

United Methodist Children's Home Focus Area

This section of the Worthington Comprehensive Plan was updated in 2014 for the United Methodist Children's Home focus area.

Background

The more than 40-acre United Methodist Children's Home (UMCH) site presents a rare opportunity for Worthington to experience redevelopment on a visible and sizable site near the heart of Worthington. The site is located north of Old Worthington along the North High Street Corridor. Originally, the United Methodist Children's Home included hundreds of acres that extended to the Olentangy River that are now residential neighborhoods.

The United Methodist Children's Home has been a compassionate steward of the land and an invested and contributing member of Worthington for over a century. It

continues to provide critical services to the greater Central Ohio community.

Following serious consideration by the UMCH Board to sell this site and concerns of the community related to its potential redevelopment, the City reexamined the future land use recommendations of this plan to deliver more clear direction and intent.

The goal, as with all of the future land use recommendations in this plan, is to provide guidance as to the range of desired land uses and development in the event the private land owner and/or future developer requests rezoning of the property; and to assist the City with its review and evaluation of any proposal. The community dialogue and consensus represented by this plan will facilitate any future redevelopment process for this site in a manner that meets the needs of the greater community as well as the land owner.



UMCH Focus Area boundaries (in red)

Context

Located along North High Street across from the Louis J.R. Gooery Worthington Municipal Building and the Worthington Fire Station, the UMCH focus area is approximately a half-mile north of the Worthington Village Green.

This 44.5-acre site contains various built structures, including administrative offices and several residential and service structures that are a part of the UMCH program. It also includes the Conference Center and the Sunrise Senior Living assisted living community on either side of Wesley Boulevard. Once part of the larger UMCH property, the Sunrise Senior Living campus is on 3.5 acres with a long-term ground lease. The United Methodist Church occupies the Conference Center. Neither facility will be included in a UMCH property sale. It should be noted that the two existing residential lots that abut the north side of this site along the south side of Larrimer Avenue are included in this focus area plan at the request of their owners.

Though relatively flat, the site's most striking natural feature is a ravine and wooded area surrounding Tucker Creek. This natural area buffers the southern section of the site from single-family homes on quarter-acre lots along Greenbrier Court.

To the southwest, the site borders Evening Street. Directly to the west, the site borders the rear yards of single-family residences on third-of-an-acre lots on Evening Street. To the north, the site abuts Longfellow and Larrimer Avenues, with single-family residences on third-of-an-acre lots across the street. The focus area is served by signalized intersections with North High Street at Wesley Boulevard and at Larrimer Avenue. The existing site also has two additional access points on High Street between these two signals.

The current zoning of the UMCH focus area consists of commercial zoning C-2 Community Commercial (0.7 acres) and C-3 Office (9.3 acres) along its High Street frontage, SC Senior Citizen (3.5 acres) on the Sunrise site, and S-1 Special (31 acres) across the remainder of the site. Current permitted uses include churches, parochial schools, colleges, hospitals, and other institutional uses (S-1), medical centers and real



Current zoning for the UMCH focus area.

estate, insurance, and legal offices (C-3), and supermarkets, specialty stores, and retail stores (C-2).

Future Land Use Focus Area Plan

The 2005 Comprehensive Plan identified the UMCH site as strategic for future growth, a matter particularly critical for an established community like Worthington. While the 2005 plan presented an example of two possible redevelopment scenarios, this update document provides a more in-depth consideration of appropriate redevelopment parameters that incorporate community and stakeholder feedback with current demographic, fiscal, and market trends.

Design Intent

Worthington was founded as a master planned community. Because of the size, location, and importance of the UMCH site, it is critical that any redevelopment be master planned and consider the site as a whole. The following sections provide a framework and direction to the City, reviewing Boards and Commissions, and potential developers as to Worthington's desired vision for any change of use and redevelopment that might occur on the site.

