



# Land Use and Character

Land use patterns shape how people experience a community—how neighborhoods evolve, where businesses locate, how people move from place to place, and how natural systems are protected. In Worthington, guiding land use requires balancing thoughtful reinvestment with respect for the City's historic character, walkable neighborhoods, and natural landscape.

Worthington's historic fabric is one of its most durable assets. The original plat of Old Worthington, laid out in the tradition of a New England town, remains the civic and symbolic heart of the community. Many neighborhoods beyond the formal historic district contain homes, streetscapes, and building patterns that reflect the community's growth across two centuries and contribute meaningfully to its character. This plan affirms that reinvestment is the preferred approach to maintaining that character, and that new development in and near historic areas should relate to and strengthen what makes those places distinctive.

This chapter establishes the framework for land use decisions across Worthington. It reflects the themes that emerged through Vision Worthington: reinvesting in key employment and commercial corridors, creating more walkable and connected places, and ensuring that change reinforces the qualities that make Worthington distinctive. The Future Land Use and Character Map and accompanying character descriptions define expectations for the scale, form, and design of development across the City, which are further refined in the Opportunity Areas chapter. The chapter concludes with a set of Strategic Priorities and actions that identify the key steps Worthington should take to align policy, regulations, and investment with the community's vision for its future physical development.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1.** Comprehensive Zoning and Development Code Reform

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2.** Catalyze and Strategically Support Mixed-Use Redevelopment

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3.** Enable Incremental and Coordinated Mixed-use Redevelopment

## CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

- Context
- Future Land Use and Character
- Priority Initiatives

# Context

Throughout the Worthington Together process, the City's built and natural environment was assessed through data analysis, insights from targeted stakeholders and the general public, as well as review of recent plans and studies completed.

## THEMES FROM PUBLIC INPUT

During the first round of public input, participants were asked to identify on a map where they saw opportunities in the city for Housing, Transportation, Commercial Centers and Corridors, or Placemaking and Quality of Life. The most common themes across the opportunity types were:

### HOUSING

- Broad need for more housing, citing opportunities on underutilized/vacant land
- Apartments, condominiums, duplexes, or other multifamily options to diversify the housing stock
- Opportunities for mixed-use developments and higher-density housing, especially near corridors and nodes
- Housing suited towards seniors and empty-nesters, like patio homes, single-story units, or other retirement-friendly options
- Workforce housing, low-income options, and ensuring that new housing meets a range of price points
- New single-family homes

### TRANSPORTATION

- Safer and more complete pedestrian connections, including new sidewalks, crosswalks, and walkability improvements
- Problem intersections, bridges, and road segments where improvements are needed to ease congestion, improve safety, or modernize infrastructure
- Expanding bike lanes, bike paths, and bicycle connectivity throughout the community

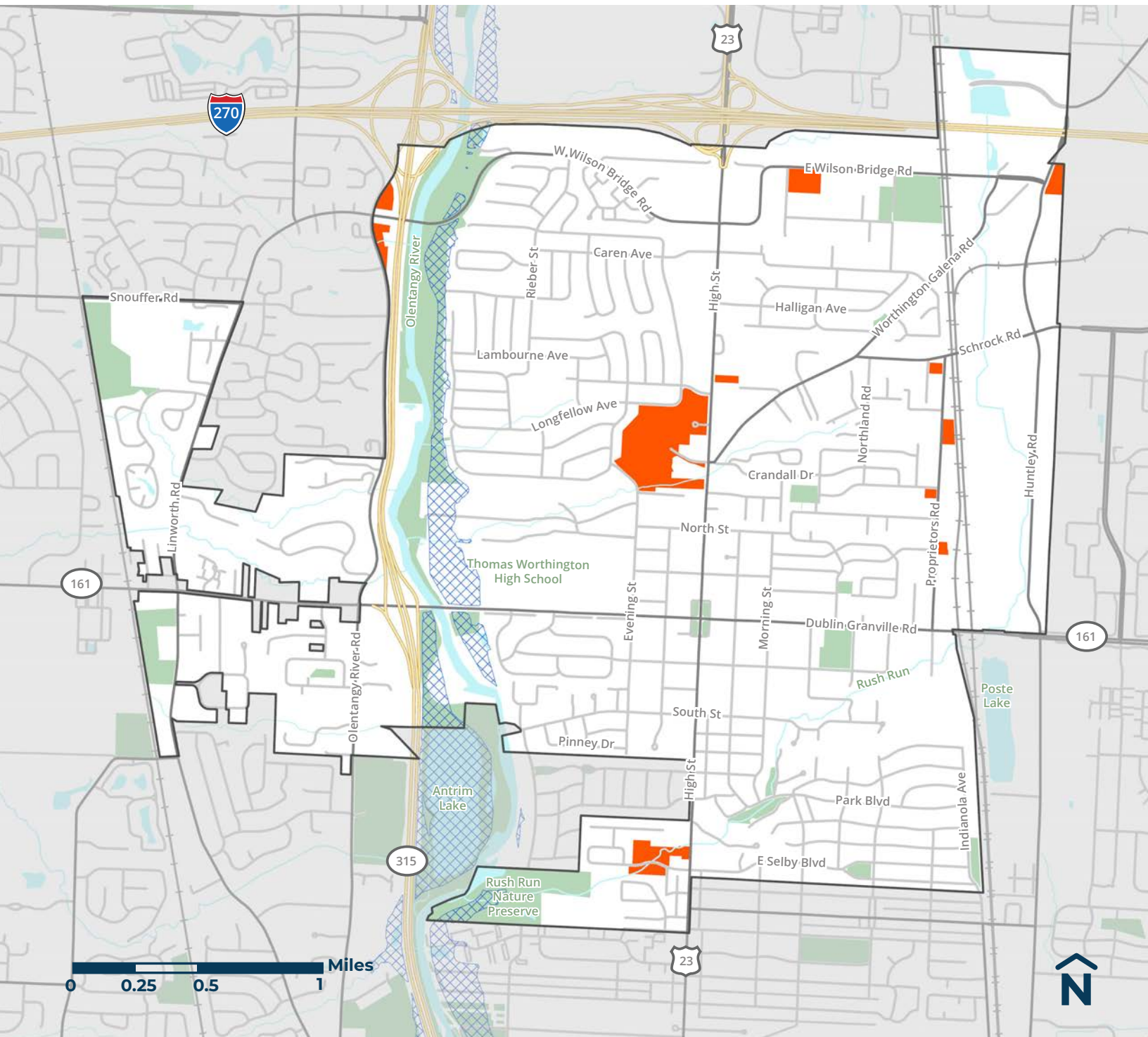
- Strengthen COTA service and better integrate transit into the City's transportation network
- Concerns about traffic congestion, speeding, and the need for calming measures to improve safety on local streets

