City of Gahanna, Ohio

Strategic Plan & Economic Development Strategy

Adopted: November 3, 2025

Our Gahanna

TODAY. TOMORROW. **TOGETHER.**
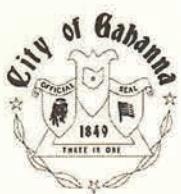
City of Gahanna

Signature

Resolution: RES-0046-2025

200 South Hamilton
Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

File Number: RES-0046-2025

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE "OUR GAHANNA" STRATEGIC PLAN AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

WHEREAS, the City of Gahanna recognizes the importance of proactive long-term planning to guide the community's growth, development, and economic vitality; and

WHEREAS, in August 2024, the City launched Our Gahanna, a citywide planning initiative designed to define a thoughtful course for the future through comprehensive community engagement and collaboration; and

WHEREAS, the Our Gahanna Strategic Plan and Economic Development Strategy reflect a year-long, inclusive planning process involving residents, businesses, civic leaders, and City staff through workshops, surveys, and community events; and

WHEREAS, the Strategic Plan outlines a high-level framework built around a vision, mission, and values that define Gahanna's aspirations and priorities, and establishes long-term goals that address community vibrancy, connectivity, stewardship, and identity; and

WHEREAS, the Economic Development Strategy complements the Strategic Plan by identifying opportunities to strengthen existing industry sectors, cultivate emerging economic drivers, and foster a skilled, employee-first workforce to support sustainable growth; and

WHEREAS, adoption of Our Gahanna provides a unified direction for the City's future, ensuring that growth is managed responsibly, resources are allocated strategically, and the community's values are reflected in decision-making; and

WHEREAS, the Administration recommends adoption of the Our Gahanna Strategic Plan and Economic Development Strategy as the City's official framework for long-range planning, investment, and policy guidance.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA, COUNTY OF FRANKLIN, STATE OF OHIO, THAT:

Section 1. City Council hereby adopts the Our Gahanna Strategic Plan and Economic Development Strategy as the official strategic and economic development framework for the City of Gahanna, establishing long-term goals and guiding principles to direct the City's future growth and development.

Section 2. City departments, boards, and commissions are encouraged to align their actions, programs, and policies with the Our Gahanna plan to ensure consistency with the community's shared vision and priorities.

Section 3. The Our Gahanna Strategic Plan and Economic Development Strategy are attached hereto and incorporated herein as EXHIBIT A.

Section 4. That this Resolution shall be in full force and effect after passage by this Council and on date of signature approval by the Mayor.

At a regular meeting of the City Council on November 3, 2025, a motion was made by *Schnetzer*,
seconded by *Jones*, that the Resolution be Adopted. The vote was as follows:

Ms. Bowers, *yes*; Ms. Jones, *yes*; Ms. McGregor, *yes*; Ms. Padova, *yes*;
Mr. Renner, *yes*; Mr. Schnetzer, *yes*; Mr. Weaver, *yes*.

President _Merisa Bowers_   Date 11/3/2025
Merisa K. Bowers

Attest by _Jeremy A. Van Meter_   Date 11/3/2025
Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

Approved by the Mayor _Laurie A. Jadwin_   Date 11.3.2025
Laurie A. Jadwin

Approved as to Form _PDT_   Date 11/3/25
Priya D. Tamilarasan
City Attorney

Acknowledgements

Elected Officials

Laurie Jadwin,* *Mayor*

Merisa Bowers,* *Council President*

Trenton Weaver, *Council Vice President*

Stephen Renner

Jamille Jones

Nancy McGregor

Kaylee Padova

Michael Schnetzer*

Priya Tamilarasan, *City Attorney*

*Also a representative on the Steering Committee

City Staff

Strategic Planning Team

Miranda Vollmer, *Senior Director of Administrative Services*

Kelsey Bartholomew, *Management Analyst II*

Jeff Gottke, *Director of Economic Development*

Kevin Schultz, *Senior Director of Operations*

Cory Wybensinger, *Senior Deputy Director of Administrative Services*

Rachel Zarick, *Economic Development Administrator*

Directors

Shawn Anverse, *Director of Public Service*

Tim Becker, *Director of Public Safety*

Stephania Bernard-Ferrell, *Director of Parks & Recreation*

Michael Blackford, *Director of Planning*

Joann Bury, *Director of Finance*

René Carter, *Director of Information Technology*

Tom Komlanc, *Director of Engineering*

Jeff Lawless, *Deputy Chief of Police*

Ben Nolan, *Human Resources Manager*

Amanda Parker, *Director of Court Services*

Dan Pearlman, *Communications Manager*

Jeffrey Spence, *Chief of Police*

Steering Committee

Ifrah Aliawl

Vera Anderson

Michael Barker

Ethan Barnhardt

James Blaney

Fatima Bouyer

Donato D'Alberto

Kimberly Ellerbrock

Ross Goldsmith

Afrika Gupton-Jones

Bruce Gurwin

John Heilmann

Joshua Heintzelman

Melissa Kendralla

Mark Mahoney

Ava Markham

Timothy A. McClurg

Darlene Molitor

Maura O'Donnell

Elizabeth Rauscher

Molly Ward

Robert Whitmer

Consultants

Planning NEXT

Julie Colley

Ninigret Partners

Special Thanks To

City of Gahanna Parks & Recreation Department

City of Gahanna Senior Center

Columbus Metropolitan Library – Gahanna Branch

Edison Brewing Company and Venues

Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools

Gahanna Municipal Golf Course

YMCA Gahanna

Many thanks to the City of Gahanna employees and community members for their input and participation throughout the planning process.

PART I: STRATEGIC PLAN

PART II: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

APPENDICES

Strategic Plan

This is a significant moment for Gahanna, a moment shaped by both tradition and new opportunities. Our Gahanna, a citywide planning initiative designed to chart a bold and thoughtful course for the future, was launched to build on the momentum of change taking place in the City and around the region. The Strategic Plan is more than a document; it's a collective reflection and a shared vision for the future.

Importantly, this Strategic Plan was developed at a pivotal moment for the City of Gahanna. With transformative economic development, the expansion of the Columbus Airport, and the continuation of LinkUS, a regional transportation and growth initiative aimed at expanding transit service and investing in active transportation, Gahanna is uniquely positioned to benefit from unprecedented opportunity.

Rather than focusing on day-to-day operations, which remain central to the City's ongoing success, the Strategic Plan offered a moment to pause and define what Gahanna should become. It provides a high-level guide to navigate challenges and seize opportunities, leveraging the City's strong operational foundation to shape an outstanding community.

Our
Gahanna
TODAY. TOMORROW. **TOGETHER.**

What is a Strategic Plan?

A Strategic Plan is a long-term roadmap for the future of Gahanna. While this plan is focused on the City as an organization, it extends beyond elected officials and staff to embrace the voices of residents, business and industry representatives, service clubs, non-profit organizations, school districts, visitors and more. This inclusive approach guarantees that the plan reflects a shared commitment to making Gahanna a place where people thrive.

Planning is a form of good stewardship; it ensures that resources are used wisely, decisions are made thoughtfully, and the long-term well-being of the community is prioritized. By anticipating future needs and aligning actions with shared values, planning helps communities grow and change responsibly. The plan begins with a community vision, a statement that reflects the hopes, needs, and aspirations of residents, businesses, and stakeholders. The plan also identifies and analyzes emerging trends and challenges and defines the community's core values. This insight informs the strategies that include policies, programs, and projects designed to bring the community's vision to life. Our Gahanna also establishes an implementation framework to help the City put the plan into action.

Why is a Strategic Plan important for Gahanna?

A Strategic Plan is important for Gahanna because it balances the preservation of the city's unique history and character with the need for thoughtful growth and development. By establishing a clear vision and strategy, the plan honors Gahanna's rich heritage while also adapting to attract new residents and encourage business investment. The aim is not to transform Gahanna into something entirely new, but to ensure it evolves in a way that enhances its existing authenticity and supports future growth. This plan builds on what makes Gahanna special, ensuring it remains a vibrant and thriving community for generations to come.

Existing Conditions

As part of the process, an environmental scan was conducted to understand the existing conditions of the community. Highlights of crucial external conditions and trends affecting Gahanna can be found below. The findings were used to inform the basis of the Strategic Plan.
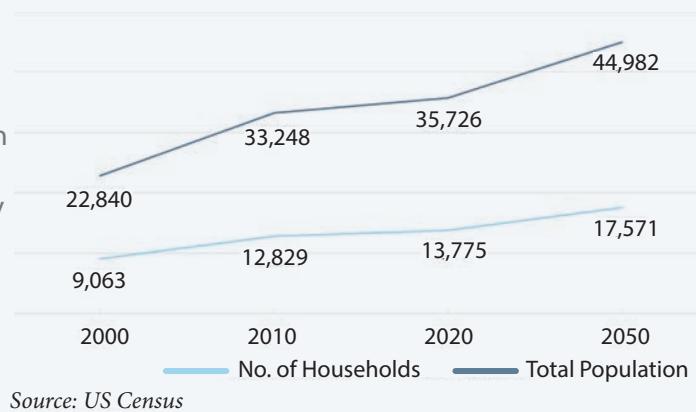
Population 1960–2023

- Population increased steadily from 1950 to 2000 and remained relatively stable from 2000 to 2010.

- The 2023 American Community Survey estimated Gahanna's population to be 35,159 people.

Population chart values: 596 (1950), 2,717 (1960), 12,400 (1970), 18,001 (1980), 23,898 (1990), 32,636 (2000), 33,248 (2010), 35,159 (2023)

Source: US Census
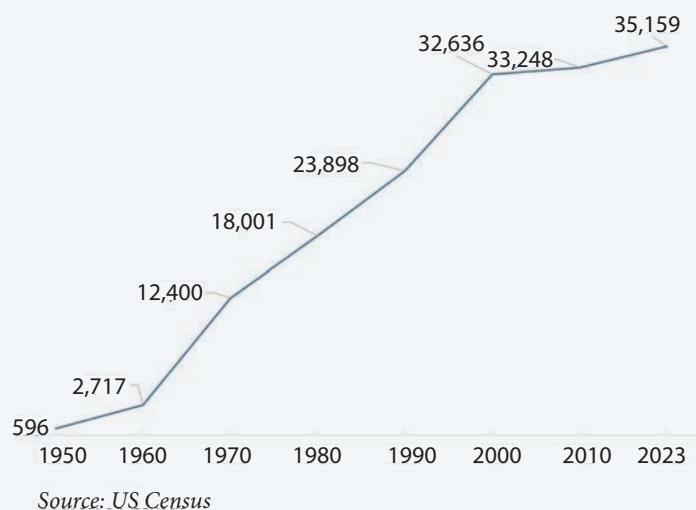
Projected Population & Household Growth

- In 2020, Gahanna's population represented 2.7% of the population of Franklin County (1.324M).

- Franklin County's population is projected to increase 26% by 2050.

- If Gahanna maintains a 2.7% share of the County's population, the City's population will increase to **44,982.**

Total Population: 22,840 (2000), 33,248 (2010), 35,726 (2020), 44,982 (2050)
No. of Households: 9,063 (2000), 12,829 (2010), 13,775 (2020), 17,571 (2050)

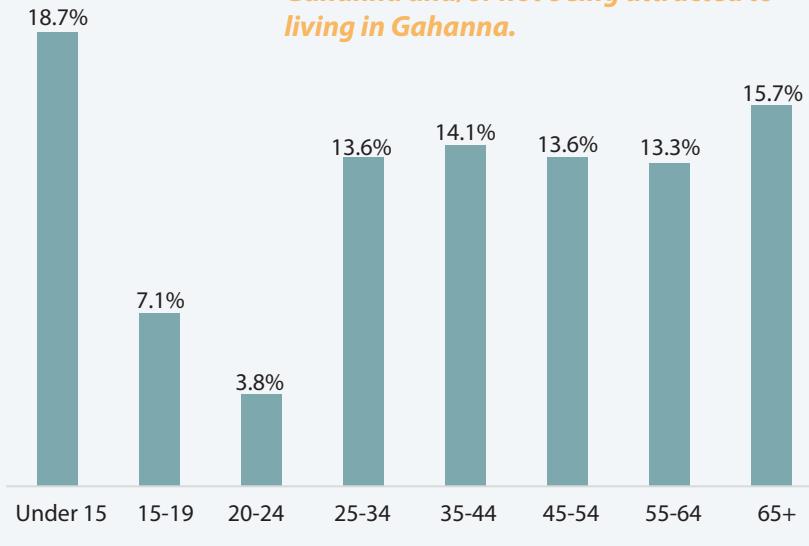No. of Households — Total Population

Source: US Census

The growing population will require effective resource allocation to meet growing and evolving needs.

Population by Age Cohort, 2020

- Residents 65 years and over make up the largest age group in Gahanna and had the fastest rates of positive change between 2010 and 2020.

- The 20-24 age range had the fastest rates of negative change between 2010 and 2020, followed by 45-54.

Aging residents require different services than their younger counterparts. They also tend to be on fixed incomes, creating implications for income taxes and property taxes.

College-age residents are not staying in Gahanna and/or not being attracted to living in Gahanna.

Under 15: 18.7%
15-19: 7.1%
20-24: 3.8%
25-34: 13.6%
35-44: 14.1%
45-54: 13.6%
55-64: 13.3%
65+: 15.7%

Source: US Census

Diversity

- All demographics with the exception of White, non-Hispanic, have increased in population since 2010.

Other 1.5%
Two or more 6.5%
Asian 3.1%
Black/African American 14.5%
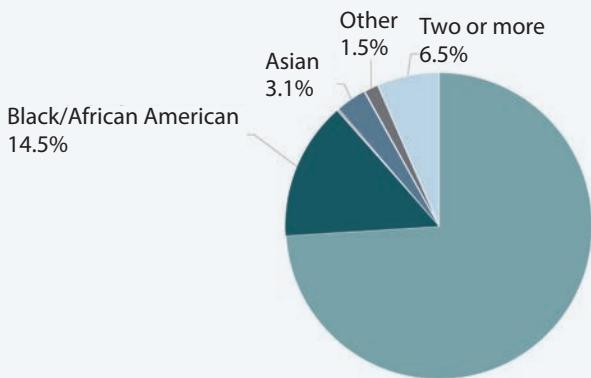
Source: US Census

Diverse population groups create opportunities to bolster language and cultural services and policies.

Median Household Income

- Median household income in Gahanna in 2021 was $95,547.

- Gahanna's median income for an individual in 2021 was above the national median ($69,021).
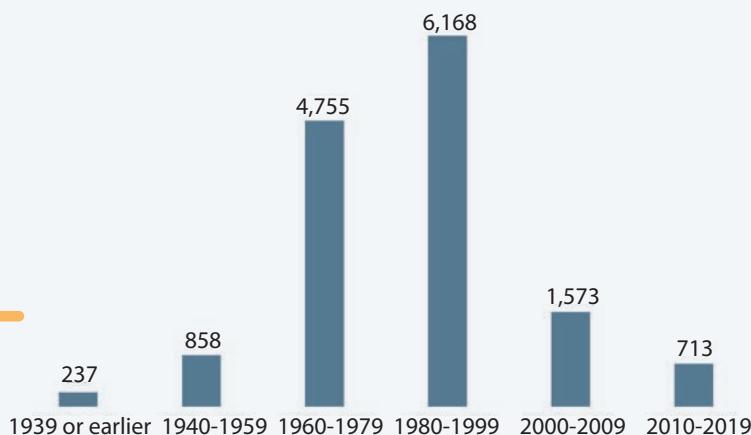
$95,547
City of Gahanna

$71,070
Franklin County

$66,990
State of Ohio

Source: US Census

A high median household income indicates economic prosperity and can attract business and investment to the City.

