



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

DEERFIELD TOWNSHIP

Warren County, Ohio

**2023 UPDATE**

# **SPECIAL THANKS**

The Residents of Deerfield Township

Deerfield Township Board of Trustees

- Lelle Lutts Hedding
- Kristin Malhotra
- Julie Seitz

Eric Reiners, Township Administrator

Paul Brehm, Economic Development Director

Sam Hill, Planning and Zoning Director

Joel Smiddy, Parks and Recreation Director

Jennifer Richardson, Finance Director

Steering Committee for the Deerfield Action Agenda

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# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Deerfield Township is simply an outstanding community. Strong demographics, thriving business districts, first class neighborhoods, and unsurpassed parks make Deerfield a true destination for commercial and residential development.

Of equal importance, Deerfield Township has an impressive team community and business leaders who work with Warren County officials and representatives from our regional partners to strengthen our competitive position. Together, we have established Deerfield Township as one of the premier communities in Southwest Ohio to live, work and play.

Originally adopted several years ago, the Deerfield Township Economic Development Strategy has served as a roadmap for our economic development program of work. However, new challenges have emerged. Reinvestment and reinvention are needed to maintain our leadership position and guarantee the viability of our community for years to come.

So, a comprehensive update of this strategy is needed. The following document includes recommendations to achieve specific goals as well as metrics to measure our progress. We have also included suggestion for improving our relations with regional partners, leveraging our own resources with outside funding to create the greatest possible return for our residents. Most important, it calls for even greater community engagement. Over the next several months, we will take steps to expand outreach, improve communication, and solicit feedback.

This must be a collaborative process. Your input is critical to our future. We must work with residents, business owners, county and state officials, and our regional partners to complete the goals set forth in this plan. Ultimately, we want to bring about sustainable and vibrant development that serves the needs of the community now and in the future.

I am always open to your suggestions on how we can accomplish these goals. Do not hesitate to contact me with your comments or questions.

Paul Brehm  
Economic Development Director and Public Information Officer  
Deerfield Township





## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

### 1.1 About the Economic Development Plan

This economic plan was created internally to drive economic development activities in Deerfield Township. It was guided by the vision of the Board of Trustees, the Township Administrator, and the Economic Development Director as well as the community outreach conducted during the formulation of the 2019 Parks Master Plan, the Deerfield Action Agenda (2018), and the Township's Comprehensive Plan (2015).

The Township recently completed an update to its Comprehensive Plan. Consequently, an update of our economic development strategy is certainly justified. It is important that we align this document with the vision and goals that included in the new Comprehensive Plan. Looking ahead, we will conduct an annual update of the economic development strategy, with a comprehensive revision occurring every five years. Our goal: ensure that our economic development goals reflect the growth and changing needs of township residents and businesses.

## **1.2 Deerfield Action Agenda Process Overview**

Work on the Deerfield Action Agenda began in 2017 and was completed in February 2018. It was a five-phase research and strategic planning process. A steering committee, consisting of stakeholders from public, private, and non-profit sectors, guided the process to ensure the residents and businesses continue to thrive in the community. The five phases of the Deerfield Action Agenda included:

### **1. Stakeholder Engagement**

The Stakeholder Engagement consisted of focus groups, interviews, and surveys which provided qualitative feedback that was used in the other phases of the strategic plan. Community communication and engagement should also be included as part of the annual updates to our economic development strategy. Moving forward, we recommend that the Economic Development Director work with the Deerfield Township Community to manage community engagement initiatives.

### **2. Community Assessment**

The Community Assessment examined the townships ability to compete in terms of place making. It sought to frame Deerfield Township as a place to live, work, visit, and do business and included a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis. Community assessment is also a continuous process, one that calls for metrics to measure our progress and if necessary modify strategies to achieve our goals. Each year, we will identify metrics for each objective in order to measure our progress over time and quantify our success.

### **3. Economic Development Service Gap Analysis**

The original Economic Development Service Gap Analysis from 2019 examined where Deerfield Township's economic development efforts could complement existing programs and meet the needs of the community that don't currently have dedicated resources. The economic development services that were examined in the gap analysis included:

- Recruitment and lead generation
- Lead and project management
- Business retention and expansion (BRE) efforts
- Small Business
- Workforce development, attraction, and retention

Beginning later this year, staff recommends that we expand the responsibilities of the Community Improvement Corporation to include periodic reviews of our efforts in each of these areas. Their findings would then be presented to the Township Board of Trustees as part of an annual update prepared by the Economic Development Director. The Trustees could then recommend changes to the department's program of work that address any gaps in our service delivery. The same review process would also apply to Items 4 and 5.

### **4. Deerfield Strategic Action Agenda**

Based on the results of the first three phases, the Strategic Action Agenda provides a plan for the development of an economic development program for Deerfield Township. The plan consists of tactical, measurable, and actionable items as well as best practices. This too would become part of the periodic review by the Community Improvement Corporation and Board of Trustees.

