



Key Planning Trends

The American Planning Association (APA) provides trends for planners to watch for while working in community planning. The reporting is a partnership between the APA and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. A brief summary of trends for 2021 and 2022 are provided and are heavily influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The trends for 2021 included:

1. **Digital Transformation:** Rapid digital transformation was an outcome from Covid-19 and will continue to happen in the future. Examples include smart cities, e-commerce, working from home, and on-line public engagement.
2. **Fiscal Impacts & Economic Recovery:** Many communities have seen dips in their resources due to the way they collect income tax on employees in office buildings, especially with employees working from home. Communities are developing more creative ways to address budgetary gaps while delivering services residents desire. Communities are also examining more equitable recovery models to ensure all citizens get what they need as they come out of the pandemic.
3. **Online Public Engagement:** Public meetings were moved on-line to meet social distancing requirements during Covid-19. Reliable internet is necessary and important in order to hear the voices of all residents. Innovative ways to engage on-line have included Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Miro Whiteboard, and Facebook Live. In addition, many communities have utilized outdoor public engagement to meet social distancing requirements.
4. **Cannabis:** Cannabis is one of the fastest-growing industries (\$25 billion dollar industry) even though it is banned under federal law. As of January 2022, 18 states allow for adult-use and 36 states allow for medical use of cannabis. Communities need to look things like shop locations, cultivation, and processing to determine land uses without undermining public health, safety, and welfare.
5. **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:** Policies should support equity, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects.
6. **Resilience and Climate Change:** Communities should plan for and address climate change for future safety and sustainability.
7. **Public Health:** The pandemic brought public health to the forefront of planning. Improvements to equitable public health are necessary for safe and healthier communities.

The trends for 2022 are listed below and given three timeframes by APA:

Act Now...	Prepare For...	Learn and Watch For...
Climate Emergency	Artificial Intelligence & Ethics	3-D Printing
Climate Innovation	Automation of Transportation	Community Funding & Equity
Decarbonization & Diversification of Transportation	Data Collection, Use & Protection	Great Resignation
Digitalization of Everything	Private-Sector Community Investment	Green Signals
Economic Restructuring		Metaverse
Health Equity & Nature		Privatization of Outer Space
Housing Affordability, Availability, Accessibility		
Political Shifts & Polarization		

Population Diversity & Inclusive Design		
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Statewide Trends:

- Revitalization and demolition of brownfield and vacant building sites
- Development of mixed-use (commercial on first floor and residential on upper floors)
- Focus on recreational uses, giving residents and visitors active and passive green space
- Focus on in-fill housing and varying housing types/prices, rental options
 - Conversion of golf courses to housing and parks
- Focus on walkability and development of transportation improvements to support alternative forms of transportation
- Development of workforce for maintenance of existing businesses and attraction of new businesses, including partnerships with educational institutions
- Upgrades to utilities (e.g., broadband, electric vehicle charging, solar panels)
- Utilization of grant funds, stimulus funds to complete infrastructure projects
- Focus on a desire to age in place
- Building of new and/or conversion of buildings for shooting ranges
- Reduction of off-street parking requirements
- Communities required to allow for installation of Small Cell Facilities along public right-of-way for phone companies (ORC 4939)
- Strengthening of planning laws (e.g., uniform public notification requirements, mandatory comprehensive planning)
- Little demand for adult entertainment establishments with proliferation of websites
- Updates to zoning codes to encourage above
 - Up zoning to encourage multi-family housing, some communities are doing away with low density, single-family zoning districts
 - Allowing for accessory dwelling units (ADU), especially in high cost areas
 - Incorporating new uses in zoning codes (e.g., microbreweries, craft distilleries, meaderies, day care facilities (children and adults with Alzheimer's), halfway houses (addiction recoveries, recently released prisoners)
 - Revamping sign codes to accommodate Reed v. Gilbert (2015 Supreme Court Case)
 - Changes for upcoming Supreme Court case ruling on billboards
 - Using form based codes in high traffic commercial districts and mixed-use neighborhood business districts
 - Requiring larger sites for fast food establishments to allow for more drive-up window space and automobile stacking (e.g., Chick-fil-A)

Existing Planning Documents

The Franklin Township Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2004 with the Steering Committee developed planning theme of “Today, Tomorrow, Together.” This document represents a vision for overall development of the township and the village over a period of two decades. The purpose of the plan was to provide a framework within which informed spending and regulatory decisions could be made to determine the future character of the community. Such decisions included proper location and nature of future development, need for public facilities or infrastructure, and the determination of scenic, environmental, and historic resources that should be afforded a measure of protection as development occurs. The planning process engaged the community in thoughtful dialog about the path of community change and mapped out strategies and initiatives. Public engagement included a broad representation on the steering committee, a survey of all households, and a series of public visioning. Data collection and analysis was also undertaken to provide a baseline for planning purposes.

