



### V: Parks, Recreation, and Trails

#### 5.1 Parks and Recreation Master Plan

On April 7, 2009, the Liberty Township Board of Trustees adopted the Liberty Township Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The plan was coordinated and drafted by Brandstetter Carroll, Inc. working with a dedicated Parks and Recreation Plan Steering Committee. Public input was sought during the planning process through an extensive household survey and three public open house meetings.

Given that the Parks and Recreation Master Plan has been recently completed, it was determined that the topic did not require further study at this time. Therefore, the entirety of the Liberty Township Parks and Recreation Master Plan shall be incorporated into this Comprehensive Vision Plan, as if fully re-written herein. All of the goals and objectives stated within the Parks and Recreation Master Plan shall be considered equal to the goals and objectives of this Comprehensive Vision Plan.

#### 5.2 Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trails Plan

The Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trails Plan (Trails Plan) was drafted under the guidance of a subcommittee and then presented to the Vision Plan Steering Committee and also at public open house meetings for comment.

##### 5.2.1 Existing Conditions

The Existing Trail and Sidewalk Map (Map 3) shows the locations of existing sidewalk and both paved and unpaved trail locations. The map indicates the location of schools and parks, which are popular destinations for pedestrians, trail users, and cyclists.

The map clearly shows that the majority of existing sidewalk infrastructure is located within subdivision developments. There are few sidewalks along the main roads of the Township, which causes the sidewalk systems within the subdivisions to be isolated because they generally do not connect beyond the subdivision. Furthermore, sidewalk has not always been a requirement of development in Liberty Township and several older subdivisions and commercial developments do not include sidewalk. The network of sidewalk and trail in Liberty Township is viewed as a puzzle where the Township fills in pieces of that puzzle as funding or opportunities present themselves.







The trails initiatives in Liberty Township began in the late 1990's with the preparation and adoption of the first Hike / Bike Master Plan. The Township participated in the regional Miami2Miami Trail initiative, and the plans were incorporated into the update of the Hike /Bike Master Plan in 2006. The Butler County Engineer's Office incorporated the Township's Hike / Bike Master Plan into the most recent County Thoroughfare Plan.

Several of the Township's parks feature multi-use trails, most of which are paved, but some are unpaved or surfaced with wood chips. The parks in or adjacent to the Township that feature trails are:

- Dudley Woods Metropark (not paved)
- Cherokee Park (not paved)
- Fort Liberty Playland (paved)
- Reserves Park (paved)
- Wetlands Park (both paved and chipped)
- Incline Park (paved)
- Allen Park (paved)
- Dudley Park (not paved)
- Liberty Park (paved)
- Voice of America Metropark (paved).



**Legend**

 Existing Sidewalk	 Schools
 Existing Unpaved Trail	 Park Locations
 Existing Multi-use Trail	
 Streams	

**Map 3: Trails Plan - Existing Trail and Sidewalk**



Some subdivisions also provide paved trails as an amenity within the dedicated open space.

Subdivisions which include trails are:

- Hawthorne Hills
- Panther Run
- Knolls of Liberty
- Windsor Estates
- Aspen Trails
- Falling Water
- Creekside Meadows
- Carriage Hill
- Longhunter Chase
- Elk Run
- Reserve at Elk's Point.

Similar to the sidewalk infrastructure, multi-use trails in Liberty Township in some cases, feature gaps and / or can be described as isolated systems that do not connect neighborhoods with other nearby parks, schools, or commercial centers.

Efforts to identify and bridge gaps in the Township's sidewalk and trail infrastructure have been ongoing and continual. Noted recent connections are:

- Sidewalk and paved trail from the end of Liberty Farms Drive to Fort Liberty Playland
- Paved trail along LeSourdsville West Chester Road near the intersection at Princeton Road with a connection into Knolls of Liberty subdivision to Wetlands Park
- Sidewalk connection along Dutchland Parkway between Dutchland Blvd. and Woodland Elementary and Liberty Junior Schools
- Sidewalk connection between Sandric Lane and existing sidewalk at Walgreens on Cincinnati-Dayton Road
- Sidewalk connection along Cincinnati-Dayton Road from Cimmon Drive to the Liberty Plaza shopping center and a crosswalk at Liberty One Drive.
- Additionally, Lakota Local Schools have installed sidewalk connections through the Safe Routes to School Program connecting

Fallingwater, Creekside Meadows, and Aspen Trails subdivisions with Cherokee Elementary, benefiting from pedestrian crossings included in the Kyles Station Road roundabout project, and connecting the sidewalk on Walnut Creek Drive with Heritage Elementary.

