



HANCOCK COUNTY, INDIANA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2023



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Hancock County Comprehensive Plan (the Plan) provides a vision for the County's future growth and development and includes goals and policies for achieving it. The Comprehensive Plan addresses the County's important issues from a high-level perspective to shape Hancock County into the community it hopes to be for the next 20 years and beyond. The following executive summary provides a synthesized version of the Comprehensive Plan. In developing this Plan, the County has identified the core issues that will be central to its future success. Each chapter of this Plan is focused on a specific topic and presents the County's overarching goals, objectives, and policies for that element. These policies are the basis for the recommended implementation strategies that are presented in each chapter. Appendix A details existing conditions and data used throughout the planning process.

This Plan also includes a detailed Economic Development Strategy and Thoroughfare Plan, which provide detailed analysis and recommendations regarding the future of Hancock County's economic and transportation systems. These documents can be read as components of the Future Hancock Comprehensive Plan as well as stand-alone documents.

Specifically, the Future Hancock Comprehensive Plan:

- Establishes a shared community Vision and Framework of strategic objectives that serve as foundations for the goals, objectives, policies, and recommended strategies.
- Identifies areas appropriate for development over the next 20 years and recommends the types and character of future land uses for specific areas.
- Makes recommendations for the preservation and enhancement of natural and agricultural resources.
- Identifies and prioritizes needed transportation and other infrastructure to serve future land uses. These priorities are described in the Hancock County Thoroughfare Plan.
- Presents forward-thinking and adaptable housing strategies.
- Charts a path into a new economic future that produces an exceptional environment for Hancock County residents and businesses in the Economic Development Strategy.
- Directly connects county policies and development choices to support a high quality of life for a diversity of household types.
- Provides detailed action items to implement plan recommendations.

FUTURE HANCOCK VISION AND FRAMEWORK

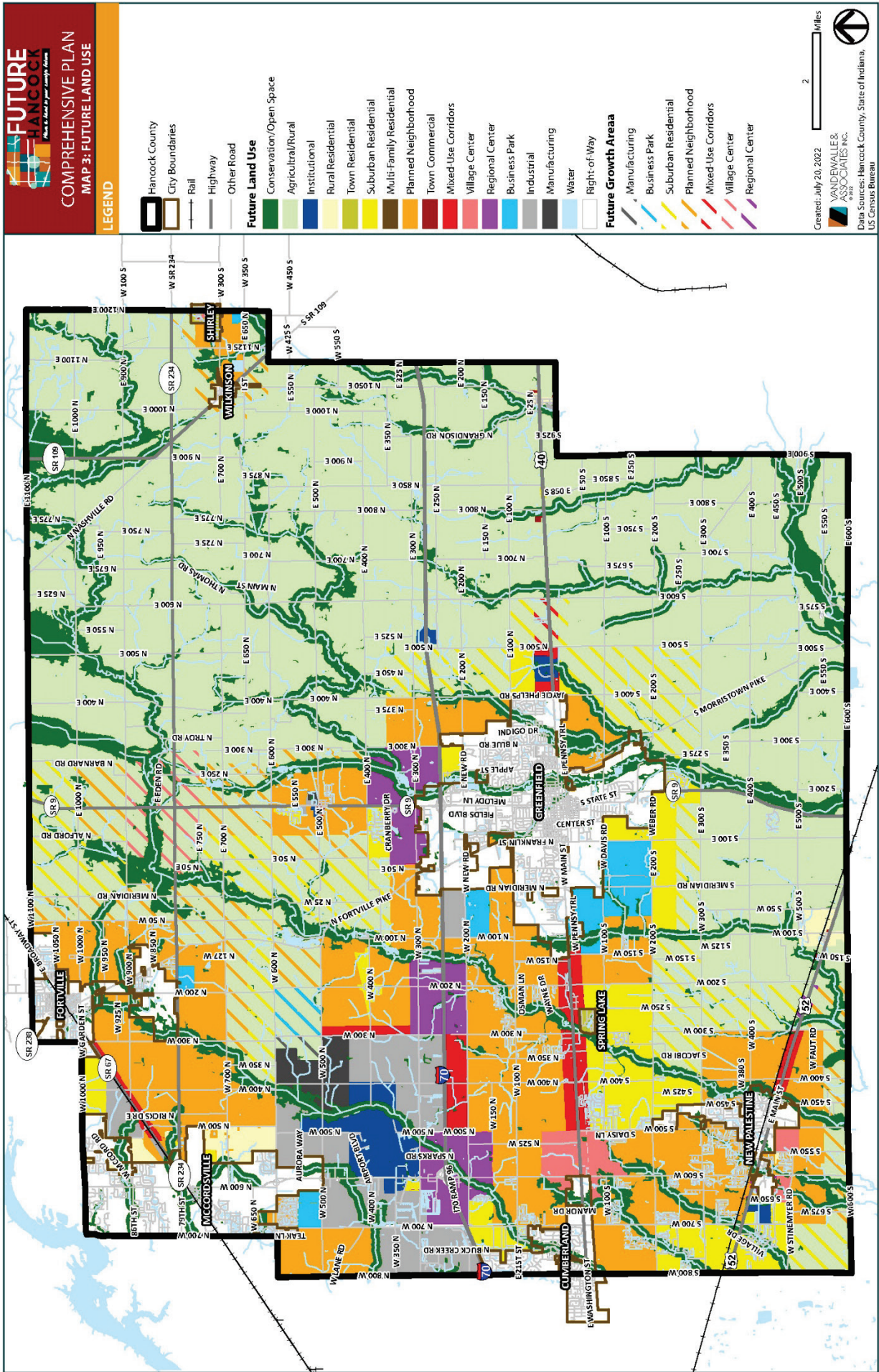
Based on the planning area's context, extensive public input, and contributions from County staff and officials, the County developed a vision statement that describes the type of community that Hancock County intends to be in 20 years. Hancock County's vision statement serves as a goal that guides and informs the direction of this Comprehensive Plan. Achieving this vision will require the County and the various communities within it to work together and cooperate in confronting and making progress on the issues and opportunities described in this Plan.

Hancock County 2042 Vision

Hancock County is Central Indiana's community of choice and recognized leader in proactively managing growth to balance and promote its agricultural resources with targeted economic opportunities.

