



## Comprehensive Plan Update Now Online for Public's Review and Comment

Collaborative effort creates updated vision for business districts, community improvement

What could Columbia Township look like in 10 years? Twenty years? The question of what changes might redefine the future of the township is just one of many questions posed to a group of stakeholders who have developed an update to the township's Comprehensive Plan.

This visionary document examines Columbia Township's strengths and opportunities, analyzes current conditions including demographics, business and economic data and uses details on transportation, utilities, community facilities and more to create strategies that will shape future development.

The 2017 review is the second update to the township's original 2005 Comprehensive Plan. Another update was completed in 2011. Business owners, residents, township officials and other stakeholders worked for six months evaluating and discussing what updates needed to be included in the 2017 revision.

"We are very pleased to present this plan to the public. It represents the community's ideas, not solely township officials' plans, and it is proactive in creating strategies to move our community forward in a significant way," said Board President David Kubicki.



**A few of the strategies touched upon in the plan include:**

- Development of neighborhood parks
- Improvement of streetscape and other infrastructure elements as a catalyst for business development
- Identification and privatization of street and sidewalk improvements
- Creation of storm water management practices for development projects

- Use of social media and township website to promote community events and activities

Each of the three business districts in Columbia Township – the Plainville Road area, the Wooster Pike business area and the Ridge and Highland corridor - has its own broad-based plan that addresses specific issues within that business community area. "I think the committee found it important that business district development leading to further economic development was one of the main focuses of the plan this time," said Administrator Mike Lemon.

Trustee Vice President Susan Hughes noted that one of the strengths of the plan was its creation of an implementation matrix, which helps leaders determine projects and community improvement priorities. "We know where we want to get to, so the matrix helps us prioritize and define the steps and timeframe to accomplish our goals," said Hughes.

Township Trustees will vote on approval of the plan update either in October or November, and upon acceptance, the plan moves to the Regional Planning Commission. It could vote on the plan as early as December.



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## Free Little Library Could Be Coming to a Corner Near You

'Take a book, return a book' venture starting in Columbia Township

The concept is simple: Make free books available in neighborhood settings, where both children and adults come together in the context of their own communities to share a love of reading.

That's the idea behind the Little Free Library, a national program that inspires a love of reading and sparks creativity by fostering neighborhood book exchanges. And thanks to volunteer "stewards" (hosts to the libraries), Trustee Chris Kritikos and Columbia Township, some township neighborhoods are on their way to bringing this initiative to a neighborhood yard near you.

Kritikos is a fan of the program for many reasons, including the benefits children receive when they read, plus less tangible gains that spill over when

neighborhoods interact and community is built. "Little Free Libraries function on the honor system; everyone contributes to ensure there are always quality books inside," he said. "Each location has a unique and personal touch. It belongs to everybody - neighbors, friends, classmates, and people we don't even know. Anyone can use the free library."

Little Libraries come in many shapes and sizes, but the most common version is a small wooden box of books on a sturdy post located in the neighborhood. Columbia Township has agreed to build these boxes for stewards who are willing to host a neighborhood library, Kritikos said. Thus far, two township communities have expressed an interest in hosting a library.



To learn more about the program, contact Trustee Chris Kritikos at 272-7871.

### Important Phone Numbers in Columbia Township



Trustee President  
**David Kubicki**  
272-7870  
dkubicki@columbiatwp.org



Trustee  
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Fiscal Officer  
**Caroline Heekin**  
272-7867  
cheekin@columbiatwp.org

### POLICE PROTECTION—Emergency- 911

**Columbia Township—Non-Emergency**  
825-2280

**Hamilton County—Non-Emergency**  
825-1500 [www.hcso.org](http://www.hcso.org)

**City of Cincinnati—Non-Emergency**  
765-1212  
[www.cincinnati-oh.gov/cpd](http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/cpd)

