

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT GROWTH IN WADSWORTH

Q: What is “balanced growth” and why is it important?

A: The word “balanced” refers to two important aspects of growth: **rate** – how rapidly development occurs, and **type** – how the land is used.

While growing too fast is not desirable in a community that has a distinctive rural character, not growing fast enough isn't good for the City either. As inflation increases the costs of everything, no matter how many people live here, tax revenue generated from new development helps the City maintain the quality of services our residents need and expect – without passing the burden on in the form of tax increases.

Development balanced between residential and commercial uses is ideal for a strong and vibrant local economic foundation. Residential development provides the commercial sector the customer base it needs to succeed. A strong commercial presence provides residents with conveniences and amenities that keep people rooted in their community.

Q: Why should the City annex Township property if development will occur on the property anyway?

A: There is no evidence that development will occur anyway; the amenities developers generally require are not available from the Township, which is why property owners approach the City in the first place. However, annexation allows the City to manage the proposed development through zoning control.

In general, annexations provide City residents with the ability to upgrade vital services like roads and water distribution infrastructure that are essential to maintain the quality of life here. In fact, annexation is the most cost effective method of achieving current and future infrastructure needs as defined by external analyses. Such improvements would otherwise cost taxpayers millions of dollars.

Q: How will annexation affect our ability to deliver public services?

A: Annexation generally improves our ability to deliver public services to our residents, and to do so more affordably. Developers finance the upgrades needed in any new development, such as to roads and water lines. Additional property tax revenues allow the City to improve existing infrastructure such as roads and water and sewer lines, which deteriorate or reduce capacity with the passage of time.

Q: How will growth and development affect our public schools?

A: Zoning controls allow the City to manage the level of residential growth here and minimize any dramatic impact on school enrollment. This is another situation where growing too fast is not desirable, but not growing at all isn't good either. Over the past decade, Wadsworth City Schools has been growing at roughly 100 students per year and has managed that growth well, as exemplified by its “excellent” state report card rating, a rating that only 123 of 674 districts have achieved.

The structure of Ohio's school funding formula has the effect of causing local school districts to lose ground unless they increase enrollment over time. Having more real property on the tax duplicate and spreading costs out over a broader base both brings in needed revenue and ensures that the Wadsworth City Schools can generate the same revenue stream with a reduced – or at least not increased – burden on taxpayers.

Q: Won't annexation and the resulting growth and development just add more traffic to our already congested roads?

A: Current proposed annexations are vital to help reduce today's traffic congestion by allowing the City to add capacity to thoroughfares we've always intended to extend. Most people agree that having an alternative access road to the North End commercial district, alleviating congestion on High Street and providing better access through the City and improved water service for emergency response would be beneficial to our quality of life. Engineering studies and models have suggested alternative access roads would alleviate congestion on High Street.

Q: Don't we already have a problem with water here?

A: The City has a responsibility to manage and conserve our water supply. Our recent history of conservation puts the City in an ideal position to provide water service to the community for years to come, regardless of the addition of new development.

In the last decade, we've added 1,500 dwelling units, but still have the same average demand of 2.2 million gallons of water per day, in large part due to residents' compliance with the sprinkling schedule. Prior to this, demand for water was growing about 5 percent annually, a pace which would eventually have led to a problem if left unchecked.

That said, we cannot just assume we'll have enough water forever – aquifers need to recharge, droughts occur – so for the long term, we must be thinking about how to achieve a diverse network of well locations so that our recharge area within the Chippewa Creek watershed is as extensive as it needs to be. There's no question we are seeking a long-term sustainable solution to obtaining an adequate supply of water for generations to come. The Ohio EPA recently approved the construction of the Chippewa Creek well. Also, the city constructed a new well in Wadsworth in late 2006 in order to add capacity to our water supply.

Q: How does the City plan annexations and evaluate the need for growth and development?

A: The City doesn't plan annexations; property owners/developers initiate them. Council Rule 23 outlines what the City must do when presented with an annexation opportunity. Using our approved comprehensive and other land use plans as a guide, the City performs due diligence on all proposals to analyze the impacts on our ability to deliver services and preserve our community character. If an annexation is deemed unsuitable, we do not support it.

Q: Can't the City and the Township just cooperate?

A: We already do. The City provides fire and EMS service to the Township under a contract. We jointly handle ice and snow removal on area roads, as well as cemetery operations and maintenance, and provide electric, communications, sewer and sanitation service to Township residents. Property owners have the right to request their property be annexed into the City. They may make this request to receive City services for their residence or for the purpose of developing their property. Current annexation law requires that real property taxes be shared with the Township for 12 years.