Strengthened by their welcoming residents, Hancock County's vibrant communities, towns, and city offer a range of living and employment opportunities and are united by their outstanding public schools, quality development, quiet neighborhoods, rural landscape, high-value amenities, and excellent public infrastructure and services.





FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

Conservation/Open Space areas are primarily mapped in environmental sensitive areas such as along creeks and water bodies or areas of large-scale outdoor recreation. They support a diversity of plant and animal species with some also providing important natural functions such as drainage. Natural areas should be preserved and restored to a natural state with minimal development or disruption.

Agricultural/Rural areas are intended to remain largely rural and undeveloped with uses primarily focusing on agriculture and agriculture-related processing and support functions and outdoor recreation uses. Residential subdivisions and development unrelated to agriculture should be kept to a minimum and be located in areas where they will be least disruptive to near-by agricultural operations.

Institutional areas support the full range of public facilities, utilities, and private/non-profit institutional land uses. These typically are mapped as single parcels or as campuses and are located throughout the County in both developed and undeveloped areas. As such, water and sanitary services availability also varies, so uses without such services should be located on lots that are large enough to adequately accommodate on-site systems for an indefinite period. For more intensive uses and those with outdoor components, adequate screening and buffering should be provided from adjacent residential development and along collector and arterial roads.

Rural Residential areas are primarily mapped in existing low-density residential subdivisions serviced by on-site septic systems and wells. Future subdivisions of this type should be kept to a minimum and adjoin existing subdivisions in order to not break-up larger tracts in agricultural production. Further, conservation subdivision designs should be used in lieu of traditional subdivisions. These areas are unlikely to ever have water and sanitary services available, so lots should be large enough to adequately accommodate on-site systems for an indefinite period.

Town Residential areas are mapped in the Towns of Shirley and Spring Lake to reflect existing single-family neighborhoods where platted lots are as small as 7,000sf.

Suburban Residential areas primarily include single family homes on large lots in areas with water and sanitary sewer services.

Multi-Family Residential areas are intended to accommodate a variety of residential uses, including multi-family apartment complexes, condominiums, townhouses, and single and two-family residences, and mobile homes and mobile home parks, all served by public sanitary sewer and water systems. Use of Traditional Neighborhood design and concepts is strongly encouraged.

Planned Neighborhood areas are intended to include large, compact, master planned tracts with a wide range of integrated and compatible uses that provide a variety of housing types, basic services, supporting public facilities, and recreation/open spaces. Use of Traditional Neighborhood design and concepts is strongly encouraged.

Town Commercial areas are mapped in the Town of Shirley, in some of the unincorporated villages, and smaller parcels interspersed throughout County. These consist of a variety of commercial uses in various configurations with specific intensities determined by zoning. Use of this category outside of the Towns or villages should be limited.

Manufacturing areas are intended to support large-scale, employment-intensive uses primarily engaged in manufacturing with all supporting commercial and institutional uses limited to 10% of the area. Due to their associated lower job density and wages, warehousing and logistic uses are allowed only as accessories to a principal manufacturing use on the same site. Outdoor storage and operations should be screened along roads at the periphery, and deep, dense landscape buffers should be provided where Manufacturing areas are adjacent to residential uses.

Mixed-Use Corridors are located along primary transportation links, and the existing character of existing Corridors varies widely across the County including older commercial and housing uses developed when US 40 served as the National Road to small neighborhood commercial parcels in unincorporated villages to vacant land in areas expected to be developed in the future. Most areas currently do not have water and sanitary sewer services, but all are located in designated sewer service areas and are expected to have service extended to them over time. Accordingly, significant new development and redevelopment should be timed with the availability of such services. The Regional Profiles address the future character of each of these areas, but in general, strip-type development should be avoided with a focus more on nodes and internal connectivity and integration among different uses/developments. Appropriate densities, intensities, and mix of uses for a particular Corridor or site will be determined during the development review/zoning process.

Village Centers are located at major crossroads where water and sewer facilities are or will be available and supporting public facilities. These are intended to be compact and highly integrated master planned developments with a range of uses similar to Planned Neighborhoods with more dense and intensive uses. Traditional Neighborhood design principles should be employed to create unique and inviting mixed-use environments that are somewhat self-contained. Each Village Center should include usable public space connected by safe and inviting pedestrian spines that promote walkability to goods and services that meet daily needs of residents. The central core of each Village Center is expected to be more intensive with lower density areas, located closer to the periphery.

Regional Centers are compact, dense nodes offering a mix of uses. Although these areas are accessed primarily by cars, pedestrian movement within a node should be encouraged and accommodated. Critical densities are required to achieve the kind of animation and activity envisioned within these nodes. To accomplish this, uses should be mixed vertically and in progression of scale that allows the built form to transition from highest intensity in the middle to lower scale development that would be complimentary to its adjacent uses at the periphery. Considerations to design should include provisions for open space, Complete Street typologies to support walking and cycling, amenities that support the broader development, and institutional uses such as libraries.

Business Park primary uses include office campuses, research & development, and light industrial while allowing commercial & residential uses. All supporting uses should be limited to 25% of the total area. Any intensive commercial & industrial activities should be conducted within an enclosed building and should not include heavy industrial, production-based uses, or those that generate significant truck traffic. These are intended to be compact and highly integrated master planned developments that create a campus atmosphere with a focus on high quality building designs, materials, and landscaping. Each Business Park should include usable public space connected by safe & inviting pedestrian spines that promote walkability between primary employment & supporting uses.

Industrial areas are intended to support a full range of intensive commercial, manufacturing, and logistics uses with supporting commercial and residential uses. Supporting uses are limited to 25% of the total area. Outdoor storage and operations should be screened along roads at the periphery of an Industrial area, and deep, dense landscape buffers should be provided where Industrial areas abut or are across the street from residential uses. Master planned Industrial areas are preferred that include trails and pedestrian spines that connect to nearby supporting commercial and residential uses.

KEY STRATEGIES

The following is a brief summary of the key strategies in the Plan, organized by chapter. The County invites you to read the full Future Hancock Comprehensive Plan to explore each in greater detail and the context in which they were prepared. Additionally, please review the Hancock County Economic Development Strategy and Thoroughfare Plan for detailed recommendations for the future of transportation and economic development in the County.



