



PLANNING THROUGH
2032
 GATES MILLS
 10 YEAR PLAN

**VILLAGE OF GATES MILLS
 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
 DRAFT PLAN
 Goals, Objectives & Strategies
 March 29, 2023**

This document includes the draft goals, objectives, and strategies for the Gates Mills Comprehensive Plan.

It represents the collaborative effort of the Gates Mills Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee over the last ten months. The work of the committee has been informed by the results of the Community Survey conducted in June/July 2022, Villager’s comments gathered at the August Town Hall and Neighborhood meetings, individual interviews with 43 Village residents, presentations provided by local subject matter experts, conversations with local realtors conducted by the Outside Perspectives Team, and research and analysis conducted by CT Consultants. Many have contributed to the work of the Advisory Committee; a complete list will be included in the final plan.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| Mitch Bass | Sean O'Brien |
| Shane Bigelow | Sean O'Hagan |
| Sharon Bodker | Linda Olejko |
| Scott Broome | Jennifer Pinto |
| Leigh Gale | Mary Jo Schmidt |
| Rob Galloway | Erin Shank |
| Dana Haas | Kelly Siemborski |
| Elizabeth Horvitz | Nathaniel Smith |
| Will Krause | John Spirk |
| Deej Lincoln | Lindsay Steinbrink |
| Karen Long Cascio | Cindy Zins |
| Rick Marabito | Ann Zoller |
| Keely Davidson-Bennett,
representing the Chagrin River
Watershed Partners | |

CONTRIBUTORS

Committee Co-Chairs

- Outside Perspectives Team:
 Chuck Spear
 Lindsay Steinbrink

- Neighborhood Outreach Team:
 Larry Frankel
 Russ Berzin

- PR and Communications Team:
 Sara Carracher
 Jamie Carracher

Subject Matter Experts

- Steve Siemborski, Gates Mills Village Treasurer
 Anthony Podojil, Executive Director of the Alliance for High Quality Education
 Bruce Rinker, Land Use Attorney, and former mayor of Mayfield Village

Village Council Co-Chairs

- Chip Auwerter
 Sandra Turner

CT Consultants

- Kristin Hopkins, FAICP
 Sarah Sitterle, AICP

Gates Mills Comprehensive Plan

DRAFT 3/29/23

This comprehensive plan is intended to guide future actions of the Village for the benefit of all residents by:

- Helping to maintain/achieve continuity in the Village by providing a framework from which to address land use, land preservation, infrastructure, and public investment issues,
- Balancing competing interests,
- Protecting public investments, and
- Providing justification for making zoning decisions that affect private property rights.

Definitions:

The plan's elements are organized around an overall vision statement, with a set of goals to support the vision statement. Ways to achieve each of the goals are described through a set of objectives and related strategies, as defined below.

Vision Statement. A community's vision is a statement embraced by residents and other stakeholders that describes how the community should look and feel in years to come.

Aspirational Goals. Aspirational goals, sometimes called stretch goals, are ambitious outcomes that seek to support and achieve the community vision over a long period of time. They provide an over-arching framework for thinking holistically about the Village. While broadly written, the goals stated specifically enough so that it is possible to assess whether progress has been made in achieving them.

Objectives. Objectives are more narrowly written than goals. They relate to and identify ways to achieve a specific goal.

Strategies. A strategy is the method or approach (i.e., specific activity, action, or program) designed to accomplish one or more objectives which helps achieve the goal.



DRAFT 2032 Vision Statement

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:

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

Draft 2032 Goals

- A. **RURAL VILLAGE CHARACTER.** Preserve/retain the history-steeped rural character of Gates Mills, including its extensive wooded hillsides, the beautiful Chagrin River, vast expanses of natural green space and the Village's numerous homesteads and well-tended historic estates.
- B. **HARMONY WITH NATURE.** Aspire to be a leading sustainable municipality in the Chagrin River Valley committed to reducing environmental damage, addressing climate change, and encouraging low-impact/green infrastructure strategies to improve Gates Mills' resilience.
- C. **DESIRABLE HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS.** Promote and preserve the variety and value of existing housing and neighborhoods, while carefully managing the limited allowance for new housing that preserves the Village's character and quality in order to attract new wage-earning residents and provide options for existing residents.
- D. **COMMUNITY PRIDE & ENGAGEMENT.** Promote/foster a sense of community pride and increase engagement among residents, with a focus on Village Center.
- E. **ACCESS & CONNECTIONS.** Promote a safe and convenient transportation system that facilitates local travel, promotes walking and biking, and fosters physical well-being.
- F. **QUALITY AMENITIES & SERVICES.** Continue to maintain and enhance community amenities/services that support a high quality of life with the right balance of community services for taxes paid, while respecting residents' desire to protect and enhance the natural environment.

Draft 2032 Goals and Objectives

The following draft goals and related objectives support the above overall vision.

Goal A. RURAL VILLAGE CHARACTER

Preserve/retain the history-steeped rural character of Gates Mills, including its extensive wooded hillsides, the beautiful Chagrin River, vast expanses of natural green space and the Village's numerous homesteads* and well-tended historic estates. Objectives/strategies include:

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.

Strategy A.1.1. Continue to support land conservation efforts through partnership with the Gates Mills Land Conservancy (GMLC) and strategic collaboration with the Metroparks while also recognizing the need to maintain a stable tax base.

As noted in the Chagrin River Watershed Balanced Growth Plan (2009), the best way to protect priority conservation areas is by publicly acquiring designated areas for permanent open space. Since 1991, Gates Mills residents have continually supported the acquisition and protection of land as permanent open space via their approval and continual renewal of a 1-mill, 5-year conservancy tax levy. Much of the 700 acres owned or conserved by the Gates Mills Land Conservancy (GMLC) has been made possible through levy proceeds via a revenue sharing agreement with the Village.

- a. Continue the Village's revenue-sharing partnership with GMLC regarding the Conservation Levy proceeds, consistent with the levy language.¹

¹ The initial operating (revenue sharing) agreement between the Village and the Land Conservancy allocated 95% of the collected funds to GMLC and 5% to the Village. With GMLC's increased emphasis on land stewardship while continuing its efforts on land acquisition and conservation easements, the Village and GMLC agreed to revise the operating agreement to a 50%/50% split. GMLC's use of the Levy Funds is restricted; the funds can be used only for purchase of land, expenses associated with acquisition of deed restrictions or conservation easements, and stewardship expenses associated with such land and conservation easements. Source: <https://www.gatesmillslandconservancy.org/funding>

* "Homestead" needs to be defined to ensure compliance with the existing Village ordinances and zoning regulations, and to distinguish it from the state of Ohio's real estate tax provision called the homestead exemption.

- b. Utilize some or all of the Village's share of the Conservation Levy proceeds to fund enhancement activities such as replenishment and expansion of the tree canopy, removal of invasive plants and necessary erosion control plantings on Village- and GMLC-owned properties in accordance with the Land Conservation and Open Space Fund requirements and limitations.²
- c. Promote the benefits of conservation easements on home sites to encourage residents to explore possible conservation options in coordination with the Village and GMLC. For example, donating a qualified easement is a charitable deduction which can result in income tax and property tax reductions.
- d. Explore creative options to incentivize conservation easements and/or lower the density of development on available properties based on the Village's determined optimal balance of tax-exempt preserved land vs. privately held conserved land.
- e. Investigate additional funding opportunities to support land conservation efforts.

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.

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. 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 by the Gates Mills Land Conservancy as permanent open space becomes tax exempt.