## 5. Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan is the “how to” road map for the Strategic Action Agenda, outlining economic development activities to be done on monthly and yearly basis. Again, the annual updates to our strategy will include modifications to these strategies that take into account changing economic development conditions in the Township.

### 1.3 Deerfield Action Agenda Recommendations and Activities

The final Deerfield Action Agenda included several key recommendations pertaining to the economic development activities of Deerfield Township. Ownership and responsibility for these recommendations ultimately rests with the Deerfield Township economic development team. However, we should also work with key regional partners including but not limited to the Mason Deerfield Chamber (MADE Chamber), Warren County Small Business Development Alliance, Warren County Area Progress Council, Warren County Economic Development, REDI Cincinnati, and Jobs Ohio. Again, Deerfield Township has responsibility for managing these initiatives, including those undertaken in concert with our economic development partners.

### 1.4 Developing a Local Economic Development Organization (LEDO)

The Deerfield Action Agenda made three recommendations pertaining to the development of a lead economic development organization (LEDO) within the Deerfield Township administration.

#### ***Recommendation 1.1 – Maintain Strong Relationships with all Economic Development Partners***

Prior to July 2018 Deerfield Township did not have a dedicated economic development position staffed. As a result of the Action Agenda the township hired an Economic Development Director/Public Information Officer.

*Action Step: The Director is to be assigned the task of building the LEDO and serving as the point of contact for all economic development issues.*

An integral part of building a LEDO is relationship building. Economic Development activities require the engagement of numerous regional stakeholders and organizations. These include:

- MADE Chamber
- Sinclair College
- Miami University
- University of Cincinnati
- Xavier University
- City of Mason
- Mason City Schools
- Kings Local School District
- United Way of Warren County
- Warren County Small Business Alliance
- Regional Economic Development Initiative (REDI) Cincinnati
- Ohio Means Jobs
- Warren County Career Center
- Warren County Economic Development/Port Authority
- Warren County Transportation Improvement District
- CoHatch Mason Deerfield
- Area Progress Council
- Local business owners and managers
- Commercial real estate brokers, developers and professional organizations



*Action Step: The original strategic action plan called on the Director to meet regularly with these groups to ensure economic development inquiries are addressed. This information will now be included as part of the quarterly reports prepared by the Director and presented to the Board of Trustees.*

**Recommendation 1.2 – Actively Support Economic Development Marketing and Project Management Activities.**

*Action Step: In the event of an economic development inquiry being received and converting to a project, the Director of Economic Development is to engage regional partners and stakeholders as necessary.*

The original document suggested that, for a LEDO to properly function, the Director must stay up to date on economic development activity occurring throughout the region, understand best practices of other communities, attend any trainings to further skills development, and meet with regional stakeholders to ensure awareness of services they provide that could assist businesses within the community. It is also imperative that we establish and maintain relations with commercial real estate professionals from the private sector.

*Action Step: The Director should work with key stakeholders from the public and private sectors and participate in any applicable economic development related meetings and events. This participation should include membership in key organizations as well as meetings with individual leaders who can help the Township advance its economic development program of work.*

Data collection is a vital component of running an effect LEDO. The types of data that should be collected includes:

- Companies/Contacts
- Commercial Real Estate Properties in Deerfield Township
- Economic Development Leads
- Economic Development Projects
- Business Retention and Expansion Projects
- Project Wins

*Action Step: The Director is to proactively work with stakeholders including businesses, developers, real estate brokers, and others to collect data relevant to economic development activities and build a database capable of storing the data that is collected.*

*Action Step: While outreach is a critical component of our economic development program of work, it is imperative that we also establish goals for completed projects, measuring their impact on the community. Annual metrics should include: number of completed projects, amount of business investment, jobs created or retained, and increases in property valuation.*

**Recommendation 6.2 – Utilize regulations and development tools to promote high-quality redevelopment**

The effectiveness of a LEDO is determined by the tools it has to conduct economic development activities. The original document identified several tools that Deerfield Township could offer including programs provided either directly or with the assistance of Warren County, The Warren County Port Authority, REDI Cincinnati, JobsOhio, the State of Ohio, and/or the Small Business Administration (SBA):

**Local Incentives and Services**

- Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- Sale of Township Property



- Site Selection Assistance
- Business Development Assistance
- Workforce Development
- Zoning Assistance
- Infrastructure Support
- Network Development

#### **County and State Tax Credits**

- Job Creation Tax Credit
- Data Center Tax Abatement
- Job Retention Tax Credit
- Research and Development Investment Tax Credit
- Sales and Inventory tax Exemptions

#### **For Small Business**

- SBA 504 Loan

#### **JobsOhio Loan and Grant Funds**

- JobsOhio Economic Development Grant
- JobsOhio Growth Fund
- JobsOhio Research and Development Grant
- JobsOhio Revitalization Program
- JobsOhio Workforce Grant

#### **State of Ohio Loan and Grant Programs**

- Research and Development Investment Loan Fund
- 166 Direct Loan
- Ohio Enterprise Bond Fund
- Innovation Ohio Loan Fund
- Roadwork Development (629) Funds
- Ohio Investment in Training Program

