

**City Manager's Goals and Priorities
For the
City of Chardon, Ohio**



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Introduction

This document outlines the goals, strategies, and initiatives that will guide the work of the City Manager and administration in the City of Chardon. It is designed to fulfill the requirements of Section 5.B. of the City Manager's contract and will be reviewed and updated at least annually in accordance with that provision.

The purpose of this document is to provide a clear, transparent roadmap for how the City Manager will work to improve the quality of life in Chardon, support long-term planning, and ensure that city government remains responsive, efficient, and forward-thinking. While the City Manager has the authority to refine the descriptions and initiatives within this document, no goal or strategy may be added or removed without the approval of City Council.

Inspiration for Ideas and Objectives

The goals and priorities outlined here are not arbitrary, they are rooted in the City of Chardon's foundational planning documents and community vision. These include but are not limited to:

- the Comprehensive Plan and associated updates
- the Throughfare Plan
- the 2012 Comprehensive Performance Audit
- the Vision Plan for Chardon Square

In addition, this document reflects the professional judgment of the City Manager, input from City staff, and widely recognized best practices in municipal governance. Together, these sources ensure that our goals are both grounded in community values and aligned with modern standards of excellence in public service.

Structure of Goals, Strategies, and Initiatives

To make this document clear and actionable the ideas and recommendations contained are structured into three levels as follows:

Goals

Goals are the City's broad, long-term aspirations. They represent enduring priorities that reflect the values and vision of the Chardon community. Goals are drawn directly from City Council policy and adopted planning documents. They are not expected to change frequently and serve as the foundation for all strategies and initiatives.

Strategies

Strategies are the general approaches the City will take to achieve its goals. They provide direction and focus, helping to translate broad goals into manageable areas of work. Strategies may evolve over time as conditions, resources, and community needs change.

Initiatives

Initiatives are specific, actionable projects or tasks that support a strategy. Each initiative is designed to be measurable and time-bound, with a clear target for completion. Initiatives may be updated or adjusted by the City Manager as needed, and a record of completed initiatives will be maintained for transparency and accountability.

Goal 1.0 Complete Small Town

The City of Chardon aspires to be a *Complete Small Town*; a community that is clearly self-defined, economically stable, and self-sustaining, while preserving its unique identity as the County Seat of Geauga County and a proud part of “small town USA.” This goal reflects the community’s desire to grow responsibly while maintaining the charm, character, and civic pride that make Chardon special.

This vision is inspired by the City’s long-standing role as a regional hub, its historic uptown, and its deep-rooted traditions such as the Annual Maple Festival. It also responds to the challenges of modern development pressures, economic shifts, and the need to preserve a strong sense of place in a rapidly changing world.

Achieving the vision of a *Complete Small Town* ensures that Chardon remains a vibrant, livable, and resilient community. It means:

- Residents can live, work, shop, and recreate within their own city.
- The city’s growth is guided by thoughtful planning, not unchecked sprawl.
- Chardon’s identity is protected and promoted, attracting visitors and investment.
- Local businesses thrive in a stable and supportive environment.
- The city remains a model of small-town values with modern-day relevance.

Strategy 1.1 Business Retention

While attracting new businesses is important, the City of Chardon recognizes that long-term economic stability depends equally, if not more, on the success of its existing business community. This strategy focuses on preserving and enhancing the businesses that already call Chardon home, particularly small and locally owned enterprises that contribute to the City’s identity and vitality.

To support this, the City aims to dedicate administrative capacity, approximately 15 to 20 staff hours per week, to proactive business development activities that are not tied to the formal development review process. This capacity may be provided by City staff or, alternatively, through a partnership with a qualified non-profit organization focused on economic development.

Initiative 1.1(a) Local Business Directory – 2026

By the end of the second quarter of 2026 the City will migrate the existing *Think Local* business directory to the City’s main website in order to create and maintain a searchable online directory of local businesses and non-profits, integrated into the City’s main site. This resource will make it easier for residents and visitors to discover local services while promoting Chardon’s business community. A submission form will be provided for new businesses to request inclusion, and a regular review schedule will be established to ensure the directory remains accurate and up to date.

Initiative 1.1(b) Regularly Meet with Existing Businesses - 2026

Beginning in 2026, the Community Development Administrator will be responsible for establishing a consistent schedule of outreach to existing businesses, including in-person visits or phone calls, to identify challenges, opportunities, and ways the City can better support their success.

Each business within the City should be contacted at least once every four (4) years with the City’s top ten largest employers to be contacted annually.

Initiative 1.1(c) Business Owner’s Survey – 2027

In every odd-numbered year, beginning in 2027, the City will conduct a local business survey to gather input from business owners and managers on their experiences, challenges, and priorities. The survey will help identify trends, assess satisfaction with City services, and guide future economic

development efforts. Results will be compiled and shared with City Council and the public to promote transparency and inform policy decisions.

Initiative 1.1(d) Merchant Association Memberships - Ongoing

To strengthen relationships with the local business community, the City, through the Community Development Administrator, will maintain active membership in key merchant associations, including but not limited to the Chardon Square Association and the Chardon Area Chamber of Commerce. City representatives will attend meetings regularly to stay informed, share updates, and collaborate on initiatives that support business growth and uptown vitality.

Initiative 1.1(e) Retaining Government Partners – As Appropriate

The City of Chardon is fortunate to host several key public institutions within its boundaries, including numerous Geauga County offices, the Chardon Local School District, Geauga Public Library, and the Ohio State Highway Patrol. To strengthen these relationships and support mutual goals, the City Manager will maintain regular contact with each entity, meeting at least quarterly, and actively seek opportunities for collaboration. This includes exploring shared services, joint planning efforts, and coordinated responses to facility and space needs as the County, Library, and School District evaluate their long-term infrastructure plans.

Strategy 1.2 Responsible New Development

Growth in Chardon must be managed with long-term sustainability in mind. This means encouraging infill development, preserving open space, and ensuring that new development aligns with the City's character, infrastructure capacity, and economic goals. Responsible development should reflect realistic market demand, support the vitality of Chardon Square and Original Chardon, and serve both local residents and the broader regional market. This strategy focuses on guiding new investment in a way that strengthens the community without compromising its identity.

Initiative 1.2(a) Determine Target Market and Incentive Packages

Determine, in more detail, and to the extent practical, the target development the City would like to see for residential, retail, office and industrial development and the needs for each segment such as location criteria, size of facilities and amenities. Develop a policy for restricting development incentives to be used only in support of those target development types identified by the City. Adapt that policy into an incentives guide that clearly shows developers the type of construction the City is seeking and the level of support the City is willing to offer.

1.2(a)(i) Establish Target Developments – 2027

The City will establish a policy of desired development types and the general locations the City would like those developments to occur in. Known developments currently of interest to the City include:

- Infill Developments in the Historic Chardon District
- A Small to Medium Hotel/Conference Center
- High Job Density Uses in the Industrial District
- Small Scale Retail and Office Around the Square
- Medium Scale Retail and Office West of Cherry Ave.
- Owner-Occupied Dwelling Units

1.2(a)(ii) Review Development Incentives Offered - 2028

Develop a set(s) of incentives specifically to encourage the desired development above. Such process will include a review of the City's existing incentive and development programs for potential modification, expansion, or repeal as may best fit the City's needs.

1.2(a)(iii) Create Incentives Guide – 2028

The City will publish an available incentive guide, both digitally on the website and in print, for use by developers in evaluating the options for public assistance on projects.

Initiative 1.2(b) Seek new businesses - Ongoing

Proactively identify and engage with businesses that align with Chardon's economic development goals. Focus recruitment efforts on businesses that complement existing offerings, meet unmet local needs, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the City's commercial base.

Initiative 1.2(c) Create and Maintain a Listing of Known Available Properties - 2026

Create and maintain a public-facing inventory of known vacancies and available commercial properties within the City. This resource will be accessible via the City's website and available to prospective tenants or developers who contact the City for assistance with relocation or expansion. The City will establish an online form through which property owners can submit their spaces.

Initiative 1.2(d) Create and Maintain a Community Jobs Borad - 2027

Create and maintain a public-facing list of known job vacancies within the City. This resource will be accessible via the City's website, using an existing module, and available to local businesses who contact the City for assistance with seeking staff. The City will establish an online form through which local businesses can submit their job openings.

Strategy 1.3 Intentional Regulation of Development

Zoning, design standards, and permitting processes are powerful tools, not just for managing growth, but for shaping the kind of community Chardon aspires to be. Focusing on refining the City's regulatory framework ensures it actively supports Chardon's vision of a Complete Small Town. Regulations should be used to encourage high-quality development, promote investment in appropriate areas, and preserve the character of established neighborhoods. The goal is to make Chardon's development process more predictable, flexible when appropriate, and aligned with modern needs; without compromising community values.

Initiative 1.3(a) Simplify Fee Structure - 2026

The City will revise its development-related fee structure to eliminate unnecessary complexity and reduce reliance on refundable deposits, which create uncertainty for applicants and increase the potential for disputes or administrative errors. This issue was first identified in the 2012 Comprehensive Performance Audit, which noted that the permit fee schedule was difficult to interpret and inconsistently applied by staff. A simplified, transparent fee schedule will be developed to ensure consistency, fairness, and ease of use, providing applicants with clear expectations and reducing the administrative burden on City staff.

Initiative 1.3(b) Simplify Administrative Processes - 2027

To improve efficiency and predictability in the development process, the City will evaluate and refine its internal workflows to ensure that each application is reviewed by the minimum number of necessary reviewers. This includes establishing clear roles, defined timelines, and standardized expectations for each stage of review. The goal is to reduce delays, eliminate redundancy, and provide applicants with a transparent, well-communicated path from submission to approval. By creating a more coordinated and accountable process, the City can better support responsible development while maintaining high standards.

