



CITY OF WORTHINGTON, OHIO

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

& 2005 STRATEGIC PLAN FOR WORTHINGTON

Prepared by:  
Myers Schmalenberger / MSI

Design Team:  
Myers Schmalenberger/MSI  
Schooley Caldwell Associates  
Benjamin D. Rickey & Co.

[www.worthington.org](http://www.worthington.org)



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**Adopted by Worthington City Council:  
December 5, 2005**

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The City of Worthington

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# REVIEW & ADOPTION PROCESS

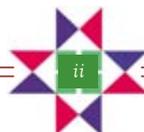
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The City of Worthington Comprehensive Plan Update was adopted by Worthington City Council on December 5, 2005.

## **Project Review Process and Public Meetings**

The following is a record of the various public meetings and interviews at which this plan was discussed.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Meeting Type</u>	<u>Location</u>
09/12/02	City Staff Meeting	City Hall
10/15/02	Steering Committee #1	City Hall
11/12/02	Steering Committee #2	City Hall
01/21/03 - 02/07/03	Community Interviews	Various locations across two weeks
02/11/03	Steering Committee #3	City Hall
02/26/03	Community Presentation	Griswold Center
06/10/03	Steering Committee #4	City Hall
08/19/03	Steering Committee #5	City Hall
12/12/03	Steering Committee #6	City Hall
02/13/04	Steering Committee #7	City Hall
05/18/04	Steering Committee #8	City Hall
07/22/04	Planning Commission	City Hall
09/09/04	Planning Commission	City Hall
11/01/04	City Council	City Hall
12/13/04	City Council	City Hall
01/13/05	City Council	City Hall
02/09/05	City Council	City Hall
09/12/05	City Council	City Hall
12/05/05	City Council	City Hall



The MSI Project Team gratefully acknowledges the following community leaders and individuals for their assistance, time, and contribution in the preparation of this Comprehensive Plan Update:

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Lou J. Briggs, President Pro Tempore  
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Robert F. Chosy, Council Member  
Michael P. Duffey, Council Member  
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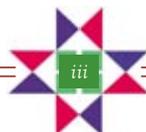
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OHIO

HISTORICAL  
MARKER

WORTHINGTON  
A PLANNED COMMUNITY

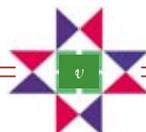
Based on a plan adopted by Scioto Company proprietors before their arrival in Ohio, Worthington was established following the New England model. The town formed a grid pattern around a village green. Settlers were required to own at least one town lot and a rural tract for farming; some settlers were designated to operate the first tavern and sawmill. The church and school were assigned double lots on the square and tracts to farm for their support. An Episcopal Church, school, subscription library, and Masonic lodge soon followed. Within months, Worthington was a complete New England town transplanted to Ohio.



THE WORTHINGTON WOMEN'S CLUB  
THE OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
2002

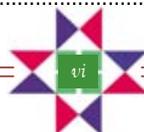
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# I. INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

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## Background

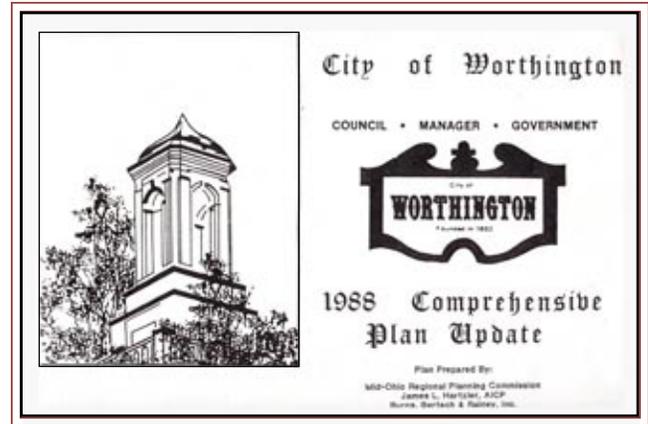
The City of Worthington first created and adopted a Comprehensive Plan for the community in 1964. As growth and development continued, the plan was updated, most recently with the *1988 Comprehensive Plan Update*. Since that time, Worthington's boundaries have not changed appreciably. However, development along Interstate 270 and north of the City has continued rapidly, significantly altering the regional environment as it affects Worthington. At the same time, the City of Worthington continues to gracefully mature, both in population and building stock. Since its founding 200 years ago, Worthington has been one of the most desirable places to live in Central Ohio.

At the bicentennial of Worthington's founding, the City faces a number of challenges. Addressing these challenges offers opportunities to evaluate the community, attend to its needs, and provide a direction for future improvements. Realizing this potential, Worthington City Council commissioned an update of the comprehensive plan. This *2005 Comprehensive Plan Update* is a tool to assist city council and the city administration as they guide this community in the new century.

## Purpose of a Comprehensive Plan

In the broadest sense, a comprehensive plan (also called a "master plan") is a land use policy document for a city. Because land use affects so many aspects of the built environment and thus influences things like local economic conditions and social interaction, a comprehensive plan can cover a wide range of issues. Its primary role is to create a vision for the city and provide recommendations to guide public policy, particularly in terms of land use-related issues. The vision and corresponding recommendations result from an examination of existing conditions and trends as well as challenges and opportunities that face the city.

A comprehensive plan is created with input from the community and adopted as an official plan by city council. As such, it provides strong legal underpinning when used as a basis for zoning, capital improvement, and land use-related decisions. In fact, the comprehensive plan should serve as a vital reference



*Worthington's 1988 Comprehensive Plan*

to inform city leaders and the community as public policies are developed and decisions made. In summary, a comprehensive plan is the official statement of a municipal legislative body which sets forth its major policies concerning desirable future physical development.

## Update as a Strategic Plan

This document is a strategic plan that builds upon Worthington's *1988 Comprehensive Plan Update* and the more recent *City of Worthington Economic Development Plan*. Traditionally, comprehensive plans are general in nature and serve as a repository for a number of city planning recommendations guiding the community in areas such as land use, development, transportation, infrastructure, safety services, education, parks and recreation, and cultural resources. However, as an established community Worthington has specific needs to address rather than the broad topics of traditional comprehensive plans.

Worthington is a mature, fully-developed community with established infrastructure and successful services. As a "First Ring Suburb" (an original suburb of a major city now surrounded by other developing cities), Worthington can not look to annexation to attract new development. The critical need for the City is to remain competitive in the region and focus on redevelopment while maintaining its strong community, unique qualities, and high level of services. As a result, this comprehensive plan is strategic, focusing on these important issues. This *2005 Comprehensive Plan Update* examines

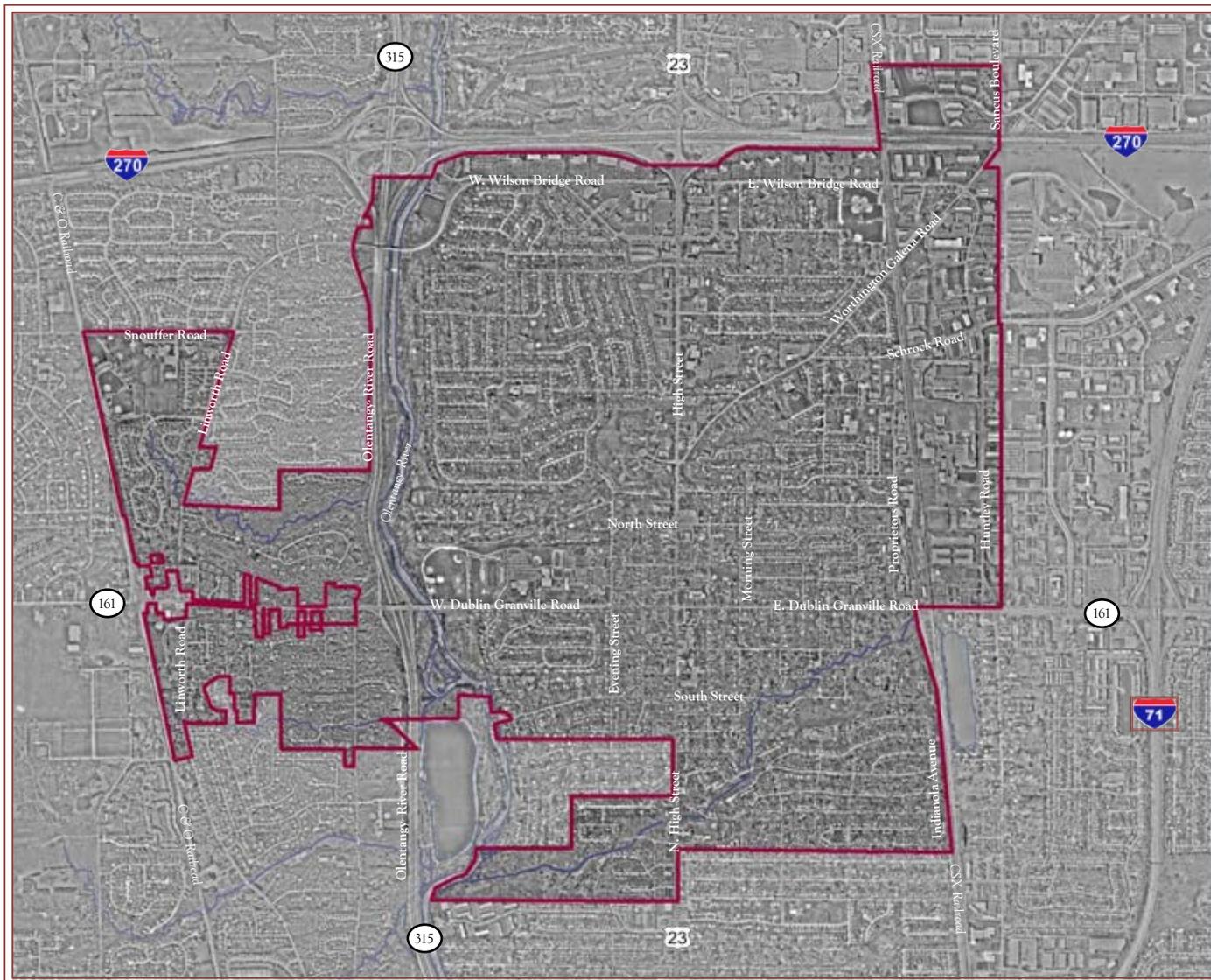
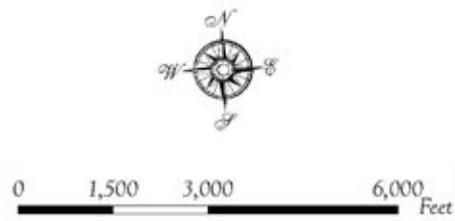


Figure 1 · Worthington Orthographic Photograph - Year 2000

**Legend**

Worthington Corporate Boundary



Note: Detailed digital orthophotography is available for Worthington from the Geographic Information System on the Franklin County Auditor's site — [www.co.franklin.oh.us](http://www.co.franklin.oh.us).

Source: Franklin County

improvement opportunities and redevelopment potential to enhance the quality of life within Worthington. While not meant to act as a specific blueprint, this strategic plan is a schematic document meant to inspire the community, guide public policy, and encourage private investment efforts.

## Need for an Update

Worthington's Comprehensive Plan dates from 1988. Most plans are designed to apply for 15 years, but may require more frequent updates in conditions of rapid change, following significant development, or where fundamental shifts in base assumptions occur. The City of Worthington recognized that it was time to update the plan in the context of current conditions and the regional climate. An updated comprehensive plan will assist the City by allowing it to:

- Reach consensus on planning and development issues
- Identify, preserve, and enhance important and positive attributes of the community
- Maintain and enhance quality of life factors
- Provide direction for needed development/redevelopment
- Evaluate merits of potential redevelopment sites
- Develop a basis for zoning decisions
- Create/maintain harmonious relationships between uses
- Identify and leverage opportunities available to the City

## Plan Time Horizon

The *2005 Comprehensive Plan Update* was written to provide direction for Worthington across the next fifteen years. Still, this plan is based on conditions and trends that exist today. As with any other planning document, it is expected that this comprehensive plan will be reviewed, and periodically updated to reflect changes in existing conditions and community priorities. The strategic component of this plan can be updated more frequently to accommodate new opportunities and build on the success of improvements and new development.

## Study Area

The study area for this comprehensive plan is the land contained within the corporate boundaries of the City of Worthington (see Figure 2). This is an area of just over five and one-half square miles. Worthington is surrounded by the City of Columbus,

the Village of Riverlea (nestled in the southwest), and several small pockets of unincorporated township land – particularly along State Route 161 to the west. Obviously Worthington is affected by the surrounding areas and this is considered and examined where relevant to the analysis.

It is important to note that as with many cities in Central Ohio, both the postal district and school district boundaries were established independently of the City of Worthington and thus do not directly correspond to the city boundaries (in fact both contain more land than the City). This can be a source of confusion as all three are often simply referred to as "Worthington". The Worthington postal area (43085 zip code) includes land in Columbus to the north and northwest. The Worthington School District (15.5 square miles) is much larger than the city limits, extending farther west toward Smokey Row Road and north to the Delaware County line (refer to Figure 14, page 47).

## Goals of the Plan

The City of Worthington began efforts to update its Comprehensive Plan in the fall of 2002 with the formation of a Steering Committee and hiring of the consultant MSI. This update builds on the work of the *Economic Development Plan* and was developed in conjunction with *Design Guidelines* for the Architectural Review District. As part of the process, a number of goals were formulated for the plan. The *2005 Strategic Plan for Worthington* seeks to:

- Assist the community in refining its vision for the built and natural environment.
- Improve Worthington's economic base by encouraging appropriate redevelopment.
- Ensure that redevelopment enhances and compliments Worthington's character and quality of life.
- Promote the provision of housing types to attract and accommodate all age groups.
- Maintain and build upon the success and vitality of Old Worthington.
- Promote Worthington's strengths and enhance the City's identity in the region.
- Maintain the quality of Worthington's existing housing stock.
- Continue efforts to create and improve pedestrian and recreational park connections.

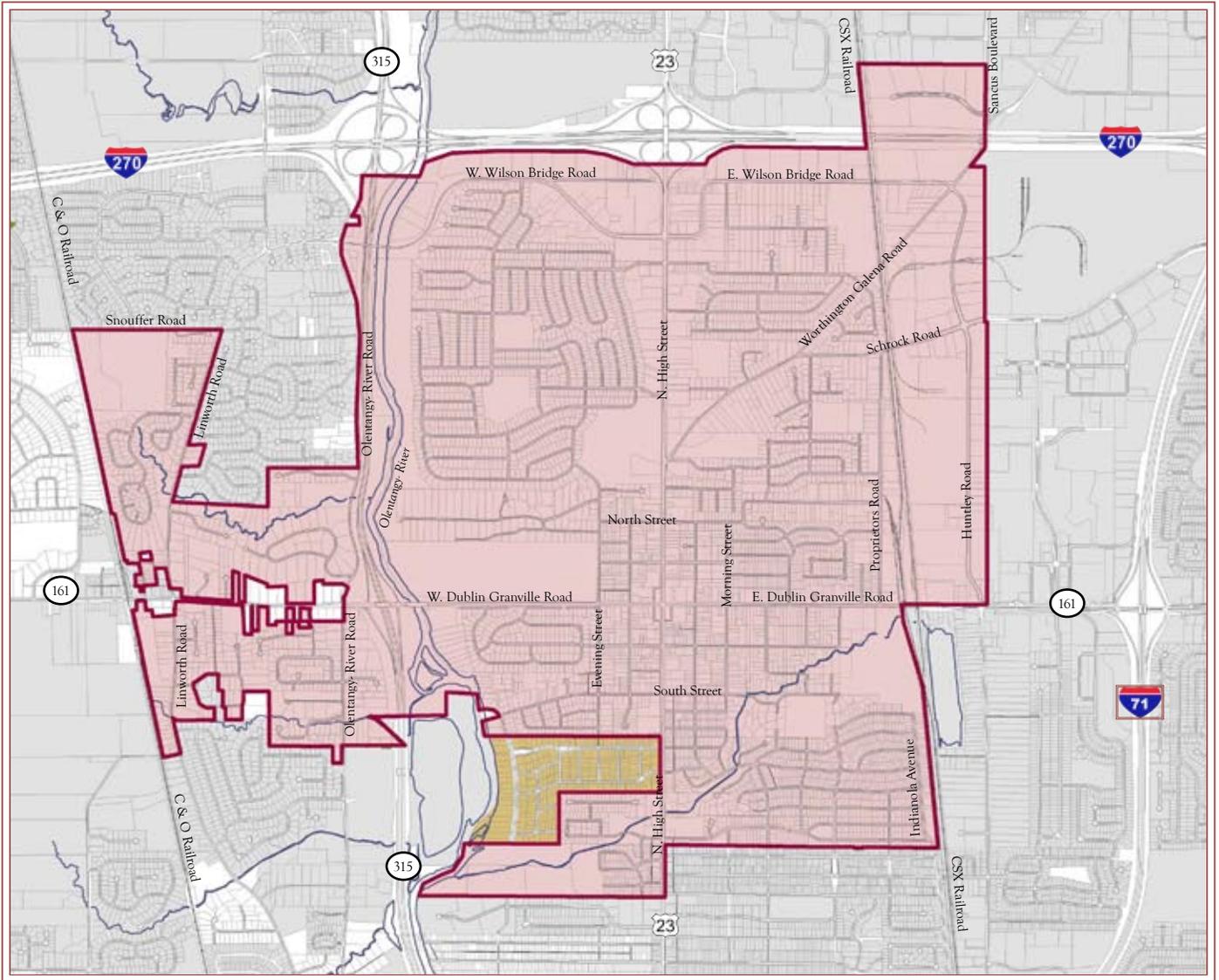
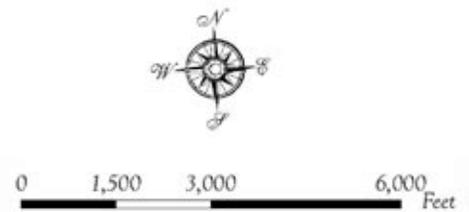
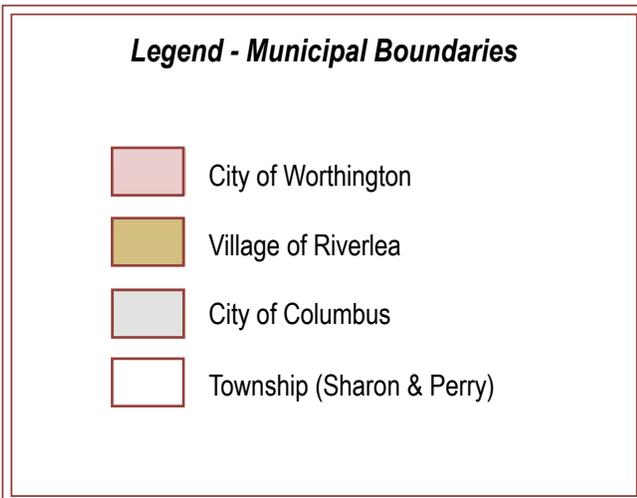


Figure 2 · Worthington Corporate Boundary Map



## Plan Overview

Following this *Introduction*, the Worthington Strategic Plan is divided into three sections. Section II, *Existing Conditions*, reviews the state of Worthington as it exists today. Section III, *Strategic Analysis*, identifies opportunities arising from these conditions, delineates focus areas, and examines strategies for addressing needs of the City. The final section, *Recommendations*, takes the various visions established in the Strategic Analysis section and outlines steps for their implementation.

The Worthington Strategic Plan is an examination of assets, constraints, opportunities, and challenges in Worthington. Assets and constraints conclude each part of Section II (*Existing Conditions*); and opportunities and challenges start each part of Section III (*Strategic Analysis*). Implementation steps summarize the plan of action in Section IV (*Recommendations*).

Assets and constraints are analyzed as they relate to the current conditions found in Worthington. They are provided throughout Section II, *Existing Conditions*, and are defined as follows:

- *Assets* are existing features and attributes of the City that are beneficial, reinforcing, and contributing to Worthington's quality of life. Worthington's assets include its excellent public services, ideal location, sense of community, top-notch amenities, and great school district.

- *Constraints* are features and attributes of the City and region that limit or impact Worthington's options for improvement. Constraints include the lack of vacant land for new growth, the aging building stock, and the explosive growth that has occurred in the region around Worthington.

Opportunities and challenges are identified in order to formulate strategies for improving the quality of life in the City. These are addressed in Section III, *Strategic Analysis*, and are defined below:

- *Opportunities* are areas in which Worthington can affect positive change and improvement. Opportunities are identified in this plan and then strategies are provided for advancing them. The effort necessary to seize these opportunities is often not minimal or easy, but the reward for the community can be great.
- *Challenges* are issues that are very difficult to address or effectively improve. This plan attempts to identify challenges facing the community and offer options for dealing with them. Due to their difficult nature, challenges represent issues that Worthington will need to continue to face and wrestle with across time. There may be no apparent solution at this time, but one may present itself with continued effort or as conditions change with time.

Following these summary traits throughout the plan will provide an overview of the information contained herein. The strategies that result are then compiled as a plan of action in Section IV, *Recommendations*.





## II. EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

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## Overview

Every community is composed of features that make it unique. When these individual traits are studied and compared, patterns emerge, trends become apparent, and their effects can be considered. This analysis identifies attributes that are important to the community, including assets that add to the quality of life and constraints that limit improvement options. The resulting framework allows the investigation of challenges and opportunities facing the City.

This section reviews Worthington's natural features, the existing land uses, the services, the transportation network, the demographics, the fiscal condition, and the regional environment. It is an examination of Worthington as a place — including the land, its people, and how it functions. Together these components provide a snapshot of Worthington and establish a framework from which to forecast future trends and create strategies to better the community.

## Community Assets

Assets and constraints are summarized for each of the framework components. Before examining the individual components, it is worthwhile summarizing some of the general attributes that together make Worthington one of the most desirable places to live, and which this plan strives to protect. These community assets are the qualities that make Worthington unique and which the community values. Attributes that are most often cited include:

- *Ideal Location:* Worthington has direct and convenient access to two major highways, Interstate 270 and State Route 315, and is in close proximity to a third, Interstate 71. As a result, downtown Columbus, major employment centers, numerous universities, the commercial airport, and large shopping centers are easily accessible within a 20 minute drive. In addition, Worthington is closer to the true center of population in Central Ohio than downtown Columbus.
- *Top Notch Amenities:* The historic Worthington Village Green is the symbolic and physical heart of this community. The scenic Olentangy River flows through the City and includes a great bike path system with regional connections. The parks within the City are outstanding. In addition, there are a number of first-rate facilities such as the new state-of-the-art community recreation center, a wonderful downtown senior center, and a nationally-acclaimed library system.
- *Excellent Services:* Residents consistently rank the City's services as excellent and this extends from the Divisions of Police & Fire/EMS, Parks & Recreation Department, and Service Departments, to refuse pickup, street cleaning, and snow/leaf removal.
- *Small Town Feeling:* Although Worthington has become a suburb of Columbus, it still has the character and feel of a small town with strong community ties and identity. Charming Old Worthington anchors the center of the town and is the wellspring of city history. It provides a perfect spot where community events occur throughout the year, such as Farmers' Market, Concerts on the Green, Arts Fair, and the Memorial Day Parade.
- *Diverse Built Environment:* Though Worthington is often viewed as a New England-style town with Colonial Architecture, it actually has a diverse built environment with many styles of architecture that span two centuries of design. In addition, Worthington is not just a bedroom community — there is a diversity of land uses that accommodate office, retail, industrial, and institutional development.
- *Great Schools:* Worthington Schools have received the highest educational ranking (superior) by the State and have a long-standing reputation for excellence. Many residents of the community were originally attracted to the City by the quality of the school system.
- *Sense of Community:* The people of Worthington are friendly, supportive, and active in the community. The City has a core of residents and businesses that have lived and operated in Worthington for years. This group provides a great community support base where new members are welcomed and encouraged to get involved. There are numerous organizations that are very active and strive to maintain and improve the community.

These are representative of the qualities that the community treasures and provide context for the existing conditions analysis that follows. They are the attributes that the City of Worthington strives to provide, ensure, and protect.

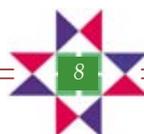
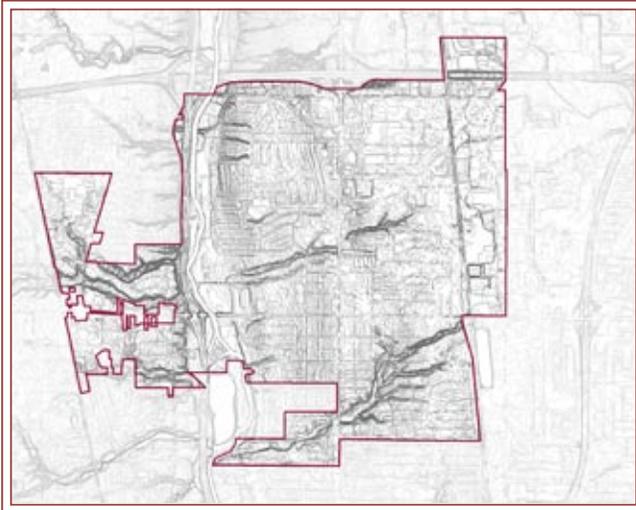
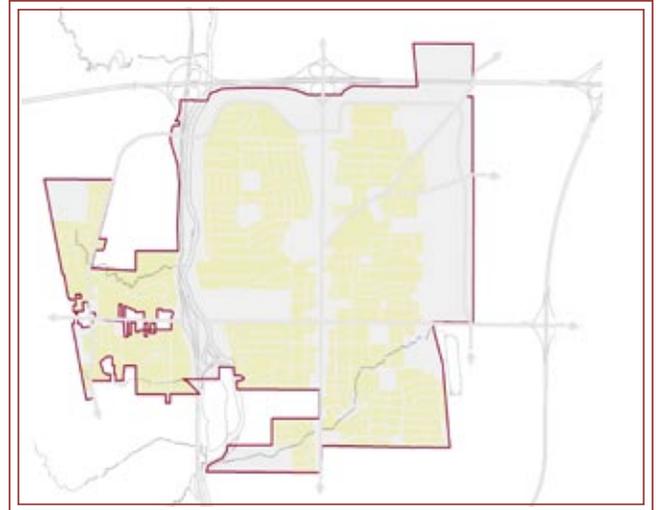


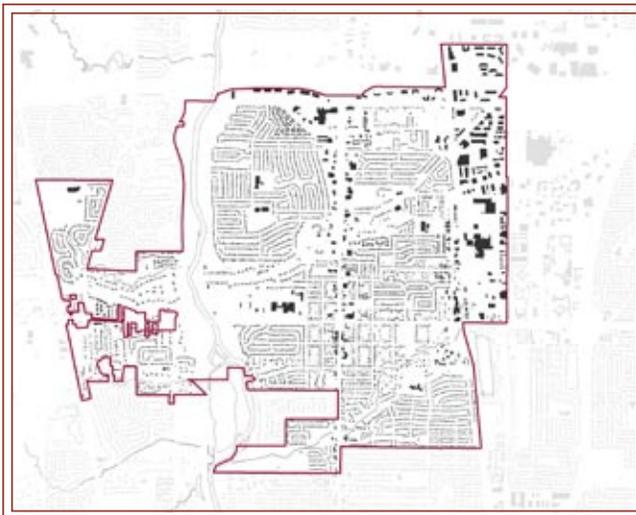
Figure 3 · Some Components of Worthington's Framework Analysis



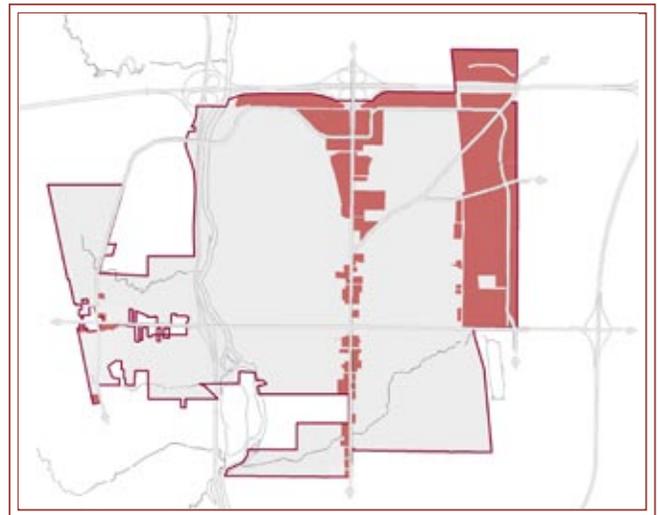
Natural Features and Topography



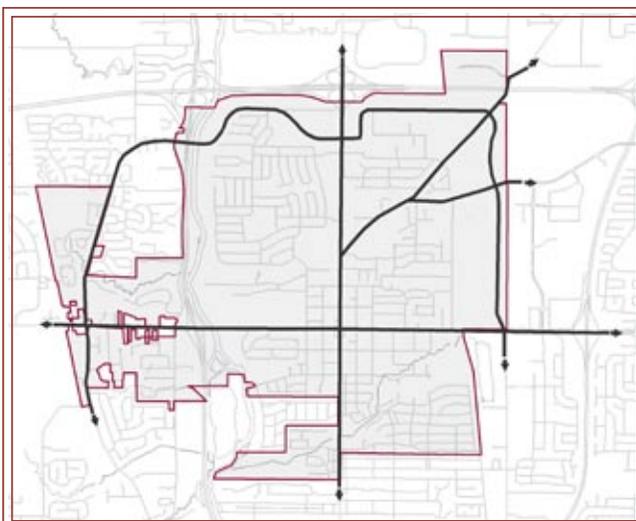
Residential Development Pattern



Building Footprints



Commercial Development Pattern



Transportation Network



Civic & Institutional Development Pattern

# NATURAL FEATURES

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## Natural Features - Overview

The Olentangy River, its related ravines, and the urban forest are the primary character-defining natural features of Worthington. The river, its floodplain, and the tributaries and ravines that drain to it have always provided Worthington with beautiful natural areas and woods that connect the residents with the natural environment. This river corridor also provides significant natural habitat within the City.

A more recent phenomenon is the urban forest that has matured throughout the community, much on what was farm fields less than fifty years ago. The maturing tree canopy reinforces the established and green nature of Worthington. Together, these natural features create context and frame Worthington's built environment, while providing invaluable open space for its residents and habitat for native species.

## Natural Features - Detail

Worthington is located in the Olentangy River drainage basin. This river flows north to south through the western half of the City. The high ground in Worthington is located along the east and west borders and the land falls toward the Olentangy River floodplain (Figure 4). Much of the City is characterized by level to gently rolling terrain with less than five percent slope. Steeper slopes are found along the edges of the Olentangy floodplain and its prominent tributaries of Rush Run, Tucker Creek, Linworth Run, Greenridge Run, and Carhart Stream.



*The Olentangy River south of Wilson Bridge.*

As a result of the glaciers that deposited soil in this region, the average depth to bedrock is 50 feet. Because of this, most of Worthington naturally drains well except for the low-lying areas along Huntley Road. The City is served by storm sewer systems that correct most drainage problems.

The Olentangy River flows through the City with a relatively broad floodplain of up to one-half mile in width. Water level is controlled by the Delaware Dam located upstream to the north in Delaware County. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) established the official boundaries of the floodplain, recently completing an update of the flood maps in 2000 (Figure 4). Worthington has adopted a policy for land within the 100-year floodplain that establishes these areas as unsuitable for building sites. In addition, fill is prohibited in these areas except for the purpose of flood control. Recognizing the significance of the Olentangy River, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) designated the Olentangy a Scenic River between the Delaware Dam and Wilson Bridge Road in 1973. With the reestablishment of natural river vegetation south of Wilson Bridge, this area may now also qualify for Scenic River protection.

The established forest and natural space together with improved water quality from better control of sewer and non-point pollution sources has increased the species diversity along the Olentangy River. Beavers, herons, and other native species have returned to the area.

Although there is an established drainage pattern in the City (because it is fully developed), today's stormwater control standards would require more on-site detention than exists in much of the area. As a result of this, and farming practices and development to the north, stormwater run-off is still an issue along the river corridor due to added sediment loads.

The river corridor and related ravines help define the space in Worthington. The Olentangy River is the natural spine of the community and the ravines extend like ribs, inserting the natural environment into the character of the residential areas. For example, Old Worthington was settled on higher ground

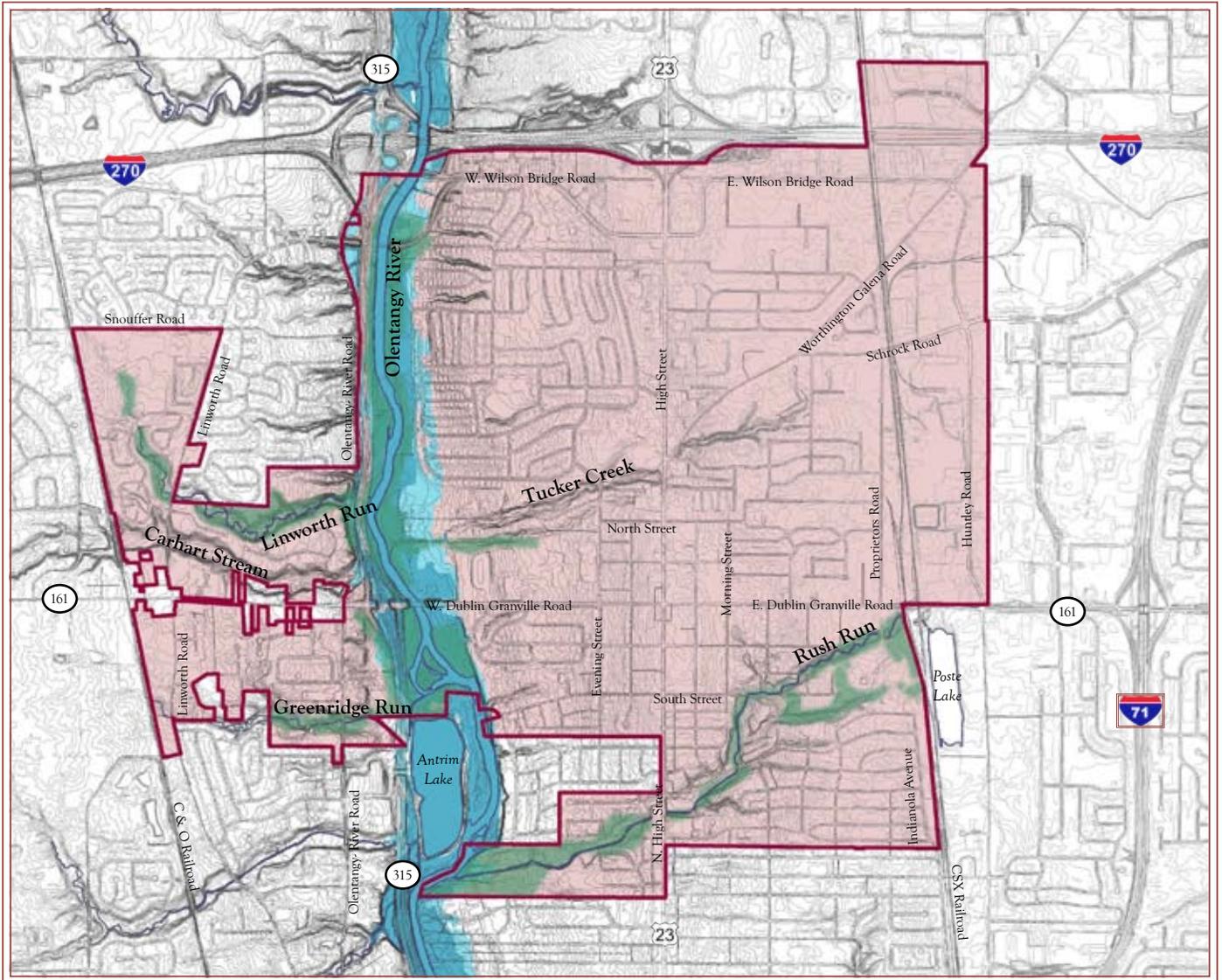
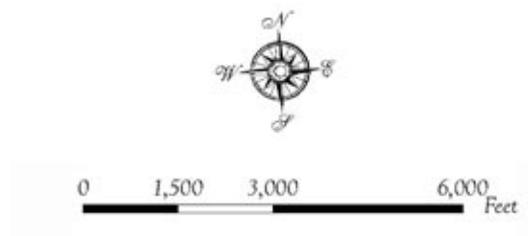
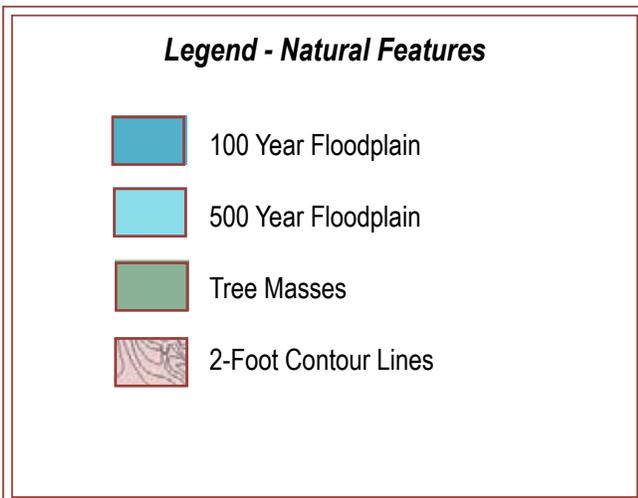


Figure 4 · Natural Features Map



Source: Floodplain data from year 2000 FEMA maps; topography from Franklin County.

that is roughly defined on the north (Tucker Creek) and south (Rush Run) by ravines that create a natural break between the historic center of Worthington and the other development along High Street. The City has worked to protect the ravines by placing conservation easements and "no-build" zones over them as part of more recent zonings. In older subdivisions, however, no protection was established for these areas located on private property (majority of ravine area).

The growth of the urban forest, and particularly the street tree canopy has been a long-term goal of the City of Worthington. The City encourages the planting of selected street trees in the city right-of-way through a subsidized program it offers to residents and businesses. Efforts such as these are important to establishing and maintaining the urban forest.

In addition to its open space and natural habitat contribution to the community, the Olentangy River corridor also serves as an important recreational feature for the City, with a fully developed bike trail system and numerous recreational fields. This is discussed further in the Parks section of the Land Use analysis (page 42).

In the next fifteen years, changes in the natural features will consist primarily of continued growth and maturing of the ravine forests and urban canopy. These will continue to be valued assets of the community. Some erosion in the river

corridor and ravines will likely need to be addressed through stabilization measures from time to time. Efforts could be made to naturalize the river corridor and improve water quality and stream habitat, including the removal or alteration of the existing low head dams. Native animal species will continue to return and prosper along the corridor. There may be need to control invasive, non-native plant species in the natural areas of the City. This will help maintain and protect the existing habitat for the area's plants and animals.

