

SUMMARY OF LOCAL ECONOMIC DRIVERS AND CONDITIONS REPORT

April 2023



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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide specific insight into the six (6) economic development drivers of Land, Labor, Markets, Capital, Regulations, and Quality of Life. These drivers are implicit in the success of the City of Wooster's economic development efforts. Strategies behind these drivers are what will describe and position the City of Wooster for success.

Civic and business leaders have a clear understanding of Wooster's business climate, population profile and industry sectors and individual interviews with community leaders have identified some key "pinch points" with reference to these drivers that can be better aligned for success. The point of view of this condition's summary is to highlight where these drivers are, identify assumptions and observations from our research and how they can be repositioned to support future strategic economic development initiatives, industry diversification and sustained growth.

The BusinessFlare® Approach utilized for this analysis is a proved method for economic development planning and successful implementation. This approach will set the framework for positive economic growth that will then spread to the surrounding areas and help lift the local and regional economy, improving the quality of life of the inhabitants.

Here is a summary of the economic drivers found in Wooster:

#Land- Limited availability, need to think of more compact sensible development in specific areas of growth. Innovation Park and Hospital are great opportunities for economic development.

#Labor - Strong labor force, white collar, labor gaps in Healthcare, Retail, and Hospitality. Missing opportunity to retain or attract young talent.

#Markets – Large number of families & 65+, country living, and traditional town, Millennials returning, countywide destination for goods and services.

#Capital - Solid financing & funding capabilities.

#Regulations – Conventional zoning regulations, missing more mixed-use. Opportunity to create more flexible performance-based regulations.

#QualityofLife – Great outdoors, anchor institutions, historic main street, missing "third places" that naturally encourage socializing and collaboration, need for more entertainment.

Quick Facts (2022)

	Population	Labor Force	Daytime Population	All Employees	Number of Businesses
City of Wooster	27,480	13,045	35,913	21,139	1,417
Wayne County	116,822	57,988	114,622	51,411	3,943

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

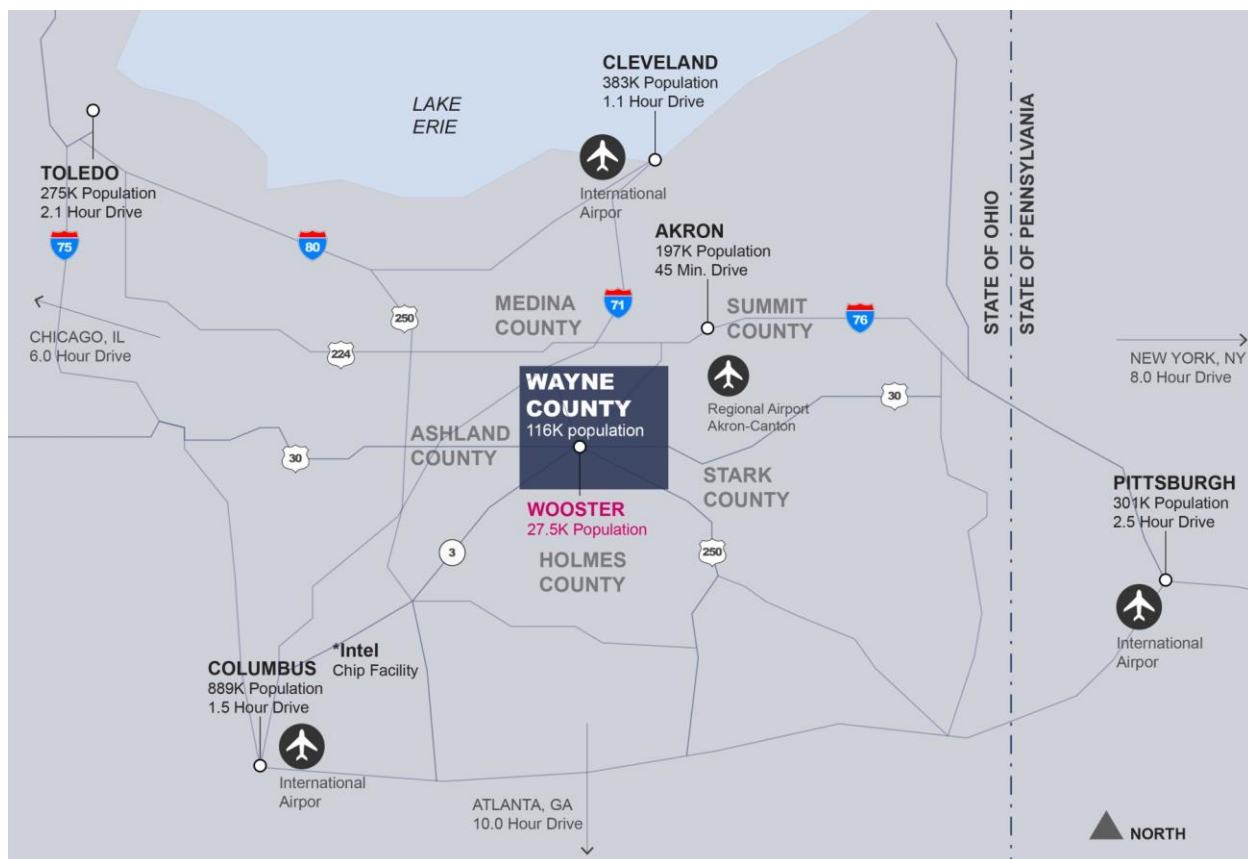
City of Wooster Profile

The City of Wooster is located in north-east/north-central Ohio which is just south of the more urban counties of Summit and Cuyahoga. Located in Wayne County, Wooster serves as the county seat and is just north of the very rural, Holmes County, which is also home to the largest Amish population in the nation.

The City of Wooster is located central to the State's two largest metropolitan areas, Cleveland and Columbus, which is the state capital. Both destinations are less than one and a half (1 ½) hours by car. The City of Akron is the closest larger urban area and is less than a forty-five (45) minute drive. Residents of Wooster can also access Akron-Canton Regional and Cleveland Hopkins International Airports which connect to national and international passenger destinations.

According to ESRI estimates, the 2022 population of the City of Wooster was 27,480 which makes up 24% of the total population of Wayne County which was 116,822. The City of Wooster also supports 41% of all county employment and 44% of all wages are generated by Wooster businesses.

Wooster is home to major institutions which include the College of Wooster, the 4,000-acre Ohio State University College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences campus and Wooster Community Hospital. Furthermore, Wooster is also home to major employers and manufacturers including GOJO, the Wooster Brush Company, ArtiFlex and Schaeffler Transmissions.



The graphic below is a summary of the input .

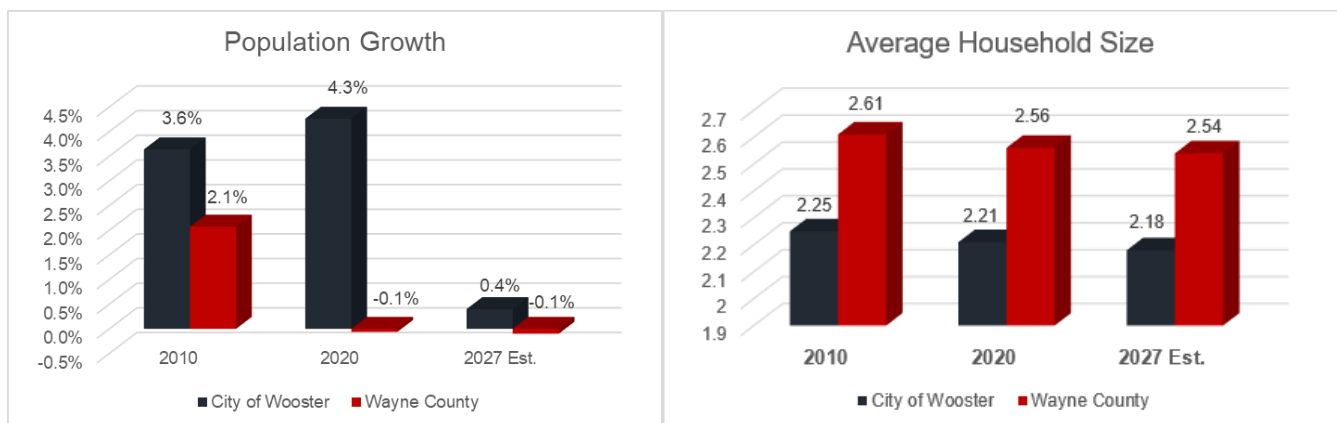
WOOSTER PIECE ANALYSIS™



DEMOGRAPHICS, INDUSTRY SECTORS AND LABOR, AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Demographics

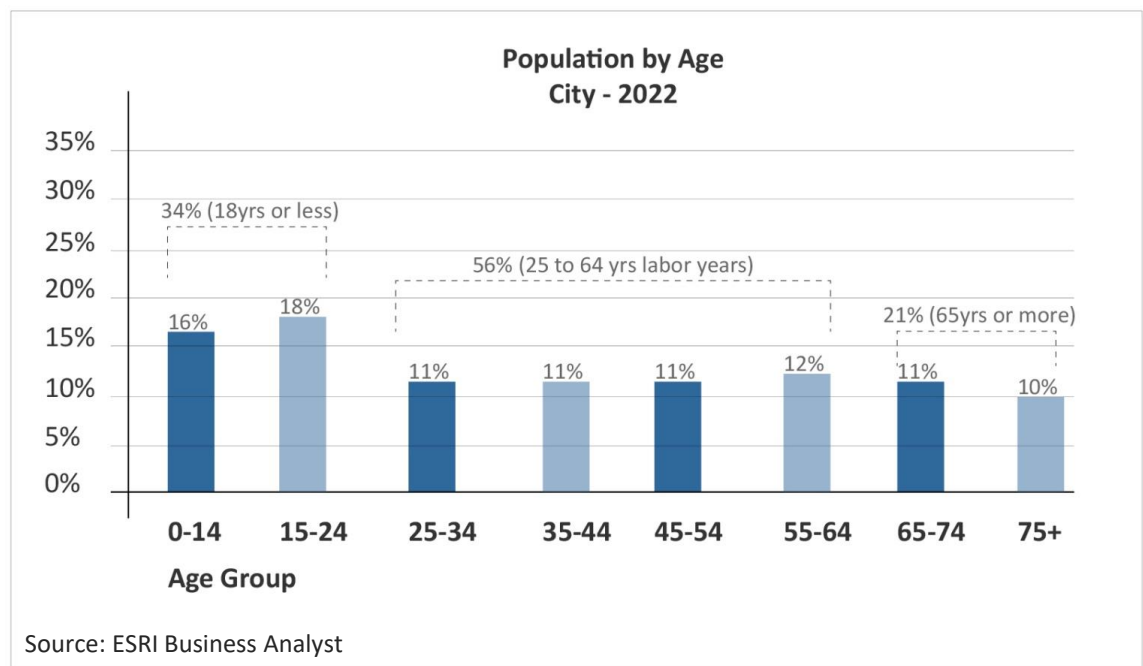
Population. Both Wayne County and the City of Wooster's population growth has stagnated since 2010. While countywide there has been little to no growth, the City of Wooster has experienced a slight uptick in population, growing by 4.3% from 2010 to 2020. ESRI projects an annual increase of all households in the City of 0.4% between 2020 and 2027.



Source: U. S. Census Bureau 2000, 2010 & 2020. ESRI Business Analyst 2027 est.

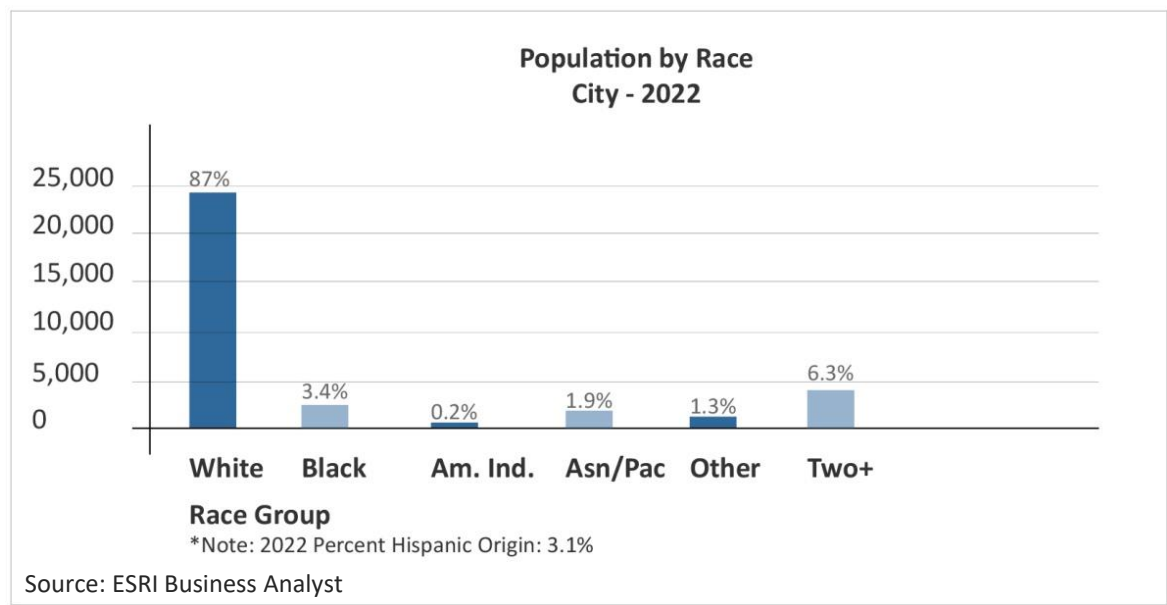
Age. More than one-third (1/3) of Wooster's population is under the age of 25, of which 16% are children under the age of 15. Generationally, population age cohorts drop of from 18% of the population 15-24, to an average of 11% of the population for each decennial age group 25 and over.

- 56% of the population is within prime working age (25-64).
- Labor force participation is high for the majority of age groups and almost one-third (1/3) of the population are in their prime earning age (35 – 64).
- There is a significant drop in population beginning at young adulthood which may indicate a loss of population due to employment or education, sometimes as “brain drain”.



Race and Ethnicity. Wooster’s demographic makeup is predominantly white with approximately 13% of the population identifying as some other race or more than one race. However, socioeconomic data does not necessarily reflect diversity within a community. Through community interviews, some of the largest employers in the city indicated that they employee a fairly diverse workforce which includes persons from multiple cultural and ethnic backgrounds. While most are not city or county residents, employers have adapted to this workforce by providing interpreters, assistive technologies, cultural sensitivity, and training in different languages to recruit and retain employees.

