

Meeting Summary

Community Committee Meeting 4

September 3, 2025

The following is a summary of the fourth meeting of the community committee for Worthington's comprehensive planning process. Attached to this summary is the agenda and presentation slides.

Welcome and process update

The consultant team provided an update about current progress in the planning process and what direction the process is headed in the coming months, including the continuation of the speaker series and preparation for the second round of community input.

Engagement takeaways

The consultant team provided a broad overview of the first round of community input and prompted committee members to share their reflections about it. This discussion included:

Round one reflection

- Some committee members were curious as to whether the first round had enough participation and how Worthington's level of participation compared to other communities. Since a recent deer survey conducted had 4,000 people participate, people were curious as to whether 800 respondents were enough.
 - The deer survey's high participation rate is not representative of typical community surveys
 - 800 participants is well-above average for comparable communities
 - This is only the first round of three, so 800 participants will not be the final total count for this process
 - Round one is an open-ended stepping-off point with no assumptions that every voice was heard or that takeaways are finite and unchanging
 - People may be more involved once there is something for them to react to in the future rounds of engagement
- Some committee members emphasized the importance of reaching people by word of mouth and social media in the future rounds of engagement.
- Several people also mentioned that the mapping tool was difficult to use on mobile devices and that marking a specific place on the map felt intimidating – these may have been barriers.
 - A request for a simpler survey tool in the next round that is easier to use on a mobile device – multiple choice or rating questions

Areas for improvement/ideas for round two

- Meet people where they are
 - Bring awareness at events people already plan to attend
 - Farmer's Market, kids' sports events, school events, etc.
 - Send flyers home about the process with school children for their parents
 - More small-scale pop-up events in places people enjoy, like small businesses in Old Worthington
 - Engage with people during this year's elections
 - Create Worthington Together t-shirts for the community committee to encourage casual conversations
- Ensure ample time to use available engagement tools
 - Meetings-in-a-box were introduced toward the middle of the first round of engagement, and could have been more successful if they had been incorporated earlier
- Overcome any knowledge barriers
 - Some people may not understand what the comprehensive plan is or why it should matter to them
 - Others may be discouraged due to feeling like there are "endless" planning processes
 - Help people see what a comprehensive plan looks like
 - Create "talking points" to address common concerns and questions
 - Have a physical copy of the 2005 comprehensive plan alongside a modern comprehensive plan example at public events to emphasize how they have evolved to be more public-oriented

Develop the plan's principles

The consultant team introduced the proposed plan structure to the committee. This included introducing the draft principles, which describe the intent about "how" (generally) and "where" (conceptual location) growth and development in Worthington should occur in the future. Committee members broke into groups of 5-6 to discuss the principles. Below is a list of the draft principles with a summary of the discussions held:

Overall Comments

- A request for more plain language when evaluating these topics.
- A desire for more graphics to help illustrate this section's content.

Principle 1. "The City's unique character is strengthened—Downtown and along key corridors."

- Consider adding a preservation-focused component to the "How" section.

- The group recommended adding this component because of how much the community has voiced that it cares about maintaining our community's unique character
 - Suggested wording: "appreciating and protecting" what we have, "building upon" what we have
- Strengthen language around ensuring that plans are appropriate for specific communities/areas
 - A desire to balance the differentiation between areas (what Old Worthington needs is different from what Wilson Bridge Road needs, etc.)
 - Suggested wording: "appropriate development for specific communities," "character for each area is strengthened," "balance differentiation between areas."

Principle 2. "Growth focuses on vacant land and underperforming commercial, office, and industrial areas."

- This principle was well received without any proposed edits or changes.

Principle 3. "The character of established neighborhoods is maintained and enhanced."

- There was discussion about how this will be a heavily debated principle, so wording needs to be intentional here.
- Refine and define what "maintained" and "enhanced" mean.
 - Thoughts on "maintained":
 - Maintain might seem too much like the status quo
 - Suggestions: Character is "respected" or "honored"
 - Thoughts on "enhanced":
 - This needs to relate to the existing opportunities more strongly
 - Suggestions: "evolve," "adapt," "allow for realizing our fuller potential for accommodating growth"

Principle 4. "Walkable mixed-use places—distinctive in Central Ohio—are created."