### Summary of Natural Features

#### Assets

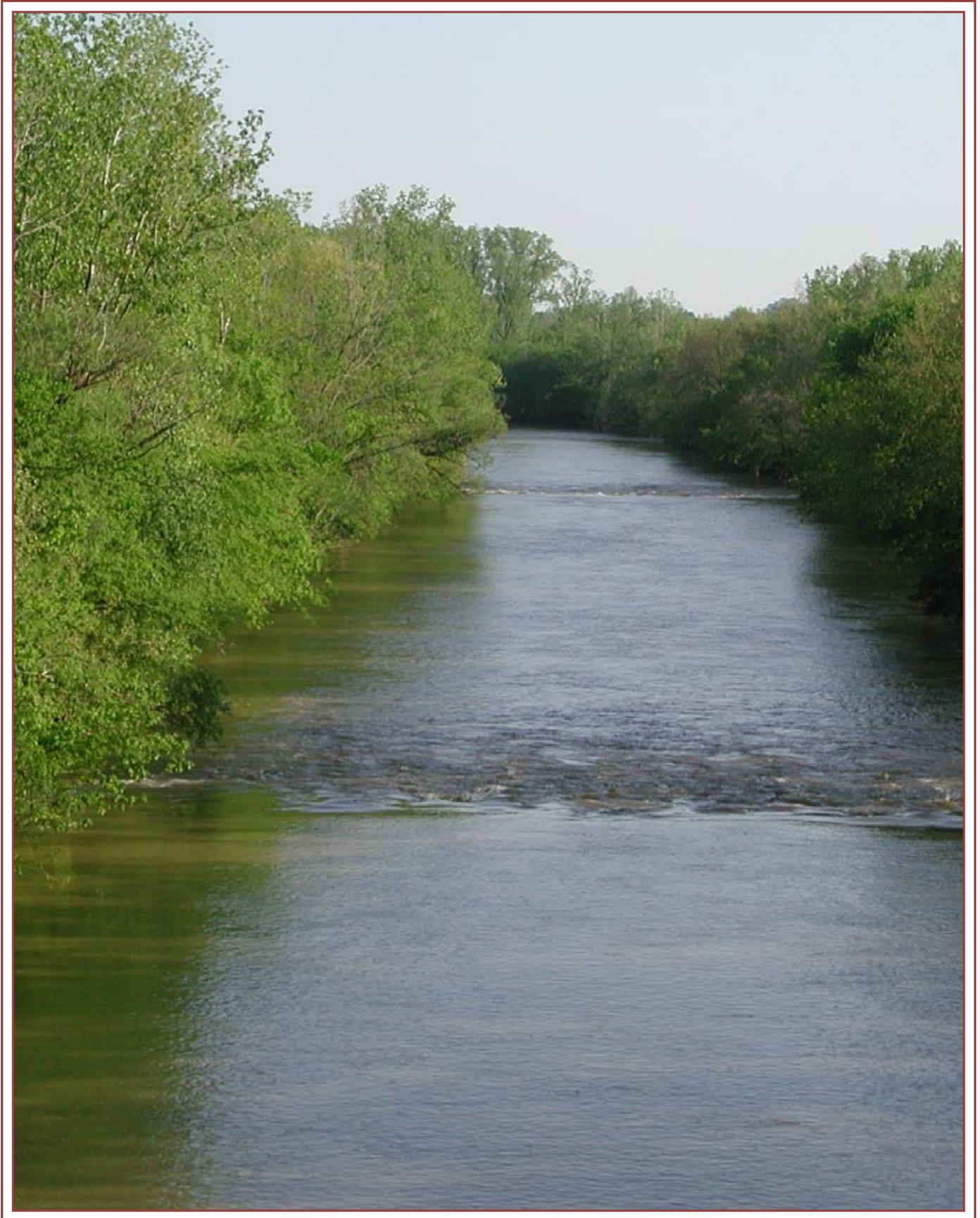
- The Olentangy River corridor is an outstanding natural feature and amenity, as well as an important identifying feature of Worthington.
- The Olentangy River corridor and ravines provide significant green space and habitat for the City.
- The urban forest and street trees add to the City's character.
- The river corridor and ravines create natural context for many neighborhoods.
- The Olentangy River is recognized as special and significant (designated Scenic River).
- The 100-year flood plain is protected and nondevelopable.
- There is an established drainage pattern in the City.

#### Constraints

- The northeast quadrant of Worthington has less natural features and topography.
- Much of the ravine area is privately held and not protected.
- On-site stormwater controls in many neighborhoods do not meet modern standards.



*View of the Worthington's mature urban tree canopy.*



*A section of the Olentangy River river corridor.*

## Development Pattern Overview

The history of Worthington's founding and its physical layout heavily influenced the character and type of development that occurred within the City. The philosophy of Worthington's founding fathers continues to subtly affect and inform land use and development decisions even today. Worthington was established as a self-reliant, self-contained community. It was platted and developed to provide all the land uses necessary to sustain the community — from places for worship, community gathering, and civic/school structures, to merchant shops, residences, and farm land. The size was intentionally limited to create a tightly-knit community. From its inception, Worthington was physically designed to create and sustain a community that facilitates interaction and has its own unique and independent character. These founding values have continued to direct City growth and development over the intervening 200 years. These principles link the past, present, and future of Worthington — manageable size, diverse land uses, sustainable, self-reliant, unique identity, and close-knit interactive community.



Historic Plat of (Old) Worthington

## History of the Development Pattern

James Kilbourne founded Worthington in 1803. He followed a basic site plan that was heavily influenced by the New England villages from which the first settlers came. The town was platted with sixteen blocks divided into 100 one-acre lots in a grid system around the intersection of what is now High Street (S.R. 23) and Dublin-Granville Road (S.R. 161). The four lots surrounding the intersection were reserved for a Village Green, and remain intact today. One set of lots was reserved for a church and one for a school. The town was bounded by North, South, Morning, and Evening Streets. Those boundaries enclose what is still popularly referred to as Old Worthington.

Almost from its inception, Worthington has been a residential community with a commercial core centered along High Street north and south of the Village Green. This historic grid remained the heart of the village through the height of the interurban street car, which was the available mass transit of the time and ran along High Street. Initial expansion of the City occurred in the 1940s during the post-World War II residential building boom. Most of this growth took place south of State Route 161 toward Columbus, and the Colonial Hills subdivision was annexed as it developed during this period.

In the 1950s further residential growth spread into the southeast, southwest, and northeast quadrants of the community. These neighborhoods continued using the basic grid pattern of streets, but began utilizing longer blocks and responded to the ravines in the area. Also during this time, houses were built along the major city thoroughfares extending east and west from High Street, in response to the increasing popularity of the automobile. By 1956, Worthington's population had surpassed 5,000 and the village became a city.

Until the late 1960s, most of the growth in Worthington consisted of single-family residences. By 1970, however, the City was attracting industrial and office development, primarily at the eastern edge along Proprietors and Huntley Roads. In the late 1970s the industrial/office development continued, spurred by the growth of the Busch Boulevard area off I-71 and S.R. 161, and by the construction of the I-270 Outerbelt. Larger, more

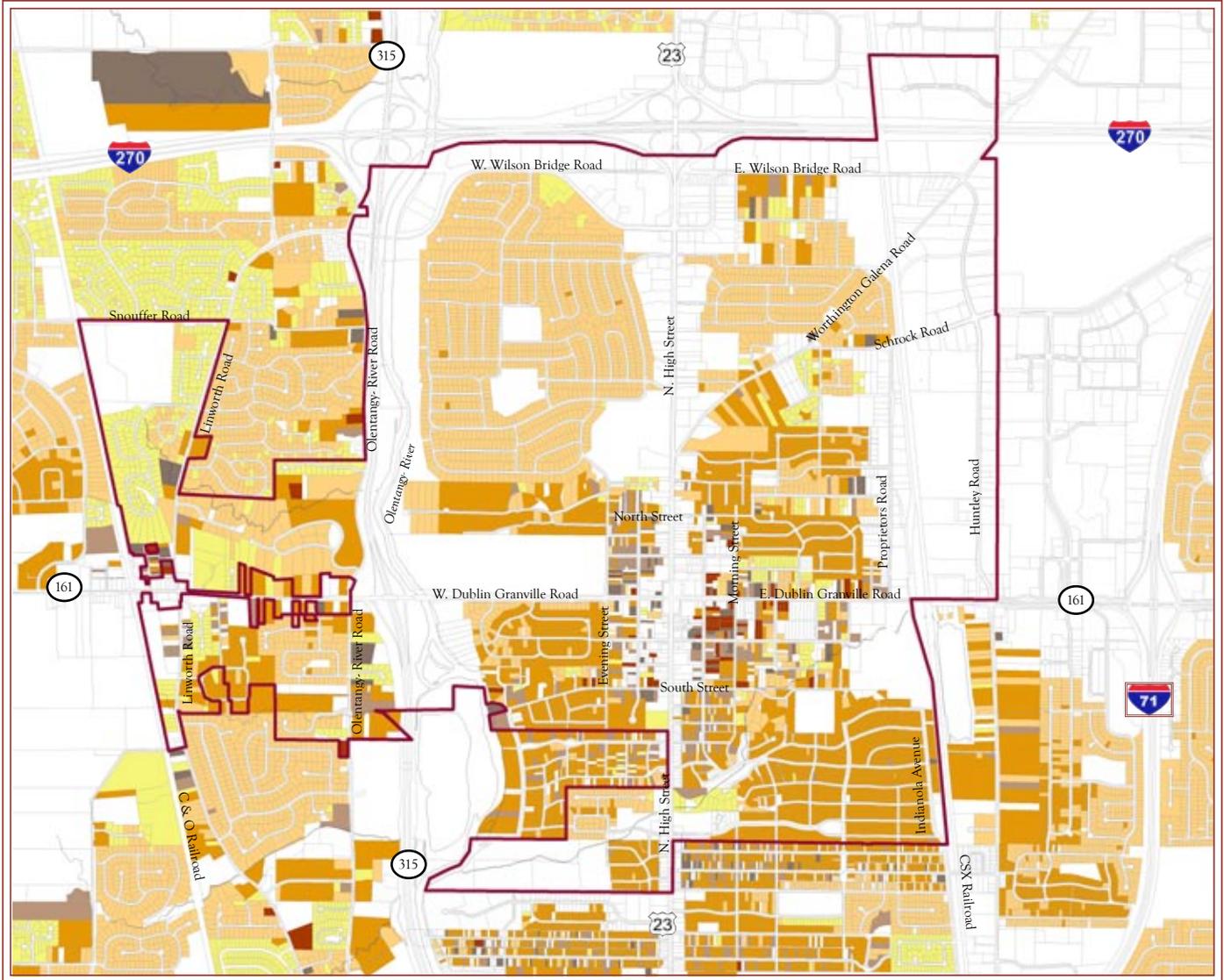
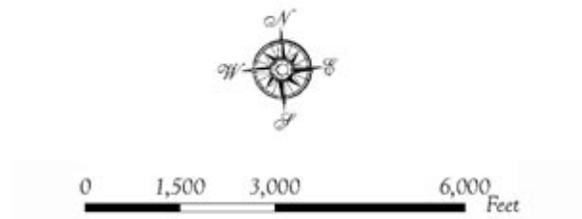
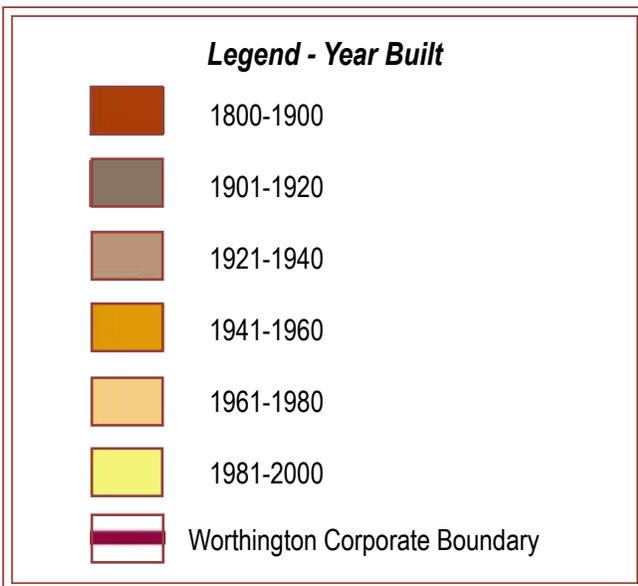


Figure 5 • Year Structures Built - Residential Development



Source: Franklin County.  
Data available for residential uses only.

suburban-style commercial offices were developed along High Street north of the town center.

Improved accessibility provided by the completion of the Outerbelt increased the diversity of development that occurred in the northern part of the community. Retail and office development took place around the intersection of I-270 and High Street (U.S. 23). Higher density, large-scale residential developments (e.g. Ville Charmante, completed 1975) were another response to the completion of the I-270 Outerbelt.

The second generation of growth stimulated by I-270 continued through the 1980s in Worthington and 1990s in other communities such as Dublin. This type of development is characterized by high-end Class A office space, sometimes developed in conjunction with office-related commercial or retail uses. This office/commercial development is as much influenced by visibility from the interstate as by direct accessibility. Thus in Worthington, this type of development occurred not only at the intersection of I-270 and High Street, but also east and west of the intersection along Wilson Bridge Road within view of the freeway.

Still, in the 1970s and 1980s the most dominant component of development in Worthington remained single-family residential housing, primarily because of the City's location and strong school district. Residential growth moved to the northern half of the City and crossed the Olentangy to the western portions of

Worthington, including in and around the unincorporated village of Linworth. These large residential subdivisions were planned in a method more typical of that time period, with increasing use of curvilinear streets, cul-de-sacs, and limited access points to major thoroughfares. As with earlier Worthington residential neighborhoods, schools were well integrated into the community. By the early 1980s, most of the developable ground in the City had been built.

By the 1990s, less than 5% of the land remained undeveloped within the Worthington corporate boundaries, and this is still true today. Much of this land is constrained by natural limitations (flood plain, etc.) or effectively constrained by the character and type of surrounding development. Most of the construction that occurred in the City over the past decade has been residential infill or residential development on newly annexed properties.

Due to the active annexation policy pursued by the City of Columbus in the 1950s and 1960s, and Columbus' control of water and sewer services, Worthington has been surrounded by Columbus. At this time, the City of Worthington can not expand its boundaries, except for a few potential annexation areas along State Route 161 west of State Route 315, a few parcels in and around Linworth, and the existing Brookside subdivision (see Corporate Boundary Map, pg. 5). As a result, if development is to occur in Worthington in the future, it will consist primarily of expansion or redevelopment of existing sites within the City.



*Public Art on the Village Green*



*Office Use on North High Street*

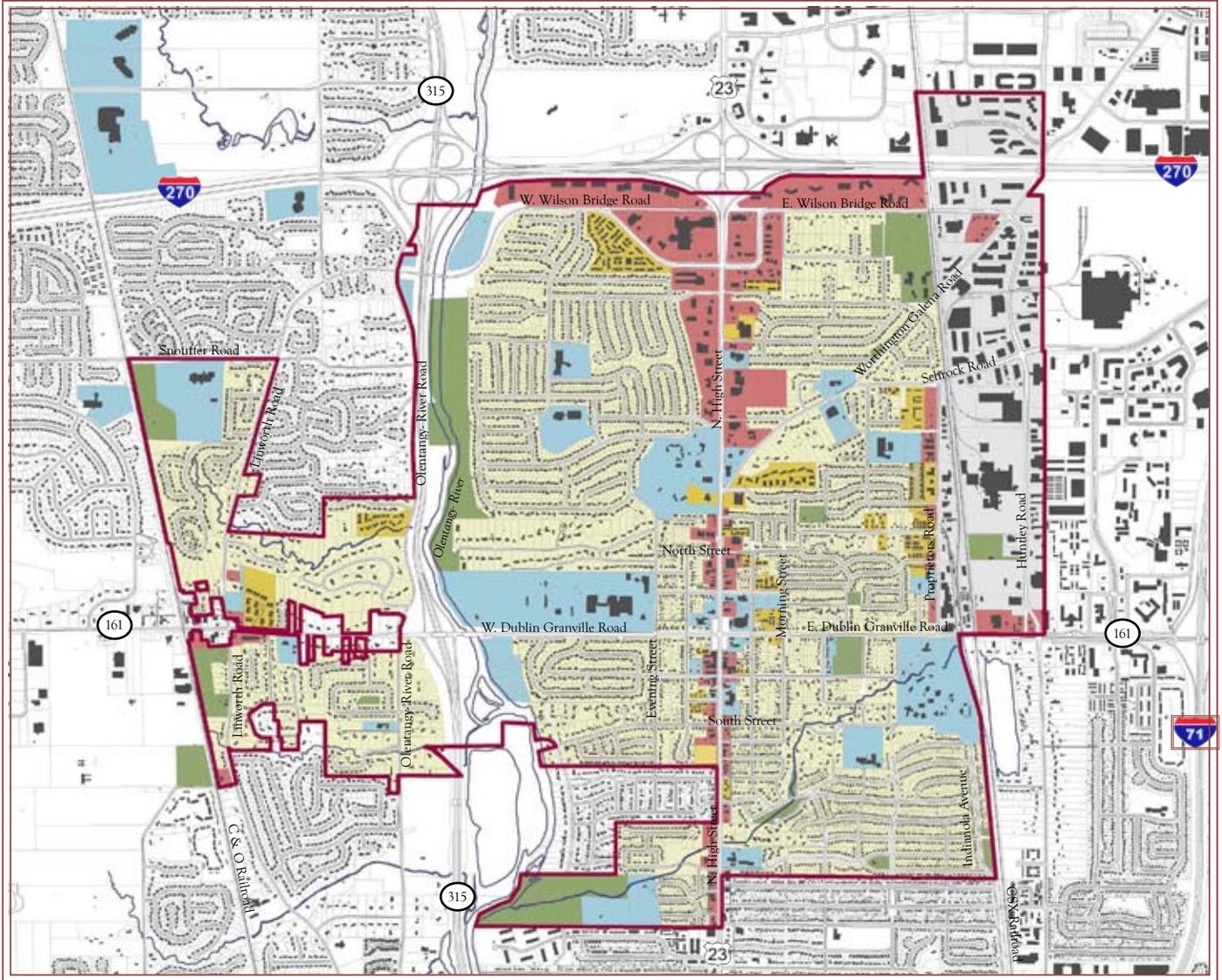
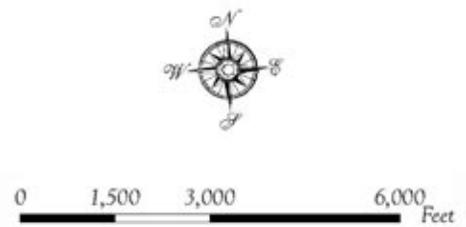
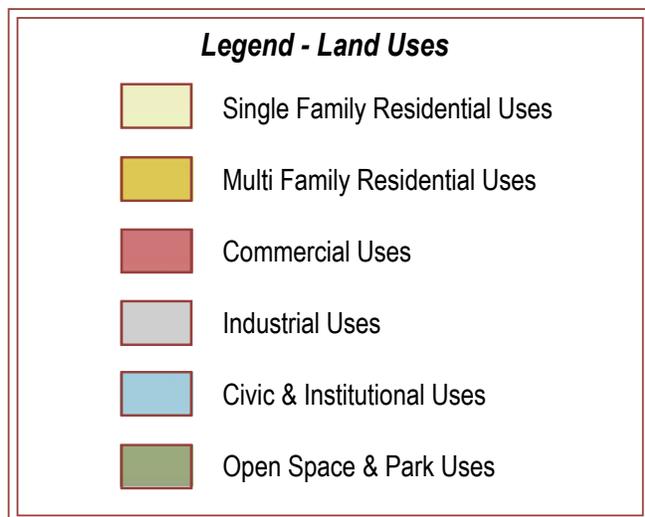


Figure 6 • Land Use Map



Source: Compiled from City of Worthington information.

**Existing Land Use**

The City of Worthington is approximately 5.6 square miles in size. It is predominantly a residential community with 64% of the community zoned and built for residential purposes (Figures 6 & 7). Just over seven percent (7%) of the City is zoned for commercial purposes (retail & office) and just over eleven percent (11%) of the City is zoned for industrial land uses. Civic and institutional uses (schools, churches, cemeteries, city offices, etc.) make up almost twelve percent (12%) of the City's land, and the floodplain covers almost another six percent (6%).

This represents a wide mix of uses, one quality of a well-rounded community. Relative to other communities, Worthington has an abundance of land devoted to parks, open space, and civic uses that are important to contributing to a community's quality of life. The City also has a substantial amount of land zoned for industrial uses. This has been a stabilizing force in the past, particularly with the recent office market downturn, but could become a concern as industrial companies are now locating elsewhere in the region.

Occupied commercial office space is generating substantial tax revenue for many suburbs and increasing commercial office use in Worthington (C-3 zoning, currently 4% of total land use) would be beneficial. As a percentage, the City also has less land devoted to multi-family uses (4%) than more diverse communities. Because Worthington is fully developed, the only method of adjusting these land use percentages is through rezoning and redevelopment. Some of the relative shortfalls in Worthington land uses such as commercial office, retail, and multi-family have been developed outside the City boundaries in the surrounding community.

**Note on Land Use Information**  
 The existing land use, parcel, and building footprint information for the City of Worthington is compiled from Franklin County Auditor's Office Geographic Information System (GIS) data, predominantly year 2000. Some of the information has been adjusted and updated by field observation and review.

Figure 7 · Worthington Zoning Districts

ZONING DISTRICT	ZONING DISTRICT DESCRIPTION	ZONING DISTRICT AREA (S.F.)	ZONING DISTRICT AREA (Acres)	AREA'S % OF TOTAL CITY AREA
F-1	Flood Plain	9,898,268.8	227.2	5.77%
S-1	Special	19,815,271.5	454.9	11.55%
	OPEN AREA & INSTITUTIONAL Subtotal	29,713,540.3	682.1	17.32%
R-16	Very Low Density Residential	22,252,285.3	510.8	12.97%
R-10	Low Density Residential	80,551,084.3	1,849.2	46.94%
R-6.5	One & Two-Family Residential	527,056.6	12.1	0.31%
AR-4.5	Low Density Apartment Residential	4,491,749.2	103.1	2.62%
AR-3	Medium Density Apartment Residential	1,773,472.2	40.7	1.03%
SC	Senior Citizen	289,712.7	6.7	0.17%
	RESIDENTIAL Subtotal	109,885,360.3	2,522.6	64.04%
C-1	Neighborhood Commercial	1,028,948.3	23.6	0.60%
C-2	Community Shopping Center	1,850,397.4	42.5	1.08%
C-3	Institutions & Offices	6,749,957.6	155.0	3.93%
C-4	Highway & Automotive Services	1,492,573.2	34.3	0.87%
C-5	Central Commercial	1,247,882.6	28.6	0.73%
	COMMERCIAL Subtotal	12,369,759.1	284.0	7.21%
I-1	Restricted Industrial: Research & Offices	12,037,622.7	276.3	7.02%
I-2	General Industrial	7,504,498.0	172.3	4.37%
	INDUSTRIAL Subtotal	19,618,398.6	450.4	11.43%
<b>TOTALS</b>		171,587,008.3	3,939.0	100.00%

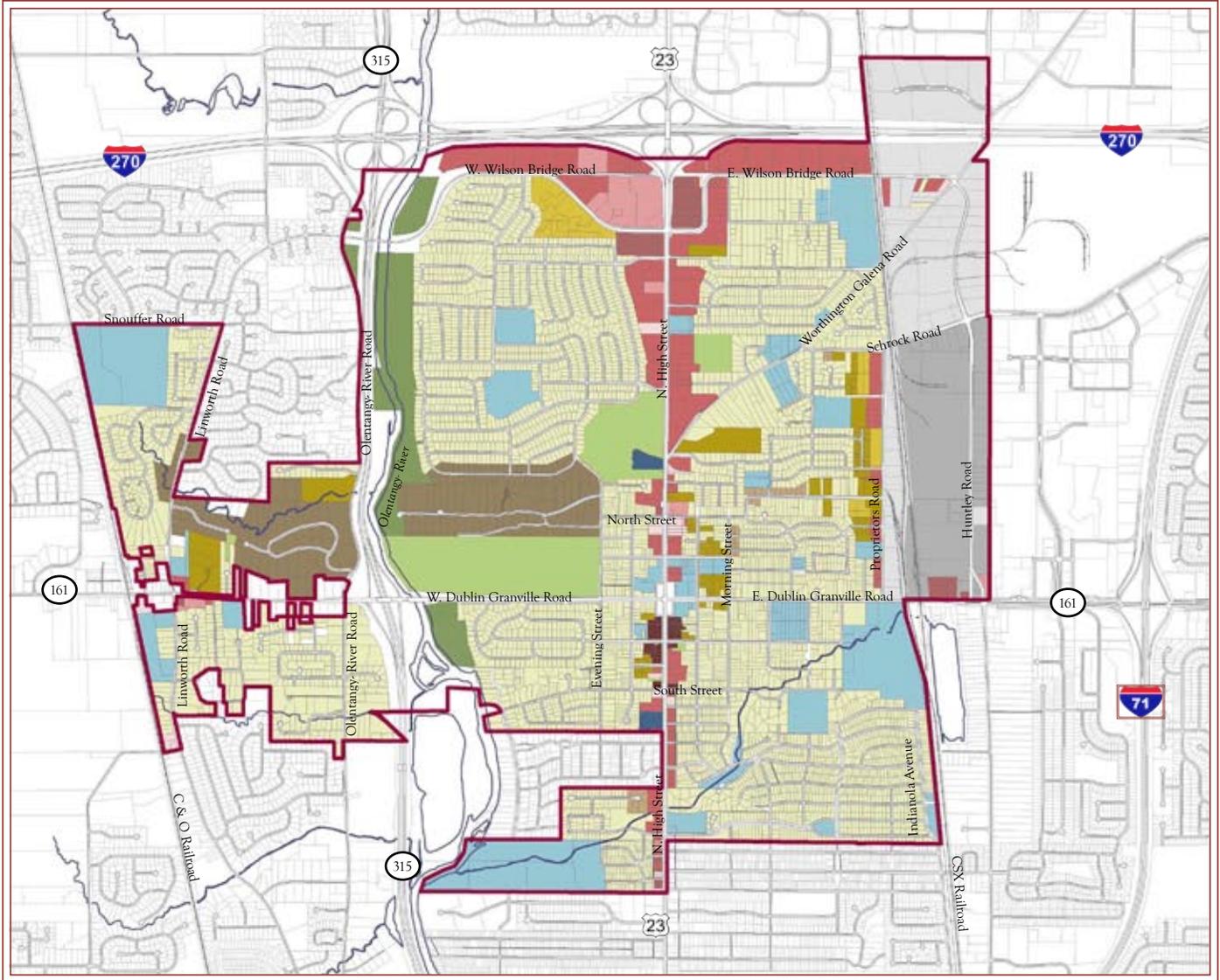
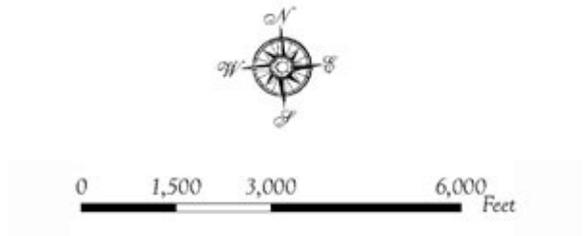
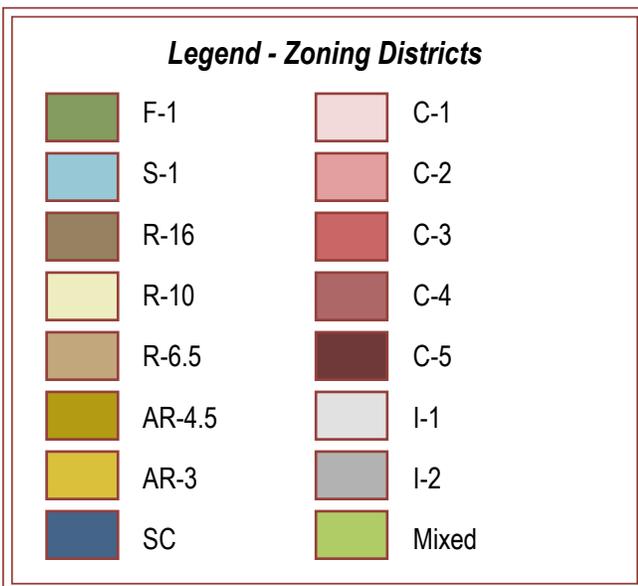


Figure 8 · Zoning Map



Source: City of Worthington zoning map.

## Summary of General Land Use

- Worthington's general division of land use is:
  - Open Area & Institutional - 17.3%
  - Single-Family Residential - 60.2%
  - Multi-Family Residential - 3.8%
  - Commercial Office & Retail - 7.2%
  - Industrial - 11.4%

### Assets:

- Worthington is a relatively compact city.
- The City has a diverse mix of land uses.
- Worthington is a mature, successful community.

### Constraints:

- Less than 5% of the land in Worthington is undeveloped and most of its development potential is limited.
- Annexation opportunities for the City are extremely limited.
- New development within the City will be in the form of expansion, renovation, and redevelopment of existing sites — more challenging on many levels to accomplish than development on "green field" sites.



Residential Housing - Rush Creek Village



Commercial Retail Use - Old Worthington Business District



Open Space Use - softball game at the Recreation Center.



Industrial Land Use - Worthington Commerce Center



*Commercial Office Use - reflection of one High Street office on another.*

# RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

## Residential Development Pattern

Approximately 64 percent of the land within the City of Worthington is devoted to various types of residential land uses. According to the year 2000 U.S. Census, there were 5,875 residential housing units in the City. This is an increase of 262 units since 1990 and 820 units since 1980.



*Residential Development Pattern*

The dominant type of residential structure is the single-family detached home with 4,613 units, or 78.5 percent of the total. An additional 390 homes (6.6%) are one-unit attached dwellings. Thus 85.2 percent of Worthington's total housing stock is single unit residential structures. The remaining 872 residential units within the City are multiple unit structures, and of these buildings, 53 percent are four (4) units or less and 75 percent are less than 10-unit buildings. Thus large apartment and condominium structures are scarce in the City and consist primarily of retirement homes. Most of the apartment and condominium units are smaller in scale and development size than found in other parts of Central Ohio. They are generally concentrated along the west side of Proprietors Road, the south

### Residential Land Use - Defined

Residential land use comprises those lands utilized for the primary purpose of human habitation. Both single-family and multi-family uses are included in this category. In this analysis, multi-family uses include nursing homes, but not other types of institutionally controlled facilities such as mental health facilities or children's homes.

side of West Wilson Bridge Road, along Morning Street north of S.R. 161, clustered in the Linworth neighborhood, and around Old Worthington and south along High Street (colored orange in Figure 8, pg. 19). More than 82 percent of Worthington residential units are owner-occupied.

A majority of the housing stock in Worthington is at least 30 years old, and a significant amount is over 50 years old. This is the time in a structure's life when major repairs and replacement are necessary. Upkeep is critical in extending the lifespan of these homes. In addition, standards for floor layout have changed in the decades since these structures were built. Today's floor plans emphasize larger kitchens, bigger bathrooms and amenities, and greater closet and storage space. The result is the need for renovation of many of Worthington's homes to stay competitive with market standards. Because of the strength of the neighborhoods and quality of the housing stock, many buyers are updating these older homes.

It is the single family units that comprise most of Worthington's neighborhoods. The result is a very homogeneous residential development pattern that has been the backbone of the Worthington community across the past fifty years. These residential developments are loosely centered around local schools and this has created strong, identifiable single-family neighborhoods. In fact, often the elementary school and surrounding subdivision share the same name. These are the homes of the families that fueled the success of the school district and expected the high level of city services.



*A single-family residence in Worthington.*

The type of housing unit directly affects the type of people that are attracted to a community. The single-family detached home predominantly attracts families, or couples planning on starting families. This demographic wants yard space, a number of bedrooms and bathrooms, and proximity to schools.

Young professionals and singles are seeking apartments with more group amenities and maintenance included, and they prefer to be in areas with other singles. Entry point cost is also a factor, as is proximity to activity and recreation centers. The real estate market indicates that many empty nesters (those whose children have moved out) prefer condominium units that still have the space and feel of a single-family home, including some private outdoor space. High level amenities and services are also important. Retired seniors are looking for condominium units with a one-story floor plan, inclusive services, and close proximity to facilities such as libraries, churches, and parks.

The dominance of the single-family development in Worthington has created a situation where few alternatives exist to the single-family home. Young professionals desiring to locate here and looking for smaller starter units are limited to areas like Colonial Hills. Options are also limited for people who wish to rent. Worthington residents in single-family homes that wish to change their lifestyles after becoming empty nesters or losing a spouse are likewise limited. Often their options are to remain in their single-family home or leave the City altogether to find the type of living unit they desire.

This gap in housing types has been recognized by the market. Apartment and cluster housing developments have been built on the fringes of the community, particularly northeast of I-270 and High Street, and to a lesser extent, south along Olentangy River Road and west toward Sawmill Road. But all of these areas are far enough outside Worthington proper that the people living there gravitate to other areas for their everyday needs. If one of Worthington's core missions is to be a life-span community and provide housing alternatives to its residents across their life, then there appear to be gaps in the available housing market. If properly designed and located, these

<b>HOUSING UNITS IN 2000*</b>		
<b>Units in structure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Single unit	5,003	85.2
Multiple units	872	14.8
Total housing units; Number	5,875	100

\* 2000 U.S. Census Bureau Data

<b>DETAILED DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSING UNITS IN 2000*</b>		
<b>Units in structure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1-unit, detached	4,613	78.5
1-unit, attached	390	6.6
2 units	122	2.1
3 or 4 units	365	6.2
5 to 9 units	159	2.7
10 to 19 units	76	1.3
20 or more units	143	2.4
Mobile home	7	0.1
Total housing units	5,875	100

\* 2000 U.S. Census Bureau Data

Figure 9 · Housing Distribution by Number of Units

alternate housing types can be incorporated into Worthington's housing stock and fill missing segments that will provide living opportunities for those who want to remain in the City. However, because there is so little ground for new development, this will require redevelopment and higher densities to achieve.

With no directed efforts by the City, there will be little change in the number or type of residential units in Worthington over the next fifteen years. Provided the school district remains strong and the City services high in quality, Worthington will remain a desirable place to live. Residents will continue to maintain and invest in their homes, and new families will be attracted to the community as single-family structures come up for sale. If additional residential units are added to the City's housing stock, it will be primarily from infill or redevelopment. Demand for new residential units in Worthington would be great, but area developers are largely ignoring Worthington because of the lack of undeveloped land. There is the potential for some of the older, larger residential lots to be purchased and subdivided or consolidated, but it would require determined effort and City approval. Should a larger site become available for redevelopment, residential development pressure would be substantial. Such a situation should be carefully controlled by the City, however, as other uses may be more beneficial to Worthington, depending on the site. Regardless, if new residential units are created within Worthington, they should be of a type that addresses the demographic needs of the community identified herein.



*Residential development along High Street in Worthington.*

### Summary of Residential Development

- Residential land uses comprise 64% of the land within Worthington.
- In 2000, there were 5,875 residential housing units in Worthington, a 4.6% increase from 1990.
- 85.2% of residential housing is composed of single-unit structures.
- 75% of the multi-unit residential structures consist of less than 10 units.
- 82% of Worthington's residential housing units are owner-occupied.
- Residential uses are generally negative revenue generators for Ohio cities.

### Assets:

- The City has strong single-family residential neighborhoods.
- These developments are loosely centered around neighborhood schools — creating strong identity.
- The value of Worthington's homes remains strong and the City is a desirable place to live.
- Residents of Worthington are very satisfied with their quality of life and living.
- Generally the neighborhoods are well interconnected (streets, sidewalks, paths).

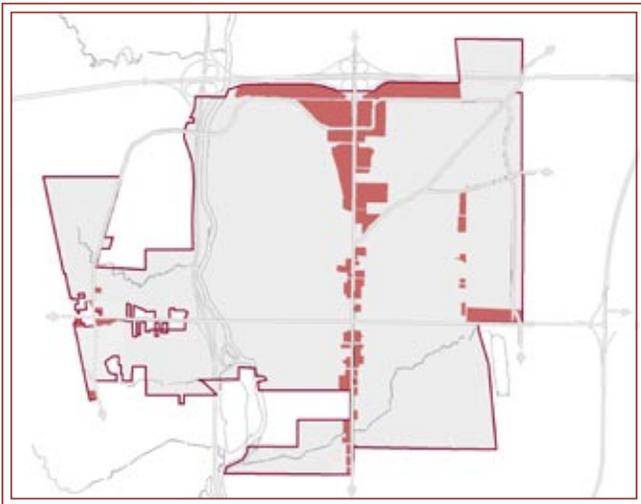
### Constraints:

- Most of the housing stock is at least 30 years old - an age when long-term maintenance is critical.
- Standard expectations for house space arrangements have changed since Worthington's homes were built - so renovation may be necessary to remain competitive in the Central Ohio market.
- There appears to be a shortage of housing types available within the City, particularly for the young professionals and mature adults.
- There is little ground available for new types of residential development.



## Commercial Development Pattern

Approximately seven percent of the land within the City of Worthington is devoted to commercial land uses. Of this, just over half of the commercial land is zoned for office uses (4% of total land use). The remaining commercial ground is in various retail zonings (3.2% of total land use). This includes neighborhood retail, shopping centers, automotive services, and the central business district in Old Worthington.