There are also sidewalk and trail connections which are due to be completed in the next couple of years.

These projects include:

- Sections of sidewalk along Dutchland Parkway and Yankee Road which includes crosswalks at the intersection of Yankee Road with Cincinnati-Dayton Road, which is funded by a grant and some of the work being done in conjunction with an intersection improvement project.
- Sidewalk along the west side of Yankee Road from Wyandot Lane to Dutchland Parkway.
- Crosswalk to connect Sidewalk at the Trails of Liberty Subdivision to the Carriage Hill Subdivision.
- Sidewalk along the east side of Van Gordon Road from the SR 129 overpass to Princeton Road.
- A paved multi-use path connection from the Windsor Estates Subdivision to Dudley Woods Metropark.

These projects show that much of the work connecting the Township's fragmented sidewalk and trail network has been, and will continue to be accomplished through targeted small projects, often piggy-backed onto other roadway projects. This reality highlights the importance of communication between the Butler County Engineer's Office and the Township when roadway improvements are being planned, so that opportunities to improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure can be considered.



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### 5.2.2 Needs Assessment

The Liberty Township Trails Plan recognizes and addresses four distinct user groups, which are: Bicyclists, Residents, Schools, and Businesses. While these distinct groups have their own perspective related to bicycle, sidewalk, and trail infrastructure in the Township, there are also many overlapping interests which are discussed below:

*Bicyclists* – While anyone who rides a bicycle is technically a bicyclist, the term is being more narrowly defined in this plan as anyone who rides a bicycle throughout the Township on public roads for the purpose of commuting from place to place or for recreation and/or exercise. The main interest of this group is a roadway network that is safe and conducive to bicycle travel for reasonably skilled riders.

*Residents* – As discussed in Chapter 2, Liberty Township's demographics favor families with children. As part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, a survey of Township households was conducted. Respondents ranked walking and hiking trails as the highest need among various recreation facilities, with 85% reporting a need for trails. Paved multi-use trails are versatile community amenities which accommodate walkers, joggers, bike riders of any skill and age level, and much more. These trails are generally separated from roadways and vehicular traffic, offering a wider and safer path than sidewalks or riding bicycles on the roadways.

*Schools* – Lakota Local Schools has changed its policy regarding students walking or biking to school and does not currently provide bus service to high school students and other students who live within a certain distance of the school they attend. As a result of this shift, many more students have a need or desire to walk or ride bicycles to school. Lakota Local Schools has recognized that this demand requires, among other things, better and safer pedestrian connectivity surrounding their schools.

*Businesses* – The walkability of a community has been shown to benefit property values, business growth and retention, and retail sales. A study by the Urban Land Institute<sup>1</sup> compared the property values of houses in four newly developed, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods with similar houses in nearby neighborhoods. The study reported that homebuyers were willing to pay \$20,000 more for a house in a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood. A case study of sidewalk and streetscape improvements in the town center of Lodi, California<sup>2</sup> showed that the improvements led to a drop in the commercial vacancy rate from 18% to 6% and a 30% increase in retail sales. A survey by Accent Marketing & Research<sup>3</sup> in the U.K. found that visitors who arrived on foot to downtown shopping districts spent on average 43% more than those who arrived by car. These studies suggest that improvements in pedestrian connectivity and infrastructure in the Township can benefit the local business community.

### 5.2.3 Trails Plan Vision Statement

The Liberty Township Trails Plan seeks to improve quality of life and encourage pride in the community by establishing a network of safe paths and sidewalks to connect subdivisions, parks, businesses, schools, and other community destinations. These paths and sidewalks will be designed to meet the needs of a variety of users with the goal of increasing the accessibility of all pedestrians and bicyclists throughout the Township and adjacent communities.