Built Year of Housing Stock, 2021

6,168

4,755

1,573

858

237

713

1939 or earlier 1940-1959 1960-1979 1980-1999 2000-2009 2010-2019

Source: US Census

- 76% of housing units in Gahanna were built between 1960 and 1999.

- 12% of housing units were built after 2000.

- Overall housing stock increased 5% between 2010 and 2021.

Older homes require increased maintenance, renovations, and potential upgrades to ensure safe and modern living conditions.

Householder Age

- Many Gahanna householders are approaching or have reached ages commonly associated with children moving out and becoming empty-nesters.

Householder Ages 45–54

18.4%

(2,655)

Householder Ages 55+

45.2%

(6,502)

Gahanna's empty-nesters and the aging population require a wider variety of housing.

9%

18%

17%

18%

20%

18%

- Under 35 years
- 35 to 44 years
- 45 to 54 years
- 55 to 64 years
- 65 to 74 years
- 75 years and over
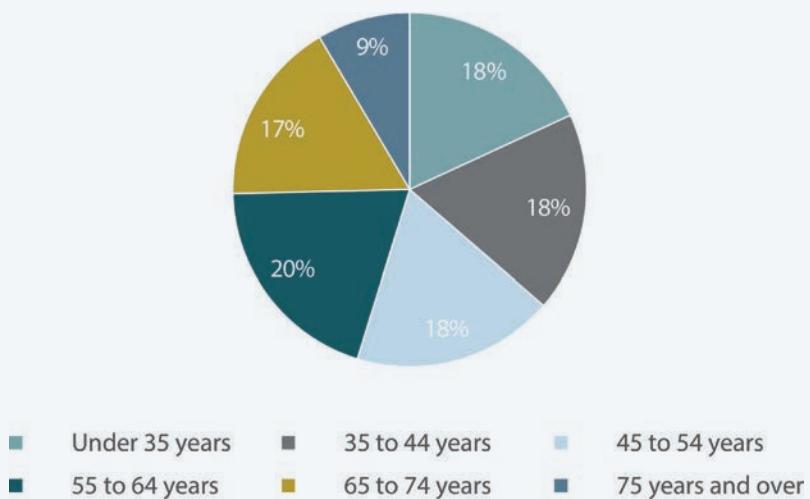
Source: US Census

Vacancy Rate

- Vacancy rates have decreased since 2010, falling to 2% in 2021.

- According to a report by Bowen National Research, a healthy market vacancy rate across all types of housing falls at about 4%.

A vacancy rate below the healthy rate signals housing shortages and the need for increased housing to meet demand.

Vacancy Rate (2010)

4%

96%

Vacancy Rate (2021)

2%

98%

- Occupied
- Vacant
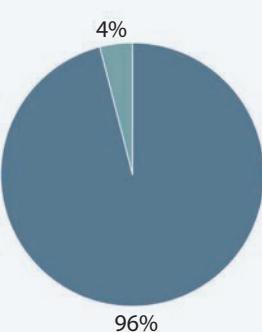
Source: US Census

Employed Population 16 Years & Over by Industry

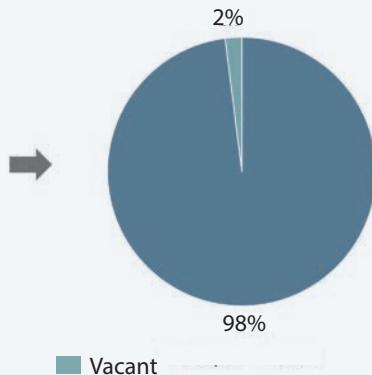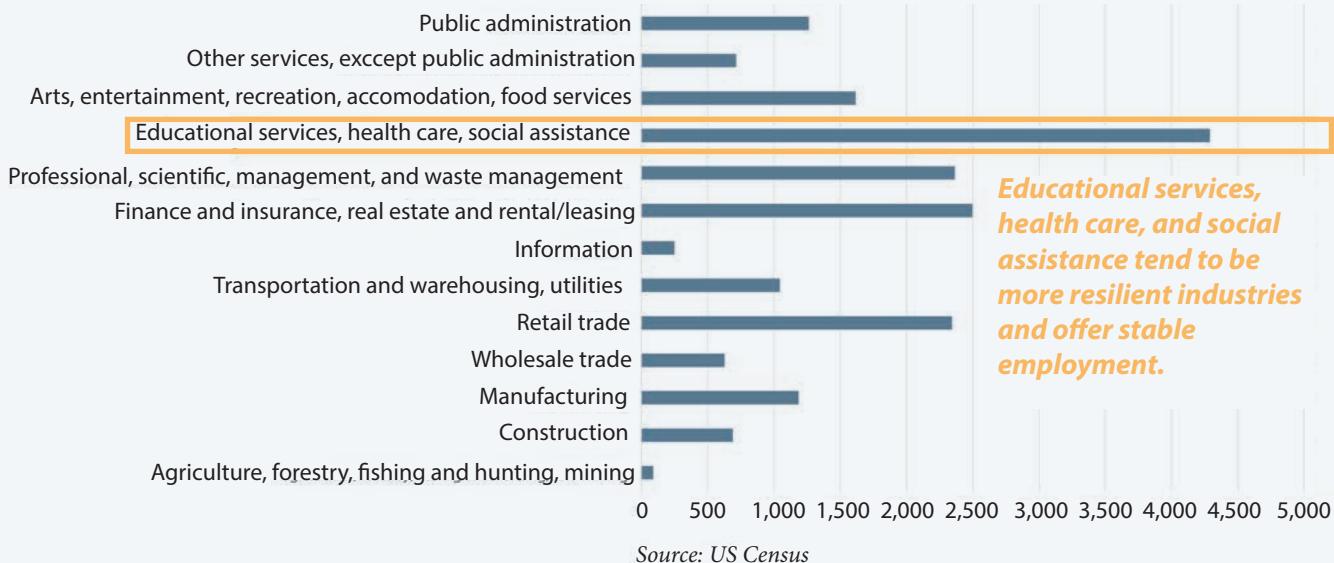*Note: These are industries where residents work, not necessarily those located in Gahanna.

Public administration
Other services, exccept public administration
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accomodation, food services
Educational services, health care, social assistance
Professional, scientific, management, and waste management
Finance and insurance, real estate and rental/leasing
Information
Transportation and warehousing, utilities
Retail trade
Wholesale trade
Manufacturing
Construction
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, mining

0   500   1,000   1,500   2,000   2,500   3,000   3,500   4,000   4,500   5,000

Educational services, health care, and social assistance tend to be more resilient industries and offer stable employment.

Source: US Census

Parks and Open Space

- 65% of Gahanna residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park*, compared to the national average of 55%.

- Gahanna has a walk score of 59 (somewhat walkable) and a bike score of 50 (bikeable).

- 20 multi-use trails help contribute to the moderate score.

Living close to a park promotes physical activity, as well as mental and physical well-being, and enhances the overall quality of life. There is opportunity to increase walkability to amenities.

Legend
- City Limit
- Parks
- Streets

— 3 mi —
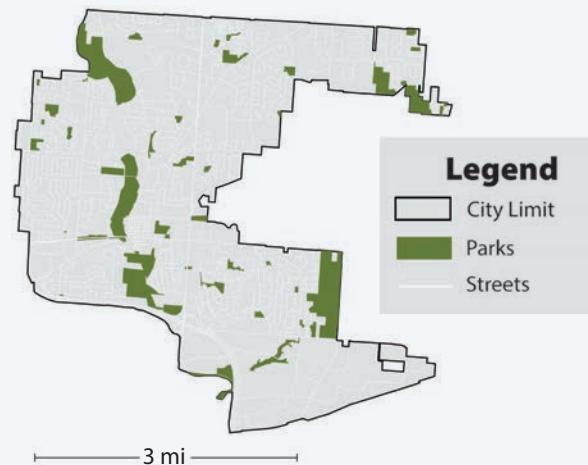
Source: ParkServe, Parks Comprehensive Master Plan, Walkscore
* Some parks calculated in this percentage may be located outside the boundaries of the City of Gahanna but close enough for residents to access.

Commuting

- Only 4% of employees live and work in Gahanna.

- Most people employed in the City do not live in Gahanna.

Most people travel in and out of Gahanna for work placing more strain on infrastructure and creating increased traffic.

18,109   1,305   16,895

Employed in Gahanna Live Outside

Employed and live in Gahanna

Live in Gahanna Employed Outside

Source: US Census, Census On the Map
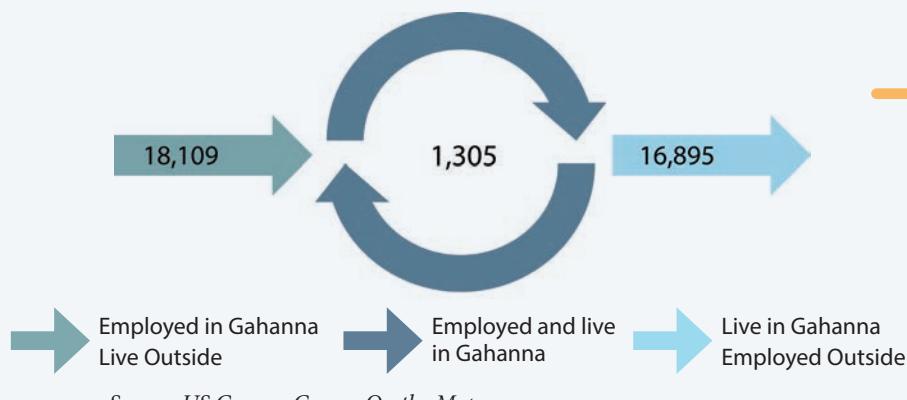
Plan Framework Overview

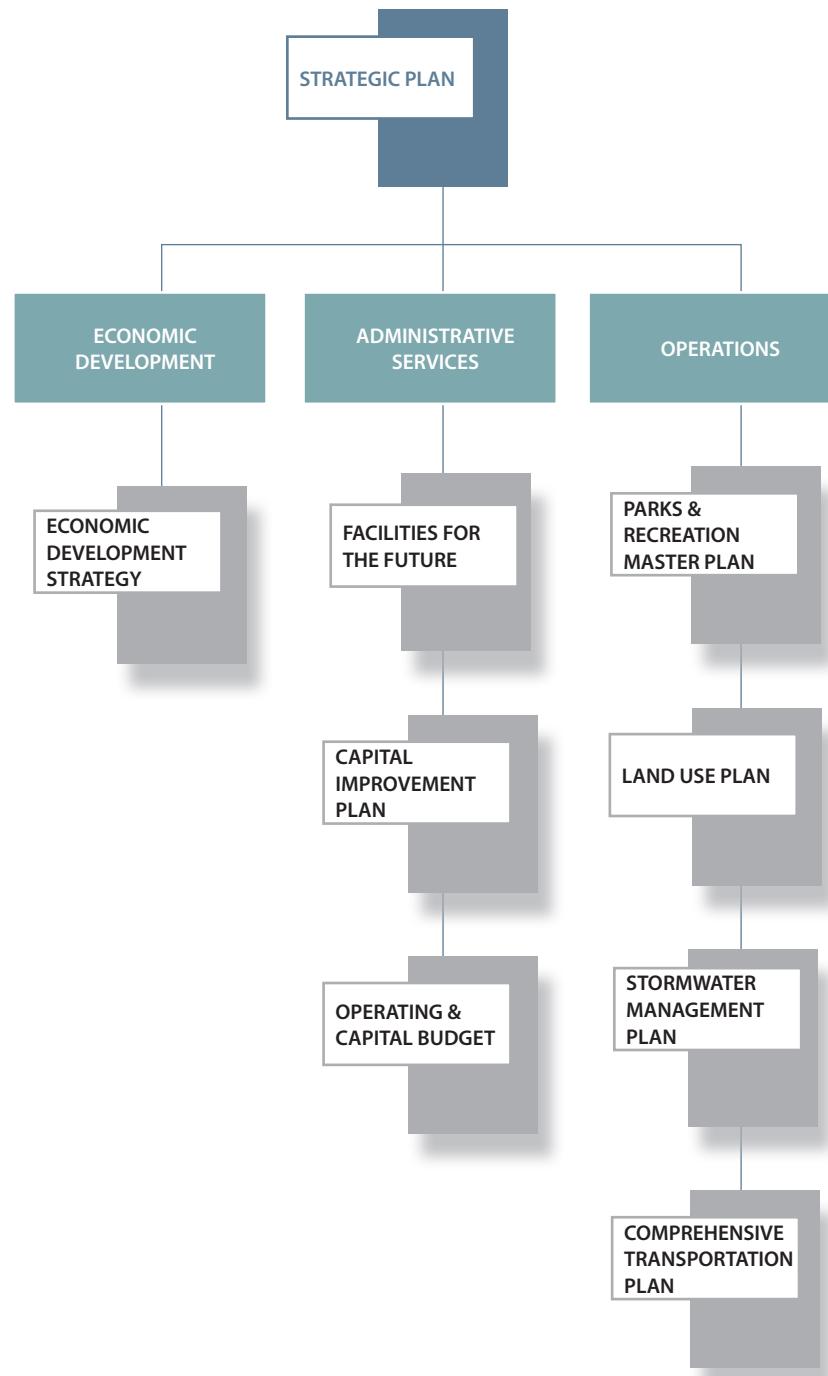**The City's adopted and ongoing plans work together to guide decision-making across Administrative Services, Operations, and Economic Development. Each plan addresses a specific focus area, but the Strategic Plan serves as the unifying framework that connects them, ensuring alignment, coordination, and accountability. The diagram on this page illustrates how these plans relate to one another and to the Strategic Plan, highlighting the integrated foundation they create for the City's future.**

STRATEGIC PLAN

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES	OPERATIONS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

FACILITIES FOR THE FUTURE

PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

LAND USE PLAN

OPERATING & CAPITAL BUDGET

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

■ SECTION

■ PLAN DOCUMENT

Process

Our Gahanna kicked off in August 2024 and included an inclusive, robust, and effective engagement process to gather input from the community, City staff, and other stakeholders. The process was intentionally designed to be inclusive and diverse to ensure the plan reflects the full voice of Gahanna. Outreach efforts were designed to reach a broad cross-section of residents, businesses, and stakeholders.

August 2024 - December 2024   January 2025 - October 2025   October 2025 onward

Preparation
- Project orientation
- Prepare for engagement
- Conduct analysis

Plan Development
- Develop values, vision and mission
- Develop implementation agenda
- Develop the final plan
- Draft strategies
- Develop economic goals
- Develop draft plan

Adoption and Implementation
- Approval process

Community Engagement

Steering Committee meetings

Staff Engagement

ROUND 1
DEC 2024 - FEB 2025
- Meetings-in-a-box
- Pop-ups
- Online survey

ROUND 2
MAY 2025
- Community events
- Online survey

ROUND 3
AUG - SEP 2025
- Open house
- Roadshow
- Online survey

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Three rounds of engagement were conducted as part of the process.

