



# **Sherwood Policy Forum White Paper**

## **Reimagine Sherwood: A Conversation Worth Having**

A Report on Balancing Growth, Identity, and Opportunity

## Executive Summary

Sherwood has long branded itself with the slogan, “*Close to the action, Far from the noise.*” At first glance, it communicates safety and peace. But it also tells people the “action” is somewhere else. That framing worked when Sherwood was comfortable as a bedroom community. It will not work for the next 25 years if Sherwood wants to attract business, investment, and growth. Reimagine Sherwood is a step forward, but projects alone will not change perceptions. To succeed, Sherwood needs a stronger marketing strategy, one that balances the values of its citizens, addresses competing viewpoints, and tells a story that makes Sherwood more than a pass-through city.

### Sherwood by the Numbers

Population: 32,000+

Median Age: 38

Median Household Income: \$65,000

Median Home Price: \$225,000

Median Rent: \$1,050/month

Sales Tax Rate: Lower than most surrounding cities

Business Strength: Hundreds of active Chamber members

Key Employers: CHI St. Vincent Hospital, major national retailers, and a diverse base of small businesses

### The Sherwood Narrative

Today, Sherwood defines itself as quiet, safe, and affordable. Those qualities are valuable, but they are not enough. Quiet and safe do not automatically translate into opportunity. Without growth, they risk becoming stagnation. Cities like Conway and Cabot leaned into bold growth narratives and now attract development and investment. Sherwood is still described as “close to Little Rock, but not Little Rock.” That perception gap costs us restaurants, retail, and new jobs.

### Competing Views of Sherwood’s Future

Not all residents want Sherwood to grow. Many families moved here because it was away from the action. They value quiet neighborhoods, less traffic, and a slower pace. For them, growth feels like a threat. Others, including parts of city government, believe growth is essential. They argue Sherwood must attract businesses, keep tax dollars

local, and create reasons for people to stay and spend here. They see growth as necessary for long-term stability and competitiveness. Neither perspective is wrong. Both deserve respect. The real challenge is balance. Sherwood must preserve what makes it peaceful while still building opportunities that keep the city relevant and sustainable.

## **The Role of Infrastructure**

Infrastructure is central to quality of life. Roads, sidewalks, drainage systems, parks, and recreational facilities send a message about how a city values its people. Citizens notice whether potholes are repaired, whether drainage systems function during heavy rains, and whether existing parks and golf courses are maintained. Businesses notice the same things. For an entrepreneur deciding where to open a restaurant or a developer considering a new project, infrastructure is a measure of stability. If a city cannot maintain what it already has, why would new businesses believe in its capacity to grow? Sherwood must invest not only in new projects but also in maintaining and improving what already exists.

## **Demographic and Housing Snapshot**

Sherwood is home to more than 32,000 residents and has experienced steady population growth over the past decade. The city's median age is 38, reflecting a balance of young families and established households. Median household income is approximately \$65,000, providing businesses with a stable consumer base. Housing remains affordable relative to nearby markets. The median home price is about \$225,000, while the median monthly rent is \$1,050. Both figures are lower than those in west Little Rock, making Sherwood attractive to families seeking value without sacrificing proximity to regional amenities.

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## **Business Demographics**

Sherwood benefits from an active and engaged business community. The Sherwood Chamber of Commerce boasts hundreds of active members across retail, healthcare, professional services, and distribution. This strong participation highlights the depth of Sherwood's entrepreneurial base and the willingness of local businesses to collaborate on civic growth. The city also hosts a mix of small businesses and larger employers. CHI St. Vincent Hospital anchors regional healthcare in Sherwood, while national retailers provide both employment opportunities and significant sales tax revenue. Combined with a growing base of service and retail businesses, this makes Sherwood's economy resilient, diverse, and positioned for future growth.

