

Chapter 2 – Community Survey Results and Stakeholder Interviews

I. Issue Identification

An important part of the planning process is procuring citizen input and identifying key community issues. The Steering Committee and PDG developed a group of substantive questions that were designed to draw insights from selected stakeholders representing a spectrum of Village and Township residents, as well as public and private sector employees. After reviewing available community information and survey results, a number of potential issues were identified by the Steering Committee. Alternative strategies and background information for each issue were presented and discussed over several meetings.

II. Community Survey¹

In mid-July 2006, three hundred (300) registered voters in the Village of Granville and Granville Township were selected at random and interviewed by telephone for input and insight into community issues. One hundred and fifty (150) interviews were completed in each jurisdiction.² Comparative results are shown in the Appendix, matching this information to a mail survey conducted among households who were not interviewed by telephone. Comparable questions are also posted from a 1997 self administered survey.

A. Survey Results

There are more female (54.7%) than male residents in the community. Most residents (89.2%) of the Granville community indicate that they are married or were married; and the largest age group (31.3%) is between the ages of 45 and 54.

While most residents (94.3%) own their home, only about one in ten (13.8%) own more than one property in the community. A majority (52.8%) of homes have 3-5 people living in the household.

Nearly two-thirds of the residents (64.3%) have lived in Granville for more than 10 years. Eight in ten (79.7%) of all residents expect to live in Granville for at least 10 years. More than 50 percent of the residents (50.3%) are employed as professionals, executives, or managers; and nearly 20 percent of all residents are retired.

Approximately 42 percent of Granville residents work in Granville, including those who work out of their homes (13.3%) and those who work at Denison (8.3%). Most others work in the Columbus area (26.5%) or elsewhere in Licking County (22.4%).



¹ *Granville Community Survey*. Prepared for Poggemeyer Design Group by Stanford H. Odesky and Associates (July 2006).

² Statistical error on a sample selected in this manner is +/-5.7% at the 95% confidence level.

Most residents (85.7%) indicated that they drive to get around the Village. Many do walk as well (47.3%). Some residents bicycle as a means of transport (21.3%).

The top three major issues facing residents were identified as community growth (26.3%), residential growth (25.0%), and high taxes (24.3%). Others noted that school taxes (10.0%), traffic (7.7%), overcrowded schools (7.7%), streets (7.7%), or the preservation of rural character and agriculture (4.7%) were major issues.

Residents were split on whether conditions in Granville have improved in the last three years or are worse. Just over one quarter (26.7%) believe that conditions have improved. Most (42.3%) believe that conditions have stayed the same. About one in five residents (21%) felt that conditions have gotten worse; and 10% did not have an opinion.

The reasons most often cited in support of overall improvement were downtown improvements (31.3%), followed by schools (15%), and then increased community activities (11.3%). Most of those who felt that nothing has changed (73.2%) simply stated that they had not noticed any difference. Just under ten percent (8.7%) noted that they felt that some things had gotten better while others had gotten worse, but the overall condition remained unimproved. Most residents that indicated that they felt the community was getting worse cited rapid growth (46.0%) as the reason. Others blamed schools (20.6%), traffic (15.9%), or increased taxes (11.1%).

Key strengths in the Granville area were identified as friendly community (38.0%), small village community (34.0%), and schools (33.3%). Others felt it is a nice place to live (20.3%) or that it is family oriented (11.3%). Denison University (Granville as a college town) was noted by some (8.3%) as a strength, as was the community's historic character (5.7%), the Village or Township staff (5.0%), and safety (5.0%).

Major weaknesses identified were too much growth (21.7%), high taxes (16.0%), and snobbishness or lack of diversity (9%). Certain residents felt that the Granville community has no weaknesses at all (6.3%). Some (6.7%) cited resistance to change as a major weakness. Others (5.7%) felt the schools were a weakness, and some residents (5.7%) indicated that the lack of a commercial base or development was a problem. Few (less than five percent) cited the local government or poor planning as a weakness. Others (11.7%) did not have a response.

