

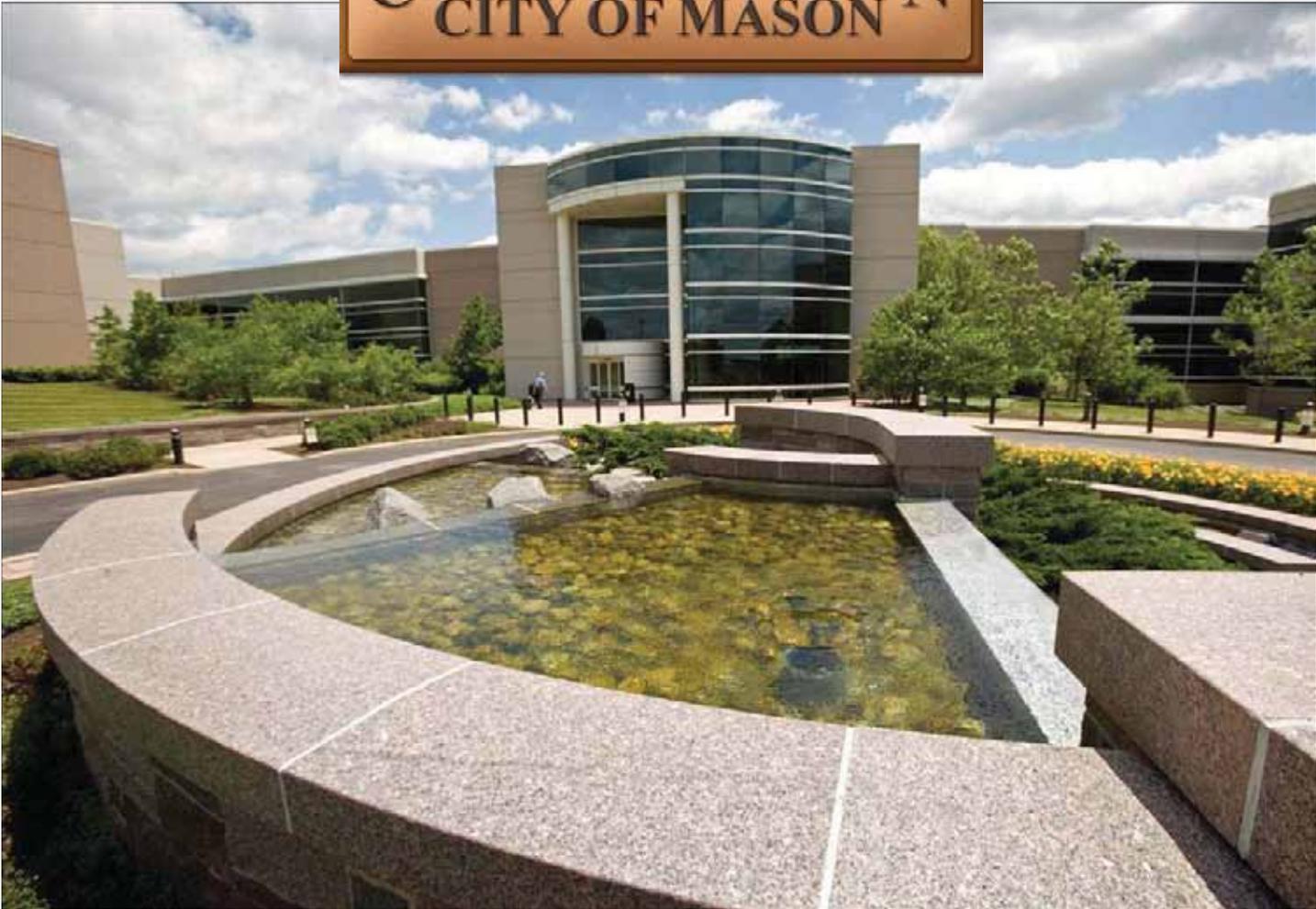
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
CITY OF MASON

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Chapter 4 Economic Development



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CITY OF MASON



Chapter 4: Economic Development

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Vision Statement

Mason will expand its economic base with a focus on a vibrant and sustainable local economy. Mason is a thriving tourism destination with a premiere location for high-tech industry, corporate campuses and light industrial development. Mason will set policy to attract a more vertical office market while retaining its diverse business investments. Economic development efforts will grow employment opportunities and increase municipal revenues needed to provide existing and desired high quality public services and facilities.

