



ADVANCE WESTERVILLE

Retain. Develop. Support. Market.

An Economic Development Strategy

09.2023



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“For ten years we've known Westerville as a place that successfully pursues the right growth and development for the city and its residents. An even more dynamic future focusing on unique opportunities with unprecedented success is on the horizon.”

- Boyette



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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Economic Development success happens because of proper planning, the right strategy, good leadership, and bold decision-making. Over the last ten years, Westerville has achieved enviable economic development success, making the city an even better place for its residents and more competitive for its existing business base.

In-depth quantitative and qualitative analysis, paired with community involvement and stakeholder participation, has resulted in the **Advance Westerville** economic development strategy, focused on "fundamentals" that will ensure desired future outcomes.

The strategy process was launched in January, and the plan was finalized in September 2023. The process was led by Boyette Strategic Advisors – Del Boyette, President and CEO; Kay Stebbins, Director of Research; and Riley McCorstin, Research Associate.

INTRODUCTION

City Council Strategic Goal – Thriving Business Climate

In 2022, Westerville City Council adopted an operational strategy, with one of the four priority Strategic Outcomes being a Thriving Business Climate.

The top priority action item under this strategic outcome was to hire a qualified consultant team to lead the update to the City of Westerville's Economic Development Strategy.

The purpose of the Strategy is to focus on programs, initiatives, and actions that will result in job creation and investment, the combination of which will expand the tax base for the City and enable the City to continue providing the high level of public services for which Westerville is known.

The Strategy will also ensure resilience, following the COVID-19 pandemic, turmoil in the commercial real estate market from rising costs and interest rates, and other factors that are driving changes to site selection and corporate location decisions.

Ultimately, only that which can be accomplished within a 3–5-year time horizon will be included in the Strategy because that is the appropriate point when a new strategic planning effort should be undertaken, evaluating new economic circumstances and the results of the action items included in this Strategy being implemented.

Acknowledgements

Community involvement and the valuable support and input of the City Council, City Administration, the Westerville Economic Development team, 65 businesses, participants in two community-wide discussion forums, and several focus group discussions have given thoughtful ideas, opinions, and direction for the development of the **Advance Westerville** plan.

*Note: A complete list of stakeholders who were interviewed as part of this process is available in the Discovery and Findings Report that accompanies the **Advance Westerville** plan.*

City of Westerville

Monica Irelan	City Manager
Jason Bechtold	Assistant City Manager
Rachel Ray	Economic Development Director
Rob Rishel	Economic Development Administrator
Stephen Gale	Economic Development Specialist

Westerville City Council

Michael Heyeck	City Council Chair
Craig Treneff	City Council Vice Chair
Diane Conley	Mayor
Kenneth L. Wright	Vice Mayor
Dennis Blair	Council Member
Coutanya Coombs	Council Member
Megan Reamsnyder	Council Member

Process Overview

A customized approach for the **Advance Westerville** economic development strategy has led to the development of strategic goals and targeted sectors, all designed to enhance Westerville's continued competitiveness and success.

This project began with a baseline economic indicator analysis, as well as an assessment of the city's overall livability. Boyette researched five benchmark communities that were chosen based on their commonalities with Westerville and their economic development competitiveness. Additional research was conducted in the areas of emerging technologies; sector trends and location criteria; support of existing and new businesses; available sites and buildings; housing availability and affordability; and K-12 and post-secondary education.

All data for the benchmarks is included in the *Discovery and Findings Report* that accompanies this plan.

The process has informed the strategies and action items that are designed to meet the four identified strategic goals:

- **Retain**
- **Develop**
- **Support**
- **Market**

Process Overview



Project Launch & Market Analysis	Stakeholder Engagement	Exploration & Discovery	Strategy & Implementation
Pre-Launch Zoom Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Components Timeline Communications Framework Stakeholder Engagement Plan 	One-on-One Interviews Facilitated Group Discussions Online Surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers 	Quantitative & Qualitative Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site & Building Inventory Analysis Benchmark Research Regional Assets Economic Development Needs Other Location Analysis Factors 	Strategic Recommendation Development Target Sector Profiles Draft Deliverable Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Council Work Session
Preliminary Market Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Reports Review Baseline Economic Indicator Analysis Livability Index 	Resident Discovery Sessions Summary of Findings	Target Sector Identification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current Business Sector Data Emerging Sectors Exploration Potential Target Identification Workforce Data Analysis 	Implementation Matrix Metrics Project Delivery
Project Launch Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market Analysis Review Community Asset Tour Core Team-Facilitated Discussion 		Summary of Findings	

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Target Sectors

OTTERBEIN
UNIVERSITY
FOUNDED 1847

TARGET SECTORS

Overview

It takes time and research to validate the relevant industry sectors (clusters of similar firms and employers within an industry) for a community like Westerville. Part of this analysis includes taking an inventory of the community's assets and how those align with factors that will influence a given sector's growth. This analysis is detailed in the Discovery and Findings Report.

