



# City of Wooster

## *ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN*

Planning a Road Map for our Future Economy

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City of Wooster, 2023

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Wooster, Ohio, serves as the background. In the foreground, a large, modern stadium with a green roof is visible. The city's residential and commercial areas extend into the distance under a clear sky.

# ***City of Wooster Economic Development***

## ***Offering Resources for a more prosperous future for Established Businesses, Residents, and Business Start-Ups.***

### **Purpose:**

- Foster Economic and Community Development within Wooster.

### **How We Do This:**

- Create and manage incentive programs to encourage investments, both for businesses and residents, to increase prosperity.
- We pursue federal, state, and local grants for public infrastructure and services to improve access and enhance safety.
- We conduct economic impact analyses to ensure that incentives, grants, and policies return-on-investment.
- Project Management for Wooster Growth, Wooster's CIC, to tackle special real estate projects including a business park to encourage basic-sector job creation.



## *A Great Small City's Economy is Important . . .*

- Free Enterprise allows for creative products and services.
- New services and products improve health, safety, innovation, and quality of life.
- Jobs created as a result of providing services generate career and income opportunities for locals.
- Higher quality jobs and exporting (“**basic-sector**”) business generates extensive wealth locally, and further incentivizes quality-of-life non-basic sector entities.
- Local government is a corporation owned by its residents (everyone owns a share) and it exists to maintain security, infrastructure, and education . . . **How well it all works is the responsibility of its residents.**



# *And Supports All Of This ...*



*Street  
Lighting*

*911*

*Fire /  
EMS*

*Police & Crime  
Prevention*

*K-12  
Education*

*Waste/  
Sanitation*

*Insurance  
Rate*

*Property  
Maintenance*

*Sewer*

*Storm-Water*

*Street Trees*

*Roadways &  
Traffic Lights*

*Sidewalks*

*Water*

*Leaf  
Pickup*



# Community Goals

- What is our strategy to meet our goals?

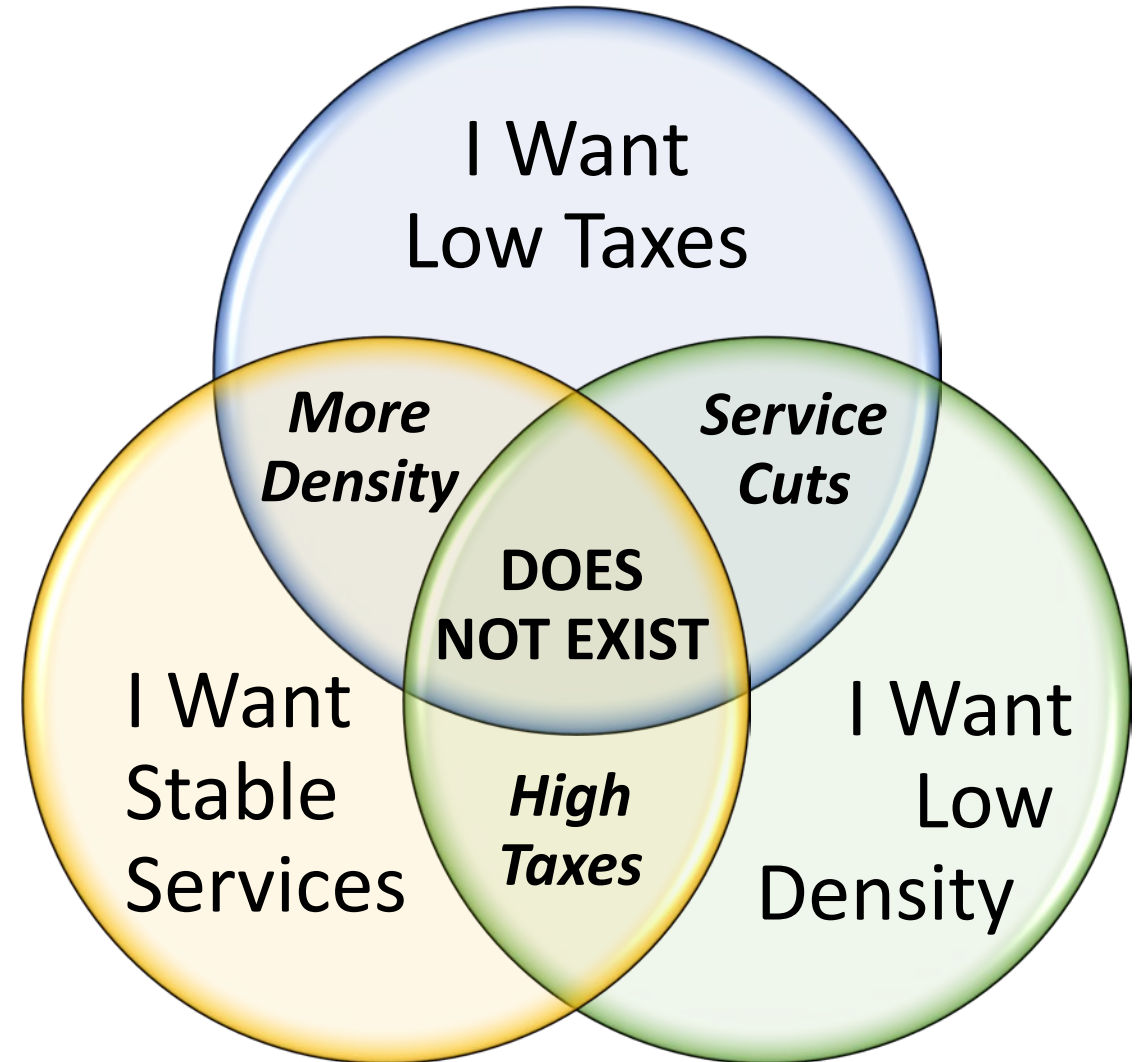
## 2023 Wooster Comprehensive Plan Survey:

Given the relationship between city services, income-generating development and tax levels, **which scenario do you most prefer?**

**67%** prefer... **..lower taxes**, but stable services paid for by new growth and development.

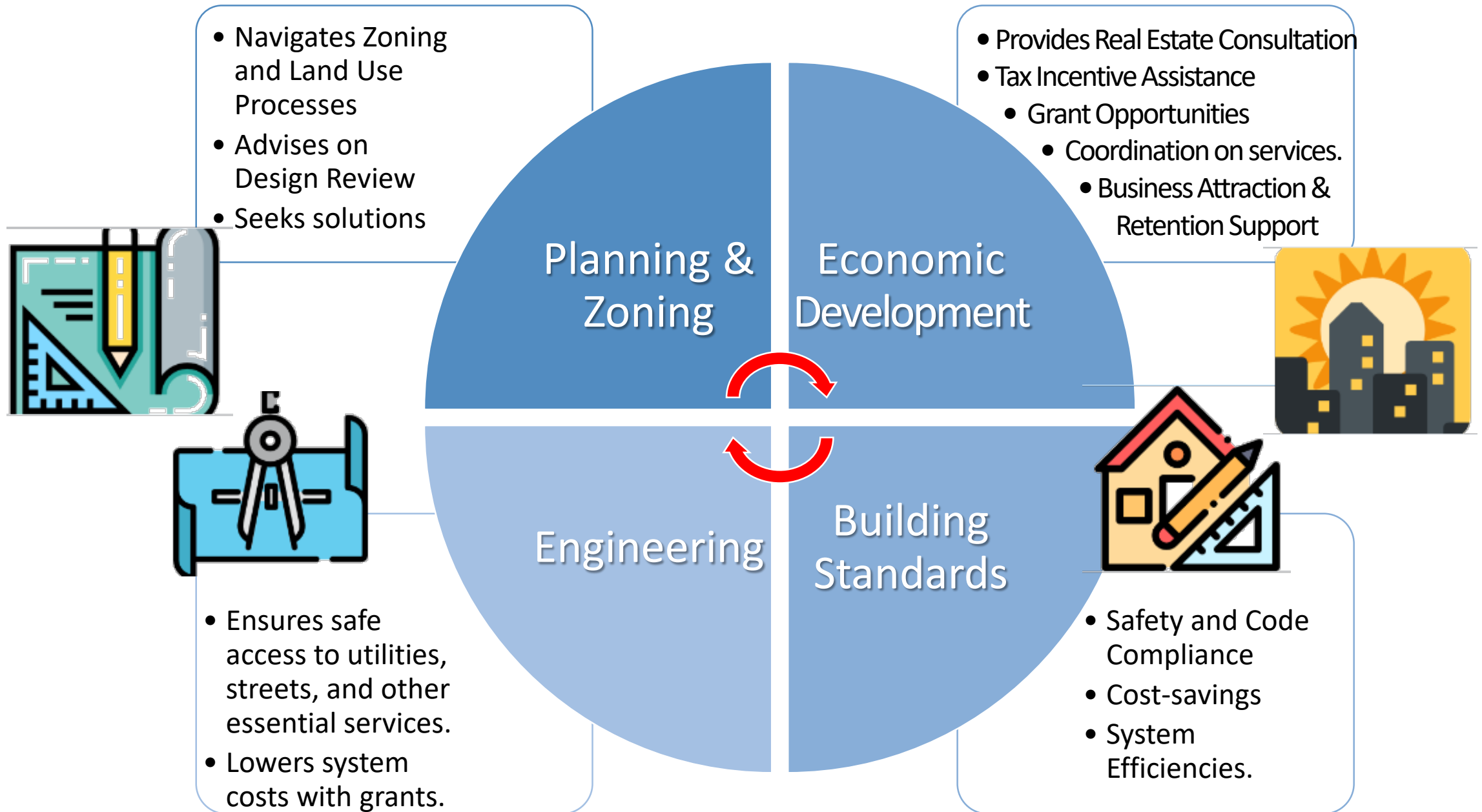
**25%** prefer... **..limited development**, and stable services funded by some tax increase.