*Commercial Development Pattern*

The commercial office space is located primarily along two corridors – High Street and Wilson Bridge Road. The retail commercial uses are concentrated in two nodes – the Old Worthington business district and the Worthington Square area around the intersection of High Street and Wilson Bridge Road. Additional retail sites within the City are interspersed along the length of High Street, Proprietors Road, and Wilson Bridge Road, as well as at two smaller nodes – one at Linworth

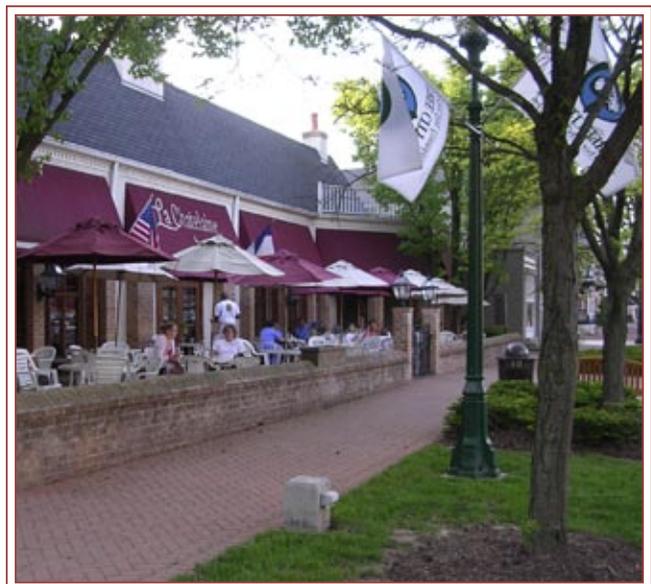
### Commercial Land Use - Defined

Commercial development uses are divided into two categories: commercial retail and professional office. Generally, commercial retail land uses are those areas devoted to the active sale or transfer of goods located on the premises directly to the public. Office land uses are generally those areas devoted to professional services (administrative, executive, research, professional, etc.) that rely on the sale of services and not the active display and sale of goods.

and S.R. 161 (west end) and another at Huntley Road and S.R. 161 (east end). The Zoning Map (Figure 8) on page 19 shows these various distinctions.

## Retail Development

Worthington's first retail uses located in the central business district of Old Worthington. This area was successful and served the everyday needs of the community for several generations. Retail uses locate where there are people and homes. Thus with the post-World War II growth, retail uses followed the residential neighborhood development north from Columbus and south from Worthington along High Street. As the automobile became the dominant form of personal transportation, retail stores adapted – becoming auto-oriented with bigger stores, parking in front, and larger parking lots. Shopping center uses detached from center cities and located along major thoroughfares to better serve their market. In Worthington, this led to the development of the Worthington Square in the early 1970s at High Street and I-270. These trends have continued – retail centers following population with ever larger stores, sites, and parking lots. Development and population growth have continued their northward march and new retail centers and superstores continue to follow the progression of this sprawling suburban development. There is now, however, a substantial and established market for Worthington retailers. In addition, there is a growing market of people who desire more compact, human-scale, and traditional retail development.



*Outdoor Dining in Old Worthington*

A majority of Worthington retailers serve the residents within five miles of their locations. This creates a trade area from Powell Road at Lewis Center in the north to Whetstone Park in Clintonville to the south; and from Cleveland Avenue at the edge of Westerville in the east to Sawmill Road at the edge of Dublin in the west. According to the *Economic Development Study*, this “Greater Worthington Trade Area” includes about 256,000 people and 110,000 households. This market area is quite sizeable and experienced tremendous growth in the 1980s and early 1990s. As with Worthington, however, this area is now approaching full build-out. Worthington’s trade area is affluent with a median household income of \$50,451 in 1999, which is 14 percent above the median household income (MHI) of combined Franklin and Delaware Counties.

The Economic Development Plan indicates the trade area consists of a mix of well-educated, younger singles and couples, families, and empty nesters with sophisticated tastes who are leading active, upscale lifestyles in middle class to affluent neighborhoods (the greater market area contains a diverse mix of age groups that is not reflected in the City's housing stock). This is a very attractive market profile for specialty retailers and fine dining restaurants. In addition to the large residential customer base, Worthington companies have the prospect to serve 10,300 businesses with 141,500 employees in a five-mile radius. Thus there appears to be opportunities to offer goods and services to these businesses and attract employees at lunch or on the way to or from work.

Retail uses within Worthington face very strong regional competition. In fact, the Columbus market is undergoing the greatest upheaval in its history, and the northeast Franklin County submarket, which includes Worthington, is the most over-retailed part of the Greater Columbus region. Retail uses saturate the corridors outside Worthington. The newest major development has occurred to the north in the Polaris/Lewis Center area with Polaris Fashion Place mall, Polaris Towne Center, and the S.R. 23 corridor. Surrounding Worthington is additional retail development including the Crosswoods Center to the north, the Sawmill Road retail corridor to the west, the S.R. 161 corridor to the east, and the redeveloping Graceland



Worthington Square Mall

Shopping Center to the south. The cut-throat, overdeveloped retail market is making it challenging for all the retail centers, with the older areas struggling the most. Some retail centers will fall victim to this and be forced to redevelop like the Continent and Graceland.

The current retail trends emphasize superstores that have a dominant assortment of products in a focused category group at low prices in huge, high-tech stores. This is the arena of national chains that are battling to capture market share because the market will only allow for one or two chains to survive per category. Worthington has not been in this race for years, and it should continue to stay out. These big-box retail uses require huge sites, vast parking, and have a good chance of being abandoned within a decade. There is another trend in the opposite direction – one that concentrates on creating more intimate space oriented to the pedestrian, rather than the automobile. The advantages of this “neotraditional development” are being rediscovered and part of the market is moving this way. The City of Worthington has an advantage in Old Worthington – an authentic and successful town center, and other sites within the City that can be adapted to cater to this trend.

### Old Worthington

Old Worthington is the heart and symbol of the Worthington community and it is one of the most successful original town centers in Ohio. It remains a key retail location for the City

with regional appeal. Much of this attraction relates to its well-executed and well-maintained streetscape design. The wide brick sidewalks, marked pedestrian crossings, and human-scale architecture create pleasing walking and strolling environments south of the Village Green. In addition to the on-street parking, there are large parking areas located behind the buildings within and adjacent to the business district. This central business district serves as a retail node with customers that park and then visit multiple establishments in one visit. According to the Economic Development Plan there are about 37 retailers here, most of which are local, unique, and independently owned and operated. It has a balanced retail mix with a good representation of all major retail merchandise groups. Old Worthington provides a comfortable mix of gathering places for Worthington residents and out-of-town shoppers.

The City of Worthington and various organizations have spent considerable resources, time, and effort to make Old Worthington an attractive and successful place to shop and operate a business. Over the past decade, the streetscape has been improved, parking areas have been designated behind the shops, and a good mix of restaurant and niche retail shops have located there. The overall design reinforces that Old Worthington's priority is the pedestrian, not the automobile. The result is a vibrant and successful retail node that invites the community to gather and is the envy of other authentic town centers. It is becoming so attractive, that some regional chains are working to locate in the area. If the buildings and area continue to be well-maintained, the restaurants are

supported, and retail zoning in the area closely guarded, Old Worthington should continue to thrive.

### **Worthington Square**

The High Street commercial corridor culminates in the Worthington Square, the City's major retail node located adjacent to the I-270 interchange at the north end of town. Opened in 1974, this mall has been enclosed, expanded, and renovated across the past three decades. At 195,000 square feet with 45 retail tenants, the Worthington Square is much smaller than the regional malls that now exist. It continues to face fierce competition and has changed its tenant mix in response. The Mall appears to be stabilizing by positioning itself as an upscale specialty boutique mall. With an emphasis on national fashion tenants, stores such as Talbots have become destination stores for the region. Its trendy restaurant and coffee shop have also experienced great success. The aging 30,000 square-foot Kroger grocery store acts as a neighborhood anchor, but is small compared to the currently preferred grocery store floor plans, and lacks a pharmacy. Plans are currently underway, to renovate and expand the Kroger.

The Worthington Square is a unique retail property in terms of size, configuration, and tenant mix. It has experienced enough success to remain where similar developments have failed or had to be reinvented (Kingsdale, Lane Avenue, etc.), even without a major department store anchor. Its underlying strength is its outstanding location adjacent to the interstate in the center of the densely populated and affluent north Outerbelt region. Still, additional attention is needed because the Kroger store is aging and the west side of the mall continues to experience a high number of vacancies. Portions of the Worthington Square will require redevelopment in order to remain competitive for the next fifteen years.

Old Worthington and the Worthington Square serve as anchors on either end of the High Street retail corridor and compliment each other well. In between and to the south on North High Street are predominantly automobile-oriented retail uses, including retail strip malls, auto services, and a few larger retailers. There are



*Students Play Music Outside Graeters in Old Worthington*

also clusters of retail uses around the Worthington Square area on Wilson Bridge Road, including two of Worthington's three hotels. Pockets of retail also exist along S.R. 161 at the east and west edges of Worthington. Most of these retail uses are in the goods and services retail segment. They are largely stand-alone uses and have experienced mixed success in town.

Neighborhood-oriented services like banks, auto service, and restaurants appear to have the most success. This is particularly true of places with strong community roots, such as Dairy Queen, Villa Nova, and Jubilee Supermarket (N. High Street), newly redeveloped sites such as Buca Di Beppo (Wilson Bridge Road), and restaurants like Cameron's (west Dublin-Granville Road) and Cosi (Wilson Bridge Road). For some of the older retail sites there may be an opportunity to encourage repositioning or even redevelopment to augment the pedestrian nature of Worthington and create a better urban condition while making the sites more competitive in the marketplace.

Overall, retail development trends appear to be shifting toward mixed-use, adaptive reuse, and entertainment-oriented construction. This is particularly true in urban areas and first-ring suburbs. Some market analysts are forecasting that over the next decade in Central Ohio renovation, redevelopment, and repositioning of older shopping centers will account for more investment activity than new construction.

From an economic development standpoint, retail uses are generally slightly more than revenue neutral for cities (and positive for the schools [property tax] and county [sales tax]). This is particularly true of small retail sites. Though Old Worthington and Worthington Square do not significantly add to the City's tax base, they are vital to a community's character, servicing the needs of the residents and businesses while providing another place for interaction. Properly designed and integrated with surrounding neighborhoods and offices, retail centers create exciting, dynamic, and desirable places to be.

**Summary of Retail Development**

- Retail commercial uses comprise 3.2% of Worthington's land use.
- In 2000, there were over 37 retailers in Old Worthington, 45 retailers in Worthington Square area, 16 along High Street corridor, and a dozen scattered throughout the rest of the City.
- Retail uses are generally slightly better than revenue neutral for Ohio cities.

**Assets:**

- Worthington's 5-mile radius trade area is fully developed with 256,000 people, 110,000 households, 10,300 businesses, and 141,500 employees — and it is more affluent than the county average.
- The City has two walkable retail nodes with strong identity — Old Worthington & Worthington Square.
- Worthington can offer authentic town center retail — an emerging niche market.
- There is a market for specialty retailers and upscale restaurants as well as neighborhood and office services within Worthington.

**Constraints:**

- Worthington's retail development is older than the regional market average - reinvestment/ redevelopment is needed to remain competitive.
- The Northeast Franklin County retail submarket is the most over-stored part of the Greater Columbus retail market — one of the most competitive in area history.
- One trend in industry is toward superstores that dominate product categories.
- Small-scale malls like Worthington Square are struggling in other areas.
- Worthington Square has a small, aging Kroger store and a high vacancy rate on the west side.

## Office

Office space has always been an important part of a well-balanced community because it provides employment centers and professional services for residents. Today, however, the companies located in Worthington's professional office corridors are crucial to the financial well-being of the City.

The employees of these businesses generate a significant portion of the income tax revenues that sustain the City budget. Approximately four percent of the land within the City of Worthington is devoted to commercial office land uses. By today's standards for Ohio cities, this would be considered a low percentage. Still, there is adequate commercial freeway office area to support a strong tax base for Worthington if it remains occupied and of high quality.

Just as with commercial retail uses, office uses were originally located in Worthington's historic core and served the needs of the local residents. As offices became regional employment centers and the population shifted from the urban centers to the suburbs, office uses followed. The 1970s witnessed the beginning of a boom in suburban office development outside of the Columbus core – particularly along the new freeway corridors. Worthington was one of the most desirable locations, again thanks to its location along the Outerbelt, strong schools, quality services, and good housing stock, but more importantly because it was more central to the white collar labor force living in northern Franklin County. Offices developed along High



*View of Officescapes*

Street in the northern part of the City. Worthington's available freeway frontage along I-270 between Huntley Road and the Olentangy River became prime commercial office ground. (The natural constraints, beauty, and existing residential development along S.R. 315 precluded this corridor from corporate office development.) Developments such as the Officescape were seen as prototypes of successfully integrated suburban office.

By the 1980s, office uses were the fastest growing segment of land use within Worthington. It was during this decade that much of the commercial office space along Interstate 270 and Wilson Bridge Road was constructed. Most of it was developed as large, high-image, Class A space with an emphasis on visibility from I-270 and easy access for employees arriving from throughout the region. Comparatively, the older offices along High Street are smaller in scale, with Anthem Blue Cross an exception. By the 1990s, Worthington's available office ground was fully developed, and corporate office construction shifted to large, vacant tracts along other parts of northern Central Ohio's interstate system.

During the 1990s, Worthington lost important office tenants. A number of companies grew in the booming economy of the 1990s and decided to build new signature corporate offices rather than lease space. This allowed them to create new facilities that were built-to-suit, as well as the ability to create an individual corporate identity through building design. These



*View of Worthington Industries Corporate Headquarters*

growing companies moved up from the older, smaller (now Class B) office properties in Worthington to new Class A facilities in other areas such as Dublin or Polaris. These areas offered larger sites, new roads, new infrastructure, and new surrounding development (apartments, housing, restaurants, etc.), often with tailored performance-based tax incentive packages from the municipality. Examples include McGraw-Hill, Mettler-Toledo, and Rail Van. Worthington also lost corporate tenants as the economy turned downward in 2002.

Worthington recognized this disturbing trend and the City worked diligently to attract new corporate tenants to vacant office space. Significant gains have been made thanks to coordinated economic development efforts and incentives by the City, and renewed marketing of Worthington as a place of business. Across the past three years a number of companies have announced leases for significant office space in Worthington, including Worthington Industry's corporate headquarters (relocated from north side of I-270 in Columbus to Corporate Exchange offices), American Health Holdings (also moved to Corporate Exchange), and MedVet (to East Wilson Bridge Road).

After having one of the lowest vacancy rates in the U.S. office market in the 1990s, the Central Ohio office market became saturated with product by 2002. This has occurred because construction outpaced absorption and has been aggravated by the recent economic downturn. This follows two decades of strong, sustained demand for high-end speculative and build-to-suit office buildings in this region. Offices followed their executives and employees to the suburbs and created new prestigious corporate suites, with free parking, green space, and amenities. In 1999, the Columbus market contained 139 offices (over 40,000 sq. ft. in size) containing 17.9 million square feet of space. Corporate Class A office parks continue to develop in Polaris (Columbus/Westerville), Weststar (Westerville), Dublin, Tuttle Crossing (Columbus/Dublin), Hilliard, New Albany, and Easton (Columbus). This is in addition to the existing large office parks such as Crosswoods (Columbus), Busch Corporate Center (Columbus), and Brookside (Westerville). According to the *Economic Development Plan*, key trends in the office market include increase in average tenant size,



*View of Anthem Blue Cross/Blue Shield Office*



*View of MedVet Veterinarian Hospital*



*View of Cascade Corporate Offices*

more employees per square foot, taller buildings, more on-site parking, and adaptive reuse projects in mature locations.

According to the *Economic Development Plan*, Worthington has twenty-nine buildings totaling 1.4 million square feet of Class A/B office space. The primary corporate office parks in Worthington are Officescape, Corporate Hill, Cascades, and Lakeview Plaza. Most of the City's office space is older (17 years old on average), with the last new building having opened in 1993. Because of the abundance of Class A office space in the Central Ohio market and the resulting competitive lease rates, the age of Worthington's product makes the situation here more difficult. As a result, vacancy rates have been higher and rents are lower than Columbus market averages. Landlords are renovating these buildings to update mechanical units and common areas to make them more competitive. In addition, the completion of the Interstate 270 widening combined with the traffic congestion north of I-270 benefits Worthington's corporate office market.

It also appears that the City's directed economic development efforts and incentive packages are having success. Additional reinvestment in the office buildings, coupled with improvement of the retail uses within the City that cater to the office market will enhance their attractiveness, as will additional amenities, such as the expanded Worthington Recreation Center. With no available vacant ground in Worthington, lower rents, incentives, renovation, and/or redevelopment appear to be the primary options to keep the City's large office sites competitive.

The *Economic Development Plan* indicates that Worthington has a large number of smaller, older Class C office properties, with 40 buildings totaling 1.1 million square feet. Rents are attractive and vacancy rates are low. Most of these properties are located along North High Street corridor and house medical, professional, and non-profit uses. These tenants are attracted to Worthington's rich amenities and existing business service providers. This Class C space is ideal for professional services and new entrepreneurs and the space is competitive. In addition, national experts predict a growing trend in home-based office workers in both start-up companies as well as telecommuting employees for larger companies. This is an area of opportunity for Worthington.

### Summary of Office Development

- Office commercial uses comprise 4% of Worthington's land use.
- In 2000, there were 29 Class A & B office buildings in the City totaling 1.4 million sq. ft. and 40 Class C buildings totaling 1.1 million sq. ft in Worthington.
- Income taxes from Worthington's professional office corridors are crucial to the City's financial stability.

### Assets:

- The City has been successful in the past couple years luring new corporate office tenants to vacant space.
- Widening of I-270 and severe traffic problems north of the Outerbelt make Worthington an attractive office location in the area.
- Worthington has an established community with many amenities and services to offer office users.
- The Class C office market is competitive in Worthington.

### Constraints:

- Worthington's percentage of office land use is low by today's standards.
- There is no vacant ground available in the City for new freeway office development.
- Worthington's office development averages 17 years old -- older than the regional market average.
- Central Ohio's Class A office market is fiercely competitive, particularly in Worthington's region.
- Trends are toward larger sites and newer buildings to accommodate increasing tenant size, more employees per sq. ft., and more parking.
- Due to value of office to cities, municipalities are offering large tax incentive packages to lure businesses.



*Rear view of High Street office building.*



*Renovated corporate office building along Old Wilson Bridge Road.*

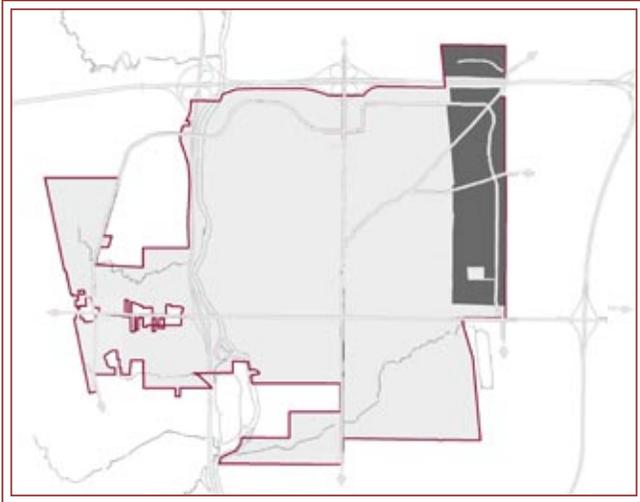


*Smaller office space located along High Street.*

# INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

## Industrial Development Pattern

Just over eleven (11%) percent of the land within the City of Worthington is devoted to industrial land uses. All of this ground is located along the northeast side of the City and is divided between two industrial zoning districts, Restricted Light Industrial and General Industrial.



*Industrial Development Pattern*

The Restricted Light Industrial ground is for research and industrial office uses and is located along Proprietors Road and on Huntley Road north of Schrock Road (7% of total land use). The remaining industrial ground is zoned General Industrial for manufacturing, light manufacturing, and warehousing uses and is located south of Schrock Road and east of the CSX railroad tracks (4.4% of total land use). Most of Worthington's industrial base consists of light industrial uses such as warehousing, distribution, and light processing. The light industrial uses are concentrated east of the railroad tracks along the Huntley

### Industrial Land Use - Defined

Industrial land uses can be classified as either light industrial or heavy industrial. Light industrial uses are warehousing, distribution, and light processing. Such uses are increasingly occurring in conjunction with limited retail commercial utilization. Heavy industrial uses are characterized as more intensive manufacturing processes and/or those causing significant external influences (smoke, noise, etc.) on the surrounding environment.

Road corridor. There is little heavy industry in Worthington, but that which does exist is located along Huntley Road south of Schrock Road (Diamond Innovations, formerly GE Superabrasives).

Worthington's industrial development peaked in the 1960s and 1970s when almost two-thirds of the existing industrial space was built. This area was one of the prime industrial addresses in Central Ohio – located at the edge of the urban area along the newly completed I-270 interchange with Interstate 71. It became an industrial node because of this proximity to the interstate system as well as the dual railroad lines, and it was anchored by Busch Brewery and Worthington Industries (east & northeast of city). The Huntley Road Industrial Park opened in 1970 as one of the first industrial parks in Central Ohio. Industries were lured to this area and Worthington by the prime location, moderate tax rate, excellent school system, plentiful housing, great services, and limited suburban competition.

Since the 1980s, other areas in the region (particularly southeastern Franklin County and central Delaware County) have become much more attractive to the industrial market. These locations have large undeveloped sites, new infrastructure, and less conflicting urban development. To attract industry a number of Central Ohio municipalities have actively assembled and serviced tracts of land, spent tens of



*Tropical Fruit & Nut Industrial Use on Huntley Road*

millions of dollars on new road and utility infrastructure (ex. \$25 mil. in New Albany, \$30 mil. in Westerville), and/or provided significant tax abatement packages over the past decade. Since 1990, Worthington has experienced little new industrial development.

There has been strong growth in the warehousing and distribution sector in Central Ohio due to its central location and proximity to 60 percent of the North American population, 61 percent of the U.S. manufacturing capacity, 80 percent of U.S. corporate headquarters, and its good access to numerous interstates. The trends in this sector are toward large bulk warehousing and distribution facilities of 100,000 square feet or greater - consolidated "super distribution hubs". This allows efficiencies of size and operation to be maximized. These new facilities are newer, larger, employ more people, and require much bigger sites for the structure, parking, and trucks access. Worthington's facilities are generally more constrained in these areas.

In other sectors, such as heavy manufacturing, new development is not as common in the region and requires even larger sites, more utilities, and often state-level incentives. In the industrial research sector, the trend is toward larger spaces in campus-type settings with cooperative agreements with companies and universities. There is growth in the area of industrial startups and small to medium suppliers, and these companies require smaller, more flexible space with lower rents. This is a sector in which Worthington could be attractive. In fact, there is a niche in the flexible industrial space market. New flex-office space in the 30,000 to 60,000 square-foot



*Flex Industrial Space on Lakeview Plaza Boulevard*

range has experienced the greatest lease rates, though this is in the "hot" market areas. While not new, this size of space is available in Worthington.

According to the City's *Economic Development Plan*, Worthington had 58 buildings being used for industrial purposes in the year 2000, totaling approximately 2.7 million square feet of space. This total was divided into four categories: single tenant warehouses (39 bldgs., 1.4 mil. sq. ft.), multi-tenant bulk warehouses (19 bldgs., 1.3 mil. sq. ft.), multi-tenant mini-warehouses (9 bldgs., 300k. sq. ft.), and multi-tenant flex office/warehouses (32 bldgs., 1.1 mil. sq. ft.). The vacancy rates were low, particularly for the multi-tenant spaces which had rates below regional market averages of 3.7 percent. Most of the vacancies exist along Huntley Road.

<b>Industrial Building Type</b>	<b># of Buildings</b>	<b>Total Gross Square Feet</b>	<b>Average Building Size</b>
<b>Single Tenant Warehouse</b>	39	1,409,249	36,135
<b>Bulk Warehouse</b>	19	1,267,290	66,670
<b>Flex Warehouse</b>	32	1,115,189	34,850
<b>Mini Warehouse</b>	9	293,490	32,610
<b>TOTAL</b>	99	4,085,218	41,265

*Figure 10 · Industrial Building Type Summary - from City of Worthington Economic Development Plan - 2000*

Worthington's industrial corridor is significant to the City because these uses contribute to the tax base and provide employment opportunities for its residents. It is an appropriate site for industry, providing an edge for the brewery to the east in Columbus and straddling the railroad tracks. Truck traffic uses Schrock, Huntley, and Busch Boulevard to access S.R. 161 to Interstate 71. On the whole, these uses are grouped so as not to substantially conflict with neighboring uses or create burdensome conditions. In addition, there is a substantial and attractive labor force nearby in northeast Columbus.

Based on the competitive regional environment in the industrial market and the lack of large undeveloped parcels, the focus in Worthington should be on maintenance, marketing, and reuse of existing structures. The real estate economics make razing and redeveloping sites difficult without a larger, coordinated effort to assemble land. The Economic Development Plan indicated that Worthington is still able to attract small to medium-sized manufacturers and distributors, but has difficulty retaining them as they grow and expand. These users should continue to be the target market, with structures renovated where possible to flexible space, easily converted for the changing needs of the tenant or new lessee.

The major issue across the next 15 years for the City of Worthington is whether industrial uses are the most appropriate and effective use of this land. This location no longer meets the ideal for industry. For this reason, this area in Worthington may continue to experience transition and possibly increased vacancy, particularly if some of the large users close. As a result, there may be increasing pressure to convert parcels from existing light industrial uses to smaller office or retail equipment uses. This trend may not be negative, provided it is coordinated and not sporadic.



*Flex office and industrial space on Lakeview Boulevard.*

## Summary of Industrial Development

- Industrial uses compose 11% of the land within Worthington.
- In 2000, there were 58 industrial buildings totaling approximately 2.7 million square feet of space.
- Average vacancy rate was 6% in 2000.
- Income taxes from Worthington's industrial corridors are second only to the office corridors in contributing to the City's financial stability.

## Assets:

- Warehousing and distribution is a strong and growing industrial sector in Central Ohio.
- There is a niche in the industrial startup and small-to-medium supplier sector.
- Worthington has facilities in the 30,000-60,000 sq. ft. size that are popular for light, flexible industrial space.
- The industrial ground is in close proximity to a significant highway network.
- The City's industrial land uses are well situated for the community.

## Constraints:

- Most of the Worthington's industrial development is at least 30 years old — almost two-thirds of the structures were built between 1960 and 1970.
- Heavy manufacturing is moving out of state and the U.S. following cheap labor and lower production costs.
- Industry trends are toward large facilities of 100,000 sq. ft. or greater — sizes not found in Worthington.
- Industrial developers are looking for large undeveloped sites with new infrastructure and easy interstate access for trucks.
- Worthington has little vacant ground for large, new industrial development.
- Other communities are heavily involved in creating industrial parks — actively assembling land, spending tens of millions of dollars on roads and utilities, and offering significant tax abatement packages.



*CSX freight train rumbles through Worthington's Industrial Corridor.*



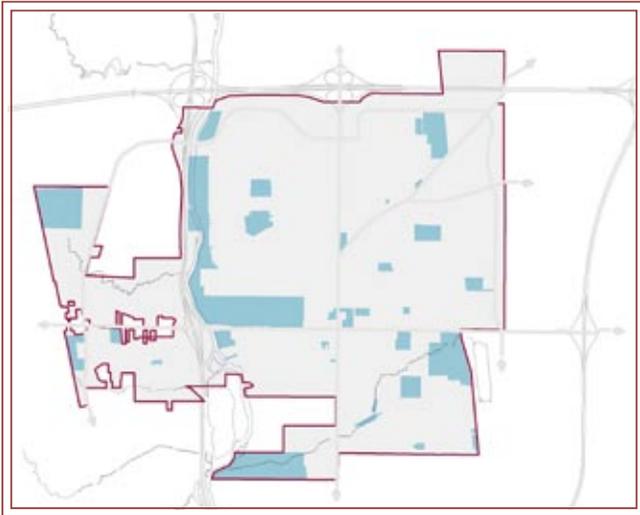
*View of the Diamond Innovation facility.*



*DMI Distribution Center on Huntley Road.*

## Civic & Institutional Development Pattern

Civic and institutional uses permeate Worthington, and that is one of its fundamental strengths. Over eleven percent of the land within the City of Worthington is zoned Special District, which includes churches, public parks, recreational facilities, school grounds, government facilities, hospitals, museums, and cemeteries.



*Civic & Institutional Development Pattern*

One of Worthington's defining strengths is its commitment to and integration of civic and institutional uses within the community fabric. Indeed, Worthington was planned and developed around the concept of civic space. The Village Green has been the center of the City since its inception. Located at the primary crossroads of High Street and Dublin-Granville Road, this historic civic space anchors the heart of the City as both a public gathering space for year-round events and the location of many public and community functions. The Village Green is framed by important public and institutional uses whose structures span the history of Worthington, from the City's two earliest churches (Worthington Presbyterian &

St. John's Episcopal) to the new Griswold Senior Center. Also close by are Kilbourne Middle School and the award-winning Worthington Public Library (once located right on the Green). Two blocks to the south on High Street can be found the Post Office, the Worthington United Methodist Church, and the earliest Masonic Lodge in Central Ohio. Two blocks to the west of the Village Green on Dublin-Granville Road is the Thomas Worthington High School campus. Thus the center of Worthington is draped with civic-oriented structures.

Worthington's founding fathers recognized the importance of these civic and spiritual uses in developing the mind and character of its residents. This importance is symbolized by their prominent location within the City core. From its inception, the Village Green represented the fundamental building blocks of a strong community with the physical placement of park, residences, businesses, churches, and schools surrounding its four quadrants. This strength in civic design is a defining characteristic of Worthington. No other Central Ohio community has such a strong city center. Other communities are desperately trying to find a way to create such an integral and binding community heart to their city.

In addition to the sites located in Old Worthington, the other city structures are carefully spaced throughout the community. The new City Administration Building, Fire Station, and

### Civic & Institutional Land Use - Defined

This category consists of public parks, recreational facilities, school grounds, government facilities, hospitals, museums, and cemeteries, as well as religious uses such as churches. For this analysis private schools have been included in this category, but day care centers are considered as commercial use.



*Worthington Presbyterian Church*

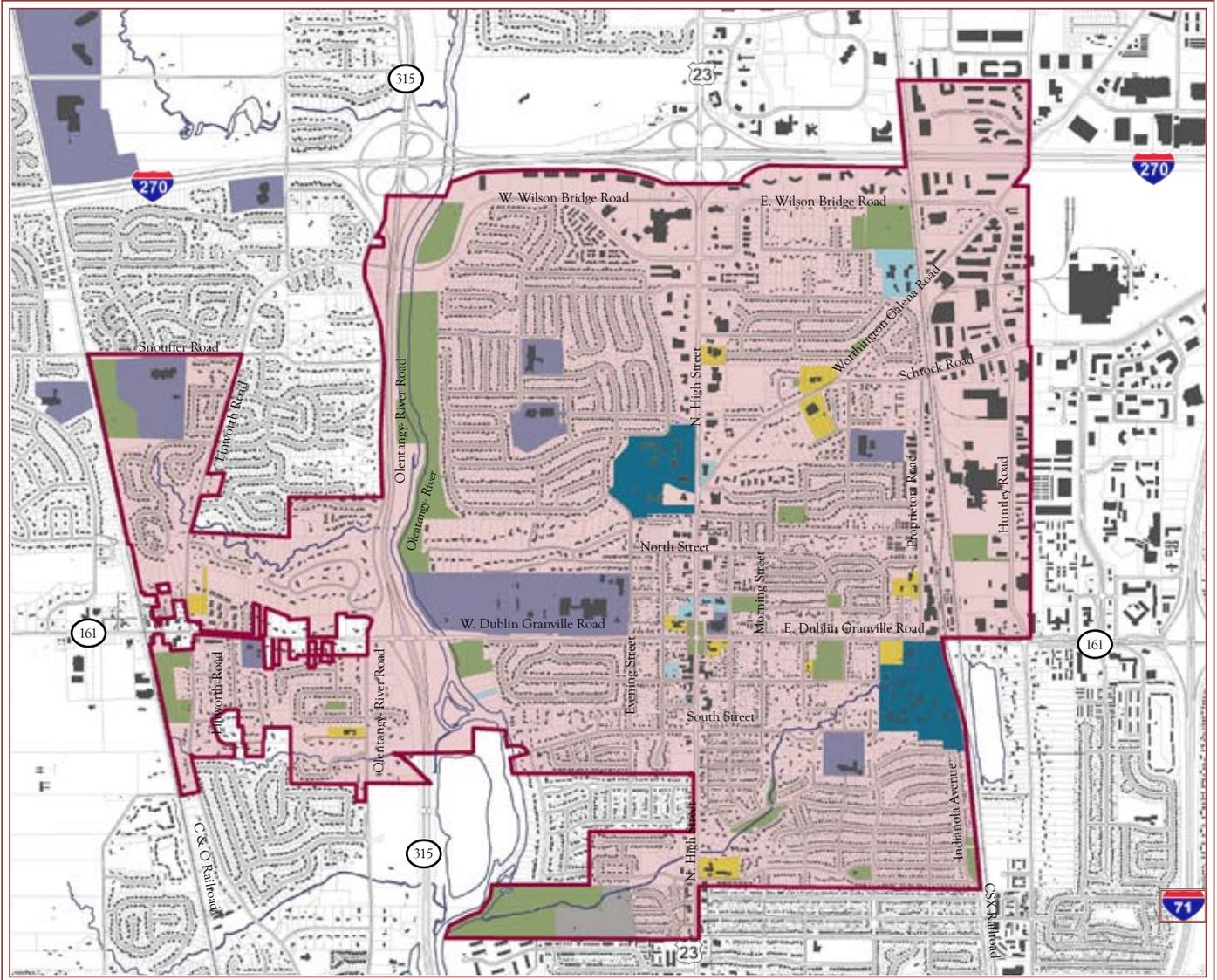
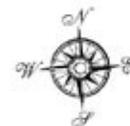
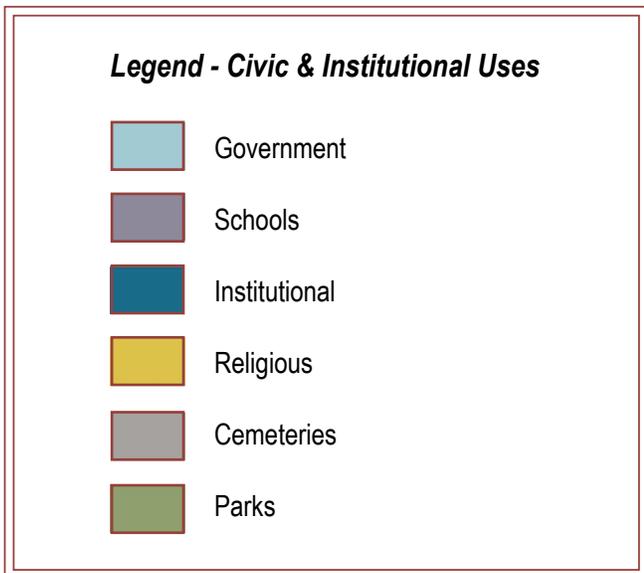


Figure 11 · Civic & Institutional Space Map



Police Station have been located in a municipal campus at the prominent corner of High Street and Worthington-Galena Road. This is closer to the geographic center of Worthington for better service to the entire community. The Engineering Department, Service Center, and newly expanded state-of-the-art Recreation Center are located in the northeastern quadrant of the City between Worthington-Galena Road and East Wilson Bridge Road. The Recreation Center provides an activity center not only for the City's resident's, but is also located to serve a majority of its daytime workforce. School sites are a fundamental part of the community and well-integrated throughout the City to serve as public green space for the residential neighborhoods. Worthington adhered to the neighborhood school concept when choosing locations for the elementary schools, locating them in large residential areas and drawing from surrounding homes. Worthington has good coverage of green space between the school sites and City park land.

The two large institutional sites in Worthington are Harding Hospital along east Dublin-Granville Road and the Methodist Children's Home on North High Street across from City Hall. Harding Hospital was acquired by The Ohio State University and its future use is unclear. The Methodist Children's Home continues to care for troubled youth, but has rezoned portions of its High Street frontage for commercial purposes. Both uses are appreciated by Worthington. Because they occupy large, desirable tracts of land, however, any change of their land use should be carefully reviewed by the City.

Worthington is rich in history and culture. The City has at least twenty-four recognized historic structures, including the Worthington Inn and the Orange Johnson House (both on High Street) which are open to the public. The Orange Johnson House is a museum housing items from the period of Worthington's founding. Another museum is the Ohio Railway Museum on Proprietors Road. It has a collection of steam engines, rail cars, and interurbans, with an original railroad station serving as offices. History can also be seen at the cemeteries in Worthington. These include the historic cemetery behind St. John's in Old Worthington and the Walnut Grove Cemetery at the south end of the City.



*Worthington City Hall*



*Griswold Senior Center*



*One of the museums in Worthington - the Ohio Railway Museum*

As a result of the strength of the Worthington community, the City is host to many annual events. Many of them are located in Old Worthington and on the Village Green because of its appeal, character, and tradition. These activities include events such as the Farmers Market, Arts Festival, Holiday Tree Lighting, Pooch Parade, Concerts on the Green, and Memorial Day Parade.

Worthington provides ample evidence of the importance of civic uses and their location. Many cities fail to appreciate that the careful location of these institutions can enhance the community, and that their appearance, architecture, and site design speak to the pride and values of the population. In these days of auto-oriented development, many cities are allowing civic facilities to move to sites on the fringes of the community for various reasons such as more parking, available ground, and/or cheap development costs. Though these are certainly important considerations, they pale in comparison to the long-term value of properly-placed, well-designed structures.

Civic uses that facilitate activity and bring residents together should be placed in town to create additional synergy and reinforce the commercial nodes. In Worthington's case, the Post Office should remain as an anchor to the south end of Old Worthington and the proposed new Arts Center is appropriately located at the Old High School Annex. These locations and structures are pedestrian-friendly, create interaction in the heart of the City, and generally enhance the community. The placement of the Griswold Center strengthened the relationships of the Village Green and placed these seniors in an active, enjoyable, and walkable location. On the other hand, the Worthington Public Library should have a front door on High Street to be a more active participant along this important corridor. With the Police Department, Fire Department, and City Administration now located in the same block, there appears to be an opportunity to create an inviting municipal campus there.

**Summary of Civic & Institutional Development**

- Civic, institutional, and park land uses comprise over 11% of the land within Worthington.

**Assets:**

- Worthington has a defined civic center focused on the historic Worthington Green - a unique and identifying trait in the region.
- Civic and institutional uses are well-integrated throughout the community.
- Worthington has a history of commitment to civic, cultural, educational, and spiritual development.
- The City continues to invest in civic structures for its residents such as the new state-of-the-art Recreation Center, new Griswold Senior Center, and the new government center (City Hall, Fire Station, Police Station).
- There are over 24 historic structures and 2 museums in Worthington.

**Constraints:**

- Worthington must continue to maintain and protect these assets.
- The City's two largest institutional sites may be sold in the next fifteen years and their redevelopment should meet the City's needs and be carefully reviewed by the City.
- There is always pressure to choose the cheapest, rather than best, solution when it comes to civic expenditures.



