



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2025

Deercreek Township

Pickaway County, Ohio



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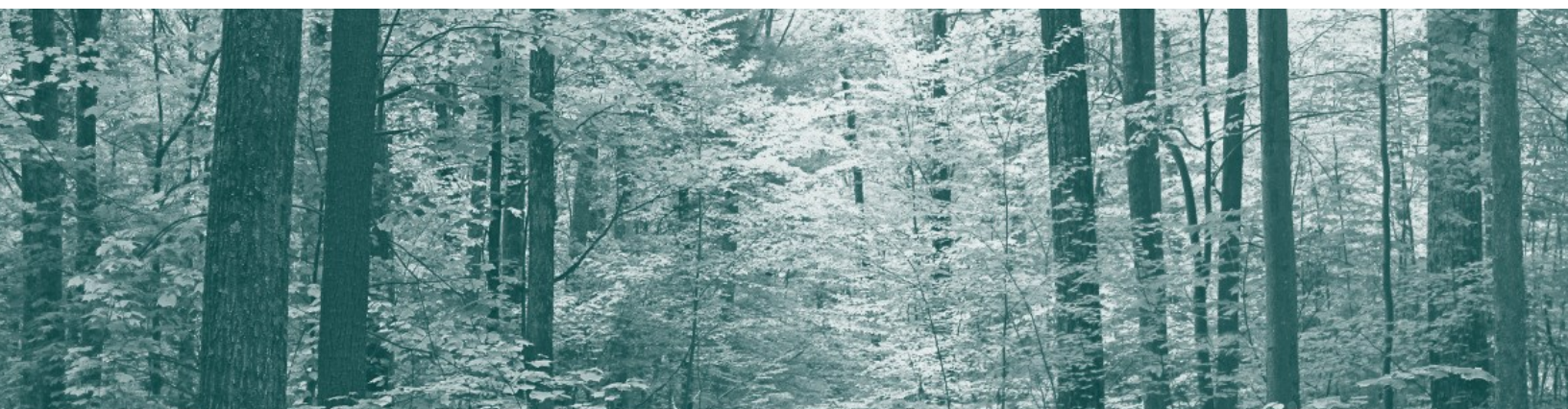
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PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The comprehensive plan was created as a collaborative effort between the Township, its residents, and key community stakeholders, as well as planning consultant, Crossroads Community Planning.

The Stakeholder Committee played a vital role in the development of the plan and served to inform the planning process. The following six people made up the Stakeholder Committee:

- Jake Bickenhauser – Firefighter (outside of the Township) & Township Resident
- Darren Metzger – Farmland Owner & Township Resident
- Randy Metzger – Township Trustee & Township Resident
- George Schein – Attorney/Legal Perspective & Township Resident
- Mark Essman – Township Resident
- Leslie Angles – Real Estate Perspective & Township Resident



A BRIEF HISTORY OF DEERCREEK TOWNSHIP

Deercreek Township, named after Deer Creek that runs through Township boundaries, is home to approximately 643 residents. Within its borders lies the Village of Williamsport, which has a population of around 970, according to the 2020 Census.

The first settlers arrived in the area around 1799, and by 1816, the community had officially organized as Deercreek Township, holding its first election that same year (Ohio Genealogy). The settlers of the Township are mainly from Pennsylvania, Maryland, Kentucky, and Virginia. While agriculture has long been the foundation of the local economy, the 19th century also saw the establishment of gristmills, sawmills, and the Sulfur Springs, known for its medicinal properties. Williamsport was platted in 1818 and incorporated in 1842.

The Township's previous Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2004. However, with ongoing development pressures in Central Ohio, the plan is now outdated, highlighting the need for an updated vision to guide the community's future growth.



VISION STATEMENT

A vision statement is utilized to guide a Comprehensive Plan when creating goals and recommendations. The following vision statement was created for Deercreek Township based upon early meetings with the Steering Committee, public engagement, and information gathered from stakeholders in the Township.

“Deercreek Township envisions a future that fosters thoughtful growth while it preserves its rural charm, community values, and agricultural heritage. We strive to create a vibrant and sustainable Township that future generations will continue to cherish.”



EXISTING CONDITIONS & TRENDS REPORT



STUDY AREA

The study area for this Comprehensive Plan includes the unincorporated area of Deercreek Township. Figure 1 shows the borders of the unincorporated Township, as well as the areas for where the Village of Williamsport border the Township.

Deercreek Township is defined by its rural aesthetic with US-22 and Ohio SR-138 as the primary roads traversing East-West through the Township and Chillicothe Pike as the primary North-South road, which bisects the Township. At the intersection of US-22 and Chillicothe Pike sits the Village of Williamsport, which is surrounded by the Township.

Another feature in the Township is Deer Creek, which flows north to south from Deer Creek Lake splits the Township in half. Chillicothe Pike runs parallel to Deer Creek for almost its entire length within the Township's borders.

Most of Deercreek Township remains largely an agricultural community with large lot, rural housing and open areas of farmland.

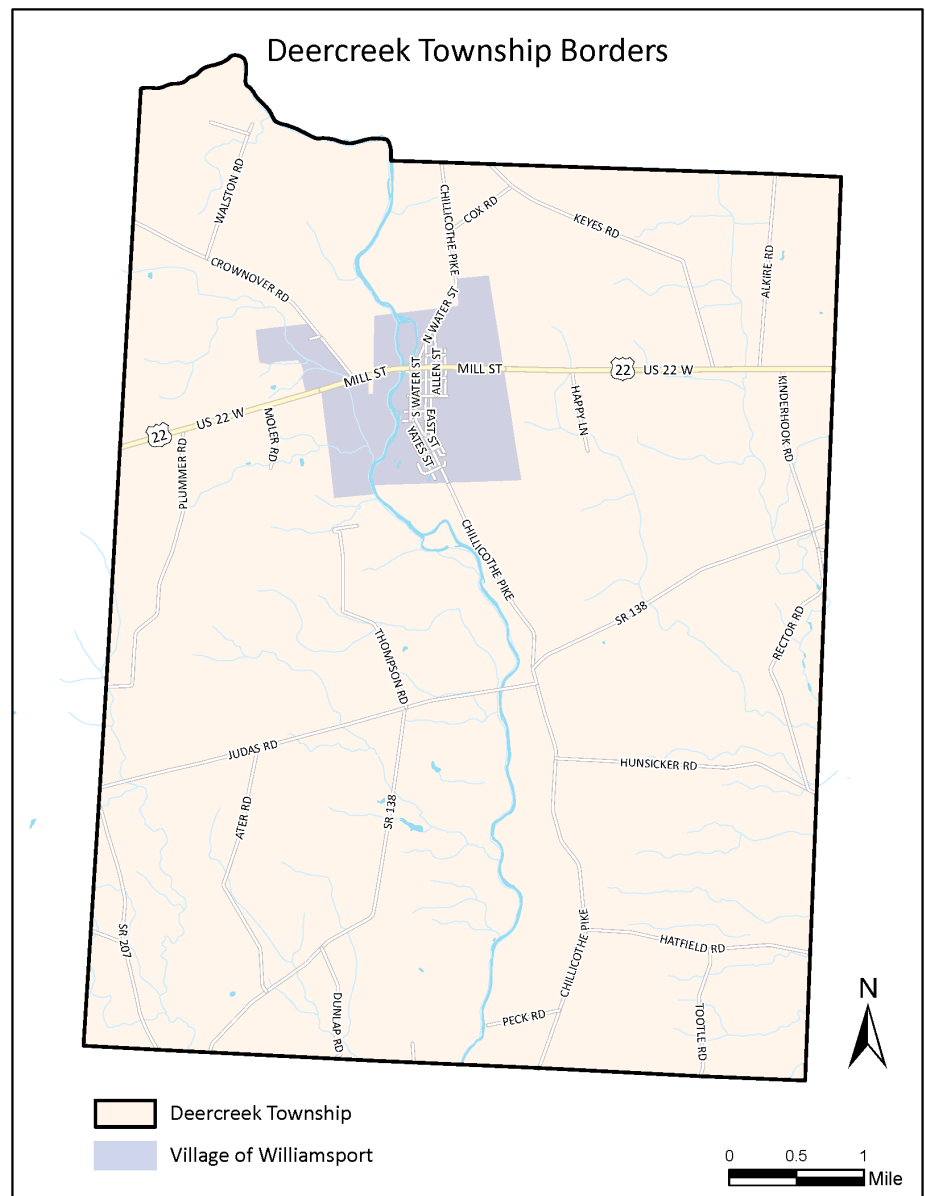


Figure 1: Township Borders

TOPOGRAPHY AND TREE CANOPY

The terrain of Deercreek Township is primarily flat with the ever-slight decrease in elevation toward the Deer Creek watershed as observable in Figure 2. This decrease in elevation does not pose a barrier to the development or use of the land.

Additionally, Figure 3 depicts the tree canopy of the Township. As shown, the tree canopy exhibits its highest density along the banks of Deer Creek, which represents a consistent line of trees on both sides of the creek from the northern to southern border of the Township.

Other areas in the Township where trees may be found are along the smaller waterways in the Township such as Hay Run and Yellowbud Creek, as well as wetland areas near farmland. Additionally, small thickets of tree canopy can be found interspersed throughout the Township, but these areas are small islands in the agricultural fields that serve as the primary land use.

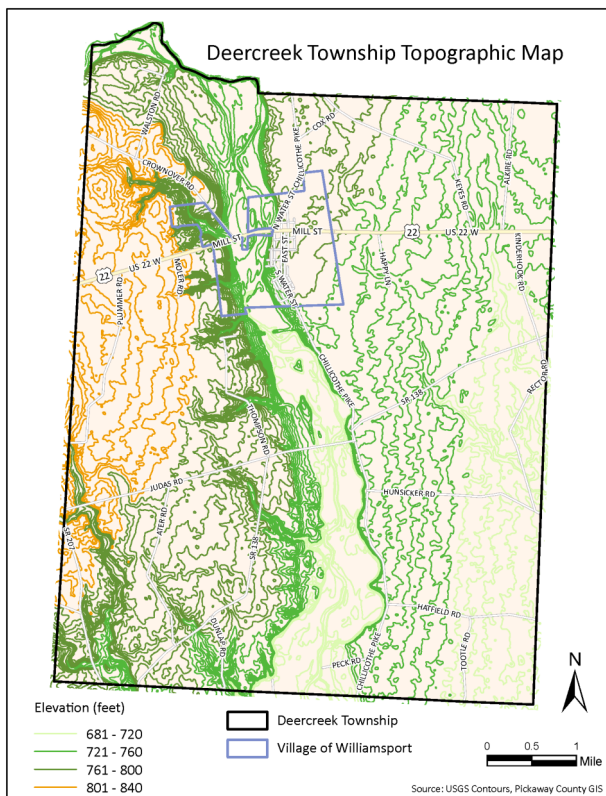


Figure 2: Topography

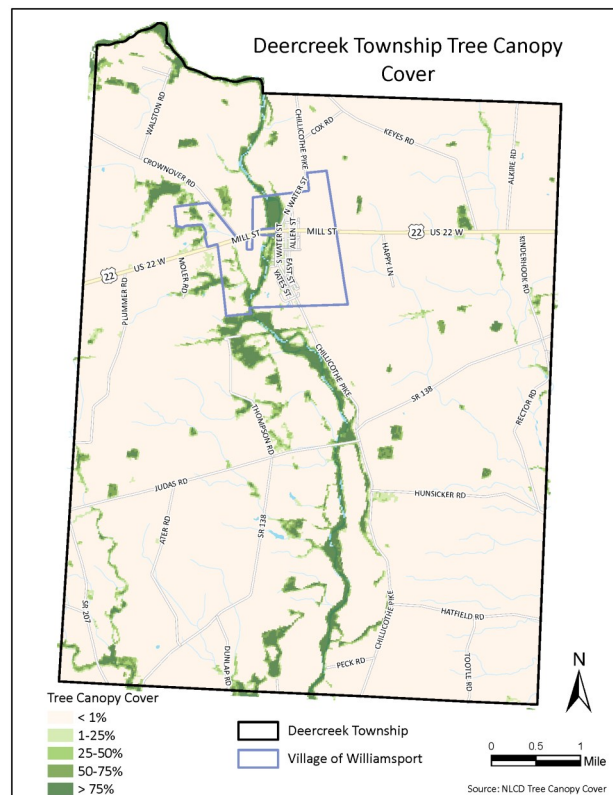


Figure 3: Tree Canopy

STREAMS & FLOODPLAINS

As previously discussed, Deer Creek bisects the Township, which not only serves as the Township's namesake but also is the only relatively major waterway within the Township's boundaries. Several other smaller waterways are also present, such as Hay Run – in the southwest corner of the Township – and Yellowbud Creek – along the eastern border of the Township.

However, as observable in Figure 4, the land along Deer Creek poses a flood risk. The area depicted on the map corresponds with a "1% Annual Flood Chance

Hazard." This means that areas at risk of flooding are designated as a Special Flood Hazard Area by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that "will be inundated by the flood event having a 1-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. The 1-percent chance flood is also referred to as the base flood or 100-year flood."¹

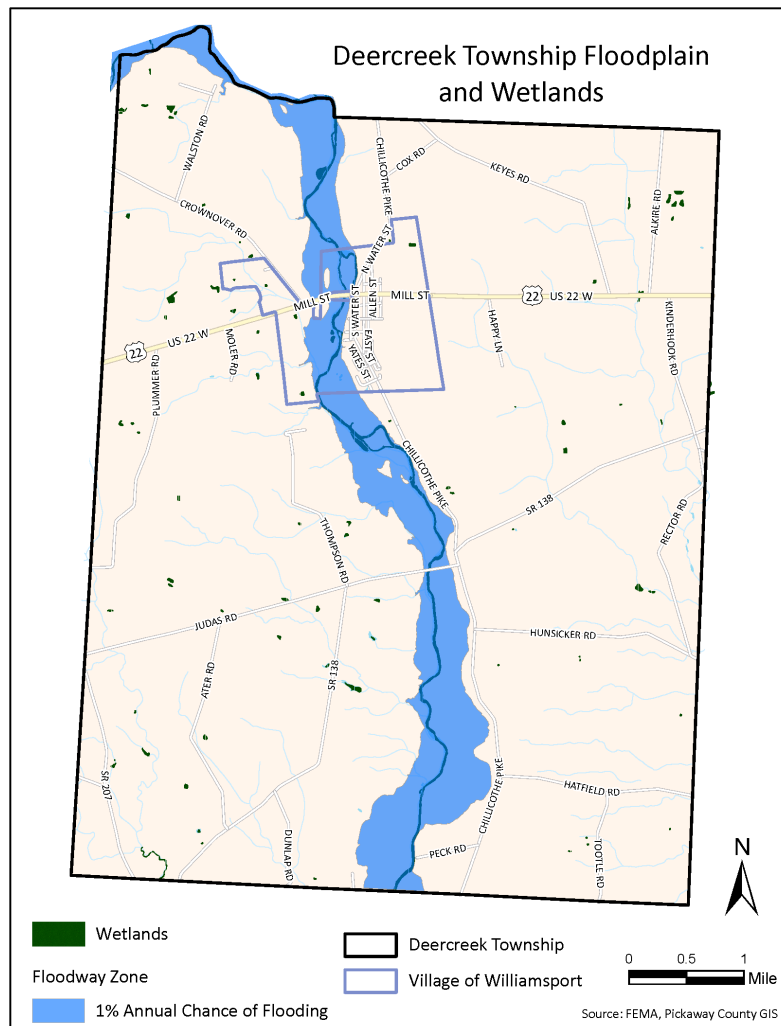


Figure 4: Floodplain & Wetlands

1. FEMA. "Flood Zones." Glossary. <https://www.fema.gov/about/glossary/flood-zones>

FARMLAND

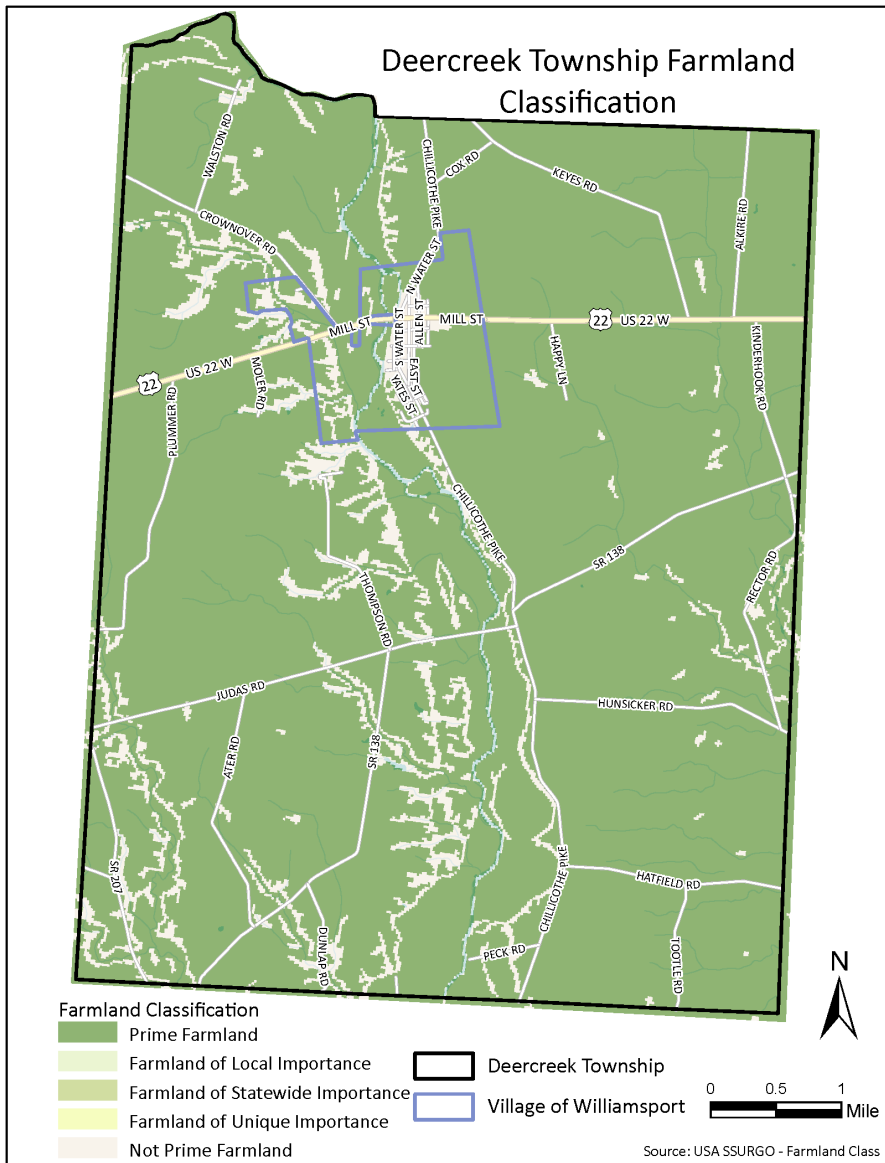


Figure 5: Farmland

Most of the land in the Township is classified as "Prime Farmland" by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Soil Survey Geographic Database (SSURGO). "Prime Farmland" may be concisely considered as land "that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses."² Figure 5 depicts a map showing the SSURGO classifications for the Township. The only places where "Prime Farmland" does not exist within the Township correspond with where the tree canopy and smaller tributaries exist.

SCHOOLS

The Westfall School District serves as the primary educational provider for children in Deercreek Township, covering a vast area of approximately 200 square miles. A small portion in the southwest corner of the Township is serviced by Adena Local Schools.