**8%** prefer... **..limited development and lower taxes**, even if it means cutbacks in services.





# The City's *DEVELOPMENT TEAM*





# Collaborative Organizations

Our Community collaborates with statewide and international-level professional organizations to ensure we follow:

- Best Practices & Industry Norms
- Access to Resources
- Ethics and Accountability



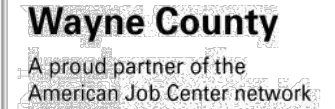
*The Power of Knowledge and Leadership*



*Creating Great Communities for All*



# A Community of Partners





# How Does The City Meet The Future?

- An Economic Development Strategic Plan would help the City with a long-term strategy to bolster prosperity for its residents.

## What this plan is...

- ✓ Strategic vs. Transactional (policy/programming)
- ✓ Respectful Reality Check
- ✓ Guidance for City Investments and Capacity
- ✓ Opportunity Assessment and Exposure
- ✓ Economic Development Partner Review  
(Government, Institutional & Non-Profit)

## What this plan is not...

- ✓ Targeted Industry Strategy
- ✓ Market Study
- ✓ Assessment of Economic Development Activities
- ✓ Implementation or Action Plan  
(Coordination, policy, programming, budget, & resources for deployment of strategies)



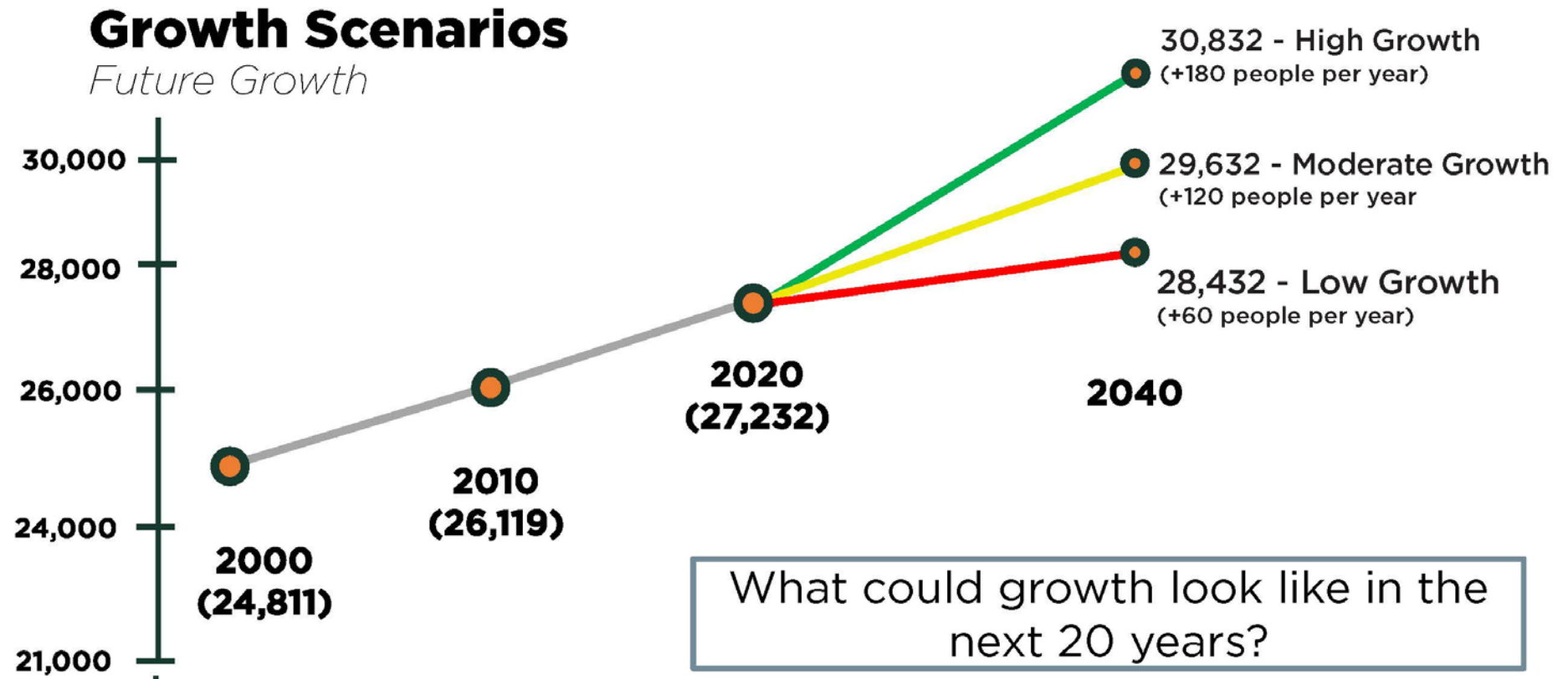
# *Charting A Path For Our Economic Future*

