

Gates Mills Comprehensive Plan

Advisory Committee Meeting #8

LOCATION: Community House Lower Level

May 16, 2023 5:30 PM



Preliminary Agenda

Distributed May 13, 2023

Time	
5:30 pm	Meeting Overview
5:40 pm	Suggested edits, questions, & issues from Advisory Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Edits to plan (see Attachment 1)<li>• Discussion
6:20 pm	Finalize priority ranking of objectives (see Attachment 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Highlights of Town Hall meeting (4/18/23)<li>• Comparison with Advisory Committee
6:50 pm	Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Present to Mayor and Council

Attachments:

1. Excerpts of plan paragraphs with edits
2. Priority ranking results

Attachment 1

Edits to Plan (highlighted in red underline and red strikethrough)

2032 Vision Statement

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Continue to be a highly desirable community that preserves and enhances the natural environment and other attributes that make the Village truly special, fosters a deep appreciation among residents, and attracts new ~~wage-earning~~ residents and retains existing residents who are committed to the Village's continued success as a community with an overall high quality of life.

Attributes that make Gates Mills special include:

- o Visual character that creates the Village's unique identity
- o Outstanding serene rural natural environment
- o Historic houses, architecture, and character
- o Small town ~~values~~ neighborly feel
- o Easy access to nearby amenities
- o Desirable neighborhoods and housing stock

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Objective A.1. **Preserve, protect, and enhance the natural environment and habitat of the Chagrin River Valley.**

Much of the Village's rural character is due to the hundreds of acres of "unspoiled" natural beauty of wooded areas and open spaces in and surrounding the Chagrin River valley. More than 25% of land in the Village is publicly preserved/conserved open space, including over 700 acres owned or conserved by the Gates Mills Land Conservancy (GMLC), over 400 acres owned by the Cleveland Metroparks, and nearly 200 acres owned by the Village of Gates Mills. In addition, the low housing density throughout most of the Village, which is a result of the lack of central sewers and the large lot zoning requirements in over 90% of the Village, also contributes to the Village's natural, rural character. Large expanses of preserved/conserved natural areas also provide important environmental benefits such as reducing damage from flooding and erosion thereby protecting the Chagrin River and its watershed.

At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that generally about 80% of the Village's general revenue comes from real estate taxes and income taxes (mostly paid by residents). As such, there is a limit to how much land can be publicly preserved open space. The following strategies provide ways to balance the long-term fiscal and ecological health of the Village and residents' quality of life via a combination of preserved land that is publicly-held and preserved privately-owned property.

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Strategy A.1.2. For the few situations that qualify, encourage the use of the Village's Conservation Development District (Chapter 1160) to preserve the Village's natural environment through permanent conservation easements on private land without using tax dollars to purchase the easements and without increasing the number of dwelling units currently permitted as determined by the existing requirements for a yield plan.

As noted above in Strategy A.1.1, land preservation/conservation in the Village has occurred primarily through the Gates Mills Land Conservancy's land acquisitions and purchase of conservation easements funded by property tax revenue. Another mechanism to encourage land preservation is the Village's Conservation Development District, which requires a minimum of 50% or more of the total development site to be designated as restricted open space and preserved via a perpetual conservation easement, while permitting the same number of house lots that are otherwise permitted by zoning as confirmed by a yield plan. A major community benefit to encouraging this method of preserving land is that it does not reduce the taxable value of the private property on which the conservation easement is applied. In contrast, land that is purchased via residents' tax dollars by the Gates Mills Land Conservancy as permanent open space becomes tax exempt; and no longer is assessed real estate taxes.