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<sup>1</sup> *Valuing The New Urbanism, The Impact of the New Urbanism on Prices of Single Family Homes*, Mark J. Eppli and Charles C. Tu, 1999, Urban Land Institute.

<sup>2</sup> *The Economic Benefits of Walkable Communities*, 2001, the Local Government Commission, [www.lgc.org](http://www.lgc.org)

<sup>3</sup> *Economic Value of Walkability*, Todd A. Litman, 2011, Victoria Transport Policy Institute.



#### 5.2.4 Trails Plan Maps

The improvements called for in the Trails Plan are depicted in two maps: Map 4: Bicycle and Trail Plan, and Map 5: Trail and Sidewalk Plan. The improvements indicated in these maps should not rule out other bicycle, pedestrian, or trail infrastructure in Liberty Township, nor shall the lack of a proposed improvement indicated in an area be grounds to absolve a proposed development of the requirement to provide pedestrian infrastructure called for by the Liberty Township Zoning Resolution or the Butler County Subdivision Regulations.

##### Map 4: Bicycle and Trail Plan

This Map depicts the proposed Multi-use Path connections and crosswalk improvements needed to further connect and complete the trail network in Liberty Township. The map also shows the proposed network of signed bikeways and connections through neighborhoods.

The area within the rectangle with the note “Also Refer to Downtown Bethany Vision Plan” was studied as part of this plan. The Downtown Bethany Vision Plan includes proposed pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. These infrastructure elements shall be considered in addition to the proposed improvements called for in this Trails Plan.

The map shows the proposed route of the Miami2Miami Trail through Liberty Township. Please refer below for more information about the Miami2Miami Trail.

The map shows Proposed Bicycle Facilities:

*Proposed Signed Bikeway* – Signed Bikeways are road segments which are to be marked indicating a bikeway using “Share the Road” signage and/or pavement markings, with the purpose of heightening motorist’s awareness of the presence of cyclists and increasing safety.

*Future Bikeway (Improvement Needed)* – Future Bikeways are road segments that require physical improvements before they can be signed as a bikeway. These road segments may have narrow lanes, narrow shoulders, poor sight distance due to curves or dips, high traffic volumes, and/or high traffic speeds.

*Proposed Signed Neighborhood Connection* – Signed Neighborhood Connections are routes through neighborhood streets that are to be signed. These routes provide connectivity between different Signed Bikeway segments or connections to parks, schools, and commercial centers.

*Future Signed Neighborhood Connection* – Future Signed Neighborhood Connections are routes through neighborhood streets that do not currently provide a connection between Signed Bikeway segments, but are projected to do so in the future. These routes will only be signed once they complete a connection.

##### Map 5: Trail and Sidewalk Plan

This Map depicts the proposed Multi-use Path connections and crosswalk improvements needed to further connect and complete the trail network in Liberty Township. The map also shows the proposed network of sidewalks to provide pedestrian connectivity between neighborhoods and parks, schools, and commercial centers.

The area within the rectangle with the note “Also Refer to Downtown Bethany Vision Plan” was studied as part of this plan. The Downtown Bethany Vision Plan includes proposed pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. These infrastructure elements shall be considered in addition to the proposed improvements called for in this Trails Plan.

The map indicates large areas of the Township with green, yellow, and red buffers. These buffers cover areas within ½ mile of parks (green), schools (yellow), and areas of the Township currently



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developed, or planned for future commercial development (red). These buffers are meant to indicate areas where pedestrian trips are more likely due to the close proximity to community destinations. Pedestrian connections within these buffers will have a more significant effect on walkability and should be areas of particular focus for planned pedestrian infrastructure.

### Miami2Miami Trail Plan

The Miami2Miami Connection is a proposed 84-mile trail system made up of a combination of 10-foot wide separate trails, 5-foot wide bike lanes on roadways, and signed shared roadways to connect the Great Miami River Trail (existing and proposed) with the existing Little Miami Scenic Trail. The multi-use system will offer transportation and recreation opportunities for walking, jogging, cycling, skating, and wheelchair use. When completed, the trail system will not only connect two large north / south trails, but with those connections, will provide links to more than 400 miles of multi-use trails across the state of Ohio.

