



CITY OF BOWLING GREEN, OHIO

# improvement plan

meeting the needs of today and tomorrow



To: The residents, business owners, and employees in Bowling Green

From: The BG Plan Steering Committee

We are pleased, and anxious, to submit to you this plan for moving Bowling Green forward. Pleased because this plan is the result of much hard work by the Steering Committee, very helpful public input, and it presents important steps for making real, effective, overdue, and affordable improvements to our community.

We are anxious because it has become clear to all of us that the steps outlined are more than nice ideas –they are important for Bowling Green’s success in the future! We cannot afford NOT to take the actions outlined, and many more after that.

There are three key ideas in this document:

**1. Competition**

Just like businesses compete for customers, so too do cities compete for residents and business investment. In this mobile and wired society, people and businesses are freer than ever to choose to locate in places that have a high quality of life; and they do.

**2. Limited Resources**

As a community, we have limited resources. Therefore we need to think very carefully and strategically about our priorities—where we will get the most “bang for buck” from our investments.

**3. Goal Orientation**

If we have a general idea of what we want to be, we can make the small, daily decisions in a way that will get us closer to our goal.

The “business” of cities is actually complicated. Each decision impacts other decisions. We have tried to boil down the information in this document to be simple and usable so that everyone in the community can understand the issues and solutions without an advanced degree in planning. Nevertheless, for those who want to delve more deeply, there is substantial backup information in the Appendix.

Finally, we encourage you to read this document, discuss with your family, friends, and associates. We encourage you to provide feedback to your elected and appointed officials. And we encourage you to support the projects and decisions that will get us closer to the Bowling Green we want to be, and help change the ones that won’t.

The Steering Committee:

Vicky Valentine-Adler  
Jeff Betts  
Julie Broadwell  
Jill Carr  
Suzanne Clark  
Jennifer Copp

Doug Cubberley  
Judy Ennis  
Gary Hess  
Bruce Jeffers  
Earlene Kilpatrick  
Steve Krakoff

Sandy Milligan  
Emily Monago  
Mark Remeis  
Barbara Ruland

# Table of Contents

<b>[1] INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>[7] DOWNTOWN</b>	<b>32</b>
Why do we need a plan?		Existing Conditions	
What IS the BG Plan?		Improvements	
Plan creation: who? how?		Actions	
<b>[2] BOWLING GREEN THEN AND NOW</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>[8] EAST WOOSTER</b>	<b>38</b>
History		Existing Conditions	
Bowling Green Today		Improvements	
What's Working / What's Not Working		Actions	
<b>[3] BOWLING GREEN'S TARGET MARKET</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>[9] OTHER UPCOMING DECISIONS</b>	<b>45</b>
Why this Target Market?		Parks and Trails	
What does the Target Market need/want?		City Park	
<b>[4] THE 7 BG PRINCIPLES</b>	<b>17</b>	North / South Main	
Applying the Principles to Priority Areas		Annexation	
Reinvestment Plans for 4 Priority Areas of Focus		Proposed Land Use	
<b>[5] THE NORTHEAST SUBAREA</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>[10] USING THE PRINCIPLES TO MAKE DECISIONS</b>	<b>49</b>
Existing Conditions		How We Got Here	
Improvements		What the Public Said	
Actions		<b>[11] APPENDIX</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>[6] THE SOUTHEAST SUBAREA</b>	<b>26</b>		
Existing Conditions			
Improvements			
Actions			

# 1

# Introduction and Background

## Why do we need a plan?

Bowling Green is one of northern Ohio's truly remarkable communities. Still standing after the combination of deindustrialization, suburbanization, globalization, 9-11, and the harsh economic turmoil of recent recessions, it is at a crossroads.

Through these big shifts, Bowling Green has remained a vibrant community of caring, engaged stakeholders. In fact, while other communities have been trying to copy what Bowling Green has - with new shopping centers advertised as Village Centers - Bowling Green is the real thing. A real town, with a real center and real edges. A real town, with a college where students are part of the community. Bowling Green is authentic.

*Bowling Green is also at risk.*

- As Ohio has aged, so has Bowling Green.
- Bowling Green State University had to face the harsh - and costly - realities of competing against other universities to meet the changing tastes of today's students. BGSU is investing millions to upgrade its own facilities, yet is also increasingly dependent on the qualities of the surrounding community to be competitive.
- As the next generations come of age (Millennials - born 1981-1996, and Gen X now approaching middle age) they are increasingly placing demands on specific kinds of amenities and communities. They are less interested in yesterday's suburbs and are hungry for authenticity.
- BG's agrarian roots and heritage provide a crossroads for our history and settlement patterns, yet remain visible and tangible at our edges. Development pressures on the fringe imperil the very town character and vibrancy we must protect.

## WE'VE LET OUR STANDARDS SLIP

In conjunction with the BG Plan, an analysis was made of all the homes in BG.

First, by a 'windshield survey'; 5,518 homes were each ranked on a score of **1-6**.

Second, the scores were correlated with real estate sales prices obtained from multiple listing services.

Third, the blocks were also evaluated in the context of non-conforming uses, nuisance/disorderly conduct citations from the Police Division, citations from Code Enforcement, and housing data from Wood County Health Department.

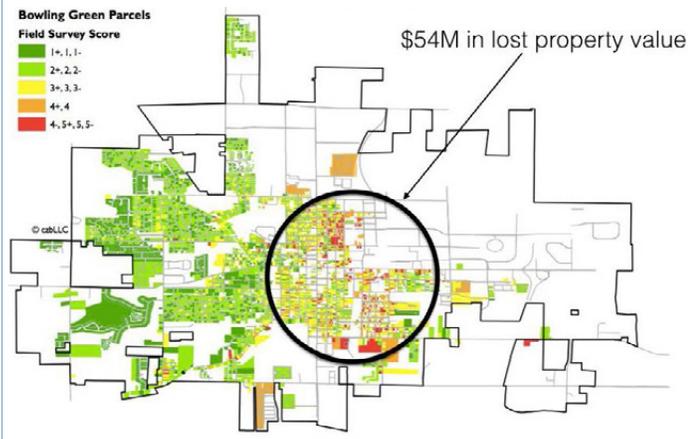
Conclusions?

1. **The field survey scores closely correlated with sales price:** for every 1 point drop in a field survey score, the sale price dropped an average of \$37,902.
2. **The conditions of homes affected the sales prices of whole blocks:** higher-ranked homes on overall weaker blocks sold for much less, even when controlling for house type and size.
3. The number of nuisance parties, disorderly conduct incidents, student renters, and non-conforming uses on a property's block are **all significantly correlated with that property's field survey score and sale price.**
4. The NE and SE quadrants of the city had much lower property conditions, property values, and increased nuisance/disorderly conduct complaints.

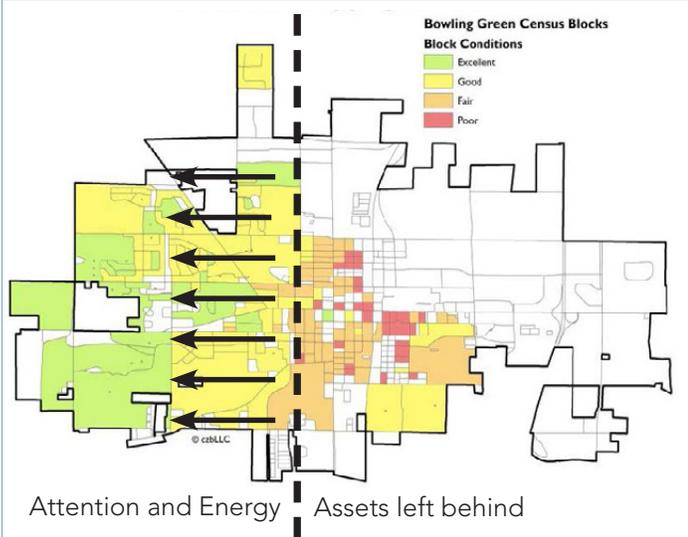
Said another way, if a home in top condition (new roof, well maintained siding, nice yard) is on a great block, it is worth about \$240,000. On such a block the average block score is close to a **1**. But when that exact same house<sup>1</sup> is on a block surrounded by poorly maintained homes where the average block score is a **3** (right in the middle of the **1-6** ranking), the value is now half that, down to \$120,000. In that case, the surrounding **3's** and **4's** drag down the **1** by \$120,000.

<sup>1</sup> Controlled through regression analyses for square footage, age, parcel size, bed/bath configuration

## Specific Conditions



## Block Level Aggregate Score

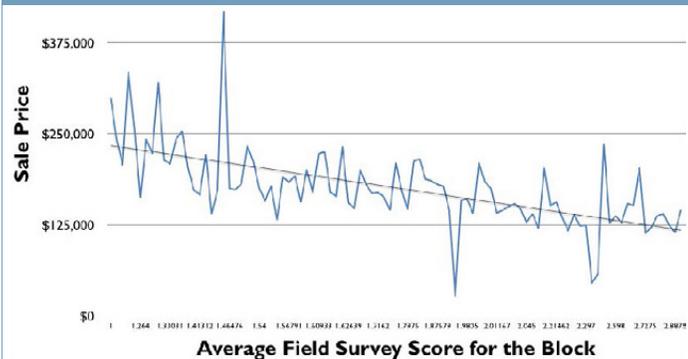


## Housing Stock Mechanism

Score	Description			Risk
1	Best in class; ready to sell; top of the Bowling Green market Demand > Supply	STRONG	Can generally be counted on to hold value, attract buyers, and generate positive cash flow if a rental property; typically in a good location.	Little to no risk of decline; the risk is that owners of these properties will move out after having grown frustrated with decline
2	Very little investment needed for property to move into the "best in class" category Rising Prices - Good Buyers			
3	Good, solid, middle Bowling Green home, but tired and needing upgrades Supply ~ Demand ~ Supply	MIDDLE	Middle market houses that often represent good "buy low" opportunities that - with sweat equity and creative financing - can turn around a market	Major risk of decline
4	Troubled property with significant issues and trending downward; still recoverable Prices Vacillate - Good Potential			
5	Blighted property with risk of abandonment Demand < Supply	WEAK	Tends to have negative equity and often too expensive to recover in a weak market	Exerts a major drag on the market
6	Property in abject distress; often abandoned Prices Falling - Attracts Reprobate Buyers and Slum Landlords			



## Average Sale Price of Single-family Homes with a field Survey Score of 1 (by Average Block Field Survey Rating)



## Scoring Process

5,518 residential structures scored receiving a score between 1-6

Score was based on property conditions ("curb appeal"), level of effort, ownership displayed

Field survey score significantly influenced its sale price. For every 1 point that a field survey score gets worse (dropping from a 3 to a 4), the sale price declined by \$37,902

Conditions on blocks strongly influenced individuals' home sale prices. Stronger houses on weaker blocks sold for much less - even when controlling for housing type and size.

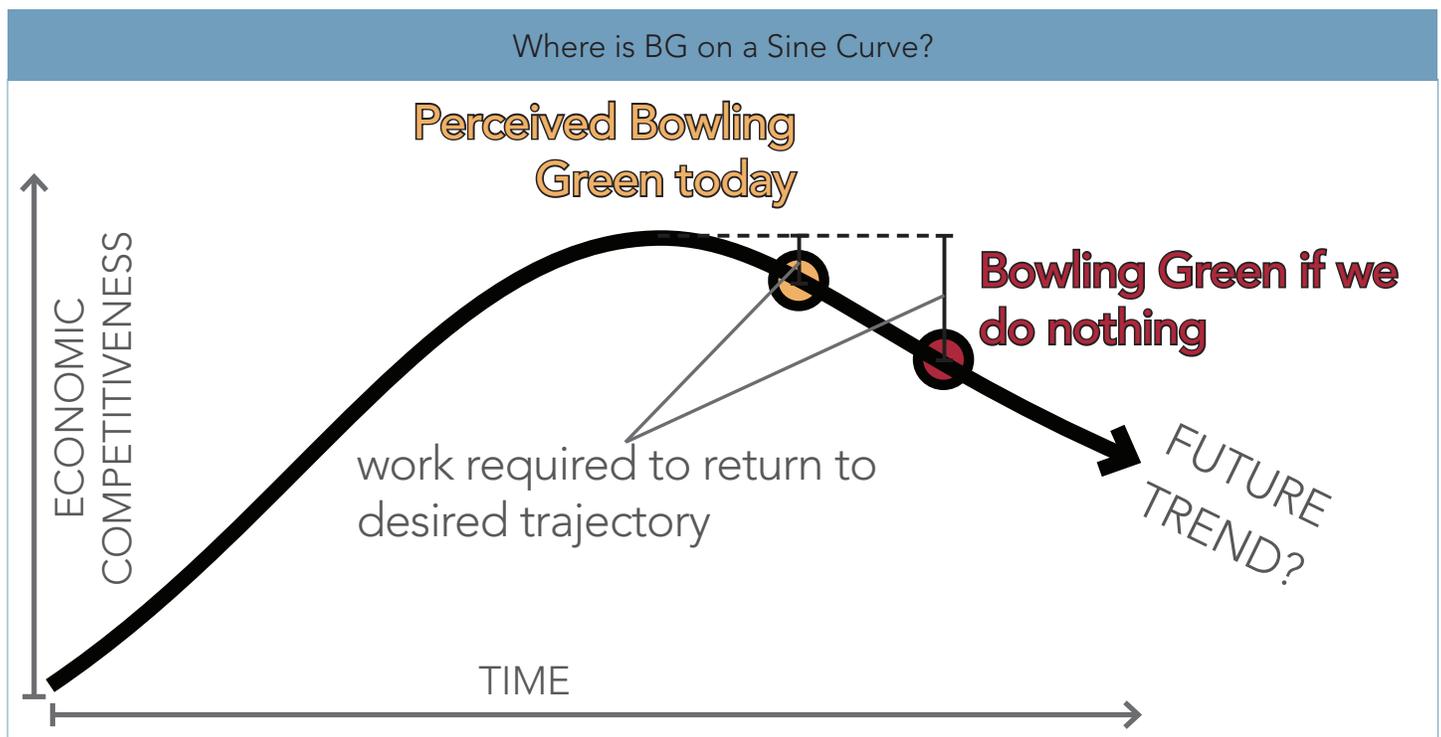
Although the west side neighborhoods are not immune to these issues, the maps show that these conditions are much more acute in the east side neighborhoods. Clearly, having all neighborhoods in BG “healthy” is good for the whole community.

### SYNOPSIS: OUR CURRENT TRAJECTORY

In spite of the evidence described above, and because these conditions have crept in slowly, the public is only beginning to acknowledge them. When residents were asked (in stakeholder meetings, Steering Committee meetings, public open house) to identify (as a matter of opinion only) “where is BG on a sine curve?” there was a general perception of ever-so-slight decline. Most felt that decline is subtle, barely perceptible, and certainly not a crisis. This “slight decline” perception was also indirectly reflected in the responses to the public opinion survey, especially the open ended-comments (see Appendix).

Even given the public’s just-dawning recognition of the problem, what does this mean for Bowling Green?

- A. The time to change the trajectory is now (it’s harder if the gap is bigger)
- B. If nothing is done, the decline tends to get worse faster (the curve tends to steepen)
- C. It’s hard to mobilize people if the problem isn’t dire



## TO ADAPT OR NOT ADAPT? THAT IS THE QUESTION

These changes are in fact imperatives across the entire U.S. They require communities to adapt. They require colleges and universities to better position themselves. They require cities and towns to become less suburban, less sprawling, less auto-oriented, and, in the process, more walkable, more identifiably unique and thus authentic, more visually appealing and marketable, more oriented towards health and fitness, more environmentally sustainable, and along the way, more fiscally sound.

Communities that fail to adapt to these market forces will find it increasingly harder to succeed. Households that can choose to raise families elsewhere will do so, taking with them their time, energy, and money. They will coach Little League somewhere else. They will open restaurants somewhere else. They will volunteer on school boards in another community. Cities and towns that fail to make these important adaptations will find their fiscal situations becoming more precarious, not less; their infrastructure less appealing, not more. Colleges, and college towns, will find their traditional student populations smaller not larger, and the students will be weaker financially instead of stronger.

These risks are at once subtle and serious. They can be hard to see. **But they are real.** In fact, Bowling Green is already feeling the impact of having paid too little attention to these imperatives for too long (see: *How our Problems Evolved* in the Appendix).

## ADAPTING TODAY IS LESS EXPENSIVE

There are valuable opportunities to adapt that will become more costly in the future if action is not taken now, like the well-known 1972 FRAM oil filter television commercial slogan: "You can pay me now, or pay me later." If the citizens of Bowling Green seize the moment now, they can, by acting boldly, pay a small sum today (for the equivalent of replacing of an oil filter), or a far larger sum tomorrow (for the equivalent of replacing the vehicle's engine) for the problems that accrue when a city loses its competitive position in a region.

- Apartmentalized houses with half a dozen BGSU undergraduates can be returned to single family homes, upgraded, and made marketable to BGSU employees and graduate students. **But not without cost.**
- Apartment buildings that have seen better days can be upgraded, and retrofitted to become more charming and more marketable, with positive impacts for the city, for BGSU, and for property owners. **But not without cost.**
- Downtown businesses that want to improve their customer base can be upgraded, and can help anchor a vital civic center that is more pedestrian-oriented, shaded by more trees, and balanced with creative signs, becoming more festive and marketable. **But not without cost.**
- The East Wooster corridor can become beautiful. It can become a striking gateway to one of Ohio's most charming small cities. Lined with trees and period street lighting, accessible to pedestrians, it can become a great, and charming boulevard capable of showcasing BGSU as well as neighboring businesses and homes. **But not without cost.**
- The drab 1970s and 1980s era big-box shopping centers north and south of downtown can become vibrant centers again with stores and homes mixed together. (Or they can be allowed to gradually become more obsolete, as the Woodland Mall on North Main, and continue to seek lower quality tenants until they are demolished.) **But not without cost.**

## ADAPTING STILL HAS A COST

These are opportunities that make serious requirements of the Bowling Green community. If Bowling Green is to be competitive for strong middle class households, we will need to be competitive in Northern Ohio over the next 50 years. We will have to make key transitions, none easy.

