

Introduction

“The Hilliard Comprehensive Plan will connect people, places, a proud past, and a promising tomorrow so that Hilliard is known as a great place to live, work, shop, and play.”

- Mayor Don Schonhardt



Chapter 1:

Introduction

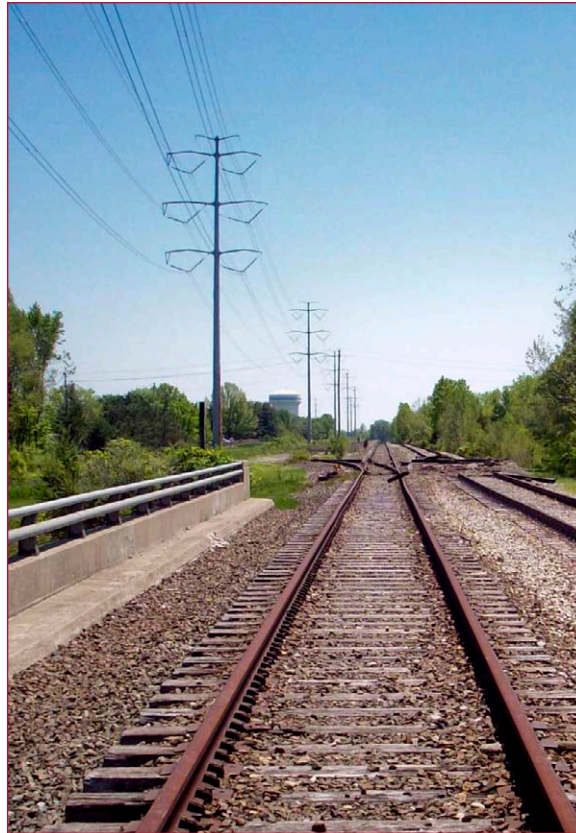
Since its beginnings in the mid-1800s as a stop along the Piqua and Indiana Railroad, Hilliard has always been a point of connection for the people of western Franklin County. For nearly 100 years, it was the place where farmers brought agricultural products to ship. Pieces of history dominated by a closely linked relationship with the railroad and farming are still evident today. This is particularly true in Old Hilliard, where there is a quaint look and feel of historic buildings, the Franklin County Fairgrounds, and a development pattern oriented around the rail line.

The orientation of the street grid in Old Hilliard, from northwest to southeast, was shaped around the railroad, and was the dominant development pattern for more than 100 years. The decline of the railroads and the construction of Interstate 270 in the 1960s and 1970s changed the development framework for the area. Growth shifted away from Old Hilliard and towards Interstate

270 to align with the rapidly expanding highway system, resulting in Cemetery Road becoming the primary commercial center. This shift signaled Hilliard's transition from an agricultural community to a Columbus outerbelt suburb.

The transition continued as many of the rural farms disappeared with the housing boom that started in the mid 1980's and continued through the 1990's. Various factors, including the availability of cheap land, housing demand, the extension of public utilities, and the predominance of auto-oriented development have caused Hilliard to grow in a very rapid, sprawling, and disjointed manner.

As the city grew, many of the small-town characteristics were replaced with more typical suburban characteristics: farmland replaced by residential development and retail centers, improved schools, strong city services and amenities, traffic



congestion, and sprawl. At the same time, the distance between Hilliard and its neighbors, Columbus and Dublin, has disappeared over the past 30 years as these cities have grown outward as well. The separation between these communities has been replaced by collaborative relationships, utility and annexation agreements, and intertwined boundaries.

Creating Connections

Hilliard's fragmented growth pattern, the presence of two railroad lines and Interstate 270 cutting through the City, and the location of several



large parcels (Franklin County Fairgrounds and Hilliard City Schools campus, among others) near Hilliard's core, have resulted in several physical and metaphorical barriers in the community.

The universal premise throughout this Comprehensive Plan is the idea of creating and restoring connections. The need to better connect Hilliard residents with one another, their community, and the region was identified through research, affirmed through community input, and is addressed in the plan recommendations.



Figure 1.1 – Examples of barriers in Hilliard

Left: The Retired Railroad Corridor looking south from Cemetery Road. Center: The site of a former industrial site near Britton Parkway and Cemetery Road. Right: Cemetery Road approaching the afternoon rush hour. Other examples include I-270, large land uses such as the fairgrounds, the Hilliard City Schools complex west of Old Hilliard, and the prevalence of large, contiguous areas of residential dwellings.

What is a comprehensive plan and why is it important?

