

# Gates Mills Comprehensive Plan

Meeting #5 (1/9/23)

Discussion Notes

Distributed 1/18/23



## **Handouts for Meeting #5**

**Expansion of Objectives and Strategies**

**Breakout Discussion Questions #1 and #2**

**Conserved Land by Ownership with Data Map**

**Natural Areas Map**

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## **Advisory Committee Members in Attendance**

### **Chip's Table:**

Jennifer Pinto  
Lindsay Steinbrink  
Scott Broome  
Kelly Siemborski  
Rob Galloway  
Cynthia Zins  
Rick Marabito  
Dana Haas  
Sean O'Brien  
Elizabeth Horvitz

### **Sandra's Table:**

Mitch Bass  
Sharon Bodker  
Ann Zoller  
Keely Davidson-Bennett  
Nat Smith  
Erin Shank  
Mary Jo Schmidt

### **Other Attendees**

Jay "Chip" AuWerter, Village Council  
Sandra Turner, Village Council  
Kristin Hopkins, FAICP, CT Consultants  
Sarah Sitterle, AICP, CT Consultants  
Jeri Crespo, CT Consultants

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## **Meeting Introduction**

The format and an overview of the night's discussion activities for the meeting were described. Each table began breakout discussions of Topic #1 on the access and connection refinement.



**BREAKOUT DISCUSSION #1:**

**Goal E. Access and Connection Refinement - Strategy E.2**

Notes from the table discussions are provided below for each question.

Question #1: Do you agree that a high priority of the Village should be to expand the sidewalk network in the Village Center as described in strategy E.2.1?

<b><u>Chip’s Table</u></b>	<b><u>Sandra’s Table</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was noted that the Mayor was looking into sidewalk projects.</li> <li>• Concerns raised about sidewalks across public land, Village land and people’s yards.</li> <li>• Discussed whether Villagers would want sidewalks in their front yards and the practicality of sidewalks in locations with narrow rights-of-way.</li> <li>• Some sidewalks in the Village Center area are narrow, made of brick, poorly maintained and in a hodge-podge of locations. Committee members described the locations of the sidewalks.</li> <li>• Discussed that the existing sidewalks should be repaired, but not widened.</li> <li>• Discussed the locations of some informal and officially unapproved crosswalks. It was noted that the State did not approve the crosswalk by the Library in front of Sara’s, but it was there for safety reasons.</li> <li>• Discussed that there should be a destination for sidewalks and to avoid constructing them to nowhere.</li> <li>• Discussed areas that needed sidewalks or a safe, designated path along the road including:                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Nature Camp is conducted every summer at GMES; there should be a designated path that is painted with markings on the street for the children to cross Chagrin River Road to get to the Community House and Arboretum.</li> <li>○ Also noted that the Community House was a lockdown space for the school when in session.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Observation that at Old Mill Road and there is a blind spot at Epping Road as cars are coming down the hill on Old Mill Rd, and people drive fast in that area. Members mentioned a sidewalk coming from Epping Road was recommended, as the State was not in favor of a crosswalk in that location.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was noted that there are already sidewalks in parts of Village Center; the Mayor is already adding a walkway from Library to GMES.</li> <li>• Agreed that it is important to install sidewalk along Chagrin from the livery to Old Mill Rd.</li> <li>• Should keep the same material (brick), the same ‘look’.</li> <li>• Concern that sidewalks installed on private property (between Hunt Club/Polo Field) would not be acceptable to the property owners (would need to check right-of-way widths: Epping Rd ROW=80ft, Sudbury Rd &amp; Deerfield Rd ROW=60ft).</li> <li>• Sidewalks along Epping are not necessary, it is already a suitable walking environment and adding them would detract from ambiance.</li> <li>• Sidewalks in Village Center are not a high priority, but installing them in Village Center was more important than installing elsewhere in the Village.</li> <li>• Where ever sidewalks are installed, it is important to make sure they do not encroach on the fences.</li> <li>• Generally, the group agreed that sidewalks were not a high priority.</li> </ul>

**Question #2** –What are the advantages and disadvantages to providing connections (in general or in specific locations) as described in E.2.2?

