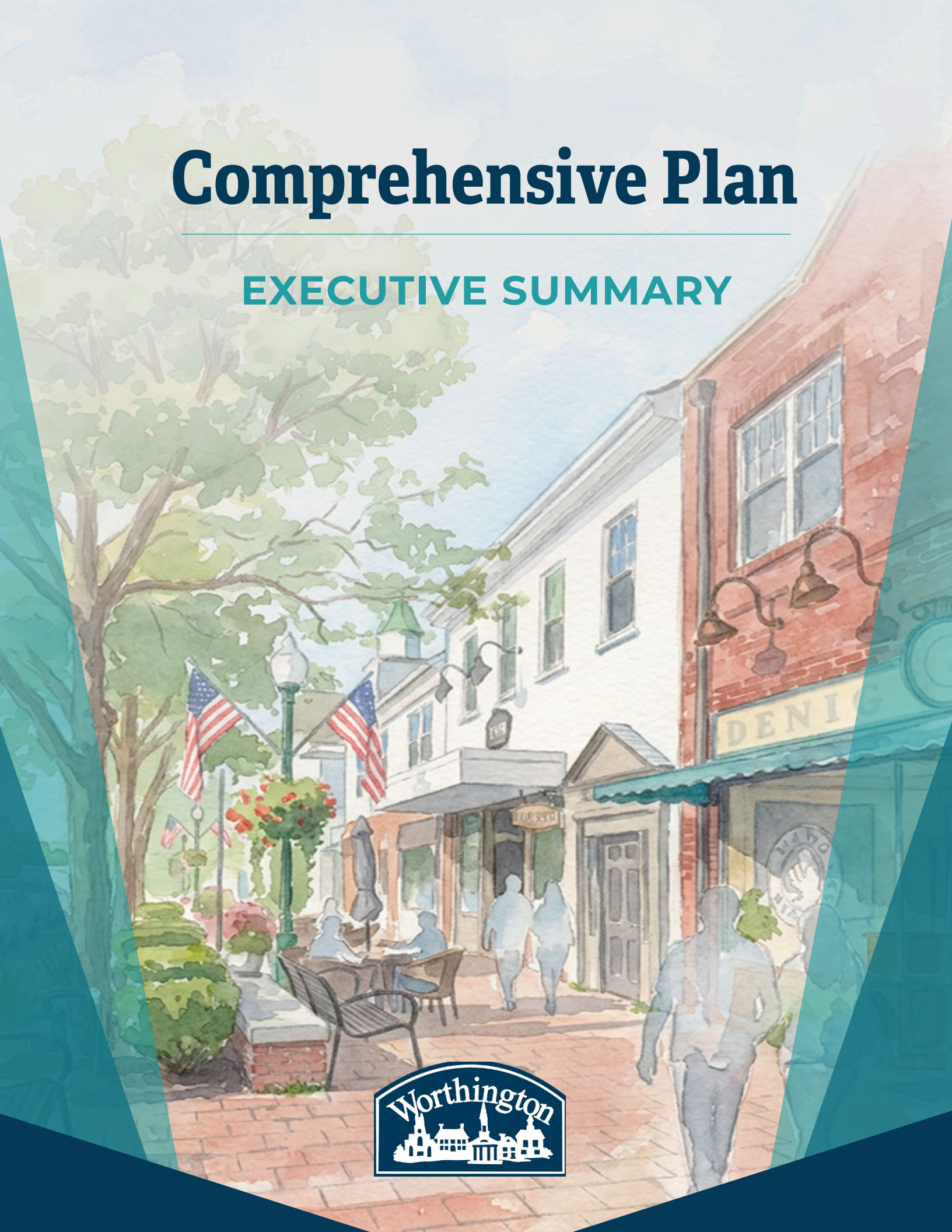
Comprehensive Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



What is the Comprehensive Plan?

In 2025, the City of Worthington launched Worthington Together, a process to shape the community's future and update the City's 2005 Comprehensive Plan. The Worthington Together process carried forward the community engagement momentum that began with the Vision Worthington plan, adopted in 2021. The plan builds on Vision Worthington's community values by outlining actionable steps the City can take to improve the quality of life for residents, workers, and visitors.