### COMMERCIAL CENTERS AND CORRIDORS

- More retail options, including shops, stores, and revitalized shopping areas
- More dining opportunities, including restaurants, cafes, breweries, and food halls
- Redevelop existing sites into mixed-use districts that combine housing, retail, offices, and civic amenities, especially in key commercial nodes
- Vacant or underutilized commercial buildings and lots as opportunities for reinvestment and new community-serving uses
- Improve or expand office space and employment centers, including interest in modern workspaces and coworking opportunities

### PLACEMAKING AND QUALITY OF LIFE

- Preserving, enhancing, and expanding parks, open spaces, and green areas
- Protecting natural resources (trees, rivers, creeks), improving environmental sustainability, and promoting green practices
- More community spaces, plazas, and gathering places for events, festivals, and social connection
- Traffic calming, safer streets, improved streetscapes, and better pedestrian infrastructure
- Expanding trail systems, bike connections, sidewalks, and overall walkability throughout the City



**There is little undeveloped land in the City.**

There is only about **63 acres of undeveloped land** in the City today. Undeveloped land is classified as "vacant" but is not a park, preserved open space, or floodplain. **The largest site is the 37-acre 1033 High Street property** in the center of the City. Some sites may have development limitations.

**Legend**

- Vacant Parcels
- 100-Year Flood Plain

## EXISTING LAND USE AND CHARACTER

Worthington distinguishes itself from other communities in part by its development character. The historic and walkable downtown business district and Village Green establish the community's identity. Design guidelines that apply along the community's major corridors (High Street and Dublin-Granville Road) and within the original plat of Old Worthington, reinforce that character through building and site design.

Traditionally, comprehensive plans look at land use, but fall short in conveying character. For example, not all commercial or office land uses look and function the same (for example: Old Worthington compared to the Worthington Mall).

The following existing land use and character assessment classifies the City's existing land by both use and character attributes such as building types and locations, lot size and coverage, street patterns, and other characteristics.



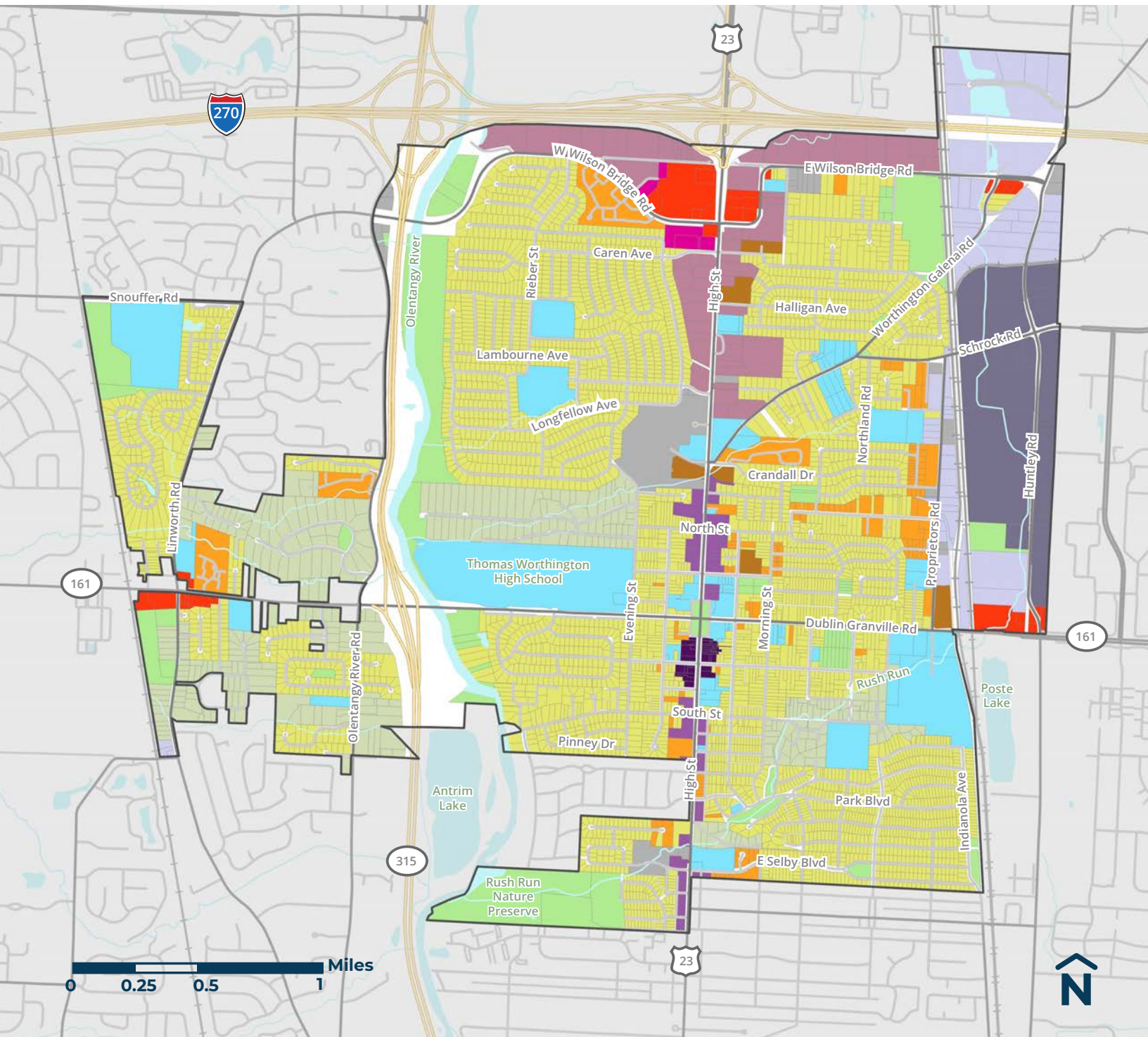
### By The Numbers

Over half of the City's land today is developed for single-family residential neighborhoods (the Single-Family Residential and Large-Lot Residential categories).

