



# Master Plan

## STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING 8

City of North Ridgeville, Ohio  
October 19, 2023

In association with  
**Ninigret Partners**

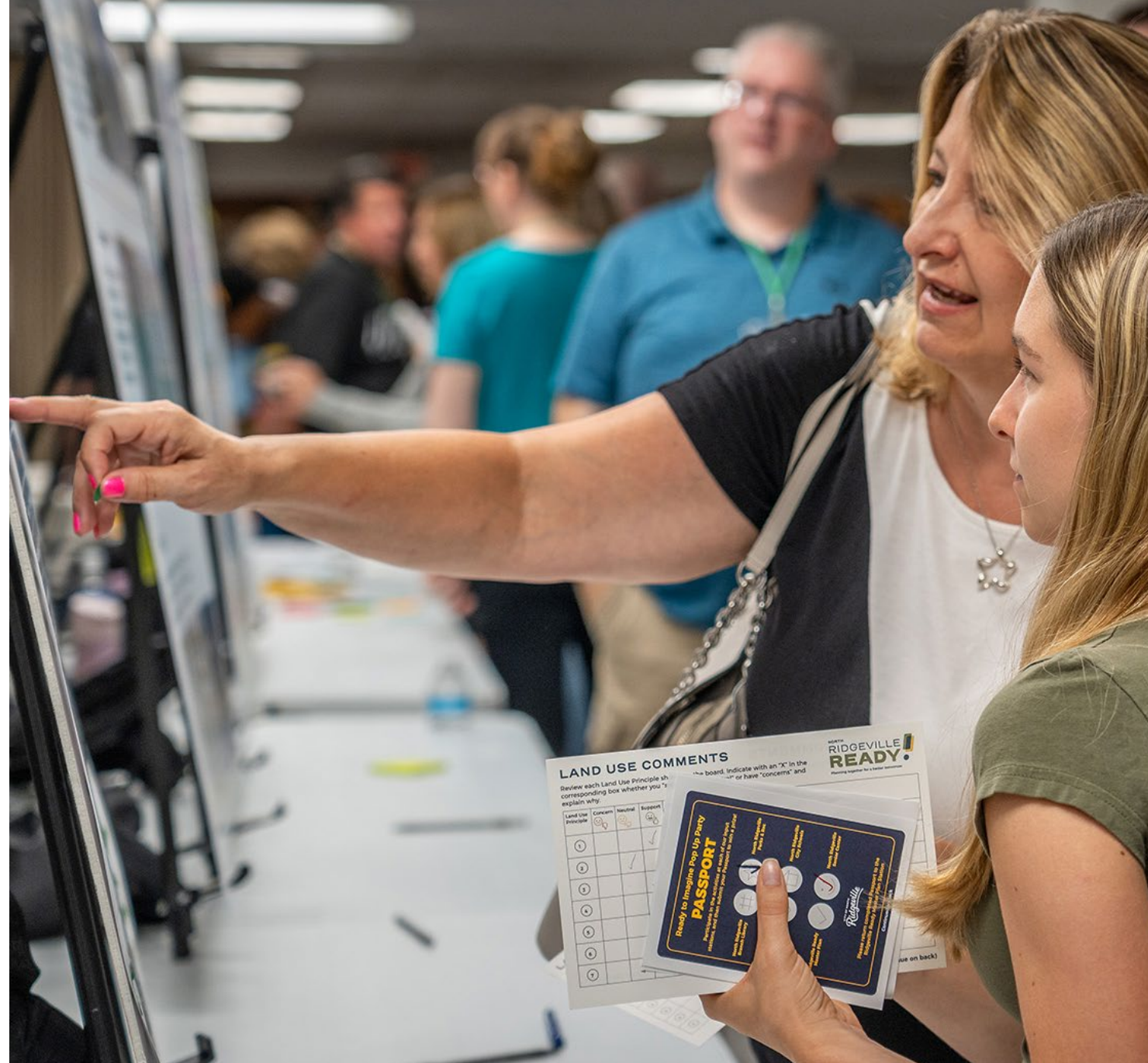


# Welcome



# Agenda

1. Economy
2. Mobility and Physical Infrastructure
3. Amenities
4. Leadership
5. Next Steps/Adjourn





A public meeting or community engagement event. People are gathered around informational displays, including a large poster titled "DRAFT CONCEPT TOWN CENTER" and another titled "TOWN CENTER READY!". The scene is busy with people of various ages and backgrounds interacting with the displays and each other. The background shows a well-lit indoor space with other people and displays.

