

Issue Identification and Vision Development

The purpose of this memorandum is to present some initial thoughts about draft goals and objectives for the comprehensive plan update. In order to think about the vision element of the new plan, it is important to consider the priorities and themes from the 1996 City of Wadsworth Comprehensive Plan Update. For this reason, we have summarized the plan issues and priorities that are identified in the 1996 comprehensive plan followed by a discussion about developing a vision for the new plan.

CURRENT PLAN ISSUES AND PRIORITIES (1996)

The 1996 Plan cites priorities from the steering committee, from stakeholder interviews and from other public input, i.e. public meetings and workshops. The priorities from the three different sources all cluster around the same general concepts, with slight variations or particular emphasis.

Steering Committee Priorities

- Provide quality water, sewer, and other public services.
 - Establish policies for the extension of new services, including timing, service constraints, and cost.
- Manage existing and future traffic, particularly in the north High Street area.
- Improve the quality and type of future growth and development
 - Concentrate on the design, appearance, scale, and location of new development.
- Preserve rural character and prevent development in environmentally sensitive areas.
- Maintain the viability of downtown as a civic and commercial center of Wadsworth.
- Maintain quality school facilities.
- Manage the rate of future growth as it affects Wadsworth's services, infrastructure, schools, and quality of life.

Stakeholder Interview Priorities

- Provide quality city services.
- Improve traffic around High Street.
- Prepare for an aging population.
- Provide affordable housing.
- Preserve rural character.
- Keep downtown viable.

Themes from Public Input

- Public services should be extended in the future based on adequate capacity availability.
- New growth and development should be sensitive and appropriate to environmental conditions.
- New growth and development should respect existing community and rural character.
- The future growth rate should be defined so that the community can be prepared for demands created by new development.
- The transportation network should be planned to respond to the needs of future development.
- Traffic management issues should be addressed in the north High Street area.

Comprehensive Plan Update

COMMUNITY ISSUE IDENTIFICATION (2009)

A comprehensive plan is a document that is intended to define the city's development policies and is a tool that can help guide decisions related to economic and community growth, the expansion of infrastructure, the provision of services, and other issues that make Wadsworth a community. As such, the comprehensive plan should reflect the community vision for the future and should provide guidance on how to achieve that vision. On June 9, 2009 the city facilitated a public workshop to engage the public in the comprehensive planning process through the identification of issues that are important to the citizens and issues that should be addressed in the comprehensive plan update.

At the workshop, participants were asked to identify the issues, problems, and opportunities that each believed to be important for the future of Wadsworth. After all participants had an opportunity to identify issues, the participants were then asked to rank the top five issues from the aggregate list of issues developed by the attendees. The participants identified 38 issues that ranged from quality of life to "greening" the community. After consolidating common issues, 27 of the topics received at least one "top five" vote. The following table illustrates the result of the issue prioritization with the number of votes each issue received.

TABLE 1: ISSUE IDENTIFICATION AND PRIORITIZATION

Priority	Issue	Votes
1	Protect the water resources of the city and complete the purchase of water.	23
2	Realign the intersection of High Street and Great Oaks Trail to be a functional, four-way intersection.	22
3	Create a transit expansion plan.	21
4	Create linkages between parks and neighborhoods by multi-modal trails.	19
5	Encourage redevelopment as the preferred option over new "green field" development.	15
6	Encourage downtown development and occupancy of vacant buildings.	14
7	Create more park land north of I-76 with active recreation uses.	14
8	Maintain and upgrade public infrastructure.	13
9	Make Wadsworth a "green" city.	12
10	Bring in more non-retail jobs and provide incentives for non-retail job creation.	12
11	Widen Hartman Road to include pedestrian paths.	11
12	Create incentives for "green" jobs.	9
13	Encourage quality development on the south side of town.	9
14	Build a connection between Great Oaks Trail and Hartman Road.	8
15	Maintain a diversity of housing values and types.	8
16	Establish a strong vision for the community.	8
17	Improve the appearance of commercial uses in neighborhoods and encourage mixed uses.	6
18	Attract more industry and provide infrastructure for industrial uses.	6