Conservation, Agriculture, and Natural Resources

- Develop or Enhance County Regulations to Protect Natural Features and Improve the Natural Quality in Hancock County
- Foster a Compact Development Pattern to Protect Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Agricultural Resources
- Support and Encourage Agriculture Cultural Development and Advancement



Housing

- Provide a Wider Mix of Housing Types, Sizes, and Costs Throughout the County
- Promote Traditional Neighborhood Design Principles
- Implement High-Quality Design Standards



Land Use and Growth Management

- Coordinate with Hancock County Municipalities on Strategic Growth Areas
- Develop a County Impact Fee Policy
- Incorporate Public Safety and Public Facilities into the Development Review Process
- Create and Maintain a Future Right-of-Way and Public Facilities Map



Community Livability

- Expand Community Engagement Opportunities
- Develop Plans to Preserve and Enhance Community Character
- Develop a County Park and Open Space System
- Increase Public Health Awareness and Collaboration
- Continue to Coordinate with Hancock County School Districts on Future Planning Decisions



Intergovernmental Cooperation

- Pursue Intergovernmental Agreements with Hancock County Jurisdictions and Municipalities
- Develop and Expand Opportunities for Intergovernmental Cooperation and Communication
- Advance Coordination within Hancock County Government, Departments, and Elected Bodies
- Coordinate with Public Safety in the Development Process
- Coordinate with Private Utilities in the County
- Collaborate on and Take a Leadership Role in Regional Initiatives
- Contribute to Statewide Initiatives



Implementation (Policies)

- Provide education and training to staff and elected officials on incorporating Comprehensive Plan implementation into their decision making and policy review
- Indicate items or topics relevant to Comprehensive Plan implementation on public meeting agendas
- Incorporate Plan implementation into annual budget and capital improvement plans
- Post and display up to date Comprehensive Plan document and materials on the Hancock County website, in County offices, and other community locations, such as public libraries
- Develop an educational presentation on the Comprehensive Plan to share with the public and local stakeholder groups
- Require that any request for a Zoning Map Amendment be accompanied by an analysis of the amendment's consistency with the goals, objectives, and policies contained in Comprehensive Plan and the recommended Future Land Use
- Track and report progress on the implementation of the Plan to the Area Plan Commission via staff reports and presentations to the Area Plan Commission, Council, and County Commissioners at least twice a year. This should include a review of any previous Zoning Map Amendments that were deemed to be inconsistent with the goals, objectives, and policies contained in the Plan or varied from the recommend Future Land Use and the potential need to amend the text of the Plan and/or Future Land Use Map accordingly

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INTRODUCTION



CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

PLAN PURPOSE

This Hancock County Comprehensive Plan (the Plan) provides a vision for the county's future growth and development and includes goals and policies for achieving it. The Comprehensive Plan addresses the County's important issues from a high-level perspective to shape Hancock County into the community it hopes to be for the next 20 years and beyond. The Comprehensive Plan Vision and recommended strategies acknowledge how Hancock County's people, places, values, and aspirations are interconnected and interdependent. The Plan is intended to serve as a guiding document for County leaders, institutions, and community members to promote and foster public health, safety, and welfare for all residents with particular attention to quality of life and responsible growth. The Plan does this by directing community change, growth, and development to ensure continued and enhanced community prosperity in the future.

In developing this Plan, the County has identified the core issues that will be central to its future success. As one of the last areas in the greater Indianapolis region to experience urban and suburban growth and development, Hancock County is faced with mounting growth and development pressures, accelerating the potential for change within the community – both positively and negatively. These changes and the evolving identity of the county in the region raise important questions: How can the County adapt to address its current needs and opportunities for growth while ensuring a high quality of life for its current and future residents? Can the County preserve its small-town, rural familiarity and character in the face of changing market forces? Can the County find a collective identity when the County seems divided between growing urban and suburban areas to the west and rural agricultural lands to the east? As the County grows and evolves, how can it use its growth opportunities to amplify or create the qualities that residents value to continue to make Hancock County a desirable place to live and work? This Comprehensive Plan attempts to provide a guiding framework that will allow Hancock County to answer these questions and accomplish its goals for a better collective future.

A collaborative effort will be required between the County, its municipal jurisdictions, community partners, major institutions, business owners, and residents to answer these questions and advance the Plan's goals and recommendations.

Specifically, the Future Hancock Comprehensive Plan:

- Establishes a shared community Vision and Framework of strategic objectives that serve as foundations for the goals, objectives, policies, and recommended strategies.
- Identifies areas appropriate for development over the next 20 years and recommends the types and character of future land uses for specific areas.
- Makes recommendations for the preservation and enhancement of natural and agricultural resources.
- Identifies and prioritizes needed transportation and other infrastructure to serve future land uses. These priorities are described in the Hancock County Thoroughfare Plan.
- Presents forward-thinking and adaptable housing strategies.
- Charts a path into a new economic future that produces an exceptional environment for Hancock County residents and businesses in the Economic Development Strategy.
- Directly connects county policies and development choices to support a high quality of life for a diversity of household types.
- Provides detailed action items to implement plan recommendations.

PLANNING AREA

The Plan exclusively makes recommendations for the area for which the Hancock County Area Plan Commission is responsible for planning. This includes the entire unincorporated portion of the County plus the Towns of Shirley and Spring Lake. Although the Plan provides specific direction for the areas within the Plan Commission's jurisdiction and does not address areas within the boundaries of the County's municipalities, it aims to be consistent with the future growth and development of Hancock County's towns, the City of Greenfield, and the surrounding counties that are not a part of the planning area. Accordingly, it provides recommendations for continued cooperation with these other jurisdictions to achieve mutual goals.

PLAN ORGANIZATION

Each chapter of this Plan is focused on a specific topic and presents the County's overarching goals, objectives, and policies for that element. These policies are the basis for the recommended implementation strategies that are presented in each chapter. Chapter Nine: Implementation Action Plan summarizes the proposed strategies and timelines needed to help make this Plan become a reality. The recommendations of this Plan are informed by key issues and opportunities discovered through analysis of data and existing conditions, numerous public engagement efforts, and discussion and direction from County staff and the Future Hancock Steering Committee. Detailed data analysis and background information can be found in Appendix A: Data Inventory.