Both the College of Wooster and the OSU campus also attract international students and faculty. In the case of OSU, many graduate students and researchers stay on in the City of Wooster and become faculty or staff and become part of the overall community.

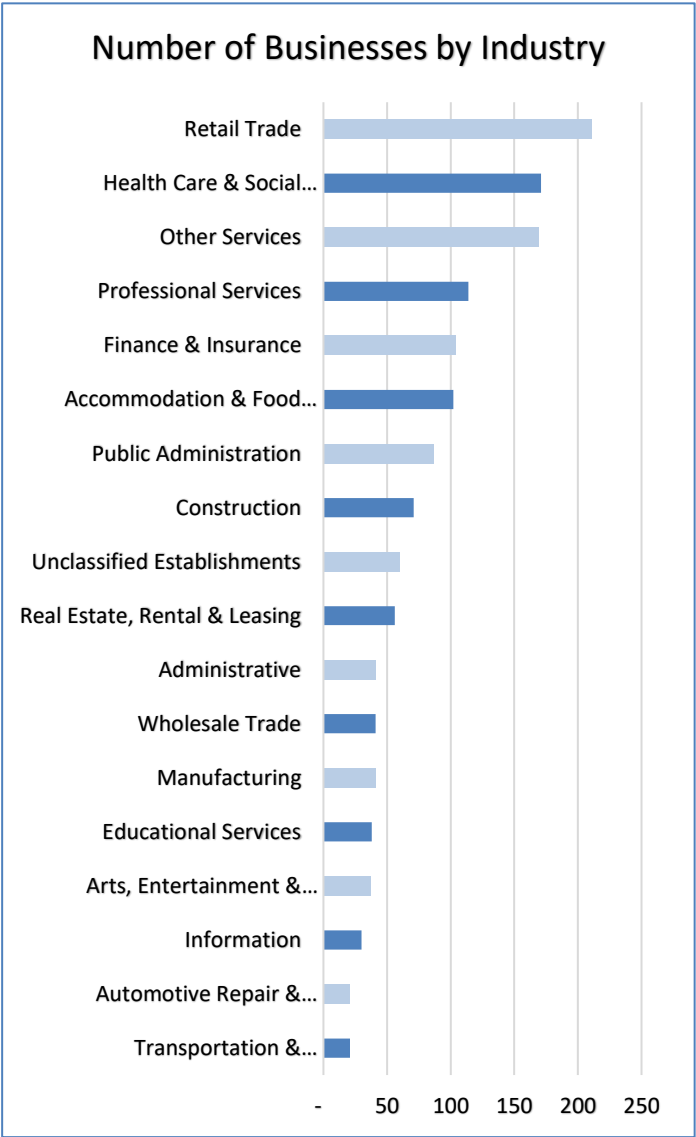
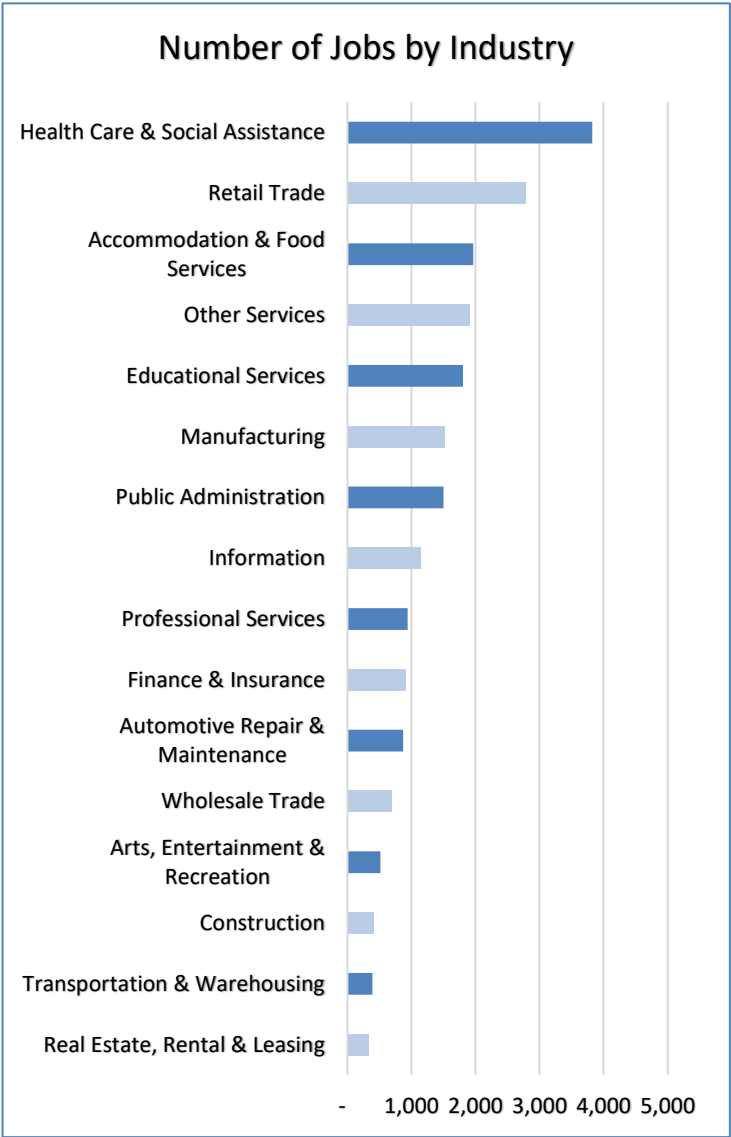


Industry Sectors and Labor

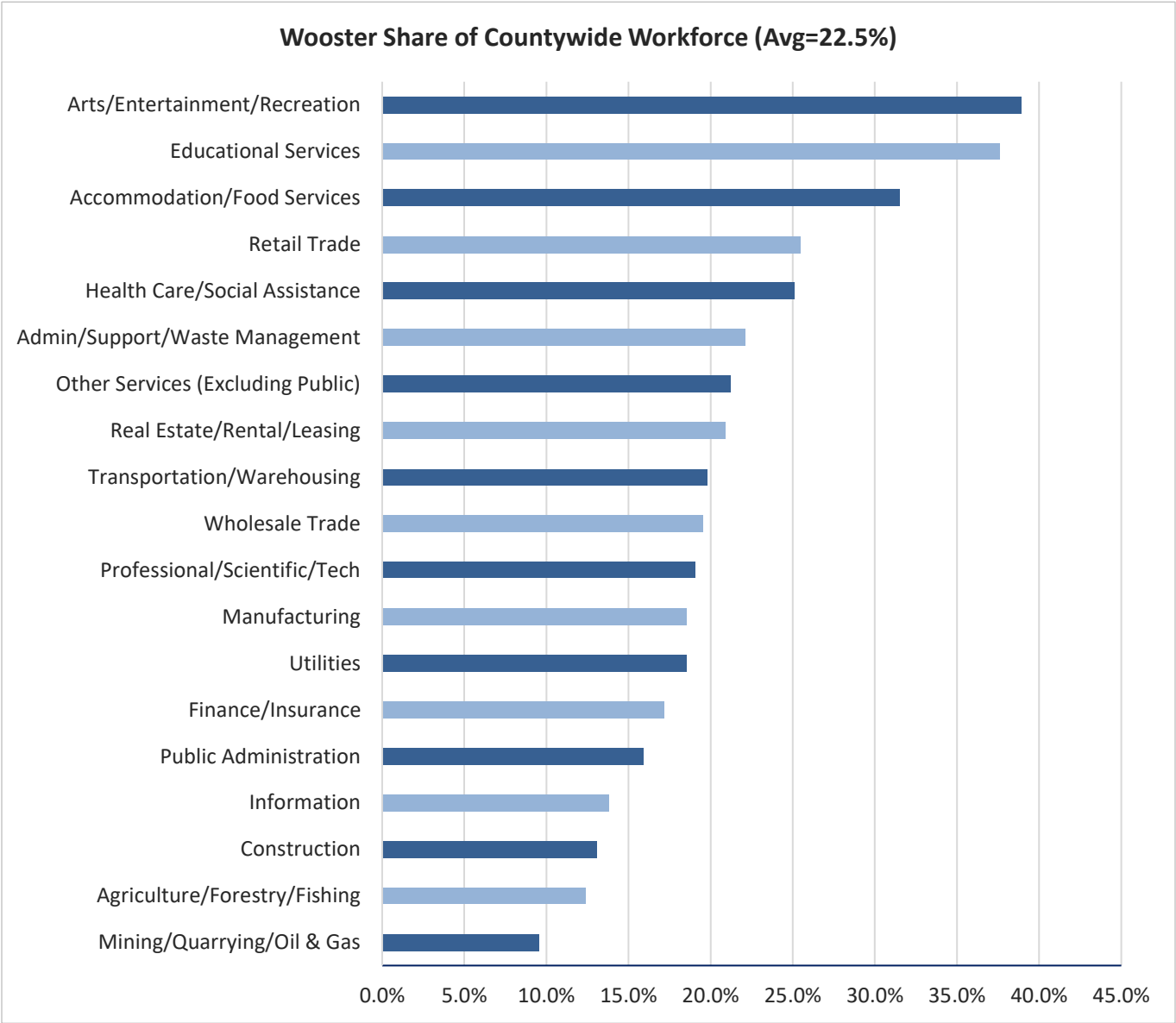
Industry Sectors and Jobs

There are several data sources that track employment, jobs and businesses, which can result in differences in the observed data. This can result in part from different classifications of industry types, as well as subsectors of certain industries. Furthermore, when considering the market share of an industry between geographies, the share of the number of businesses, compared to the number of jobs and the revenue and payroll generated by the industries can vary (i.e., the highest performing revenue industry may not be the highest employment generator).

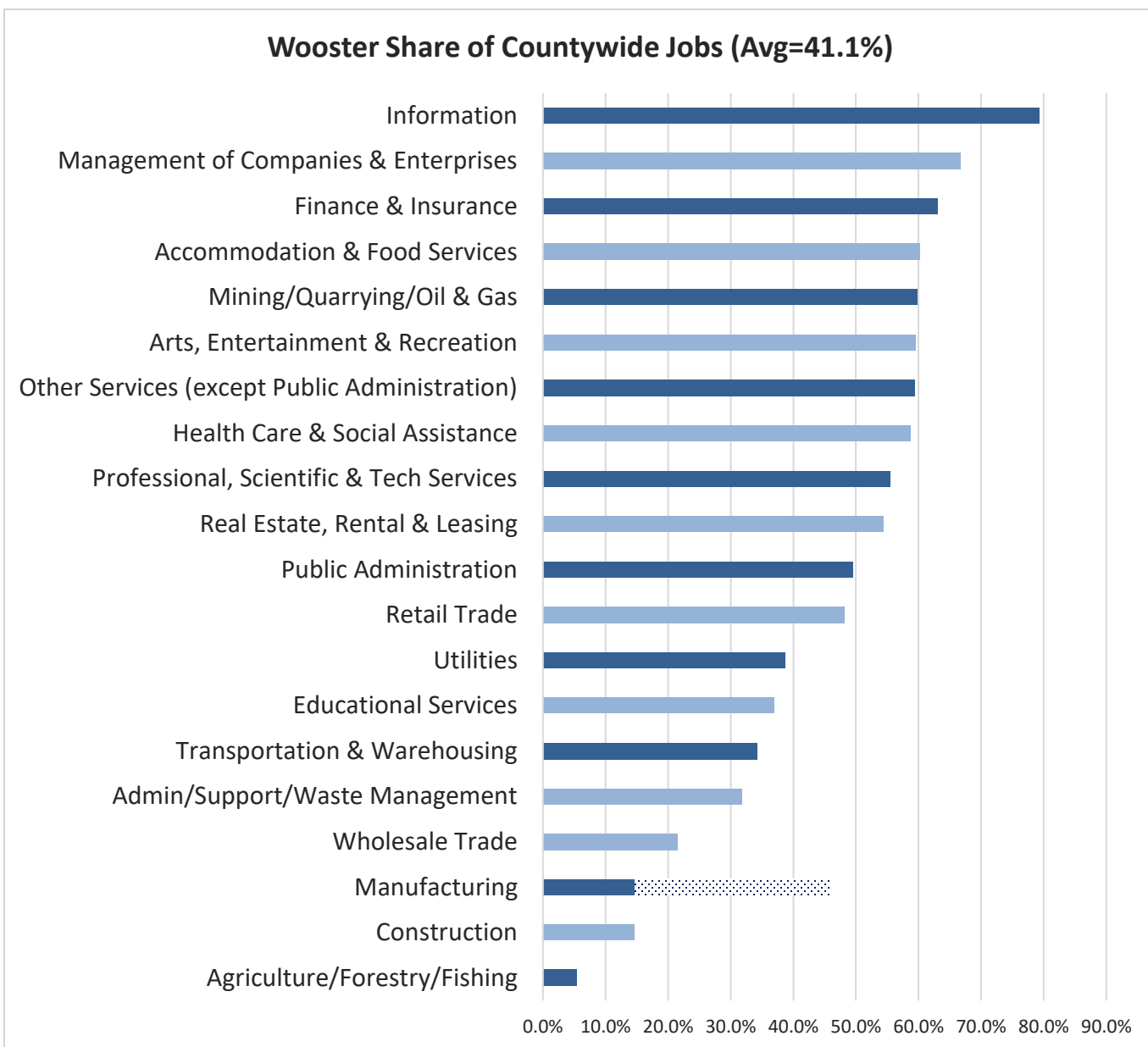
In addition to the following charts provided by standard sources such as ESRI, the City directly tracks wages by industry based on Income Tax Gross Receipts.



The following chart validates the observational findings that Wooster is the center of industry in the county. The workforce for customer and place-based industries such as arts and entertainment, education, healthcare, retail and hospitality are clustered in Wooster. This is consistent with the City of Wooster’s position as the regional activity center and destination for these industries which provide direct consumer goods and services and attracting customers from both Wayne and Holmes Counties, particularly as it relates to healthcare. The education sector in Wooster, is somewhat unique compared to the county as whole because the two post-secondary institutions draw from a much wider customer base, regionally, nationally and internationally, and bring temporary residents to the city to support the other place-based industries.