Founded in 1803, Worthington is a well-established community with a strong sense of place, a historic downtown, and a strong tradition of planning. The community has maintained a stable population of approximately 14,800 residents since 2000, supported by high-quality public services, excellent schools, and an attractive character that has made it one of the most desirable communities in Central Ohio. Increasing home values reflect the community's desirability and the strength of its neighborhoods.

At the same time, the Central Ohio region is experiencing significant change. The seven-county region is projected to add more than 550,000 residents by 2050, driven by major private investments, a growing job market, and increasing migration from across the country and abroad. The Columbus MSA is expected to average over 14,300 new jobs per year through 2050. This growth brings both opportunity and pressure, which Worthington is well-positioned to manage with a community-driven plan.

Since Worthington's prior comprehensive plan was completed in 2005, portions of the plan have been revised, and more narrowly focused plans have been adopted (e.g., the Northeast Area Plan, the Wilson Bridge Corridor Study, the Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan, and the Parks Master Plan). Given the changing and continually evolving national, regional, and local conditions, now is the time to lay a foundation for achieving broad policy goals.

Worthington Together builds upon the momentum of Vision Worthington and the many plans and investments that have come before it, providing a clear path forward for the community's development in the years ahead.

A Comprehensive Plan is a long-term guide that expresses a community's values and aspirations. It is the broadest public policy document a community can create for its future physical development, incorporating input from residents, businesses, subject matter experts, and others. It sets a vision for the City's future, establishes principles and desired strategic priorities for topics such as land use, housing, economics, parks, and transportation, and outlines specific actions to achieve those strategic priorities. The plan is a tool for preparing for change and serves as both a business plan and a guidebook for decision-makers to create predictability within the community.

Worthington's Comprehensive Plan is regularly used to guide many City decisions, including budgeting, zoning, regulations, and infrastructure investment. The plan will be implemented over time through capital improvements, development approvals, city budgets, departmental work programs, economic incentives, private development decisions, and other measures.

Worthington Together
Our City, Our Plan, Our Future

Vision Worthington

Vision Worthington was a community visioning effort led by a visioning committee comprised of Worthington residents appointed by City Council. It was a citizen-led process with broad community engagement, culminating in the adoption of eight vision statements across seven vision areas in March 2021. The visions highlight the community's values and describe the community's desired future. Vision Worthington focused on overarching interests to pursue over the long term.

The Comprehensive Plan did not start from scratch; it incorporated the vision statements as direction since the inception of the planning process. The guiding principles, plan topics, strategic priorities, and actions were all directly shaped by the momentum started from the visioning process.

More information about Vision Worthington can be found at worthington.org/visioning



Process

Worthington Together was iterative and inclusive, with each round of public engagement built directly on the community's previous input. The plan was shaped by quantitative analysis of existing conditions and input from the community over a 24-month process.

24 months
three rounds of input
1,900+ participants
18 committee members
11 committee meetings
15+ interested party meetings
12,000+ social media impressions
3-part Speaker Series

Community Committee

A diverse group of 18 community members appointed by City Council guided the process. They represented many interests, geographic areas, professions, and demographic groups, attended 10 official meetings, and assisted with all three rounds of public input.

Public Input

- Round 1: The Launch (June to August 2025) introduced the process and gathered initial. ideas. 801 participants shared 1,055 treasures and marked 3,098 places on the map. Results created the guiding principles and identified the Opportunity Areas.
- Round 2: Community Choices (November to December 2025) tested the draft guiding principles and the questions that emerged from Round 1. 820 participants shared 2,854 comments. Results shaped the plan's recommendations.
- Round 3: Community Review (May to June 2026) shared the full draft plan and prepared for implementation. Over 300 participants said what they liked, what they would change, and which actions matter most. Results refined the plan for adoption.







Speaker Series

Three public events brought outside expertise into the process.