The planned route of the Miami2Miami Connection through Liberty Township follows a network of over-the-road routes along main roads and through subdivisions, as well as using existing and proposed trail segments. The planned route also traverses five mid-block crossings, including crossing SR 747 at Grandin Ridge Drive. Given that the Miami2Miami Connection seeks to accommodate less experienced and child bicyclists while minimizing the switching from separate path to bike lane and shared roadway conditions<sup>4</sup>, thought was given to better achieving these objectives through this Trails Plan update. While the original Miami2Miami Connection route through Liberty Township is being left intact, this plan offers some alternate routes that seem to better

fulfil the stated objectives of the Miami2Miami Connection plan.

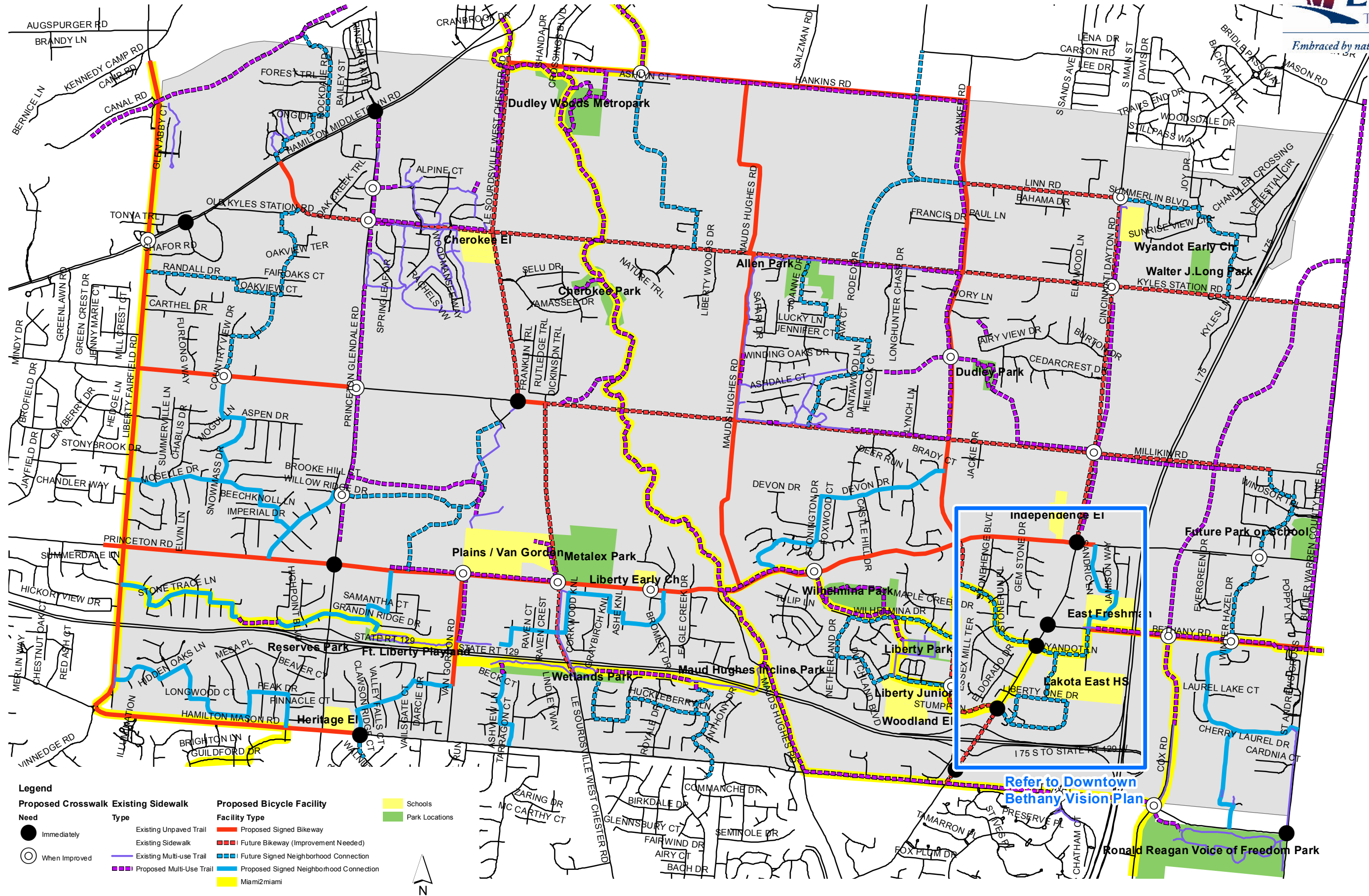
The largest of the proposed alternative routes to the Miami2Miami Trail through Liberty Township follows along Gregory Creek, and is often referred to as the proposed Gregory Creek Trail. The previous Liberty Township Trails Plan, adopted in 2006, proposed that the Gregory Creek Trail be a hike / equestrian trail. Due to the trail's central location in the Township and access via three Township Parks, a paved trail would allow it to be more useful to a wider range of residents and be a more prominent centerpiece of the Township's trail system. The route follows the floodplain and the three existing Township Parks could serve as trail heads with parking and bathroom facilities. At the northwest segment of the Gregory Creek Trail, two optional routes are shown for connecting into the Great Miami River Trail. Conversely, in the southeast portion of the Township, two optional routes are indicated for arriving at the proposed trail along Bethany Road, east of I-75. From this point the Miami2Miami Trail will travel east through the City of Mason to its eventual connection to the Little Miami Scenic Trail.