*Action Step: Using the existing tools, the Director will work with businesses, developers, and regional/state partners to identify any applicable incentive, loan, or grant programs that would business with (re)location, business expansion, workforce development, or anything else needed for those businesses to thrive within the Township.*

*Action Step: In recent years, new challenges have arisen that challenge the viability of our office and retail areas. "Work from home" and other hybrid work solutions have had a negative effect on our office environment causing occupancy rates at several office to decline. Consequently we have also seen less daytime activity at local restaurants, stores, and other establishments. This phenomenon is not unique to Deerfield Township. Other jurisdictions are experiencing similar challenges. Several have adopted new programs to bolster the viability of their office districts.*

*To improve the competitiveness of our office buildings and maintain the viability of our retail centers, staff is recommending a unique, limited, and targeted business assistance program that would provide eligible companies with grants to offset relocation costs. We would target companies identified as targets in our annual program of work. This business assistance*

*grant initiative would help prospective companies offset short term costs associated with relocation, making our properties more competitive with others under consideration,*

After an examination of existing economic development tools, the township administration also recommends that we take greater advantage of the community improvement corporation (CIC) as a means to enhance its ability to promote redevelopment activity. The CIC functions as the LEDO for the township and can take on the responsibilities and strategies outlined in this plan, including the proposed business assistance initiative. Information about the CIC will be discussed in the next section.

*Action Step: The Director shall work with the Deerfield Township Community Improvement Corporation and position this organization as the LEDO for Deerfield Township.*

### **1.5 Analyzing the Current Land Use and Real Estate Products**

The Deerfield Activity Agenda included a recommendations that pertained to analyzing the current real estate market and variety of real estate types that currently exist in the township.

#### *Recommendation 1.3 – Develop and share in-depth information about Deerfield Township’s real estate “product”*

This recommendation was to develop and share in-depth information about Deerfield Township’s real estate “product.” Included in this, the Action Agenda tasked the township with developing relationships with key stakeholders and assembling a knowledge back about the local real estate product and development climate.

*Action Step: The Director shall meet regularly with members of the real estate brokerage community, as well as property owners to understand the real estate market, what leads and prospects are looking for space, and to provide them with materials that promote Deerfield Township as a place to do business.*

*Action Step: The Director shall contract with CoStar or some other commercial real estate listing service monitor the status of existing commercial properties and identify opportunities for businesses considering relocation. The Director will share this information with members of the CIC, township staff, and the Board of Trustees as part of its quarterly report.*



## SECTION 2: DEERFIELD TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION

### 2.1 What is a Community Improvement Corporation?

Community Improvement Corporations (CIC) were established by the State of Ohio General Assembly in 1961 under Senate Bill 299 and are currently defined under the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 1724. CICs essentially are non-profit economic development corporations created for the following purposes:

Advancing, encouraging, and promoting the industrial, economic, commercial, and civic development of a community.

According to Chapter 80 of the Ohio County Commissioners Handbook, "CIC's assist with the promotion and financing of economic development by providing loans to individuals and businesses; buying, selling, and leasing real and personal property for economic development purposes; and, by entering into contracts with the state and local governments."

### 2.2 Powers of the CIC

The original document stated that, by creating a CIC for economic development purposes, the Township is better able to control (re)development activity throughout the community.

A CIC can perform the following activities:

- Borrow money for CIC related activities
- Provide loans to individuals or businesses
- Buy, lease, and sell real estate
- Acquire the good will, business rights, property, and assets of an individual or business.
- Charge fees to political subdivisions for services.
- Enter into contracts with government agencies
- Apply for/administer grants.

Additionally, a CIC must comply with Ohio Ethics Law, does not have eminent domain authority, can only recommend tax abatements, and cannot levy taxes.

## 2.3 CIC Funding

Funding of a CIC can come from a number of different places. These include:

- Township general funds (requires unanimous vote from Board of Trustees)
- Donations from Businesses
- Membership Dues
- Grants
- Property sale proceeds
- Lease revenue
- Contracts for services

## 2.4 Mission and Core Principals

The Deerfield Township CIC is guided by a mission and core principles that fall into five categories (Functioning CIC, Civic Community, Business Community, Infrastructure, and Sustainability).