- Central Ohio Today: a speaker on regional growth and housing trends, July 2025
- Quality of Place: a panel on communities that have sustained quality places through change, October 2025
- Economic Development: a panel on balancing high-quality public services with a healthy and diverse tax base, October 2025

Guiding Principles

Ten Principles describe the intent about "how" (generally) and "where" (conceptual location) growth and development in Worthington should occur in the future. They are based upon community input and reflect several mutually reinforcing themes, including the type, quality, appearance, pattern, character, and organization of development; environmental quality; efficient use of infrastructure; and expanding connectivity and mobility choices. The principles were prepared with the community committee following the first round of public input. They were later refined through the planning process and guide the plan's recommendations.

As Worthington develops, it is our intent that:

1. The City's unique character is strengthened.

We will respect and build upon the cherished character of historic places and create a strong sense of place in other areas. The specific character, expressed through building design and materials, public spaces, landscaping, signage, lighting, historic preservation, and public art, will vary between different areas, but it will be intentional, context-appropriate, and contribute to community pride.

2. Growth focuses on underperforming commercial, office, and industrial areas.

We will pursue intentional redevelopment for aging retail/office areas, older industrial districts, and corridor reinvestment sites. We will encourage other corridor areas to evolve in character through incremental, opportunity-driven redevelopment and phased infrastructure and public-realm upgrades. When developing vacant land, we will look to preserve meaningful green space to complement new buildings so the area doesn't feel overbuilt.

3. Walkable mixed-use places, with uniqueness and purpose, are created.

We will shape new places that combine shops, restaurants, services, employment space, diverse housing, and a high-quality, pedestrian-scale public realm, converting large blocks and surface parking lots into connected streets and walkable blocks in targeted nodes and corridors.

4. A broader range of housing serves the community.

We will broaden housing types and price points, preserve and encourage reinvestment in naturally occurring affordable housing, and encourage accessible, age-friendly homes; so young people, families, and long-time residents can reside here through every life stage. New housing will be focused on reinvestment areas, corridors, and mixed-use nodes.

5. The character of established neighborhoods is honored while accommodating growth.

We will help established neighborhoods maintain their character while corridors evolve, supporting context-appropriate infill and additions, requiring transitions in scale at neighborhood edges, encouraging preservation and reinvestment in existing homes, and limiting traffic on neighborhood streets.

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

We will close sidewalk gaps, expand trail connections, improve crossings, calm traffic, expand bikeways, enhance streetscapes, and integrate COTA (and potential bus rapid transit or BRT) with land use, linking Old Worthington's Central Business District with schools, parks, employment areas, and new development along High Street, SR 161, and the regional trail network.

7. The City's parks and public spaces are enhanced.

We will enhance the quality, accessibility, and utilization of existing parks and civic spaces and, where appropriate, deliver new public spaces as part of redevelopment, so these places reflect community values for nature, culture, education, and civic life.

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

We will protect natural systems (riparian areas, woodlands, steep slopes), expand the tree canopy, apply green infrastructure and on-site stormwater management, promote energy-efficient buildings and site design, and encourage native plants, recycling, and composting as baseline expectations for all significant projects.

9. Business corridors are modernized to support a resilient economy and workforce.

We will expect new employment-focused mixed-use development in key corridors. In the High Street and Wilson Bridge Road corridors, new mixed-use office development should serve as the primary use, with complementary uses that support the viability and vibrancy of these areas. In the Northeast Area, we will pursue clean and flexible light-industrial and innovation space, provide small-business and incubator opportunities, and create smaller mixed-use nodes to serve these employment areas.

10. Redevelopment supports long-term fiscal responsibility.

We will use land and infrastructure efficiently, right-size utilities, evaluate life-cycle costs, and align land use with service costs, creating a citywide mix of uses that strengthens Worthington's long-term finances and capacity to deliver outstanding services.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS IN THE PRINCIPLES

Green Space. Green space is the broad category that includes any park, natural preserve, or other undeveloped space, such as lawns and yards. These spaces do not have to be publicly accessible.

Park Space. Park space refers to all publicly accessible green spaces, including both active and passive spaces. Active spaces are programmed with a specific purpose, like a playground or sports field, while passive spaces are unprogrammed, like a trail. These spaces could be publicly or privately owned as long as they are open to anyone.