TARGET SECTORS
Legacy Business & Industry
Life Sciences - R&D, Genomics, Healthcare
Entrepreneurs/-Startups - FinTech, InsurTech, HealthTech
Financial, Professional & Technology Services – Finance & Insurance, Engineering & Design Firms, IT & Software Services, Logistics
Corporate & Regional HQ
Intel Customers

TARGET SECTORS

Districts

As of 2023, Westerville has limited greenfield available for new development. As a result, thoughtful consideration, creativity, and analysis are required to generate opportunities for redevelopment and limited new development. For this Advance Westerville strategy, target sectors are aligned with a "district" approach, focusing opportunities for target sectors in specific geographic areas of the City of Westerville because they are poised to offer the right mix of real estate, programs, and other amenities necessary to foster growth. These districts are Brookside/Eastwind, South State Street, Uptown, the McCorkle Corridor, the Medical Mile Corridor, Westar, and the Innovation District.



LEGACY BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

5%

Projected Job Growth
All Industries
(2023-2028)

46,000+

Private Jobs in
Westerville
(2023)

\$7.8B

Gross Regional
Product
(2022)

Lightcast 2023.3

SECTOR DEFINED

Westerville has a very strong economic base of Legacy Business and Industry in five key sectors. Those sectors are **Corporate and Regional Headquarters, Financial Services, Healthcare, Transportation/Logistics, and Advanced Manufacturing.**

Bringing a focus to these employers will help ensure the success of these businesses and, as a result, Westerville's success. A focused effort that addresses the needs of legacy companies is essential as these businesses consider expansion, retention, and facilities rationalization.

SELECT EXISTING EMPLOYERS



LIFE SCIENCES

MEDICAL MILE CORRIDOR

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

8,055

Life Sciences jobs in
Westerville labor shed
(45-minute drive time)
(2023)

Top 10

In biological and
biomedical doctorate
completions (The
Ohio State University)

4%

Projected life sciences
industry growth in
labor shed
(2023-2028)

Lightcast 2023.3

SECTOR DEFINED

- **Life Sciences** includes organizations and companies whose work is centered around research and development focused on genomics, biotech, pharmaceuticals, and health sciences
- This sector should be focused in the areas surrounding the **Medical Mile Corridor** to take advantage of existing talent and potential customer base

REGIONAL ASSETS

- Existing talent and potential customers
 - Nationwide Children's Hospital
 - OSU Wexner Medical Center
 - Mt. Carmel St. Ann's
 - OhioHealth
 - Central Ohio Primary Care
- The Ohio State University (13 miles from Westerville)
 - Center for Life Sciences (Columbus)
- Ohio Life Sciences advocacy group
- Battelle - Largest contract research and development organization in the world located in Columbus

LIFE SCIENCES

MEDICAL MILE CORRIDOR

Sector Highlights

- **7 percent** projected growth in sector nationally (2023-2028)
- Opportunity in Central Ohio to grow life sciences sector – research at The Ohio State University Center for Life Sciences
- Global genomics market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 15.35% between 2021 and 2028

Real Estate Needs

- Lab space
- Specialized facilities that include tailored labs, clean rooms, and research facilities
- Proximity to customers
- Proximity to talent and research institutions

Westerville Assets

- Nationwide Children's Hospital
- OSU Wexner Medical Center
- Mt. Carmel St. Ann's
- OhioHealth
- Lake Shored Cryotronics
- Central Ohio Primary Care

ENTREPRENEURSHIP/STARTUPS

INNOVATION DISTRICT

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

#5

Mid-West metro for VC and
Startups
(2023)
Bizjournal.com

2%

Projected growth in
Finance & Insurance
industry in Westerville
(2023-2028)
Lightcast 2023.3

64%

Population with an
Associate's Degree or
higher
Lightcast 2023.3

SECTOR DEFINED

- **Entrepreneurship/Startups** includes small businesses and startups focused on fintech, insurtech, healthcare tech, and the intersection between the three subsectors
- Activities should be focused on a designated **Innovation District** that would include parts of **Main Street, the Otterbein campus, and The Point**

