

WARD | City Council Survey 2019

Education

B.A., The Ohio State University; J.D., Saint Louis University School of Law

Professional / Occupational Achievements

Former vice chairman, Ohio State Fire Commission Former president, Ohio Women's Bar Association Woman of the Year, Convenience Store News' Top Women in Convenience Legislative Committee, National Association of Convenience Stores Former trustee, Columbus Children's Theater.

QUESTIONS RE: THE UMCH PROPERTY

Whatever happens to the large centrally located United Methodist Children's Home site will be key to Worthington going forward. What is your vision for this property? Be specific as to commercial, residential, open community space and the amenities that would be placed on that space.

First, we must not do economic harm to the community. Housing is, frankly, not helpful at a time when school overcrowding is, and will continue to be, an issue. In contrast, offices would forestall, not fuel, school overcrowding and would drive more income tax revenue. For these reasons, we should focus on offices and a park rather than housing. This could be a city greenspace offering the welcoming 'feel' and integrity of a traditional Worthington neighborhood landscape. It could a place for families to gather with perhaps a high-end wedding space like Franklin Park to generate revenue.

To what degree should the desires of Worthington residents determine the outcome at UMCH?

We should be listening to the residents of the City of Worthington. Sadly, Worthington City Council is listening to developers.

The June, 2019 city financial report shows large positive balances in the General Fund and All Funds accounts. Would you use any of this money for the purchase of some or all of UMCH by the city? Yes or no.

It is definitely an option. Land appreciation is better than, or similar to, investing the money at the low interest rates the city gets. And, if the property is developed with offices, it can pay for itself.

Will you take action to see that UMCH is developed as a complete and coherent whole; not in a piecemeal fashion. Yes or no.

It is preferable to develop the UMCH property as a whole. That said, should the UMCH property be developed in its entirety, we should make haste slowly. It's important to balance urgency and diligence.

QUESTIONS RE: THE WIDER COMMUNITY

At a recent meeting a millennial who moved into Worthington with his family a year ago praised our community's "vibe", which he contrasted with other places that have experienced large, dense development. How can the character of Worthington be preserved as our own development projects move forward?

I grew up in Worthington and I get the "vibe" of Worthington - walkable, bustling but still quaint in certain ways. We don't really want to become the Short North, where nobody can find a parking space and developers are constantly building upwards 8 stories to 10, and now 28 stories where the North Market parking lot stood. There's a point at which you risk losing what makes you special. Let's keep development to primarily 2 stories. And, we don't need apartments. We have only one opportunity to do something at UMCH and to get it right for residents nearby - that's offices and a park.

Over the next several months Worthington will engage in a visioning process that will identify what we can aspire to be for years and generations to come. City leaders have stated that this process should be “citizen led” and reflect the “long term interests and desires” of residents and “it is time for city officials to listen.” What will you do to insure that this visioning process is an authentic resident led process with a resident centered outcome?

Let’s be honest. This visioning process is not authentic. The community and residents, including WARD, already expressed the community’s vision. It certainly isn’t apartments. This is just a game by the city administration and council leadership to warm up discussions about Lifestyle Communities building there. We need new leaders on council who will actually make decisions, not form another visioning group. We should respect what citizens want, which is parks and offices.

In past years residents have strongly expressed a frustration that their voices have not been heard, or have been heard and not valued, by city council and city staff. As a council member elected by those residents, what would you do to change this belief and promote resident centered decisions?

We need a change in leadership. Not just council, but also staff. We would not have the dissatisfaction we have today if staff was ushering council in a direction that was positive. How many years has UMCH festered? UMCH has been a toss-up since 2012. There has been no clear direction by staff or city council as to what they want in 7 years. The city controls the zoning so we can tell the developer a firm yes or no on apartments. It’s not zoned for residential today. The city would have to say yes. Let’s just say “no” and move on.

According to the National League of Cities, in a city manager form of government the “city council oversees the general administration, makes policy and sets budget. Council appoints a city manager to carry out day to day administrative functions.” In Worthington, how closely should the city council be involved in providing direction for the city manager?

In the past, Worthington Council has really just let staff run the city. That’s a big part of the problem. We have folks too scared of their shadow to make a decision. And, we have no leadership from city council to fix that. So what happens? We have a big controversial property like UMCH just sit there for 7+ years. It’s unfortunate, but when we think about it. All the frustration. We can’t fix it by doing the same thing. It’s time for new council members so we can go in a different direction - one that listens to residents like WARD.

Surveys show that Worthington residents believe our community should have more senior housing. What kinds of structures, and on what scale, should be built? Where should they be built?

Surveys don’t always tell the real story. The bottom line is: we have senior housing. It’s already built or under construction. We have new apartments at the old Worthington Mall. We have senior housing now under construction at 161/Proprietor’s Rd. National Church Residences has several proposals in the city. There is another for Wilson Bridge. What we have is a shortage of Class A offices to drive tax revenue to the city. You can build senior housing in lots of places. We must be strategic about the UMCH site because it is our last opportunity for offices to grow income tax revenue.

To what degree should developers who work in Worthington be responsive to the residents?

City council’s job is to represent residents’ interests to developers. Yet Council continues to disregard residents. That’s the reason for this historic election. Top city officials know. Residential development costs cities money. Commercial development generates money for cities. It’s basic economics. Much of Worthington’s revenue comes from income tax. That’s why it is so puzzling that Council President Bonnie Michael backed 350 apartments and 200 homes for the UMCH site. It never made fiscal sense. And, for whatever reason, Council still pushes for apartments. Worthington deserves better.