

CITY OF WOOSTER

CHAPTER 10—IMPLEMENTATION POLICIES

Introduction

The Wooster Comprehensive Plan provides a vision and framework for decision making for city and community leaders, the public and the development community. The key issues identified during the planning process document the desires of city residents for possible long term changes. Any potential change will occur over a period of time through incremental actions and short-term decisions made by elected and appointed officials.

The plan recommendations focus on maintaining and enhancing the quality of life and small town character often cited as attractive reasons for living in the City of Wooster. The following implementation policies/actions are important steps in achieving the visions outlined in the Wooster Comprehensive Plan.

Utility Infrastructure Policies

- ▶ Adopt adequate public facilities standards as part of the development review process for sites within the city and also within the three mile extra-territorial jurisdiction area.
- ▶ Provide funding for and adopt a long term utility master plan for water and sewer systems to proactively prepare an assessment of existing conditions, identify problems, identify inefficiencies and deficiencies, and develop improvement plans.
- ▶ Adopt a Capital Improvements Plan to allocate and prioritize infrastructure investment resources.
- ▶ Continue to implement the Storm Sewer/Sanitary Sewer line separation projects.
- ▶ Support expansion of infrastructure to all industrial park areas.
- ▶ Continue to seek an atmosphere of cooperation between adjacent municipalities, and county to officials leverage resources related to infrastructure.
- ▶ Establish a city-wide stream erosion control maintenance program to minimize flooding and soil erosion.

Transportation Infrastructure Policies

- ▶ Adopt adequate public facilities standards as part of the development review process for sites within the city and also within the three mile extra-territorial jurisdiction area.
- ▶ Adopt a Capital Improvements Plan to allocate and prioritize infrastructure investment resources.
- ▶ Adopt access management standards and design alternatives to improve or maintain safety, and the capacity of the city's roads. ODOT standards and new ideas such as the slip street concept as well as using an interconnected street grid rather than cul-de-sacs can be implemented to minimize curb cuts and improve safety in existing neighborhoods and future annexed areas.
- ▶ Adopt a requirement that traffic impact studies be required of all development proposals and annexation requests in order to minimize the negative traffic impacts of new development.
- ▶ Consider the creation of multi-purpose paths and sidewalks as part of new road design.
- ▶ Support expansion of infrastructure to all industrial park areas.
- ▶ Continue to seek an atmosphere of cooperation between adjacent municipalities, townships, as well as county officials to leverage resources related to infrastructure.

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Parks and Recreation Policies

- ▶ Promote the donation of undeveloped land for future park lands, especially in areas that have a deficit of parkland.
- ▶ Establish standards for the amounts of and the design of open spaces as part of the land donation requirements for proposed development.
- ▶ Apply for State of Ohio grants; for example the Enhancement Fund through the DOT, Nature Works Programs, and Issue One programs; to acquire funds for park and recreation facility acquisition, improvement and maintenance.
- ▶ Adopt a Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan in order to proactively and strategically acquire, maintain and program parks and recreation facilities as well as determine means for funding new park and recreational facilities.
- ▶ Establish a review board to determine and regulate equitable rental fees for facilities, determine which activities should be user pays and determine fees for non-resident users.
- ▶ Promote pedestrian and bicycle safety and usage through road re-development standards, subdivision design criteria and park development standards
- ▶ Establish a joint financial support program between the county, the city and surrounding townships to provide parks, open space and recreational facilities for the entire region

Land Development and Design Policies

- ▶ Adopt design guidelines for each development character area in order to provide a specific framework for the development pattern in that area. The parameters that should be addressed include building setbacks, massing, architectural details, landscaping, the design of public spaces, parking requirements and signage. These guidelines could be in the form of an overlay or adopt wholesale changes to the zoning map and zoning ordinance.
- ▶ Limit commercial and retail uses to designated areas as outlined in each development character area.
- ▶ Develop streetscape plans that link the downtown to surrounding neighborhoods and in conjunction with park linkage plans.
- ▶ Adopt incentives to encourage historic preservation and adaptive re-use of historic structures.
- ▶ Adopt adequate public facility standards and incorporate these into the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations.
- ▶ Adopt criteria/standards on which to analyze annexation proposals in order to determine the costs and benefits to the city of a particular annexation.
- ▶ Revise or create city regulations that would help support the implementation of the visions outlined in this comprehensive plan.
- ▶ Adopt a parking management plan that explores options to maximize parking resources in areas where parking supplies are limited.
- ▶ Adopt programs to help increase home ownership in the city such as low interest or forgivable loans to assist with down payments on homes; and incentives for re-development.
- ▶ Continue an atmosphere of cooperation with surrounding municipalities and other entities with a stake in growth/quality of life in Wooster, such as the Wayne Development Council and the Wooster Growth Corporation in order to maintain a favorable quality of life.

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Downtown Development Policies

- ▶ Review and or revise the zoning regulations to support renovation of upper floor space into residential uses and the retention of existing residential uses on upper floors.
- ▶ Adopt zoning and design regulations that are consistent with an urban/downtown mixed use/retail environment in scale, massing, and style; and that provide a framework for buildings to successfully have retail uses on the ground floor.
- ▶ Adopt a parking management plan that explores shared parking concepts and other options to maximize parking resources downtown.
- ▶ Perform a periodic review of historic district design codes to upgrade or enhance them as needed.
- ▶ Perform a periodic review of upper floor residential space.
- ▶ Place signage on US 250 and US 3 stating that there is a historic downtown shopping district at the appropriate exits.