Section 4.1. Purpose

The purpose of the Economic Development Element is to guide efforts to diversify and expand Mason's mix of businesses and tax base, while retaining and enhancing Mason's existing industries. A vibrant economic base will provide employment opportunities close to residents, reduce the overall tax burden and improve quality of life.

The primary components of this element include:

1. An analysis of Mason's current economic base and employment characteristics.
2. Analysis of trends in tourism markets and opportunities.
3. Recommendations for policies, practices and partnerships that will encourage economic growth that is appropriate for Mason.
4. Specific recommendations to enhance attractiveness of Mason for business development.

Section 4.2. Economic Development Snapshot

This section contains a summary of existing conditions, issues and opportunities related to Mason's business environment. Detailed information can be found in the Existing Conditions Report.

Introduction

Economic development in Mason in recent decades has included the establishment of numerous high-tech industries, research facilities and corporate headquarters in the City. Due to a variety of factors including Mason's strategic location, availability of land, proximity to a highly educated workforce, and proactive municipal policies, Mason has been highly successful in balancing job growth with housing growth. The result has been an abundant tax base and close proximity between jobs and Mason residents.

Chapter Cover Photo

Mason is home to several Fortune 500 companies including P&G. This research and development facility is located on P&G's health science campus located on Mason-Montgomery Road.

Photo provided courtesy of P&G.

Highlights

- Close to half of Mason’s working residents are employed in managerial/business/finance or professional occupations.
- Mason’s residents are highly educated.
- Mason’s household incomes are considerably higher than the Cincinnati region and Ohio.
- Mason residents overwhelmingly drive alone to work, although commute times are relatively short due to the presence of local jobs.
- A relatively high percentage (nearly a fourth) of Mason’s working residents work in Mason.
- Mason’s daytime population (workers) is nearly as high as its nighttime (resident) population.
- Mason’s business mix includes a major healthcare research facility, corporate headquarters, and high-tech manufacturing.
- 1100 acres of land zoned for business parks is either vacant or agricultural. A substantial amount of this land is located near I-71 interchanges.
- The City owns 300 contiguous acres zoned for business parks along State Route 741.
- A JEDD (Joint Economic Development District) located in Liberty Township will help to fund significant transportation improvements that will improve pedestrian and vehicular circulation throughout Mason and improve access to I-75.

Income

- Mason’s median household income was 48% higher than the CBSA in 2000 and remains 44% higher than the CBSA, and 64% higher than the State’s (see Table 4.2A).

Jobs and Employment

- The highest percentage of Mason residents (42.3 percent) are employed in service industries, which include professional services such as lawyers, doctors, architects, engineers, etc, but exclude finance, insurance, and real estate service professionals.

Commute Patterns

- Mason residents have relatively short average commute times when compared to the CBSA and State, likely due to the availability of jobs in Mason and surrounding communities.

Table 4.2A:
Median Household Income: 2000-2008

	2000	2008	Change
Mason City	\$66,293	\$85,697	29.30%
Cincinnati-Middletown, OH-KY-IN CBSA	\$44,842	\$59,701	33.10%
State of Ohio	\$40,998	\$52,391	27.80%

Source: 2000 Census. 2008 estimates from ESRI

Top Employers

- Mason has become a premier business location within the Cincinnati region, due to its location, demographics, available land, and municipal policies.
- Businesses in Mason employ over 20,000 people and include corporate headquarters, research facilities, and high-tech industries.
- Mason’s top 10 employers alone generate over \$5 million annually in income tax revenue.

Business Parks

- Mason’s business parks consist of approximately 2600 acres zoned for industrial and office uses and are generally found in three areas (see Map 4.2A):
 - Along I-71, clustered around the interchanges at Fields-Ertel Road, Western Row Road, and Kings Mills Road.
 - Near the intersection of Western Row Road and Butler Warren Road.
 - Near the intersection of State Route 741 and Bethany Road.