Round 1: Our Gahanna Table Talks

The Table Talks spanned the months of December 2024 through February 2025. They marked the launch of the community engagement process, offering residents a chance to share their ideas and perspectives through small group workshops and an online survey. Designed to be interactive and inclusive, these sessions focused on gathering input to help shape the vision and strategic direction of the plan. Table Talks were hosted at various times and locations throughout the city by Steering Committee members, City staff, and the planning team, ensuring that anyone interested could participate. A dedicated series of sessions was also held with City staff to capture their unique insights and experiences. To expand access, an online survey replicating the Table Talk activities was available on the project website throughout the first round of engagement.

Round 2: Our Gahanna Vision Fest

The second round of community engagement took place in May 2025. It was anchored by Vision Fest, a weeklong series of events designed to make participation fun and inclusive. The festivities kicked off with the Taco Tuesday Family Fest, followed by Small Business Coffee Networking, Senior Lunch, and Young Professional Happy Hour. Events were scheduled at various times and locations across the city to ensure broad accessibility. Activities during the Vision Fest were crafted to test and refine the vision, values, and strategic goals shaped by feedback from the first round of engagement and gather additional input on key themes that were emerging from the process. The Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Plan was also spotlighted, allowing attendees to weigh in on its direction. To reach even more voices, City staff and the planning team conducted pop-up engagement sessions throughout the community, including with local high school students and at the City's Economic Development Annual Meeting. For those unable to attend in person, an online survey mirrored the Vision Fest activities and remained available on the project website throughout the second round.

Engagement at a Glance

Round 3: Our Gahanna Sweet Celebration.

The third round of engagement took place in August and September 2025. It unveiled the contents of the draft plan, including the vision and mission statements, key outcomes, and recommendations. This phase began with a Sweet Celebration at Creekside Plaza, where community members were invited to enjoy a sweet treat while exploring and providing feedback on the draft plan content. Following the event, the draft plan display boards went on a citywide roadshow, appearing at locations such as the library, YMCA, and Gahanna Market, to maximize accessibility and encourage broader participation. To ensure everyone had a chance to weigh in, an online survey mirroring the in-person experience was available on the project website throughout the third round of engagement.

1,800+
Total Participants

9,100+
Total Pieces of Input

Participation in the process was representative of the community.

Steering Committee

A 25-member Steering Committee was established to guide the planning process, bringing together a diverse mix of voices from across the community, including representatives from various neighborhoods, professions, age groups, and backgrounds. These individuals promoted the process and encouraged participation through their networks. Beyond outreach, the Steering Committee played a vital role as a sounding board, offering valuable insights and feedback on the emerging themes and topics of the plan.

Staff Engagement

Throughout the planning process, Our Gahanna collaborated closely with City of Gahanna department directors to ensure alignment with internal goals and operational realities. Directors contributed their expertise by sharing insights into departmental priorities and offering context around trends identified through community engagement. An online survey was distributed to all department directors at the beginning of the process to gather input on their goals and needs. As the process progressed, directors participated in a dedicated workshop to help refine the mission statement and joined a joint session with the Steering Committee to shape draft recommendations.

City staff were invited to participate in all three rounds of engagement through in-person opportunities held at city buildings and via the online survey.

Elected Officials Engagement

The Mayor played an active and ongoing role throughout the planning process. As a member of the Steering Committee, she helped guide key decisions and led outreach efforts with influential groups across the City. Two City Council members also served on the Steering Committee, contributing their perspectives and helping shape the direction of the plan.

Beyond their roles on the Steering Committee, Council members were regularly engaged in the process. Through one-on-one interviews at the beginning of the process, they shared their aspirations for the community, offering valuable insights into their priorities and vision for Gahanna's future. They received regular updates from City staff and the planning team and were encouraged to participate in all three rounds of public engagement. At the conclusion of the process, Council members reviewed the draft plan and provided feedback through an online survey and follow-up interviews with the planning team.

Plan Framework

A plan framework is the foundation of a strategic plan. It lays out the community's vision (what we want to be in the future), values (what we believe in), and goals (outcomes that we want to achieve). Together, these elements paint the picture of the future of the community and organize the more specific recommendations. These elements were derived from community input and refined in collaboration with City staff and the Steering Committee.

Vision

The vision is what the community wants to be in the future.

Gahanna aspires to…

Cultivate a community where people, neighborhoods, and opportunities connect and thrive.

Mission Statement

To guide the internal organization, a mission statement was created that describes the City's purpose and serves to energize staff in their role of implementing the overall vision for the community.

Serving our community with pride and purpose.

The City of Gahanna works together to enrich Gahanna's future, enhance our neighborhoods, and ensure the government serves our community with excellence.

The people of Gahanna value:

Vibrancy

Robust amenities, programs, and services that engage and enrich residents' lives.

Connections

A conveniently located community that provides ease of living for all with excellent connectivity to local and regional services and amenities.

Stewardship

Intentionally balancing the development of the built environment and necessary infrastructure with the conservation and preservation of green space.

Community

A welcoming, supportive, and safe community that builds lasting connections and fosters mutual respect, understanding, and belonging.

Elevate our Unique Places.

Vibrant, inclusive, and connected places that reflect community identity, support livability, and foster pride.

Serve our Community.

High-quality municipal services that are effective, collaborative, and responsive.

Connect our Community.

A welcoming and accessible community that fosters a sense of belonging, promotes active living, and celebrates shared experiences.
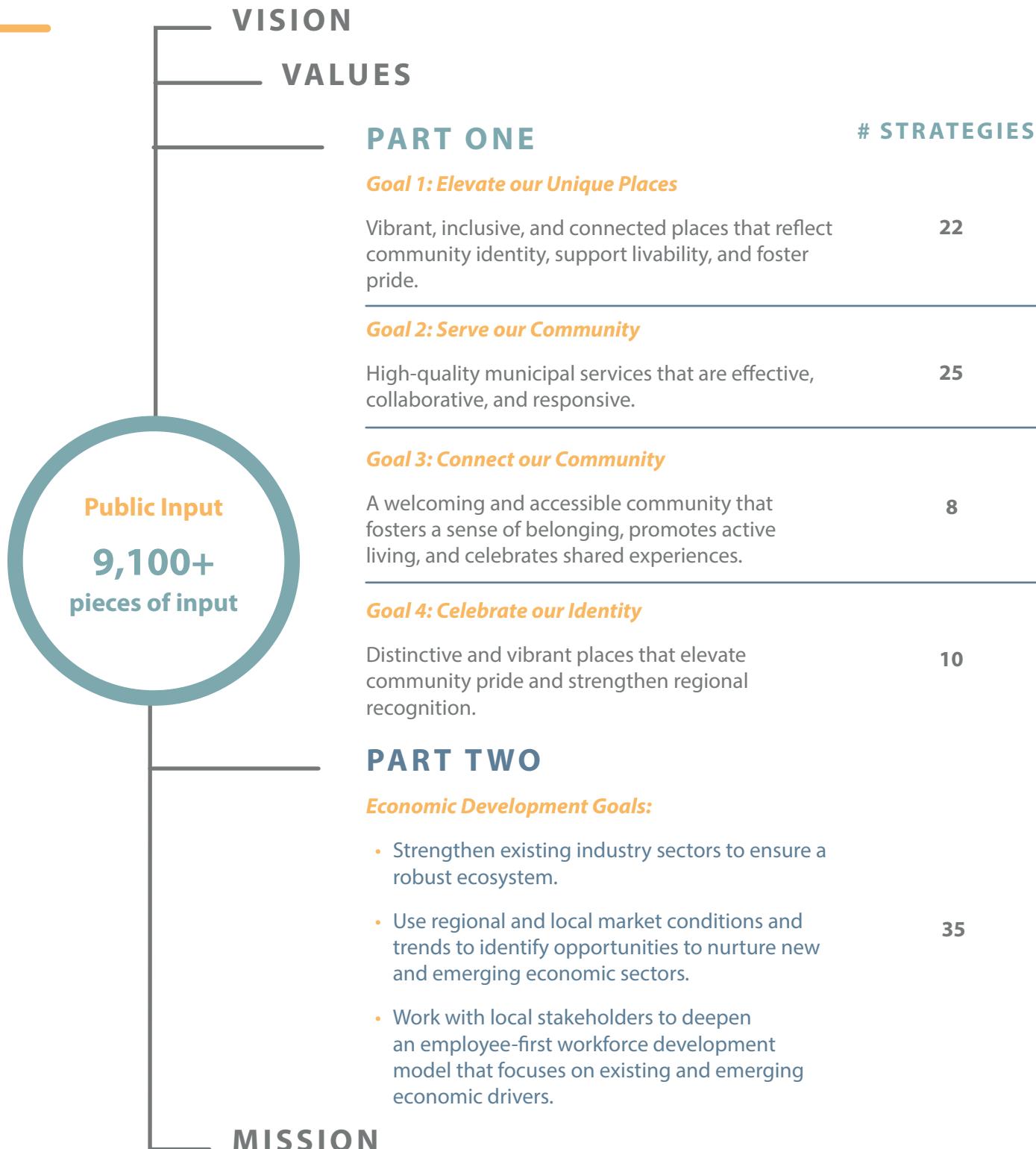
Celebrate our Identity.

Distinctive and vibrant places that elevate community pride and strengthen regional recognition.

Overview

The Strategic Plan contains 65 strategies organized by four goal areas.
The Economic Strategy contains three goals and 35 strategies.

VISION

VALUES

Public Input

9,100+
pieces of input

PART ONE

 # STRATEGIES

Goal 1: Elevate our Unique Places

Vibrant, inclusive, and connected places that reflect community identity, support livability, and foster pride.

22

Goal 2: Serve our Community

High-quality municipal services that are effective, collaborative, and responsive.

25

Goal 3: Connect our Community

A welcoming and accessible community that fosters a sense of belonging, promotes active living, and celebrates shared experiences.

8

Goal 4: Celebrate our Identity

Distinctive and vibrant places that elevate community pride and strengthen regional recognition.

10

PART TWO

Economic Development Goals:

- Strengthen existing industry sectors to ensure a robust ecosystem.

- Use regional and local market conditions and trends to identify opportunities to nurture new and emerging economic sectors.

- Work with local stakeholders to deepen an employee-first workforce development model that focuses on existing and emerging economic drivers.

35

MISSION

Strategies

The strategies contain the specific ideas that will be implemented to achieve the overall vision. The strategies are not organized in priority order. The City will prioritize the strategies during the implementation phase. The strategies in the plan are intentionally crafted to be clear, accessible, and easy for residents to understand, ensuring that the community can see how each action directly supports shared goals and priorities.

Elevate our Unique Places: Vibrant, inclusive, and connected places that reflect community identity, support livability, and foster pride.

Advance the Creekside District as a vibrant area.

A.1 Enhance visibility, access, and engagement with the Big Walnut Creek.

A.2 Attract and support businesses that reflect community interests and market demand.

A.3 Promote the creation of vibrant, usable spaces for dining and entertainment.

A.4 Review Creekside District planning documents to ensure alignment with updated citywide planning policies and support ongoing district-level planning efforts.

A.5 Reimagine a Creekside District based organization to align with current needs for the district.

A.6 Develop a comprehensive parking strategy for the Creekside District.

A.7 Improve walkability and pedestrian safety within the Creekside District.

A.8 Develop streetscape design standards to be implemented throughout the district.

A.9 Develop a Creekside District Improvement Program to leverage funding to improve facades, upgrade signage, and provide necessary infrastructure.

A.10 Establish a comprehensive wayfinding and beautification campaign for the Creekside District and other priority development areas.

A.11 Develop an event strategy that activates the Creekside District through vibrant programming while balancing economic, social, and environmental impacts.

Foster inclusive, accessible, and well-maintained parks.

B.1 Continue to implement the 2023 Parks Comprehensive Master Plan.

B.2 Develop and maintain modern, well-kept infrastructure in parks and recreation spaces.

B.3 In line with the Parks Master Plan, develop inclusive public spaces that are welcoming and designed for community gathering and connection.

B.4 Expand and create more diverse active recreation programming opportunities in parks.

B.5 Assess opportunities to preserve passive green space using existing open space within the city.

B.6 Enhance access to and visibility of waterways throughout the city.

Foster strong and engaged neighborhoods.

C.1 In alignment with the Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Plan, expand and improve the sidewalk and multi-use path network within and between neighborhoods.

C.2 Improve basic infrastructure within neighborhoods.

C.3 Promote increased communication among community and neighborhood organizations.

C.4 Facilitate the creation of diverse housing options to meet the needs of all ages and lifestyles.

C.5 Promote awareness and engagement with partners who offer programs supporting renovation and maintenance of older housing stock.

Strategies

1A. Advance the Creekside District as a vibrant area.

A.1 Enhance visibility, access, and engagement with the Big Walnut Creek.

Create inviting and accessible spaces that encourage residents to connect with this natural asset, especially behind the existing plaza and in parks that abut the creek. This includes improving existing spaces and creating new ones. Collaborate and communicate with the development community, who can assist in the creation of new spaces. Explore opportunities to incorporate areas where people can enjoy goods from local businesses. This may also include educational and recreational programming opportunities that inspire stewardship, such as clean-ups and nature walks.

A.2 Attract and support businesses that reflect community interests and market demand.

Encourage a diverse mix of businesses that contribute to the vibrancy of the Creekside District, including those offering unique goods, services, and experiences. Strengthen partnerships and provide resources that help entrepreneurs succeed, while also creating spaces that invite residents to shop, dine, and gather. Prioritize efforts that reflect the market demand of the area.

A.3 Promote the creation of vibrant, usable spaces for dining and entertainment.

Create spaces that invite residents and visitors to gather, dine, and enjoy entertainment in a lively, welcoming atmosphere. Encourage development and enhancements that support outdoor seating, flexible event areas, and pedestrian-friendly design. Explore flexible development standards for events and similar activities. Partner with local businesses to activate these spaces with food, drinks, and experiences that reflect the Creekside District's unique character. Prioritize accessibility and comfort to ensure these areas serve as inclusive hubs for community connection and celebration.

A.4 Review Creekside District planning documents to ensure alignment with updated citywide planning policies and support ongoing district-level planning efforts.

Ensure planning efforts within the Creekside District reflect the City's broader vision by reviewing existing documents for alignment with updated citywide policies. Support ongoing district-level planning that promotes connectivity and vibrancy. Employ strategies that enhance the area and build it into a unique, beautiful, and livable place. Design standards or guidelines may be implemented to provide visual cues and design intent for the district. Establish and expand the district's boundaries to better capture its full potential and inform future investment decisions.

A.5 Reimagine a Creekside District based organization to align with current needs for the district.

The organization should be a collaborative, inclusive body that reflects the district's evolving needs and opportunities. Engage a diverse group of stakeholders, including local businesses, property owners, residents, and community organizations, to share updates, identify challenges, and foster partnerships that strengthen the district. Create regular opportunities for dialogue and coordination that support shared goals and amplify the district's unique character. The organization should serve as a proactive forum for shaping and stewarding the district's future.

A.6 Develop a comprehensive parking strategy for the Creekside District.

Create a parking strategy that maximizes the use of existing parking assets and identifies opportunities for new parking. Encourage shared parking agreements where appropriate to promote efficiency and collaboration among businesses and property owners. Enhance wayfinding signage to facilitate easy parking and navigation throughout the district.

A.7 Improve walkability and pedestrian safety within the Creekside District.

Prioritize people over vehicles through improved infrastructure. Focus on well-lit, accessible pathways, safe crossings, and traffic-calming measures that make walking both convenient and enjoyable. Collaborate with stakeholders to identify key areas for improvement and ensure that upgrades reflect community needs and support district vibrancy.