Overall, the majority of residents had a very positive image of the Granville community. Most residents felt that it is a nice place to live (40.7%), a small village/community (32.0%), and a friendly community (28.0%). Other residents viewed the community as family-oriented (13.7%); historic in character (10.7%); a college-university town (9.3%) due to Denison University; safe (5.3%); rural in character (4.7%); or an All American town like Mayberry or New England (3.7%). Some residents felt that the community has a "snobby" image (4.3%).

Students are often given the grades of A, B, C, D, and F on the quality of their work. Residents surveyed were asked to "grade" the Granville community in the same way. Almost nine in ten (85.4%) graded the community an "A" (38.7%) or "B" (46.7%). Some did grade the community as a "C" (11%), but very few graded it as a "D" or "F" (1.3% and 0.3%, respectively).

The most important characteristics of Granville were identified by residents as: "A good place to raise a family, the schools, friendly people and a safe feeling." Least important characteristics were cited as the community's proximity to Columbus and proximity to places of work for residents and their spouses.

1. *General Consensus (Over 90%)*

Almost all residents agreed that Granville is a good place to live, a safe place to live, a good place to raise children, has an attractive downtown and a good school system, and that it is a freestanding community, not just a suburb of Columbus. There is also general agreement that Village and Township officials should work cooperatively and that developers should be required to reserve open space in their plans.

Residents of the Village agreed that the following services are satisfactory: fire and emergency services; public services (water, sewer, streets); and police services. Those in the Township agreed that fire and emergency services are satisfactory.

2. *Majority (51%-90%)*

Most residents agreed that the community is growing too fast (68.0%), that taxes are high (66.3%), that people in the village and township do not “think as one” (implying a lack of collective consensus) (53.0%), and that parking in the downtown is inadequate (52.7%)

Most indicated that Granville has adequate parks and public areas (79.0%), cultural facilities (75.3%), and shopping areas (54.3%). The majority of residents (81.0%) feel that Downtown Granville should remain the commercial and cultural hub of the community and that retail space should provide services primarily for local residents (52.3%). Additionally, most residents also indicated that Granville should consider buying available green space to be preserved for the benefit of the community (81.0%), that local zoning ordinances should promote more consistency between the Village and Township (73.7%), and that the rate of residential development is too fast (72.7%).

The majority of residents agreed that a senior citizen housing retirement community (65.3%), a senior citizen assisted-living facility (64.0%), condominiums for empty nesters (62.0%), housing for young professionals (60.7%), a senior citizen nursing home (56.0%), and single family homes in the \$200,000 - \$300,000 price range (50.3%) would be beneficial residential additions to the community.

Family restaurants (66.7%), small retail stores (65.0%), fine dining restaurants (63.3%), corporate facilities (61.3%), professional offices (60.7%) parks and recreation facilities (78.0%), and a community center or a senior center for meetings, cultural, and recreation use (72.7%) were elements that most residents agreed would benefit the community.

Residents in the majority would be willing to pay additional taxes to preserve open space and green space (75.7%); to support the school system (70.0%); for parks and recreation facilities (73.3%); and for a senior center and a community center for meetings, cultural, and recreation use. Most (61.3%) would support a levy for adopting Bryn Du buildings as a mixed-use community center for meeting, cultural, and recreational uses.

Most Village residents agreed that the Village staff and Village Council are responsive to the Village residents. Residents of the Township mostly agreed that the condition and maintenance of roads and County sheriff services were satisfactory, as well as that the Township staff and Trustees were responsive to the Township residents. The majority of Township residents felt that the cost of community services is low.

3. *Minority (Less than 50%)*

Only a minority of residents agreed that there is too much traffic in the Village (35%), and that

truck traffic through the Village is excessive (44%). Some in the minority (42.3%) agreed that there is a lack of affordable housing, the potential for too much commercial development (41.3%), a limited number and variety of stores (36.3%), too much interference with the right of individual property owners (32.3%), a lack of parks and recreation facilities (18.0%), and that the appearance of the gateways to the village are poor (14.3%).