Indiana Planning Statutes

Indiana statute, Title 36, Article 7, as amended, empowers counties to plan. Local governments are further charged with the purpose of improving "the health, safety, convenience, and welfare of the citizens and to plan for the future development of the community to the end that:

- Highway systems (and street systems) be carefully planned
- New communities grow only with adequate public way, utility, health, educational, and recreational facilities
- The needs of agriculture, industry, and business be recognized in future growth
- Residential areas provide healthful surroundings for family life
- The growth of the community is commensurate with, and promotive of the efficient and economical use of public funds. (IC 36-7-4-201)

Public law further states that a county may establish planning and zoning entities to fulfill this purpose. (IC 36-7-4-201) Furthermore, the adoption of a comprehensive plan is established by legislative mandate as the basis for zoning and subdivision control ordinances. The Indiana statutes provide for and require the development and maintenance of a comprehensive plan by each plan commission. (IC 36-7-4-501)

IC 36-7-4-502 and 503 state the required and permissible contents of the plan. Required plan elements include:

- A statement of objectives for the future development of the jurisdiction
- A statement of policy for the land use development of the jurisdiction
- A statement of policy for the development of public ways, public places, public lands, public structures, and public utilities

The Future Hancock Comprehensive Plan was prepared in accordance with State of Indiana statutes.

ABOUT HANCOCK COUNTY

Established in 1828, Hancock County grew rapidly over the course of the 19th Century. This began first with the establishment of a railroad within the County and then with the discovery of natural gas in the region in the 1880s, prompting the growth of many small towns throughout the area. Established around these resources, which quickly attracted businesses and housing construction, the County developed into an important agricultural production area and established base industries in farming and glass production.

The population of Hancock County grew exponentially after World War II, when the automobile allowed for easier access to employment in nearby Indianapolis and Anderson, allowing commuters to enjoy the rural atmosphere of Hancock County while maintaining jobs in Indianapolis's urban core. Since that time, Hancock County has continued to grow into a county comprised of several towns and the City of Greenfield with a total population of 79,840 residents in 2020.

Located in central Indiana, Hancock County is positioned adjacent to and directly east of the City of Indianapolis and Marion County. It is bordered by Madison County to the north, Henry and Rush Counties to the east and southeast, and Shelby County to the south. Interstate 70 runs east and west through the center of the County, and several U.S. and state highways cross through Hancock County, providing it with multiple connections to other regional communities. Regionally, Hancock County is within the Indianapolis metropolitan area as designated by the U.S. Census Bureau. The County is a member of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Madison County MPO both of which manage transportation projects and funding within their respective jurisdictions.

Hancock County is one of the last metro area counties to experience the impacts of urban and suburban growth caused by the continued expansion and development of the greater Indianapolis region. Interstate 70 and state highways provide the County with excellent access to the entire greater Indianapolis metro area, as well as easy access to Fort Wayne and southern Michigan via I-69 and Cincinnati via I-74. As a result, the County is in close proximity to regional employment, shopping, cultural, and entertainment destinations, while much of the County itself remains undeveloped with large expanses of agricultural lands.

COUNTY PROFILE

Examining key demographic, housing, development, and economic indicators provides a baseline understanding of the county's existing context and its opportunities for the future. A detailed and complete set of all data for Hancock County in comparison to neighboring counties and the state is available in Appendix A: Data Inventory. The following are highlights of several key trends.

- As of 2020, the total population of Hancock County was 79,840. This represents an increase of 44% since 2000. Over the last decade, the County has continued to grow at a faster rate (14%) than the average growth rate for all counties in the region (9%).
- By the year 2045, Hancock County is projected to have a population of 103,431, or an increase of nearly 20,000 people from the Census 2020 population count.

Who lives in Hancock County?

79,840

2020 Hancock County
Population
+44% since 2000

89%

WHITE
Not Hispanic

11%

NON-WHITE
Hispanic

40.5

2019
Median
Age
2010 Median Age — **39 years**

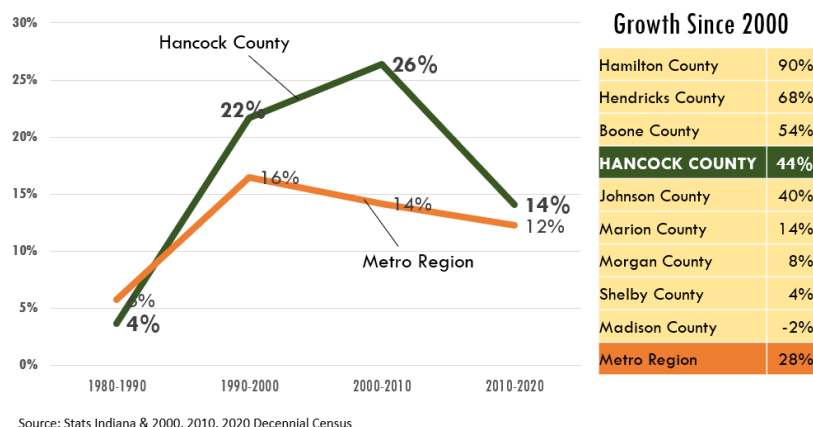
\$74,072

2019
Median HH
Income
2010 Median HH Income — **\$61K**

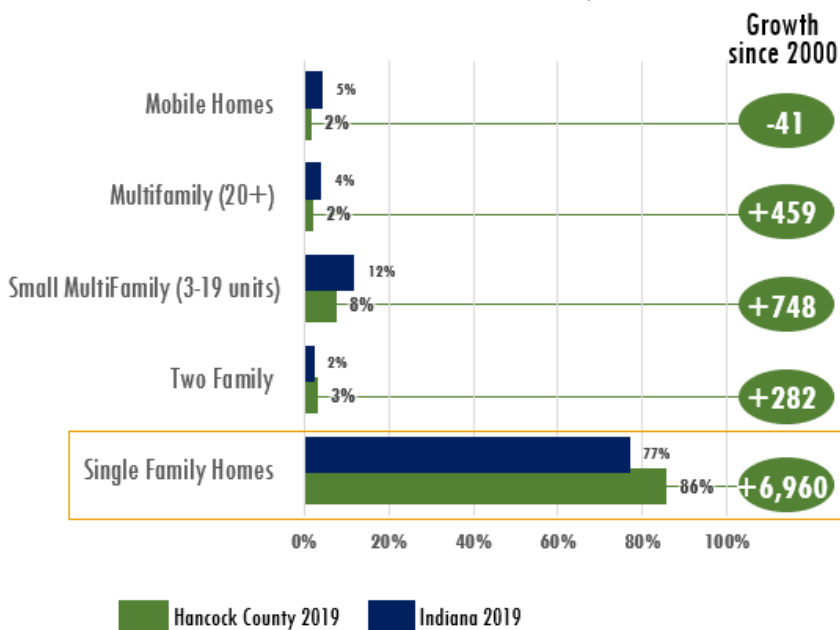
Source: 2020 Decennial Census; 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates

- Similar to regional and national trends, Hancock County's population is aging. Over the last two decades, the County's median age rose from 37.4 to 40.5. This also coincides with the County's decrease in both the percentage of the population younger than 18 years old and the average household size, which slightly decreased from 2.7 people per household to 2.6 in 2020.
- The median home value in Hancock County is \$179,300, higher than in most neighboring counties and the state average. The median monthly cost of housing for an owner-occupied household is relatively affordable at \$1,254, and though homeownership costs have increased across the board, Hancock County experienced the smallest percent increase compared to the rate of cost increases in every other county in the region and the state as a whole (a cost increase of 15% compared to an average of 23%).
- Only 35% of the people employed in Hancock County live within the County, and a total of 79% of all County residents work outside of Hancock County.

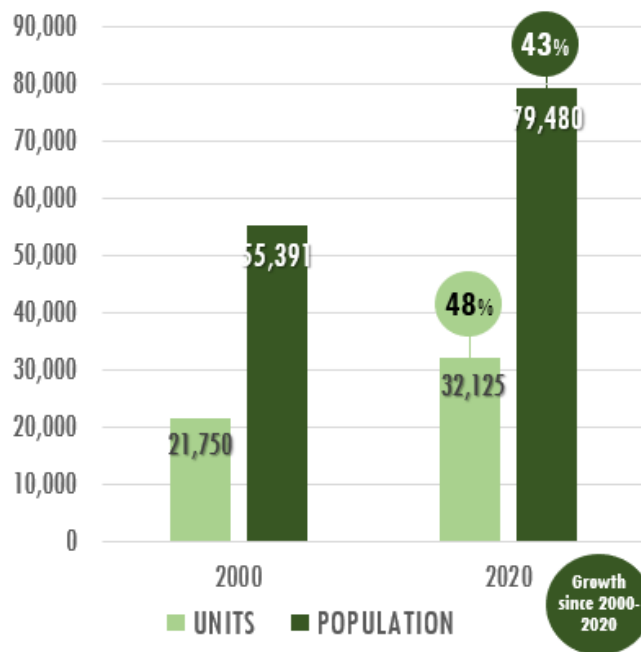
Metro Region Population Growth by Decade



DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSING BY TYPE, 2019



HANCOCK POP. & HOUSING 2020



ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

The planning process identified several key issues and opportunities that influence the County's ability to reach its desired vision for the future. The issues and opportunities identified for this Plan were developed based on data analysis and the observation of the County's existing context, as well as through conversations with the Future Hancock Steering Committee, County staff, elected officials, community stakeholders, and residents.

Regional Distinctions One of the clearest themes that evolved over the course of the planning process is the difference between eastern and western Hancock County. Where the west side of the county is experiencing rapid growth and commercial and industrial development, the eastern end remains primarily in agricultural production and rural nature. These dynamics have the potential to change the face of Hancock County and disrupt a unified county-wide identity.

Agricultural History & Future As previously described, Hancock County long has been an agricultural community, and its existing land use remains agricultural. A variety of changes over the last several decades, however, presents new dynamics in agriculture that undoubtedly will impact its future, not only in Hancock County but around the country. Some of these changes include increased land prices for agricultural land and development pressure are increasing the sale of farmland for development; increases in traffic on County roads bring new conflicts between cars, trucks, and even bicyclists with farm equipment, making essential farm activities more challenging; developments in agricultural technology require new investments by farmers; generational change in agricultural families is leading to turnover of family farms; farms are negatively impacted by labor shortages, particularly at planting and harvesting times; and climate change, extreme weather, and natural resource management can lead to particularly volatile growing seasons and impact the bottom line for farmers.

Rapid Industrial Development Over the last several years Hancock County has experienced a rapid increase in industrial development, particularly on the west side of the county. The County's regional position within the state and the Midwest, its excellent interstate accessibility, and availability of large sections of undeveloped land have made it an appealing place for development, most recently for logistics facilities and warehouses. Although the development has primarily occurred in land zoned industrial and in areas shown in the 2012 Hancock County Comprehensive Plan as industrial, some County residents are concerned about the impacts this development has on traffic volumes, road conditions, and land use conflicts as industrial buildings are constructed near homes. Many in the County desire a future plan that balances development, contains industrial development to specific areas of the County rather than allowing the development to sprawl county-wide, and provides high design and buffering standards to promote more harmonious land use.

Becoming a Live-Work County Hancock County's regional position means that residents have access to a variety of employment opportunities, including in Indianapolis and Hamilton County, within a relatively short drive. In recent years, Hancock County also has lost large employers, including Elanco, which provided high quality jobs to County residents. As a result of these and other factors, 65% of the employees working in the County live somewhere else. This is a missed opportunity for the County because it means that other communities are receiving the tax income from these workers and they also likely spend the majority of their discretionary income outside Hancock County. Many of Hancock County's largest employers, including Hancock Health, report the challenge in attracting new and

How does growth compare in the incorporated vs unincorporated areas of the County?

% OF POPULATION LIVING IN
UNINCORPORATED AREAS OF THE COUNTY
46% → 41%
2010 2020

% OF POPULATION LIVING IN
INCORPORATED AREAS OF THE COUNTY
54% → 59%
2010 2020

SINCE 2010 . . .

UNINCORPORATED AREAS
GREW BY 971 RESIDENTS OR
+3%

INCORPORATED CITY & TOWNS
GREW BY 8,867 RESIDENTS OR
+23%

SINCE 2012 . . .