REGIONAL ASSETS

- **The Point** at Otterbein University (Westerville)
- **The Ohio State University** (13 miles from Westerville)
 - **Keenan Center for Entrepreneurship**
- **John Glenn International Airport** (10 miles)
- Downtown **Columbus** (15 miles)
- Existing facilities and programs in Columbus include: **RevI Ventures and Drive Capital**
- **Ohio State University COhatch, Elevate Westerville**, and other existing coworking and support spaces

ENTREPRENEURSHIP/STARTUPS

INNOVATION DISTRICT

Sector Highlights

- The global FinTech market size is expected to grow at a compound CAGR of **10%** between (2022-2027)
- The global FinTech market was valued at **\$133 Billion** (2022)
- The global InsurTech market size was valued at **\$5.45 Billion** (2022)
- Global InsurTech market is expected to expand at a CAGR of **52.7%** from 2023 to 2030

Real Estate Needs

- Small, easily scalable spaces
- Short-term/flexible leases
- Subsidized space
- Proximity to mentors/ customers/talented workforce
- Access to other entrepreneurs and startups/events and marketing opportunities

Westerville Assets

- The Point - Otterbein University
- Existing Corporate Employers that support innovation
- Educated workforce
- Westerville Area Chamber
- COhatch
- Westerville Public Library, with amenities and maker space

FINANCIAL, PROFESSIONAL & TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

BROOKSEGE & SOUTH STATE STREET

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

14,000+

Financial, Professional &
Technology Services Jobs in
Westerville
(2023)

11%

Historic job growth in
Professional Services
labor shed
(2018-2023)

3%

Projected IT job
growth in Westerville
(2023-2028)

Lightcast 2023.3

SECTOR DEFINED

- **Financial, Professional & Technology Services** includes Engineering & Design Firms, IT & Software Services, Logistics, and the support staff/industries for those operations
- Activities should be concentrated around the **Brooksedge** and **South State Street** areas

REGIONAL ASSETS

- City-owned data center – **WeConnect**
- **Otterbein University**
- **The Ohio State University** (13 miles)
- **John Glenn International Airport** (10 miles)
- **Downtown Columbus** (15 miles)
- Presence of 15 Fortune 500 companies in the region
- Diverse industry mix in the Columbus Region
- Educated Workforce
 - 64.7% of the population age 25+ have an Associate's Degree or higher
- Proximity to Intel

FINANCIAL, PROFESSIONAL & TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

BROOKSEGE & SOUTH STATE STREET

Sector Highlights

- Global revenue in Professional Services expected to grow at CAGR of 5.62% (2023-2028)
- Global engineering services market projected to grow at CAGR of 3.3% (2023-2027)
- 45 percent historic growth in Software Publishers in Westerville (2018-2023)
- Intel - \$20 billion investment to develop semiconductor manufacturing facility in Central Ohio
- 27% historic growth in IT services cluster in nation (2018-2023)
- 13% projected growth in IT services cluster in nation (2023-2028)

Real Estate Needs

- Flex/high bay space
- Access to talent and amenities
- Proximity to interstate/regional road networks
- Proximity to clients

Westerville Assets

- City-owned data center – We-Connect
- Proximity to Columbus (15 miles)
- Educated Workforce
- Existing business base
- Otterbein University
- The Ohio State University (13 miles)

CORPORATE & REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS

WESTAR & SOUTH STATE STREET

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

9,400+

HQ and support jobs
in Westerville
(2022)

Lightcast 2023.3

2%

Projected Corporate/Regional
HQ job growth in labor shed
(2022-2028)

Lightcast 2023.3

15

Existing Fortune 500
companies located in
Columbus region

Westerville.gov

SECTOR DEFINED

- **Corporate & Regional Headquarters** offices, including the management and legal, accounting, HR, IT, marketing staff
- Activities should be focused around the existing cluster of headquarters and support services around Westar and South State Street areas

REGIONAL ASSETS

- Westerville-owned data center – **WeConnect**
- **Otterbein University**
- Educated Workforce
 - 64.7 percent of the population age 25+ have an Associate's Degree or higher
- Located within 500 miles of over half the United States and Canadian population
- Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and Indianapolis less than 300 miles
- **The Ohio State University** (13 miles)
- **John Glenn International Airport** (10 miles)
- **Downtown Columbus** (15 miles)