### Infrastructure Design

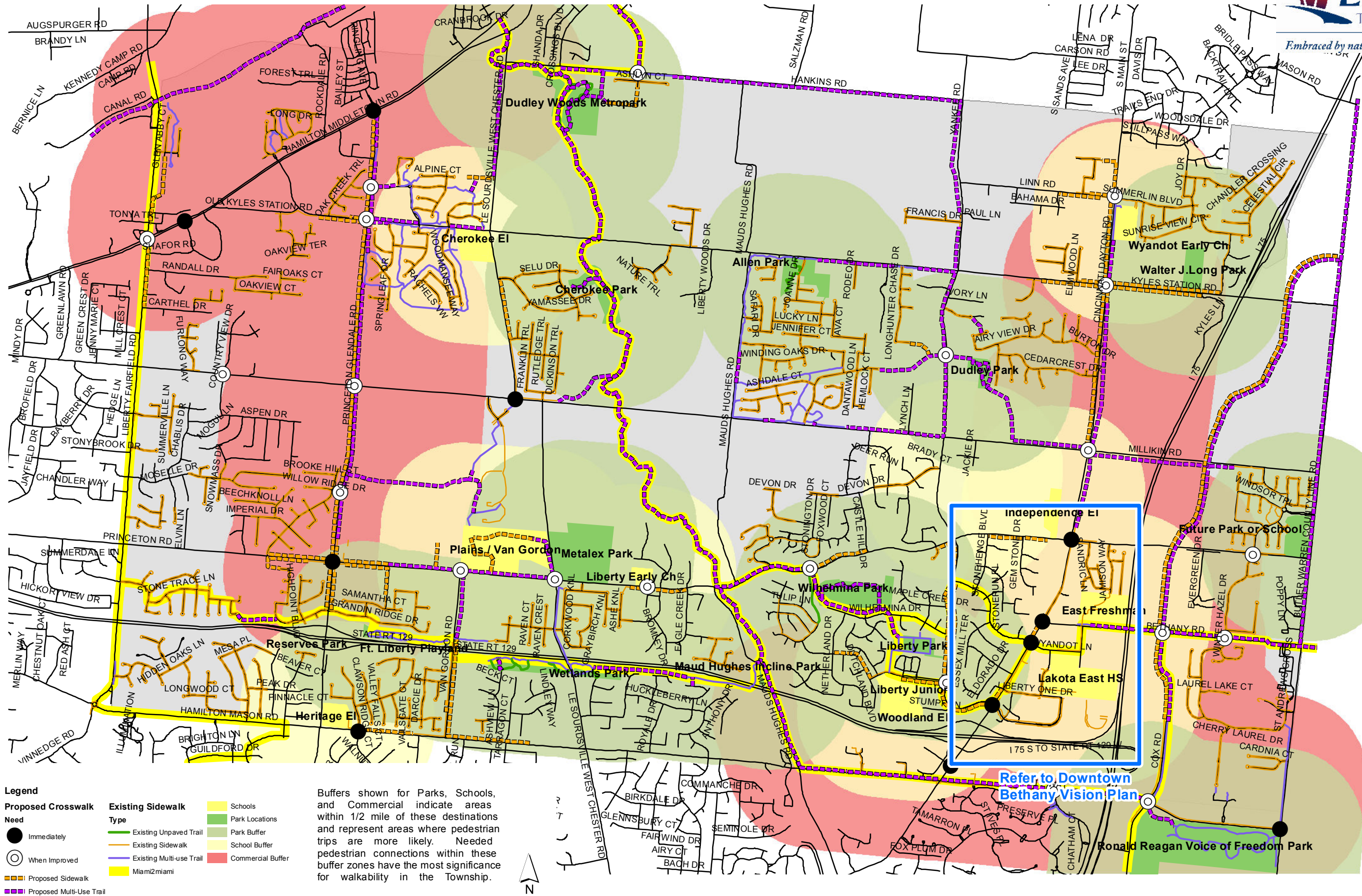
The design and construction of bicycle, pedestrian, and trail improvements shall comply with the standards and guidelines of the Liberty Township Zoning Resolution, Butler County Subdivision Regulations, and any other applicable requirement. Multi-use trail segments that are through connections – which mean that they are segments that are integral to a wider proposed trail system, not local within the proposed development – shall be at least ten (10) feet wide. For any questions over proper trail design and clearances, the most recent edition of AASHTO design guide shall be consulted.