To view more details about each Existing Land Use Type, see Existing Conditions Snapshot Part 1 in the Appendix.

Existing Land Use and Character Type	Acreage	% of City
Single-Family Residential	1,240	43.4%
Large-Lot Residential	303	10.6%
Duplex and Small Multi-Family	56	2.0%
Senior Residential	20	0.7%
Old Worthington Village Center	10	0.4%
High Street Transition	30	1.1%
Corridor Mixed Use	9	0.3%
Corridor Commercial	52	1.8%
Corridor Office	157	5.5%
Hybrid Commercial	151	5.3%
Industrial	159	5.6%
Civic/Institutional Campus	294	10.3%
Park / Open Space *	255	8.9%
Vacant	63	2.3%

\* includes conservation areas, cemeteries, and active/passive parks



### Existing Land Use and Character Map





- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #90EE90; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Parks / Open Space            | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #4B0082; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Old Worthington Village Core | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #B0C4DE; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Hybrid Commercial            |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #C8E6C9; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Large-Lot Residential         | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #8E44AD; border: 1px solid black;"></span> High Street Transition       | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #4682B4; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Industrial                   |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #F0E68C; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Single-Family Residential     | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FF00FF; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Corridor Mixed Use           | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ADD8E6; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Civic / Institutional Campus |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FFA500; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Duplex and Small Multi-Family | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FF4500; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Corridor Commercial          | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #A9A9A9; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Vacant                       |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #8B4513; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Senior Residential            | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #9932CC; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Corridor Office              |  |

## Future Land Use and Character







The Future Land Use and Character map defines the types of development that are appropriate in the future and where. It is a tool for the City to guide decisions about future land use and development over time. It is not a mandate for development or redevelopment but describes the city's expectations regarding the use and character of future development. It is implemented over time through the administration of the City's zoning regulations and various public and private development decisions. It will serve as the basis for potential future zoning updates.

Each of the Opportunity Areas have additional guidance that should be consulted when considering development in those locations. All places in the City will have a character type, even if that place is not intended to significantly change.




### Residential Areas

-  Residential, Large Lot
-  Residential, Suburban
-  Residential, Small Lot & Attached
-  Residential, Old Worthington

### Mixed Use Areas

-  Old Worthington Core
-  Corridor Transition
-  Corridor Mixed Use
-  Wilson Bridge Mixed Use
-  Rush Run Mixed Use
-  Forge Fields Mixed Use

### Other Areas

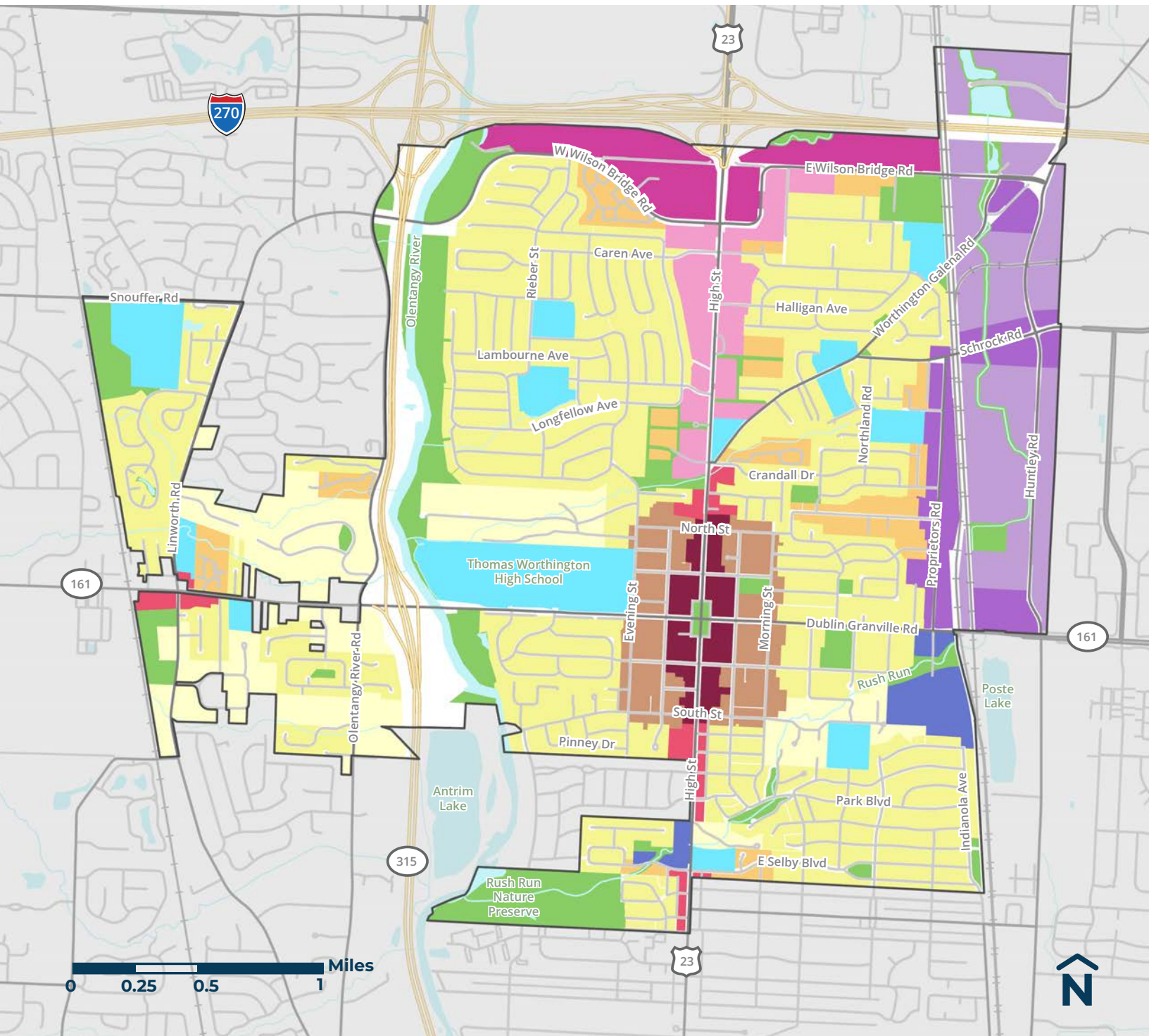
-  Forge Fields Flex
-  Institutional Campus
-  Parks and Green Space