Initiative 1.3(c) Simplify Code Language - 2028

Chardon's current zoning code is overly lengthy and complex, making it difficult for both applicants and staff to navigate. Often, there may be simpler ways for the City to express the regulations, intent, or processes contained in the Code. To improve clarity and usability, the City will conduct a review of the code with a goal not of changing the regulations, but of improving clarity, simplicity, and readability. When the code is accessible to both seasoned practitioners and applicants it results in a more efficient and user-friendly development process.

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Chardon Zoning Code Length Comparison to Other Communities

<i>Chardon*</i>	312 Pages
<i>Mentor</i>	71 Pages
<i>Kirtland</i>	131 Pages
<i>Willoughby</i>	141 Pages
<i>Painesville</i>	191 Pages

Initiative 1.3(d) Publish a Development Process Guide - 2029

To improve transparency and reduce confusion for applicants, the City will create a clear, user-friendly Development Process Guide that outlines the steps, timelines, required documents, and fees associated with common development and permitting activities. This guide will be made available online and in print and will be updated annually to reflect changes in policy or procedure. By clearly communicating expectations upfront, the City can reduce errors, improve applicant confidence, and ensure a more consistent and equitable review process.

Initiative 1.3(e) Review New Uses – Next in 2029

As retail and industrial trends evolve, the City will review and update its zoning code to accommodate emerging business types. This review will also consider how to better support the reuse of aging buildings that may no longer suit traditional uses. A formal review of permitted uses will be conducted at least every five years to ensure the code remains relevant, flexible, and aligned with Chardon’s development goals.

Strategy 1.4 Cohesive Community Image

A community’s image, how it presents itself to residents, visitors, and the broader region, is a key factor in attracting investment, tourism, and new residents. Currently, Chardon lacks a formal, unified branding or marketing strategy to communicate its strengths and vision. This strategy focuses on developing a clear, consistent, and compelling identity for Chardon that reflects its heritage, values, and aspirations. A cohesive image will guide internal decision-making, shape external perceptions, and reinforce Chardon’s position as vibrant, welcoming, and distinctly “small town”.

Initiative 1.4(a) Unified City “Branding” - 2026

The City will develop a unified branding standard to ensure consistency across all departments, communications, and public-facing materials. Currently, various departments use different logos, color palettes, and visual styles, which can dilute the City’s impact and reduce its professional image. The new branding standard will provide a modern, cohesive look while drawing inspiration from Chardon’s culture, history, and traditions, incorporating colors, imagery, and symbols that reflect the City’s identity. This effort will help present Chardon as a well-organized, forward-thinking community with deep roots and a clear vision.

Initiative 1.4(b) Develop a Marketing Plan - 2027

Create a comprehensive marketing plan that includes messaging and promotional materials to convey Chardon’s unique strengths and long-term vision. The plan should identify target audiences, key messages, and communication channels, and serve as a foundation for all future outreach and promotional efforts.

1.4(b)(i) Advertise Small Town Charm

As part of the marketing plan, the City will actively promote Chardon’s identity as a classic “Small Town U.S.A.”, highlighting its walkable uptown, historic charm, community events, and welcoming atmosphere. This messaging will be woven into all public communications, tourism materials, and economic development outreach.

1.4(b)(ii) Promote Chardon as Business Friendly

In addition to promoting lifestyle and tourism, the City will emphasize that Chardon is a great place to do business. Marketing efforts will highlight the City's supportive environment for small businesses, available commercial space, and strategic location within Geauga County.

Goal 2.0 Protect Chardon's Square

Chardon Square is the heart of the community, its cultural, civic, and emotional center. *Protecting Chardon's Square* reflects the City's commitment to preserving the Square's historic character, reinforcing its role as the symbolic and functional center of Chardon, and ensuring its continued vitality for generations to come.

Chardon Square is more than a geographic location, it is a living symbol of the City's identity. This goal is inspired by decades of community planning that consistently recognize the Square as Chardon's most cherished and defining feature. The City must take proactive steps to preserve the Square's relevance, economic health, and historic integrity. Protecting and enhancing the Square:

- Preserves Chardon's historic and architectural heritage
- Supports local businesses and uptown economic activity
- Reinforces the City's role as the County Seat and civic center
- Provides a gathering place for community events and traditions
- Enhances tourism, walkability, and quality of life

Strategy 2.1 Enhance the Identity of "Original Chardon"

The area surrounding Chardon Square, often referred to as "Original Chardon", includes some of the City's oldest residential neighborhoods and commercial corridors. While zoning updates adopted in 2012 allow for mixed-use development, much of the area remains unchanged since 2008. To preserve the historic character of these neighborhoods and encourage reinvestment in aging commercial properties, the City will pursue a combination of design standards, land use tools, and economic incentives.

Initiative 2.1(a) Establish Incentives – See Initiative 1.2(a)

Recognizing that redevelopment in older mixed-use areas can be financially challenging, the City will develop a package of economic incentives to support private investment. These may include grants, tax incentives, or infrastructure support for projects that align with the City's vision for Chardon Square. By lowering the financial barriers to entry, the City can help attract developers and business owners who are committed to preserving and enhancing the Square's historic charm.

Initiative 2.1(b) Strategic Land Acquisition for Redevelopment – As Deemed Appropriate

In areas where larger-scale redevelopment is desired, the City will consider purchasing available properties with the long-term goal of assembling parcels for future projects. This approach allows the City to guide redevelopment in a way that aligns with community goals and zoning standards, while also making it easier for private developers to invest in the area.

Strategy 2.2 Enhance and Maintain a Beautiful Public Space

Chardon Square is more than just a civic and commercial center, it is a cherished public space that reflects the City's history, identity, and sense of community. As the Square continues to evolve, the City must invest in its physical upkeep, preserve its historic charm, and thoughtfully guide improvements that enhance its beauty and functionality. This strategy focuses on maintaining the Square's visual appeal, walkability, and architectural integrity while encouraging reinvestment in key areas.

Initiative 2.2(a) Pedestrian Improvements Plan – 2026

The current decorative walk, trees, benches, and other pedestrian infrastructure around the square is aging and needs maintenance. The City will work with local leaders, community members and outside consultants as necessary to generate a unified design plan for pedestrian improvements around the Chardon Square. This plan will then inform other subsequent pedestrian infrastructure projects to follow.

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Initiative 2.2(b) Restore and Maintain the Historic Main Street Walk – Begin in 2027

The historic Main Street walk, originally installed in 1999, has begun to show signs of wear, with concrete and brick settling unevenly. The City will begin planning for a comprehensive restoration of this important pedestrian corridor. The goal is not just to repair aging infrastructure, but to update it in a way that honors the original design while preparing it for the next generation of use. This restoration/improvement will likely be completed in phases.

Initiative 2.2(c) Pedestrianize Short Court – 2028 and Beyond

Multiple planning documents have recommended the pedestrianization of Short Court to improve walkability and create a more inviting public space. The City will begin developing a phased plan to achieve this vision, balancing the need for pedestrian access with practical considerations such as maintaining limited drop-off or short-term parking. A thoughtful, incremental approach over a number of years will allow the City to test concepts, engage the public, and adapt the plan over time.

Initiative 2.2(d) Preserve Historic Character – Ongoing/As Applicable

Preserving the architectural and historic character of Chardon Square is essential to maintaining its identity. The City will continue to enforce design standards that ensure new construction is compatible with the traditional form, scale, and site configuration of surrounding buildings. This includes maintaining appropriate setbacks, materials, and architectural details that reflect the Square’s historic roots. The City will also review its existing architectural code provisions to ensure they adequately preserve historic character and do not allow for some projects to fall through the cracks. (See also Initiative 1.3(c)).

Initiative 2.2(e) Evaluate Creation of a Special Improvement District – As Applicable

The City could consider the potential creation of a Special Improvement District (SID) as a long-term strategy to support the maintenance, enhancement, and promotion of Chardon Square. While the Chardon Square Association (CSA) currently plays a central role in coordinating merchant activity and public space stewardship, a SID could offer a more formalized and sustainable funding mechanism should CSA’s capacity diminish in the future or if the community seeks a more structured approach. Any evaluation should include a review of legal requirements, financial implications, and governance models, as well as outreach to property owners and stakeholders to assess interest and feasibility. If pursued, the SID would be designed to complement existing efforts while reinforcing the Square’s role as the civic and cultural heart of Chardon.

Initiative 2.2(a) Encourage East Side Redevelopment – As Applicable

The east side of Chardon Square presents a key opportunity for reinvestment and revitalization. As outlined in the Chardon Square Plan, the City will actively encourage redevelopment in this area, working with property owners and potential investors to support projects that align with the Square’s historic character and long-term vision. This may include targeted incentives, infrastructure improvements, or land use adjustments to facilitate high-quality redevelopment.

Strategy 2.3 Square of Arts and Culture

Chardon Square has long served as a gathering place for the community, not just for commerce and civic life, but as a center for arts, culture, and shared experiences. Building on this tradition, the City will continue to support and expand cultural programming, public events, and artistic expression in and around the Square. These efforts will help strengthen the Square’s identity as a vibrant, inclusive, and creative space for all.

Initiative 2.3(a) Support and Streamline Public Events on the Square – 2026 and Ongoing

Public events are a defining feature of Chardon Square, contributing to its vibrancy, sense of community, and regional appeal. The City will continue to support these events while working to

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simplify the application and permitting process for organizers. All event coordination will be centralized through the Recreation Department to ensure consistency and ease of access. As part of this effort, the City will evaluate whether to establish a maximum number of events per year—such as one per month or one every two weeks—to balance community activity with the need for rest, maintenance, and predictability. By streamlining procedures and providing a clear point of contact, the City aims to encourage more community-led programming while preserving the Square’s welcoming and well-managed atmosphere.