*The Worthington Library*

# PARK LAND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

## Park System

Another of Worthington's crown jewels is its well-developed park system. Almost five percent of the City's land is reserved for park land, and this does not count public school land. Together with the Olentangy floodplain, the total open space is ten percent. As the City grew, it strived to provide for the recreational needs of the community. Through the aggressive use of its parkland dedication ordinance and generous funding allocations, the City has structured a commendable park system. These efforts were guided by a desire to provide a variety of parks, evenly distributed, that offer active and passive recreation opportunities.

The City provides a full range of activities through its Parks Department, including over 500 programs targeted for various age groups. Many of these are based from Worthington's newly expanded Recreation Center that provides a full range of indoor facilities and activities, including leisure pool, lap pool, track, weights, athletic courts, lockers, and classrooms. For outdoor activity, natural enjoyment, and passive recreation, Worthington has over 190 acres of parkland. This is more than 50 acres over national standards for the City's population.

Worthington's park and open space is highlighted by the Olentangy River parkland that runs the length of the City. The entire east bank of the river is flanked by park and connected



*Skateboarders enjoying Worthington's new skate park*

with a regional bike path system put in place over 20 years ago. Active recreation fields have been interspersed along the river corridor where the floodplain broadens. Other communities have worked to replicate this great amenity ever since.

Worthington has several large parks distributed throughout the City. In addition to the interconnected Olentangy River parks there is a the 22-acre Perry Park located adjacent to Perry Middle School on the west side of the river, and the 25-acre McCord Park located behind the Community Center along East Wilson Bridge Road. Because Worthington's schools are located in the neighborhoods, these public school lands function as recreation resources for the community.

The eastern half of the City (east of High Street) is well represented by small parks that serve the immediate neighborhoods. Residents west of High Street have the Olentangy corridor and school facilities to meet their needs. West of the river in the Linworth area, Worthington has acquired park land and been building paths to serve these neighborhoods.

The City of Worthington Parks Department maintains a number of neighborhood playground areas and provides many active recreational opportunities from soccer and baseball fields to tennis courts and a new skate park. This is in addition to the bike path system, which the City continues to expand. A park land dedication fee is still required for all new residential development based on a flat fee per living unit.



*Worthington Parks offer beautiful public open space.*

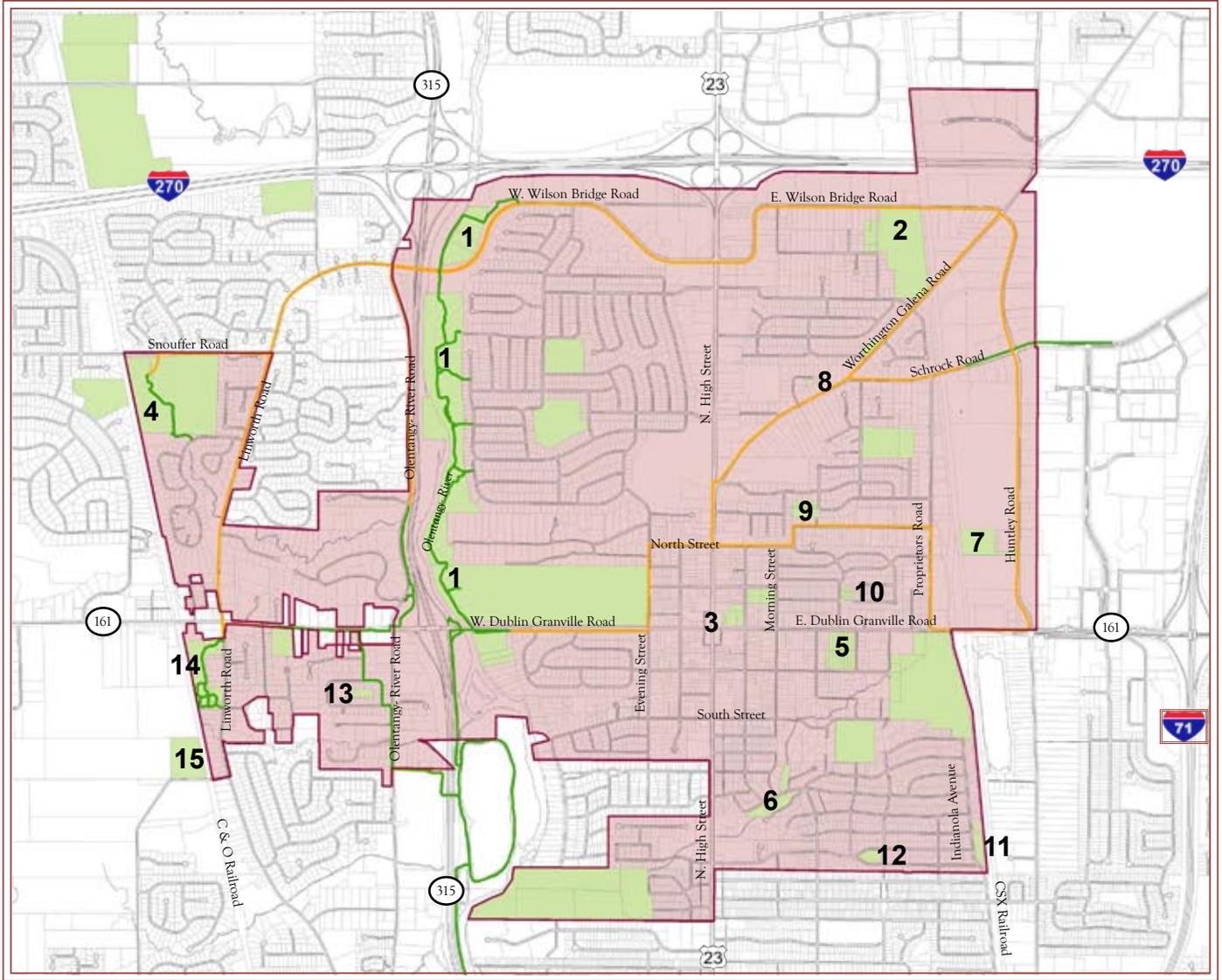


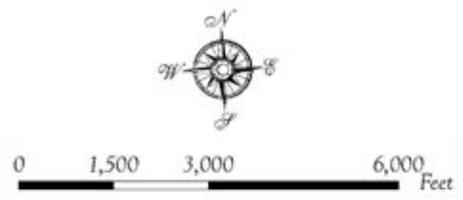
Figure 12 · Park Land & Bikeway Connections Map

**Legend - Parks & Bikeways**

- Existing Park & Open Space
- Existing Bikeway
- Planned Bikeway

**Parks**

Community Parks	Neighborhood Parks
1) Olentangy Parklands	8) Heischman Park
2) McCord Park	9) Wilson Hill Park
3) Village Green	10) Pingree Park
4) Perry Park	11) Indianola Park
5) East Granville Park	12) Selby Park
6) Park Blvd. Park	13) Shaker Square
7) Huntley Bowl	14) Linworth Park
	15) Godown Park



Source: City of Worthington



*Bicyclists on the Worthington Bike Path*

## **Bikeways**

Bikeways are an important part of Worthington's recreation and transportation system. Bikeways in the community should create a network that provides short distance connection between neighborhoods, schools, recreational areas, retail areas, and employment centers; and long distance service by tying into a regional system that services a much larger area.

Bikeways include both bike paths (a.k.a. bike trails and leisure trails) and bike lanes. Bike lanes are on-street pavement that is dedicated/designated for bike riders. Bike lanes typically are a part of, or follow, existing roads and are primarily transportation routes for bicyclists and oriented toward longer trips. Bike paths are asphalt trails physically separate from roads and often more scenic with a larger recreational component. Though bike paths are also important bicycle transportation routes, they are multi-use and shared by walkers, joggers, rollerbladers, etc. A bicycle-friendly city blends both types of bikeways into a functional and safe system.

In Worthington, the major bikeway system is the Olentangy River Trail that extends north and south along the length of the river corridor through the City. This fully developed, almost 30-year old bike path is a key recreational amenity and transportation system not only for the City, but also for the region as it now connects all the way south to Downtown Columbus, passing by Antrim Lake (a regional park in Columbus frequented by Worthington residents), the Park of Roses, and The Ohio State University. The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning

Commission (MORPC), in conjunction with the area's local governments, has a plan to extend the Olentangy Trail farther north. This agency also has plans to interconnect the trail via downtown Columbus with newer north-south trails (such as the Upper Scioto Trail and Alum Creek Trail) being developed along other major tributaries (see Figure 13).

Worthington continues to extend bikeways to the Olentangy Trail with recent connections added to neighborhoods west of the Olentangy along West Dublin-Granville Road (S.R. 161) and Olentangy River Road. The City has good connections to the West Dublin-Granville Road neighborhoods and has almost created parallel paths on both sides of the Olentangy River. Worthington hopes to connect all of its community parks with this trail system. Figure 12 on the previous page shows the City's plan for future bikeway extensions, including the creation of a northern loop via Linworth, Wilson Bridge, and Huntley Roads, as well as an inner north loop via Proprietors Road, North Street, Evening Street, and West Dublin-Granville Road. In addition, work is progressing on a northeast to southwest connector along Worthington Galena and Schrock Roads, that will take the form of a bike lane rather than separated bike path.

The current bikeway and trail plan still lacks east-west



*Figure 13 · Regional Trails Map from MORPC*

connections to this trail from the historic village center and many residential neighborhoods, and the southern portion of Worthington is devoid of planned bikeways. Opportunities to create these links will most likely be along the primary thoroughfares, as part of new developments, and through existing parks and open spaces. There are issues with traffic and historic appearance, but connecting bikeways to the center business district in Worthington would be a boon for riders and businesses alike. New bikeways should take advantage of interesting and scenic views for recreational paths, and existing/future road right-of-way for on-street bike lanes.

Where possible between Worthington's neighborhoods and parks, the creation of bike paths (separated from roadway) is preferable. This will create a safe and effective transportation network for the children in the community. Even more ideal is the placement of these paths along natural areas and corridors. A number of communities have adopted a standard of placing a sidewalk on one side of the road and a wider bike path on the other to better interconnect and link their neighborhoods and activity centers. As Worthington improves roadways and replaces sidewalks, it should consider this system in identified areas. In addition, as properties redevelop the City should work with private developers for the dedication of bikeway right-of-way. (Bike lanes are further

discussed in the Transportation Network chapter.)

Over the next 15 years, Worthington's population is expected to remain relatively stable, but the community will continue to mature. As a result, it is expected that the community's recreational needs will lean toward passive recreational and classroom activities over the more traditional team sports. At the same time, the continued extension and interconnection of a regional bikeway system will bring more people to and through Worthington.



*Olentangy River Corridor Bike Path*

**Summary of Park System**

- Worthington has 190 acres of park land/open space — 5% of its total land area.
- Including floodplain, the total open space is 10% of the City.

**Assets:**

- Worthington has an excellent park system with at least 50 acres more of park land than national standards recommend.
- Parks Department has over 500 recreation programs, targeted at all age groups.
- City has new state-of-the-art indoor Recreation Center.
- Olentangy River Trail system is major amenity for City and region.
- Worthington plans to connect its parks and extend its bikeway system.
- A park land dedication fee is required for all new residential development.

**Constraints:**

- More bikeway connections are needed east-west and in the southern half of the City.
- Natural areas are attractive places to locate new bikeways and trails, but most land is privately owned.
- Separated bikeways require more right-of-way.

## Worthington School District

The Worthington School District serves as a major unifying and identifying agent within the community, especially in a social sense. Though the school district is actually much larger than the City itself, the schools are well integrated into the city fabric. The schools are a bonding force, because for many people living outside the City but within the school boundaries, it is their children's involvement in the schools that pulls them into the community. The Worthington School District is one of the best in Central Ohio and received an Excellent rating by the State of Ohio from 2002 to 2005. The attractiveness of the greater Worthington area combined with the superiority of the school system has been a major contributor to the attractiveness of the residential neighborhood areas.

The Worthington School District comprises over ten square miles and includes portions of Sharon and Perry Townships, portions of the City of Columbus, and the Village of Riverlea in addition to the City of Worthington (Figure 14). The present school district boundaries were decided in an agreement with the Columbus School District in 1968. The District is currently served by 11 elementary schools (grades K-6), four middle schools (grades 7-8), and two high schools (grades 9-12) plus an alternative high school. The school locations are indicated in Figure 14. Within the City, 4.6 percent of the land is occupied by public schools, including four elementary schools (Evening, Colonial Hills, Wilson

Hills, and Worthington Estates), three middle schools (Kilbourne, Worthingway, and Perry), one high school (Thomas Worthington), and one alternative school (Linworth).

School enrollment increased dramatically in the 1980s and early '90s as the areas outside of Worthington in the Columbus portion of the school district developed. This new residential development encouraged substantial in-migration. Since that time, enrollment has begun to decline and the Worthington School District is facing significant budget constraints due to this and the effect of "phantom revenue" from the state funding formula. As a result, the District is facing operating budget deficits and is cutting staff and even considering closing an elementary school.

While educational issues and the school system decisions are not the purview of the city government of Worthington, it is obvious that the impact of educational policy and facilities planning has a major impact on local government. One of the qualities of the school system that is cherished by Worthington residents is the neighborhood schools. This arrangement works well and creates an environment where many children are within a short distance of their school and each neighborhood has a school and related park area close by.

Worthington School District data show that as of 2000, only about 30 percent of the school district's student population live inside the corporate boundaries of Worthington (it was close to 50% in 1986). This trend is stabilizing, however, and may increase slightly at some point in the future. The population in the City has been aging and across the next decade a number of houses within Worthington's single-family neighborhoods should turn over to families with children (see Demographics). A fluctuation of enrollment up and down within a range is not unusual in fully developed, stable school districts because of this cycle. For these reasons, it is important to the City that the School District maintain its school presence in these neighborhoods. Some first ring suburban school districts facing similar declining enrollment trends have eliminated schools only to see the student population stabilize and reverse to some degree.



*Worthington schools are located in the heart of the community*

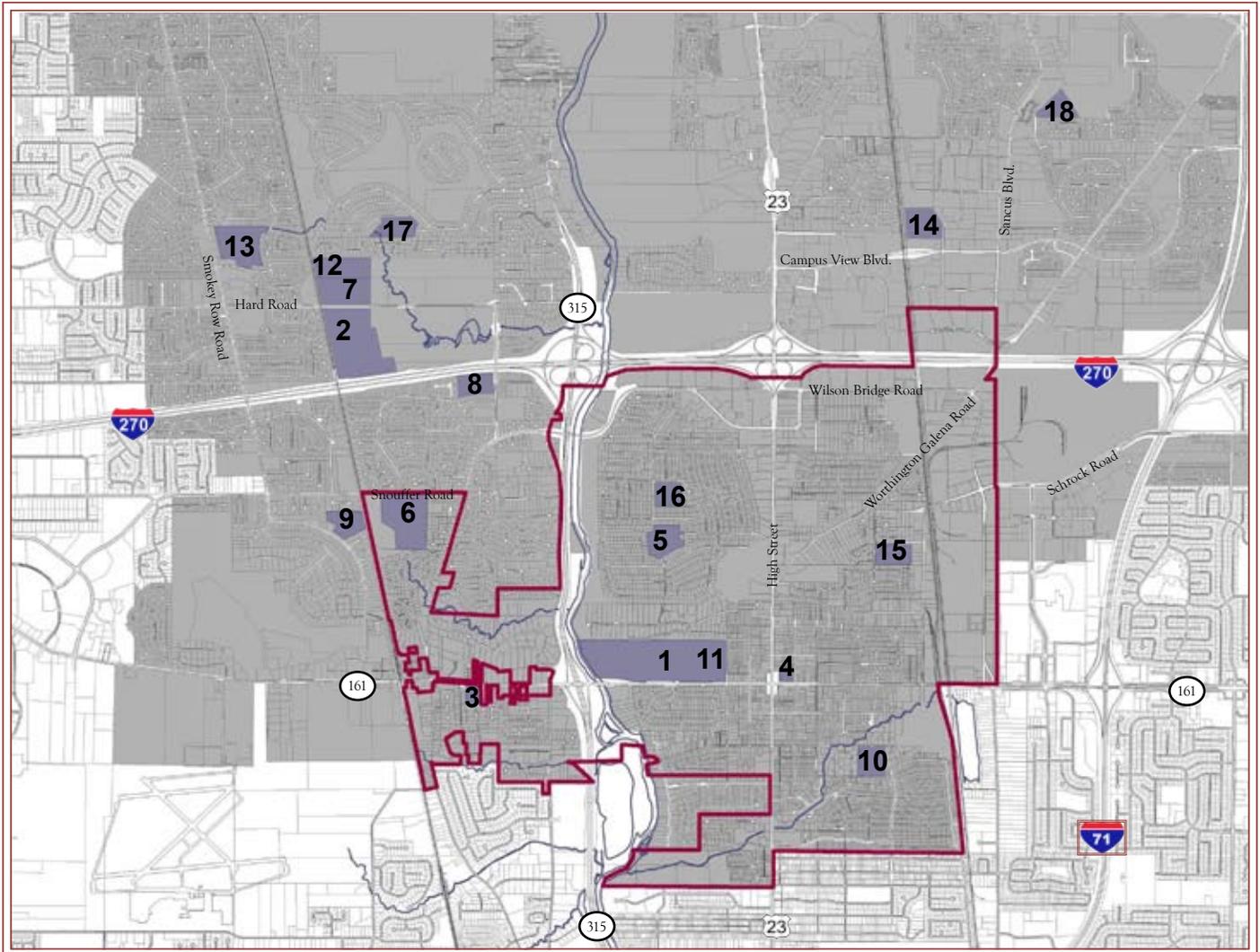


Figure 14 · Worthington School District Map

**Legend - School District**

-  Worthington School District
-  Worthington School Locations
-  Worthington Corporate Boundary



**Public Schools**

<b>High Schools</b>	<b>Elementary Schools</b>
1) Thomas Worthington	8) Bluffsvew
2) Worthington Kilbourne	9) Brookside
3) Linworth Alternative	10) Colonial Hills
	11) Evening Street
	12) Granby
	13) Liberty/Sutter Park
<b>Middle Schools</b>	14) Slate Hill
4) Kilbourne	15) Wilson Hill
5) Worthingway	16) Worthington Estates
6) Perry	17) Worthington Hills
7) McCord	18) Worthington Park

The excellent reputation of the Worthington school system continues to be a significant amenity and attraction for the City, as well as a major part of its identity and image. Middle-upper socioeconomic groups, which comprise the dominant part of the resident population in Worthington, are likely to place a major emphasis on the education of children. The quality of the school system is a critical consideration to professional and corporate transfer families in locating within the City. These people are fundamental to maintaining Worthington's residential neighborhoods and housing stock and infusing the community with energy. Therefore it continues to be in the City's best interest to see the Worthington School District remain successful.

As a result, the City should consider two important points in making policy decisions due to the positive impact they will have in assisting the financial position of the school district. First, stabilizing and even increasing the number of K-12 students within the City will aid the schools. Under current state funding formulas, the District loses substantial funding for each student decline from the previous year.

Second, the school district relies on property taxes to operate. Any new investment, renovation, and redevelopment that occurs within the City that increases the land and/or building value (i.e. taxable, not exempt) ultimately increases the District's revenue. It is true, however, that the State school funding formula does result in less funding when the overall property tax base within the school district increases. It is worth noting that less than 40 percent of the school district's real estate valuation lies within the City of Worthington.



Students work on laptops in class.

Overall, the Worthington School District handled its rapid growth well over the past three decades and remained a top-notch public school system. The challenge for the coming decade is to weather the decline in enrollment and funding until it stabilizes while maintaining its excellence. If the City is to continue to attract the best and brightest people, it is imperative that the school district maintain its excellence.

### Summary of School District

- The Worthington School District is almost twice as large as the City of Worthington (10 sq. miles vs. 6 sq. miles).
- There are 11 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 3 high schools in the School District of which 4, 3, and 2 respectively are within the City.

### Assets:

- Worthington School District was rated "Excellent" by the State of Ohio the last four years ('02-05).
- District contributes to significant positive image of the City.
- School District is major unifying element of community.
- Neighborhood-based schools anchor subdivisions within the City.
- Consistent strength of Worthington Schools attracts new residents, adds vitality to City, and helps maintain property values.
- Adding children to the City population improves the District's condition.

### Constraints:

- The School District is largely developed and enrollment is declining.
- As a result, the District is facing a continuing budget shortfall, exacerbated by the State funding formula that rewards growth, new development, and lower property values.
- The City of Worthington can only affect land use decisions within its portion of the School District.



*Students preparing for class.*



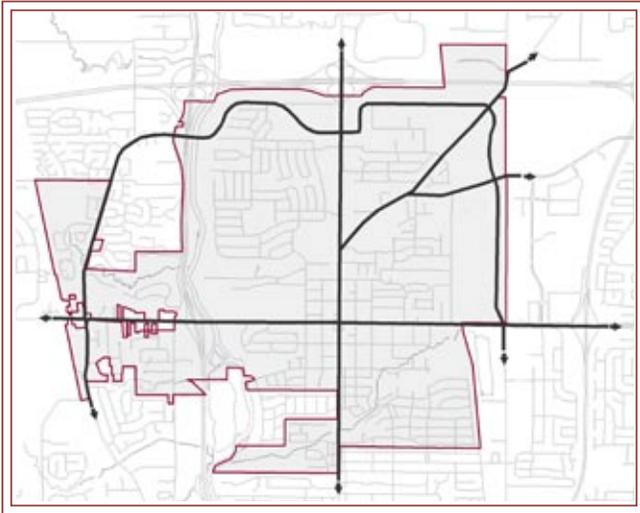
*One of the Worthington School District's nineteen schools.*



*Group projects in the research library.*

## Road Network

As a mature and developed city, Worthington has a well-established roadway network. At its founding, Worthington anchored the crossroads of two historically important travel routes — the north-south route that is now High Street (U.S. 23) and the east-west route that is now Dublin-Granville Road (S.R. 161).



*Road Transportation Network*

Until the 1970s these were the primary intercity access roads. With the arrival of the interstate highway system, the major transportation networks of this century were established around Worthington. These freeways became both economic generators and primary access points. Interstate 270, Central Ohio's Outerbelt, was built along the City's north boundary, creating a major interchange with High Street. State Route 315 was constructed along the Olentangy River floodplain through Worthington, creating a significant interchange with S.R. 161. It provided an alternate north-south access from I-71 for the northern suburbs to downtown Columbus. Located less than a mile away from Worthington's east boundary, I-71 is also in close proximity to the City. As a result, residents, workers, and visitors have tremendous access to Columbus and the region.

Traffic congestion is consistently one of the greatest concerns for residents of Worthington. To address this and respond to improvement pressures from state officials, Worthington adopted a Transportation Thoroughfare Plan. This plan is

represented in Figure 15. The road network and traffic volumes were analyzed and classified into a road hierarchy. In addition to the freeways and arterials already mentioned, Worthington is well-served by a number of north-south arterials including Linworth Road, Olentangy River Road, High Street, and Huntley/Worthington-Galena Roads. Worthington's collector streets that serve the residential neighborhoods and Old Worthington are also shown. Together these arterials and collectors form the secondary roadway system that effectively moves traffic throughout the City. The remaining roads are local residential streets. Those in the historic core and the southern portion of the City are arranged in a traditional grid pattern. The residential streets in the newer subdivisions in the northern and western portions of the City are more curvilinear with fewer connections to the external thoroughfare system.

Due to the explosive growth that occurred in northern Franklin County and southern Delaware County in the last three decades, the transportation infrastructure has been strained. With so many people working a distance from where they live, the primary and secondary road system became overloaded. The interstate system was built in the 1960s and 70s for design capacities significantly below today's traffic volumes. As a result, congestion has become an increasing concern of everyone that uses the roadways and a priority for government bodies. In response, ODOT widened I-270 from two travel lanes to four in each direction (1997-1999), U.S. 23 was widened north of I-270, I-71 was widened from the I-270 interchange



*Dublin-Granville Road (SR 161) looking east to Old Worthington*

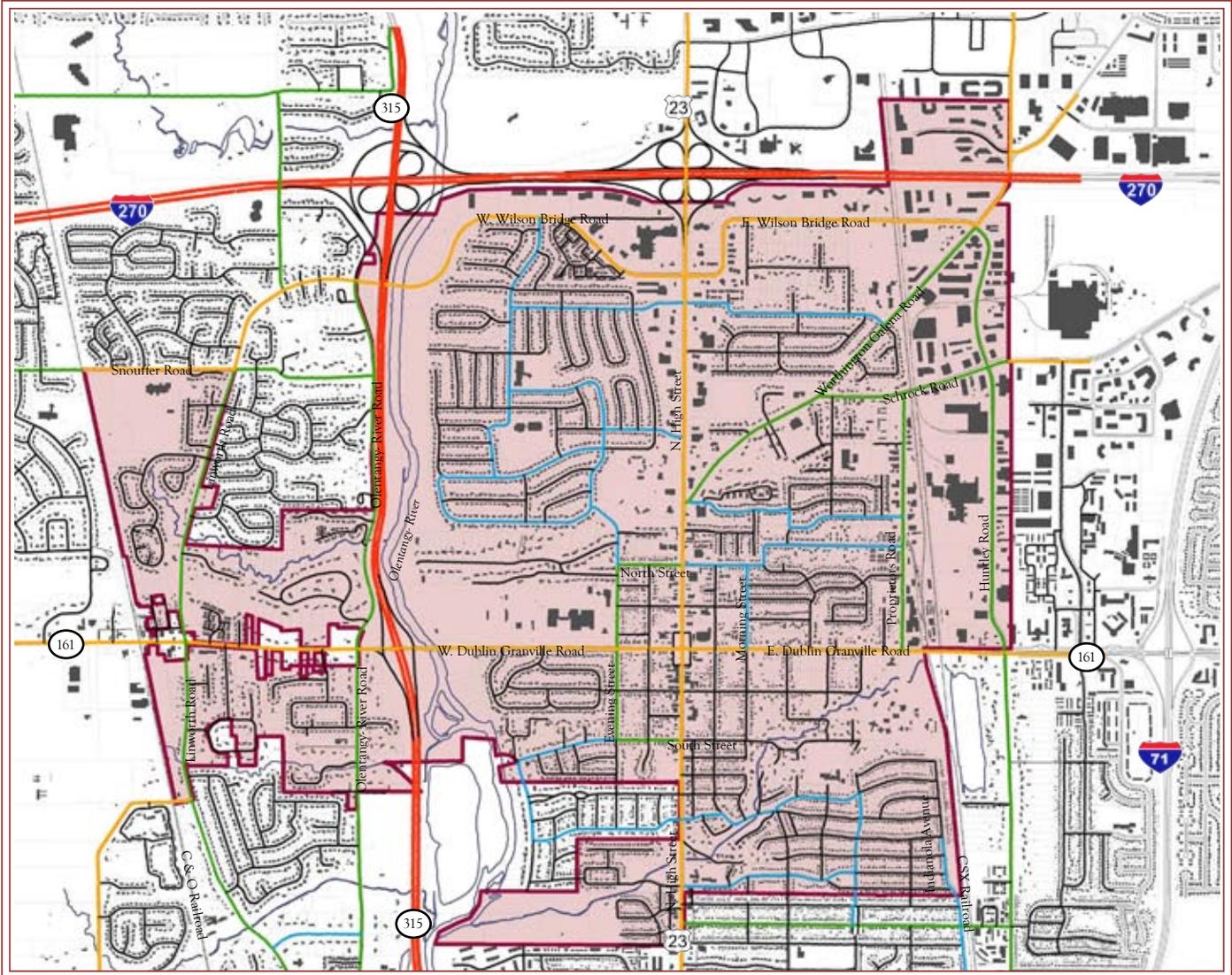
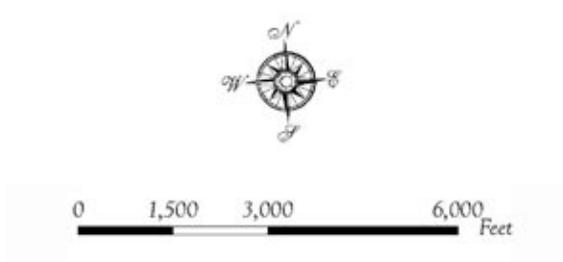
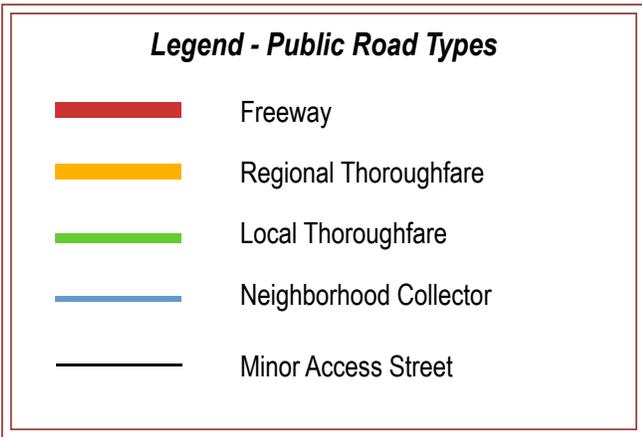


Figure 15 · Worthington Thoroughfare Plan Map



Source: City of Worthington

north, and S.R. 315 was widened from two travel lanes to three. This is in addition to various other improvements and connections performed by area jurisdictions. In Worthington, this included improvements such as the widening of the High Street/Wilson Bridge Road intersection and the redesign of the Sancus Boulevard/Worthington-Galena Road connection. The completion of all these road projects has improved the capacity of the interstate network and reduced the pressure on arterial roads to carry through traffic. Still, the increased traffic volumes using the highways must exit and enter from the interchanges and the capacity issues have migrated there – such as Route 23 north of I-270. ODOT is planning to improve the three mile stretch of I-270 between S.R. 315, U.S. 23, and I-71 because it is now the fourth-most congested, crash-prone segment of freeway in the state of Ohio (averaging 542 accidents annually).

The congestion on Worthington's east-west thoroughfares is compounded by the fact that the region's arterial road system, which should relieve this traffic pressure, is itself constrained by natural and man-made features. Parallel arterials in an urban area should be spaced one mile apart. In the four mile distance between Wilson Bridge Road and Henderson Road (south of study area), only one arterial, S.R. 161, crosses the Olentangy River. This restricts traffic to a few available routes, including S.R. 161 and Wilson Bridge Road through

Worthington. As a result, Worthington experiences heavy traffic through its city center. One of the projects advanced by the City of Columbus and MORPC is the Bethel-Morse connector. Though this project has failed by referendum twice, it could help alleviate some pressure through Worthington. ODOT also advocates widening S.R. 161 from Sawmill Road to S.R. 315. Worthington's firm position is widening to no more than three lanes east of Linworth Road.

The City of Worthington has regularly conducted traffic studies to address the concerns of its residents, businesses, and staff. The conclusion is that Worthington's roadway system is effective and well-developed, particularly within the constraints of a fully built city within a very developed region. Virtually all of the major improvements recommended by these studies have been implemented. One exception is the Wilson Bridge, Huntley Road, Worthington-Galena intersection improvement that is on hold. Cut-through traffic has been an issue in some residential neighborhoods, particularly in those subdivisions with limited connections to the road network. This is a difficult issue in built areas. A number of traffic calming measures were suggested to aid with residential cut-through traffic, but they were rejected by a majority of the residents who preferred the existing conditions to the alternatives. Any new development within the City should incorporate multiple connections to address this issue. On the whole, the existing roadway system is adequate to handle the redevelopment concepts considered in further sections of this plan.

The growth in the region around Worthington continues to impact traffic levels within the City along its major through arteries. Worthington's roadway network is more than adequate to handle its internal needs, but it is this through traffic that is straining the system. It is important to recognize the limitations that now exist in Worthington to further widen and improve strategic roadways. For example, the City has extended to the limit the widening of High Street between South Street and North Street and the widening of State Route 161 between Evening Street and Proprietors Road. Any further widening of these roads or related intersections would destroy the essence of the strong historical residential



*State Route 315 with its parkway feel along the Olentangy.*

character of the City and will not be acceptable under any conditions. Worthington will not sacrifice its valued identity and quality of life to accommodate more through traffic. The same now can even be said of other areas including High Street at Wilson Bridge Road. This intersection has been widened to facilitate access to Worthington’s important commercial ground from I-270. However, any further widening would make it completely intimidating to pedestrians and drivers alike. Intersections this wide take away from the pedestrian-scale of Worthington and the aesthetics of the community’s gateways. There are limits to how much a roadway or intersection should be widened. The limits are both from a practical traffic standpoint and from the equally important community character standpoint. Worthington has reached this level on most of its road system.

**Transportation Options**

Just as with a vast majority of suburban residents, Worthington residents are heavily dependent on their vehicles for transportation. According to the 2000 Census, 87 percent of Worthington residents drove their car, truck, or van to their place of work. Another 4.5 percent car or van-pooled. Only 1.7 percent used public transportation and one percent walked to work. Society’s dependence on the automobile and the growth in Central Ohio continues to create the congestion issues that lead to efforts to build out of the traffic. One solution is to encourage the development and use of mass transit and other alternatives (walking and bicycle-riding) and a built environment that promotes their use.



*A bike lane on Schrock Road.*

**Bike Lanes & Routes**

One important alternative form of transportation embraced by Worthington residents is the bicycle. Riding bikes is not just a recreational activity, it is an important form of transportation and commuting. Worthington desires to be a bicycle-friendly community. To achieve this requires more than bike trails or paths (separated from roadways). Designated bike lanes on the street are necessary to accommodate commuting and transit-oriented bicyclists. So called "complete streets" create a bike lane and appropriate signage as part of the public way. Bike lanes are interconnected with the street grid and regional systems are identified as bike routes. The City has created bike lanes in some areas, but more can be done. MORPC has completed a regional bike route plan.

Means of Commute to Work	Number of Residents	Percent of Residents
Car, truck, or van – drove alone	6,346	87.1%
Car, truck, or van – carpooled	325	4.5%
Public transportation (incl. taxicab)	121	1.7%
Walked	97	1.3%
Other means	25	0.3%
Worked at home	371	5.1%
Total Work Force (16 years & older)	7,285	100.0%
Average travel time to work (in minutes)	19.5	n/a

Figure 16 · Commute to Work Table - 2000 Census

## Mass Transit

Mass transit options have always been available to Worthington residents and businesses in some form. The interurban served Worthington along High Street at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was replaced with a bus system after World War II by the predecessor to the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA). Today COTA serves Worthington with three bus routes - the Worthington Express (#31), the North High Street Local (#2), and the Smoky Row Express (#30). A fourth, the S.R. 161 Crosstown (#94) was recently cut. Figure 17 highlights the current routes. These routes service High Street, the Wilson Bridge business corridor, Linworth Road, and Snouffer Road; as well as some residential neighborhoods. The system is primarily oriented north-south in this area with service to downtown Columbus and some transfer points to other routes. COTA plans to increase bus frequency and service in the future as part of a planned levy.

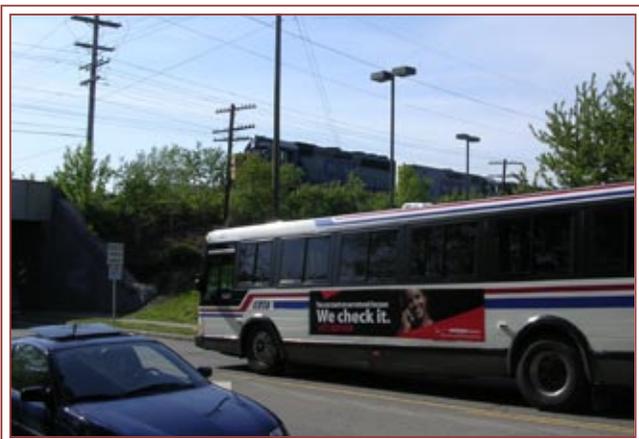
COTA also has an ambitious plan to add light rail service to Central Ohio, starting with the proposed North Corridor Route along the CSX railroad right-of-way. This plan is in the engineering stage and COTA is requesting federal funding for the project. This will require Franklin County voter's approval of a COTA levy to raise the required local matching contribution. At this preliminary stage, stops are planned for E. Dublin-Granville Road within Worthington and Campus View Boulevard to the north at Crosswoods in Columbus (see figure 18). Preliminary studies identified five other future light rail corridors in Central Ohio radiating from downtown Columbus.



*Rendering of light rail transit on High St. in Downtown Columbus.*

This includes one along the C&O rail line on Worthington's west side. Stops for this line are shown at W. Dublin-Granville Road (Linworth area) and near I-270 to the north. Figure 19 on page 56 highlights the proposed stops in and near Worthington as part of COTA's light rail plan.

Such a system could provide exciting opportunities for Worthington. Light rail transit would certainly allow great access to the region with two potential rail corridors at either edge of the City. The close proximity of such passenger rail corridors would provide more commuting options for Worthington residents and employees who work in Worthington. Park and ride lots, bike path connections, and local shuttles could make the system even more attractive and successful. With the importance of the Wilson Bridge Road and Huntley Road corridors it would behoove the City to secure a transit stop at Wilson Bridge Road as well. Another advantage for Worthington is the potential for some transit-oriented development to occur around the stations. Transit-oriented development is mixed-use in nature, focusing on higher densities at the rail stations. This could allow the development of additional, complimentary employment and living nodes within the City. Ultimately the development of light rail service through Worthington could create great benefits for the City.