Survey Results (30% Response Rate):

- A wide margin of people would encourage children or others to live in Franklin Township.
- A substantial majority of people (more than 80%) see many housing choices and affordable housing prices in Franklin Township.
- People generally reacted negatively to the questions regarding local opportunities for shopping, dining, and entertainment.
- People respond favorably regarding local services such as police, fire, and emergency/medical.
- Annexation is a concern; and most believe that New Franklin should be dissolved if the merger fails.
- 8 out of 10 people think maintaining rural character is important to the Township.
- People are only marginally concerned about the current growth rate of 6.7% (housing increase); however, if this rate doubles, concern dramatically increases.
- The least favored development type is traditional subdivisions. The majority prefers conservation/open space subdivisions. About one in three prefer lot splits.
- More than two out of three residents feel that new retail development is important for the economic viability of the Township. A modest majority also wants to see office and industrial development for economic growth.
- Franklin Township gets generally good marks for keeping residents informed and for balancing services with tax burdens.
- The Township needs a web site with up to date information.
- Residents want more recreation facilities and opportunities including a system of bike and pedestrian trails. However, residents many not be willing to pay for these additional programs and facilities.
- 7 in 10 residents want to protect environmentally sensitive areas.

Public Visioning Workshops

What Residents Like in Franklin Township

- Peace and quiet
- Rural character, large lots
- Open space
- Farms
- Beauty of community
- Little traffic
- Low taxes, low utility costs
- Affordable housing
- Good schools

Issues of Concern That Residents Would like to Improve in Franklin Township

- Keep taxes low
- Keep autonomy of community
- Maintain rural character, large lots
- Promote balanced growth
- Protect sensitive natural resources
- More shopping, restaurants, and industrial development, but a limited amount
- More recreation opportunities and trails
- Build a community center
- More housing/services for seniors
- Improve appearance of Manchester Road and certain other areas

Issues of Where There is Little Agreement

- Provision of sewer service
- Provision of water service
- Annexation/merger

Existing Infrastructure/Public Services, Land Use, Natural Environment

This information was discussed in detail. Based on the state land use codes assigned to parcels in Summit County, 42% of the land use in Franklin Township is residential, 7% is commercial, 3% is industrial, 5% is public, 1% is utility, 30% is agriculture, and 7% is vacant. 20% of the township is environmentally constrained and in addition to this, about 60% contains environmentally sensitive areas. Of the remaining potential development areas, 62% is environmentally sensitive. The township has the following active and passive recreational opportunities: Portage Lakes State Park, Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail, Dunning Road Park, Lakeside Park, Maple Grove Park, Miracle Park Nature Trail, Nimisilia Road Park, Rawlins Park, and Franklin Park Civic Center. The natural environment includes urban forestry and woodland resources, watershed and surface water, aquatic features, water quality monitoring, floodplains, riparian corridors, topography and steep slopes, wetlands, hydric soils, glacial geology and groundwater resources, and rare, threatened, and endangered species. A summary of environmental issues was provided by Davey Resource Group and environmentally sensitive areas were mapped.

Goals, Policies, and Initiatives

Goals, policies, and initiatives were presented in four subject areas and the overall goals are listed below:

Residential Development

Goal: Maintain lower densities in developing areas and employ conservation design to conserve rural character and environmental features.

Commercial Development

Goal: Provide opportunities for shopping, dining, and entertainment for Franklin Township residents while maintaining rural character.

Industrial/Office Development

Goal: Create a tax base and provide employment opportunities in Franklin Township.

Agricultural Preservation

Goal: Maintain and enhance the rural character of Franklin Township.

Parks and Open Space

Goal: Maintain and enhance the open spaces and recreational opportunities in Franklin Township.

Environmental Conservation

Goal: Maintain and enhance the environmental integrity of Franklin Township.

Future Land Use

A future land use map was completed based on the goals, policies, and initiatives. The conservation district was expanded to include environmentally sensitive lands and large tracts of open space. All districts were recommended to be developed with conservation development and low impact development guidelines. The commercial/residential, commercial, and industrial zoning districts are subject to an overlay district addressing design issues. Riparian setbacks are also shown on the map.