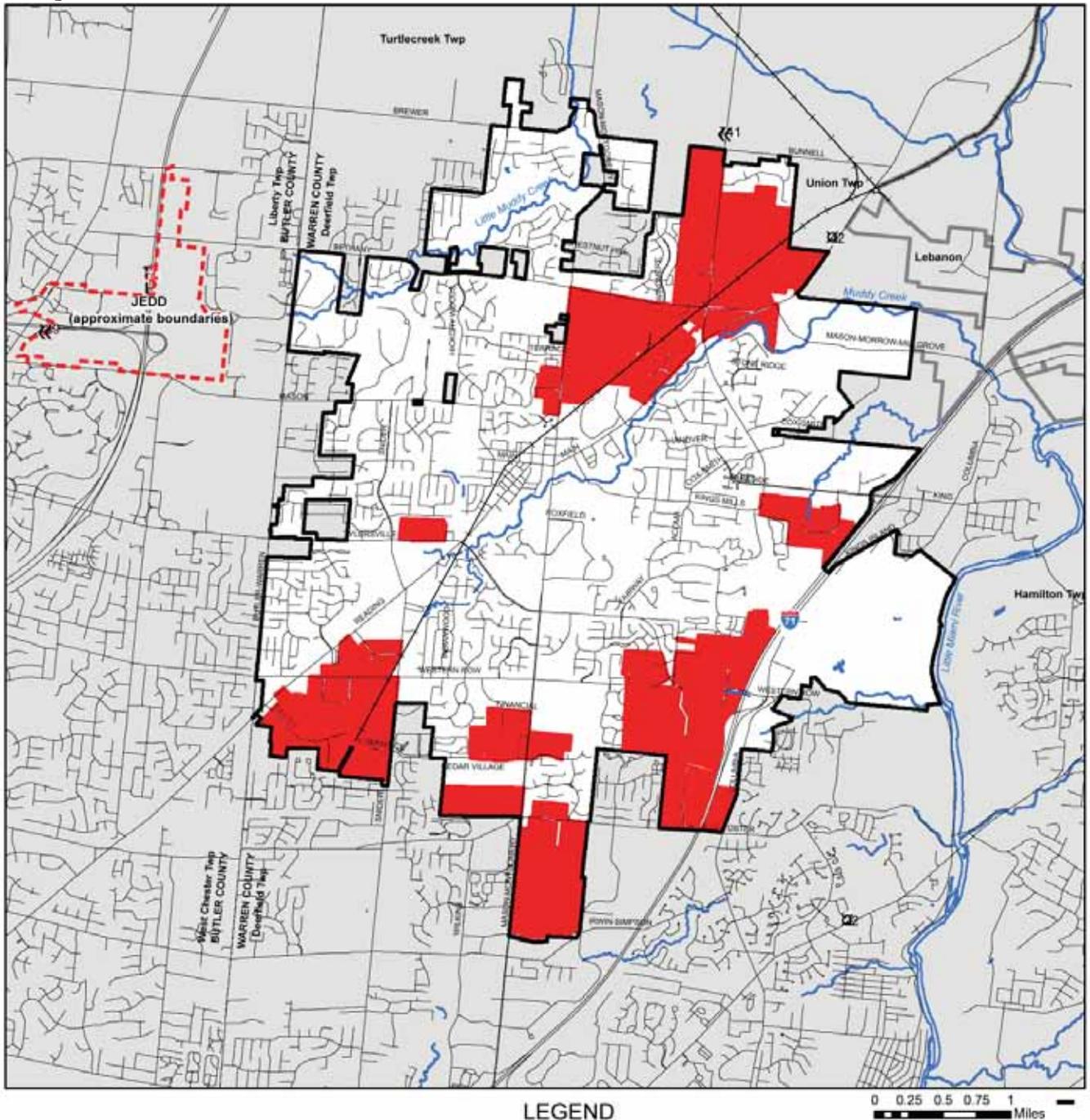
Development Opportunities

- Mason’s business parks are approximately 58% developed, with 1100 acres of vacant or agricultural land remaining within these areas.
- The largest concentration of undeveloped land is located along both sides of State Route 741 north of U.S. Route 42.
- Undeveloped business park land is also concentrated near the I-71 interchanges at Western Row Road and Kings Mills Road, which are prime locations for business park uses.