There are other benefits to conservation development as well. Conservation development is promoted in the Chagrin River Watershed Balanced Growth Plan as a way of (1) providing links between existing open spaces, (2) preserving the character of the Village, (3) buffering/obscuring views of development, (4) providing habitat corridors along streams, (5) reducing and filtering storm water runoff from development, and (6) ensuring the long-term survival of wetlands, rural views, and historic features. The Plan further notes that "while the development of areas at a low density through large lot zoning may allow for preservation of rural character and natural resources, it often does not." In contrast, conservation development regulations "protect the valuable resources while still allowing property owners to realize the development potential of a property" permitted by the Village's zoning code.³

² By ordinance, the Village's share of the levy funds are segregated into a special Village "Land Conservation and Open Space Fund" for the "public purpose of conserving, retaining, protecting and preserving land, water, forest, open, natural or wetland areas in [Gates Mills] predominantly in their natural, scenic, open or wooded condition or as suitable habitat for fish, plants or wildlife, including the acquisition of such real property or interests therein as may be necessary to carry out that purpose. (G.M.C.O. Section VIII-5 Levy for Land Conservation and Open Space Fund)

³ Chagrin River Watershed Balanced Growth Plan, Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Inc., 2009. Pg 80.

Consistent with the Growth Management Plan’s recommendation for establishing “open space subdivision design standards,” the Village adopted Chapter 1160 Conservation Development District, a 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. 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 house lots that could be created in compliance with the 5-acre minimum lot area and minimum 200 feet of lot frontage. Once the number of lots is determined, the property owner can then rearrange the lots according to the spacing requirements for Conservation Developments, which will result in a smaller area of the 25+ acre site being disturbed because of the requirement that at least 50% of the contiguous area of the site be placed in a conservation easement. In essence, use of the Conservation Development District is a win-win for the Village and the property owner.

Example of Conservation Development, Hunting Valley.

In 2007, this 35-acre parcel, south of Fairmount Boulevard was divided into six lots, utilizing 5 acres, with the remaining 30 acres preserved as open space.

Source: Cuyahoga County Web Mapping Application.

<https://myplace.cuyahogacounty.us/>



Objective A.2. Protect important scenic views and natural landscaping along roadway corridors.

Nearly all (99%) Gates Mills residents who responded to the 2022 Community Survey noted they highly value the Village's historic ambiance and rural/natural environment, including views of the Chagrin River, extensive wooded hillsides, and meadows. In addition, roadway corridors throughout Gates Mills are known for cultural resources such as historic fence lines and stone walls, as well as natural resources such as open fields, high quality forests, and hemlock ravines. Points along some roadways also offer expansive panoramic vistas over the scenic Chagrin River Valley. These scenic views from the road are significant community resources that reflect the Village's character and are highly valued by residents.

Protection of these scenic resources is a significant component of maintaining the rural character and quality of life of the Village, both for natural resource conservation and scenic resource protection. Recognizing, preserving, and enhancing or improving the view from the road is a critical element in sustaining Gates Mill's unique character-defining features and sense of place.



Scenic view along Berkshire Road. CT Consultants.

Strategy A.2.1. Identify important gateways, scenic corridors and/or scenic views that should be protected.

Identifying and mapping the entryways and visual qualities of Gates Mills' most valued by residents (which could be as simple as photographing existing places and then ranking them based on agreed upon criteria) helps to then determine suitable ways to protect them. See sidebar below for example of criteria used by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources for designating a scenic river.

Examples of characteristics that could be included are shown below:

- a. Roadways:
 - The natural landscape on the edge of the roadway consists of dense forest edge.
 - The road has a narrow, winding quality linking it with the Village's rural past.
- b. Open fields and meadows.
 - The open field or meadow provides a visual link to the agricultural history of the Village.
 - The open field provides an important visual focus for stands of trees, stone walls, or fences.
- c. Cultural places.
 - Settings and locations, including buildings, walls, fences, markers, other structures, and the surrounding areas that provide a visual link to the culture and history of the Village.

Strategy A.2.2. Explore the potential of adopting regulations and/or design guidelines that would protect the identified scenic roadway corridors. To ensure that the rural scenic character as seen from the roadway is not negatively impacted by new housing construction, cell towers, other man-made structures or other alteration of the natural environment, regulations and/or design guidelines such as noted below could be considered for specific roadways that are determined to be scenic corridors.

- a. Explore the possibility of creating a scenic corridor overlay district, applied in the same manner as the Village's Historic District, where the overlay district would be in addition to the standard use and lot regulations. The overlay district could impose additional requirements (such as limiting the type of fence that can be constructed along the roadway and/or requiring that any proposed subdivision or housing construction coordinate early with the Planning and Zoning Commission to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate negative scenic impacts) or could be a set of voluntary guidelines. For example, Liberty Township, Delaware County, OH adopted a set of guidelines for the Olentangy Heritage Corridor (OHC) as recommended by the Township's Comprehensive Plan.
 (<https://www.libertytp.org/DocumentCenter/View/172/Olentangy-Heritage-Corridor-State-Scenic-Byway-PDF>)

SCENIC CHAGRIN RIVER

The Chagrin River, from US Route 6 to the confluence with the Aurora Branch, was designated as a State Scenic River in 1979. Scenic river designation is representative of a waterway that retains much of its natural character for most of its length. Shorelines are, for the most part, undeveloped, but the river may exhibit signs of disturbance by human activities. The adjacent corridor must be forested to a minimum depth of 300 feet for 25 percent of the stream's length.

SCENIC VIEWSHED

A viewshed is defined as the view of an area from a specific vantage point; a computer model of this; and the area that comprises this view. The National Scenic Byways Program, a voluntary, community-based program, provides resources (including potential funding) to assist local communities in identifying and protecting scenic areas.

- b. Along identified scenic roadways, encourage new homes to be located on the parcel in such a way that minimizes their visibility from the public right-of-way, wherever possible, while seeking to limit the expansion of additional hardscaping and the number of trees being cut down, as part of the site plan review process for new housing construction. This is consistent with the 1997 Growth Management Plan recommendation that, except for removing trees for a driveway, vegetation located within 200 feet of the public right-of-way should remain natural to eliminate view of a structure from the road. Plus, the Village’s 1991 National Historic District Nomination Form highlights how efforts to maximize the retention of trees on wooded lots helped reduce the visibility of new houses. This provision would not apply in the Village Center area and other historic areas where the existing character is created by the historic houses visible from the street.

Excerpt from Gates Mills 1991 National Historic District Nomination Form.

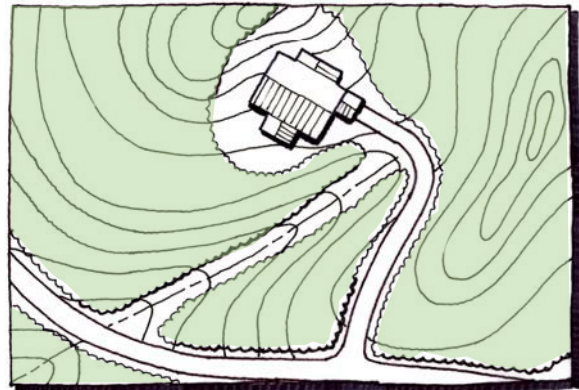
“[The] newer housing developments off Mayfield Road are not generally visible from the road. Care has been taken to locate these large newer residences on spacious, generally wooded lots which are of a fairly large size. The houses may be seen from their small streets but are usually shielded from traffic and each other by large stands of trees. While these developments have changed the character of their surroundings and therefore have been kept outside the district boundaries, they are not an intrusive presence because of their relative lack of visibility.”