Public Realm. The public realm refers to all publicly accessible outdoor spaces, including streets, sidewalks, plazas, parks, and civic spaces, that are open and available to everyone, regardless of ownership.

Mixed-Use. Development that combines two or more uses, such as retail, office, and residential, in a single building or at single location. Mixed-use development supports walkability by placing everyday destinations in close proximity and can strengthen a city's tax base by layering uses on underutilized land.

Infill. Development that occurs on vacant, underutilized, or previously developed land within an existing built-up area, rather than on undeveloped land at the urban edge.

Green infrastructure. Stormwater management systems that use natural processes, such as rain gardens, bioswales, permeable pavement, and tree canopy, to filter and absorb water on site. Green infrastructure is distinct from gray infrastructure like pipes and detention basins and from green space, which refers to vegetated areas more broadly.

Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH). Existing privately owned rental housing that is affordable to moderate-income households because of its age, size, or condition. NOAH is often the first housing stock lost to rising rents or redevelopment pressure.

Strategic Priorities

The 10 guiding principles on the preceding pages describe what Worthington values and where change should occur. The 15 strategic priorities below translate those principles into direction for action, organized across the plan's five topics. Each priority is supported by specific implementation actions found within its chapter.

Land Use and Character

1. Comprehensive Zoning & Development Code Reform

2. Catalyze and Strategically Support Mixed-Use Redevelopment

3. Enable Incremental and Coordinated Mixed-Use Redevelopment

Economic Vitality

4. Support great places and spaces where people want to live, work, shop, play, and eat

5. Target industries that support Central Ohio's development focus and the context of Worthington's Opportunity Areas

6. Ensure Worthington proactively strengthens its economic development capacity

7. Establish clear policies and procedures for the use of incentives and other economic development tools

Mobility and Connectivity

8. Adopt and Implement the Updated Thoroughfare Plan

9. Advance Active Transportation as a Core Network

10. Prioritize and Plan Complete Streets Studies and Safety Improvements

11. Coordinate and Advocate for Transit Improvements

Housing and Neighborhoods

12. Support Neighborhood Character and Support Reinvestment in Existing Housing

13. Expand Housing Options in Context Appropriate Locations

Environment and Resilience

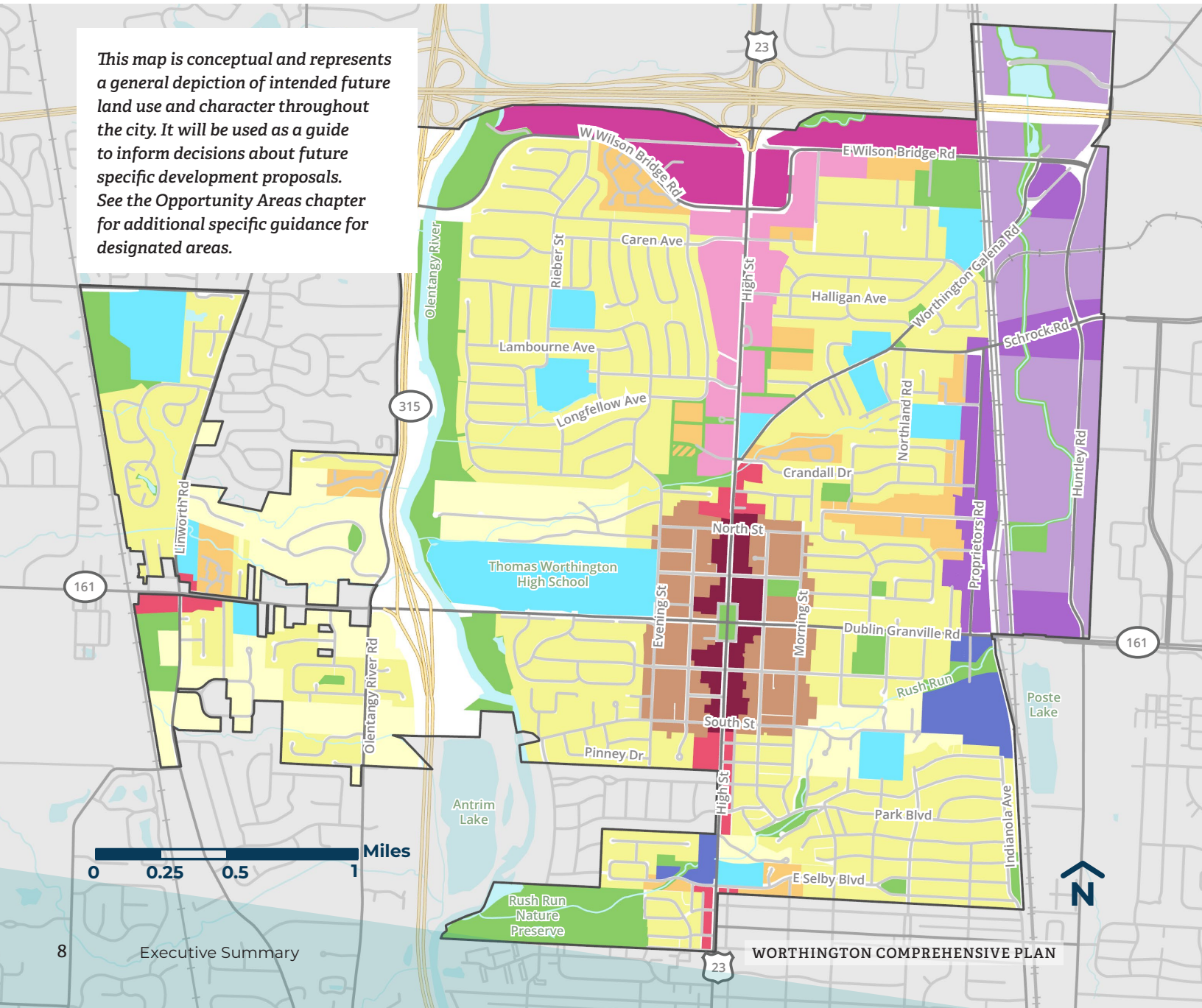
14 Lead by Example in Environmental Stewardship and Resilience

15. Update the Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Future Land Use and Character Map

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. Definitions of the land use types begin on page 26 of the Plan.

- Residential, Large-Lot
- Residential, Suburban
- Residential, Attached
- Residential, Old Worthington
- Old Worthington Core
- Corridor Transition
- Corridor Mixed Use
- Wilson Bridge Mixed Use
- Rush Run Mixed Use
- Forge Fields Mixed Use
- Forge Fields Flex
- Institutional Campus
- Parks and Green Space