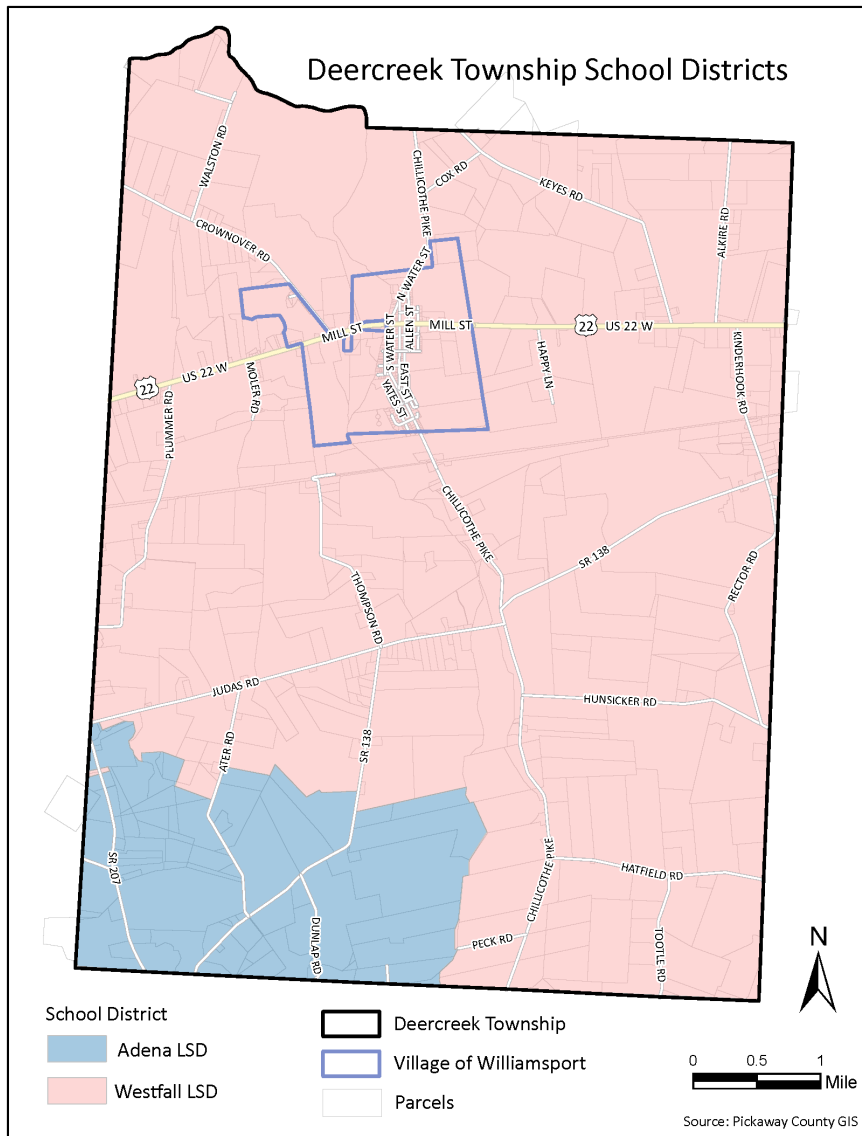


Figure 6: School Districts

During the 2023-2024 school year, the Adena Local School District served 1,101 students across grades K-12, with one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school, with a graduation rate of 94.6%. Based on the Ohio School Report Card, the school is rated overall a 2.5, which means support is needed to meet state standards. With a student-teacher ratio of approximately 15:1, the district supports an environment conducive to individualized learning and personal attention. The student demographics are predominantly White, Non-Hispanic (92%), with other groups including Multiracial (4.8%), Hispanic (2%), and Black, Non-Hispanic (1.1%) according to the Ohio Department of Education School Report Cards 2023-2024.

During the 2023-2024 school year, the Westfall Local School District served 1,288 students from kindergarten through 12th grade. The district includes one elementary school, one middle

school, and one high school, with a graduation rate of 90.2% and a student-teacher ratio around 17:1. With an overall score of 3 from the Ohio School Report Card, Westfall Local School District meets state standards. The district's student demographics are predominantly White (92.9%), with additional representation including Multiracial (2.9%), Hispanic (2.4%), and Black (1.2%). (Source: The Ohio Department of Education School Report Cards 2023-2024)

Between the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years, Adena Local Elementary School experienced notable growth, gaining 66 new students. This increase may indicate that more young families are moving into the area. The influx of new students could also reflect regional trends of growth in suburban and rural communities, where families often seek safe neighborhoods, accessible green spaces, and community-centered amenities. This growth signals potential longer-term population and housing shifts that could further impact community planning and local services.

School District	Number of Schools	Enrollment	Attendance Rate	Graduation Rate
Adena Local	3	1,101	93%	94.6%
Westfall Local	3	1,288	93.2%	90.2%

Figure 7: ODE School Report Card Information



ELECTRIC & GAS

Deercreek Township is primarily serviced by South Central Power ("SCP"), with a small portion in the southwestern corner serviced by Dayton Power & Light. Conversations with SCP confirmed there is capacity the capacity to provide electrical services within their territory of the Township as development occurs.

The primary provider of residential and commercial natural gas services in Deercreek is Columbia Gas of Ohio. CenterPoint Energy provides natural gas service to southwest region of the Township.

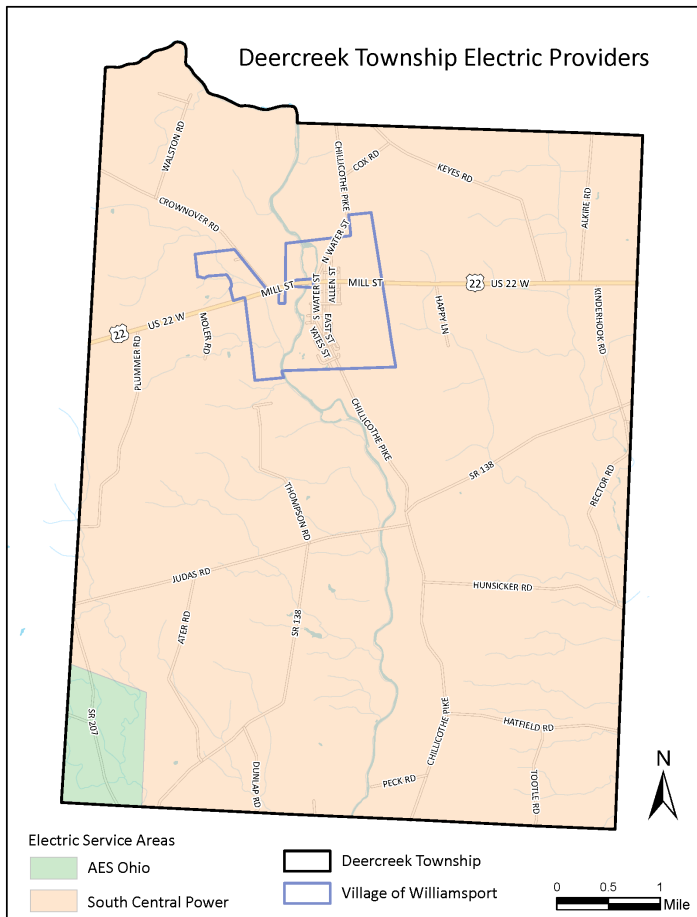


Figure 8: Electric Providers

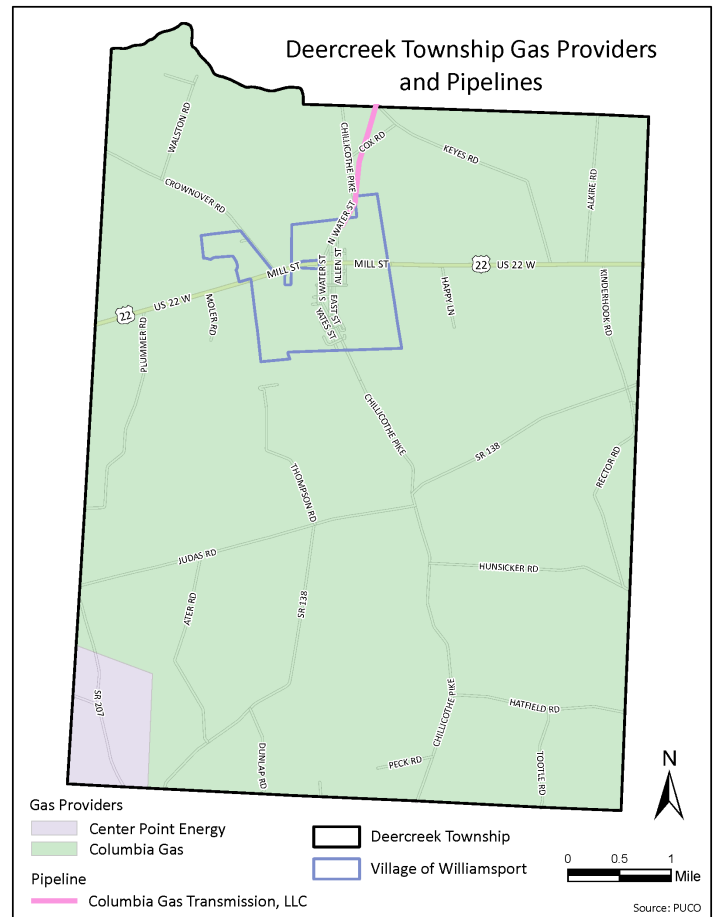


Figure 9: Gas Providers

WATER & SEWER

Currently, the Township does not have centralized water and sewer services. The Village of Williamsport operates its own gas company, as well as water and sewer systems. While Williamsport has access to two wells for its water supply, it is currently utilizing only one well for its operations. The Township is currently unaware of Williamsport's water capacity, or ability for residents to tap into these lines in the future. There are two locations where Williamsport water lines extend into the Township, as inferred through the locations of their hydrants.



Figure 10: Hydrants

Water lines represented by the dashed blue line are inferred based on the location of hydrants extending from the Village of Williamsport.

FIRE & EMS

The Williamsport and Deercreek Emergency Squad (WADES), a private 501C3, and the Southwest Pickaway Fire Service collectively serve a 93-square-mile area, providing vital fire and emergency medical services to the community. These services are two separate and distinct entities. Both services are supported by a dedicated team, with the fire station staffed entirely by volunteers.

In 2023, WADES responded to 52 calls, averaging approximately four calls per month. Consistent approval of fire and EMS levies highlights the community's strong support for these essential services.

A new station was constructed in 2024, reflecting investment in infrastructure to support these services. However, the facility lacks certain amenities, such as sleeping quarters, which may enhance comfort for staff during shifts. Additionally, like many volunteer-based services, maintaining adequate staffing can occasionally be a challenge, impacting timely responses for high-demand periods. According to WADES and the Fire Chief, opportunities to access nearby training schools for staff and volunteers are limited, especially in a rural area, and addressing this need may help strengthen service capabilities.



NEARBY COMMUNITIES

Although the Township is primarily rural, it is important to understand the plans of communities nearby in order to determine how they may impact the Township. One of the goals of this Plan is to encourage collaboration and positive relationships between the Township and its closest municipal neighbor– the Village of Williamsport.

COLUMBUS

With the expansion of industrial activities in Central Ohio, there is growing concern about population increases and the resulting demand for additional housing. Discussions with the Pickaway Progress Partnership (P3) and the Building Industry Association (BIA) indicate that significant residential development in Deercreek Township is unlikely in the near future due to the absence of public water and sewer infrastructure. However, Pickaway County as a whole is a prime location for future growth given its proximity to Columbus. While Deercreek Township may face development pressures in the long term, the lack of infrastructure currently limits immediate housing expansion.

WILLIAMSPORT

Located in a north-central position in the Township, the rural Village of Williamsport sits within the Township. As of July 2025, the Village has not updated their comprehensive plan since 2004.

To briefly summarize Williamsport's existing conditions, the Village is mostly comprised of single-family housing across an area roughly 1.84 square miles with a population of 970 individuals according to the 2020 Census. The Village maintains its own gas company, which supplies natural gas to its residents. Its sewer plant operates at half capacity and its water supply uses less than half of its supply of 200,000 gallons. The Village shares its EMS and Fire Department services with the Township.

Following conversations with the Village's mayor, Tim Bush, an overarching goal expressed is to encourage and improve communication between the Village and the Township. Mutual goals should exist between the two governments due to their shared geographic, cultural, and economic positions. Improved communication could enhance the possibility for partnerships and collaboration between the Township and Williamsport, and may assist both

entities plan for the future without future annexations. Most recently, the Village annexed land around the Crown Hill Golf Club. Concerning the future, the Village may annex eastward towards Circleville to expand its residential opportunities or westward to expand its industrial opportunities. It is important to note that neither option are in any plan nor stabilized on any timeline. This information only expresses a mere interest from the Village.

Regardless, due to the potential future expansion of the Village, it is recommended that the Township engage with the Village to better understand its future goals and see where alignment may occur. Improving communication and understanding is further encouraged because the Village has a surplus of water and sewer capacity that may have the ability to expand should the Village choose to invest in that effort.



STATE PARKS

Deercreek Township is enriched by its proximity to two major state parks—A.W. Marion State Park and Deer Creek State Park—both of which are managed by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR). These parks provide township residents with a wide range of outdoor recreational activities that greatly enhance the area's quality of life.

A.W. Marion State Park, located near Circleville and surrounding Hargus Lake, is a favored spot for fishing, kayaking, and picnicking. Deer Creek State Park, situated just a short drive from Deercreek Township, offers even more recreational options with its large reservoir for boating and swimming, scenic hiking trails, camping facilities, golf course, and a lodge for longer stays.

In addition to these parks, ODNR oversees important wildlife areas in the region, including the Pickaway County Wildlife Area and the Deer Creek Wildlife Area. These areas are valuable for habitat conservation and provide opportunities for hunting, birdwatching, and fishing, blending recreational uses with environmental preservation efforts.

The natural beauty and diverse outdoor activities available in these state parks and wildlife areas not only enhance the lives of residents but also contributes to Deercreek Township's

appeal. Residents and visitors alike enjoy easy access to high-quality recreational spaces, which adds to the community's rural charm and creates a welcoming environment. Whether for leisure or conservation, these outdoor spaces play a key role in maintaining the township's unique character and offering a well-rounded lifestyle for those who live there.

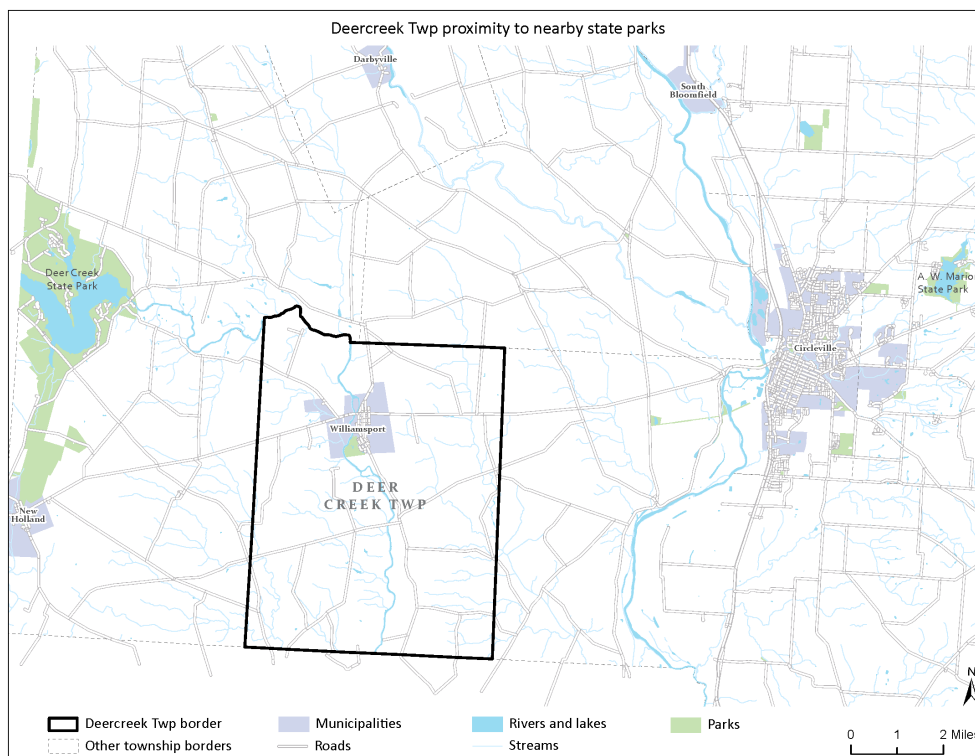


Figure 11: Nearby State parks

Trends, Future Improvements, & Activities in Deer Creek State Park

The ODNR Parks Division reports that camping in Deer Creek State Park has seen substantial growth and beach visitation is reaching levels not seen since the 1980s.

Alongside these trends of increased visitation, Deer Creek State Park is currently or has already performed renovations on its lodge and all twenty-five of its cabins. Pending improvements to the park include the construction of a playground and upgrades to its water and wastewater systems.

Deer Creek State Park offers a plethora of recreational activities including boating, fishing, hunting, golf, educational activities, swimming, hiking, and more as well as winter activities such as ice fishing, skating, and sledding.

In light of these trends, future investments, and recreational opportunities, Deer Creek State Park serves as an important recreational place not only for the residents of the Township, but also for the wider region. This attraction may serve as a feature that may encourage developers to invest in the surrounding area.

The parks do not only offer opportunities to enjoy nature from a recreational perspective, but also serve as a place of great biodiversity. Throughout the state parks and Township, native species such as turkeys, pheasants, quail, deer, and other game species can be found. Notably, Deer Creek State Park is home to the highest population of Northern harrier hawks in the state and has also successfully reintroduced ospreys into the wilderness.



LOCAL PARKS

The nearby presence of State Parks are not the only exhibition of the Township's recreational opportunities. The Metzger Preserve, Ballard Avenue Park, and Community Square Park in Williamsport are three examples of parks that serve the community and have exhibited increased visitation since the outbreak of Covid-19. Figure 12



depicts a table showing the visitor data for Metzger Preserve from the Pickaway County Parks District, a 52-acre park acquired by the Pickaway County Park District in 2018.

Deercreek Township's parks have experienced a notable increase in visitors in recent years, reflecting growing community engagement with outdoor spaces. Metzger Preserve, for example, saw 7,257 visitors in 2024, up from 5,399 in 2023, despite some vandalism that year which disrupted data collection based on conversations with the County Parks District.

Recent developments in the parks include plans for upgrades at Ballard Avenue Park, where grant funding has been secured to install new restrooms, explore the possibility of a public pool, and create community garden space. In addition, Metzger Preserve is under consideration for future expansion to accommodate the increasing number of visitors.

One major upcoming project is the Pickaway Trail extension, which will connect Circleville to New Holland and briefly pass through Deercreek Township. While the timeline for this project is not yet set, funding has been secured, with construction expected to start in 2026. This will include the

METZGER PRESERVE	
Year	Attendees
2021	6,439
2022	6,918
2023	5,399*
2024	7,257
*Numbers in 2023 may be skewed due to the vandalization of the counting machine during the summer.	

Figure 12: Metzger Preserve Visitation

addition of two new bridges over Yellowbud Creek and Lick Run, further enhancing the trail's accessibility and appeal to both local residents and regional visitors. The Pickaway Trail exhibits significant growth in usage, with 4,416 visitors recorded in 2024, up from just 484 in 2019 when the trail was still unpaved.