A.8 Develop streetscape design standards to be implemented throughout the district.

Establish streetscape design standards that unify the visual and functional character of the Creekside District while supporting walkability, accessibility, and economic vitality. These standards should guide elements such as lighting, landscaping, signage, seating, and paving materials to create a cohesive and inviting public realm. Prioritize designs that enhance safety, encourage gathering, and reflect the district's identity.

A.9 Develop a Creekside District Improvement Program to leverage funding to improve facades, upgrade signage, and provide necessary infrastructure.

Launch a Creekside District Improvement Program in coordination with the Community Improvement Corporation to strategically invest in the district's physical and economic vitality. Leverage public and private funding to support facade enhancements, upgraded signage, and critical infrastructure improvements that benefit both businesses and the broader community. Prioritize projects that elevate the district's visual appeal, accessibility, and long-term resiliency.

A.10 Establish a comprehensive wayfinding and beautification campaign for the Creekside District and other priority development areas.

A comprehensive wayfinding and beautification campaign will strengthen identity and connectivity within the Creekside District and other priority development areas. Design and install signage that helps residents and visitors easily navigate key destinations while reinforcing a cohesive visual brand. Enhance public spaces with landscaping, lighting, and public art that reflect the character of each area and invite community interaction.

A.11 Develop an event strategy that activates the Creekside District through vibrant programming while balancing economic, social, and environmental impacts.

Create an event strategy that brings energy and connection through thoughtful, inclusive programming. Focus on events that reflect community interests and celebrate local culture, while also supporting economic development. Balance large-scale gatherings with smaller, recurring activities to maintain momentum and encourage regular engagement. Collaborate with local businesses, organizations, and residents to ensure that events are well-supported and responsive to the district's needs.

1B. Foster inclusive, accessible, and well-maintained parks.

B.1 Continue to implement the 2023 Parks Comprehensive Master Plan.

Focus on strategic investments that enhance recreational opportunities and improve park infrastructure. Align park improvements with community needs and priorities to ensure they contribute to broader goals. Maintain momentum through cross-departmental coordination and ongoing public input.

B.2 Develop and maintain modern, well-kept infrastructure in parks and recreation spaces.

Maintain and modernize park and recreation infrastructure to ensure it remains safe, welcoming, and functional for all users. Prioritize upgrades that improve accessibility and the overall user experience, including restrooms, lighting, pathways, and recreational equipment. Invest in durable, high-quality materials and designs that reflect community needs and support long-term maintenance.

B.3 In line with the Parks Master Plan, develop inclusive public spaces that are welcoming and designed for community gathering and connection.

Prioritize features that support gathering, recreation, and cultural expression, such as flexible seating, shade structures, performance areas, and universally accessible amenities. Prioritize features such as dog parks, splash pads, and ability-inclusive play areas to ensure all ages and abilities can enjoy public spaces. Ensure these spaces reflect the diversity of the community and encourage interaction across age groups and backgrounds. Integrate thoughtful programming within the spaces.

B.4 Expand and create more diverse active recreation programming opportunities in parks.

Expand active recreation programming in parks by offering a broader range of structured and spontaneous activities that reflect the diverse interests and needs of residents. Focus on inclusive, engaging programs such as fitness classes, nature-based workshops, intergenerational events, and cultural celebrations. These programs should be thoughtfully designed and scheduled to activate public spaces and encourage healthy, active lifestyles for all ages and abilities.

B.5 Assess opportunities to preserve passive green space using existing open space within the city.

Identify and enhance existing green and open spaces throughout the city to improve aesthetics, public health, and environmental sustainability. Focus on softscape improvements such as native plantings, tree canopy expansion, and pollinator-friendly landscaping that contribute to air quality, shade, and visual appeal. These spaces should offer passive recreation and moments of reflection in nature.

B.6 Enhance access to and visibility of waterways throughout the city.

Identify opportunities to establish scenic viewpoints, improve recreational access, and integrate trails and pathways that invite exploration and appreciation. Prioritize design elements that highlight the environmental and aesthetic value of waterways while ensuring user safety.

1C. Foster strong and engaged neighborhoods.

C.1 In alignment with the Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Plan, expand and improve the sidewalk and multi-use path network within and between neighborhoods.

Expand and improve the sidewalk and multi-use path network within and between neighborhoods to support safe, accessible, and connected mobility options. Prioritize filling gaps in the existing network and upgrading aging infrastructure. Focus on routes that connect residents to parks, schools, commercial areas, and transit stops. Consider disadvantaged populations within the community during the planning and implementation of sidewalk and multi-use path extensions.

C.2 Improve basic infrastructure within neighborhoods.

Focus on improvements such as streetlights, street trees for shade and aesthetics, and clearly marked crosswalks to support pedestrian safety. These elements should be thoughtfully integrated to create welcoming, walkable environments that reflect community character.

C.3 Promote increased communication among community and neighborhood organizations.

Support regular opportunities for dialogue, resource sharing, and joint problem-solving to empower residents in shaping neighborhood initiatives and solutions. Encourage inclusive participation from a broad range of voices, including youth, seniors, and underrepresented groups. Support these efforts with accessible tools and platforms that make it easy for organizations to connect, coordinate, and take collective action.

C.4 Facilitate the creation of diverse housing options to meet the needs of all ages and lifestyles.

Align efforts with the Land Use Plan and the housing study outlined in Strategy ED A.8 to guide thoughtful development and reinvestment of housing. Prioritize housing types that support affordability, accessibility, and neighborhood stability, including multi-generational living, smaller footprint homes, and mixed-use developments.

C.5 Promote awareness and engagement with partners who offer programs supporting renovation and maintenance of older housing stock.

Connect residents with trusted partners who offer programs that support the upkeep and preservation of older homes to preserve neighborhood character. Highlight resources such as the Franklin County Home Repair Program through the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, the Franklin County Minor Home Repair Program for seniors, and Habitat for Humanity's Home Repair initiatives. These programs provide critical assistance for homeowners, especially those with limited incomes, to address safety, accessibility, and structural needs.

GOAL 2

Serve our Community: High-quality municipal services that are effective, collaborative, and responsive.

Enhance internal operations.

A.1 Identify a "champion" in each department to track implementation of this Strategic Plan and submit reports.

A.2 Establish a framework by which projects may be evaluated and prioritized while measuring progress toward the City's goals.

A.3 Connect the Strategic Plan with the charter review process.

A.4 Regularly review and update City codes and regulations.

A.5 Embed the Strategic Plan into the City's budget development process.

A.6 Hold an annual retreat to review the Strategic Plan and update or revise goals as appropriate.

A.7 Enhance existing new employee orientation to include information on the City of Gahanna as a whole, including the Strategic Plan and mission statement, and provide opportunities to tour various City facilities and engage with other City employees.

A.8 Ensure transparency and responsiveness throughout City government.

A.9 Enhance collaboration by regularly sharing updates across departments.

A.10 Strengthen employee-employer communication.

A.11 Expand professional development and training opportunities for all departments.

A.12 Assess technology usage across all city departments and identify needs and/or barriers to utilizing available technology to the fullest extent to enhance communications and improve operations.

A.13 Foster mutually beneficial partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions to share services, implement best practices, and achieve greater efficiency through collaboration.

A.14 Establish internal guidance of policies and procedures to ensure they are applicable, modern, and achieve compliance.

A.15 Identify opportunities to elevate and maintain employee wellness and morale.

A.16 Streamline procurement and financial practices.

Maintain a high level of stewardship and safety.

B.1 Create a business continuity plan.

B.2 Maintain a high quality of public safety through proactive services and community partnerships.

B.3 Create a long-term plan for emergency preparedness citywide.

B.4 Adopt a Sustainability Plan to implement environmentally sustainable practices across the City.

B.5 Evaluate and enhance urban forestry initiatives.

B.6 Promote programs offered by partner organizations that assist residents and businesses with the cost of sustainable activities.

B.7 Expand recycling and composting programs.

B.8 Promote soil health by encouraging regenerative practices such as composting and reduced fertilizer use.

B.9 Provide additional tools for residents and business owners to address erosion/flood risk for their properties.

2A. Enhance internal operations.

A.1 Identify a "champion" in each department to track implementation of this Strategic Plan and submit reports.

Integrate the plan into the operations of each department by identifying a person to lead plan implementation efforts. This "champion" may identify, develop, and/or coordinate department projects to achieve goals and assemble materials necessary to report progress. A citywide "champion" should additionally be determined to "check in" with the department-level champions and assemble all departmental reports into one final report for distribution.

A.2 Establish a framework by which projects may be evaluated and prioritized while measuring progress toward the City's goals.

The Strategic Plan serves as a roadmap, guiding the City in establishing priorities to address current needs and identifying key initiatives to prepare for the future. Establishing a regular reporting format allows the City to keep track of and share progress towards the stated goals. At the same time, the Strategic Plan is intended to be flexible, allowing the City to take advantage of opportunities that present themselves. Develop and consistently apply a standardized framework to evaluate and prioritize projects and programs for inclusion in the City's annual operating and capital budgets, ensuring alignment with strategic priorities.

A.3 Connect the Strategic Plan with the charter review process.

Connect the Strategic Plan with the charter review process to ensure that long-term community goals are reflected in the City's foundational policies and procedures. During the review, actively reference the Strategic Plan to guide discussions, identify alignment opportunities, and inform potential updates to governance structures.

A.4 Regularly review and update City codes and regulations.

Establish industry "best practice" standards for the regular review and update of City codes and regulations, including, but not limited to, personnel policies, zoning code, fee schedules, and business regulations. Maintain data such as zoning variance requests, appeals, permit processing times, and code enforcement actions. Perform analytics to identify trends, inefficiencies, and opportunities for improvement. Analyze innovative new programs and practices for potential inclusion in City updates.

A.5 Embed the Strategic Plan into the City's budget development process.

Require all proposals demonstrate alignment with plan goals. As projects and programs are considered for inclusion in the City's operating and capital improvement budgets, the proposals may require a checkbox and statement explaining how the project or program furthers the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan. Regular progress reports will provide officials, staff, and the public with continued updates on plan components. An annual report should be included as a component of the annual Operating Budget documentation, providing the link between funding requests and the City's stated priorities.

A.6 Hold an annual retreat to review the Strategic Plan and update or revise goals as appropriate.

Conduct an annual review of the Strategic Plan's goals, strategies, and objectives, ensuring the Strategic Plan remains a living document and reflects the most current priorities and needs of the community. Including all elected officials and senior staff members in this annual review creates opportunities for healthy dialogue and results in an updated plan in which all have ownership and are invested in the process and outcomes. It may also be appropriate to involve the broader community when considering updates or revisions to the Strategic Plan.

A.7 Enhance existing new employee orientation to include information on the City of Gahanna as a whole, including the Strategic Plan and mission statement, and provide opportunities to tour various City facilities and engage with other City employees.

Engaging each employee and offering them the opportunity to become knowledgeable about the City's overall mission to serve its residents provides each with a heightened awareness and a better understanding of their role, as well as that of their department, in supporting this mission. Offering new employee orientation as a group provides opportunities for new employees to develop connections across departments. Educate employees on what it means to be a public servant.

A.8 Ensure transparency and responsiveness throughout City government.

Conduct regular resident surveys on the quality of City services and timely topics. Share results with the public and analyze results for areas of improvement. Annual employee reviews conducted on standard forms provide valuable information to the employee on expectations for conduct and implementation of the City's priorities as well as a continued opportunity for open communication.

A.9 Enhance collaboration by regularly sharing updates across departments.

Continue to look for opportunities to create cross-departmental teams to address a particular topic or service of interest, utilizing the collective knowledge and experience throughout the City's departments. Strengthen interdepartmental communication at all levels to coordinate work projects, prevent duplication of efforts, and elevate team dynamics.

A.10 Strengthen employee-employer communication.

Continue to strengthen communications with City staff through employee newsletters, regular staff meetings, and engagement opportunities at the department and citywide levels. Provide regular updates on new initiatives, plan progress, and opportunities for continued training and personal development. Provide opportunities for employees to share ideas or information gained at professional training with senior staff. Encourage innovation by soliciting creative solutions to departmental challenges, recognizing and celebrating inventive contributions, and supporting pilot projects or experimental approaches that align with City goals.

A.11 Expand professional development and training opportunities for all departments.

Invest in employees by offering a variety of opportunities to continue professional development and training. Seek opportunities locally and nationwide to create connections with other people in the profession and new ideas and best practices that may be replicated in Gahanna. Participate in programs that provide funding or support for professional development, such as Ohio TechCred. Offer professional development plans for employees who indicate an interest in taking on more responsibility. Continue to support staff participation in leadership opportunities regionwide.

A.12 Assess technology usage across all city departments and identify needs and/or barriers to utilizing available technology to the fullest extent to enhance communications and improve operations.

Inventory technology platforms across the City and their utilization. Identify barriers to usage and opportunities to extend technology platforms to other departments, enabling the quick sharing of information. When considering the acquisition of new technology, the Information Technology team should be approached early on to assist and open opportunities for additional applications.

A.13 Foster mutually beneficial partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions to share services, implement best practices, and achieve greater efficiency through collaboration.

The Gahanna Communications Technicians currently dispatch for the Gahanna Division of Police and transfer 9-1-1 calls to Mifflin and Jefferson Townships, which provide fire and EMS services to the community. The communications center at 825 Tech Center Drive is planned to enable dispatching services to be scaled up should the opportunity arise to serve other jurisdictions. Each department should review its services and identify opportunities to collaborate with other jurisdictions where efficiencies can be achieved, additional revenues generated, and City goals and priorities realized.

A.14 Establish internal guidance of policies and procedures to ensure they are applicable, modern, and achieve compliance.

Continuously review and update policies and procedures to reflect current practices and legislative updates. Educate employees on modifications and train supervisors where appropriate.

A.15 Identify opportunities to elevate and maintain employee wellness and morale.

Continue to offer opportunities for employees to gather and celebrate successes or provide a day of service to the community, as individuals or department-wide. Create an internal brand for employee communications to celebrate and acknowledge employees; explore ways to integrate this initiative into other facets of employee engagement. Continue to survey employees regularly and evaluate results. Use the mission statement throughout internal branding.

A.16 Streamline procurement and financial practices.

Timely access to equipment, supplies, and services is critical to providing a high level of service to the community. Incorporate best practices into the procurement process to increase efficiency and effectiveness, capitalize on opportunities for cost savings, foster collaboration with frequent suppliers, and effectively manage risk. Recognize departments annually that display strong stewardship of resources.

2B. Maintain a high level of stewardship and safety.

B.1 Create a business continuity plan.

A business continuity plan is designed to ensure the uninterrupted performance of essential internal functions during major disruptions such as natural disasters, cybersecurity incidents, or pandemics. Continuously review and update the City's continuity plan to ensure the ability to protect data and critical systems using best practices and establish off-site recovery capabilities. Review and update, as needed, a strong technology usage policy for employees and provide regular training on usage and potential threats. Maintain a strong password protection policy.

B.2 Maintain a high quality of public safety through proactive services and community partnerships.

Continue collaborations with neighboring jurisdictions to provide high-level safety services. Encourage all senior-level management to achieve National Incident Management System (NIMS) coursework certification. Continue to work through neighborhood civic associations to enhance the safety of residents. Work with the business community to identify physical site improvements to improve the safety of employees and educate them on potential cyber threats. Explore additional opportunities to educate and protect Gahanna seniors from threats to their personal safety and well-being.