1. The role of the pedestrian will have to rise to the top. **This will only happen if we are intentional about making it happen.**
2. We will have to become more visually charming. Trees will have to be planted, and cared for, and treated as value-creating additions. Street lighting will have to be installed that is more than utilitarian. **This will only happen if we are intentional about making it happen;** it will have to be vernacular and value adding.
3. Students will have to become a part of the community in a different, and new way. Not just as today's renters, but as tomorrow's neighbors. And not in dreary and dull apartment complexes or in homes originally designed for families, but in bright and cheerful buildings that are well maintained, and to a greater extent than today, on the BGSU campus. **This will only happen if we are intentional about making it happen.**
4. Bowling Green will have to be strategic when it comes to growth tendencies. It will have to return to its original compact town form, keeping neighboring farmland as farmland, and directing demand inward. **This will only happen if we are intentional about making it happen.**
5. Downtown will require special emphasis as the center of the community's civic and commercial life. While retail activity will and should occur throughout Bowling Green, Downtown must remain the city's focal point. **This will only happen if we are intentional about making it happen.**

## ACHIEVING THESE TRANSITIONS WILL DEMAND MUCH FROM THE BOWLING GREEN COMMUNITY

- Re-purposing many of the city's corridors will be expensive. (ODOT may assume some of these costs, but not all.)
- Changing the zoning for large sections of NE and SE Bowling Green will prevent further "apartmentalization," but demand political will. And, that alone will not return non-conforming properties to their desired use—for that, financial subsidies may be needed—the City and its partners will need to cover these costs.<sup>2</sup>
- Incentivizing the redevelopment of obsolete commercial space (before they completely drag down the surrounding property values) will cost money.
- Planting and maintaining trees will cost money and require different maintenance priorities.

*Fortunately, the Bowling Green community has stated - emphatically - that it is up to this challenge, and that it:*

- wants to reposition itself to be marketable to Millennials (Gen Y).
- recognizes the imperative to become a healthier community with more outdoor lifestyle amenities.
- wants a thriving inner urban core and downtown.
- wants all older neighborhoods to thrive.
- recognizes the costs associated with these changes.

---

<sup>2</sup> Federal grants will, at best, offset only some of these expenses.

# What IS the BG Plan?

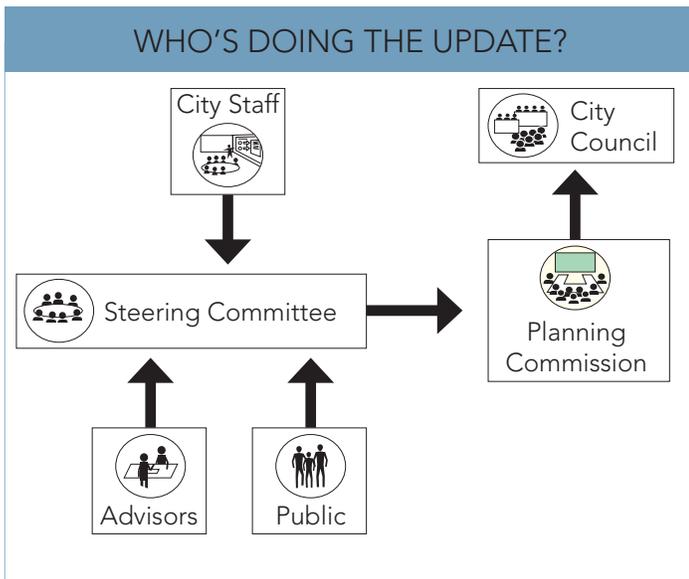
The BG Plan is an operating manual for how to succeed in "getting the big stuff right." It includes 7 key BG principles to help guide decisions about future needs, and about the unexpected. It emphasizes the community's values, its priorities, and its target market. It also identifies implementable actions that it can undertake to position Bowling Green to thrive in the coming decades.



# Plan creation: who? how?

Through eight months of work beginning in 2013, a Steering Committee of 18 members, drawn from a cross-section of the community, worked with City staff and consultant advisors to create this plan. Their work was supplemented by feedback from:

- interviews with individuals and groups interested in or affected by these issues (stakeholders)
- a public open house attended by approximately 250 residents and business people
- a public opinion survey with 423 responses (see Appendix)



## KEY LINES OF INQUIRY

**1**

What's 'working' and 'not working'  
- What is our current trajectory?

If we keep doing what we're doing, will we get better or worse?

**2**

How can BG better compete in the region?

business residents  more mobile!  
many choices!

Just like businesses, cities are also in competition with each other

**3**

How can we better coordinate with BGSU?

Universities are also facing competition

Can we have greater mutual benefit?

**4**

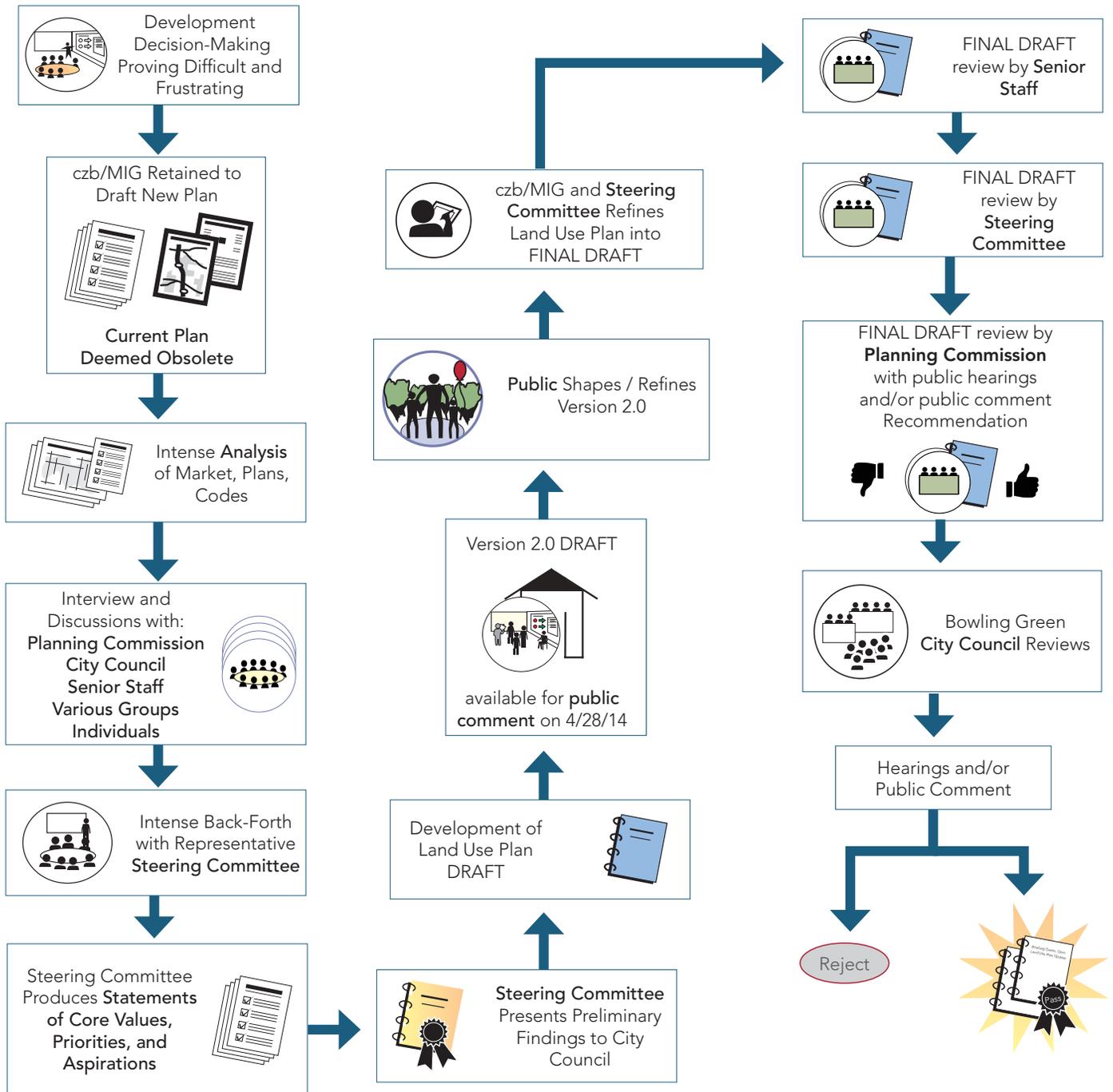
What is our Target Market?

How do we keep current businesses and residents?

Who do we want to attract?

What will appeal to them?

## PROCESS GRAPHIC



# 2

# Bowling Green Then and Now

## History

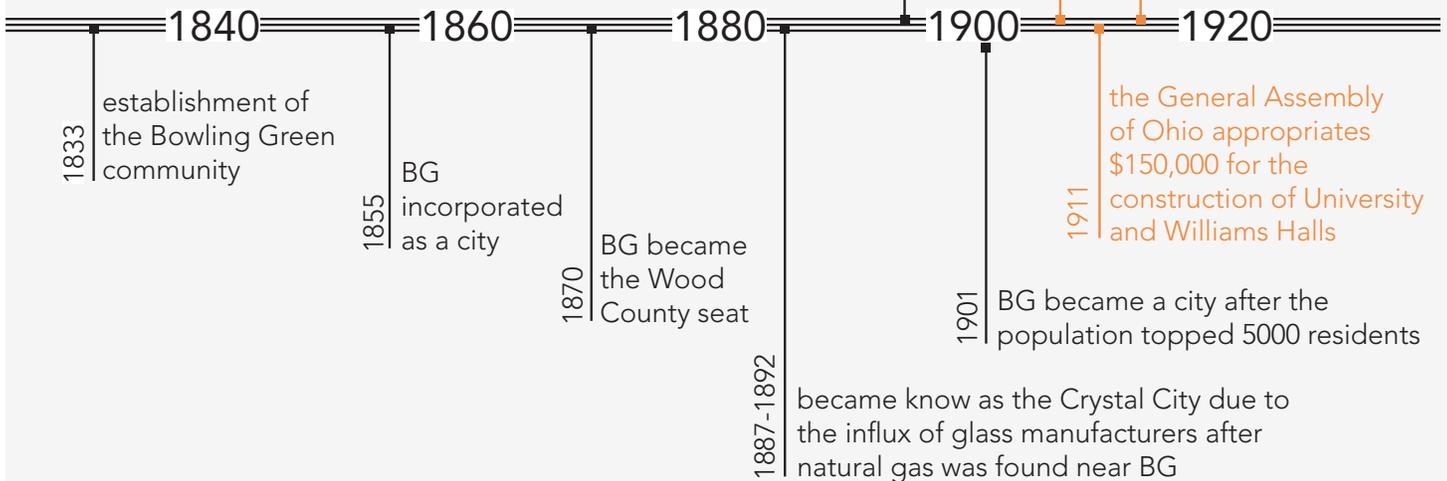
All cities evolve over time. Bowling Green is very different today than it was in 1914 (100 years ago), and even different than it was 20 years ago.

Although this document is about the future, as we think about the next 5, 10, even 15 years for Bowling Green, it's useful to think about the past.

Below is a timeline of events over the history of Bowling Green, along with images of the city and individual places. This is useful to see how key decisions influenced the future and development patterns.

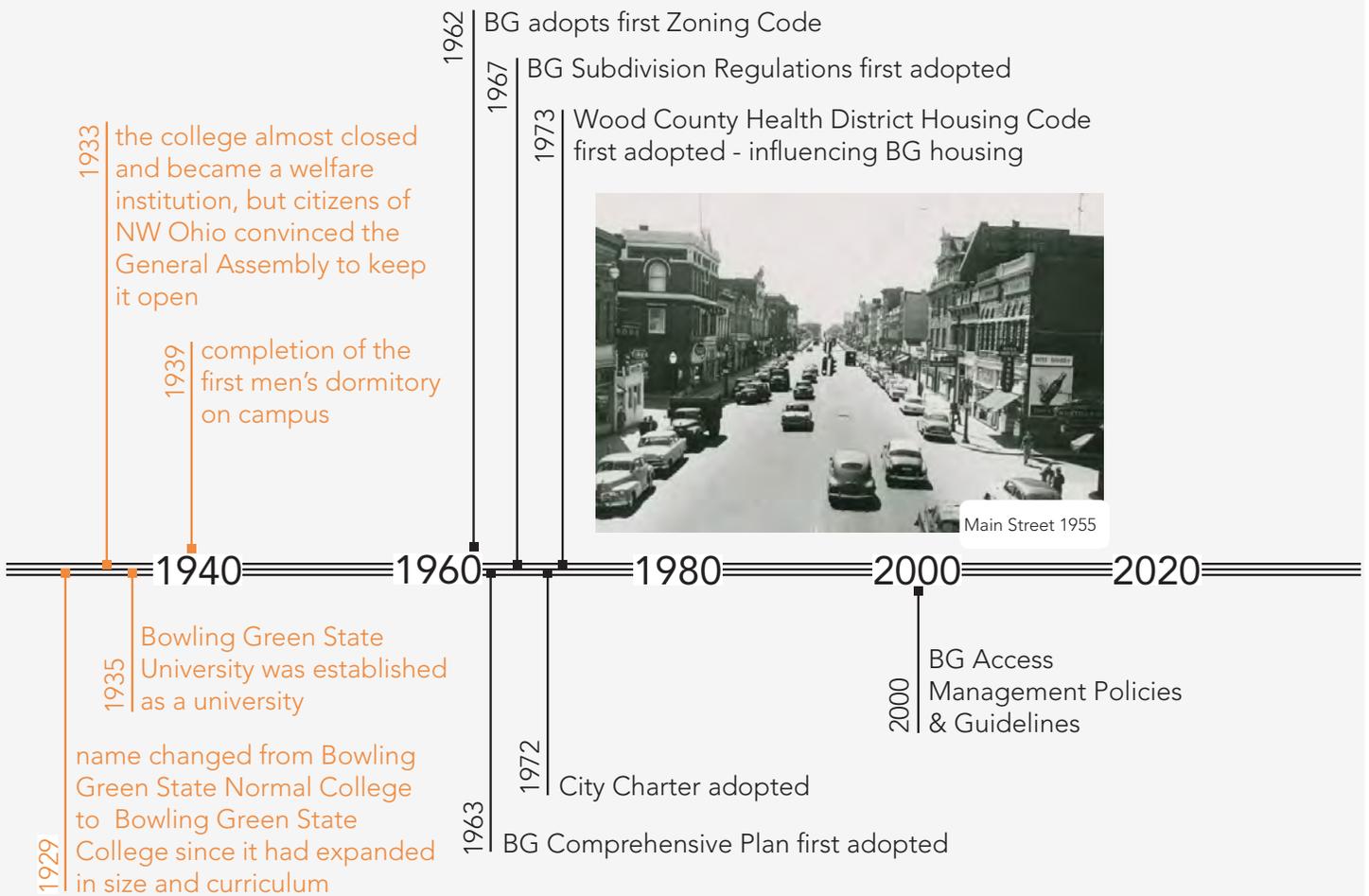
### A Timeline of...

The City of Bowling Green & Bowling Green State University



## CONSIDERING OUR PAST

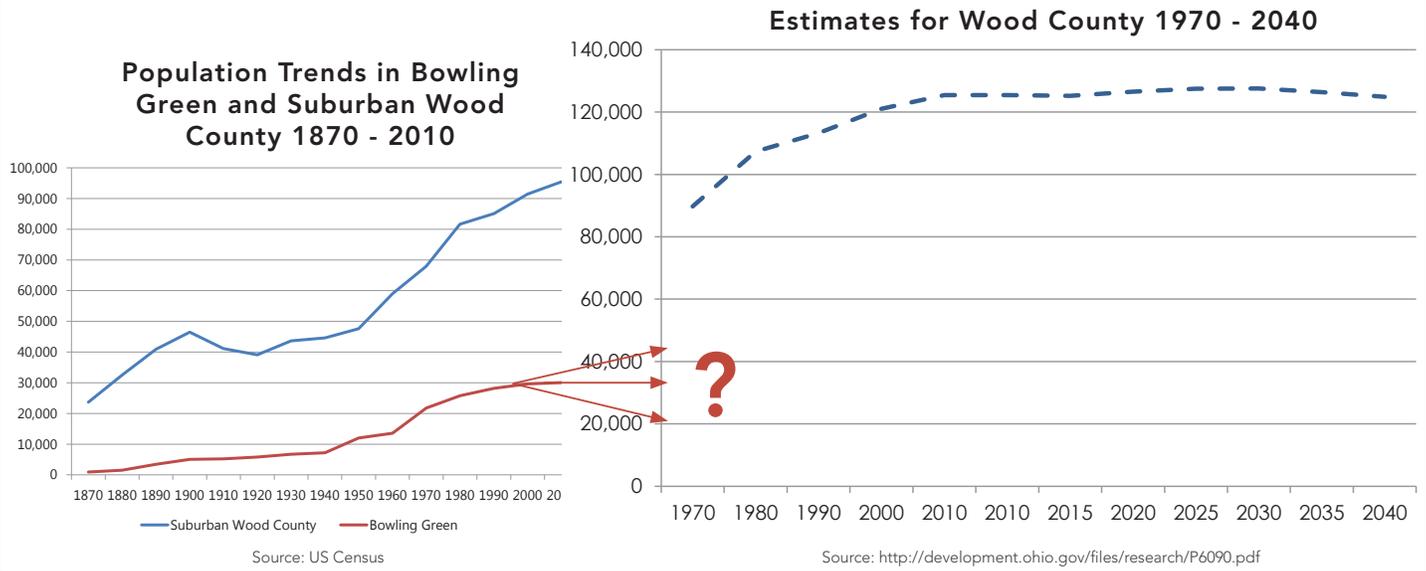
- What vision, values, and constraints influenced the form and character of the city?
- Why are uses located where they are (the downtown, the shopping areas, the University, the industrial areas)?
- How does the form and character of the city affect its livability? Its desirability? Its functionality?
- How do regulations and plans affect the form and character of the city?
- Is the development that has occurred over the last 30 years different than what occurred previously? Is it better or worse? Why?
- Are there any physical changes you would like to see in Bowling Green over the next 20 years?
- What vision do YOU have for Bowling Green in 20 years?