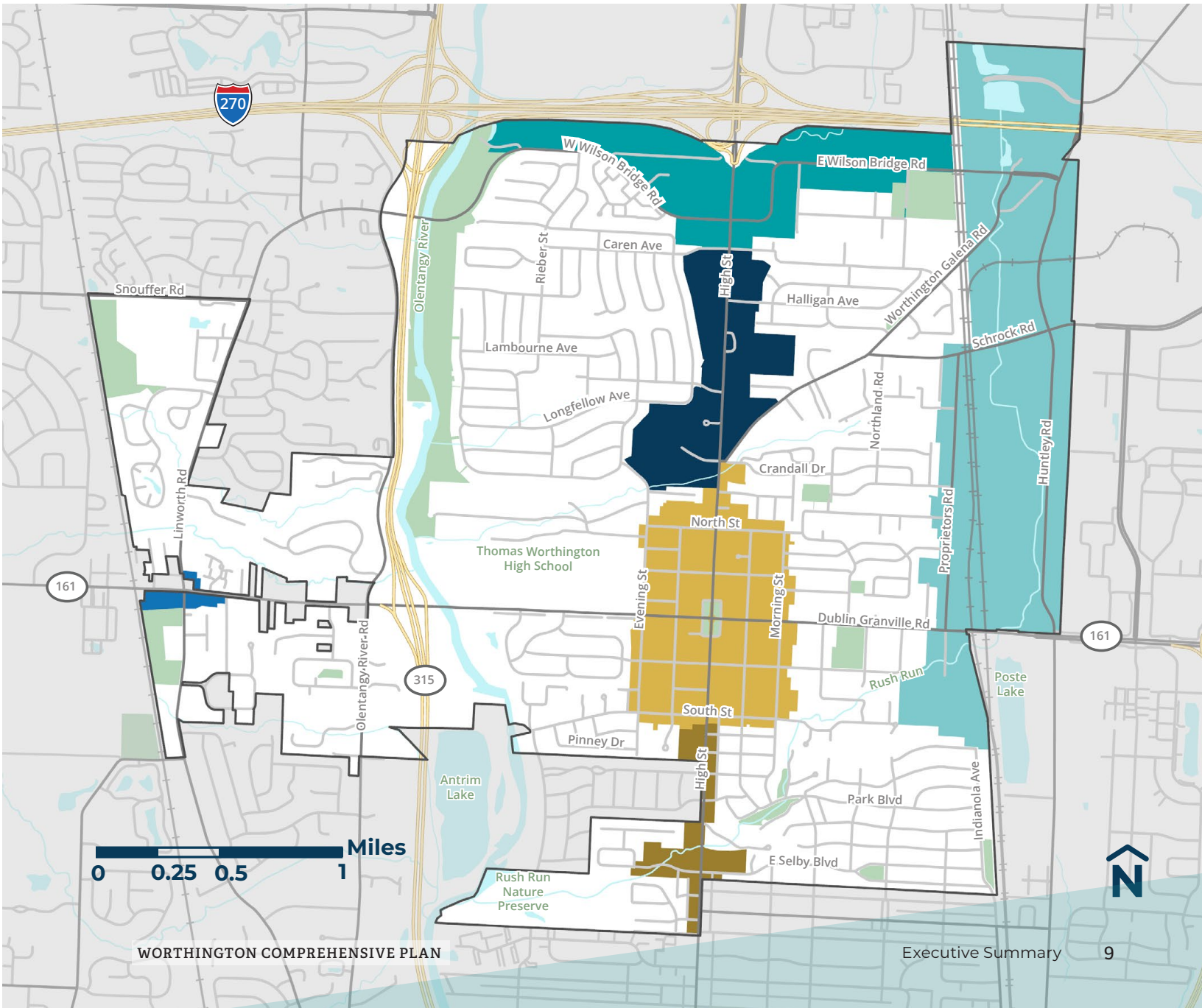
Opportunity Areas

The Opportunity Areas chapter provides geographic guidance for areas where change is anticipated, encouraged, or should be strategically managed. These areas build upon the Citywide Strategic Priorities and translate them into place-specific direction.

Each Opportunity Area includes: Strategic Role, The Area Today, Strategic Direction, Public Space, Land Use and Character, and Mobility and Connectivity.

The Opportunity Areas are:

- **WILSON BRIDGE**
- **NORTH HIGH**
- **OLD WORTHINGTON**
- **LINWORTH**
- **SOUTH HIGH**
- **FORGE FIELDS / NORTHEAST**



WILSON BRIDGE (Begins on page 136)

The Wilson Bridge area is Worthington's primary economic engine and one of its most significant reinvestment corridors. It serves as the city's front door from I-270 and is positioned to evolve into a walkable, employment-focused mixed-use district that strengthens the tax base while signaling arrival into Worthington. This corridor can accommodate greater intensity than most other areas of the City, provided development transitions carefully to adjacent neighborhoods and infrastructure capacity is aligned with redevelopment timing.

1. **Advance coordinated reinvestment in major redevelopment sites.**
2. **Support higher-intensity employment and vertical mixed-use development in appropriate locations.**
3. **Integrate shared parking, structured parking, and coordinated stormwater strategies.**
4. **Implement corridor design improvements incrementally.**
5. **Align redevelopment sequencing with fiscal capacity.**





Wilson Bridge Mixed Use Examples





Plazas and social green spaces

NORTH HIGH (Begins on page 145)

North High serves as a transitional corridor between Old Worthington and larger-format commercial areas to the north. Two major reinvestment sites anchor the area, while incremental redevelopment along smaller parcels should improve walkability and reinforce a cohesive mixed-use character. The following statements describe the intent for the two major reinvestment sites.