CORPORATE & REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS

WESTAR & SOUTH STATE STREET

Sector Highlights

- 96% historic growth in Activities Related to Credit Intermediation in Westerville (2018-2023) – largest industry sub-sector growth and includes jobs related to fintech and digital banking operations (Chase, Wells Fargo, etc.)
- 2 percent projected growth in Corporate HQ cluster in Westerville (2023-2028)
- DHL Supply Chain and JP Morgan Chase have corporate/regional HQ operations in Westerville

Real Estate Needs

- Class A office
- Proximity to talent and amenities
- Access to hotels, conference space, and mobility assets

Westerville Assets

- City-owned data center – We-Connect
- Proximity to Columbus
- Proximity to John Glenn International Airport
- Educated Workforce
- Existing business base
- Otterbein University
- The Ohio State University (Columbus)

INTEL CUSTOMERS

WESTAR/BROOKSEDGE & EASTWIND

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

\$20B

Investment made by Intel in the Central Ohio region

9 Miles

From Uptown Westerville to the Intel site

3,000+

Projected direct Intel jobs added to the region

Intel.com

SECTOR DEFINED

- **Intel Customers** include users of Intel products, who are expected to cluster in the region as a result of the investment
- The users of the products include IT firms, engineering firms, electronics manufacturing, automotive manufacturing, and other forms of advanced manufacturers and purchasers of chips

REGIONAL ASSETS

- **New Albany International Business Park** (10 miles)
- Westerville-owned data center – **WeConnect**
- **Otterbein University**
- Located within 500 miles of over half the United States and Canadian population
- Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and Indianapolis less than 300 miles
- **The Ohio State University** (13 miles)
- **John Glenn International Airport** (10 miles)
- **Downtown Columbus** (15 miles)

INTEL CUSTOMERS

WESTAR/BROOKSEdge & EASTWIND

Sector Highlights

- \$20 Billion investment made by Intel in 2022 to construct new manufacturing facilities for the purposes of semiconductor development
- 3,000+ projected jobs
- 2 new facilities under construction in nearby Licking County, OH
- Less than 10 miles away from Uptown Westerville to the New Albany International Business Park in Licking County

Real Estate Needs

- Users are diverse; therefore, space requirements will differ
- Light manufacturing facilities and office space
- Proximity to talent and amenities

Westerville Assets

- Westerville-owned data center – We-Connect
- Proximity to Columbus
- Proximity to John Glenn International Airport
- Educated Workforce
- Existing business base
- Otterbein University
- The Ohio State University (Columbus)

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Strategic Goals

STRATEGIC GOALS

Overview

The findings of the qualitative and quantitative research and analytics have led to development of strategic recommendations in four categories, all designed to maximize Westerville's economic development assets and address any challenges that may be present during the next five years. These strategies and associated action steps provide a focus on the fundamentals of successful economic development, while also continuing to enhance the city's economic development competitiveness over the next five years.

The strategic goals will serve as a guide to strengthen the city's economic base and focus resources in areas that will help improve economic competitiveness; promote innovation; develop and attract a skilled workforce; and raise awareness of Westerville's key assets. Additionally, these recommendations will help Westerville maximize its assets and mitigate challenges that might otherwise limit the city's competitiveness on a regional, national, and global scale.



STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Retain

Develop programs that are focused on and responsive to the needs of the businesses who are well established in Westerville and will require support to weather any economic challenges on the horizon resulting from workforce competition, rising costs, increased emphasis on new industries like the semiconductor industry, post-pandemic challenges, etc.

#	Strategies
1	Launch a proactive existing industry program.
2	Continue to leverage Otterbein University as a key competitive advantage.
3	Maximize Westerville's existing assets to support employer needs.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop

Programs and strategies to focus plans and resources in areas that are primed for growth, development, and redevelopment.

#	Strategies
1	Redevelop and reposition aging commercial real estate to maximize Westerville's competitive product availability.
2	Invest in infrastructure developments that will support future economic development efforts.
3	Continue to enhance the economic vitality of Uptown to support City Council's goal of an Authentic and Alive Uptown Westerville.
4	Study economic development tools that will enable Westerville's boundaries to grow and result in expanded land available for development.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Support

Programs and amenities to ensure businesses of all sizes and across industries will be successful in Westerville, particularly those that are unique to Westerville (i.e., utilities, infrastructure, emphasis on DEI, and sustainability).