### *Mission*

The mission of the Deerfield Township CIC is to:

***Facilitate collaborative, strategic, and sustainable economic development in Deerfield Township that improves the lives of residents, increases business investment, and promotes the Township as a thriving and vibrant place to call home.***

### *Core Principals*

#### Functioning CIC

- Develop the operational structure of the CIC including securing board members and resources
- Seek general and project-specific funding from public and private organizations
- Define and develop CIC activities and programs

#### Civic Community

- Further define the needs of the residential community as identified in Township strategic planning efforts (Deerfield Action Agenda, Parks Master Plan, Comprehensive Plan)
- Increase awareness of CIC



## Business Community

- Encourage dialogue between Township, CIC, and local businesses
- Inventory land and buildings that are targets for (re)development
- Identify the needs of the business community through the launch and operation of a Business Retention and Expansion Program
- Recruit new businesses to Deerfield Township

## Infrastructure

- Identify opportunities to increase connectivity throughout the township

## Sustainability

- Participate in ongoing and future strategic planning efforts of the township
- Promote development that reflects the wants/needs of township residents and promotes aging in place
- Identify and acquire strategic parcels of land to control for future (re)development
- Promote Deerfield Township as a brand and increase awareness and identity

## 2.5 Leadership Structure of the Deerfield Township CIC

The Deerfield Township CIC is led by the Economic Development Director for Deerfield Township. The Director will serve as the Executive Director under a loan agreement wherein they remain an employee of the Township, but can lead the CIC. Under a similar arraignment, the township's Finance Director will serve as the Finance Director for the CIC.

The work of the Executive Director and Finance Director is overseen by a five member Board of Directors, 40% of which must be elected or appointed township officials. With that said the five board members includes the President of the Deerfield Township Board of Trustees, the Township Administrator, and three members from residential/business community.

The inclusion of township staff and board members in the leadership structure of the CIC ensures that it acts in the best interest, and with the guidance of the Deerfield Township residents.

*Action Step: Now that the CIC has been established, it is critical that we take full advantage of this dedicated group of volunteers. Specifically, staff recommends that the CIC be convened on a quarterly basis to advise the Economic Development Director on the department's annual program of work, review recommendations for business assistance and property redevelopment, and provide input on economic programming to the Deerfield Township Board of Township. The CIC would also review requests for business assistance initiatives and make recommendations to the Township Trustees for their review and approval*



## SECTION 3: COMMUNITY PROFILE AND DEMOGRAPHICS

### 3.1 About Deerfield Township

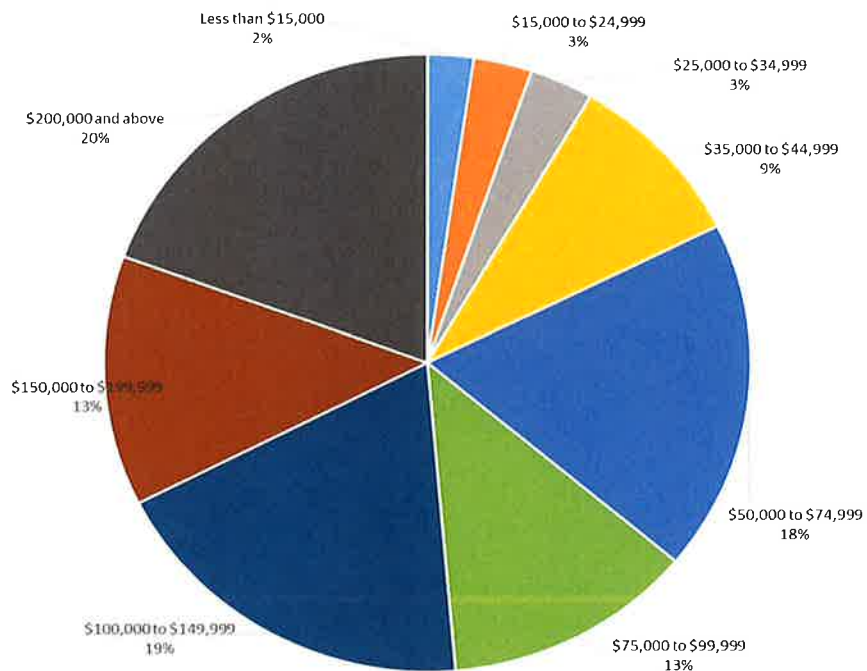
Deerfield Township was formally established on May 10, 1803, although early settlements of the area date back to the 1790s. The area got its name from the large deer population that was supported by numerous springs that scattered the landscape. Today, Deerfield Township is a vibrant community of 38,500 plus residents in the Cincinnati Metropolitan Area who enjoy a diverse housing stock, excellent schools, a top notch park system, and a bustling retail and entertainment scene. It is the most populous jurisdiction in Warren County comprising approximately 16.8 square miles in southwest corner of Warren County and borders both Hamilton and Butler Counties.

Located on I-71 and just 2 miles from I-275, Deerfield Township is situated at an important crossroads for both travel and commerce, as it has since its founding. Residents and businesses enjoy easy access to all parts of the Greater Cincinnati Region and beyond. In fact, Deerfield Township is located within 600 miles of over 50% of the United States' purchasing power, population, and manufacturing establishments.

