ECONOMIC VITALITY

Overview

Job Growth

Leveraging Assets
OVERVIEW

Westerville is a dynamic and progressive community in the heart of the Columbus region, with attributes for economic development success, including business clusters, existing public and private partnerships and unique services. With a history of thoughtful development, Westerville has become a family-oriented city with a lengthy list of amenities. Westerville has long been known as an attractive place for businesses and residents.

In keeping with its commitment to thoughtful development, in 2014 Westerville began a triad of interwoven planning efforts. These efforts included: development of this Comprehensive Plan to serve as a framework for future growth; a branding program focused on how to market the community both internally and externally; and an economic development strategic plan focused specifically on opportunities for future business development.

Westerville possesses tremendous assets, but to stay successful in a growing and ever competitive region, Westerville has to make some critical decisions about its future. Westerville must decide if it wants to be a comfortable suburban hometown or if it wants to be a more aggressive competitor for jobs and investment.

The strategies and Recommendations in the Economic Vitality section are intended to ensure the city’s ability to compete and be successful, while staying true to Westerville’s mission statement: “The City of Westerville is dedicated to providing exemplary municipal services to our community and fostering prosperity while embracing our unique heritage and character.”

WHAT IS IN THIS CHAPTER

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<th>SECTION</th>
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<td>E1.1-1.5</td>
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<td>E2: Targeted Industry sectors are thriving</td>
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<td>E3.1-3.8</td>
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What Makes Westerville Unique in the Region

SENSE OF PLACE
Westerville as a City within a Park, its historic Uptown and Otterbein University are attractions for residents, visitors, employees and employers. Stakeholder interviews to prepare the Economic Development strategic plan (2014) outlined the greatest attractions of this place as being authentic, inclusive and progressive. The municipal-owned utilities, well-managed City and reasonable cost-of-living are also attractive to businesses and employees.

The WESTERVILLE PARTNERSHIP promotes the commitment to civic engagement, transparency, service, fiscal responsibility and life-long learning through cooperation and dedication. Our city is defined by hard-work, innovation, a passion for learning, and responsible leadership to fully achieve our city’s vision. Working together increases the ability of job creation and entrepreneurial incubation. The coalition promotes having effective community leadership at all levels, and is the key to moving forward as a city. The Westerville Library, Otterbein University, City of Westerville, Westerville Chamber of Commerce and The Westerville School Board share important information and work together to help solve problems and promote innovation in our entire community. The continuing use of service indicators will help all leaders understand the return on investment and what is needed from each member to be successful. By empowering the Westerville Partnership, these big ideas will be implemented and measured as both individuals and as members of the partnership.

WēCONNECT
For today’s growing businesses, high-speed fiber connectivity and data center services are a fundamental utility, like electricity and water. That is why the City of Westerville established WēConnect, as the Nation’s first Community Data Center. WēConnect offers a unique advantage for attracting and retaining businesses. Together, the data center and high-speed fiber backbone enable WēConnect to offer speeds and services typically not available in a community the size of Westerville. Similarly Westerville residents are increasingly reliant on the Internet for their daily lives. Internet usage has evolved dramatically in the last few years - changing how we all shop, bank, search for services, share pictures, acquire and consume digital content. Therefore, WēConnect provides the 21st century critical public utility to support economic and social development.

IDEAL LOCATION
Westerville is well-connected to the region, with direct access to I-270 and I-71, 13 miles from Columbus International Airport, and connected into Central Ohio Transit Authority’s bus route system. Many business have grown and located here for this reason. Future challenges include how to build in a manner to support smarter transportation choices and ensure clean air and water.
The city’s strong economy is supported by a number of diverse public and private employers. Providing a nurturing environment to sustain those employers and attract new ones and grow the city’s employment base is critical to the Westerville’s economic success.

Existing Assets

Westerville’s assets include a diverse array of existing employers. The largest of these are JP Morgan Chase, who employs just over 4,000 workers. Mount Carmel, Otterbein University and Westerville City Schools each employ more than 1,000. The City’s largest employers are listed in the table below.

The Medical Mile, along Cleveland Avenue between OhioHealth in the north and Mount Carmel St. Ann’s in the south, is an economic driver as well as a unique community asset. The opening of St. Ann’s Hospital in 1984 provided the catalyst for what would become one of the largest suburban medical districts in central Ohio. Today, three hospital systems operate within the district, employing more than 4,500 in nearly 800,000 square feet of buildings.

