Westerville is the kind of suburb that still keeps much of its original character as a proud, freestanding small city. Like other outer-ring suburbs of Columbus, it experienced rapid growth only in the 1970s and later, as the I-270 Outerbelt encouraged development of the Central Ohio region. From 1970 to 1980 the city almost doubled in size. Growth slowed only with the new century.

Founded along the banks of Alum Creek in the early 1800s, Westerville long maintained a lively independence from the state capital 15 miles to the south. It was the home of Otterbein College (now University), founded in 1847, which always welcomed women faculty and students and admitted black students even before the Civil War. The city also was well known for anti-slavery activism, spiriting runaway slaves north up what is now Africa Road. Two famous composers, Benjamin Hanby and Daniel Emmett, who lived in 19th century Westerville, wrote songs sympathetic to abolition. To Emmett’s disgust, his song “Dixie” became the Confederacy’s rousing anthem.

A thumbnail history of this activist community would not be complete without noting that it also became the headquarters of the hugely influential Anti-Saloon League, which led to Prohibition. Even after Prohibition was abandoned in 1933, Westerville remained dry until the 1990s.

This heritage of civic involvement and concern lives today in the city’s high standard for its schools and services.

Westerville has adopted a pavement standard based on cost, ease of maintenance and the predictability of maintenance needs — a perpetual pavement that is renewable with regular maintenance.
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With its beautiful historic Uptown of its centrally located campus.

The city operates 41 parks and recre-
ation facilities, including several parks creating a green belt along Alum Creek.

To support its schools and services, the city has a small industrial sector and a growing health-related development along Cleveland Avenue’s “medical mile” anchored by Mount Carmel St. Ann’s Hospital. Another large local employer is JP Morgan Chase.

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The city has established a minimum standard for its pavements that is about 10 inches of asphalt over five inches of 304 crushed aggregate base.

Naturally, growth means new streets and roads and a bigger maintenance budget. Today Westerville maintains 152 miles of roadways, plus 25 miles of bike paths, including part of the U.S. 50 bike path across the United States and the Heart of Ohio bike path. According to City Engineer Susan Banbury, “Our standard for its schools and services. Westerville City Schools, the 10th largest school system in Ohio, operates 14 elementary schools, four middle schools and three acclaimed high schools. More than 80 percent of its schoolchildren go on to post-secondary education. Otterbein University educates some 3,000 undergraduate and graduate students on its centrally located campus.

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