Pg 5. Strategy A.1.2 continued

Consistent with the Growth Management Plan's recommendation for establishing "open space subdivision design standards," the Village adopted Chapter 1160 Conservation Development District. The regulations provide a density-neutral development option for large properties (25 acres and larger) that provides more flexibility in the arrangement of houses in exchange for the permanent preservation of 50% or more of the project site through conservation easements. In order to develop according to the Conservation Development District, the property must be rezoned. Despite the Conservation Development District being adopted by the Village in 2007, new house lots have been created only via lot splits along existing streets, which provides no assurance that large areas of contiguous natural area will be preserved. ¶

There are only a few large parcels (25 acres and larger) in private ownership remaining in the Village. To make the regulations more viable for property owners and preserve private property rights, while still providing important community benefits, consider making Conservation Development an option in the U1-A1 District rather than a separate zoning district that requires rezoning. but that still retains all of the other zoning requirements for Conservation Development. The current regulations in Chapter 1160 ensure that **a Conservation Development is limited to the same number of house lots that are possible under the existing zoning regulations.** The property owner is required to prepare a "yield plan" to determine the number of

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Strategy A.4.1. Strengthen and increase awareness of the Village's Exterior Lighting standards ([Chapter 1165](#)), which are intended to preserve the nighttime rural village atmosphere and prevent offensive lighting while maintaining visibility for pedestrians. The Village's outdoor lighting ordinance helps to preserve the night sky, improve visibility on village streets, reduce energy waste and protect the quality of life within the Village. Consider enhancing the current regulations to address the preference for warmer toned lighting (as was characteristic of incandescent lighting) as opposed to cooler tones (such as LED lighting which often is bluer and brighter). This is especially important in order to maintain the historic ambience of the Village Center as well as the rest of the community.

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Strategy B.1.1. Consider revising the zoning regulations to permit additional alternative and clean energy options, such as ground mounted solar panels, with appropriate requirements/limitations to encourage use of alternative energy options while ensuring there are minimal negative impacts on adjacent property. The current regulations permit solar panels on the roof of a residential structure provided the panel does not extend above the ridge line, nor is visible from the street. Solar panels may also be attached to an accessory structure in the rear yard. Ground mounted panels are not permitted. Given the large lot size and wooded nature of the community, consider allowing more flexibility in the location of both roof-mounted and ground mounted panels, and evaluating their suitability and impacts based on a comparison of impacts of other structures that are permitted on the property (i.e. solar panels on a storage shed in the rear yard). These recommendations are in line with sustainability guidelines for historic buildings which recommend installing solar devices in compatible locations on the site or on non-historic buildings where there will be minimal impact on the historic building and its site. At the same time, the Village should monitor solar technology improvements that make solar devices less conspicuous, and update the regulations as needed. Wind turbines are currently not permitted anywhere in the Village.

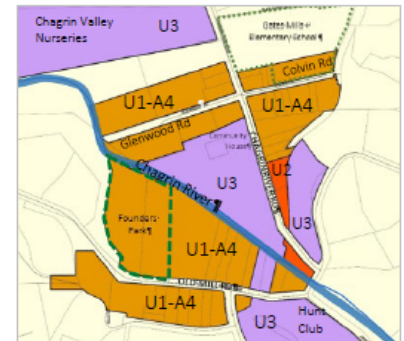
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Strategy C.2.1. Retain the existing residential zoning minimum lot size requirements (U1-A1, U1-A2, U1-A3 Districts) outside the Village Center, which applies to 95% of the land area within the Village. In 1997, the Village commissioned the Gates Mills Growth Management Plan. At that time, Gates Mills was “experiencing increasing residential growth pressures...” which had “begun to strain municipal services and infrastructure...” The Growth Management Plan also noted that “as residential development has scattered throughout the Village, open space, woodlands, scenic views and other characteristic elements of the rural setting have disappeared.” Based on the recommendations of the 1997 Growth Management Plan, the Village revised the U1-A1 Residential Zoning District in 2000 to require all new residential lots to be at least 5 acres.⁷ The Code amendment also permitted a house to be built on a lot of less than five acres that was created prior to December 31, 1998, as documented on the Cuyahoga County property records.

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Strategy C.2.2. Maintain the U1-A4 Zoning District minimum lot size requirements in the Village Center.

The Village’s highest density residential zoning district is in the Village Center (U1-A4), both north and south of the Chagrin River Road bridge. Most of the area is in the original Gates Mills Village Historic District, which was established in 1979 and encompasses historic buildings such as the Town Hall, Community House, and the Hunt Club (in the U3 District). This area is the ‘heart’ of the Village, where the community at large gathers for important, long-held community events, such as the Fourth of July parade.