Emergency Services, Polices

- ▶ Adopt a master plan of fire and emergency service provision to analyze ways to provide adequate service coverage, especially as new areas are annexed into the city.
- ▶ Adopt a policy of street naming that would minimize potentially confusing or similar names in order to ease the provision of emergency services.

Cost Recovery

As federal and state dollars to cities have declined, other additional revenue sources should be investigated to meet the future infrastructure improvement needs, so that a greater portion of the city income tax revenues can be used to meet the costs of providing services.

Adequate Public Facilities and Concurrency Requirements

Adequate public facility programs are intended to ensure that all required public facilities are provided or planned for to meet the impacts of new development. Adequate public facility policies do not insist that developers pay for all new public improvements, only that there is assurance the public improvements are adequate or provided for when development occurs. New development may only be approved if the developer agrees to pay for needed improvements to keep public services a specific quality and service level.

Adequate public facilities programs require the following steps:

- ▶ Levels of Service (LOS) standards are set for all essential public infrastructure. For example, a city can determine that all roads and intersections must operate at a LOS C or above, that fire stations be within a certain distance or response time of residential development, that water pressure in residential lines be maintained at a minimum level, that active park land facilities be available within a certain distance from all residents.
- ▶ A Capital Improvement Plan identifies required projects and funding sources to meet these standards.
- ▶ New development or reuse is reviewed against these standards. If new development can not occur within the acceptable LOS, mitigation or improvements are required as a condition of approval.

Adequate public facility programs can be established either through standalone ordinances, or as development review criteria in the zoning and subdivision regulations. The advantage to having it as part of the zoning and subdivision regulations is that all approving bodies and administrative departments of the city incorporate the policy concepts in their day-to-day review activities.

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The policy of official concurrency requirements (APFPs) provides a rational decision making structure for a city's long range capital improvement programs.

The City of Wooster already recognizes this concept in its subdivision regulations, which state that a developer is required to oversize improvements or provide offsite improvements where the engineer determines it is necessary, and in the Zoning Code which states that for a Conditional Use Permit an applicant must show that development will be serviced adequately by public service facilities. However, this language is subject to individual interpretation, gives no firm advance guidance to potential developers and is only triggered during a subdivision process or a conditional use process.

In order for the city to use this approach in a formalized way, it would have to establish current and preferred LOS for key facilities.

Impact Fees

Impact fees are a monetary charge to recoup a proportionate share of the capital costs required to accommodate new development. Impact fees have been used for decades, typically in the form of water and sewer tap fees. Impact fees address the costs of needed facilities and services that go beyond the boundaries of a project site. Thus, impact fees have been used to address wastewater treatment plants, long-range road improvements plants, fire and police facilities, schools, and community recreation facilities. Impact fees are growth accommodation tools because they help generate part of the funds needed to build new infrastructure.

To apply impact fees in the State of Ohio, four general tests must be met. The fees must be reasonably related to a development's impact. The fees must only reflect the proportionate share of the impacts generated by the project. The fees paid must be used to complete identified and quantified projects. Finally, projects must be completed in a timely manner.

The advantage to adopting a formal impact fee structure is that it eliminates negotiation of impact mitigation on a case by case basis. The disadvantage is that its use requires an in-depth analysis initially to establish the true long term costs and meet the tests of reasonable relationship and proportionality.

Access Management Guidelines

As road capacity improvement costs are often the most costly item for a city's budget, many cities are adopting the State of Ohio Department of Transportation access Management Manual as part of their zoning regulations. These guidelines set standards for when deceleration lanes are required, how to use traffic impact studies to establish necessary offsite road improvements, how to increase road capacity without the cost of adding lanes, how to utilize intersection improvements to maximum benefit, etc. They also set guidelines for determining long term build out on a particular traffic system and establish rules for assigning developer responsibility. The city may also adopt standards in excess of state minimums with the understanding that state officials would abide by those regulations as well.

Fee Structure Review

Cities should review their administration and development fee structures on a regular basis to determine if they are adequate to cover general administrative costs. Some cities set benchmarks for these fee structures. For example, fees from summer recreation programs must cover a certain percentage of the personnel and out of pocket costs. Wooster has extensive data on direction for fee structure review and is a recognized leader in this analysis.

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Impact Statement Requirements as a Condition of Approval or Annexation

Currently, Wooster has no official requirements for submission of specific impact statements as part of the application submittal process even though city departments are asked to submit impact assessments on projects. Many cities require the preparation of such impact statements as a condition of review.

Typically, these impact statements require analysis of the effect of development on police and fire response numbers, ongoing road maintenance costs, effects on sewer capacity, schools, park demand and traffic operations.

The purpose of these statements is to provide adequate information on which to base project approval and conditions, potential annexation approvals and to help in updating future capital improvement programs. The information contained in these impact statements can be used to negotiate development agreements to be approved by city council.

The City of Wooster should establish a threshold ratio for land to be annexed, of a minimum of \$1:\$1 cost versus revenue. If an area does not generate sufficient revenue to offset its cost in services, then the city should not annex it. An exception to this principle is when an area is included in an annexation to allow future annexation of higher-revenue-generating property. Annexations are approved in part based on contiguity to the current city boundaries, so an annexation that strategically opens up property of high potential revenue should be considered even if it does not otherwise qualify.