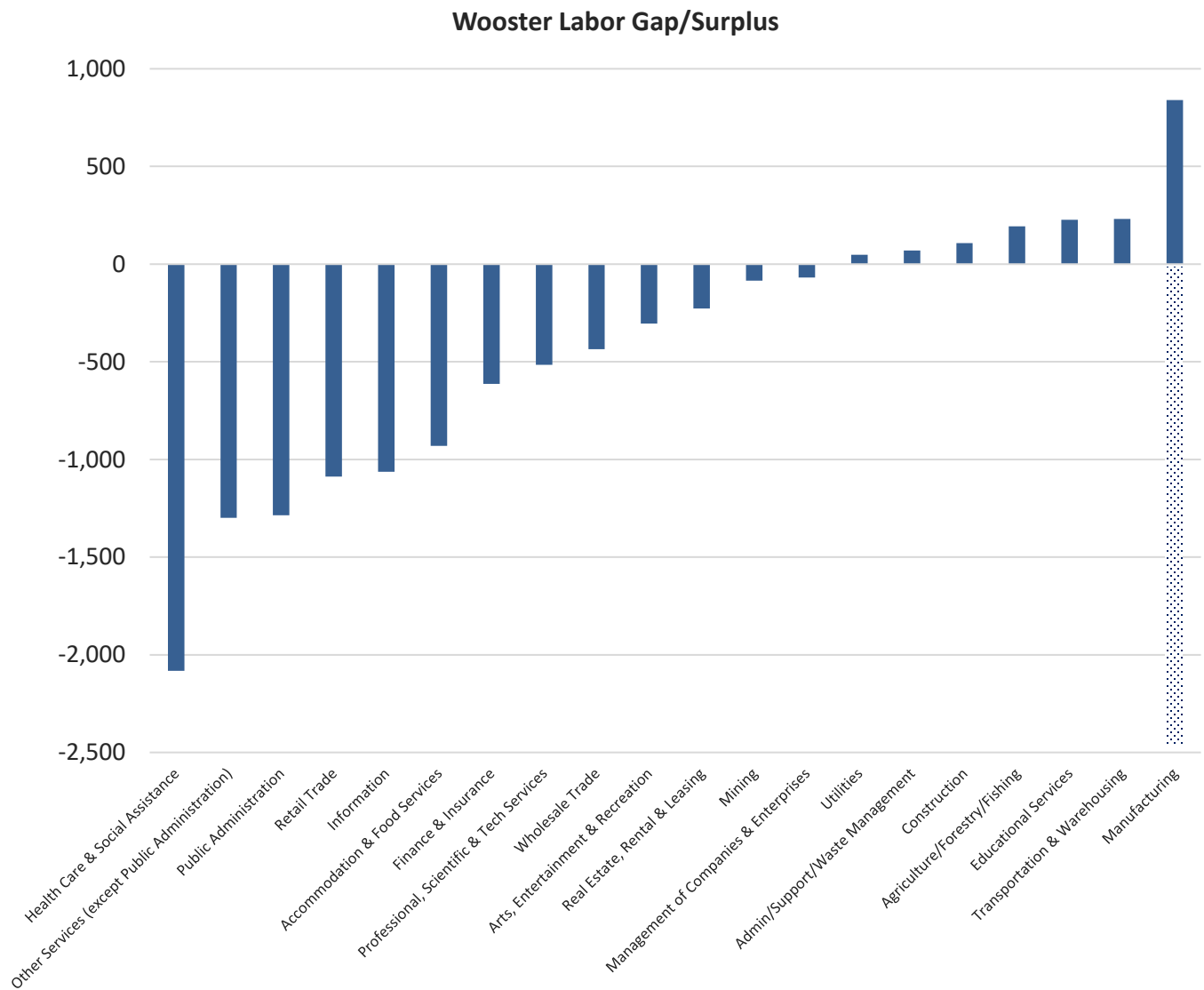
While industrial and manufacturing sectors have a large footprint within the City of Wooster, the diversity of the county’s industry sectors is most evident in Wooster with large knowledge based and professional industries. The largest industry clusters and jobs countywide in these sectors, including information, management, finance and insurance, and professional, scientific and tech are concentrated in the City of Wooster. In fact, these clusters provide a solid foundation for Wooster to build upon to attract new residents, talent and the basic support for entrepreneurial endeavors.




Note: Bureau of Labor Statistic, September 2022 and the City of Wooster’s data are inconsistent with 2022 ESRI data (see further explanation on the following page). BLS and City data most likely a more accurate reflection of countywide jobs. The shaded area on the above chart would more closely reflect the actual percentage of countywide manufacturing jobs in the city.

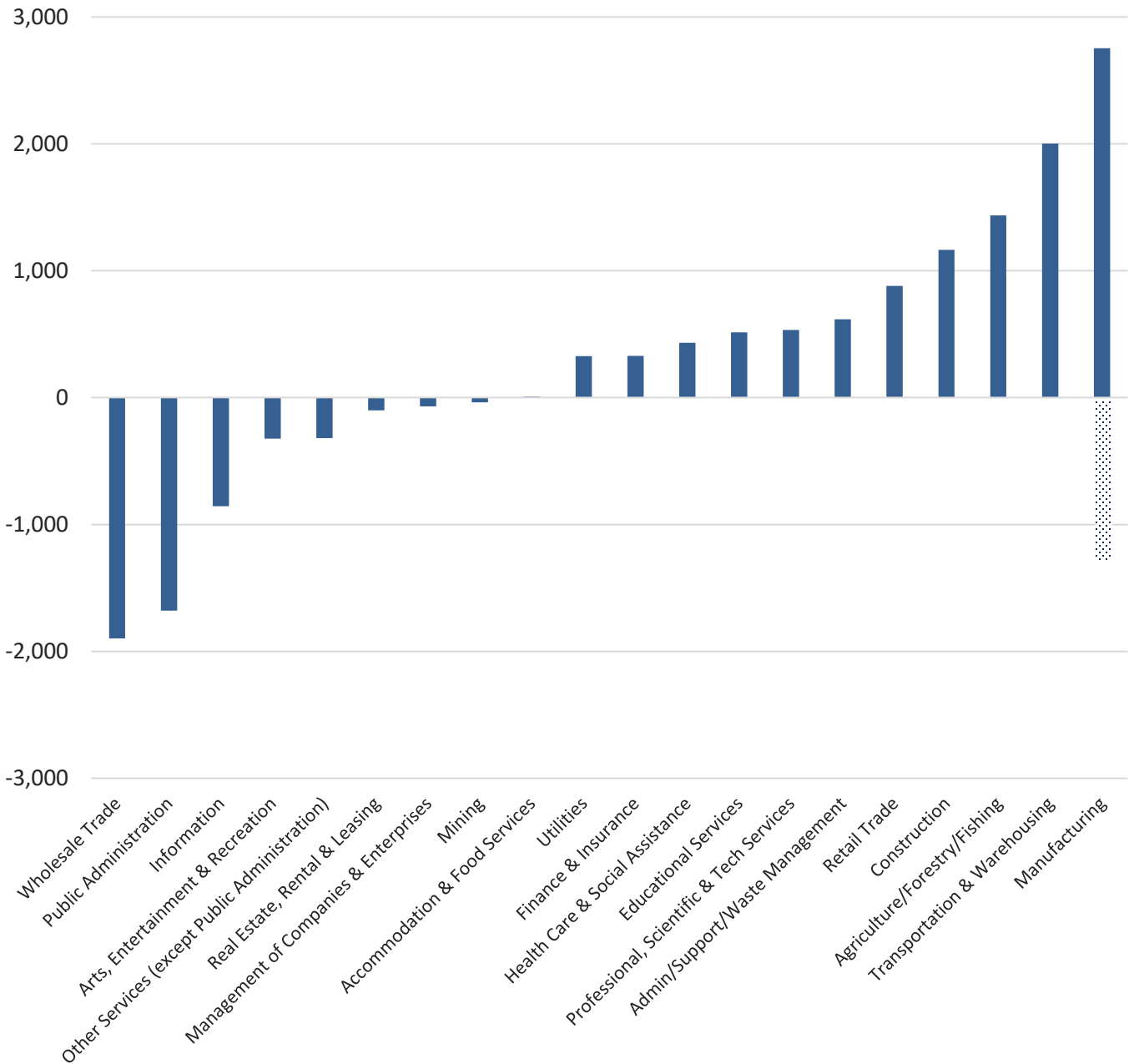
Labor Characteristics

While the previous discussion shows a significant number of persons working in the healthcare, retail and hospitality industries, are also residents of the City of Wooster, these industries have some of the largest labor gaps, meaning number of workers in these sectors living outside of the city. Foundational industries such as manufacturing, transportation, warehousing, and education have a surplus of workers, meaning they may live in Wooster but travel outside of the city for their jobs.



 **Note:** The City of Wooster monitors its own employment data which indicates there are an additional 5,000+ manufacturing jobs within the city limits. Using city data, rather than 2022 ESRI data would indicate a net deficit of approximately (4,100) workers in the manufacturing industry. (See shaded area above)

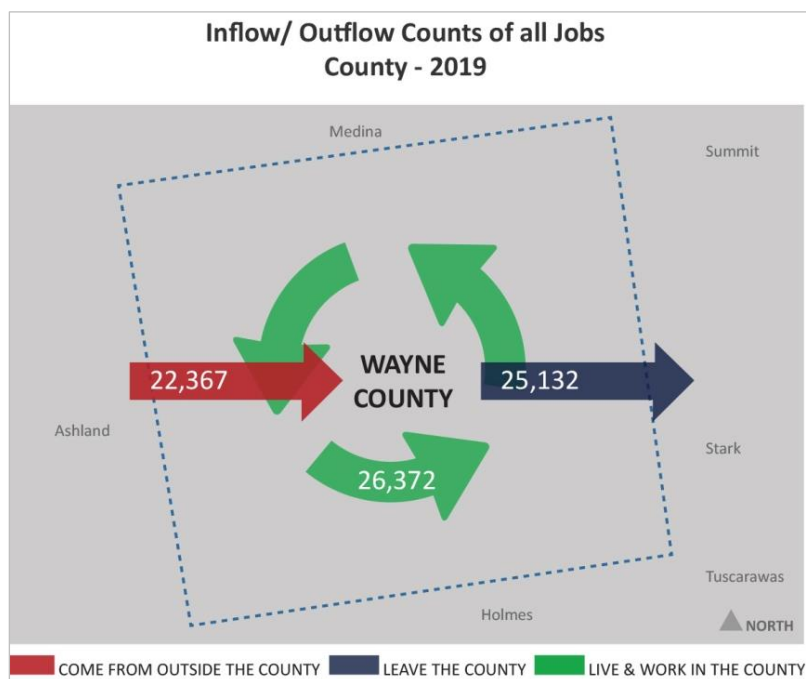
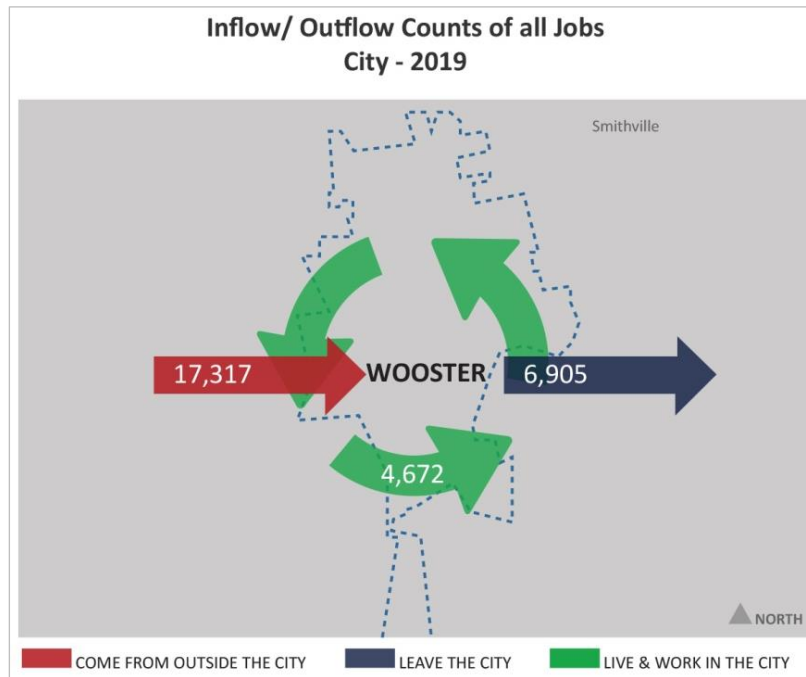
Countywide, the regional economy does not have as many gaps as the City of Wooster, but the influence of nearby metros such as Akron and Cleveland are apparent. Industries such as public administration, information and arts and entertainment have some of the largest gaps both in the city and the county, which could infer opportunities for to further build upon these as growth industries or attract these employees to the become future city residents.



Note: Bureau of Labor Statistic, September 2022 employment data indicates there are an additional 4,800 manufacturing jobs in Wayne County. Using BLS data rather than 2022 ESRI data would indicate a net deficit of approximately (1,240) workers in the manufacturing industry (see shaded area above).

Labor Characteristics (continued)

To that end, Wooster attracts almost three times (3x) as many workers to the city for work as do leave the city for work. The city's daytime population swells to 35,913, which does not account for shift workers. Approximately 21% of all employees within the City of Wooster also live in Wooster. The remaining 79%, or 17,317 employs come from the remainder of Wayne County or the region.

