

Community Visioning Committee



Laura Abu-Absi

Laura Abu-Absi is a public policy professional focusing on health and human service issues of interest to Ohio's counties. Prior to her current role serving Ohio's 88 county departments of job and family services, she worked as a policy analyst for the County Commissioners' Association of Ohio. She also has experience in both the executive and legislative branches of state government. One of Laura's favorite parts of her job is distilling complex public policy issues to a conversational level and working to build consensus across varying perspectives. A Toledo, Ohio native, Laura has called Worthington home since 2012. She has two children, the oldest of whom is starting Kindergarten at Colonial Hills Elementary this year.



Kathryn Burris

Kathryn Burris is retired after 25 years in the financial services industry, working the majority of her career as a licensed financial advisor. An Ohio native and graduate of The Ohio State University, Kathryn has lived in Worthington for 15 years with her husband Mark and Quincy, their black Labrador Retriever. Kathryn is an avid sports fan and a novice gardener. She believes citizens should be well informed and active participants in their community. Kathryn thinks a successful visioning process will require collaboration between residents and city leadership, using imagination, compromise and common sense.



Paul Cynkar

Paul Cynkar spent 25 years with the Worthington Schools, serving as assistant superintendent, director of teaching and learning, and as a middle school principal. After a 35-year career in public education, Paul joined the not-for-profit Battelle for Kids as Chief Operating Officer in December 2008. He retired from BFK in October 2018 after the death of his wife in August of that year. He currently serves as a consultant for Red Brick Hill LLC, a Worthington-based leadership organization and for the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation, a Cleveland-based philanthropic organization. Paul also currently serves as the Chair-Elect of the Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce. He has served as an adjunct faculty member at Ashland University and Ohio University, teaching graduate courses in community engagement and politics and served on the First Lady's planning committee for Ohio Governor Ted Strickland's Institute for Creativity and Innovation in Ohio. Paul has lived within the boundaries of the Worthington School District since 1983 and in the City of Worthington since 1996. His daughter, and her family live in the Lakes of Worthington. Grayson, his grandson, attends kindergarten at Bluffsview Elementary.



Cynthia Findlay

Cynthia Bent Findlay is a stay at home mom and freelance writer. She has a Master's degree in Magazine Journalism from Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Communication ('95) and worked in journalism in the Pittsburgh area at daily, weekly and monthly publications. Findlay moved to the Columbus area in 2001 to be with her husband, Doug. Since then she has written extensively for Columbus Business First and more recently for Columbus CEO and the Columbus Dispatch. Cynthia has also worked in public relations, mostly for the United States Fencing Association, and edited the association's magazine for more than 10 years. The Findlays moved from Schumacher Place to Worthington in 2008 and have two kids in Worthington schools, a sixth grader at Worthington Estates Elementary School and a freshman at Thomas Worthington High School. Cynthia is passionate about volunteerism, civic participation, and about journalism in education. She enjoys research, and also reading, gardening and playing violin and piano.



Matthew Lees

Matt Lees has lived in Worthington with his husband, Ray, and eight children since 2007. They chose Worthington for its close-knit neighborhoods, parks, diverse schools and walkability. Matt is a senior communications consultant for Nationwide where he manages executive communications with associates, agents and industry partners. Matt has 25 years of experience communicating for non-profit, corporate and government organizations. Matt holds a bachelor's degree in public relations from Marietta College, and he is certified in organizational change management and focus group facilitation. Matt is active with Feeding America, Haitian Health Foundation and Worthington Schools. Matt looks forward to working with this committee to help our residents envision the future of our city.



Jon Melchi

Jon Melchi (Melk-eye) is the Executive Director of the Building Industry Association of Central Ohio (BIA). The BIA is in its 75th year of serving the Central Ohio residential construction community by representing nearly 800 builder, developer and associate members. Before joining the BIA, Jon served as the Vice President of Government Affairs and Business Development with Heating, Air-conditioning and Refrigeration Distributors International (HARDI). He has served on the Board of Directors for the Family Business Coalition and the Small Business Legislative Council. Jon is a graduate of The Ohio State University and lives in Worthington with his wife Amanda and daughters Mary and Claire.



Linda Mercadante

Linda Mercadante, Ph.D. was recently named Distinguished Research Professor at Methodist Theological School after serving for 32 years as the Straker Chair of Historical Theology. She is also ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA). She specializes in the social and spiritual analysis of culture, using qualitative analysis. Author of five books and hundreds of articles, her most recent is *Belief without Borders: Inside the Minds of the Spiritual but not Religious*. She is immediate past president of the Worthington Libraries Board of Trustees and still serves on that board. She has also been a part of Leadership Worthington and the Colonial Hills Civic Association. While growing up in Newark, NJ, she dreamed of living in a place like Worthington and so has been a grateful resident for the last 20 years. She and her husband Joseph Mas, an attorney and regular on WOSU's "Columbus on the Record" have three grown children. Son David graduated from Thomas Worthington HS.