### FIRE PROTECTION—Emergency- 911

**The Little Miami Joint Fire & Rescue District**  
271-3636  
<http://lmfr.org>

**Deer Park—Silverton Joint Fire District**  
791-2500  
[www.dpsjfd.org](http://www.dpsjfd.org)

**Village of Golf Manor Fire Department**  
531-2022  
[www.golfmanor.org](http://www.golfmanor.org)

### Township Administration

Administrator  
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# the Voice

FALL 2017

A PUBLICATION OF COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP

## Columbia Township Leverages Its Economic Advantages

Created revenue provides funding for quality-of-life neighborhood improvements, safety services

**A**s communities around southern Ohio struggle to meet their budgets after state funding cuts and loss of income at the local level revamps their finances, one method of creating revenue that has been chosen by Columbia Township is called a Joint Economic Development Zone.

Three years ago, voters overwhelmingly passed the JEDZ, imposing a 1 percent income tax on employees and businesses in the township's three business districts to make infrastructure improvements, recruit and retain businesses and provide services in the business districts.

Now, three years into the JEDZ, Township Trustees have a clearer picture of the income stream generated. The great news is that funds received are slightly more than we expected.

So, how has the JEDZ helped Columbia Township residents? In the short term, the additional income



has helped us pay for revenue shortfalls in police and fire protection for the business districts and neighborhoods, which was the trustees' plan from the inception of the idea. Those shortfalls have now been resolved.

Going forward, Township Trustees plan to enhance the commercial and residential communities through investments and programs we believe make the township more attractive to business, safer, more pedestrian-friendly, and more attractive for our residents and visitors. We hold the belief that investments we make with JEDZ money will increase property

values, attract more business, and will pay for themselves in the long run.

As part of Columbia Township's investment in the community, we have provided financial assistance and promotion of the Little Miami Scenic Bike Trail. The township helped pay for a feasibility study to extend the trail in partnership with Great Parks of Hamilton County and anticipates learning soon what solid costs are involved in finally making this project a reality.

If you traveled on Plainville Road last Christmas season, you may have noticed Christmas light displays in Madison Place, another township investment. We intend to continue this display and enhance it each year. Other commercial areas may also be part of this decorative effort as well.

Township Trustees have turned their attention to sidewalks and safety enhancements on Wooster Pike. We are studying enhancements to the local individual neighborhoods with legacy-type projects such as landscape upgrades to entrances, street and gateway signage upgrades.

Through concerted efforts to leverage these JEDZ funds, we plan to enhance our neighborhoods, to make business districts better, and to support high property values. Increasing pride of home ownership in individual neighborhoods is a goal we will continually work toward.

With the JEDZ money we receive, we now can make these important quality-of-life investments that are out of reach of many small communities. As your trustees, we continue to strive to improve our township each year.



**David Kubicki**  
Trustee President

## Save Money – Join the Columbia Township Electric Aggregation Program

Reduce your monthly bill by joining with other residents to reduce costs

**D**id you know Columbia Township offers a savings program that gives residents and small businesses a chance to reduce their monthly electric bill?

Columbia Township became an electric aggregator in 2012, which allowed it to negotiate electric supply rates for township residents and small businesses. However, thus far, only about a third of township residents take part in this program.

Administrator Mike Lemon reminds residents that even if you opted out at the onset of the program several years ago, there is still an opportunity to get into the savings program at no cost to you. "Despite being a success in reducing electric supply rates by nearly \$100,000 over the past 12 months, many residents chose not to be members and are missing the opportunity to reduce their electric rates," he noted.

The township just extended its electric supply contract with Interstate Gas Supply (IGS) through August 2020, lowering the previous rate by 8.5 percent to 5.27 cents/kWh, which is the lowest rate in Duke's service area, Lemon said.

This is 14.3 percent below Duke's Price-to-Compare rate of 6.15 cents/kWh. A comparison of Columbia Township's rate to surrounding communities details how the township saves money: Deer Park at 6.26 cents; Newtown at 5.89 cents; Sycamore Township at 5.84 cents; and Cincinnati at 5.57 cents (all per kWh).