Example from Canandaigua, NY

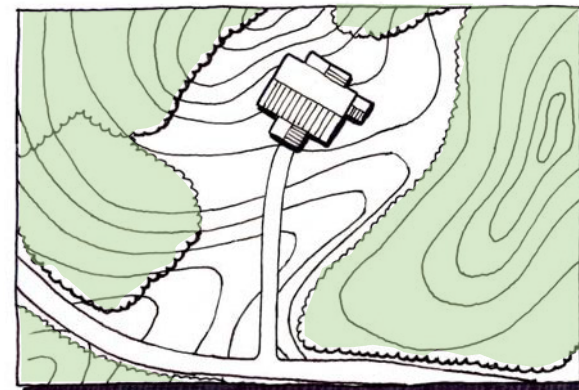
Building and Lot Design

Buildings should be laid out to reduce the visual impact of the structures. This should include designing buildings to conform to the contours of the site and arranging driveways and patio areas to be compatible with the slopes and building design. The illustrations below show examples of possible guidelines on driveway arrangements.

This...



Not This...



Source: Ridgeline Development Guidelines, Town of Canandaigua, NY.
www.townofcanandaigua.org

Strategy A.2.3. Update the Village’s Conservation Development District regulations (Chapter 1160) to include designated scenic corridors as one of the important resources to be protected as part of the restricted open space requirement.

The Conservation Development District regulations already stipulate that the “Restricted Open Space”⁴ conserve a development site’s significant natural features such as steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, and woodlands. This strategy recommends adding consideration of scenic views from the road of attractive natural features such as ridge lines, steep slopes, woodlands, streams, and lakes, as well as views of historic features and landmarks (which may or may not be along scenic corridors).

Objective A.3. Preserve, protect, and increase the tree canopy in the Village.

Gates Mills has the second highest percentage of tree canopy (defined as the amount of ground covered by leaves when viewed from above) in Cuyahoga County. The extensively wooded areas throughout the Village significantly contribute to the rural natural character. However, between 2011 and 2017, the Village experienced a 5% loss in tree canopy due to tree blight and land clearing for new housing construction. In addition, preserving trees on hillsides helps to prevent landslides.

Strategy A.3.1. Strictly enforce tree protection regulations.

- a. Continue to require a permit for tree cutting within the Village in compliance with Chapter 1173. The Village adopted Chapter 1173 Tree Cutting regulations in 1993 to order to “preserve the woodland nature and vegetational aesthetics for which the Village is known”, in addition to numerous environmental benefits. This chapter requires a developer or property owner to obtain a permit before tree cutting can occur as part of new construction or any other earth-disturbing activity.
- b. Continue to enforce the Protected Hillside Zone regulations which were adopted in 1992. The intent of the regulations is, in part, to preserve and enhance the natural beauty of hillsides in the Village by encouraging the maximum retention of natural features including trees and other natural plant formations. These regulations help to retain the sense of identity and rural image for which the Village is known.

Strategy A.3.2. On Village property, maintain existing trees and systematically plant new trees that will thrive in a warming climate.

According to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry, maintaining existing tree health is, over time, more cost effective than planting new trees. Consider incorporating the recommendations from the Cuyahoga County Greenprint for maintaining and planting new trees as part of the Village’s policies for village property in order to maintain and ensure regeneration, as well as enhance the quality of the tree canopy cover.

- a. Adopt a Village tree plan that includes tree planting, maintenance, and tree removal standards, guidelines, and policies. This includes developing strategies to maintain the existing forests on Village-owned land such as occasionally removing dominant trees and vines so that smaller trees can thrive.

⁴ In a Conservation Development, a minimum of 50% of the development site must be designated and preserved as open space in perpetuity (1160.06(b)).

- b. Adopt a tree replacement policy to ensure that whenever a tree is removed by the Village, it will be replaced.
- c. Consider establishing a Village Tree Commission to assist in creating and implementing a Village Tree Plan. If a Tree Commission is established, the Village may wish to become a Tree City USA (Arbor Day Foundation), which would provide recognition and possibly some assistance to the Commission through the Foundation's local Service Forester representative.

More information is available at:

<https://www.arborday.org/programs/treeCityUSA/index.cfm#becomeSection>

Annual Tree City recognition is achieved by meeting four overarching standards:

1. Maintaining a tree board or department
2. Having a community tree ordinance
3. Spending at least \$2 per capita on urban forestry
4. Celebrating Arbor Day

Strategy A.3.3. Consider providing educational resources for residents to help them choose the right tree for the right place.

Potential resources range from providing website links to information about tree species that thrive in NEO trees to more specific information about the Village's Forest and the benefits and care of trees that could be spearheaded by a Village Tree Commission, noted in Strategy A.3.2. In addition, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry has a Service Forester for Cuyahoga County. On their Landowner Assistance page, there are links for the list of Service Foresters and private arborists, etc. if the Village wanted to seek professional assistance.

See also their website: <https://ohiodnr.gov/discover-and-learn/safety-conservation/about-odnr/forestry/landowner-assistance>

Objective A.4. Ensure Dark, Star-filled Skies for Future Generations.

Dark Sky lighting is lighting provided only where it is needed, while reducing unnecessary scattered light and glare. Dark Sky efforts focus on only using as much light as is needed and when it is needed.

Strategy A.4.1. Adopt an Outdoor Lighting Ordinance to establish a standard for night sky friendly practices, while maintaining visibility for pedestrians.

Adopting an 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.

Strategy A.4.2. Investigate becoming a designated Dark Sky Place.

Investigate the possibility of the Village becoming a designated Dark Sky Place through the International Dark Sky (IDA) Association Dark Sky Places Program or similar program. Night sky designation programs allow residents and local leaders to get involved in night sky preservation through responsible lighting policies and public education.

- a. Educate residents on the importance of dark skies to ecosystems.

Goal B. HARMONY WITH NATURE

Aspire to be a leading sustainable municipality in the Chagrin River Valley committed to reducing environmental damage, addressing climate change, and encouraging low-impact/green infrastructure strategies to improve Gates Mills' resilience. Objectives/strategies include:

Objective B.1. Encourage/facilitate the use of alternative and clean energy systems.

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).

Wind turbines are currently not permitted anywhere in the Village.

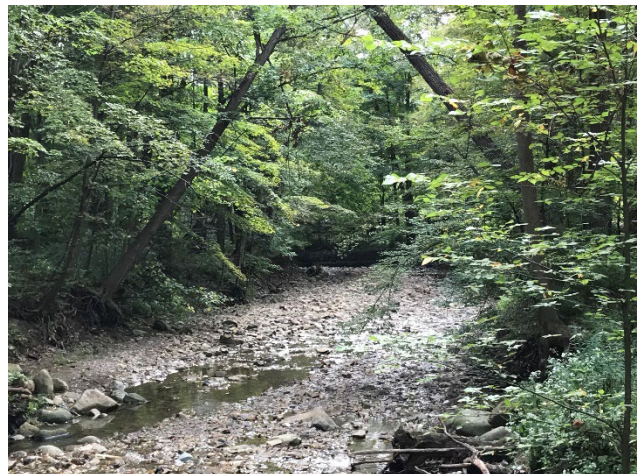
Strategy B.1.2. Adopt zoning regulations for Electric Vehicle Charging Stations (EVCS).

By proactively addressing EVCS in the zoning code, especially for nonresidential uses such as Gilmour Academy, the Village facilitates their installation because property owners know the rules when planning improvements.

Objective B.2. Ensure all properties are well-maintained through environmentally responsible best practices in compliance with Village ordinances to protect both public and private investments.

Strategy B.2.1. Review the existing resource protection regulations for effectiveness (including stormwater management, erosion and sediment control, hillside protection, and riparian setback regulations), revise/update if necessary, and diligently enforce.

While the Village has a number of regulations for resource protection, some were adopted 25 or more years ago and may not be as effective as they could be in protecting the natural environment.