# Economy

## ***Fostering a Diverse and Resilient Economy***

*Transitioning from a bedroom community to a complete community requires the creation of new economic opportunities for residents and businesses. Now is the time for North Ridgeville to grow the types, quality and diversity of jobs which will contribute to a healthy fiscal position for the city. This is essential not only to the livelihood of residents but also to the city's ability to continue to provide and expand high quality services.*

# 1. Preserve or acquire land for employment uses.

To encourage business and industry to expand and increase the tax base, the City should prioritize preservation of land for economic development by identifying and actively marketing areas appropriate for employment. The City should also consider pursuing land acquisition and rezoning, as needed, to create development-ready sites. Control over property would allow the City to pursue a wide range of employment uses and provide amenities, public services and utilities to attract diverse and high-quality end users.

## **2. Develop a methodology to assess the impact on revenue when an applicant proposes to rezone from non-residential (commercial/industrial) to residential use.**

Over the last several decades, the City's population has increased as a result of the construction of thousands of new residential units. As the City continues to grow, it will be important for North Ridgeville to expand employment opportunities that provide revenue to support public services and infrastructure, and to attract new businesses that serve residents. The City should carefully evaluate anticipated revenue, long-term costs and other economic implications of a project where a developer applies to rezone a non-residential area to residential use. This methodology will help the City better understand fiscal impacts and assist with the decision-making process.

### **3. Improve underutilized commercial areas along Center Ridge Road and in other areas of the City through zoning updates.**

The City's zoning map and zoning regulations create obstacles to efficient development. For example, the frequent split zoning of properties creates lots with commercial frontage and residential land to the rear, which significantly limits the development potential of commercial corridors. Eliminating split zoning will create new opportunities for economic development. Additionally, business districts should be updated to allow for greater development flexibility and to accommodate a mix of uses where appropriate (i.e., combination of commercial and residential in multi-story structures). Creating basic design and landscape standards would help to improve aesthetics and uniformity along key corridors.

## 4. Explore taxing options for different land uses and typologies.

With the introduction of different housing typologies and mixed-use districts, the City should engage in discussions with the County Auditor to determine if there are options to tax developments with a mix of residential and non-residential uses at commercial rates, which could improve the City's tax base.



## **5. Create new economic development programs and tools to support small businesses interested in locating or starting up in North Ridgeville.**

The City should ensure its zoning code makes allowances for the increasing number of hybrid business models combining a mix of uses under a single roof. A review of home-based business regulations would help to ensure that it reflects emerging work from home models and is competitive with surrounding communities. To further support small businesses beyond zoning updates, potential resources such as grants, loans, programs, etc., should be identified, whether City established or working with partners in a concerted effort.

## **6. Collaborate with community partners to communicate funding opportunities available to small businesses.**

The North Ridgeville Chamber of Commerce and Small Business Development Center at Lorain County Community College provides resources and tools to help small businesses grow. Both of these entities have resources available within the City and region, however, many in the community may be unaware that these opportunities exist. The City should help direct small businesses to these resources to provide counseling and related assistance that will help potential businesses start-up, succeed and remain in the City.

## 7. Create space for small offices within the Town Center.

The City can build support for other smaller businesses by providing shared spaces for these companies. Planning for flexible space (i.e., co-working space) with a variety of term lease lengths will allow businesses to grow as needed. The City should update zoning standards and ensure occupancy permits allow for this flexibility. The City may also need to negotiate with developers or landlords to allow for lease flexibility in the rental contracts.



## **8. Identify growing businesses and provide support for their retention, expansion and/or relocation within North Ridgeville.**

Building and maintaining relationships and support for the business community will help the City's employers continue to thrive and succeed in North Ridgeville. Existing businesses may be looking for opportunities that improve the quality of life of their employees or that enhance their business environment. The City should develop a process to assist companies that are outgrowing current locations or dealing with changing needs to remain and grow in North Ridgeville.