+38% **COUNTYWIDE**
ASSESSED PROPERTY
VALUE*

+59% **INCORPORATED**
ASSESSED PROPERTY
VALUE*

Source: 2020 Decennial Census; Indiana Gateway

*Certified Net Assessed Value = assessed value of property minus any deductions, exemptions, and TIF impact

existing employees to live in the County, citing a lack of desirable housing stock and the absence of quality-of-life amenities, such as parks, shopping, dining, and entertainment, that they can find elsewhere in the region. This Plan and Economic Development Strategy provide a number of recommendations to establish Hancock as a place where people live and work with strategies to expand employment opportunities, diversify the housing stock while maintaining high design standards, and increasing amenities to serve existing and future residents.

Intergovernmental Coordination Hancock County is home to a number of vibrant and attractive municipal communities, including the Towns of New Palestine, Cumberland, McCordsville, Fortville, Shirley, and Wilkinson and the City of Greenfield. Most of Hancock County’s residents live within the boundaries of one of these incorporated municipalities (59%). This proportion of residents has increased since 2010 and the incorporated communities are increasing population at a faster rate than the unincorporated areas of the county. It is important for the County to recognize that Hancock County’s overall success is tied to the success of its municipalities and that strong towns will lead to a strong County. To ensure mutual success, the County and its incorporated municipalities must work together on a number of fronts and increase communication, cooperation, and collaboration, particularly as they relate to land use strategies, development, and quality of life.

CHAPTER STRUCTURE

The planning process identified several key issues and opportunities that influence the County’s ability to reach its desired vision for the future. The issues and opportunities identified for this Plan were developed based on data analysis and the observation of the County’s existing context, and through conversations with the Future Hancock Steering Committee, County staff, elected officials, community stakeholders, and residents.

The issues and opportunities described above are reflected in the goals, objectives, policies, and strategies found in subsequent chapters of this Plan. Generally, goals, objectives, policies, and strategies are defined below:

- **Goals** are broad, advisory statements that express general public priorities about how the County should approach development issues. Goals are based on key issues and opportunities that are affecting the County.
- **Objectives** more specifically identify future direction. By accomplishing an objective, the County moves closer to achieving its goals.
- **Policies** are rules or courses of action implemented to achieve specific objectives. County staff and officials should use policies on a day-to-day basis when making decisions.
- **Strategies** provide detailed information regarding how to implement objectives, policies, and programs.

ASSET ANALYSIS

Created through discussion with County staff, elected officials, and community stakeholders, the asset and opportunity analysis identify and summarize Hancock County’s existing initiatives and features that help define the County, and top opportunities for future growth and advancement of the County’s values and priorities. This analysis was grounded first in an understanding of the community as it exists today, including its demographics and key indicators. Asset and opportunity analyses were conducted at both the County and regional levels in order to take inventory of the local and regional contexts and opportunities for growth.

Summary of Key Assets:

- **Location in the region:** Hancock County, often referred to as the “last frontier” in the central Indiana region, is an attractive location for businesses that seek proximity to urban amenities but prefer the comfort of doing business in a small-town environment. The County’s appeal provides opportunities to influence the type of growth and investment it attracts.

- **Excellent access & infrastructure:** Traversed by I-70, US 40, US 50, US 36, State Road 9, SR 234, SR 109, and Mount Comfort Road, the County offers a well-connected transportation system with available land and supporting infrastructure. Hancock County is also home to the Indianapolis Regional Airport.
- **Well-connected, high-speed broadband:** Unlike any other county in the region, Hancock is one of the few rural counties in the state that has high-quality broadband service from corner to corner, which it can leverage for future economic development opportunities, including remote worker attraction.
- **Strong agricultural identity and prime farmland:** With 80% of the land used for agriculture, the County takes pride in its rural identity. Many opportunities exist to take advantage of the local food movement as an economic initiative to diversify its economy with agribusiness, food processing, and farm-to-consumer direct marketing and to grow its ag-tourism ecosystem.
- **Authentic downtowns & small-town community character:** Hancock County is unique in offering well-rounded lifestyle options from rural, suburban, to urban with small-town charm at the heart of the County's assets. This can be a strong marketing opportunity for talent attraction and retention.
- **High-quality school system:** Hancock County has four excellent PreK-12 school districts that increasingly have become a key factor when families look to relocate. Supporting a strong school system is key for continuing to draw families and new jobs.



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REGIONAL ASSETS

LEGEND

- Urbanized Area (incorporated areas)
- Employment Centers
- Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Area
- Cities (size based on population)
- Universities
- Ivy Tech Colleges
- Interstate (widths by ADT)
- IndyGo BRT Routes
- Existing Trails
- Potential Trails

HANCOCK COUNTY ASSETS

- 1 Expanding influence of Indianapolis region
- 2 Excellent Access to Major Interstates
- 3 Rural character and variety of lifestyle choices drive people to community
- 4 Access to robust labor force within 30 minutes

ASSETS

INDIANAPOLIS

- State Capital
- Hub of Anchor Institutions
- Sports Entertainment Cluster
- Primary Commuter Destination
- Within 1-day drive of majority of US population

