

Barton Hacker

1. Yes or no, do you agree that there should be no significant new traffic introduced into the Colonial Hills neighborhood? How will you ensure this in the future?

I believe all residential neighborhoods in Worthington could benefit from traffic-calming initiatives, as I witness vehicles driving entirely too fast on my own street (Stafford Avenue) to avoid traffic in Old Worthington each morning and evening. That said, having spent a considerable amount of time in Colonial Hills - my son Harold attended CHES for seven years, I coached Colonial Hills based Youth Booster soccer and basketball teams, and my partner Sarah Hansen used to live on E. Selby Blvd at Greenwich Street - I know that a significant concern to many residents in Colonial Hills is through-access via Indianola Avenue from Dublin-Granville Road to E Lincoln Avenue as a result of possible development of the I Am Boundless property. Should development occur, I believe the best way to control traffic is to allow purchase of the 13-acre portion of land closest to the Indianola Avenue entrance by Worthington Schools and use traditional traffic-calming measures such as speed bumps to discourage street access from being used for purposes other than normal student transport. School-related traffic is already coming into Colonial Hills each day, so this would not itself be an increase at all.

2. What improvements to Colonial Hills do you propose?

Referencing my ties to the Colonial Hills neighborhood above, in addition to traffic concerns, residents have expressed specific desires to have the shelter house at Selby Park upgraded, as well as having water system problems addressed (see question #3), the latter having caused flooding and the introduction of sewer rats from neighboring communities. All are valid concerns, and each deserves to be addressed as a part of a larger list of priorities that face the entirety of Worthington. Does a new shelter house rank higher than a safe pedestrian crossing on Dublin-Granville Road from Pingree Drive to East Granville Park? Does the purchase of the UMCH property trump all other projects? What about the Worthington Pool? I guess what I am proposing is that in a vacuum, all projects have value and are worth the city's investment of time and financial resources; however, when those resources are limited, we must determine how best to prioritize the needs versus the wants of our community.

3. How do you propose to upgrade the water system in Worthington?

Speaking of priorities... this is a public health issue that must become a priority of Worthington City Council. As part of the 2020-2024 CIP, the City is evaluating waterlines and plans to begin a new program to invest in necessary upgrades; those lines in Colonial Hills must be part of this program. However, it is important to note that this program is expected to be funded using bonds. This means the amount of CIP resources dedicated to debt payments will increase, impacting the City's ability to fund other immediate needs now and in the future. Debt financing is also affected by Worthington's bond rating, which can be impacted by the level of our general reserve fund. Both are currently very good, but pressures to lower our reserves to pay for Worthington Pools and the UMCH property will potentially impact this, especially at a time when city expenses are beginning to outpace revenue generated from municipal income tax receipts. Again, what are our priorities?

4. How would you diversify and stabilize the revenue stream in the City of Worthington?

There are two meaningful ways to diversify Worthington's revenue stream. The first is to allocate a larger portion of the residential property tax to municipal operations, something that would pit the city's needs against those of the school district. The second is to charge a fee for certain city services, or conversely to reduce them. I am not in favor of either of these options and would therefore not concern myself with diversifying our revenue stream, so much as I want to stabilize and expand it through an increase in business development activities that stretch the entire length of High Street from E Lincoln Avenue to Interstate-270. This can be done through structural and financial incentives that encourage redevelopment of existing properties into Class A office and mixed-use space, re-aligning budget priorities to provide more resources to economic development efforts, and selling Worthington as a central location for technology businesses and satellite corporate offices for core Columbus-based operations. This will require a change in the general perception that Worthington is an unfriendly community in which to do business.