

**Tipp City, Ohio**  
**Council Goals and Policy Direction**  
**Report Date: February 2024**

On February 9, 2024, Tipp City Council members along with the City Manager, Clerk of Council, and Department Directors convened to establish strategic priorities for the City for the next two years and beyond. The session was facilitated by Jane Dockery, a consultant with Systematic Solutions, Inc.

**Participants:**

**Council Members**

- Kathryn Huffman, President
- Logan Rogers, Mayor
- Greg Enslen
- John Kessler
- Ryan Liddy
- Joanna Pittenger
- Douglas Slagel

**Senior Staff**

- Tim Eggleston, City Manager
- John Green, Finance Director
- Greg Adkins, Chief of Police
- Eric Mack, Director of Municipal Services
- Matt Spring, Community Development Director
- Cameron Haller, Chief of the Fire & EMS Department
- Janice Bates, Executive Secretary to City Manager/Clerk of Council

In preparation for the planning session, a simple survey was distributed to City Council members and Staff leadership. A list of potential City priorities was developed from the survey results and was used as a discussion guide for the Council retreat. This report summarizes the strategic and policy guidance provided to Staff by Council according to the following categories. Each category begins with background information and then presents potential strategies for the next two-year (or more) policy agenda.

- Broad Planning Efforts
- Economic, Business, and Residential Development
- Infrastructure and Utilities
- Public Safety Services
- Parks and Facilities
- City Operations
- Communications

## Broad Planning Efforts

**Background:** The City's Comprehensive Plan hosts the community's vision statement, and it is time for a comprehensive plan review. As the City becomes more built out, the critical question is, what is the future vision for Tipp City? Does the community envision future development? How aggressively should Tipp City be in pursuing growth and development? How does the community wish to balance growth/no growth with its tax base? What is the City's remaining inventory of land holdings and do these holdings (such as the 90-acre property in the industrial park) support the future vision and strategy? If the City were to expand, how might the Township be involved in the planning?

### ***Potential Planning Strategies for the two-year Policy Agenda***

- Develop a unified plan on how Tipp City wants to grow in the future with an understanding of the infrastructure and costs associated with that growth.
  - Conduct a community engagement process to assess growth and no-growth desires and scenarios to inform a Comprehensive Plan update or review.
  - Conduct City Council land-use planning work sessions with the Director of Municipal Services providing data, maps, and other necessary information to Council members.
    - Maps will identify water and sewer line extensions.
    - Maps will identify opportunities for industrial, commercial, and residential development, taking into consideration existing limitations with resiliency. For example, an extension of sewer services by Tri-Cities North Regional Wastewater Authority (TCA) is a ten-year process. Tipp City has researched tapping into Troy's sewer infrastructure for development going north. In this case, Tipp City would pay 100% of the cost of extended sewer infrastructure. For development that goes to the south, Tipp City shares the cost of extensions with TCA partners.
    - Maps that indicate additional infrastructure needed if the City were to grow to the west of Peters Road, such as a water tower.
  - Revisit the City's and perhaps other partners' vision and mission statements (e.g., the Tipp City Downtown Partnership, the Community Improvement Corporation, etc.).
  - Pursue a branding initiative if warranted by the vision and mission efforts.
- Ensure completion of the Charter Review.

## Economic, Business, and Residential Development

**Background:** Beyond the planning activity described above to assess community interest in residential and business growth, the Council also discussed the role of the Community Improvement Corporation (CIC),<sup>1</sup> the Downtown, grocery stores, and other strategies to spur economic development.

### Business Development

#### **The CIC**

The Council and Staff discussed the Tipp City CIC and its role in business retention and expansion, as well as in advancing, encouraging, and promoting business development. Some of the activities that a CIC can undertake include:

- Acquiring and selling property
- Borrowing money for economic development projects
- Lending money (i.e. revolving loan funds for economic development projects)
- The CIC can be used for strategic planning purposes for the community
- Serving as an administrative agent for grant applications
- May enter into contracts with third parties
- The CIC CANNOT levy taxes, issue tax-exempt bonds, condemn or appropriate property, nor grant tax abatement

In one example of entering into third party contracts, the CIC is working with a consultant, Woodard Development of Dayton, to create a long-term redevelopment plan for Tipp Plaza which is in the Uptown area.

#### ***Potential CIC Strategies for the two-year Policy Agenda***

At the Council Retreat, two main CIC issues were discussed: (1) the funding level that is appropriate for the CIC to be able to function optimally; and (2) the methods used by the CIC to present information for Council consideration.

- The Council would like to schedule a work or planning session to be able to singularly focus on the appropriate funding level for the CIC
- To expedite the review of CIC proposed activities, City Council recommends that the CIC follow a structured method for presenting proposals to Council that:
  - Present the goal of the activity and ties that goal to the City's Comprehensive Plan;
  - Define clear metrics to measure progress and performance of the proposed activity;
  - Estimate the payback period for the investment; and
  - Provide a cost-benefit analysis.
- The CIC should present results to City Council from Woodard Development of Dayton within the year.