- **2019:** Began exploring options for strategic planning
- **2020:** Consulted with WEDC and TeamNeo
- **2021:** New Census Data – Wooster Grew 4.26% | Wayne 1% | OH 2.3%
- **11/2021:** Applied for JobsOhio grant
- **1/2022:** Issued RFPs, reviewed/interviewed 6 firms, selected BusinessFlare
- **2/2022:** Informed grant unavailable, moved ahead because of need.
- **9/2022:** Partner Interviews – Thanks!
- **6/2023:** Plan Completed – Next Steps!



# Comprehensive Plan Excerpt

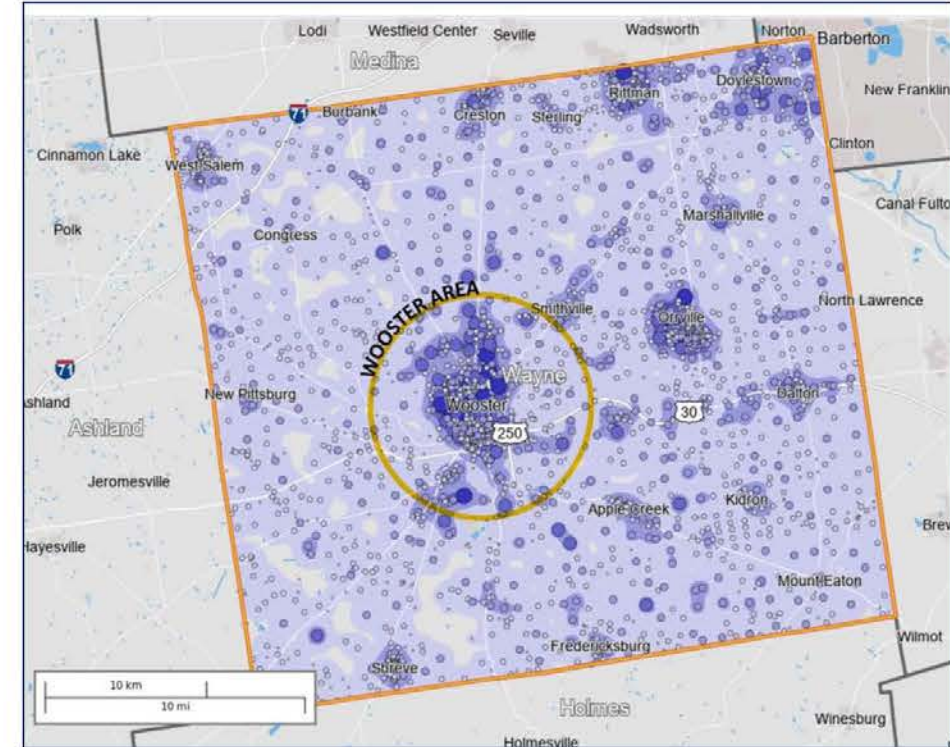
## How do we prosper in the future?