- a. Review and strengthen the floodplain regulations and riparian regulations. The current floodplain regulations allow construction within the floodplain provided the first-floor elevation of the building is at or above the flood protection elevation. However, most riparian setback regulations do not permit construction within the designated riparian setback and, in locations where the 100-year floodplain is wider than the minimum riparian setback, the riparian setback restrictions are extended to the outer edge of the 100-year floodplain. This is not the case in Chapter 1176 Riparian Setbacks, which does not extend the no build restriction throughout the adjacent 100-year floodplain.
- b. Review and update the Hillside Protection regulations (adopted in 1992) to ensure they are as effective as possible at minimizing hillside erosion.

Strategy B.2.2. Lead by example.

Leadership is a process in which an individual/entity influences the behavior and attitudes of other people, often by modeling the desired behavior in a way that inspires others to follow. In this regard, the Village government can be an example for residents by staying current with best management practices and highlighting its compliance with resource protection regulations whenever projects are undertaken.

Invest in a Stormwater Management Master Plan (SMMP) for the Village. As part of the plan preparation, review changes in topography, etc. to understand the past impacts of extreme weather events and newer developments on topography throughout the Village. Consider using Conservation Levy proceeds to help fund such a project. As part of the SMMP, identify actions and infrastructure investments necessary to improve stormwater management to protect existing houses, particularly those at lower elevations near the Chagrin River.

Objective B.3. Promote composting, recycling, and diversion opportunities to reduce the amount of material going to landfills.

Strategy B.3.1. Explore ways to promote yard waste and food waste composting.

Composting is nature's way of recycling. It is an easy and economical way to both reduce trash going to landfills and build healthy soil. Composted material, when reapplied as part of a soil or fertilizer replenishment program, results in fewer emissions of Green House Gases and small amounts of carbon storage.

- a. Consider ways to provide educational materials and programming to increase participation.
- b. Explore creating an in-house composting program.

Strategy B.3.2. Review and improve the Village's waste reduction and recycling programs.

Currently, Rumpke Waste & Recycling is the waste hauler for households in the Village. The company provides weekly curbside recycling for residents.

- a. Benchmark against neighboring communities. The Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District prepares a Solid Waste Management Plan every five years, as mandated by the State of Ohio. The last update, ratified in May 2019, includes a wealth of information at the local community level that the Village could use to gauge how community efforts compare to other Cuyahoga County municipalities. For example, according to the Plan, in 2016, curbside recycling efforts

by Gates Mills residents resulted in an average of 296 pounds per household per year and ranked 41 out of 59 communities. In comparison, Moreland Hills, ranked number 2, reported an average of 712 pounds per household per year.

- b. Explore ways that Village government can increase opportunities to reduce, reuse and recycle. For example, make subscription to the Pink Sheet optional and encourage digital distribution to promote sustainability and environmental responsibility.

Objective B.4. Explore additional ways the Village can be more sustainable.

Becoming a sustainable community requires planning, implementing, and promoting sustainable practices that will benefit residents, the community, and the environment. Sustainable practices can address a wide range of factors, such as natural systems, energy, water, waste, transportation and many others, that contribute to residents' quality of life, create healthier places for people, and enhance resilience. The Village has already adopted a number of natural resource protection regulations to increase resiliency. Given Gates Mills unique characteristics compared to most other communities in Cuyahoga County, it is essential to define what sustainability means for Gates Mills and what additional actions can and should be pursued.

Strategy B.4.1. Investigate tools and strategies other NEO communities have adopted to encourage property owners to incorporate sustainable practices.

One local example is the Village of Orange, which adopted the Village's own locally created Green Certification Program patterned after the LEED⁵ certification program. The Village drafted guidelines and standards for new construction and established a certificate of recognition that is awarded to applicants who meet a certain level of the certification requirements.

Strategy B.4.2. Investigate ways to update Village practices to be more environmentally-responsible and ecosystem-sustaining in ways that are within its control.

Examples include:

- a. Consider creating a plant-based erosion control plan for Village properties, especially those on hillsides.
- b. Update the Village Service Department landscaping and land management practices to be more eco-friendly, such as restricting the use of pesticides to invasive-species removal only, reducing the amount of tended lawn area on Village-owned property and turf mowing along roads.
- c. Consider other ways in which the Village can set the example of following eco-friendly practices, such as identifying ways to transition away from fossil fuel dependent vehicles and tools over a 5-year period, and strengthening, complying with and enforcing compliance with the Village's environmental protection regulations.
- d. Investigate the US Green Building Council's LEED for Cities criteria for additional ideas on ways for the Village to improve the environmental sustainability of its actions as an entity.⁶

⁵ LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, created by the U.S. Green Building Council.

⁶ <https://build.usgbc.org/lfcexistingbeta41> from here <https://www.usgbc.org/leed/rating-systems/leed-for-cities-communities>

Goal C. DESIRABLE HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

Promote and preserve the variety and value of existing housing and neighborhoods, while carefully managing the limited allowance for new housing that preserves the Village's character and quality in order to attract new wage-earning residents and provide options for existing residents. Objectives/strategies include:

Objective C.1. Encourage investment in the existing housing stock (housing updates and remodeling projects).

Strategy C.1.1. Review, update and modernize the architectural review process for housing renovations, additions, and new housing construction to be more user-friendly.

Building permit applications for new house construction and additions are reviewed by the Architectural Board of Review (ARB) and, for properties in the historic district, by the Historic District Subcommittee (HDS). The process can take multiple meetings before an application is approved, depending on the size and complexity of the project, and even longer for houses in the expansive historic district because of additional review by the Historic District Subcommittee.

Considerations for modernizing the process include:

- a. Consider ways to decrease the time between review meetings.
- b. Make the process more user-friendly and easier to navigate by enabling staff to guide applicants through the process and to review applications to ensure all needed items are submitted by the applicant before being forwarded to the Board. Consider providing the opportunity for applicants to meet with either staff or a Board member to help applicants understand how plans can be revised per the guidance of the Board before the next meeting.
- c. Create a set of design guidelines to supplement the one-page list of 10 design standards established in Section 1313.091 so that applicants and their architect can prepare acceptable applications that meet the Village's expectations. The guidelines should address both historic district properties and nonhistoric district properties, and should be posted on the Village's website so they are easily available to applicants. Consider utilizing the documentation of historic assets included in the Village's National Register Nomination and hiring a consultant or the professional architects on the ARB and/or HDS to develop the guidelines.

Strategy C.1.2. Reevaluate the Historic District regulations and boundary to ensure it encompasses historic properties that contribute to the character of the Village without burdening undeveloped and noncontributing properties.

The current boundary of the local Village's Historic District was established in the early 1990s after the area was designated as a National Register Historic District. The goal of the National nomination was to nominate the largest and most cohesive contiguous area of historic Gates Mills to the National Register in a single district. At the time, the district included 200 contributing properties (built prior to 1940) and encompassed a "large amount of open space [which] was carefully selected because of its role in providing a sympathetic environment for proper interpretation of the buildings which occupy the large estates which exist in parts of the district."

- a. Reevaluate the current boundary of the Village’s Historic District. Since the historic designation took effect, some structures have been demolished and replaced by new construction and new houses have been built on vacant parcels. In addition, there are some places, such as along Berkshire Road, where older houses on one side of the street are not in the district, while those across the street are. Due to such changes and inconsistencies, it is prudent to reevaluate the district boundaries and revise if warranted.
- b. Consider creating design standards and guidelines to address new infill construction on a vacant lot in the historic district, as well as additions and renovations on existing houses in the Historic District. The Village’s current Design Review Standards in Section 1313.091 are actually the list of ten rehabilitation principles initially prepared by the National Park Service. The Village should have more extensive written guidelines along with illustrations. This is especially important for houses that are visible from road and from neighboring historic properties. More guidance is needed to ensure a new house is compatible with adjacent houses (such as when a Hunt Club house on Chagrin River Road was demolished).
- c. Consider utilizing “Scenic Corridor” regulations and guidelines discussed in Strategy A.2 to retain the essential “rural character” within the boundary of the Village’s Historic District in areas that were included in the National Historic District nomination retain and “convey a sense of the former agricultural character. The 1990 nomination notes the importance of estate homes situated on exceptionally large parcels, and how the large amount of open space is an essential element contributing to the cohesive contiguous area. The Village’s historic district regulations do not prevent a large estate from being carved into a modern subdivision with five acre lots, so the Scenic Corridor regulations and guidelines would help preserve the historic landscape.