## 9. Identify improvements and amenities that would increase business and industry attraction.

Researching best practices and/or surveying existing businesses to understand site selection decisions will help North Ridgeville remain competitive with surrounding communities. The City could retain an economic development consultant to develop a business outreach program, initiate discussions, prepare marketing materials and otherwise help lead this effort.

A public meeting or community engagement event with people gathered around informational displays. The background is a faded image of a large room where many people are looking at posters and talking to each other. One poster in the background has the text "DRAFT CONCEPT TO... READY!".

# Mobility and Physical Infrastructure

## *Creating a Connected Community*

*Ensuring accessible, safe and multi-modal transportation options is important to maintaining livability for residents as the community continues to grow. Additionally, planning must consider not only the traditional physical infrastructure needed to support development (water, sewer, etc.), but also the essential services of the future related to technology and sustainability.*



# 1. Evaluate and prioritize improvements to infrastructure in older, developed areas of the City.

In addition to the maintenance and repair needs that come with age, infrastructure constructed in decades past may not meet current requirements for materials, installation techniques, capacities and best practices. Reinvesting in existing infrastructure is important to preserving the quality of life for residents and enhancing property values in older neighborhoods.

## **2. Formalize a proactive coordination process between departments to address ongoing and future infrastructure projects.**

The City should develop a process to improve internal communication and coordination between departments involved in capital projects and infrastructure maintenance. Also, the City should proactively communicate with outside utility providers to better understand upcoming projects that may impact the City's capital plans.

### **3. Coordinate planning efforts related to water, sanitary sewer and stormwater utilities to ensure recommendations align with the Master Plan.**

The City is currently undertaking a process to complete water, sanitary sewer and stormwater master plans. It is important that these planning efforts are coordinated with the Master Plan to avoid conflicting recommendations and to align utility investments with development goals. These plans should be referenced together when necessary to help make decisions on land use and future projects.



## 4. Improve public facing communications about current and future capital projects.

Each year, the City creates a list of planned capital projects and makes this information available to the public. To expand upon this and provide greater transparency, the City should also provide a longer view of critical upcoming projects in the next five years. For active projects, frequent updates should be consistently communicated to the public with the most up-to-date schedule available on the City website.

## 5. Build a resource kit to educate the public on stormwater management and flooding mitigation techniques.

While recent improvements have been made to stormwater systems, increasing severity of rain events resulting in flooding is a concern of the community, especially in established, older residential neighborhoods. Creating a resource kit for community members to refer to will increase awareness and provide helpful tips for residents to protect their property and minimize damage.

## 6. Improve mobility and connectivity throughout the City, especially through non-motorized transportation methods.

While new developments are required to provide sidewalks, many existing neighborhoods in the City are not served by sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, multi-use trails or other pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. The City received funding through NOACA to develop an Active Transportation Plan to evaluate deficiencies in the transportation network and propose improvements to create a more connected community, with an additional focus on creating safe routes to school. Once complete, this plan should be used as a roadmap to update policies and procedures around mobility and to prioritize capital improvements.



## 7. Identify high-risk areas that require pedestrian safety measures.

Some areas in North Ridgeville are unsafe for pedestrians, due to lack of sidewalks and/or barriers to connectivity such as railroad tracks and bridges. To implement a safer and more connected pedestrian system, high-risk areas of North Ridgeville should be identified and evaluated for safety measures that would decrease conflicts (i.e., crosswalks, landscaping to slow down traffic, etc.).

## 8. Explore an interconnected fiber network.

The City is discussing ways to improve traffic and pedestrian safety through installation of cameras at key intersections and linked signalized intersections to improve traffic timing. The City should consider an interconnected fiber network system to improve the operation of the signal systems, which would help improve street intersection traffic and pedestrian safety.

## 9. Leverage planning work initiated by other governmental agencies and organizations.

In addition to the Active Transportation Plan funded by NOACA, North Ridgeville is participating in a process to create a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan for Lorain County, focused on creating safe roads and reducing traffic fatalities and injuries in the region. The City should leverage these and future collaboration opportunities to provide documentation and support for funding requests that work towards creating strong built environments.

