



# **Sherwood at a Crossroads: ROI, Spending Discipline, and Accountability**

Sherwood Policy Forum

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## **The Crossroads We Face**

Sherwood is at a crossroads. Our city is being asked to make major financial commitments, extend taxes that were once temporary, and take on projects that carry long term obligations. The question is not simply whether Sherwood should grow, but whether that growth will be guided by responsible spending, clear priorities, and real accountability.

## **Growth Without Discipline**

In business, growth without discipline leads to bankruptcy. In government, it leads to wasted tax dollars, missed opportunities, and frustrated citizens who see their money spent without results. It also drives higher taxes, resulting in barriers to growth. True growth in a community does not come from government created projects. It comes from private businesses choosing to locate, expand, and invest. The role of government is to create the conditions where that growth can happen through predictable policies, strong infrastructure, and disciplined spending.

## **Unintended Consequences of Government Led Growth**

This is not the result of malice on the part of elected officials. It is usually the unintended consequence of poor planning, misplaced priorities, or the temptation to deliver quick wins without considering long term costs. When government tries to take control of growth directly, the outcome is almost always the same: higher taxes, more waste, and fewer opportunities for the private sector to flourish.

## **What ROI Means in Business**

Most people are familiar with ROI in a business sense. If you invest a dollar, you expect to get more than a dollar back in value. If you do not, it is a bad investment. Businesses track ROI constantly. They measure whether marketing dollars produce more sales, whether an expansion produces more customers, or whether a new hire improves efficiency. If the return does not justify the cost, they adjust, because wasted dollars can destroy the business.

## **What ROI Should Mean for Sherwood**

Cities are different, but the principle still applies. ROI for municipal government is not about profit margins. It is about results that matter to citizens and responsible, accountable spending. Roads that reduce congestion. Drainage projects that prevent flooding. Parks that improve quality of life. Investments that attract businesses and keep dollars local. ROI for citizens should also reflect



quality of life. Safe neighborhoods, strong schools, utilities that are reliable and reasonably priced, and recreational opportunities that make Sherwood appealing to families and employers.

## **The Problem of Ignoring ROI**

Governments at every level can unintentionally ignore ROI because they are not spending their own money. They are spending the public's money. When accountability slips, waste and delays follow, and taxpayers are left holding the bill. That mindset damages trust and makes future requests for funding harder to justify.

## **The Benefit of Clarity**

When leaders ask citizens to extend or increase taxes, clarity is essential. People deserve to know exactly what they are being asked to fund, how much it will cost, how long it will last, and what the measurable outcomes will be. Clarity builds confidence. It allows citizens to weigh trade offs, understand priorities, and hold leaders accountable for results.

## **The Benefit of Town Halls**

Regular town hall meetings build trust. When leaders meet directly with citizens, explain proposals, and take questions, citizens become part of the conversation. Town halls let leaders explain costs and timelines in plain language, and they give citizens a way to voice concerns and share ideas. The result is better decisions and stronger buy in.

## **The Benefit of Predictability**

Citizens and businesses rely on predictability from government. When rules, taxes, or priorities shift without warning, confidence erodes. Families hesitate to buy homes. Businesses hesitate to expand. Investors look to neighboring cities with more consistent leadership. Predictability does not mean refusing to change. It means setting clear priorities, sticking to them, and communicating adjustments openly when they are necessary.

## **A Clear Plan Citizens Deserve**

Before asking for a tax extension or a new tax, citizens should see a plan that includes:

- Detailed financials that go beyond overall project cost, with a breakdown of how each piece will be funded
- A realistic timeline for delivery of projects
- Details on debt and repayment schedules
- Current and future operational costs, including maintenance and staffing

- Reasonable, attainable, and measurable outcomes that inform citizens whether promises are being fulfilled

## **The Question Every Citizen Should Ask**

Has the city presented a credible plan to fix the very areas it admits are deficient? Have leaders outlined how roads will be improved, how drainage will be addressed, and how parks and recreation will be enhanced? Or are citizens being asked to trust that those things will come later?

## **ROI is About Progress**

ROI in business is about profit. ROI in cities is about progress. For Sherwood's citizens, ROI should mean that every dollar you are asked to contribute comes back in visible, measurable improvements to your community, backed by a clear, transparent plan.

Sherwood taxpayers work too hard for their money to accept anything less.

## **About the Author**

Mike Willingham is a local business leader and the founder of the Sherwood Policy Forum, an independent community initiative focused on clarity, collaboration, and civic growth. As Chief Operating Officer of RegenaDermRx, a national healthcare distributor headquartered in Sherwood, Mike combines executive leadership experience with a passion for strengthening his hometown. Mike's roots in Sherwood run deep. He attended Victory Baptist School during his elementary years and is a 1985 graduate of Sylvan Hills High School. Through the Sherwood Policy Forum, he works to provide residents and leaders with practical, transparent insights into Sherwood's future.

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