HISTORIC DISTRICT

DESIGN STANDARDS & GUIDELINES

Historic District design standards and guidelines are locally relevant criteria that assist property owners, architects, and others in making decisions about the appropriate treatment of historic resources when planning repair, rehabilitation, restoration, landscape, or new construction projects. The Village’s Historic District Subcommittee would also be guided by these design standards/guidelines when evaluating the potential effects of projects to historic resources within the Historic District.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR THE TREATMENT OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Historic District design standards and guidelines incorporate the principles set forth in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, prepared by the National Park Service (NPS). The NPS developed these standards to assist the long-term preservation of historic properties through the preservation of historic materials and features.

ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



Grass pavers create a ramp without concrete and without altering the historic entrance to the building.

When carrying out work on an existing building or constructing a new building, accommodations must be made for people with disabilities in accordance with established regulations. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a Civil Rights Act intended to offer people with disabilities the same opportunities and enjoyment as the general public in employment, access to public buildings, and transportation. In turn, these businesses will benefit from the additional patronage. This Act applies to existing and new structures, including spaces that are leased for public use. Title V (ADA) specifically addresses building additions, alterations, and historic preservation. (Reference Preservation Brief 32.)

Excerpt From *City of Kent Design Guidelines for the Kent Design Overlay District and Listed Properties*. © Chambers, Murphy & Burge Restoration Architects, Ltd. 2009

Strategy C.1.3. Explore the potential of adopting a Community Reinvestment Area designation in those parts of the Village where investment is needed, as a complement to the Heritage Home Program.

The Village currently participates in the Cleveland Restoration Society's Heritage Home Program, which provides technical assistance and low-interest loans to owners of older homes to maintain and improve their properties. As a participating community, Gates Mills homeowners that have eligible properties can utilize the Heritage Home Program's free Technical Assistance and apply for a fixed interest rate loan for a qualifying home renovation.

To the extent that additional incentives are determined necessary in specific locations of the Village, explore the possibility of designating such locations as a Community Reinvestment Area (CRA). A CRA is an area of a community that is identified through a detailed housing study where investment in the existing housing stock and/or new housing construction is not occurring. Once documented, the area is designated by the local government as a CRA so that homeowners can receive property tax incentives for constructing new or renovating existing houses. Ohio's CRA program enables Gates Mills to identify and designate specific areas of the Village where investment has been lagging to encourage revitalization of the existing housing stock and new housing construction. Owners receive a tax abatement on the increased property value recorded by the county from major improvements to an existing house and from new house construction. See the Heritage Home Program and Community Reinvestment Area factsheets in the Appendix for additional information.

Objective C.2. Provide housing choices that are consistent and compatible with the density of the surrounding housing.

The Gates Mills Comprehensive Plan takes a character/density-based approach to identifying future housing options based on defensible regulations that achieve a balance between private and public benefits and burdens.

Strategy C.2.1. Retain the existing residential zoning 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.

The goal of the lot size change was to limit the increase of new dwelling units to not more than 25% over the existing amount, or approximately 250 additional units based on the existing 992 dwelling units reported in the 1990 census. According to the 2019 American Community Survey, the number of housing units in Gates Mills has increased by 45 to 1,037 units. At the same time, there have been several new houses built in place of older houses that have been demolished.

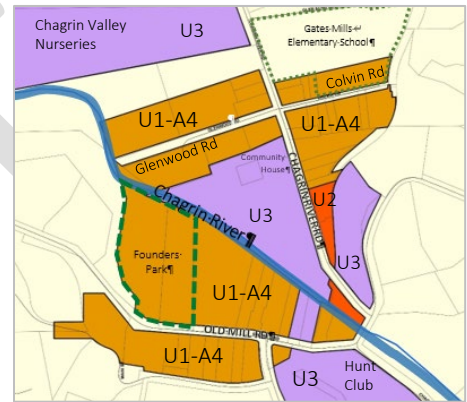
⁷ Ordinance 3053, passed March 14, 2000.

Based on an analysis of the remaining vacant parcels, an additional 90 houses could be built in compliance with the current zoning regulations, or 14% increase from the 1990 census.

There are two other residential zoning districts outside the Village Center: the U1-A2 and U1-A3. The U1-A2 District is located along Gates Mills Boulevard and requires a minimum lot size of 1.95 acres. The U1-A3 District is located along SOM Center Road and requires a minimum lot size of 15,000 square feet. In both districts, the area is entirely subdivided into house lots, all but two comply with the minimum lot area requirement and nearly all are developed.

Strategy C.2.2. Maintain the U1-A4 Zoning District 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, which 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.

- a. Consider reducing the front and side yard requirements to retain the existing characteristic of houses close to the street and to each other. The Zoning Code requires houses to be set back at least 50



Old Mill Road

feet from the street right-of-way (behind the sidewalk along Old Mill Road), but houses along Old Mills, Colvin and Glenwood are generally much closer (15 feet to 30 feet).⁸

In addition, the code requires houses to have two side yards, each at least 15 feet wide.⁹ That means that after accounting for 30 feet of side yards on a 50-foot-wide lot, the house can only be 20 feet wide, and houses next to each other must be separated by at least 30 feet. Yet, many houses in the U1-A4 district are much closer together, some as close as seven or eight feet, and others are located only a few feet from the lot line.



Colvin Road

- b. For the U1-A4 parcels that are north of the bridge and the concentration of commercial and government buildings, consider modifying the zoning to allow a limited number of housing units to be attached while maintaining the density that would otherwise be allowed. For such modification (which could be permitted via a conditional use permit), Village should ensure that the units are appropriately designed and sited to be compatible with the existing development.
- c. Continue to require all new housing units built in this district to be designed in compliance with the Historic District design guidelines, as it is essential that all new housing units are built **to enhance the Village Center's historic character**. *[See also D.1. for Village Center discussion.]*

Strategy C.2.3. Clarify the regulations for small, nonconforming lots to clearly allow owners to rebuild in the event an existing house is destroyed or torn down, and regulations related to additions and accessory buildings on these lots.

The Zoning Map notes that in the U1-A1 District the minimum lot size required for lots established prior to 12/31/1998 is 2.5 acres (while lots created after are required to be 5 acres). There are some areas in the U1-A1 District where most of the pre-1999 lots are less than 2.5 acres, such as Riverview Road and Robinwood Lane. These lots may have a number of nonconforming lot conditions. The Planning and Zoning Code Section 1157.06 addresses nonconforming uses but not nonconforming lots and nonconforming buildings. This means it is unclear if a new house can be built on a pre-1999 nonconforming vacant lot (e.g., less than 2.5 acres).

Establish nonconforming lot and nonconforming building regulations that provide guidance for new home construction and home additions in all districts. There are several reasons beyond lot size that can cause a parcel to be nonconforming, including noncompliance with the minimum lot width (which was increased to 200 feet in the U1-A1 District) and minimum front, side, and rear yard setbacks.

⁸ See Sections 1163.09(d) and 1163.18(d)

⁹ See Sections 1163.05(d) and 1163.14(c)

Strategy C.2.4. In the event the need arises, consider allowing adaptive reuse of nonresidential structures that contribute to the character of the Village.