1. **Concentrate mixed-use development along High Street.**
2. **Emphasize meaningful and connected green space.**
3. **Include a mix of housing types that respect context.**
4. **Require clear transitions to surrounding neighborhoods.**
5. **Improve connectivity while minimizing cut-through impacts.**
6. **Provide public benefit with long-term fiscal responsibility.**
7. **Reflect Worthington's character in architecture and landscape.**
8. **Integrate visible, low-impact environmental features.**



Corridor Mixed Use Example: Retrofit.



Corridor Mixed Use Example: Complete redevelopment.



Civic Green/Plaza.



Connected Greenways.

OLD WORTHINGTON (page 156)

Old Worthington is the historic and symbolic heart of the community. Anchored by the Village Green and defined by a traditional grid street pattern, it functions as Worthington's Main Street district and primary civic gathering space.

1. **Support development and adaptive reuse that respect and celebrate Old Worthington's historic character.**
2. **Establish a clear rehabilitation preference for contributing structures.**
3. **Protect the Village Green as the civic and symbolic heart of the community.**
4. **Encourage active ground-floor uses along High Street.**
5. **Maintain the prevailing one- to three-story scale along High Street.**
6. **Strengthen pedestrian and bicycle connections to surrounding neighborhoods.**
7. **Manage parking strategically and expand supply only if clearly justified.**





Old Worthington already exemplifies a great public space. Future investment should maintain and enhance the existing network of public and publicly accessible spaces that support gathering, events, and daily activity.

LINWORTH (page 164)

The western edge of Worthington, where the City's stake in a place exceeds its control over it. Much of the area is unannexed township land the SR 161 right-of-way falls under ODOT, and frontage parcels to the west lie in Columbus. What happens here shapes the western entry into Worthington, yet the City cannot direct it alone.

1. **Coordinate planning across jurisdictions.**
2. **Steer land use toward the established pattern.**
3. **Establish a western gateway.**
4. **Complete the corridor for walking and biking.**
5. **Extend Worthington's design influence beyond the review district.**

WORTHINGTON'S HISTORIC CHARACTER

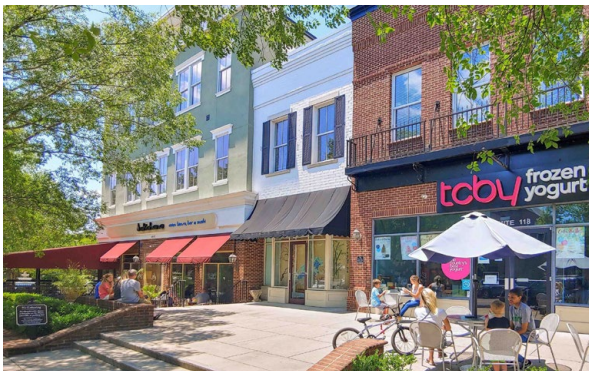
Historic does not simply mean old. It refers to places that help tell the story of our community: the people, events, architectural traditions, and patterns of development that shaped Worthington over time. A building, neighborhood, or landscape can be historic because of what it represents, not only when it was built. Worthington was platted in 1803 around a public green. More than two centuries later that original vision remains recognizable in the Village Green, the historic storefronts along High Street, and the tree-lined residential streets radiating from Old Worthington's core.

This plan's commitment to preservation extends beyond the Architectural Review District. Many established neighborhoods contain homes, streetscapes, and building patterns that contribute to community character without formal designation. The City should support reinvestment, discourage unnecessary demolition, and ensure that change strengthens rather than erodes what makes Worthington distinctive. See Actions 1.3, 12.2, and the Old Worthington Opportunity Area.

SOUTH HIGH (page 167)

A transitional mixed-use corridor between Old Worthington and higher-intensity development in Columbus. Over time it should evolve into a more walkable, vertically mixed-use environment that strengthens Worthington's southern gateway while carefully managing scale transitions and jurisdictional differences.