3.2 Demographics

<b>Population</b>	
2021 Total Population	41,381
2010-2021 Population Growth	14%
% Male Population	49%
% Female Population	51%
Median Age	38
<b>Income</b>	
Average Household Income	\$135,938
Median Household Income	\$102,411
Per Capita Income	\$51,329

2021 Households by Income



<b>Labor Force</b>	
Total Population 16+	23,063
Population 16+ Employed	98.2%
Population 16+ Unemployment Rate	1
<b>Employment by Industry (by SIC Codes)</b>	
Agriculture and mining	1.2%
Construction	3.3%
Manufacturing	5.1%
Transportation	.2%
Communication	.2%

Utility	.1%
Wholesale Trade	1.5%
Retail	35.1%
Finance Insurance and Real Estate	20.6%
Services	30.7%
Government	1%
Unclassified	1%

Source: ESRI 2021

### 3.3 Education

Deerfield Township offers a well-educated workforce with nearly 71% of its population over 25 years old holding at least an Associate's Degree. Furthermore, there is access within 50 miles of a robust network of colleges and universities including the University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati State, University of Dayton, Miami University, Mount St. Joseph University, Northern Kentucky University, Ohio State University Butler County Extension, Sinclair College (Mason and Main Campuses), Wright State University and Xavier University. Collectively, these schools have a total enrollment of over 158,000 which produces a deep talent pool for companies to get the next generation of well-educated and talented employees.

#### Educational Attainment (Pop. Over 25)

Less than 9th grade	.7%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	1.3%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	12.7%
GED, Alternative Credential	1.3%
Some college, no degree	12.5%
Associate's degree	7.6%
Bachelor's degree	38.3%
Graduate or professional degree	25.6%

Source: ESRI 2021

### 3.4 Business Summary

Deerfield Township is a significant economic driver for Warren County. There are over 1,200 companies that call Deerfield home employing over 23,000 employees. These companies span across many business sectors and range in sizes from small firms to large, multinational corporations.

#### Largest Employers

Large employers in the Township include:

- Elevance Health (Anthem)
- Macy's Credit and Customer Service
- Cengage Learning Inc
- Atos IT Solutions
- General Revenue Corporation
- MedPlus Inc. a Quest Diagnostics Company
- Down Lite International
- Mercy Health Partners
- Clopay Corporation
- Apex

Below is a breakdown of all of businesses in Deerfield Township:



Sector Description	# of Firms
Accommodation and Food Services	123
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	61
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	27
Construction	61
Educational Services	27
Finance and Insurance	92
Health Care and Social Assistance	115
Information	26
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1
Manufacturing	35
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	3
Other Services (except Public Administration)	111
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	122
Public Administration	8
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	76
Retail Trade	186
Transportation and Warehousing	12
Utilities	1
Unclassified	112
Wholesale Trade	27
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1227</b>

Source: ESRI 2021

### 3.5 Competitive Advantage

#### Cost of Living

Overall the cost of living in the Cincinnati Metropolitan Area is 9% below the national average making it an affordable amenity rich location to reside in.

- The average rent in Deerfield Township is \$1,467
- The median home value in Deerfield Township is \$270,523

#### No Local Income Tax

As a Township in the State of Ohio, Deerfield **DOES NOT** have a local income tax.

#### Fiscal Responsibility and Exceptional Services

After any rollbacks, exemptions, credits, etc., Deerfield Township typically receives about 17.5% of total annual property taxes for its operations—a figure which includes all levies. Those funds go to operate fire, police, public works (roads), cemeteries, parks, zoning, and any other functions associated with a larger suburban township. The remaining 80% of what residents pay annually in property taxes go to schools, the county, and any other special assessments, such as a lighting district to fund street lights.

The Township is continuously exploring and uncovering outside funding sources and grant opportunities for projects and improvements, where available and appropriate. This approach to operations works to stretch every tax dollar, and in some cases, leverages local resources against matching outside dollars to fund improvement projects.