A number of Cuyahoga County communities have adopted regulations that permit an historic (or otherwise significant) nonresidential structure (i.e. church or school) adjacent to or surrounded by houses to be converted to a residence while retaining the exterior of the structure and the character of the area.

Objective C.3. Expand housing options for older and retired(ing) residents.

AARP research shows that more than 80% of people want to be able to age in their home, rather than in a long-term care facility.

Strategy C.3.1. Clarify the renter allowance in the Zoning Code.

The Gates Mills Zoning Code currently allows homeowners to rent out up to two rooms in their house but not to more than four persons. This provision could be interpreted as permitting an “in-law suite, which is a common solution to allowing an older family member to live in the house while maintaining some sense of independence. However, it is unclear how this allowance is regulated to ensure that the single-family neighborhood character is maintained. The regulations could specify whether it is possible to have an exterior entrance directly to the rental space and/or whether there is a maximum amount of floor area that can be rented.

Strategy C.3.2. Encourage all new housing and remodeling projects to include universal design features that, while not age-specific, often make it easier for a person to age in place.

Universal design is “a design process that enables and empowers a diverse population by improving human performance, health and wellness, and social participation” (Steinfeld and Maisel, 2012). Not to be confused with minimum accessibility requirements imposed on public buildings by the Americans with Disabilities Act, universal design is design that is useable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

Universal design features such as lever doorknobs instead of standard round ones and wider doorways can help a person stay independent and eliminate the need to remodel in the event of injury or illness. These features also improve the marketability of homes by increasing the pool of potential buyers. Examples include eliminating elements that get in the way, such as showers with no doors, and increasing automation, such as adaptive lighting that comes on when someone enters the room. (See the “Residential Universal Design Building Code” for a compilation of design elements that help make a home universally accessible:

<https://universaldesign.org/code>.)

Goal D. COMMUNITY PRIDE & ENGAGEMENT

Promote/foster a sense of community pride and increase engagement among all residents, with a focus on the Village Center. Objectives/strategies include:

Objective D.1. Maintain and enhance the Village Center as a place for active community interaction.

Gates Mills residents place a high value on the sense of community created by the concentration of government, business and recreation facilities anchored by the Community House, Post Office, Library and Town Hall. This area also enjoys a concentration of historic structures in and surrounding the central area. This is also the place where most community events are held, making the Village Center a key contributor to the Village's high quality of life.

This plan envisions an enhanced Village Center with a small collection of shops that cater to Village residents and encourage people to come "downtown" and linger, as well as limited expansion in housing and more river-oriented spaces. As such, the plan recommends carefully building on ongoing investments by developing a long-term strategy coupled with short-term tactical improvements that show ongoing progress.

Strategy D.1.1. Continue to recognize, promote and enhance the area around Town Hall as the central gathering "place" for residents.

Consistently refer to the area north of the bridge and south of Glenwood Road as Village Center. While many residents already refer to this area as the Village Center, some residents (especially those who live on large lots to the north and east) refer to this area as "the village" which can be confusing for new residents.

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.

Strategy D.1.3. Identify ways to create more themed events to support retail activities.

Utilize the Community House to hold periodic "market day" events similar to seasonal markets held at Shaker Square and similar places throughout Cuyahoga County. The 'market' could be aimed at popup small specialty food and crafter establishments. It could attract people on a regular basis if the offerings were unique and local, with special themed markets for the holidays, e.g., a European Christmas Market, summer picnicking supplies tied to Village Center concerts, and a Fall Harvest market.

Strategy D.1.4. Enhance access to the Chagrin River in the Village Center area.

Enhance access to the Chagrin River on public property and increase residents' awareness of access points via a walking trail along the river for the length of the Village Center area (as defined from Glenwood to Old Mill). Connect to the Arboretum Trail, and provide amenities, such as a benches, to entice visitors to linger. Ensure that any improvements are done in a sustainable way, such as using permeable pavers.

Strategy D.1.5. Ensure there are adequate parking spaces to accommodate any increase in activities in the Village Center.

Consider a two-pronged approach to parking to (1) ensure there is enough parking on a regular basis and (2) identify additional locations and parking strategies to accommodate larger crowds that come for special events.

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.

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.

Strategy D.2.3. Increase direct communication between Village government and residents.

- a. Continue to livestream, record, and post Village Council meetings to YouTube.
- b. Hold semi-annual "Mayor & Council Listening Nights."
- c. Continue to sponsor "Candidates Night" for Village elections (Mayor, Council, and Treasurer).

Goal E. ACCESS & CONNECTIONS

Promote a safe and convenient transportation and trails system that facilitates local travel, promotes walking and biking, and fosters physical well-being.

Objectives/strategies include:

Objective E.1. Maintain quality road infrastructure.

Strategy E.1.1. Continue to monitor and enforce speed limits within the Village, such as but not limited to along major roads such as Chagrin River and Sherman Road.

Concerns were raised about safety concerns due to speeding traffic along Chagrin River Road and other roads in the Village.

- a. Conduct a traffic analysis of streets with known issues to verify and quantify the issues.
- b. Identify ways to reduce the amount of Geauga County commuter traffic that cuts through the Village on secondary roads. A prime example is how morning and evening rush hour traffic cuts through on Old Mill Road to avoid traffic lights on Mayfield Road. Speed and volume are both issues. Find ways to restrict cut-through traffic similar to how Shaker Heights has addressed cut-through traffic at Fairhill Road and S Park Boulevard near Shaker Square.
- c. Work with state representatives to reduce the speed limit on Chagrin River Road north of the Village Center from 40 mph to 35 mph.
- d. Utilize proceeds from Mayfield Road traffic camera enforcement to fund additional speed limit enforcement efforts.

Strategy E.1.2. Review and update the Village's strategy for road construction and maintenance.

Road maintenance and repair was a common issue cited on the Community Survey.

Objective E.2. Increase pedestrian, biking, and other trail facilities throughout the Village.

Based on the results of the community survey, a significant percentage of residents support increasing walking, biking and trails throughout the Village. However, there are several factors that need to be considered, such as topography and roadway conditions, when determining the best locations for new connections. In addition, wherever sidewalks or other types of paths are installed, it is important to make sure they do not encroach on the fences.

Strategy E.2.1. Add sidewalks where needed within the Village Center as part of an overall Village Center Master Plan.

The historic Village Center is where numerous community amenities are located and the primary gathering place for Village events. Sidewalks already exist in some parts of the Village Center: narrow brick walkways are found along both sides of Old Mill Road, a segment of concrete sidewalk exists along Epping Road extending from Old Mill Road, and a new sidewalk was recently installed from the interurban bridge to the Gates Mills Post Office. The Village is completing plans to extend

the sidewalk on the east side of Chagrin River Road from the Library to Gates Mills Elementary School. Improving walkability in this area where there already are large concentrations of pedestrians for special events makes sense.

- a. Expand the network by installing short missing linkages between destinations within the Village Center such as:
 - Completing the sidewalk along Epping to connect from Old Mill Road to the Dan Collister polo field.
 - Completing the sidewalk along Chagrin River Road from the Old Livery Tavern south to Old Mill Road.
 - Establishing a designated path (crosswalk) on Chagrin River Road with painted pavement markings for Gates Mills Elementary School students and children attending the summer Nature Camp at the school so they can cross the road to get to the Community House and Arboretum.
 - Extending the walkway on the north side of Old Mill Road to Founders Park.
- b. Any sidewalk installed in the Village Center on the west side of Chagrin River should keep the same ‘look’ of the older sidewalks, such as the same width and material (brick). Whenever new sidewalks are installed, it is important to make sure they do not encroach on the existing fences.
- c. Encourage homeowners to properly maintain and repair the brick sidewalks to retain their historic appearance.