# Bowling Green Today

## POPULATION

Below are graphs of population growth for BG and Wood County, and a forecast for Wood County in the future. What do you think Bowling Green's future population change will be? Why?



## CITY'S FISCAL CONDITION

**47%**

% of City revenue that comes from Income Tax

Generally, the city where you live gets 1%

The city where you work gets 1%

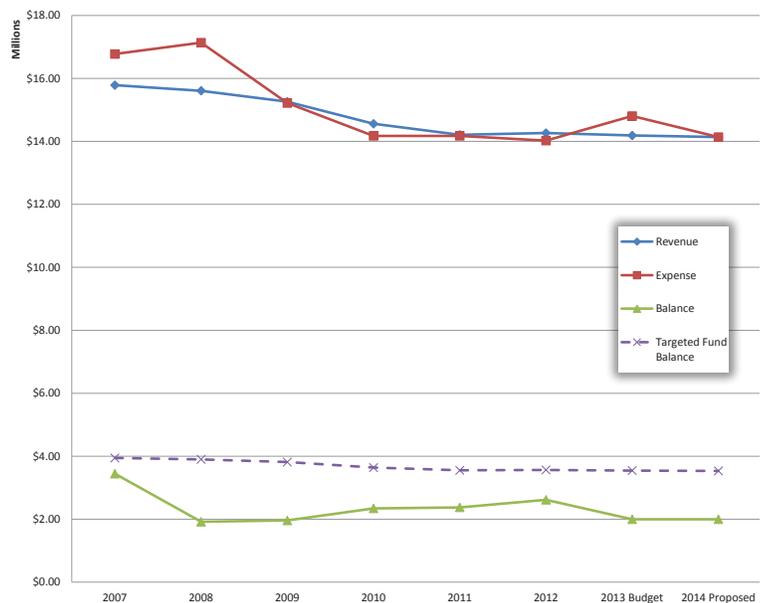
**...having people live AND work in BG has the biggest revenue impact**

**14%**

% of City revenue that comes from Property Tax

**0%**

% of City revenue that comes from Sales Tax



# BGSU

70

countries represented by BGSU students



~19,000

students at BGSU



6,000

# of students living on campus

16%

% of BGSU students are non-traditional<sup>1</sup> (the national average is approaching 50%)

<sup>1</sup> Non-traditional = one or more of the following: over 25, working full time, married with children, taking less than ¾ of normal class load.



147

BGSU "Bang for Buck" ranking is 147<sup>th</sup> out of 349 national universities, highest of all Ohio public institutions

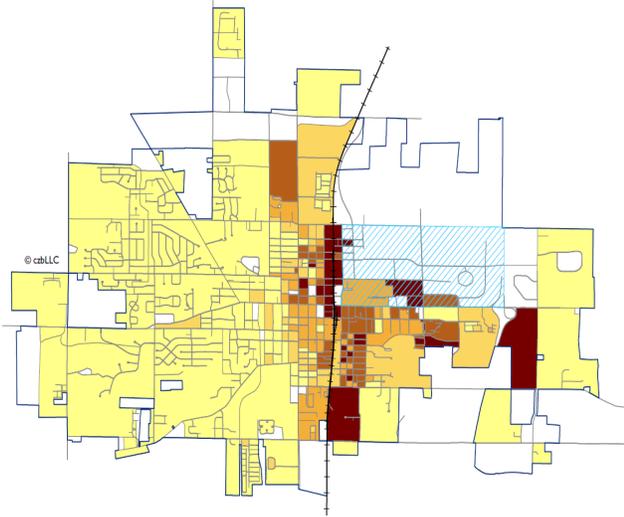


800+

BGSU faculty, a significant portion of whom live elsewhere and commute into BG



# HOUSING



**90%**  
% of renters adjacent to, and south of BGSU, that are under 25 years old

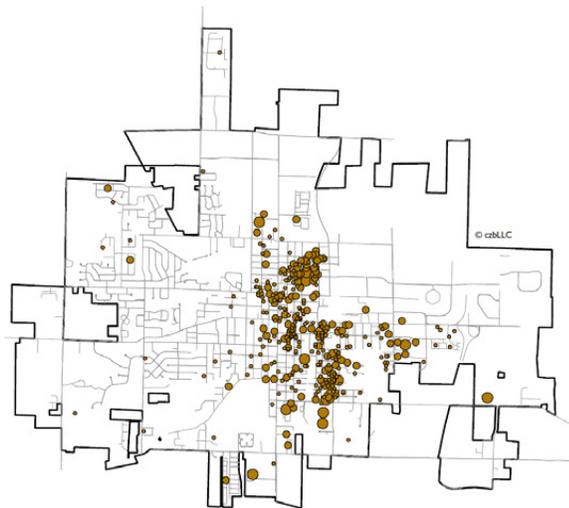
**60%**  
% of BG housing that is renter-occupied

**Bowling Green Census Blocks**  
% of Households Renters Headed by 15- to 24-year-old

- 0% - 9.9%
- 10% - 24.9%
- 25% - 49.9%
- 50% - 74.9%
- 75% - 100%
- Rail Lines
- Bowling Green State Univ.

## NE / SE

quadrants of BG that had the majority of disorderly conduct reports

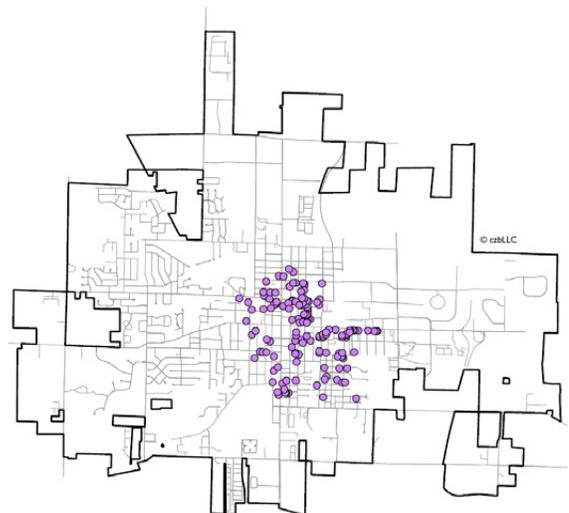


**Bowling Green Parcels**  
# of Disorderly Conduct Incidents, 2009-2010

- 1
- 2 - 9
- 10 - 84

## 136

# of 'non-conforming' uses in BG in 2013  
non-conforming uses are primarily conversion of homes to apartments



**Non-Conforming Uses**  
Identified Parcels

# What's Working / What's Not Working

*Public input, through research, surveys, open house comments, and individual input provided the following:*

## **WORKING**

- A real, functioning downtown with local stores and restaurants, downtown events, farmers market, Black Swamp Arts Festival, etc.
- BGSU brings significant jobs, student patronage, visitors, and resources
- A diverse economic base, including industry, that has been purposefully nurtured over a number of years
- BGSU has a high “bang for buck” ranking nationally
- Beautiful, established neighborhoods
- Exceptional parks, city pool and water park, and a nascent trail system
- Great school system
- Stable economy that has weathered difficult times
- Historic buildings that give a sense of continuity
- Many areas with mature canopy trees that provide shade and stateliness
- Convenient access to an interstate highway

## **NOT WORKING**

- We are losing people to Perrysburg—an increasing number of people that work here, commute from Perrysburg
- Low retention of faculty, staff, graduate students, and alumni that stay in the area
- Could capture more student business downtown
- BGSU, like many universities, is facing challenges of competition (other schools, online learning)
- Entry, first impressions are negative
- Non-conforming uses and low maintenance practices of rental housing are negatively impacting neighborhoods, especially NE and SE
- A major shopping center at the north end of town is under-utilized

# 3

# Bowling Green's Target Market

There are three key ideas that underlay this document:

## 1. Competition

Just like businesses compete for customers, cities also compete for residents and businesses. In this mobile and wired society, people and businesses are freer than ever to choose to locate in places that have a high quality of life; and they do.

## 2. Limited Resources

As a community, we have limited resources. Therefore we need to think very carefully and strategically about our priorities—where we will get the most “bang for buck” for our investments.

## 3. Goal Orientation

If we have a general idea of what we want to be, we can make the small, daily decisions in a way that will get us closer to our goal.

Even though we want to hold on to everyone, and appeal to everyone, given limited resources we cannot do everything to a high standard. Where should we focus our efforts?

Who is our Target Market?

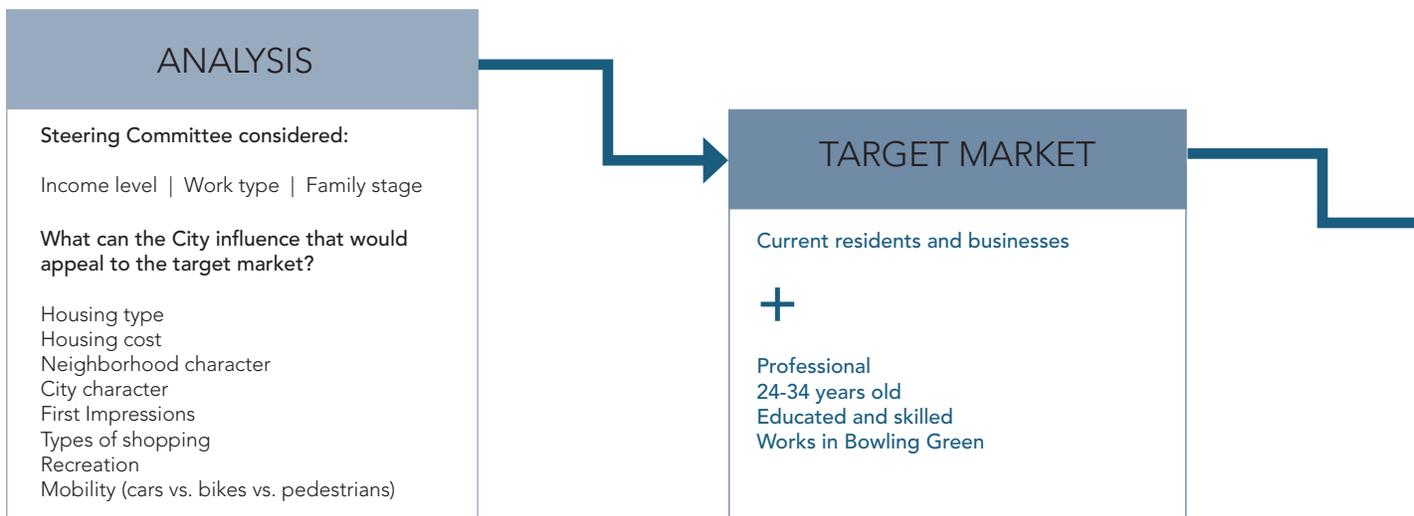
After wrestling with this question, and after considering many potential target “markets,” the Steering Committee settled on the following:

**Target Market**  
(who we most want / need to retain, and to attract)

**EXISTING BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS**

+

**SPECIAL FOCUS ON:**  
professional  
educated and skilled  
24-34 years old  
works in, or have ties to BG or the region



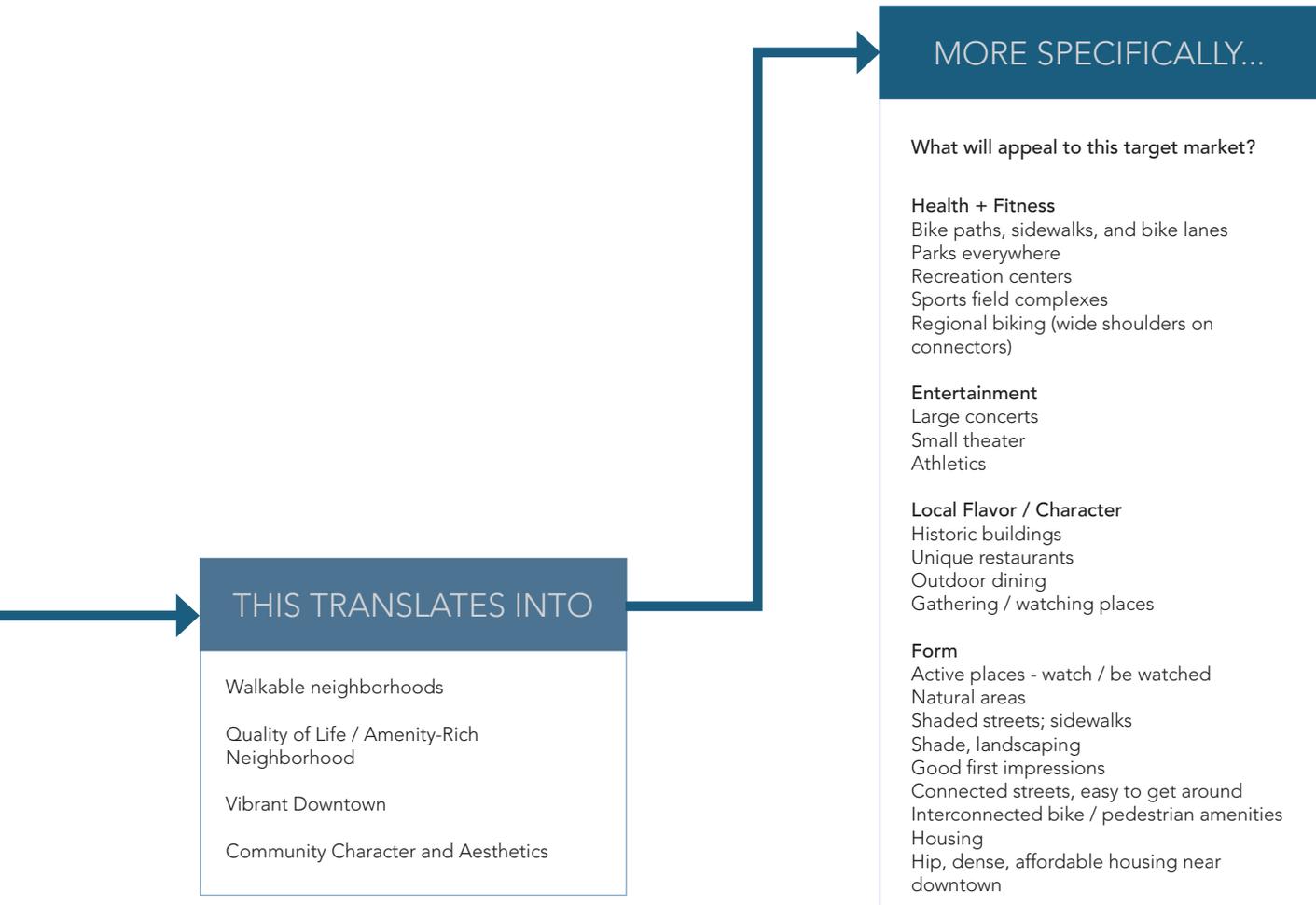
## Why this Target Market?

The city has already attracted an older demographic. We need to reach out to a younger, professional age-group to create a vibrant community. This target market represents the strong, entrepreneurial workforce that cities need. A good example of this market are BGSU graduates. Many current residents attended BGSU, met their spouses here, and stayed. Strong households were created throughout their life cycle.

## What does the Target Market need/want?

To retain and attract this target market, we will have to **compete against other communities** also aiming for this market. With the resources we have, what can we reasonably provide? How can we compete most effectively?

The Steering Committee evaluated the options, visited other communities, and reached the conclusions diagrammed below with public feedback.



# 4

## The 7 BG Principles

All of the preceding (the kind of community we want, what character will attract and retain our target market), can be summarized into 7 key principles. Listed below are these principles, and the examples of improvements that can help bring them about in various areas of Bowling Green:

### 1. Highly livable urban form that creates/preserves a community

1. **"Centers" that have walk-to, or bike-to convenience** for surrounding neighborhoods, with dining, convenience shopping, and professional services
2. **A strong downtown 'center'** with convenient access from BGSU, convenient parking, outdoor dining, wide, decorative paved sidewalks, attractive public gathering areas, and an emphasis on the arts
3. **Ability to get around easily** without a car—with bike paths/lanes; good, generous sidewalks; and thorough connectivity for cars, bikes and pedestrians
4. **A "green" community** with continuous street trees, parks, pocket parks, and "greens" everywhere

### 2. Positive, appealing first impressions

1. **Gateways** with lush landscaping, open space and monuments
2. **Grand boulevards** lined with street trees and with richly planted medians

### 3. Local flavor/character

1. **Entertainment** with a focus on downtown events and community activities, including BGSU
2. **Unique dining** with farm-to-market, local "one of" restaurants or small regional chains, outdoor dining, micro-breweries, including the existing downtown and local farmers' markets
3. **A focus on the arts**, with emphasis on local events, such as Black Swamp Art Festival
4. **Sense of heritage, grounding**, with historic buildings, natural areas, and clear city/country demarcation

### 4. A strong business base

1. **Retention of existing companies**
2. **A focus on employee-intensive businesses\***
3. **A stabilized and growing BGSU**
4. **A climate encouraging local entrepreneurs**, taking advantage of BGSU intellectual capital, and creating opportunities for business incubation

\* That have a high ratio of employees-to-building area (since BG receives a portion of the local income tax of those who work in BG, the city will receive more revenue from office buildings than warehouses).