Luxottica Office Building at Tylersville and Western Row Road

Map 4.2A: Business Park Locations



- Business Parks
- Joint Economic Development District
- Mason City Boundary
- Other Municipal Boundaries

Section 4.3. Goals and Strategies

Goal ED-1.

Develop the I-71 corridor in Mason as a premier corporate address.

The I-71 corridor in Mason, home to multiple Fortune 500 companies, has a considerable amount of vacant land remaining for additional corporate-office development. Improved interstate access and circulation between interchanges will maximize the development potential of this corridor. Introducing a pedestrian-orientated, mixed-use development with supportive amenities will preserve this corridor as a competitive business destination. Accordingly, a new model of economic prosperity is envisioned for the I-71 corridor that will set the standard for sustainable development within the region.

Strategy ED-1.1.

Preserve areas planned as Business Park along the I-71 corridor for corporate offices, high-tech uses and other businesses that create high-paying jobs.

Action ED-1.1.1. Amend the Zoning Code to restrict the I-71 corridor for corporate office. Consider adopting a new overlay district to allow and establish guidelines for parking garages, taller buildings, mixed land use, circulation, stormwater management and architectural controls.

Action ED-1.1.2. Pursue opportunities to acquire strategically located properties as they become available and as funding permits.

Action ED-1.1.3. Utilize city-owned property to induce developers and corporate users to the I-71 corridor.

Strategy ED-1.2.

Improve access and circulation at the I-71 and Western Row Interchange gateway.

Action ED-1.2.1. Work with state, county and regional governments to promote employment and long range development planning via a full interchange improvement at I-71 and Western Row.

Action ED-1.2.2. Watch for viable opportunities for a connection between Kings Mills Road and Western Row Road.

Action ED-1.2.3. Look at alternative transportation options such as shuttles and people movers that connect corporate office buildings to shared parking lots, parking decks and support amenity uses.

Strategy ED-1.3.

Create a master planned, mixed-use (corporate-office) business park environment with support uses to catalyze development within an amenity rich district.

Action ED-1.3.1. Develop an integrated network of pedestrian and bicycle paths that connects all uses within the I-71 corridor.

Action ED-1.3.2. Study the feasibility of constructing a pedestrian connection across I-71.

Action ED-1.3.3. Integrate existing amenities, such as the Golf Center and Lindner Family Tennis Center, to create a truly unique corporate environment.

Action ED-1.3.4. Support amenity retail, retail services and hospitality uses integrated as part of a well thought out mixed use development to increase Mason's long-term sustainability and attractiveness.

Goal ED-2.

Attract light industrial businesses to the North State Route 741 Sub-Area and other areas planned as Light Industrial to maintain a diverse local economy.

Even though the industrial market has been relatively flat in recent years and the office/high tech market is now in-fashion, it is still important to market industrial parks to maintain a diverse local economy.

Strategy ED-2.1.

Improve and actively market older industrially zoned properties and parks.

Action ED-2.1.1. Include more information on each of the city's industrial parks on the Economic Development web page.

Action ED-2.1.2. Improve industrial park visibility and identity by improving or adding entry features and signage.

Action ED-2.1.3. Promote Mason's industrial property to site selection consultants and regional brokers. Ensure such professionals are aware of Mason's multiple industrial parks and their competitive advantages.

Strategy ED-2.2

Promote more flexible use arrangements in industrial parks to ensure older properties generate tax income and are properly maintained.

Some of Mason's more mature industrial parks and buildings are slightly outdated. Obsolescence can create a competitive disadvantage relative to newer properties but it can also create a price advantage.

Action ED-2.2.1. Review zoning and amend, if needed, to permit a broader mix of uses in industrial districts. Consult real estate experts as part of this action to ensure competitiveness within the region.

Action ED-2.2.2. Permit flex-office configurations. Flex-office demises larger buildings into several smaller spaces. Each space is demised to meet user-specific floor area needs for office, manufacturing and warehousing.