In addition to these assets, Westerville’s unemployment rate (3.1%) is well under the Columbus Region (3.8%) and state average (5.2%).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

**TABLE: WESTERVILE’S LARGEST EMPLOYERS (2015)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPANY</th>
<th>PRODUCT or SERVICE</th>
<th>EMPLOYMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JP MORGAN CHASE BANK NA</td>
<td>FINANCE</td>
<td>4,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOUNT CARMEL ST. ANN’S</td>
<td>HEALTH CARE</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WESTERVILLE CITY SCHOOLS</td>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>1,587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALLIANCE DATA SYSTEMS</td>
<td>PROFESSIONAL SERVICES</td>
<td>760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTTERBEIN UNIVERSITY</td>
<td>HIGHER EDUCATION</td>
<td>655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INVENTIV/GSW</td>
<td>ADVERTISING</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXEL LOGISTICS</td>
<td>LOGISTICS</td>
<td>556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFFINION GROUP</td>
<td>PROFESSIONAL SERVICES</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROGRESSIVE MEDICAL</td>
<td>PROFESSIONAL SERVICES</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITY OF WESTERVILLE</td>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMERSON NETWORK POWER (LIEBERT)</td>
<td>ELECTRONICS</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Market assessment as input into land use scenarios

Regional and national market forces impact future population and employment growth in the City of Westerville. These forces include demographic shifts and the emerging preferences of Millennials and Baby Boomers, and employers. Along with demographic and employment shifts, the land use scenario development process included a review of performance measures, such as existing space, price points and occupancy rates, for residential, retail, office, and industrial land uses.

Population and employment growth forecasts were also prepared prior to testing the land use scenarios. These growth forecasts consider regional economics, historic trends, and land availability. Ultimately, all of the tested scenarios were vetted through the compiled economic factors, and are considered to be based in market reality.
Future Needs: Continued Job Growth
The City aspires to maintain a strong and growing local economy with employment spread through many sectors. Identifying targeted sectors as part of an overall economic development strategy provides a framework for focusing business recruitment, retention and expansion efforts. Targets have been determined by considering Westerville’s location, clusters of existing business, land development potential, and other assets (such as fiber) that make the city attractive to various business sectors. Using a sector approach to economic development also allows the city to align its economic development, workforce, infrastructure and marketing resources to position itself for continued success.

Five targeted business sectors have been identified as priorities for Westerville over the next five years. Additionally, two aspirational targets have been identified as opportunities that will require the city to address some challenges in order to be fully competitive for those sectors.

Industry Sectors and Job Growth
The Economic Development Strategic Plan (2014) identifies these sectors as targets that provide a framework for business recruitment, retention and expansion efforts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TARGET SECTORS</th>
<th>PHYSICAL NEEDS</th>
<th>CHARACTER AREA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corporate and Regional Headquarters</strong></td>
<td>Class A office space; workforce</td>
<td>Uptown Office Campus Suburban Employment Center Neighborhood Center Mixed Employment Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finance and Insurance</strong></td>
<td>Class A &amp; B office space</td>
<td>Uptown Office Campus Suburban Employment Center Neighborhood Center Mixed Employment Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Healthcare</strong></td>
<td>Medical office, medical care and institutional buildings; pharmacies</td>
<td>Office (Medical) Campus Suburban Employment Center Neighborhood Center Mixed Employment Center Flex Employment Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Logistics Services</strong></td>
<td>Flexible space, light industrial manufacturing, Class B office space</td>
<td>Suburban Employment Center Flex Employment Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technical Support Centers</strong></td>
<td>Flexible space, Class B office space</td>
<td>Neighborhood Center Mixed Employment Center Suburban Employment Center Flex Employment Center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASPIRATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>PHYSICAL NEEDS</th>
<th>CHARACTER AREA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electronic Instruments &amp; Controls</strong></td>
<td>Flexible space, light industrial manufacturing, Class B office space</td>
<td>Mixed Employment Center Suburban Employment Center Flex Employment Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medical Device Manufacturing</strong></td>
<td>Flexible space, light industrial manufacturing, Class B office space</td>
<td>Mixed Employment Center Suburban Employment Center Flex Employment Center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Job Growth Recommendations

The following recommendations outline the desired outcomes for improving economic vitality. These goals and strategies were developed through the public engagement process and refined by the Citizen Advisory Team.