*There are many transportation modes in Worthington.*

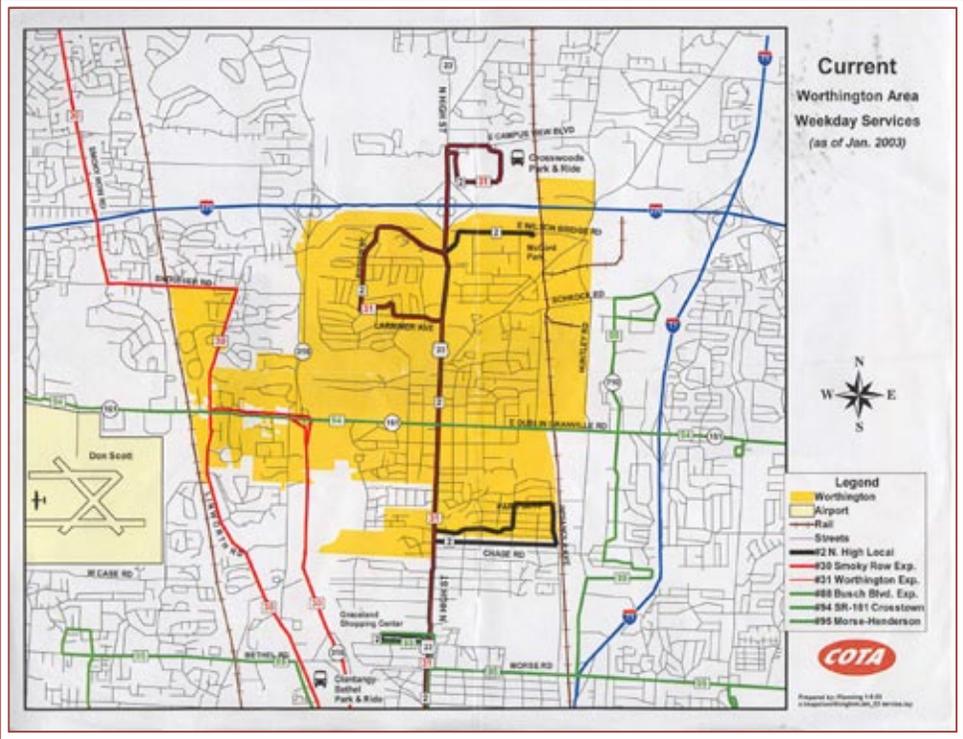


Figure 17 · COTA Current Bus Service Map · Worthington Area

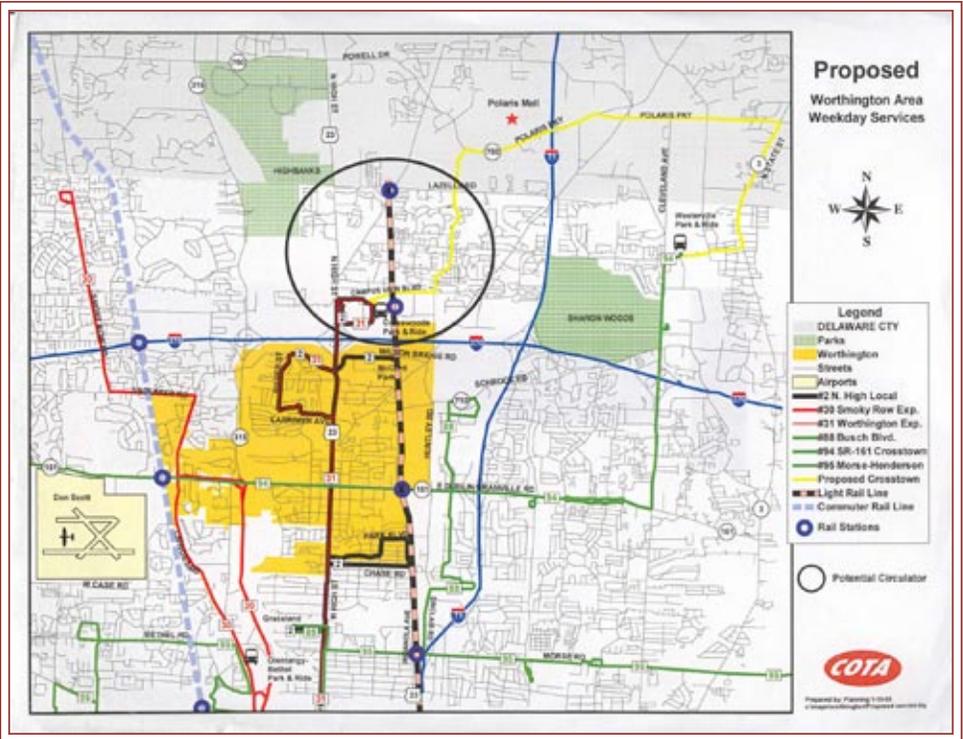


Figure 18 · COTA Proposed Bus & Light Rail Service Map · Worthington Area

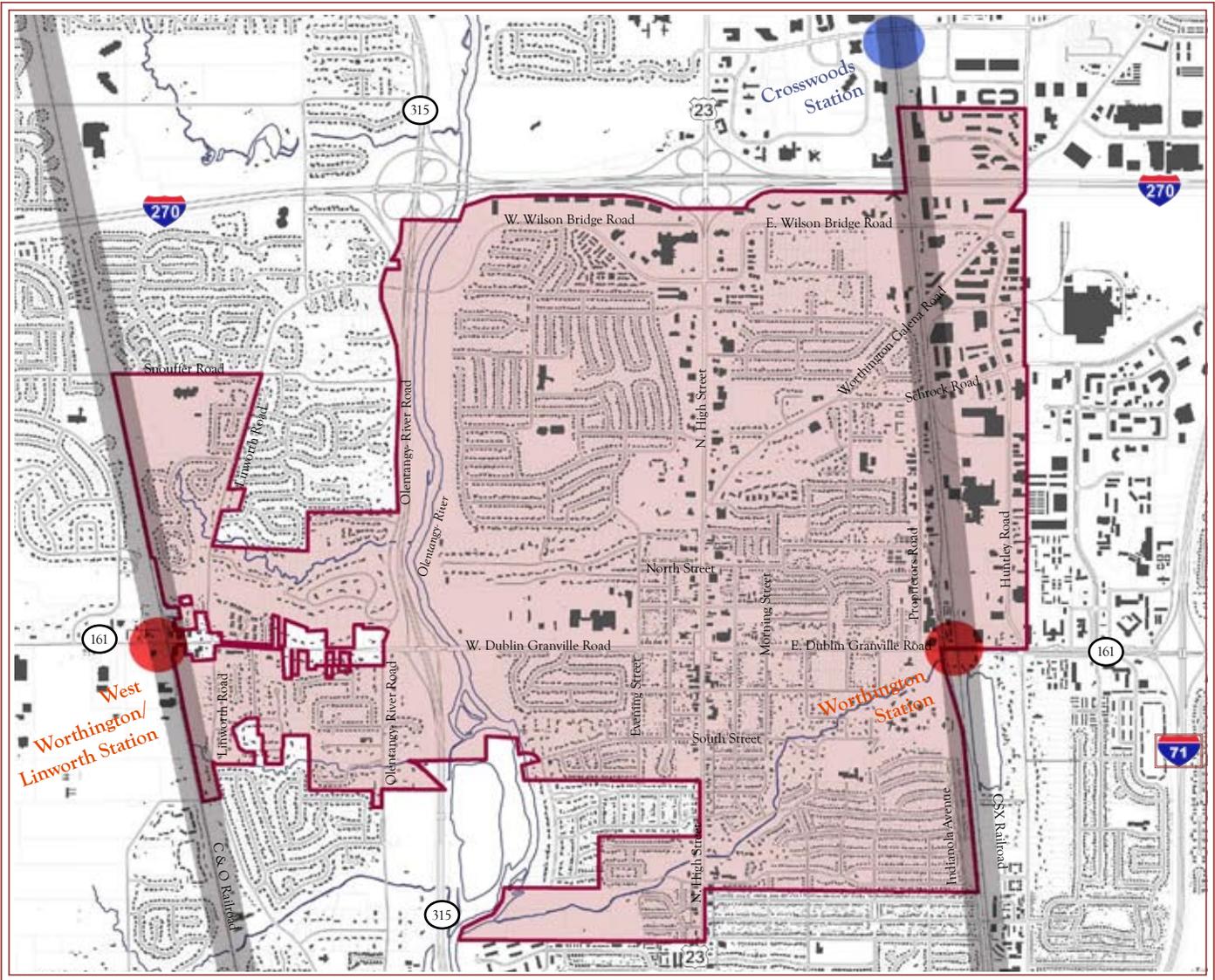
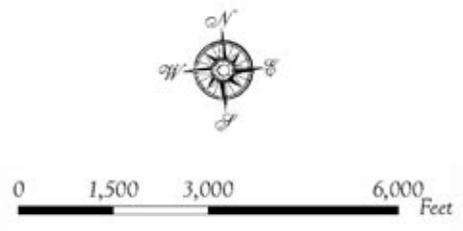
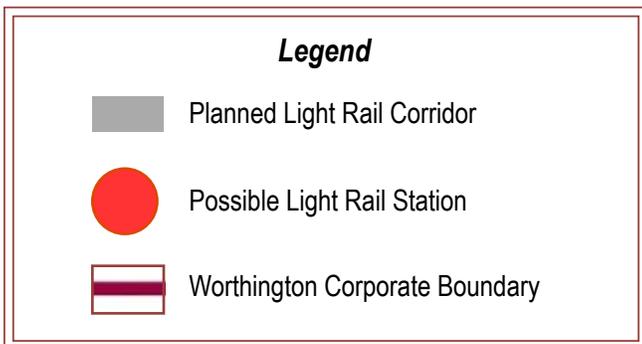


Figure 19 - Potential Light Rail Station Locations



Source: Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) and Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC).

**Entry Portals/Gateways**

Worthington has a number of important gateways to the City, particularly from the interstate system, but also along the major arterials noted above. Worthington has made efforts to beautify many of these entries with landscaping and City markers. These areas provide an occasion to identify and announce Worthington. There appears to be opportunities to create gateway identification for the original village core along S.R. 161 and High Street and then use a similar theme at the other gateways throughout the city.

**Pedestrian Paths**

Pedestrian connections are vital components for linking a community together. Worthington is well-connected for pedestrians. Sidewalks were required for most of the subdivisions built within Worthington and only a few areas of the City lack adequate sidewalks - primarily older street routes. Worthington is working to build wider, grade-separated asphalt recreational trails along one side of the road in these areas and to interconnect the neighborhoods and major activity centers. Some of these paths and trails have met resistance from neighboring property owners, but these paths are very important to the community. Worthington has also been diligently working to meet ADA requirements for sidewalks and curb ramps. A fundamental principal and goal of the community is the ability to safely walk or ride a bicycle from any point within Worthington. These pedestrian connections help raise the value of the entire City, making it a more desirable place to live. In addition to city-wide paths, there are plans for a regional bike trail system. This was reviewed in the Parks section.



*Worthington children in search of a sidewalk or bike path.*

**Summary of Transportation Network**

**Assets**

- Worthington has great access to Central Ohio's interstate system - virtually surrounded on three sides by freeways.
- Recent widening of the interstate system within the area (I-270, S.R. 315, I-71) has improved its traffic flow and reduced the intracity traffic burden on Worthington's arterial roadways.
- Most of the land surrounding Worthington has developed, so traffic through the City should stabilize until the interstate system reaches capacity again.
- Traffic studies indicate Worthington's roadway system is effective under current conditions.
- Worthington has an adopted Thoroughfare Plan.
- Residents' average commute to work time is under 20 minutes.
- Worthington is served by three COTA bus lines.
- The City is well-connected for pedestrians.
- There is potential for light rail lines along the east and west sides of Worthington within the next fifteen years.

**Constraints**

- Both the Olentangy River and the railroad corridors act as barrier to connectivity - funneling people to a few specific points, particularly S.R. 161.
- Interstate widening in the area has migrated the traffic problems to the interchanges - particularly I-270 with S.R. 315, U.S. 23, and I-71.
- Worthington's roadway system cannot be widened much further from both a traffic and community character standpoint.
- Bus routes and frequency are being cut rather than increased and existing mass transit options are not used by residents.
- Some property owners are opposed to trail connections.

## Demographic Profile

The population of Worthington has shown a slight downward trend over the past thirty-year period. From a population high of approximately 15,500 residents in 1970, there has been a population decrease to slightly over 14,000 residents by the year 2000 (see Figure 20). This represents an approximate 10% decrease in population over those thirty years. Meanwhile, cities such as Dublin and Westerville have experienced tremendous population growth. Contributing factors to these communities' high rates of growth are the availability of undeveloped land and opportunities to physically expand via annexation. In fact, virtually all non-landlocked municipalities in Central Ohio experienced strong population growth during the last three decades.

While Worthington's population declined slightly over the past thirty years, the number of households in Worthington increased by over 1,600 dwelling units during that same period. In 1970 there were approximately 4,200 dwelling units, and this increased to over 5,800 dwelling units in 2000. Combining these demographic factors, it is clear that the average household size in Worthington decreased from 1970 to 2000. Figure 21 shows that the average household size dropped from over 3.5 persons per household in 1970 to less than 2.5 persons per households in 2000. By the year 2000, one and two-person households made up a combined 64% of all the households in Worthington (see Figure 22). Household sizes experienced a downward trend in the region, but were

**City of Worthington  
Population Change 1970-2000**

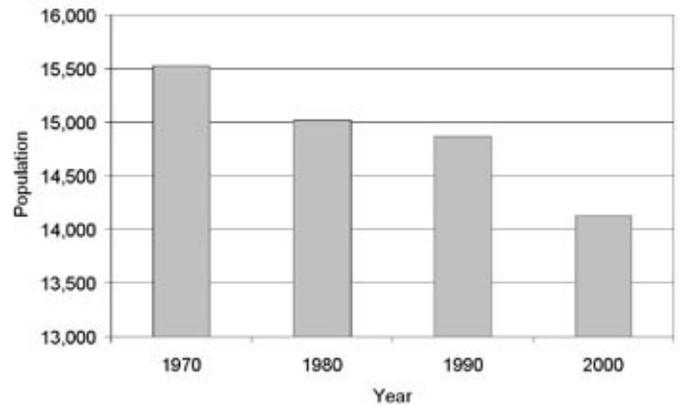


Figure 20 · Population Change: 1970-2000

**City of Worthington  
Average Household Size**

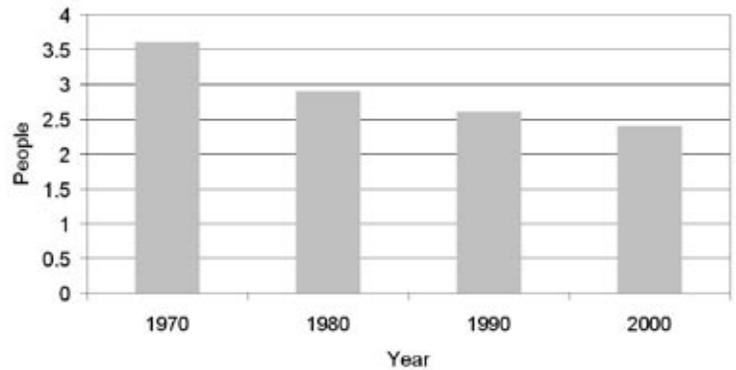


Figure 21 · Average Household Size Change: 1970-2000

lowest in the maturing First Ring Suburbs such as Worthington and Upper Arlington (2.37 persons/household), as well as Columbus (2.28 persons/household) where students and non-family households make up more than 40% of the city).

The relationship of these trends to the changing nature of Worthington becomes clear when one additional demographic factor is analyzed. Census information from 1990 to 2000 shows that the population of the City is aging. Over that time period, there was a drop in the number of residents in all age categories under 45 years old. For the same period, there was an increase in population for all categories 45 years in age and older, other than for residents between 60 and 69 years



Worthington youth, young adults, and adults are active in the City

**City of Worthington  
Persons Cohort Distribution  
1990 and 2000**

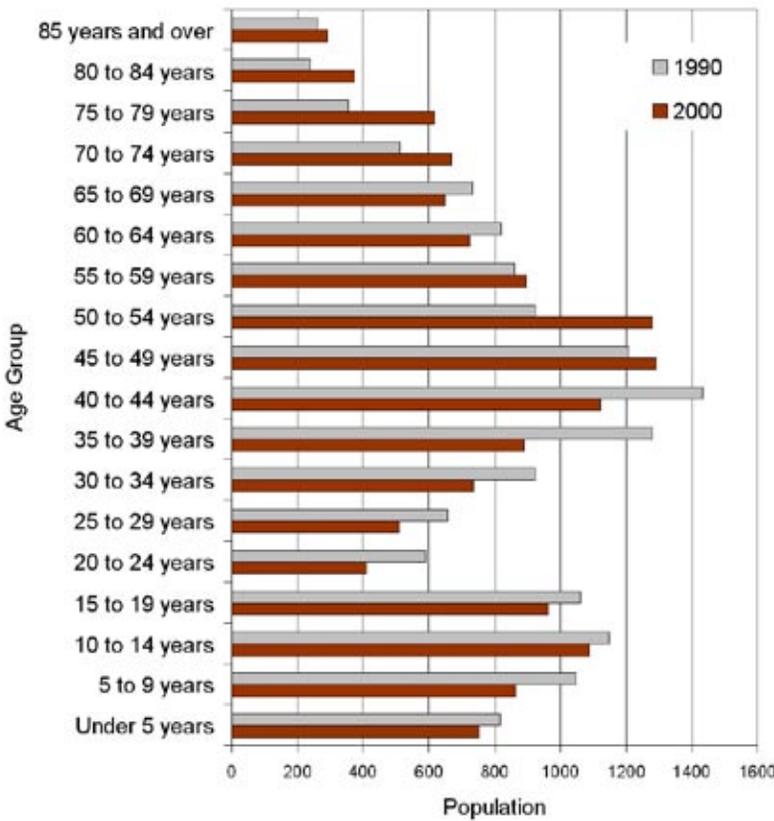


Figure 23 · Population Distribution - 1990 & 2000

old, which showed a slight decrease (see Figure 23). This is clearly evidenced by the fact that the number of households with individuals 65 years or older increased from 16% in 1980 to 29% in 2000 (see Figure 24).

Analyzing these factors together, it is clear that the population has “aged in place” in Worthington. This means that people who moved into the City throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s have largely remained in their households long after their children have grown and moved away. It speaks well of the quality of the City and its neighborhoods that so many residents have chosen to stay for so long. This may also be an indication that there is a limited supply of housing options

**City of Worthington  
Persons per Households in 2000**

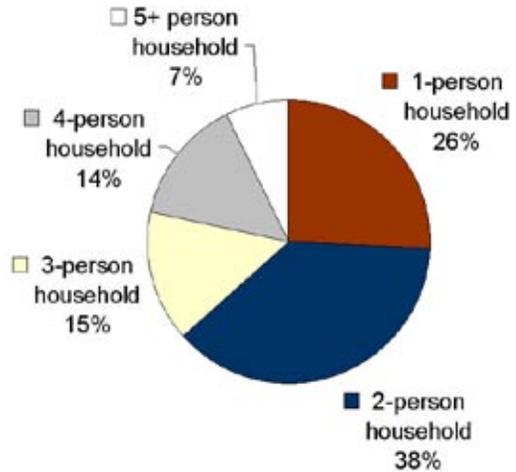


Figure 22 · Persons Per Household - 2000

**Households with Individuals  
65 Years and Over**

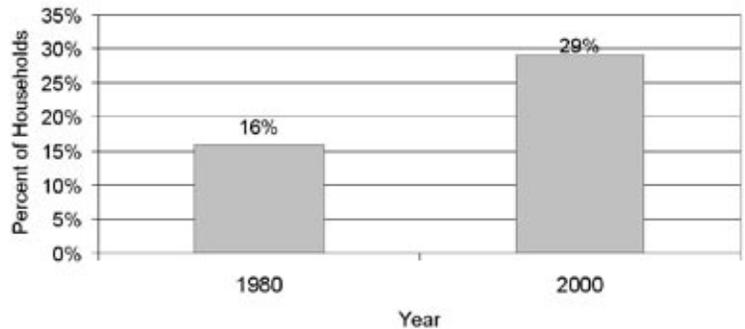


Figure 24 · Households Over 65 - 1990 & 2000

available to an aging population. Since the neighborhoods of Worthington are so heavily oriented toward single-family houses on individual lots, residents who wish to remain in the City as they age and their household size shrinks have little choice but to keep their current homes. This presents a real opportunity for Worthington. The potential to develop housing of alternate types and densities seems to exist. This approach will allow the property values to stay consistent due to a steady, yet controlled turn-over rate in the neighborhoods. In addition, needed housing opportunities will be provided to Worthington residents as the aging trend in the city continues. This opportunity will be explored further in the following portions of this document.

On the other end of the distribution, Worthington is not attracting the 20 to 44 year old residents to the same extent it has previously. The 25 to 35 year old population has been low in Worthington (smallest cohort under 65) the past two decades because the cost of homes in Worthington has been relatively high and the availability of rental units has been low. This trend is continuing in the City, with the numbers in this age group shrinking further. It is also now affecting even the 30 to 40 year old age group. Thus more than housing affordability is at work. Much of this trend is due to existing residents aging in place in the housing stock. The result is low availability of housing units in the Worthington market.

This is a serious issue because 20 to 30 year-olds represent a significant portion of the young professionals; and the 25-40 year-olds generally represent the starter families. The young professionals are the group projected to be the largest growing demographic in Central Ohio and they can become the life-blood of a community — replenishing and reinvigorating it as they marry and start families. This is the age group that commonly becomes active and works for positive change in a community. Young professionals are looking for certain price-points and are attracted to more urban living. Again, it appears that there is a real opportunity to attract this demographic if the right product is available within the City. At the same time, this group will want single-family homes in Worthington's wonderful neighborhoods - if the units are available. At this point, these homes are not turning over and are not available in the quantity they have been in the past. Obviously the age "bubble" will work through the City and homes will turn-over in larger numbers in the future. Still, there has always been a gap in Worthington's housing structure for young professionals and this should be addressed.

In further exploring the head of household demographics for the City of Worthington, Figure 25 shows that 62 percent of the households in the City are headed by a married couple. At the same time, 30 percent of all households in Worthington consist of a single person (10% males, 20% females). Of the 20% single female head of household, more than 40% (9% of the total) are over 65 years old (see figure 26). Single mothers

**City of Worthington  
Head of Household - 2000**

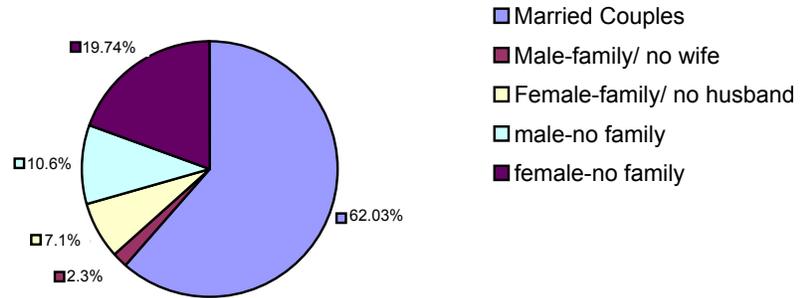


Figure 25 – Head of Household

**City of Worthington  
Single Female Head of Household**

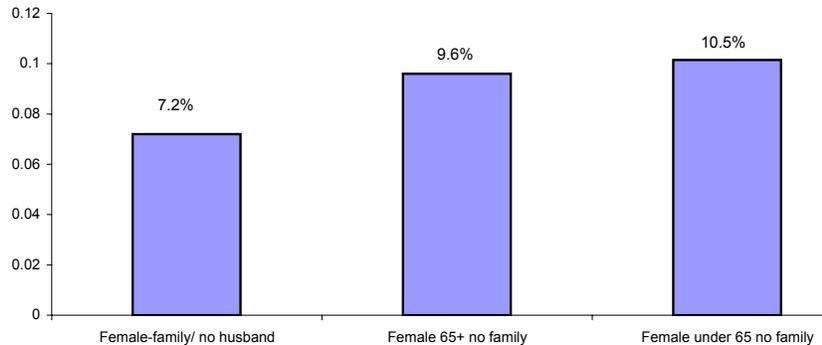


Figure 26 – Female Head of Households

compose 7.2% of the total households in Worthington. When examining just the renters subset of head of household, the total married couples consist of only 26% (see figure 28). Single women compose 36% of the renters in Worthington and single men compose 19% — indicating a majority of renters are single with no dependents (55%). Single heads of families make up 18% of the total renters, with 13.1% consisting of single mothers.

**City of Worthington  
Head of Household - Owners**

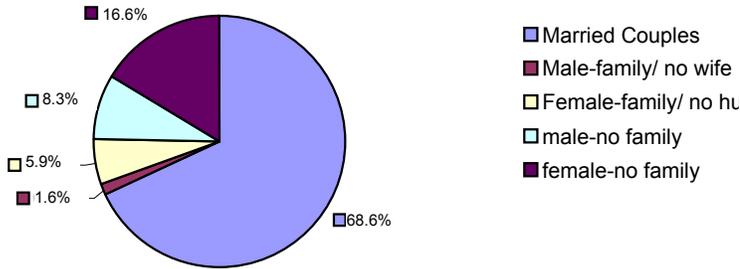


Figure 27 · Head of Household-Home Owners

**City of Worthington  
Head of Household - Renters**

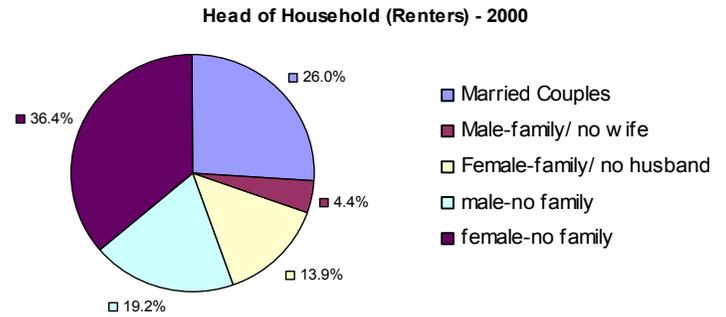


Figure 28 – Head of Household-Home Renters

**City of Worthington  
Education Attainment**

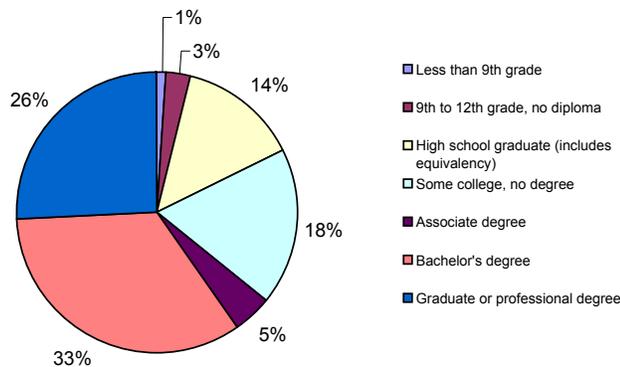


Figure 29- Education Attainment

Education is important to Worthington residents. According to the 2000 Census, Worthington continues to have very high levels of educational attainment. Over 90 percent of Worthington residents have a high school degree and 50 percent have a four-year college degree. Additionally, more than 25 percent of the City's population has an advanced or professional degree.

**City of Worthington  
Household Income Distribution**

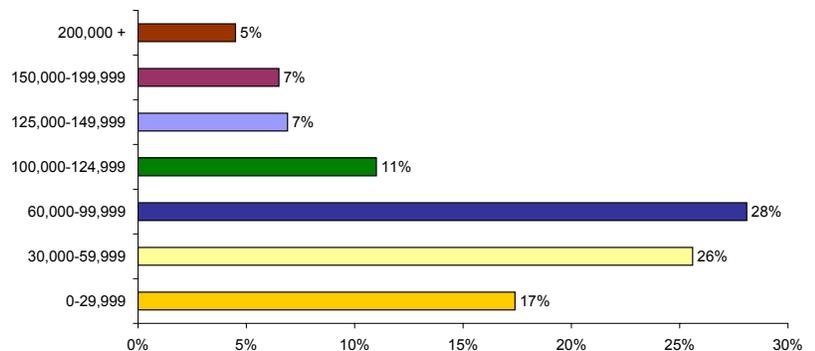


Figure 30 · Household Income Distribution

In examining household income, (figure 30) eleven percent of Worthington's households make less than \$20,000 of annual income and a total of 25% earns less than \$50,000 annually. The largest group (22%) earns between \$50,000 and \$75,000 per household annually. Thus just more than half of the City's households (53%) earn at least \$75,000 of annual income. Twenty-nine percent of Worthington's households earn more than \$100,000 annually and 6% earn more than \$200,000

annually. Overall this places Worthington solidly as an upper middle income community.

Worthington's racial and ethnic distribution is minimal. The City of Worthington is largely Caucasian (94%). Six percent of the population is composed of the remaining ethnic and racial groups including African American, Native American and Alaskan, Asian, Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, and other, which is inclusive of the multiracial population. The second largest racial group in Worthington is Asian, consisting of 3.2% of the population. The third largest group is African American, which consists of 2.2% of Worthington's population.

### City of Worthington Racial and Ethnic Distribution

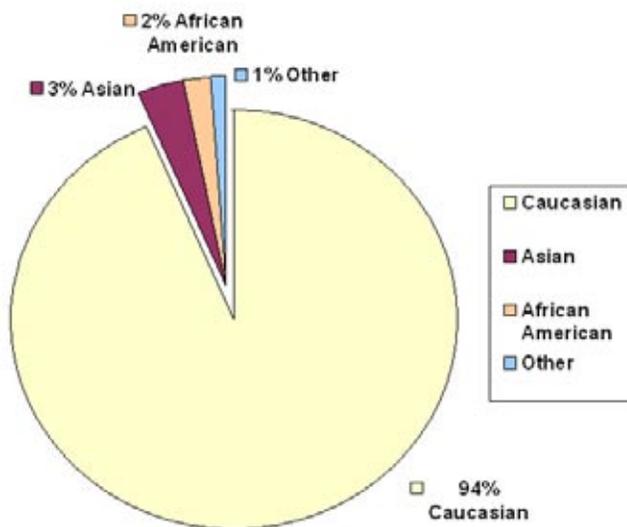


Figure 31 · Racial and Ethnic Distribution

#### Summary of Demographics

- Worthington is a maturing community, with 29% of its residents now over 65 years old.
- Worthington's population has decreased by 10% since 1970 to 14,125 residents in 2000.
- The number of households in Worthington has increased by 36% since 1970 to 5,875 dwelling units in 2000.
- The average household size has decreased to 2.5 persons per household in 2000 from 3.5 in 1970.
- One and two person households comprise 64% of all Worthington's households.

#### Assets:

- Worthington is such a desirable place to live, that residents want to "age in place" and remain in the community.
- The City's population and number of households is relatively stable, making budgeting and service more predictable.
- Worthington residents are highly educated.
- Worthington's median income is much higher than Columbus, the County, and the State.

#### Constraints:

- There appears to be a lack of housing options for empty nesters in single-family homes desiring to move within Worthington.
- There appears to be a lack of housing options for young professionals hoping to live in the City.
- Low turn-over in Worthington's single-family neighborhoods is reducing the number of starter families living in the City at this time.



## Fiscal and Economic Condition

It is critical to understand how the built environment in Worthington affects the fiscal prosperity of the City. The City of Worthington provides highly-rated services that consistently rank as superior in community surveys. These services (fire, police, parks & recreation, trash pick-up & recycling, etc.) as well as infrastructure improvements (roads, sidewalks, water, sewer, etc.) are funded by the general revenue received by the City. These expenditures amounted to \$17 million in 2004, and the cost of providing them at the level expected by the community continues to rise.

The most important point is that the capability of Worthington to provide high-quality services and infrastructure is directly proportional to the commercial and industrial base that exists within the City. This is a fundamental principal that governs the welfare of municipalities today in Ohio. Figure 32 represents the City's revenue sources in 2004. It is apparent that the City of Worthington relies on the City's income tax for more than half of its annual revenue (64%). This reliance has only increased as residents approved an increase in the income tax rate in April 2003, from 1.65% to 2%. This matches the rate collected in surrounding municipalities and was critical for meeting the long term budget needs of the City. The remainder of the City's revenues are fairly evenly divided between property taxes (8%), the local government fund (6%), the estate/inheritance tax (3%), Perry Township Fire Service (3%), interest income (1%), fines and forfeitures (1%), and all other revenue (7%).



*Worthington Industries Corporate Headquarters*

This dependence on income tax for a majority of revenues is typical for many Central Ohio municipalities.

Worthington's reliance on income tax has grown since 1990 when revenues from property taxes were almost equal. In that year property tax collections were almost \$1.47 million and income tax collections were \$1.63 million. Property tax represented 47.3% of the total and income tax represented 52.7%. By 1995, this split was 14.3% property tax (\$1.41 mil.) and 85.7% income tax (\$8.48 mil.). In 2000, it was 10.9% property tax (\$1.25 mil.) and 89.1% income tax (\$10.23 mil.). This illustrates the increasing importance of local business as a means to support municipal services provided to residents.

Worthington's tax revenues have been affected by the general economic downturn, but the negative trend is more severe because employment in the City's office and industrial corridors has been dropping as businesses not only downsize, but also relocate outside the community. As a result, the net income tax revenues, the most important revenue source for the City, had been declining up to the 2003 income tax rate increase. This rate increase will improve Worthington's revenue collections, as will the City's recent success of attracting new corporate tenants to existing prime office space. It is worth noting that the state legislature has debated phasing out the estate tax in the future. If this were to occur, Worthington will be facing the task of replacing the roughly three (3) percent of its annual budget that inheritance tax represents. In summary, to maintain the existing services through the next fifteen years, the City of Worthington must continue striving to grow the existing revenue streams. If the City desires to actively pursue major capital projects (infrastructure upgrade, land acquisition, building renovation, etc.) or provide economic development incentives, further additional revenue will be necessary.

The built environment affects the fiscal condition of the City in a number of ways. Land use and development affects property, income, sales, and estate taxes. The type of development also directly affects the amount of services (and thus expenditures) that a city must provide. Both the revenue and expenditure impacts that a land use creates/requires are components

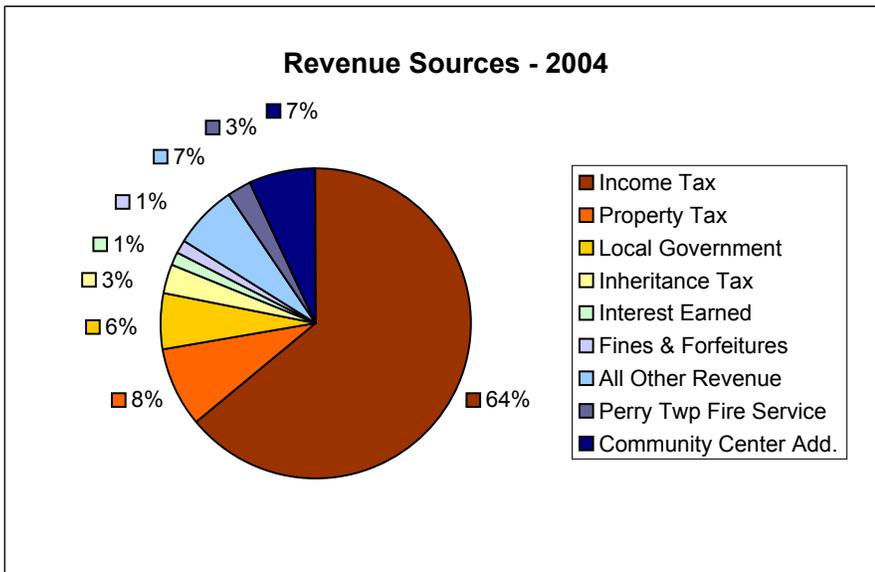


Figure 32 · Revenue Sources - 2004

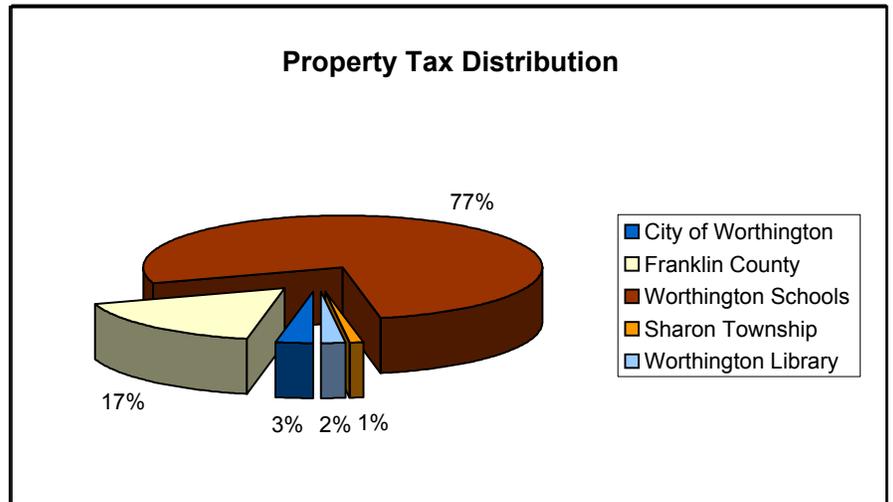


Figure 33 · Property Tax Distribution - 2002

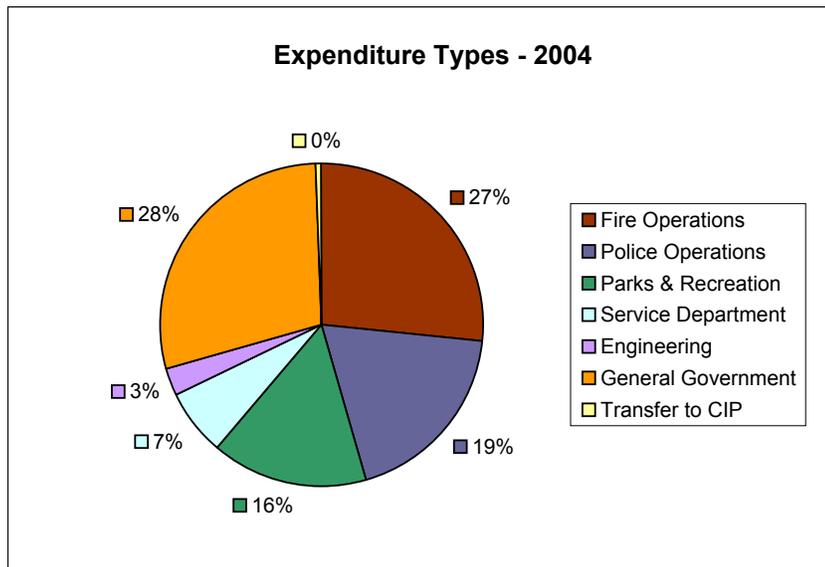


Figure 34 · Expenditures - 2004

that should be considered by a community when evaluating development decisions.

Raising income tax revenues requires one or more of the following: increasing the income tax rate (recently accomplished), increasing the overall salaries paid to employees working within Worthington, or increasing the number of jobs within the corporate boundaries. Development directly impacts the last two items. Adding more employment space (office, industrial, retail, institutional, service centers) should result in higher employment levels. Building and development space can be targeted for businesses and institutions that provide higher salaried jobs. Likewise, renovating existing structures and improving their attractiveness in the marketplace should attract new or better tenants with higher paid employees. Thus increasing the amount and/or level of income generated by employment within the city has a direct positive impact on City revenues.

The tax most people directly relate to land use and development values is the property tax. The type of land use, the condition of the structure, and the location directly impacts the value of property. However, property taxes support the school district much more than the city. Figure 33 shows the distribution of property taxes in the City of Worthington. Note that 77 percent of all property taxes go to the school district and another 17 percent goes to Franklin County, with only three (3) percent going to the City and the rest to the Library (2%) and Sharon Township (1%). The City of Worthington only receives three percent of all property taxes. Yet property taxes compose eight percent of the City's revenue. Thus, increasing the value of privately held land and structures within Worthington has a positive impact on City revenues. The impact of increased property values on the school district is more complex, due to the state funding formula that reduces support to districts with decreasing student enrollment and higher assessed property valuations (the "shadow revenue" dilemma).