#	Strategies
1	Convene employers, education/training partners, and others in the workforce ecosystem to address ongoing workforce needs and skills gaps.
2	Encourage the growth of the innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem.
3	Support equitable economic development as part of growth and redevelopment in key strategic areas.
4	Explore the opportunities for continued growth in the Medical Mile.
5	Leverage the Westerville Industry and Commerce Corporation (WICC) as a strategic conduit for economic development programs and opportunities.
6	Continue to understand the needs of Westerville businesses and potential prospects as they relate to sustainability.
7	Collaborate with regional partners on economic development efforts.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Market

Raising awareness of the Westerville story, and our unique value proposition, in a strategic and targeted approach.

#	Strategies
1	Develop key messages and a marketing strategy to support the expansion of Westerville's target industries.
2	Leverage Westerville's "Smart City" initiatives to support the economic development strategy.
3	Create a branding initiative for the "Medical Mile."
4	Promote the attributes of Westerville City Schools.
5	Cultivate community economic development champions through enhanced education.

GOAL: RETAIN

Strategy: Launch a proactive existing industry program.

One of the strategy's top priorities is to maintain and enhance connections with the existing business community. This strategy focuses on listening and responding to those who have already chosen to invest in Westerville, promoting their achievements, and helping them and their employees achieve new levels of success.

- **Action Item:** Make regular visits to corporate headquarters of key Westerville employers to develop relationships with business leaders and monitor the pulse of the company.
- **Action Item:** Monitor workforce needs of legacy business and industry and align education/training programs to address those needs.
- **Action Item:** Continue to host industry-specific luncheons and business breakfasts to strengthen relationships with legacy business and industry.
- **Action Item:** Maintain a contact and communications database between the City of Westerville and its businesses.
- **Action Item:** Plan company- and industry-specific appreciation events to support Westerville's legacy business and industry.

GOAL: RETAIN

Strategy: Launch a proactive existing industry program. (continued)

- **Action Item:** Promote mobility options to ensure employees of Westerville businesses can easily access Uptown during lunch hours.
- **Action Item:** Explore opportunities to streamline permitting processes.

GOAL: RETAIN

Strategy: Continue to leverage Otterbein University as a key competitive advantage.

As one of the members of the Westerville Partnership and a key talent pipeline for the City of Westerville, this strategy identifies four action items to explore in partnership with Otterbein University to expand on their existing assets, while recognizing that the University is entering a new period of growth and opportunity with its Antioch University partnership announced in 2022.

- **Action Item:** Collaborate with Otterbein University and Antioch University to leverage the Coalition for the Common Good as an economic development asset.
- **Action Item:** Co-promote Otterbein University events, activities, announcements, and key metrics that support the City's economic development strategy.
- **Action Item:** Work with the University to ensure that Otterbein students are connected to employment opportunities, housing, and community amenities pre- and post-graduation.
- **Action Item:** Partner with Otterbein University to maximize opportunities for The Point and future innovation districts.

GOAL: RETAIN

Strategy: Maximize Westerville's existing assets to support employer needs.

Westerville is unlike any other municipality in the Columbus Region and certainly unique among other communities across the country, for many reasons. This strategy seeks to leverage those key differentiating assets and ensure the business community is able to connect directly to and benefit from these key assets.

- **Action Item:** Improve visibility, awareness, and accessibility of Westerville's mobility infrastructure in key business districts.
- **Action Item:** Ensure that key business districts include walkable access to high-quality open spaces, building on Westerville's "City within a Park" reputation.
- **Action Item:** Provide responsive, cost-effective service and forward-thinking infrastructure through Westerville's world-class public utilities.
- **Action Item:** Develop an inventory of all "smart city" activities and expand efforts where gaps exist.

Gilbert Smart Cities Tech

During 2020, Gilbert, AZ, created digital applications to support administrative tasks for employers. These include virtual building inspections and online permitting procedures that reduce time and costs.

Benchmark Communities Smart Cities Include:

- Fishers, IN
- Georgetown, TX
- Gilbert, AZ
- Morrisville, NC

GOAL: DEVELOP

Strategy: Redevelop and reposition aging commercial real estate to maximize Westerville's competitive product availability.

As available greenfield land in Westerville becomes increasingly scarce, the city will need to focus on land use policies and development tools that will facilitate redevelopment and infill development - which is often more costly and expensive. These action items are intended to ensure Westerville maximizes development potential consistent with the type of commercial real estate in demand among the identified target sectors.

- **Action Item:** Identify and evaluate all properties with redevelopment potential in the identified geographic areas poised for economic growth.
- **Action Item:** Explore the feasibility of securing aging commercial buildings for conversion to space suitable for the life sciences industry.
- **Action Item:** Work with developers to reimagine older commercial properties into mixed-use developments, with considerations for workforce housing.
- **Action Item:** Allow for flexible scaling and infill development of existing sites and encourage infill development.

