

BROWN TOWNSHIP

ESTABLISHED 1830

Summer 2024

Preserving Local Control

The Vital Role of Township Zoning

In the first year of the 135th General Assembly, the Ohio Senate established the Senate Select Committee on Housing. The newly minted committee is charged with delving into the housing crisis in Ohio and proposing legislative solutions to tackle the pressing issue. The committee conducted hearings both in Columbus and across the state gathering local insights on the nature of the crisis.

Why is Ohio facing a housing crisis, and what is causing it? Turns out, this is an extremely complex issue.

According to economic development experts, Ohio has a massive shortage in the number of homes available to rent or purchase. The concern is that the lack of housing, particularly affordable housing, will hinder current and future economic development projects. It is estimated the number of homes Ohio needs to have is around 250,000 to satisfy current and future demand. But building 250,000 new homes isn't going to solve the crisis. Why? Well, there are several factors.

Affordability is a major roadblock to housing. We all have heard the stories of how home buying changed during the pandemic. People wanted to buy homes rather than rent and there were many people coming into Ohio from high-cost states. There were only so many existing homes on the market or few new homes were being built due to the lack of building supplies. Homebuyers were sometimes offering upwards of \$25,000-\$75,000 over asking price in

their initial offer.

Interest rates are a huge factor in affordability. Developers, like home buyers, generally take out loans for the properties they purchase and develop. The days of a \$125,000 starter home are long gone. The Ohio Homebuilders Association has stated that the lowest cost for which a developer can build a starter home today is in the low \$300,000 range.

"... there have been statements made that township zoning is cumbersome and is a root cause of the lack of housing in Ohio."

How is this affordable for those first-time home buyers? In today's market, buyers must have at least a 20% down payment. For a \$300,000 home that is \$60,000. A 30-year fixed rate mortgage for \$240,000 at today's average interest rate of 7.5%, brings the total cost of the loan to \$604,000. In 2021 when the average mortgage rate was 2.9%, this same loan would have only cost \$295,000.

To make matters worse, according to the Ohio Housing Finance Agency, households are spending at least 50% of their income on housing related costs. Ohioans are having to choose what bills to pay and whether or not they should fund their retirement, or start a family.

How do you choose which is more important? Market forces may be making the choice for them.

Other factors affecting the builder's cost include land prices, material costs, labor expenses, and access to essential utilities such as water and sewer ser-

vices, all attributing to that final lowest cost home.

So, where do townships fit in on this topic? A significant portion of undeveloped land can be found in townships. Accordingly, development is bound to happen in townships. And, in areas that are near the new Intel and Honda plants being built, that development is going to happen sooner rather than later.

Developers in central Ohio have had several housing projects denied by township zoning commissions or township residents have voted to overturn the proposed zoning change sought by developers. Due to this, there have been statements made that township zoning is cumbersome and is a root cause of the lack of housing in Ohio. Instead, some are calling for statewide zoning standards developed by the Ohio General Assembly and enforced at the county level.

The Ohio Township Association (OTA) maintains that township zoning is a safeguard from uncontrolled development and protection of our property values. Zoning within townships is not merely a bureaucratic exercise but a fundamental aspect of preserving the character and integrity of these areas. It ensures that development aligns with the needs, values, and aspirations of the residents. It is possible to preserve the character of your township, while still accepting development, but it takes effort from all parties involved.

The OTA staunchly opposes any encroachment on township zoning authority.

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Preserving Local Control

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Attacks on township zoning equate to attacks on local control, eroding the very foundation of democracy. The right to shape zoning policies through local processes is inherent to the success of zoning in a community. This includes allowing residents to vote to overturn a zoning decision. The right of referendum is enshrined in Ohio's constitution, and any attempts to curtail this right must be vehemently resisted.

Efficiency is another hallmark of township zoning. With an intimate understanding of local dynamics and community needs, townships are best positioned to make informed zoning decisions, promptly. State-mandated zoning would not only disrupt this efficiency but also stifle economic development opportunities within townships.

Moreover, proposed changes to zoning regulations often stem from outside interests seeking to exert undue influence. Such overreach threatens to sub-

vert the interests and well-being of township residents, prioritizing narrow agendas over the broader needs of the community.

In the face of the housing crisis gripping Ohio, townships need to stand ready to be part of the solution. So, what can be done?

The OTA advocates for empowering townships with additional development tools to foster housing and economic growth within their jurisdictions.

One such tool is the comprehensive plan, which serves as a blueprint for guiding development in townships. By ensuring that proposed projects align with the objectives outlined in their comprehensive plan, townships can maintain clarity and consistency in their zoning decisions.

Furthermore, the OTA encourages townships to utilize and embrace county and regional water and sewer districts if possible. Embracing county-wide or regional systems, as opposed to having only municipal-controlled water and

sewer services, can help mitigate the risk of annexation and uncontrolled development.