1. **Establish a clear southern gateway identity at High Street and Selby Boulevard.**
2. **Support vertical mixed-use redevelopment.**
3. **Transition building scale thoughtfully between districts.**
4. **Expand and rebalance the public realm toward pedestrian comfort.**
5. **Improve access management.**
6. **Encourage reinvestment that strengthens the tax base.**



Public spaces, consistent building edge with modest setback



Stream-oriented mixed use with multi-use path (Rush Run Mixed-use)



Townhomes



3.5-story multifamily



Just outside of Worthington to the south along High Street, the City of Columbus's new zoning allows buildings up to 4 stories with limited to no setbacks and no required parking. (Image from Columbus ZoneIn initiative)

NORTHEAST (page 175)

A strategic employment district positioned to support advanced industries and long-term economic diversification. Building on the adopted 2024 Northeast Area Plan, it accommodates higher-value job growth in sectors aligned with the City's Target Industries. This district is not envisioned as a residential-led mixed-use area.

1. **Reinforce employment preservation through zoning and land use policy.**
2. **Implement the adopted subarea framework from the 2024 Northeast Area Plan.**
3. **Facilitate strategic parcel consolidation where substantial reinvestment is desired.**
4. **Modernize building inventory to support target industries.**
5. **Align infrastructure investment with employment growth objectives.**
6. **Strengthen internal connectivity and coordinated site design.**
7. **Enhance environmental performance and compatibility at edges**

Rush Run Mixed-use subarea (south of SR 161) is intended to:

- Support a coordinated mixed-use campus that includes office along SR 161, office / institutional uses, and residential integrated into a live-work environment.
- Allow moderate-density residential within the interior of the campus, while providing lower-density residential forms along edges adjacent to existing single-family neighborhoods.
- Preserve and enhance Rush Run as a central ecological corridor and green space amenity integrated into redevelopment.
- Concentrate vehicular access at the SR 161 and Proprietors Road intersection, while improving pedestrian and bicycle connections within the district and to surrounding areas. No new vehicular connections to Indianola Avenue.



Rush Run rendering from the Northeast Area Plan



Mixed-use hub plaza rendering from the Northeast Area Plan

How to Use the Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be used daily in making public and private decisions regarding development, redevelopment, capital improvements, economic incentives, and other matters affecting the City.

Annual work programs and budgets. Departments, boards, and commissions consider the plan's recommendations when preparing annual work programs and budgets.

Capital Improvement Plan. The five-year CIP should be consistent with the plan's recommendations.

Development approvals. Administrative and legislative approvals will be reviewed for consistency with the plan. Planning Commission decisions and Planning & Building reports will reference relevant recommendations and the Future Land Use and Character Map.

Economic incentives. All incentive programs should be reviewed to ensure they reinforce the plan's land use and economic development recommendations.

Private development decisions. Property owners and developers should consider the guiding principles and the Future Land Use and Character Map when making investment decisions.

Monitoring and updating. The plan should be referenced annually in work programs, budgets, and capital improvements planning, with a formal review of accomplishments and relevancy at five-year intervals. A major update should be scheduled every ten years or following a formal recommendation from the Planning Commission.

Community Priorities

The following strategies and actions were most frequently identified as priorities in the Community Review Round of public input. These topics should be considered along with other factors as City Council establishes an implementation plan.

Modernize the Zoning & Development Code. Action 1.2 is the enabling action for many of the plan's ideas (top rated Action). It is the vehicle for compatibility standards (Action 12.1), ADUs (Action 13.2), and environmental standards (Action 14.2).

Build Great Places & Catalytic Mixed-Use. This includes Strategic Priority 4 (#2 overall), trophy mixed-use development (Action 4.1), a vibrant Old Worthington (Action 4.2), infill (Action 4.3).

Expand Housing Variety in the Right Places. Includes ADUs/small-scale types (Action 13.2), focus intensity in the six opportunity areas (Action 13.1), neighborhood-compatible infill (Action 12.1).

Make Worthington More Walkable. Includes Strategic Priority (#4 overall) sidewalk gaps (Action 9.1), Complete Streets (Action 10.3), transit-ready corridors (Action 11.2).

Lead on Green Infrastructure & Resilience. Includes Strategic Priority 14 (#3 overall), green infrastructure in projects (Action 14.3), tree canopy (Action 14.4), the sustainability plan (Action 14.1).



For additional information contact

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