Sections of the Pickaway Trail.
From: Pickaway County Parks

PICKAWAY TRAIL	
YEAR	Attendees
2019	484
2020	1,782
2021	2,078
2022	1,622
2023	2,356
2024	4,416

Figure 13: Pickaway Trail usership. Data from
Pickaway County Parks

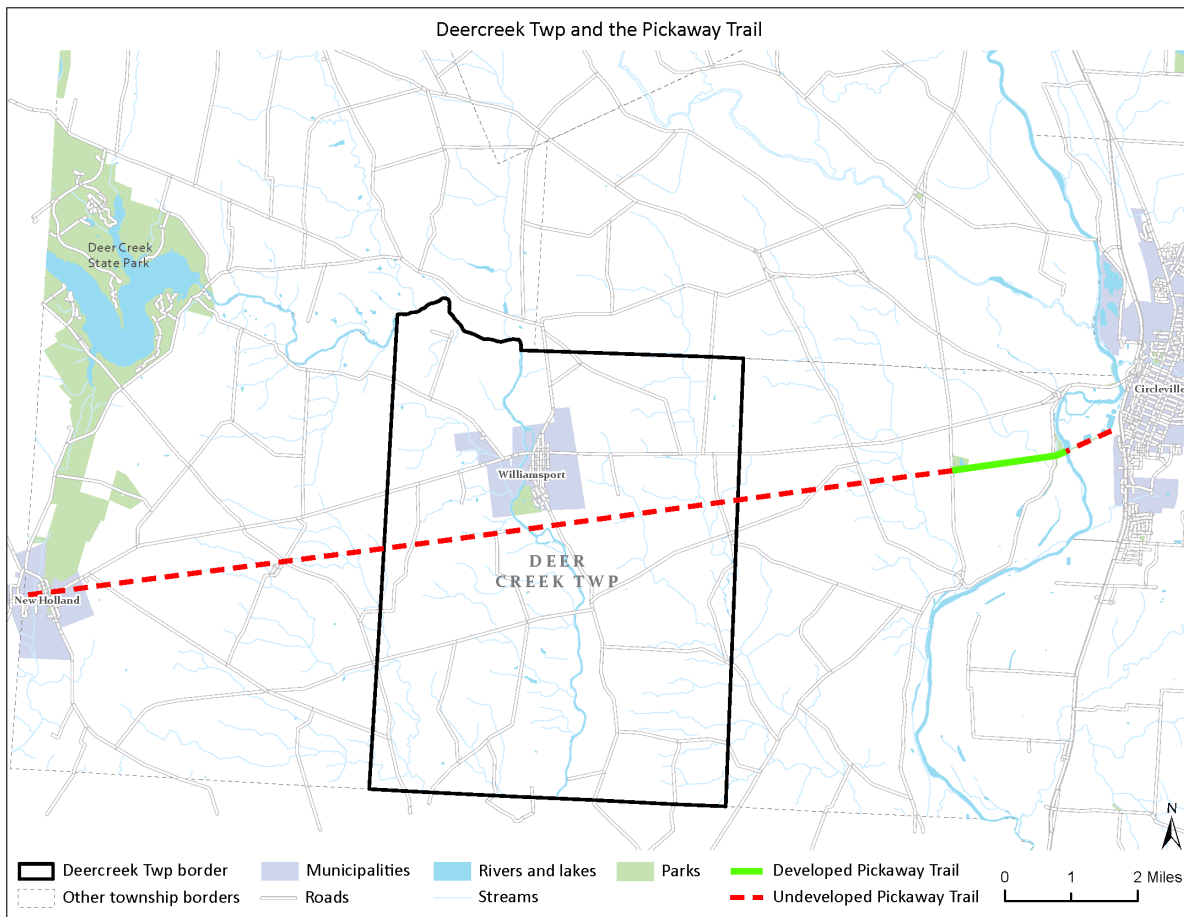


Figure 14: Pickaway Trail

DEVELOPMENT CONCERNS

Due to the natural presence of diverse ecosystems in the Township and surrounding areas, the ODNR has expressed concern about the potential impact of single-family housing developments, which could displace wildlife and lead to increased nuisance wildlife calls (ex: foxes, coyotes, and deer in residential areas). Development which does not consider the ecosystems of the Township may lead to fragmented habitats and disrupt the balance of local wildlife populations, posing long-term environmental challenges.

DEMOGRAPHICS & COMMUNITY SURVEY



The demographics analysis for Deercreek Township is included below and includes only the unincorporated areas of the Township, which excludes all Villages and cities in the area. This provides a snapshot of the areas over which the Deercreek Township administration currently has regulatory control.

POPULATION

The Township has experienced subtle yet notable shifts in population over recent decades. Between 2000 and 2010, the township's population saw slight increase, growing from 680 to 686 residents. However, the following decade saw a slight decrease, as the township lost 43 residents between 2010 and 2020, reducing the population to 643.

Since 2020, Deercreek Township has experienced slight population growth, adding 15 residents through 2024, bringing the total to approximately 658. Responses from the public and the community survey indicate that individuals and families seek a quieter, close-knit community setting while still being able to enjoy the proximity to nearby Columbus and other employment centers. These feelings held by the public may influence future population growth, especially in light of Central Ohio growth trends, based upon the Township appearing as an attractive place to live.

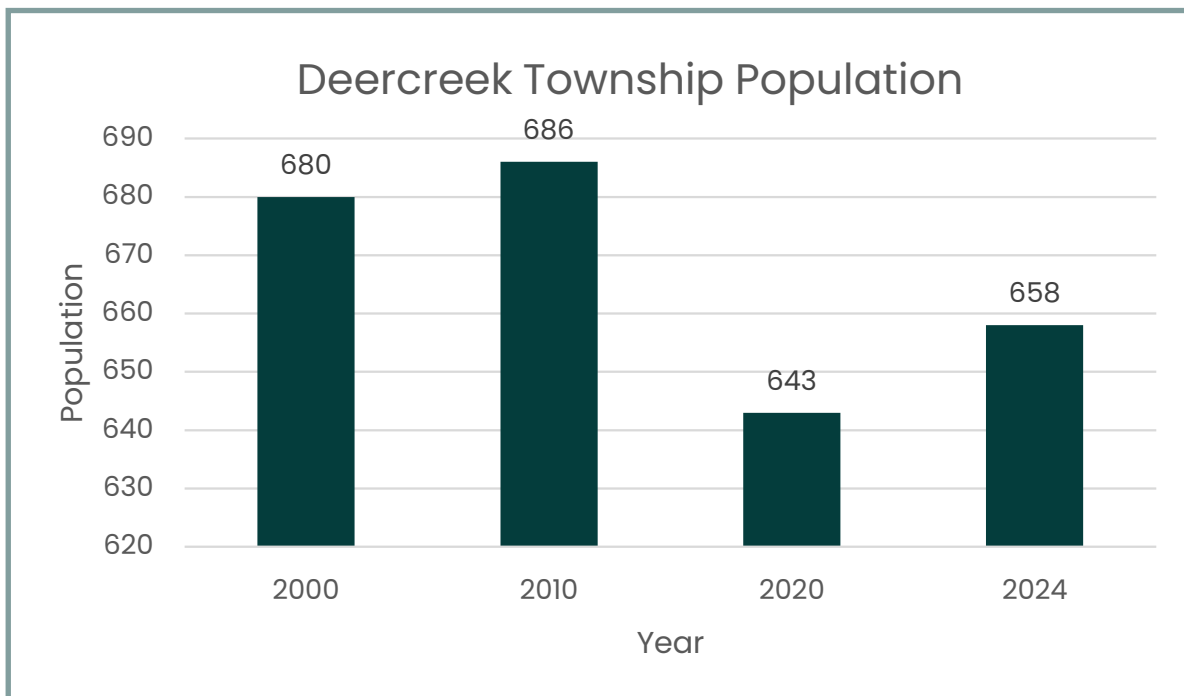


Figure 15: Population

AGE, RACE, & EDUCATION

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the Township's population is predominantly White, with 599 residents identifying as such. The 2020 Diversity Index, as calculated by Esri, is 15.1, indicating relatively low racial diversity within the Township.

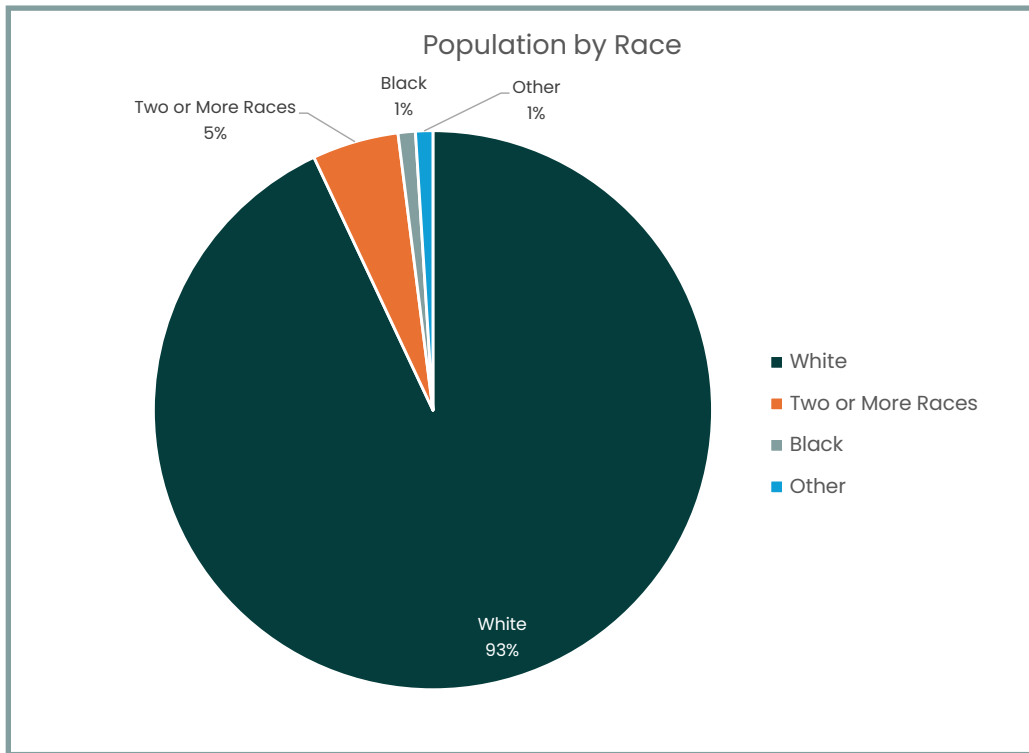


Figure 16: Race

The Township's age distribution from 2018–2022 (ACS) reflects a population with a strong presence of middle-aged residents. The youth population (under 19 years) accounts for approximately 23% of residents, with the largest group being those aged 15 to 19. The middle-

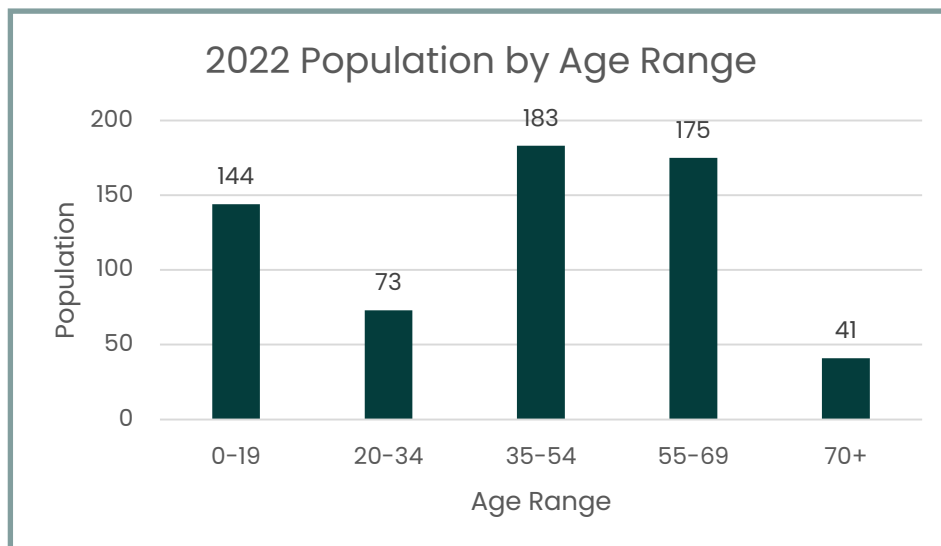


Figure 17: Age

aged segment (35–54 years) is substantial, with 183 residents at 29%. Overall, the Township maintains a strong middle-aged presence with a distinct gap in young adults living in the Township, while the 70+ population remains limited.

2024 educational attainment data indicates that the majority of Township residents have completed at least a high school education. 171 residents hold a high school diploma, while 19 earned a GED or alternative credential. Additionally, 57 residents attended some college but did not obtain a degree, and 34 hold an associate's degree. Higher education levels are also well-represented, with 82 residents holding a bachelor's degree and 48 earning a graduate or professional degree. Only 35 residents did not complete high school.

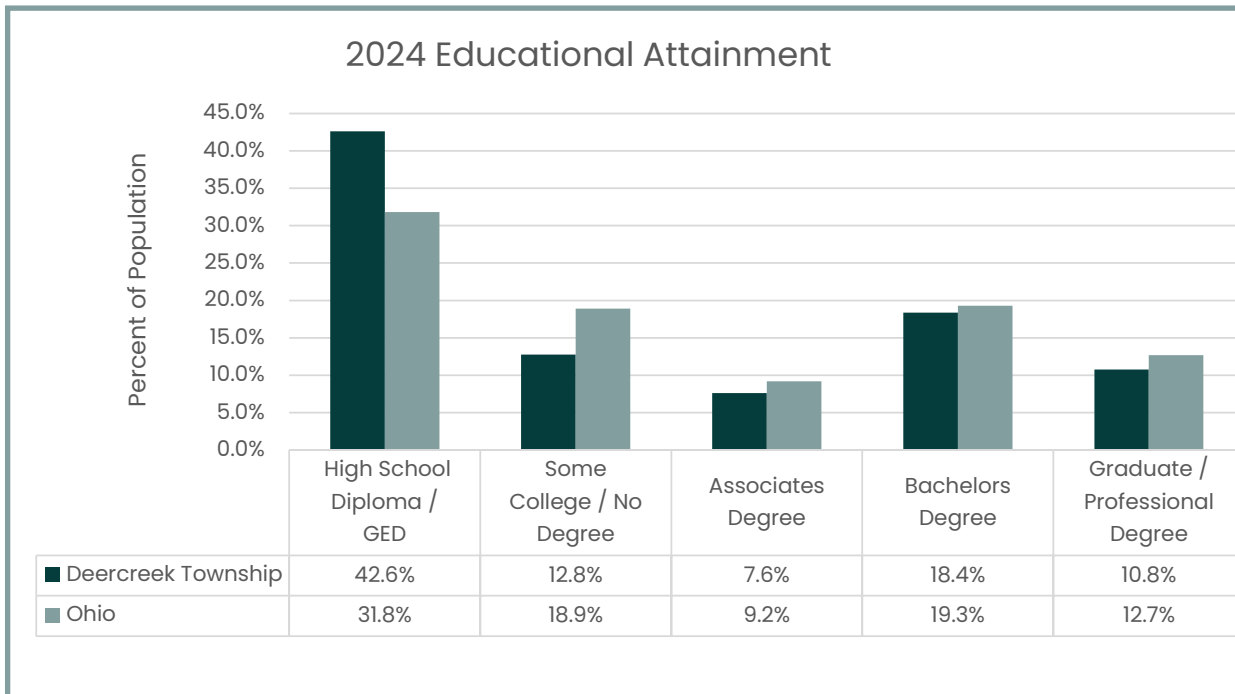


Figure 18: Education



OCCUPATION

Deercreek Township has concentrations in several industries which appear to match up with the educational cohorts of the previous section.

At 22% of the Township's workforce, management is the most common occupation sector among employed residents. Other common sectors include construction/extraction at 10%, installation/maintenance/repair at 9%, and transport/material moving at 9% (Figure 19).

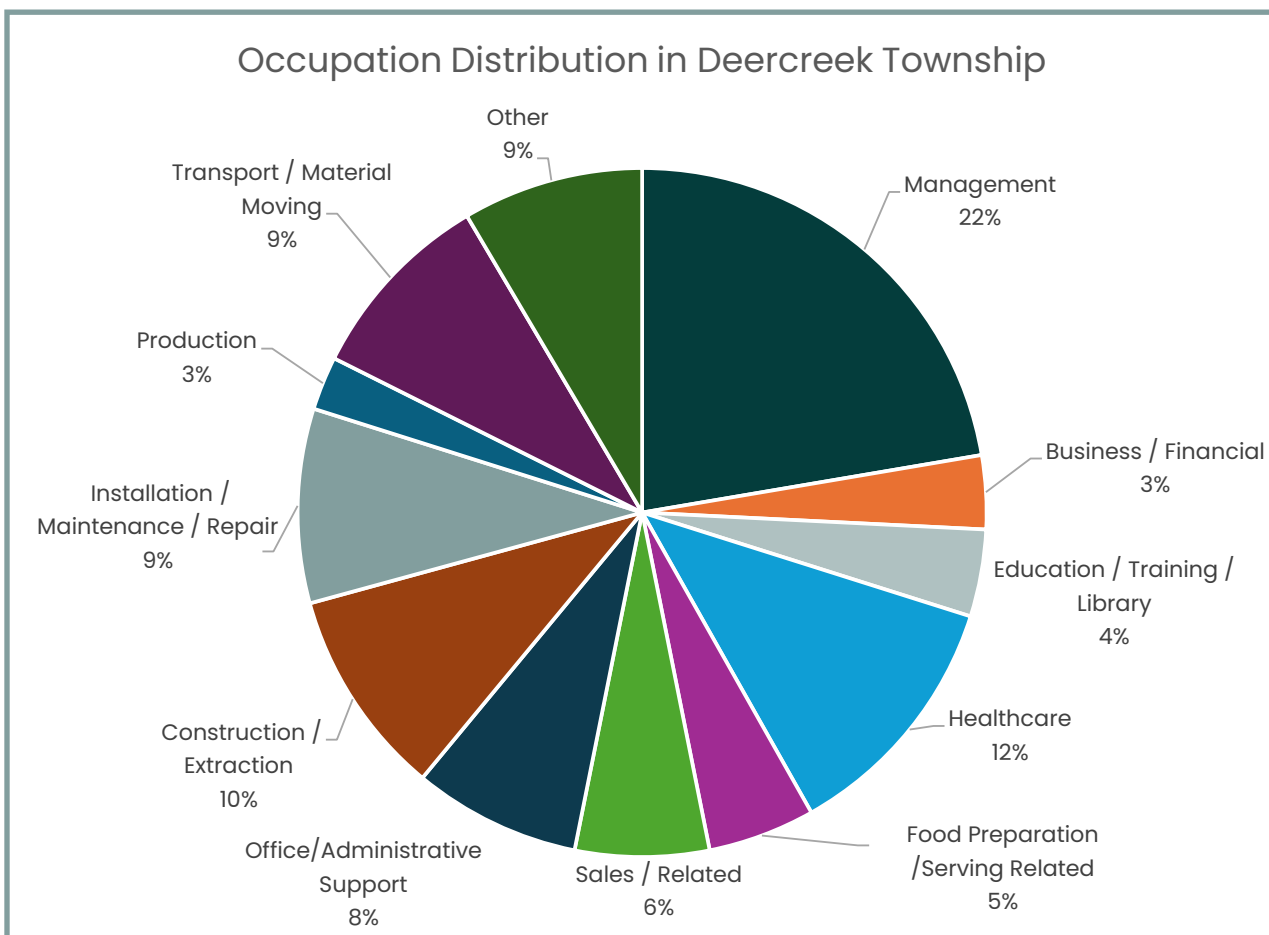


Figure 19: Occupation

INCOME & HOUSING

The 2024 income data reflects a relatively affluent community, with a median household income of \$95,995 and an average household income of \$109,201. While 18 households earn less than \$15,000, the majority of households fall within higher income brackets. Sixty-nine households earn between \$100,000 and \$149,999, while 38 households fall within the \$150,000–\$199,999 range, and 19 households earn \$200,000 or more. The per capita income is \$41,578, and the aggregate household income for the community totals \$28,392,276 across 260 households.