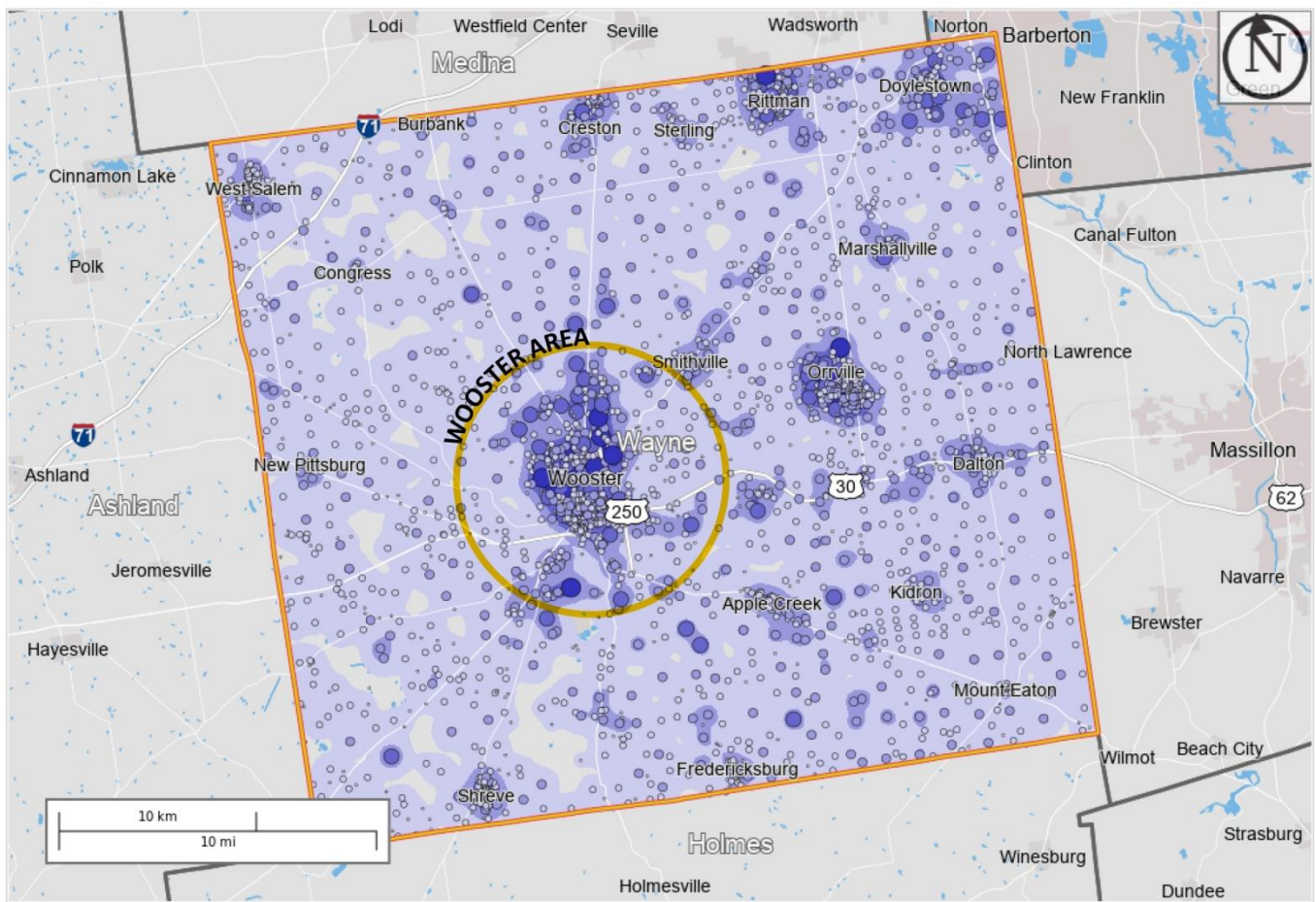


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics

As a mass importer of workforce for its existing businesses, 2019 statistics indicated that 13.7% of the workforce are commuting to Wooster from greater than 50 miles. Employee retention is correlated to distance traveled to work with employees opting to work closer to home if provided similar wages.

Counts and Density of All Jobs in Wayne County (2019)

Wayne county



Map Legend

Job Density [Jobs/Sq. Mile]

- 5 - 107
- 108 - 413
- 414 - 923
- 924 - 1,637
- 1,638 - 2,556

Job Count [Jobs/Census Block]

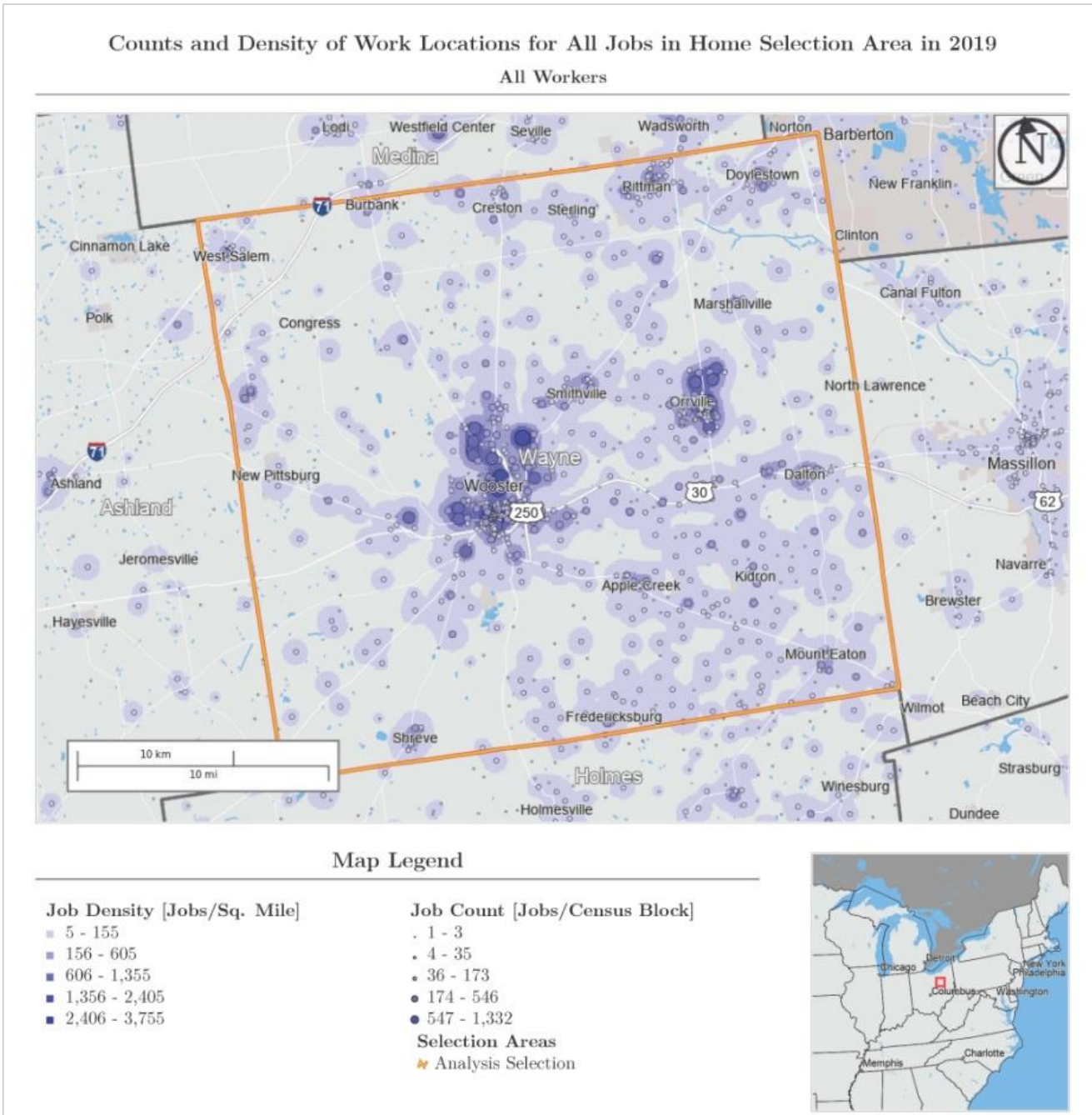
- 1 - 3
- 4 - 24
- 25 - 81
- 82 - 191
- 192 - 374

Selection Areas

- Analysis Selection



As a mass importer of employees, the City of Wooster’s workforce travels a significant distance for work. Based on the map below, there is a large contingency of the workforce that may not reside in the city but do reside in the county. There is also a cluster of employees located in the Massillon area, just east in Stark County. According to the graph below a large swath of the workforce traveling 25 miles or more are coming from north and east of Wayne County. However, there is a significant segment of the workforce, approximately 3,000 employees, that travel more than 50 miles to Wooster for their jobs. This can be problematic in terms of employee retention, since there is a direct correlation between distance traveled to work and employee attraction and retention. Most of these long-haul commuters are traveling from central Ohio.



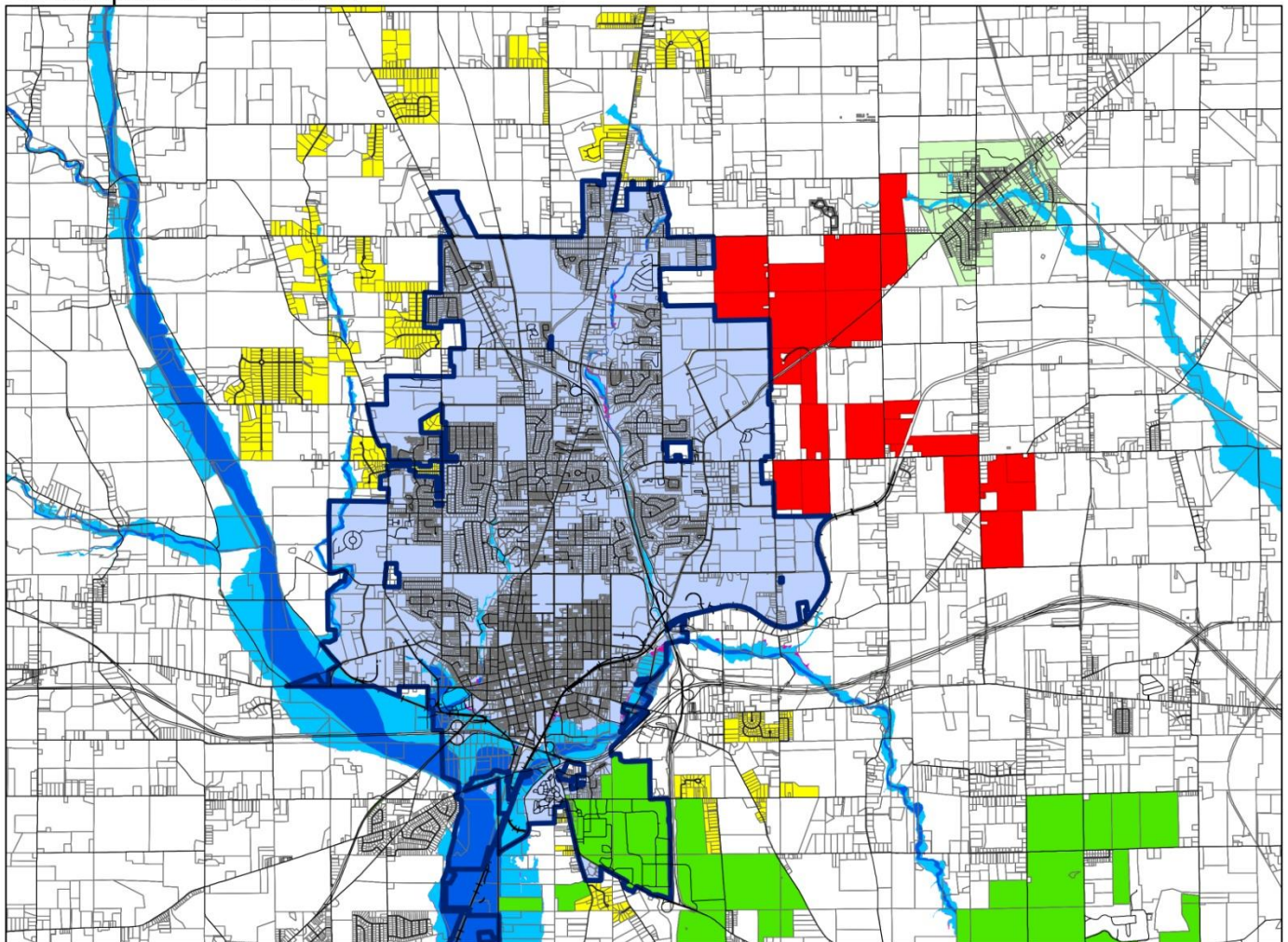


Land Characteristics

Availability of land and availability of the right mix of land uses are quintessential to balanced growth. The City of Wooster is somewhat constrained in terms of geographic growth.

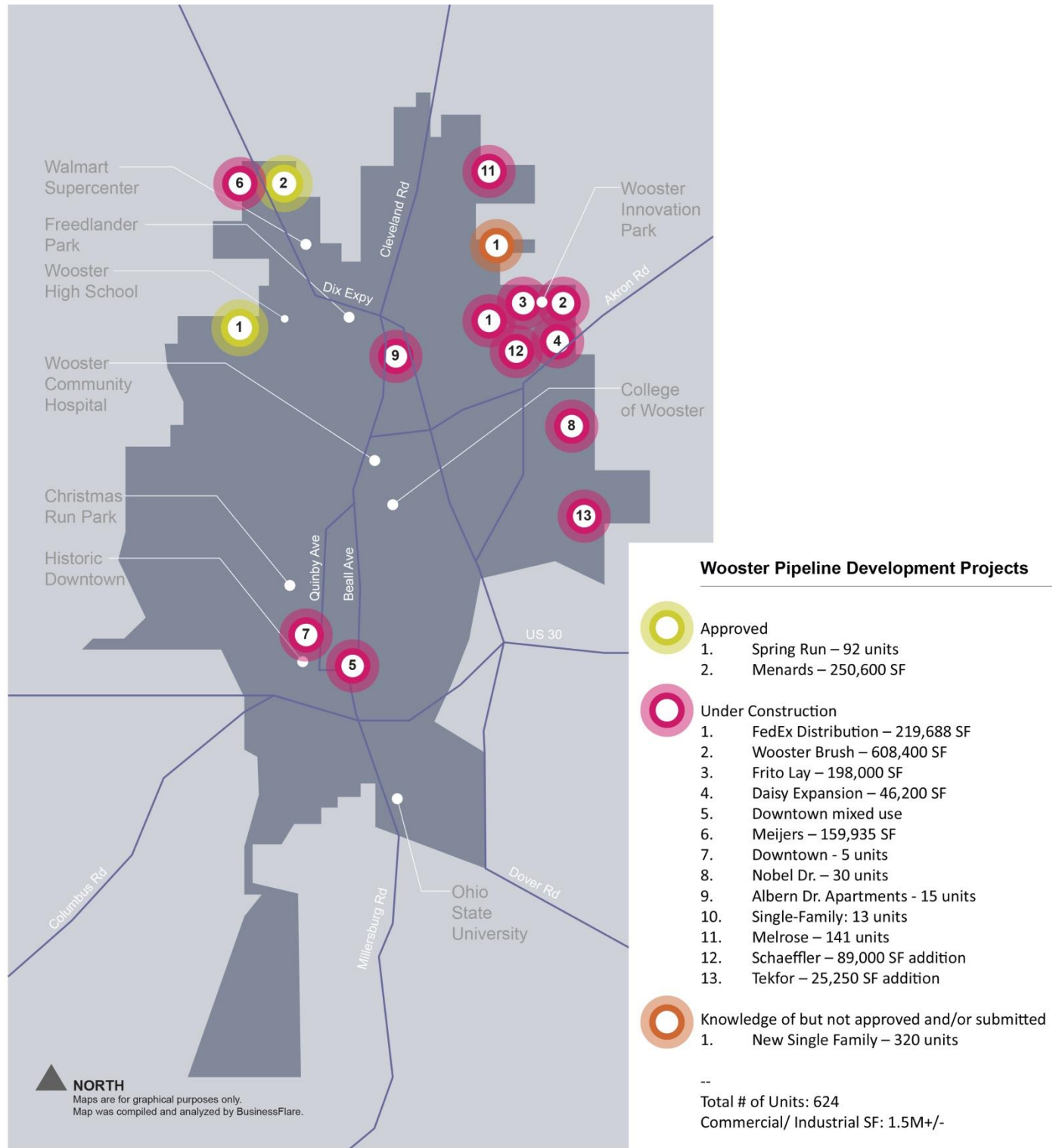
Physical challenges to geographic expansion include adjacent Agricultural Security Areas, floodplains and limitations on expansion of municipal services. However, within its boundary Wooster still holds a good amount of undeveloped land, especially in the northeast sector of the City where the “Innovation Park” is. There are very few sites within the City that exceed 30 acres which, as indicated by the City, is the minimum necessary as expressed by single family residential developers. There are underutilized properties, particularly around the perimeter of the city, that could be assembled into larger sites. In addition, surrounding the historic downtown there are also opportunities for higher density residential and mixed use.