The U1-A4 district has a minimum house lot size of 7,500 square feet and is where houses in the Village have the highest value on a per acre basis. The district encompasses 36 acres, of which, approximately 21 acres are residential (most ranging in size from 7,500 square feet to less than an acre, with one large 4-acre house lot). There are two ‘vacant’ parcels (0.58 acres) that function as either a side or rear yard to the house on the adjacent lot. The remaining 15 acres are primarily Village-owned open space, including the area along Old Mill Road known as Founders Park, which was donated to the Village to be preserved as open space. The Village also owns the house at the end of Glenwood Rd, which sits on a two-acre parcel along the Chagrin River.

There are 28 residential parcels (not including the Village-owned house), three of which have two units on the parcel. The median density is 2.4 units per acres (18,482 square feet per unit) because of the larger, wider lots, some of which are large enough to ~~could~~ be subdivided in compliance with the existing requirements into 7,500 square foot lots with at least 50 feet of frontage.

The current U1-A4 minimum lot size and frontage requirements should be retained based on the numerous houses on small narrow lots both north and south of the Chagrin River Road bridge. However, consider modifying other zoning requirements to ensure that any new construction retains the existing characteristics of the Village Center, while not permitting an increase in the number of lots currently permitted by the Code.



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Strategy D.1.2. Continue to explore opportunities for limited additional retail/service and recreational uses in the Village Center area.

All the commercially zoned land in the Village Center (north of the bridge) is owned by the Village. Village Council recently authorized a new coffee shop next to Sara's restaurant that will be open 6 days a week from 6:00 AM to 3:00 PM. In addition, the Village is exploring adding a second floor to the Burton Court building for Sara's bar and restaurant. Given the importance of maintaining a vibrant Village Center while retaining the quaint, small-town atmosphere without becoming a regional attraction, consider creating a Village Center plan that will provide recommendations based on a more in-depth analysis that considers the key points identified below.

- a. Consider limited expansion of businesses that support residents working from home and recreational uses, while making sure to preserve the existing establishments, i.e., the Library, the Post Office, Sara's, Cindy Halle's, etc. because they are already the backbone of the Village Center and should continue to be an important part of the Village Center development.
- b. Consider "testing" the viability of additional small-scale, limited retail and/or food options by allowing/encouraging temporary uses. Options include "pop-up" retail in existing underutilized space, and food trucks that come during scheduled events or specific times.
- c. Optimize Village-owned property in the Village Center for public use and consider ways to increase public use/enjoyment of the Village-owned open space along the river. Identify ways to better separate recreational uses from the Village service uses, including the area between the Service Department building and the Chagrin River.

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Objective D.2. Expand and modernize communication strategies and methods to increase awareness of local services and events, foster a welcoming environment and increase community interaction.

Gates Mills communicates with residents primarily via the Village website and the Pink Sheet, but lacks a greater variety communication methods than often provided by other communities. With rapid advancements in technology, there is a growing need to use a greater variety of communication methods to reach a more diverse group of residents and prospective residents.

Strategy D.2.1. Redesign the Village website and establish policies to ensure it is well-maintained, accurate, timely and up-to-date.

Ensure that the Village's website is the go-to resource for all information regarding life in Gates Mills. At a minimum, increase the amount of information available online, such as providing a complete collection of meeting minutes for the Planning & Zoning Commission, Architectural Review Board, and the Historic District Subcommittee.

Strategy D.2.2. Expand the Village's use of contemporary communication methods and social networking platforms to reach a larger number and wider range of residents.

Research and evaluate the range of communication tools and platforms available and identify methods that are most appropriate and effective for disseminating to and receiving information from residents. Once established, continue to monitor the usefulness of the new methods and update/revise as necessary.

New Strategy D.2.3. added, previous D2.3 renumbered as D2.4.

Strategy D.2.3. Promote the Village's positive attributes more widely to attract new home buyers.

Consider ways to design and implement a marketing program aimed toward prospective home buyers and to be more intentional about marketing/communicating with active real estate agents. The Comprehensive Plan's Outside Perspective's committee conducted interviews with 29 local realtors who were familiar with housing sales in the eastern Cuyahoga County market and had recently represented sellers and/or buyers of homes in Gates Mills and the surrounding communities. They noted that many prospective buyers (and realtors) are unaware of the high quality of Village services and amenities available to residents. A marketing campaign could promote the variety of neighborhoods, community services, local amenities, and annual events. In tandem, explore ways to welcome new residents and help them assimilate in the Village after moving.