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<sup>1</sup> A Community Improvement Corporation is a not-for-profit corporation authorized by the State of Ohio Legislature for the purpose of advancing, encouraging, and promoting the industrial, economic, commercial, and civic development of a community or area.

## ***Potential Business Development Strategies for the two-year Policy Agenda***

### **Grocery Store**

- Assess the potential of attracting a grocery store as part of the research being conducted by Woodard Development of Dayton under a contract with the CIC.

### **Downtown (development and parking)**

The City works closely with the Tipp City Downtown Partnership. City Council members discussed downtown development potential. They discussed the difficulty of pursuing new opportunities for dining and shopping due to the fact that some property owners with several downtown holdings are not interested in selling or developing their properties. Council asked Staff to conduct some related research.

- Research the role of overlay zoning in improving the appearance of downtown.
  - Identify opportunities for the Restoration Board and the Partnership to team together to beautify downtown.
  - Ensure the City is abreast of the Partnership's plans for beautifying downtown so that citizen questions can be readily responded to.
- Assess the degree to which the vacant property ordinance is being applied and review the permitted uses.
- Downton parking opportunities continue to be pursued. The City is in conversations with a church and may discuss options to share some spaces with other property owners as well, through a cost share or rent payment situation.

### **The Prill Property**

- Council needs to revisit a decision regarding zoning of the Prill Property, which was annexed but currently has an unspecified zoning designation.
- The wider issue to be addressed in land use work sessions is to develop an annexation policy that states the process for designating zoning for newly annexed properties.

### **Springhill Property**

- The City needs to consider contingent rezoning of Springhill properties, in case a decision to sell the property is made.

### **Residential Development**

Council members discussed the future of residential development, and speculate that any major development in the southern part of the City will create the need for another interchange.

## ***Potential Residential Development Strategies for the two-year Policy Agenda***

- Council members said that the land use plan should point to possible areas for development of duplexes or other similar higher-density housing options. In this way, Council members won't have to respond to individual requests for variances.

## Infrastructure and Utilities

**Background:** To maintain high quality infrastructure and utility services, Tipp City will continue to conduct infrastructure maintenance and improvements. As discussed previously, the Council and Staff will participate in work sessions to study land use and the future needs for infrastructure.

### Sanitary Sewer System

The City has a pending study session to discuss sewer system capacity issues, which are especially affected by Abbot Labs and Meijer. Abbott Labs alone comprises about 30% of the City's sanitary sewer flow. The City is assessing whether it is possible to divert some flow. The City is making some plant improvements that will come online in 2029.

### Water Treatment

The City is not near 70% capacity for its water treatment plant and has room to expand.

### Electric

Tipp City's electric service is a municipal-owned service. Electrical sub-station number 4 is in process.

### Roadways

Tipp City has made great strides in improving the condition of its roads in recent years. The City is now focusing on alley resurfacing and is addressing ditches.<sup>2</sup> The Municipal Services Department conducted a pilot demonstration test with \$16,000 invested in alley road resurfacing and the findings were positive. The City now has a plan to invest an additional \$100,000 in alley chip and seal resurfacing in 2024. Amokee ditch is in the capital improvement plan (CIP) and the City is pursuing stormwater grants to help address these open-channel systems.

### ***Potential Infrastructure and Utility Improvement Strategies for a two-year+ Policy Agenda***

- As mentioned earlier, the Council and Staff will conduct land use work sessions to consider critical infrastructure issues. Sanitary sewer is the single greatest limitation to future development in Tipp City. A long-term plan needs to be developed and implemented to address this issue if Tipp City wants to continue to grow.
- If the City continues to grow and expand, then these investments are needed:
  - Additional water tower
  - Expanded sewer capacity (both in town and to the treatment plant)
- Complete electrical sub-station number 4.
- Conduct preparatory work in Spring 2024 for the alley chip and seal program.
- Continue to stay on top of stormwater management requirements and unfunded mandates.
  - Address Amokee Ditch
- Continue beautification of interstate ramps and city entrances, reconstructing brick approaches, reconstructing the wall near Union Savings Bank, and eventual reconstruction of the walls at the laundromat and Dairy Queen.

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<sup>2</sup> Ditches are open-channel systems designed to quickly move stormwater off the roads.

## Public Safety Services

**Background:** Tipp City Police Department is a mid-sized department, focused on providing service-oriented policing. The *service style* places an emphasis on serving the public and helping the community. A discussion point at the 2024 Council Retreat was the challenge to reach all parts of the community expeditiously with public safety services given the railroad tracks. Tipp City has established mutual aid agreements<sup>3</sup> with neighboring jurisdictions that can provide almost 24/7 public safety services to Tipp City areas east of the railroad tracks. Another point of discussion at the Council Retreat pertained to the long-term funding of Public Safety services. As for fire and EMS services, the Tipp City Fire & Emergency Services (TCFES) is the provider of emergency medical, fire and all hazard service in Tipp City and Monroe Township in Miami County Ohio. The Township's funding for fire and emergency services rolls off in 2026. It is also time to begin developing a funding strategy for the Police Department.