Only a minority of residents (45.0%) felt that Downtown Granville should remain as it is and that more stores and shops were not needed. Only a minority agreed that there should be a shopping area outside downtown (43.3%), that more downtown property should be zoned for commercial purposes (26.0%), and that the rate of commercial development is too fast (25.3%). Less than a majority of the residents indicated that the community has adequate services for the elderly (39.0%) and adequate downtown parking (38.0%).



Less than half of residents agreed that additional rental housing and apartments and single-family homes priced between \$100,000 and \$200,000 or greater than \$300,000 would be beneficial additions to the community housing stock.

A minority of residents agreed that additional child care facilities (48.3%), grocery stores (36.7%), lodging (hotels/motels) (33.0%), auto service businesses (25.7%), distribution facilities (warehouses)(21.7%), manufacturing facilities(20.7%), gas stations (19.3%), fast food restaurants (19.3%), convenience stores (18.7%), strip shopping centers (16.7%), and/or drive-through restaurants (16.0%) would be beneficial commercial additions to the community. Less than half of the Granville community residents feel that Granville should expand its bike trail (45.0%). Even fewer feel that the Granville village and township need new combined offices (26.3%) or a new fire station (24.7%). Of those few who agree with the need for a new station, most (74.3%) did not want it in Downtown Granville.

Few were willing to pay additional taxes for infrastructure for new commercial areas (31.3%) or new residential areas (19.3%). Few in the Village or in the Township were concerned that the Village will annex land from the Township.

4. *Design Preference*

Wood lots and treed areas were most often cited as areas that respondents would leave undeveloped in future residential subdivision designs (39.0%). Respondents also frequently preferred that wetlands or areas along a stream or creek (20%), hillsides or areas of steeper slopes (15.3%), farmlands (8.3%), and prominent views or vista across the landscape (6.7%) remain undisturbed. A few noted that they felt that new residential subdivisions were not needed (6.7%).

Six in ten residents (61.7%) feel Granville should encourage a particular architectural and/or physical characteristic in new office or commercial forms of development. Most advocating a style indicate that development should have a New England feel (69.2%), while some (21.6%) remained more nondescript in the preference for a general use of unifying elements. Others (13.5%) urged no particular style, but high quality and generous landscaping; and some preferred a design that was reflective of more of a rural or countryside feel (9.7%).

5. *Ten Years Out*

Residents were asked to identify one thing that they would like Granville to do in the next ten years, and slow growth or the control or regulation of growth was cited most frequently (by 17.7% of the respondents). Others noted that they would like the community to remain as it is (10.3%). Some felt that a new community swimming pool (10%), improved schools (5%), or more commercial development (9.3%) was what they most desired for the community.

III. Stakeholder Interviews

Twelve³ individuals were selected to participate in Stakeholder Interviews for the Comprehensive Plan to gauge and understand local attitudes about community development. These residents were selected by the Steering Committee as key persons who could offer valuable insights into key development issues facing the Granville Community.

All but one of the key person interviews were conducted over the phone. The twelve key persons who graciously gave of their time and knowledge are listed below:

- Ben Barton, President, Granville Chamber of Commerce
- Kevin Bennett, Granville Historical Society
- Dr. Clarke Berdan, Research Executive, Owens Corning; Member, Granville School Board
- Jerry Brems, Director, Licking County Planning Commission
- Jim Eckert, Executive, Owens Corning
- Julie Gwinn, Planning Administrator, ODOT District 5
- Dr. Abram Kaplan, Associate Professor, Denison University
- Dr. Dale Knobel, President, Denison University
- Marcia Phelps, Licking County Commissioner
- Steve Schneider, Granville Recreation Commission
- David Trautman, Licking County Chamber of Commerce
- Don Wiper, Licking Land Trust

Each of the interview responses were merged to retain anonymity and then arranged in narrative format for analysis by the Steering Committee.

A. Interview Format

For these interviews, each person was asked to comment on the following five topics:

- How to balance market pressures for community growth and our tax base issues (both residential and commercial)?
- How do we plan for the needs of seniors, both in housing needs and facility needs?
- What impacts do respondents see from the improvements to SR 161?
- How do we manage the community's environmental interests vs. growth-related issues?
- Other comments.

³ The number of people interviewed was not intended to provide a statistically valid sample of residents and non-residents. Although the statistical error and confidence level would not be considered reliable, the Steering Committee felt that the people interviewed would provide the reliable and non-biased insight needed in this survey.

B. Summary of Interviews

The following summary of the interview comments is presented by topic with the comments from each of those interviewed organized to best express the insights that were provided and to allow the Steering Committee to reflect upon these thoughts to determine consensus for further development and inclusion in the comprehensive plan.

1. *Overview*

Generally, the key persons expressed strong support for the effort to update the comprehensive plan and to build consensus regarding land use issues and the development of effective tools to implement community desires.

There was a general feeling that growth, especially residential growth, is inevitable, and that Granville is experiencing the impacts of new housing demand from commercial growth in New Albany and Columbus. Many of the key persons expressed concern that new market pressures will have a negative impact on community identity, schools, traffic, community services, displacement of lower-income residents, and the environment unless the community agrees on an effective and creative plan to mitigate the negative impacts of this growth. [In the community survey, the major issues facing the community were cited by survey respondents as community growth, residential growth, and taxes being too high. While a substantial majority (72.7%) felt that the rate of residential development within the community was too fast; only 25.3% of the respondents indicated that the rate of commercial development was too fast.]

2. *Balancing Growth*

There was general consensus among the key persons interviewed that the community is facing two choices regarding tax base issues: (1) the Granville Community can remain predominantly residential, or (2) it can intentionally plan for a diversified tax base. Several referenced the American Farmland Trust's cost of community services study that looked at the perceived impacts of residential growth. It showed that in most communities, residential development tends to use more public services than the tax base it generates, while farm and commercial development generates more tax base than the public services it requires. [A majority of the respondents to the community survey indicated support for certain types of residential development such as a senior citizen housing retirement community (65.3%), a senior citizen assisted-living facility (64.0%), condominiums for empty nesters (62.0%), housing for young professionals (60.7%), a senior citizen nursing home (60.7%), and single family homes in the \$200,000 to \$300,000 range. A majority of the respondents also indicated support for specific types of commercial development such as family restaurants (66.7%), small retail stores (65.0%), fine dining restaurants (63.3%), corporate facilities including research and development (61.3%), and professional offices (60.7%).]

Continuing with a predominantly residential land use focus was described as having the following impacts on the community: a) an advantage was thought to be that it would guarantee the continued quaint nature of the community; b) consequences were thought to include higher taxes on residential owners to support additional public services and a decrease of diversity in residential housing affordability in the community as only the wealthier and established could afford to live here.

Encouraging commercial, office, and light industrial development in the land use mix was described by several of the key persons as having the following potential impacts on the community: a) Advantages were suggested to include the opportunity to target value-added general growth and that the diversification and broadening of the tax base would help balance

the tax burden on residents; b) A consequence was stated to be the potential loss of unique community character and ambience (with the example of SR 23 through southern Delaware County cited as evidence of poor commercial development planning and regulatory standards).

Some key person comments were made that the Granville Community has made some major steps forward and is seeking more of a balance in growth and development. One person commented that the City of Hudson is a model for how the Granville Community can successfully encourage commercial growth and succeed in maintaining character and ambience. Several persons stated that some high intensity commercial uses, such as gas stations, have triggered “excessive zeal” in the community and that any new commercial regulations should carefully address these trigger issues to require that commercial and office development be compatible with neighboring uses. One person commented that new development should be assessed impact fees for infrastructure and recreation. One key person questioned the need to maximize office and commercial opportunities in order to continue to provide adequate public services. This person believes that the tax base is in reasonably good shape and that the way to improve the tax base is not to control who can build, but maintaining exceptionally high standards on what can be built (control house sizes, number of bedrooms, materials used, etc.). This person attributed growth in the Granville Community to the excellence of its schools and that because of the “crazy” school funding formula, property values need to be maintained at the highest values possible to maintain the growing population. One person suggested that some of the ways Mason, Ohio has approached these problems could serve as a study model for the Granville Community.