"The Stitch" Morrisville, NC

The redevelopment of the 25-acre Morrisville Outlet Mall into a mixed-use bio-sciences facility called the Stitch resulted in more than \$35 million in investment. The Stitch is situated on what used to be tired commercial property and is now home to genetic testing company Invitae, restaurants, retail, and wellness amenities.

GOAL: DEVELOP

Strategy: Redevelop and reposition aging commercial real estate to maximize Westerville's competitive product availability. (continued)

- **Action Item:** Create vibrant areas with diverse amenities surrounding office developments.
- **Action Item:** Consider familiarization visit by the economic development team to Morrisville, NC.
- **Action Item:** Deepen the City economic development team's understanding of key economic drivers and financing tools for development and redevelopment and monitor economic trends.

Strategy: Invest in infrastructure developments that will support future economic development efforts.

Development is impossible without appropriately sized and located infrastructure - period. This strategy links the redevelopment strategy with opportunities to be gained from one of Westerville's key differentiators: world-class public utilities and thoughtfully planned infrastructure.

- **Action Item:** Explore opportunities to leverage the Westerville Electric Division as an economic development competitive advantage.
- **Action Item:** Maintain and enhance WeConnect service and fiber to offer residents and businesses the most technologically-advanced internet access available.
- **Action Item:** Utilize TIF opportunities to ensure new investment in infrastructure.

GOAL: DEVELOP

Strategy: Continue to enhance the economic vitality of Uptown to support City Council's goal of an Authentic and Alive Uptown Westerville.

Another one of the four Strategic Outcomes identified by Westerville City Council is an Authentic and Alive Uptown, closely related to the Thriving Business Climate Outcome. This strategy identifies specific action items that will ensure that Uptown Westerville not only retains its focus on preservation and incredibly special history, but also continues to evolve, while maintaining its status as the heart of the community and another uniquely Westerville asset that adds value to every other part of the city.

- **Action Item: Attract an appropriately-scaled boutique hotel to Uptown that includes a destination bar and restaurant.**
- **Action Item: Grow the food and arts scene in Westerville by taking a targeted approach to attract restaurants, breweries/distilleries, entertainment venues, and art galleries.**
- **Action Item: Encourage infill development in Uptown to include housing options.**
- **Action Item: Promote the availability of infrastructure and incentives for fire suppression of historic properties.**

Hotel Florence Florence, SC

60-room Boutique hotel located in downtown Florence, SC, with adjoining restaurant. The city worked with developers on the redevelopment project in 2013. The City of Florence incented the \$5.6 million investment with a \$450,000 development grant.

GOAL: DEVELOP

Strategy: Study economic development tools that will enable Westerville's boundaries to grow and result in expanded land available for development.

The Advance Westerville Economic Development Strategy has already noted that there is limited land available within the city's current corporation limits for new greenfield development. It is in the city's best interest to evaluate opportunities that allow for the city's footprint to strategically grow, informed by thoughtful land use, infrastructure, and financial feasibility analyses.

- **Action Item: Conduct economic feasibility studies for any potential growth areas.**
- **Action Item: Pursue appropriate due diligence activities, including land use and infrastructure planning, for key growth areas.**

GOAL: SUPPORT

Strategy: Convene employers, education/training partners, and others in the workforce ecosystem to address ongoing workforce needs and skills gaps.

Workforce remains a top concern among legacy businesses, as well as those considering Westerville as a future location to grow. The action items supporting this strategy are intended to build on the foundations laid by the Westerville WorkWISE Collective, led through a partnership between the City and the Westerville Chamber - another Westerville Partnership member.

- **Action Item:** Take a leadership role in advancing the Westerville WorkWISE Collective's workforce development initiatives.
- **Action Item:** Refresh the membership of the WorkWISE Collective to ensure that the correct organizations are included and that members are in position to advance workforce initiatives.
- **Action Item:** Monitor high-demand occupations and skills to ensure a responsive talent pipeline for existing employers.
- **Action Item:** Identify skills that may be lost to an aging workforce and automation, and work with education/training partners to offer opportunities to increase talent availability.