Development Constraints



Land Development

Wooster has started to experience new private investment activity, with a number of projects in the development pipeline that are either planned, approved or under construction. These pipeline projects include residential, industrial, retail and restaurant use. Notably, this will include the introduction of 624 new residential units to the marketplace.



Land Use Analysis at Primary Destinations

In part of the economic development analysis for this report, the team looked at land use efficiency in t in Wooster: (1) Historic Downtown, (2) Wooster Crossings and (3) Wooster Community Hospital area. In a limited land availability place such as Wooster it is important to think creatively and strategically about land development. The following diagrams show that there are large quantities of undeveloped/ underutilized land in retail customer areas.

Historic Downtown – The city's commitment to providing adequate parking downtown creates opportunities to fill in the "gaps" along the internal streets with new construction on privately owned underutilized parking lots and parcels.



Wooster Crossings Area - Opportunity for a “lifestyle” center (retail, hotel, office, rental apartments, etc.), walkable, connected community of shopping, dining, entertainment, living, and working. It can be more than just another place to go, it’s a place to be.



Note: Wooster Crossings Area has ample parking and out parcels for development still available. However, property maintenance is not consistent between the properties and cross access in some cases does not exist. Current property conditions and lack of guiding design principles impede vision and marketability of these sites.

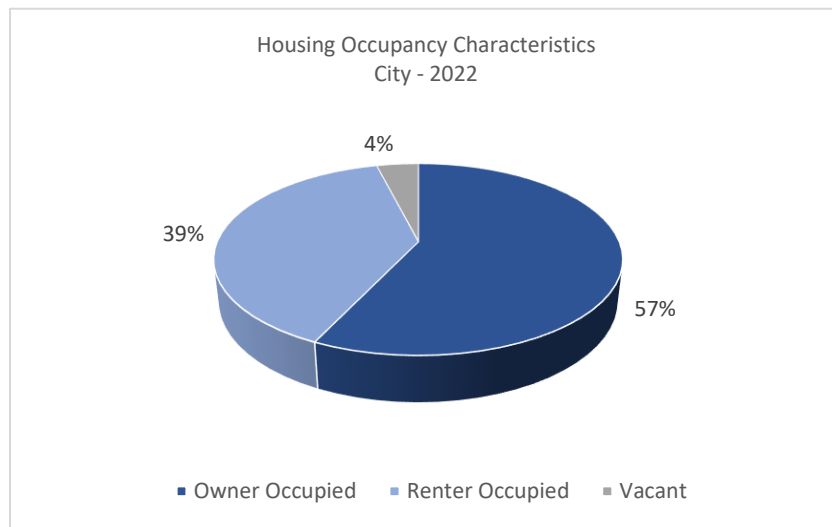
Wooster Community Hospital Area - Opportunity for an integrated “healthcare” district (medical services, office, retail, coffee shops, eateries, rental units, etc.).



Note: A parking deck or structure attached to the hospital could consolidate parking and free up valuable land for future development. Pedestrian connections from the hospital to adjacent medical office, retail and residential uses are non-existent and require pedestrians to traverse parking lots and internal drives providing no safe separation from cars and emergency vehicles.

Real Estate

As of 2022, the total number of housing units in the City of Wooster is 11,976 with a vacancy rate of only 4%, compared to a countywide vacancy at 5.7%. Of all housing units, approximately 39% are renter occupied. Vacancy rates, in general have decreased by 23% since 2010. As of August 2022, home price in the City of Wooster range in price between \$150 and \$300K. Housing challenges, especially for the workforce, have more to do with availability than affordability.



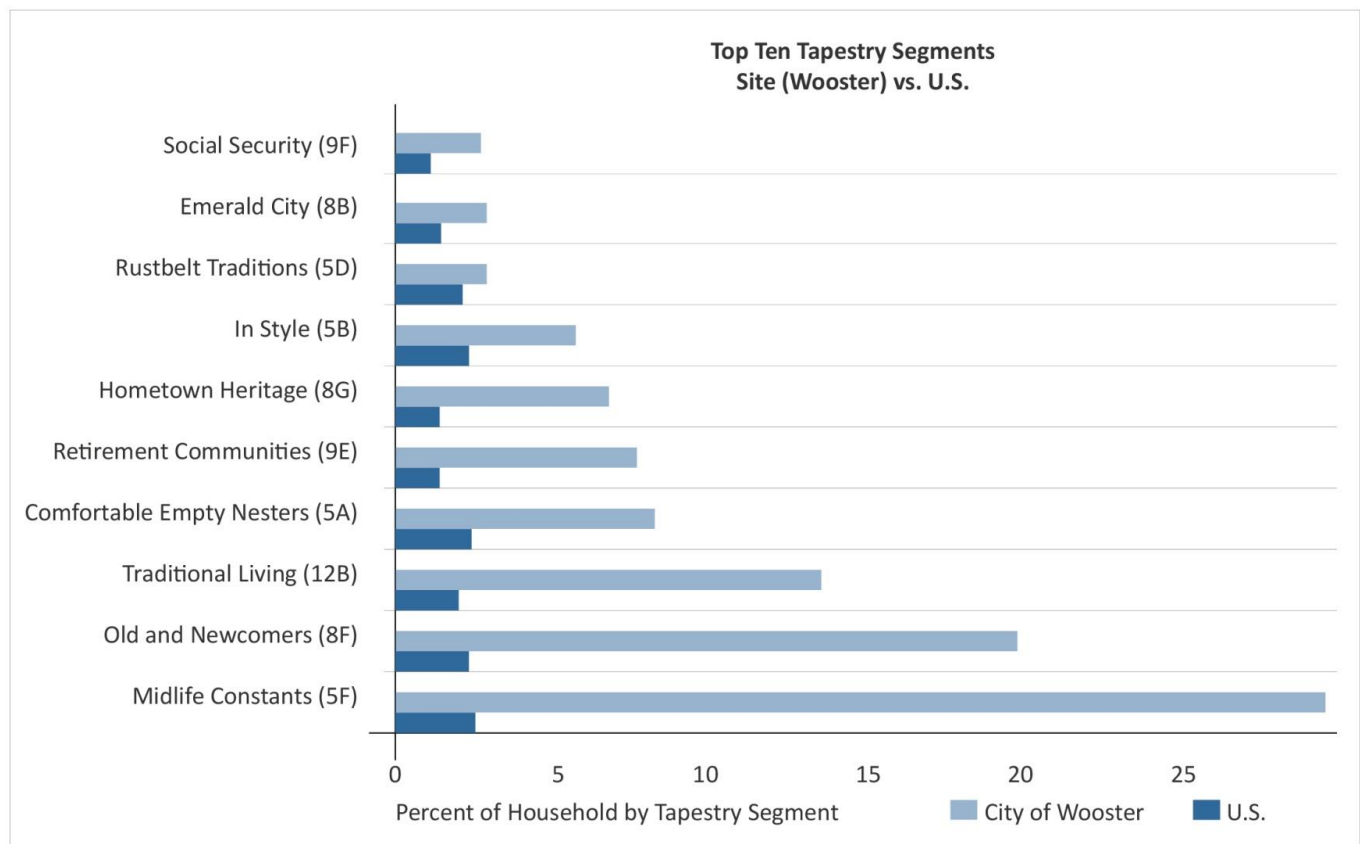
The city's multifamily apartment inventory is limited, with approximately 2,255 units. These units demonstrate the same characteristics as the single family home market, with very low vacancy and rising rents. Over the past 10 years there have only been 126 new residential units built. Conversion from owner-occupied units to rental have increased to meet rental market demand.

The city has a significant amount of commercial (retail, office) and industrial real estate, all of which demonstrate solid fundamentals. Similar to the residential market, these sectors demonstrate low vacancy and rising rents, indicating continued demand by end users. The office market has higher vacancy (11%) than the retail and industrial sectors but remains at a healthy level and provides opportunity for the attraction of new entrepreneurial ventures.

Markets Snapshot							
	Inventory SF	Under Construction SF	12 Mo. Net Absorption SF	Vacancy Rate	Market Rent/SF	Market Sale Price/SF	Market Cap Rate
Retail Market	2.7M	0	38.5K	2.8%	\$9.47	\$82	9.2%
Office Market	721K	0	(-30K)	11.1%	\$14.84	\$106	9.6%
Industrial Market	5.9M	0	221K	2.5%	\$4.41	\$42	9.1%

Markets - Resident Characteristics

The chart below illustrates the top ten tapestry segments in the United States compared to the City of Wooster. The following is a comparison of the City of Wooster and Wayne County’s top three segments .



The three top tapestry segments in the city are Midlife Constants, Old and Newcomers, and Traditional Living, which generally represents two-thirds (2/3) of the population. What is unique is that countywide, Salt of the Earth is the top tapestry segment which can be explained by the rural nature of the county as a whole. Full descriptions of each tapestry segment are included in the appendix.

City & County Top 3 Tapestry Segments	
City of Wooster	Wayne County
1. Midlife Constants	1. Salt of the Earth
2. Old and Newcomers	2. Midlife Constants
3.Traditional Living	3. Traditional Living

Tapestry Segmentation provides a detailed description of America's neighborhoods—U.S. residential areas are divided into distinct segments based on their socioeconomic and demographic composition. Neighborhoods with the most similar characteristics are grouped together, and neighborhoods showing divergent characteristics are separated.

Midlife Constants (City #1/ County #2) are seniors, at or approaching retirement. Although located in predominantly metropolitan areas, they live outside the central cities, in smaller communities. Their lifestyle is more country than urban. They are generous but not spendthrifts. This segment was number 1 and 2 within the city and county respectively and represent the general population characteristics throughout Wayne County

Salt of the Earth (County Only #1) residents are entrenched in their traditional, rural lifestyles. Citizens here are older, and many have grown children that have moved away. They still cherish family time and also tending to their vegetable gardens and preparing homemade meals. Residents embrace the outdoors; they spend most of their free time preparing for their next fishing, boating, or camping trip. technology is not their forte. They use it when absolutely necessary but seek face-to-face contact in their routine activities.

The **Traditional Living (City #3/ County #3)** segment lives primarily in low-density, settled neighborhoods in the Midwest. The households are a mix of married-couple families and singles. The manufacturing, retail trade, and health-care sectors are the primary sources of employment for these residents. This is a younger market—beginning householders who are juggling the responsibilities of living on their own or a new marriage, while retaining their youthful interests in style and fun. This segment is the third largest in both the county and the city.

Old and Newcomers (City Only #2) are composed of neighborhoods in transition, populated by renters who are just beginning their careers or retiring. This market features singles' lifestyles, on a budget. The focus is more on convenience than consumerism, economy over acquisition.

City/ County Tapestry Comparison					
	Age Group	Marital Status	Class Group	Renter/ Owner	Lifestyle
City of Wooster Old and Newcomers Tapestry	30's and 40's	Single or married	Middle Class	More renters	Tech Savvy
Wayne County Salt of the Earth Tapestry	50's and 60's	Married (empty nest)	Above median income	Homeowners	DIY and outdoors

While some of these lifestyle segments may prefer limited change, opportunities to strengthen the community can come with balanced growth. The term “balanced growth” is an often used and rarely defined term in economic development. It is often used to describe balancing competing interests as a community's economy grows, such as, land development and fears of overdevelopment. We will attempt to define and better describe our view on how the concept of “balanced growth” applies to Wooster's economic development.

Future Real Estate Demand Projections

Conducting a “straight line” analysis of future demand by real estate sector the following are current and future projections. A market analysis will be presented as part of the final report.

Projections Table			
	City of Wooster	Wayne County	City's Share of Space
Real Estate Market – 2022 (not inclusive of current development)			
Industrial Real Estate	6,300,000	12,000,000	52.5%
Retail Real Estate	2,700,000	4,500,000	60.0%
Office Real Estate	782,000	1,300,000	60.2%
Real Estate Market Demand Projections (5-7 Years)			
Industrial Real Estate	501,311	954,878	52.5%
Retail Real Estate	214,847	358,079	60.0%
Office Real Estate	62,226	103,445	60.2%

Observations

- Industrial and Retail users located in the city have a larger per employee footprint than those located elsewhere in the county.
- The potential industrial demand in the city will ultimately depend on the type of user that occupies the space.
- Market demand for new real estate development in Wooster is more than half of the total projected countywide demand.
- Commercial demand will exponentially increase as new residential units come on line and the populations in the city and county grow.