Township zoning is a cornerstone of local governance and community development. Preserving the integrity of township zoning is essential to safeguarding the principles of local control, efficiency, and democratic decision-making. As Ohio grapples with its housing crisis, empowering townships to use their zoning authority judiciously ensures a balanced approach to development in the state.

This article first appears in the Ohio Township News, May/June 2024 Issue and is reprinted with permission.

About the author: Kyle A. Brooks is the OTA's Director of Governmental Affairs. He is responsible for legislative matters, including the OTA legislative alert, and is liaison for CLOUT. He advocates for issues with the Ohio General Assembly and U.S. Congress. He can be contacted at brooks@ohiotownships.org

Zoning Referendum Process Update

Referendum Update

As you may recall, the Franklin County Commissioners rezoned 7124 Davis Road from Rural Zoning to a PR-6 zoning classification (up to 6 dwelling units per acre) on March 12th, 2024.

As a result, 285 signatures on a referendum petition to let the voters decide the zoning on the 24.116 acre parcel at 7124 Davis Road was submitted to the Franklin County Board of Commissioners on April 9th, 2024. The Deputy County Administrator received the petitions, dated and time-stamped them, and then sent them to the Franklin County Board of Elections for validation. 273 signatures were validated on April 24th, 2024.

The next step was for the County Commissioners to sign a resolution that directs the clerk to submit to the Board of Elections "the petitions necessary to place the referendum on the ballot in accordance with ORC 303.12 for a special election on the date of the November 2024 general election." On May 14th, 2024, Resolution No. 0413-24 was passed and

signed by the Commissioners. On June 4th, 2024, the Brown Township petitioners were notified the resolution was filed with the Board of Elections.

On June 6th, 2024, a request not to certify the referendum petition was submitted by attorneys representing the property owners, Horsehouse Property, LLC. Representatives for the property owners and the Brown Township petitioners were to speak at the Board of Elections hearing on July 1st, 2024. However, a continuance was issued for the attorneys that represent Horsehouse Property, LLC, hours before the meeting.

Rep Steward Responds

Trustee Pam Sayre and Development Coordinator Tracy Hatmaker met with Representative Brian Stewart (Ohio House of Representatives, 12th District) on June 25th to discuss township zoning.

According to information received by Brown Township from the Ohio Township Association, certain influential groups representing development inter-

ests were using concerns about housing costs and shortages in Ohio as a basis for recommending rolling back or eliminating the authority of townships to enact and enforce zoning.

Some of the recommendations also called for making it more difficult to file a citizen referendum challenging zoning decisions. The meeting was precipitated by Representative Stewart's questions about Brown Township's distribution of an article about these threats and about calls Brown residents made to his office asking him not to support such action.

Representative Stewart told Trustee Sayre and Development Coordinator Hatmaker that he has long been a strong proponent of township zoning and that he was taken aback by the calls.

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Changes in Township Staffing



Barbra Hoover

Barbara Hoover has retired – again

This time as clerical assistant to the Brown Township Board of Trustees, a position she has held since 2012. It is a second retirement for Barbara. She retired in 2007 after a 40-year career in teaching in several central Ohio school districts, primarily the Hilliard district.

The Brown Township position was created to provide improved customer service to township residents. Until her recent retirement, Barbara had been the only occupant of the position.

In addition to staffing the township office on a regular basis, answering phones and relaying messages, assisting with records retention, scheduling and overseeing cleaning of township facilities, Barbara was responsible for scheduling rental of the township hall. Many town-

Rep Steward Responds

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He further stated that the strong reaction of the Ohio Township Association, echoed by the Township's article, was unnecessary because no rollbacks of township zoning authority were being seriously considered at the Statehouse.

Trustee Sayre responded that Brown Township considered the Ohio Township Association to be a credible source and a good partner, so the Township felt a responsibility to inform its residents of the potential threat, especially since recent events have caused township residents and officials to begin discussions regarding the adoption of a township zoning code.

ship residents came to know Barbara through that work, including Tom Ferguson of Abundant Life Church whose organization held frequent meetings in the township hall. Tom attended the April 15 Brown Township Board of Trustees meeting to publicly thank Barbara for her service.

Joining Tom Ferguson in honoring Barbara at the Board's recognition event were Norwich Township Fire Chief Dave Baird and several Norwich Township firefighters.

Barbara says she will miss "being knowledgeable about what's happening in the township." She will also miss the stairway in the Firehouse because, as she puts it, "I don't have stairs at home and the stairway helped me get exercise."

Her newfound freedom will allow Barbara to work outside in her yard more and to have more time to read.