The Hilliard Comprehensive Plan is a forward looking document designed to guide the future development of the City. It encompasses the

entire city geographically, as well as all services and functions of city government. This plan is the result of a 3 year effort, during which Hilliard residents, elected officials, and City staff discussed and planned for almost every aspect of the community. The result is a plan, developed with extensive public input, which reflects the values of the community and presents a clear, formalized vision for Hilliard's future over the next 20 years.

The purpose of the Plan is to guide policy and budgeting decisions made by city officials, and to communicate the City's desires and intentions

regarding future development. Hilliard's public officials and staff will use the Plan to evaluate and revise City Code and policies such as zoning ordinances, prioritize infrastructure projects, and plan City expenditures in coming years.

Some components of the Plan are general in nature and may be open to interpretation, while others outline detailed policies and requirements that should be enacted. It is important to consider each recommendation in the larger context of the Plan's goals, the city as a whole, and in some cases, the surrounding region.

This document is not a new plan; rather it is an update to Hilliard's past planning efforts, most notably the Hilliard Transportation Plan (2001), the Hilliard Community Plan (2003), and the Old Hilliard Master Plan (2003). The updated Hilliard Comprehensive Plan builds upon these documents and introduces new guidance and concepts where relevant. Over the life of this Plan, it should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to ensure that it meets the changing needs of the City and continues to advance the goals of the community.



Figure 1.2 – Members of the community shop at a Farmers Market event in Old Hilliard. Events such as these provide opportunities for members of the community to connect.

Comprehensive Plan Study Area

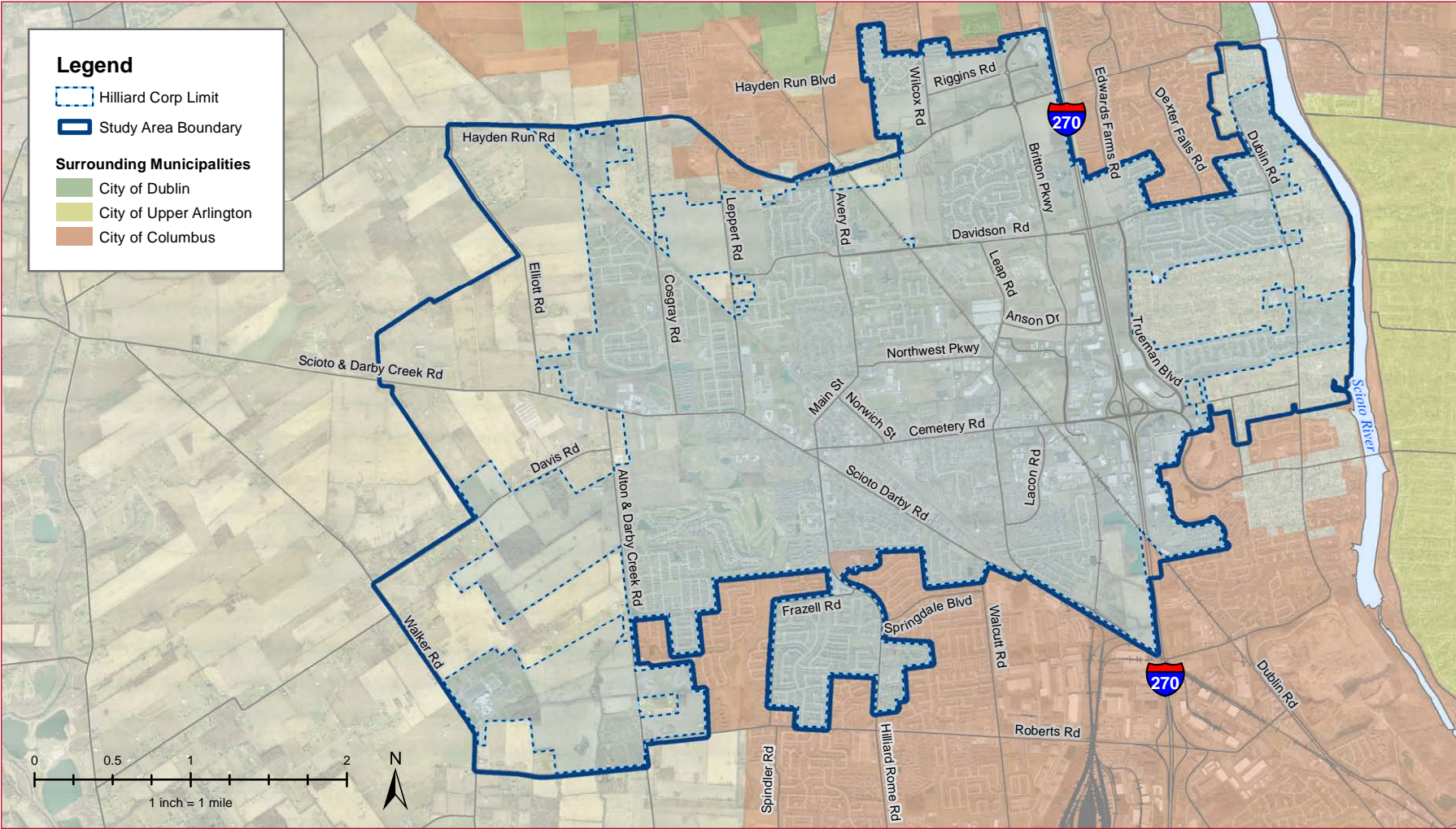
The study area for the Plan included all land currently within the City of Hilliard as well as land that may be annexed into the city in the future based on utility agreements with surrounding municipalities (see Map 1.1 below).