Worthington should carefully consider and plan for redevelopment within the City. While it is true that private market forces drive most development and the income, sales,

### Assessed Valuations

One measure of a community's health and desirability is the relative value of properties within the city. Areas with strong location and quality of life factors are more highly valued, and often development and investment occur there. The age of development, upkeep and condition of structures, and the desirability of the location are all aspects that factor into the value of land. Examining assessed property values is one way of evaluating this characteristic. A map of the Total Assessed Valuation for the City of Worthington is located on the opposite page (figure 35). It is based on the Franklin County Auditor's information. The total assessed value is the sum of the assessed value of the land parcel and all structures on it. The higher a property's assessed value, the darker the color.

The areas of dark green represent the prime property tax generating areas. These areas are very important to the fiscal health of the school district (because the school district relies on property taxes, while the City relies on income taxes -- see Fiscal Condition). By looking at the map, two traits are readily apparent. First, the economic engine of the City is represented in the darker green areas in the northern (commercial office & retail) and eastern (industrial) edges of the community and along High Street (retail & office). These areas have high total assessed values, primarily due to the size, density, age and condition of the buildings, property size and location, and zoning of the land. The other land use characteristic that is apparent is the public and institutional uses (city buildings, parks, library, churches, schools, etc.). They appear lightest green because they are tax exempt, even though they have actual value in the market place. Most of these uses are very important to the community fabric, though they do not generate revenue for the city or schools. Of particular note are the Methodist Children's Home and the former Harding Hospital site - which are also tax exempt. Underdeveloped parcels are apparent in the second lightest green hue (with some exceptions).

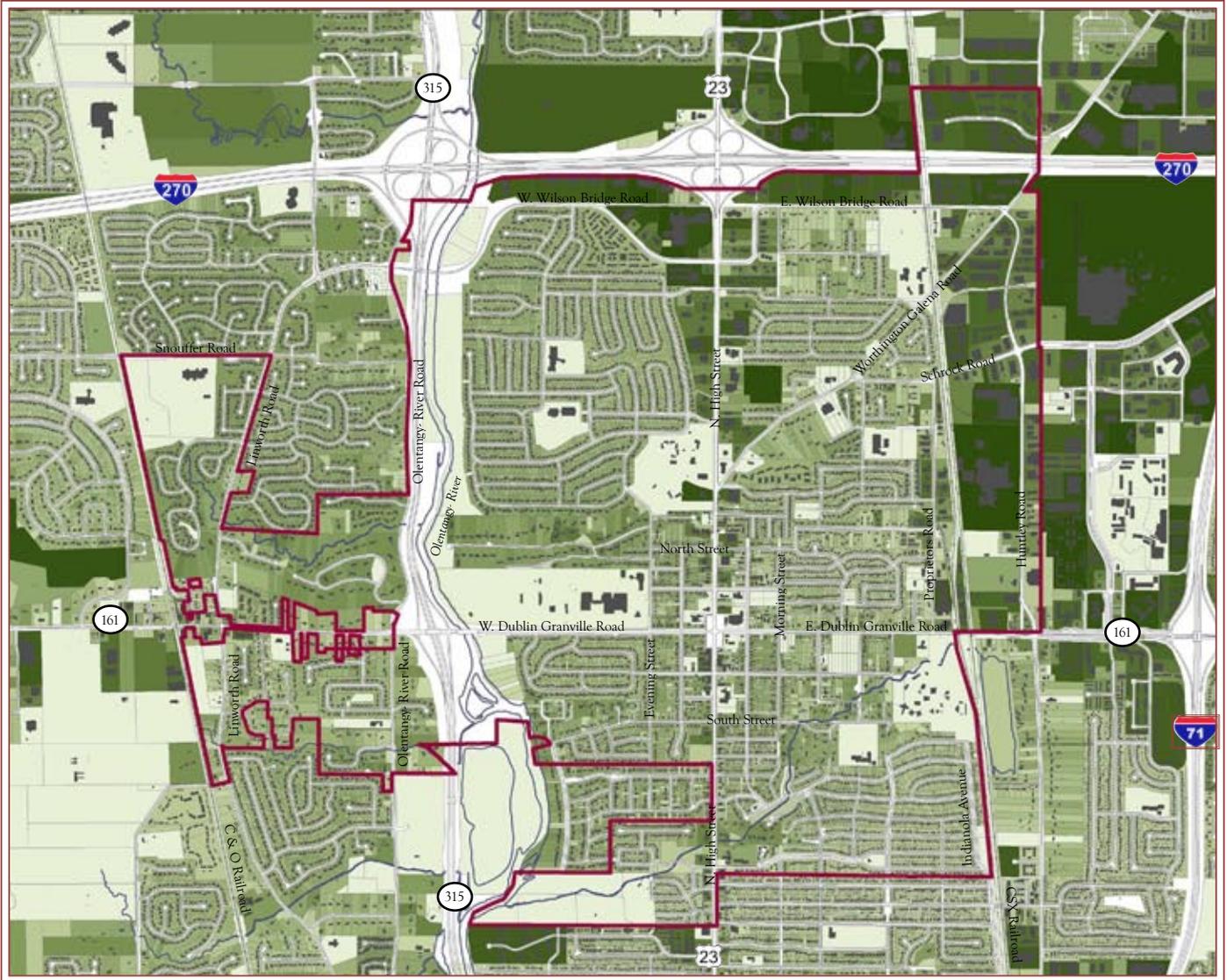
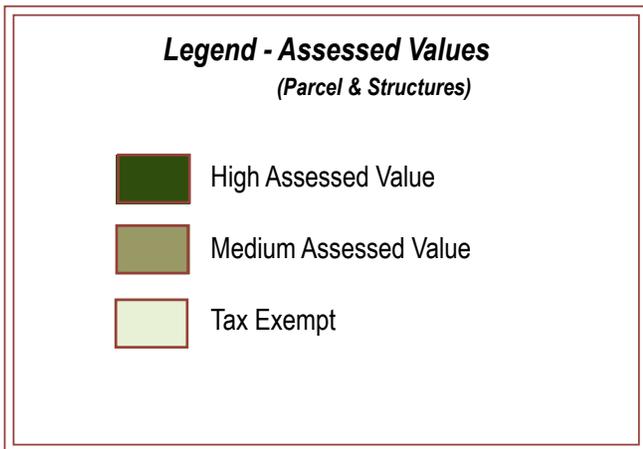


Figure 35 · Assessed Values Map - 2000



and property tax derived from it, a city can have a surprising affect on the private market by encouraging and directing redevelopment through its various powers – including master planning, zoning decisions, economic incentives, marketing, improved infrastructure, service provision, and an attractive and inviting community and environment. By targeting City efforts and funds in strategic places, private development can be attracted and the economic impact and benefit to the City and its revenues can be magnified. Worthington has already reaped rewards for its recent development efforts with the location of Worthington Industries corporate headquarters and American Health Holdings to the City.

In summary, it is important to consider methods for improving the City's revenue stream. One way is to increase Worthington's income tax revenue. This was accomplished in April 2003, when the standard two percent rate was approved by residents. It can also occur with increased employment within Worthington. If businesses expand or offices relocate to the City (bringing new employees) this will increase the income tax revenue.

Expansion space for businesses within Worthington is very limited. One way to expand is to make existing income-producing development denser. Redevelopment in certain locations at higher densities could add office space. Efforts should also focus on ways to encourage the private sector to make vacant buildings and under-performing properties more attractive. This could even take the form of redevelopment on the site. New construction also adds to the revenue stream through permits and taxes on the income of construction workers. Reinvestment and redevelopment at a higher density also increases both the school and City revenues through the increased assessed values of the property and structures. Note that tax-exempt or wholly tax-abated development does not have this affect, so such uses and incentives should be carefully evaluated.

### Summary of Fiscal Condition

- The City's ability to provide high-quality services is directly linked to the income tax revenue stream generated within the City.
- This income tax revenue stream is dependent upon the commercial and industrial base in the City.
- Future major capital projects are also dependent on the City's revenue stream.
- Income tax composed 65% and property taxes 8% of the City of Worthington's revenues in 2004.
- 77% of all property taxes collected go to the School District, 17% to the County, and 3% to the City.

### Assets

- Commercial and industrial re/development can add to income tax (City), property tax (School District), and sales tax (County) revenues.
- Worthington has the power to encourage and guide private market forces into redevelopment that will aid the City and community.
- New office tenants in Worthington will improve the income tax base.
- City resident's recently approved (2003) income tax rate increase to 2% will help maintain the City budget and services.
- Worthington has same income tax rate (2%) as surrounding municipalities.

### Constraints

- The maintenance of Worthington's high-quality of services is heavily tied to income tax revenues - and this reliance will continue to increase.
- The best method for growing Worthington income tax revenues is increasing employment, particularly higher salary jobs, within the City.
- Residential re/development does not add to the income tax base of the City.
- Allowing higher densities is one method of sparking redevelopment, but this is often controversial for the community.



### III. STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

## Overview

This plan focuses strategically on opportunities to enhance the Worthington community in its built and natural environment. The previous section established a framework that represents the condition of the City of Worthington in 2004. On the whole, Worthington is a strong and vibrant community that has grown to maturity in its 200-year history. The City is fully developed and its residents are very satisfied with it. As the existing conditions analysis points out, there are regional forces and issues inherent with the City's maturity that need to be addressed. The task at hand is to build on the City's success, make community refinements to tackle these issues, and continue to raise the quality of life standards so that Worthington continues to be one of the best places to live, work, and grow.

Often, there is some reluctance and resistance to change for a number of reasons ranging from inertia, to concerns over impacts, to a lack of clear direction. This plan attempts to overcome these concerns by creating a vision of what is possible and how change will benefit the lives of residents and businesses within the City. This section examines a number of areas with opportunities for improvement. It is hoped that these next pages generate excitement from the community, city leaders, and businesses interested in supporting and advancing this plan.

In examining the challenges, needs, and potential of various areas within the City, a number of focus areas were identified (see Figure 36). These include the Residential Neighborhoods, Old Worthington, the Old Worthington Transition Area, the High Street Corridor, the Freeway Commercial Area, the Industrial Corridor, the OSU Harding Hospital Site, and the West Dublin-Granville Road Corridor. In addition, there is a general examination of other opportunities such as park connections and light rail.

These focus areas are important to the City for a number of reasons that include opportunities to improve the built and natural environment, maintain economic centers, encourage beneficial redevelopment, and strengthen community ties.

One of the purposes of the Strategic Plan is to examine areas that are prime for redevelopment, consider their potential, and create a plan that guides redevelopment to complement and meet the needs of the community. As most of these focus areas are privately held land, it is important to note that these plans are general concepts that only serve to indicate a preferred direction for the City. They do not represent actual development plans of any party. This is an analysis of needs, opportunities, challenges, and a vision of what can be realistically achieved.



*Worthington Arts Festival in Old Worthington*



*Worthington Commerce Center*

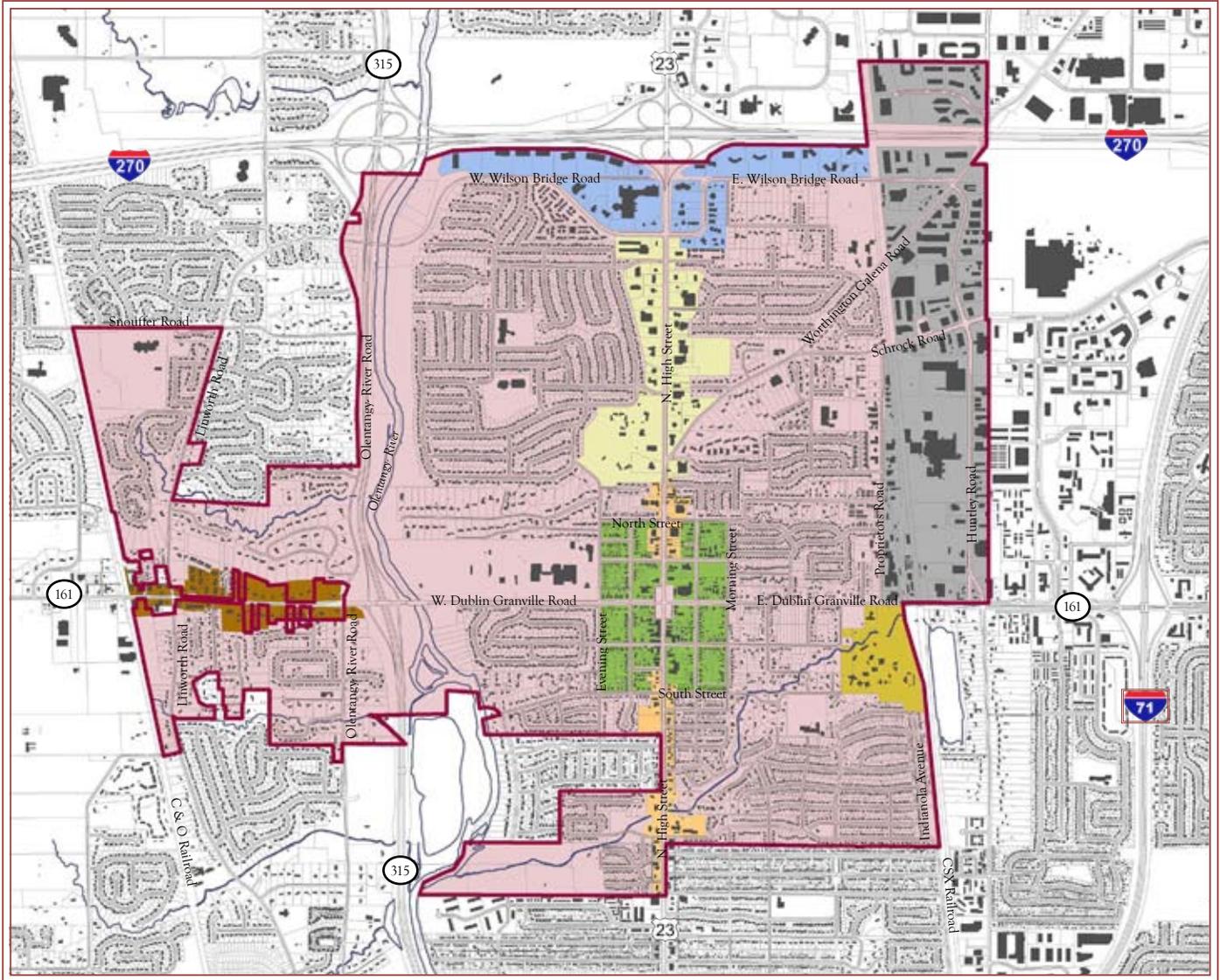
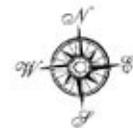
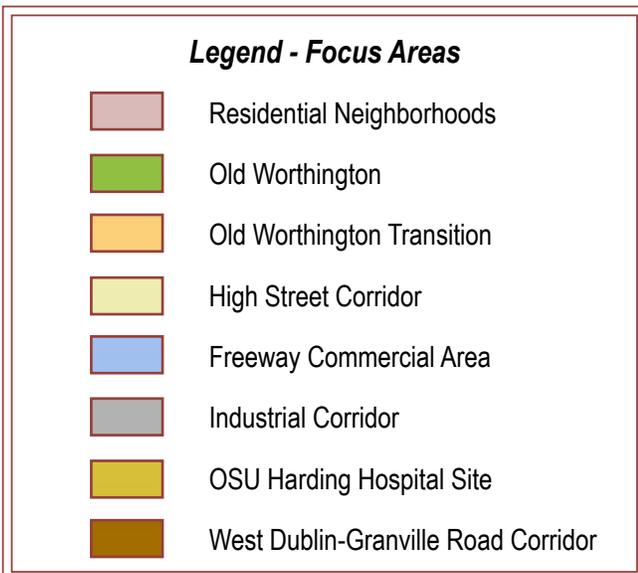
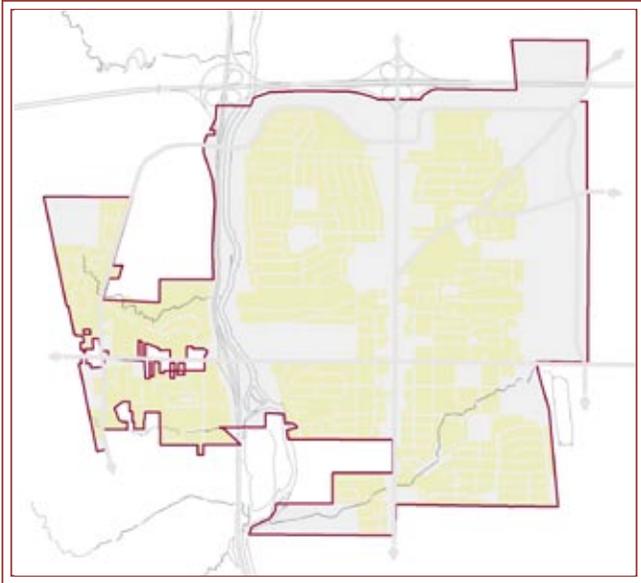


Figure 36 · Focus Areas Map





*Residential Neighborhoods Map*

## Residential Neighborhoods

The strength of the Worthington community is its residential neighborhoods — they house the people that provide the life to the community. Worthington's residents identify with their neighborhoods and are generally very satisfied with them. Common concerns of most of the neighborhoods center on holding traffic to acceptable levels, providing expected City services, maintaining the local schools and parks, and preserving the mature, safe, and relaxed nature of the community. Most of the issues revolve around quality of life and protecting the physical and psychological investment to the community.

From a City point of view, the land use and development issues surrounding the residential neighborhoods are not critical because of their current success. The primary challenge the City faces in the future is how to maintain the desirability of living in Worthington. If this is accomplished, the neighborhoods will continue to thrive. The secondary challenges related to the neighborhoods are the age of the housing stock and the imbalance in housing types.

## Maintaining Existing Housing Stock

One long-term issue facing Worthington's residential neighborhoods is upkeep and maintenance of the housing stock. A large amount of the housing stock is more than 30

years old, and some much older. Most of the subdivisions located near Old Worthington (inner-ring subdivisions) were built between 1940 and 1960, with the remaining areas predominantly developed between the 1960s and 1980s. Not only have architectural styles evolved since that time, average house sizes have increased as have the expected amenities (e.g. larger bedrooms, closets, bathrooms, and garages, an emphasis on kitchens, etc.). As a result, much of the housing stock is dated not only by its architectural style but also in internal amenities.

Renovation and upkeep of the housing stock becomes an issue to ensure that it maintains its appeal within the regional market. Through code enforcement and the use of an appearance code, the City can encourage owners to maintain their property and



*Residential neighborhood in Worthington*



*Existing Home in Worthington*

their building's exterior. In addition, the City should continue to be supportive of renovations by facilitating the permitting and review process in order to encourage these improvements — provided that the renovations are generally in context with the neighborhood. Indirectly, the key for the City is to continue to provide the amenities and services that make Worthington such a desirable place to live. This in turn will maintain property values and instill commitment to maintaining the housing stock in these residential neighborhoods.

### Improving City's Housing Balance

Another significant issue facing the City is the imbalance in the types of housing available within the City limits — assuming one of the goals of Worthington is to be a life-span community. As discussed in Section II, there is a shortage of housing options that allow a resident to live his or her entire life within Worthington. This requires a diversity of housing that targets college graduates ("young professionals") and maturing adults ("empty nesters"). Approximately 79% of the residential housing stock in Worthington is single-family detached homes. Often young professionals are looking for lower entry costs, more of an active community environment, less maintenance, and more amenities than the small starter-home offers. This type of development is lacking within the City. At the other end of the spectrum, the newer housing types that appeal to the empty nester are also fewer in number in Worthington proper. As a result, many Worthington residents stay in the detached, single-family home they have been living in for years, or they move out of the community. There is an opportunity to encourage the provision of these housing types within Worthington.

The successful housing product to meet this need in Worthington is one that takes advantage of the "urban village" living environment the city offers. This is not the typical suburban housing model found throughout the surrounding area (which is usually repetitive, disconnected, of a single house type, and reliant on the automobile to go anywhere). Connectivity and social interaction are critical to urban village living so these residential developments will connect into the pedestrian and street fabric and have a higher density that encourages contact and communication with neighbors.

This product, both in condominium and apartment form, will target those Worthington residents whose children have left their single-family home ("empty nesters") and those former children, newly on their own, who wish to come back to the City ("young professionals"). It will place people in close proximity to Worthington activity centers and encourage them to be involved in the City. For a more detailed description of Urban Village development, see the next page (p. 74).

The challenge is determining the appropriate location for such a product in a land-locked, fully-developed community. The market for these types of units in Worthington is limited only by the supply of land. For the City, the major constraint in accommodating this urban village residential redevelopment is the critical need Worthington has for commercial office ground. Reserving areas for commercial office redevelopment is vital for Worthington's well-being and must take priority.

If and when sites become available for redevelopment, the strongest pressure will be for the sites to become single-family residential neighborhoods. It is important to note that the City does not need additional single-family detached neighborhoods. Areas targeted for residential redevelopment should improve the housing imbalance with targeted products, not worsen it with more detached, single-family product. New single-family, detached homes should only be built to infill vacant lots in existing neighborhoods, replace existing ones, or as a small buffer for a larger mixed-use development project.



*Possible Large Redevelopment Site*

## Urban Village Development

Urban Village development is an appropriate and encouraged redevelopment option for certain sites in the City of Worthington. It will increase the variety of housing options in the city, attract young professionals and empty-nesters, optimize the use of the city's valuable land, and further promote the walkability and good design that are hallmarks of this community.

These urban village living units are townhouse-like in nature and are compact, multiple-story, and pedestrian-oriented. They foster interaction and provide a close walk to activity centers with shopping, eating, reading, public transportation, events, and/or festivals. These condominium and apartment developments are attractive in appearance and style, tend toward individual architectural character (though they may maintain a consistent theme), and provide amenities as well as an increased density.

The design of urban village development is a modern replication of the site layout used for Old Worthington (but it does not necessarily have the same architecture). These urban village living units are townhouse-like in nature in that they are built to the sidewalk (or court), are two to four

stories in height (never one-story), share outside walls, and have differentiated architecture. These developments are oriented around or near amenities such as pocket parks. Parking and garages are usually placed internally to the development off private drives while the building facades face and anchor the public street(s). Urban village design incorporates differentiated architecture so that the development does not appear as one large structure or repeated look-alike units, but rather a series of attractive, individual buildings next to each other — much like downtown Old Worthington. Urban village development can be true mixed use with retail or commercial uses on the first floor where appropriate.

Urban village development is designed to foster interaction with neighbors and the community. This is done through both the placement of the development (connecting it with activity centers) and the individual layout of the development. It is pedestrian-oriented with amenities such as sidewalks, trees, and lighting that connect to the surrounding areas and neighborhoods. These developments are in close walking distance to shops, restaurants, libraries, parks, community and recreational facilities, etc. and will reduce the need to



*Examples of Urban Village Development*

### Residential Infill Redevelopment

Again the challenge is finding appropriate locations for residential redevelopment in this fully-developed community. Figure 37 (page 77) identifies areas where urban village residential redevelopment could successfully occur within Worthington. These areas consist of Worthington's activity nodes (Old Worthington, Worthington Square), its existing multi-family residential corridors (south High Street, west side of Proprietors Road), remaining clusters of rural residential lots (E. Wilson Bridge Road, Worthington-Galena Road), and the two large potential redevelopment sites (Methodist Children's Home and OSU Harding Hospital). Figure 37 is provided to illustrate where non-single-family residential redevelopment could occur, though some areas are more suitable than others.

### Activity Centers

Ideal locations for urban village residential redevelopment are in the City's more urban nodes around Old Worthington and the Worthington Square. It is critical for any residential condominium/apartment development in the Old Worthington area to complement the character of the area and meet the City's Design Guidelines. Such development would have to be sensitively placed — where the architecture, site plan, and design merit it. In addition to infill sites, the upper floors of retail structures in Old Worthington should also be encouraged to return to residential uses. This is a great way of adding residential density with little impact to the character of the village center. Urban village residential infill can be accommodated around the Worthington Square area and is described in more detail as part of the Freeway Commercial chapter (page 92).

### Existing Residential Corridors

The existing multi-family residential corridors are ideal places for residential infill and redevelopment. If private developers step forward with redevelopment plans along the west side of Proprietors Road or the south High Street corridor, they should be seriously considered. To be worthwhile, however, they should substantially improve on the existing development and/or incorporate the existing structures. Increased density is acceptable provided it is an attractive urban village-style product.

### Rural Residential Lots

There are a couple of areas in Worthington where a group of larger rural residential lots exist. These areas, such as the south side of East Wilson Bridge Road, the south side of Worthington-Galena Road west of the Worthington Christian School offer some potential for residential redevelopment. Because the houses are on larger lots, the acquisition of a group of adjacent lots could provide a large enough site for urban village redevelopment. These areas would be difficult to assemble and are more sensitive due to the proximity of residential neighbors. Still if a developer was able to acquire enough land, a project could be feasible.

Residential development along the south side of East Wilson Bridge Road would be attractive because of its proximity to major parks and the Recreation Center. At the same time, its proximity to other commercial and offices uses in the area make commercial office use viable. Because commercial ground is so important to the City, the priority for this area should be assembling and holding this ground for commercial office projects. If this can not be accomplished, urban village residential projects could be acceptable if they meet the high development standards outlined in this plan.



*Urban village character*

**Infill Residential**

Infill Residential is an appropriate redevelopment option for several sites in the City of Worthington. For most sites urban village development is preferable (see page 74). There are potential redevelopment locations, however, that are surrounded by single-family residential development and are not close to parks and/or activity centers. In these cases, a more suitable infill residential development is appropriate.

In such a case, the residential development can be lower density than urban village, but should still be more clustered than traditional single-family development. Units should be no taller than two stories. Architecture and materials are of high quality and while the design of individual units will be unique, they will appear to be related and "from the same chess set."

This type of development must still contain pedestrian connections throughout the neighborhood and to the public street and surrounding developments. Infill Residential development will typically consist of a condominium association that cares for the grounds, amenities, etc. In cases where infill development may occur within the City of Worthington it must be done in such a manner that it contributes to the community of Worthington.



*Example of Infill Residential Development*

The Worthington Galena Road parcels west of the Worthington Christian School would also make a good site for infill residential development. It is close to other multi-family residential development and provides close connections to High Street, Wilson Hills Elementary School, City Hall, and the Worthington Recreation Center. Improved sidewalks and bike path along this road would strengthen these connections.

**Large Redevelopment Sites**

Two institutions control large sites in Worthington that would be very attractive for redevelopment. One is the Methodist Children's Home located on High Street and the other is the Ohio State University Hospitals (former Harding Hospital) along East Dublin-Granville Road. Because Worthington needs income tax-producing uses, it is more critical that these areas focus on commercial office or other income tax generating uses. A predominance of residential development on these sites is not advisable or in the City's best interests. Each of these areas is considered in more detail in later chapters of this section (see High Street Corridor, page 88, and OSU Harding Hospital Site, page 96).



*Existing example of Infill Residential.*

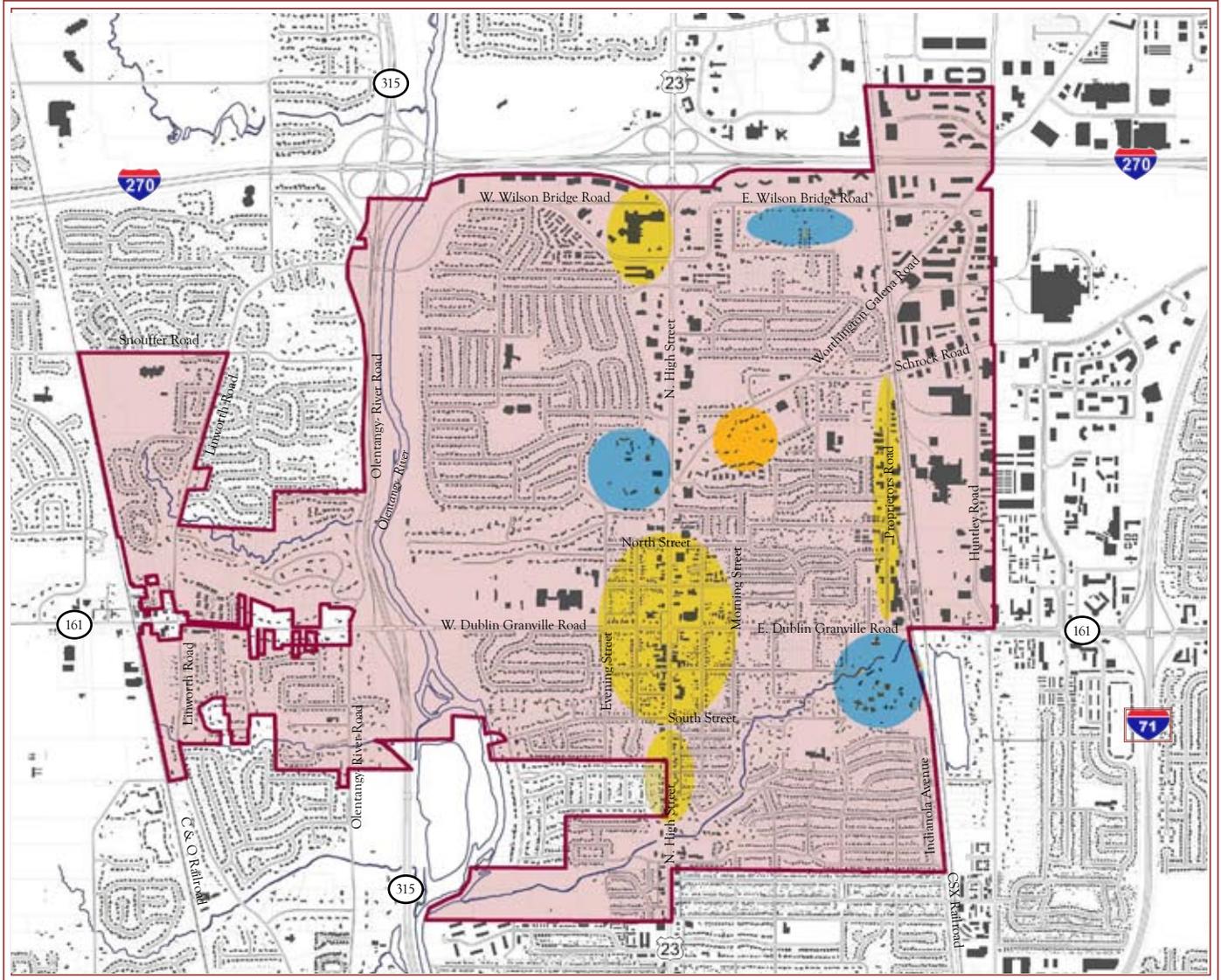
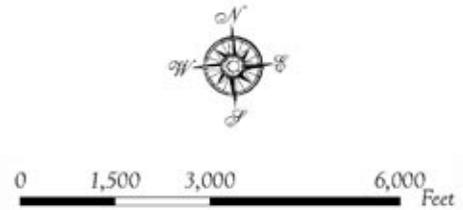
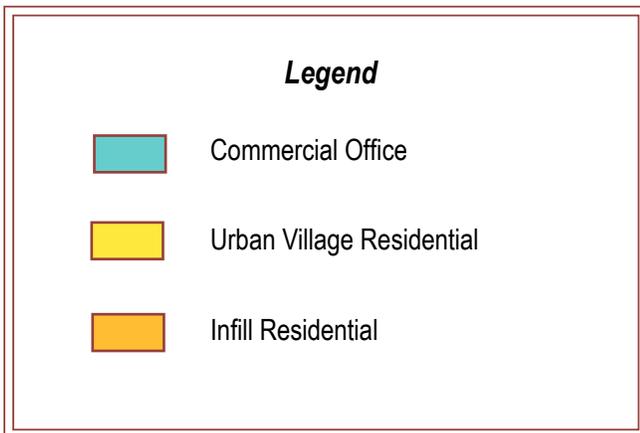


Figure 37 Residential Infill and Commercial Redevelopment Areas Map





*Old Worthington Core Map*

## Old Worthington

The historic village center, known today as Old Worthington, creates much of the identity of the City for residents and visitors. Founded in 1803, Worthington's 200-year history is reflected by the style and nature of development throughout Old Worthington. As in most historic village centers, there is a mix of land uses including commercial, residential, civic and institutional. The centerpiece of Worthington is the large Village Green located in the heart of the City - the four corners created by the intersection of High Street and Dublin-Granville Road.

Civic and institutional uses are focused around this public green, further creating the sense of a community gathering place. These uses include churches and the original site of the Worthington school and library. The commercial uses in Old Worthington are located along High Street, which has historically been the most significant commercial street in both Worthington and in neighboring Columbus. Beginning one-half block east and west of High Street are the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

The Old Worthington business corridor just south of the Village Green is the envy of many other towns in the region. It continues to serve as the heart of the community, but has recaptured its status as a successful commercial area as well.

Great efforts transpired to achieve this commercial rebirth in Old Worthington. The City, community, and business associations have spent years and substantial funds creating a beautiful streetscape, improving parking and facades, and achieving the right mix of tenants. Old Worthington has achieved an important critical mass of restaurants and bars as anchors along with acclaimed niche retailers. The location also benefits from the pedestrian-friendly scale of the sidewalk, streetscape, and buildings with rear-located parking. Furthermore it is a compact, concentrated area that invites strolling and easy exploration.

## Vision

Old Worthington offers a major competitive advantage for the City. This core area captures people with its vibrant, yet quaint and authentic presence. This is the community experience that so many people seek. Developers now attempt to replicate the conditions that exist here in their new malls and town center developments. Worthington should build upon this success and take the lessons it has learned and continue to apply them to other areas of Old Worthington. People want to live in and around this authentic community.

Additional urban village housing opportunities should be created where possible within the context of Old Worthington; and the three-block High Street core could be incrementally expanded to provide new living, retail, and office opportunities. The key then is to capture the essence of the Old Worthington



*Outdoor Dining at Old Bag of Nails Restaurant*

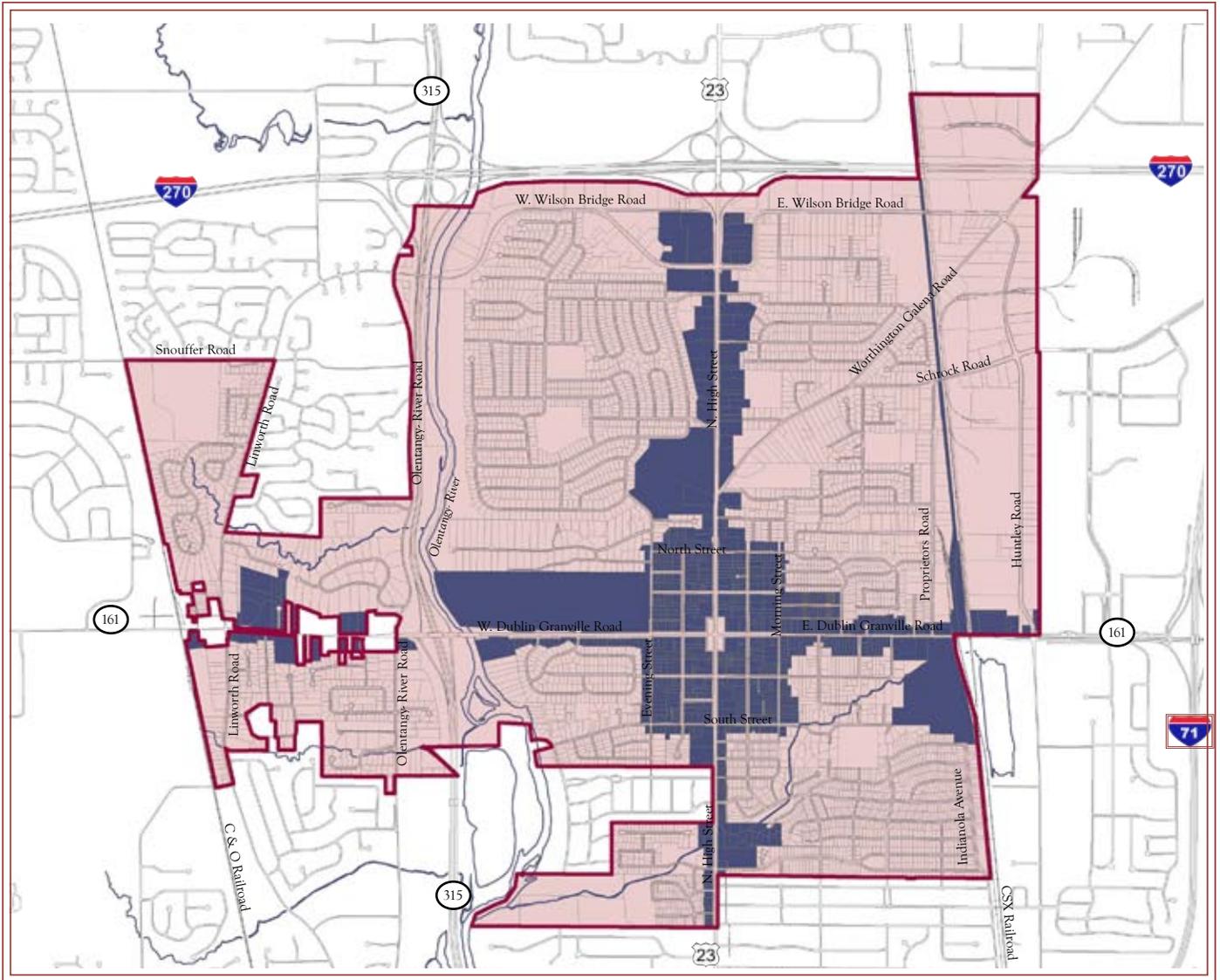
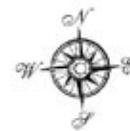
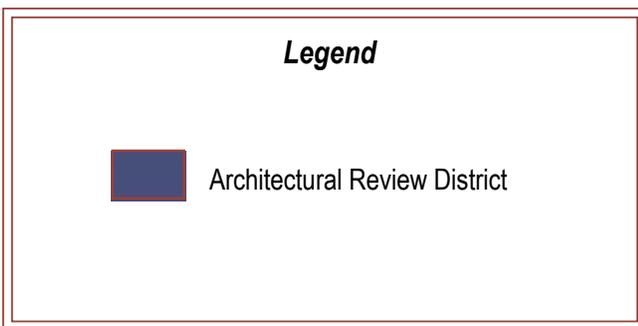


Figure 38 · Architectural Review District Map



core and expand it within the boundaries of North Street to South Street along High Street. The reuse, renovation, and redevelopment would take the form of mixed use urban retail and residential opportunities based on the character of Old Worthington and within the context of adopted Architectural Design Guidelines.

