

## **Metro Parks and new construction**

I am a frequent user of both the bike trails and Metro Parks in Summit County. I get a great deal of satisfaction from these facilities and feel they are major amenities which contribute to the quality of life. I have looked forward to the opening of each new bike trail segment and park trail. Nonetheless, I think it is time for a moratorium on such new construction by Metro Parks, Serving Summit County.

I did research on how well the residents of Summit County are served by these facilities. Using 2010 population data and Geographic Information System maps and software, I determined that 90 percent of the population is within five miles of a bike trail. Using bike path trail heads as criteria, 89 percent of the population is within five miles of a trail head. Ninety-four percent of the population is within five miles of a Metro Park. Five miles is somewhat arbitrary, but it represents about 15 minutes of travel time, not a great inconvenience.

I worked for over 25 years as a city planner in Akron. I had reservations about the number of new community centers that were built in the 1990s, worried that the city would be unable to properly maintain and operate so many.

I worry that the Metro Parks may be getting itself in a similar situation. An eight-year, 1.46-mill Metro Parks levy was passed in 2006. This will come up for a renewal about 2014. Since 2006, the economy has plunged into a major recession, if not a depression. Property values have declined by 7.9 percent (\$2.1 billion).

I have seen signs (literally) of declining maintenance by Metro Parks. This does not seem to be a good time to add further operational and maintenance responsibilities. In particular, I question the need for the Freedom Trail construction and the Liberty Park nature center. These projects should be deferred until we see a turnaround in property values.

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