**DESIRED OUTCOME**

**E1** Physical qualities of the community are desirable for businesses and employees attracted to Westerville.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **E1.1** Encourage development that is authentic and relevant to the community. 
  Encourage local businesses growth and entrepreneurship. 
  Incorporate unique place-making, such as: 
  • Utilize the Alum Creek Corridor for views, walking, and recreation 
  • Historical structures as adaptive re-use (ex. 1800’s farmhouse becomes a restaurant).

- **E1.2** Communicate governmental processes, services and incentives, in an easy to understand, transparent and effective manner. 
  Through the City’s website, brochures and other communication, make it easy for residents, builders and developers to know how to get projects done and what tools are available.

- **E1.3** Improve convenient multi-modal access. 
  Transportation is key, and easy access with all modes, as well as connecting all places together with recreational trails, paths, drives and views is imperative. See ‘Mobility’ Chapter for detailed policies. Everyone wants a reasonable commute time and safe areas to walk. 
  • Airport shuttle / Uptown circulator

- **E1.4** Initiate innovative community amenities, resources, and services. 
  To increase the competitiveness, there must be an increase in services, such as: 
  • Public fiber-optic lines to homes and businesses. 
  • Shared parking resources (city/developers/businesses) 
  • Sustainable infrastructure (city/developers) 
  • Local business growth and success (city/educators/chamber) 
  • Building trades school education (school district / community college / chamber)

- **E1.5** Enhance relationships with quality developers to expand their involvement in Westerville. 
  Identify developers who build mixed-use projects who currently have no projects in Westerville, and share this vision with them. Seek to address their comments and concerns.

- **E1.6** Enhance Westerville’s livability with a focus on sustainability. 
  1. Publishing an inventory of all community programs related to social, economic and environmental vitality. 
  2. Initiate a full “community wellness initiative” to promote our healthy community.

- **E1.6** Be prepared for future job transformations, in where people choose to work, such as ‘third places’ and telecommuting, as well as length of job tenure. 
  This has a direct relationship with tax structure, economic viability of offices only vs. mixed-use with ‘third places’ as well as apartment market fluxations.
**E2** Targeted industry sectors are thriving.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**E2.1** Identify locations for targeted industry sectors. Build synergy of place by co-locating reciprocal end-users, allowing for benefits from sharing services or products, with a clear understanding of amenities that would be attractive to the priority markets. 
For example: 
1. expand upon the ‘Medical Mile’ by attracting and marketing further medical providers, suppliers, medical device manufacturers (clean tech), doctor’s offices and pharmacies within a walkable, campus-like area, that also includes complimentary uses (restaurants, workforce housing, services) and easily accessible by car, bike and bus with smart parking and integrated green spaces for healthy living. 
2. Retail redevelopment – Windsor Bay, South State Street, Schrock/Cleveland 

**E2.2** Consider co-locating of different companies. Companies can benefit from shared services or products. The city, businesses and developers should invest in mixed employment centers that will cultivate a unique sense of place and encourage walking to nearby services, recreation amenities and transit.

**E2.3** Partner to invest in an Innovation / Incubator / Entrepreneurial Center or District. In order to support entrepreneurs, makers, creators, and inventors, by leveraging space to work and resources for small business development. Strengthen entrepreneurial opportunities, from high school through retirement community, by promoting “Think outside of the box” business incubation, think tank, entrepreneurial spirit, and awards.

**E2.4** Create a reward program for innovation. The community, through the Westerville Partnership, should create an annual reward program that acknowledges business incubation and entrepreneurship. The intent is to highlight the best work in the community in a way that could lead to additional job opportunities in Westerville.
LEVERAGING ASSETS

Westerville has an aggressive economic development program and a successful educational system that has positioned the community as a top tier suburb of Columbus. However, there are several other neighboring cities that are in a similar position, which makes for a very competitive economic development environment. To maintain its position in that top tier, Westerville must develop a focused approach to economic development that will create additional job opportunities in the city, leading to revenue growth for continued development of amenities and services.