## 5. A broad housing spectrum

1. **Greater variety of options** including apartments and condos, town homes, small-lot single family homes, and accessory dwellings (e.g. 'granny flat' over garage)
2. **Hip, dense, affordable housing**

## 6. "Good neighbor" neighborhoods

1. **Gradual transitions** between different land uses and building types so as to not diminish adjacent property values
2. **Inconspicuous off-street parking** behind buildings
3. **Consistent street trees** throughout BG
4. **Well-maintained** homes, buildings, and neighborhoods

## 7. Easy access to health and fitness

1. **Bike paths, lanes, walking/jogging paths** throughout the community and along natural areas
2. **Indoor and outdoor facilities** for active sports and programs for all ages
3. **Passive recreation** including natural areas, community gathering spaces, and "green" in every neighborhood

## BOWLING GREEN'S COMMUNITY INTENTIONS

It is the intention of the Bowling Green community to be a **distinct, family-friendly college town** comprised of a **diverse community** of residents, business owners, shopkeepers, and students. It is our intent to be an **economically viable** and **environmentally sustainable place** comprised of households and businesses alike that work together to steward scarce natural resources. It is our intent that our **neighborhoods be walkable, safe, and vibrant, and our streets beautiful and appealing.**

# Applying the 7 Principles to the 4 Priority Areas

To demonstrate how the 7 Principles can be applied to real issues and locations: 8 areas of immediate concern were identified:

- The under-utilized Woodland Mall on North Main
- City Park
- Downtown
- East Wooster Street
- Northeast quadrant
- Southeast quadrant
- The South Main commercial area
- Future annexations

And of these, 4 priority areas of focus were selected:

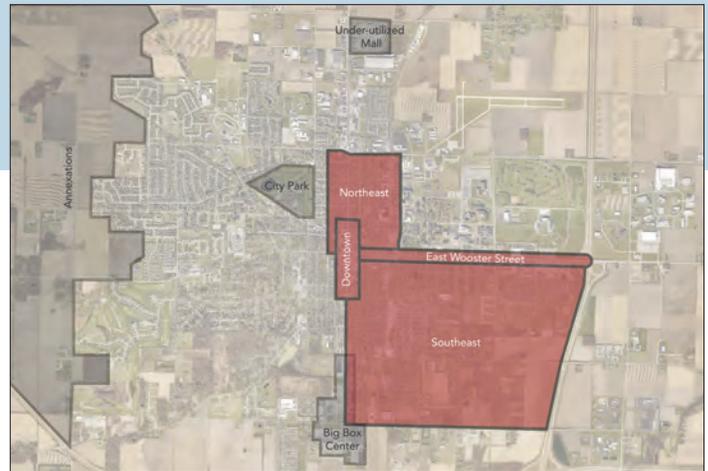
1. Northeast quadrant
2. Southeast quadrant
3. Downtown
4. East Wooster Street

## Reinvestment Plans for 4 Priority Areas of Focus

The following pages illustrate the application of the 7 key principles to the specific challenges and opportunities in these 4 areas. Furthermore, a plan of action is described for each of the 4 priority areas. Each section contains an overview of what will be required, as well as a specific “to-do” list.

The issues facing each area fall into 2 categories:

1. Public Investment
2. Market-Oriented Public Leadership, Private Investment



### 1. PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Solutions that can be addressed with public investment:

- a. purchases of property
- b. physical enhancements to the public realm
- c. changes to the municipal code

For example, more trails, green, or park space requires the city to purchase rights-of-way, or parcels, and then plant or construct them, and maintain them. These costs are offset by the increased marketability of the blocks to Gen X and Millennial buyers and renters who want walkable, amenity-rich neighborhoods, a vibrant downtown, and community character.

### 2. MARKET-ORIENTED PUBLIC LEADERSHIP, PRIVATE INVESTMENT

Solutions that are more market-oriented:

- a. Improved maintenance
- b. New development
- c. Redevelopment

# 5

## The Northeast Subarea

Community life in America is anchored in its neighborhoods. It is where families raise children, watching their kids ride their bikes down the street. It is where lawns are mowed, teenagers learn how to back out of the driveway, trick-or-treating occurs, and life's plans are realized. The traditional neighborhood is an economically powerful building block, with densities that support retail within walking distance and tax revenue capacity that supports a high level of public infrastructure for such amenities as parks.

This area has numerous assets, around which to build and maintain a vibrant community: Wood County Courthouse, Ridge Park, stable church congregations, public services (Fire Department), and proximity to downtown and BGSU.

During the period between 1975-1990, when BGSU student demand for housing emerged and matured, the NE market reacted by absorbing students through the apartmentalization of traditional, single-family homes.

This was a very logical sequence for the market to take. The regulatory framework (at the time) was not strong enough to curtail such a transformation, and the market itself was softening. It is not so much that student housing reduced property values - although this is true. It is that property values were already declining (owing to demand for newer suburban homes) and the only buyers many NE neighborhood sellers could find were those aiming to modify the properties for student rental purposes.

Buying single-family homes of falling value, converting them to student rentals, and then cash flowing them was very reasonable and smart.

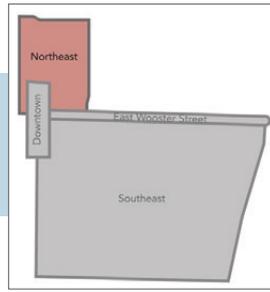
But over time, the arrival of a critical mass of students in a traditional neighborhood undermined an already fragile submarket through the typical student behaviors found in every college town.

The cost of this unintended transformation has been expensive. The upside comes mainly in the form of flows of rent to owners. The downsides are reduced life and property values, which are absorbed by long-time neighbors. Other downsides are significant as opportunity costs. What should be one of Bowling Green's most marketable neighborhoods to BGSU employees is instead a collection of marginal blocks. Downtown businesses miss the customers they would otherwise have from walkable nearby homes. BGSU misses an easy marketing win. The city overall signals decline to those who see these marginalized blocks, rather than the charm and vibrancy they could.

Reverting the NE blocks back to their traditional and charming potential should be a high priority.

<b>Problem to Solve</b>	Disproportionate student impact on traditional family-oriented blocks.
<b>Challenge</b>	Return NE blocks to family-orientation, and modify infrastructure and regulations to promote NE blocks to BGSU graduate students, university staff, alumni, and other families.

# Northeast



# Existing Conditions

**non-conforming uses** (apartment conversions)  
lower market value of adjacent property

missing **neighborhood parks** and green spaces reduce neighborhood desirability

missing **street trees** lower the aesthetic quality and livability of neighborhood

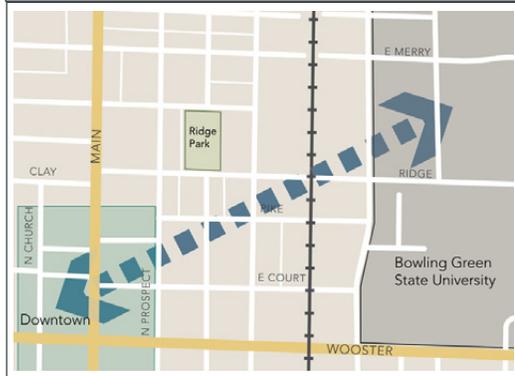
\*Downtown, as marked on these maps, represents the general downtown area and is not meant to represent the current or future extent of the downtown zone (B3 - Central Business District).



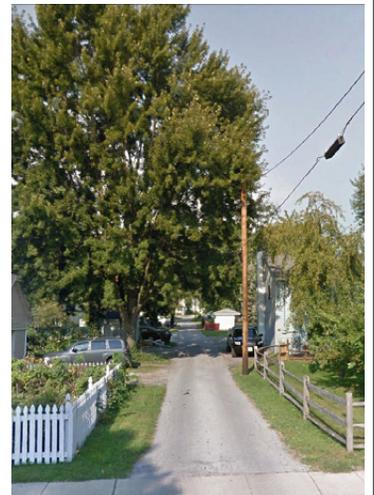
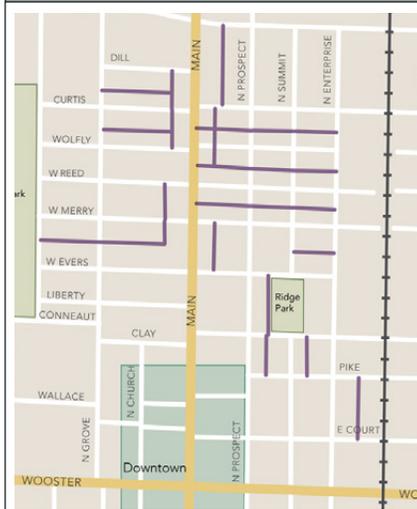
**incompatible adjacent uses**  
make single-family homes  
less desirable



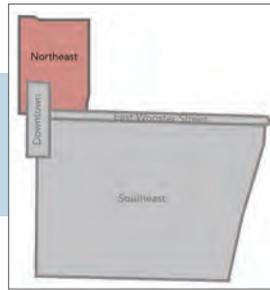
strong need to **connect BGSU to downtown** (via pedestrian/  
bicycle) to increase patronage



**existing alleys** are often poorly maintained  
and conducive to vandalism



# Northeast



# Improvements

## non-conforming uses



Convert apartments back to single-family homes

## compatible land uses



Allow townhomes along N. Enterprise as transition between single-family homes and apartments (also provides opportunity for higher density housing closer to campus)

## parks

Convert vacant parcels to neighborhood parks in under-served areas

## BGSU connectivity



Create "sharrows" on Court Street as strong connection from Campus to downtown

## streetscaping



now



proposed

Infill street trees to restore signature Bowling Green character throughout neighborhoods

## existing alleys



Allow / encourage apartment-over-garage (granny flat), with owner-occupied homes only, to put "eyes on the alley," upgrade conditions, and provide alternative to 'apartmentalizing' homes.

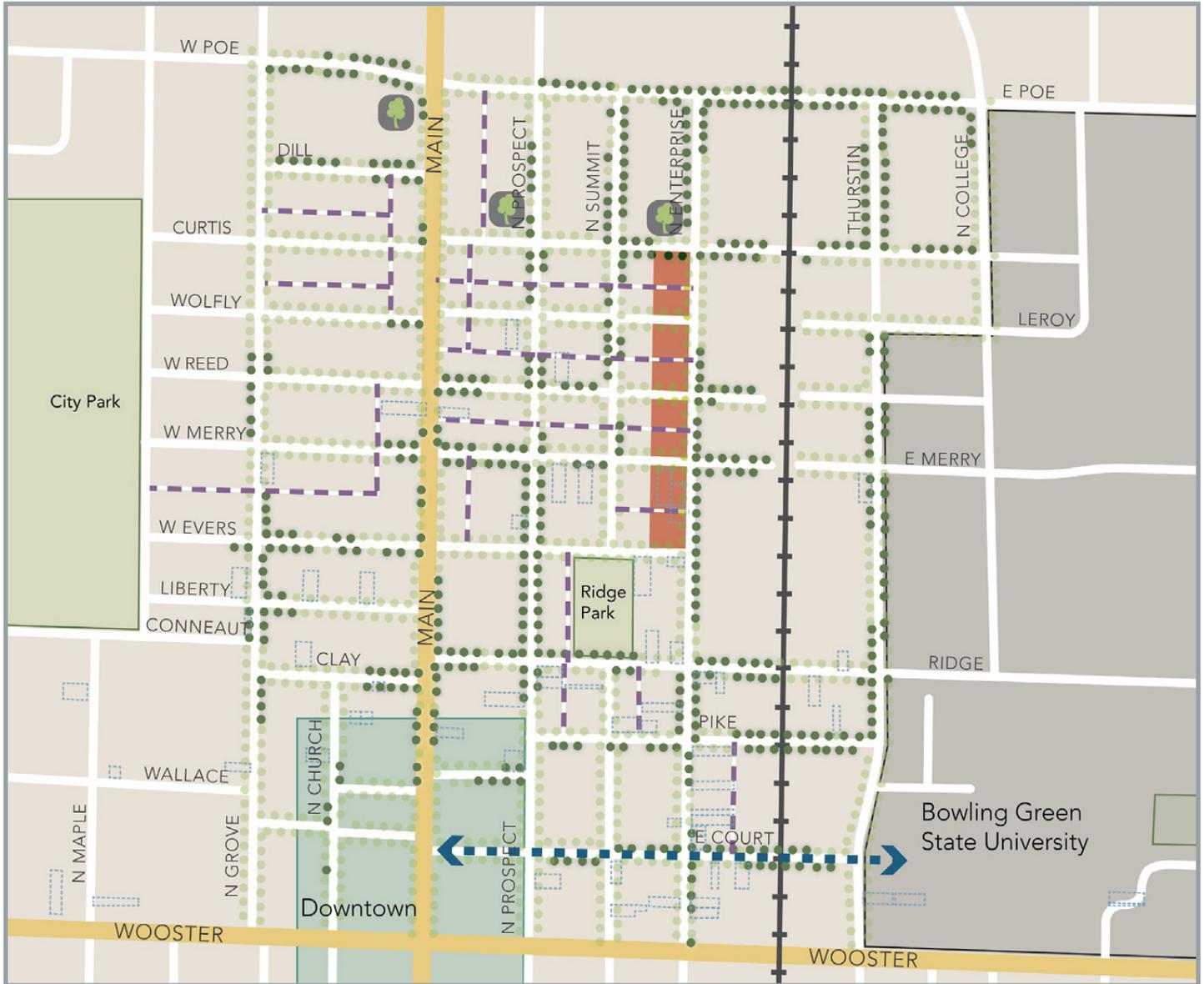
**GOALS**

**1** Stop and then reverse "apartmentalization" of houses

**2** Improve livability and aesthetics

**3** Encourage health and fitness

**4** Allow transition uses and higher densities



\*Downtown, as marked on this map, represents the general downtown area and is not meant to represent the current or future extent of the downtown zone (B3 - Central Business District).

- ..... Existing trees
  - ..... Proposed trees
  - ←- - -> Bicycle "sharrows"
- - - Alley with auxiliary units
  - Townhomes
- Neighborhood parks on one or more vacant parcels
  - Proposed renovated single-family homes

# Northeast Actions

What/How		Why (7 Principles)							Who	
1	Purchase and convert vacant lots, or portions thereof, to small neighborhood pocket parks. Refine neighborhood park locations in conjunction with an update of the Parks & Open Space Master Plan. Require pro-rata parkland dedication of all future residential subdivisions.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Reduce the number of non-conforming uses (apartment conversions): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create community development corporation to purchase apartmentalized houses and redevelop/restore them to single family homes and resell</li> <li>• Form a City/BGSU partnership to offer zoning conversion incentives to bring properties into compliance</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Create a partnership with city, BGSU, and other appropriate parties to work together to develop strategies that support home ownership in the Northeast area in a manner consistent with applicable laws and regulations.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Amend single-family zoning to allow accessory dwelling units (apartments over garages) when served by alleys (as income alternative to "apartmentalization") and when primary home is owner-occupied.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Infill BG's 'signature' street trees and continue to enhance the city's stature as a 'tree city': <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institute an annual Arbor Day Program to provide trees at low cost to businesses and homeowners</li> <li>• Amend subdivision regulations to require street trees on all new development</li> <li>• Plant street trees on appropriate public properties</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Significantly increase police presence to manage nuisance behaviors.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Change zoning to allow town home "transition" development on N. Enterprise and N. Summit streets (see Section 6, NE neighborhood).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Commission a design study for Court Street "Commons," between Thurstin and Main. Consider: shared street concept with designated lane for bikes, one way traffic for cars, continue on-street parking, wide sidewalks, decorative pavement, unique light fixtures, benches, etc.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Partner with BGSU to develop properties consistent with 7 Key Principles: mix of uses, transitions to adjacent properties, timeless design, etc.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

# 6

## The Southeast Subarea

The challenges facing the SE quadrant fall under the heading of **“Preparing the SE Quadrant to Compete for Strong Households in the Coming Decades and Remake the SE Quadrant into a Vital Thriving Mixed Use Community.”**

Today’s SE quadrant has evolved into mostly a large, featureless concentration of a single land use (apartments), that is gradually forcing out the few remaining single-family blocks. Any large expanse of a single land use is highly susceptible to eventually becoming obsolete and declining in value. This is even more true of the SE quadrant. The combination of dated apartment buildings and changing tastes in student housing make this area especially vulnerable.

What the SE quadrant can become is: tomorrow’s mixed income neighborhood comprised of a combination of student apartments, family housing, and neighborhood stores that the market increasingly wants. The private sector will eventually gravitate to delivering this product if any regulatory barriers are removed, if a vision is established, and the long-term market is cultivated. The SE quadrant is the city’s best chance to capture that market within existing city boundaries and, in the process, to transform roughly 300 acres from a series of monochromatic, unimaginative drabness to vibrant, mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhoods.

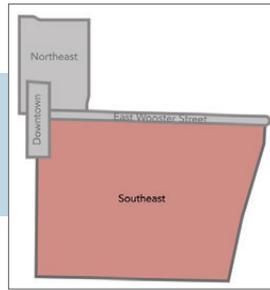
This area has numerous assets, around which to build a vibrant community: Carter Park, stable church congregations, excellent schools, and proximity to the downtown and BGSU.

Like the challenges facing the NE quadrant, some can be addressed with public actions, while others are more market-oriented and will require a combination of City leadership and private action.

With municipal leadership, parking that now is in front of too many buildings can be relegated to the alleys. Treeless streets and those also / or otherwise maligned by power lines and unsightly signage can be addressed. Concurrently, the quadrant can be rezoned to promote the kind of denser development able to finance amenity-rich blocks needed to secure market share of strong households in the region.

<b>Problem to Solve</b>	Disproportionate student impact on traditional family-oriented blocks.
<b>Challenge</b>	Upgrade the character and livability of SE blocks to make the whole quadrant more appealing to students as well as other types of residents. By so doing, help BGSU become more competitive, and take advantage of the infrastructure already available to make the SE quadrant into a quality BG neighborhood.