Action ED-2.2.3. Promote vacant buildings to area incubators. Incubators are a great way to grow new business and create demand for space.

Goal ED-3.

Update and align economic development policies with performance related goals.

Clear incentive policies make the economic development process more predictable. Incentives can be financial or non-financial ranging from tax abatement, waived fees, and/or public infrastructure improvements. All of these

incentives are appropriate tools but they should only be used when city goals are met and the benefits outweigh costs.

Strategy ED-3.1.

Make the use of incentives transparent and predictable - linked to performance.

Action ED-3.1.1. Adopt minimum requirements (performance standards) for the use of incentives. Incentives should be linked to jobs created and wages provided (i.e. fiscal return) for office, retail and industrial uses.

Action ED-3.1.2. Enhance economic development webpage and collateral material to inform existing and perspective companies of the city's minimum performance requirements and their tie to incentives.

Strategy ED-3.2.

Ensure incentives are provided in return for adherence to Comprehensive Plan goals.

Incentives are powerful tools. They should be leveraged to drive compliance with Comprehensive Plan vision, goals and policies.

Action ED-3.2.1. Utilize development agreements, where applicable, when incentives are offered to ensure projects are developed consistent with Comprehensive Plan goals.

Action ED-3.2.2. Offer incentives in the I-71 Corridor only when users can adhere to the highest development standards consistent with a leading-edge, high-tech and corporate office environment.

Action ED-3.2.3. Consider extending incentives to projects that meet job, industry and wage goals and also incorporate supportive mixed uses such as retail and services.



The Diamond Back courtesy of King Island

Goal ED-4.

Grow Mason's family friendly tourism industry.

With amusement parks and professional sports, Mason is a family-orientated destination and tourism powerhouse. World-class events and venues bring millions of people to Mason annually and offer the City a significant amount of national exposure and prestige. Mason's family-oriented tourism industry offers potential for synergistic development that can have broader economic development benefits.

Strategy ED-4-1

Develop and economic development based tourism strategy. The tourism industry in Mason is quite large but it has room to grow.

Action ED-4.1.1. Work with the Warren County Convention and Visitors Bureau and/or tourism consultants to create a strategy aimed at increasing Mason as a Regional Tourism Center.

Strategy ED-4.2.

Promote entertainment and hospitality uses in the Kings Mills Sub-area (See Chapter 8 and Chapter 7, LU-17).

Central to this strategy is a new, mixed use lifestyle center (entertainment, shopping, and restaurants) that supports and is co-marketed with Kings Island, The Beach and professional sports to drive overnight trips.

Action ED-4.2.1. Ensure suitable acreage in the Kings Mills Sub-area (see Chapter 8) is preserved for a pedestrian and family friendly, mixed use lifestyle center.

Action ED-4.2.2. Work with property owners and developers to cooperatively establish a pedestrian-friendly hospitality, entertainment and retail district.

Strategy ED-4.3

Grow Mason's sports and recreation themed cluster in the I-71 corridor.

Action ED-4.3.1. Support the development of a regional sports event/tournament facility in or close to the Kings Mills Sub-area.

Action ED-4.3.2. Continue to support regional events and facilities including ATP Tennis Tournament, and Duramed Golf Tournament.

Goal ED-5.

Brand and market Mason's unique districts.

Mason is one of the most visited cities in Ohio. This is an unique distinction for a community of Mason's size. The following actions are offered to attract additional visitors and to generate multi-day trips.

Strategy ED-5.1.

Develop a unified system for creating and naming districts.

Action ED-5.1.1. Identify districts that have unique market appeal. The sports, recreation and entertainment clusters located in the I-71 corridor is an obvious example. Downtown is another.

Strategy ED-5.2.

Develop a branding strategy for each district (see Map 4.3A) that provides a positive image for the district and the community as a whole.

Action ED-5.2.1. Assess target audience (i.e. developers, businesses, residents and visitors) needs for attractions, land use, entertainment and hospitality and develop a branding theme and strategy for each district.

Action ED-5.2.2. Develop marketing materials based on the branding themes aimed at attracting developers and businesses to each district.

