



City of Willoughby Hills

To: Willoughby Hills Charter Review Commission
cc: Mayor Weger
From: Steve Roszczyk
Subject: Charter Review
Date: February 19, 2015

Once again, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide input to your review of the city charter. As we saw last summer, it is no doubt a daunting task, but one that is vital to the health and well-being of The City of Willoughby Hills. I for one appreciate your willingness to tackle the issues.

The issue that most concerns me is **Article V, Section 5.15 Mandatory Public Vote on Land Use Changes**. I believe that it severely limits the potential for growth in the City.

This section states, "Any change to the existing permitted uses in zoning districts, or any changes in the Municipal Zoning Map as amended from time to time, cannot be approved unless and until it shall have been submitted to the Planning Commission, for approval or disapproval. In the event the City Council should approve any of the preceding changes, whether approved or disapproved by the Planning Commission it shall not be approved or passed by the declaration of an emergency, and it shall not be effective, but it shall be mandatory that the same be approved by a majority vote of all votes cast of the qualified electors of the City of Willoughby Hills at the next regular Municipal election, if one shall occur not less than sixty (60) or more than one hundred and twenty (120) days after its passage, otherwise at a special election falling on the generally established day of the primary election. Said issue shall be submitted to the electors of the City only after approval of a change of an existing land use by the Council for an applicant. Should the land use request not be affirmed by a majority vote it cannot be presented again for one full year and new request must be made at that time."

In essence, ANY change to the City's current zoning must be approved by referendum. In hindsight, it's easy to see why the City adopted this policy. Willoughby Hills was a most desirable place to live. The Charter's framers wanted to maintain this desirability and allow the residents a say in who their neighbors would be. In addition, business conditions were such that cities were in a position to demand that developers conform to city regulations. Thus, making zoning changes cumbersome, expensive and uncertain was an easy way to allow only desired businesses to locate in the City.

Unfortunately, the playing field has changed:

- The demographics of the City has changed
- There is less home ownership (only 51% of residents live in owner occupied units)
- Homeowners share of the tax burden is increasing
- There is a reliance on 'recycled retail' space to fill the business tax void
- The City is virtually out of land available for new commercial/industrial development under current zoning configurations (see chart attached)
- Business conditions/climate have changed
- Business attraction competition is formidable

These changes have made requiring a referendum obsolete. Consequently, the method used to change zoning laws should be streamlined and made more user friendly.

The common options are to allow overlay districts or to place the decision in the hands of elected officials, who are ultimately answerable to the electorate. It is likely that more 'creative' options exist throughout the state. However, how the process change is accomplished is not for me to decide.

Regardless, the old way has become a barrier to economic development. If the City is serious about attracting new business, it must change the way it conducts its business and the place to start is with the process required for zoning changes.

Thank you for your consideration.

If you have any questions, or would like to meet to discuss these issues in more detail, please let me know.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Steve".

Economic Development Director
econdev@willoughbyhills-oh.gov
440-918-8746

MASTER PLAN -

-2015-

		A-	B-	B1-	C-	D-	E-	F-	G-	H-
		(Master Plan)	(Master Plan)	(Master Plan)	(Master Plan)	(Master Plan)	(Master Plan)	(Master Plan)		
		Total	%	Developed	Acres	Flood	Total	Percent	Developed	Actual
		Acres/ District	Developed	Acres	Vacant	Plain	Developable	Of -A-	Since 2007	Developable Land
							Land			
				(=A*B)	(=A+B)	(=E-C)				
Residential										
R-1	Residential	4,899	59.0%	2,890	2,009	237	1,772	36.2%	70	1,702
R-2	Residential	44	91.0%	40	4	4	0	0.0%	0	0
SCR	Residential	12	0.0%	0	12	0	12	100.0%	0	12
M	Multi-Family	21	100.0%	21	0	0	0	0.0%	0	0
M-1	High Rise Apartment	59	81.0%	48	11	0	11	18.6%	0	11
Total Residential		5,035	60.0%	2,999	2,036	254	1,783	25.7%	70	1,713
Commercial										
B-1	Commercial	10	80.0%	8	2	0	2	20.0%	0	2
B-2	Commercial	93	81.0%	75	18	0	18	19.4%	9	9
B-3	Commercial	72	97.0%	70	2	0	2	2.8%	0	2
E	Research	37	86.0%	32	5	0	5	13.5%	0	5
Total Commercial		212	87.0%	185	27	0	27	12.7%	9	18
Industrial										
I1	Industrial	45	18.0%	8	37	0	37	82.0%	37	0
Total Industrial		45	18.0%	8	37	0	37	82.0%	37	0
Total Interstate		350	100.0%	0	0	0	0	0.0%	0	0
Parks										
Cleveland Metroparks		990	100.0%	990	0	0	0	0.0%	0	0
Lake Metroparks		114	100.0%	114	0	0	0	0.0%	0	0
Local Parks		203	100.0%	203	0	0	0	0.0%	0	0
Total Parks		1,307	100.0%	1,307	0	0	0	0.0%	0	0
Total Acres		6,949	100.0%	3,192	2,100	254	1,847	26.6%	115	1,731
Available for Commercial/Industrial							27			18

There are only 18 acres available for new development