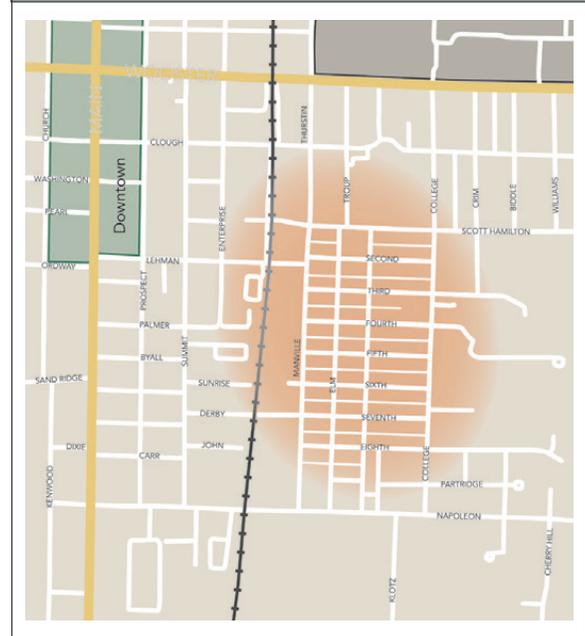
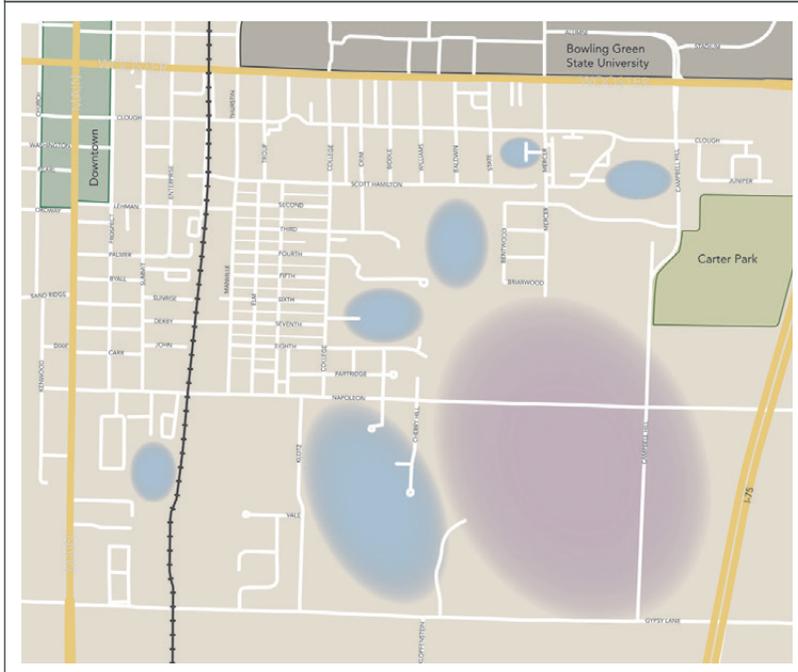
# Southeast



# Existing Conditions

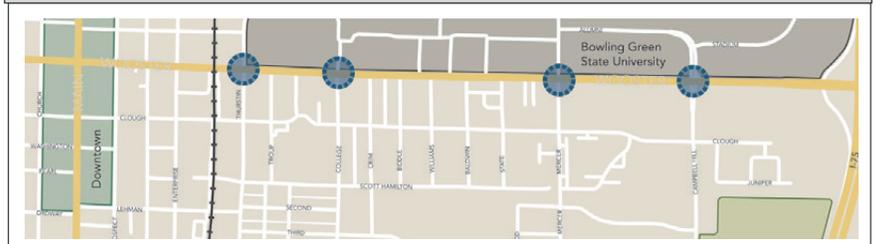
large areas for **potential development** are unique opportunities for the City to encourage off-street trails and neighborhood connectivity

large areas of student housing have created **sterile neighborhoods** with dated buildings, front-yard parking, and lacking street trees

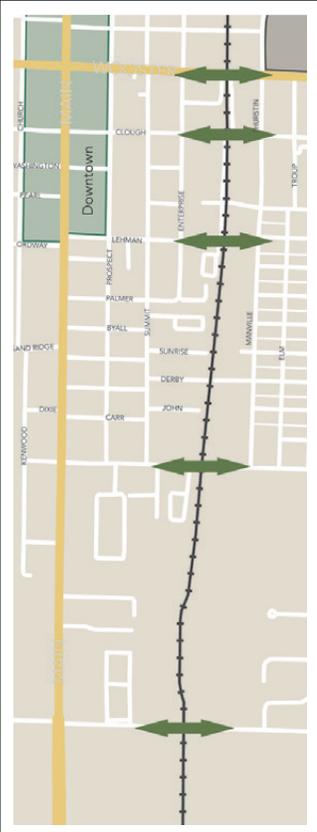


\*Downtown, as marked on these maps, represents the general downtown area and is not meant to represent the current or future extent of the downtown zone (B3 - Central Business District).

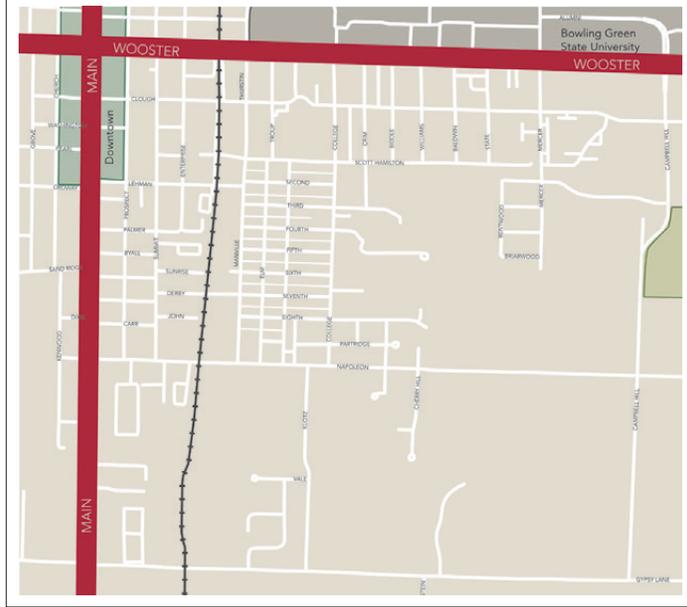
there are only a **few intersection connections** to BGSU, to which bike/ped routes must connect



**limited at-grade rail crossings** are connecting points for bike/ped routes



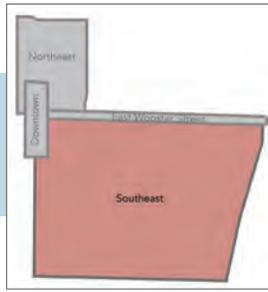
SE quadrant has a general **lack of 'livable' amenities**: parks, trails, and local-serving commercial



past development has left areas with only **limited connectivity**, which will also increase congestion



# Southeast



# Improvements

## sterile neighborhood



- Remove front yard parking, locate in alleys
- Add trees and landscaping
- Gradually bury overhead power lines

## BGSU connectivity

Formalized entry will increase pedestrian safety and flow into neighborhood



## limited connections

- Require new roads with development to improve connectivity
- On-street bike paths
- Off-street bike/ped paths



## development potential

- local-serving commercial (mixed use)
- neighborhood parks
- interconnected local streets



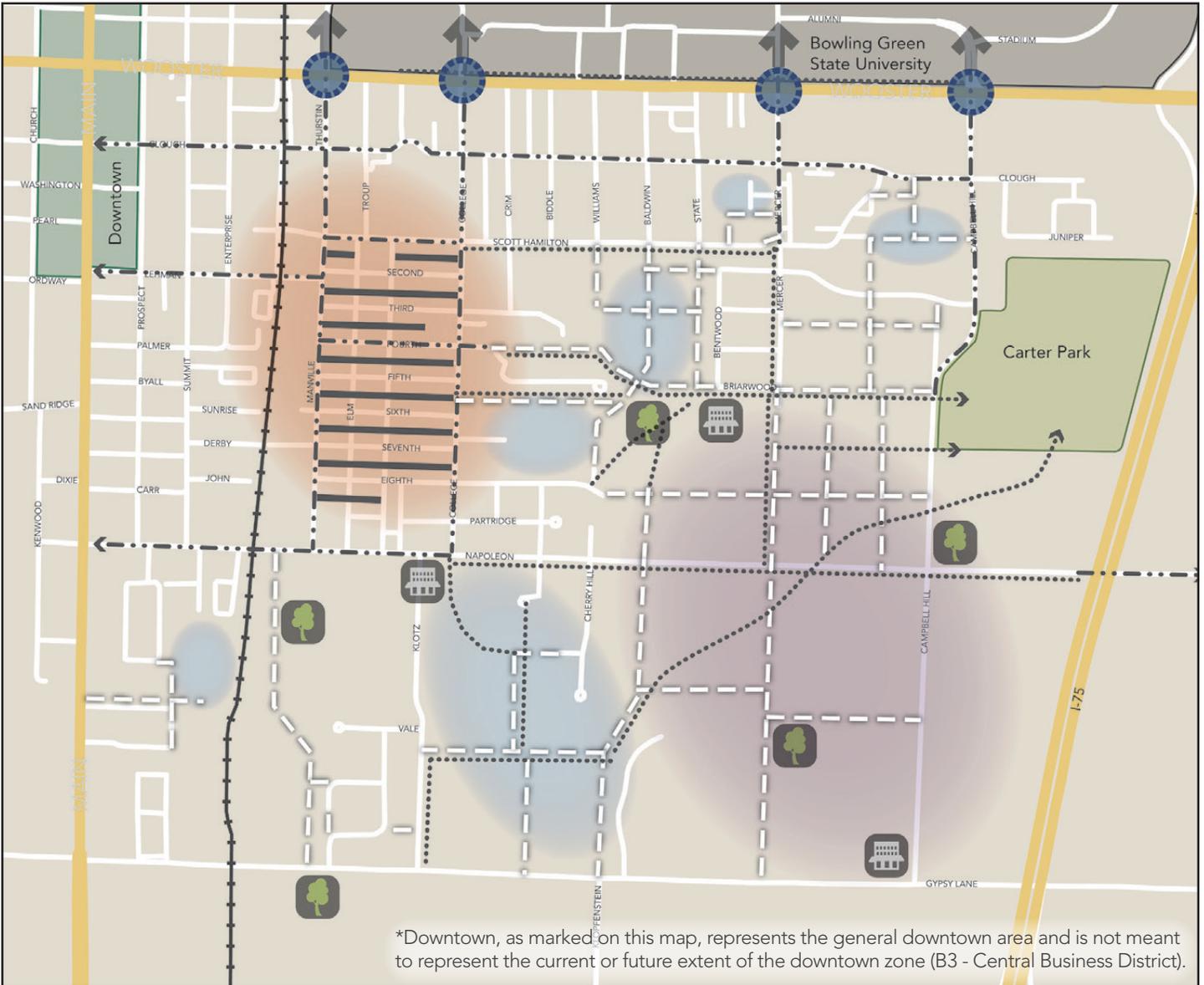
# GOALS

**1** Enhance aesthetics of existing neighborhoods

**2** Establish new development that creates high livability

**3** Encourage health and fitness

**4** Create positive first impressions



- Sterile neighborhood
- Limited connectivity area
- Development potential
- Existing alleys
- Potential on-street bike path
- Potential off-street bike/ped path
- Potential interconnected local street
- Potential local-serving commercial (mixed-use)
- Potential neighborhood park
- ↑
 Special "gateway" intersections for potential campus entries

# Southeast Actions

	What/How	Why (7 Principles)							Who	
		CREATES A COMMUNITY	POSITIVE, APPEALING FIRST IMPRESSIONS	LOCAL FLAVOR/CHARACTER	A STRONG BUSINESS BASE	A BROAD HOUSING SPECTRUM	"GOOD NEIGHBOR" NEIGHBORHOODS	EASY ACCESS TO HEALTH AND FITNESS	PUBLIC INVESTMENT	PRIVATE INVESTMENT
1	Purchase and convert vacant lots, or portions thereof, to small neighborhood pocket parks. Refine neighborhood park locations in conjunction with an update of the Parks & Open Space Master Plan. Require pro-rata parkland dedication of all future residential subdivisions.									
2	Reduce the number of non-conforming uses (apartment conversions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create community development corporation to purchase apartmentalized houses and redevelop/restore them to single family homes and resell</li> <li>• Form a City/BGSU partnership to offer zoning conversion incentives to bring properties into compliance</li> </ul>									
3	Create a partnership with city, BGSU, and other appropriate parties to work together to develop strategies that support home ownership in the Southeast area in a manner consistent with applicable laws and regulations.									
4	Amend single-family zoning to allow accessory dwelling units (apartments over garages) when served by alleys (as income alternative to "apartmentalization") and when primary home is owner-occupied.									
5	Infill BG's 'signature' street trees and continue to enhance the city's stature as a 'tree city': <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institute an annual Arbor Day Program to provide trees at low cost to businesses and homeowners</li> <li>• Amend subdivision regulations to require street trees on all new development</li> <li>• Plant street trees on appropriate public properties</li> </ul>									
6	Significantly increase police presence to manage nuisance behaviors.									
7	Partner with BGSU to develop properties consistent with 7 Key Principles: mix of uses, transitions to adjacent properties, timeless design, etc.									
8	Create special "gateway intersections" on E. Wooster for bicycles and pedestrians. Include signage, distinctive crossings, and striping of bike lanes and turns.									
9	For large parcels subject to development or redevelopment, change zoning to mixed use.									
10	With advance notice, enforce parking regulations to move parking from front yards and sidewalks to alleys, and to provide screening and shade of parking lots.									



# The Downtown

Downtown Bowling Green is a jewel in the City's crown, but it is hardly polished. While cherished and much improved over the last ten years, it must be the recipient location of significant strategic investment for it to thrive in the coming decades. Narrow sidewalks and a lack of public spaces undermine a quality experience for the pedestrian. Parking incoherence makes it harder than it needs to be for visitors.

What the downtown represents is the opportunity for Bowling Green to move from "good" to "great."

In some respects this will be the most difficult of all challenges facing the community. Because downtown is not in serious trouble the way the NE blocks are, or an obvious looming challenge the way North Main big box retail and the whole SE quadrant are, it can be easy to dismiss as a low priority. That would be a mistake.

Downtown is the key to Bowling Green every bit as much as East Wooster is the main path to discovering it. As such, the downtown should become the focal point for the community: a place where festivals happen, where history is made, where sidewalk dining is possible for six to seven months a year, and where young professionals congregate after graduating. Downtown is where ideas are incubating – for new businesses and for dissertations.

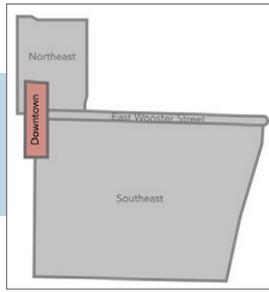
## Problem to Solve

A signature asset of Bowling Green that can be even better.

## Challenge

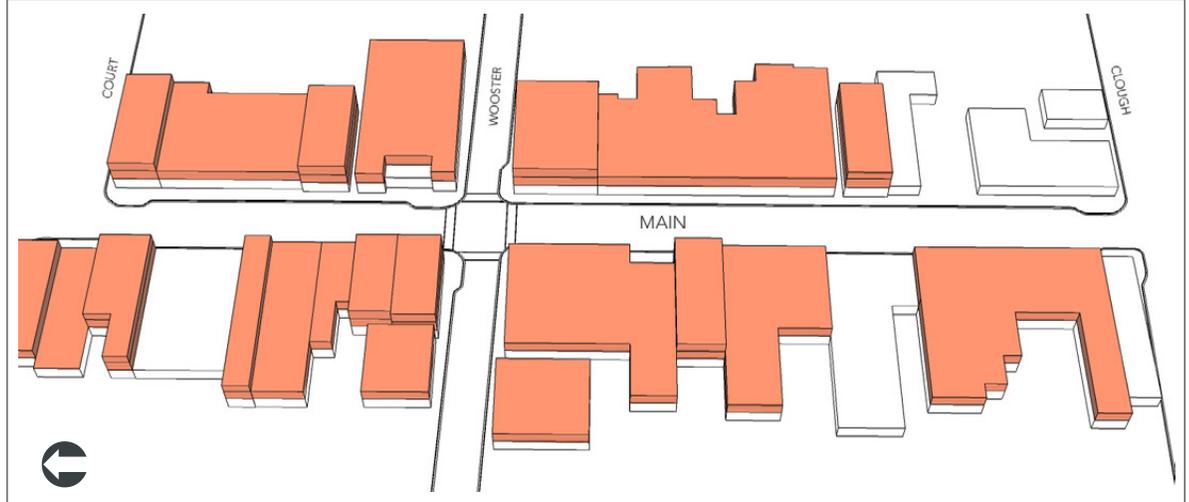
Leverage physical strengths of downtown to truly remake Bowling Green as the region's destination and an authentic place to go to experience small town life.

