

VISION & VALUES

The City of Vandalia Community Vision embodies the City's desired future, as articulated by the residents and the Steering Committee. Development of a Community Vision is not a simple process. It results from an extensive process of citizen input and data collection, including interviews, surveys, focus groups, and a charrette. The Steering Committee becomes a tool in developing the Community Vision and identifying community values by participating in series of exercises where community issues are discussed and solutions explored.

COMMUNITY VALUES / CHARACTERISTICS

During the first Steering Committee session, members were asked to identify community values and characteristics. These community values and characteristics help define the direction that the Comprehensive Plan will take. Notice that the majority of values and characteristics listed below center around quality of life issues.

- Manageable traffic patterns
- Opposed to new commercial districts
- "Sensible growth" community (growth, but not at any cost)
- Good city services (clean, etc.)
- Home town feeling
- Many housing options
- Recreation opportunities
- Good place to raise a family
- Upwardly mobile community
- Good school system
- Safe and secure (lowest crime rate in the county)
- Good relationship with neighboring townships
- Geographic location / convenient access
- Disproportionately industrial / import jobs
- Stable / increasing property values
- Proximity to airport
- Park system (community edges)
- Integration of single-family and multi-family housing
- Stable population (longevity / loyalty)
- Financially healthy / low tax, high service government
- Open communications / informal processes
- Good public golf course
- Large number of churches / many large churches
- Lack central gathering place / no identifiable downtown
- Proximity to labor market of Dayton SMA
- "Crossroads of America"

VISIONING EXERCISE

The first stage in developing the Community Vision for the City of Vandalia began with the Steering Committee in January 2000 when the Committee completed a three-step visioning exercise. The process involved identifying two possible outcomes of what the community would look like if the City either (1) did nothing, or (2) used planning and citizen involvement. Finally, the Committee identified the steps needed to bridge the gap between the two scenarios.

The first part of this exercise consisted of the development of statements describing “cruise-control” for Vandalia. In “cruise-control,” nothing would change from its current state. There is no change in the way decisions are made, no policy changes, no change in existing community programs, etc. The Steering Committee considered a period of ten to twenty years (or the years 2010-2020) for this scenario. The statements were developed in response to the following question:

* *What will the City of Vandalia look like / be like in ten to twenty years if nothing changes, “cruise-control?”*

1. Older neighborhoods with post-war housing stock will have declined
2. Vandalia will have fallen behind other communities in the region - in every aspect
3. Some natural growth and development
4. Old comprehensive plan goals exhausted
5. Polarization of some areas - loss of local business in the CBD
6. Decline in Poe Avenue area because of changes in the interstate connection
7. Industrial areas not fully utilized
8. Sharp cultural / economic divisions and the problems associated with this
9. Increase in the number of rental units - absentee landlords
10. Continued expansion of utilities, roadways, and an increase in industry
11. No new space to develop - homogenization of business districts
12. Neighborhoods threatened by more environmental externalities
13. Conflicting land uses
14. Loss of community values and characteristics

The second part of the exercise consisted of the development of vision statements describing a “preferred future” for Vandalia. A vision statement describes what, how, or where a community could or should be at a specified future time. Again, the Steering Committee considered a period of ten to twenty years (or the years 2010 to 2020). The vision statements were developed in response to the following question:

* *What could Vandalia look like / be like in ten to twenty years with good planning and strong city and citizen effort, but no miracles?*

1. Nonconforming districts become conforming with the new land use plan
2. Positively well-balanced community (land use districts, appearance)

3. Comprehensive plan adopted that has strong goals and principles, is reliable, and is used by Planning Commission / Zoning Appeals
4. Community has a focal point
5. Well-organized, defined, and protected neighborhoods
6. Additional high quality industrial and office development
7. Extension of utilities on the west end of town and along the airport access road; expansion of roads (Webster)
8. Thoroughfare Plan accomplished
9. Maintenance of positive community values, stable and increasing property values
10. Premier city in the Northern Miami Valley
11. Stronger school system - its growth parallels city growth
12. Create and maintain policies that enhance the school district
13. Stand out from other communities

For the third and final part of the exercise, the Steering Committee was asked to develop action steps for the vision statements and think about what made the difference between scenarios one and two. Action step development moves the discussion beyond initial visioning into implementation by establishing critical, urgent tasks that are necessary to achieve the visions. The action steps generated as a part of this exercise were integrated into the recommendations found throughout the plan.

TRENDS

During Steering Committee meetings and throughout the interview process, the following trends were identified.

- Rising costs of government
- Increase of regional commercial chains affecting local / private businesses
- Desire to locate manufacturing high / desire to locate offices weak
- Businesses increasingly foreign-owned
- Explosion of new subdivisions / running out of land
- Potential for development at major interchanges
- Increasing traffic (air & highway)
- Overlap in business zoning districts
- Potential impact of e-commerce
- Interstate congestion
- Commercial industrialization to exclusion of residential development (Little York)
- Commercial upgrading (Dixie)
- Decline in major shopping centers / anchor stores
- New housing mostly upper end
- Rising awareness of noise and air pollution
- Future of the Grand American
- Annexation of new property

The Comprehensive Plan that follows will provide recommendations targeted at many of the trends discussed above.