<u>Chip’s Table</u>	<u>Sandra’s Table</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connections between neighborhoods will be difficult in certain areas, based on topography challenges.</li> <li>• Suggested that sidewalks would be helpful to Timber Ridge. Some members noted that sidewalks would change the character of the neighborhoods.</li> <li>• Noted it is important to ask what is to be connected and “why”, such as people travelling between two places or for exercise.</li> <li>• Noted it is important to figure out why people feel unsafe using the roads for walking and cycling and to address those concerns.</li> <li>• Worth discussing connections between neighborhoods and the Village Center. Some noted that neighborhoods located further from the Village Center may benefit from sidewalks that connect their neighborhood to other neighborhoods to improve connectivity, such as sidewalks from cul-de-sacs off of County Line Road.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed that a marked bike lane along Gates Mills Blvd is desirable.</li> <li>• Comment that neighborhoods used in the Community Survey were artificially defined. Consider a more deliberate analysis to better define the ‘neighborhoods’.</li> <li>• Suggested that once neighborhoods are better defined, neighborhood residents could get together to decide for themselves where they think sidewalks/paths are needed.</li> <li>• Connections between neighborhoods and village center will be difficult due to the terrain.</li> <li>• Generally do not agree that neighborhoods should be connected to the metroparks; though one member stressed that the Metroparks is a great asset. Questions raised about where you cross the river to get to the North Chagrin Reservation.</li> <li>• One suggestion was to create a dog park where the dump used to be, and provide a trail to the dog park.</li> <li>• Some suggested talking to the nursery about extending the trail on their property along river</li> <li>• Noted that cameras are located at Mayfield/ Chagrin River intersection, perhaps a crosswalk with a push light is appropriate there as well.</li> <li>• Some members felt Village should be more walkable/ bikeable. More accessibility would encourage residents to walk.</li> <li>• A question was asked if is possible to widen the shoulder so that walking along the streets wouldn’t be so dangerous. Improve berms so they are smoother and firmer for cyclists. It was noted, however, that without curbs, the berms will be susceptible to deterioration.</li> </ul>

**Question #3:** Do you agree with advocating for a trail system on land owned by the Village and GMLC? (pedestrian only? Or pedestrian and bridle?)

<u>Chip’s Table</u>	<u>Sandra’s Table</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noted that Cleveland Metroparks has had a plan to connect trails through Gates Mills for over 50 years.</li> <li>• Noted that the Land Conservancy does not own any land along the river.</li> <li>• Discussed the availability and location of bridle trails. Some members noted it is possible to ride horses between the parks. However, the entire trail is not on public land, there are some gaps where the trail is on private property. A rider</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A member described the locations of existing bridle trails. Also, suggested that a committee could be created to study the existing trails that are already being used and maintained (mowed), and other historic trail locations to determine where bridle trails previously existed and/or are appropriate.</li> <li>• Bridle trails are primarily for people, and also suitable for horseback riding.</li> <li>• Others noted that they do not think people will want to have trails cross their property. For example,</li> </ul>



<u>Chip's Table</u>	<u>Sandra's Table</u>
<p>needs to know which specific private property owners allow people to traverse.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With the discussion, it was mentioned that the Metroparks owns property at the Mayfield Road and Chagrin River Road intersection. Perhaps this site could be used for trails.</li> <li>• Members noted concern about trails that allowed connections between the Metroparks and the Village that would be open to the general public.</li> <li>• Some members do not share the same concerns about access for outsiders to the Village on trails and noted the value of having an extended regional trail. Another member noted that there is a missed opportunity without a trail on GMLC/Village-owned land and untapped potential in the Village.</li> <li>• It was concluded that the idea of trails is great, but the execution and side effects were undesirable. Members agreed that the objection was trail connections to the rest of the world.</li> </ul>	<p>residents whose property backs up to conservancy property may have an expectation of no trail.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noted that trails require a lot of maintenance.</li> <li>• Trails <u>within</u> Gates Mills are not controversial: Potential for trails on Village-owned property along Chagrin River, provided they do not connect to the Metroparks.</li> <li>• Also discussed Geauga County commuter cut-thru traffic. A prime example is people cut-thru the Village on Old Mill Road east and west to avoid traffic lights on Mayfield Road. Speed and volume are both issues. Find ways to restrict cut-thru traffic similar to how Shaker Heights has addressed cut-through traffic at Fairhill Road and S Park Blvd.</li> </ul>

Sandra and Chip provided a summary of their table's discussion at the conclusion of the breakout session. The report-out summaries are found in the addendum on page 7.

**BREAKOUT DISCUSSION #2:**

**Goal A. Rural Village Character & Goal B. Harmony with Nature Refinement**

For Breakout Discussion #2, Kris Hopkins explained the changes made to Goals A. & B. before the two groups resumed discussion of the topics.

Notes from the table discussions are provided below for each question.

Question #1: Do you agree with the refinements made to Goal A and Goal B?