Building upon the previously stated objectives, redevelopment of this site must create a high-quality, mixed-use development



Future land use zones for the UMCH focus area.

that is walkable, connected, and integrated within the site and with the City. This mix of uses should contain a range of residential types together with commercial office and neighborhood retail uses integrated with contributing and shared green space and amenities – all of which complement each other to create an active, vibrant place. Any proposed design must be sensitive to the neighborhoods adjacent to the UMCH site, as well as to the natural features related to Tucker Creek. Any development that occurs within the focus area should relate internally to the site and to an overall plan, even if it is built at different times. For this reason, it is expected that any proposed redevelopment include rezoning of the entire site to a Planned Unit Development as an early step. Because of the importance of achieving the full potential of the UMCH site for the City and Worthington community, it is expected that public-private partnership(s) will play a role in the planning and redevelopment of this site.

Future Land Use

The future land use map for this focus area divides the site into four general zones:

- High Street Mixed Use (red on the plan)
- Worthington Estates Edge (yellow on the plan)
- Neighborhood Core (orange on the plan)
- Tucker Creek Preserve (green on the plan)

Objectives

As part of the update of this focus area plan, a group of consolidated objectives was created. These objectives include:

1. Consideration of the redevelopment potential of this site recognizing the critical resource and opportunity this 40+ acre site represents within the City.
2. Provision of a mix of desirable uses and green space that are compatible with surrounding neighborhoods and are currently underserved in Worthington.
3. Addressing the needs of current and future residents by providing new housing types/options that are underrepresented in the market and complement Worthington's current offerings.
4. Recognition of the financial goals of UMCH to enable it to continue its mission within the region.
5. Expansion of the City of Worthington's tax base by incorporating uses that allow for new or enhanced sources of revenue.
6. Preservation and integration of the existing natural features found on the site related to Tucker Creek.
7. Creation of a well-planned, vibrant, walkable, and integrated development of the highest quality that meets or exceeds current best practices for mixed use development, including the provision of communal space and complete streets.

Each are described in more detail below:

High Street Mixed Use

North High Street is the commercial spine of the City of Worthington. It is home to some of the City's most important corporations and the address for much of its retail and services. The UMCH site lies less than a half-mile from the center of Old Worthington and is situated between both this retail center and the Shops at Worthington Place.

As a result, this is a good location for commercial office use.

As discussed throughout this Comprehensive Plan, income-tax generating employment uses such as office are critical to the fiscal sustainability of the City. In addition, this site's close proximity to historic Old Worthington makes it a prime location for walkable residential development and denser, amenity-rich housing types similar to what is discussed in the Improving Housing Balance section of this document (page 73). This location along High Street is attractive for retail and service uses as well. It is not the desire of the City, however, to create a third retail center in close proximity to Old Worthington and the Shops at Worthington Place. Retail in this location should be neighborhood scale and serve the development that occurs on this site and that exists in the surrounding neighborhood; and it should help to activate the High Street frontage.

The High Street Mixed Use zone consists of the frontage of the UMCH site along High Street. It permits a mix of office, residential, and retail uses with the focus on commercial office and medical uses with subordinate residential and limited retail uses. Buildings in this zone should be a minimum of two stories and a maximum of five stories in height with attractive, four-sided architecture. Buildings in this zone should address the streets, activate the street frontage, and include opportunities for outdoor dining and other pedestrian-focused activities.

It is expected that the buildings adjacent to High Street will be commercial offices. Residential uses might occur behind as a transition to the Neighborhood Core. Neighborhood-oriented retail uses can complement the development in the first floors of office and residential buildings. The objective of the High Street Mixed Use zone is to create a high-quality, dense, walkable, connected, mixed-use development that creates a dynamic space and signature address to attract Class A office tenants along High Street and add vitality and life to the High Street corridor.