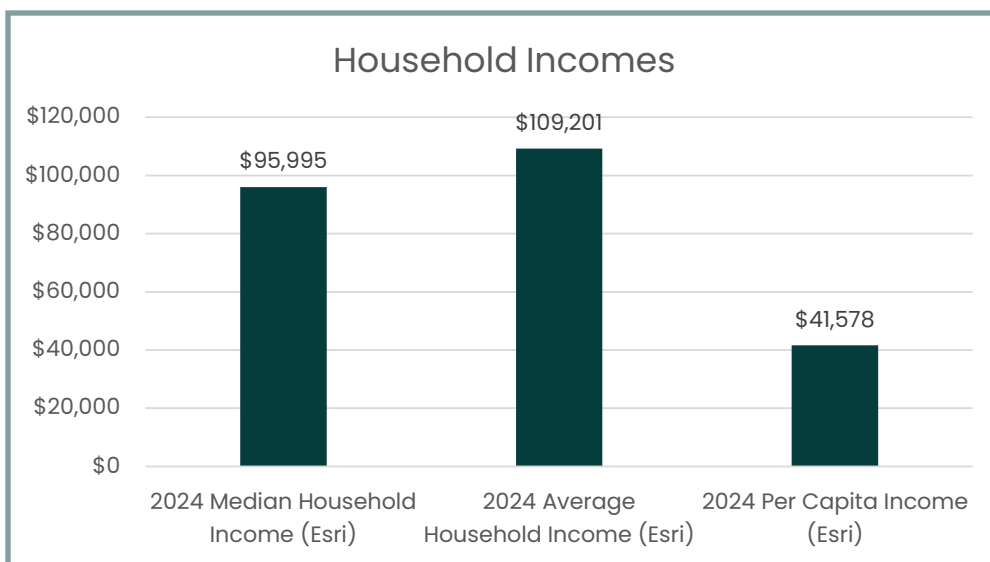


Figure 20: Income

Most houses in the Township are detached single-family units at 95%. Of the remaining 5%, 2% are in structures that house between 2 to 9 units, and 3% are mobile homes. Of the houses in the Township, only 6% have been built since 2000, and none have been built after 2019. At 40%,

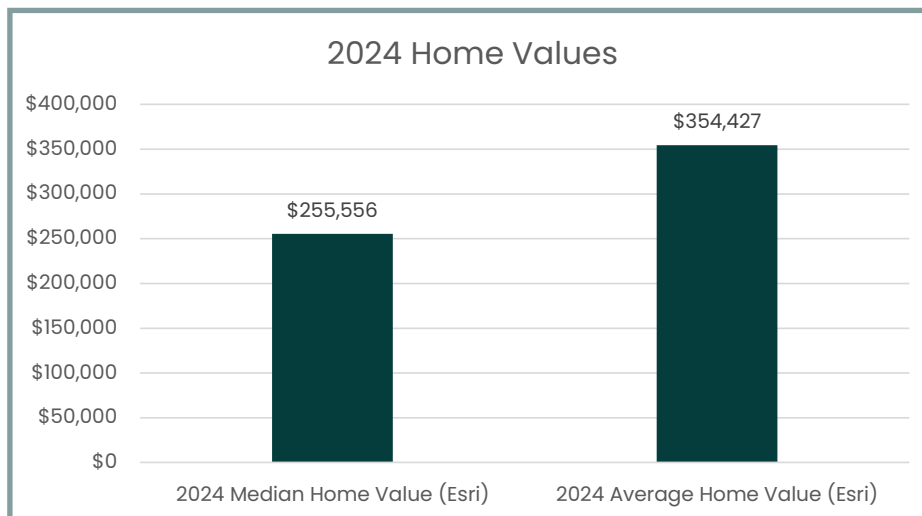


Figure 21: Home Value

most of the houses were built before 1939, and 29% were built between 1980 and 1999. The median owner-occupied home value in the Township is \$255,556. Eighteen percent of owner-occupied homes are worth \$500,000 or more, while ten percent are worth less than \$100,000.

DEMOGRAPHICS & TOWNSHIP CHARACTERISTICS SUMMARY

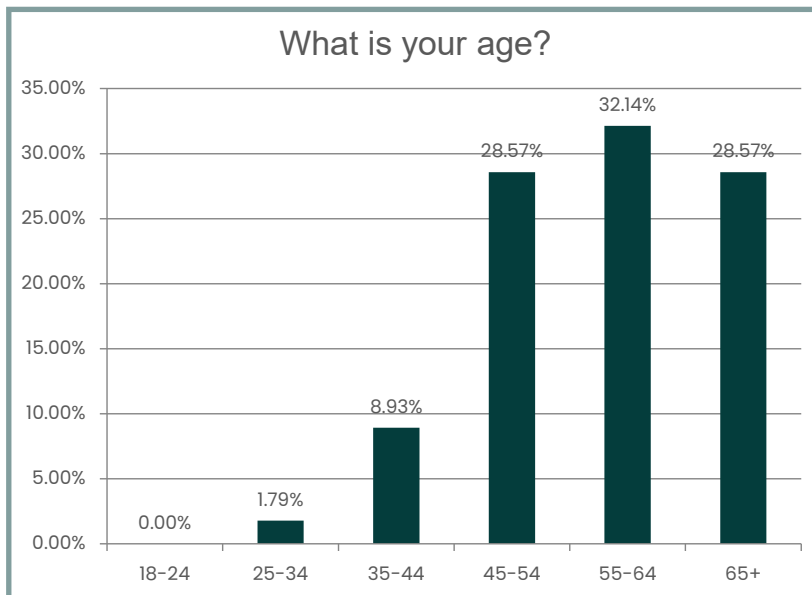
Based on the demographics data, Deercreek Township is a small rural community that is experiencing a population with very little increases or decreases over the past twenty years. The Township is characterized by low racial diversity (predominantly White), an age structure that predominantly represents a middle-aged and older population, and relatively high educational attainment (with 82 residents holding bachelor's degrees and 48 with graduate degrees). Residents primarily work in management (22%), construction/extraction (10%), installation/maintenance/repair (9%), and transportation (9%) sectors, likely outside the township. Housing consists almost entirely of single-family detached homes (95%), with 40% built before 1939 and very little new construction since 2000. The community is relatively affluent, with a median household income of \$95,995 and median home value of \$255,556, reflecting its nature as a quiet rural community within commuting distance of Columbus.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

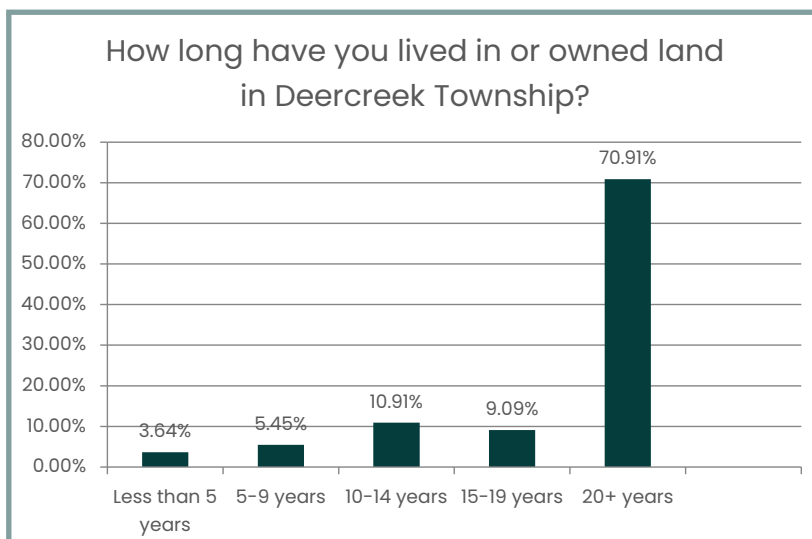
From September 9 to October 21, 2024, Deer Creek Township conducted a survey regarding the current state of various aspects of the Township's land use and services, along with inquiring on potential options for future improvement and development. The township mailed 381 postcards to residents of the unincorporated portion of the Township with instructions to take the online survey. At the end of the survey period, the Township received responses from 58 individuals (Q1), all of whom are current residents of the Township (Q3).

QUESTIONS 2-4



The respondents to the survey were primarily middle-aged and older, with most of them between the 55-64 age range. Only 11% of the respondents were younger than 44, and no respondent was between the ages of 18-24.

Figure 22: Survey Age



In addition, a significant majority (71%) of the respondents have lived in the Township for at least twenty years. A quarter of the respondents have lived in the Township for 5-19 years, and only 4% have lived there for five or fewer years.

Figure 23: Length of Residency

The location where the primary wage earners of the respondents' households is relatively spread out. Of the options listed, the two most popular options were Columbus/Franklin County and Deercreek Township. However, the most popular option was "Other (Please Specify)." Several common responses respondents listed under the other option included Ross County, Fayette County, and retired.

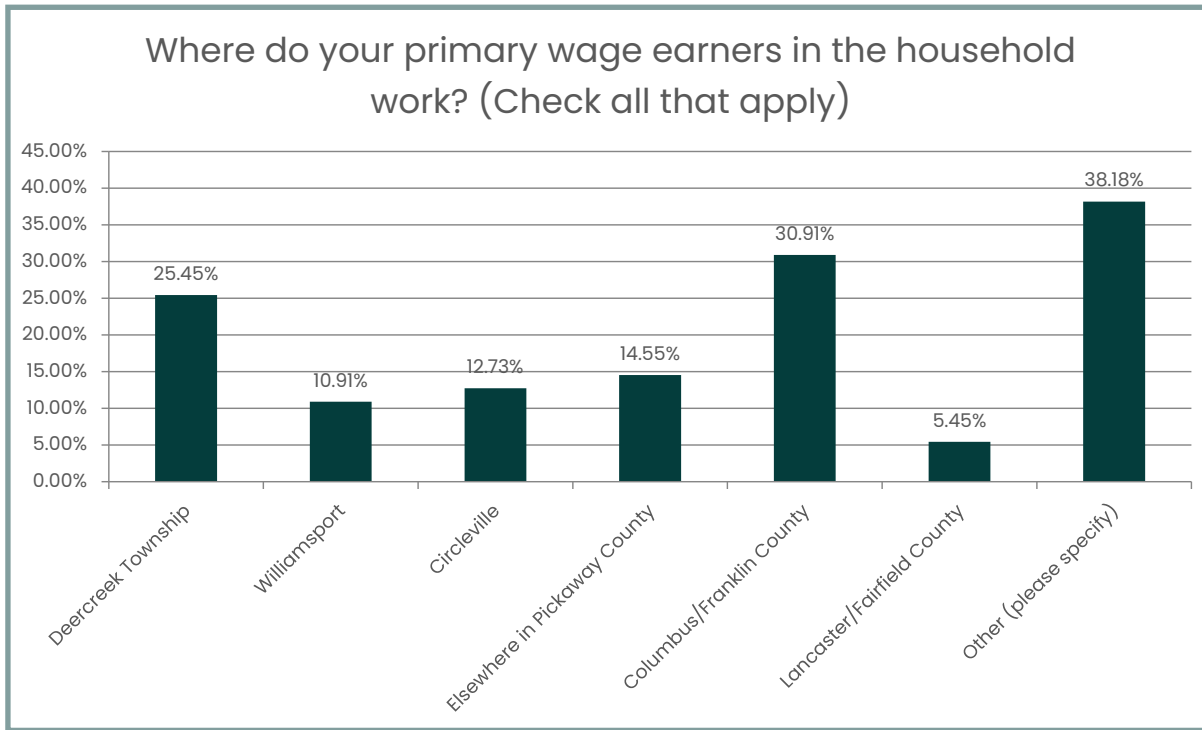


Figure 24: Employment Location

QUESTIONS 5-9: CURRENT STATE OF THE TOWNSHIP

A majority of respondents rated their quality of life in the Township (55%) as good, while 16% rated it as excellent. Eleven percent of respondents listed their quality of fair or poor. This demonstrates that, despite the overall positive consensus from the survey, there is some room for improvement given the lower score for excellent and the relatively high scores for fair and poor, 11% total. The remainder of this survey will identify the areas for improvement.

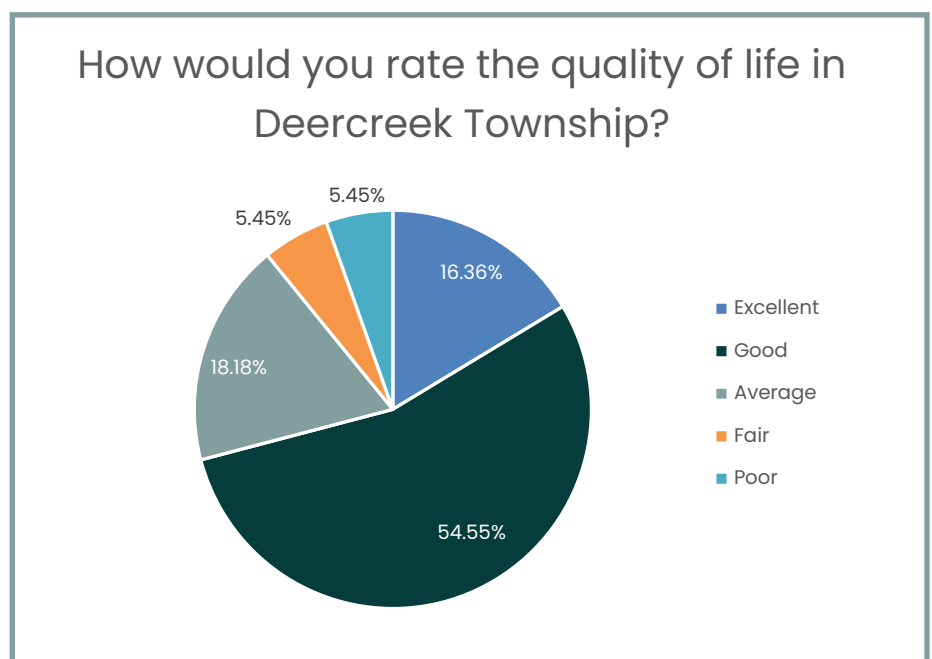


Figure 25: Quality of Life

The Deercreek Dam Days Festival is an annual festival that occurs in the Township. A large majority (69%) of the respondents are supportive of the festival. This approval rating demonstrates possible local support toward introducing potential businesses, trails, and other services that Township residents desire (based on the results of this survey) to coincide with the festival.

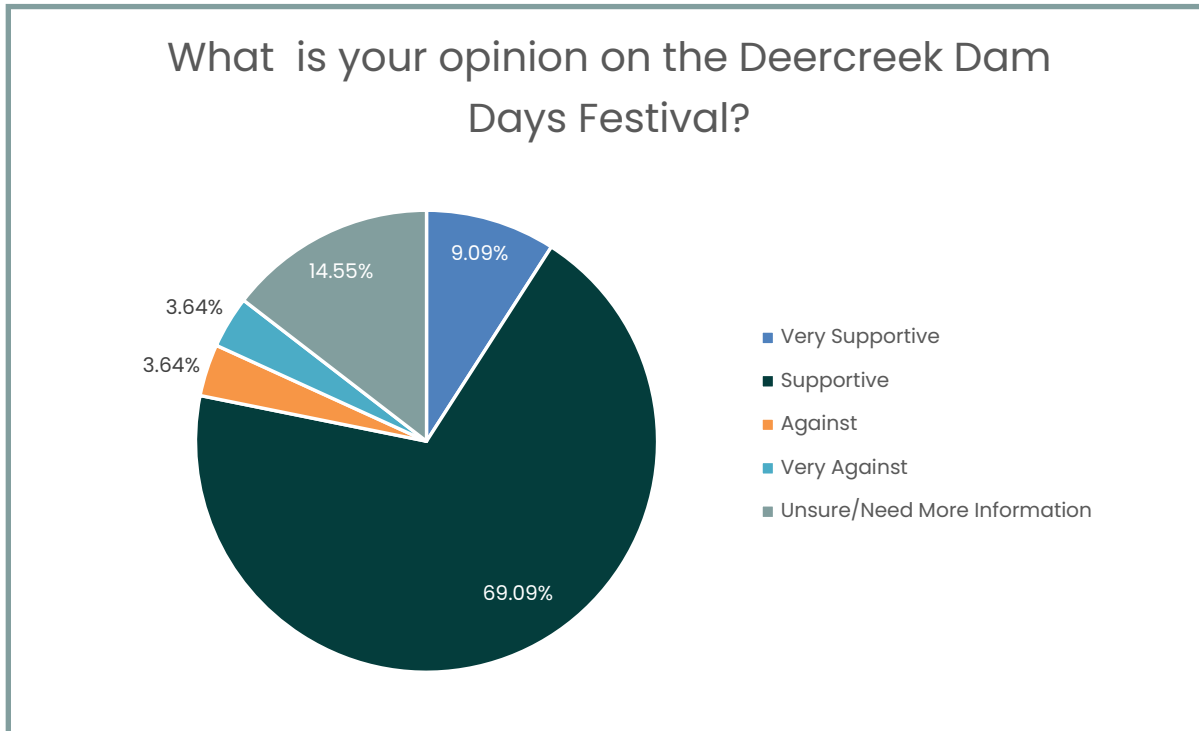
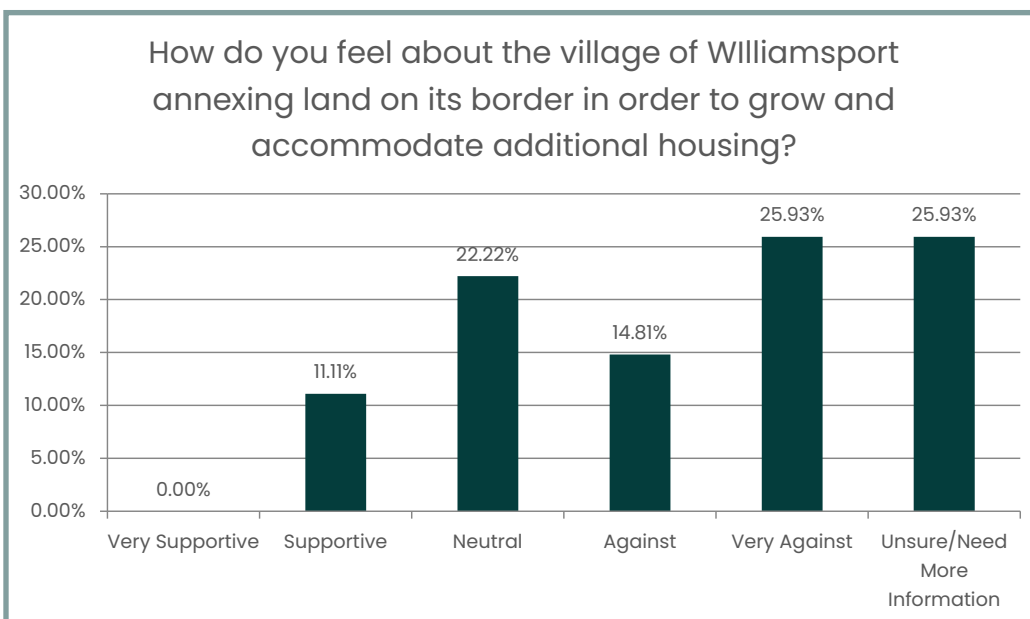


Figure 26:
Deercreek
Dam Days

When asked whether they support the Village of Williamsport annexing land in the Township, the respondents gave mixed results. Even though no respondent indicated they were very supportive of the annexations, an equal percentage of respondents (26% each) answered they were very against the annexations or were unsure and needed more information. Due to these fractured results, the Township should make more efforts to provide residents with information on these



annexations for unsure residents to determine where they stand on this issue.