The approximate boundaries for the Comprehensive Plan’s study area include:

- North: Hayden Run Road
- West: Elliott, Langton, and Walker roads
- South: Roberts, and Scioto Darby roads
- East: Mill Run Drive, and the Scioto River

As part of the Central Ohio region, Hilliard is closely tied to its surrounding municipalities, townships, and other government entities. This means that very few decisions for Hilliard’s future can be made without first considering the influences of, and on the surrounding region. The recommendations made throughout this Plan are

Map 1.1 – Comprehensive Plan Study Area



focused within the Comprehensive Plan’s study area; however, analyses were performed on a much larger area to ensure that developments and improvements made within the City meet future demands and are economically sound. This is particularly true for the thoroughfare plan and competitive market analysis, both of which extended to Rings Road and Tuttle Crossing Boulevard on the north, the Madison County line on the west, I-70 on the south, and the Scioto River on the east.

Planning Process

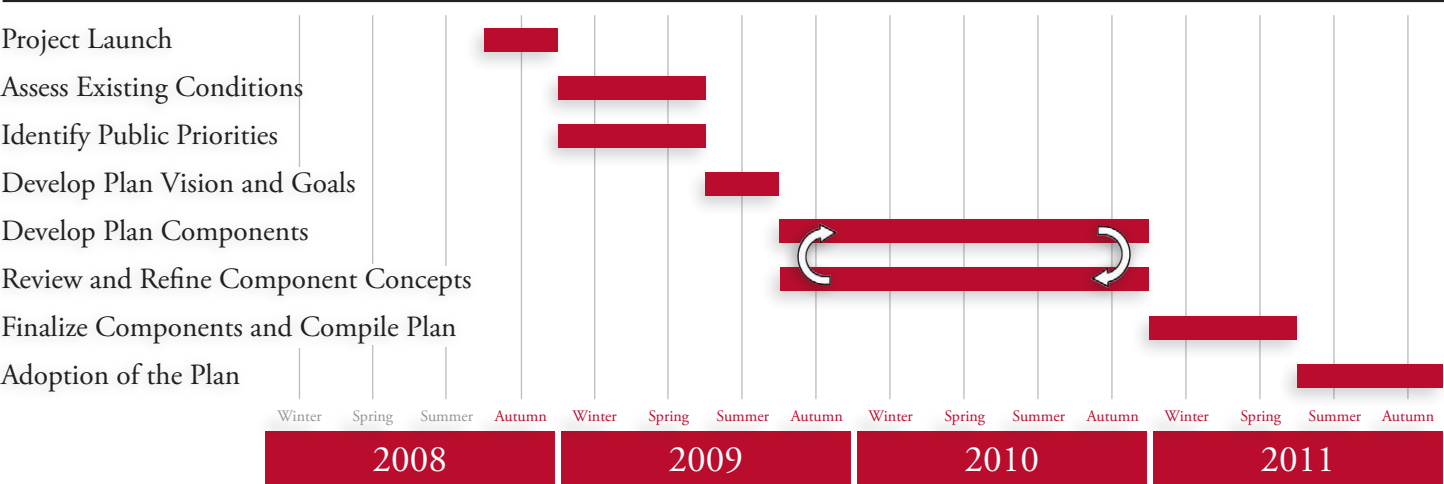
Employing an innovative planning process, Hilliard sought to develop a truly comprehensive plan; one that would fully integrate land use, transportation, parks and public spaces, economic development, utilities, and other public services planning. While most comprehensive plans consider each of these components to some extent, the emphasis tends to be on planning for future land

uses. Hilliard’s unique approach involved not only updating the comprehensive plan and future land use map, but also updating the Thoroughfare Plan and Utility Master Plan, further developing its Parks and Public Spaces Plan, and creating a new Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan. Traditionally, each of these plans would be completed by different departments as a separate project; however, by incorporating them into one planning process, the resulting plan more effectively accounts for the needs of, and interrelationships between each component.