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<sup>4</sup> Miami2Miami Connection Feasibility Study, 2002, Barge, Waggoner, Sumner and Cannon, Inc. and Human Nature, Inc.



**Map 4: Trails Plan - Bicycle and Trail Plan**



**Map 5: Trails Plan - Trail and Sidewalk Plan**





### 5.2.5 Trails Plan Goals and Objectives

The following Goals and Objectives related to the Liberty Township Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trails Plan were prepared by the Trails Plan Steering Committee. These Goals and Objectives were presented to the Comprehensive Vision Plan Steering Committee for inclusion in this document, and for comment at a public open house. These goals and objectives are not listed in any particular order of priority.

#### Overall Goals

1. Promote awareness of Liberty Township Trails and Bike Routes through maps, flyers, existing Township events, and trail signage.
  - a. Use these same avenues to educate regarding trail safety and etiquette.
2. Get applicable sidewalk, trail, and bike route projects included in the Butler County Thoroughfare Plan, CKI, and ODOT plans.
  - a. Monitor Butler County Engineer's CIP for projects to partner with to accomplish proposed improvements.
3. Coordinate trail efforts with neighboring communities.
  - a. Meet with neighboring communities regarding their trail efforts on a regular basis.
4. Continue to work with and support Lakota Schools in their Safe Routes To School efforts.
5. Work with community groups (Boy / Girl Scouts, HOAs, etc.) to partner with for the implementation of components of the Trails Plan.

#### Bicycle Goals

1. Obtain recognition as a Bicycle Friendly Community from the League of American Bicyclists  
Objective: Submit application for Bicycle Friendly Community designation for review.

2. Develop objective criteria to determine which road segments can currently be a signed bikeway, and which segments require improvements before they can be signed.
3. Sign proposed bike routes.  
Objective: Create a line item in yearly CIP for new signs / pavement markings.
4. Include directional signage for parks and attractions.
5. Sign bike route connections through neighborhoods.
6. Add bicycle racks at Township facilities, and encourage local businesses and institutions to do the same.

#### Pedestrian Goals

1. Make sidewalk connections between subdivisions and to schools and commercial development.
2. Prioritize closing gaps in the existing sidewalk network along main thoroughfares and providing sidewalks where pedestrians currently walk with no sidewalk.
3. Start at destinations (commercial, schools, parks, etc.) and spider out in making sidewalk connection priorities based on a ½ mile walking radius.
4. Whenever possible, promote pedestrian improvements in tandem with planned roadway improvements to minimize cost and disruption.  
Objective: Coordinate with BCEO on proposed roadway improvement projects to ensure that planned sidewalk, trail, or bicycle facilities are included in the project.  
Objective: Monitor the BCEO's CIP for upcoming projects to include planned pedestrian facilities.
5. Provide for safe pedestrian crosswalks at designated intersections on the plan maps.