This area faces on-going challenges that include concerns over parking supply and location, retail hours, building and streetscape maintenance. Similarly there is concern regarding the appropriateness of redevelopment and land use changes within the Old Worthington area. The Architectural Design Guidelines prepared as part of this effort will address the architectural design and district integrity issues. Any redevelopment within this area must be reviewed by the Architectural Review Board (see Figure 38), and these guidelines will help this important effort.

### Walking Distances

A critical measurement in analyzing town centers and retail areas is the distance a pedestrian will comfortably walk. A distance of 1,500 linear feet is considered an easy walking range for the average person. With a destination in mind and a route that is pedestrian-friendly and direct, a pedestrian will walk upwards of 3,000 feet. These distances, when measured from a specific point such as the center of the Village Green, identify the *pedestrian walking shed*. These walking shed distances (concentric circles) are shown in Figure 39.



*In parts of Worthington the landscape is less pedestrian friendly.*



*Pedestrian friendly area in Old Worthington.*

### Extending the Business District

The heart of the active retail district is really very compact. Beginning south of the Village Green, it encompasses both sides of High Street for a block to New England Avenue. Then it continues along the west side of High Street one more block to Short Street and in less robust form to South Street. The reality is that the strolling retail customer needs storefront activity and visual stimulation to continue. When this is interrupted, the pedestrian flow stops.

The gas station at the southeast corner of New England begins to disrupt the flow with its auto-orientation, but the real obstacle is the vast inactive space and large setback of the Worthington United Methodist Church. To connect the east side of High Street all the way to Short Street, this dead space must be activated. An inviting linear pocket park could help, but the best solution would be to combine this with a new retail space built in front of the parking lot on the south side of the building. On the west side of High Street at Short Street, the activity of the post office contributes to the pedestrian flow. However, the uses and uninterrupted building density found to the north are not continued to the south. Infill on this next block, possibly even the redevelopment of these structures, could really activate the corridor to Short Street. Parking should be located to the rear of structures in shared lots. Shared parking agreements, such as those with the Methodist Church, are an important method of addressing parking concerns.

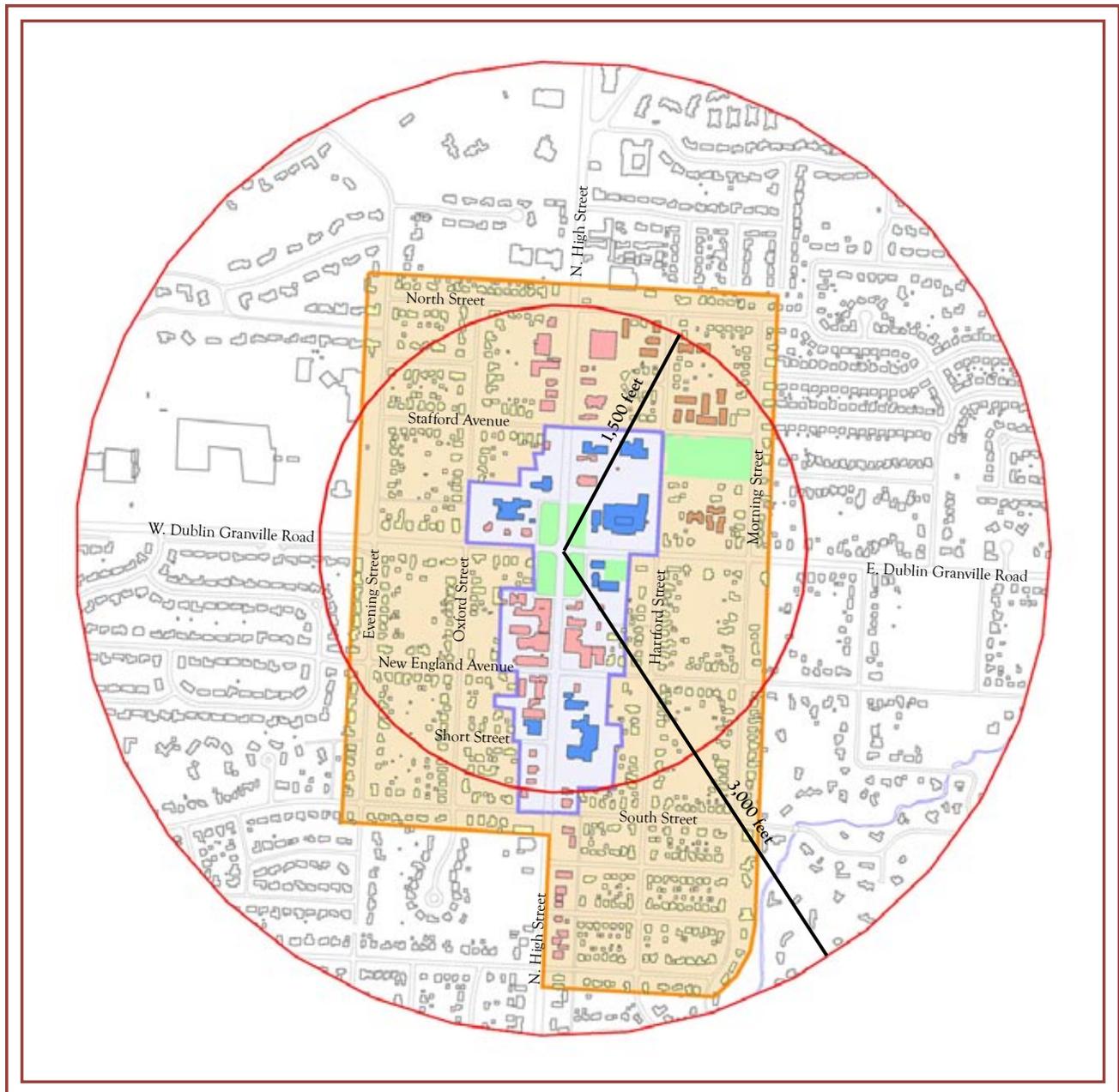


Figure 39 · Old Worthington Land Uses and Pedestrian Walking Shed Map

Another consideration is extending the Business District development pattern to the north. In this case, the size and expanse of the Village Green, though a wonderful civic space, is actually too broad to coax shoppers across to the north side. This and the traffic volumes on S.R. 161 hinder this movement. If retail and active uses surrounded the edge of the Green, it might be possible to lure pedestrians and shoppers across. However, the existing religious and civic institutions are too

important to the community to contemplate this. The former school administration building could make an inviting destination space; and ultimately the redevelopment of the Huntington Bank (site of original Griswold Inn) into a use and structure more active and in context with the Village Green would be exciting.

It is important to note that expansion of retail commercial uses should not extend beyond the High Street corridor. It

is appropriate for restaurants and shops to turn the corner along High Street within the first half block, but these valuable uses should not be extended too far into the residential area and take away from the vitality and viability of the commercial corridor. The High Street corridor should remain the retail center with roads like Dublin-Granville remaining primarily civic and residential land uses. On the other hand, certain uses such as bed and breakfast homes, could be very appropriate within the block off of High Street.

### **New Residential**

Village centers like Old Worthington are logical places to add residential density in and behind the main corridor. Such residential development adds more pedestrian activity, increases the market base for the retail stores, and can be designed as a product that is attractive to young professionals

and empty nesters. In Worthington, redeveloping residential lots within the first High Street block requires expertise to prevent it from tearing into the historic fabric of the City. Such development must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, but it would be critical to be appropriate for the site in scale and design while at the same time creating a continuous street front. One of the most effective methods for adding residential units in this area is to rediscover and recapture the upper floor spaces in existing and new development along the corridor.

The pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use nature of Old Worthington is historically appropriate. Its success indicates that there are significant land use lessons to be applied to redevelopment efforts in Worthington. It appears there may be new opportunities for mixed-use development in appropriate locations. The history of the High Street corridor indicates long-term success for a linear commercial development approach.



*Old Worthington Business District*





*Old Worthington High Street Transition Area Map*

### Old Worthington High Street Transition

Significant redevelopment opportunities exist in the "transition zones" along High Street where Old Worthington ends. These areas have a distinctly different character than Old Worthington because most of the sites were developed or redeveloped to cater to the automobile. As a result, many of the sites along the transition areas are heavily auto-oriented though they are within the Old Worthington grid and context. Because of their age, size, and the competition within the region, many of these retail commercial areas are marginal and could be redeveloped with more of the core's pedestrian-oriented character and design. Such a result could markedly transform and improve the High Street corridor, creating more inviting and successful retail space and reknitting the neighborhood to these spaces.

There are two primary areas in this High Street transition zone: one centered around the North Street intersection, and the other larger one flowing from South Street to Cemetery Drive at the southern city limits. This plan examines the area around the intersection of North and High Streets and suggests redevelopment options that can be applied within Worthington's High Street transition areas. The following examples illustrate the potential beneficial impact of such redevelopment in the High Street transition areas. This type of redevelopment can be accomplished in the short-term by private interests, with

immediate investment producing immediate returns. The uses illustrated have attempted to reflect the economic realities of development by including adequate parking and site access. The major change is a more efficient and well-designed site layout that takes cues from the Old Worthington core. These illustrations show the potential enhancement of the site and corridor by following the preferred traditional urban design principals — moving the buildings forward to the sidewalk, placing the parking to the rear (screened by the building), and creating an inviting streetscape with an attractive two-story building facade.

The site plan in Figure 40 shows a number of changes to the corner of North and High Streets. Existing buildings are shown as gray and new or expanded buildings are in red. On the southeast corner, the Jubilee grocery store is expanded forward on the site and replacement/additional shared parking is created to the south, behind the High Street structures. This allows expansion of the neighborhood grocery store, creates a new facade, and creates a more traditional streetscape. On the southwest corner, the Speedway gas station and Worthington Center retail strip are redeveloped into a new retail and office center. This development helps to anchor and revitalize the corner. Parking is accommodated to the rear of the site and screened from the residential neighbors. This development could be achieved without the Speedway, but turning the corner with this type of development makes a much stronger statement. This concept is further illustrated with the before and after images in Figures 41 & 42 on the next page. The building image used in Figure 42 was actually built by a private developer on a corner lot in Dublin where a gas station was formerly located.

On the northeast corner, the Kinkos/CVS center is rebuilt (including the Dairy Queen). Again the buildings anchor the corner, frame the pedestrian space and street, invite browsing, create second story-office or residential opportunities, and locate and screen the parking in the rear of the site (see Figures 43 & 44). Such a development is much more in context with and complimentary to the adjacent historic Orange Johnson House. The Speed Lube corner is also shown as redeveloped.



Figure 40 · North & High Streets Potential Redevelopment Concept

Decorative pavement, gateway features, and street trees mark the entrance into Old Worthington.

Together, this redeveloped corner evokes the atmosphere of Old Worthington, crafts an architecturally defined entry point to the historic village, and produces another community node and neighborhood activity center to anchor the north end of Old Worthington. Such a redevelopment will also energize Worthington and signal the development community that

high-quality products are encouraged and will be successful in Worthington. At this point, the proposed redevelopment is just a conceptual vision, but area developers have expressed interest in this model.

Similar efforts within the south transition zone will create comparable opportunities. These redevelopments would enhance the character of Old Worthington and continue to tie it together and build on one of the City's greatest assets.



Figure 41 - Southwest Corner of High Street & North Street, Existing Condition



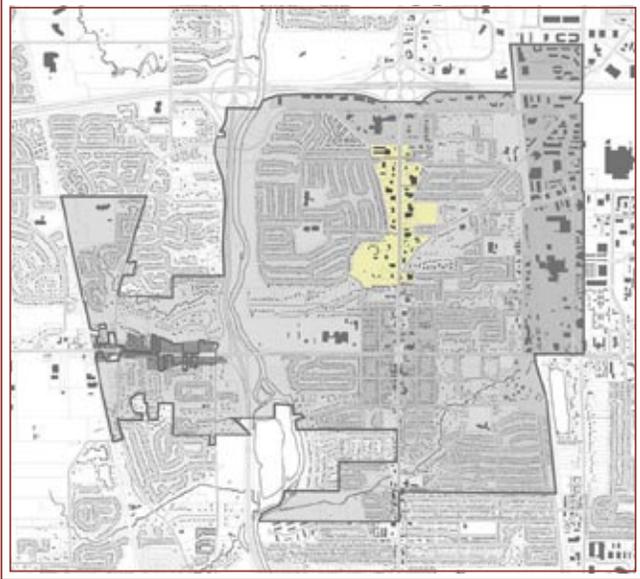
Figure 42 - Redevelopment Possibility for the Southwest Corner of High Street & North Street



Figure 43 - Northeast Corner of High Street & North Street, Existing Condition



Figure 44 - Redevelopment Possibility for the Northeast Corner of High Street & North Street



*High Street Corridor Extents Map*

## **High Street Corridor (Extents Area)**

The High Street Corridor Extents are the portions of High Street outside of the historic core and transition areas located north of Wilson Drive (*on page 88*). The design character of the High Street Corridor Extents is, by nature, different from that in the historic core. This area is more suburban in style with broad, green front yards, deeper and wider parcels, increased setbacks, and large off-street parking lots.

It represents a distinct development model and serves as a transition from Old Worthington to the freeway commercial areas surrounding Interstate 270. A number of building styles have been constructed here intermittently across the past fifty years. It contains an array of uses including corporate offices, retirement homes, retail services (banks, restaurants, gas station, etc.), and city hall.

The deep lots with green yards and mature trees make this area pleasant to drive through. Some of the larger office sites even located their large surface parking fields to the rear of the site, minimizing their visual impact to High Street. For the most part, the development style is established and should not be disturbed at this point. Improvements can be made, however, to the existing site conditions. Consistent site design should be encouraged such as landscape screening and

interior planting of all surface parking areas and the location of large parking areas to the rear of the site. These types of improvements should be encouraged on existing sites and required for new sites.

The High Street Corridor Extents could accommodate redevelopment at a higher density, similar to that of Blue Cross/Blue Shield, if needed. Such a project should only be approved if it meets the needs of the City and it should provide green setbacks and meet the Architectural Design Guidelines. Large format and strip retail centers are not encouraged or welcome.

## **Methodist Children's Home Site**

The High Street Corridor Extents does, however, contain a possible redevelopment opportunity in the Methodist Children's Home site. This site is not currently on the market, but it is such a large site that it continues to attract development interest, and in fact has received rezoning approval for commercial development along its frontage (but not built). Therefore, it is important that this Strategic Plan examine the preferred use of this site for the City in case it does become available for redevelopment in the future. It is critical that any redevelopment of sites such as this be guided to benefit the community. An appropriate redevelopment project could provide a major boost to Worthington.



*Worthington United Methodist Center*



Figure 45 · Children's Home Potential Redevelopment Concept A  
 Professional office and small commercial development along High Street  
 with civic green opposite city hall, and single-family residential development buffer.



Figure 46 · Children's Home Potential Redevelopment Concept B  
 Medical center and office development with multi-family and single-family residential development transition.

This 41-acre site offers the opportunity to develop some of the urban village living that is lacking in the City. In particular, higher density residential development could be accommodated here along with transition areas for the single family neighborhood to the west. At the same time, Worthington can not afford to allow potentially significant income-producing ground to be developed for residential or retail uses. The High Street frontage provides an attractive development site for commercial office uses. Thus this is an ideal site for a mixed use, planned development. Planned developments allow flexibility in the site design in a negotiated approval process between the developer and the City. Use of traditional neighborhood development (TND) principles would be appropriate in reuse of this site.

Several development options for this site have been explored in this plan and two are illustrated here (see Figures 45 & 46). Both of the concepts include residential development as a buffer and transition for the single-family neighborhoods in the west. This residential area would consist of cluster residential development and transition to more dense urban village residential development to help address the housing type imbalance of the City. In addition, a pocket park could be provided for the new neighborhood. All the concepts also provide a green setback along High Street and strive to create a relationship (to varying degrees) with the City Hall and Fire Station across High Street. Redevelopment of this site provides the opportunity to create a focal point green, park, or "civic square" with the City campus.



*Worthington United Methodist Center*

The major difference between the redevelopment concepts are the uses proposed for the front, eastern two-thirds of the site (it should be noted that the existing Children's Home uses could be consolidated to the west, allowing any of the following). Figure 45 shows a neotraditional development with two and three-story commercial office buildings along High Street and mixed-use structures lining an internal "Main Street". A civic green aligns with the city building campus across High Street; and parking fields are located to the rear of the buildings, screening the parking. Main Street design creates a very walkable block of restaurants, live-work units, and/or small professional offices. Figure 46 places the building footprint of a surgical hospital on the site with a related medical office campus behind it.

These are just two conceptual site designs out of many. The critical issue is that any redevelopment on this site must address City needs. Worthington requires development that generates employment within the City. Thus commercial and professional offices would be welcomed here. Likewise, a surgical hospital, medical offices, or occupational therapy center would be a great fit. A higher density office, residential, and (limited) retail mixed-use development could be successful as the northern extension of Old Worthington — walkable and interconnected.

It is also important that the residential component of this site address the housing needs discussed in this plan. The residential areas should connect with the existing residential street grid and High Street because interconnections are very important to the community. The redevelopment concept could be further improved if the Sunrise Assisted Living development could be incorporated into the plan, allowing a main entrance to be created opposite Worthington-Galena Road.



*West Dublin-Granville Road Corridor Map*

This plan recommends that the Dublin-Granville corridor remain residential in nature. Large commercial retail development should remain in the Sawmill Road corridor. The neighborhood retail service center established at the Dublin-Granville Road and Linworth Road node (Linworth) is appropriate for the community. Residential development along this corridor should be lower density to permit the minimal widening of State Route 161. The roadway should be made no larger than a three-lane section at any point along this corridor. This allows for one moving lane in each direction and a center turning lane, where needed, and a median in other locations. As a primary gateway into Worthington, the character of this roadway should be carefully guarded.

### **West Dublin-Granville Road Corridor**

The West Dublin-Granville Corridor presents an interesting challenge due to the current mix of jurisdictional boundaries in the area. A number of parcels along Dublin-Granville Road remain in Perry and Sharon Townships. In addition, Columbus and Worthington meet in a jagged fashion near the intersection of Dublin-Granville and Linworth Roads. This fragmentation makes it difficult to create a cohesive vision for this corridor. The result is confusion over the future and direction of development here. Annexation of the remaining township parcels into Worthington should be pursued in order to alleviate one layer of this difficulty. This would allow Worthington to better control and influence the development of this important entry corridor.

The future appearance and success of the West Dublin-Granville Road corridor depends on land use and the transportation improvement decisions that are about to be made. This area is largely residential — there are some institutional and neighborhood retail uses here, but otherwise the significant commercial development is located within Columbus. Large new residential and mixed-use development is expected west of Linworth and the C & O railroad tracks. In addition, ODOT plans to widen the road through this area of Worthington to accommodate the growing traffic demands. The issue is what does Worthington want this corridor to be.



*Commercial center along West Dublin-Granville Road*



*Freeway Commercial Area Map*

## **Freeway Commercial Area**

The commercial office center of Worthington is located along its northern boundary. Large suburban office buildings were developed on Wilson Bridge Road and the I-270 highway frontage in the 1970s due to the proximity of the High Street interchange. Worthington Square, an enclosed retail mall, anchors the southwest corner of the interchange. Together, this commercial office and retail center is a vital economic engine for the City of Worthington. The success of this area is critical to the health of the City.

Unfortunately for Worthington, the commercial and retail market in Central Ohio is saturated and extremely competitive, particularly in northern Franklin and southern Delaware Counties. Combined with the fact that Worthington's building stock is aging and there are attractive greenfield sites in the market, this area faces difficult challenges. Office employment levels have declined in the Freeway Commercial area across the past decade as business tenants have relocated to other communities for build-to-suit spaces. Yet the City has attracted a number of new tenants in the past three years and continues to diligently work toward filling vacant office space.

Similarly, new retail centers have opened in the area over the past decade, including Crosswoods, Tuttle Mall, Easton Mall,

and most recently, Polaris Mall. These new retail destinations have affected the tenant mix and success of the Worthington Square. At this time, much of the west end of the mall is under-performing.

Thus Worthington's Freeway Commercial area is challenged by dated structures and competition from newer locales. The advantage of this area is its freeway visibility and access, and this access is better south from the interchange into Worthington, than north toward Delaware. Still, there are no easy solutions. Adding new buildings on the sites is problematic as this would require the development of expensive parking structures and the best sites are occupied. The office buildings have too much value to be redeveloped. As a result, property owners have been investing in substantial interior renovation to make the buildings more competitive in the market. This is beginning to show success in new leases. At this time, the best course of action for the city is to focus on creating a more cohesive and attractive district that energizes the area and continues to support and encourage private reinvestment and redevelopment. The prime candidate for this effort is the Worthington Square Mall.

## **Worthington Square Development**

A renovation to the Worthington Square and careful redevelopment of the site's edges could greatly enhance the attractiveness and success of the site, and in turn the office



*Worthington Square*

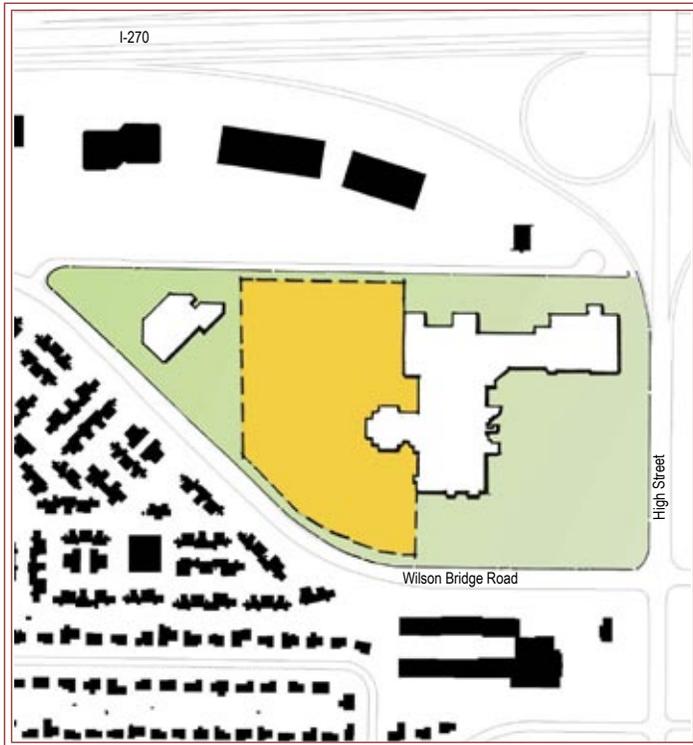


Figure 47 - Potential Worthington Square Redevelopment Area

corridor. There is potential to replace marginal structures along Wilson Bridge Road to the west of the mall with office development facing the road. This would add new office employment centers, but is challenging in the current office space market. A better, more exciting solution is the opportunity that exists to create a thriving mixed-use center that is a smaller, more integrated version of the Easton Town Center concept. Such a development would occur along the Wilson Bridge Road frontage and at the west end of the mall. It would consist of multi-story apartment buildings with retail spaces on some first floors. The result would be an inviting pedestrian-oriented entertainment area with outdoor restaurants and shops for evening and weekend strolls. The apartment housing units would be attractive to the 20-35 year old market that is underserved in Worthington. In addition, it adds to the captured market for the Worthington Square. With careful design, this west side redevelopment could create a new, signature entrance through to the Corporate Exchange office development – tying it together and adding prestige to the new corporate tenants there. Overall, this exciting development would invigorate the Freeway Commercial area, making it an

exciting destination and an attractive area for businesses to locate. This in turn could spark new leases, renovation, and possibly even encourage redevelopment of office structures along the corridor.

Figures 48 and 49 show concept sketches of the form this mixed-use redevelopment of the western side of the Worthington Square might take. The site plans are included to inspire and provide a feel for what could realistically fit on this site. Both designs are variations of the same theme. The western entrance from Wilson Bridge Road remains in place but is aligned straight past the western edge of the mall and terminates in a parking structure. This garage accommodates the surface parking eliminated by this project (it could conceivably be enlarged to hold the parking for the adjacent office building and moved west, to allow the access road direct connection to Old Wilson Bridge Road). The existing office and retail development along Wilson Bridge Road west of this entry road is removed and/or relocated. In their place is a three-story residential townhouse development. These buildings are placed along new roads, creating a neighborhood feel with strong streetscapes. The residential units (yellow on the plan) front on the public roads and main access streets. Parking areas are internal to the development and many of the units could have first floor garages in the rear. Retail uses (orange) are located on the first floor of some of these buildings (with residential above) at strategic corners and along the entry street. Together with outparcel restaurants (red) added along the east side of the entrance, an active outdoor strolling, shopping, and dining corridor is created.

This is one type of urban village housing this plan contemplates. It is integrated with the community, provides a multitude of amenities, activities, and services within an easy walk, and reinforces the stability of existing uses.

Still the critical issue in this corridor is increased employment density. Additional development that increases employment in the corridor is worthwhile and encouraged. To this end, attracting appropriate reinvestment in this area is a necessity. Improving this Mall and helping it become more of a special and vibrant destination, is one approach to achieving this.



*Worthington Office Character Photos*



*Area Office Character Photo*



*Worthington Residential Character Photos*



*Area Residential Character Photo*



*Worthington Retail Character Photos*



*Area Retail Character Photo*

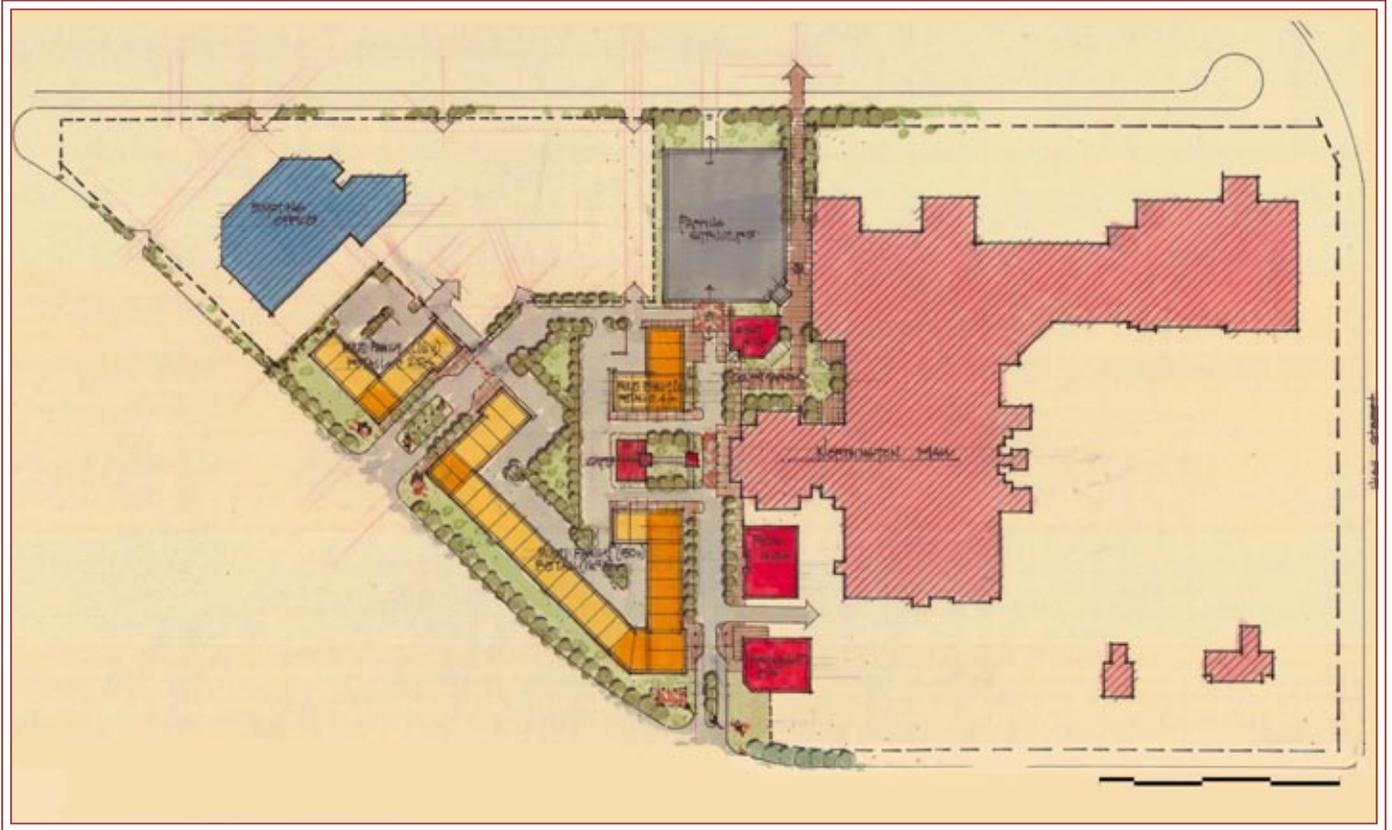


Figure 48 · Worthington Square West End Potential Redevelopment Concept A

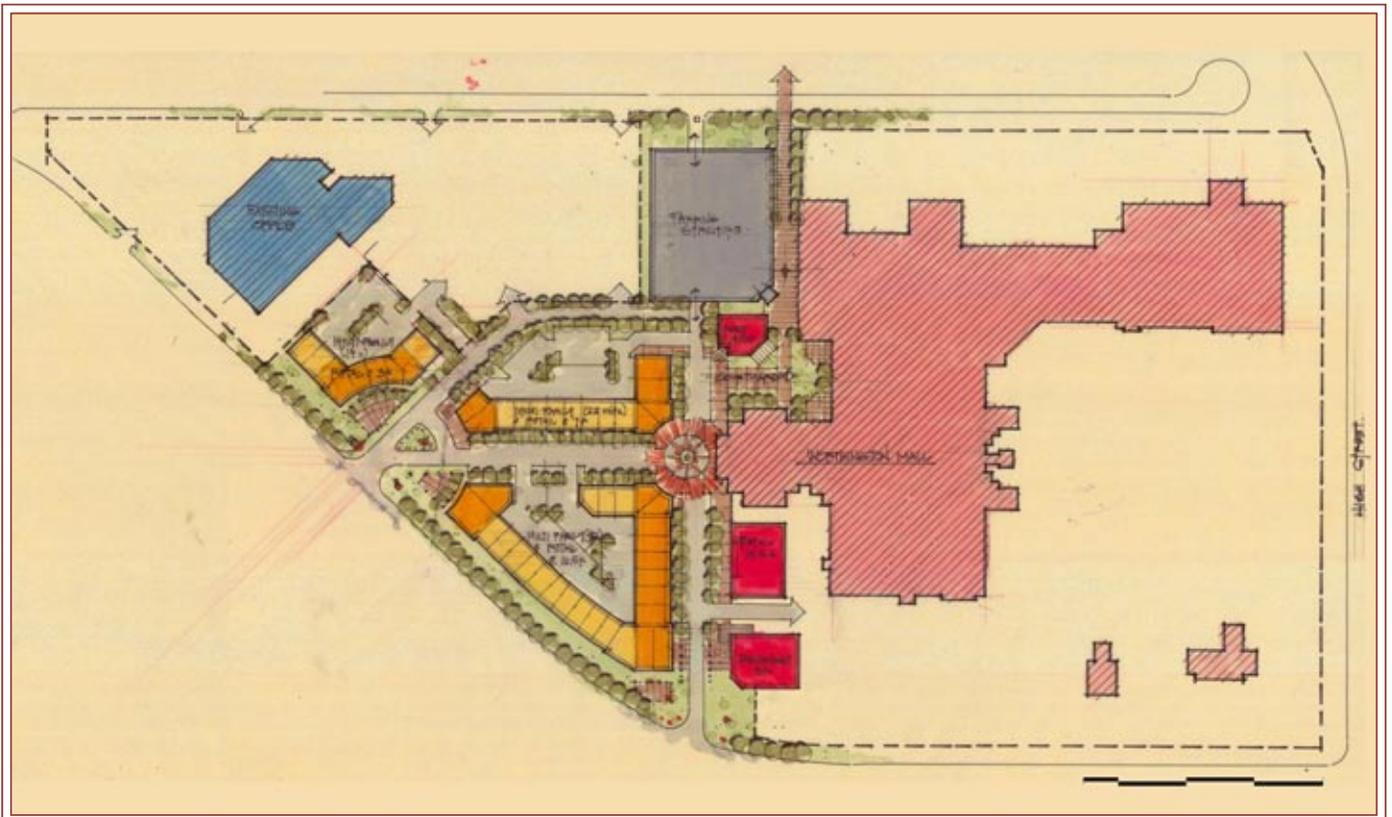


Figure 49 · Worthington Square West End Potential Redevelopment Concept B



*OSU Harding Hospital Site Map*

## **OSU Harding Hospital Site**

The OSU "Harding Hospital" site is a beautiful, wooded campus of 45 acres located near the heart of Worthington. The hospital no longer is in operation and the site is currently owned by the Ohio State University. OSU has not determined the site's future so it is reluctant to consider selling it or making any changes. Still, at some point, this site will either be sold or redeveloped by the University. As a result, it is essential that this plan examine its potential and provide direction for this future redevelopment.

Determining an appropriate redevelopment strategy for the site is challenging. It is located along the busy Dublin-Granville Road corridor, so its short frontage has commercial value. Because of the size, terrain, and beauty of the area, it is ripe for residential development. Surrounding neighborhoods see the site's potential as a park. At the same time, COTA is planning Central Ohio's first light rail system in half a century along the adjacent railroad corridor and plans on locating a station in this vicinity. Finally, this site represents one of the last, large opportunities for a major employment center for Worthington. Adding to the employment base is an imperative need for the community.

The site is limited by its location with regards to its commercial potential. As a corporate office site, the visibility is relatively low compared with other sites in the immediate region. This problem is

even more sharply felt by potential retail tenants of this site. The visibility is much lower for a retailer than most anywhere on the High Street corridor, which is the natural retail focus for Worthington. In addition, the City should not encourage competing retail uses here. Adding traditional single-family residential development is not encouraged as it will not provide an economic benefit to the City, nor is it a community need. Similarly, while a great setting for a retirement community, this location does not serve the elderly housing market as well as High Street locations nor does this use meet the critical needs of the City. Revenue from single-family development does not cover the infrastructure and service costs that come with it and multi-family is similar.

The idea of a Metro Park was also explored for this site. It would provide an excellent opportunity to develop a Metro Park inside the outerbelt, further expanding the regional service of that park system into an underserved area. However the site is not large enough for their needs. In addition, such a plan precludes development on the site, eliminating potential property and income taxes generated on the site.

An urban village residential development could be very successful here, providing connections through the neighborhoods to Old Worthington. The addition of a light rail station makes this use even more appealing. The creation of a transit-oriented development is an option if light rail service is provided. This type of development



*Harding Hospital Site Entrance Sign*



Figure 50 • Corporate Campus-Style Potential Redevelopment Concept for OSU Harding Hospital Site

pattern creates a mixed-use node around a light rail train station, capitalizing on the area as both a point of departure and arrival on the transit line. Neighborhood retail uses would be provided in conjunction with the station.

There are a handful of uses that should be embraced by the City because they both take advantage of the setting and significantly improve Worthington's tax base. This site has potential for future collegiate use or expansion as a branch campus. The employment and opportunities such a use could provide would be welcome. At this time, however, OSU has no plans to utilize the area for an academic use in the foreseeable future. Another option is to market the site as a corporate campus headquarters. Certain companies value a campus setting over highly visible locations. This site could be a perfect fit for such a user and Worthington. Another appropriate fit would be as a high-tech campus for a company like Battelle or an expansion or relocation of Ohio State's research and development labs.

To attract any of these ideal users, the City needs to indicate

that this is the preferred development for this site and actively market it as such. A partnership with Ohio State will be required for such an effort. There is no incentive for Ohio State to sell the site because any profit is returned to the general fund. As a result, leasing the ground or creating some type of non-profit development corporation with OSU is highly desirable. Because of this, an OSU use of the site would be the easiest to accomplish.

Regardless of development type, any use will have to be sensitive to the site, protecting the wooded ravines and providing natural area buffers for the existing neighborhoods. Community connections are vital, and this site could provide some missing links. It would be very appropriate to create natural public paths within this site that take advantage of the site's beautiful natural features. Pedestrian connections to Worthington's street grid that allow easy access to Old Worthington are important. Finally, multiple street connections are a requirement for this site. At a minimum, a public connection made to Indianola Avenue is critical. These streets should not promote cut-through traffic, but they should be connected to the site.



*Industrial Corridor Map*

## **Industrial Corridor**

The industrial corridor of Worthington is an elongated area that follows Huntley Road, the CSX railroad tracks, and the east side of Proprietors Road, running north-south from Dublin-Granville Road to just north of I-270. The corridor is a strong source of revenue for the City. It has functioned as a successful industrial area for decades, but faces heavy competition from newer industrial parks in the region and world. As a result the corridor has declined somewhat since its peak in the 1970s, and experienced conversion from manufacturing and research to warehousing. The corridor consists of a number of buildings of various sizes and arrangements, as well as a few vacant lots. Because of the general age of the corridor and larger size of competing areas, Worthington's industrial corridor is attractive to small and medium-sized manufacturers and distributors as well as business startups.

The corridor still has the advantages of access to the rail line, proximity to the freeway system, close labor pool, and a location within the Outerbelt. To remain attractive as an industrial location it is critical to consistently maintain and improve the infrastructure to allow good roadway access for trucking between these industrial sites and the I-270 and I-71 corridors.

Still the City faces an important directional decision for this corridor - should it remain entirely industrial. Because of the attractiveness of the I-270 business office corridor, there is increasing interest in reusing and redeveloping some of this space for office purposes. The City could continue to maintain the corridor as a light industrial/warehousing area, it could work to redirect it as a research and design corridor, or it could allow portions of it to convert to office uses. There are challenges with each approach.

If no direction is provided and the corridor remains industrially zoned, this area and the structures within it will likely continue to age and convert to predominantly small and medium-sized warehouse and light industrial uses. Change will occur incrementally, with redevelopment triggered when the ground and the economic potential for new buildings is worth more than the structures that exist on it. The concern is that warehousing uses provide less taxable income to the City than business or research and development facilities because the buildings are housing more inventory than employees.

Another option is the wholesale redevelopment approach which calls for making major changes to the corridor. In this scenario the City actively works to facilitate the consolidation of parcels for redevelopment and aesthetic improvements in the corridor



*The successful Worthington Commerce Center*

to position it more toward research and development as well as business incubation. Larger sites are more attractive for major redevelopment and bigger users. Upgrading the corridor's aesthetics would be important in attracting the professional employees and differentiating Worthington's location from others. If successful, such an effort could greatly enhance the tax-generating capacity of the corridor. This direction requires support, commitment, and heavy-lifting by the City.