Initiative 2.3(b) Create a Centralized Calendar for Square Activities - 2026

To improve communication and increase participation, the City will develop a clear, centralized calendar of events for Chardon Square. This calendar will be available online and promoted through the regular newsletter, helping residents and visitors stay informed about upcoming activities, performances, and opportunities to engage with the community.

Initiative 2.3(c) Revitalize the Historic Geauga Theater as a Cultural Anchor - 2027

The historic Geauga Theater is a cornerstone of Chardon Square, but it is currently underutilized, hosting only a handful of shows each year. The City will work with partners to increase programming at the theater, with a goal of hosting events an average of three nights per week for 40 weeks of the year. This could include a wide range of offerings; live music, comedy, theater, film screenings, classes, town halls, and public forums. Expanding the theater’s use will not only enrich the cultural life of the community but also generate revenue to help maintain and preserve this historic structure.

2.3(c)(i) Evaluate Capital/Operating Needs – Qtr. 1 2026

City will conduct a thorough review of the facilities needs and create three lists of investment needed, must do (minimum to operate), prefer to do (best practice to be able to operate even as tenants change), and ideal to do (create fully functioning facility for all contemplated uses.)

2.3(c)(ii) Develop Ideal Operational Format – Qtr. 1 2026

Manager will determine with City Council the City’s ideal operational format which could be direct operation, contracted operation, single tenancy, multiple tenancy, or continuing with the current recreation rental model.

2.3(c)(iii) RFP or Operating Plan for Implementation of Format – Qtr. 2-3 2026

Once an ideal operation format is determined the manager will prepare as appropriate an RFP for service or tenants, or an operating plan for City management.

2.3(c)(iv) Contract Award or Hiring of Staff – Qtr. 3-4 2026

City will begin the process of implementing the awarded RFP or operating plan by executing a contract, hiring staff, and/or making necessary budget allocations.

2.3(c)(v) Implementation – 2027

The 2027 Season will be the start of operating the chosen ideal format.

Initiative 2.3(d) Expand Public Art in and Around the Square - 2028

To further enhance the Square’s visual identity and celebrate local creativity, the City will launch an initiative to expand public art installations. This may include murals, sculptures, artistic streetscapes, and other creative elements that reflect Chardon’s history, values, and community spirit. Public art can help create a more engaging and memorable environment while supporting local artists and cultural expression.

Strategy 2.4 Address Parking to Support Development

A fully developed and thriving Chardon Square will require more than just existing surface parking. Relying solely on existing lots to meet future demand would compromise the traditional form and walkability of the Square, potentially harming the experience for visitors, residents, and merchants alike. The City will take a proactive approach to managing parking in a way that supports economic activity while preserving the Square’s historic layout.

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Initiative 2.4(a) Consider Paid Parking – 2029 and After

The City will evaluate the potential for implementing additional time-limited and/or paid parking in key areas of the Square. Paid parking can serve as a tool to encourage turnover in high-demand spaces, ensuring that customers and visitors have access to convenient parking near shops and restaurants. This approach can help support local businesses while reducing long-term congestion.

Initiative 2.4(b) Expanding Public Parking Opportunities

To alleviate pressure on existing lots, the City will identify opportunities to add new public parking near the Square.

2.4(b)(i) South Street – 2028/2029

One such opportunity is the area behind City Hall and the Geauga Theater, along South Street. By re-routing municipal court overflow and City Hall staff parking to this area, the City can free up more central spaces for public use and reduce congestion in the main municipal lot.

2.4(b)(ii) Additional Spaces on E Park St. – 2031

A second opportunity is adding additional on-street parking on the east side of park avenue. This could help serve major events and the Heritage House as well as potential new development at the Library.

Strategy 2.5 Collective Marketing

Chardon Square is home to a diverse mix of small businesses, each with its own story and character. To strengthen the Square’s identity and support its continued vitality, the City will work with merchants to develop a unified approach to marketing and public presentation. By coordinating efforts and enhancing the visual and historical appeal of the area, the City and its business community can create a more memorable and engaging experience for residents and visitors alike.

Initiative 2.5(a) Historic Building Placards - 2030

Many of the buildings around Chardon Square have rich histories that are not widely known. The City will partner with business owners to install small, tasteful historic markers that tell the story of the buildings they occupy, including original uses, notable past tenants, and architectural significance. These markers will help visitors connect with the Square’s heritage and deepen their appreciation for its character.

Initiative 2.5(b) Public Banners - 2035

The City will work with merchants and community organizations to install decorative banners throughout the Square that highlight local events, seasonal themes, and featured businesses. These banners will help create a cohesive visual identity, draw attention to happenings around the Square, and reinforce the sense of place that makes Chardon unique.

Goal 3.0 Public Safety

The City of Chardon is committed to ensuring that all residents, businesses, and visitors feel safe and protected. The goal of *Public Safety* reflects the City's dedication to maintaining a high standard of emergency response, crime prevention, and community well-being. Public safety is not only a core function of local government, but also a prerequisite for a thriving, livable community.

Chardon is honored to have a tradition of strong police, fire, and emergency services, as well as high community expectations for a safe environment in which to live, work, and raise a family. Public safety is essential to quality of life. When people feel safe, they are more likely to invest in their homes, participate in community life, and support local businesses. Preserving public safety:

- Protects lives and property
- Builds trust between residents and first responders
- Supports economic development and community stability
- Enhances the City's reputation as a desirable place to live and visit
- Ensures preparedness for emergencies and disasters

Strategy 3.1 Appropriate Police Staffing and Operational Efficiency

The City of Chardon continues to monitor its police staffing levels in relation to crime trends, community expectations, and financial capacity. Recommendations from the 2012 Operational Audit and national best practices emphasize the importance of aligning staffing decisions with clearly defined goals, data, and public input, rather than relying solely on officer-per-thousand formulas.

Initiative 3.1(a) Improved Scheduling – 2026

PD still uses an excel and paper-based scheduling system. Transition them to a modern digital scheduler that will more easily enable shift trades and call offs.

Initiative 3.1(b) Streamlined Civil Service Process – 2026

The City has traditionally used sit down in-person exams for the Police Department but at the last attempt no – applicants signed up. Transition to an online rolling testing method that will allow applicants to apply year-round in anticipation of a vacancy instead of holding a single test at a specified time that is reliant on applicants seeing the posting at that specific moment.

Initiative 3.1(c) Evaluate the Need for Additional Staffing – To be Hired in 2027

In the past decade and a half Chardon's demand for police services has grown through the addition of new roles such as court security and school officers. In addition, as Chardon's national retail sector has grown, so has the volume of theft-related incidents and the investigative workload they generate.

At present, the City employs 14.5 FTEs for basic police roles but has sufficient scheduling demand for up to 18.2. This places a strain on officers and supervisors as they work to fill the schedule while still honoring time off. The result is high overtime costs and staff burn out.

The City will evaluate the need for additional patrol staff and a full-time investigator or detective bureau to handle investigations more efficiently. Additional patrol staffing could help manage the schedule and fill gaps while improving department operations. A dedicated investigator could improve case resolution rates, reduce patrol workload, and enhance coordination with regional law enforcement partners.

Initiative 3.1(d) Police Department Remodel – 2027

With the relocation of dispatch services, the Police Department now has vacant space that may be underutilized. The City will evaluate the need for a remodel or reconfiguration of the department's physical layout to better support current operations, improve functionality, and enhance working

conditions for staff. Any proposed changes will be aligned with long-term facility planning and fiscal responsibility.

Strategy 3.2 Long-Term Fire Company Stability

Chardon contracts with a private fire company to provide fire protection services to residents. This company also serves surrounding townships and operates out of a City-owned facility. While this partnership has served the community well, it is heavily reliant on the periodic renewal of local levies, which creates long-term uncertainty.

To ensure continued service stability, the City will work with the fire company and surrounding townships to explore more sustainable funding models. This may include multi-year agreements, shared service frameworks, or other mechanisms that provide predictable, long-term financial support for fire protection services.

Initiative 3.2(a) Explore Potential for a Formal Fire District – As Appropriate

As demand for fire and EMS services continues to grow, the City may wish to explore the feasibility of creating a more formal fire district in partnership with surrounding townships instead of the contractual relationship that now exists. Such a district could pool resources, expand access to services, and generate its own revenue instead of the City levying property tax. This shift could help ensure that residents throughout the area benefit from high-quality services regardless of the budgetary constraints of any individual participating community. This model could also help address staffing and funding challenges by distributing costs differently across the region.

Strategy 3.3 Emergency Operations Plan

Preparedness is essential to effective emergency response. The City will maintain its Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and ensure that it remains up to date and aligned with state and federal guidelines. To test readiness and improve coordination among departments and partner agencies, the City will conduct tabletop exercises at least once every five years. These exercises will help identify gaps, refine procedures, and ensure that Chardon is ready to respond to a wide range of emergencies, from severe weather to public health events.

Initiative 3.3(a) Table-Top Exercise – Next in 2027

To ensure readiness for a wide range of emergencies, the City will conduct a table-top exercise as part of its ongoing commitment to emergency preparedness. These exercises provide an opportunity for City staff and partner agencies to simulate response scenarios, identify gaps in coordination, and refine procedures outlined in the Emergency Operations Plan. Exercises will be designed to reflect current risks and operational realities, with participation from all relevant departments. Outcomes from the exercise will inform future training, policy updates, and planning.