# Downtown

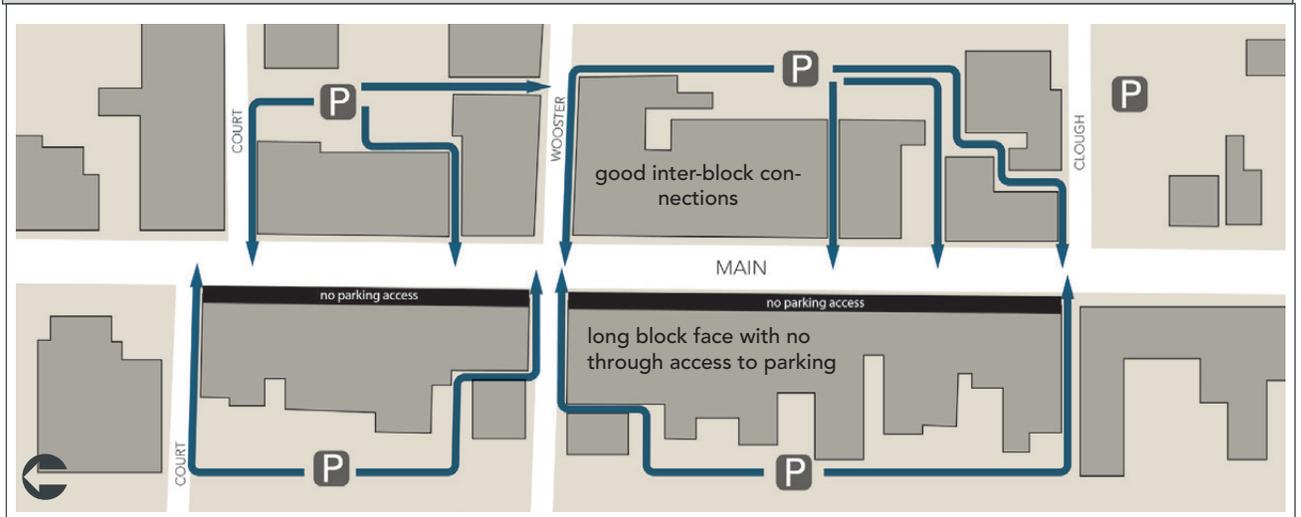


# Existing Conditions

**2nd and 3rd floors** are opportunities for consolidation into larger downtown office and/or residential use

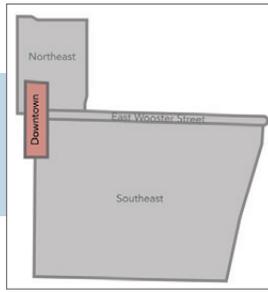


**lack of pedestrian connections** make the west side of Main Street much less accessible from current parking





# Downtown



# Improvements

## traffic

consider reconfiguring driving lanes to create opportunities for:

- wider sidewalks
- bike lane
- seasonal dining decks
- angled parking

### existing



### potential alternatives



## vacant land

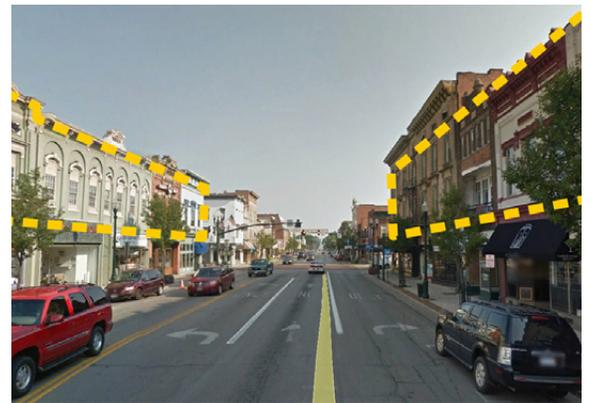
create a downtown "Central Park" for Bowling Green on all or part of the property at the southwest corner of Wooster and Church

## gathering places



create additional active plazas by:  
 A) enclosing adjacent parking lots  
 B) installing on street seasonal dining decks in parking places

## 2nd & 3rd floor opportunities



work with owners to encourage consolidation of 2nd / 3rd floors into larger spaces for:

- mid-size businesses
- downtown apartments
- meeting & event space
- Bowling Green State University offices or classrooms

## parking access

provide additional mid-block pass-throughs on the west side of Main to make parking (and shopping) more convenient

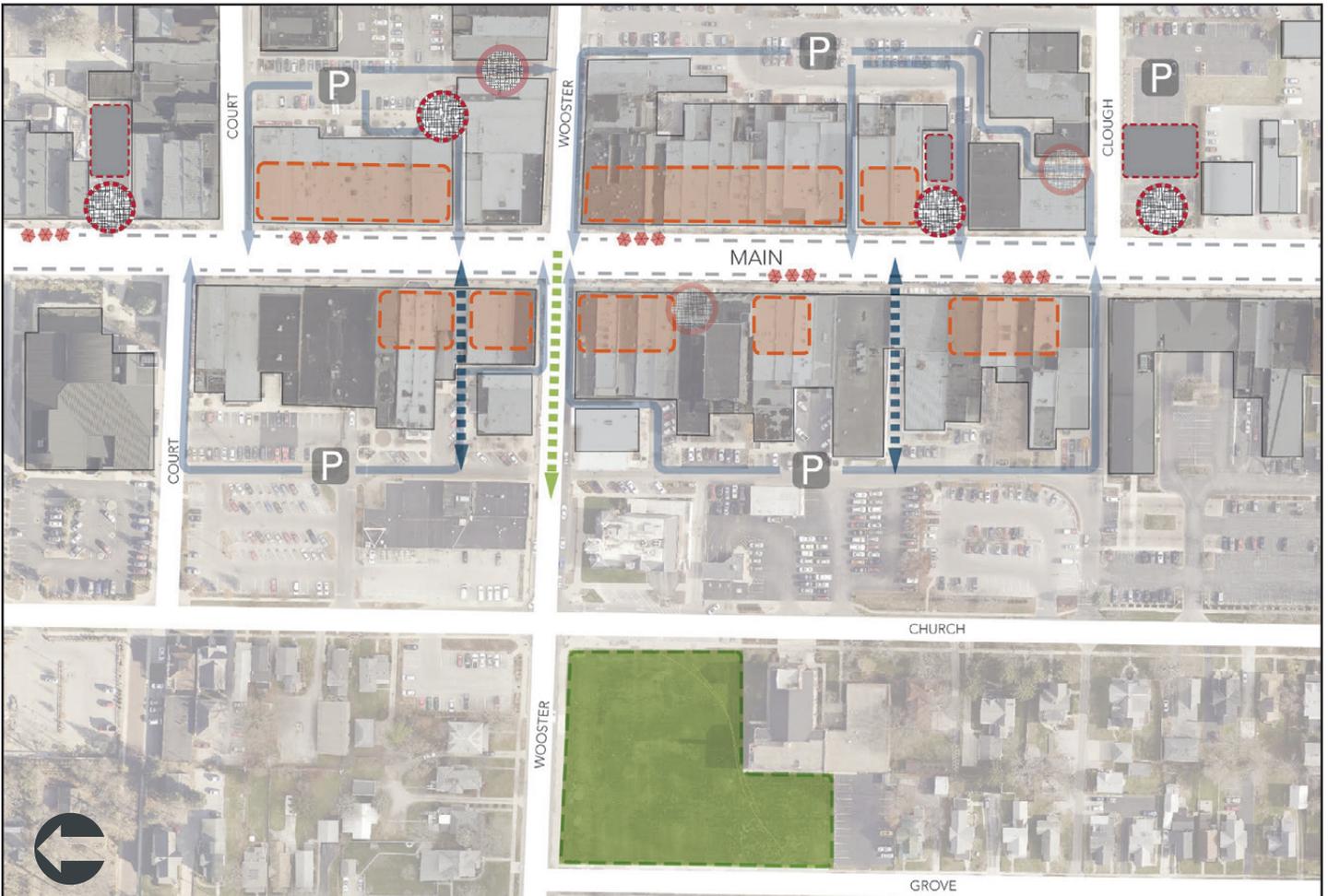
**GOALS**

**1** Create connections from parking lots

**2** Improve livability and aesthetics

**3** Encourage health and fitness

**4** Establish multiple gathering places



- |   |  |   |                   |  |   |
|---|--|---|-------------------|--|---|
|  | Proposed building / wall for plaza enclosure |  | Existing access   |  | Upper-floor(s) consolidation                      |
|  | Existing plaza                               |  | Proposed access   |  | New "Central Park" location (existing vacant lot) |
|  | Proposed plaza                               |  | Existing parking  |  |   |
|  | On-street decks                              |  | On-street parking |  |   |

# Downtown Actions

	What/How	Why (7 Principles)							Who	
		COMMUNITY	POSITIVE, APPEALING FIRST IMPRESSIONS	LOCAL FLAVOR/CHARACTER	A STRONG BUSINESS BASE	A BROAD HOUSING SPECTRUM	"GOOD NEIGHBOR" NEIGHBORHOODS	EASY ACCESS TO HEALTH AND FITNESS	PUBLIC INVESTMENT	PRIVATE INVESTMENT
1	Commission a streetscape design study, and traffic analysis, to determine the feasibility of, and options for: widened sidewalks, a planted median, bike lanes, and public plazas, while maintaining or improving on-street parking and traffic efficiency.									
2	Commission a concept design to evaluate using the former junior high parcel as a "town green" (alone or in conjunction with new city offices).									
3	Create additional plazas in the downtown. Do this by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public purchase and development of vacant lots</li> <li>Public/private partnership to create plazas in development of vacant lots</li> <li>Temporary "parklets" in individual parking spaces</li> </ul>									
4	With Downtown Bowling Green, study the feasibility of creating additional "breezeway" connections between Main Street and parking lots west of Main. Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhancing existing through-store connections, or</li> <li>Converting the ground floor of one of more existing narrow buildings to a paseo (narrow alleyway, flanked by small shops)</li> </ul>									
5	Encourage further consolidation of second and third stories into larger residences, offices, and/or classroom spaces. Do this by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study what other cities have done to exempt remodels from strictest building code requirements</li> <li>Search for City and other public agency tenants</li> <li>Work with BGSU and appropriate parties to develop creative spaces in the downtown area</li> <li>Create the amenities described in this section to make the downtown more appealing to live and work</li> </ul>									
6	Establish an "entrepreneurial fund" for downtown (grants for equipment, technical assistance, and five year waiver of employee taxes) for new or improved businesses, restaurants, stores, etc.									
7	Commission an analysis of simplifying and clarifying downtown signage to parking lots (and branding).									
8	Create incentives to increase maintenance of downtown historic facades.									
9	Expand downtown: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extend Transitional Central Business District zoning along E. Wooster from Main to Thurstin</li> <li>Create seamless commercial corridor to BGSU campus (streetscape, art work) and other ways to attract students, employees downtown</li> </ul>									
10	Conduct parking study to verify availability.									



# East Wooster

The prevailing issue along East Wooster is that it is the front door of Bowling Green and that, in its present form, it is as aesthetically decrepit as it is economically inefficient. As an auto-oriented three quarter mile long eyesore, it undermines the deeper reality of Bowling Green as the unique and beautiful place it truly is.

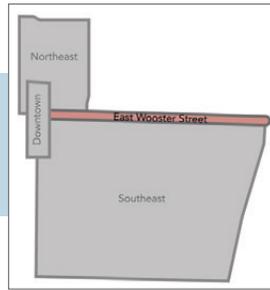
For too many years, Bowling Green has been content to rely more on East Wooster as the place to host fast food and fuel outlets catering to I-75 motorists rather than places for residents seeking places to dine, and for students and others to co-mingle as they move back and forth from residential life in the neighborhoods to campus. East Wooster gives no hint of the promise contained in Bowling Green’s fantastic downtown, or within the beautiful BGSU campus.

Very troublesome is the role that the character of East Wooster now plays in undermining Bowling Green’s main asset: BGSU. Before parents and visitors to the University can experience the charm of walking downtown from the public library past the Melt Shoppe to Grounds for Thought to Cycle Werks, their first impressions of Bowling Green are the congestion, acres of asphalt, dated hotels, and indecipherable curb cuts and turning lanes that decades of free-standing, parking-surrounded development along East Wooster have wrought.

East Wooster more than anything else is a missed opportunity. A missed opportunity for denser, more diverse commercial vibrancy. A missed opportunity to present to the world Bowling Green’s best face. A missed opportunity for student housing above retail. A missed opportunity for greater income per square foot for property owners. It’s a long list and it needs attention.

<b>Problem to Solve</b>	Unsightly, inefficient, hard-to-market primary entryway into Bowling Green.
<b>Challenge</b>	Remake East Wooster into a magnificent gateway into Bowling Green, communicating pride, high standards, the presence of a college town, and a welcoming and inviting place to visit, attend school, or live and work.

# E Wooster

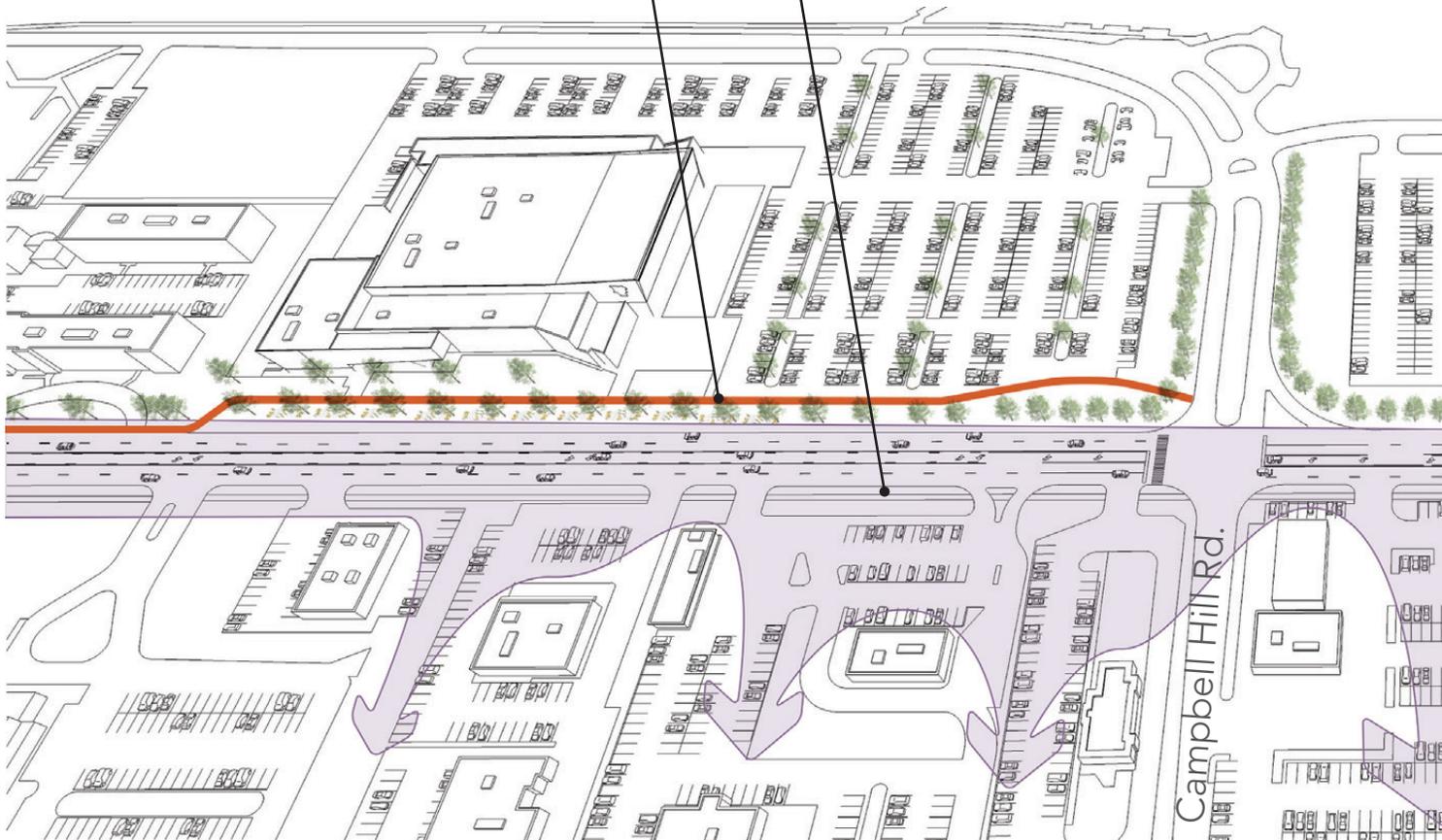


# Existing Conditions

the center turn lane adds unused asphalt, the **lack of bike lanes or wide sidewalks** further discourage everything but autos and trucks



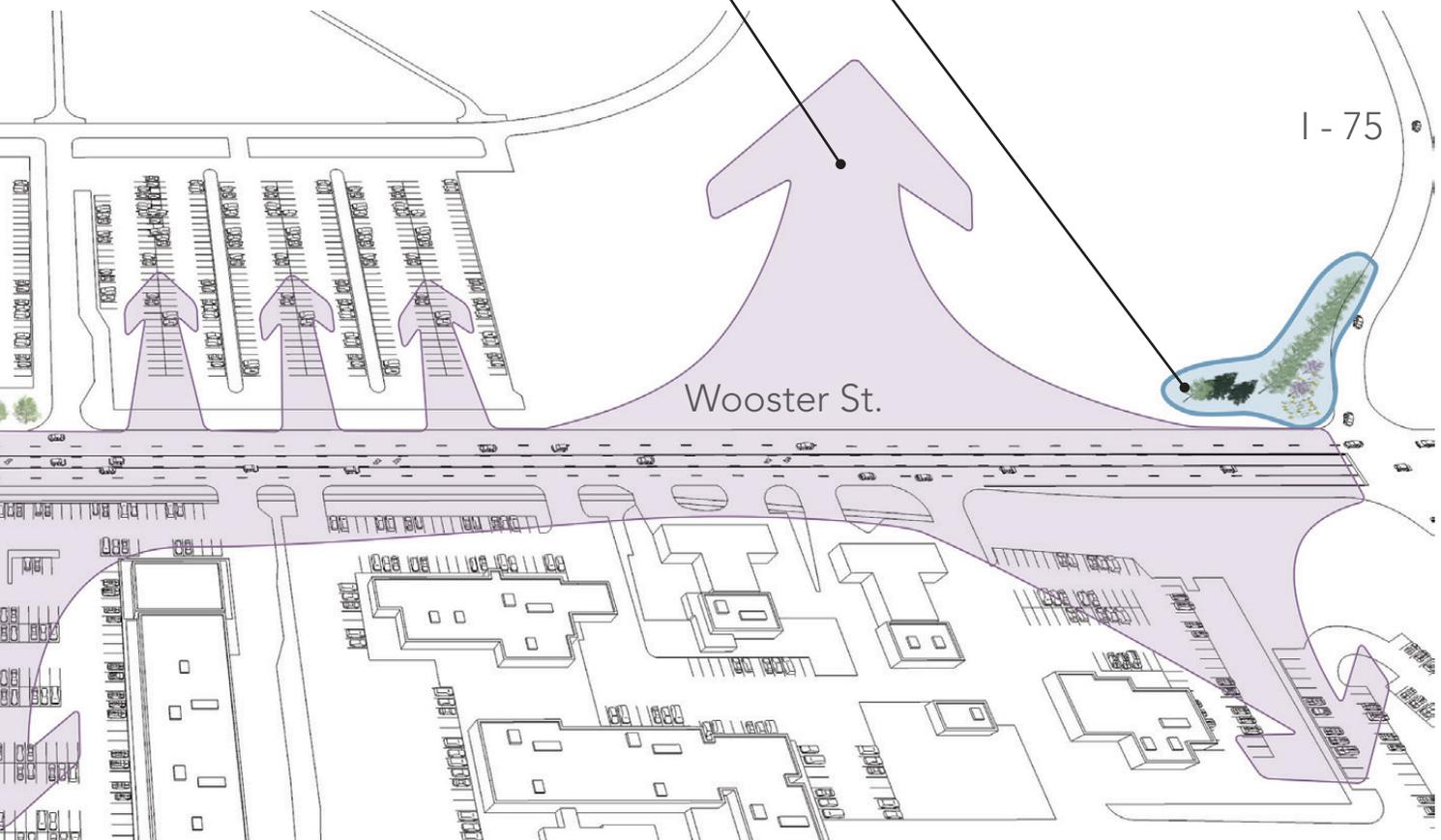
**lack of screening** exposes acres of unattractive surface parking