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Strategy E.1.2. Review-Continue to utilize and periodically update the Village’s strategy for road construction and maintenance by carefully balancing the need to improve the roads relative to the financial strength of the Village.

Road maintenance and repair was a common issue cited on the Community Survey. Recently, the Village created a new “Roadway Assessment Program” which, after evaluating and grading the condition of every road in the Village, prioritized improvements to the roads based on their condition. The Village’s goal is to make systematic upgrades so that every road in the Village is in good condition.

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New Strategy
F.1.1. added

Strategy F.1.1. Consider a promotional campaign highlighting the Village’s excellent safety services and targeted toward potential new residents.

High quality safety and security services are foundational to a growing and vibrant community. The Village’s police, fire and service departments are exceptional and a hidden gem. This should be emphasized more in the Village’s marketing and communication efforts.

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Strategy F.4.2. Work with the Mayfield City School District to ensure the Gates Mills Elementary School (GMES) remains a valued community resource.

The nine-acre property is owned and operated by the Mayfield City School District. Serving approximately 100 students, Gates Mills Elementary continues to provide just one class of each grade, Kindergarten through fifth. Built in 1927, GMES is vital as the Village’s connection to the Mayfield Public School District and as an important community-engagement institution. It is also a diverse, high performing school that provides a vital and direct connection to the Mayfield School District. While the Village recognizes that it has no control over the School District’s use of its facilities, the elementary school is in a prime location in the Village Center, conveniently located near a number of other community buildings and gathering spaces, and the Village has a vested interest in ensuring the building remains a vibrant contributor to the Village Center.

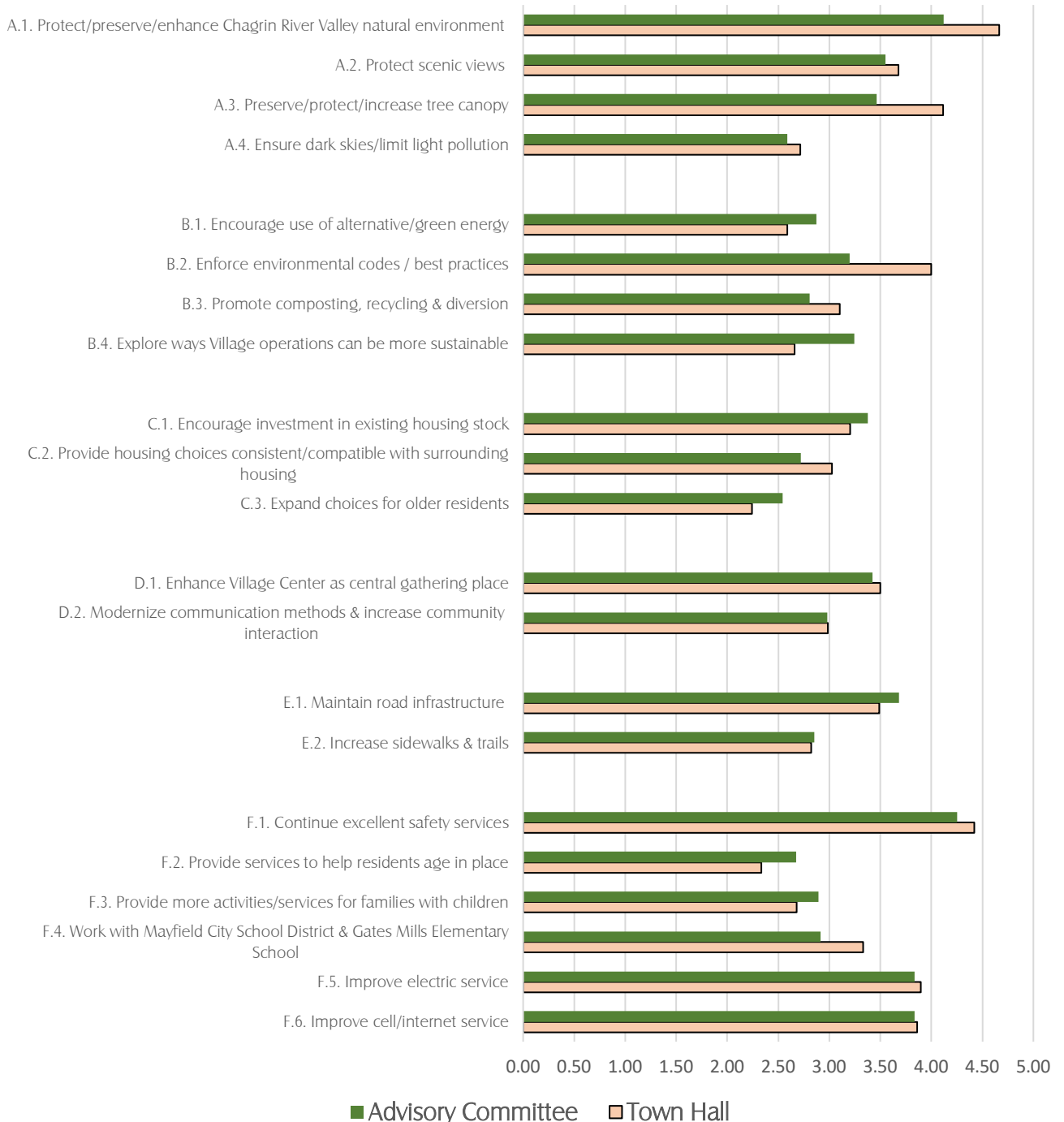
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Strategy F.5.1. In areas where overhead electric power lines are often damaged by existing trees, develop a plan in concert with the electric company to systematically eliminate power outages, including the possibility of burying the power lines.