Goal 4.0 Center of Services

As the County Seat and a historically significant hub in Geauga County, the City of Chardon is uniquely positioned to serve as the *Center of Services* for the surrounding low-density and rural townships of northern Geauga County. This goal reflects Chardon's role as a central destination for essential services for residents who live outside the city but rely on it for daily needs.

This vision is inspired by Chardon's geographic location, its concentration of public institutions, and its established and civic infrastructure. It also acknowledges the city's responsibility to support the broader region while maintaining its own vitality and identity.

Serving as the *Center of Services* strengthens both Chardon and the surrounding communities. It means:

- Residents and nearby townships have reliable access to government services.
- The city remains a focal point for civic life and community engagement in northern Geauga County.
- Regional collaboration is encouraged, fostering shared prosperity and efficient service delivery.

Strategy 4.1 Ensure Long Term Stability of Public Utilities

The City of Chardon owns and operates its own water, sanitary sewer, and storm sewer utilities, a responsibility that brings both opportunity and long-term obligations. These systems are essential to public health, environmental protection, and economic development. To ensure their continued reliability, the City must proactively maintain infrastructure, comply with regulatory standards, and plan for future investments. This strategy focuses on strengthening the financial, operational, and physical foundations of our utility systems to ensure they remain stable and sustainable for decades.

Initiative 4.1(a) Establish Working Capital Targets - 2026

Following Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) best practices, the City will establish formal working capital targets for each utility fund. These targets will ensure that each utility maintains sufficient reserves to cover operating costs, emergencies, and capital needs without relying on sudden rate increases or short-term borrowing.

Initiative 4.1(b) GIS For Public Infrastructure – 2026/2027

The City will begin developing GIS capabilities to map and manage public infrastructure assets. This system will improve planning, maintenance, and transparency, and will serve as a foundation for future asset management efforts. [See also 7.3(c)]

Initiative 4.1(c) Infrastructure Capacity Assessment - 2027

To support smart growth and responsible land use, the City will conduct a comprehensive assessment of infrastructure capacity, including water, sewer, and storm sewer systems. This assessment will identify areas that are best suited for new development or redevelopment based on available capacity. The findings will be used to guide zoning, land use decisions, and capital planning, ensuring that growth occurs where it can be supported without overburdening existing systems.

Initiative 4.1(d) Transition Connection Charges to an EDU Based Calculation – 2027

The City's current sanitary sewer connection charges are based on a chart from the Ohio Plumbing Code, which determines fees according to pipe size rather than actual usage. This method does not accurately reflect the volume of wastewater generated by different types of development and can result in inconsistent or inequitable charges. To address this, the City will transition to a usage-based model that calculates connection fees according to the number of Equivalent Dwelling Units (EDUs) a property represents. One EDU will be defined as the average daily wastewater flow from a single-family residence, and other uses, such as commercial, institutional, or multi-family, will be indexed

proportionally based on expected flow. This approach will improve fairness, transparency, and alignment with infrastructure demands, while providing developers with a clearer understanding of costs during project planning.

Initiative 4.1(a) Second Clearwell - 2027

To improve water treatment capacity and operational resilience, the City will construct a second clearwell at the water treatment plant. This project is supported by a \$1.28 million federal grant and will provide critical redundancy in the treatment process, allowing for maintenance and emergency operations without interrupting service. The additional clearwell will also help accommodate future growth and ensure compliance with regulatory standards. Design and permitting will begin in 2026, with construction targeted for completion in 2027.

Initiative 4.1(b) Compliance with EPA Best Management Practices – 2028 and Beyond

In addition to AMPs, the City will align its utility operations with EPA-recommended best management practices. This includes regular inspections, preventive maintenance, and system performance monitoring. These practices help extend the life of infrastructure, reduce emergency repairs, and ensure compliance with environmental regulations.

4.1(b)(i) Lost Water and Tracking Non-Revenue Water

The City's water system has consistently reported lost water levels well above EPA guidelines, with 21.33% in 2024 and 19.24% in 2023, significantly exceeding the recommended threshold of 15%. This level of loss represents both a financial burden and a potential indicator of infrastructure deficiencies. The City will undertake an analysis to identify the most likely sources of lost water, including aging infrastructure, undetected leaks, and metering inaccuracies. In parallel, the City will improve its tracking of non-revenue water, water that is used but not billed, such as hydrant flushing, bulk fill station usage, fire suppression, and internal municipal accounts. The long-term goal is to reduce total water loss to below 5%, aligning with best practices and improving the financial and operational efficiency of the water utility.

4.1(b)(ii) Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) Issues

Inflow and infiltration (I&I) remain a significant challenge within the City's sanitary sewer system, particularly during rain events when the wastewater treatment plant experiences sharp increases in flow. These surges suggest that stormwater is entering the sanitary system through cracked pipes, faulty connections, or unauthorized tie-ins, placing unnecessary strain on treatment capacity and increasing operational costs. The City will attempt to identify the most problematic areas, using flow monitoring, smoke testing, and visual inspections where appropriate. Once identified, the City will develop a phased plan to address these sources through rehabilitation, replacement, or disconnection. Reducing I&I will improve system efficiency, extend the life of the treatment plant, and ensure compliance with environmental regulations, especially as the City prepares for future growth and potential expansion of service areas.

4.1(b)(iii) Breaks Per-Year

The City's water distribution system has experienced a higher-than-recommended rate of main breaks in recent years, with 2.6 breaks per 10 miles of line in 2023 and 5 per 10 miles in 2024. These figures exceed the EPA's benchmark of 1 break per 10 miles annually and suggest underlying issues with aging infrastructure, soil conditions, or installation practices. To address this, the City will review break locations, frequency, and contributing factors. This review will inform a targeted replacement and rehabilitation strategy, prioritizing the most vulnerable segments of the system. Reducing the frequency of water main breaks will improve service reliability, reduce emergency repair costs, and minimize disruptions to residents and businesses.

4.1(b)(iv) Address 4-Inch Water Mains

Approximately 12% of the City's water distribution system consists of 4-inch diameter mains, which are considered undersized by modern standards, particularly for fire suppression and peak demand scenarios. These lines pose a risk to public safety and system reliability, especially in areas with higher density or critical infrastructure. The City will develop a phased replacement plan to upgrade

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these mains to standard sizes, prioritizing locations based on risk, service demand, and coordination with other infrastructure projects. This initiative will improve water pressure, enhance fire protection capabilities, and support future development by ensuring that the distribution system meets current engineering and safety standards.

Initiative 4.1(c) Endorsed Source Water Protection Plan – 2029

The City maintains legacy documentation related to source water protection dating back to 2004, but it has not been formally adopted or integrated into current planning and regulatory frameworks. To ensure long-term protection of the City’s drinking water supply, the existing materials will be reviewed, updated, and restructured into a formal Source Water Protection Plan endorsed by the Ohio EPA. This plan will identify potential contamination risks, outline protective strategies, and establish clear implementation responsibilities. Once finalized, the plan will be incorporated into the City’s zoning code for enforcement and reviewed every three years, as required by state guidelines.

Initiative 4.1(d) Water Tower Rehabilitation - 2029

The City’s existing water tower has been identified as needing significant structural attention, including potential truss replacement, based on a prior assessment. In 2026, the City will conduct an evaluation to determine the scope of necessary repairs and assess the long-term viability of the structure. Depending on the findings, the City may pursue rehabilitation or replacement, including consideration of a second tower to support system redundancy and future demand. This initiative will ensure continued reliability of water storage and pressure regulation across the distribution system.

Initiative 4.1(e) Adopt EPA Mandated Asset Management Program (AMP) - 2030

The City will formally adopt and maintain an Asset Management Program (AMP) for its water and sewer systems, as required by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and state law. This program will serve as a comprehensive framework for tracking infrastructure conditions, prioritizing maintenance, and planning long-term capital investments. A self-audit conducted in late 2025 identified several areas of deficiency, many of which are addressed through related initiatives in this section. Full compliance will require the integration of GIS mapping, performance monitoring, and financial planning tools considered in other initiatives. The AMP will also support risk-based decision-making, helping the City allocate resources efficiently and extend the useful life of its utility assets. Once implemented, the program will be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect system changes, regulatory updates, and evolving community needs.

Initiative 4.1(f) Adopt CRWP EPA Endorsed Storm Water Code - 2026

The City’s current stormwater code, last updated in 1991, is outdated and insufficient to meet modern regulatory standards or anticipated future requirements. With a high likelihood of being designated as an MS-4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) community in the near future, the City must proactively update its code to ensure compliance with Ohio EPA mandates. As a member of the Chagrin River Watershed Partners (CRWP), the City has access to model ordinances and technical guidance that align with EPA best practices. The City will adopt a revised stormwater code based on CRWP recommendations, incorporating provisions for runoff control, water quality protection, and long-term maintenance of stormwater infrastructure.

Initiative 4.1(g) Evaluate the Creation of a Storm Sewer Utility - 2031

As stormwater management becomes increasingly complex and costly, the City will evaluate the feasibility of establishing a dedicated storm sewer utility to provide a stable and transparent funding source for system maintenance, upgrades, and regulatory compliance. A formal utility would allow the City to allocate costs more equitably across users based on impervious surface area or other measurable criteria, rather than relying solely on general fund resources. This model is commonly used in MS-4 communities and would position Chardon to better manage aging infrastructure, meet

EPA requirements, and respond to increased rainfall intensity and development pressures. The evaluation will include financial modeling, and legal review to determine whether a utility is appropriate and beneficial for Chardon's long-term needs.