CARMEL/FISHERS

- Corporate Headquarters Destination
- Life-Science Hub
- Entrepreneurship Hub

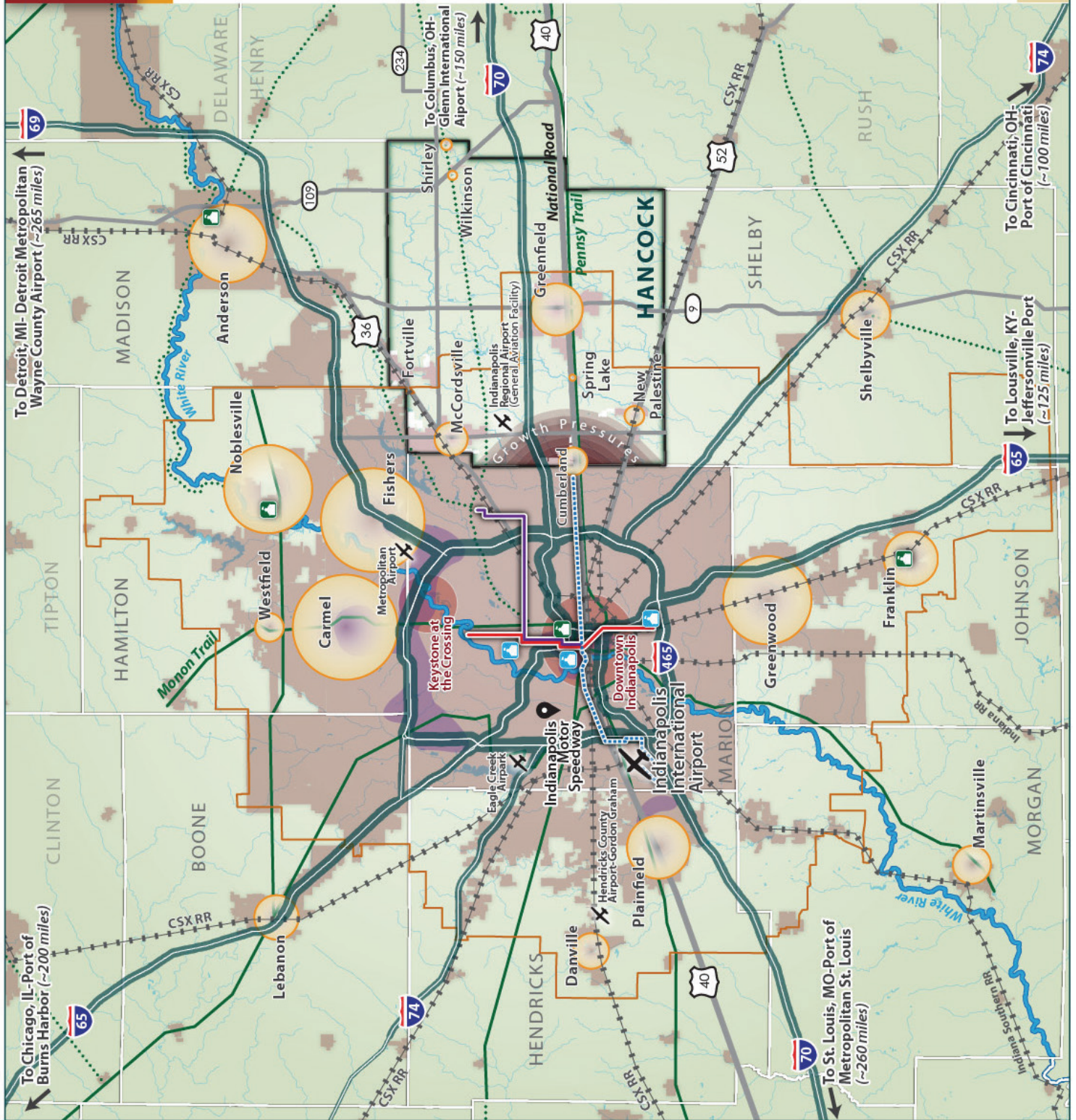
ANDERSON

- Manufacturing & Food Processing Hub

PLAINFIELD

- Logistics hub
- Proximity to Indianapolis International Airport & Nation's 2nd largest FedEx hub

Adopted January 3, 2023



FUTURE HANCOCK

How to learn in your community's future?