In order to create a walkable environment, it is expected that buildings will line public streets and most parking will be located at the center of blocks, screened from public streets by attractive buildings. Parking beneath buildings may also be considered, provided the public street frontage of a building is



Conceptual view of possible new development along High Street.

activated. By providing a mix of uses within the High Street Mixed Use zone, parking areas can be shared to optimize their use. To achieve the desired densities, parking decks are encouraged to be integrated into the site. Features expected as part of any parking deck or structure include masonry and architectural elements to dress up the exterior, windowed stair towers, and lush landscaping and pedestrian connections.

Parking structures and/or parking lots could be lined with residential and/or retail development to separate and screen them from the Neighborhood Core. Where the High Street Mixed Use zone is opposite existing single-family residential development, it is expected that the new development will consist of residential development and/or substantial and attractive buffers.

As with all development in the UMCH focus area, it is to be of high-quality in character and design with four-sided architecture. It should follow the *Worthington Design Guidelines*.

Worthington Estates Edge

This zone is where development in the UMCH focus area should create a desirable transition between it and the existing single-family housing development that surround its north and west sides. The surrounding development consists of homes on third-of-an-acre lots. The Worthington Estates Edge zone



Future Land Use Map for the UMCH site (bird's eye view).

calls for single-family residential development on lots between a third-of-an-acre and a fifth-of-an-acre. This equates to a residential density similar to Worthington Estates (3 dwelling units/acre) and Old Worthington (4-5 dwelling units/acre). The structures are limited to the same two-and-a-half story height as the surrounding neighborhood.

These may be single-family, detached homes that are more current, updated versions of what is found in the surrounding neighborhoods. Or they may be smaller homes with smaller yards that provide first floor living opportunities for Worthington residents — an option in which many residents expressed an interest during the community meetings. They may be something in between. Regardless, these homes must be of high-quality design, differentiated architecture, and in close proximity to amenities. This zone is for custom-built, individualized homes and not one for homes with repetitious floor plans.

Housing in this zone should consist of individual units, potentially with lots of different sizes, fronting on a street or streets. The use of cul-de-sacs is strongly discouraged. These new lots must include rear or side yards to provide a substantial

buffer and green landscape between these structures and the rear yards of existing homes. Attractive storm water systems designed as a naturalized amenity can be placed within the Worthington Estates Edge zone.

As with all development in the UMCH focus area, it is to be of high-quality in character and design with four-sided architecture. It should follow the *Worthington Design Guidelines*.

Neighborhood Core

The Neighborhood Core zone represents the most flexible zone of the UMCH focus area because it is internal to the site. It consists of a higher density neighborhood that creates a transition from the single-family homes along the periphery of the site to the more active uses proposed closer to High Street.

The Neighborhood Core calls for residential development at a density between six and fourteen dwelling units per acre (6-14 du/ac) gross density with a height limit of three stories. It is expected that the Neighborhood Core will be developed with more than one housing type and at more than one density level. The expected amount of park space and amenities correspondingly increases with the density. For a density



Conceptual view of single family homes along a great street.

reference, Ville Charmante along West Wilson Bridge Road is over seven dwelling units per acre.

This area creates the opportunity to introduce different types of housing options that are not readily available in the city. This area should provide residential living that is underrepresented in the market and complements Worthington's current offerings, addressing the needs of aging Worthington residents, future young professionals, and those desiring amenity-rich living. For reference, more information on the need for this type of housing product is described in "Improving Housing Balance" on page 73.

Examples include a mix of single-family detached homes on small lots with rear alley garages, homes with great front porches for outdoor gathering, custom homes designed for first-floor living, luxury residences with integrated front autocourts, well-appointed walk-up townhomes, and a limited number of high-end flats. To be successful, the Neighborhood Core must incorporate common areas/shared green space(s). These parks create the community gathering and development focal point(s). Shared amenities and facilities should also be provided. In all cases, the buildings must have front doors on inviting tree and sidewalk-lined streets. The objective is not to have streets dominated by garages, so garages must be de-emphasized – set back or placed to the rear of structures, creating a very walkable neighborhood.