The Village has explored the idea of burying the electric lines. It is an expensive undertaking, but worth exploring in vulnerable areas of the Village that are more prone to outages than others such as heavily wooded area. In addition, burying the power and cable lines in the historic district of Gates Mills would also be a major enhancement to the rural appeal of the Village. Based on feedback from residents, burying the power lines may only be needed in certain areas. Work with First Energy to identify the areas with the most frequent power outages and that affect the most number of residents. Once the priority areas are identified, identify ways and funding strategies to address the power outages, including evaluating burying the lines.

Attachment 2 Priority Ranking Results

21 Objectives Ranking: Advisory Committee & Town Hall Results*



*Advisory Committee’s responses converted to a 5-point scale for comparison

Advisory Committee and Town Hall Responses Ranked 1 to 21

Objectives		Total	Average	Advisory Comm Ranking	Town Hall Ranking
Advisory Comm Top 7	F.1. Continue excellent safety services	97	5.105	1	2
	A.1. Protect/preserve/enhance Chagrin River Valley natural environment	94	4.947	2	1
	F.5. Improve electric service	87.5	4.605	3	5
	F.6. Improve cell/internet service	87.5	4.605	3	6
	E.1. Maintain road infrastructure	84	4.421	5	8
	A.2. Protect scenic views	81	4.263	6	7
	A.3. Preserve/protect/increase tree canopy	79	4.158	7	3
Advisory Comm Middle 7	D.1. Enhance Village Center as central gathering place	78	4.105	8	9
	C.1. Encourage investment in existing housing stock	77	4.053	9	10
	B.4. Explore ways Village operations can be more sustainable	74	3.895	10	18
	B.2. Enforce environmental codes / best practices	73	3.842	11	4
	D.2. Modernize communication methods & increase community interaction	68	3.579	12	13
	F.4. Work with Mayfield City School District & Gates Mills Elementary School	66.5	3.500	13	11
	F.3. Provide more activities/services for families with children	66	3.474	14	16
Advisory Comm Bottom 7	B.1. Encourage use of alternative/green energy	65.5	3.447	15	19
	E.2. Increase sidewalks & trails	65	3.421	16	15
	B.3. Promote composting, recycling & diversion	64	3.368	17	14
	C.2. Provide housing choices consistent/compatible with surrounding housing	62	3.263	18	12
	F.2. Provide services to help residents age in place	61	3.211	19	20
	A.4. Ensure dark skies/limit light pollution	59	3.105	20	17
	C.3. Expand choices for older residents	58	3.053	21	21