**"Some solicitors are paid based upon their ability to learn this information which may result in you being changed to a new plan without your permission."**

Township Administrator Mike Lemon

Lemon advises residents to be cautious about giving out personal Duke account information. He noted, "If you are contacted by a solicitor asking for

your Duke account number or for a copy of your Duke bill, do not provide it. Some solicitors are paid based upon their ability to learn this information which may result in you being changed to a new plan without your permission."

It is not too late to join the Columbia Township Electric Aggregation program with Interstate Gas Supply and realize lower electric bills. To become a member, contact them at 800-280-4474. Check your supplier or Interstate Gas Supply to determine if any penalties are involved to change plans.

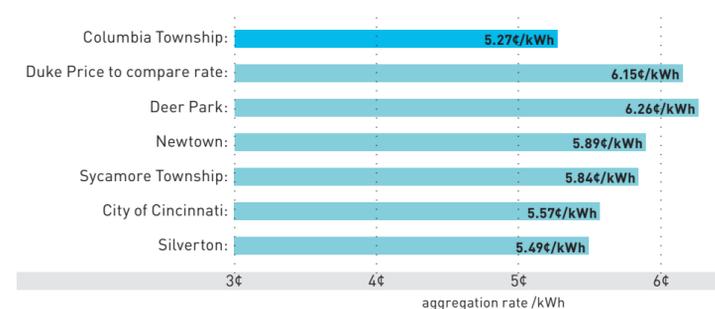
If you have any questions or concerns, contact the township at 561-6046 or call the township's consultant, Eagle Energy, at 251-7283. There is no risk to you to join.

### Gas Aggregation Program Also Can Cut Costs

Columbia Township also has a variable rate gas aggregation program which can reduce residents' natural gas costs through Constellation Supply.

In 2017, the average cost reduction through July has been 5.9 percent per month less than Duke. If interested in joining, contact Constellation at 800-492-6869 and mention the Columbia Township aggregation program.

### COMPARISON OF LOCAL ELECTRIC RATES



## Township Ready for Big Leaf Pickup Push

**M**other Nature is readying for her next season, and that means soon your yard will be full of leaves.

Leaf removal in Columbia Township will start in mid-October, depending how quickly leaves hit the ground. Please note, if you miss the first pickup, road crews will return to your street within seven to 10 business days up until this service ends the week of December 25.

John Servizzi, Columbia Township's road superintendent, notes that township crews pick up leaves on each street at least seven times throughout the fall.

**You can do your part to help them pick up your leaves by following these simple steps:**

- Place leaves as close to the curb as possible.
- Leave the area in front of your home open (no cars parked) until the road crews pass through.
- Do not rake leaves into the street. Leaves left in the street could cause clogged storm drains or be a factor in an auto accident.



As part of the leaf pickup service, crews will blow the sidewalk and street in front of your home on both sides of the streets during their pass through. Requests for special leaf pickups will not be honored so the crew can maintain their seven to 10-day pickup rotation.

For questions about when leaf pickup starts, check the township's website: [www.columbiatwp.org](http://www.columbiatwp.org).



### Calling all Columbia Township Historians....

Our community's history has a few gaps!

**I**f you have historic documents or information related to significant events in Columbia Township, or if you are a longtime resident of the township with special historical information related to the history of our community, contact Administrator Mike Lemon. Especially sought is information prior to 1998. Lemon can be reached at 561-6046 or [mlemon@columbiatwp.org](mailto:mlemon@columbiatwp.org).



## Keep Your Holidays Safe This Year

**T**his holiday season, don't give pickpockets, burglars or muggers or a chance to do their dirty work. Criminals love the holidays as much as everyone else, chiefly because it's a perfect opportunity to commit a crime.