Initiative 4.1(h) Emergency Fail Over Connections for Water System – As Possible

While the City's Emergency Operations Plan outlines procedures to maintain water flow during a treatment plant failure, it does not guarantee access to potable water in the event of a total system outage. To strengthen resilience, the City will evaluate as possible the feasibility of establishing emergency interconnects with neighboring water systems. These connections would allow for the delivery of treated water from external sources during critical failures, ensuring continuity of service and public health protection. Although implementation may be complex and long-term, pursuing this option reflects the City's commitment to preparedness and infrastructure reliability.

Strategy 4.2 Expand Parks and Recreational Programs

Chardon is fortunate to have a growing and well-loved parks and recreation program that serves residents of all ages. However, as participation increases, the City faces two key challenges: a shortage of part-time staff and volunteers to run programs, and a lack of adequate physical space to meet demand. To ensure that recreation offerings continue to grow in both quality and accessibility, the City will evaluate the structure, staffing, and facilities of its recreation programs and explore new partnerships and community-driven ideas.

Initiative 4.2(a) Post Programming on the Website and Other Platforms - 2026

To increase awareness and participation, the City will ensure that all recreation programs are consistently advertised on the City's website and included in the official calendar of events. Improved digital outreach will make it easier for residents to discover and register for programs, especially as more people rely on online sources for community information.

Recreation information should also be being shared in the City's Kiosks, on the Square Sign Board, the City's social media, and through G-TV. In the future, the City may wish to consider adding a mailed advertisement of some kind depending on cost.

Initiative 4.2(b) Pocket Park – 2026

The City will construct a small public park at the corner of Water Street and Cherry Avenue, with design work currently underway. This space will serve as a welcoming green area for residents and visitors, enhancing walkability and providing a new gathering spot near Chardon Square. Construction is scheduled for 2026, and the final design will reflect community input received so far, accessibility standards, and long-term maintenance considerations.

Initiative 4.2(c) Permanent Pickleball Facilities – 2027

In response to growing community interest, the City is working with the Chardon Local School District to develop permanent pickleball courts on the site of the former tennis courts. These courts will be jointly used for public recreation and City programming, expanding access to this increasingly popular sport. The partnership will allow for shared investment and scheduling, ensuring that the facilities serve both school and community needs effectively.

Initiative 4.2(d) Formalize Incentives for Program Coordinators - 2027

Currently, program instructors are compensated based on attendance and program success. While this model rewards performance, it may deter potential applicants who prefer more predictable compensation. The City will explore the feasibility of offering flat-rate compensation or treating instructor roles more like traditional part-time positions. This could help attract and retain qualified coordinators and reduce staffing shortages.

Initiative 4.2(e) Parks Facilities Plans - 2028

The City will develop a long-range Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan to guide future investments, programming, and land use. This plan will assess current and future needs, identify gaps in service, and prioritize projects that will expand access and improve the quality of recreational offerings. A key focus will be the more than 30 acres of undeveloped land already owned by the City and designated for park or recreation use. This land represents a major opportunity to expand facilities and relieve pressure on existing spaces. The City will also explore partnerships with the Geauga Park District to utilize additional vacant land within city limits.

As part of the planning process, the City will evaluate the need for additional gym space, new or upgraded sports fields, a potential recreation center, and the long-term future of the City's pool. These assessments will be based on community input, usage data, and projected population trends.

Initiative 4.2(f) Programming "Auditions" - 2030

To tap into the creativity and talents of local residents, the City will consider hosting an open application or "audition" process where community members can pitch ideas for new recreation programs. Selected applicants could be offered the opportunity to lead a class or activity, helping to diversify programming and build community ownership of the parks system.

Initiative 4.2(g) Public Private Partnerships - Ongoing

To expand offerings without duplicating services or overextending City resources, the City will examine opportunities to collaborate with private organizations, nonprofits, and other public agencies. These partnerships can help fill programming gaps, share facilities, and bring new expertise into the community's recreation system.

Strategy 4.3 Partner with Surrounding Townships

Chardon's economic and service footprint extends well beyond its municipal boundaries. Many people who work, shop, and participate in community life in Chardon live in the surrounding townships. Recognizing this interdependence, the City will actively pursue partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions to explore shared services, infrastructure improvements, and cooperative development opportunities. These efforts will help reduce duplication, improve service delivery, and support the long-term vitality of the broader region.

Initiative 4.3(a) Explore Service Agreements in Lieu of Annexation – As Appropriate

Rather than relying solely on annexation to expand utility service areas, the City will explore formal service agreements with surrounding townships. These agreements could allow for the extension of water and sewer services beyond city limits in a way that is mutually beneficial, financially sustainable, and respectful of township autonomy. This approach can help the City make better use of its existing utility capacity while supporting responsible growth in the region.

Initiative 4.3(b) Explore Potential for a Shared Recreation District – As Appropriate

As demand for recreation programs continues to grow, the City will explore the feasibility of creating a shared recreation district in partnership with surrounding townships. Such a district could pool resources, expand access to facilities, and ensure that residents throughout the area benefit from high-quality recreational opportunities. This model could also help address staffing and funding challenges by distributing costs more equitably across the region.

Goal 5.0 Fiscal Health

The City of Chardon is committed to maintaining strong *Fiscal Health*, ensuring that the City's financial resources are managed responsibly, sustainably, and transparently. This goal reflects the City's duty to protect public funds, plan for the future, and provide high-quality services without placing undue burden on taxpayers.

This goal is inspired by the City's long-standing tradition of conservative budgeting, and the need to remain resilient in the face of economic uncertainty, inflation, and changing revenue streams. Fiscal Health is the foundation of everything the City does. Without it, Chardon cannot invest in infrastructure, maintain services, or respond to emergencies. Strong financial management:

- Ensures long-term stability and resilience
- Supports strategic investments in infrastructure, safety, and quality of life
- Preserves the City's creditworthiness and ability to borrow when needed
- Builds public trust through transparency, understanding, and accountability
- Helps avoid sudden tax increases or service cuts

Strategy 5.1 Best Practice Budgeting

To strengthen Chardon's long-term fiscal health, the City will modernize its budgeting process by aligning with nationally recognized best practices established by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). These improvements will increase transparency, improve financial planning, and ensure that public resources are used efficiently and effectively.

Years for enactment on initiatives in this section are for the budget year. For example, "2027" means 'for the 2027 Budget'.

Initiative 5.1(a) Consolidate Funds and Create Clearer Fund Policies - 2027

Chardon currently maintains over 60 separate funds and hundreds of outdated or duplicative line-item accounts. This complexity makes financial oversight more difficult and less transparent. The City will work to consolidate funds where appropriate and close out special-purpose funds that are no longer active. Clear policies will be developed for fund creation, use, and closure going forward.

Initiative 5.1(b) Implement a ACFR - 2030

Historically, the City has not produced a Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR), a key financial reporting tool recommended by both the Auditor of State and the GFOA. Implementing a CAFR will provide a more complete and transparent picture of the City's financial condition, helping residents, Council, and staff make better informed decisions.

Initiative 5.1(c) Achieve Financial Reporting and Budgeting Awards – 2035 or Sooner

The City will pursue recognition through several respected state and national programs that promote transparency, accountability, and excellence in public finance. These awards are not just symbolic — they reflect a commitment to high standards in budgeting, financial reporting, and public communication.

5.1(c)(i) GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award

Recognizes budgets that serve as effective policy documents, financial plans, operations guides, and communications tools.

5.1(c)(ii) GFOA Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting

Awarded to governments that go beyond the minimum requirements of generally accepted accounting principles to prepare comprehensive annual financial reports (CAFRs) that demonstrate transparency and full disclosure.

5.1(c)(iii) Ohio Auditor of State's Award with Distinction

Honors local governments that meet rigorous standards for clean audits, timely financial reporting, and exemplary recordkeeping.

Strategy 5.2 Ensure Appropriate Rates and Fees

To maintain high-quality services while being fair and transparent to residents, the City will adopt a consistent, policy-driven approach to setting and reviewing rates and fees. This includes utilities, emergency services, parks and recreation, zoning, and cemetery services. The goal is to ensure that fees are equitable, understandable, and aligned with the City's cost recovery goals without creating barriers to access or development.

Initiative 5.2(a) Establish Cost-Recovery Standards for all Fees and Rates - 2026

The City will develop and adopt formal cost-recovery standards for each category of fees and rates, including utilities, ambulance services, cemetery operations, zoning and development, and parks and recreation. These standards will define what percentage of service costs should be recovered through user fees versus supported by general revenues.

Establishing clear cost-recovery targets will:

- Ensure consistency in how fees are set and adjusted over time
- Provide transparency to residents and businesses about how fees are determined
- Help the City balance affordability with financial sustainability
- Support long-term planning and budgeting for each service area

These standards will be reviewed periodically and adjusted as needed to reflect changes in service delivery models, community priorities, and financial conditions.

Initiative 5.2(b) Simplify Fee Structures – 2027

The City will develop a formal policy outlining how fees are established, how often they are reviewed, and what level of cost recovery is expected for each service area. As part of this effort, the City will conduct a comprehensive review of its full fee schedule to identify opportunities to simplify and consolidate fees, particularly in zoning, land development, and cemetery services. A more streamlined and transparent fee structure will improve public understanding and encourage greater participation in City services and processes.

Initiative 5.2(c) Regular Utility Rate Studies – 2026 with Regular Cycle Starting in 2028

In accordance with Section 921.15 of the City's Codified Ordinances, the City will perform annual reviews of water and sewer rates. These reviews will ensure that utility rates remain fair, financially sustainable, and responsive to changes in operating costs, infrastructure needs, and usage patterns.