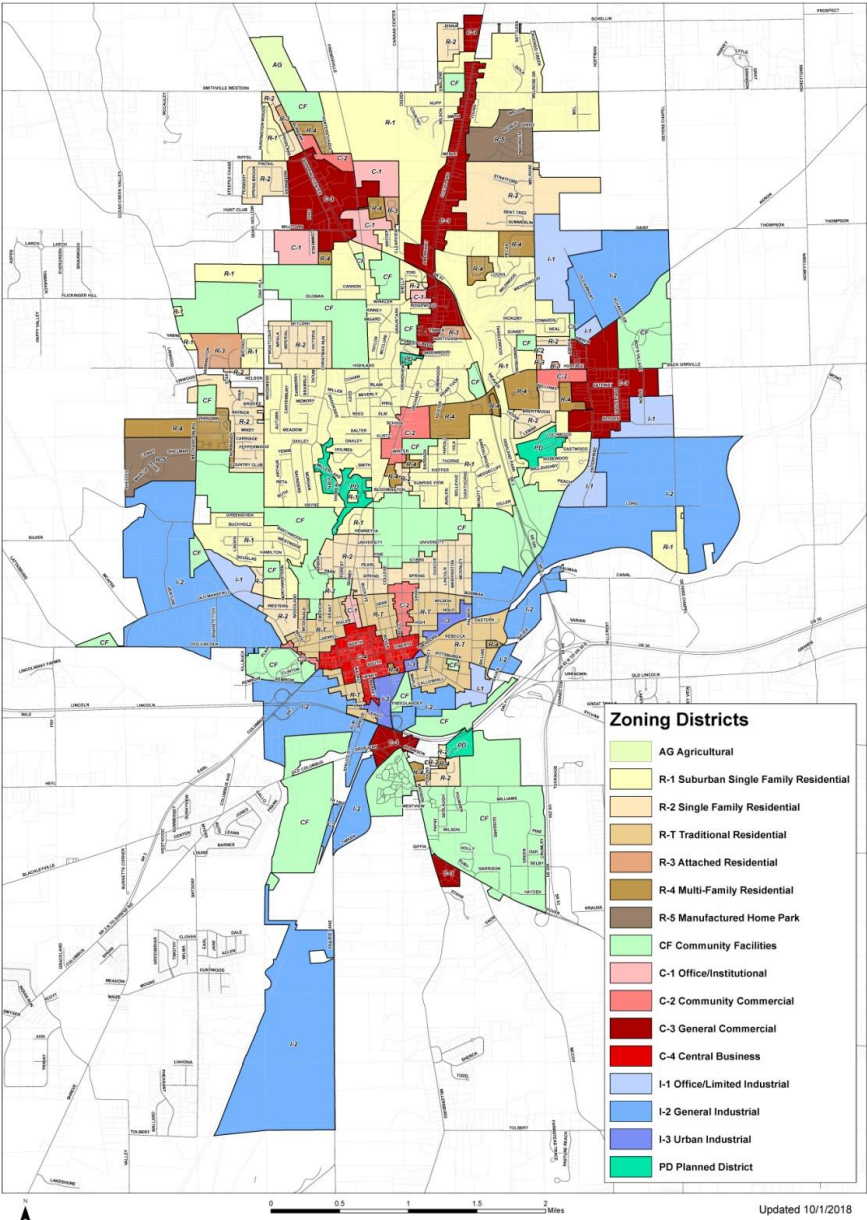
Regulations

In part of its functions, local government performs in economic development as a regulator: zoning and land use, construction licenses, occupational licenses, and impact fees. A city's regulatory role has a significant impact on credibility, customer service, and cash flow.

Real estate investors and developers want to know if the community where they are going to make an investment fits their needs and goals. Also, they want to know if the local government has a friendly attitude towards development and clear goals and expectations. The tools that a city possesses include those of zoning and regulation, to make the regulations coincide with the reality of the market and when a developers comes in a follows that vision they might get a fast-track process or other incentives/ bonuses.

Wooster’s zoning is a conventional Euclidian zoning type that separates all land uses into single categories. This code made sense in earlier times when sanitation and safety measures were more primitive. But in today’s market and with new technologies it is possible to have more mixed-use development in a sensible way to respect the context and the community’s desires. Most of the residential zoning is designated for single family and low density.

City of Wooster Official Zoning Map



Top 4 zoning designations in Wooster

- 1.Industrial (strong base)
- 2.Community Facilities
- 3.Single Family Residential
- 4.General Commercial

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ECOSYSTEM REVIEW

Summary of Economic Development Partners and Activities

Based on city input, interviews and a review of economic development resources, the chart on the following page attempts to describe current partners and organizations that have a role in the City's economic development activities and ultimately the implementation of the City of Wooster Economic Development Strategic Plan. There are certain activities that have multiple partners, but there is not clarity as to their role. Furthermore, some activities will require a collaborative approach for implementation while others may be implemented primarily by the City or one of its partners with limited support from other agencies.

Based on our review, there may be a lack of ownership or direction on particular activities that will become important as part of the implementation strategy(s), these areas include community development and entrepreneurship. In other areas, such as workforce development, there are clear agencies that take on this role but there is limited coordination with partner agencies and the ultimate consumer(s), local business which should also be included as a partner in almost all economic development endeavors. Partners will need to be nimble and adaptable to proactively respond to economic development challenges. The city can play a major role as convener and facilitator and call upon the resources of the private sector in its future implementation.

Economic Development Activities by Organization

The list on page 26 shows current economic development ecosystem "partners" and their primary activities. Included in this review are specific services and tools that these partners can contribute to the city's economic development strategies. Through the course of our research and community conversations, there is a disconnect between aligned community strategies and consistency in external messaging around Wooster and Wayne County. In addition, many of these partners provide valuable services that could be utilized by the city and the business community at large but are largely unknown or underutilized. One example is the Wayne Career Center which provides customized hiring support to local businesses, but underutilized.

The review of the economic development ecosystem, city initiatives and programs, and partner activities guides the development of economic development strategy areas for the City of Wooster's focus, limiting duplication and ensuring that important service gaps are covered, while continuing to work as a partner supporting local and regional economic growth.

Economic Development Activities by Organization

City of Wooster

- Regulatory Incentives and Land Planning
- Infrastructure, Utilities, & Public Safety
- Quality of Life - Assets
- Tax Abatements and Incentive Programs
- Grant Writing and Management
- Economic Analysis
- Infrastructure and Incentive Packets

Wooster Growth Corporation

- Land Acquisition and Disposition
- Project Financing and Negotiations
- Review of Incentives and Grant Making

Wayne County (resource)

- Infrastructure
- Community Development Incentives

Wayne Economic Development Corp.

- Coordinate and Evaluate Leads -TeamNEO
- Corporate Visitation & Outreach Program
- Corporate Site Selection Assistance
- County Promotions and Marketing
- Data and Research

Wayne Community Improvement Corp.

- Land Acquisition and Disposition

Wayne County Land Bank

- Land Acquisition and Disposition
- Housing Rehabilitation and Grants
- Building Demolition
- Clear Title

Main Street Wooster

- Events and Activations
- Downtown Business Liaison
- Program Management
- Marketing & Promotions

Wooster City Schools

- Quality of Life – Education System
- Decision Maker, TIF and tax Abatements

TeamNEO (Regional ED)

- Marketing
- Site Selection Facilitation
- Regional Promotions & Lead Generation
- Liaison to JobsOHIO programs & incentives

JobsOhio (Support)

- Marketing
- Business Development (US & International)
- Jobs and Workforce Development Grants.
- State Agency Liaison
- Chamber, Economic Development Advocacy

Ohio Means Jobs (Workforce Development)

- Labor Force Job Readiness Training
- Career Exploration and Development
- Workforce & Corporate Training
- Corporate Recruitment Assistance
- Job Search Assistance
- Incentives for Hiring/ Training

Greater Wooster Chamber of Commerce

- Business Marketing and Events
- Networking Opportunities
- Access to Lower Cost Insurance Costs
- Young Professionals Engagement.
- Small Business Counseling & SBDC
- Economic Development Advocacy
- Workforce Attraction and Retention

Wayne County Career Center (Resource)

- Secondary and Adult Technical Education
- Customized Corporate Workforce Training*
- Apprenticeship Job Coaching*
- Resume and Applicant Screening*

(*Direct business services provided by WCCC)

Wayne Metro Housing Authority

- Public and Senior Housing and
- Section 8 Voucher Administration
- Residential Rehabilitation Grants
- Homeownership Grant Programs

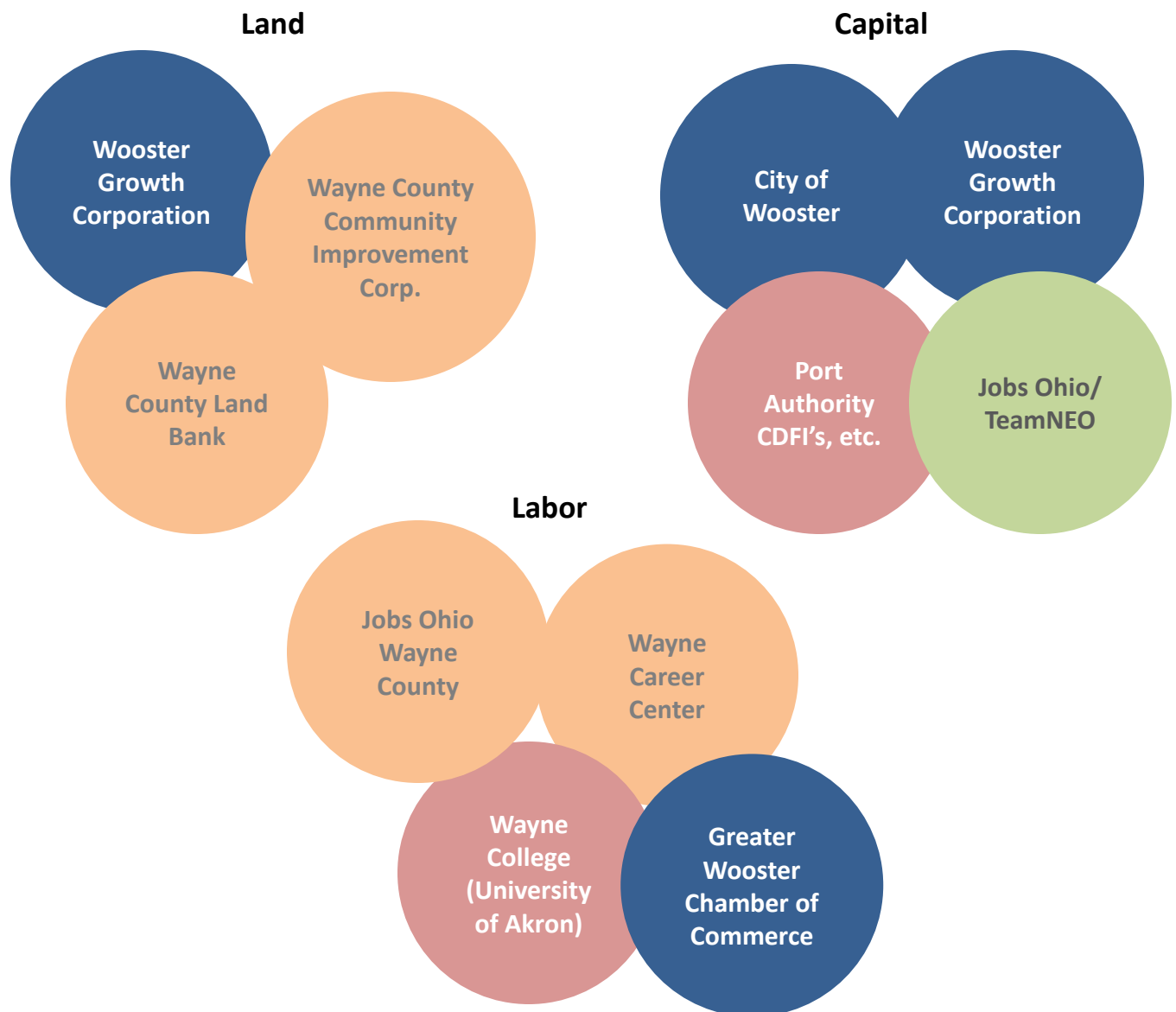
Wayne Convention and Visitors Bureau

- Tourism and Attraction Marketing

INVENTORY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLS

Summary of Economic Development Tools and Drivers

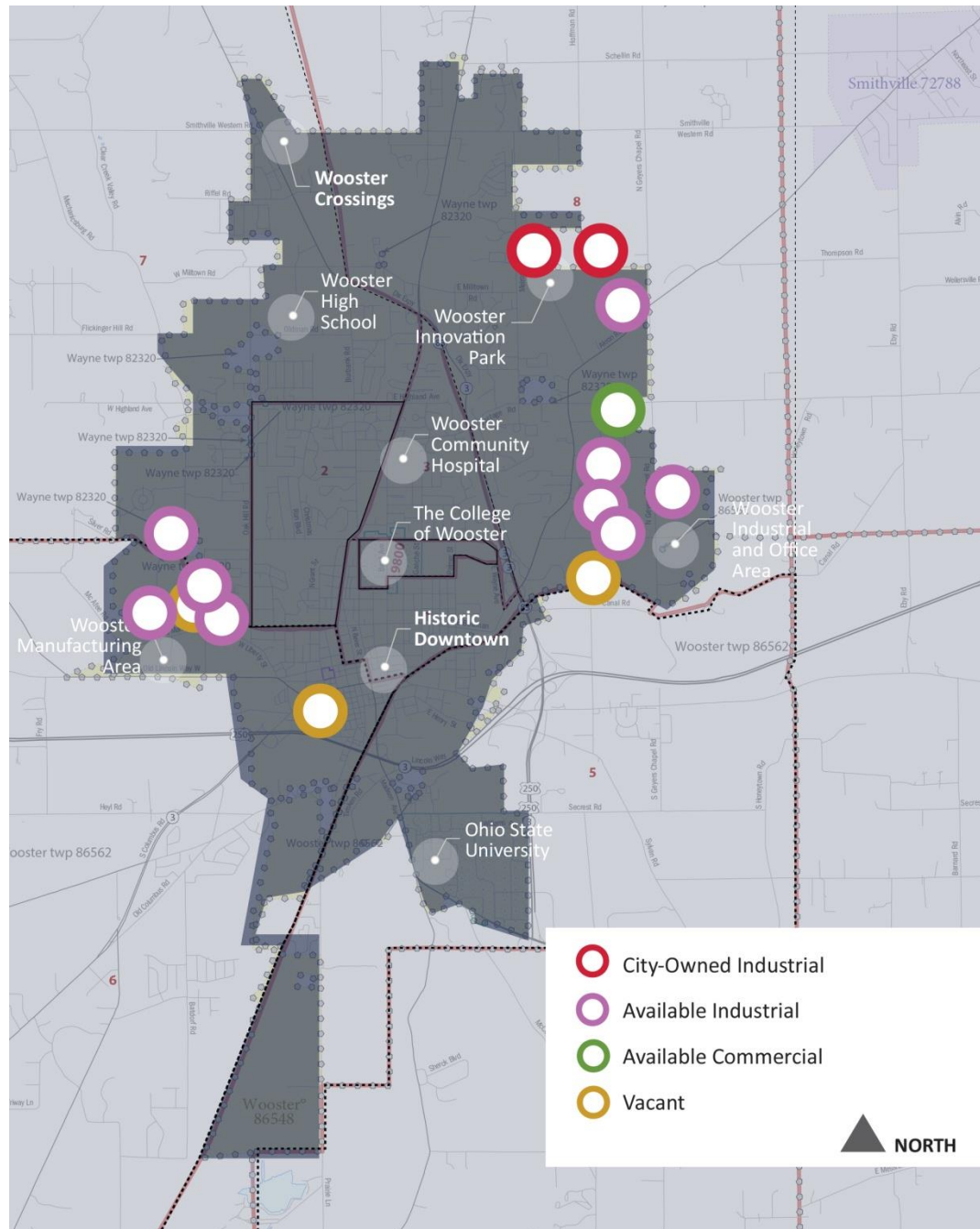
There are several economic development tools at the city's disposal, which can positively influence the economic development drivers of Land, Labor and Capital. These include tools that the city directly administers, such as the city's land assets, funding and incentive programs, along with tools that are managed by county, regional and state partner organizations, especially tools related to the labor markets.