B.3 Create a long-term plan for emergency preparedness citywide.

Continuously review and update the City's Emergency Preparedness Plan and hold regular tabletop exercises with senior management staff. Include community partners and key public safety partners, such as Mifflin and Jefferson Fire, when holding disaster training and active shooter drills. Perform "after-action reviews" to improve preparedness.
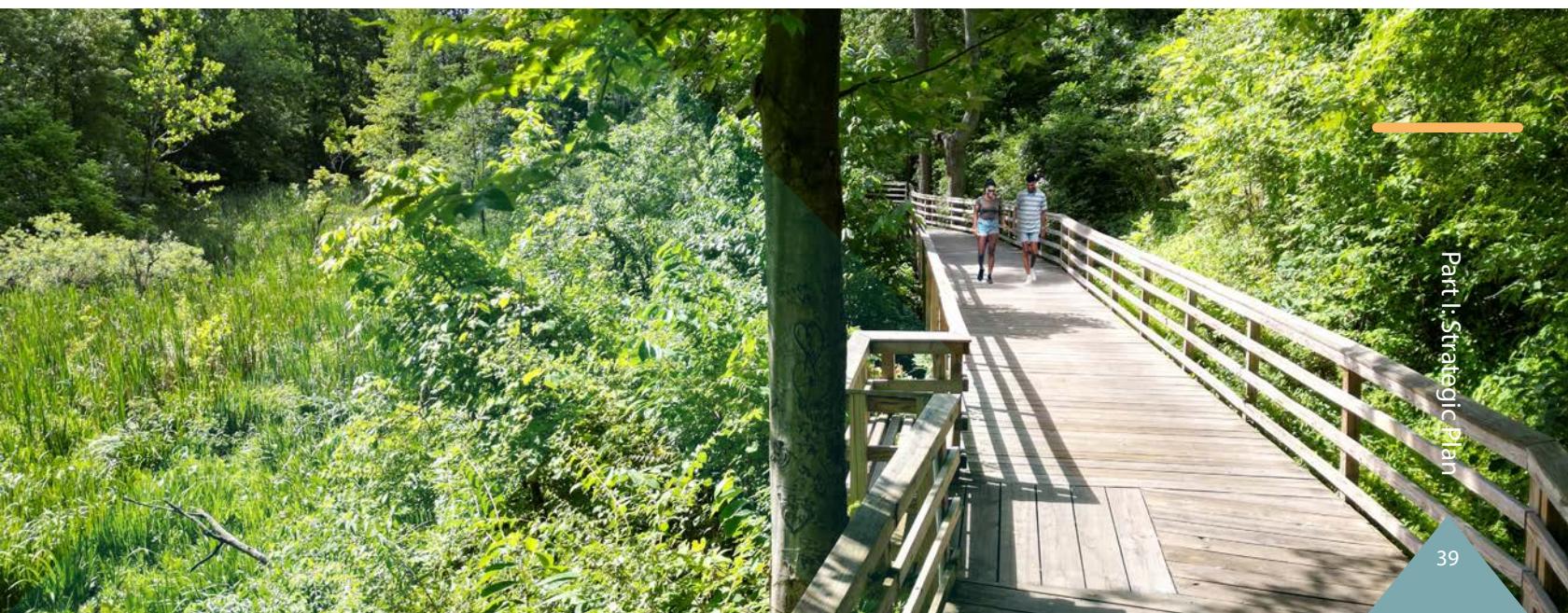
B.4 Adopt a Sustainability Plan to implement environmentally sustainable practices across the City.

MORPC has recertified Gahanna as a Gold Plus Equity Champion through its Sustainable2050 program. The City should continue to explore ways to develop and implement sustainable practices, such as increasing the use of electric vehicles in its fleet. The Sustainability Plan should encompass internal government operations, efforts to reduce environmental impact, and initiatives that promote long-term resilience, all accompanied by actionable metrics. Consider establishing a "Green Team" with participation from each department to explore sustainable programs.

B.5 Evaluate and enhance urban forestry initiatives.

Trees offer numerous benefits to a community, such as improving air quality, providing habitat for wildlife, preventing soil erosion, and creating welcoming places for people. Increase Gahanna's tree canopy through programs that plant street trees in neighborhoods, along key corridors, and in strategic areas. Encourage residents and businesses to plant trees on private property by offering programs that reduce the cost of tree purchases. Explore programs offered by energy utilities and collaborate.

B.6 Promote programs offered by partner organizations that assist residents and businesses with the cost of sustainable activities.

These programs may include rebates, grants, or educational resources for activities such as stormwater management, energy efficiency, native landscaping, and waste reduction. For example, the Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District provides rebates and guidance for installing rain gardens, native plants, and other conservation measures. Promote these opportunities through City communication channels to increase awareness and participation.

B.7 Expand recycling and composting programs.

Continue to explore ways to expand the City's recycling and composting programs, in both public and private spaces. Leverage the City's food-based business leaders to develop programs addressing food waste.

B.8 Promote soil health by encouraging regenerative practices such as composting and reduced fertilizer use.

Evaluate opportunities to utilize regenerative practices on public land and parks, such as increased compost use and decreased use of chemicals, to enrich soil and protect wildlife.

B.9 Provide additional tools for residents and business owners to address erosion/flood risk for their properties.

Map areas of concern and host community meetings to educate residents and business owners on preventative measures such as tree and landscape beds, rain gardens, rain barrels, and other best practices to reduce stormwater runoff and erosion. Collaborate with regional partners such as Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District to assist with education and plant material guides. Consider introducing stormwater management practices in public improvement projects, such as permeable pavements and bioswales.

GOAL 3

Connect our Community: A welcoming and accessible community that fosters a sense of belonging, promotes active living, and celebrates shared experiences.

Advance a comprehensive mobility network.

A.1 Implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Plan.

A.2 Explore community rideshare opportunities for older adults, underserved populations, and those with limited mobility.

A.3 Develop a citywide Trails Master Plan.

Foster an engaged and inclusive community.

B.1 Become an age-friendly community to support healthy aging and improve quality of life for all.

B.2 Establish a Citizen's Police Academy.

B.3 Strengthen the existing relationship with Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools.

B.4 Increase the number of inclusive, community-wide events that bring people together in all seasons.

B.5 Enhance and expand the Citizen's Academy.

3A. Advance a comprehensive mobility network.

A.1 Implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Plan.

The Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Plan is scheduled for completion in 2026. The plan focuses on creating safer, more connected, and accessible mobility options for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, and drivers. Implementation should be coordinated across departments and with regional partners to ensure effective execution and measurable progress.

A.2 Explore community rideshare opportunities for older adults, underserved populations, and those with limited mobility.

Expand mobility options by identifying innovative rideshare solutions. Focus on improving transportation equity and accessibility through partnerships, pilot programs, and community-driven models. These efforts can help reduce barriers to essential services, social engagement, and daily activities, while promoting independence and overall well-being. Ensure outreach and implementation strategies are inclusive and responsive to the unique needs of each group.

A.3 Develop a citywide Trails Master Plan.

A citywide Trails Master Plan should be developed to guide future trail development, enhance access for all users, and establish critical trail connectivity across neighborhoods and key destinations. The plan should include identification of opportunities to develop amenities and attractions along the trail. These may include fitness stations, rest areas, and public art. Reference the Active Transportation section of the Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Plan to ensure alignment with broader mobility goals and multimodal infrastructure strategies. To support implementation, a financial model should be developed to identify funding sources, estimate capital and maintenance costs, and evaluate potential partnerships or grant opportunities. Focus on expanding safe, accessible, and enjoyable trail experiences through thoughtful design, wayfinding, and integration with parks, schools, and commercial areas.

3B. Foster an engaged and inclusive community.

B.1 Become an age-friendly community to support healthy aging and improve quality of life for all.

As Gahanna's population grows older, adopting citywide strategies that support aging in place will help ensure the community remains safe, inclusive, and welcoming for older adults. These efforts may include enhancing accessibility, improving mobility options, expanding recreational amenities, and addressing social and emotional needs. Support a range of housing types, affordability levels, and home modification programs to help older residents remain in their homes and neighborhoods as they age. Designing initiatives that benefit older residents also creates a more livable environment for people of all ages.

AARP Livable Communities Program

By 2030, one in five Americans will be age 65 or older, and by 2034, older adults will outnumber children for the first time in U.S. history. This demographic shift underscores the growing need for communities that support residents across all ages and life stages. The AARP Livable Communities initiative champions the transformation of neighborhoods, towns, cities, and rural areas into places that are safe, accessible, and inclusive. Key features of livable communities include walkable streets, age-friendly housing and transportation options, access to essential services, and opportunities for meaningful community engagement.

A livable community is one where people of all ages can thrive. It offers secure environments, affordable and appropriate housing, diverse transportation choices, and inclusive spaces for civic participation. Through the AARP Livable Communities Program, AARP collaborates with public officials, local stakeholders, and residents to plan and implement changes that enhance quality of life, especially for older adults. The program also empowers volunteers and community members with the knowledge and tools needed to advocate for improvements that help individuals remain in their homes and connected to their communities.

B.2 Establish a Citizen's Police Academy.

Enhance transparency and strengthen relationships between law enforcement and the community through development of a Citizen's Police Academy. Offer educational sessions that provide insight into police operations, policies, and public safety strategies, helping residents better understand the role of law enforcement in Gahanna. The Gahanna Citizen's Academy could serve as an example for program structure. Encourage participation from a diverse cross-section of the community to promote dialogue, mutual respect, and shared problem-solving. This initiative should empower residents to become informed partners in creating a safe and connected city.

B.3 Strengthen the existing relationship with Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools.

Collaborate with the school district on shared goals that support student success and strengthen youth engagement. Leverage joint resources and expertise to enhance educational opportunities and address common challenges. Practice regular communication to share updates, projects, and other news, ensuring alignment across initiatives. Integrate workforce development strategies by connecting students with career pathways, internships, and mentorship opportunities.

B.4 Increase the number of inclusive, community-wide events that bring people together in all seasons.

Leverage partnerships with local non-profits to create a vibrant calendar of events that encourage community building year-round. Seasonal activities like a Gahanna Hop, First or Fourth Fridays at Creekside, and an expanded and more regular Farmers Market can serve as third spaces for residents, encouraging connection and relationship building. They will also attract visitors from outside Gahanna. These events should be designed to be accessible and reflective of the city's diverse interests.

B.5 Enhance and expand the Citizen's Academy.

The Citizen's Academy offers Gahanna residents a hands-on opportunity to learn how their local government operates and to build stronger connections within the community. Each session highlights a different area of city operations. Expanding and enhancing the program could include more interactive experiences, broader outreach to underrepresented groups, and deeper dives into topics like civic leadership and volunteerism. These improvements would help develop informed, engaged residents who are empowered to contribute to Gahanna's future.

GOAL 4

Celebrate our Identity: Distinctive and vibrant places that elevate community pride and strengthen regional recognition.

Elevate Gahanna's regional identity.

A.1 Ensure City branding supports strategic goals and strengthens recognition and attachment.

A.2 Align City branding with ancillary organizations and other stakeholders.

A.3 Market Gahanna as an attractive, accessible alternative to the urban core or surrounding areas.

Strengthen placemaking efforts.

B.1 Develop a gateway improvement program.

B.2 Prepare and adopt a Wayfinding Master Plan.

B.3 Identify underutilized areas within the City and develop innovative strategies to transform them into vibrant, functional spaces.

B.4 Prepare and adopt a Public Art Master Plan.

Enhance citywide communications and promotion.

C.1 Develop and launch a coordinated marketing plan for the City of Gahanna.

C.2 Evaluate opportunities to expand communications to the public.

C.3 Produce an Annual Report to share information with residents.

4A. Elevate Gahanna's regional identity.

A.1 Ensure City branding supports strategic goals and strengthens recognition and attachment.

Enhance the City's recognition among residents and surrounding communities by updating and aligning its branding with the strategic goals outlined in this plan. Branding elements such as logos, taglines, and other messaging should consistently reflect the City's values and vision for the future. The brand should be cohesive across platforms and public spaces. In addition to visual identity, the City should emphasize its distinct qualities and the experience it aims to deliver to residents, businesses, and visitors. The identity should reflect Gahanna's rich history. By integrating this heritage into branding efforts through storytelling, public art, events, and partnerships, the City can strengthen its reputation as a vibrant, distinctive destination known for its natural beauty, educational experiences, and small-town charm.

A.2 Align City branding with ancillary organizations and other stakeholders.

Ensure City branding is consistently reflected across ancillary organizations and other stakeholders such as Visit Gahanna and the Gahanna Area Chamber of Commerce to present a unified and recognizable identity. Consider how the brand can be shared with and utilized among the development community. A cohesive brand presence will support strategic goals like economic development. Provide ancillary organizations and stakeholders with the necessary tools and resources to consistently represent the City's brand. This could include sharing brand guidelines and logos, as well as communication that encourages alignment.

A.3 Market Gahanna as an attractive, accessible alternative to the urban core or surrounding areas.

Emphasize Gahanna's proximity to Columbus, Easton, and other areas in Central Ohio, as well as its suitability for day and weekend trips, to highlight its appeal as a welcoming and accessible alternative. Showcase the City's walkable districts, local businesses, parks, and seasonal events. Message Gahanna as having a small-town atmosphere with the convenience of a big city.

4B. Strengthen placemaking efforts.

B.1 Develop a gateway improvement program.

Create a program to enhance key gateways into Gahanna with thoughtful design, landscaping, signage, and public art that reflects the City's identity and values. Improvements should focus on creating a welcoming first impression on visitors and a sense of pride for residents. The program may include opportunities for collaboration or sponsorship with local artists, community groups, and businesses.

B.2 Prepare and adopt a Wayfinding Master Plan.

The Wayfinding Master Plan should be visually cohesive and appealing, integrating signage and other navigation tools across all areas of the City, including districts, trails, gateways, and public spaces. The plan may include a digital component such as an interactive guide for community members or visitors. The wayfinding system should reflect the City's branding and make it easier for visitors and residents to explore and connect with key destinations.

Wayfinding Plans

Wayfinding is an informational system of signs, colors, and other design elements that helps people navigate space, often in an urban environment. As the system people use to orient themselves when traveling, wayfinding helps us interpret the physical environment. A well-implemented wayfinding system provides people with the information they need to navigate an unfamiliar environment. It also supports brand identity through consistent visual cues and can boost tourism by making a location more accessible and appealing.

There are four types of wayfinding signs: identification, directional, informational, and regulatory. As standalone signs, they serve a specific role; as part of the greater wayfinding system, they inform each other.

B.3 Identify underutilized areas within the City and develop innovative strategies to transform them into vibrant, functional spaces.

Opportunities may include transforming unused or underutilized areas into pocket parks, seating nooks, or art installations. Focus on activating "in-between spaces" with creative placemaking strategies that encourage gathering and reflect the character of the surrounding neighborhood. Work with the Community Improvement Corporation or identify funding avenues for the City to acquire properties.

B.4 Prepare and adopt a Public Art Master Plan.

The plan should formalize processes for selecting and placing art on City-owned property. It should also outline strategies for site selection and promotion while aligning with broader placemaking and branding goals.