Initiative 5.2(d) Regular Non-Utility Rate Reviews – Regular Cycle(s) Starting in 2030

The City will regularly evaluate fees for non-utility services to ensure they are recovering an appropriate share of operating costs. In particular:

- Ambulance and cemetery fees will be reviewed to ensure they reflect actual service costs while remaining affordable for residents.
- Zoning and land development fees will be assessed to ensure they are not unintentionally discouraging investment or growth.
- Parks and recreation program fees, will be monitored to determine whether they are achieving the intended goal of making the department self-sustaining. If not, the City may consider operational changes, revised fee structures, alternative service delivery models, or a combination of these strategies to ensure long-term sustainability.

Strategy 5.3 Ten-Year CIP - 2026

To improve long-term planning and financial stability, the City will extend its Capital Improvement/Investment Plan (CIP) from a five-year to a ten-year horizon. This expanded view will allow the City to better anticipate infrastructure needs, manage large purchases, and align capital investments with strategic goals.

The Ten-Year CIP will be divided into two planning phases:

5.3(a)(i) First Five Year - Funded

The first five years of the CIP will be fully developed, balanced, and funded. This portion of the plan will include only those projects for which funding sources have been identified and scheduled. It will serve as the City's actionable capital plan and guide near-term investments.

5.3(a)(ii) Second Five Year - Intended

The second five years of the CIP will serve as a long-range planning tool. While not fully funded, this portion will identify anticipated needs, major projects, and potential funding strategies. It will help the City prepare for future infrastructure demands and avoid unexpected costs.

Initiative 5.3(b) Vehicle Rotation Schedules - 2027

To stabilize capital spending and avoid large, unpredictable spikes in vehicle purchases, the City will develop standardized vehicle replacement schedules. These schedules will outline the expected service life of each vehicle type and ensure a consistent, manageable number of replacements each year.

Initiative 5.3(c) Equipment Rotation Schedules - 2027

Similarly, the City will create rotation schedules for major equipment, particularly those items with high replacement frequency or cost. This will help level out annual capital expenditures, improve budgeting accuracy, and ensure that critical equipment is replaced before it becomes unreliable or unsafe.

Strategy 5.4 Simplified Competitive Procurement Policies

To improve efficiency, reduce duplication, and modernize internal operations, the City will transition from paper-based procurement processes to a fully digital, web-based system. These changes will streamline administrative workflows, reduce manual data entry, and allow staff to focus more time on service delivery and less on paperwork.

Initiative 5.4(a) Digital Contract Tracking System - 2025

The City will implement a centralized, digital contract tracking system to monitor all active service contracts. This system will:

- Track contract expiration dates and renewal deadlines
- Assign contract oversight responsibilities to specific departments or staff
- Automatically notify department heads when contracts are approaching expiration or due for rebidding
- Maintain a searchable archive of contract terms, vendors, and performance history

This tool will reduce the risk of missed deadlines, improve compliance with procurement policies, and ensure that contracts are reviewed and renewed in a timely, consistent manner. It will also support better coordination across departments and enhance transparency in the City's contracting process.

Initiative 5.4(b) Implement Full Use of e-Procurement/Bidding System - 2026

The City will fully utilize its existing website module for e-procurement for Bids, RFPs and RFQs, to replace outdated paper-based purchasing processes. Doing so will increase transparency and encourage broader participation from local businesses and service providers, the City will post all bid, RFP, and RFQ opportunities on its website and social media channels. As traditional newspaper

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advertising becomes less effective, digital outreach will help ensure that more vendors, especially local ones, are aware of opportunities to work with the City.

To further enhance the bidding process, the City will implement Bid Express, a free-to-use online platform for creating, distributing, and tabulating bid documents. Bid Express allows vendors to submit bids electronically, reducing paperwork and improving accuracy. It also provides automated tabulation tools, secure document handling, and real-time bid tracking, making the process more efficient for both staff and participants.

Initiative 5.4(c) Periodic Contract Review - 2027

The City will adopt a formal policy requiring periodic review of all service contracts, including those for perpetual services such as engineering, fire, ambulance, and EMS billing, to ensure continued cost-effectiveness and service quality. This policy will include:

- Regular evaluation of alternative service delivery models
- Required use of Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for all professional service contracts
- Defined intervals for re-bidding contracts without fixed end dates

This approach will help the City maintain competitive pricing, ensure accountability, and adapt to changing service needs over time.

Goal 6.0 Transparency

The City of Chardon is committed to building and maintaining trust between local government and the community it serves. The goal of *Transparency* reflects the City's dedication to open communication, accessible information, and accountable decision-making. This commitment is rooted in the belief that a well-informed public is essential to a healthy democracy and a responsive, effective local government.

Transparency is the foundation of public trust. When residents understand how decisions are made, how funds are spent, and how to participate in local government, the entire community benefits. Specifically, this goal helps to:

- Strengthening public confidence in City leadership and operations
- Encourage civic participation and community input
- Reduce misinformation and confusion
- Improve the quality and accountability of City services
- Ensure compliance with legal and ethical standards

Strategy 6.1 Improve Public Communications

The City will take a comprehensive approach to improving how it communicates with residents — using a mix of digital platforms, traditional media, and direct outreach. The goal is to ensure that important information reaches people where they are, in a format that is clear, timely, and easy to access.

Initiative 6.1(a) Improve Use of Traditional Communication Channels – 2025/2026

While digital tools are essential, traditional communication methods remain important — especially for residents who may not use social media. The City will redevelop its website to improve navigation, streamline subscription options, and enhance the quality and accessibility of content. Press releases will be issued for major initiatives, and City officials will offer to speak with local reporters after every public meeting to ensure accurate and timely coverage of City business.

Initiative 6.1(b) Strengthening the City's Social Media Presence - 2026

The City will commit to posting at least once per day on its primary communication channels, including Facebook and the City website, and at least once per week on secondary platforms such as LinkedIn and Instagram. Frequent, consistent communication helps build trust, reduce misinformation, and address the common concern of “I never heard about that.” Social media will be used not only to share news, but also to highlight community events, celebrate local successes, and provide real-time updates during emergencies.

Initiative 6.1(c) Support Division-Level Communications for High-Interest Areas - 2029

Some City departments — such as the Police Department and Parks & Recreation — have high public visibility and strong community interest. These divisions will be encouraged to develop their own dedicated communication channels, such as social media pages or email updates. Administrative staff may assist with content creation and management to ensure consistency and professionalism. This approach allows for more targeted communication while maintaining alignment with the City's overall messaging strategy.

Initiative 6.1(d) Expand the City Newsletter - 2030

The City will expand its newsletter to be published at least twice a year, with the goal of moving toward a quarterly schedule. The newsletter will provide updates on City projects, upcoming events, and key decisions, and will serve as a reliable source of information for residents who prefer printed or email-based communication.

Strategy 6.2 Improve Data Capture and Sharing

Transparency is not just about making information available, it's about making it understandable, relevant, and useful. To build trust and support informed decision-making, the City must improve how it collects, analyzes, and presents data. This includes tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) across departments and sharing information in ways that are accessible to the public. At the same time, the City must actively seek feedback from residents to better understand how services are performing and where improvements are needed.

Initiative 6.2(a) Launch a Regular Community Survey Program - 2026

To better understand how residents perceive City services and to track changes over time, the City will launch a recurring community survey program. Surveys will be conducted every even-numbered year and will include both service performance metrics and questions about community sentiment. Over time, this will create a valuable longitudinal dataset that can guide policy decisions, budget priorities, and service improvements. The survey results will also be shared publicly to demonstrate accountability and responsiveness to community feedback.

Initiative 6.2(b) Improve the Accessibility and Clarity of Public Reports – 2026/2027

While the City currently publishes detailed annual reports, budgets, and capital improvement plans, these documents are often lengthy and heavily reliant on technical tables. For many residents, this level of detail can be overwhelming and difficult to interpret. The City will evaluate these key reports with the goal of simplifying content, focusing on the most meaningful data, and incorporating more visuals, such as charts, infographics, and summaries, to improve readability and public understanding. The goal is to strike a balance: sharing enough to be transparent and informative, without overwhelming the audience with unnecessary complexity.

- Budget Book – For the 2026 Budget
- Annual Report – For the 2026 Report
- Quarterly Development Reports – 2026/2027
- Quarterly Parks and Recreation Reports – 2026/2027
- Parks and Recreation Brochures – Winter 2026 Brochure

Initiative 6.2(c) Capture and Review KPIs - 2027

The City should develop objective workload measures and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of its staff in relation to defined benchmarks. The City should subsequently use those measures to determine if staffing reductions can be made or if expansions are necessary to maintain service levels.

6.2(c)(i) Costs by Facility

The City should measure the total cost of maintaining its facilities and separate expenditures by building. Tracking expenditures by building will allow the City to make more informed decisions concerning energy usage, rent, and maintenance procedures.

Initiative 6.2(d) Update Comprehensive Plan - 2031

The City will undertake a full update of its Comprehensive Plan. The timing should reflect the completion of many internal improvements and development initiatives outlined in this document, as well as the need to reassess long-term land use, infrastructure, and community priorities. The last major update occurred in 2019, with a review completed in 2024. A new planning process will allow the City to incorporate lessons learned, respond to demographic and economic changes, and ensure alignment with current community values and regional trends.

The updated plan will be developed through a robust public engagement process and will serve as the foundation for future zoning, capital investment, and strategic decision-making. It will also provide a framework for coordinating with surrounding jurisdictions and addressing emerging challenges such as housing diversity, transportation connectivity, and environmental sustainability.

Strategy 6.3 Provide Transparency into Public Meetings and Records

Public trust is built when residents can see how decisions are made, understand the issues being discussed, and feel confident that their voices matter. To strengthen this trust, the City will improve access to public meetings, legislative records, and decision-making processes. This includes using technology to broaden access, improving the clarity of meeting materials, and creating new opportunities for residents to learn about how their government works.