GOAL: SUPPORT

Strategy: Encourage the growth of the innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Since the City of Westerville's previous economic development strategy was completed in 2014, there has been exciting growth in the community of assets supportive of an entrepreneurial ecosystem - namely, the opening of Elevate office suites at Westar Place; the COhatch coworking community developed with the support of the City of Westerville at the City's former historic Armory property on South State Street; and the foundation of The Point at Otterbein. This strategy seeks to maximize the impact of these assets and grow the ecosystem to foster more innovation and investment in the Westerville startup community.

- **Action Item:** Designate a strategic area of Westerville for an Innovation District to encourage innovative startups to cluster in an area with proper zoning, commercial real estate, and supportive infrastructure.
- **Action Item:** Develop workspaces, programs, and amenities to support innovators and entrepreneurs in Westerville.
- **Action Item:** Engage with Otterbein University to focus The Point on fintech, insurtech, healthtech, and logistics technologies.
- **Action Item:** Work with the Westerville Public Library, a member of the Westerville Partnership, to leverage the Innovation Lab as a key resource in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

GOAL: SUPPORT

Strategy: Support equitable economic development as part of growth and redevelopment in key strategic areas.

The City of Westerville embarked on the creation of a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Framework in 2023, alongside the development of this economic development strategy. While the full results of the DEIB Framework are forthcoming as of the completion of this strategy, this action item ensures that the City continues to place a focus on DEIB priorities related to Westerville's economic development practices.

- **Action Item: Align economic development programs with the City of Westerville DEI Framework.**

GOAL: SUPPORT

Strategy: Explore the opportunities for continued growth in the Medical Mile.

From 1984, when Mount Carmel St. Ann's hospital was the first suburban hospital to open in the Columbus Region on Cleveland Avenue, to 2023, when Orthopedic One opened its new headquarters and orthopedic medical offices on Polaris Parkway, Westerville has had a thriving medical corridor with a heavy concentration of clinical and healthcare administration jobs. This strategy recognizes that additional growth is possible - and could be supercharged by the addition of a medical college to address a critical healthcare workforce need.

- **Action Item:** Explore the opportunity for an osteopathic medical school in Westerville as a key workforce pipeline for the healthcare industry sector.
- **Action Item:** Conduct a feasibility analysis, including evaluating admissions data at existing osteopathic medical schools.
- **Action Item:** Consider opportunities to develop a strong hospital relationship for student rotations during the four-year education program.
- **Action Item:** Identify a partner institution of higher education and determine if the partnership offers a possible sponsorship option.

GOAL: SUPPORT

Strategy: Leverage the Westerville Industry and Commerce Corporation (WICC) as a strategic conduit for economic development programs and opportunities.

The City's Westerville Industry and Commerce Corporation (WICC) has been an important tool for the City's economic development programs and strategic initiatives, with potential to grow further. The action items associated with this strategy are intended to leverage WICC in a more strategic manner, in support of many of the other strategies outlined in the Advance Westerville Economic Development Strategy.

- **Action Item: Develop a real estate strategy for WICC.**
- **Action Item: Understand partnership opportunities for development and redevelopment with WICC.**

GOAL: SUPPORT

Strategy: Continue to understand the needs of Westerville businesses and potential prospects as it relates to sustainability.

Sustainability is a key priority for the Westerville City Council, with each City department and division tasked with incorporating programs that support environmental sustainability into the delivery of public services. Moreover, many businesses are placing increased importance on practices that will support corporate carbon neutrality goals. This strategy is designed to focus on ways to leverage Westerville's public utilities and other services to support community sustainability goals.

- **Action Item: Promote Westerville's existing sustainability initiatives and assets among existing businesses.**
- **Action Item: Advocate for a diversification of electric generation mix.**

GOAL: SUPPORT

Strategy: Collaborate with regional partners on economic development efforts.

No economic development strategy can be implemented in isolation. It is a truism in economic development that rising tides raise all ships, from a regional economic development perspective; and the strategies in this Advance Westerville Economic Development Strategy will be most successful and will best serve the existing and future business community when diverse, regional, and national partners sign on to assist with implementation.

- **Action Item:** Coordinate on strengthening public services and infrastructure to support Westerville businesses.
- **Action Item:** Leverage unique programs and opportunities that are only available through partnerships.
- **Action Item:** Explore opportunities to maximize the Columbus region's commitment to Smart Cities.

GOAL: MARKET

Strategy: Develop key messages and a marketing strategy to support the expansion of Westerville's target industries.

The City of Westerville has benefited for many years from sound City leadership, thoughtful decision-making, talented City staff, and innovative programs and initiatives - the result of which is a community of residents and business leaders with an incredibly high level of satisfaction with living and doing business in Westerville. The purpose of this strategy and its supporting action items is to develop clear, concise, and targeted messaging around Westerville's successes and key assets to raise awareness of the city's unique value proposition to attract and retain the next generation of business decision-makers.