Figure 27: Annexation

QUESTIONS 10-18: BUSINESS, HOUSING, AND LAND USE

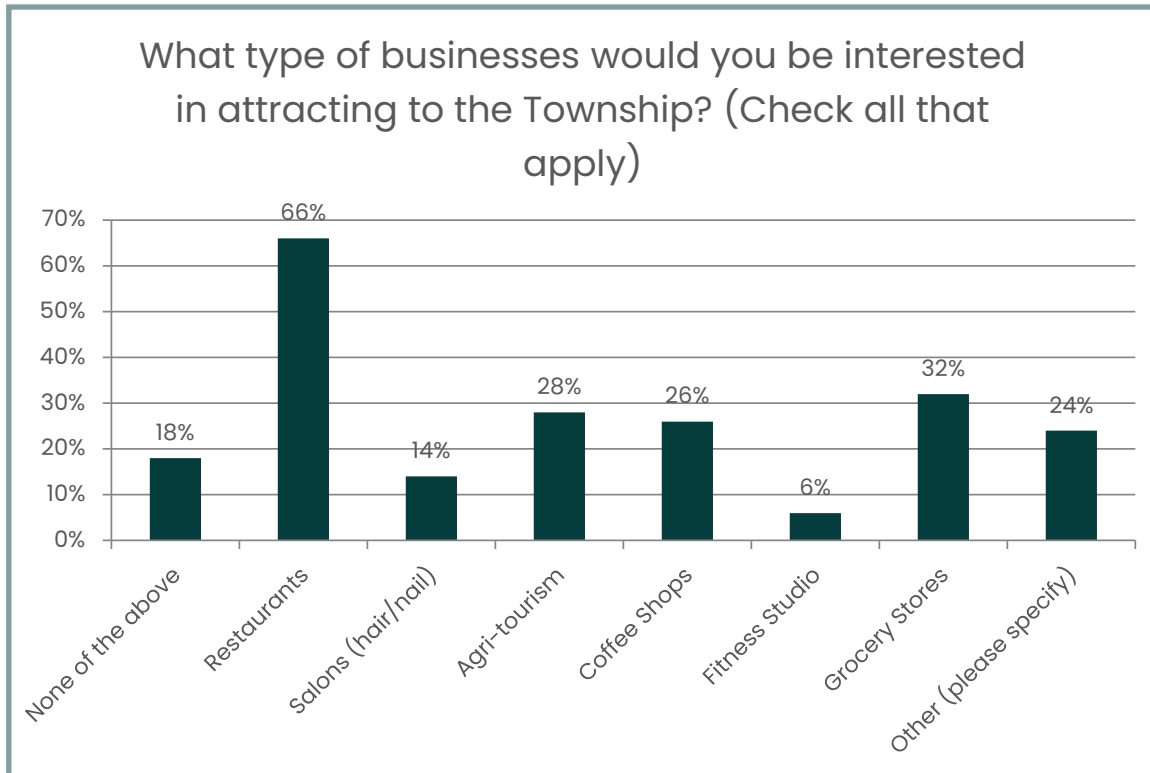


Figure 30: Business Attraction

When given a list of potential businesses that the Township could attract, the most popular option was to attract restaurants. Grocery stores, agri-tourism, and coffee shops came in distant second, third, and fourth ranks. Salons and fitness studios were the least chosen of the options listed, while only 9 respondents indicated they would like none of the above (including the “other” option).

Single-family on large lots are the most popular choice for housing types in the Township, with senior housing/assisted living at a distant second. This shows that the Township is like many other communities in Central Ohio, that prefer single-family homes but also have an older population, thereby having an interest to support senior housing/assisted living. Due to this common trend, there are many example communities the Township can observe for inspiration on how to promote these housing types.

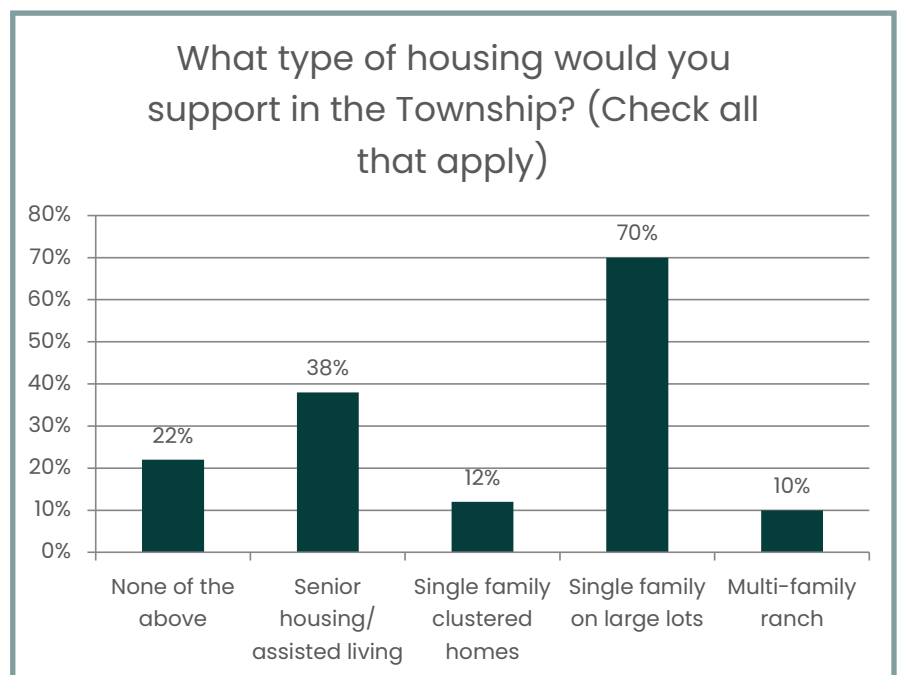


Figure 31: New Housing

The two most popular types of agritourism among the respondents were seasonal farmers' market venues and pumpkin patches/corn mazes. Only three respondents indicated they support no type of agritourism.

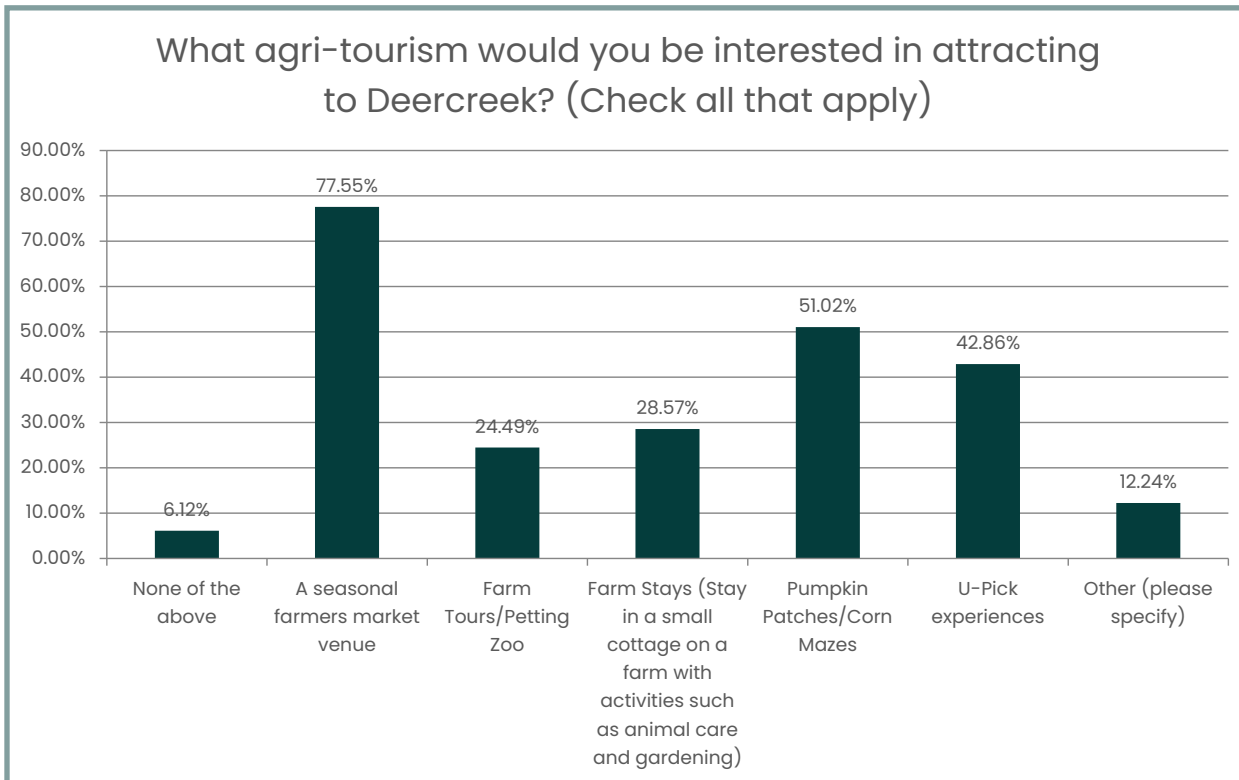


Figure 32: Agri-Tourism

Williamsport is the preferred location for respondents to visit a restaurant (46%). The other half of the respondents are roughly equally split between the unincorporated areas of the Township, somewhere farther away like Circleville, or having no preference.

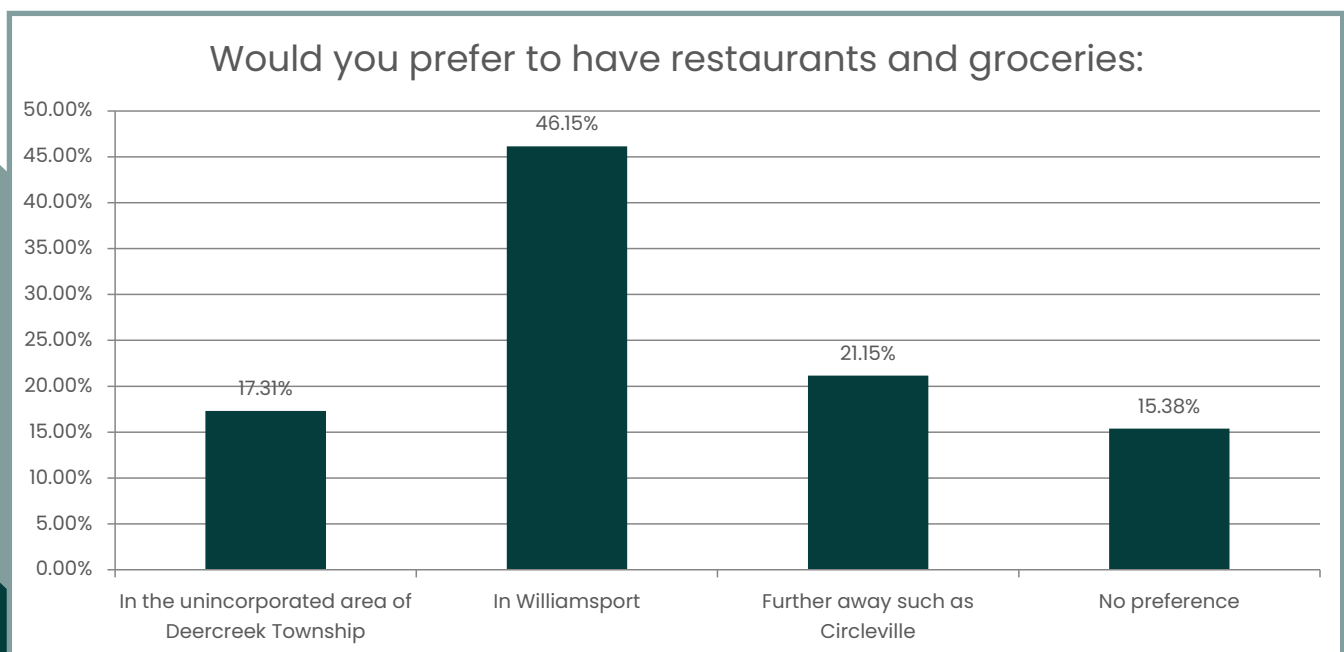


Figure 33: Restaurants and Groceries

Around two-thirds of the respondents support adding additional multi-use trails for the Township, with a third of them as very supportive. As shown later in this survey, the trails in and around the Township are popular among the respondents, despite their satisfaction with their current state not completely ideal. Therefore, the Township should consider contacting the Pickaway County Parks District (the agency that maintains the local trails) to create plans and a potential partnership for improving the current trails.

Are you supportive of or against adding new multi-use paths in Deercreek Township? These allow for walking, biking, etc.

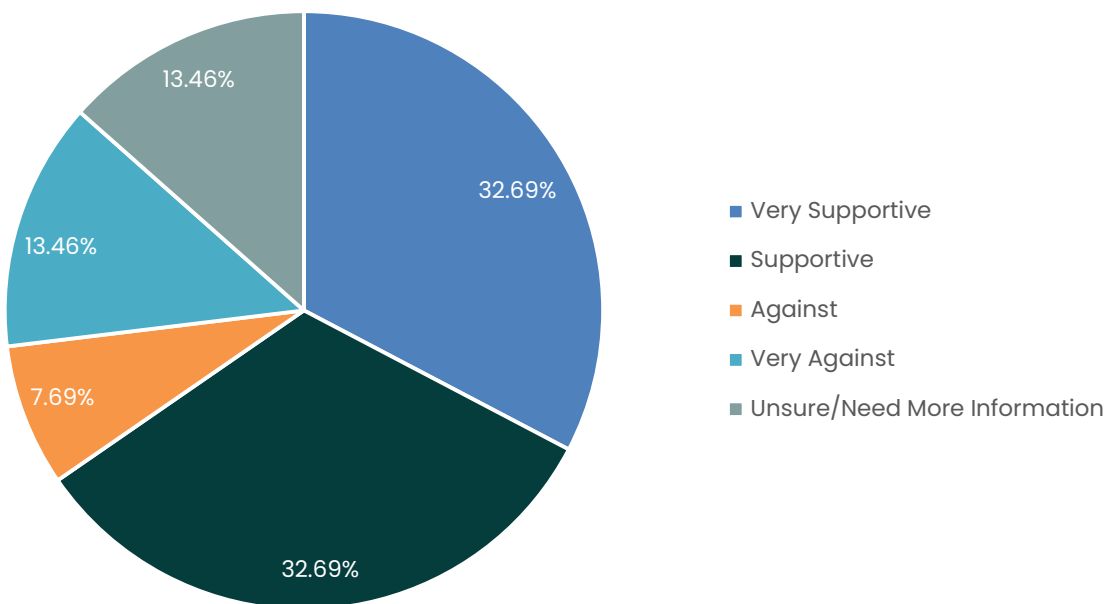


Figure 34: Multi-Use Paths



The respondents mostly range from being indifferent to against cannabis farming in the Township. Most of them listed their opinion on potential cannabis farming as neutral (37%) while the second highest choice was very against at 19%. Cannabis dispensaries are more unpopular, with 31% of the respondents being very against their presence in the Township. This shows that while the Township may have the support to allow residents or businesses to grow cannabis, it is highly unlikely that the Township will be able to approve dispensaries with popular support.

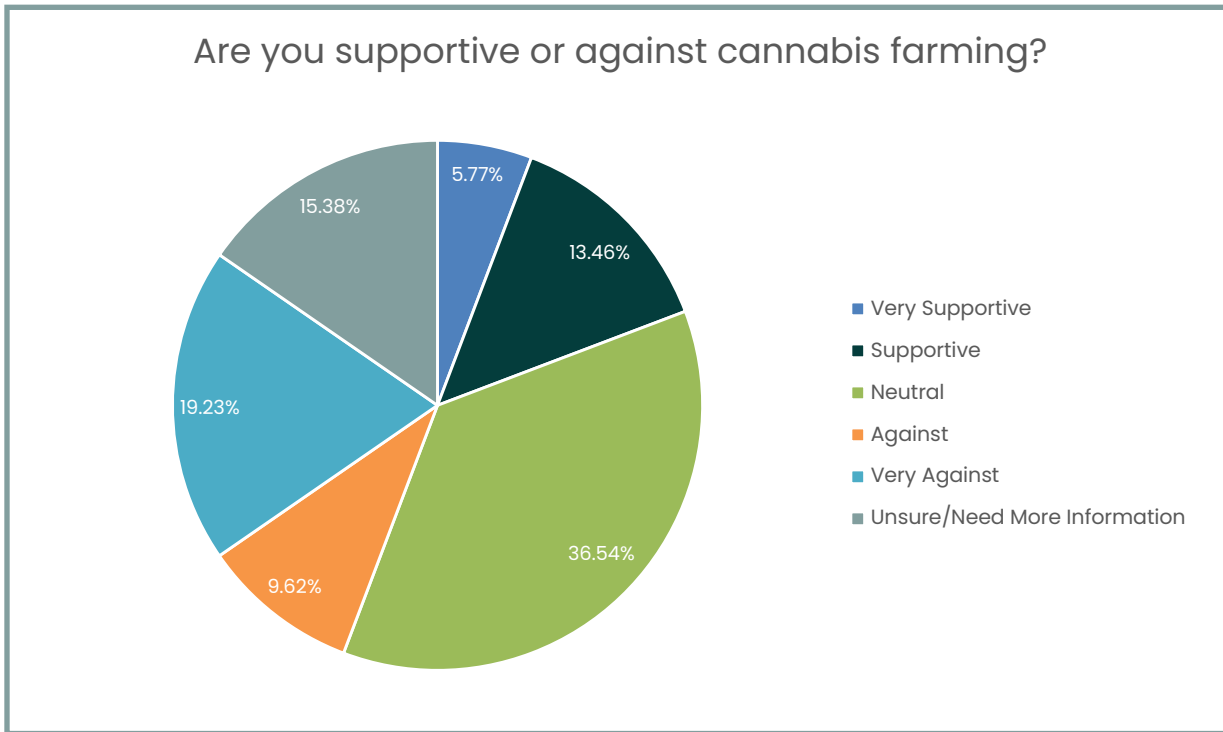


Figure 35: Cannabis farming

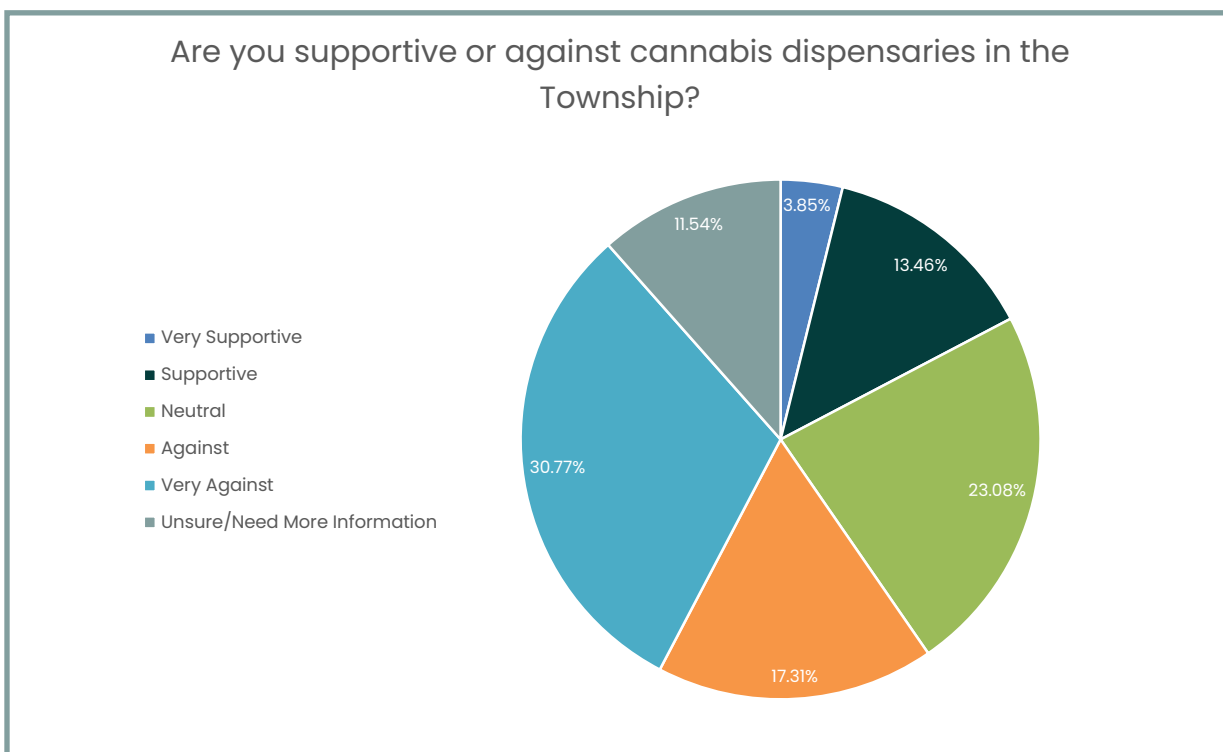


Figure 36: Cannabis Dispensaries

Solar panels, which are often a contentious topic in Central Ohio, have some support for individual households in the Township. Most respondents shown approval of attached panels on individual houses. Only 13 respondents indicated disapproval of all solar panels. These results show that personal solar panels may have the support of residents, larger projects may face opposition.