<u>Chip's Table</u>	<u>Sandra's Table</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The group noted that it was hard to disagree with revisions to Goals A. &amp; B.</li> <li>• The language is clear.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The group was generally ok with changes to Goals A. &amp; B., though one member felt Goal B still needed to be tweaked regarding how Gates Mills might become a leading sustainable municipality.</li> <li>• Rural Village Character-should include homesteads (working hobby farms) as part of Village's rural character.</li> </ul>



**Question #2:** Do you agree with the revisions to the strategies under A.2. Protecting important scenic features?

<u>Chip's Table</u>	<u>Sandra's Table</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members questioned A.2.2 strategy relating to regulating scenic views.</li> <li>The Committee members discussed that imposing on a landowner was difficult and they did not know how that would get accomplished.</li> <li>The group wasn't sure exactly what scenic views meant and how that would be enforced in an ordinance.</li> <li>The Committee members showed support for objectives A.1, A.3 and A.4, but were unclear how to handle A.2. After discussion about gateways, it was noted that objective A.2 could include gateways.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group stated 'scenic' is a lot more than what you see from road- biggest issue in plan. May be more aspirational.</li> <li>Noted that Chagrin River Rd is the most scenic route in the Village and most of the land along the Chagrin River is already protected via public ownership (GMLC, Village or Metroparks).</li> <li>The best way to protect land is through the Land Conservancy.</li> <li>Noted that it is better to focus on protecting the environment for other than aesthetic reasons.</li> <li>Some commented no need to document where scenic areas exist - all views in the Village are scenic.</li> <li>How do you determine what is considered scenic and where? Seems too subjective.</li> <li>Could focus on gateways into the Village.</li> <li>Concerned about trees getting cut down. Group is in favor of preserving/protecting tree canopies, perhaps consider moving to be under A.3.</li> <li>Some agree that A.2.1 should be removed but if you remove that then you should remove A.2.2.</li> <li>A-2.3 – Group didn't discuss, but no issues.</li> </ul>

**Question #3:** Do you agree with the Sustainability Strategies that have been expanded under Goal B.?

<u>Chip's Table</u>	<u>Sandra's Table</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group noted that the Zoning Ordinance should be changed to expand the allowance for solar panels.</li> <li>Regarding Objective B.4 LEED-certification for the Village. Committee members noted that the requirements to achieve LEED certification are expensive and extremely stringent. There are tradeoffs, but the effort was costly. The group discussed what the effort would accomplish and whether it was more aspirational than practical to achieve.</li> <li>Objective B.4 needs to be reworked; and need a better understanding of what is required for LEED certification before including it as an objective.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What can Gates Mills do for alternative energy?</li> <li>Group discussed Gates Mills' restrictions on solar panels, noted that the Planning &amp; Zoning Commission agrees the ordinance should be revised to delete restriction on visibility from the street. Village should encourage people to install solar.</li> <li>Group suggests getting rid of strategy B.1.2. EV Charging stations in village, and perhaps putting them (facilitating the installation of them) at schools for teachers.</li> <li>Need to improve electrical grid- power goes out every week and people need to have a generator.</li> <li>Electricity reliability-How can they bury lines in the Historic District? Decide where this should be included – here or in Goal F.</li> <li>For Environmentally Responsible Best Practices (B.2.) Noted the importance of preparing a stormwater master plan.</li> <li>Strengthen recycle program and compost education, consider educational programs to increase participation.</li> <li>Perhaps the Village could create an in-house composting program. One strategy would be to generate ideas</li> </ul>



<u>Chip's Table</u>	<u>Sandra's Table</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members liked the wording of B.4.1 and noted the examples and strategies that other communities have used were helpful for Gates Mills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agreement that the Village should start to move toward more sustainable practices, but need to define what it means for Gates Mills</li> <li>B.4.1. consider this statement as the starting point rather than LEED</li> <li>A member noted that many aspects of the Village (lifestyle of massive houses and cars) are not consistent with LEED goals.</li> </ul>

Sandra and Chip provided a summary of their table's discussion at the conclusion of the breakout session. The report-out summaries are found in the addendum on page 7.

**NEXT STEPS**

At the conclusion of the meeting, Sandra noted that the specific material discussed during the meeting would be incorporated into recommendations and would not be rehashed at the next meeting. She stated that a summary of the meeting discussions would be distributed and committee members would have time near the end of the process to discuss any topic reviewed.

Topics for the next meeting (#6) will focus on Goal F. Amenities and Services, and Objective D.1. Encouraging Investment in Existing Housing. Then, at the following meeting (#7) the group will revisit topics related to the Village Center and Housing.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

The public attending the meeting was asked if they had any comments or questions. A resident commented that there were people who attended the meeting that expected to hear a report with results and they were disappointed. The person stated that the meeting was a workshop, which was not made clear in advance.

It was mentioned that the next two meetings would be advertised in the Pink Sheet as "working sessions."

**CHIP'S ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON PROCESS**

While waiting for Sandra's group to complete their review of Breakout #2 questions, Chip reflected on the changes to the process with the group. He noted that there were two small tables for breakout groups. He asked if the process worked better for the group and they responded positively. He reflected that the narrower approach to topics was productive.