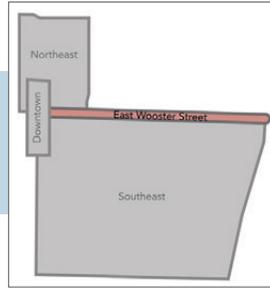
the **lack of enclosure** and shade creates a nondescript corridor



a **barren intersection** is the first impression of Bowling Green (and Bowling Green State University)



# E Wooster



# Improvements

combine **pedestrian and bike path** to make a functional and aesthetically-pleasing corridor and increase economic vitality



**low walls or plantings** would help screen unattractive surface parking



# GOALS

## 1

Create positive first impressions

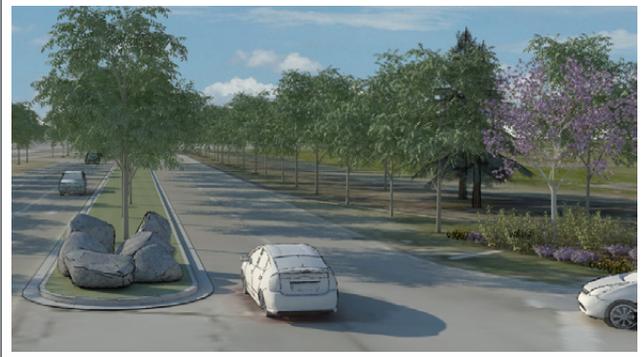
## 2

Harness local flavor and character

## 3

Encourage health and fitness

adding **street trees and a planted median** gives a unique Bowling Green signature to the arrival experience



**strong gateway** features (planting, sculpture) create a striking 'first impression' of Bowling Green



# East Wooster Actions

	What/How	Why (7 Principles)							Who	
		THAT CREATES/PRESERVES A COMMUNITY	POSITIVE, APPEALING FIRST IMPRESSIONS	LOCAL FLAVOR/CHARACTER	A STRONG BUSINESS BASE	A BROAD HOUSING SPECTRUM	“GOOD NEIGHBOR” NEIGHBORHOODS	EASY ACCESS TO HEALTH AND FITNESS	PUBLIC INVESTMENT	PRIVATE INVESTMENT
1	Commission a detailed design study to replace the center turn lane on E. Wooster with a generous center median with street trees and ornamental shrubs. Maintain left turn lanes at intersections and consolidated drive entries (serving multiple properties). Fund through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Capital Improvement Projects</li> <li>• ODOT projects</li> <li>• Special improvement district</li> </ul>									
2	On both sides of E. Wooster, create attractive streetscape with tall, broad-canopy street trees, way finding signs (in conjunction with the downtown), decorative pedestrian lighting, and complete sidewalks. Accomplish through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership with adjacent businesses (Arbor Day volunteer project, low interest loans)</li> <li>• City Capital Improvement Projects</li> <li>• BGSU</li> </ul>									
3	Create a strong “gateway” entry feature near the I-75 interchange. Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple rows of canopy and ornamental trees</li> <li>• Sculpture</li> <li>• Lighting.</li> </ul>									
4	Change zoning along E. Wooster (see Downtown actions).									
5	On the north side of E. Wooster, create sidewalks and bike/ped paths from the Stroh Center to Thurstin, consistent with the BGSU Master Plan and in concert with the BG 7 Principles.									
6	Screen parking lots along E. Wooster. By working with property owners, with adequate lead time, to become compliant with the Streetscape Buffer Yard requirements of the zoning code, including decorative fencing, trees and shrub landscaping.									
7	From Mercer to Dunbridge create a special gateway type of zoning to create a corridor that allows for a distinctive character: signage, landscaping, building form and placement, maximum parking, etc.									



# 9

## Other Upcoming Decisions

In addition to addressing the four key focus areas described above, BG is facing other decisions and challenges only slightly less pressing:



### PARKS AND TRAILS

There are few remaining opportunities for additional parks and off-street trails within BG. This suggests identifying now the general location of new park sites that will be needed in the future, and then making sure that development contributes fairly to the acquisition and development of those parks. This should be part of the next update of the Parks Master Plan.

Trails are usually the most popular recreation amenity in any community. To implement the existing and future plans for trails, all city departments and divisions must plan and work together to pool funds, acquire easements, widen berms, create sharrows, and oversee equitable distributions of parking and capital improvement funds to accommodate all modes of transportation.

### CITY PARK

The current golf course lease on City Park expires in 2025. The city may terminate the lease anytime after 2015, with two year's prior notice required. This suggests an important community conversation could be due about the highest and best uses for this major asset.

### NORTH / SOUTH MAIN

North and South Main are also important entries into BG. Many of the strategies proposed for East Wooster Street could be applied in these areas, including replacing the paved median with a landscaped median, widening sidewalks into multi-use paths, adding street trees, and screening parking lots.

An additional concern is the long-term outlook for the big box centers. Historically, big box centers have a life-span of 20 to 30 years at best, as evidenced by the under-utilized Woodland Mall on North Main. BG needs to begin now to:

1. Work with owners of the Woodland Mall site to find ways to encourage repurposing and/or redevelopment. Explore financial incentives, public-private partnerships, civic uses, and joint creation of a visionary sub-area plan to illustrate possible reuses for investors.
2. For the other centers in BG, consider commercial mixed use zoning and other strategies to maintain their vitality.
3. For future centers, develop design guidelines to assure that they are done in a timeless way that will not quickly become obsolete.

## ANNEXATION

Since cities typically only provide services to people and properties that are within the city boundary and pay city taxes, when property owners want those services they request annexation. Annexation is the way cities typically grow.

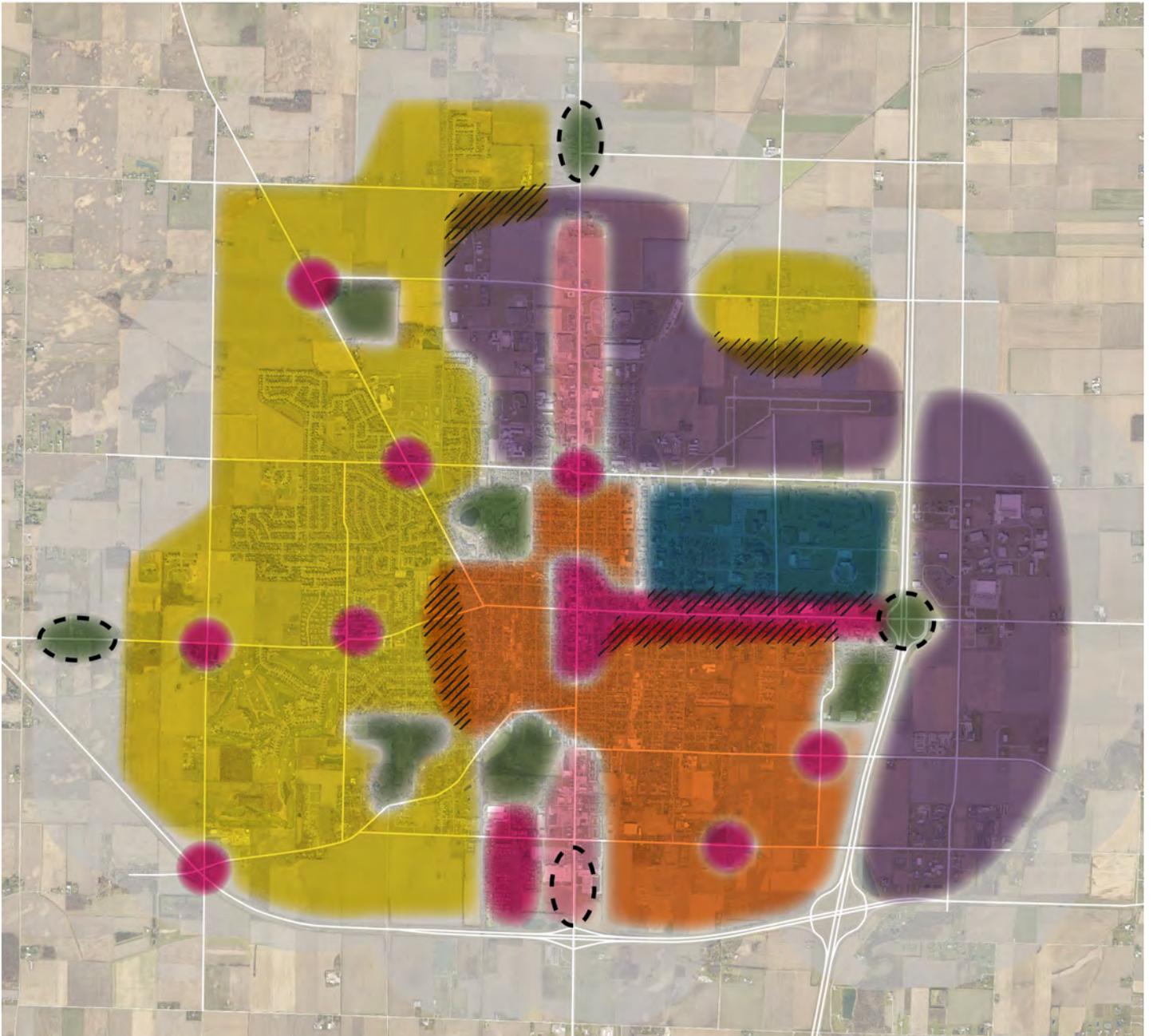
However, annexation commits the city to maintain roads, water, sewer, police, fire services, etc. These all cost money. Cities assume that those costs will be repaid, over time, with additional tax revenues. Only a small portion of BG's revenue comes from property taxes. The majority comes from income taxes often shared with the municipalities where people work.

So, this poses critical questions that should be asked of every proposal that would prompt annexation:

1. Will the new development actually generate sufficient revenue to cover the costs of extending services? Over what period of time?
2. Over the "pay-back" period of the annexation, will we be able to maintain the infrastructure we already have (i.e.: utilities, roads, sidewalks), let alone adding more? Will growth diminish our ability to improve services and quality of life (bike paths, parks, sidewalks, etc.) for those here now?
3. Since annexation absorbs some of the market demand that might go toward filling in the vacant land and redeveloping existing areas in need of improvement, much of which already has infrastructure, how much annexation do we want to encourage?
4. Where should the City annex further? (If we extend in many directions, we may decrease the efficiency and level of service.)
5. Since the kind of development (how compact it is), determines the proportionate cost of infrastructure, what kind of development will be most cost-effective for the city to serve?
6. What types of new development (homes and businesses) will be desired by our Target Market? Will the proposed development increase our appeal to, and competitiveness for, the Target Market?
7. Will the annexation include commercial development? How will additional commercial development affect existing businesses?

These questions need to be answered by a stronger annexation review process and policies that will bring about careful analysis preceding any decisions about annexations.

# Proposed Land Use



	Light manufacturing / assembly (including service and commercial)
	Traditional residential (w/ retail permissions)
	Suburban single family residential (w/ retail permissions)
	Intensive mixed use residential and retail - pedestrian oriented
	Regional serving retail and commercial
	Large parks or preserved open space
	BGSU
	Gateways
	Overlapping uses (transitions or buffers)

## PRINCIPLES, PRIORITIES, AND FIT

1. Bowling Green has concluded the traditional urban core (orange) should be the primary focus of (re)development.
2. The surrounding areas (gray) is a reserve for:
  - a. agriculture
  - b. open space for recreational use.
  - c. policy-directed annexation and development to assure that growth is complimentary to the vitality of the urban core.
3. Downtown and East Wooster, over time, should be extensions of one another in form and use.
4. The western half of Bowling Green (yellow) is low and moderate density residential, and should remain a predominately residential area, but with allowances for neighborhood serving retail and commercial.
5. An area for light manufacturing and assembly is specified east of I-75 and north of BGSU.
6. An underlying principle is boundary permeability. "Zones" or "areas" depicted here should transition smoothly. Areas of overlap signify transitions or buffers.

# [10] Using the 7 Key Principles to Make Decisions

## 1

Approving Development

The five preceding sections addressed issues and challenges that are known and anticipated. There will be many more issues and challenges that we do not presently know about, and cannot anticipate. How does the City use the 7 Key Principles to address unknowns?

The city typically faces three types of decisions:

### APPROVING DEVELOPMENT

#### Projects that are consistent with the zoning on the property

Zoning grants a property owner a vested right—that is, the property owner has been given the right to develop, as long as the development is consistent with all the applicable land use regulations. In this case, even if the comprehensive plan suggests otherwise, existing zoning supersedes. (This is the reason it is so important to make sure that projects are consistent with zoning.)

#### Projects that require a change in zoning, including annexations

When a project is proposed that requires a change in zoning, what should guide decision-making? The comprehensive plan.

### AMENDING REGULATIONS

Regulations that govern how land is developed fall into two categories: zoning (the allowed uses and arrangement on the property) and subdivision (rules about dividing the land and serving individual lots).

Since the land use regulations “vest” development rights, it is important that they be consistent with the comprehensive plan.

### CITY PROJECTS

Physical improvements by the city can do much to

## 2

Amending Regulations

implement (or undermine) the vision for Bowling Green. Therefore, it is important that city projects also be consistent with the comprehensive plan.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK:

The following checklist should be used to make sure that the types of decisions above are consistent with the comprehensive plan, in order of priority:

1. Is the proposal/regulation/project consistent with the 7 Key Principles?
2. Does the proposal/regulation/project help bring about the underlying objectives of the principles?
3. Is the public benefit greater than the public cost?
  - a. --for current residents?
  - b. --for future residents?
4. Does the proposal otherwise make BG more attractive to the Target Market?
5. Does the proposal make BG more competitive in the region?

### IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

Two quick actions the city can take to assure decisions are consistent with the comprehensive plan are to adopt the following policies:

1. In capital improvement budgeting, all requests shall include a demonstration of how the proposed improvement is consistent with, and will help achieve, the BG Plan.
2. All land use decisions will be consistent with the BG Plan. If the proposal is not consistent with the BG Plan, either the proposal will be adjusted, or the BG Plan will be amended, before approval of the proposal.



GRUMPY DAVE'S

The Answer Factory  
COMPUTER SALES & SERVICE

THE MATTHEWS &

ONLY

ONLY

ONLY

TO  
75

↑  
64  
SOUTH NORTH

# 11

## Appendix

### How We Got Here

How our problems evolved—four examples

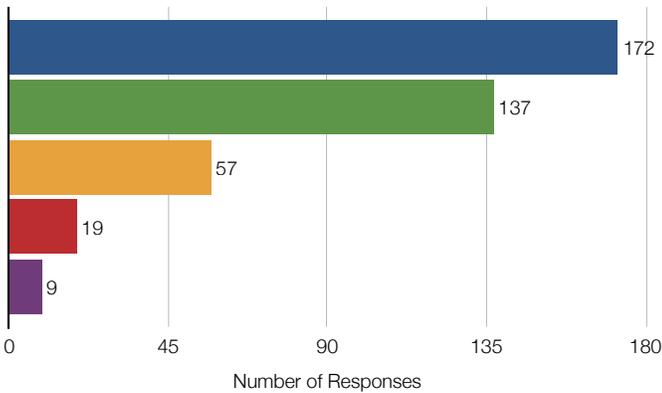
1. In the 1970s and 1980s, when BGSU began to grow but decided not to house all students on-campus, students seeking off-campus housing were able to find it in two ways that would grow problematic. Sellers of single-family homes in NE and SE Bowling Green decreasingly found buyers who were families. During these years, a large suburban house in a new development was all the rage - the very definition of success. Demand went to the suburbs, and older blocks - such as along Prospect and Summit and Enterprise - suffered falling values as a result. To fill the market vacuum, absentee owners were allowed to “apartmentalize” single family homes for students, principally undergraduates. Over time, as more homes were apartmentalized the balance was tipped, and nearby single family homes became the exception. These blocks show the impacts of students: too many cars parked in front, less frequent repairs and painting, a loss of the little things that show pride of ownership (flowers, shrubs, weeding, etc.). Many of these conversions were non-conforming uses, ignored with respect to the city’s zoning code. The failure to properly regulate use has led to this problem - one of a handful that illustrate Bowling Green’s slide.
2. During this same period, the whole of Bowling Green’s southeast side was undergoing massive transformation from its earlier history as ‘Hogtown’ (an area that was unimproved) to a new student enclave. Strong demand for student housing, absent any design standards, resulted in large suburban style, multifamily apartment complexes that lacked any measure of charm or pride and beauty, today show their age, and in the near future will be hard pressed to attract an evermore discerning student market. In form and use, these apartment complexes are prone to market, if not functional, obsolescence. The failure to transition from Hogtown to an urban fabric commensurate with Bowling Green’s underlying grid will mean that this large section of Bowling Green will eventually prove expensive in numerous ways and requires attention.
3. East Wooster is a charmless entryway into Bowling Green, imperiling the city’s - and BGSU’s - capacity to tell a positive story about itself on one hand, and, consequently, undermines the city’s ability to market itself to ever more important Gen X and Millennial households. The market Bowling Green needs, and must retain and attract, and increasingly wants, has charm, beauty, uniqueness, and authenticity. They will locate where they find such qualities.