Conceptual view of townhouses facing a green commons.

As with all development in this focus area, the community expects this development to be of high-quality in character and design, and adhere to the *Worthington Design Guidelines*.

Tucker Creek Preserve

The southern boundary of the UMCH focus area is the beautiful and wooded Tucker Creek ravine. This plan calls for preserving this area as a natural green space amenity for the site and the community. The creek and the steep slopes that surround it are not developable and the wooded areas along it are important contributing and environmental features.

The community expressed a strong desire to continue linking neighborhoods, parks, and destinations with multi-use trails throughout the City. This includes achieving a dedicated trail along Tucker Creek that highlights this natural feature and provides an amenity and potential connection between High Street and Evening Street.

As part of any development that occurs on the UMCH site, it is expected that any future developer preserve the Tucker Creek ravine and wooded area. Any storm water systems in this area must be designed as a naturalized, aesthetic landscape feature that fits in the environment.



Conceptual view of a mixed-use development along a green commons.

Zone Boundaries

The boundaries between zones internal to the site are not absolutely fixed and could be adjusted at the margins. Depending upon the street layout and overall merits of a proposed development, these boundaries might shift. For example, the Worthington Estates Edge might grow or shrink slightly in some areas as part of a formal development plan submittal, or the Tucker Creek Preserve might grow in one area and shrink in another to better protect surveyed natural features. In order to provide appropriate parking and building screening, the High Street Mixed Use zone might be enlarged to the west.

There is one exception. As mentioned throughout this Comprehensive Plan, the need for revenue-producing land uses for the City of Worthington, particularly income-tax generating uses such as well-planned commercial office and medical, is of strategic importance. If a development plan is proposed that provides significant income tax revenue to the City, the High Street Mixed Use zone could expand into the Neighborhood Core zone. In the event of a substantial expansion of the High Street Mixed Use zone, the sensitive design and aesthetics of the edge treatment/buffer of the zone with the adjoining areas become critically important.

Park Space

The creation of park space for community and public enjoyment is an important component for any redevelopment on the UMCH site. This is in addition to the Tucker Creek Preserve. Beyond serving community-gathering functions, the park space is critical to providing place-making in development layouts as well as a green space balance to the built environment contemplated in the High Street Mixed Use and Neighborhood Core zones.

In potential redevelopment scenarios, this additional park space was several acres divided between the High Street Mixed Use and Neighborhood Core zones. Park space could be used to provide linear park “windows” into the site from High Street; neighborhood-oriented parks internal to the site; and/or extension of the Tucker Creek preserve. The expected amount of park space and amenities correspondingly increases with the density of development proposed on the UMCH site. Park space as discussed here must be useable, contributing ground for residents, workers, and visitors of the redeveloped site, and not, for example, storm water controls or left-over ground.

It is expected that the developer(s) of the UMCH site will integrate usable park land into the development and work with the City to provide acreage in the High Street Mixed Use and Neighborhood Core zones as park space useable by the community.

Creating this additional park space within the UMCH focus area will address the community’s desire for park space and amenities here. The public process generated numerous ideas for amenities worthy of further consideration. It is important that the City and the Worthington Parks and Recreation Commission work with the community to plan for and create parks that include the desired amenities in the appropriate places within the City and at this site.

Design Guidelines

Because the UMCH focus area falls within the City of Worthington’s Architectural Review District boundary, any new construction or alteration is subject to review and approval by the Architectural Review Board (ARB). The Board ensures the

high quality of design and site planning for any construction within the Architectural Review District. In order to meet the expectations of the ARB, any development on the UMCH site should adhere to the *Worthington Design Guidelines* used by the City and ARB to review development proposals.