The Hamilton County Sheriff's Office offers these to keep in mind during the upcoming holiday season.

**If you are shopping:**

- Stay alert and be aware of everything around you at all times.
- Park in well-lit spaces and as close to the store as possible.
- Lock your car doors and hide packages in the trunk or under the seats.

- Do not carry large amounts of cash; pay with a check or credit card if possible.
- Carry your purse close to your body, not dangling by the straps. Put a wallet in an inside coat or front pants pocket.

**If a stranger comes to the door:**

- Stay alert to suspicious-looking couriers delivering packages to you or your neighbors.
- Many con artists take advantage of holiday generosity by going door-to-door. Ask for identification and get specifics on how and where the donation will be spent/used.
- If you feel uncomfortable, say, "No thank you" and shut the door.

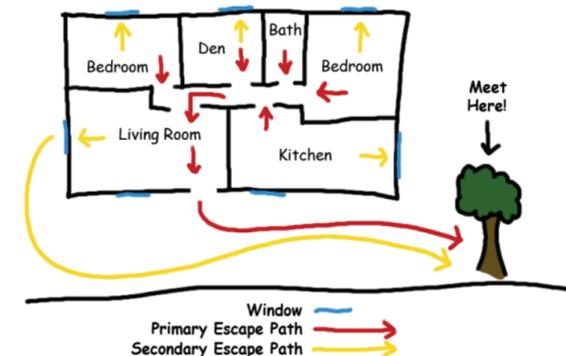
## Be Prepared-Practice Your Fire Safety Plan

**H**ow are you preparing your family to be fire safe? During a fire, every second counts. To ensure your family gets to safety as quickly as possible, plan two ways out of your home.

Twice a year, you and your family should practice your home fire drill. This fall, discuss your home fire plan with all members of your household. Make sure all members who can escape on their own, can locate two points of exit from every room, and know where to meet after they escape.

As you are leaving your home, either in a fire drill or a real event, make it a habit to close doors behind you as you leave. Closed doors may slow the spread of smoke, heat, and fire.

**TIP:** Daylight Savings Time which ends on Sunday, Nov. 5 this year, is a great



reminder for when it is time to check the batteries in your smoke alarms! When it is time to change your clocks, be sure to change your smoke alarm batteries, and change your supplies in your emergency

supply kit to either restock or adjust for the change of seasons. Information supplied by the Hamilton County Emergency Management & Homeland Security Agency.



## Fall into Preparedness with These Simple Steps

**M**ake sure that your family is prepared before, during, and after a disaster by building an emergency preparedness kit. In the event of a major emergency or disaster, residents may be forced to rely upon themselves until help can reach them.

When preparing an emergency kit, it is advised to have at least a three-day supply of food and water, as well as a three-day supply of any medication that you or your family members may require.

Once you have built a kit, keep your supplies dry by storing them in a watertight container in a dry, safe place. If you choose to store your kit in the basement, consider keeping it on an

elevated surface to avoid water damage if your basement is prone to flooding.

You may not be with your family when a disaster strikes. Ensure that you have a plan to contact and locate your loved ones. Phone lines may be overwhelmed with calls, or knocked out by severe weather, so consider a plan that incorporates the use of text messaging.

Know where to go and how to get there! Pick a well-known spot where you will meet up with your family if you need to get out of your house quickly. Discuss your emergency plan with your family and practice it regularly. For more information about preparedness, visit [www.Ready.gov](http://www.Ready.gov).

### Build a Kit

Create a family emergency kit with simple essentials

- Water. One gallon of water, per person, per day, for at least three days
- Non-perishable food (three-day supply)
- NOAA Weather Radio
- Flashlight
- First aid kit
- Whistle
- Dust mask
- Moist towelettes
- Wrench to turn off utilities
- Non-electric can opener
- Local maps
- Three-day supply of medication
- Baby supplies
- Pet supplies
- Personal documents
- Emergency contact information