### IMPLEMENTING THE LAND USE VISION THROUGH ZONING

Zoning is a legal tool that regulates land use and the intensity of development, including types of structures that may be built, how they are to be built, where they are to be built, and how they may be used. Each property in the City is assigned to a zoning district. There may be more than one appropriate zoning category for a particular future land use category. For example, there is one "Residential, Suburban" future land use category, but there may be two or more appropriate zoning districts to account for various lot sizes and contexts.

The land use vision is implemented over time through many distinct public and private development decisions. For example, property owners seeking to redevelop or change the use of their property often have to seek rezoning. Rezoning decisions are evaluated with respect to how they conform to the comprehensive plan's Future Land Use and Character Map.

Plan	Zoning
• Future Intent	• Currently allowed
• Policy guide	• Legal rules
• General desired Character	• Specific uses and standards
• Advisory	• Enforceable



### Future Land Use and Character Map

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #4CAF50; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Parks and Green Space             | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #8B0000; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Old Worthington Core    | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #3954AB; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Rush Run Mixed Use     |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FFF9C4; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Residential, Large-Lot            | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #E91E63; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Corridor Transition     | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #8E24AA; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Forge Fields Mixed Use |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FFF176; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Residential, Suburban             | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #F06292; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Corridor Mixed Use      | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #9575CD; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Forge Fields Flex      |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FFCC80; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Residential, Small Lot & Attached | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #C2185B; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Wilson Bridge Mixed Use | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #00BCD4; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Institutional Campus   |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #A52A2A; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Residential, Old Worthington      |  |   |

## Residential, Large Lot

Residential areas characterized by large lots (greater than one acre) that are developed in a pattern that feels like rural living. Homes are set far back from streets. Blocks are long and streets are narrow and lack curb and gutter systems. Some areas (west of the Olentangy River) are on septic systems. Residential, large lot areas represent established development patterns that are not intended to change.

### Land Uses

#### Primary

Residential

#### Secondary

Civic/Institutional

### Housing Types

Single-family homes of varied sizes and accessory dwelling units

### Form Attributes

#### BUILDING FORM

##### Height

1-2.5 stories

##### Setback

30+ feet

#### TRANSPORTATION

##### Street Types

Residential Street

*See Mobility and Connectivity Chapter for detail*

#### GREEN SPACE

Mostly private green spaces such as lawns and wooded areas with trail access in some areas.

### Example Character



## Residential, Suburban

Residential areas with primarily single family homes on lots of varying sizes and housing styles that reflect the era in which they were developed. These areas typically have a connected network of blocks, curb and gutter systems and sidewalks.

### Land Uses

#### Primary

Residential

#### Secondary

Civic/Institutional

### Housing Types

Primarily single family homes, with some two-family and accessory dwelling units that are designed to mimic the style of single family homes.

### Form Attributes

#### BUILDING FORM

##### Height

1-2.5 stories

##### Setback

20-30 feet

#### TRANSPORTATION

##### Street Types

Residential Street

Residential Neighborhood Connector

Residential Avenue

Residential Boulevard

*See Mobility and Connectivity Chapter for detail*

#### GREEN SPACE

Mostly private green spaces such as lawns and yards, with additional community green spaces and access to trails in some areas. Most public parks and school sites that include playgrounds/green space are integrated into these neighborhoods as well.

### Example Character



## Residential, Small Lot and Attached

Residential areas characterized by small lot single family and attached housing at a scale and orientation that is compatible to single-family. They are appropriate at the edge of suburban neighborhoods as a transition to activity centers and corridors.

### Land Uses

#### Primary

Residential

#### Secondary

Civic/Institutional

### Housing Types

Small lot single family, cottage courts, duplex, three, and four-family homes, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units.

### Form Attributes

#### BUILDING FORM

##### Height

1-3 stories

##### Setback

20-30 feet

#### TRANSPORTATION

##### Street Types

Residential Street

Residential Neighborhood Connector

Residential Avenue

Residential Boulevard

Old Worthington Neighborhood Connector

Mixed Use Avenue

*See Mobility and Connectivity Chapter for detail*

#### GREEN SPACE

Mostly private green spaces such as lawns and yards, with additional community green spaces and access to trails in some areas.

### Example Character



## Residential, Old Worthington

The residential areas of the Old Worthington Historic District, characterized by a mix of traditional housing types in a walkable gridded street pattern following the City's original plat.

### Land Uses

#### Primary

Residential

#### Secondary

Civic/Institutional

### Housing Types

A mix of single-family homes; two, three, and four-family homes; townhomes; and accessory dwelling units

### Form Attributes

#### BUILDING FORM

##### Height

1-3 stories

##### Setback

10-20 feet

#### TRANSPORTATION

##### Street Types

Old Worthington Street

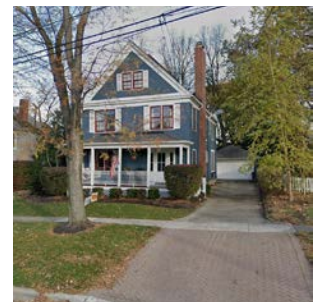
Old Worthington Neighborhood Connector

*See Mobility and Connectivity Chapter for detail*

#### GREEN SPACE

Mostly private green spaces such as lawns and yards, with additional community green spaces and access to trails in some areas.

### Example Character



## Old Worthington Core

Worthington's historic walkable, mixed-use core along High Street between North Street and South Street. Future development should mimic the scale, proportions, and orientation of historic development. Buildings should be oriented near High Street, be designed with authentic and pedestrian-oriented features like functional street entrances, and frame attractive and usable public spaces. Vehicle access and parking should be located behind buildings and may be shared.