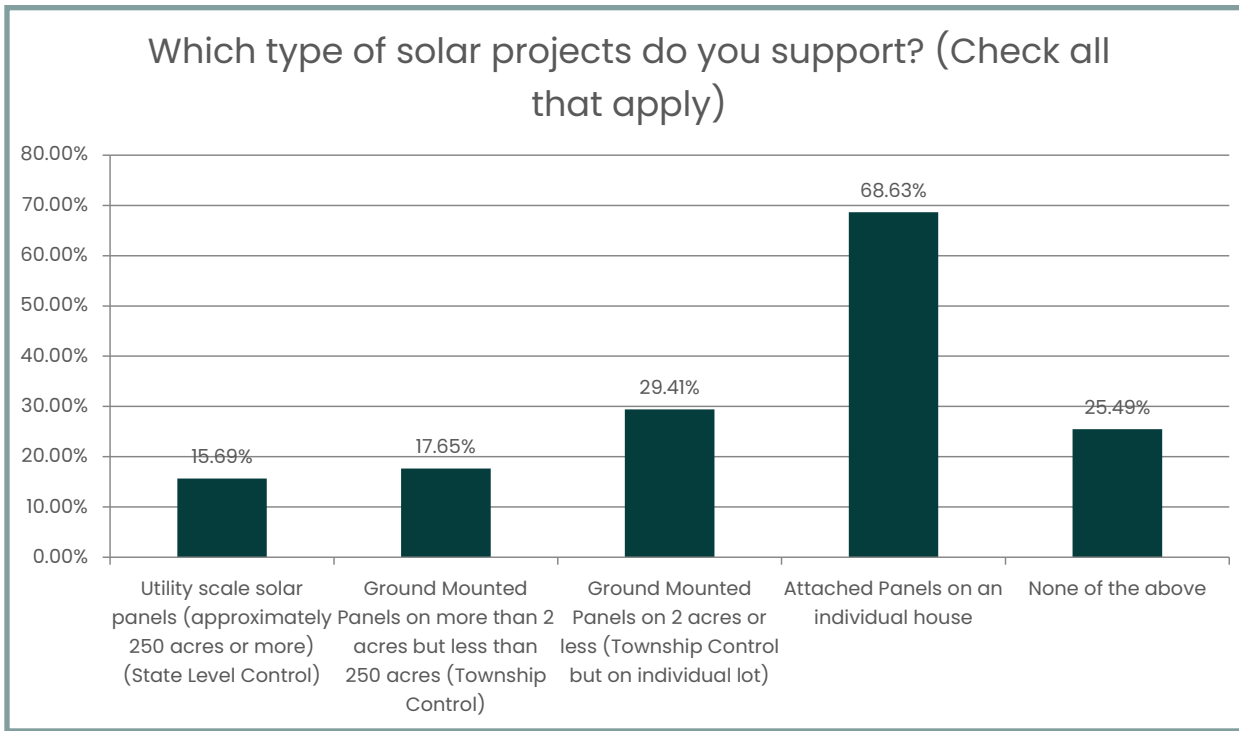


Figure 37: Solar

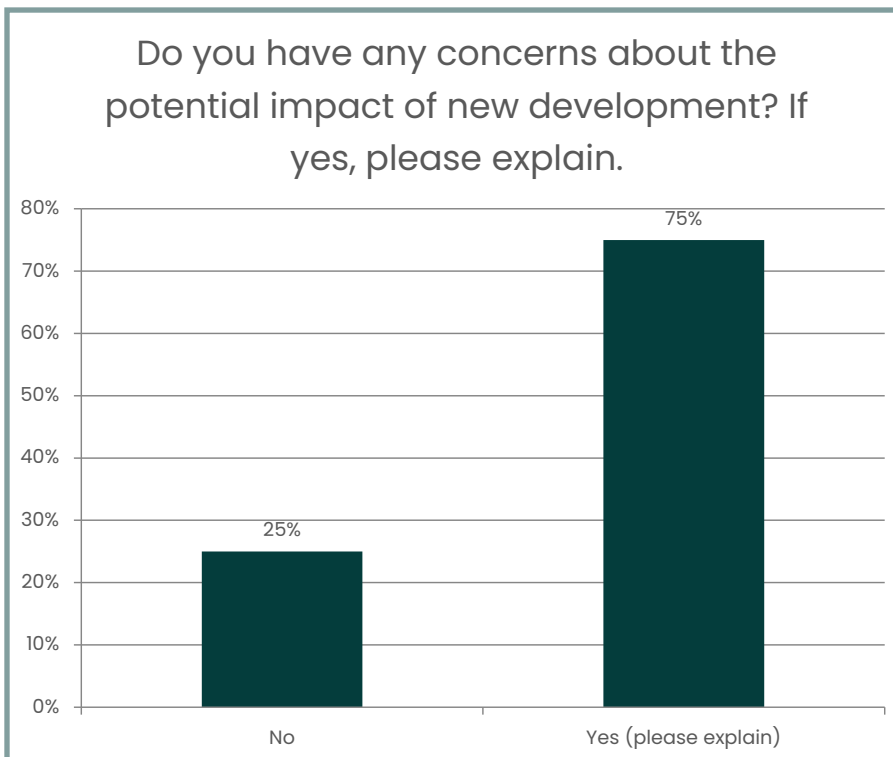


Figure 38: Development Concerns

At three quarters, most of the respondents have at least a few concerns about potential new development in the Township, with only a quarter having no comments. Some common themes included concerns about solar panels and losing the rural character of the Township.

QUESTIONS 19-20: TOWNSHIP SERVICES

For Question 19, the survey listed seven services that the township provides and asked the respondents to rank them from 1 (meaning the service is inadequate) to 5 (meaning the service is top quality). The services that received the highest weighted averages were fire rescue and EMS/first responders, both at a score of 3.83. Roads and parks and recreation received moderate scores, while availability of housing, trails/multi-use paths, and quality of housing received the lowest scores, each scoring lower than 3.00. Question 20 corroborates the residents' lower satisfaction with housing and trails/multi-use paths, as these were among the most chosen services for potential improvement. However, despite receiving a moderate score in Question 19, the residents indicated potential for improvement for roads as well. These results demonstrate that, even though the roads are satisfactory today, there are still areas and topics the Township should address regarding their roads.

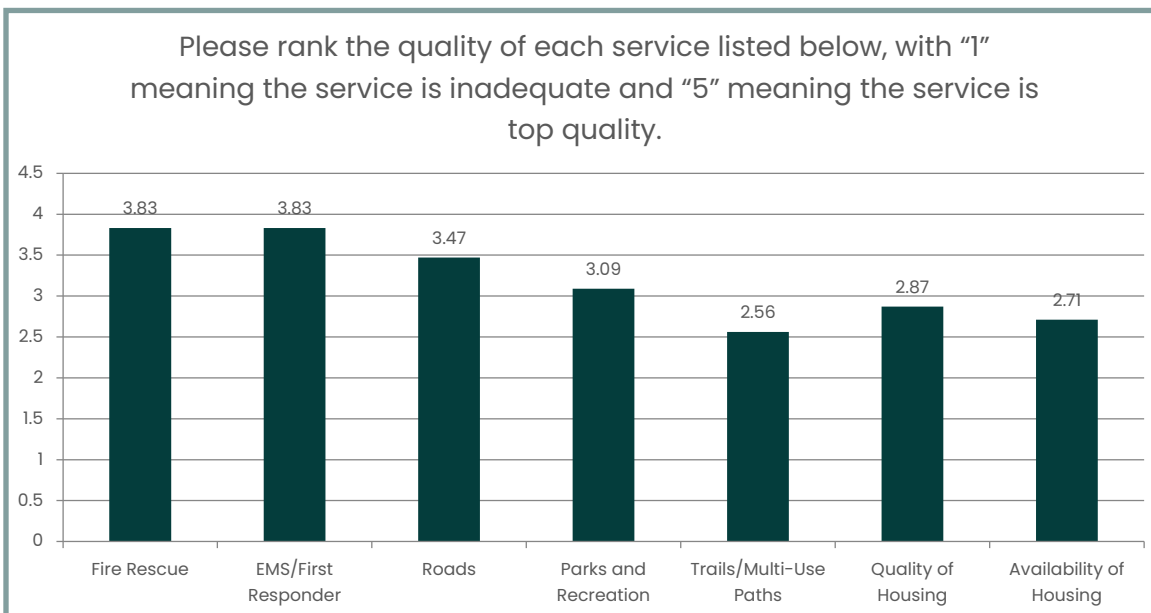


Figure 39:
Service Quality

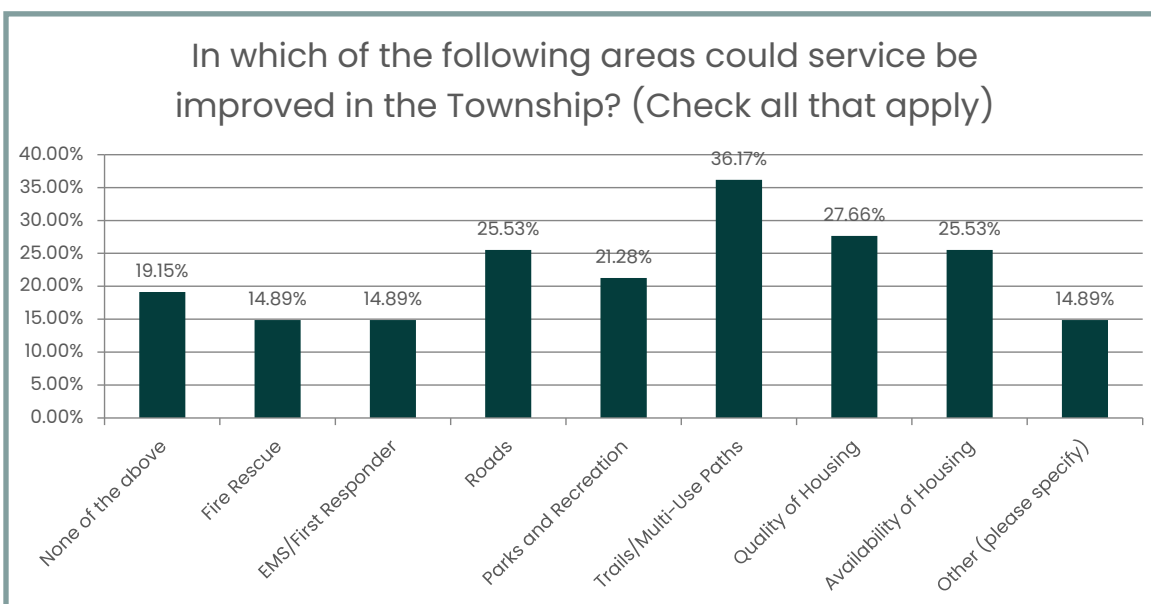


Figure 40:
Service
Improvements

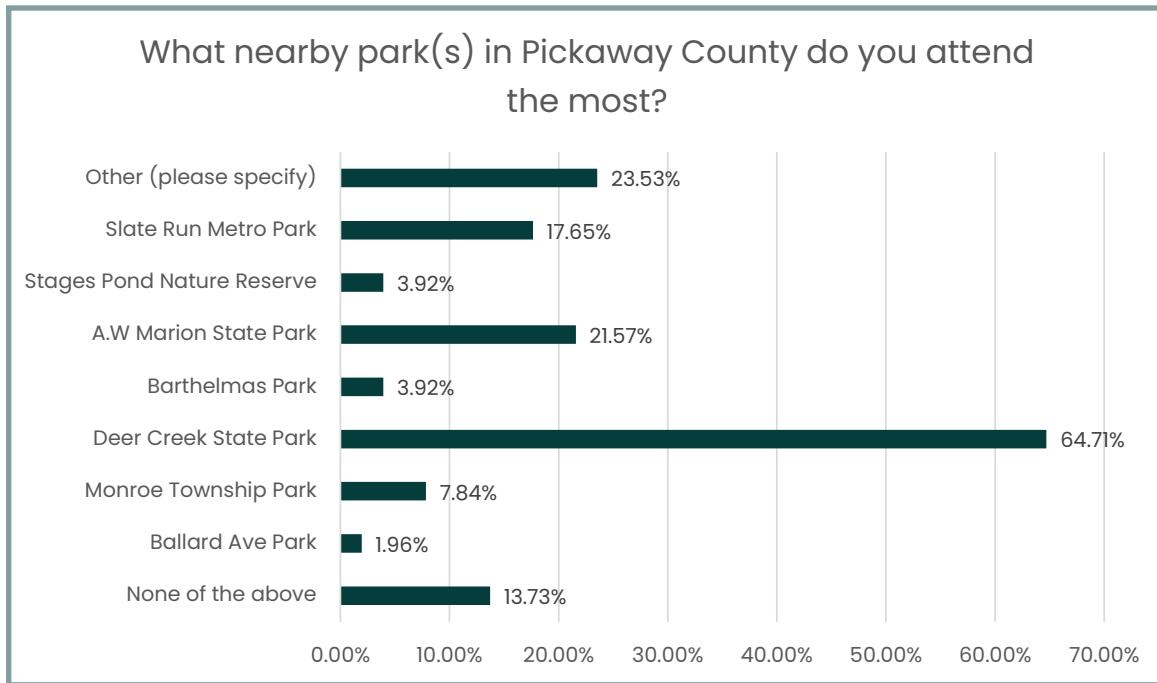


Figure 41: Pickaway Park Visitation

64.7% of respondents indicated they visited Deer Creek State Park the most out of all the parks in Pickaway County. However, most respondents visit a park in Williamsport either once every couple of months or never (46% and 44% respectively). This may explain why the parks and recreation options for Questions 19 and 20 received moderate scores, as parks may not be a common service the respondents use, unlike the trails and multi-use paths (as shown in Question 14).

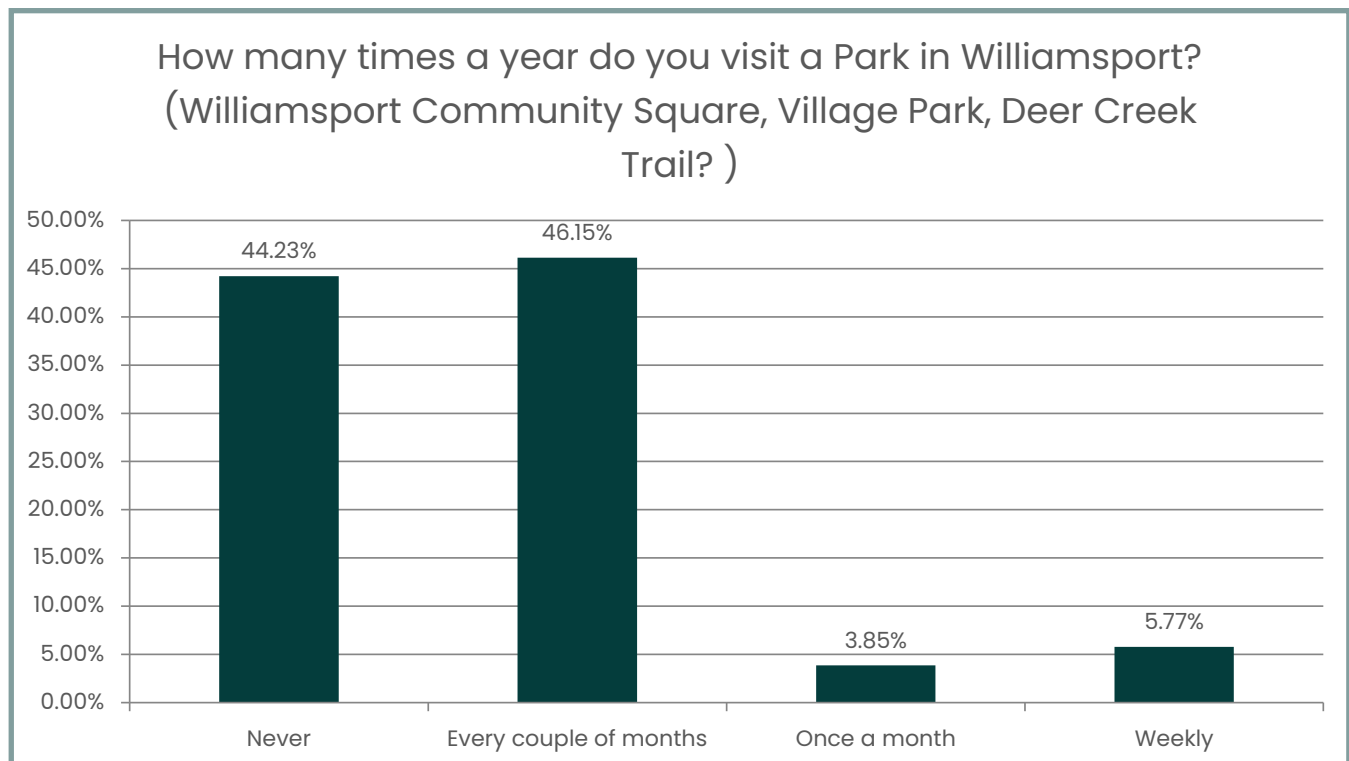


Figure 42: Williamsport Park Visitation

QUESTIONS 23-25: CONTACT INFORMATION AND ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

The final questions asked the respondents about how they would like to receive future information regarding Township matters. Most of the respondents prefer social media, Township platforms, and email as the primary communication method for these updates. Text messages, local newspapers, and local meetings were unpopular choices.