# What we know (Data)...

- ✓ 39% of all jobs in Wayne County.
- ✓ 36% of all businesses in Wayne County.
  - There are 1,400+ businesses in Wooster.
- ✓ 1,663 jobs/per square mile (Wooster).
- ✓ 92 jobs/per square mile countywide, including:
  - Doylestown (pp. 3,034)
  - Orville (pp. 8,471)
  - Rittman (pp. 6,153)



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

# What we know...

The largest **employment industries** Wayne County and Wooster:

- 🏭 Manufacturing,
- 🛍️ Retail Trade,
- ⚕️ Healthcare Services, and
- 🎓 Education and libraries

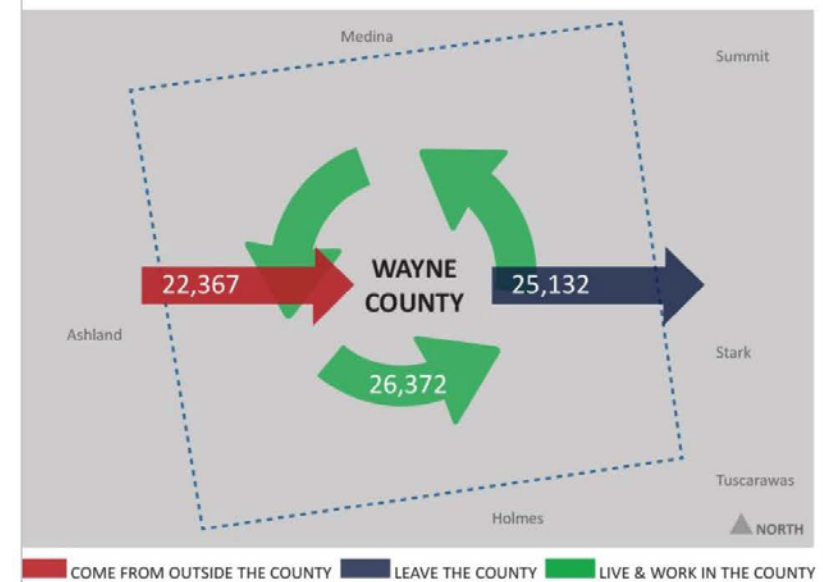
There are a large number of **knowledge-based and professional service** workers in Wooster:

- 💻 Information,
- 💼 Management,
- 🏛️ Finance and insurance, and
- 🔬 Professional, scientific and tech

Inflow/ Outflow Counts of all Jobs  
City - 2019



Inflow/ Outflow Counts of all Jobs  
County - 2019





# What we know...

- **Land- *Limited land availability***; Innovation Park and Hospital are great opportunities; Existing warehouse inventory can be repositioned; Land assembly is important to future growth.
- **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 65+ and empty nesters; traditional town values; millennials returning with families; ***countywide destination***.
- **Capital** - City has solid financing & funding
- **Regulations** – Conventional zoning regulations; ***missing opportunity for mixed-use*** outside of downtown; Need improved aesthetics and placemaking.
- **Quality of Life** – Great outdoors, anchor institutions, historic main street; missing “third places” that naturally encourage socializing and collaboration; need ; ***more entertainment***.

## ECONOMIC DRIVERS EXPLAINED

**#Land-** Availability of land and natural resources

**#Labor** - Availability and skill level of labor matched with industry

**#Markets** –Goods and services dependent on supply and demand to be feasible. (Are there gaps in customers, labor or assets?)

**#Capital** - Financial investments and physical assets.

**#Regulations** – Governmental policies. (Are they predictable, certain, credible or efficient?)

**#QualityofLife** – Access to community services, education, healthcare, infrastructure, housing, recreation and upward mobility.

# Strategy Areas





# Business Retention and Expansion

Goal 1: Become the “go to” problem solver for industry leaders and the local business community.

- ✓ Relationship building (partners and businesses)
- ✓ Local business visitation program
- ✓ Coordinated “traded sector” visitations
- ✓ Enhanced methods of communications
- ✓ Education and programming to grow existing businesses

## **BUSINESS RETENTION PARTNERS**



# Market Position / Place Brand

Goal 2: Establish Wooster's place brand to showcase its competitive advantage(s) and assets.

- ✓ Proactive marketing & place brand strategy
- ✓ Consistent (and reinforced) messaging amongst ED and Community Partners
- ✓ Storytelling, testimonials, positive social media reviews
- ✓ Improve "1<sup>st</sup> Impressions" through public improvement, commercial property improvements
- ✓ Connections, corridors and "distinct" places



