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Batavia Twp. set for huge growth

By Reid Forgrave
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BATAVIA TWP. - Archie Wilson looks at the shrinking vacant land in the township where he's lived for 30 years and realizes change is not far off.

"Right now in spots you see vacant land, vacant land, vacant land, but five years from now you'll see houses, houses, houses," said Wilson, chairman of township trustees in this Clermont County community. "The township never changed for quite a few years in there. Even now, up by the Ford plant you still see the same soybean fields you saw there 15 or 20 years ago."

But changes in the township just east of the Interstate 275 loop have already started.

Beginning today, the township becomes a home-rule township, giving it more governing authority.

Becoming a home-rule township is another step to becoming an increasingly suburban extension to Greater Cincinnati's eastern suburbs.

In the past five years, the township has seen 400 houses rise from former farmland. During the past year, township leaders have approved close to 3,000 plans for new home sites.

"It gives us a little more authority now here so we can operate more like a residential township," said Rex Parsons, township administrator. "Home-rule falls in between township government and municipal government."

With Batavia Township's location along Ohio 32 - one of the busiest interchanges along the Interstate 275 loop - and near Eastgate Mall and the surrounding retail area, it was only natural for the township to become Clermont County's newest suburban boomtown.

The township will now have the capacity to charge impact fees on new developments and can levy

BOOMING GROWTH IN RECENT YEARS

Batavia Township's population over the years

1990: 13,673

2000: 17,503

2005: 19,000 *

* township estimate; based on number of new houses built in the township since the last census

finer for people not following ordinances such as cleaning up junk in their yards. It can establish its own speed limits for roads. Another requirement of becoming home-rule is that the township had to hire a law director.

In recent years, the township has prepared for its growth and development in a number of ways: It hired a full-time administrator and a zoning consultant, built its own salt bin and researched purchasing its first piece of park land.

Township leaders expect the growth to continue.

"You have all this sudden growth, roads, parks in the township," Parsons said. "This is all new to us."

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