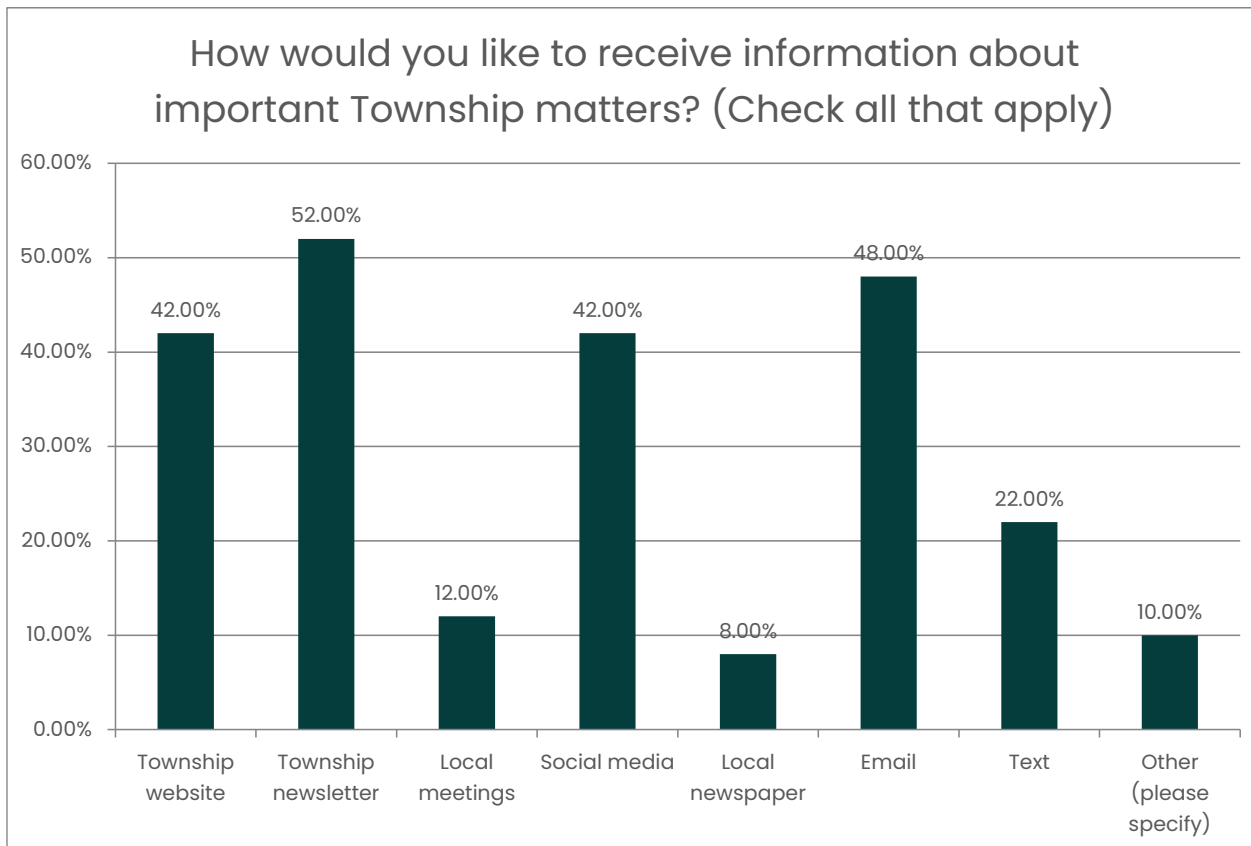


Figure 43: Contact Methods

The final question of the survey asked the respondents if they had “any additional thoughts not covered by the previous questions,” of which 39% responded. However, most of these responses simply stated they have no comments. However, several respondents stated their opposition to solar panels and commitment to preserving farmland in the Township.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

SUMMARY

Overall, the respondents are middle-aged to senior residents of the Township who are concerned about potential development and annexations in the Township. However, many are also looking forward to some changes and additions to the Township and the surrounding areas, such as improved and expanded trails, restaurants, and seasonal agritourism.

Regarding development preferences, residents strongly favored restaurants as the most desired new business, followed distantly by grocery stores and agri-tourism. For housing, single-family homes on large lots were overwhelmingly preferred, with senior housing as a distant second choice. Two-thirds supported additional multi-use trails. For agri-tourism, seasonal farmers' markets and pumpkin patches/corn mazes were most popular.

The Deercreek Dam Days Festival enjoyed strong support (69% approval). Opinion was divided on Williamsport annexing township land, with equal numbers (26%) either strongly opposed or unsure and wanting more information.

Regarding solar development, residents generally supported individual household solar panels but expressed concerns about larger solar projects. Cannabis farming received mixed opinions (37% neutral, 19% strongly against), while dispensaries faced stronger opposition (31% strongly against).

Township services receiving highest satisfaction ratings were fire rescue and EMS/first responders. Roads and parks received moderate ratings, while housing availability/quality and trails received lower satisfaction scores. For communication preferences, residents favored social media and email updates over other methods.

Many respondents (75%) expressed concerns about new development, particularly regarding solar panels and preserving the township's rural character – a sentiment reinforced in their additional comments.

The survey responses played a key role in the development of this plan, and guided the development of the vision statement as well as the goals and recommendations set forth.

GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS



RURAL IDENTITY GOALS

When one travels through Deercreek Township, farm fields abound and the quiet, rural character is ever present. It is this observation that has been a universal truth for Deercreek residents and is often this quiet, rural character that calls former residents back. Through community outreach efforts and discussions with local leaders, this rural community desires preservation by championing farming and the Township's natural resources. The following goals aim to preserve and enhance the rural identity that Deercreek residents know and love.

1. PRESERVE AGRICULTURAL LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Preservation and Promotion of Agricultural Land

Agriculture is essential to the character of Deercreek Township and will continue to be an important facet of the community as it looks toward the future. The future land use map retains agriculture and rural residential land uses as the primary uses outside of the growth nodes around the Village of Williamsport and along US-22. These growth nodes are established to make sure that the Township remains a family-friendly community while also ensuring it retains autonomy against potential development pressures from the Village of Williamsport and the City of Circleville. Within these growth nodes, any change due to development should still be mindful of the wider Township and its history as an agricultural community.

Updating Zoning Code

By updating the community's zoning code, the Township will be better prepared to face economic and societal challenges generated by development pressures from surrounding municipalities. The goal of an updated zoning code should be to emphasize large lot zoning for areas where water and sewer services are not expected in the near future. On the other hand, in areas where water and sewer services may expand, an updated zoning code can be more precise in allowing for increased density with the caveat to build both sustainably and conscientiously. By providing more density where water and sewer services may expand, it allows the Township to retain its rural character in balance of trying to maintain a family-oriented community.



Create a Clustered Conservation Residential Zoning District

As Pickaway County grows and development pressures begin to reach Deercreek Township, it is important to treat residential development in a way that reflects the community's values while preserving rural character and natural resources. By having zoning infrastructure in place that supports the protection of rural open spaces and conservation of natural resources, the Township will be in a better position to retain community identity.

Clustered Conservation Residential offers multiple advantages:

Efficient Land Use: By concentrating homes on smaller lots, the Township can preserve larger areas as open space while creating managed growth opportunities. This use of land reduces the environmental impact and helps maintain the Township's rural feel.

Conservation of Natural Resources: Focusing development in specific areas around the proposed growth nodes helps protect environmentally sensitive regions, such as wetlands, woodlands, and streams, while promoting biodiversity and improved stormwater management.

Infrastructure Efficiency: Clustered conservation development requires less infrastructure – fewer roads, utilities, and sewage systems – leading to reduced development and maintenance costs for both developers and the Township to result in more sustainable growth.

Viewshed and Field Preservation: By designing a Zoning District limited in scope, purposeful in placement and mindful of open space, clustered conservation residential creates a clear message in support of agriculture and rural living to developers seeking to build in the Township. The purposeful placement of housing and open space requirements lend opportunities to lessen the visual impact of new housing by keeping the Township's rural roads and fields clear and visible as residents drive through the area.

These goals associated with Clustered Conservation Residential Zoning Districts are best achieved when paired with strong design standards that establish guidelines for housing layouts, architectural styles, sustainable materials, open space integration, and street design to align with the goals of the Township.

Clustered Conservation
Housing. From: The
American Planning
Association



2. ESTABLISHING A FARMERS' MARKET

Despite being an agrarian community, the nearest farmers' market from the Township is in the City of Circleville. Through public outreach, there has been strong interest in creating a space to host a farmers' market to enhance the community and support local business. The process to undertake this interest should include collaboration between Township Trustees and the Village of Williamsport because of the existing cultural and societal ties between the two communities.

In order to create a farmers' market, leadership between the Township and Williamsport should consider the following:

- Where should the market be located?
- Are there any County Health Department rules to take into account?
- What should the extent of advertising the market be?
- What rules should be included within the market's bylaws? For example, what types of goods can be sold? What days should the market be hosted? How to attract local support without conflicting with the City of Circleville? Etc.
- Discuss plans with the local agriculture county extension office (740-474-6284) and reach out to other farmers' market managers.
- ODA's Food Safety Division can answer questions regarding processed, baked, canned or foods that require refrigeration at your market. (614-728-6250).
- Contact the Ohio Farmers' Market Managers Network at 740-289-2071 ext. 234¹⁶

Once the farmers' market is established, it is recommended that the Township provide clear notice to potential vendors regarding licensing and tax rules that are required by the State of Ohio's Revised Code and Administrative Code. This will be helpful to help guide potential vendors as to when they do and do not need a license.

As stated by The Ohio State University, College of Food, Agriculture, and Environmental Sciences' "Law Bulletin": "If the vendor is not required to charge tax, then a vendor's license is not required."¹⁷ This means that the sales tax exception rule that states, "[s]ales of food for human consumption off the premises where sold" applied to farmers' markets does not require a vendor to acquire a vendor's license. It is recommended that the list of foods that fall under this exception are provided somewhere within the bylaws and reference to Ohio Administrative Code § 5703-9-23 for agricultural tax code and ORC § 3717.22(B)(2) for vendor license exemptions.

16. <https://ohioproud.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/FarmMarketStartup.pdf>

17. <https://farmoffice.osu.edu/sites/aglaw/files/site-library/Vendor%27s%20Licenses%20and%20Sales%20Taxes%20at%20Ohio%20Farmers%20Markets.pdf>

3. GENERATE A UNIFYING BOND BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY THROUGH ENCOURAGING AGRITOURISM OPPORTUNITIES.

In addition to the establishment of a farmers' market, other opportunities abound to highlight the agrarian community in the Township through agritourism initiatives. By working alongside the agricultural community, the Township Trustees can create a foundation for agritourism to thrive within the community while also expanding the economic utility of farmland. The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines "Agritourism" as "a form of commercial enterprise that links production and/or processing with tourism to attract visitors onto a farm, ranch, or other agricultural business for the purposes of entertaining or educating the visitors while generating income for the farm, ranch, or business owner."¹⁹ Examples of agritourism include, but are not limited to, "you-pick" farms, community festivals, farm stands, corn mazes, hayrides, and other fun or education activities that are agriculturally related. Agritourism presents a way for farmers to add an additional revenue source for their land while also generating community pride and deterring undesirable development from encroaching upon the land. It is recommended that Township Trustees and community leaders engage with farmers to learn more about these opportunities.

19. <https://www.nal.usda.gov/human-nutrition-and-food-safety/local-foods-and-communities/agritourism>



Apple Picking in Ohio.

From: Ohio.org

4. PURSUE STATE CONSERVATION GRANTS AND EDUCATE LANDOWNERS ABOUT AGRICULTURAL EASEMENTS

State Conservation Grants

The preservation of farmland should not be the only priority of the community when it comes to mindfulness of the Township's rural landscapes. The recognition of natural systems and their preservation is another goal towards achieving the Vision Statement of this Plan. Deercreek Township is fortunate to enjoy a vibrant hunting scene, nearby county parks, and the Deer Creek State Park. To further celebrate this presence, the Township Trustees may consider collaboration with other local entities to pursue grants provided by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to encourage community members to engage with the natural resources that the Township has to offer.

Step Outside Grant – The ODNR Division of Wildlife offers a grant available “to local government agencies, non-profit organizations, and other family and youth-oriented facilities to promote outdoor skills such as fishing, hunting, trapping, archery, and shooting sports.”²⁰ Through providing aid to host educational, hands-on experiences such as fishing, hunting, and other outdoor recreational activities that can help bring the family and community together, the Township can partner with community and county agencies to help promote a connection to the land through hosting these grant funded activities.

Agricultural Easements

An agricultural easement ensures that an existing farm remains dedicated to farming, safeguarding it from being developed for non-agricultural purposes. By maintaining the scenic beauty and rural character of the area, these easements protect the landscape that defines your community's identity and appeal. Additionally, agricultural easements can offer financial incentives, such as tax benefits, allowing community farmers to be eligible for federal, state, or local tax deductions or credits. Establishing an agricultural easement allows for a farmer to leave a legacy of land stewardship, ensuring that the land remains productive and valuable for agriculture long into the future.

20. <https://ohiodnr.tfaforms.net/4624885>



SIMPLIFIED STEPS TO OBTAINING AN AGRICULTURAL EASEMENT

1. Connect with Local Organizations

Reach out to organizations like the Ohio Farmland Preservation Association or local land trusts.

These groups specialize in agricultural easements and can provide tailored guidance for preserving farmland in Deercreek Township.

2. Consult Pickaway County Agencies

Contact the Pickaway County Planning Commission or the OSU Extension Office for resources and information about local programs that support agricultural preservation.

4. Prepare and Submit the Application

Work closely with the organization to complete the application process. This may include a site visit to evaluate your property, determining the land's value, and drafting the terms of the easement agreement.

3. Start the Process

Schedule a consultation with your chosen organization or county agency to discuss your land, your preservation goals, and the specific requirements for establishing an agricultural easement in Deercreek Township.

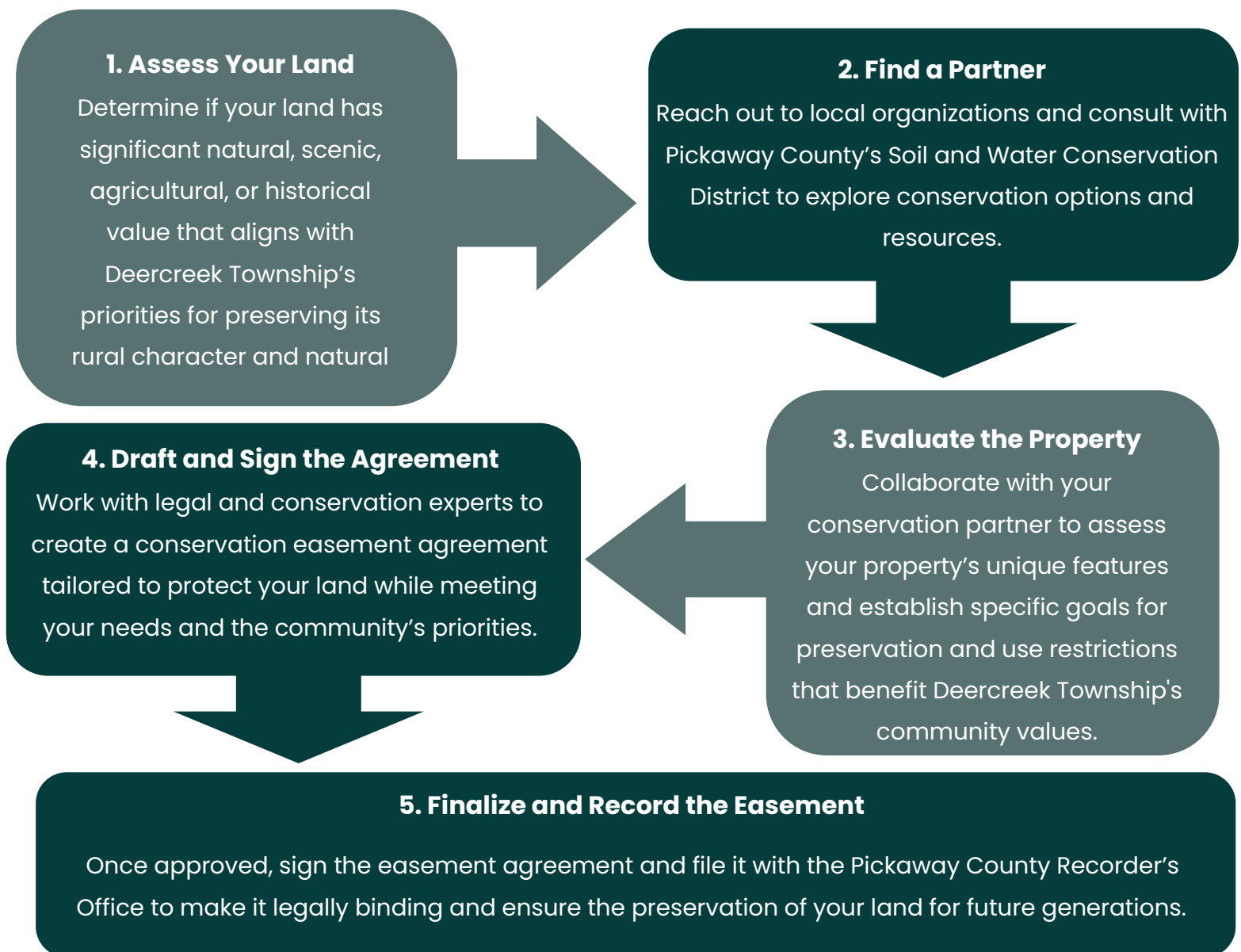
5. Finalize and Record the Easement

Once approved, sign the easement agreement and file it with the Pickaway County Recorder's Office to make it legally binding and ensure the preservation of your land for future generations.

Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a conservation organization or government agency that restricts certain types of development on the property to protect its natural, scenic, or historical values. This agreement ensures that the land is preserved in its current state or managed according to specific conservation goals. In return, landowners may benefit from various tax incentives, including federal income tax deductions, state tax credits, and potential property tax reductions. The easement also typically requires ongoing stewardship and monitoring to ensure that the conservation goals are met and that the property is managed properly. Importantly, the agreement remains in effect with the land, regardless of changes in ownership, thereby ensuring that the property's conservation values are preserved for future generations.

SIMPLIFIED STEPS TO OBTAINING A CONSERVATION EASEMENT



LAND USE GOALS

The Future Land Use Map highlights the aspirational land uses within Deercreek Township for the coming years. The Land Use Map should be utilized to guide planning, development, and zoning decisions within the Township.

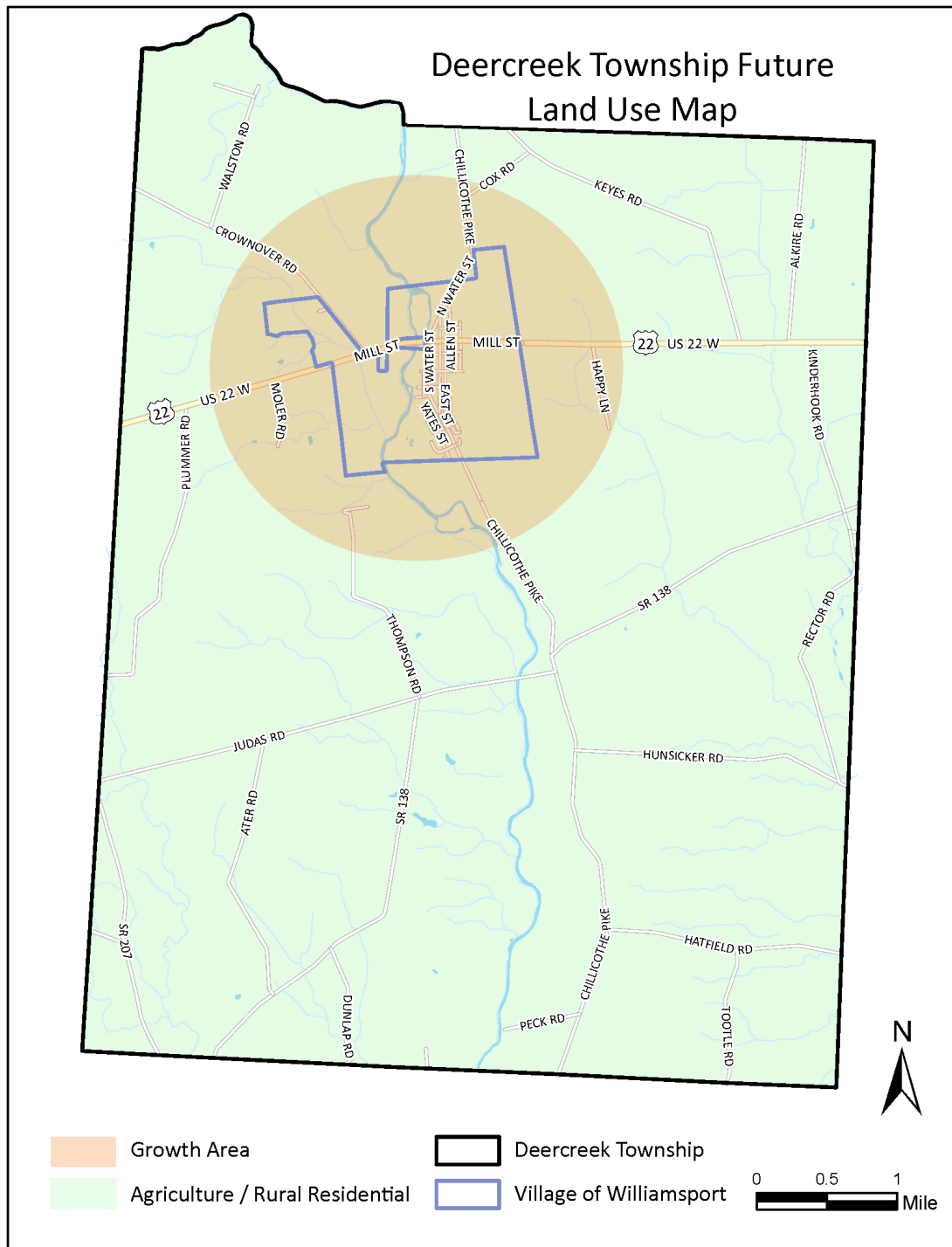


Figure 44: Future Land Use Map

1. ALIGN LAND USE DECISIONS WITH FUTURE LAND USE MAP

Agriculture/Rural Residential

These areas are planned to remain agricultural or large lot rural residential uses. These areas do not face strong development pressures and are expected to retain their current uses looking towards the future.