EagleView imagery of Village Center, 11/14/20 Cuyahoga County GIS.



Historic brick sidewalks along Old Mill Road, 11/14/20 Cuyahoga County GIS.

Strategy E.2.2. Establish a dedicated bike lane along Gates Mills Boulevard.

An overwhelming 72% of residents who responded to the community survey supported creating a marked bike lane along Gates Mills Boulevard. The boulevard is marked as being only one travel lane north of SOM Center Road. Given the wide pavement width, it may be possible to simply restripe the surface, paint bike symbols and install signage. The suggested bike lane would connect to a proposed recreational multi-purpose trail along Gates Mills Boulevard in Mayfield Heights, which is to be constructed within the grassy median.



Gates Mills Boulevard in Gates Mills Village is 20 feet wide on each side with signage noting it is only one lane in each direction. Google Earth 9/22.

Strategy E.2.3. Explore opportunities to create family-friendly connections within the Village.

Based on the 2022 Community Survey, residents were most dissatisfied with the existing roadway conditions as they related to pedestrian and bicycle safety. Yet, while there is support for more safe places to walk and bike throughout the Village, there are several challenges that need further study to determine “how” and identify “where” sidewalks/paths may be more important, necessary and/or easier to install than in other areas of the Village.

- a. Consider establishing a committee to analyze and identify actual “neighborhoods” within the Village. Once the neighborhoods are defined, facilitate neighborhood meetings for residents to get together and decide for themselves where they think sidewalks/paths are needed and why. This would also give residents the chance to discuss if/why they feel unsafe using the roads in their neighborhood for walking and cycling and to determine if there are other ways to make walking and cycling safer, such as widening the shoulder and/or improving berms so they are smoother and firmer for cyclists.
- b. Prioritize locations where potential bike lanes and/or walking paths are important for safety reasons, such as along County Line Road to provide a connection between the cul-de-sac streets.
- c. Explore the possibility of installing a crossing signal at the Mayfield Road/Chagrin River Road intersection. With the installation of traffic cameras at this intersection, investigate if it is possible to also add a crosswalk with a push light.
- d. Identify where pedestrian and biking bridges exist over the Chagrin River, creeks, and roads. If there are inadequate existing crossings, identify/evaluate suitable locations for additional bridges.
- e. Identify and pursue outside grant funding for increasing pedestrian and bicycling connectivity.

Strategy E.2.4. Explore the idea of creating a trail system on land owned by the Gates Mills Land Conservancy and the Village of Gates Mills.

The Gates Mills Land Conservancy has acquired approximately 285 acres of vacant land in the Village and another 98 acres of Village-owned land are restricted through conservation easements. Currently, the Land Conservancy holds periodic events such as the naturalist walks and talks at the Sherman Road Preserve and have granted access to various school districts for educational programs. However, due to funding and manpower limitations and safety issues, unrestricted access to GMLC properties is not possible.

According to the 2022 Community Survey, two out of three residents support re-establishing the bridle paths, especially noting that possible bridle trails within Gates Mills are also suitable as walking trails, particularly on land that is owned by the Village and GMLC. In many cases, the highest use of these trails would be by Village residents who desire a safe place to take their children and dogs on easily accessible walks in nature.”

- a. Explore the opportunity to, where possible, re-create the bridle trail system within the Village on property owned by the Gates Mills Land Conservancy and the Village of Gates Mills. Consider establishing a committee to identify existing trails that are already being used and maintained (mowed), and other historic trail locations to determine where bridle trails previously existed and/or are appropriate. There is an existing and maintained trail located on the Wick Preserve

along Chagrin River Road on GMLC property. It used to extend to the Hunt Club barn and could be re-extended. There is a former trail from County Line Road down to the Wick property that could be re-developed. There is also a partially developed trail that runs along the Chagrin River from the Village Arboretum to Mayfield Road that could potentially be established with cooperation from the nursery. There may be other potential old trails that could be reactivated, but more research is needed. There may also be segments where existing trails traverse private property, in which case arrangements for public access would need to be negotiated with the owner.

- b. In the event additional funding is obtained, consider creating trails on Village-owned parcels along the Chagrin River for use by residents, designed in a way that protects adjacent private property.

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Goal F. QUALITY AMENITIES & SERVICES

Continue to maintain and enhance community amenities/services that support a high quality of life with the right balance of community services for taxes paid, while respecting residents' desire to protect and enhance the natural environment. Objectives/strategies include:

The community amenities and services provided by Gates Mills Village and other public entities greatly impact residents' quality of life and safety. They include public water, emergency services, schools, library, parkland, and related services. This goal encompasses recommendations for continuing to provide community amenities and services as effectively as possible. Gates Mills has an established tradition of volunteering and provides strong support for its community organizations. Many of the strategies for achieving this goal involve efforts of existing Village departments and community organizations, and in some cases identifies the potential for new community organizations.

Objective F.1. Continue to provide excellent safety services that foster a sense of security throughout the Village.

More than 95% of Gates Mills residents who responded to the 2022 Community Survey rated the overall quality of services provided by the Village police and fire departments as good to excellent. These services include police protection and public safety, fire protection and search & rescue, police and fire alarm monitoring, and vacation house security check. "Gates Mills best services today are the Police and Fire," so say residents. One resident noted that the Village's "services are top notch" and "contribute to the excellent quality of life;" another wrote that "the police are cordial, and residents 'feel very safe;' and another said: "the police and fire departments are excellent- they provide such personal service and respond so quickly." The high level of the safety services Gates Mills residents receive is well known and was noted by some as "one of the reasons we moved here." These sentiments underscore the importance of the Village continuing to provide high quality services as one way of attracting and retaining residents.

Objective F.2. Ensure that adequate community amenities and services that increase residents' ability to age-in-place are available and widely known, including ways to stay engaged with neighbors and the wider community.

Gates Mills has a higher proportion of residents 65 or older than most other communities in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, and the country. A growing trend in community development is making a commitment to be more livable, especially for older residents, e.g., more age-friendly.

Strategy F.2.1. Identify and communicate to residents the community amenities and services that are currently available to residents.

The Village currently has several programs for older residents, such as police and fire department home safety assessments, outreach during weather related and other emergencies, daily wellness checks, house key storage at the police department for emergency access to home, etc. In addition, there are various community organizations that provide outreach to older residents who are house-bound.

- a. Create a committee or task force to identify what residents want, what is currently available to Village residents, either by the Village or other local entities, and what is missing. Consider if any of the missing services/programs could be easily implemented with the Village's current resources to assist residents, such as a "vial of life" program with instructions for residents on how to make their medical information readily available for first responders in the event of an emergency.
- b. Increase awareness and connect residents with existing programs by posting the services already provided on the Village's website and periodically featuring programs through direct communication with residents. Include programs and services provided by other entities, such as services at the Mayfield Village Senior Center that are available to Gates Mills residents.
- c. Consider creating a resource guide that can distributed to residents.

Strategy F.2.2. Investigate additional strategies and local programs that the Village could provide or become a participating community.

There are additional services in Cuyahoga County that are provided by others and which may be available to and beneficial for Gates Mills residents. According to AARP, people of all ages benefit from the adoption of policies and programs that make neighborhoods more walkable, feature transportation options, enable access to key services, provide opportunities to participate in community activities, and support housing that is affordable and adaptable.