## MARKETING / BRANDING PARTNERS

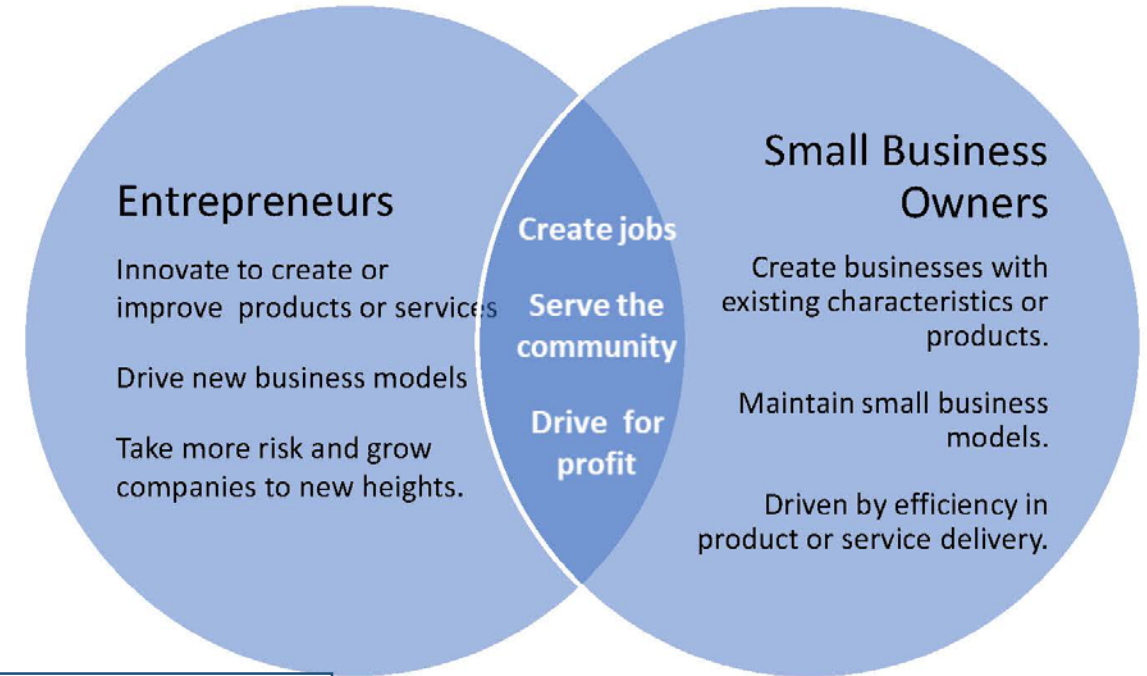




# Entrepreneurship

Goal 4: Become a center for entrepreneurship, innovation, and creative industries.

- ✓ Ecosystem and support
- ✓ Tourism and events
- ✓ Creative, technology, services, supply chain
- ✓ Third Places and networking



## ENTREPRENEURSHIP PARTNERS



Main Street  
WOOSTER



# Workforce and Talent

Goal 3: Ensure that the City of Wooster is a place that can attract talent and provide the necessary workforce to sustain continued economic growth.

## *Workforce Development*

- ✓ Connect local businesses to workforce training, apprenticeships and funding.
- ✓ Participate in and/or support and promote local hiring events.

## *Talent Attraction*

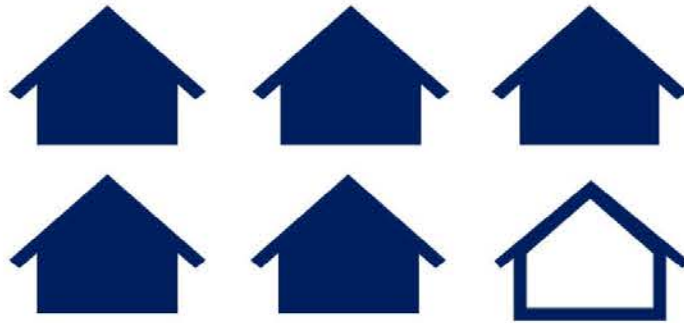
- ✓ Influence quality of life factors, like transportation and housing.





# Workforce Housing

**CITY OF WOOSTER**  
**DEFICIT = 1 NEW UNIT FOR EVERY 5 EXISTING UNITS**  
**TOTAL DEFICIT:**  
**2,100 UNITS**



Balanced Growth, Housing = 1 Unit : 1.5 Jobs

## WAYNE COUNTY



### 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



### LifeMode Group: GenXurban **Midlife Constants**

Households: 3,068,400  
Average Household Size: 2.31  
Median Age: 47.0  
Median Household Income: \$53,200



### LifeMode Group: Hometown **Traditional Living**

Households: 2,395,200  
Average Household Size: 2.51  
Median Age: 35.5  
Median Household Income: \$39,300

## CITY OF WOOSTER



### LifeMode Group: GenXurban **Midlife Constants**

Households: 3,068,400  
Average Household Size: 2.31  
Median Age: 47.0  
Median Household Income: \$53,200



### LifeMode Group: Middle Ground **Old and Newcomers**

Households: 2,859,200  
Average Household Size: 2.12  
Median Age: 39.4  
Median Household Income: \$44,900



### LifeMode Group: Hometown **Traditional Living**

Households: 2,395,200  
Average Household Size: 2.51  
Median Age: 35.5  
Median Household Income: \$39,300



# Asset Management

Goal 5: Use land acquisition, disposition and existing publicly owned lands to target specific business sectors and development types and facilitate economic development activities within targeted redevelopment areas.