A planning process (Figure 1.3), consisting of eight general steps, was developed at the beginning of the project. Given the breadth and complexity of the Plan, this process helped to guide project activities, many of which were carried out concurrently, and maintain the overall project schedule. The following is a brief summary of each step in the planning process.

- **Project Launch**
During this initial step in the planning process, the scope of services was defined for the planning team and members of the Comprehensive Plan Task Force were identified and invited to participate. The project was also introduced to the public at a Community Open House Meeting.
- **Assess Existing Conditions**
Throughout the spring and summer of 2009 the project team collected and analyzed data about all aspects of the city. This information provided an understanding of the current conditions in the Hilliard area and formed the recommendations in the Plan.
- **Identify Issues/Concerns**
Concurrently with the existing conditions assessment, public input was sought using a combination of meetings, interviews, and

Figure 1.3 – Planning Process



surveys, to gain insight into the concerns and needs of Hilliard residents. This also helped to form the development of recommendations in the Plan.

- **Develop Plan Vision and Goals**

Based on the public input received early in the process, an overarching vision and goals for the Plan were formulated by the Task Force. The vision and goals communicate what the City hopes to accomplish through the creation and implementation of this plan.

- **Develop Plan Components**

This step in the planning process involved developing recommendations for each component of the plan, including: proposed land uses, upgrades to the thoroughfare network, expansion of the pedestrian and bicycle network, park and public space enhancements, economic development strategies, and utility improvements.

- **Review and Refine Plan Components**

Perhaps the most integral part of the planning process, this step evaluated the impacts of future recommended land uses on the transportation and utility networks. Using an iterative process, traffic and utility capacity analyses were performed on several future land use scenarios. Following each analysis, problem areas were identified and each component was refined to create a balanced land use plan.

- **Finalize Components and Compile Comprehensive Plan**

Because each component of this plan is traditionally a stand-alone plan, simply binding



Figure 1.4 – Planners and city officials had the opportunity to dialog with members of the public about the challenges and opportunities facing specific subareas of Hilliard.

them together into one document would have resulted in a very large and difficult to use plan. Once the individual components were completed, compilation of the Comprehensive Plan document began. While some of the components, such as land use and parks and public spaces, were included in their entirety, others, namely the thoroughfare and utility master plans, were summarized, with just the key issues and recommendations being included. The final document is intended to be a concise,

understandable, and easily implemented document. More in-depth information, such as the full existing conditions analyses, the thoroughfare and utility plans, and detailed budget recommendations are contained in the appendices.

- **Adoption of the Plan**

The final step in the comprehensive planning process was review and approval of the plan by the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council. The Planning and Zoning

Commission officially approved the plan on Thursday, August 11th 2011, and it was adopted by City Council on Monday, October 24th 2011.

Plan Organization

The Hilliard Comprehensive Plan is comprised of 10 chapters, along with an executive summary and supporting appendices. The first three chapters provide an overview of the planning process, a summary of the public input and vision for the plan, and a brief discussion of the existing conditions throughout the city. The input and issues expressed by the public together with the existing conditions data serves as the foundation for all recommendations made in the plan.

Chapters four through nine focus on individual components of the plan, such as land use or transportation. Each of these chapters begins with an introduction and a brief discussion of the key

findings identified through public input and existing conditions analyses. The identified issues are followed by the recommendations section. In this section, a goal is presented for addressing the focus of each chapter. To help the City achieve each goal, objectives are provided that address existing concerns and meet future needs. Action items are provided for each objective, providing specific steps that can be taken to advance each objective. An example of this is provided in Figure 1.5 below.

Chapter 10 outlines an implementation strategy to aid in the fulfillment of the Comprehensive Plan’s recommendations. This chapter provides guidance on how the Plan should be used and when it should be updated and amended. It also summarizes and prioritizes the recommendations made for each Plan component. A phasing strategy is included to provide further detail for the implementation of the Plan by dividing the recommendations into short, medium, and long-term priorities.

Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations

Each chapter has one goal, for which there are multiple objectives. Each objective will have at least one recommendation that, if implemented, will help to achieve the objective and goal for that chapter. Below is an example relating to the Transportation plan presented in Chapter Six.

Goal

“Hilliard will develop a safe, efficient, and balanced transportation network that provides all users with mobility choices, connects land uses, enhances the environment, and improves the quality of life for those who live and work in Hilliard.”

Objective

“Implement the Thoroughfare Plan to address the infrastructure needs of today and tomorrow.”

Action

“Construct intersection and signal improvements to improve operational efficiency and address site specific safety concerns.”

Figure 1.5 – Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations