

2025 Chester Land Use Plan Update Survey

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Chester Township Board of Trustees (BOT) moved to create the Chester Township Land Use Plan Update Committee in April 2025. The committee consisted of 15 residents appointed by the BOT, with support from the township zoning inspector and zoning administrative assistant, and the staff of the Geauga County Planning Commission. In October 2025, a total of 3994 postcards were mailed to every property owner in the Township with instructions to take the survey online. The survey was not designed to be statistically calibrated. The goal of the survey was to engage the community and gather feedback from residents to gauge attitudes about the current state of the township and its zoning, as well as desires for the future of the township.

When the survey closed on December 15th, 2025, there were a total of 920 responses, or 1 response for every 4.34 postcards mailed. This represents a 23% response rate, well above the 10% threshold generally recognized as the minimum required to validate a survey's results. The survey results were analyzed and presented through the software used, survey123 by ESRI. The full results for every multiple-choice and open-ended question can be found in the final survey report. What follows is a summary of the survey responses.

Demographics

Most respondents, 53.8%, have lived in Chester for over 20 years, while only 1.96% indicated living here for less than 1 year. The most common age group is 60+, which totaled 48.48% of all respondents, while only 1.41% of respondents were under 30 years of age. The most common household size is 2 with 44.46% of all responses, and 29.56% of answers indicated a household size of 4 or more. 59.56% of residents indicated living on lots of 3 acres or less.

The demographic results are in agreement with the most recent [American Community Survey](#) from the US Census Bureau, which shows a median age in Chester Township of 51.4 and an average family size of 2.86

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Township Services

When asked about the services and amenities of the township, the results were mostly favorable. 78.59% of respondents were very or somewhat satisfied with the police department and 83.15% were very or somewhat satisfied with the fire department. The respondents were very or somewhat satisfied with the road department in 67.06% of responses and 79.56% were very or somewhat satisfied with the township and county parks located in Chester.

Quality of Life

Over 90% of respondents agreed that Chester Township should maintain its semi-rural atmosphere. When asked what they liked most about the township, the most popular answers included “semi-rural” and “small town atmosphere”. Among the least liked things in town included “vacant buildings” and the look of the area at the intersection of Mayfield Road (State Route 322) and Chillicothe (State Route 306). Over 64% of residents said they visit parks very or somewhat often. Despite the large senior population, only slightly more than 4% of people indicated visiting the West Geauga Senior Center very or somewhat often and only 7.28% reported being very or somewhat satisfied with the facility and programs offered there.

Zoning

When asked about the Township Zoning Resolution, only 26.63% of respondents indicated some level of satisfaction, while 18.37% indicated some level of dissatisfaction, and a plurality of 40.22% were neutral. 40.44% of residents agreed the current zoning resolution should be simplified, while 30.87% were neutral and 14.24% disagreed to some extent. On the topic of the current level of zoning enforcement, 41.09% had a neutral view, 24.68 were very or somewhat satisfied, and 22.39% were very or somewhat dissatisfied.

The survey also asked for opinions on property maintenance. A large majority of people, 76.96%, rated their area as having excellent or good property maintenance. Less than 1% rated the property maintenance in their area as very poor. Despite a positive view of the area they live, a plurality of 42.28% support implementing a property maintenance code. 39.56% would oppose a property maintenance code and the rest were neutral.

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If a maintenance code were enacted, the most supported form of enforcement was “education and voluntary compliance” (35.11%). Nearly as many (33.37%) indicated they did not support any enforcement of a property maintenance code.

Residential

Questions on this topic included Accessory Dwelling Units and Age Restricted housing options or housing options on smaller lots. Accessory Dwelling Units had the most support with 72.39% strongly or somewhat supporting the ability to attach them to existing homes. When asked whether the township should support quality, market rate housing for residents who could no longer maintain larger lots, 48.63% strongly or somewhat oppose the idea while only 34.78% indicated some level of support and the rest were neutral.

Commercial

When asked about their level of satisfaction with the appearance of the commercial area in the township, 47.93% indicated some level of dissatisfaction and 34.35% indicated some level of satisfaction. The next question dealt with the mix of retail establishments in the commercial district and 48.26% indicated some level of satisfaction while 26.74% expressed dissatisfaction with the retail offerings. When asked what was missing from the commercial district the most common responses included another grocery store and more dining options.

Respondents were asked whether they would favor or disfavor changing development standards in the commercial district to make redevelopment more viable. 39.02% of residents were in favor of this approach and 43.81% did not favor changing development standards. The rest were neutral. This question was followed up by asking whether people would support changing development standards in a specific portion of the commercial district and the answers changed. 49.56% strongly or somewhat favored this approach while 30.87% did not, with the rest being neutral.

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The final question about the commercial district was whether respondents would favor rezoning any of the commercial area to allow the construction of age-restricted (55+) housing. 39.35% of residents strongly disfavored this idea while only 33.59% strongly or somewhat favored it.

Additional Comments

The final 3 questions were open-ended, and we received 885 individual comments, which are available in the addendum of the final survey report. A few themes emerged from the comments including a distrust of any proposal suggesting future development or redevelopment, a need for better communication from the township and engagement with the public, and a preference for the status quo. However, many respondents also indicated a willingness to look into sensible and controlled development and/or redevelopment to address housing shortages and an aging population, including fewer restrictions on residential and commercial lots.

Many of the additional comments related to matters beyond the scope of the Land Use Planning Committee or the township's zoning function, such as dissatisfaction with certain area businesses or matters involving the West Geauga School District. Some of these matters can be addressed indirectly by the Land Use Planning Committee as part of its discussions.

Conclusions

Residents and property owners largely want to maintain the current semi-rural environment while allowing more flexibility on existing residential lots for things like accessory dwelling units. People are generally satisfied with the quality of life and township services. It appears there is some agreement that zoning regulations need to be adjusted, but consensus on how to do so is less clear. Further study should be done, and public and stakeholder input should be sought before moving forward with the final recommendations of the Land Use Plan Update Committee. Such recommendations may address the aging population, vacancies in the commercial district, property maintenance, accessory building size in the residential district, and communication to township residents, to name a few.

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