The Brown Township Board of Trustees extends heartfelt thanks to Barbara and best wishes in the future.

Meet Donna Palmer

Donna was born in Dayton, Ohio, and moved to the Hilliard community when she was five years old. Her father was a state highway patrolman stationed in Vandalia. He quit that position and moved his family back to Columbus where he was from.

Donna is a graduate of Hilliard High School, class of 1975. She moved to Michigan with her then-husband and worked in a real estate office. After seven years there, she moved back to the Hilliard area and has been here for 40 years. Donna has held a myriad of positions in her work experience. She has worked for Bob Evans Farms in restaurant accounting, worker's compensation and insurance, she was the secretary to the president of manufacturing for Capital City Products, she became a sales and service manager, she worked for Dublin City Schools for 18 years in their special needs preschool program, and she started the latchkey program for Jonathan Alder Schools.

She retired in 2019 to take care of her father for a year and a half. She has been married to her husband, Vic, for 37 years. They live on Alton Darby Creek Road not



Donna Palmer

far from the Brown Township offices. In her spare time, Donna volunteers at her church and also volunteers for Life-wise Academy in the Hilliard Schools. You might see her at the polls as she has been an election poll worker for seven years.

Her hobbies include planting over 200 zinnias in her garden and riding with Vic on his motorcycle. The Palmers also enjoy visiting "Amish country" in Holmes County, Ohio.

Donna has been learning the ropes in her new position as "Assistant to the Trustees." Her duties include scheduling the usage of the Township Hall, answering the office phone and relaying messages to the Trustees, and making sure the Hall and the upstairs meeting room in the firehouse are clean and ready for the next use. She also keeps up on the Township's maintenance contracts. In a nutshell, she makes sure everything is running smoothly. Welcome aboard, Donna!

The Brown Township Hall Located at 2495 Walker Road

**Is Available for Use by
Brown Township Residents**

The Cost is \$50 per event:

- **No cost for Civic groups**
- **Resident must be present**
- **No alcohol**

Contact Donna Palmer

Donna_Palmer@BrownTwp.org
(614) 876-2133



Brown Township
2491 Walker Road
Hilliard, OH 43026

Brown Township Administration Office

2491 Walker Road, Hilliard, Ohio 43026
(614) 876-2133

Website

www.BrownTwp.org

Fiscal Officer

Becky Kent • (614) 446-2359

Trustees

Mr. Gary Dever • (614) 876-4768

Mrs. Pamela Sayre • (614) 582-0191

Mr. Joseph Martin • (614) 309-8879

Norwich Fire Department

Dave Baird, Chief • (614) 876-7694

Franklin County Sheriff's Department

Emergency • 911

Non-Emergency • (614) 525-3333

Public meetings are held the third
Monday of every month at 7:00 p.m.
at 2491 Walker Rd., Hilliard, Ohio



L-R: Trustees Pam Sayre,
Gary Dever and Joe Martin
Seated: Fiscal Officer Becky Kent

SAVE THE DATE!

Community Event

25th Anniversary of
Brown Township Firehouse

Sunday, October 6, 2024
10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Station 82
2491 Walker Road, Hilliard, Ohio
43026

Planning is underway!
Norwich Township Fire Department
demonstrations; Ice cream; Commu-
nity information stations

PRSRT STD

U.S. POSTAGE PAID

COLUMBUS OH

PERMIT# 5964

PUBLIC SAFETY SUMMARY

Each issue of the Brown Township newsletter
contains a quarterly wrap-up of public safety
reports and calls in Brown Township.

Norwich Township Fire Department

Calls to addresses in both incorporated and
unincorporated portions of Brown Township.

Fire Calls

EMS Calls

Incorp Unincorp Incorp Unincorp

MAR 2024	4	3	2	19
APR 2024	3	6	3	16
MAY 2024	4	6	8	22

Franklin County Sheriff

Calls to addresses in both incorporated and
unincorporated portions of Brown Town-
ship:

March 2024

Mar 26 – Grand theft and theft at an address
on Spicewood Ct.

April 2024

Apr 4 – Aggravated menacing at an address
on Dellinger Rd.

Apr 7 – A known stolen vehicle was recov-
ered at an unknown address in the 43119 zip
code of Brown Township.

Apr 15 - Misdemeanor Theft at an address
on Spicewood Court.

May 2024

May 15 - Stolen vehicle recovery from I-70
and Jones Road

Hilliard Division of Police

Non-routine calls to Brown Township ad-
dresses within the City of Hilliard:

March 2024

No non-routine calls

April 2024

No non-routine calls

May 2024

No non-routine calls

Medication Disposal

Dispose of unused medication in the red
disposal station inside main entrance of the
Joint Safety Services Building located at 5181
Northwest Parkway, which is next to the
Franklin County Fairgrounds.