Initiative 6.3(a) Live Streams – 2025/2026

While G-TV currently broadcasts City Council meetings and occasionally Planning Commission sessions, many other public meetings are not recorded or shared. The City will begin live streaming all public meetings on a dedicated YouTube channel. This low-cost initiative will make it easier for residents to stay informed, even if they cannot attend in person, and will create a permanent archive of meetings for future reference.

Initiative 6.3(b) Publish Full Packets - 2026

Currently, only meeting agendas are published in advance. To improve transparency and public understanding, the City will begin publishing full meeting packets, including staff reports, background materials, and supporting documentation. This will allow residents to review the same information as Council members and come to public meetings better informed and prepared to participate.

Initiative 6.3(c) Achieve Auditor of State’s 5 StaRS Rating for Transparency - 2028

The City currently holds a 3-star rating in the Ohio Auditor of State’s StaRS (Star Rating System) for transparency. The City will work toward achieving the full 5-star rating by meeting additional benchmarks for open data, financial disclosure, and public access to records. This recognition reflects a commitment to best practices in transparency and accountability.

Initiative 6.3(d) Launch a Chardon Resident Academy - 2030

To deepen public understanding of local government, the City will create a Resident Academy, a program that gives residents a behind-the-scenes look at how the City operates. Participants will learn about City departments, budgeting, public safety, infrastructure, and more. The academy will help build civic knowledge, encourage community involvement, and foster stronger connections between residents and their local government.

Goal 7.0 Efficiency

The City of Chardon is committed to delivering high-quality public services in a way that is cost-effective, timely, and responsive to community needs. The goal of *Government Efficiency* reflects the City's responsibility to be a good steward of public resources, ensuring that every dollar spent and every hour worked contributes meaningfully to the well-being of residents and the success of the community.

This goal is inspired by the City's ongoing efforts to modernize operations, improve service delivery, and respond to the expectations of residents, businesses, and partner agencies. Efficient government operations help Chardon do more with less, delivering better outcomes without unnecessary cost or delay. This benefits the community by:

- Reducing waste and duplication of effort
- Improving the speed and quality of public services
- Freeing up resources for reinvestment in priority areas
- Increasing public satisfaction and trust in local government
- Supporting long-term financial sustainability

Strategy 7.1 Meaningful Staffing Structure

The City's staffing model must reflect its current needs, long-term goals, and the realities of limited personnel capacity. A well-aligned staffing structure ensures that employees are empowered to do their jobs effectively and that the City can deliver high-quality services without unnecessary duplication or administrative burden.

Initiative 7.1(a) Complete and Implement Compensation Study – 2025/2026

In 2025, the City initiated a comprehensive compensation study to evaluate the competitiveness and equity of its pay structure. This study will be completed in 2026, with a recommended updated compensation plan presented to City Council for consideration. The findings may also inform updates to the City's administrative code, ensuring that compensation policies are aligned with organizational goals, market conditions, and legal standards (see Initiative 7.2(a)).

Initiative 7.1(b) Reinstate and Standardize Annual Performance Evaluations – 2026

Beginning in 2026, annual performance evaluations will be mandatory for all City employees, regardless of their eligibility for merit-based raises. In recent years, some departments discontinued evaluations for employees who had reached the top of their pay range; this practice will be eliminated. Staying up to date on annual evaluations will be required for employees to receive a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA).

To ensure consistency and fairness across departments, the City will eliminate department-specific evaluation forms and implement four standardized forms tailored to the primary categories of City staff: salaried exempt supervisors, office/administrative personnel, utility/service workers, and police officers. These forms will be designed to reflect the core competencies and expectations of each role while maintaining a consistent evaluation framework across the organization.

Each evaluation will, whenever possible, involve two supervisors to promote objectivity and accountability. For example, the Deputy Director of Finance's review will be led by the Finance Director with participation from the City Manager, while the Water and Sewer Foreman's review will be conducted by the Superintendent with oversight from the Public Service Director.

This initiative will help ensure that performance management is meaningful, equitable, and aligned with the City's broader goals for professional development and operational excellence.

Initiative 7.1(c) Professional Development Plans – 2026

Starting in 2026, all full-time, salaried exempt employees in leadership roles will be required to maintain a professional development plan. These plans will be reviewed and updated annually as part of the performance evaluation process. While not mandatory for non-leadership staff, the City will encourage all employees to pursue professional development planning as a tool for career growth and continuous improvement. Department/Division heads may choose to make development plans mandatory. This practice may be expanded in future years.

Initiative 7.1(d) City Hall Second Floor Remodel – 2027

To improve staff working conditions and make better use of existing space, the City will reconfigure the second floor of City Hall. The current carpeted storage room, which is approximately three-quarters empty, will be converted into two new offices with exterior windows. Staff currently located in interior hallway offices without natural light will be relocated to these new offices, enhancing comfort and productivity.

The vacated interior offices will then be repurposed for storage, consolidating materials from the existing storage room and improving overall space efficiency. This remodel will be completed using existing square footage and is intended to minimize disruption while maximizing the functionality of City Hall's layout.

Initiative 7.1(e) Regular Review of Job Descriptions – 2027 and Beyond

To ensure that job roles remain aligned with the City's evolving needs, the City will adopt a regular review cycle, such as every three years, for all job descriptions. These reviews will ensure that each position accurately reflects current responsibilities, required qualifications, and performance expectations. Keeping job descriptions up to date will support more effective hiring, evaluation, and organizational planning.

Strategy 7.2 Simplify Administrative Rules and Regulations

Over time, the City's administrative rules and procedures have become fragmented across multiple documents and formats. This can lead to confusion, inefficiency, and inconsistent application of policies. Simplifying and consolidating these rules will improve internal clarity and provide greater transparency to the public.

Initiative 7.2(a) Review of Administrative Code – 2026/2027

The City will conduct a comprehensive review of its administrative code to eliminate redundancies, resolve conflicts, and improve organization. The goal is to create a clear, user-friendly set of rules that guide staff operations and support consistent decision-making. Should be regularly reviewed at least every five years thereafter.

7.2(a)(i) Standardized Committee Process

In conjunction with the Administrative Code update and to improve legislative efficiency, the City Manager requests Council adopt more standardized processes for referring items to committees. Currently, assignments of items to committees are largely at the Manager's discretion. This would include a clear system for determining whether an item should be submitted directly to Council or first reviewed by a committee, helping to streamline the legislative workflow and reduce confusion.

Initiative 7.2(b) Single Unified Policy Manual - 2027

Currently, the City maintains multiple documents, including an employee manual, policy guides, and a procedures manual, that govern staff conduct and expectations. These will be consolidated into a single, comprehensive employee policy manual that serves as the definitive resource for all administrative policies and procedures beyond the Administrative Code. This manual will be reviewed and updated at least every three years to ensure it remains current and relevant.

Initiative 7.2(c) Simplify and Streamline Municipal Specifications - 2027

The City's municipal specifications, which guide construction standards, public works projects, and infrastructure requirements, have become overly long, repetitive, and difficult to navigate. The City will undertake a comprehensive review to simplify and modernize these specifications. The goal is to create a more concise, well-organized document that is easier for staff, contractors, and developers to understand and apply, while still maintaining the technical rigor needed to ensure quality and consistency in public infrastructure.

Initiative 7.2(d) Achieve ICMA Local Government Recognition - 2028

The City will pursue formal recognition through the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Local Government Recognition Program. This designation highlights a municipality's commitment to professional management, ethical governance, and continuous improvement. Achieving this recognition will affirm Chardon's alignment with national best practices in transparency, performance management, and community engagement.

To qualify, the City will document its adherence to ICMA's core principles, including strategic planning, data-driven decision-making, and public accountability. The recognition process will also support internal efforts to modernize operations and reinforce Chardon's reputation as a well-managed, forward-thinking community.

Strategy 7.3 Adoption of Modern Technology

Technology offers powerful tools to improve both internal operations and the resident experience. By adopting modern systems and making better use of existing software, the City can reduce manual processes, improve responsiveness, and make services more accessible to the public.

Initiative 7.3(a) Online Citizen Services Portal - 2026

The City will develop a centralized online portal where residents can apply for permits, licenses, and other one-time services. The portal will allow users to submit requests, track progress, and receive approvals or feedback, all without needing to visit City Hall. This will save time for both residents and staff while improving service accessibility.

Initiative 7.3(b) Clerk Software for Legislative Management - 2026

The City will implement software to streamline the legislative process, including agenda generation, item submission, and pre-meeting staff approvals. This will reduce administrative workload, improve coordination, and ensure that meetings are well-organized and transparent.

Initiative 7.3(c) Cloud based GIS Mapping – 2026

The City currently uses an outdated desktop version of ArcView for geographic information system (GIS) mapping. In 2026, the City will transition to ESRI's ArcGIS Online, the industry standard for cloud-based GIS. This platform offers greater functionality, real-time updates, and improved accessibility for both staff and the public, all at a comparable cost to the current system.

Initiative 7.3(d) Digitize Internal Workflows – 2026/2027

The City will leverage its existing Office 365 tools to automate routine internal processes, reducing paperwork and improving efficiency. These automated workflows will streamline approvals, reduce delays, and allow staff to focus on higher-value tasks. Initial workflows to be automated include:

- Lease agreements - 2027
- Personnel Transactions - 2026
- Travel and Training Requests - 2027
- Performance Evaluations - 2026
- Professional Development Plans - 2026

Initiative 7.3(e) Transition to SharePoint for File Storage and Collaboration – 2027

The City will transition from its aging physical file server to SharePoint, a cloud-based platform included in the City’s existing Office 365 subscription. SharePoint offers secure, scalable, and collaborative document management, improving accessibility for staff and reducing reliance on outdated infrastructure.