The third direction is to allow the conversion of portions of the corridor to office or mixed office/industrial use. This option would attract tenants that do not require freeway-type visibility. This effort could gain momentum in the private sector with the return of the office market. More office employees generate more tax dollars for the City. The concern is that this would be done haphazardly in existing buildings with little investment in the properties. If the City chooses this path, areas should be designated for these uses and zoning changes made to allow this. Such Code changes should include aesthetic design controls so that the property owners improve the appearance of these sites as part of their investment. Higher densities should be allowed in the scenario to encourage redevelopment of the sites into larger office parks with more employees.

In any case, it is critical that the City protect this area as an employment center. The City should strive to make this area attractive to investment and redevelopment. The availability and provision of amenities (like the Recreation Center), services, and infrastructure are important in this effort. The City could adopt stronger aesthetic design controls to improve the appearance of this corridor, but there must be a careful balance with the impact to the users. As long as the industrial corridor continues to be economically attractive to investment and production, it will continue to be a vital part of Worthington's success.



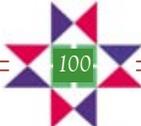
*Rush Creek Center*



*Available industrial space on Huntley Road*



*Shipping/Receiving area along Huntley Road*





## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendations and Implementation

The recommendations and implementation steps listed in this section are designed to meet the overall goals of the Worthington Comprehensive Plan Update.

### I. GENERAL IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

#### 1. Adopt Comprehensive Plan Update

The Worthington City Council should formally adopt the Worthington Strategic Plan as the City's updated Comprehensive Plan. Adoption demonstrates Worthington's commitment to the goals and direction of this plan as well as provides legal underpinning for taking action on the following implementation steps. This plan provides direction for the community and indicates to residents, property owners, businesses, and other private interests the intent and focus of the community.

#### 2. Adjust Zoning Code

Analyze Worthington's zoning code and consider zoning adjustments to facilitate the components of this plan including protection of important environmental resources, focusing on new uses such as light rail, and facilitating the development concepts suggested by the plan. This includes addressing issues related to natural resource buffers, infill development, traditional redevelopment, parking maximums, landscaping, etc. Most of these steps will require action by City Council in the form of an adopted ordinance.

**2-a Create PUD Zoning Classification:** Planned Unit Development (PUD) is a type of zoning that allows some negotiation of the zoning standards between the developer and the City in order to encourage innovative development that meets the goals of the community. PUD development plans, including a limitation development text that contains zoning restrictions, are reviewed and approved by the City in stages. Review includes site design, architecture, materials, landscaping, etc. This type of development allows both the City and developer flexibility and is a method for allowing mixed-use and traditional style redevelopment. The availability of the PUD zoning category will help encourage the development types discussed in this plan – ones that address Worthington's needs. In particular, this includes the Urban Village Residential style development. Urban Village Residential could be a subcategory of the PUD District or its own zoning district. Its purpose is to enable high-quality, higher density residential development that is compact, walkable, and close to

activity centers. It should also permit retail uses on first floors as a conditional use.

**2-b Add Corridor Overlays:** Create corridor zoning overlays where added protection and/or additional development standards are needed. There are really two types: a *natural protection overlay*, and a *corridor/district overlay*. The City already has a district overlay with the Architectural Review District. Natural/Scenic Protection Overlay Zoning should be adopted for the Olentangy River corridor and its major ravines. It would establish buffers and conservation areas; restricting the type of structures that could be placed within it. A High Street Corridor Overlay should be enacted in Old Worthington to re-establish traditional development standards, encourage mixed-uses, and reinforce the Design Guidelines.

**2-c Limit Large Format Retail Uses:** The City might consider modifying the commercial retail section of the Zoning Code to limit the maximum size of retail uses in order to discourage and prevent the location of "big box" single retail uses within Worthington.

**2-d Create a TOD Zoning Classification:** With the potential of light rail corridors being developed on both the east and west sides of Worthington, the City should create a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) zoning category that facilitates appropriate development of the rail station and related uses. This zoning should require reduced parking requirements, structured parking rather than large surface parking lots, promote pedestrian integration and sidewalk connection, ensure high-level of design, and encourage a mixture of uses beneficial to the community such as employment centers and urban village living. Standards should be included to address these issues. For example, parking garage design must be attractive and of appropriate scale for the site and surrounding neighborhoods.

**2-e Strengthen Landscape, Screening, and Lighting Zoning Requirements:** It appears that Worthington's landscape, lighting, and screening requirements could be more effective in certain areas. Landscaping and screening requirements can be improved for parking lots and parcel boundaries. Lighting guidelines can be added to reduce light pollution and spillage. Standards should also be added to require dumpsters and ground-mounted mechanical equipment to be appropriately walled and/or screened. Worthington should update its zoning code in these areas to match the more stringent requirements of other Central Ohio communities.

- 2-f Combine Industrial Districts (I-1 & I-2):** The distinction between industrial uses in Worthington is blurring. It could be more effective to combine these zoning classifications and address this area as one district.

### 3. Promote High-Quality Physical Environment

The City should continue to emphasize strong physical and aesthetic design. This is one of the defining characteristics of Worthington. The City must continue to require high-quality development, from offices to warehouses, apartments to houses, and civic buildings to parks. Promoting attractive and desirable high-quality development improves the community for the residents and businesses, makes the City more desirable, and improves the value of all the development within the City.

- 3-a Maintain High Quality of Civic Design and Location:** The design and placement of Worthington's civic uses are a part of the City's fundamental strength. Architecture, site design, and prominent location speak to the pride and values of this City. Continue to carefully select the location of civic uses to enhance the community and improve the strength of the built environment and surrounding uses. Active public uses should be placed in the village center to reinforce this community node and add to its synergy.
- 3-b Expand Design Review:** Because the success of the Highway Commercial Corridor and the Industrial District are so important to the City, it is worthwhile supporting the enhancement and updating of these areas to more modern design standards found in newer commercial parks. This includes site design and aesthetics. The development and design of buildings and sites in these areas should receive aesthetic review. Similarly, the aesthetic integrity and character of neighborhoods such as Rush Creek Village should also be recognized. These areas should be included under some type of expanded design review process. This could take a number of forms, such as an overlay zoning district(s) (see 2-b above).

## II. RESIDENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

Encourage redevelopment that creates a life-span community. This includes creating housing products that will attract young professionals and maturing adults so they can "live in place" in Worthington. Well-designed housing products catering

to these groups should be sought and supported. Any new housing development should be well integrated and connected with the community. The City should encourage and facilitate the maintenance and vitality of the existing single-family neighborhoods.

### 1. Restrict New R-10 and R-16 Zoning

Severely limit the use of any new R-10 (Low Density Residential) or R-16 (Very Low Density Residential) zoning within the existing City limits. There is an abundance of the type of housing this zoning creates — almost 60 percent of Worthington's total land area is devoted to low density single-family detached housing stock. As this Plan notes, there are pressing needs for other types of uses within the City – both residential and commercial. New residential development should be of the "village residential" type that addresses the deficiencies in the City's housing market identified within this plan. In-fill or redevelopment in existing single-family zoned areas is appropriate, but the conversion of existing land to R-10, R-16, or lower density single-family zoning should be discouraged, except in areas with small parcels surrounded by this type of development.

### 2. Promote Urban Village Housing Development

This plan identifies a need for an alternate type of residential housing type – herein called "urban village." It caters to those looking for an alternative to the single-family detached home. This type of housing has high-quality architecture and design, provides modern amenities, orients structures for the pedestrian (no garages or parking facing public street), is compact and walkable, and fosters interaction with residents and activity centers in close proximity. This product should attract one or both of two groups of people: the young professionals beginning their post-college careers, and long-term residents desiring to move from their single-family home within the City. Two prime areas for mixing in this type of residential development are around Old Worthington and the Worthington Square.

### 3. Encourage Upper-Story Residential Uses

The renovation and use of upper stories for residential living should be permitted and encouraged where possible – particularly in areas such as Old Worthington. Such uses provide additional urban village-type living. Furthermore, the increased residential density along High Street will create an additional customer base for service/retail uses located in the corridor. Tax incentives could even be considered to spark renovation of upper floor residential space in targeted areas.

## 4. Support Housing Stock Maintenance

The City should monitor the housing stock to ensure that it continues to be maintained. Demolition by neglect is not acceptable. The City approval process and fees for residential renovation and improvement in the residential areas should be straightforward, quick, and relatively easy (with the possible exception of the ARD). Design expertise and assistance, or even a loan and/or grant program, could be made available for residents. Tool-lending libraries (branch of public library) have also been successful. On the other side, code enforcement is the stick that must be used when necessary. Complaints should be checked and resolved. The City Code should be examined for more tools of enforcement. If property maintenance code or appearance code requirements need to be added, they should be. The best method of ensuring a stable housing stock is to continue providing the excellent services and environment that makes Worthington and these neighborhoods a desirable place to live.

## 5. Interconnect Neighborhoods with Sidewalks & Paths

Interconnection is critical to creating a community and bringing people together. Neighborhoods are created because they are connected and woven together. Worthington was established to be a strong community. To achieve this, it is imperative that all of the City's neighborhoods, parks, schools, and activity centers are interconnected with sidewalks and linked into the bike path system. Path connections like those along the west side of Linworth Road (from Collins Drive to Linworth Park) are important and attractive improvements. This means that every public road should have at least a sidewalk or pathway on one side, and major roads should include a bikeway. These connections should be added as roads are repaired and rebuilt. Furthermore, road connections are also critical for creating a community as well as reducing traffic burdens. Developments should have multiple public road connections – cul-de-sacs and single access points should be a last resort.

## III. TAX-BASE IMPROVEMENT IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

A primary need of the City is to achieve city income tax revenues sufficient to maintain the existing level of city services. The income taxes of workers in Worthington provide the majority (59%) of the City of Worthington's operating revenue. Thus it is critical for the City to increase the income tax-producing property within Worthington to keep pace with necessary expenditures, pursue major capital improvement projects, and continue to provide the quality of life that makes Worthington an outstanding and desirable place to live. At the same time, new development/redevelopment also aids the School District which is very dependent on property taxes.

## 1. Work Toward Maximizing the Revenue Stream

When land is rezoned or redeveloped, the proposed use and design should maximize the revenue stream to the City per acre of land. This means encouraging uses and increased densities that add to the income tax revenue stream. Obviously this should not be done to the detriment of Worthington's character or charm. However where land is being developed, and there is a choice between, say, commercial office development and single-family homes – the professional office use would be preferable because it maximizes the revenue stream. Likewise, if there is a choice between a warehouse development (low number of employees per acre) and an office development (higher number of employees per acre) on a given site – the office would be preferable.

## 2. Increase Commercial Office Space

Worthington's office space currently consists of 4% of the total land use. Because the income taxes generated from these office uses are crucial to the City's financial stability, great efforts should be made to encourage the private market to add additional commercial office space within the City. This can be accomplished by converting some land to office use and by allowing increased densities on office sites. This can also be accomplished by keeping vacancy rates low and by encouraging home-based offices and telecommuting in the City. Recommendations include:

- 2-a Encourage the renovation and redevelopment of the existing highway office properties to make them more competitive and attractive in the market. Increased densities through expansion and use of structured parking (parking garage) should be promoted.
- 2-b Market the Class C office space internal to the City for small professional and niche users.
- 2-c Support and work to meet the needs of companies in the business incubators, such as the Worthington Commerce Center.
- 2-d Promote the addition of amenities and services around the existing commercial areas to make their location more attractive.
- 2-e Consider the reuse and/or conversion of some industrial buildings for employee-intensive uses.
- 2-f Work to attract work-at-home employees, but develop a system to monitor/capture the income tax from these home office locations.

## 3. Create an Industrial Corridor Plan

Worthington's industrial corridor represents a significant amount of land (11%) and is very important to the City's

economic base. Because of the age and types of uses located here, this compact area is experiencing significant change and has the opportunity to reinvent itself. An area plan focusing on the Proprietors/Huntley Road corridor should be developed that makes recommendations for repositioning it in the market place to make it attractive and competitive in the region. A number of issues need to be addressed, particularly what this corridor can and should become (i.e. research and development center, technology park, business incubator, corporate office park, light manufacturing center, etc.) and the potential for capitalizing on the integration of a light rail station. Issues such as building renovation, aesthetics, and possible road and infrastructure improvements should also be addressed.

#### **4. Target Desired Retailers**

Identify retailers that the community would like to have located within Worthington and encourage them to look at the traditional retail environment that exists within the City. Retail trends are shifting toward mixed-use and adaptive reuse in urban environments with pedestrian orientation. Some of the most desired retailers are looking for urban village centers. Worthington should promote its High Street corridor and the Worthington Square nodes for these uses.

#### **5. Attract and Retain Small Businesses**

Small businesses are a critical component of Worthington. Together, they compose a majority of the employment within the city and provide a diverse economic foundation for the community. Successful small businesses can grow into larger employers and they can also attract or spin-off other related businesses. For small businesses, lease and rent rates are a primary locational consideration. Solutions to issues related to absentee landlords and their impacts should also be investigated. The City must continue to work with the small businesses within the community and identify opportunities and methods for attracting and retaining them. This includes strengthening the partnership with the Worthington Chamber of Commerce and other local business associations.

#### **6. Embrace and Develop High Technology**

Employers and households are becoming increasingly integrated with and reliant upon advanced high technology, including the wired and wireless world. The impacts of technology are widespread, rapidly evolving, and directly affect the economy. The City should embrace hi-tech infrastructure that will facilitate businesses and residents in being actively part of this globally-connected economy and society. This includes investigating looping Worthington with high-speed fiber optic lines and rolling out a wireless network

environment. The City should work with local businesses and experts in the field to identify opportunities in this area.

### **IV. JURISDICTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

#### **1. Encourage Annexation to Consolidate Borders**

Encourage the annexation of township “islands” along S.R. 161 east of the CSX Railroad tracks into Worthington. This will help consolidate the City’s borders and ensure appropriate and consistent development. Efforts could include informational meetings with owners of these properties.

#### **2. Improve Multi-Jurisdictional Coordination**

Work with the City of Columbus to create area plans and design standards for common border neighborhoods. These include:

- The Linworth Area
- High Street, south of Selby Boulevard
- East Dublin-Granville Road, east of the Norfolk & Southern Railroad tracks
- Connections on the north side between Worthington and Crosswoods along U.S. 23, and in the northeast along Worthington-Galena Road and Sancus Boulevard

Such an effort would facilitate a sharing of concerns and understanding, as well as assist Worthington in having a voice in the development planning occurring close to its borders, and vice versa. Efforts should also be made to encourage Columbus, Riverlea, ODOT, and MORPC to extend and interconnect the bikeway system.

#### **3. Partner with the Worthington School District**

The City of Worthington and the Worthington School District have a symbiotic relationship - the health of each affects the other. Both organizations must be strong for the benefit of the community. There appear to be regular opportunities for the City and Schools to work together better. This ranges from shared facilities and parking to decisions affecting land use, location, and tax base.

### **V. FOCUS AREA IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

Encourage the redevelopment of selected areas to meet the existing and future needs of the City and community. These selected focus areas are identified in this plan. Because there is so little ground where redevelopment should be considered and because re/development decisions have a long-lasting impact on the community fabric, it is imperative that such projects advance City goals and are of high-quality – otherwise they are not worth accepting. The goal is to target City efforts, resources, and funds in strategic places so as to attract

private redevelopment that generates a positive economic and community impact, magnifying the benefits and creating positive, upward momentum. More specific recommendations related to each focus area are listed below:

## 1. Old Worthington

- 1-a Focus retail and office uses to the High Street corridor with particular attention on retail for first floors in Old Worthington and the Old Worthington Transition Area. Do not let retail uses spread outside of this corridor here. Market to desired retail users that are targeting the authentic town center with pedestrian-oriented store plans and products.
- 1-b Extend the pedestrian strolling environment that exists in the Business District south (toward South Street) and north (toward North Street). The urban fabric should be inviting for the pedestrian with infill redevelopment and active uses in places to draw them along the street (for example allowing a retail structure in front of United Methodist Church parking lot). Any redevelopment must meet architectural design guidelines.
- 1-c Re-examine Code to ensure that development is permitted/encouraged to be pedestrian-oriented in downtown Worthington. This includes buildings up to the sidewalk envelope, on-street parking and parking to the rear or internal courtyard parking, two-story average building height, architecturally detailed structures, front door and windows along High Street, pedestrian-oriented signs, built landscape treatment of parking lots, etc. Sign and parking codes should be particularly addressed. Encourage and/or provide incentives for shared parking areas.
- 1-d Promote increased residential densities around Old Worthington provided it addresses targeted housing markets, meets the architectural design guidelines, does not significantly impact the historic fabric, and provides interior parking. This should occur primarily within the first block to each side of High Street. This should also include encouraging the mixed-use of space with active retail on street and residential above.
- 1-e Maintain active civic uses in the Old Worthington area. This is the public and institutional heart of the City and active civic-related uses should remain in this area. They create an energy that adds to the village center. Existing uses such as the Post Office and proposed ones such as the Arts Center best serve the community by being located in close proximity to Old Worthington to reinforce its vibrancy.

- 1-f Maintain the Village Green. Continue to reinforce the contributing uses and community orientation of this central civic area. This includes long range efforts like encouraging the ultimate redevelopment of the Huntington Bank site back to a contributing architectural structure. Consider appropriate uses that will draw people into and through the Village Green. High-end restaurants and similar attractors could be appropriate just north of the Green to add additional vitality.
- 1-g Maintain on-street parking in the central business district. This parking is part of the physical indication marking the heart of Old Worthington and provides a traffic calming effect that improves the pedestrian condition. In addition, its presence is important to the psychology of the retail businesses' customers – knowing that the businesses are open and accessible.

## 2. Old Worthington Transition Area

- 2-a Reduce the auto orientation of High Street commercial uses in this area. New and infill development should follow the same pedestrian-oriented site design as found in Old Worthington. The buildings should be placed along the public sidewalk with parking placed behind the structures.
- 2-b Encourage redevelopment of four corners area around North and High Streets to create an additional pedestrian-oriented neighborhood retail node and extend the historical village fabric to the northern boundaries of Old Worthington.
- 2-c Consider extending overlay design standards similar to those adopted by Columbus for the urban High Street corridor. They can serve as a starting point for standards for Worthington's portion of the corridor. Partner with the City of Columbus to encourage redevelopment in the High Street corridor area (southern Worthington) per these standards.

## 3. North High Street Corridor & Methodist Children's Home Site

- 3-a Maintain the deep green lawns and setbacks along this corridor. Require landscape screening of parking lots in these areas.
- 3-b Support the redevelopment of the Children's Home site into a mixed-use development. This will convert the site from non-taxable to taxable land. The preferred development mix must address community needs (i.e. office uses, targeted residential markets,

and small retail uses like restaurants) and be of high-quality design. If commercial uses are included, they should occur as part of a town center design along the front, High Street, side of the site.

#### 4. Freeway Commercial Area

- 4-a Promote the improvement of the Worthington Square area, including redevelopment of the west side. Encourage a mix of uses including urban village residential development based on a town center design with streets that create synergy with the mall and street level retail. New development in this location will improve this retail node and return regional focus to the mall and highway commercial area.
- 4-b Consider allowing phased redevelopment of existing office space – such that new structures are placed on the site adding to or replacing the existing building. This will be facilitated by the inclusion and integration of structured parking. Phasing may create situations where the site does not meet parking code, but this is acceptable on a temporary basis.
- 4-c Increased traffic capacity of the I-270/U.S. 23 Interchange should not be a priority of the City. However, if this road system and interchange is redeveloped, greatly improved pedestrian connections, aesthetic/gateway enhancements, etc. should be required as part of the project. This project should not widen the road sections in Worthington.
- 4-d Support the rezoning and redevelopment of the south side of East Wilson Bridge Road to commercial office uses. Such redevelopment should not be permitted on a piecemeal basis (i.e. one or two lots at a time). If this priority can not be achieved, urban village residential development is acceptable. Regardless, such redevelopment must be of high-quality architecture and design and must screen and buffer surrounding residential uses. A bike path should be provided as part of this project.

#### 5. OSU Harding Hospital Site

- 5-a Work with OSU to investigate the possibility of converting the Harding Hospital site into a satellite campus, research and development center, biological/medical science facility, or technology park (similar to their Kinnear Road facilities). If the University is unwilling to use the site, work with the Trustees to facilitate its sale to a private entity willing to develop it as an employment center.
- 5-b This site should be an employment center in the

City. Any redevelopment of this site should be as a corporate headquarters-style campus development where the tenant is desiring of and sensitive to the pristine natural environment and the campus is built within the context of the site. If the light rail system is developed along this corridor, this site could be developed as a mixed-use commercial office and urban village residential neighborhood integrated with greater Worthington. Large format retail and/or single-family residential development should be prohibited.

- 5-c If this site is redeveloped, the natural buffers should be maintained with the adjacent residential neighborhoods. In addition, it is very important that neighborhoods be reconnected with pedestrian paths to Old Worthington and street connections opened to Indianola Avenue.

#### 6. West Dublin-Granville Road Corridor

- 6-a Create a joint area plan for the Linworth area with the jurisdictions of Columbus and Perry and Sharon Townships. The goal is to guide and advocate appropriate development and integration of uses and infrastructure to meet the needs of the community around the Linworth node. Uses should be restricted to neighborhood retail and office uses on existing commercial sites around the intersection of S.R. 161 and Linworth Road, regardless of jurisdiction, to create a small neighborhood retail node that is pedestrian in scale – particularly within 1000 feet of both where the railroad tracks and Linworth Road cross S.R. 161.
- 6-b Limit widening of West Dublin-Granville Road to three lanes west of S.R. 315. Adopt a bike-path plan and require ODOT to build a bike path along the route as part of project.
- 6-c Maintain West Dublin-Granville Road (S.R. 161) as a single-family residential corridor east of the Linworth Road. The spread of commercial uses east of this intersection should be prohibited, with redevelopment limited to residential uses (except where commercial and institutional uses currently exist).
- 6-d Connect the neighborhoods with sidewalks. Consider ways to interconnect the community with the neighborhood retail node and possible transit station at Linworth crossing.
- 6-e Develop and pursue plans to annex into Worthington the Sharon and Perry Township parcels along S.R. 161 between Linworth Road and Olentangy River

Road with the goal of permitting the City to control all zoning and new development along both sides of that corridor.

### **VI. HISTORIC RESOURCES IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

#### **1. Encourage Federal & State Historic District Registration**

Worthington has a number of historic resources that define its character and help root the community. These resources should continue to be identified, with sites and districts submitted to both the State of Ohio and the Federal Government for formal recognition. This makes additional resources available to the sites and the community. The preservation and publicity of such sites provides educational and economic benefits to the community.

#### **2. Reinforce the Character of Historic Residential Area**

The Old Worthington area is not only the business district, it is also the surrounding residential and institutional area. Because this area is the historic core of the City, it is important to maintain its infrastructure and streetscape - and make it distinctive and appropriate for the district. The City should explore an improvement program to bring historic streetlights, brick sidewalks, and other enhancements to the district. As this recommendation is supported by residents within the neighborhood, it may be possible to offset a portion of the cost of such a program by a special improvement district assessment.

### **VII. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

#### **1. Preserve Natural Corridors & Ravines**

Preserve and enhance all natural corridors and ravines. This includes protecting the scenic and historic qualities of these corridors. Fill material of any type and new non-park related development should be prohibited in these areas.

#### **2. Restore Natural Habitat**

Work with government, non-profit groups, and property owners to restore natural habitat and migration routes, and remove invasive species. Encourage the development of an environmental learning laboratory along the Olentangy park area.

#### **3. Monitor Stormwater Impacts and Requirements**

Stormwater run-off from developed areas can have a significant negative impact on water quality, water courses, and properties downstream. The impact of stormwater is better understood, as are new methods of mitigating its

impacts. Federal and state regulations are becoming more strict in dealing with stormwater runoff and best management practices are being required. While adapting existing developed areas can be challenging, the City should follow and understand these newest practices and work to retrofit existing areas as opportunities arise.

### **VIII. PARK & CONNECTION IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

#### **1. Maintain Urban Tree Canopy**

Continue efforts to add to and maintain the City's urban tree canopy. This includes efforts such as Worthington's Street Tree Program and forest maintenance efforts that plant young trees in park land to ensure a succession of mature trees. Such programs should encourage the use of approved native species where possible. Designating a street tree species by road corridor should be considered as this creates a unifying and appealing visual character.

#### **2. Adopt City Bikeway Plan**

Adopt a formal City of Worthington Bikeway Plan. Being bicycle-friendly city is important to the community. Bike paths, bike lanes, and bike routes add to the quality of life for residents and workers within Worthington (and the region) by providing alternate transportation options, encouraging exercise and healthy lifestyles, connecting activity centers, offering safe routes for our children, and affording opportunities to be more in touch with the natural environment. Creating such a plan will aid the City in identifying appropriate and needed bike paths and bike lanes, as well as their interconnection. Standards for appropriate widths and design should also be addressed. An adopted bikeway plan compels ODOT to build connections as part of their projects (such as S.R. 161, U.S. 23, I-270, light rail) and aids with grant applications. For this reason, the Worthington Bikeway Plan should include regional connections and routes. Similarly, sidewalks should be made a part of this plan, indicating areas where sidewalk connections must be built (see #3 below).

#### **3. Add Bike Path Connections**

Continue to create bike path connections, particularly between community parks and activity areas and neighborhood entries (i.e. along Wilson Bridge Road, Worthington-Galena, Perry Park, Snouffer Road corridor, etc.). Work to integrate with and provide links for the regional bikeway system.

#### **4. Sidewalks**

Just as all properties in Worthington should access a public road, so all properties should access either a public bike path or sidewalk. The only exception should be for properties or

a neighborhood where the historical character prescribes no sidewalks, a condition that should be rare. Where possible, sidewalks should provide a tree lawn or be wide enough to comfortably separate the pedestrian from moving vehicular traffic. Adequate and safe sidewalks must also be provided connecting to and along bridges, such as Wilson Bridge Road and S.R. 161 over the Olentangy, and U.S. 23 over I-270, Worthington-Galena under I-270, etc. Sidewalk must be maintained throughout the City.

## **IX. CIRCULATION & TRANSPORTATION**

### **IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

While the growth around Worthington continues to impact its street system, the City's road network is more than adequate to handle its internal needs. Through traffic road systems have been widened to the limits. Further widening will irrevocably detract from the character and charm of Worthington. The City will not sacrifice its valued identity and quality of life to accommodate more through traffic. At the same time, the City needs to continue to be concerned, involved, and heard in regional planning and construction projects and activities surrounding Worthington. Note that bikeways and sidewalks are critical components of the transportation network but were covered in the previous recommendation Section VIII: Park & Connection Implementation Steps (#2-4).

#### **1. Limit West Dublin-Granville Road Widening**

Limit the planned widening of West Dublin-Granville Road to three total lanes west of S.R. 315.

#### **2. Prohibit Widening Through Old Worthington**

Prohibit the widening of S.R. 161 or U.S. 23 through Old Worthington. Traffic congestion should be relieved by making improvements or connections in other areas (ex. Morse-Bethel Graceland Connector). Tunneling from S.R. 315 to east of Worthington corporate line (similar to the North U.S. 23 plan for the North Outerbelt) would be the only other option worth consideration.

#### **3. Enhance I-270 North Outerbelt Improvements**

The City should make sure any state and federal improvements to I-270 and the North Outerbelt interchanges improve the City. This includes creating safe and inviting sidewalks/paths across I-270 on High Street, adding a tunnel for future path under I-270 for connectivity to any Light Rail Station, and limiting any widening of the High Street/Wilson Bridge Road intersection. Any solution to the North Outerbelt traffic problem should not negatively impact Worthington or place its

access point at a disadvantage.

#### **4. Study Remaining CIP Interchange Improvements**

Examine intersection improvements to the East Wilson Bridge/Worthington-Galena/Huntley Road intersection.

#### **5. Support Morse-Bethel (Graceland) Connector**

Support the creation of a Morse-Bethel connector provided it appropriately addresses the urban and neighborhood character of the area. A connection through Graceland would preserve the neighborhoods and provide incentive for its redevelopment.

#### **6. Promote Alternate Transportation Modes**

Promote and support alternate transportation modes by facilitating the use of buses, bikes, walking, and light rail. Continue to support and facilitate the operation and regular routes of COTA. Promote active lifestyles and continue to provide pedestrian and bike path links between all activity centers. Just as every parcel is served by a street, every parcel should be served by a sidewalk or bike path.

#### **7. Support Development of a Light Rail System**

Encourage the approval and development of Central Ohio's Light Rail system. The development of this system has the potential of dramatically improving the development, value, and accessibility of multiple locations within the City. If constructed appropriately, light rail could greatly enhance the livability of Worthington.

7-a Be involved in the COTA light rail design and planning process

7-b Carefully consider the location of stations. Achieving one station in the S.R. 161 area and another that serves Wilson Bridge Road as well as Crosswoods would be a great success.

7-c Demand good site design, appropriate uses, and strong aesthetics. Large surface parking lots are not appropriate in Worthington. Such development should consist of structured parking garages.

## **X. GATEWAY IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

### **1. Craft Distinctive & Appropriate Worthington Gateways**

Continue to improve and create distinctive, unifying gateways for Worthington and Old Worthington. Opportunities exist to create unique and appropriate entryways into the community. These gateway locations exist at both the major roadway entries into Worthington and those into Old Worthington. The City has worked to improve the streetscapes of Worthington

and create elegant but subdued gateways in areas such as North High Street. Yet there still is an opportunity to improve these gateways and add new ones using a coordinated design vocabulary that demarcates both the city boundaries and the entries into Old Worthington. This could take any number of forms from monument markers to painted pavement at intersections. Design of the gateway theme could be in the form of an artist competition. Improvements could be constructed across time. These gateways would tie the community together, enhance the city's attractiveness, and serve as visual cues for Worthington's boundaries and history. For areas such as South High Street, East Dublin-Granville Road, and Linworth, look for coordination opportunities with City of Columbus for grant sources (such as foundations like the Jeffrey Foundation, etc.) and for design (joint plans, Neighborhood Design Assistance Center, etc.). Work with ODOT for future Transportation Enhancement Program dollars for S.R. 161 and U.S. 23 gateways, as well as others outside of, but important to, the City such as the I-71 interchange.

### **2. Enhance Worthington's Primary Corridors**

The City has continuously worked to improve the traffic function and aesthetics of major street corridors within the City. The traffic improvements have been largely accomplished other than ODOT projects discussed in IX above. There are still opportunities to improve the aesthetics of various corridors within the City. This recommendation extends the improvements contemplated for the gateways in #1 above to lengths of the corridor. Improvements should include addressing utility poles, where the preference is to bury the lines in underground conduit, but at a minimum they should be separated from the street trees to allow a full tree canopy (decorative metal poles also improve the appearance). Street trees, landscaping, repaired sidewalks, decorative light poles, and traffic mast arms also enhance a street corridor. These elements should be designed to reflect a distinctive Worthington character. Some corridors should be addressed as part of planned ODOT projects. Others, such as East Dublin-Granville Road, should be addressed in appropriate phases.

## **XI. SCHOOL DISTRICT IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

### **1. Development within the School District**

The two most effective methods of assisting the Worthington School District are: 1) Increasing the property tax revenue (through higher rates or new, improved developments), and 2) Increasing the student population within the City and district. It is important to encourage careful development within the Worthington School District. It is acceptable for new residential development to add children to the district as

it is operating below capacity and the district benefits from per pupil state dollars. Development that increases the property tax base should be supported, provided any non-residential uses do not substantially compete with ones in Worthington.

### **2. Possible School Closure**

Encourage the district to maintain neighborhood schools. If it becomes necessary to close an elementary school, select one that is collocated with another school on the same property. In this way a neighborhood presence will be maintained. The open space and park around a closed school facility should be maintained, possibly through a partnership with City – including use of the gym as recreation/community space.

## **XII. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

### **1. Don Scott Field and OSU Airport Plans**

Don Scott Airfield is located west southwest of the City of Worthington and has been a neighbor to the city since 1943. In that time, it has become one of the busiest airports in the State of Ohio. Air traffic has increased across the past several decades, particularly as corporate jets have located here to serve the commercial businesses located along the Outerbelt in Columbus and the northwest suburbs. The existing airport facilities have provided businesses and residents with a convenient airport location. In fact, the airport was an important factor in recently attracting at least one corporation to relocate to Worthington. However, the airport's existing air traffic is impacting the surrounding neighborhoods, particularly in terms of noise. Though not located within the City of Worthington, the City must carefully examine the existing conditions and future plans of Don Scott Field and the OSU Airport — particularly in three general categories:

#### *(1) Addressing Existing Noise Issues:*

At the end of 2003, Worthington implemented a voluntary noise reporting system for complaints related to aircraft taking off and landing at the OSU airport. In a twelve-month period, 9,888 complaint reports were registered. A grass-roots group of residents called WOOSE formed to study this issue and oppose any airport expansion. WOOSE and the City's aviation consultant have raised important issues and concerns. This existing noise impact must be addressed by Don Scott Field and OSU Airport before Worthington can consider supporting any new runway or facility expansion.

#### *(2) North Runway Extension Project*

The City of Worthington has requested that an Environmental Impact Study and Part 150 Noise Study be conducted before the airport's Master Plan or any expansion of the airport is

approved by The Ohio State University. Based upon the level of concern and noise complaints from the people of Worthington, OSU should conduct a thorough single event noise study as well.

The City of Worthington can not consider supporting the extension of the runway and/or expansion of the airfield until the existing noise impacts are addressed. At that point, any expansion must be carefully and fully studied and reviewed by all parties, including the City of Worthington and its experts. Issues, needs, and concerns of the community, stakeholders, and affected parties must be considered. The City should continue to press The Ohio State University and the FAA to conduct the requested studies and to take action to mitigate the existing negative impacts of the airport on Worthington neighborhoods.

*(3) Monitoring Development of Don Scott Field Area:*

Don Scott Field consists of more than just OSU's airport. It contains roughly 1,400 acres representing the largest underdeveloped area in close proximity to Worthington. Conversion of this land to residential, retail, or office uses could have substantial impacts on Worthington, particularly in terms of additional economic competition and traffic through the existing City road network. Don Scott Field involves three major land owners: the OSU Board of Trustees, the State of Ohio with OSU, and the State of Ohio. Several development plans have been contemplated by these landowners. The long-range plans for all of this area should be reviewed and understood by the City, and potential impacts conveyed to appropriate parties. See Recommendation IV-2 "Improve Multi-Jurisdictional Coordination."

## 2. Mass Transit Considerations

Consider the potential of planned future mass transit stations when reviewing development applications, etc. Access to mass transit, both bus and light rail, is very important to the community. It can provide opportunities and options for residents and businesses of the City that make it more attractive as a place to live and work. Creation of a light rail system will provide significant advantages to those cities that plan and design for it. It is critical that Worthington plan for this in its development and land use decisions.

## XIII.. TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

### 1. Create a Worthington Investment Corporation

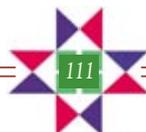
Creation of a non-profit community investment corporation (CIC) would assist the City in advancing the redevelopment concepts recommended by this plan and in realizing their full

potential. Because of the regional competition and the mature nature of Worthington, market forces need to be jump-started by a CIC. Tasks could include prioritizing redevelopment sites, purchasing and assembling land for redevelopment, marketing sites and creating interest, hiring firms to search for users, applying for grants and fund-raising, etc. There are a number of examples where the CIC could be very effective – most recently, for example, by purchasing the old school administration building on the Village Green for the community. It could then hold this property and work to determine its best reuse. Creation of a CIC was also an implementation step recommended by the Economic Development Plan.

## 2. Continue to Advance These Issues

A number of the major challenges facing Worthington are regional in scope. Regional issues require regional solutions. However many issues are smaller in scope than MORPC, Franklin County, or greater Columbus. The City must ensure that the staff and community can continue to focus on these issues. These functions/duties could also be rolled into the existing Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC). It is important that time is devoted on behalf of the City toward facilitating communication and addressing issues and challenges that affect this area - from residents, employees, businesses, the school district, etc. Issues to be addressed include:

- Share and Review of Development Plans (ex. the proposed TND plan in Columbus near Linworth, the new apartments in Crosswoods, etc.)
- Appropriate Future Land Use (ex. undeveloped parcels along Hard Road, etc.)
- Area Plan Development (North High Street, Linworth, Continent, Graceland, etc.)
- Special Issues (ex. Don Scott Airport expansion, etc.)
- School District Improvement (ex. district revenue enhancement)
- Parks and Recreation Needs (ex. cemetery vs. southern parkland, etc.)
- Environmental Protection (river corridors, stormwater, etc.)
- Trails and Greenway Connections (bike path connections and extension, etc.)
- Transportation Issues (ex. light rail station location, I-270 North Outerbelt Study, Busch brewery road system, etc.)
- Economic Development and Community Improvement (ex. TIFs, JEDDs, corridor zoning overlays, etc.)
- Jurisdictional Boundary Adjustments (to improve



- efficiency and effectiveness, etc.)
- Services and Infrastructure (ex. police, fire, utilities, etc.)

### **3. Form Tax Increment Financing District(s)**

Certain infrastructure improvements may be necessary or desirable in order to achieve/attract some of the development discussed in this plan. The use of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District(s) should be considered as a method of assisting with the financing of these improvements. This is particularly true for adding structured parking, enhanced streetscapes, and/or improved infrastructure. For maximum effect, a TIF District should be in place to capture the impact of new investment in these areas as a result of this plan. It should be noted that any TIF (together with other tax incentives) should be designed to prohibit it from resulting in a net loss of school revenues within its area.

### **4. Share the Worthington Plan**

Share the new Worthington Strategic Plan with the greater community. Work to create a "buzz" about the opportunities that exist within Worthington. Host meetings with the real estate and development community to let them know that the City is open and supportive of appropriate redevelopment in certain areas as discussed in this plan. New development will create an enthusiasm and excitement for Worthington and encourage additional private investment and improvements.

### **5. Analyze "Out of the Box" Thinking**

Often potential lies in thinking beyond normal expectations and investigating challenges that appear insurmountable. In conducting interviews and compiling this comprehensive plan update a number of intriguing suggestions were made. These included thoughts such as: re-establishing real trolley service along High Street (between Old Worthington and Worthington Square) and S.R. 161 (between the two future light rail stations), possibly involving the Rail Museum; working to adjust the City boundaries to create more community-based and logical borders; investigating a new I-71 interchange at Worthington-Galena Road as part of the redesigned North Outerbelt system, etc.