Public Art Plans

A Public Art Plan is a long-term strategy that outlines goals, policies, and best practices for integrating art into public spaces. Its purpose is to enrich communities, foster civic pride, celebrate cultural heritage, and stimulate economic growth. These plans are typically developed by municipalities, arts councils, and cultural organizations and seek to weave public art into the fabric of urban design and community programming. By doing so, they ensure that art is not only accessible to all but also contributes meaningfully to a community's identity and overall quality of life.

The City of Gahanna established the Public Arts Advisory Committee in 2024. This five-member committee oversees the selection process for public art installations throughout the City and plays a key role in promoting public art initiatives. Their work helps ensure that Gahanna's public spaces reflect the creativity, diversity, and spirit of its residents.

4C. Enhance citywide communications and promotion.

C.1 Develop and launch a coordinated marketing plan for the City of Gahanna.

The marketing plan should elevate Gahanna's visibility across the region. Work in partnership with Visit Gahanna to align messaging, leverage platforms, and target key audiences through digital and print campaigns. The plan should promote tourism, support local businesses, and reinforce the City's brand.

C.2 Evaluate opportunities to expand communications to the public.

Explore new and diverse methods to expand how the City communicates with the Gahanna community, moving beyond traditional printed materials. Consider increasing the use of digital platforms, such as mobile apps and interactive web tools, to reach a broader audience. Incorporate visual storytelling and video content.

C.3 Produce an Annual Report to share information with residents.

The Annual Report should clearly communicate financial information, progress on strategic goals, and departmental highlights in a format that is both informative and accessible. The report may include a one-page summary that highlights key accomplishments and other developments within the City using visuals and metrics.

Implementation

The Strategic Plan will not only serve as a guide for City staff and elected officials, but it will also identify critical partners and the coordination necessary to realize the recommended actions. The implementation of the Strategic Plan will be led by the Mayor's Office, with support from all City departments. The execution of the plan will be shared among City staff, City Council, and key partners.

It is important to acknowledge that it will take time to fully institutionalize the plan and nurture a culture of using it. Over time, through collaboration and an iterative process that includes periodic updates, the plan will become a valuable tool to serve the community's needs.

Staff should create departmental work plans to ensure the successful and ongoing implementation of the Strategic Plan. These work plans should be consistent across the organization but still allow for departmental customization. The work plans should outline the departmental mission, essential core services, and specific Strategic Plan actions being worked on for the upcoming fiscal year, along with budget requests to accomplish both the essential core services and the Strategic Plan actions. It is recommended that each department reconcile its core services with future needs as outlined in the Strategic Plan. In addition, the Strategic Plan should be an opportunity to help organize staff reports (i.e., report out on actions that are ongoing, complete, or future actions) and department head goals (i.e., tie department goals back to the Strategic Plan).

The Strategic Plan should be actively managed and regularly monitored for implementation effectiveness and relevance. This review should happen on a formal basis no less than once per year. A status report should accompany this review and be promoted throughout the community, such as through the City website. An annual public meeting, perhaps featuring a noted speaker or tied to the State of the City event, could be held to share progress and attract additional participants to move the plan forward.

Reporting and Monitoring

Several methods can be undertaken to report and monitor the plan's progress to the community. An implementation matrix will be provided to support this plan. The matrix is a tool that connects each recommendation with a timeframe for completion, effort leader, supporting entities (e.g., departments and organizations), and potential funding sources. It is anticipated that the implementation steps may change over time based on annual reviews, new developments, or successes in other areas.

Other methods for reporting and monitoring include:

- Presenting an annual or biannual report card to City Council

- Reporting City actions that support the Strategic Plan

- Illustrating completed or ongoing actions through the use of infographics on the City website
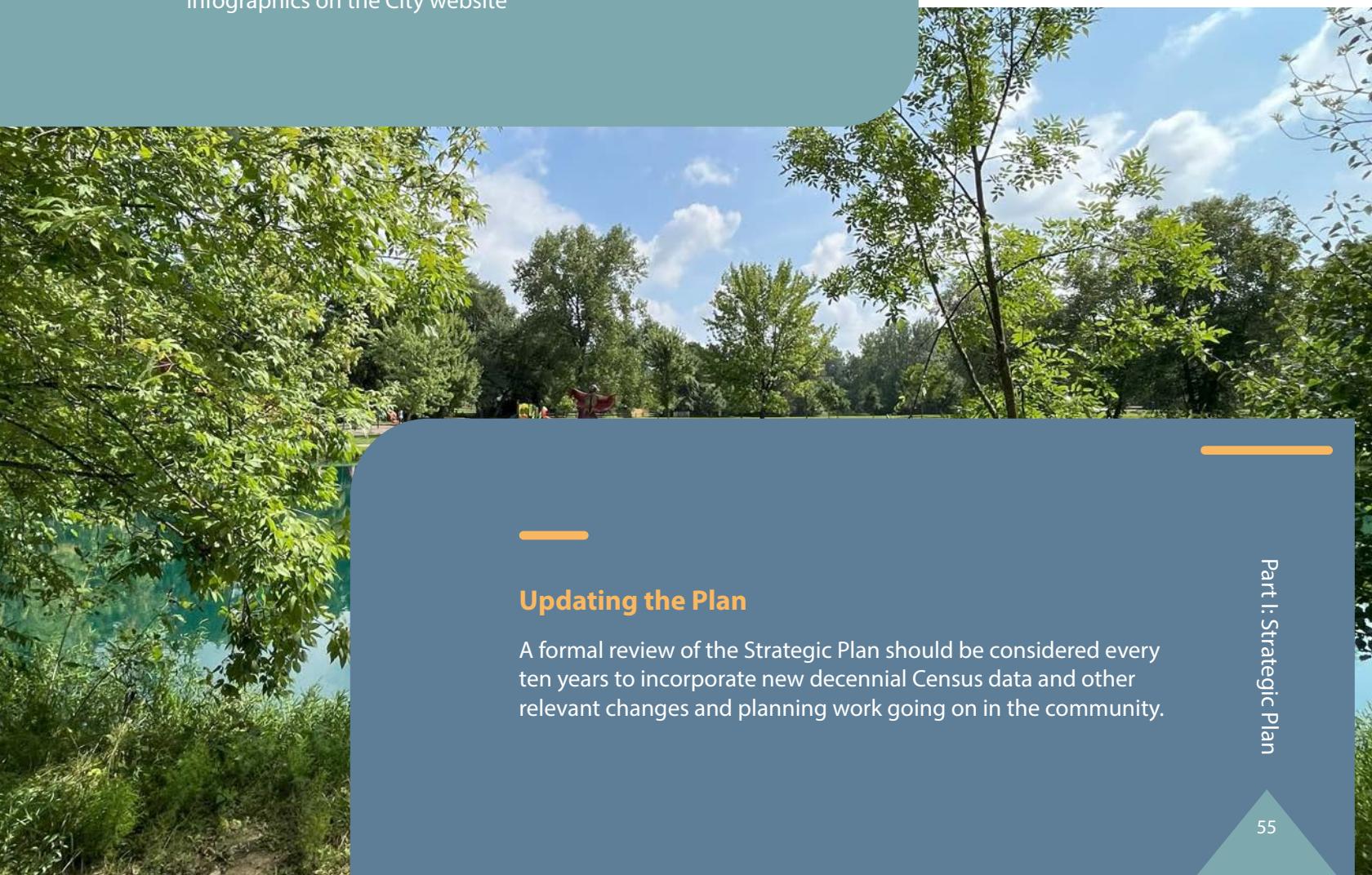
Updating the Plan

A formal review of the Strategic Plan should be considered every ten years to incorporate new decennial Census data and other relevant changes and planning work going on in the community.

How to Use the Plan

This document is intended to serve as a ten-year strategic planning document. The plan should be used daily as public and private decisions are made concerning the community's future. The following is a summary of how decisions and processes should be institutionalized to align with the vision and actions.

Annual Work Programs and Budgets

City staff should be cognizant of the recommendations of the plan when preparing annual work programs and budgets. This also includes considering the plan when making important policy and financial decisions that impact the community.

Community Planning

Community planning efforts, including those of the City, community organizations, and the school district, should be aligned with the vision, values, goals, and recommendations of the plan.

Capital Improvement Program

The City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) should be consistent with the plan's recommendations.

Private Investment Decisions

Property owners, developers, and other private entities should consider the plan's recommendations in their planning and investment decisions. Public decision-makers will use the plan as a guide in their deliberations about proposals, projects, and funding requests. Property owners and developers should be cognizant of and development proposals consistent with the plan's recommendations.

Civic and Social Engagement

All civic and community groups should create opportunities to explore solutions to issues of concern to the community. They should seek alignment with the plan's recommendations and collaborate across various interests, missions, and constituencies.

PLAN MANAGEMENT CYCLE

This plan should be integrated into annual City processes, including budgeting and capital improvements planning. It should also be regularly tracked for progress and assessed for effectiveness. The diagram below illustrates the recommended plan management cycle. It begins with the start of the fiscal year (FY) and includes various steps that lead to the adoption of a budget for the following fiscal year.

1 Strategic Plan Review, Ongoing
Progress review
Department Director updates
Discussion of planning priorities

6 Budget Adoption

FY Begins

FY End

5 Operating Budget delivered to Council
Operating Budget questions

4 Budget Adoption Process begins
Capital Budget delivered to Council
Capital Budget questions

2 Begin CIP and Budget Review and Preparation
Review CIP based on current conditions
Division work plan updates
Division budget requests

3 CIP Adoption Process begins
CIP Annual Update
Introduction to Council

Implementation
Continuous Monitoring
Sharing Progress

JAN. FEB. MAR. APR. MAY JUN. JUL. AUG. SEP. OCT. NOV. DEC.

Strategic Plan Review

Capital Improvement Plan Process (assumes the creation of a three- or five-year capital plan, which would be updated annually. It prioritizes all capital projects and identifies funding sources)

Budget Adoption Process (for upcoming fiscal year)

PART II

Economic Development Strategy

INTRODUCTION

In Ohio, cities primarily rely on income taxes as their main source of funding. By pursuing economic development strategies that focus on job retention and attracting new investments, these cities can stimulate growth in the local economy.

This growth supports an improved quality of life for residents, visitors, and the business community as a whole. Job creation is especially important, as it generates the revenues necessary to provide essential city services, enhance infrastructure, and expand recreational offerings. For residents, local employment growth means increased training and job opportunities, ultimately raising their standard of living.

Gahanna's economic development strategy is designed to prioritize initiatives that invigorate the local economy. The strategy aligns City policies and programs to create an environment where existing businesses can succeed and grow, new businesses are encouraged to establish themselves, innovation is championed, and opportunities for residents continue to expand. Key initiatives include targeted investments in core industry sectors and in designated areas of the city, small business support, a citywide workforce development program, and an economic development toolkit that promotes growth and promises a return on the City's investment. By capitalizing on its unique assets and strengths, Gahanna aims to establish itself as a leader in the central Ohio economy.

Process

The strategic process began with a thorough analysis of Gahanna's economic data, such as workforce demographics, trends in job and income growth, employment by sector, and commuting patterns. This information was then used to benchmark Gahanna against other communities in the central Ohio region: Grove City, Hilliard, and Westerville. These communities were selected based on the similarity of their governmental structures and budgetary profiles to that of Gahanna.

To develop the goals and guiding principles for this economic development strategy, the City engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including individuals, businesses, and organizations, who work in the economic development space to assess Gahanna's strengths and areas for improvement. In February, business roundtables gathered companies from diverse sectors and sizes to share their perspectives. At the City's 4th Annual Economic Development event in May 2025, business leaders heard from Josiah Brown, the New York Sherpa, on building a strong visitor economy. Afterward, participants took part in in-depth roundtable discussions about Gahanna's unique character and sense of place. Input from City officials, staff, and the Gahanna Community Improvement Corporation was also integral to shaping these economic development strategies.

Economic Benchmarks

Economic benchmark data provides valuable insights into how municipalities compare in terms of financial performance, resource allocation, and service delivery. In the case of the City of Gahanna, benchmarking was conducted against Westerville, Hilliard, and Grove City, selected due to their similar government structures and budgetary frameworks. The City was also compared to the Columbus metropolitan statistical area, a U.S. Census designated region around the City of Columbus. This comparison allows Gahanna to evaluate its fiscal health, operational efficiency, and strategic priorities relative to peer communities.

Resident Labor Force

- Active labor force of 19,000, relatively flat since 2018.

- 8% self-employed, same percentage as benchmark communities and metro area.

- Residents across all industries have a median wage of $62,183.
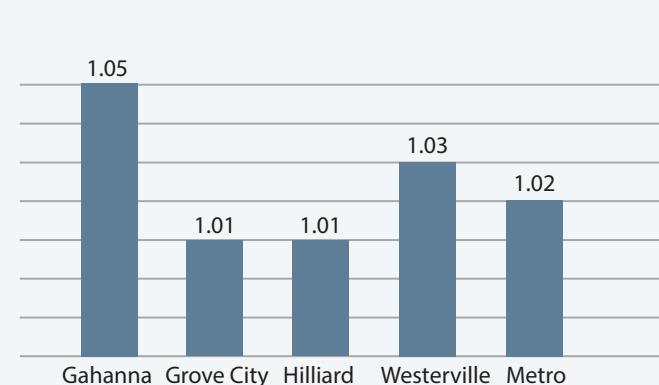
Resident Median Wage
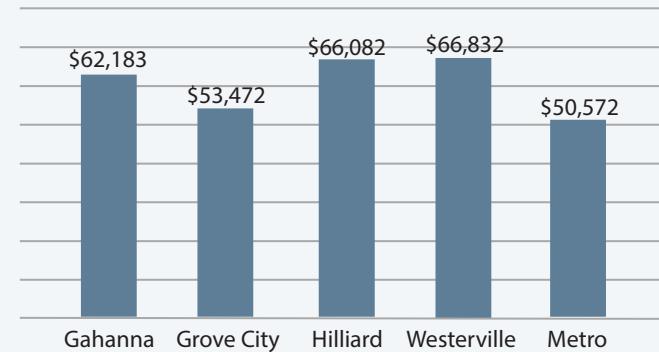
Source: US Census

Resident Wages

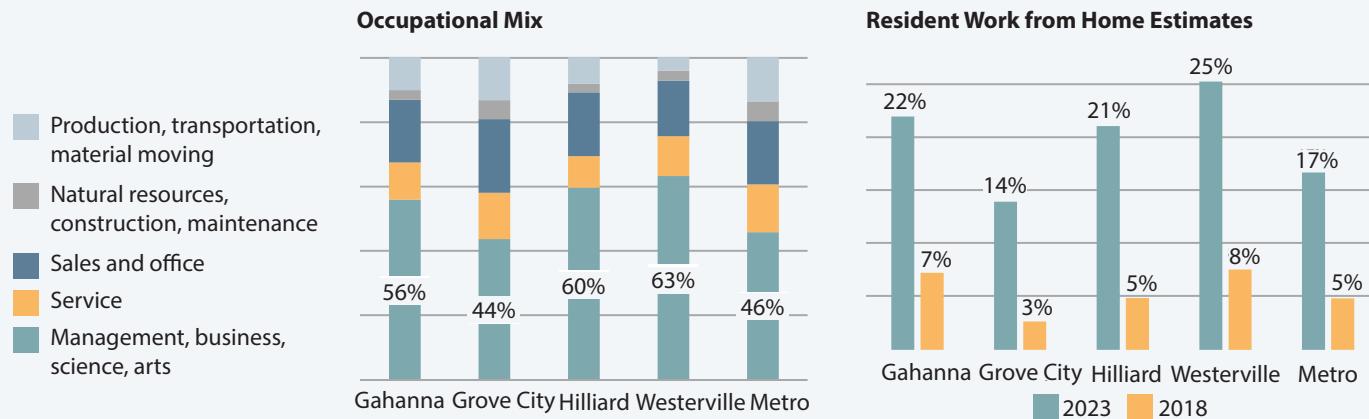- Gahanna residents' wages have grown faster than in peer communities.