Action ED-5.2.3. Identify synergies between districts and co-market unique district attributes and large events to drive overnight visits (e.g., turn day trips into weekend trips). An example is the development of restaurant and entertainment uses in the Community Core to provide an alternative experience for visitors visiting Kings Island or attending professional sporting events.

Action ED-5.2.4. Study the feasibility of linking Mason's districts and notable tourist attractions via a supportive transportation system.

Action ED-5.2.5. Develop district branded marketing material that includes maps, attractions and events. Place these items on-line, in hotels and restaurants, etc.

Action ED-5.2.6. Enhance the streetscape and gateways in each district so as to reflect the established theme and provide stronger physical connections to other districts. Include wayfinding elements that direct motorists and pedestrians to key destinations. See CF-5.1.3, CF-5.1.5 and ED-7.



Cintas maintains a large educated workforce at its Mason campus.

Goal ED-6.

Continue to grow and diversify the local economy.

Strategy ED-6.1

Encourage retention and expansion of existing Mason businesses.

Existing businesses will play a critical role in growing Mason's economy. Development regulations and incentive policies must cater to existing businesses while attracting new ones.

Action ED-6.1.1. Conduct "customer satisfaction" surveys of businesses who have recently been through the City's development review process.

Action ED-6.1.2. Work with the business community to identify changes to the zoning code and/or review process to facilitate business expansion.

Action ED-6.1.3. Establish a mechanism for improved and regular communications between business leaders and city officials. Hold regularly scheduled meetings and ad-hoc meetings when necessary to discuss issues of mutual importance, to share needs and discuss pending policies and solicit feedback.

Action ED-6.1.4. Continue to refine economic development programs, incentives and policies for business retention and growth based on business feedback.

Strategy ED-6.2

Continue entrepreneurial approach towards economic development.

Strong regional competition for jobs is making corporate recruitment more challenging. The city, in response, has adapted over time and created a “port authority” to vigorously pursue opportunities.

Action ED-6.2.1. Use the Mason Port Authority to aid the development goals of the City by using creative financing and incentive resources.

Goal ED-7.

Maintain and enhance Mason’s strong aesthetic image at key entrances and along thoroughfares.
See CF-5.1.3.



Mason’s manicured boulevard treatments and streetscape investment along primary thoroughfares enhances community image and creates a welcoming appearance.

Strategy ED-7.1.

Establish gateway enhancements to provide a greater sense of entry and arrival at key locations.

Action ED-7.1.1. Incorporate entry style gateway signage at or close to important City entry points and use streetscaping and signage to signify arrival at important intersections.

Action ED-7.1.2. Promote denser, mixed use development at key intersections as planned in Chapter 7 Land Use, LU-19. This will create activity nodes, generate pedestrianism and add variety along corridors.

Strategy ED-7.2.

Continue to enhance and extend landscape parkways with ornamental lighting and decorative features. This is a signature “Mason” placemaking element.

Action ED-7.2.1. Consider a lighting and landscaping special assessment district to pay for or help offset costs.

Goal ED-8.

Be a leader in small business growth.

Small business is the growth engine of our national economy, representing between 60% to 80% of all new jobs created on an annual basis. Communities are taking note by developing new economic development policies and programs targeting small business growth.

Strategy ED-8.1

Make Mason a small business community of choice.

Action ED-8.1.1. Incorporate the importance of entrepreneur and small business development into economic development strategies.

Action ED-8.1.2. Promote small business resources on the City’s webpage.

Action ED-8.1.3. Advertise the city’s small business advocacy program and co-market with area chambers and Small Business Administration, etc.

Action ED-8.1.4. Review the Zoning Ordinance and amend to recognize increased telecommuting and home based business trends and practices.

Action ED-8.1.5. Consider adding live-work units as a permitted use type as explored in Chapter 2, HN-1.2 and Chapter 7, LU-11.3 and LU-15.3. These units promote small business development.

Strategy ED-8.2

Ensure the resources and infrastructure needed for small business success is in place.

Action ED-8.2.1. Ensure a wide variety of flexible office spaces exist suitable for a variety of different sized small businesses located throughout the City. These office types generally offer shared administrative services and conference rooms.

Action ED-8.2.2. Work with area higher education service providers to meet entrepreneur and small business workforce development needs.