Clustered Conservation Area

Currently, the zoning code designates areas as Farm Residential and Rural Residential, with the latter allowing homes to be built closer together. While Rural Residential zoning exists throughout the township, it is most prevalent along the US 22 corridor.

Introducing a clustered conservation overlay in this area would enable higher development standards, including buffering, height restrictions, color and design guidelines, and other measures to ensure compatibility with the rural character.

The planning process identified the clustered residential area along US 22 due to its close proximity to Williamsport and location along a major corridor. The implementation of clustered residential uses supports a conscientious endeavor for limited population growth in the Township. As the demographics data shows, the population of the Township is stagnant and the median age of the community is high. By limiting and targeting growth along this major corridor, the Township will be able to maintain its rural community feel while also providing accommodating spaces for potential growth.

Clustered conservation housing presents an opportunity to preserve open space while accommodating some housing demand. Survey results indicate that the availability of housing was rated 2.8/5, suggesting moderate concern. Although there is limited interest in large-scale residential growth, clustered conservation offers a balanced approach—allowing for additional housing while maintaining the township's rural aesthetics. By strategically locating homes away from major roadways and preserving natural landscapes, this approach can enhance housing quality and availability without compromising the township's visual character.

Clustered conservation housing can be utilized both with and without centralized water and sewer systems. On tracts with access to central water and sewer, lot sizes can be greatly reduced to maximize the amount of preserved land. On sites without central water and sewer systems, lot sizes must be increased to the minimum requirement for use of a septic system, but

still incorporate reduced lot sizes compared to traditional rural residential development and can incorporate features such as multi-use paths and creative site design, as shown in Figure 45.



Figure 45: Conceptual renderings of clustered conservation housing, where the left tract highlights an example of on-site septic systems, and the right image displays a layout where central water and sewer are utilized.

Growth Area

To support economic development while maintaining the rural character, Deercreek Township can establish a designated growth area along US 22, surrounding Williamsport, to serve as a vibrant hub for small-scale businesses, local commerce, and community gathering spaces. This area would encourage small, locally owned business development while preserving open space. The Growth Area was determined by interest from survey results, public discussion, and input from the stakeholder group to identify an area where agricultural-related businesses and other small businesses could be implemented in the Township.

In order to realize the goal of a growth area surrounding Williamsport that will align with the Township's vision, the Township should explore the ability to utilize water and sewer services from Williamsport, as well as other partnerships such as the establishment of a Cooperative Economic Development Agreement (CEDA).

A CEDA would enable Williamsport and the Township to collaborate on development projects, infrastructure expansion, and economic initiatives. A key feature of the CEDAs should be a non-

annexation clause, which restricts annexation of the Township by Williamsport. CEDAs also promote shared benefits, allowing both entities to receive a portion of the economic gains, such as increased tax revenues.

Recommended Land Use and Features of the Growth Area

Small-Scale Businesses & Artisan Shops:

- Encourage cafés, bakeries, and farm-to-table restaurants that reflect the township's agricultural roots and offer fresh, locally sourced products.
- Support craft shops, antique stores, and artisan markets that provide unique, locally made goods and attract both residents and visitors.
- Permit seasonal businesses and pop-up shops to enhance economic diversity without requiring large-scale permanent development.

Flexible Green Space & Event Venue:

- Designate a multi-purpose green space that can accommodate farmers' markets, craft fairs, food truck gatherings, and seasonal events.
- Establish a covered pavilion or tented area to allow for year-round community and business events, providing a venue for local entrepreneurs and organizations.
- Incorporate walking paths, seating areas, and landscaping to create an inviting, pedestrian-friendly environment.

Agri-Tourism and Eco-Tourism:

The growth area of Deercreek Township surrounding Williamsport, with its proximity to Deer Creek State Park, presents an ideal opportunity to establish agritourism and ecotourism destination. This area can serve as a hub for outdoor recreation, hunting tourism, and nature-based activities while preserving the township's rural character.

To support outdoor recreation, the area could feature bait shops, hunting and fishing outfitters, and outdoor gear stores that cater to both tourists and local residents. The natural assets of Deer Creek offer an excellent opportunity to introduce canoe, kayak, and paddleboard rentals, expanding the area's appeal beyond hunting and fishing to a broader audience of outdoor enthusiasts.

The growth area should be designed with conservation and sustainability in mind. Partnerships with local and state conservation organizations like Pickaway County Parks District and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources could help implement habitat preservation initiatives.

Beyond tourism, this initiative would strengthen the local economy by creating jobs and supporting small businesses. Local farms could benefit from agritourism partnerships, offering fresh produce, meats, and handmade goods to visitors. Additionally, a well-developed eco-tourism area would provide residents with more recreational opportunities while maintaining the scenic beauty and rural character that defines the township.

2. UPDATE THE ZONING CODE

Introduce overlay districts with design guidelines to ensure new developments align with rural aesthetics. An Overlay District is layered on top of an existing zoning district and establishes additional use and development standards, including: road setbacks, aesthetic considerations, architectural requirements, landscaping specifications, design elements, building dimensions, density limitations, and other criteria. These regulations are intended to promote high-quality development throughout the designated overlay area.

Overlay Districts are commonly referred to as "cloud zoning" because they hover over a specific area of the Township, defined by overlay boundaries. The notable characteristic of this "cloud" is that the underlying zoning remains applicable until a property owner chooses to "pull down" the cloud by submitting and receiving approval for a development plan that complies with the Overlay District criteria.

This approach provides property owners with flexibility by offering two development options – they may proceed under either the underlying zoning or the overlay zoning provisions. When a property owner elects to pull down the cloud, the underlying zoning designation is superseded. Individual property owners may implement the overlay provisions at different times, though all such actions occur within the established framework of the Overlay District.

Within each area of an overlay district, there can be subareas that have further design standards and regulations that must be upheld. Overlays are a great way to protect the character of a Township and build a well thought out community.



COMMUNITY GOALS

1. IMPROVE COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY

Strengthen communication and build trust between the township government and residents by fostering open dialogue, increasing accessibility, and providing regular updates on township affairs.

- **Quarterly Township Newsletter** – Launch a digital newsletter to provide updates on projects, finances, and key decisions. Summarize important information from meeting minutes to ensure transparency.
 - ⇒ Create a volunteer position of communications officer to handle these duties. The Township Administrator and the Communications Officer can be in contact to decide the highlights of the meeting minutes, to decide what is most impactful to share with the public.
- **Citizen Advisory Committee** – Another important step in promoting transparency is establishing a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), which would allow residents to provide direct input on township decisions. This committee, appointed by the Trustees, would serve as a formal mechanism for community members to review and comment on key issues. A model for this exists within the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), where the CAC plays a crucial role in the transportation planning process. Implementing a similar structure in the township would encourage greater public involvement and ensure that diverse perspectives are considered in decision-making.
- **Township Meetings** – Improving accessibility to township meetings is also a key component of increasing public engagement. One potential change is relocating regular township meetings to the fire station, which could provide a larger space for residents. As an initial step, the township could pilot this change by holding quarterly meetings at the fire station before transitioning to a long-term arrangement. In addition, offering a Zoom link for remote participation would allow residents to watch trustee and zoning commission meetings virtually, ensuring that those who cannot attend in person still have the opportunity to stay informed and engaged.

2. ENHANCE PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES

- **Coordinate** between the Township government, the Southwest Pickaway Fire District, and the Williamsport and Deercreek Emergency Squad (WADES) EMS to apply for grant funding to support volunteer service providers.
- **Identify and secure staffing and equipment** needs to meet the needs of the community.
- **Assess steps necessary to attract volunteers** to public safety services or assess steps necessary to transition to a paid workforce.

Currently, two separate volunteer-based public safety service entities provide for the care and welfare of Deercreek Township residents in the form of the Southwest Pickaway Fire District and WADES EMS. These two services have experienced a tremendous upgrade in their community with the construction of the new fire station when the tax levy passed in 2022. However, both entities are restricted due to the lack of dedicated sleeping accommodations in the station as well as the difficulty in finding new volunteers to serve either service. The following describes a variety of potential funding sources to support the Fire District and EMS services.

Grant Funding to Support Volunteer Service Providers

In order to ensure that Deercreek Township's volunteers continue to receive the training and equipment necessary for them to provide their services, there are many avenues to apply for such aid at the state and federal level. According to ORC 4765.07, EMS organizations seeking aid for personnel training and equipment and vehicle purchasing as well as to improve service availability, accessibility, and quality receive priority in grant funding.³ As for volunteer fire departments, many grants are only accessible to small, rural departments that serve small populations and have limited funding opportunities.

Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation – Safety Grant

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation Safety Grant offers the Firefighter Exposure to Environmental Elements Grant (FEEEG) to fire departments which provide funds to purchase equipment to better protect themselves. The following list provides the qualified items available to provide protection:

- Diesel Exhaustion Systems (local source (tailpipe) capture, not general dilution/filtration ventilation)
- Extractors/Washing Machines for Turnout Gear or Personal Protective Equipment
- Hoods with Barrier Protection
- Turnout Gear
- Turnout Gear Drying Machines
- Washable Gloves (structural firefighter glove or one that meets the requirements of NFPA 1971)

3. <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-4765.07>

4. <https://info.bwc.ohio.gov/for-employers/safety-services/safety-grants/feeeg>

Ohio Department of Commerce – Division of State Fire Marshal

The Division of State Fire Marshal at the Ohio Department of Commerce offers several grant opportunities designed specifically to help small fire departments ranging from firefighter training to radio communication systems.

Fire Training Reimbursement Grant – This grant provides reimbursement for specific fire training classes, including the cost of training manuals and student workbooks. These classes are limited to firefighters only, but they do include volunteer firefighter courses. To qualify, the grant is available to departments that serve a population of 25,000 people or less.⁵

Individual and Joint Fire Department Equipment Grant – This grant offers funding for equipment such as, but not limited to, protective clothing, SCBA, and communications equipment. To qualify, the grant is available to volunteer fire departments that serve a population of 25,000 people or less, compliant with the Volunteer Firefighters' Dependents Fund, and have submitted incident fire reports for the previous year.⁶

Multi-Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS) Grant – This grant offers funding to purchase systems, equipment, and/or services that are a part of, integrated into, or otherwise interoperable with MARCS. To qualify, this grant is available to fire departments that serve a population of 25,000 people or less.⁷

Firefighter I Training Grant – Should the Township wish to entertain the idea to encourage the fire department to transition to paid firefighters, the Ohio Department of Commerce offers a grant that pays for the cost of Firefighter I or Firefighter I Transition certification courses at approved class providers. This grant is dispersed on a first come, first serve basis.⁸

United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development

The USDA offers loan and grant programs to aid in rural development of community facilities. A rural area is designated by the USDA as one with no more than 20,000 residents and grant approval is based upon a graduated scale based upon smaller communities with lower median household income being eligible for a higher proportion of grant funds. These funds can be used to assist in the construction of public safety facilities and their improvements as well as assistance for vehicles and equipment.⁹

5. <https://com.ohio.gov/divisions-and-programs/state-fire-marshal/grants/training-reimbursement-grant>

6. <https://com.ohio.gov/divisions-and-programs/state-fire-marshal/grants/fire-department-equipment-grant>

7. <https://com.ohio.gov/divisions-and-programs/state-fire-marshal/grants/MARCS-grant-application>

8. <https://com.ohio.gov/divisions-and-programs/state-fire-marshal/grants/firefighter-training-grant-package>

9. <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program#overview>

National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT) – Federal Funding Database

The NAEMT offers a database to find federal grant opportunities offered by federal agencies for the training of and assistance to firefighting and EMS personnel.¹⁰

Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) – This grant is available through FEMA to provide firefighting and EMS entities the funds to obtain equipment, protective gear, emergency vehicles, training, and other resources necessary for protecting the public and emergency personnel from fire and other hazards. For example, the neighboring Pickaway Volunteer Fire Department received a cumulative \$1,725,618 since 2017 for operations and safety and vehicle acquisition.¹¹

Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant – This grant provides funding directly to volunteer fire departments to help increase or maintain the number of trained firefighters. The table below shows the awarded grants to Ohio fire departments for the hiring of firefighters in 2024:¹²

Organization	State	Program	Award Amount	Award Date ▼
City of Streetsboro Fire Department	OH	Hiring of Firefighters	\$1,184,714	9/23/24
Monclova Township	OH	Hiring of Firefighters	\$1,013,046	9/23/24
City of Euclid	OH	Hiring of Firefighters	\$1,539,288	9/23/24
Reminderville Admin ofc	OH	Hiring of Firefighters	\$1,008,891	9/23/24
Clinton Township	OH	Hiring of Firefighters	\$1,218,784	9/23/24
Eastern Knox County Joint Fire District	OH	Hiring of Firefighters	\$1,267,859	9/23/24
City of Delphos	OH	Hiring of Firefighters	\$1,808,905	9/23/24
Norwich Twp	OH	Hiring of Firefighters	\$2,454,899	9/6/24
Willoughby City of Fire Department	OH	Hiring of Firefighters	\$1,335,553	9/6/24
City of Elyria	OH	Hiring of Firefighters	\$847,503	8/16/24
City of Northwood	OH	Hiring of Firefighters	\$939,819	8/2/24

Figure 46: SAFER Grant Recipients

10. <https://www.naemt.org/resources/federal-funding>

11. <https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/firefighters/assistance-grants>

12. <https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/firefighters/safer>

Rural Emergency Medical Services Training Grant –

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has offered this grant to rural non-profit emergency medical service agencies in the past and provides a two-year project period to fund

the recruitment and training of EMS personnel in rural areas with a particular focus on addressing substance use and mental disorders. Due to this being a two-year project, the grant is currently unavailable, but may be reopened in 2026 for renewed recruitment and training efforts.¹³



The Effects of Grant Funding

In light of the above information, the Township should coordinate with the Fire District and WADES to determine the staffing and equipment needs to provide the best potential services to the residents of the Township. Once these needs are assessed, exploring and applying for state and federal grant options may serve as a successful avenue to meet those needs.

By providing training opportunities and equipment to the volunteers of these public services that are paid for by grants, it accomplishes several goals at once. In meetings with the public, a general concern exists regarding increasing taxes to meet public service needs. Therefore, one of these goals is accomplished by supplementing service improvements through grant funding, which allows residents' tax dollars to be spent on further improving the services in whatever gaps form between the grant awards. This reduces the likelihood for the need of increasing taxes for support training, equipment, and facility costs. Another goal regarding public services is to attract volunteers to serve as fire fighters and EMTs. By applying to these grant programs, the accessibility to become a volunteer is greatly improved due to the ability to provide volunteers with the training and equipment necessary to serve their communities.

13. <https://www.samhsa.gov/grants/grant-announcements/ti-23-011>

The Question of Transitioning from Volunteer to Paid Safety Services

The hard work put forth by the volunteers of the Southwest Pickaway Fire District and WADES is certainly praiseworthy and the chiefs of these respective organizations both share a long-term goal in someday transitioning to a paid service so that the personnel can be rewarded for their services and provide an increasingly reliable service. Transitioning to a paid department is not an easy task, however, and this section outlines some ideas for collaboration with these departments should they choose to pursue transitioning to paid departments.

Considerations:

- One of the larger barriers to transitioning is the fact that the new fire station lacks 24/7 occupancy due to there being no sleeping quarters. Should a transition to paid departments be pursued, it will be necessary to invest in improving the existing facility to meet this need.
- The departments should take inventory of the personnel as described in the above section. However, in addition to how many personnel are necessary to meet the needs of the community, the consideration of how many personnel required per shift to handle the volume of responses is also necessary. The following questions should be asked:
 - ⇒ Should there be a ranking system for shift assignments?
 - ⇒ Is there room to still utilize volunteers who cannot make the shift to paid workers as volunteers or part-time support staff?
 - ⇒ How would a paid department respond to turnover? The costs of training/equipment should be especially considered.
 - ⇒ Should there be a command staff present?¹⁴
- The departments should consider how funding will be allocated. Both departments already have an advantage by providing services across multiple jurisdictions, therefore, the Township should ensure that the departments and the other jurisdictions, including itself, are included in any conversation involving a transition.¹⁵

14. See, <https://www.dovedesigns.com/blogs/thenest/how-to-take-your-department-from-volunteer-to-paid>; <https://www.firerescue1.com/fire-products/fire-department-management/articles/reignite-quick-take-making-the-volunteer-to-paid-conversion-ydmhtiLP9APDj3dw/>

15. See, <https://www.thebigredguide.com/insights/addressing-transition-volunteer-paid-career-firefighters.1673844225.html#:~:text=Transitioning%20from%20a%20volunteer%20to,do%20well%20to%20think%20ahead.>

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The implementation matrix outlines each goal within the comprehensive plan and defines the party that will lead the initiative to complete each goal. The implementation matrix also provides a timeframe guideline for the goal to be completed. The timeframes are broken into short-term (within 1 year), medium-term (1 to 3 years), and long-term (3+ year) goals.

Goal	Responsible Party	Timeframe
Protect agricultural zoning outside of growth nodes.	Zoning Commission	Short-Term
Update zoning code to support a small-business focused growth area around Williamsport.	Zoning Commission, Township Trustees	Medium-Term
Update Zoning Code and create a Clustered Conservation Residential Zoning District.	Zoning Commission, Township Trustees	Medium-Term
Establish a Farmers Market.	Township Trustees, Village of Williamsport	Long-Term
Support and highlight agritourism opportunities within the Township.	Township Trustees	Short-Term
Pursue State conservation grants to protect key areas of the Township.	Township Trustees, Potential Non-Profit Partner	Medium-Term
Promote and educate landowners on agricultural and conservation easements.	Township Trustees	Short-Term
Create and distribute a quarterly Township newsletter.	Township Trustees, Zoning Commission	Medium-Term

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

CONTINUED

Goal	Responsible Party	Timeframe
Consider development of a Citizen Advisory Committee.	Township Trustees	Short-Term
Offer remote options for accessing Township meetings, such as Zoom.	Township Trustees, Zoning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals	Short-Term
Evaluate and apply for grants to support Fire and EMS services for equipment and staffing needs.	Township Trustees, Fire District, Consultant	Medium-Term
Assess and study the ability to transform the Fire District from a volunteer to paid force.	Township Trustees, Fire District, Consultant	Long-Term