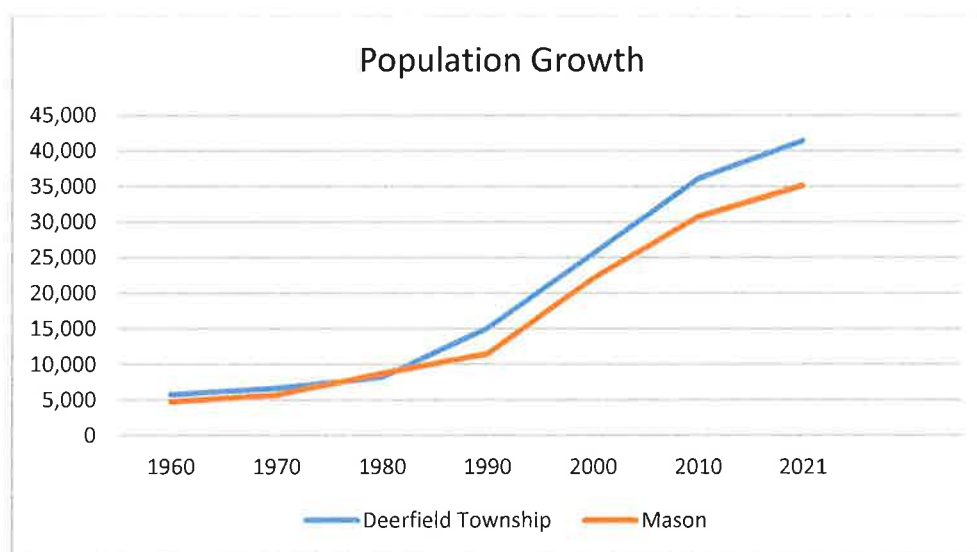


## SECTION 4: FUTURE GROWTH ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Historic and Future Population Growth

#### Historic Population

Deerfield's 2021 population, according to the ESRI, was 41,381. As shown in the chart below, Deerfield and its neighbor, the City of Mason, have seen relatively high rates of population growth since the 1960s, with annual growth in Deerfield ranging between 2% in the 1960s to as much as 6% in the 1980s.



	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2021
<b>Deerfield Township</b>	5,700	6,640	8,126	15,039	25,515	36,059	41,381
<b>Mason</b>	4,727	5,677	8,692	11,452	22,046	30,712	35,089
<b>Warren County</b>	65,711	85,505	99,276	113,927	158,383	212,693	246,553

American Community Survey, 2021 ESRI

The table above shows the Deerfield Township population for the last several decades along with the current population in Warren County and the City of Mason.

#### Percentage of Warren County Population

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2021
<b>Deerfield Township</b>	8.7%	7.8%	8.2%	13.2%	16.1%	17.0%	16.7%

American Community Survey, 2021 ESRI

The population of Deerfield Township has grown to nearly seven times what it was in the 1960s. Deerfield Township's portion of the Warren County population grew steadily over the past two decades, showing that new residential development is happening in the Township at a quick pace. The table above shows the percentage of the Warren County population in Deerfield Township.

Understanding the growth of the combined Mason-Deerfield area is important because the two jurisdictions share roads and area residents frequent business establishments in both areas.

#### Population Density

The township consists of approximately 10,752 acres, or 16.8 square miles. With a population of 41,381, the township's average population density is 3.84 persons per acre or 2,463 persons per square mile. This density will continue to increase as the population grows within the township. Further increases in population density will result in an expanded need for services, infrastructure, and amenities. All of which will need to be factored in when considering new economic development projects. The original Economic Development Strategies adopted in 2019 suggested the pursuit of single-family residential developments to limit the amount of density that occurs in the township. It also suggested that the Township pursue the redevelopment of existing assets. Staff recommends that we continue to pursue both strategies.

#### Population Forecasts

Forecasting population is challenging because it is impossible to predict the future, however, using historic trends to create an estimate of what future growth may occur provides a point of comparison for how long it may take a community to reach a certain population, or in the township's case, buildout. According to ESRI, the population of our Township is expected to increase by another 6.4% or 2,653 residents over the next five years.

#### Population Assessment

The wide range of potential population growth stresses the importance of examining potential areas of growth in township to determine capacity. As this report will show, there is limited available land for greenfield development. The density at which this land is developed will ultimately determine the future population in the township.





## SECTION 5: DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

### 5.1 Potential Development and Redevelopment Sites

The Deerfield Action Agenda included a recommendation (number 6.1) that would enable township staff to evaluate potential sites for development or redevelopment activities.

#### ***Recommendation 6.1 – Inventory all potential redevelopment sites in Deerfield Township***

A database of commercial real estate properties will enable the Economic Development Director to inventory all potential redevelopment and greenfield sites in Deerfield Township. Once this information is collected the Director could work with the community to identify potential projects.

### 5.2 Target Areas

Based on the Comprehensive Plan and early discussions with the business community, a number of sites stand out as existing targets for development activity.

#### ***Business Redevelopment Districts***

The current zoning map (see previous page) showcases a number of zoned Business Redevelopment Districts. These areas are located along Fields Ertel Road near the intersections of Mason Montgomery Road and US 22-3 are vital gateways into the main business and retail centers of Deerfield Township and therefore are prime targets for redevelopment efforts to achieve a higher and better use for these properties. Redevelopment of these sites could be in the form of:

- Office
- Mixed Use
- Retail

*Action Item: The Director will pursue redevelopment activity focused in the zoned Business Redevelopment Districts. In particular, we will identify commercial that are underperforming and identify pathways to bring them back to their highest and best use. Our relationships with commercial real estate brokers and developers will be critical to our success in this area. Private investment is the key to an effective property redevelopment program.*

### **Fosters Crossing**

The Little Miami River, which runs on the eastern boundary of Deerfield Township, is a highly underutilized asset the Township should consider, when promoting economic development activity. Foster's Crossing, the point when State Route 22 and 3 crosses the Little Miami River, serves as the best option in terms of attractive development activity. The township already owns approximately 8 acres of land along the waterfront at Fosters Crossing. The types of development that could be attracted to this location is:

- Retail
- Community Space
- Outdoor Activity Hub

Furthermore, a development at Foster's Crossing would enable the opportunity to provide connectivity to the Loveland Bike Trail and Carl Rahe Park, a State Park on the south side of the crossing that has an outdoor picnic area as well as a canoe launch located on it.