- ✓ Asset management plan
- ✓ Site readiness and responsiveness
- ✓ Strategic capital investments

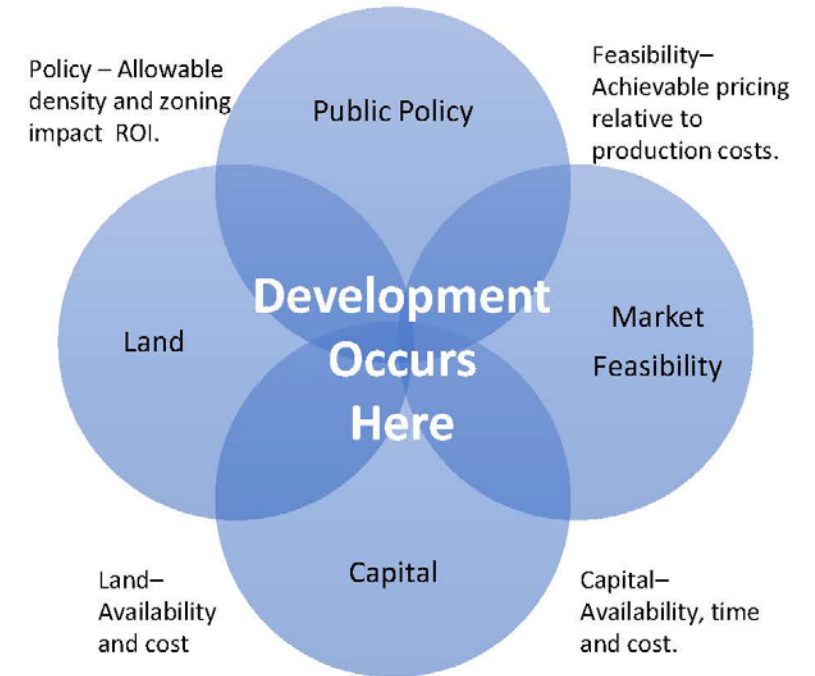
## ASSET MANAGEMENT PARTNERS



# Regulation and Efficiency

Goal 6: Encourage targeted development and redevelopment

- ✓ Compact housing development
- ✓ Efficient use of land
- ✓ Time saving process





# Business Attraction

Goal 7: Proactively target specific industries and sectors compatible with the local economy and engage in business attraction activities.

- ✓ Industry organizations, regional opportunities, showcase events, business news
- ✓ Collaborate on co-branded and companion marketing materials
- ✓ Engage with industry leaders and networks
- ✓ Industry development plan



**REALITY** ✓

**INDUSTRIAL MARKET**

- ✓ Wayne 3%
- ✓ Wooster 1.5%

# Implementation (Partner Scan)

WOOSTER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS	Business Attraction	Business Retention & Expansion	Entrepreneurship	Asset Management	Market Position & Place Branding	Regulation & Efficiency	Workforce Development
City of Wooster Government	LEAD (LOCAL)	LEAD	FACILITATOR*	LEAD	LEAD	LEAD	PARTNER
Wayne County Government				PARTNER			
Wayne Economic Development Council	LEAD (REGION)	PARTNER			PARTNER		PARTNER
Wooster Growth Corporation				PARTNER			
Main Street Wooster		PARTNER	PARTNER		PARTNER		
Wayne County Land Bank				PARTNER			
TeamNEO	PARTNER						
JobsOhio	PARTNER						
OhioMeansJobs Wayne County							PARTNER
Wooster Area Chamber of Commerce	PARTNER	PARTNER	PARTNER		PARTNER		LEAD
Wayne County Schools Career Center							PARTNER
Wayne Convention and Visitors Bureau					PARTNER		
Wayne College (University of Akron)			PARTNER				PARTNER
Other Partners	Corporate leadership, trade organizations		Wayne County Public Library, OSU, Wooster College, SBDC	ODOT, ODNR, Wayne County			Wooster City Schools, WMHA Community Action Agency

*BusinessFlare® perspective based on interviews and observations.  
To be refined and defined during partner engagement for plan implementation.*