## 10. Update local codes and ordinances to address sustainable practices.

Sustainable practices are becoming important in communities to, among other things, improve health and well-being of residents and conserve environmental resources. The zoning code and other local ordinances should be updated to recognize and encourage sustainable design principles including green infrastructure and retrofits for improved energy efficiency. Examples range from rain gardens and bioswales to electric vehicle charging stations. As new technologies emerge, codes should be updated to reduce obstacles to sustainable design while ensuring these projects contribute positively to community aesthetics.



## 11. Update subdivision and zoning regulations to limit the construction of cul-de-sacs or dead-end streets.

While cul-de-sacs may be appealing to homebuyers, disadvantages of dead-end streets include the lack of connectivity, creating greater reliance on automobiles and providing obstacles to emergency access. A cul-de-sac or dead-end street can become a safety hazard to residents when access is blocked by construction, accidents and other barriers such as railroads, fallen trees or downed power lines. The City should update development regulations and zoning codes to prohibit or significantly restrict the development of new cul-de-sacs and dead-end streets. This should also be addressed as part of the City's Thoroughfare Plan.

## 12. Proactively coordinate with other governmental agencies on transportation projects that will affect the City.

Other government agencies have the jurisdiction to undertake projects within the North Ridgeville city limits such as Ohio Department of Transportation, Lorain County, Amtrak and the Ohio Turnpike. The City should maintain communication with these agencies to keep up to date with ongoing and upcoming projects that may require schedule adjustments and to address impacts (i.e., traffic delays, mobility re-routes, etc.) on the community. As projects are confirmed, the City should provide timely updates to the community so that they are aware of construction projects that may affect their traffic routes, properties, etc.

### **13. Collaborate with Lorain County Transit and the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority to explore extension of transit services.**

Currently in the City, limited transportation services are only available to eligible older adults served through the Senior Center. Broader public transportation is not available. Lorain County Transit and Greater Cleveland RTA have begun discussions about the potential of joint planning and linking their public transit systems at key locations. The City should participate in these conversations to advocate for transportation services that would benefit residents and major employers in North Ridgeville.

## 14. Plan for additional City resources to serve growth.

As North Ridgeville's population grows, City services and facilities must be evaluated for capacity to serve that growth. One example of planning for growth is the construction of a new police station that is expected to open in early 2024. The City has also identified a need for a larger site and modern facilities to accommodate the City's public works department, including its staff, vehicles, equipment and materials inventory. The City should evaluate needs across all departments and proactively plan for additional staffing, services and expanded facilities that will be required to serve the growing population.



A community meeting or public hearing is taking place in a large room. Numerous people are gathered around several large informational boards. One board prominently displays the text 'DRAFT CONCEPT TOWN CENTER' and 'Ridgeville Ready!'. The room is filled with people of various ages, some looking at the boards, others talking in small groups. The overall atmosphere appears to be one of active community engagement and planning.

# Amenities

## *Developing Attractive Amenities*

*Priority should be given to designing places in the community for people to gather including multi-use spaces, parks and recreational facilities that are accessible to all. Fostering the sense of community in North Ridgeville is key to elevating civic pride and creating an enduring attachment to place.*

# 1. Update the tri-annual program guide to include a section that identifies amenities available at each public park.

North Ridgeville Parks and Recreation provides many programs and activities that cater to all ages and groups. Every year NRPR offers over 100 programs to the community. Despite all the City has to offer, community members may not be aware of the facilities available. The City should update the tri-annual program guide to include a listing of the amenities offered at each park. Upon completion of the update, the guide should be widely promoted through communication efforts such as social media, web updates, newsletter, email blast, library bulletin board, etc. to ensure residents and subscribers are aware these amenities exist.

## 2. Create more passive recreational spaces.

Several City-owned parks include facilities used for specific sports' competitions, tournaments and practice. The City should provide more parkland and open spaces available and accessible to all for outdoor enjoyment on a year-round basis. The City should audit current parks and open spaces and create a plan that focuses on passive recreational spaces with diverse amenities. The audit could consider lands with wetlands, major forested areas or other sensitive environmental features the City can acquire and convert into passive recreation spaces.