- Some groups found "distinct in Central Ohio" to be confusing, suggesting "unique and purposeful" instead.
- There was discussion about how jargon like "superblocks" (used in the "How" section) may be too complex.
- Some groups also felt the "Where" section should be broader and more general.

Principle 5. "The City's parks and public spaces are elevated."

- This principle was well received without any proposed edits or changes.

Principle 6. "Major destinations are connected by safe walking, biking, and transit."

- In the "Where" section, groups felt that "mixed-use nodes" should become "general development" to encourage walkability more broadly.

Principle 7. "A broader range of housing types serves all ages and backgrounds."

- All groups discussed the framing of the title. There was general consensus that we shouldn't get too much into the demographics in the title. Suggestions for refinement included:
 - Cutting headline at "all."
 - Some discussion about what "all" means and how much can be promised
 - A broader range of housing types that serves "anyone who wants to call Worthington home"
 - Consider using known language like "attainable," "attractive," "serve a broader range of people," etc.
 - "To meet the needs of the community"
- In the "How" section, there was discussion on how the word "Allow" may be too strong to start, suggesting "Consider" instead.
- Suggestion to include first-time homebuyers/young professionals more clearly reflected in this section, as well as ensuring that Worthington is welcoming and accessible.
- There was some consensus that a mention of design standards should be included in the language of this principle
 - Groups noted that there is a difference between what people perceive multi-family housing to look like and what real development looks like
- Some people felt that the market-driven nature of housing development was important to note
- There was some discussion on how to communicate a desire to conserve existing naturally affordable housing/general affordability and how eventually new affordable units would be needed to replace aging, existing affordable units.
- There may be potential concerns about any change within neighborhoods, so there will need to be more thought on how people may respond to the way the "How" and "Where" sections are worded.
- People felt there would need to be more discussions on the potential housing options, especially with graphic representation.

Principle 8. "Development and the public realm demonstrate environmental stewardship and resilience."

- There was some discussion on the "How" section being limiting
- "Creating a more sustainable model"/ "future change should address sustainability" was language people liked
- Groups mentioned wanting to see the promotion of native plants, recycling, and composting included.
- Some potential community partners were discussed, including the Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed (FLOW), Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District (FCSWCD), and Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO).

Principle 9. "Employment corridors are modernized to support a resilient economy."

- In the title, groups suggested changing "Employment corridors" to "Business corridors" since so many people who are employed in Worthington live outside of the city and residents feel more tied to businesses.
- Also in the title, groups liked supporting the workforce in addition to the economy
- In the "How" section, groups felt that the first line about "flexible light-industrial/innovation space" should be swapped with the following line about "new mixed-use office development"
- Groups also discussed how there is a need to create more activity on the street by having a more comfortable walking environment, boosting the viability of commercial spaces
 - There was discussion about how people conflate mixed-use as one style or type of development, and that they need to see more examples of what mixed-use can look like.

Principle 10. "Growth is fiscally responsible and infrastructure-efficient."

- In the title, groups felt "Growth" was the wrong word, suggesting some language like "Rebalancing larger sites with what is existing"
 - Some groups felt the language used was less relevant since the city is not truly growing, and that the language used should better reflect the built-out nature of the community.
- Request to focus more on the fiscal responsibility aspect and less on infrastructure.
- Tie in fiscal responsibility to the City's ability to deliver quality services, facilities, and desirable amenities.
- Some groups also felt that the principle should emphasize having a diverse economy to create a strong tax base

Introduce land use character and focus areas

The consultant team provided a brief overview of the plan development steps that are coming next, including the future land use character map/types, as well as focus area recommendations. These elements of the plan will be advanced in preparation for the next community committee meeting and the second round of community input.

Next meetings

The committee was encouraged to continue spreading the word about the process, with various events coming up over the next few months.

- Date for the next meeting was provided:

- **Fifth Meeting will be on October 8th**
- There will be a City Council update on September 15th and additional updates throughout the planning process. The committee will always be welcomed and encouraged to attend
- Late Sept/early Oct: Second Speaker Series – Quality of Place (panel)
- Late Oct: Third Speaker Series – Economic Development (panel)
- Nov: Second round of engagement (choices)
- Dec: City Council Update 2
- Jan: Sixth Community Committee Meeting

Attachments

Agenda

Presentation Slides

Round 1 Engagement Summary