The new residential development portion of the Residential Design Guidelines (page 31) provides guidance on site development, form, massing, and scale, setbacks, roof shape, exterior materials, windows, entries, ornamentation, and color. In general, the goal is to create residences and neighborhoods of a high quality of design with pleasant, intimate character and a strong sense of place and inviting human scale. Architecture and design should be rich and varied (not repetitive/homogeneous) with great attention to detail.

The new commercial development portion of the Commercial/Institutional Design Guidelines (page 25) provides guidance on site development, scale, form, and massing, setbacks, roof shape, materials, windows, entries, ornamentation, color, and signage. In general, the goal is to build upon and extend the pedestrian scale and walkability of the city's commercial heart as well as create buildings that are long-lasting and have four-sided architecture that is attractive on all sides. Building forms, materials, and setbacks should be consistent with historic patterns and help continue traditional patterns into new development.

It is important that the commercial development encourage pedestrian connections and activities. The location along High Street and the close proximity to Old Worthington and existing neighborhoods creates the potential for strong pedestrian connections. In order to make this area inviting to pedestrian activity, wide sidewalks such as those in Old Worthington should be encouraged in order to allow for connections as well as additional activities. Pedestrian-scale signage, plantings, lawn areas, and street furniture will also create an inviting, walkable atmosphere. By implementing these recommendations and following the standards established in the *Worthington Design Guidelines*, the proposed commercial uses along High Street will introduce complementary uses

Commercial Design Guidelines

Excerpts from the *Worthington Design Guidelines* for new commercial and institutional construction include:

1. Tend toward simpler geometric forms and uncomplicated massing;
2. Carefully design facades with traditional storefronts to make buildings pedestrian-friendly;
3. Build up to the required setback to get pedestrians closer to the building;
4. Locate parking areas to the rear and avoid front setbacks;
5. Use buildings to screen off-street parking from view;
6. Create unimpeded pedestrian access to the front building façade from the public sidewalk;
7. Make roof shapes in scale with the building;
8. Use traditional materials with a focus on brick and limit poured concrete/concrete block to foundations;
9. Use large areas of glass for storefronts and more traditional patterning on upper floors;
10. Emphasize the primary entry on the street-facing principal façade; and
11. Help create a linkage between Old Worthington and newer areas through consistent design elements.
12. Use compatible colors.

and provide new amenities within walking distance of the Worthington community.

Connectivity

To achieve a high-quality, mixed use development that is walkable, safe, and successful, it is important that any development on the UMCH site be well connected both internally to the site and to the greater Worthington community. The UMCH site is ideally situated along High Street and within close proximity of Old Worthington, the Olentangy Trail, nearby neighborhoods, and Worthington Schools. Therefore, multiple connections should be created to encourage pedestrian, cyclist, and vehicular access to the area in a complete streets fashion.

Residential Design Guidelines

Excerpts from the *Worthington Design Guidelines* for new residential construction include:

1. Avoid facing garages to the street and set them back from the main building plane;
2. Establish multiple connections to existing streets to integrate with the existing community fabric;
3. Carefully consider components of scale;
4. Match roof shapes to the appropriate architectural style;
5. Use building materials in traditional ways;
6. Consider substantial use of brick; fiber cement board is appropriate; and avoid the use of stucco;
7. Carefully design window patterns, sizes, and proportions;
8. Use good quality windows – all-aluminum and vinyl windows are discouraged;
9. Avoid blank wall or walls with few windows;
10. Orient entry doors toward the street, make them clearly visible, and aligned with the window rhythm;
11. Use ornamentation in traditional locations; and
12. Use compatible colors.

These street connections must be strategically and sensitively designed and located. It is not enough to simply connect the site to High Street. This development must be integrated into the greater community and neighborhoods. This could include connections to Evening Street and Longfellow Avenue/Hayhurst Street. The development plan must show how these complete street connections are to be made. The objective of these new connections is to interconnect this site but strongly discourage cut-through vehicular traffic from High Street and commercial office uses through the Worthington Estates and Evening Street neighborhoods. In particular, the street system should be designed to discourage through commercial traffic from exiting to Evening Street.