### 3. Develop a plan for the 20-acre site at Shady Drive Complex.

The City owns approximately 20 acres of land adjacent to the west side of Shady Drive Complex. North Ridgeville Parks and Recreation has begun collecting public input regarding potential amenities and programming for the undeveloped site. A broader effort to obtain input from city departments, user groups and other stakeholders should be undertaken to maximize the community benefit of this land.

## 4. Create a system of neighborhood pocket parks.

According to benchmarks provided by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), the City of North Ridgeville provides less acreage of parkland per resident than the national average. The City should work to improve this standing by acquiring land over time to create a system of small-scale parks that serve immediate surrounding areas, retrofitting existing neighborhoods to add pocket parks and updating subdivision regulations to require developers to provide parks within new developments.



## 5. Include a community center as part of the future Town Center.

Included with the civic uses in the Town Center, the City should create a community center to provide both indoor and outdoor space for programming that allows for a range of social and recreational offerings in addition to rentable community spaces. A senior center or dedicated space for older adults should be incorporated into the community center.

## 6. Expand the bike network through development of connected multi-use trails.

To expand mobility and recreation options throughout the community, the City should consider new bicycle facilities, especially where those facilities would connect to existing parks, paths, multi-purpose trails and designated bike routes. The City could consider creating and adopting a Complete Streets policy to implement a plan for bicycle connection and safety.

## 7. Continue to collaborate with health-centric community organizations.

Heart and Sole is an organization that is dedicated to improving community health by combatting chronic disease. With a growing aging population and general community interest in providing more recreation programming, it is important for the City to continue partnering with Heart and Sole and other affiliated organizations to encourage physical activity, address mental health and provide access to healthy foods. The City should explore creative new ideas and partnerships to improve the community's health, wellbeing and quality of life.

## 8. Create an inventory of existing historical assets in the City.

The City's heritage and history are important components of community pride. The City should partner with the North Ridgeville Historical Society to compile an inventory of sites, buildings and locations that have historical or cultural significance. This information could be used to guide preservation efforts, to educate the community and to celebrate North Ridgeville's history. Creating a historic building registry and procedures for nominations by private individuals to the registry could also be considered.

## 9. Revisit opportunities at Victory Park to maximize its benefit to the entire North Ridgeville community.

Victory Park is a City-owned property that is leased to a private operator. While initially developed as a sports park, this site has the potential to become a venue for new types of programs and activities. The City should initiate conversations with the operator to better understand their future plans and create a shared vision for the property. For any new activity or change in use, the impact to City services should be evaluated. The needs of North Ridgeville Parks and Recreation should also be included in the discussion.



## 10. Explore partnership opportunities with private recreation providers in the City.

Private recreation providers in North Ridgeville that own sport and athletic facilities may offer activities and programming not available through North Ridgeville Parks and Recreation. The City should explore ways to create mutual, beneficial collaborations with these businesses and organizations to allow for wider community access to recreation while minimizing additional costs to the City.

# 11. Update the 2013 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

The 2013 Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a document used by City staff to prioritize capital improvements and recreation programming in the community. Since 2013, many projects have been accomplished. The City should undertake a process to audit and update the plan to reflect those accomplishments, address any changes to community needs and plan for the long-term growth of Parks and Recreation services and staffing.

## 12. Work with the North Ridgeville Arts Council.

The City should work with the Arts Council to find opportunities for creating, promoting and leveraging public art within the community including but not limited to public art in rights-of-way, roundabouts, parks, the Town Center, historical sites, etc.). The Arts Council could be a resource for advising grant or fundraising opportunities to install art within the City. A public art percentage program as part of the annual capital improvement budget could also be explored by the City.

A public meeting or community engagement event. People are gathered around informational displays, including a large poster titled "DRAFT CONCEPT TOWN CENTER" and another titled "TOWN CENTER READY!". The scene is busy and collaborative, with individuals of various ages and backgrounds engaged in discussions and looking at the displays. The background shows a well-lit indoor space with other people and displays, suggesting a large-scale community event.

# Leadership

## ***Providing Responsible and Accountable Leadership***

*City leaders must dedicate the resources required to realize the community's vision and future potential. This means working closely with residents, businesses, government partners and community organizations in a transparent and collaborative way. Implementation of this plan takes the entire community playing their roles, working together and finding creative solutions to the challenges ahead.*

# 1. Develop a Communications Plan.

Implementing routine internal communications with employees can help improve understanding of current priorities and projects and create a greater sense of teamwork. The City should also identify ways to improve external communications with the public using a variety of methods (website, e-newsletters, social media, signage, etc.), ensuring there is opportunity for two-way communication with residents. When opportunities are available, the City should continue to provide mailed content (i.e., via utility bill inserts) to residents and businesses.