Currently, the City’s physical file servers are operating at over 90% capacity, with a total storage limit of just 250GB. Expanding or replacing this hardware would be costly and inefficient compared to cloud-based alternatives. Migrating to SharePoint will eliminate the need for future hardware upgrades, enhance remote access, and support better version control and cross-department collaboration. The transition will include staff training, structured file migration, and the implementation of standardized folder structures and permissions.

Initiative 7.3(f) Evaluate Transition to Cloud-Based Financial Software – 2027

The City’s current financial software is hosted on internal servers, which are costly to maintain and lack some cybersecurity features. The City will evaluate the costs and benefits of transitioning to a cloud-based financial system. A cloud solution could offer enhanced security, improved accessibility, and reduced long-term infrastructure costs.

Initiative 7.3(g) Work/Asset Management System - 2028

To better manage infrastructure, maintenance, and service requests, the City will implement a work and asset management system. This system will help departments track work orders, schedule preventive maintenance, and monitor the condition of City assets over time, leading to more efficient operations and better long-term planning.

Initiative 7.3(h) Digital Recreation Rental Access System - 2028

To improve convenience and reduce operational issues, the City will transition from its current physical key-based lockbox system to a digital keypad access system for recreation facility rentals. The existing lockbox model has proven unreliable, with frequent service issues, lost keys, and a costly maintenance contract.

The new system will allow renters to receive a unique access code for their reservation, eliminating the need for physical key exchanges and improving security. A compatible module already exists within the City’s recreation rental software, making implementation straightforward and cost-effective. This upgrade will streamline facility access, reduce staff workload, and enhance the rental experience for residents.

Goal 8.0 Transportation

The City of Chardon is committed to developing a safe, efficient, and connected transportation system that serves all users, drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders alike. Improving *Transportation* reflects the City's responsibility to maintain and improve infrastructure that supports mobility, access, and economic activity while enhancing the character and walkability of the community.

As Chardon continues to grow and evolve, it must balance the needs of regional traffic with the desire for a walkable, small-town environment. A well-planned transportation system is essential to daily life and long-term prosperity. Improved transportation:

- Ensures safe and reliable travel for residents, businesses, and visitors
- Supports economic development and access to jobs and services
- Enhances walkability, public health, and environmental sustainability
- Preserves the small-town character of Chardon while accommodating growth
- Connects neighborhoods, uptown, and regional destinations

Strategy 8.1 Comprehensive Pedestrian Scale Connectivity

Chardon will pursue a comprehensive system of pedestrian and bicycle circulation that offers safe, convenient alternatives to vehicular travel. This network will connect neighborhoods to Chardon Square, schools, parks, and other key destinations, while also providing recreational opportunities and enhancing the City's walkability. The goal is to create a community where walking and biking are viable, enjoyable, and integrated into daily life.

Initiative 8.1(a) Formal Sidewalk Plowing Policies - 2026

The City will clarify and formalize its sidewalk plowing policies to resolve inconsistencies between ordinance and practice. Currently, the City plows sidewalks connected to the Square, but ordinances require residents to clear sidewalk. A clear policy will define which sidewalks are maintained by the City, under what conditions, and which routes are prioritized during snow events.

Initiative 8.1(b) Along Major Routes - Ongoing

Identify and prioritize pedestrian and bicycle improvements along major corridors that connect key origin and destination points, such as Chardon Square, schools, and commercial areas. While specific routes may need to be re-evaluated for feasibility, the City will focus on corridors with the greatest potential for impact and connectivity.

8.1(b)(i) Wilson Mills Sidewalk – 2027

The next major sidewalk expansion will be on Wilson Mills Road and is currently scheduled for 2027.

Initiative 8.1(c) Connectivity with New Developments - Ongoing

Require private developments to include pedestrian and bicycle connections that extend to the edges of their properties, allowing for future linkages with adjacent developments. These connections should be designed to support a larger, citywide network and promote short, direct routes to nearby destinations.

Initiative 8.1(d) Bike Lanes on Court Street - 2031

The City will develop bike lanes along Court Street to connect the regional trail system to Chardon Square. This route will provide a safer, more direct alternative to main roads for cyclists and pedestrians, enhancing access to the Square while reducing conflicts with vehicular traffic.

Initiative 8.1(e) Sidewalk on All Streets – 2040

Work toward the long-term goal of having sidewalks on at least one side of every street in the City. This includes identifying and filling sidewalk gaps, prioritizing areas with high pedestrian activity or safety concerns, and incorporating sidewalk construction into future capital improvement planning.

Strategy 8.2 Alternatives in Vehicular Circulation System

Chardon is fortunate to be served by two major state routes, SR 44 and SR 6, which have historically contributed to the City’s growth and regional importance. However, these routes also bring high volumes of through-traffic, including heavy trucks, directly through the City’s core. The City aims to develop a vehicular circulation system that offers alternative routes, reduces congestion in sensitive areas, protects residential neighborhoods, and maintains strong access to Chardon Square. A more balanced and flexible road network will also support future development and economic growth.

Initiative 8.2(a) Meadowlands Extension

Complete the extension of Meadowlands Boulevard across Water Street to Wilson Mills Road at Park Avenue. This connection would provide a critical east-west alternative and support the potential rerouting of truck traffic away from Chardon Square. At current collection rates, the Residential Improvement Districts (RIDs) designed to fund the project are expected to reach full funding by 2035. Given the complexity of the river crossing and likely involvement of federal permitting agencies, early design work is essential.

8.2(a)(i) Wilson Mills & Park Avenue Re-Alignment – 2028

Realign the intersection to improve safety and traffic flow, and install a fully functioning traffic signal.

8.2(a)(ii) Meadowlands to Wilson Mills – 2030

Construct the roadway connection from Meadowlands Boulevard to Wilson Mills Road.

8.2(a)(iii) Meadowlands Bridge – 2035

Build a new bridge over the Chagrin River to complete the Meadowlands extension, creating a continuous east-west corridor from Water Street to Wilson Mills.

Initiative 8.2(b) Evaluate Cherry Ave Truck Route – 2035

Evaluate the potential to shift designated truck routes from Chardon Square to Cherry Avenue. This would reduce heavy vehicle traffic in the historic uptown core, improving safety, walkability, and the overall experience of Chardon Square for residents and visitors.

Goal 9.0 Housing

The City of Chardon is committed to ensuring that residents of all ages, incomes, and lifestyles have access to safe, high-quality, and appropriately located housing. This goal reflects the City’s vision for a diverse and inclusive community, where housing options support the vitality of Chardon Square, reinforce the identity of “Original Chardon,” and grow in a way that respects the City’s small-town character.

There is long-standing recognition that a healthy housing market is essential to economic development, community stability, and quality of life. It also responds to changing demographics, evolving household needs, and the importance of supporting local businesses with a strong residential base. A well-balanced housing strategy:

- Provides options for young professionals, families, seniors, and lifelong residents
- Supports local businesses by increasing foot traffic and workforce availability
- Reinforces the walkability and vibrancy of Chardon Square and surrounding neighborhoods
- Helps maintain property values and neighborhood character
- Encourages thoughtful, sustainable growth

Strategy 9.1 Evaluating Impact of Rental Properties - 2031

With rental housing accounting for approximately 35% of Chardon’s housing stock, primarily in multi-unit buildings, the City must evaluate how rental properties affect neighborhood stability, housing quality, and community character. The City should explore whether additional oversight, a rental registration program, or other support is needed.

Initiative 9.1(a) Single Family Rentals

Evaluate the impact of single-family homes being converted to rentals. While currently limited, these conversions can significantly affect neighborhood cohesion and property maintenance. The City should consider whether proactive policies are needed.

Initiative 9.1(b) Traditional Apartments

Many of Chardon’s apartment buildings are 20–30 years old and beginning to show signs of aging. The City should explore ways to encourage reinvestment in these properties, which serve as important entry points for new residents and downsizing options for seniors.

Initiative 9.1(c) Short-Term Rentals

Conduct a study to determine whether short-term rentals (e.g., Airbnb, VRBO) are appropriate in Chardon or in selected areas. The evaluation should consider both economic benefits and potential community impacts including if the City’s existing lodging tax should be expanded.

Goal 10.0 Strong Municipal Court

As the seat of Geauga County's only municipal court, the City of Chardon plays a vital role in the administration of local justice. A *Strong Municipal Court* reflects the City's commitment to supporting a court system that is respected, efficient, and as self-sufficient as possible, both financially and operationally.

A strong municipal court system is essential to the rule of law and the effective functioning of local government. The City's desire is to ensure that the court continues to serve the public with professionalism, fairness, and fiscal responsibility by:

- Providing timely and fair resolution of legal matters
- Enhancing public trust in the justice system
- Supporting law enforcement and public safety efforts
- Reducing reliance on City resources through operational efficiency
- Reinforcing Chardon's role as a regional center for civic services

Strategy 10.1 Support Operational Efficiency and Fiscal Sustainability

To reduce reliance on City resources and ensure long-term sustainability, the City will work with the court to identify opportunities for operational improvements, cost savings, and revenue stability. This may include investments in technology, process improvements, and shared services that help the court operate more efficiently while maintaining high standards of service.

Strategy 10.2 Reinforce the Court's Role in Regional Public Safety

As a regional institution, the municipal court must be well-integrated with law enforcement, legal services, and other civic functions. The City will support initiatives that strengthen coordination between the court and public safety agencies, improve case processing times, and ensure that the court continues to serve as a respected and effective partner in the broader justice system.