



Five Year Economic Development Plan: Strategies and Implementation

Introduction:

Smart growth economic development strategy is a planning mechanism consistent with what city staff believes is most conducive in creating goals and initiatives in expanding our local economy. According to a recent report titled “Framework for Creating a Smart Growth Economic Development Strategy: A Tool for Small Cities and Towns,” published in January 2016 by the EPA’s Office of Sustainable Communities, smart growth “refers to a strategy that builds upon existing assets, takes incremental actions to strengthen communities, and builds long-term value to attract a range of investments.” Using the steps detailed in the report, we’ve outlined strategies and timelines demonstrating what we believe is essential to grow the city’s tax base and community appeal over the next several years.

Combining the strengths of our city with a clear vision for the future, staff will be able to gradually implement the following strategies to grow our city by accenting our assets and small town charm. To move these strategies and goals forward, we also need to understand our demographics and community characteristics.

Demographics (2010 U.S. Census) and Characteristics:

- Median family income is \$67,250, which is higher than the national and state average .
- Median house price is \$136,000, which is higher than the national and state average.
- Almost 95% of adults in Clayton graduated high school.
- One third of the adults in Clayton have a bachelor’s degree or higher.
- Median age of residents in Clayton is 39
- The city is located at I-70 near I-75
- Developable land: almost 300 acres of developable commercial and residential land currently listed on the real estate market
- Two main business corridors (Salem Avenue and N. Main Street) that extend into other areas of Montgomery and surrounding counties.
- Pro-development City Council
- Excellent police and fire services
- City-owned property
- Strong school system
- Variety of housing stock

Steps:

The report “Framework for Creating a Smart Growth Economic Development Strategy: A Tool for Small Cities and Towns,” list five key steps to developing an economic development strategy:

- A. Select a focus area
- B. Define the context
- C. Set goals
- D. Identify existing assets and barriers
- E. Select the right tools

These steps will guide Clayton’s future economic development strategies and implementation plan.

Select a Focus Area

There are three main focus areas staff believes we need to concentrate on in regards to economic development initiatives over the next five years.

1. North Main Street Business Corridor

- Retail and personal/professional service corridor.
- Good existing street trees and lights.
- Beginning to utilize banners on the light poles on a more consistent basis.
- City currently owns two parcels and is looking to acquire additional properties in this area. Possibly use TIF funds to accomplish this goal.
- Demolition of aging housing stock along this corridor. Possibility of using NIP and CDBG resources to accomplish this goal.

2. Salem Avenue Business Corridor

- Prime area for new industrial development, specifically advanced manufacturing and possible logistics.
- Area includes the Salem/Hoke Road intersection.
- Solid infrastructure for future development.
- Available properties to target for future site control.
- Next area to develop.

3. Villages of North Clayton

- New Urban Retail and Residential town center with an active HOA and Community Authority.
- New walking path will be finished in 2016.
- Farmer’s market started in spring of 2015.
- Infrastructure already in place.
- Commercial parcels can be developed quickly.
- Residential parcels are tied up in various legal scenarios, may present opportunity for the city to obtain site control.

Define the Context

In order to accurately understand where we've been, where we are, and how we want to move forward along the target areas, staff must devise supporting documents and plans to assist this effort based on research and community feedback that is both "qualitative and quantified." This step is important in identifying community assets, growth patterns, previous public and private projects as well as initiatives which have been both successful and unsuccessful.

To accomplish this step the city needs to undertake three phases which will greatly increase our success in implementation of future development plans.

1. Create an Overlay Zoning District along N. Main Street

- This is essential in order to address the different development standards and zoning classifications found along this commercial corridor. N. Main Street is the corridor where medical office and retail currently exists and where future redevelopment will occur. This is also the corridor where daily commuter traffic travels.
- Part of this process will be for staff to conduct a Business Walk along this corridor in order to get feedback from our current business community. As detailed in the previously mentioned report, "retaining existing businesses are the foundation of any economic growth strategy. By building on what already exists, cities can support current businesses and create a strong foundation on which to build." Receiving feedback from our current businesses will assist in creating an informed and carefully planned district
- Creating an Overlay District will implement uniformed development standards for new infrastructure, redevelopment construction, parking and landscaping. This district will impact the development of this corridor over the next two decades and will ensure the city continues to keep its "small town feel" while also creating an aesthetically pleasing business corridor which will attract new diversified development.