Land

Wooster continues to experience private development activity, and has been proactive in the assembly and disposition of land. While there are available sites within the city there is a finite supply. There are parcels of land in the city that are undevelopable. These properties are constrained by environmental issues, lack of infrastructure, and incompatible regulation. This is inclusive of both “greenfield” sites and infill parcels.

The primary tools to be deployed include acquisition and disposition, code enforcement, nuisance abatement, infrastructure, environmental remediation, and regulation.



Labor

Labor and workforce are one of the most challenging drivers for economic development, particularly today (post-Covid) when everyone is competing for talent. While what typically comes to mind in terms of labor is workforce development, in the case of Wooster and Wayne County accessibility to jobs is equally important. Based on our stakeholder interviews with larger employers in Wooster, these were the four (4) main challenges to workforce attraction and retention:

Lack of Available (and appropriate) Housing, tools and resources include:

- Wayne County Housing Authority
- Land Use and Zoning
- Public/Private Development
- Targeted Acquisition and Disposition
- Code Enforcement
- Nuisance Abatement
- Employer Assisted Housing

Lack of Transportation (access to workforce)

- Employer and Community Carpool Programs
- Transportation Demand Management Strategies
- City of Wooster Transit Service
- Expanded Wayne County Transit

Child Care. This has been identified as a gap, particularly for infants to toddlers (0-3). This can provide a unique opportunity for entrepreneurship.

- Employer Supported Childcare
- Hospital Sponsored “Sick Child” Care
- Training, Education and Certifications
 - UA Wayne College – Child Development A.A.
 - Wayne Career Center – Early Childhood Development

Local resources that can support the “up skilling” and attraction of labor include:

Ohio Means Jobs – Wayne County

- Foreign workforce hiring and certification assistance.
- Technical training and apprenticeship matching (coordination with trade unions).
- Tax incentives and hiring assistance for special populations.
- Rapid response and layoff aversion and placement services.

Wayne Career Center

- Coordinated curriculum development based on local labor gaps.
- Continued community collaboration, i.e. “Manufacturing Days”.
- Internships and apprenticeship placement and support.

UA Wayne College

- Campus resources and customized trainings
- Wayne campus offers five B.A. degrees related to nursing, social work, business, communications, and education.
- Opportunities to build specialized A.A. and certification programs fully completed at Wayne College campus, i.e. advanced manufacturing.

Capital

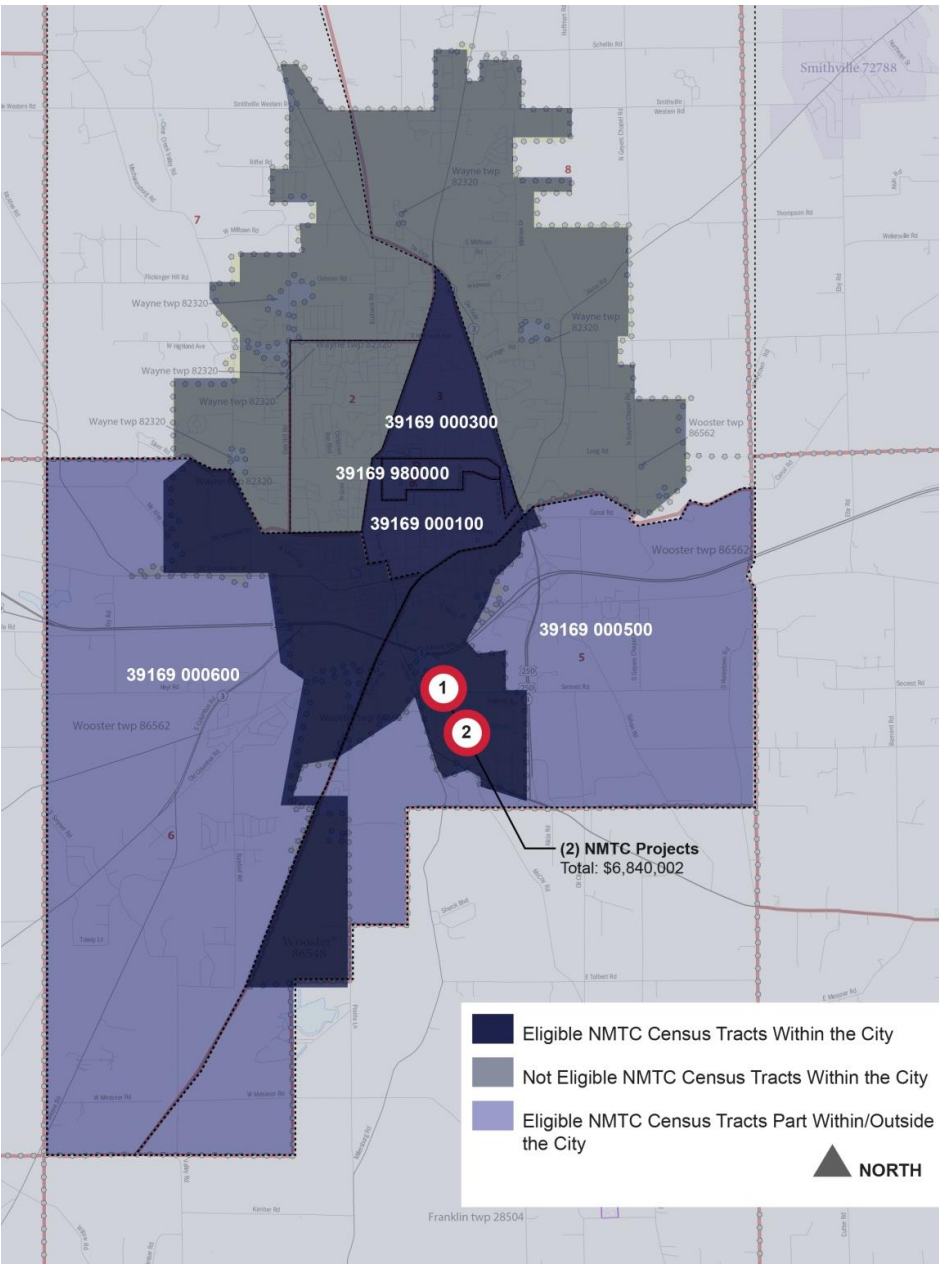
The financial and funding tools available for economic development can be categorized into two distinct camps: Tools that provide equity today, and tools that support future credit.



There are a number of capital trends that are important to Wooster’s economic development efforts. The **Commodity Index for Raw Materials** expected to increase in all sectors making infrastructure and housing projects more costly. In the Motor Vehicles and Parts Sector, which is heavily invested in Wooster, after tax profit rallied in Q2 to the 2021 level, and the Transportation Equipment Sector followed this trend to the 2nd highest quarter since 2020.

Municipal Bond rates for AA Bonds are projected to increase according to Bond Wave. The City of Wooster is inside millage capacity and has low current debt. Important to economic development efforts is the fact that all 8 of the city’s census tracts allow for CDFI approved investment.

A significant portion of the City qualifies for projects that include participation in the **New Markets Tax Credit program (NMTC)**, one of the most effective economic development programs, however only two projects have taken advantage of the program to date.



Small Business and Entrepreneurial Support

Tools for Reinvesting in Downtown

- Façade Grant Program
- Historic Preservation Tax Credits
- Infrastructure Improvements

Programs to Attract and Grow Businesses (city services)

- Local Economic and Market Data
- Enterprise Zone Incentives
- Community Reinvestment Area Incentives
- Job Creation Tax Credit
- Community Owned Industrially Zoned Building Sites (Wooster Innovation Park)
- Real Estate Tax Exemption
- Tax Increment Financing
- Phased and Paperless Permitting
- Site Selection and Property Availability (interactive map)

Wooster for Start-Ups

Mentoring and Funding Resources

- SCORE
- Small Business Development Center
- ECDI
- JumpStart
- MBAC – Minority Business Assistance Center
- Wooster Opportunity Loan Fund

Connections and Resources

- Wooster Area Chamber of Commerce
- The Business Center at Wayne County Public Library
- Local Roots Café/Market & FoodSphere Commercial Kitchen and Maker Sale
- Wayne Center for the Arts
 - Pottery Studio(s)
 - Sound Studio
 - Performing Arts Studio(s)
 - Digital Arts Software
- Schantz Maker Space - Computerized Equipment Builds, Use and Classes
- OSU/OARDC Pounden Hall Technology Center
 - Research and Development Incubator
- Apple Creek Maker Space (7 miles from Wooster in Apple Creek Historical)
 - 3D Printer
 - Computerized Routers, Laser Markings
 - CAD Software and Trainings
 - Woodworking Equipment
- 3D Lab at UA Wooster College (11 miles from Wooster in Orville)
 - Digital Fabrication Equipment
 - Design and Fabrication Services for Businesses
- Romich Foundation Makerspace (12 miles from Wooster in Creston)
 - 3D Printing
 - Woodworking
 - Laser, Metalworking and Electronics



INVENTORY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSETS

List of Economic Development Assets

Quality of Life and Sense of Place

- Small Town Charm
- Farming Community (Amish)
- Historic Downtown (Liberty Street)
- National Register of Historic Places (10)

Schools & Talent

- Wooster High School (+/- 1300 students) and other schools
- The College of Wooster (+/-2000 students) (Scottish Presbyterian heritage)
- Ohio State University Agricultural Technical Institute (+/- 700 students)

Entertainment

- Wayne County Fair-Ohio (Fairgrounds)
- Music and Rib Fest
- Woosterfest

Legacy Businesses

- Schaffler
- Wooster Brush Company
- Artiflex

Outdoors and Nature

- Secrest Arboretum
- Large number of parks
- Wooster Historic Public Square – Historic District

Health & Workforce

- Wooster Community Hospital (+/- 300 employees)
- Cleveland Clinic
- Land

Wooster Innovation Park

- Wooster's future Land Bank
- Wooster Growth Corporation (also a source of capital)

What's Missing

- Hip places to connect college population to Downtown.
- More Third places
 - In sociology, the third place refers to the social surroundings that are separate from the two usual social environments of home ("first place") and the workplace ("second place"). Examples of third places include coffee shops, public markets, plazas, squares, parks, bookstores, eateries, and breweries.
- Live Music Venues.
- Housing diversity in walkable neighborhoods connected to places of commercial activity.
- Exposure of cultural significance and history – Storytelling.
- The “fun” and “cool” factor for the younger talent.

Community Events, Outdoors, and Parks

Photo during Woosterfest 2022



Photo of the Music and Ribfest in Wooster



Photo of Main Street Wooster / Historic Downtown



Community Events, Outdoors, and Parks

Photo of Secrest Arboretum by Heather J Photography (local entrepreneur) – Secrest Arboretum is located in Wooster at the Ohio State University's Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center's (OARDC).



Photo of Christmas Run Kiwanis Playground



Photo of Coed Sand Volleyball at Freedlander Park



ECONOMIC DRIVERS THAT SUPPORT BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

Business Retention and Expansion

Location/Land

The City of Wooster is well located between Cleveland and the State's Capitol, Columbus, which are Ohio's largest cities, both can be reached with 1 ½ hours by car, Akron and Canton are approximately 35 miles away and within easy commuting distance. These local urban centers also support Wooster and Wayne County's appeal with expanded access to education, entertainment such as minor league sports, museums, concerts, and corporate offices and headquarters. Location is a leading factor in investor decisions and labor force satisfaction.

Transportation and Distribution Network

Approximately 40 miles from the city is the Akron Canton Airport which provides commercial and passenger air service. In addition, Cleveland Hopkins is in close proximity. The Wayne County Airport is less than 15 minutes from the City of Wooster and is extremely executive friendly for private business and personal travel. The City of Wooster is the County's transportation hub for commerce. The city is bisected by the Norfolk Southern Rail Line which is a class II railroad, boosts 25 trains per day, and connects in Orville with the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway which provides north/south access. Older industrial areas just south of the downtown have active rail spurs connecting to the freight line.

The City of Wooster is the County's transportation hub for commerce. The city is bisected by the Norfolk Southern Rail Line, which boosts 25 trains per day, and connects in Orville with the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway which provides north/south access. Older industrial areas just south of the downtown do active rail spurs connecting to the freight line.

In addition, the City of Wooster is located adjacent to US 250 and US 30 making it an ideal location for manufacturing and distribution. US 30 is the main east-west trucking route connecting through Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. More than 26% of all traffic on US 30 carries freight. The Port of Cleveland is only an hour north of Wooster, which connects freight and commodities to and from the Great Lakes region and Canada.

Workforce Access to Transportation.