### Land Uses

#### Primary

Mixed Use  
Office/Commercial

#### Secondary

Residential  
Civic/Institutional

### Housing Types

A mix of single-family homes, accessory dwelling units, two, three, and four-family homes, townhomes, and some multi-family

### Form Attributes

#### BUILDING FORM

##### Height

1-3 stories

##### Setback

0-15 feet

#### TRANSPORTATION

##### Street Types

Old Worthington Street  
Old Worthington Neighborhood Connector  
Old Worthington Boulevard

*See Mobility and Connectivity Chapter for detail*

#### GREEN SPACE

Village green and public realm (spaces between buildings and the street) feature landscaping, street trees, and pedestrian amenities such as benches and outdoor dining.

### Example Character



## Corridor Transition

Areas of smaller scale commercial and mixed use development along High Street or SR 161 that are well connected to neighborhoods and serve as gateways into or transitions within Worthington. Future development should locate buildings closer to the street to improve the pedestrian experience and consolidate parking and curb cuts.

### Land Uses

#### Primary

Mixed Use

Office/Commercial

#### Secondary

Residential

Civic/Institutional

### Housing Types

Multi-family and mixed use buildings

### Form Attributes

#### BUILDING FORM

##### Height

1-4 stories

##### Setback

0-15 feet

#### TRANSPORTATION

##### Street Types

Mixed Use Street

Old Worthington Neighborhood Connector

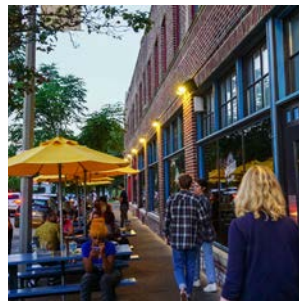
Old Worthington Boulevard

*See Mobility and Connectivity Chapter for detail*

#### GREEN SPACE

Integrated parks, plazas, and public realm areas (spaces between buildings and the street) act as green space, both public and private.

### Example Character



## Corridor Mixed Use

Areas along the northern portions of High Street, focused on a mix of office with retail and supporting services. Through incremental redevelopment, these areas should evolve to a pattern with buildings closer to the street that frame a safe and appealing pedestrian experience, fewer curb cuts, and shared parking located behind buildings.

### Land Uses

#### Primary

Mixed Use  
Office/Commercial

#### Secondary

Residential  
Civic/Institutional  
Hotel

### Housing Types

Multi-family and mixed use buildings

### Form Attributes

#### BUILDING FORM

##### Height

2-4 stories

##### Setback

10-30 feet

#### TRANSPORTATION

##### Street Types

Mixed Use Street  
Mixed Use Neighborhood Connector  
Mixed Use Boulevard  
*See Mobility and Connectivity Chapter for detail*

#### GREEN SPACE

Integrated parks, plazas, trails, and public realm areas (spaces between buildings and the street) act as green space, both public and private.

### Example Character



## Wilson Bridge Mixed Use

A signature activity center defining the northern gateway along High Street and Wilson Bridge Road. This area is intended to redevelop from underutilized suburban office and retail area into a walkable hub, with new class-A office, retail, shopping, dining, hotels, activated public spaces, and residential options mixed horizontally (across a site) and vertically (within buildings). A broad mix of uses is appropriate, but the area should have an overall employment emphasis to generate a strong positive fiscal impact for the City.

### Land Uses

#### Primary

Mixed Use  
Office/Commercial  
Hotel

#### Secondary

Residential  
Civic/Institutional

### Housing Types

Multi-family and mixed use buildings

### Form Attributes

#### BUILDING FORM

#### Height

3-10+ stories

#### Setback

5-20 feet,  
dependent on scale

#### TRANSPORTATION

#### Street Types

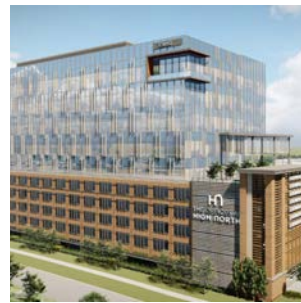
Mixed Use Street  
Mixed Use Neighborhood Connector  
Mixed Use Avenue  
Mixed Use Boulevard

*See Mobility and Connectivity Chapter for detail*

#### GREEN SPACE

Integrated parks, plazas, trails, and public realm areas (spaces between buildings and the street) act as green space, both public and private.

### Example Character



## Rush Run Mixed Use

Employment-oriented mixed-use areas along High Street or Route 161 where Rush Run creates an opportunity to integrate ecological amenity, active transportation, and coordinated campus-scale development. These areas accommodate office uses as primary drivers, with residential and limited retail integrated into a live-work environment. Larger parcel sizes support coordinated redevelopment rather than lot-by-lot infill.

### Land Uses

#### Primary

Office

Residential

#### Secondary

Mixed Use/  
Commercial

Civic/Institutional

### Housing Types

Multi-family and mixed use buildings

### Form Attributes

#### BUILDING FORM

##### Height

2-4 stories

##### Setback

Varies

#### TRANSPORTATION

##### Street Types

Innovation Street

Innovation Boulevard

Mixed Use Street

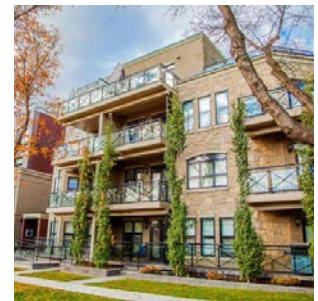
Mixed Use Boulevard

*See Mobility and Connectivity Chapter for detail*

#### GREEN SPACE

Trail connections, park and plaza spaces, green infrastructure (like bioswales), and passive preserved land, especially oriented along Rush Run; generally private.

### Example Character



## Forge Fields Mixed Use

Employment-focused mixed use areas designed to support a live-work environment within the Northeast area of the City. As described in the Northeast Area Plan, these areas should combine light manufacturing uses with commercial and residential areas to support the larger employment uses in the area.