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6. Require that new developments provide sidewalk and trail segments in accordance with this plan, along with the Township Zoning Resolution and Butler County Subdivision Regulations.  
Objective: Review during development pre-application meetings.

Objective: Conduct a feasibility study of high priority projects. If found infeasible and with no alternatives, consider moving down the list or removing from the plan.

### Trails Goals

- Focus on connections between subdivisions and connecting subdivisions to parks.  
Objective: Encourage the construction of trail segments when possible as part of proposed development or roadway projects where indicated in the Trails Plan.  
Objective: Utilize ODNR or other grant programs to acquire right-of-way.  
Objective: Promote donated right-of-way as a local match to leverage for construction grants.  
Objective: Review during development pre-application meetings.  
Objective: Identify gaps in existing infrastructure.
- Establish a desired route among the options shown for the Miami2Miami Trail that utilizes a separate path trail to the extent possible.  
Objective: Continue to work with Trails Committee and adjacent communities to identify a preferred route.
- Establish a Trail along Gregory Creek between Incline Park and connecting to the Great Miami Trail. The Gregory Creek Trail (or part of it) should be looked at as a possible segment of the Miami2Miami Trail.  
Objective: Review as properties develop along the Gregory Creek Corridor.
- Identify planned trail segments on the current plan which are infeasible, remove them and look for alternative routes if necessary.

### 5.3 Parks, Recreation, and Trails Goals

The following Goals and Objectives related to parks, trails, and recreation were prepared by the Comprehensive Vision Plan Steering Committee. These Goals and Objectives were presented for comment at a public open house. These goals and objectives are not listed in any particular order of priority.

**Goal #1: The goals, objectives, and policies outlined in the Liberty Township Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Liberty Township Trails Plan, and Downtown Bethany Vision Plan are incorporated in this Comprehensive Vision Plan as if fully re-written herein.**

**Goal #2: Provide multi-use paths for recreation within and between neighborhoods. Also use paths to link neighborhoods with parks and schools.**

Objective: Adopt a Trails Plan which plans out a network of sidewalk, trail, and bikeways.

Objective: Find ways to finance the construction and maintenance of trail segments through matching grants, private fundraising, public / private, or other in-kind donations.

Objective: Review all development proposals to ensure that required improvements are included per adopted plans or the Zoning Resolution.

**Goal #3: Develop the Gregory Creek floodplain as a natural corridor, accessible through a trail and Township parks along the creek. The corridor would be connected**



**to adjacent neighborhoods through trail as well.**

Objective: Continue to work with property owners along the creek to communicate the vision for Gregory Creek, listen to their ideas, and address their concerns.

Task: Organize informal discussions with property owners.

Objective: Acquire right-of way / easements for the trail as opportunities arise.

Objective: Require the installation of trail segments as part of development along the creek corridor.

Task: Identify during development review.

Objective: Work with the Miami Conservancy, Metroparks of Butler County, BCEO and adjacent communities.

**Goal #4: Expand upon annual community events.**

Objective: Find more reliable and ongoing sponsorship and effective organizing beyond Township staff.

Objective: While still retaining events tailored to families, seek to add events or components to events which attract young adults and empty nesters.

Task: Seek input from residents to identify other activities.

**Goal #5: Find funding sources for development and maintenance of park properties.**

Objective: Market the fund at Community Foundation for parks development to be able to accept donations and contributions.

Objective: Leverage local funds and donations through use of grant programs.

Objective: Leverage the efforts of volunteers.

**Goal #6: Encourage the use of Lakota Schools' Facilities in off-hours to make them true community amenities.**

Objective: Work with Lakota School's staff to identify opportunities.

**Goal #7: Support the efforts of larger regional trail networks such as the Great Miami River Trail and the Miami2Miami Trail.**