Similarly, transportation was noted as an issue which limited access to the surplus of jobs in the City of Wooster. Countywide there is no public transportation (other than SARTA, Stark County connection) and if an employee lives outside of the county, jobs are inaccessible by any other means but car. The city provides a local transit circulator system, but interviewees indicated that it was a "fixed route" loop with longer than average headways which does not connect to larger employers.

Housing

Lack of housing is no surprise given the limited development over the past ten years and the multiple discussions within the community about this issue. However, the mix and housing types were also identified as a challenge in attracting talent, which includes housing based on lifestyle choice, housing types that cater to different stages of life, and housing (and community amenities) that may be more culturally desirable.

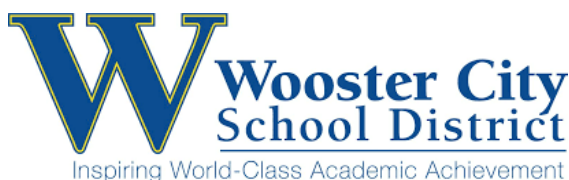
Healthcare and Education

In healthcare, **Wooster Community Hospital (WCH) Health System** is a city run, 173-bed, full-service and acute-care facility with \$100 Million, 1,083 employees paid \$73,154,000 annually, \$2,465,000 in local purchases and taxes paid. In addition, the presence of the Cleveland Clinic Physicians Office adds additional credibility to the city's health care cluster.

In education, the Wooster School District is in the Top 10% in the nation, and the WCSCC -Joint Vocational School District provides advanced workforce training. Finally, the presence of higher education including the Ohio State University and the College of Wooster, and proximity to the University of Akron provides the city and community with an educational foundation not present in many other communities.

Community Institutions

Attracting & Retaining the Workforce



Higher Education & Training

Preparing the Workforce



BUSINESS ATTRACTION AND MARKETING PROFILE

A Branding and Marketing Approach

City attractions, relationships and history help support marketing strategies that promote community strengths and support the goals of real estate developers, top employers and small businesses. There are many hidden destinations and “stories to tell” about Wooster businesses, places and people that make a difference in the external perceptions of the city. Just a small number of those stories and accolades have been uncovered in our research, which is represented below.

Culture, Heritage, and Institutions.

For its size, Wooster is rich in cultural assets, educational institutions, history, and industry and has the feel of a progressive city with traditional values. Downtown Wooster is a destination for food, hospitality, and specialty shopping with distinct retail niches such as second hand and antique merchandise and artisan and handmade items. Main Street Wooster, the Chamber and other organizations host farmers markets, events and provide entertainment that attract residents and regional visitors. Downtown Wooster is also home to the Public Square Landmark District which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and North Market Street Landmark District which is locally designated.

Throughout the city are several National Register and locally designated individual properties including churches, residential properties and commercial properties, many of which are of museum quality or are historically significant due to their association with a person or activity of historical significance.

Environment and Natural Resources

The City of Wooster is the county seat of Wayne County and is surrounded by farming and greenspace. It is a city within a rural oasis which has its roots in agricultural and innovation. As the home to Ohio State University’s Agricultural Research and Development Center, OSU contributes to the preservation of natural resources, sustainable agricultural practices and provides multiple programs and assets that are open to the community as a whole. Of note is the Seacrest Arboretum and Education Center, which offers tours and programming year round. True to its roots, Wooster is also home to the Wayne County Fair and Buckeye Agricultural and Education Center. The Wayne County Fair hosts a plethora of activities and is a premier celebration and draw for Wayne County. The Buckeye Agricultural and Education Center, showcases the tools and history of agriculture in the region and is continuously adding to its offerings and collections. The Wayne County Fairgrounds also hosts multiple events throughout the year.

Other notable resources within and around Wooster include county and state natural areas such as Killbuck Marsh Wildlife Area for hunting and fishing or trout fishing on Apple Creek in Grosjean Park, one of only a few untouched natural areas in the city. These natural resources are not often found in close proximity to urban areas so the challenge for the city will be how to preserve and enhance these resources while balancing growth to at a minimum, “do no harm.” Better yet the city should capitalize on the richness of these resources and offerings as part of its overall economic development and talent attraction strategies.

Workforce Joint Vocational School District

The Wayne County Career Center provides technical education for youth and adults and is a joint district and is funded by property tax apart from the regular school district millage. With nearly 25 career options it provides Youth and Adult Training Pathways with Local Business Partners which have been developed to meet business needs and resident choices

Wayne College also offers several certifications and AA programs and will be adding a degree in Advanced Manufacturing.

The following is a sample of some of the attributes that we heard during our interviews

Strong Sense of Community Pride

- Historic Downtown – Unique, Main Street USA.
- Strong corporate leadership and volunteerism in the community.
- Stakeholders say, “there is a lot of unity and good will in the community”.
- Opportunities to get involved in the community and the schools.

Accolades

- “Wooster Daisy plant is the largest sour cream producer in the nation”.
- “Wooster Frito Lay facility is the oldest facility still operating”.
- “The College of Wooster’s PhD award was to a woman in 1882”.
- “Wooster, OH is in the top three Micropolitan’s in the nation for project attraction”.

Community Attributes

- City is small enough that you can still walk or bike to many destinations and attractions.
- Cost of living is lower than the national average.
- The City of Wooster is the county seat.
- Lots of restaurants and family activities.
- Lots of education options and workforce training in close proximity to the city.
- Strong infrastructure in visual and performing arts through Wayne County Art Center.

Events and Attractions

- Wayne County Fair
- Ohio Light Opera
- College of Wooster Alumni Weekend
- MSW Farmers Market, Music Series, and WACC Woosterfest

Wooster has a unique story to tell with its tight knit community, historic main street, great outdoors, and the educational component.

COMPARATIVE AND COMPETITIVE ASSESSMENT

The Comparative Assessment identifies those elements that position Wooster for quality, realistic economic growth. The main areas in which Wooster is highly competitive include:

Access to Post-Secondary Education

The Wooster community has access to multiple opportunities for higher education, including the college of Wooster, the Ohio State University, the College Credit Plus offered at Wooster City Schools, UA Wayne College in Orville, and the Wayne Career Center in Smithville, and Ohio Means Jobs rounds out the opportunities for higher education and workforce skill education.

Entrepreneurial Resources

Entrepreneurship is the foundation of a community's economic development, but often takes place hidden from view, blocked by the "sexier" strategies of business attraction. Some of the entrepreneurial resources and opportunities in Wooster include the Local Roots Café and Market, the Wayne Center for the Arts, OSU's Pounden Hall Technology Center, and the College of Wooster's Entrepreneurship Center. Additionally, budding entrepreneurs can find additional resources at the Apple Creek Maker Space, the 3D Lab at UA Wooster College, the Romich Foundation Makerspace, and the MakerFaire at UA Wayne College. There is a hidden culture of entrepreneurship within the City of Wooster. Local entrepreneurs need to be "tapped" to build competitive strategies and promote and expand opportunities.

Locational Advantages

Wooster's location near major urban centers such as Cleveland and Akron, combined with the adjacency of the Appalachian counties, provides an opportunity to authentically provide both urban and rural lifestyles and benefits in a way that allows for co-existence. Additionally, Wooster has locational advantage with the presence of major rail and road transportation networks.

The "Hidden" Stories of Innovation

One of the most under-utilized economic development strategies is the "storytelling" about entrepreneurship and innovation that is already occurring in a community. Wooster has many of these stories which, if told correctly, can grow momentum for additional entrepreneurial endeavors. Some of the stories include the bioenergy and biofuel innovation being done by OSU, the manufacturing automation that Artiflex is undertaking, and electric vehicle and automotive technologies at companies such as Tekfor and Schaffler. Additionally, Wooster has creative entrepreneurs throughout the city, especially in the downtown area.

Community Attributes

Ultimately, economic development is about creating, maintaining, and enhancing places that people want to live, to work, to invest, to visit, and to open a business. Quality of life is the basis of placemaking, and Wooster has many community attributes that position it for continued economic success. These include a quality, historic downtown, quality public schools, convenient regional access, multiple cultural engagement opportunities, opportunities for lifelong learning, and bountiful recreational assets.

“Wooster has a unique story to tell with its tight knit community, historic main street, great outdoors, and the educational component.”

CITY OF WOOSTER SUMMARY OF LOCAL ECONOMIC DRIVERS
AND CONDITIONS REPORT
BusinessFlare®

Thank You

BusinessFlare® Contact:

Rachel Bach, AICP, Project Manager
Rachel@businessflare.net

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Kevin Crowder, Founder, CEcD
kevin@businessflare.net

APPENDIX

1. Tapestry Segments Information Sheets



LifeMode Group: GenXurban

Midlife Constants

Households: 3,068,400

Average Household Size: 2.31

Median Age: 47.0

Median Household Income: \$53,200

5E

WHO ARE WE?

Midlife Constants residents are seniors, at or approaching retirement, with below-average labor force participation and below-average net worth. Although located in predominantly metropolitan areas, they live outside the central cities, in smaller communities. Their lifestyle is more country than urban. They are generous but not spendthrifts.

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

- Older homes (most built before 1980) found in the suburban periphery of smaller metropolitan markets.
- Primarily married couples, with a growing share of singles.
- Settled neighborhoods with slow rates of change and residents that have lived in the same house for years.
- Single-family homes, less than half still mortgaged, with a median home value of \$154,100 (Index 74).

SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS

- Education: 63% have a high school diploma or some college.
- At 31%, the labor force participation rate is low in this market (Index 91).
- Almost 42% of households are receiving Social Security (Index 141); 27% also receive retirement income (Index 149).
- Traditional, not trendy; opt for convenience and comfort not cutting edge. Technology has its uses, but the bells and whistles are a bother.
- Attentive to price, but not at the expense of quality, they prefer to buy American and natural products.
- Radio and newspapers are the media of choice (after television).



Note: The Index represents the ratio of the segment rate to the US rate multiplied by 100. Consumer preferences are estimated from data by MRI-Simmons.



LifeMode Group: Middle Ground

Old and Newcomers

8F

Households: 2,859,200

Average Household Size: 2.12

Median Age: 39.4

Median Household Income: \$44,900



WHO ARE WE?

This market features singles' lifestyles, on a budget. The focus is more on convenience than consumerism, economy over acquisition. *Old and Newcomers* is composed of neighborhoods in transition, populated by renters who are just beginning their careers or retiring. Some are still in college; some are taking adult education classes. They support charity causes and are environmentally conscious. Age is not always obvious from their choices.

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

- Metropolitan city dwellers.
- Predominantly single households (Index 148), with a mix of married couples (no children); average household size lower at 2.12.
- 55% renter occupied; average rent is lower than the US (Index 85).
- 45% of housing units are single-family dwellings; 45% are multiunit buildings in older neighborhoods, built before 1980.
- Average vacancy rate at 11%.

SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS

- An average labor force participation rate of 62.6%, despite the increasing number of retired workers.
- 32% of households are currently receiving income from Social Security.
- 31% have a college degree (Index 99), 33% have some college education (Index 114), 9% are still enrolled in college (Index 121).
- Consumers are price aware and coupon clippers but open to impulse buys.
- They are attentive to environmental concerns.
- They are comfortable with the latest technology.



Note: The Index represents the ratio of the segment rate to the US rate multiplied by 100. Consumer preferences are estimated from data by MRI-Simmons.

Traditional Living

Households: 2,395,200

Average Household Size: 2.51

Median Age: 35.5

Median Household Income: \$39,300



WHO ARE WE?

Residents in this segment live primarily in low-density, settled neighborhoods in the Midwest. The households are a mix of married-couple families and singles. Many families encompass two generations who have lived and worked in the community; their children are likely to follow suit. The manufacturing, retail trade, and health-care sectors are the primary sources of employment for these residents. This is a younger market—beginning householders who are juggling the responsibilities of living on their own or a new marriage, while retaining their youthful interests in style and fun.

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

- Married couples are the dominant household type, but fewer than expected from the younger age profile and fewer with children (Index 79); however, there are higher proportions of single-parent (Index 146) and single-person households (Index 112).
- Average household size is slightly lower at 2.51.
- Homes are primarily single family or duplexes in older neighborhoods, built before 1940 (Index 228).
- Most neighborhoods are located in lower-density urban clusters of metro areas throughout the Midwest and South.
- Average commuting time to work is very short (Index 22).
- Households have one or two vehicles.

SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS

- Over 70% have completed high school or some college.
- Labor force participation is a bit higher than the national rate at 63.4%.
- Almost three-quarters of households derive income from wages and salaries, augmented by Supplemental Security Income (Index 139) and public assistance (Index 152).
- Cost-conscious consumers that are comfortable with brand loyalty, unless the price is too high.
- Connected and comfortable with the internet, more likely to participate in online gaming or posting pics on social media.
- TV is seen as the most trusted media.



LifeMode Group: Cozy Country Living Salt of the Earth

Households: 3,545,800

Average Household Size: 2.59

Median Age: 44.1

Median Household Income: \$56,300

6B

WHO ARE WE?

Salt of the Earth residents are entrenched in their traditional, rural lifestyles. Citizens here are older, and many have grown children that have moved away. They still cherish family time and also tending to their vegetable gardens and preparing homemade meals. Residents embrace the outdoors; they spend most of their free time preparing for their next fishing, boating, or camping trip. The majority has at least a high school diploma or some college education; many have expanded their skill set during their years of employment in the manufacturing and related industries. They may be experts with DIY projects, but the latest technology is not their forte. They use it when absolutely necessary, but seek face-to-face contact in their routine activities.

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

- This large segment is concentrated in the Midwest, particularly in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Indiana.
- Due to their rural setting, households own two vehicles to cover their long commutes, often across county boundaries.
- Homeownership rates are very high (Index 133). Single-family homes are affordable, valued at 25% less than the national market.
- Nearly two in three households are composed of married couples; less than half have children at home.

SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS

- Steady employment in construction, manufacturing, and related service industries.
- Completed education: 40% with a high school diploma only.
- Household income just over the national median, while net worth is nearly double the national median.
- Spending time with family is their top priority.
- Cost-conscious consumers, loyal to brands they like, with a focus on buying American.
- Last to buy the latest and greatest products.
- Try to eat healthy, tracking the nutrition and ingredients in the food they purchase.



Note: The Index represents the ratio of the segment rate to the US rate multiplied by 100. Consumer preferences are estimated from data by MRI-Simmons.

APPENDIX

2. ESRI Reports for Wayne County and Wooster