### ***Potential Public Safety Improvement Strategies for a two-year Policy Agenda***

- Establish a funding strategy for the Police Department by 2027-2028. This strategy needs to take into account the higher prices for purchasing police cars, which, in the past, were covered under state bid-pricing for purchasing at an agreed upon amount that was about half the price as the public price. Today, many times, there is no state bid-pricing and police cars cost 90-95% of the public price. Electric cars add costs, if they become required, because the fleet would need to be substantially increased to ensure the number of cars on a shift are fully charged.
- Prepare for the extra resources that may be needed due to high traffic volumes and road congestion during the April 2024 solar eclipse.
- In the CIP-sponsored 2025 needs assessment for Fire Station 2 and its locale, determine how the new facility, if warranted, will be funded.
- Keep up with facility condition and functional assessments.
- Assess the most efficient means of responding to unfunded mandates pertaining to public safety technology trends. For example, body worn camera video and audio can be subject to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, and protecting the confidentiality of those in the video can take hundreds of hours to prepare videos for sharing.

## Parks and Facilities

**Background:** Tipp City has over 837 acres of neighborhood, regional, prairie reserves, and community parks throughout the city. The Buckeye Trail (multi-use recreational trail system) runs through Tipp City along the old Miami-Erie Canal, and connects to Vandalia, Dayton, and hundreds of miles of trails south of Tipp City. The Miami County trail system continues northerly to Troy, Piqua, and beyond.

### ***Potential Park and Facilities Improvement Strategies for a two-year Policy Agenda***

- Staff to research a portable amphitheater and its costs and storage options.
- Kyle Park improvements are pending, with electrical to be updated in 2025. Address sidewalks to the baseball fields in 2025.
- Install inclusive and accessible park equipment in 2024 per the budget allocation.
- Research possible partnerships with the schools to provide tennis and pickleball courts.
- Review, once available, developer's concepts for Broadway School facilities and grounds reuse.

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<sup>3</sup> Mutual aid is an agreement between departments to provide help to each other across jurisdictional boundaries.

## City Operations

**Background:** Tipp City department heads work diligently to maintain reduced operating expenses wherever possible, and the General Fund has operated with an annual surplus in 18 of the last ~20 years. The City will be in a state of transition as the City Manager plans to retire in June 2024. This will be the right time to review administrative and HR policies and wage compensation.

### ***Potential City Operations Improvement Strategies for a two-year Policy Agenda***

- Evaluate departmental efficiencies with the new City Manager. The new City Manager will meet with each department to discuss staffing and equipment needs and areas for savings, especially in preparation of the next CIP process.
- Continue to pursue grant funding (especially for training, safety, and infrastructure grants), recognizing that the City will not typically qualify for need-based grants.
- Assess the most efficient means of responding to requests for information from the public.
- Continue to provide educational opportunities to the City's boards and commissions, such as an introduction to city operations and ethics training.
- Through the City's Human Resource Department, develop a succession plan for the City that focuses on the training necessary for internal staff promotions.
- Review both City Administrative and HR policies with the new City Manager.
- Address needed positions such as an inspector to help with stormwater management requirements.
- Share the results of edits made by City staff to the consultant's Tipp City employee compensation study. (City staff are adding additional comparison communities to the study conducted by a consultant.) Thus far, the study indicates that Tipp City's wage compensation is less than comparison communities for the parks and street workforce, but those positions are under contract and will be reviewed in time for the next contract in October 2024.
- Study the hiring difficulties experienced by the City when hiring a seasonal workforce.
- Develop a strategy to address the "revolving door" of new emergency services candidates. It is difficult to fill part-time positions, and it takes two months to onboard new hires, one to three months to train them, and most leave Tipp City in their first year due to better salary offers from other communities.
- Study administrative trends in the City's workforce—are some administrative positions not competitively compensated? What are the pros and cons of the 4 day/10-hour work week?

## Communications

**Background:** This section addresses communications among Council members, between Council and Staff, and with the public. Whenever a council changes, it is important to reestablish communication expectations. Council members also used the retreat as an opportunity to share their communication expectations of Staff members and shared some practical recommendations.

### ***Potential Communications Improvement Strategies for a two-year Policy Agenda***

- Some Council members indicated that the same information may not be being distributed to all Council members equally. Even in the cases where a split vote among Council members is predicted, each Council member needs to be privy to the same information.

- It may be that not all staff members are equally informed, and Council's suggestion was to hold regular staff meetings, since these can be a good means of communicating and conversing.
- Ensure that the City website keeps up-to-date information. (An example was provided by one Council member who could not find the location of the 2024 Council meeting on the City's website.)
- In terms of presentations by Staff to City Council, staff reports should include recommendations that ensure Council members have sufficient information of the pros and cons of top-tier options so that Council can make informed decisions.
- To promote healthy dialogue, it was recommended that constructive criticism, when criticism is needed, is the best path forward.