Jack Miner

Jack Miner is University Registrar and Executive Director of Enrollment Services at The Ohio State University. He is Chairman of the Worthington Community Relations Commission and has served with the commission for 6 years. Jack is Secretary of the McConnell Arts Center Board of Directors and served as Secretary of Board of Governors of the Legacy Fund Board of The Columbus Foundation. Jack works nationally on issues of diversity and student access in higher education. Jack and his husband have lived in Worthington for 15 years and have two grown children.



Austin Mitchell

Austin Mitchell was born and raised in the Glass City (Toledo). He met my amazing wife, Heather, while at the University of Dayton and both went to graduate school in Pittsburgh and fell in love with the city. They returned to Ohio to be closer to family after having their first child, Clara, who is 3 going on 14. Their son, Troy, just turned 2. They recently adopted a mixed breed dog, Teddy, and also have a cat named Reggie. They are very happy that they landed in Worthington! They love their Wilson Hill neighbors, walking to downtown, and the accessibility to broader Columbus. Austin recently took a new role with NiSource (parent company to Columbia Gas) around risk quantification and communication. Outside of work and quality time with his family, he is a news junkie, enjoys biking and loves policy discussions. He wishes he had more time to play golf and more friends with boats.



Don Mottley

J. Donald ("Don") Mottley has been a Worthington resident since 2012. Don and his wife Marianne live in the Ville Charmante condo complex. Don lived in the Dayton area for over 50 years, where he served for 20 years as an elected official (first a school board member, then a State Representative) and 6 years as a full-time appointed official for Montgomery County. Since moving to Worthington, Don has completed Leadership Worthington, Worthington Citizens Academy, and Worthington Citizens Police Academy. He is a board member of Leadership Worthington, a former Board member of the Worthington Resource Pantry, and a member of Dublin-Worthington Rotary. Don is Of Counsel with the Taft Stettinius & Hollister law firm, where he practices in the areas of state and local taxation and public agency law. Don also founded the firm's government relations affiliate, Focused Capitol Solutions LLC. Before becoming an attorney, Don served as a financial manager with NCR Corporation and as the top aide to two countywide elected officials in Montgomery County.



Joe Sherman

Joe Sherman and his wife, Linda, moved to Worthington nine years ago this December having spent the previous twelve years in that city on the "other side" of the Olentangy....Dublin. Cardinal Health brought him to Ohio from Chicago as a Vice President to help lead and build its pharmaceutical distribution sales effort in the National Retail Market arena. He has since retired from a challenging, yet extremely enjoyable, professional career. Three and half years ago, he joined the Planning Group that leads the efforts of the Worthington Alliance for Responsible Development, or simply WARD. As a result, WARD has given him the opportunity to become involved with City Staff and City Council. He has also volunteered at Dublin Methodist Hospital, The Worthington Food Pantry and annually at Jack's Memorial Golf Tournament. Joe and his wife love to travel and he plays golf whenever possible. As a member of the Visioning Committee, he is excited to be a part of this strategic process for our community, building for our future generations.



Beth Sommer

Beth Sommer is a Vice President and Business Development Officer for the Business Banking Division of Huntington Bank. During her lengthy tenure at Huntington, Beth has served in various capacities throughout the bank, including retail manager for Huntington in Worthington from 1987 to 1996. Beth currently serves on the Board of the Friends Foundation of the Worthington Libraries, is a current member and past Trustee of the Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce and a 2001 graduate of Leadership Worthington. Beth has previously served as Chairman of the City's Charter Review Commission, President and Trustee of the Worthington Libraries Board, and Co-Chair of a Levy Campaign for Worthington Libraries. She is also a long-time member of DRAC - Downtown Residents Association of Columbus. Beth and her husband, Steve, have lived in Worthington for 27 years. They have two grown children, both graduates of Thomas Worthington High School and Miami University; both are living and working in Columbus.



Graham Wood

Graham Wood is a Program Administrator for the Ohio Department of Education, managing projects for the Office of Career-Technical Education. A 2015 Teach For America Corps Member in Southwest Ohio, Graham taught both a Kindergarten and 5th Grade Math in Northwest Dayton, Ohio. Born and raised in Sylvania, Ohio and a 2015 graduate of The Ohio State University, Graham is a lifelong Ohioan with a passion for bringing his vision of true educational access to all Ohioans, and eventually all Americans. Graham moved to Old Worthington with his wife, Katie, in 2017 and is excited to raise a family as a part of a community he is proud to call his home.