Comprehensive Plan Update

TABLE 1: ISSUE IDENTIFICATION AND PRIORITIZATION

19	Control “leap frog” development that extends public services.	5
20	Identify appropriate locations and means of alternative energy resources.	5
21	Require development to pay the costs of infrastructure and utility improvements.	4
22	Install a traffic light at Route 57 and College Street.	3
23	Improve the safety of dangerous intersections.	3
24	Build quality affordable housing.	2
25	Make the senior center more user-friendly.	1
26	Get a sense of purpose about “expansion” vs. “consolidating” development patterns.	1
27	Attract a higher education institution to the community.	1

The prioritized issues can generally be grouped into the following eight categories:

1. **Infrastructure.** The importance of public infrastructure was one of the top ranked priorities. This was particularly true for issues related to the protection of the city’s water resources and developing “green” energy. Quality infrastructure is also viewed as important to attracting jobs and industry.
2. **Road and Traffic Improvements.** Measures to improve traffic circulation and access received high rankings. Participants identified a range of specific intersection, traffic signal, widening, alignment, and road extension projects with specific issues raised about High Street, Great Oaks Trail, and Hartman Road.
3. **Transit.** There is support for expanded transit service and coordination with the Medina County transit system and planning efforts.
4. **Parks and Trails.** Expanded park land and improved connections to parks from neighborhoods are high priorities.
5. **Redevelopment.** Redevelopment of existing areas is identified as preferable to new development on “green-field” areas. Participants specifically identified the redevelopment of areas south of town as a priority.
6. **Downtown.** Participants see encouraging development, infill, and jobs in downtown as an important priority for the future of Wadsworth.
7. **Economic Development.** Jobs and economic development received a number of votes and many see economic development as contingent on the city providing incentives for job attraction and investing in infrastructure improvements.
8. **Housing.** Maintaining, improving, and providing a variety of housing types and values is a priority.

PLANNING THEMES AND GOALS (2009)

Utilizing the information from the 1996 plan update, the issue identification exercise, and meetings with staff and the steering committee, we propose to organize the new plan around seven major planning themes.

Planning Themes

The planning themes represent the primary framework upon which the comprehensive plan update will be developed and encompass the priorities described in the previous section. The seven planning themes we submit for consideration, in no priority, include:

- 1. Land Use and Development**
- 2. Neighborhoods**
- 3. Services and Infrastructure**
- 4. Community Mobility**
- 5. Downtown Wadsworth**
- 6. Parks, Recreation, and Open Space**
- 7. Economic Development**

Draft Goal Statements

The goals and objectives component of a plan is intended to be the guiding force behind the plan and should direct the creation of the plan. The following are some general definitions for a goal, objective, and strategy that you may want to consider when reviewing the proposed goal statements. The strategies will be developed as we continue through the process and will essentially become the implementation section of the plan.

- A **GOAL** is a desired end state or target that, if pursued over the long-term, will contribute to the attainment of the community vision.
- An **OBJECTIVE** is a more specific (and often measurable) desired short-term end, or benchmark, that in conjunction with the other objectives can cause the goal to be achieved.
- A **STRATEGY** is the actual action or tool that will be used to achieve the objective or goal.

We have prepared draft goal statements for discussion with the steering committee. Once we have a general consensus, we can build upon the goals with objectives, strategies, and specific recommendations. In addition to the goal statements, we have included some of the concepts and topics that we feel need to be addressed within the context of each goal. These topics are listed in the sidebar next to each goal. Additionally, we have expressed a number of policy questions that we would like to discuss with the steering committee to help guide refinement of the goals, objectives, and eventual recommendations.

1. Land Use and Development

Wadsworth will manage current and future land use and development so that the pace, quality, and amount of growth positively contributes to the community character, enhances the quality of life, and does not overburden community infrastructure or services.

- Should the plan contain recommendations for areas currently outside the city based on how the city wants the area to develop? As an alternative, should the plan assume future land use recommendations (outside of the city boundary) based on the plans adopted by the townships?
- Is the protection of agriculture or rural character within the boundaries of the city still a legitimate goal for the future of the city or should the city take more of the position that development within the city's boundaries should be suburban or urban with the preservation of natural resources and open spaces?
- Are there priority areas within the city that should be targeted for redevelopment?
- Will increases in density be supported by the community?