3. Senior Housing and Facilities

There was concern expressed by several of the key persons that the current trend of expensive residential construction in the Granville Community will limit the ability of low and moderate income residents, such as senior citizens, to continue to live here. Even new senior housing developments are considered too pricey for many seniors. Those who currently own their own homes are said to feel squeezed by the tax burden and are being priced out of Granville. Several key persons suggested that Granville needs to do more to provide a better mix of residential opportunities.

Contrary to the strong community support in the survey for a senior citizen retirement community (65.3%) or a senior citizen assisted living facility (64.0%), other key persons questioned whether the Granville Community is the proper setting for senior housing. One person suggested the community may be too much on the urban periphery and too far from convenient shopping and other services needed to support elderly facilities. Several persons doubted the need for additional senior center and related facilities and noted the activities catering to seniors by several organizations in town (churches, music clubs, garden clubs, etc.). One person suggested that as seniors downsize into smaller units, their older homes become available, often at affordable prices, to the market of younger families.

Two of the key persons generated ideas that may be helpful to senior citizens. One idea was to see if some of the excess land at the Owens Corning research site could be developed as homes targeted for seniors. Another idea was to propose state legislation for a freeze on the tax valuation of homes occupied by seniors, similar to the homestead exemption legislation used in Florida and California.

4. State Route 161

The estimated timetable for the construction of the SR 161 widening project is 2009. This project will include interchanges at SR 37 and SR 310. There are bikeway improvements

planned that involves some type of crossing near the Granville Market and the highway bridge at SR 661. The Cherry Valley Road intersection is also planned to be improved with a new interchange and has been put on the State of Ohio Transportation Advisory Review Council (TRAC) proposed funding list, but will not likely be built until approximately 2013. The existing interchange at SR 16 and SR 37 south of Granville has been identified to be upgraded at some point in the future as it is not designed to current standards.

Several of the key persons praised the local and state effort to widen SR 161 to four lanes due to the high traffic and danger presented to drivers. One person described the widening project as a “necessary evil” due to the fact the current volume on the two-lane road is like a “wagon train” during the commute. One person stated that the SR 161 project provides needed roadway infrastructure support of the growth already taking place in the Granville community and will make the area a more desirable bedroom community from which to commute. Some related benefits cited for the widening project is that it will make it more feasible to do commercial and industrial economic development. One person suggested that the highway improvements provide an opportunity to see transportation improvement funding to create a nice gateway into Granville, such as an Easton-like Bridge with the community’s name on the side.

Other key persons were concerned the widening of SR 161 will add to the high degree of growth pressure. Several persons questioned the value of decreasing the rush hour commute time against the cost to taxpayers and the new growth pressures on the Granville community that it will allow. One person stated the SR 161 project hastens growth, speeds up access for commuters, and makes Granville more of a bedroom community to Columbus.

Specific planning concerns were noted by several key persons. One person suggested that new growth pressures will require both the Village and Township to ensure that land use planning and regulations are in place that adequately address design and landscaping standards desired by the community. A second concern noted that future decisions about where to extend sewer and water lines relates to the current efforts to develop the local 201 plan. Another comment was that once the interchange is built, there will be a 150 acre parcel of land in the Village south of SR16 on Cherry Valley Road that will be more or less cut off from the rest of Granville, making it difficult to provide water and emergency services. It was also noted that the Owens Corning site has no direct access to the highway (SR 161) and at some point may need community help in gaining access.⁴

A planning difficulty noted by one person is that the “161 Planning Accord” group formed a few years ago with Mid Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) participation has not been successful in encouraging townships to work together on corridor planning and zoning initiatives. The concern is that without township buy-in to the accord, the transportation difficulties experienced in southern Delaware County could be repeated along SR 161.