- **Action Item:** Identify opportunities to network and/or market Westerville to business prospects through industry events.
- **Action Item:** Inventory key conferences, seminars, and trade shows for each target sector.
- **Action Item:** Determine sector events that provide the best opportunities for meeting and developing relationships with target companies and other decision-makers within the target sectors.
- **Action Item:** Utilize social media and targeted marketing strategies to raise Westerville's brand awareness within these key sector audiences.
- **Action Item:** Leverage key business and community leaders to facilitate introductions to business leaders within target sectors.

GOAL: MARKET

Strategy: Develop key messages and a marketing strategy to support the expansion of Westerville’s target industries.

(continued)

- **Action Item:** Collaborate with community partners and industry associations to host networking events, conferences, and other industry programs.

Strategy: Leverage Westerville’s “Smart City” initiatives to support the economic development strategy.

The City of Westerville was recognized as a Top 7 Intelligent Community worldwide by the Intelligent Communities Foundation (ICF) in back-to-back years (2019 and 2020), in recognition of Westerville's forward-thinking approach to public services and utilities. This strategy is designed to ensure the City continues to focus on Smart City priority initiatives, while linking them to economic development opportunities to grow the city's tax base.

- **Action Item:** Promote Westerville “Smart City” programs and services using key messages that will resonate with existing business and industry, as well as target industry sectors.
- **Action Item:** Consider a community, regional, or state event that promotes Smart City initiatives by demonstrating and/or offering hands-on experiences to Westerville residents and businesses.

GOAL: MARKET

Strategy: Create a branding initiative for the “Medical Mile.”

Almost every major health system in Central Ohio has a presence on Westerville's "Medical Mile," located along Cleveland Avenue, generally between Schrock Road and Cleveland Avenue and Africa Road, and anchored by Mount Carmel St. Ann's Hospital and the OhioHealth Westerville Medical Center. This strategy notes the opportunities to be gained from branding and raising awareness of this asset, particularly as the city seeks to attract new investment in the life sciences and healthcare technology sectors.

- **Action Item:** Explore signage, common design themes, and placemaking assets in the “Medical Mile” corridor to create a marketable brand.
- **Action Item:** Align marketing activities to position Westerville as a healthcare hub with commitment to R&D and new technologies (i.e., healthtech, insurtech, health informatics).

GOAL: MARKET

Strategy: Promote the attributes of Westerville City Schools.

The Westerville City Schools are another key member of the Westerville Partnership - one that is directly responsible for a crucial talent pipeline for the region, as well as a quality-of-life measure. The action items supporting this strategy focus on maximizing collaboration between the City and the Schools.

- **Action Item:** Build a relationship with the Westerville City Schools Public Information Officer (PIO) to explore future collaboration.
- **Action Item:** Collaborate regularly with the school district to identify and promote impactful stories and data points that support the community's economic development strategy.

Potential School Marketing Topics

- # of National Merit Semifinalists per year
- Experience level of teachers
- # of AP Scholars
- Standardized test score improvements
- % of graduates that attend university
- Career prep courses
- Student body diversity – 65 native languages spoken by students

GOAL: MARKET

Strategy: Cultivate community economic development champions through enhanced education.

There are many, many people who live and/or work in Westerville who love the community and are invested in its long-term success. However, economic development can be complex and nuanced and difficult for a typical resident or business leader to identify how they can directly plug in and help Advance Westerville. The action items supporting this strategy are intended to develop community champions by enhancing community education and messaging around the City of Westerville's economic development strategy.

- **Action Item:** Regularly update Westerville's key economic development messages and value proposition.
- **Action Item:** Develop and maintain a simple, up-to-date "elevator pitch" capturing Westerville's unique assets and value proposition.
- **Action Item:** Publish infographics, social media messages, and news releases that raise awareness of the impact of economic development on community quality of life.
- **Action Item:** Create a content calendar for social media outreach, with a focus on existing employers, prospective new companies, developers, brokers, and others who may be in position to positively contribute to Westerville's economic development efforts.

GOAL: MARKET

Strategy: Cultivate community economic development champions through enhanced education. (continued)

- **Action Item:** Engage in beneficial communication with elected officials to continue to share the impact of economic development efforts in the community.
- **Action Item:** Include Westerville's strong commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in economic development communications.

4

Endnotes

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