- a. Investigate the "Community Partnership on Aging" program, which currently serves adults aged 60 and over living in South Euclid, Lyndhurst, Highland Heights, Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, and Richmond Heights, Ohio. The program promotes independence, a healthy lifestyle, community involvement, and opportunities for personal growth for older adults. The program plans, coordinates, and provides services that enhance the dignity, security, and overall well-being of older adults. The program is supported by funds from each participating community; the Village could join for approximately \$20,000 per year.
- b. Investigate and consider joining AARP's Network of Age-Friendly Communities. Consider applying for an AARP Community Challenge Grant to implement a "quick-action" project supported by this Plan. Community Challenge grants can be used to support a range of projects, including permanent physical improvements in the community, temporary demonstration projects that lead to long-term change, and new, innovative programming or service. Learn more about what it means to be an age-friendly community at [AARP.org/CommunityChallenge](https://www.aarp.org/CommunityChallenge).
- c. Investigate the potential of establishing additional community-based programs to support older adults remaining in their own homes and neighborhoods. Gates Mills has a tremendous history of community-based programs and establishing a program to assist older adults to remain in Gates Mills is a natural evolution in community programming.



Grants to make communities livable for people of all ages
[aarp.org/CommunityChallenge](https://www.aarp.org/CommunityChallenge)

Engage residents to determine interest and support for establishing such a program and solicit ideas regarding the type of support desired and how the program could be designed and implemented.

One model to consider is the Village concept, a neighborhood-based program created in Boston that takes advantage of residents' strengths to meet the practical needs of the elder community who continue to reside in their own homes. They developed a system whereby members of the Village could ask for and provide help with transportation, light household repairs, technology use, or other tasks. Older adult members were also volunteers; a younger member might provide transportation to older members needing assistance getting to medical appointments, whereas an older member might help in other ways such as babysitting. While each Village is designed to meet the needs of its community members, most include three core components: 1) volunteer services; 2) social programming; and 3) referrals to reliable professional providers for services the volunteers can't provide. Villages are sustained through membership dues, donations, and grants.

Objective F.3. Provide more community activities and services to meet the needs of residents with children.

Families are important to the growth and sustainability of every community. While it is true that Gates Mills has typically been an older community (with a higher percentage of residents over 55), in the last 10 years there has been an increase in the percentage of families with children (from 18% in 2010 to 23% in 2021).

Strategy F.3.1. Widely promote the activities and services to existing residents, potential home buyers, realtors, etc.

For example, the various recreational facilities and programs are available to Gate Mills residents for nominal fees such as the indoor pool and fitness center at Mayfield High School, the outdoor pool in Mayfield Village and the indoor pool at Gilmour Academy. There is also the advantages of having access to city water even though we live in a community with rural character, a rare combination.

- a. Identify the activities and services that currently exist and the committee/Village department (or staff) that is responsible for each. For example, the Improvement Society and Positively Gates Mills Committee are responsible for a number of activities. In addition, parents have been instrumental in the success of events and sports such as soccer and t-ball, as well as the annual 4th of July parade. Consider if any of the roles and responsibilities of the committees (such as the Recreation Committee, which monitors the calendar) and organizations need to be redefined.
- b. Identify ways to improve communication and awareness of the activities and services.

Strategy F.3.2. Consider intergenerational opportunities that could meet the needs of both older residents and younger families.

It has been noted that the factors that make a community conducive to aging in place are also characteristics that make a community family friendly – such as transportation, parks and other places for recreation, walkability, and safety.

Identify ways to engage younger residents to be involved in intergeneration services and activities. Suggestions include:

- a. Babysitting services (could be offered at the Community House).
- b. Neighborhood based volunteer opportunity for older children to check on older residents (potential to provide volunteer credit for college applications).

Objective F.4. Continue to work with the Mayfield City School District and communities within the District.

The largest portion of residents' property taxes goes to the Mayfield City School District. While this is true for all municipalities in Ohio because it is the primary way public education is funded, Gates Mills residents also have many other educational options from which to choose. Families send their children to private schools for a variety of reasons; indeed, some families choose move to Gates Mills because of the proximity to one of these schools with the intent of enrolling their child(ren).

Strategy F.4.1. Explore ways to increase Village's interaction with the Mayfield School District.

The School District is embarking on a planning process, making it an opportune time to explore opportunities with the District.

- a. Continue to invite the Mayfield School Superintendent to a Council meeting to present a "State of the Schools" report and answer questions from residents.
- b. Increase awareness of the role of the Mayfield School System Liaison Committee (Liaison Committee). The Village created the Liaison Committee to increase Village government officials' and residents' awareness of the Mayfield School Board and school activities.
- c. Explore ways to support and promote the school district's offerings, successes, and initiatives, and identify ways Village residents can be involved with the Mayfield City School District.

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.

- a. Explore the possibility of offering publicly funded preschool services or expanded day-care/after-school care facility at either Gates Mills Elementary School or at the "Environmental Center" on County Line Road.
- b. Explore opportunities with the Mayfield School District to expand community use of the Gates Mills Elementary School. For example, the Nature Camp uses the school throughout the summer.

Objective F.5. Explore ways to improve electric service to residents.

The poor reliability of electric service in certain parts of Gates Mills is a major issue today, and it will become more so as energy systems take a radical turn away from fossil fuels over the next decade. According to responses to the 2022 Community Survey, the more heavily wooded areas of the Village have frequent power failures, which are often caused by trees knocked down during storms. Some survey

respondents noted the frequent loss of electricity as something they value least about the Village. One person even suggested that to remain a “premier” community, the electrical grid needs major improvement.

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 bury 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.

Strategy F.5.2. Identify areas that are most vulnerable to power failures and explore additional options for improving electric service.

Homeowners who experience frequent loss of electricity often end up purchasing a back-up power generator. One suggestion mentioned was for the Village to assist affected homeowners with the purchase of a generator.

Objective F.6. Improve cellular and internet service to ensure all areas of the Village are suitable for remote work-from-home.

Improved, reliable cellular and internet service is necessary to retain and attract residents who work from home. As the USA continues to wrestle with remote work arrangements, and as the tech industry promotes more ways to incorporate wireless devices in everyday life, reliable 24/7 service becomes essential. The 2022 Community Survey asked residents about their cellular and internet service needs. Overall, 66% of respondents said they were satisfied with their broadband access/service and the same percentage was satisfied with their cellular access/service. However, when looking more closely at responses from the 10 different ‘neighborhood’ areas, the majority (53%) of respondents from the southwest corner of the Village (‘neighborhood’ 7) were **dissatisfied** with their broadband service and 65% were **dissatisfied** with their cellular service. A resident noted that they “cannot even make a phone call from our house without being on Wi-Fi.” A lack of competitive high-speed internet service provider options was noted as one reason for the dissatisfaction.

Strategy F.6.1. Continue to explore opportunities to improve service.

The Village has been seeking ways to improve cellular and internet service. A new tower is being proposed at Gilmour Academy to address the lack of cell service/reception in ‘neighborhood’ 7. The new tower will help to cover parts of the Village, but not all. The Village is also exploring the potential of increasing the height of the current cell tower on Carpenter Road from 150 feet to 250 feet.

High speed internet access includes multiple types of technologies such as fiber optics, wireless, cable, DSL, and satellite. The Village has investigated fiber optics as a way of increasing internet options.

- a. Continue to explore opportunities to increase the number of internet service providers in the Village.
- b. Consider enacting a "dig-once" policy as an incremental approach to establishing a fiber optic network within the road right-of-way. With a dig-once policy, any time a trench is opened, conduit for carrying fiber optic cable is installed. Sometimes the fiber is installed then, too, but not typically.

Strategy F.6.2. Identify potential funding sources and potential partners.

Cuyahoga County has been working on a plan to provide access to high-speed internet service to various communities, funded through the American Rescue Plan Act. Portions of Mayfield Heights are slated to receive the upgrades, but not Gates Mills. Nevertheless, various areas of Gates Mills are noted on the Ohio Residential Broadband Expansion Grant Program map as not having access to high-speed internet. Continue to explore potential improvements and funding sources.

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