## **The Tax Advantage**

Sherwood's sales tax rate is lower than that of many surrounding cities. This is sometimes presented as a weakness when leaders argue for higher taxes, but it can also be reframed as a strength. A lower sales tax rate is an incentive for both consumers and businesses. Sherwood should lean into this advantage, promoting itself as not only family friendly but also business friendly.

## **The Political Environment**

Sherwood's future is being debated in an environment that can feel divided. Some leaders and citizens view growth as essential, while others fear it threatens the suburban character they value. What is missing is a unified vision that balances these priorities. Conversations about Sherwood's future often happen in fragments—at luncheons, neighborhood forums, and council meetings—but rarely connect into a clear message citizens and businesses can rally behind. That lack of clarity creates uncertainty. Citizens do not know what direction the city is heading. Businesses hesitate to invest when they are not sure how Sherwood defines itself. Meanwhile, other cities with bolder and clearer narratives continue to win opportunities. Sherwood Policy Forum exists to help fill that gap by raising the right questions, presenting data, and insisting on transparency. Growth or no growth is not the central issue. The

central issue is clarity and accountability.

## **The Business Community**

Sherwood has one undeniable strength: its business community. The Sherwood Chamber of Commerce is active, visible, and well supported. This is an asset. A strong Chamber presence shows Sherwood already has an engaged, entrepreneurial foundation. The challenge is whether the city will leverage this strength. Business owners care about infrastructure and quality of life because they know it drives consumer behavior. They are also the ones deciding where to expand, relocate, or reinvest. Sherwood has the opportunity to align city leadership with its business community to present one consistent message: Sherwood is not only a good place to live, it is a smart place to invest.

## **Government's Role in Growth**

For businesses—both those already here and those considering Sherwood—the number one need is consistency. Entrepreneurs can adapt to regulations and taxes if they are clear and predictable. What slows growth is uncertainty. Municipal governments sometimes fall into the trap of adding layers of rules or policies in the name of control. Even when well intended, the result is hesitation. Businesses wait. Developers delay. Citizens lose confidence. Sherwood's government must prove it can be predictable and consistent. Whether in zoning, permitting, or tax policy, the rules cannot change midstream. The more stable and dependable Sherwood becomes, the more confident investors, entrepreneurs, and families will be in choosing it as their home.

## **The Cost of Doing Nothing**

If Sherwood does not define its story, dollars will continue flowing to neighboring cities. Younger families will choose communities with more amenities. Infrastructure will continue to be funded largely on the backs of homeowners instead of through a broader commercial base. Inaction is not neutral. It is a choice that leaves Sherwood standing still while others move forward.

## **The Shift Sherwood Needs to Make**

A rebrand must tell both sides of the story. Sherwood can remain a place where families enjoy quiet neighborhoods and also a place where businesses and visitors find activity. Not just a good place to sleep, but a good place to spend, build, and invest.

## Slogans Worth Considering

- Sherwood: Where Community Meets Opportunity
- Sherwood: Building Tomorrow, Living Today
- Sherwood: Connected, Growing, Thriving
- Sherwood: The Next Destination
- Sherwood: More Than Close, We're the Action

## Conclusion

Sherwood's future is not about choosing growth or no growth. It is about striking the right balance. If Sherwood clings only to quiet, it risks stagnation. If it chases growth recklessly, it risks losing its character. The path forward is strategic: preserve what makes Sherwood livable while opening the door to businesses and opportunities that secure its future. The current slogan says Sherwood is *"close to the action."* That may have been acceptable yesterday. Tomorrow, Sherwood should be telling a new story. Sherwood is not just near the action. Sherwood is the action.

## About the Author

Mike Willingham is a local business leader and the founder of 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 run deep in Sherwood. He attended Victory Baptist School during his elementary years and is a 1985 graduate of Sylvan Hills High School. Today, he continues to invest in Sherwood's future by working to provide citizens and leaders with practical, transparent insights into the challenges and opportunities ahead.

For more resources and community discussion, visit [sherwoodpolicyforum.com](http://sherwoodpolicyforum.com)