Land Use and Development

- Redevelopment vs. new development
- Architectural and site design character
- Historical and natural resources
- Rural character
- Densities
- Land uses types
- "Green" development

2. Neighborhoods

Wadsworth will be a community where families and individuals of different demographic and economic backgrounds can find affordable, quality, and diverse housing options.

- Is there support for increased housing density?
- Is there support for the provision of more diverse housing options beyond single-family detached?
- How will residents react to the concept of allowing mixed use or neighborhood commercial nodes within neighborhoods?
- Is property maintenance code enforcement a concept that will be supported by the community?

Neighborhoods

- Transitional development standards
- Housing for older adults
- Housing density
- Mixed use
- Housing maintenance
- Commercial nodes

3. Services and Infrastructure

The city will provide high quality, well maintained, and accessible services, utilities, and facilities to meet the needs of residents and businesses.

- How can the plan address the threats to the city's water resources?
- Should the city continue its policy of requiring water and sanitary sewer customers to annex into the city?
- Are there priority locations that should be targeted for future service expansion?

Services and Infrastructure

- Water resources
- Sanitary sewer systems
- Water distribution systems
- Storm water management practices
- Other utility services
- Policies for extension of utilities
- Public facilities (e.g., police, fire, schools, etc.)
- Green energy

Comprehensive Plan Update

- Does the city support solar, wind, and other “green” energy systems? If so, to what extent (e.g., what are the limits the city might want to place on wind turbines?)?
- Are there public service facility plans or limitations – police, fire, schools – that will constrain or facilitate future growth?
- Does the city support a policy requiring adequate public infrastructure and services for new development, and recovering costs for such infrastructure or services?

4. Community Mobility

Wadsworth will have a safe and efficient multi-modal transportation network that provides appropriate access and mobility to all users and areas of the community.

- Is the city’s current traffic impact assessment system effective?
- Should the city financially support expanded mass transit?
- Is there broad support for expanded pedestrian and bicycle systems? Is the support just for on road or on sidewalk trails versus trails “in people’s backyards”?
- Where are the priority roadway extension and expansion locations – i.e. in or out of the city?
- What should the city’s stand be on the use of cul-de-sacs or the provision for gated communities?

Community Mobility

- Roadway extensions and expansions
- Streetscape improvements
- Access management
- Transit
- Pedestrian and bicycle circulation

5. Downtown Wadsworth

Wadsworth will have a vibrant, active, and attractive downtown that continues to be a hub of civic, commercial, and cultural activity.

- What are the strengths of downtown that should be protected?
- What are the weaknesses about downtown that should be improved?
- Is housing viable in downtown?
- Are the current zoning review processes for downtown adequate to create desirable development? Should the city institute stronger standards including architectural review?
- What makes downtown “viable”?
- Should the city commit increased resources and incentives to attract new jobs and infill to downtown?

Downtown Wadsworth

- Land use types
- Infill development
- Redevelopment
- Design standards
- Jobs
- Housing

6. Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

The city will have a system of parks, recreational facilities, and open spaces that meet the needs of the community and that are located so as to be accessible to users.

- What are the priority needs for parks and recreation areas?

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

- Park and recreation policies
- Natural feature preservation
- Land acquisition
- Services and programs

Comprehensive Plan Update

- Is there community consensus on specific open space or natural areas that should be protected?

7. Economic Development

The city will have a diversified tax base that has a mixture of appropriately located nonresidential land uses that positively contribute to the quality of life in Wadsworth.

- Where are the primary locations for future economic growth?
- Are incentives needed for job retention and creation?
- Are the perceived needs for increased city investment in infrastructure to attract jobs and economic development (particularly industrial uses) accurate?
- Do the airport, hospital and other institutions receive the marketing and infrastructure support needed for them to attract growth? Should the city work more cooperatively with these employers to mutually market the community?
- What are the barriers to economic development in Wadsworth that can be addressed in this plan?

Economic Development

- Green jobs
- Adequate public facilities and services
- Airport
- Hospital
- Education
- Mitigating impacts