4. BGSU's fortunes are the city's, and vice versa. Fail to remake Bowling Green the city into the walkable, authentic, small town it was and for which it still has the bones underneath to be, and BGSU will correspondingly struggle to attract the kinds of students, faculty, staff, and alumni that the community needs for it to remain competitive in the future. Bowling Green's failure in the 1980s to manage the transition from a weak NE neighborhood to one competitive for university families and alumni, and parallel failure to manage the transition from Hogtown to a new and essentially urban neighborhood of families and students instead of thousands of dated student apartments today form the basis of a troubling reality for Bowling Green: the fortunes of the city rise and fall with the health of BGSU, and the fortunes of BGSU rise and fall in proportion to the degree to which the city is perceived to be an appealing - and marketable - complement to the university. If the city isn't able to attract and retain faculty, staff, and alumni, it will see well educated households live (and spend) elsewhere. If the city is not able to communicate to parents of potential students not just basic safety but the rich community life that Millennials and their Gen X parents now expect, BGSU will lose its share of top tier students and the resulting financial pressures on BGSU will mean more commuter and more on-line students over time, each with impacts that affect the future value of apartments and the manner in which students interact with local business.

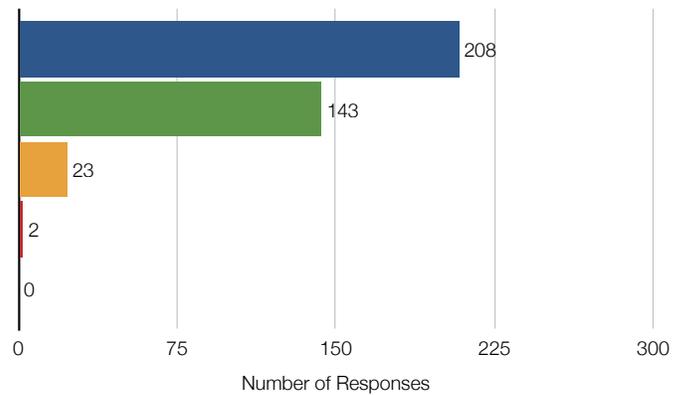
# What the Public Said

● Agree Strongly  
 ● Agree  
 ● Neutral  
 ● Disagree  
 ● Disagree Strongly

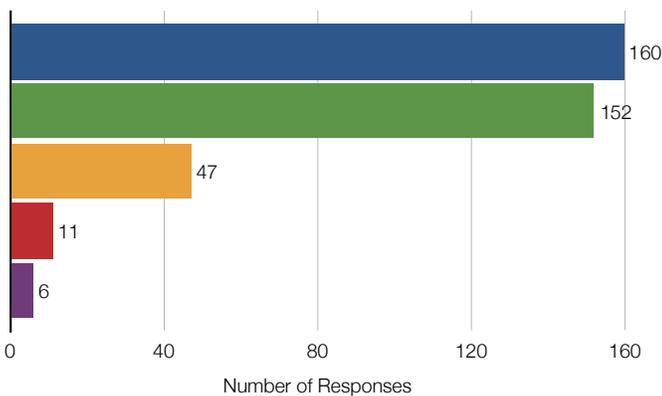
Bowling Green needs to have new development (zoning) regulations that are up to date and capable of addressing today's contemporary market and development challenges



Bowling Green needs to be able to retain and attract young professionals



Bowling Green needs a new comprehensive plan to direct growth and re(development) activities

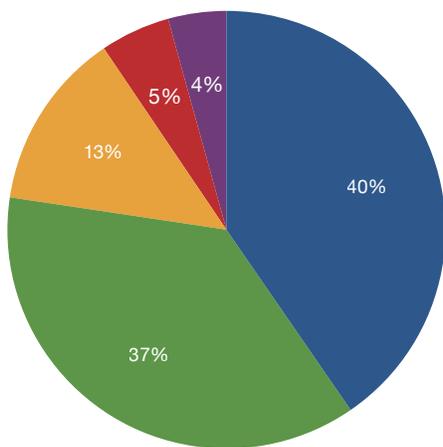


*"Bowling Green is having an identity crisis. Our young professionals buy houses in Perrysburg because of a perceived identity that Perrysburg is upscale."*

*"I heard someone mention how people are moving to Perrysburg, and I think that's true... but I love the historic downtown and the community feel of BG and I don't want to live where there are only strip malls! Keep up the great work."*

● Agree Strongly 
 ● Agree 
 ● Neutral 
 ● Disagree 
 ● Disagree Strongly

The proposed approach for redeveloping E Wooster will be good for Bowling Green's future

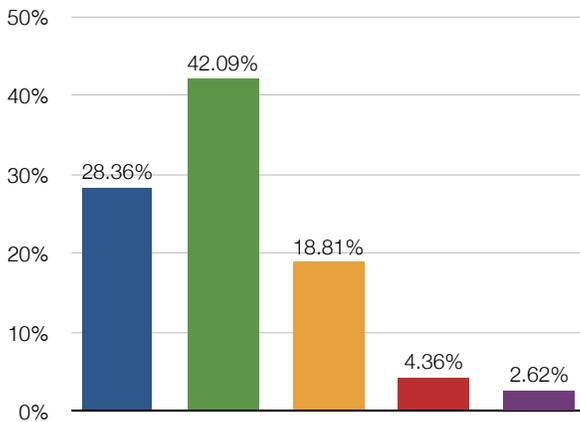


*"BGSU must be encouraged to invest in E. Wooster corridor. Private investment and/or joint private/government projects are necessary. Need to be creative to accomplish project goals."*

*"Please balance the aesthetic and ideal with the practical and realistic. A pretty median at the expense of a recent (and hard-won) turn lane could again clog traffic and imperil safety (rear-end crashes) as drivers slow and stop to turn."*

*"The east side of Bowling Green needs attention, especially east of I-75. When you get off the ramp there is nothing there and it looks like this city has nothing to offer."*

The proposed approach for redeveloping E Wooster is aesthetically pleasing to me



# What the Public Said

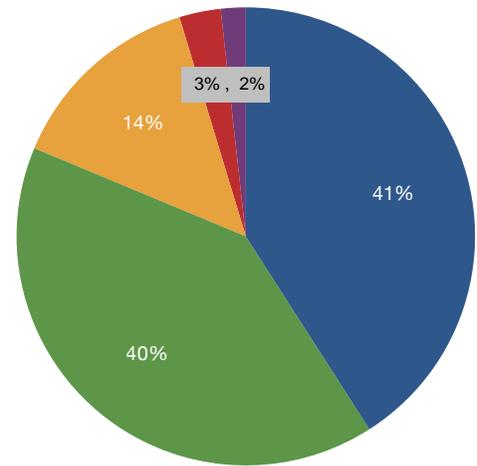
● Agree Strongly  
 ● Agree  
 ● Neutral  
 ● Disagree  
 ● Disagree Strongly

*“Please help families who live south of Wooster near Crim school. In recent years many of those single family homes have been turned in to rental housing and are falling into disrepair. With a great public school nearby, this neighborhood should be attractive to BGSU faculty and staff with families, but it's quickly becoming a party ghetto.”*

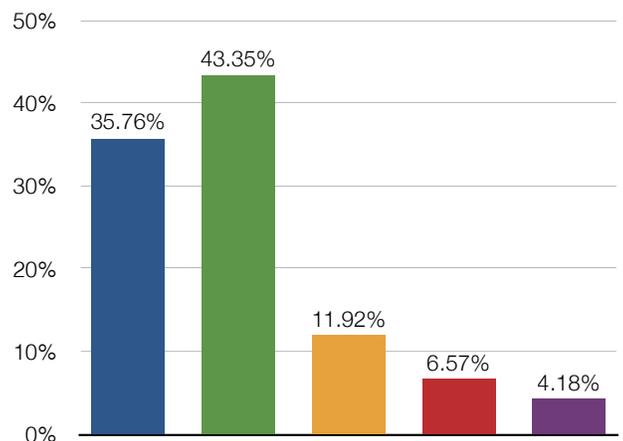
*“Landlords need to be held accountable for the properties that they own. Upkeep of those properties is essential. I am tired of seeing slum-like conditions in the NE and SE areas of my community.”*

*“We think that the time has come to consider trading with landlord/developers, allowing re-zoning of selected areas in Wards 1 and 2 so as to allow townhouses or even apartment buildings, IN EXCHANGE for the landlords/developers converting their R-2 rental houses back to single family use. This should be a guaranteed trade; the City should extract real progress toward restoration of our older neighborhoods in exchange for the higher density zoning.”*

I support the proposed approach for the NE neighborhood in Bowling Green

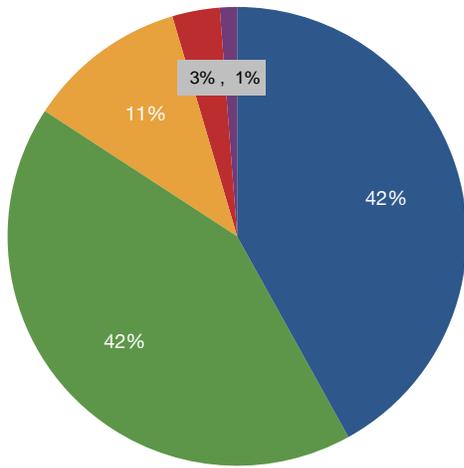


Current conditions in the NE neighborhood of Bowling Green need attention



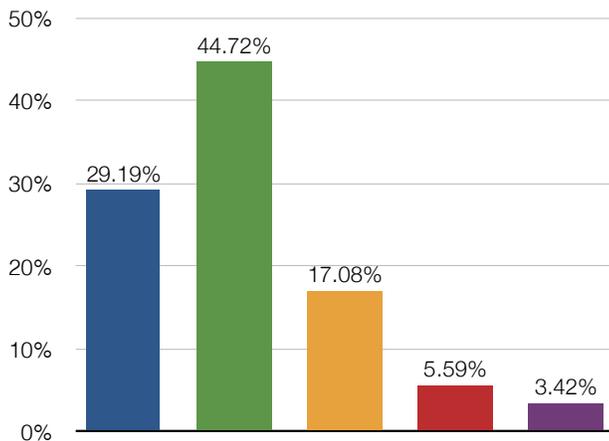
● Agree Strongly ● Agree ● Neutral ● Disagree ● Disagree Strongly

Conditions in the SE neighborhood of Bowling Green need attention



*"How will we protect these areas when people are allowed to park on the grass, not mow their lawns, not trim or cut their bushes, not repair homes and buildings, not control pets... I would happily invest back into my property and my rental homes if I knew my neighbors weren't going to park junk cars in their back yard..."*

I support the proposed approach for the SE neighborhood in Bowling Green



*"Be mindful of pre-existing non-conforming uses. People own and purchase their property expecting to be able to continue current uses. Provided they maintain their property reasonably well government should not try to void those uses, at least until they are legally abandoned."*

# What the Public Said

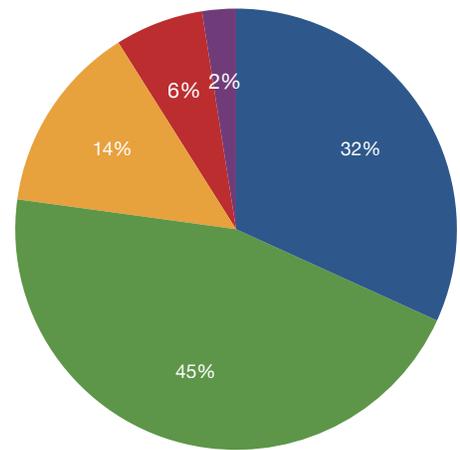
● Agree Strongly  
 ● Agree  
 ● Neutral  
 ● Disagree  
 ● Disagree Strongly

*"I think a parking garage would be beneficial to the downtown area. There are ways that other cities have successfully done this without it sticking out like a sore thumb... a college town with a lot of downtown activity that has successfully done this is Athens, OH. They have a multi-level parking garage that is sort of hidden and nobody notices that it's a parking garage but it is utilized by many."*

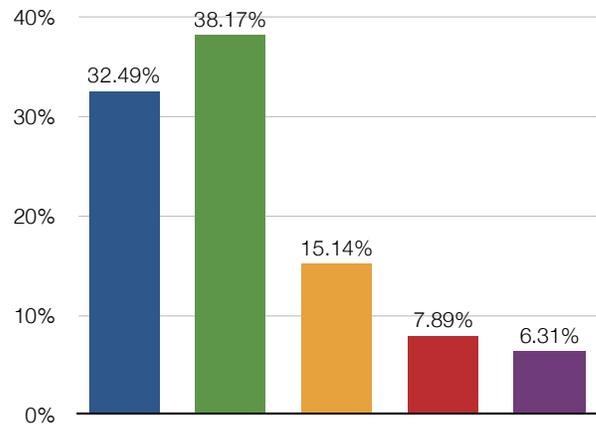
*"I believe that it is within our abilities to make BG a more appealing and trendy place to live. I visit Ann Arbor as much as I can when the weather is nice. That city has a healthful vibe. They have safe, wide bike lanes, outdoor seating with umbrellas in the downtown area. They appear to have found a balance between accommodating cars and bikes/walkers."*

*"There are a lot of shabby looking places in the most visible places of BG, and that's a shame for the city. You can't attract new populations to a town that looks like that. The most important area of a town is downtown. It's the heart of any city. The downtown is what creates the first impressions on visitors when they first arrive in town. And the downtown in BG is not only Main St. but Wooster as well. Don't just beautify East Wooster. Make sure the buildings are functional, clean, and up-kept."*

Current conditions downtown need attention

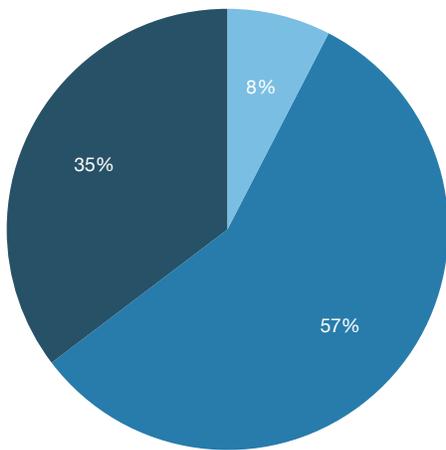


I support the proposed approach for Bowling Green's downtown



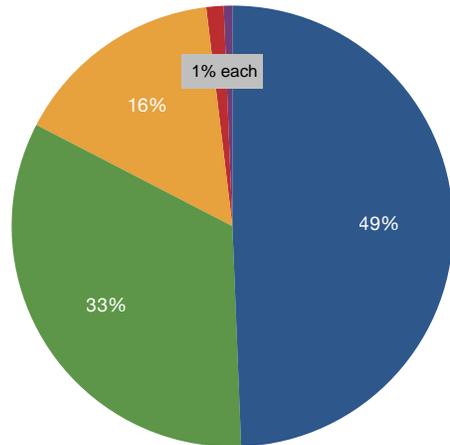
● Agree Strongly  
 ● Agree  
 ● Neutral  
 ● Disagree  
 ● Disagree Strongly

I would be interested in seeing future time and resources dedicated to the following item, which is not currently part of the land use update (select one);

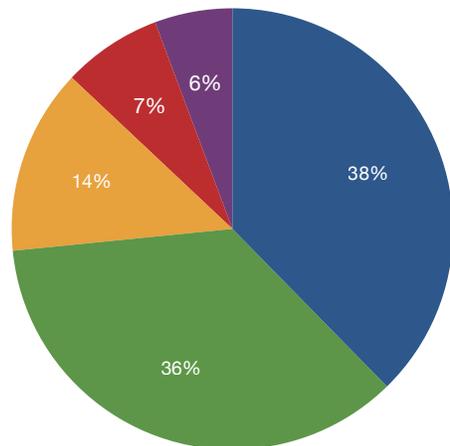


- Annexing land to the west
- Appearance of N/S main commercial corridors
- Creating additional parks

I believe it's time for Bowling Green to increase its level of reinvestment in itself



I am willing to see more of my tax dollars go towards improving the quality of life in Bowling Green, such as parks, trails, bike lanes, street trees, and other aesthetic improvements

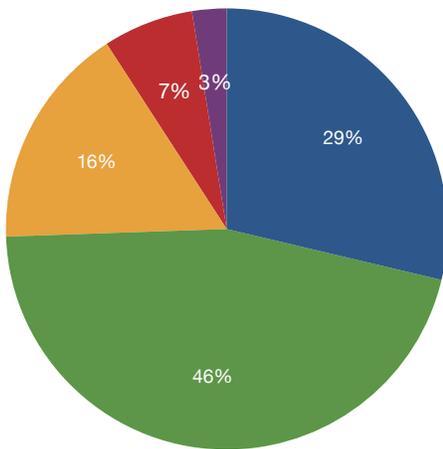


*"I think that it is important to enlist the aid of as many citizens as possible, not only in the conceptualizing process but also as volunteers when work/change actually occurs. Please give citizens the opportunity to raise money and/or contribute hours on a regular basis towards those initiatives that are most important to them. City representatives can begin gathering name/contact information immediately so that interested citizens of BG can begin work as soon as they are needed."*

# What the Public Said

● Agree Strongly  
 ● Agree  
 ● Neutral  
 ● Disagree  
 ● Disagree Strongly

I understand this comprehensive planning and land use update process



*“Landlords should not be viewed as the enemy. Students should not be viewed as the enemy. Bars should not be viewed as the enemy.”*

*“Someone said that the City needs to decide whether it wants to be married to the university and have industry as a mistress or vice versa. I feel that by making changes that make BG more appealing to college students, young professionals and young families we are actually making the community more attractive to industry as well.”*

*“BG needs to encourage a progressive vision yet maintain the charms of an ‘olde’ town - preserve the past, but offer QUALITY. A Levis Commons instead of our dying mall would be great. More bike paths and much more attention to the ‘poor side’ of town needs to be paid. Kudos to the planning commission for seeing this and FINALLY doing something about it!!!”*

*“Quality of life is the most important issue affecting Bowling Green, and that issue most clearly impacts the east side of town. Most of the energy spent updating the plan should be focused on the east side and bringing it up to par with the west side. It’d be great if we could see some creative thought and willpower going toward creating bike lanes and connecting the city and campus, more parks/green spaces, better housing, and more cultural amenities to make BG a vibrant city that attracts and retains young people.”*