*Action Item: The Director will work with the development community to determine the scope and type of development activity to pursue on the Township owned parcels near Foster's Crossing.*

### **Duke Boulevard Corridor**

There are several properties along Duke Boulevard that could serve as targets for (re)development activity. These properties include several parcels of vacant land varying in size, as well as multi-tenant single story office buildings that could be targets for a higher and better use. The types of development that could be attracted to this location include:

- Retail
- Office

*Action Item: The Director will work with current building owners and development community to determine the scope and type of development activity to pursue within the Duke Blvd Corridor. Revitalization of this important office corridor is essential to the long term health of our business community. Indeed, the proposed business assistance grant program is designed to facilitate significant investments in this area.*

## **5.3 Types of Development to Pursue**

Recent public engagement efforts as well as projects that have come before the Board of Trustees for approval have shown a preference for hospitality, office, retail, and single family housing development. The economic development efforts in Deerfield Township should primary focus attention to these types of developments. Other types of commercial development worthy of consideration are advanced manufacturing (technology or medical related), health services, and research and development. Small business and entrepreneurial development are also important.

### **Office**

Office is a targeted as a means to grow the employment base in the township. Currently, Deerfield Township is the primary economic driver for Warren County, and companies are attracted to the township for a variety of reasons including the location, amenities and the fact that the township does not have a local income tax.

Based on the business community analysis in Section 3 of this report, economic development activity will target industries where there is already a cluster of businesses. This includes finance and insurance, administrative and support services, health care and social assistance, and educational services.

### **Retail, Entertainment, and Hospitality**

As the population continues to grow in the township, additional retail services will be needed to ensure that the community has all the amenities and products they need. Retail attraction efforts will be focused on bringing boutique shops, non-chain restaurants, and entertainment options designed for families. Furthermore, hospitality uses offer opportunities due to the large business community in the area, as well as sporting and family events that take place in the region. Hotels also provide the township with an additional revenue stream through the hotel and excise tax.

### **Research and Development**

Research and development (R&D) is when businesses gather knowledge to create new products or discover new ways to improve their existing products and services. Larger companies may have their own research and development team that will test and refine products or processes before commercial use. Sources for identifying such prospects can be found at existing businesses, local commercial real estate firms, and area universities. We can also work with our regional partners at REDI Cincinnati and Jobs Ohio.

### **Advanced Manufacturing**

Advanced manufacturing is the use of innovative technology to improve products or processes, with the relevant technology being described as advanced, innovative or cutting edge. Advanced manufacturing industries increasingly integrate new innovative technologies in both products and processes. The rate of technology adoption and the ability to use that technology to remain competitive and add value to define the advanced manufacturing sector.

We have already had some success in this area. Workhorse Aero recently joined our growing business community. A leader in the emerging technology of drone delivery systems, this company designs and manufactures a high-efficiency delivery UAV that is integrated with their line of electric delivery trucks. Workhorse Aero recently moved into a 75,000 square foot building on Irwin Simpson Road, bringing 35 employees to Deerfield Township.

### **Health Services**

Health services consist of medical professionals, organizations, and ancillary health care workers who provide medical care to those in need. Health services assist patients, families, communities, and related populations. They cover emergency, preventative, rehabilitative, long-term, hospital, diagnostic, primary, palliative, and home care. These services are centered around making health care accessible, high quality, and patient-centered. Because of our past success at bringing medical services to Deerfield Township (e.g. Mercy Health and Cincinnati Children's), we should explore opportunities to expand our presence in this industry.

### **Small Business and Entrepreneurial Development**

Entrepreneurs tend to be classified as those who take on high-growth, high-risk innovations while small business owners oversee an established business with an established product and customer base. Successful entrepreneurs and small businesses are often seen as driving forces in today's modern economy.

In order to better establish Deerfield Township as a destination for small business and entrepreneurship, we should maintain our partnership with the Warren County Small Business Development Alliance and establish a stronger relationship with the local branch of COHatch. This organization is a new kind of shared work, social, and family space built on community that offers its members services, activities and amenities to live a fully integrated life and ultimately succeed. They operate a successful facility at the Deerfield Towne Center.

### **Single Family Housing**

Additional single family housing will be needed as the population continues to grow. By pursuing single family housing in favor of multi-family residential, the township will minimize the rise in population density caused by the growth.

### **Multi-Family Residential**

While multi-family development is not among the preferred property types, any multi-family projects that are proposed within the township boundaries will be assessed on a project by project basis. Furthermore, the 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update will reevaluate the needs and desires for multi-family housing based on population trends analyzed as a part of that report.

## Zoning

Current zoning of the township, for the most part, allows for the growth in these property types. The zoning classifications in the township will be further examined by the 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update and any adjustments needed to this report will be made using that analysis.