In order to best determine the alignment of the new street connections, a detailed traffic study must be conducted. This study will help determine the alignment of new street connections and what needed street improvements are required, if any. The traffic study will be provided by the developer and approved by the City as part of any redevelopment proposal for the UMCH site.

Streets within the UMCH site should be designed to traditional neighborhood development and complete street standards. This means that they should be narrow travel lane widths (10 feet) with on-street parallel parking, street trees in tree lawns, decorative street lights, and accommodating sidewalks. Bike travel should also be accommodated through the development. The use of cul-de-sacs is strongly discouraged. Any dead-end streets should still provide pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to adjacent streets. Alleys are acceptable as a means of providing access to parking structures, garages, and service areas. Alleys should be sensitive to the overall design and aesthetics of the development and reflect the high design standards of the community, including placement of architecture and landscape along them for visual enhancement. The disposition of any alleys, public or private, will be determined as part of the development plan review; though it is expected that all streets throughout the development will be publicly dedicated.

Street Intersection Options

Because of the desired development described here, signalized intersections will be critical to providing access to the site and minimizing traffic impacts. At this time, access is provided at only one signalized intersection: Wesley Boulevard and High Street/Worthington-Galena Road. Currently through movement to Worthington-Galena Road from this site is not permitted. This restriction will need to be studied for removal as part of any redevelopment of the UMCH site. Additionally, it is very likely that a drive access will be necessary to the north to provide access to the Larrimer Avenue/High Street signalized intersection.

As mentioned in the existing conditions, it is likely that the UMC Conference Center and Sunrise Senior Living will not be part

of any initial redevelopment. Because these two buildings sit astride the primary entry to the site, and because of the importance of setting the tone and quality of any redevelopment at the gateway – it is possible that providing an additional signalized intersection on High Street will be requested to achieve the desired redevelopment.

This could take several forms, from creating a new intersection to relocating an existing one. It could also involve realigning Worthington-Galena Road between the Louis J.R. Goorey Worthington Municipal Building and the Fire Station as contemplated in one of the scenarios studied. Regardless, any such roadway and intersection improvement must be carefully considered from a safety and traffic viewpoint as well as a fiscal one. If requested, studies must be commissioned by the developer for City review to determine the potential for a High Street access change.

High Street Frontage

The potential redevelopment of the UMCH focus area as described herein creates a change in the consideration of setbacks along High Street in these blocks. To achieve the desired walkability, vitality, and screening of parking along Worthington's signature street, it is expected that multi-story buildings will be constructed closer to the High Street right-of-way, with parking located behind the buildings. The buildings should engage High Street with broad sidewalks, storefronts, front entries, and outdoor seating that provide an inviting strolling environment for pedestrians.

The buildings constructed along High Street will set the tone and impression for the entire UMCH focus area. As such their architecture, materials, quality, interest, aesthetics, and vitality are critical. These buildings should have a predominance of brick and complement the community character.

Buildings along High Street must have the majority of their building face fronting/parallel to the street. Buildings are expected to be at least two stories in height with substantially transparent storefronts on the first floor, whether retail or office, to activate the street. Operational building entries must be