5. *Community Environmental Interests*

There was general pride and confidence expressed by the key persons in what the Township Open Space Levy and the Licking Land Trust have accomplished to preserve open space and protect the environment in the Granville Community. The Raccoon Valley Greenway is a major project of the Trust and started with the donation in 1991 of the Harnden Mill Pond Preserve in Granville Township. The Greenway’s purpose is to create and preserve a woodland ribbon of conservation easements at least 150 feet on each side of Raccoon Creek from Johnstown to Newark to provide aquifer protection, wildlife habitat, erosion prevention, flood control, passive

⁴ Currently however, due to ODOT’s limited access policies along this highway, any access to the Owens Corning site from SR 161 at its northern boundary is highly unlikely.

recreation and education experiences. Several of the key persons commented that while the greenspace initiative in the township is commendable, taxpayers alone cannot afford to buy the entire Greenway – It was suggested that the community will have to be far more aggressive and use development controls, such as open space impact fees and transfer of development rights, to acquire open space.

The Granville Recreation Commission (GRC) offers recreational and educational activities and operates Raccoon Valley Park, Wildwood Park, McPeck Lodge (Raccoon Conservation Club), and the Community Gardens at Wildwood. Presently, the GRC relies on part time directors. At some point in the future, full time professional staff is anticipated due to local growth. The GRC is mainly focused on recreation programs. It may be reaching a point where parks and recreation may need to be merged in a meaningful way. The GRC would like to look at greater alignment and partnership with the schools. However, since the school district and boundaries of the GRC do not match, the GRC has recommended and promoted the creation of a joint recreation district with the school district boundaries representing the service area of the new district.

The general feeling of the key persons is that the commitment to preserve open space now highlights the Granville Community's desire to make the community even more desirable and leave more green space for future generations. (In the community survey, 93.3% of the respondents said that developers should be required to reserve open space in their development plans; and 75.7% said that they would be willing to pay additional taxes for open/green space in the community.)

6. Other Issues Regarding the Future Needs of Denison University

Denison University is located in the Village of Granville. It is a residential college and does not create significant off-site housing needs for its 2,000 student population. One of the key persons noted that Denison is not planning to grow, the main campus is adequate, and the University does not need more land. It intends to keep its bio-reserve as such.

Denison intends to work closely with the Village as it addresses maintenance of its buildings. Some of the fine arts facilities on the lower campus are housed in old converted structures (former residences and gyms, for example) and will need attention.

The University also foresees linkages between Denison and the potential of developing additional Research and Development (R&D) facilities. University faculty are active researchers and an undergraduate curriculum with internship opportunities could be developed.

7. Other Issues Regarding the Historical Society

The Granville Historical Society was founded in 1885 to promote an understanding of the history of the Granville community, to collect and preserve materials relating to Granville's history, to encourage the education of children in this history, and to make these materials available to the public. The Society maintains a museum with displays that include many pioneer artifacts and those from the later 19th and from the 20th century. A key person noted that the Historical Society needs to get new people to become interested in the history of the community.

8. Other Issues Regarding Village and Township Cooperation

Several of the key persons recommend that the two governmental bodies continue to attempt to work together and provide unified governmental leadership on regional cooperative efforts. One key person noted that there have been some good partnerships developed between the Village

and the Township in recent years, such as the planned improvements to the interchange at Cherry Valley Road and SR 161 and discussions on the financial health of the school district. On other issues, several key persons report there have been conflicts, such as on the issues of annexation and growth. While attempts to merge the Village and the Township have not been supported by the voters, Village and the Township officials worked together on the formation of a Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) to include the Owens Corning technical center and the Dow research facility.

9. Other Issues Regarding the Owens Corning Technical Center Site

Owens Corning (OC) owns 520 acres around its technical center, much of which is underutilized. OC has owned the site since the 1950's. Considering wetlands and steep slopes, only 250 acres or so of the site is developable. OC has had to reduce research and development operations due to the dictates of business, but it remains committed to research and development and is willing to entertain co-location of other R&D companies and mixed development of site. Representatives of OC have done some evaluation of potential uses of property with land planners and a market study and are now trying to determine what the market will support and what is compatible with community values and desires. An OC consultant has advised that if the site is not developed with some mix of residential uses, it will not be successful. One of the possible uses includes housing targeted to seniors because there is a market for this type of housing in the community and it would have zero impact on the schools. An OC representative suggested the company would like any potential housing to have a traditional New England architectural design. One key person suggested the OC site also offers the potential to provide a new gateway to the community, reinforcing the character of the Downtown area.