### Land Uses

#### Primary

Light Manufacturing  
Office  
Tech-Flex  
Research & Development

#### Secondary

Mixed Use  
Commercial  
Residential

### Housing Types

Multi-family and mixed use buildings

### Form Attributes

#### BUILDING FORM

##### Height

1-6 stories

##### Setback

Varies

#### TRANSPORTATION

##### Street Types

Innovation Street

Innovation Avenue

Innovation Boulevard

*See Mobility and Connectivity Chapter for detail*

#### GREEN SPACE

Trail connections, park and plaza spaces, green infrastructure (like bioswales), and passive preserved land, especially oriented along Rush Run as referenced in the Northeast Area Plan; generally private.

### Example Character



## Forge Fields Flex

Employment area identified in the Northeast Area Plan, supporting light manufacturing, advanced industries, renewable and clean energy industries, tech-flex spaces, class-A office space, and research & development

### Land Uses

#### Primary

Light Manufacturing  
Office  
Tech-Flex  
Research &  
Development

#### Secondary

Civic/Institutional

### Housing Types

None

### Form Attributes

#### BUILDING FORM

##### Height

1-4 stories

##### Setback

Varies

#### TRANSPORTATION

##### Street Types

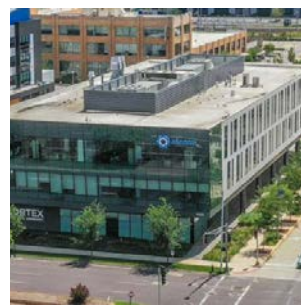
Innovation Street  
Innovation Avenue  
Innovation Boulevard

*See Mobility and Connectivity Chapter for detail*

#### GREEN SPACE

Trail connections, park and plaza spaces, green infrastructure (like bioswales), and passive preserved land, especially oriented along Rush Run as referenced in the Northeast Area Plan; generally private.

### Example Character



## Institutional Campus

All public and private institutional and civic campuses outside the Old Worthington Core, including schools, churches, and City civic buildings.

### Example Character



## Parks and Green Space

All active and passive public parks, trails, amenities, and green spaces. Additionally, some privately-owned undeveloped land within the flood plain is included.

Park-like and preserved green spaces are often integrated with other land uses, especially neighborhood and mixed use areas, which are not included in this place type.

### Example Character



**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1:  
COMPREHENSIVE ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODE REFORM**

**Why This Matters**

Zoning and development regulations are the primary tools for implementing this plan. Rather than addressing zoning piecemeal across multiple chapters, Worthington should undertake one coordinated update that aligns land use, housing, design standards, and procedures with the Future Land Use and Character Map. A coordinated update ensures land use, housing, design standards, and procedures work together to support reinvestment, protect neighborhood character, and provide predictable expectations for property owners and residents.

**IMPLEMENTS THESE GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Principles 1, 2, 5, 8, and 10.

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**Alignment with Vision Worthington**

This Strategic Priority advances several Vision Worthington commitments:



**Worthington offers a high quality of life.** Clear, predictable standards ensure that new development reinforces the quality, design expectations, and livability residents value. Strong implementation tools protect neighborhoods while allowing thoughtful reinvestment.



**Worthington is a diverse and equitable community.** Transparent processes and accessible development guidance reduce barriers and create a more understandable system for residents, small property owners, and businesses. Clear rules support housing variety and inclusive growth.



**Worthington is connected.** Aligning zoning, infrastructure standards, and Complete Streets principles ensures that land use decisions support walkability, bikeability, and coordinated public investment.



**Worthington's leadership is open, forward-thinking and collaborative.** Modernizing regulations through a transparent and coordinated process reflects proactive governance and thoughtful long-term planning.

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**Implementation Actions**

- 1.1. **Conduct a comprehensive regulatory assessment.** Currently, the City of Worthington Planning and Zoning Code, Worthington Design Guidelines, and engineering standards do not align with the comprehensive plan. Updating these

regulatory policies after adopting the new plan is essential to align day-to-day decisions with the community's long-term vision and guiding principles. The first step in this process is to create a Task Force to guide the process and ensure transparency with the public. The Task Force should be comprised of City Staff, representatives of the Municipal Planning Commission, Architectural Review Board, and Board of Zoning Appeals, as well as additional community representatives (e.g., former members of the Worthington Together Community Committee). The Task Force would evaluate the existing Planning and Zoning Code, Worthington Design Guidelines, and engineering standards to identify conflicts, redundancies, and barriers to implementation of the comprehensive plan. Input should be collected from members of the City's board and commissions, as well as City Council, regarding obstacles they have encountered when reviewing development projects against the City's regulations. A clear set of priorities (e.g., modernizing code definitions, streamlining procedures for review and approval of development projects, and making the organization more logical) to inform future updates should be determined upon completion of the assessment.

#### 1.2. **Undertake a coordinated rewrite of the Planning and Zoning Code.**

The City of Worthington Planning and Zoning Code was originally adopted in 1971. Since that time, sections of the Code have been modified; however, a complete rewrite has not occurred. The City should align the districts, standards, and procedures of the Planning and Zoning Code with the Future Land Use and Character Map. The Task Force can advance this action by testing conceptual development projects reflective of the plan's recommended character types against current Code requirements to identify barriers to approval. The Code rewrite will address these barriers and allow the City to directly implement key actions of the plan to ensure that regulations do not undermine desired mixed-use development within the community. Aligning the Code with the plan will also set clearer expectations for property owners, more predictable outcomes for the City, and a more efficient path to implementing the Guiding Principles.

#### **ZONING CODE UPDATE SHOULD ADDRESS**

- Mixed-use and corridor reinvestment standards
- Small-scale housing types (e.g., ADUs, duplexes, cottage housing) in appropriate locations
- Compatibility standards for infill and additions
- Parking flexibility and shared parking tools
- Transitions between redevelopment areas and neighborhoods and buffering standards between commercial and residential areas
- Administrative and procedural improvements, and opportunities for administrative streamlining

**1.3. Update Architectural Review District standards.**

The City of Worthington Design Guidelines for the Architectural Review District were originally adopted in 2003. Since that time, the City has undergone two comprehensive plan review processes to determine long-range strategies and actions for the community. Once the Planning and Zoning Code has been rewritten, the City should refine the Worthington Design Guidelines to reflect current standards while maintaining Worthington's design expectations. In addition, the update should consider advancements in modern building materials over the last 20 years to identify potential updates. Updating the Design Guidelines for Worthington's Architectural Review District will help ensure that new development and reinvestment reinforce the community's cultural heritage while accommodating contemporary needs such as mixed-use, walkability, sustainability, and modern building functionalities. The update should also reinforce Worthington's commitment to rehabilitation over demolition. Historic buildings, including those outside the established Architectural Review District, should be encouraged to be rehabilitated rather than demolished. Where demolition does occur, new construction should relate to and strengthen the core characteristics of the neighborhood through thoughtful building scale, materials, and site design.

**HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY**

Worthington's Architectural Review District covers Old Worthington and the High Street and 161 frontages, but many neighborhoods outside the district contain homes, streetscapes, and building patterns that contribute meaningfully to the community's character. A historic resources survey would document these assets, establish their significance, and provide an evidentiary basis for evaluating whether additional protections, a local historic register, or voluntary preservation tools are warranted. Completing a survey before or alongside the Zoning Code and Design Guidelines updates would ensure those documents reflect a full picture of Worthington's historic fabric, not just the areas already under formal review.



## Worthington's Historic Character

Worthington was platted in 1803 by James Kilbourne, who laid out a New England-style town centered on a public green. More than two centuries later, that original vision remains recognizable. The Village Green, the historic storefronts along High Street, and the tree-lined residential streets radiating from Old Worthington's core are not just pleasant features of community life. They are the foundation of Worthington's identity and one of its most genuine competitive advantages.

Communities that preserve authentic historic character attract the employers, residents, and visitors who value quality of place.

Preservation and prosperity are not in tension in Worthington. They reinforce each other.

This plan's commitment to preservation extends beyond the Architectural Review District. Many established neighborhoods contain homes, streetscapes, and building patterns that contribute meaningfully to community character without formal designation. The standard is the same across all of them: support reinvestment, discourage unnecessary demolition, and ensure that change strengthens rather than erodes what makes Worthington distinctive. New development near historic fabric should relate to and strengthen what is already there, without imitating historic character through artificial or decorative means.

The following actions across this plan reflect that commitment:

**Rehabilitation preference for historic structures.** SP 1, Action 1.3 establishes that buildings contributing to neighborhood character, inside and outside the ARD, should be rehabilitated rather than demolished, and that new construction where demolition does occur must relate to the surrounding context. A sidebar on the previous page identifies a future survey to document contributing structures outside the formal district, providing the foundation for any future protections or voluntary preservation tools.

**Investment in older homes.** SP 12, Action 12.2 includes a historic and older-home rehabilitation program in the Opportunistic Tools menu, available for funding as City revenues grow.

**Old Worthington development review.** The Old Worthington Opportunity Area establishes that contributing structures should be evaluated for rehabilitation before demolition is considered, communicated through pre-application conversations and review criteria.



**1.4. Modernize engineering and infrastructure standards.**

The City of Worthington's engineering and infrastructure standards largely pre-date the previous Comprehensive Plan. Since that time, some sections of these Code standards have been modified; however, a complete review of these standards in the context of a long-range plan has never occurred. Once the Planning and Zoning Code has been rewritten to align with the plan, the City should refine the engineering and infrastructure standards to support mixed-use redevelopment, shared parking strategies, stormwater coordination, and Complete Streets principles. The Task Force can advance this action by testing the four citywide map-based frameworks in the Mobility & Connectivity chapter against current Code requirements to identify implementation barriers. Updating Worthington's engineering and infrastructure standards will ensure that streets, utilities, and other right-of-way improvements are designed to support the plan's Guiding Principles. Aligning these standards with the new comprehensive plan will ensure that routine replacements and upgrades steadily advance the community's long-term vision.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2:  
CATALYZE AND SUPPORT MIXED-USE REDEVELOPMENT**

**Why This Matters**

Several of this plan’s Opportunity Areas present opportunities for a catalytic mixed-use redevelopment project that could set the tone for reinvestment citywide. A successful flagship project can demonstrate the community’s vision, strengthen the tax base, and build confidence in change. While priority locations are identified today, additional sites may emerge over time. To succeed, catalytic projects must be supported by coordinated infrastructure planning, financing tools, and clear public objectives.

**IMPLEMENTS THESE GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Principles 2, 3, 4, 9, and 10.

**Alignment with Vision Worthington**

This Strategic Priority advances several Vision Worthington commitments:



**Worthington’s economy is balanced and resilient.** Strategic reinvestment strengthens the tax base, diversifies revenue sources, and enhances long-term fiscal stability.



**Worthington offers a high quality of life.** Well-designed mixed-use destinations create active places to live, work, and gather, reinforcing the amenities and experiences residents value.



**Worthington is connected.** Concentrating growth in walkable nodes improves access to daily needs and strengthens connections between neighborhoods and business districts.



**Worthington’s leadership is open, forward-thinking and collaborative.** Coordinating infrastructure, financing tools, and public-private partnerships reflects proactive and strategic governance.

**Implementation Actions**

**2.1. Proactively advance a catalytic redevelopment project.**

Since the adoption of Worthington’s 2005 comprehensive plan, several major mixed-use development projects have been undertaken in the Central Ohio region (e.g., Bridge Park in Dublin, Grandview Yard in Grandview Heights). To stay competitive in Central Ohio’s rapidly evolving market, Worthington must demonstrate that it can deliver high-quality, mixed-use environments that grow the income tax

base while reinforcing community character. A targeted site in one of the identified opportunity areas should be prioritized soon after the plan's adoption. This will signal to employers, investors, and developers that the community is serious about significant redevelopment. This process can be initiated by convening property owners, developers, and community partners to explore feasibility, redevelopment concepts, and implementation pathways. Focusing limited Staff and financial capacity on a singular initial flagship project can demonstrate early, visible success, build community confidence, and help ensure that redevelopment in later, incremental opportunity areas is guided by knowledge gained.