He asked if people liked the 90-minute format and people responded positively.

## **ADDENDUM – REPORT OUT SUMMARIES**

Sandra and Chip provided a summary of their table’s discussion at the conclusion of each breakout session.

### **BREAKOUT #1: GOAL E. Access and Connection Refinement**

Sandra noted that for Question #1, the group was interested in maintaining the current character of the Village Center, more natural. Sidewalk improvements to fill in gaps should be considered as part of an overall plan for Village Center.

Chip reported that the group had concerns about intrusions of sidewalks onto personal property. He noted that there were sidewalks in the Village Center, but that they were not maintained. He mentioned that the group had concerns about making sure there was a need for the sidewalks with a destination. He stated that a sidewalk or marked path made sense to the elementary school. He noted that the group did not want the existing sidewalks to be widened. There was a question on whether the Village would be able to keep the existing crosswalks that were not approved by the State. He noted that the group agreed that a sidewalk connection to the polo field made sense.

Sandra noted for Question #2, there was consensus among the group on the need for more safe places to walk although the “how” and “where” were still to be determined. The group had concerns about how a connection could be made across the Mayfield Road (OH 322) and Chagrin River Road intersection. The group also wondered if a crosswalks would be permitted at that intersection. She noted that the group felt the “pros” were accessibility, attracting new residents, and improved safety. She mentioned the “downsides” were private property owner concerns, outsiders using trails and the security issue, and safety due to vehicular traffic, specifically speeding traffic. She mentioned that the group thought that connectivity and paths for the whole 8 square mile Village was overwhelming. The group thought that there should be exploration of connectivity in each neighborhood with each one having their own neighborhood committee.

Chip reported that for Question #2, part “a” there was a concern about connectivity between neighborhoods and that it was not a priority to provide connections along big hills (Sherman, Brigham, Old Mill and Berkshire). The group felt it was something for each neighborhood to decide. The group thought that the northeast part of the Village where cul-de-sac streets along County Line Road may want to be connected to other neighborhoods. For part “b” the group felt there should be no connection to the North Chagrin Reservation. For part “c” the group agreed that connections within neighborhoods were important.

It was mentioned that during the neighborhood meetings, the meeting at Gilmour Academy included neighbors who were interested in connecting Gates Mills Boulevard to Pepper Pike’s planned marked bike lane. Both groups agreed that on recommending creating a bike land on Gates Mills Blvd.

A Committee member noted that overall the terrain throughout the Village is a concern. It was mentioned that better managing traffic and roads would provide for safety. It was stated that the Village should figure out where unsafe areas exist and make them safer by improving safety for bicycles and pedestrians, improving/widening the shoulders, and improving signage. It was mentioned that many areas have advisory speed limits which are not enforceable. The Committee member suggested lowering of speed limits and using political capital with State representatives for assistance.

For Question #3, Chip reported that his group placed a higher priority on Village Center sidewalks over connecting the bridge trails. Sandra's group noted sidewalks in the Village Center are a higher priority compared to other types of connections. She also noted that trails are a difficult topic and require a separate discussion.

#### BREAKOUT #2: GOALS A & B - Rural Village Character & Harmony with Nature

For Question #1, Chip reported that the group felt it was hard to disagree with Goals A. & B, and they were also okay with objective A.1. Sandra reported that one committee member suggested adding "homestead" to Goal A to be in addition to "well-tended historic estates."

For Question #2, regarding strategies under A.2. for protecting important scenic features, Chip's group did not know what "scenic views" meant. The group agreed that scenic views, however articulated and defined, are an integral part of the Village's ambiance and need to be preserved and maintained. However, the proposed language does not quite capture the concept and needs to be refined. He mentioned that the group was okay with objective A.3. In addition, the group thought entries into the Village could be considered gateways.

Sandra's group thought that strategies A.2.1 and A.2.2 should be deleted as there were other higher priorities. There was a question whether strategy A.2.3 should be deleted also, and whether all of objective A.2 should be deleted. The group did not think that objective should go away, although it was thought of as more aspirational and not practical. Members mentioned that strategy A.2.2.b was good and should be kept.

Chip noted that for Question #3, Goal B, objective B.4 was too stark and that strategy B.4.1 was good - the Village can aspire to move toward LEED certification.

Sandra noted for Objective B.1 Alternative Energy, that the EV charging station should be eliminated in the Village Center as it was not needed. The group had no edits to objective B.2. The group thought that with composting, as noted in objective B.3, that there could be more education to promote its use. The group also discussed the future of electricity and what the Village can do to make the area more scenic and have reliable electricity, such as burying the electric lines. The members also noted that the Village should do a stormwater management master plan.