2. Update our Comprehensive Master Land Use Plan

- The last Land Use Plan was created at the time when the city of Clayton merged with Randolph Township, almost twenty years ago. Since that time different economic and sociological trends has developed in the city as a result of The Great Recession. The process of updating our Land Use Plan will give staff an opportunity to research what has been successful and what has failed. It is also an opportunity to get public feedback from our community. All these factors are vitally important in order to successfully implement our future economic development strategies.
- The Land Use Plan will identify which areas of the city staff will concentrate development efforts. The Plan is the foundation for the future development of the city. It's a roadmap for staff to follow. Without this plan staff will be simply reacting to random situations instead of implementing a consistent and concise plan for our future.

3. Update Zoning Code

- Our present code is not consistent with the original Land Use Plan and will definitely not be complimentary to the new plan. Not updating this plan will prohibit economic development due to vague statutes and open interpretations. In order to successfully carry out an economic development plan the city needs to have the Zoning Code mesh with the Land Use Plan and subsequently, consistently interpreted by our staff.

Define Goals

There are several goals included with the Five Year Economic Development Plan. Some of the initiatives will occur simultaneously with others. Some will not occur until other steps are accomplished. All the goals are fluid and will be impacted by real life occurrences and unforeseen developments during the plan's lifetime.

1. Supporting Businesses

- This initiative has previously been mentioned and will be a continual effort. The primary goal of the Montgomery County BusinessFirst! Program, which Clayton belongs, is to support our existing businesses through site visits and connecting existing businesses with regional partners to assist in retention and expansion projects. BusinessFirst! does a good job in meeting with strategically selected businesses to ensure everything is being done on a regional level to meet the company's needs. However, staff believes it's important to be just as aggressive over the next twelve months with our entire business community, specifically along the N. Main Street corridor.
- Staff will be conducting business site visits along this corridor during the summer and fall months of 2016. We are currently weighing the best method to accomplish this goal: do it with BusinessFirst! staff or is the sample size along N. Main Street accommodating enough for our staff to do it over several months times by ourselves. Our meetings with business representatives will be used to gather information on the status of the local business market, individual business needs as well as what goals those businesses have moving forward. It will also be important for us to understand how the city can assist the business community to grow within the city limits. We'll also ask questions specific to the proposed Overlay District in order to gain an accurate understanding of how our existing businesses feel about such an undertaking.

2. Attract New Businesses

- This is an obvious goal for any economic development plan. How to successfully carry out this initiative is the more complicated detail. "Attracting new businesses—particularly in high-priority industries—could help increase local employment options and build the city's tax base. Attracting new businesses is often most effective when the effort is tailored to the industries that are best suited to a community's assets and opportunities and can provide high-quality employment options for local residents or other services and amenities desired by the community." (Framework for Creating a Smart Growth Economic Development Strategy: A Tool for Small Cities and Towns). The four main types of high priority industries in the Montgomery County region are:

manufacturing, medical, aerospace and IT/data management. We believe each of our three target areas is ideal for one or more of these specific types of industries.

- There are several initiatives staff must undertake prior to being able to successfully accomplish this goal. The first two initiatives have to occur in conjunction with one another. As previously mentioned, in order to understand where we want to develop our city, we must develop a plan. The Comprehensive Master Land Use Plan and Zoning Code rewrite will give staff the framework on where we want specific industries located. Though we may have an idea where certain sectors fit best, we need to research to ensure we are carrying this out in the right format.
- The second initiative will be for the city to continue to obtain site control of developable lots, be it for redevelopment or new development projects. There are several opportunities to accomplish this goal. Staff has already begun to reach out to real estate professionals which have active listings for several of our commercial properties. We have also created a list of tax delinquent properties which we can acquire with the assistance of the Montgomery County Land Bank. By the end of 2017 staff desires to acquire additional parcels along N. Main Street to assist in the redevelopment of this corridor and acquire an option on a larger tract of land along Salem Avenue so we are ready to aggressively move forward at the time the Land Use Plan is adopted.
- The final initiative will be to address the outdated traffic counts along our commercial districts. Staff has been told by multiple real estate professionals that our commercial districts are not attracting new retail uses due to low traffic counts. The published studies we currently have were conducted prior to new development occurring along some of these corridors. Staff has already contact MVRPC to do an updated traffic count on Hoke Road, south of Salem Avenue. We will develop a plan to conduct new traffic count studies over the next 12-24 months in strategic locations along our commercial thoroughfares.