**2.2. Align public policy to support the Opportunity Areas.**

The identified Opportunity Areas have the greatest potential for redevelopment, bringing desired amenities to the public while also increasing the City's income tax base. Due to the unpredictable nature of development and the time it can take to complete site work, careful coordination between City Departments and the development community is needed to spur catalytic redevelopment. Proactive policy updates that reduce steps for future development in the Opportunity Areas will increase their marketability. This includes updating the Planning and Zoning Code, planning capital infrastructure projects, and refining development agreements to successfully support an initial flagship project. Coordination with the development community on these items can increase the likelihood that public and private investments will dovetail, creating a cycle of value for the community. When aligning public policy to support the Opportunity Areas, careful consideration must be given to ensuring a mix of uses, including employment-based uses.

**2.3. Prioritize Capital Improvement Program (CIP) investments in the identified Opportunity Areas.**

The five-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) presents the City's plan for infrastructure development and improvements and is updated annually as part of the City's budget process. To connect the specific strategies of the plan's Opportunity Areas to funding, it is critical that the CIP reflect those strategies and integrate the most time-sensitive items. The next CIP update process should review the comprehensive plan and align capital projects with the plan's strategies and recommendations. The sequencing of capital improvements should reinforce redevelopment priorities, especially for a catalytic redevelopment project in an opportunity area.

#### 2.4. **Plan for shared and district-scale infrastructure.**

In a future round of CIP updates, Worthington should identify where coordinated infrastructure systems (e.g., shared parking, district-scale stormwater facilities, connected greenways, utility improvements) can effectively serve multiple properties. As proactive steps are taken to prepare the Opportunity Areas for development, the City should evaluate the cost-benefit of initiating these improvements; cross-implementation of recommendations from other City plans and studies (e.g., 2026 parking study) should be prioritized. This will allow the City to set clear expectations for how these improvements will be funded, sequenced, and maintained. Use of financing tools may be necessary to advance a catalytic redevelopment project.

#### 2.5. **Use financing tools strategically.**

The City has been successful in using economic incentives and should continue to use these tools. Given the range and scale of potential redevelopment projects within the identified Opportunity Areas, adding additional financing tools and capacity should be considered. This could include applying TIFs, infrastructure cost-sharing for new projects, expanding the role of the Worthington CIC, or public-private partnerships to align public investment with measurable public benefit. Strategic use of these tools should emphasize clarity, efficiency, and transparency when approving incentives. This could include requiring minimum fiscal returns (e.g., adding jobs, increasing payroll, building infrastructure) from projects receiving incentives, subject to claw-backs or other regulatory mechanisms.

## Opportunistic Tools

The Opportunistic Tools are a menu of additional projects, policies, and programs that Worthington may consider for implementing the strategic priority. Where applicable, current strategies that the City should continue are described below.

- Development agreements
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- Infrastructure cost-sharing strategies
- Shared parking districts or structured parking strategies
- District stormwater or green infrastructure solutions
- Utility coordination agreements
- Phased implementation plans

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3:

## ENABLE INCREMENTAL AND COORDINATED MIXED-USE REDEVELOPMENT

### Why This Matters

In many reinvestment areas identified in this plan's Opportunity Areas, change is likely to occur incrementally rather than through a single large project. Fragmented ownership, small parcels, legacy lot patterns, and infrastructure constraints can make high-quality mixed-use outcomes difficult to achieve. Clear standards, flexible tools, and coordinated infrastructure allow smaller-scale and phased redevelopment to occur in a predictable, context-sensitive manner aligned with community expectations.

### IMPLEMENTS THESE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Principles 2, 3, 5, and 10.

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### Alignment with Vision Worthington

This Strategic Priority advances several Vision Worthington commitments:



**Worthington offers a high quality of life.** Measured, incremental change allows reinvestment without destabilizing neighborhoods or corridors.



**Worthington is connected.** Walkable patterns and coordinated infrastructure reinforce mobility choices and cohesive development.



**Worthington's economy is balanced and resilient.** Supporting adaptive reuse and small-scale reinvestment strengthens long-term economic sustainability

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### Implementation Actions

#### 3.1. Facilitate coordination among property owners.

The identified Opportunity Areas contain a high number of access points along key corridors as well as many individual parking lots that appear underutilized. The City can facilitate shared access and parking agreements by updating the Planning and Zoning Code, engineering standards, and other development policies to explicitly allow, encourage, and, where appropriate, require shared arrangements. The City can provide model agreements, streamline approvals, and use incentives (e.g., reduced parking minimums or infrastructure cost-sharing) to streamline the process. These improvements would not occur until a property undergoes redevelopment; however, over time, this approach can reduce underutilized space and impervious surfaces, maximize site design, and improve walkability between properties.

### 3.2. **Establish incentives for parcel consolidation.**

The identified Opportunity Areas contain a large number of individual parcels, which makes it difficult for redevelopment to implement the plan's Guiding Principles. Larger sites allow development projects the flexibility to include appropriate transitions between uses, accommodate modern stormwater standards, and provide amenities such as green space, walking trails, and landscaping that the community desires. The City can facilitate parcel consolidation by setting clear policy guidance for the community and using tools such as density bonuses, flexible standards, or expedited review for coordinated multi-parcel proposals that include consolidated parcels. This creates a clearer path for property owners and developers to move from fragmented sites to cohesive redevelopment projects.

### 3.3. **Align infrastructure with long-term intended character.**

A complete build-out of the plan's Opportunity Areas is expected to take longer than the typical 10-15-year life cycle of a comprehensive plan. This is due to the majority of these parcels containing a mix of active uses. While this condition helps maintain community stability, it limits the number of immediate opportunities for large-scale development to implement the plan's highest aspirations. The City can facilitate incremental, coordinated redevelopment within the Opportunity Areas by aligning policies to enable small-scale projects to move toward a long-term vision. This would include coordinating streets, utilities, stormwater facilities, and shared parking investments to support cohesive redevelopment reflective of the plan's character types over time rather than site-by-site reactions.

## Opportunistic Tools

*The Opportunistic Tools are a menu of additional projects, policies, and programs that Worthington may consider for implementing the strategic priority. Where applicable, current strategies that the City should continue are described below.*

- Density, height, or lot coverage tied to parcel consolidation
- Flexible parking and setback standards for assembled sites
- Expedited review for multi-parcel proposals
- Shared parking agreements or districts
- District-scale stormwater or green infrastructure solutions
- Development facilitation or convening role
- Infrastructure participation agreements
- Strategic acquisition or land banking (if warranted)