*Action Item: The Director will pursue development opportunities that feature office space, retail, hospitality, advanced manufacturing, research and development, health services, small business development, and entrepreneurship as well as single family housing. Our goal: build a diverse business community that will continue to grow. The retention and recruitment of major office prospects, especially at multi-tenant along Duke Boulevard and the Mason-Montgomery corridor, is critical to our future success.*

### 5.4 Analysis of Property Use in Township

An analysis of Warren County Auditor Data shows that the mix of property use (based on acres) in the township is as follows:

- Retail – 6%
- Office – 3%
- Industrial/Warehouse – 1%
- Single Family Residential – 46%
- Multi-Family Residential – 5%
- Hospitality - 1%
- Farm/Vacant Land – 21%
  - Agricultural Farm Land – 12%
  - Vacant Residential Land – 6%
  - Vacant Commercial Land – 3%
- Parks/Open Space – 7%\*
- Other – 10%

*\*Data from Parks Master Plan Process*

With economic development activity focused on the target areas outlined in the previous section, these percentages will likely fluctuate. Additionally, based on feedback from the community from the Parks Master Plan process, park space and open space will be preserved and potentially expanded. Staff will work to balance activity and achieve a property mix that will feature:

- Retail between 6% and 10%
- Office between 3% and 10%
- Single Family Residential between 46% and 55%
- Hospitality between 1% and 3%
- Multi-Family Residential – 5%
- Park/Open Space between 7% and 10%

By targeting growth in retail, office, single family residential, and hospitality, the township would be poised to see significant property tax revenue increases based on the value per acre of land within these types. This additional revenue would help offset the cost of any infrastructure or service improvements caused by such growth.

### 5.5 Deerfield Action Agenda Recommendation for Mixed-Use Gathering Space

The Deerfield Action Agenda made the following recommendation and action steps.

***Recommendation 5.1 – Identify a potential scope, site, and development partners for a vibrant, mixed-use gathering place***

The District at Deerfield provides us with this opportunity. With the initial phase of the project now complete, the developer is prepared to move forward with Phase II. We anticipate the start of construction in the first quarter of 2023 with a completion date at the end of 2025. The next phase include 85,000 square feet of retail and experiential restaurant or entertainment space. It will also feature a public square to be owned by the Township and programmed with community events. Once



completed, this \$120 million development is sure to be the vibrant, mixed-use space envisioned by community leaders several years ago.



Looking ahead, economic development staff will continue to look at other areas within the township that may be suitable for redevelopment into the vibrant mixed use space this recommendation speaks of.

#### 5.6 Infrastructure Needs of the Community

The original Deerfield Action Agenda also sought to address the infrastructure needs of the community. Considering these, along with the pursuit of economic development projects should be a major focus of staff. The recommendations that the Action Agenda included were:

##### ***Recommendation 6.3 – Improve walking and biking connectivity throughout Deerfield Township***

The Parks Master Plan process is helping to gather information on this topic. When that report is complete and the feedback from the community is compiled, staff will be able to better access the community's desire for expanded pedestrian and trail systems. Additionally, this item plays a significant role in the 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update.

##### ***Recommendation 6.3 – Support regional efforts to enhance transit connectivity***

Much like the pedestrian and trail systems, this plays a significant role in the 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update. It is imperative that we continue to explore ways to improve connectivity throughout the Township, making it easier for residents and visitors to enjoy the many amenities found in our community.

***Action Item: the Director will continue to research and advocate for additional transit connectivity throughout the region and assess the feasibility of bringing a bike share to the community.***



## SECTION 6: BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

### 6.1 What is Business Retention and Expansion?

Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) is an economic development strategy of proactively connecting with existing businesses to understand and respond to local business needs.

### 6.2 Establishing a Business Retention and Expansion Program

In addition to the (re)development activities expressed in this strategic action plan, the township needs to establish a BRE program. The Deerfield Action Agenda emphasizes this point through recommendation 2.1, which states:

***Recommendation 2.1 – Actively support the business retention and expansion (BRE) efforts of regional partners***

In a similar way that a database is needed in order to assemble knowledge about the local real estate market, prior to being able to launching a BRE program a complete a business inventory must be completed to know all the businesses in the township and contact information for them.

***Action Item: the Director will complete a full business survey of all the companies in Deerfield Township.***

Once the database is complete, the Director should communicate with local businesses to inform them that the Township can help them grow and prosper. Business visitations with owners and managers will help us better understand how their businesses are performing. We can also provide any assistance that is needed to help them operate a high level.

*Action Item: the Director will develop and implement a communications and marketing strategy to reach out to businesses and inform them of the BRE program. A key component of this will be an expanded business visitation program. The Director will work with our regional partners to expand our business communications.*

The Director can and should work with our regional partners to improve our business outreach activities. The regional partners that should be included in BRE visits include:

- REDI Cincinnati
- Warren County Economic Development/Port Authority
- MADE Chamber
- Sinclair College
- Warren County Small Business Development Center

*Action Item: the Director will create programs to call attention to the products and services provided by local businesses. Such efforts could include business recognition events and activities as well as improved utilization of our electronic media and other communication materials.*