Resident Wage Growth

Source: US Census
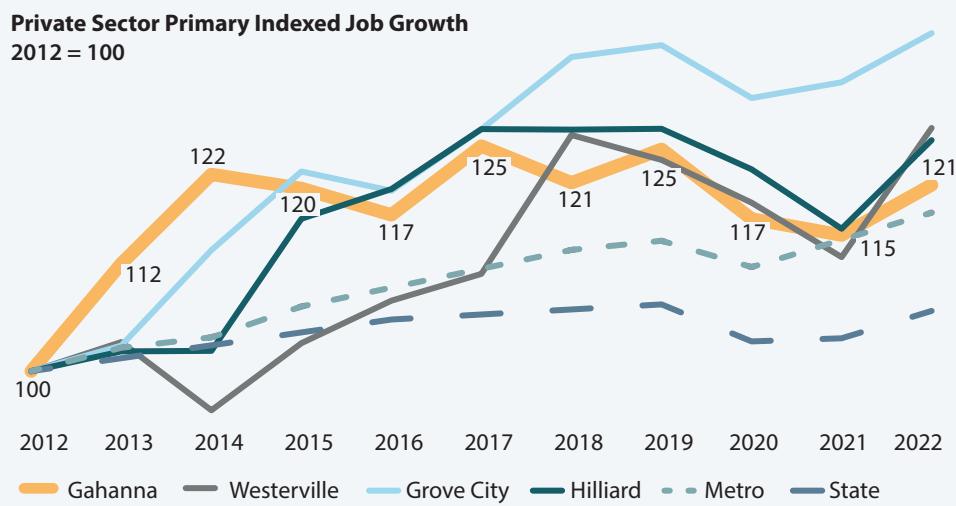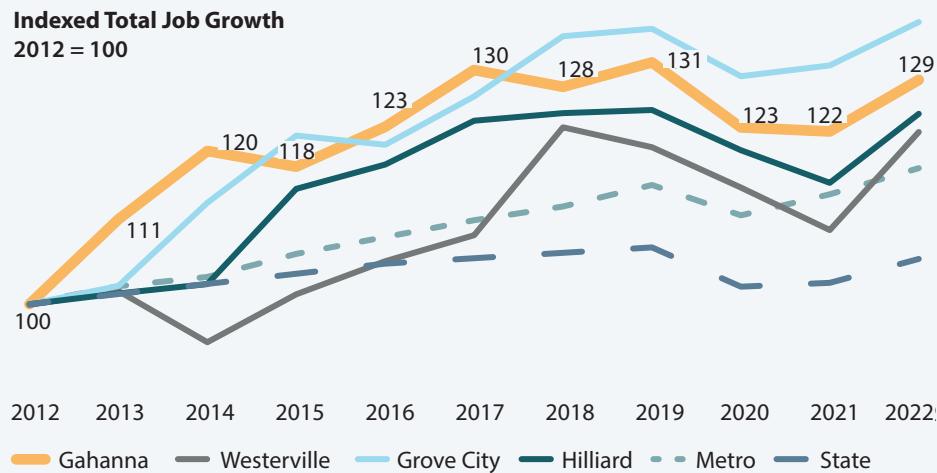
Occupational Mix

- Occupational and industry mix of Gahanna residents has likely contributed to high work from home rates.

- Recent expansion within the medical industry may not yet be fully captured in the latest Census data.

Occupational Mix

Legend:
- Production, transportation, material moving
- Natural resources, construction, maintenance
- Sales and office
- Service
- Management, business, science, arts

Bar values (Management, business, science, arts):
- Gahanna: 56%
- Grove City: 44%
- Hilliard: 60%
- Westerville: 63%
- Metro: 46%

Resident Work from Home Estimates

	Gahanna	Grove City	Hilliard	Westerville	Metro
2023	22%	14%	21%	25%	17%
2018	7%	3%	5%	8%	5%

Source: US Census

Job Growth

- Gahanna has outperformed every benchmark community except Grove City in job creation.

- Gahanna added private sector jobs at a slower rate than other sectors. Non-profit job growth drove employment growth in the City.

Indexed Total Job Growth
2012 = 100

Gahanna values: 100, 111, 120, 118, 123, 130, 128, 131, 123, 122, 129

Legend: Gahanna, Westerville, Grove City, Hilliard, Metro, State

Years: 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022

Private Sector Primary Indexed Job Growth
2012 = 100

Gahanna values: 100, 112, 122, 120, 117, 125, 121, 125, 117, 115, 121

Legend: Gahanna, Westerville, Grove City, Hilliard, Metro, State

Years: 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022

Source: US Census, Census On-the-Map

Strategies

The following section contains the specific ideas that will be implemented to achieve the Economic Development Strategy. The section is not organized in priority order. The City will prioritize the strategies during the implementation phase.

GOALS

1. **Strengthen existing industry sectors to ensure a robust ecosystem.**
2. **Use regional and local market conditions and trends to identify opportunities to nurture new and emerging economic sectors.**
3. **Work with local stakeholders to deepen an employer-first workforce development model that focuses on existing and emerging economic drivers.**

Advance development and/or redevelopment of strategic areas.

A.1 Create a playbook that identifies strategic areas within the city for redevelopment.

A.2 Facilitate and support mixed-use development and flexible workspaces in commercial areas.

A.3 Encourage vertical mixed-use development that is sensitive to the surrounding context.

A.4 Collaborate and align efforts with regional transportation partners to provide efficient and convenient transportation to the City's job centers.

A.5 Work collaboratively with respective jurisdictions to create mutually beneficial cross-jurisdictional job and development opportunities.

A.6 Continue to align the Community Improvement Corporation's (CIC) mission and activities with the recommendations in this plan to implement major economic development projects and initiatives.

A.7 Complete a housing study that projects future demand.

Cultivate a thriving small and local business community in priority areas.

B.1 Foster and promote small business growth.

B.2 Partner with local and regional small business development organizations to attract, support, and grow strategic small business sectors in designated focus areas.

B.3 Regularize a GRAB (Grow, Retain, Attract, Build) business strategy to create a more structured, consistent, and effective approach to economic development.

Align economic development tools to strategically attract economic base companies and other priority businesses.

C.1 Regularly review the City's economic development priorities.

C.2 Share economic development priorities with development partners.

C.3 Review and align City processes to streamline the development approval process and reduce time to market.

C.4 Review and update the 2019 Gahanna Land Use Plan to ensure consistency with the recommendations outlined in this plan.

C.5 Create a Utility and Infrastructure Master Plan to appropriately prepare for investments in utilities and infrastructure to support economic growth and the 2019 Gahanna Land Use Plan.

C.6 Review, align, and update incentive programs to reflect the City's economic development priorities.

C.7 Pursue tools and resources that support green and sustainable development practices.

C.8 Enhance coordination with the Community Improvement Corporation to advance development initiatives and programs.

C.9 Enhance financial contribution from the City to the Community Improvement Corporation for programs and initiatives that support the goals of the Economic Development Strategy.

C.10 Enhance Gahanna's Economic Development marketing presence to showcase Gahanna's attributes and tell the story.

C.11 Work in collaboration with the Gahanna-Jefferson School District and Eastland-Fairfield Career Center on their proposed Workforce Development initiative.

C.12 Collaborate with workforce development stakeholders on employer-driven initiatives.

C.13 Actively market strategic business development opportunities across the region and Midwest.

C.14 Engage a retail consultant to aid in attracting the desired mix of uses.

C.15 Invest in GahannaNet to create better service and provide stable funding to the Community Improvement Corporation.

Strengthen collaboration and communication with businesses and community partners.

D.1 Establish a Business Advisory Committee.

D.2 Facilitate regular Business Leader Roundtables to enhance retention efforts and build relationships.

D.3 Expand the City's marketing and communication efforts to recognize and celebrate the business community and business opportunities.

D.4 Create or enhance programs to assist Gahanna businesses with becoming a vendor for the City.

Implement a sector-based approach to economic development.

E.1 Gather data on economic-driving industries locally, regionally, and in the Midwest to attract investment and support workforce development.

E.2 Determine the needs of target industry sectors.

E.3 Align incentive tools around the needs of industry sectors.

E.4 Align City approval processes to facilitate the attraction of target industries.

E.5 Use Objective ED.A to identify appropriate space for sector growth.

E.6 Market strategic areas and parcels to promote the overarching vision.

Strategies

ED A. Advance development and/or redevelopment of strategic areas.

A.1 Create a playbook that identifies strategic areas within the city for redevelopment.

Identify strategic areas within the city that are prime for redevelopment and establish any physical or regulatory barriers to overcome. Develop an approach to overcoming barriers to develop properties to their highest and best use.

A.2 Facilitate and support mixed-use development and flexible workspaces in commercial areas.

Create opportunities to increase walkable and inviting spaces for people to work and live. Review current land use and zoning restrictions for areas identified for mixed-use development and make revisions necessary to support desired development. Prioritize addressing infrastructure availability, such as utilities, transportation access, and stormwater management.

A.3 Encourage vertical mixed-use development that is sensitive to the surrounding context.

Create vibrant urban spaces for people to live, work, and play. Vertical mixed-use developments elevate a community's accessibility and create engaging places that improve quality of life and social interaction. Identify potential sites and update current land use and zoning regulations, as well as critically important infrastructure, to facilitate development.

A.4 Collaborate and align efforts with regional transportation partners to provide efficient and convenient transportation to the City's job centers.

Collaborate with regional transportation partners such as the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) to identify and develop bus rapid transit corridor opportunities, seek improvements to general service routes, and deploy "last mile" transit opportunities. Utilize LinkUS as a funding source to develop transit-supportive infrastructure, such as sidewalks, bike paths, and crosswalks, to improve accessibility for all.

A.5 Work collaboratively with respective jurisdictions to create mutually beneficial cross-jurisdictional job and development opportunities.

Identify opportunities to collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions to create economic growth opportunities that benefit both parties. Working collaboratively, analyze and implement available programs, such as a Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) to facilitate efforts.

A.6 Continue to align the Community Improvement Corporation's (CIC) mission and activities with the recommendations in this plan to implement major economic development projects and initiatives.

Work closely with the CIC to share the City's goals and priorities, aligning incentive programs and projects to attract and retain desired industries and foster economic job growth. Identify and present opportunities that will expand the role of the CIC in supporting the City's economic development growth while assuring a return on investment.

A.7 Complete a housing study that projects future demand.

Conduct a housing inventory within the city limits of Gahanna and adjacent neighborhoods, noting characteristics such as age of unit, availability and turnover, rent versus own, cost, number of bedrooms, and demographic population. Utilizing MORPC's Insight2050 program and other data as a guide, identify existing and projected housing gaps and develop strategies toward meeting future demand.

ED B. Cultivate a thriving small and local business community in priority areas.

B.1 Foster and promote small business growth.

Connect small businesses and entrepreneurs to realize opportunities for collaboration, shared resources, find encouragement, and gain access to professional support services.

Gahanna Community Improvement Corporation

The Gahanna Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) is a (501)(c)(4), not-for-profit organization formed by the City of Gahanna to promote industrial, economic, commercial and civic development, as well as business attraction, retention and expansion, in the City.

The CIC focuses its efforts on providing land bank services for strategic land acquisition, and investigates land consolidation opportunities to maximize available redevelopment solutions in the City.

B.2 Partner with local and regional small business development organizations to attract, support, and grow strategic small business sectors in designated focus areas.

Conduct a comprehensive survey of Gahanna's small business sector to identify critical needs and inform the development of targeted programs and policies. Engage local business leaders to provide mentorship and coaching opportunities that strengthen entrepreneurial capacity. Catalogue existing small business assistance programs at the local, state, and federal levels, and identify gaps where the City can introduce new initiatives to support priority sectors. Collaborate with community partners such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Creekside District Alliance to effectively communicate and distribute program information, ensuring broad access and awareness.

B.3 Regularize a GRAB (Grow, Retain, Attract, Build) business strategy to create a more structured, consistent, and effective approach to economic development.

Continue to develop a strong economic development program around these key elements. Studies have shown that more job growth occurs in small and/or existing businesses. Build initiatives around engaging, connecting, and supporting these businesses and recruit them as ambassadors to attract new business.

ED C. Align economic development tools to strategically attract economic base companies and other priority businesses.

C.1 Regularly review the City's economic development priorities.

Regular assessments of the City's economic development priorities will allow the City to pivot easily to take advantage of opportunities and align programs and initiatives to address developing needs.

C.2 Share economic development priorities with development partners.

Continue to meet regularly with development partners, such as One Columbus, to tell Gahanna's story and share priorities. Holding annual meetings with active commercial real estate brokers in Gahanna provides an opportunity to share priorities and programs and to receive feedback on city services and potential barriers inhibiting private investment.

C.3 Review and align City processes to streamline the development approval process and reduce time to market.

A smooth permitting process can elevate a city's ability to attract, retain, and grow businesses. Evaluate current processes for areas of potential improvement in technology, review time frame, and communication. Continue to educate all boards and commissions integral to the approval process about the City's priorities.

C.4 Review and update the 2019 Gahanna Land Use Plan to ensure consistency with the recommendations outlined in this plan.

Review and update the land use plan to reflect new priorities and desired forms of development. Identify revisions and update zoning code language necessary to attract desired land uses and reassure potential developers of City priorities.

C.5 Create a Utility and Infrastructure Master Plan to appropriately prepare for investments in utilities and infrastructure to support economic growth and the 2019 Gahanna Land Use Plan.

Assess current utility and infrastructure conditions and identify future needs based on projected growth and land use priorities. Focus on transportation networks, utility systems and capacity, stormwater management, and broadband access to ensure readiness for new development. Identified infrastructure projects should support economic development priorities. Update the 10-year Capital Improvement Plan to reflect these needs.

C.6 Review, align, and update incentive programs to reflect the City's economic development priorities.

Development incentives provide financial support to businesses to overcome start-up or relocation costs, assist in expenditures to support future growth, or provide job training. Review, restructure, and create incentive programs to spur job growth and development as well as attract targeted industries while creating an environment that ensures both a return on the City's investment and a joint partnership in the economic stability of the community.

C.7 Pursue tools and resources that support green and sustainable development practices.

The State of Ohio offers a number of financial rebates or incentives to encourage Ohio businesses to adopt sustainable practices or build energy-efficient buildings, thereby lowering energy usage and reducing costs for all users. In addition, many cities offer incentives to businesses to utilize sustainable building standards in exchange for relaxed development standards in the zoning code. An inventory of incentives offered at various local, county, and state levels will assist Gahanna in identifying its own priorities and enacting programs locally to support sustainability.

C.8 Enhance coordination with the Community Improvement Corporation to advance development initiatives and programs.

Survey Central Ohio's various CICs to collect information on funding sources and programs in their economic development toolbox, particularly those that might support small businesses. Evaluate for relevance in assisting the City of Gahanna in meeting its economic development growth priorities and incorporate into the CIC's overall role. New initiatives may include facade improvement programs, revolving loan funds, and no-interest loans, and should reflect the City's requirements on realizing a return on investment where applicable.