## 2. Continue to implement North Ridgeville's brand identity in the physical and digital realms.

The City has made progress on many of the initial rebranding tasks such as letterhead, business cards, forms, vehicle signage, apparel, etc. A new gateway sign program is underway. The City should continue to build out its brand through physical improvements to buildings and properties, a website refresh and other digital tools, as well as continuing to develop the communications side of the brand.



### **3. Create a consistent approach for departmental annual work plans.**

To help the City operate and communicate more efficiently, a standardized template for departmental work plans will ensure consistency and create a broader understanding between and among department heads of work across the City. This will not only improve communication between departments but also allow for alignment of projects, so resources are used efficiently.

## 4. Implement a training program for all Boards and Commissions.

The City's boards and commissions are comprised of community members who, in their volunteer roles, make important decisions impacting the future of North Ridgeville. To ensure these members conduct the business of their board or commission according to legal requirements and best practices, annual training and education opportunities should be provided. Any incoming board or commission member should be afforded sufficient onboarding so that they are comfortable in their new role.

## 5. Provide ongoing staff training and professional development opportunities.

Employees should be encouraged to increase their job knowledge and skillsets through continuing education. All staff should be provided with training on city policies and procedures, both upon hire and as any changes to requirements are made. Additionally, employees in management and leadership positions should be provided with training tools to improve their supervisory skills.

## 6. Reference the Master Plan in decision making.

The Master Plan should be actively used as a guide for city leaders to make decisions related to policies, budgeting, programming, capital investments and land use. To that end, it should be referenced by city officials in proposals, budget requests, staff reports and related documents. Staff should carefully consider the recommendations of the Master Plan when considering zoning code amendments or reviewing applications for rezoning.

## 7. Evaluate the progress of the Master Plan's implementation.

The City should review the Master Plan's action items annually to gauge progress and note accomplishments. Each department and division should be responsible for reviewing and reporting on the recommendations in their purview using a standardized template. The status report should be widely disseminated and communicated to the public (i.e. State of the City, various publications).

## 8. Provide more resident education regarding City finances.

It is important for the community to better understand City revenue sources and how spending priorities are determined. One way to convey this information and provide greater transparency would be to create and distribute a Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR). A PAFR could serve as a valuable educational tool by summarizing key financial information for residents in an easy to read and understand format.



## 9. Create a Community Resiliency Plan.

Centered on emergency preparedness, the City should take a comprehensive approach to creating a resiliency plan addressing various potential natural and manmade disasters. The Plan should include action steps aimed at prevention and mitigation in addition to response.

## 10. Establish and strengthen relationships with local and regional partners.

North Ridgeville relies on other governmental agencies, nonprofits and community organizations to provide funding, services and support for a wide spectrum of projects and programs. The City should continue to collaborate with these entities and identify new partnership opportunities for joint planning, information sharing and identification of changing community needs.

# 11. Create new, local events aimed at bringing the community together and strengthening civic engagement.

Robust civic engagement allows more community voices to be heard and influence decision making, which builds trust between the public and government. The City should create new, local events designed specifically for the North Ridgeville residents to increase civic pride and engagement and allow for people from various parts of the community and walks of life to get to know one another. The City should also use these events as an opportunity to collect input from the community and promote or educate the public on City initiatives and projects. New events should consider social aspects that attract families and all age groups.

A public meeting or community engagement event is taking place in a large, well-lit room. Numerous people of various ages are gathered around several long tables. On the tables are large informational displays, including architectural renderings of buildings and a map titled "DRAFT CONCEPT TOWN CENTER". The text "Ridgeville Ready!" is visible on the displays. People are engaged in conversations, looking at the displays, and some are using mobile devices. The overall atmosphere is one of active participation and community discussion.

# Next Steps

# Next steps

- Next meeting – review of Land Use, Housing and Town Center
- Plan for round 3 public engagement





**Thank you!**