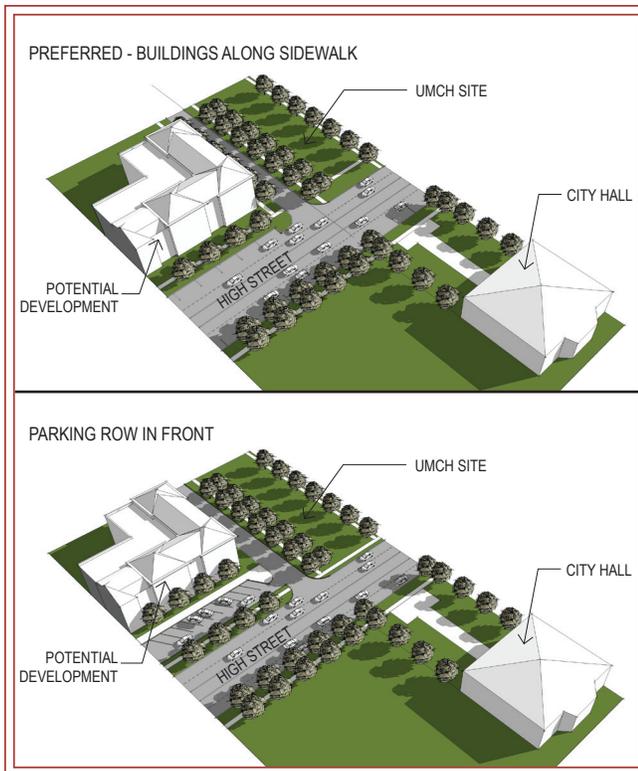


Conceptual view of possible new development along High Street.

provided along High Street regardless of parking orientation. Neither single-story commercial buildings nor retail buildings on outlots are part of the vision for the UMCH focus area, nor are buildings placed in the middle of parking lots.

Generally it is anticipated that buildings will be setback from the High Street curb line an appropriate distance based upon the architecture and use(s) of the buildings. The streetscape section between the building and the curb should include a sizable tree lawn or street trees in planters (ten feet +/-), at least an eight-foot wide unobstructed sidewalk, and an outdoor seating and/or landscape planting area. As the building height increases, the buildings should consider the relationship between the setback, the street corridor, and the building height. It is expected that if fourth or fifth stories are included, a variety of techniques will be implemented to mitigate any potential "canyon" effect along High Street, such as the use of floor terracing, changes in building massing, insertion of a green commons, recessed seating and dining areas, and lush landscaping to name a few.

While it is preferred that parking be provided to the rear of building, if parking is provided in front, it should be consistent across the frontage and be limited to either one row (single bay) of parking or on-street parking for short customer visits.



Potential High Street frontage examples.

This would alter somewhat the streetscape described above. Parking visible between buildings should be screened by landscape and/or masonry wall.

As mentioned in the Parks Space Section, it is expected that some type of green civic space is provided that allows sight line vistas into the site from High Street and at least pedestrian and bicycle connection to the Neighborhood Core area, if not vehicular connection.

Landscaping and Buffers

Development within the UMCH focus area should be well-landscaped, with particular focus on the streetscapes, building edges, buffers, and public park/community commons. Landscaping should be substantial, lush, well-planned, and commonly-maintained. Landscape should emphasize native species where possible.

Buffers for any redevelopment of the UMCH focus area are the Worthington Estates Edge and Tucker Creek Preserve zones.

The Worthington Estates Edge provides rear yards adjacent to the existing rear yards and new single-family homes across the street from existing single-family homes, similar to other lots within the Worthington Estates neighborhood. The Tucker Creek Preserve maintains the ravine separating this site from the Greenbrier Court development.

Storm Water

As with any development, the quantity and quality of storm water runoff must be managed per Code. Comprehensive design of the storm water system for the UMCH focus area must be part of the development plan with needed controls located and sized prior to construction of any first phase. Storm water controls should be aesthetically integrated, be natural in appearance, and serve as amenities to the site. Sustainable and green measures should be included to the extent reasonable. Because of the storm water sensitivity of Tucker Creek, it is expected that storm water controls will meet or exceed all requirements.

Public Private Partnerships

There are several opportunities for public-private partnerships as part of any substantial redevelopment of this focus area. The community has expressed great interest in creating integrated public park space. In addition, parking decks may be important site improvements to achieve the desired office densities and tenants important to the City. Furthermore, relocation or creation of street intersections to facilitate gateway development and attract best-of-class commercial development may be necessary. Public-private partnership opportunities should be explored by the City and any developer of this site to achieve the full potential and quality of this site.