The seven areas of strategic recommendations identified for Westerville are focused on leveraging all assets of the city, while addressing the opportunities and challenges. To ensure continued success, Westerville must: strengthen its economic development partnerships; enhance its business development efforts; implement more aggressive business retention and expansion initiatives; expand the business recruitment and retention program; collaborate on talent recruitment and education programs; create a culture of entrepreneurship; integrate marketing and communications initiatives; and pursue programs that will further enhance Westerville’s quality of place.

The table below shows the strategic priorities addressed in each recommendation area. The Strategy E3 and suggested Recommendations focus on the idea that these activities will further enhance Westerville’s quality of place.

**TABLE: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN (BOYETTE, 2014) SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INFRASTRUCTURE</th>
<th>BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>BUSINESS RETENTION &amp; EXPANSION</th>
<th>TALENT RECRUITMENT &amp; EDUCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expand economic development program</td>
<td>Create a lead generation program</td>
<td>Strengthen relationships with existing businesses</td>
<td>Implement Talent Recruitment Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximize relationships</td>
<td>Pursue product development</td>
<td>Clarify and communicate existing processes for business licenses, tax payments, permits, occupancy regulations and building regulations</td>
<td>Strengthen Otterbein University’s Role in Economic Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W&amp;Connect Data Center and high speed fiber network</td>
<td>Develop business intelligence and expertise</td>
<td>Work with local businesses to make all processes cleaner and easier</td>
<td>Expand the Relationship Between Businesses and Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluate local incentives</td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop Workforce Training Solutions for Businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthen relationships with developers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthen the partnership with Blendon Township</td>
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**ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

- Create a culture of entrepreneurship
- Reframe the relationship with TechColumbus
- Consider development of an entrepreneurial center
- Partner with Otterbein University to establish an innovation park

**MARKETING / COMMUNICATIONS**

- Develop materials to support marketing and lead generations efforts
- Enhance Westerville’s digital and social media presence
- Increase awareness of Westerville among economic development partners

**QUALITY OF PLACE**

- Enhance Westerville’s competitiveness with a focus on sustainability
- Pursue additional retail development to meet workforce demands
- Determine housing requirements of the existing and future workforce
- Explore ways to minimize traffic

Recent OH legislative measures put into place enable communities to leverage their assets as ‘districts’ such as: Entertainment Districts (4301.08), Downtown Redevelopment District, and Innovation District (HB 233).
**DESIRED OUTCOME**

**E3** Westerville’s unique assets are leveraged to attract new investment and generate a return on the community’s investments

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

| E3.1 | Leverage **Parks & Recreation** programs and facilities.  
The City will use the existing assets and additional investment in parks and recreation to support business attraction, recruitment and retention. |
| E3.2 | Promote Uptown as a **special destination district**; consider an Entertainment District designation.  
By focusing on customer service, easy parking, events and diverse shopping and restaurants, the city will continue to promote Uptown as the heart of the community, implementing the Uptown Plan and Uptown Parking Study recommendations. |
| E3.3 | Investigate ways to encourage a **boutique hotel / B&B** in Uptown district.  
As an attraction for cultural tourism and Otterbein University visitors, as well as diversity of jobs and opportunities in Uptown. |
| E3.4 | Coordinate **arts and cultural organizations** and venues.  
Existing organizations can plan together to provide high-quality and professional events, shows, recitals, exhibits, and programs to the community. |
| E3.5 | Promote the **Westerville brand**. |
| E3.6 | Align **economic development efforts** with land, building, and office space needs of our targeted industries.  
Market available land and buildings in conformance with this community plan, create a rezoning process for targeted sectors, maintain up-to-date availability of office space, create guidelines of how office can evolve to Mixed Employment Center, and develop an aggressive “building update” initiative for out-dated commercial buildings. |
| E3.7 | Utilize the **Westerville Partnership** (Otterbein University, Westerville City School District, Library, Chamber of Commerce and City of Westerville) for long-range goals and measuring together as a community for success.  
This can take the form of an annual goal-setting meeting and work sessions discussing action strategies, shared challenges and results. |
| E3.8 | Continue **infrastructure Investments** to capture and retain business.  
The city will be maintained at a high-level standard to meet the business retention and development priorities.  
- Continual infrastructure improvements to water, sewer, stormwater, electric grid, etc.  
- Community-wide fiber network |