3. Eliminate old and blighted structures and acquire tax delinquent properties

- One method of attracting new businesses and new investment to our city is the aesthetic quality of our business corridors. New investment spurs additional desires to be located within our city boundaries. By creating the N. Main Street Overlay District, adopting a new Master Land Use Plan and rewriting our Zoning Code we will slowly shift our commercial corridors from an outdated line of blighted homes mixed with newer commercial uses to a cohesive platform that will become a destination place for residents within and outside our city limits. Staff will spend the next five years tracking the tax delinquency status of several of the older homes along the N. Main Street and partner with the Montgomery County Land Bank to begin acquiring these properties. These properties will then be included with the NIP Demolition program. This program will have the structures demolished by the end of 2020 and the city will then be ready to market the land for redevelopment purposes.
- Staff will also spend the next one to three years trying to bring the tax delinquent properties at the Villages of North Clayton into tax producing parcels ready to be marketed for development. We presently have legal staff researching the legal status of these properties. Staff is also working with the Land Bank to see if these properties can put into tax foreclosure and acquired by the city or another entity to be developed.

Identify Assets and Barriers

The City of Clayton does a great job at identifying and marketing our community assets, which include community parks, schools and civic buildings. We have begun to engage social media as well as continuing to use traditional media outlets to encourage our residents to be engaged with all that the community offers.

As important it is to identify community assets and anchors, it's just as important for us to identify those barriers which prohibit redevelopment and new development projects. Some of those barriers have been addressed already with this plan. Vacant properties, tax delinquent developments and blighted structures all negatively impact our ability to carry out a comprehensive development plan. Over the next 12 months staff will make a list of all the various barriers preventing new development projects and will offer possible solutions to these issues. Some of the solutions will be able to be accomplished over a one year time period, while others will take several years. Despite having barriers within the community, creating possible solutions will assist staff in overcoming these obstacles as we begin to implement our development strategies.

Select the Right Tools

Selecting the correct tool to address specific barriers within our development plan is essential to making sure we are as successful as possible.

1. Land use policy

- This has been addressed with the goals of creating a N. Main Street Overlay District, updating our Master Land Use Plan and rewriting our Zoning Code.

2. Partnership building

- Some of the potential partnerships have been identified previously in this plan. Staff has already reached out to the Land Bank and will begin working with them over the next several years to acquire tax delinquent properties, remove blighted homes and rehab structures in our residential areas. We will also continue working with the North Clayton Community Authority, the Clayton/Clay Township JEDD Committee, the Northmont Chamber of Commerce, Montgomery County BusinessFirst!, Jobs Ohio, and other regional partners to push our development plan forward.

3. Business development, entrepreneurship & workforce development

- This tool will be accomplished working with Montgomery County and their various business initiatives, such as the Montgomery County Entrepreneur Center and the Job Center.

4. Brownfield and infill redevelopment

- The majority of the infill development which must be accomplished is centered on N. Main Street. Combining our partnership with the Land Bank, private site acquisition and installing the N. Main Street Overlay District, staff believes we will be able to systematically produce positive brownfield redevelopment along this corridor.

5. Transportation

- Having easily traveled right of ways, walkable communities and bike paths throughout our community is important is creating an appealing community which will attract both businesses and new residents. Adding this component in our Master Land Use Plan and N. Main Street Overlay District will give staff the essential outline in working towards improving these aspects in both our commercial and residential communities.

6. Infrastructure Financing

- There have been several initiatives already taken up by the city to accomplish this goal. There are multiple TIF Districts in place to assist in infrastructure improvements in designated commercial zones, the city is undertaking a three year street pavement, curb and gutter replacement project which will see all the residential areas updated and we are in the process of financing engineering plans in order to extend sewer services to the older section of Clayton. In addition to these projects, the Master Land Use Plan will assist staff in identifying additional areas where we can create new opportunities to finance additional infrastructure improvements.

7. Neighborhood stabilization

- One of the biggest drivers of economic development is stable residential neighborhoods. While many of our neighborhoods continue to be stable, there are some neighborhoods in specific sections of the city that need extra attention. The city has hired a full time code enforcement officer, updated our inspection database and will begin to utilize the Land Bank on several of their stabilization programs over the next year. Proactive code enforcement, selective demolition activity and rehabilitation projects will inject additional investment into these areas which will assist in investment within our commercial corridors.

Conclusion

Using the methodology described in this plan, staff has constructed what we believe is an economic plan that moves Clayton towards the future in a proactive fashion. This plan is for the next five years; however it's laying the development foundation for the next 10-20 years. This plan outlines goals with reasonable timeframes. Staff will work in unison with these new plans and zoning concepts to bring new, diverse economic development: assist in spurring new development along Salem Avenue, redeveloping N. Main Street and getting the Villages of North Clayton off the ground and moving towards what it was originally slated to be. This can all be accomplished while maintaining the "small town" feel which attracts so many families to call our city home. This plan is only for the next five years, but staff believes it is vitally important to follow through in terms of the methods described. We are setting the direction of our future with this plan. There is much groundwork which needs to be completed before we can begin to realize our true potential. The land use and zoning plans we complete over the next 12-24 months will impact development for the next 10-20 years.