# *Following The Map*

- **Working Groups**
- **Growing Capacity**
- **Enhancing Service**
- **Expanding Programming**
- **Open New Opportunities**
- **Continuing to help make the City of Wooster the BEST place to live, work, and visit!**





# **THANK YOU!**

**Contact:**

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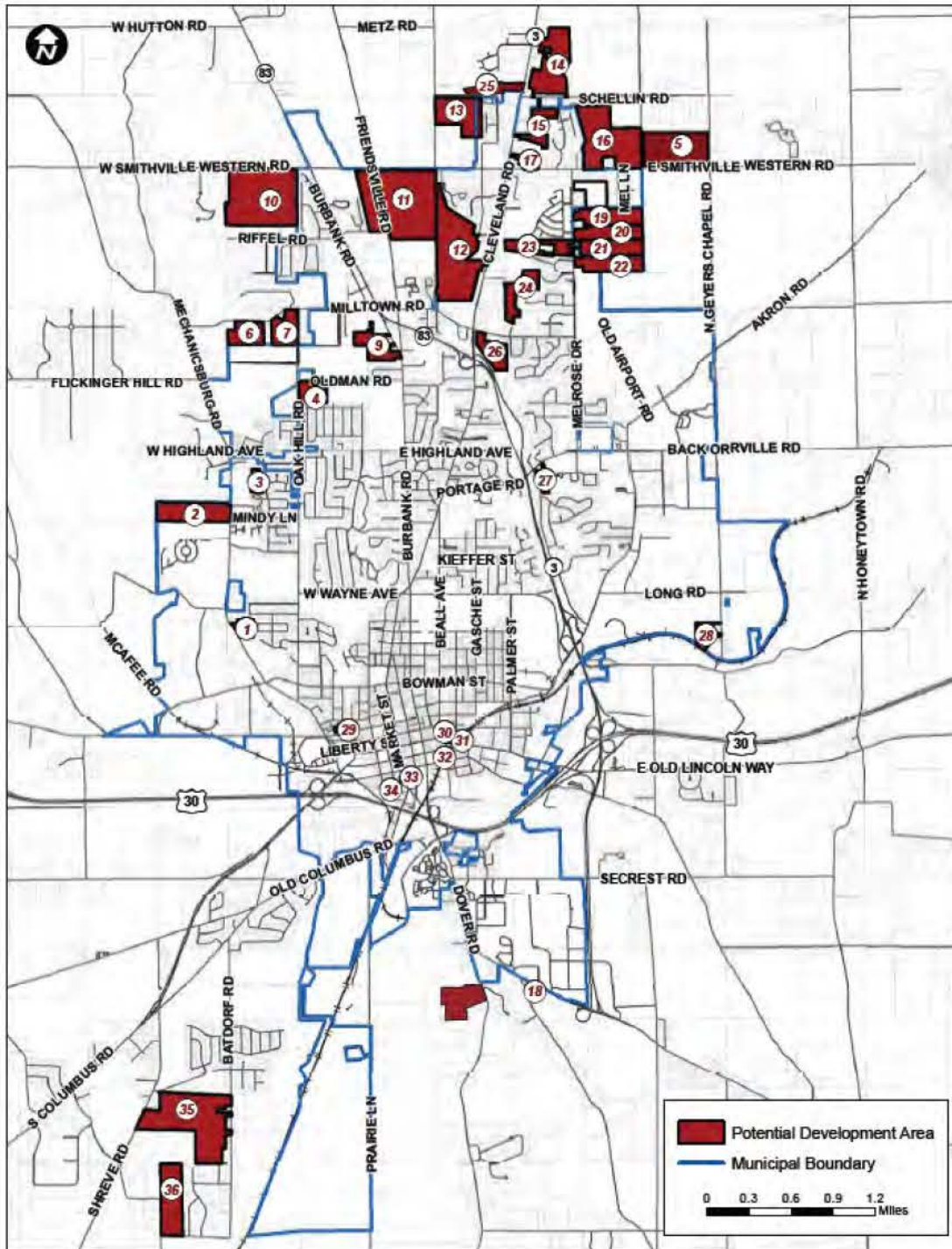
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**[www.woosteroh.com/development](http://www.woosteroh.com/development)**







# Potential Residential Development Areas

*Within or adjacent to city boundary*

*Exercise conducted by city staff to understand potential development areas. We broke this down further to understand what the development potential could be...*

- Combined acreage of **parcels greater than 50 acres\*** = **895.1ac**
- Combined acreage of **parcels less than 50 acres\*** = **418.4ac**

**\*Parcels less than 50 acres have limited market potential for development**