C.9 Enhance financial contribution from the City to the Community Improvement Corporation for programs and initiatives that support the goals of the Economic Development Strategy.

Explore various sources of revenue that may be redirected to the CIC to provide a stream of income to support desired economic development programs and initiatives.

C.10 Enhance Gahanna's Economic Development marketing presence to showcase Gahanna's attributes and tell the story.

Sharing Gahanna's attributes and welcoming atmosphere is critical to putting the City on the radar of a potential business executive or commercial realtor. Review Gahanna's current presence in online and printed materials and look for ways to elevate its presence. Build on the existing economic development content hosted by the Community Improvement Corporation to promote available resources and feature expanded testimonials to showcase local success stories.

C.11 Work in collaboration with the Gahanna-Jefferson School District and Eastland-Fairfield Career Center on their proposed Workforce Development initiative.

Workforce Development is a critical element in any economic development strategy to retain, grow, and attract new businesses. Gahanna's educational partners, working in collaboration with the City, can identify the skills needed by the business community, develop curriculum and training programs to teach skills, and connect the skilled workforce to local job opportunities.

C.12 Collaborate with workforce development stakeholders on employer-driven initiatives.

Align workforce development strategies with the real-time needs of employers, ensuring that training programs, career pathways, and talent pipelines are responsive to industry demands. Engage stakeholders such as educational institutions, economic development agencies, and business leaders to foster a skilled workforce that supports local business growth, enhances job readiness, and strengthens the overall economic resilience of the community.

C.13 Actively market strategic business development opportunities across the region and Midwest.

Through One Columbus, the Mid-Ohio Development Exchange (MODE), and its own resources, the City has opportunities to share its numerous assets to entice new employers and employees to make Gahanna "home." Identify trade publications associated with targeted industries and develop marketing materials and advertisements. Look for opportunities to make a presentation, exhibit at a trade show, or support conferences and seminars where appropriate.

C.14 Engage a retail consultant to aid in attracting the desired mix of uses.

Attracting the right mix of high-quality retail tenants is key to developing vibrant and welcoming places for people. Engaging a retail consultant brings professional expertise to provide advice on critical elements of development projects to enhance placemaking, as well as provide connections within the retail sector.

C.15 Invest in GahannaNet to create better service and provide stable funding to the Community Improvement Corporation.

Survey regional communities to understand how fiber can be leveraged to attract and retain businesses. Consider how GahannaNet may be utilized as a tool in the economic development toolbox, and consider allocating any revenues derived to the CIC to further support economic development efforts.

ED D. Strengthen collaboration and communication with businesses and community partners.

D.1 Establish a Business Advisory Committee.

Invite a diversified group of business leaders in the city to participate in a regularly convened committee to discuss key topics supporting the city's economic growth and prosperity, such as workforce development, transportation, housing, and public policies. Invite key community partners, including representatives from the Gahanna-Jefferson school district and other educational partners, to participate

D.2 Facilitate regular Business Leader Roundtables to enhance retention efforts and build relationships.

Invite members of the business community grouped by sector, area, size, or around a particular topic to monthly roundtables to share city information regarding programs or upcoming projects, listen to feedback or areas of concern, and establish or continue to grow relationships between the City and the business community, and enable engagement amongst the businesses themselves.

D.3 Expand the City's marketing and communication efforts to recognize and celebrate the business community and business opportunities.

In the same manner in which the City shares information and communicates with its residents, communication with the business community is equally important to share essential information and build relationships. Through various means, the City may welcome new businesses to the community, celebrate success stories, and promote opportunities for residents to support its local businesses.

D.4 Create or enhance programs to assist Gahanna businesses with becoming a vendor for the City.

Offer seminars, online or in person, to assist local businesses in becoming knowledgeable regarding the City's procurement processes and becoming a qualified bidder.

ED E. Implement a sector-based approach to economic development.

E.1 Gather data on economic-driving industries locally, regionally, and in the Midwest to attract investment and support workforce development.

Utilize economic development agencies in Central Ohio, such as JobsOhio, One Columbus, the Ohio Economic Development Association (OEDA), and the Mid-Ohio Development Exchange (MODE), to gather data on existing industries and targeted industries for the region. Utility companies, such as AEP Ohio, headquartered in Gahanna, additionally provide a critical source for data and recruitment.

E.2 Determine the needs of target industry sectors.

Identify and update, as needed, target industries for Gahanna. Leverage existing industry sectors, such as the food and beverage industry, to become home to a critical mass of both the central industry and integral suppliers. Become knowledgeable on the essential requirements needed to successfully attract and support the target industry and its suppliers (e.g., land, transportation, workforce skills, utilities, fiber, housing, and supply chain). Integrate any programs, services and infrastructure needed into annual operating and capital improvement budgets to offer development-ready opportunities.

E.3 Align incentive tools around the needs of industry sectors.

Leverage State of Ohio incentives with local incentives to meet the specific needs of industries. Be creative and flexible in assembling a package and seek opportunities to engage the industry in community efforts.

E.4 Align City approval processes to facilitate the attraction of target industries.

Provide opportunities for all individuals involved in the City approval processes to understand the basics of economic development and their role in it. Take advantage of regional training and educational opportunities such ED 411, offered annually by One Columbus, or training programs offered by OEDA and MODE. Provide regular updates to boards and commissions on economic development priorities, goals, and progress.

E.5 Use Objective ED.A to identify appropriate space for sector growth.

Identify requirements for each targeted sector (space, transportation, utility, etc.). Identify strategic areas within the city that meet the needs of targeted sectors and are ready for redevelopment or adaptive reuse.
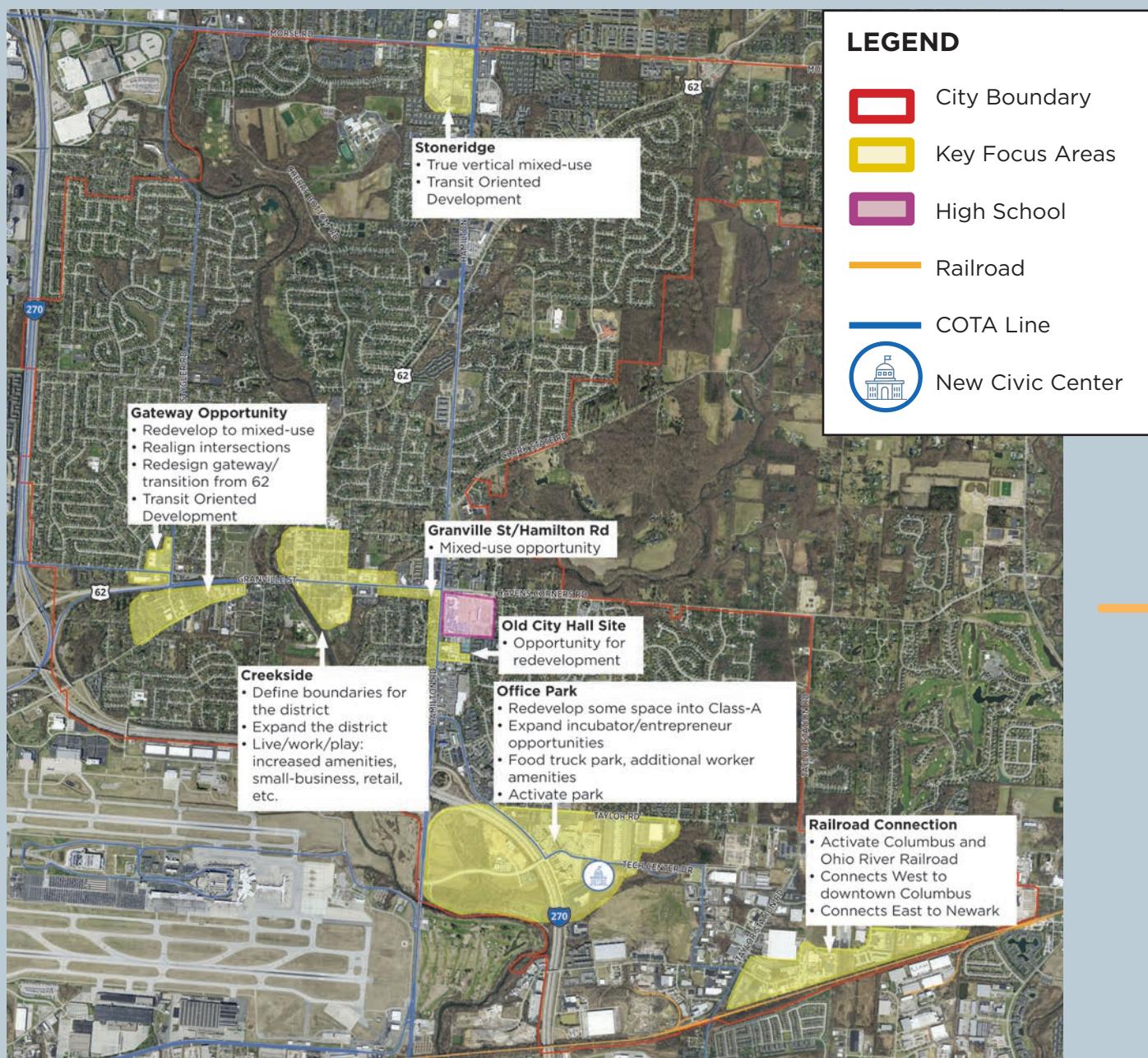
E.6 Market strategic areas and parcels to promote the overarching vision.

Promote strategic areas targeted for sector growth through online and print materials. Create a template to enable a quick response to a "Request for Proposals" for each targeted sector and include sector-driven data, such as skilled workforce. Be proactive.

Key Focus Areas

The Key Focus Area map is a strategic tool developed to identify zones of economic opportunity within the City of Gahanna. It highlights specific areas where targeted investment, development, and revitalization efforts can yield the greatest impact for the community. This map was shaped through a collaborative process that included three rounds of community engagement, Business Roundtables, and refinement by City staff, ensuring it reflects both public input and professional insight.

The significance of this map lies in its ability to guide decision-making and resource allocation. By pinpointing areas with the highest potential for economic growth, whether through commercial development, infrastructure upgrades, or business attraction, it helps the City prioritize efforts that will strengthen the local economy, create jobs, and enhance quality of life. For residents, business owners, and developers, the map serves as a clear signal of where the City is focusing its energy and where opportunities for partnership and investment are most promising.

Stoneridge
- True vertical mixed-use
- Transit Oriented Development

Gateway Opportunity
- Redevelop to mixed-use
- Realign intersections
- Redesign gateway/ transition from 62
- Transit Oriented Development

Granville St/Hamilton Rd
- Mixed-use opportunity

Creekside
- Define boundaries for the district
- Expand the district
- Live/work/play: increased amenities, small-business, retail, etc.

Old City Hall Site
- Opportunity for redevelopment

Office Park
- Redevelop some space into Class-A
- Expand incubator/entrepreneur opportunities
- Food truck park, additional worker amenities
- Activate park

Railroad Connection
- Activate Columbus and Ohio River Railroad
- Connects West to downtown Columbus
- Connects East to Newark

LEGEND

	City Boundary
	Key Focus Areas
	High School
	Railroad
	COTA Line
	New Civic Center

Implementation

The Economic Development Strategy will serve not only as a guide for City staff and elected officials, but also as a means to identify critical partners throughout the development landscape and coordinate the necessary actions to realize the recommended goals. The implementation of the Economic Development Strategy will be led by the Mayor's Office, primarily by the Economic Development Team, with support from all City departments. Its successful execution will be shared not only among City Council and Staff, but also by key community partners, such as the Gahanna-Jefferson School District and the Gahanna Chamber of Commerce, as well as regional economic development organizations like One Columbus. The Plan's success relies on active participation from the Gahanna business community.

It is important to recognize that it will take time to fully institutionalize the Economic Development Strategy and its various components. Over time, through thoughtful intention, collaboration, and a process that provides for periodic reviews and updates of the City's economic goals, the Economic Development Strategy will become a valuable tool to strengthen the City's tax base, develop fundamental resources to support the business community, and enhance the economic and social well-being of Gahanna's residents.

Operationalizing the Strategy

The Economic Development Team should create work plans to ensure the successful and ongoing implementation of the Economic Development Strategy. These work plans should identify additional resources, critical department collaborations, and key partners necessary to implement the plan's objectives. The work plans should outline the Strategic Plan actions being addressed for the upcoming fiscal year, along with budget requests to accomplish both the essential economic development core services and the Strategic Plan actions. Where appropriate, the work plans should additionally identify resources needed in other City departments and agencies that will collaborate with the Economic Development Team in implementing Plan actions. The Economic Development Strategy should be an opportunity to help organize annual reports, staff reports to Council as well as various city boards and commissions, and presentations to community partners. The Economic Development Strategy should also be used to review all public information platforms (i.e., websites) and various marketing materials to ensure alignment with the goals and strategies outlined.

The Economic Development Strategy should be actively managed and regularly monitored for implementation, effectiveness and relevance. This review should be conducted on a formal basis at least once per year. A status report should accompany this review and be promoted throughout the community, such as through the City website. The City's Annual Economic Development event should celebrate progress toward Plan goals and strategies, acknowledge community partners and key individuals, and share upcoming work plans to engage additional participants in moving the plan forward.

Reporting and Monitoring

Several methods can be undertaken to report and monitor the plan's progress to the community. An implementation matrix will be provided to support this plan. The matrix is a tool that connects each recommendation with a timeframe for completion, effort leader, supporting entities (e.g., departments and organizations), and potential funding sources. It is anticipated that the implementation steps may change over time based on annual reviews, new developments, or successes in other areas.

Other methods for reporting and monitoring include:

- Presenting an annual or biannual report card to the City Council, perhaps as a companion to the Annual Operating Budget submittal
- Reporting City actions that support the Strategic Plan
- Illustrating completed or ongoing actions through the use of infographics on the City website
- Staff reports where requested legislation or action furthers Strategic Plan components
- Presentations to community partners where collaboration has been successful or may be strengthened.

Updating the Plan

A formal review of the Economic Development Strategy should be considered every ten years to incorporate new decennial Census data and other relevant changes and planning work going on in the community. Annual Business Surveys, conducted jointly by the U.S. Census Bureau and the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, may provide interim data to assist in more frequent reviews to assess the Plan goals.

How to Use the Plan

This document is intended to serve as a ten-year strategic planning document. The Economic Development Strategy should be used daily as public and private decisions are evaluated and made concerning the community's future. The following is a summary of how decisions and processes should be institutionalized to align with the vision and strategies.

Annual Work Programs and Budgets

City staff should be cognizant of the recommendations of the plan when preparing annual work programs and budgets. This also includes considering the plan when making important policy and financial decisions that impact the community.

Community Planning

Community planning efforts, including those of the City, community organizations, and the school district, should be aligned with the vision, values, goals, and recommendations of the plan.

Capital Improvement Program

The City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) should be consistent with the plan's recommendations.

Private Investment Decisions

Property owners, developers, and other private entities should consider the plan's recommendations in their planning and investment decisions. Public decision-makers will use the plan as a guide in their deliberations about proposals, projects, and funding requests. Property owners and developers should be cognizant of and development proposals consistent with the plan's recommendations.

Civic and Social Engagement

All civic and community groups should create opportunities to explore solutions to issues of concern to the community. They should seek alignment with the plan's recommendations and collaborate across various interests, missions, and constituencies.