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COUNTYWIDE ASSETS

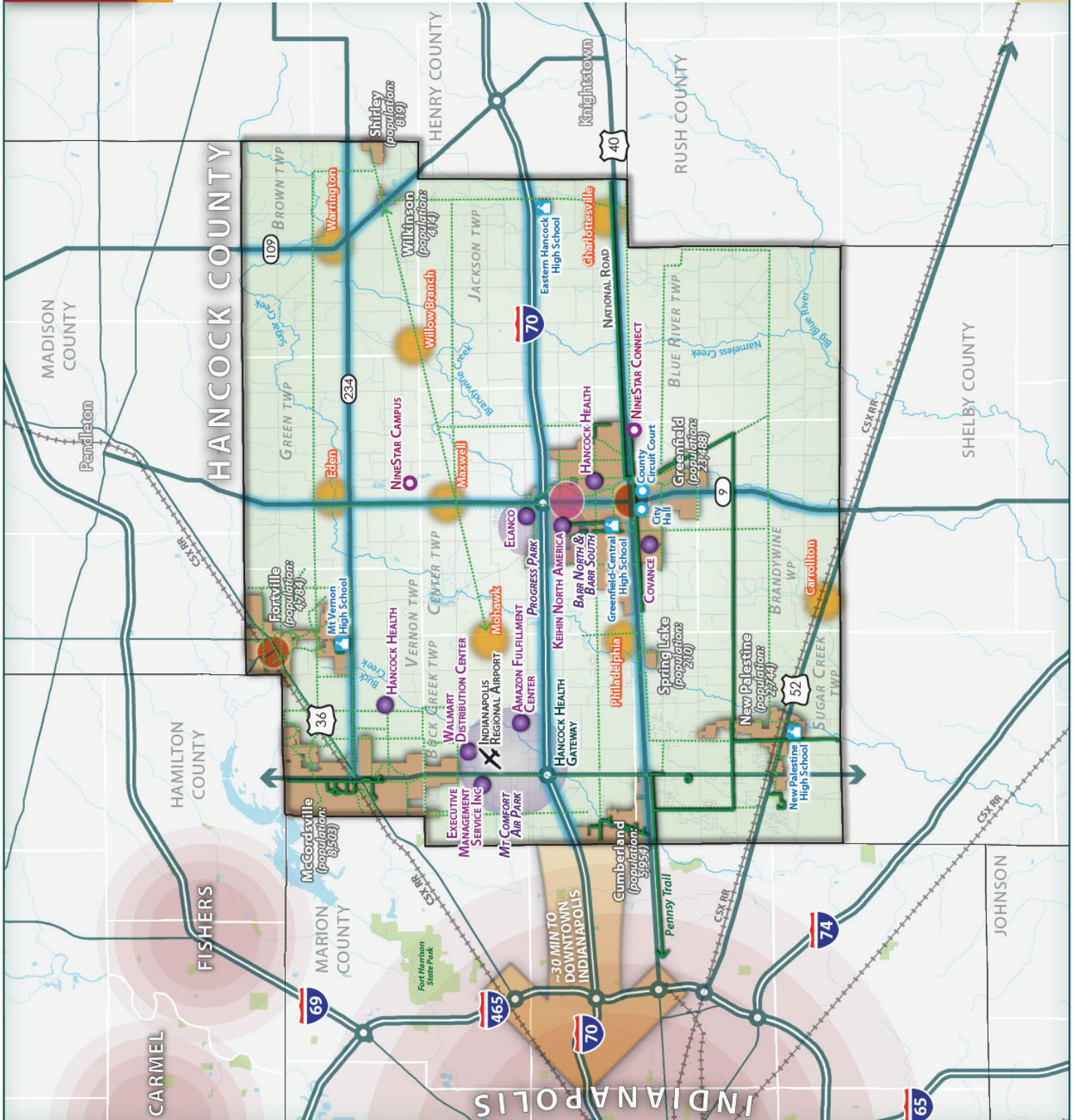
LEGEND

- Incorporated Cities/Towns
- Unincorporated Areas
- Historic Downtown
- Indiana Site Certified Locations
- Top Employers
- Retail/Commercial/Hospitality Center
- High Schools
- Interstates
- Interchanges
- Hancock County Boundary
- River/Streams
- Existing Trails & Routes
- Proposed Trails and Routes

ASSETS

- 1 Sense of community
- 2 Strong agricultural identity
- 3 Authentic downtowns & small town community character
- 4 High quality school system
- 5 Well-connected & served by high-speed broadband
- 6 Proximity to Indianapolis allows people to easily access jobs, shopping, & entertainment
- 7 Excellent transportation/interstate access; and availability of vacant land with supporting infrastructure

Adopted: January 3, 2023



VISION AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Based on the planning area’s context, extensive public input, and contributions from County staff and officials, the County developed a vision statement that describes the type of community that Hancock County intends to be in 20 years.

Hancock County 2042 Vision

Hancock County is Central Indiana’s community of choice and recognized leader in proactively managing growth to balance and promote its agricultural resources with targeted economic opportunities.

Strengthened by their welcoming residents, Hancock County’s vibrant communities, towns, and city offer a range of living and employment opportunities and are united by their outstanding public schools, quality development, quiet neighborhoods, rural landscape, high-value amenities, and excellent public infrastructure and services.

Hancock County’s vision statement serves as a goal that guides and informs the direction of this Comprehensive Plan. Achieving this vision will require the County and the various communities within it to work together and cooperate in confronting and making progress on the issues and opportunities described in this Plan.



Future Hancock Vision and Strategic Objectives

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The County also has identified several strategic objectives that are crucial to implementing the Vision and serve as the foundation for the development of the Comprehensive Plan, driving the many other goals, objectives, policies, and specific strategies described in this Plan.

Strategic Framework:

- A. **Enhance Intergovernmental Collaboration and Coordination to the Benefit of all County Residents.** Strong systems need to be put into place to ensure efficient and effective service delivery and consistent and mutually beneficial decision-making regarding infrastructure investments and policies such as:
- Working collaboratively with Greenfield and the Towns to identify future growth areas
 - Ensuring compatibility of land uses at jurisdictional boundaries
 - Ensuring adequate public safety facilities and staffing are available to serve new development
 - Cooperating and coordinating with utility providers
 - Understanding the fiscal impacts of development incentives on other units of government
 - Identifying sites for new and expanded public facilities, schools, and rights-of-way
 - Determining the type and location of new recreation facilities
- B. **Strengthen the Sense of Community and Identity while Diversifying Lifestyle Choices.** Emphasis should be placed on reinforcing a strong sense of community and sense of place while accommodating a greater diversity of living options by:
- Providing a greater range of public and private amenities including, open space, recreation, shopping, dining, and entertainment
 - Coordinating with the school districts to ensure their long-term quality and fiscal health as growth continues
 - Working with Greenfield and the Towns to offer a diversity of rural, suburban, and urban lifestyle options
 - Ensuring quality development with high design standards to create a recognizable sense of place
 - Protecting and building on Hancock's rural heritage by promoting compact expansion of developed areas and creating additional ag-related tourism and value-added processing opportunities
 - Identifying and promoting new and expanded businesses to stabilize and enhance the County's smaller communities that are appropriate to their rural nature
 - Developing a County brand identity as a community of choice in the Indy region to attract families, amenities, services, and employers
 - Developing a framework to be more intentional with types, intensity, and location of new development
- C. **Expand Workforce Opportunities to Make Hancock a Live-Work County.** Attract a wider variety of job opportunities that align with the skills of the resident workforce by:
- Establishing career pipeline programs to introduce junior and senior high school students to local employers and the career opportunities they offer
 - Creating programs to make new employment opportunities known to County residents and encourage and incentivize employers to hire local
 - Attracting and expanding employment opportunities that align with resident skills in areas such as healthcare, education, scientific and technical services, and agbioscience, among others
 - Providing local opportunities for job training, continuing education, and career advancement

- D. **Support a Balanced High-Quality Housing Mix.** Work with a variety of partners, including incorporated communities, to meet population- and job-driven housing demand by:
- Creating attainable housing types at a wide variety of price points to support the workforce of growing industries
 - Supporting an appropriate balance of denser rental and for-sale housing products that appeal to both younger and older households
 - Promoting denser housing developments in areas well-served by supporting infrastructure and near amenities
 - Identifying areas that are compatible with existing neighborhoods and are appropriately buffered from potentially conflicting land uses
 - Developing strategies to revitalize housing conditions in communities that are experiencing significant housing vacancy
- E. **Invest in a Robust and Efficient Transportation System Concurrent with Development.** Due to global and national shifts in supply chain management, inventory control, and logistics, and shifting population dynamics bringing personal vehicle traffic, it is imperative that the County maintain a highly functional, multi-faceted transportation system for goods and people by:
- Working with state, regional, and local partners to have a safe, efficient network of roads within the County to improve both freight and passenger mobility
 - Working with the state to make improvements to I-70 and interchanges and state roads
 - Working with IndyGo, Central Indiana Regional Transit Authority, and Hancock Area Rural Transit to create a strong multimodal transportation system that supports Hancock’s economic development objectives, which may include:
 - Workforce Connector services
 - Transit expansion
 - Innovative private partnerships to address employer demands
 - Planning for the increased electrification of all transportation modes by working with public and private entities to strategically locate charging stations
 - Implementing the Hancock County Trails Plan and developing policies for the addition of bike lanes and sidewalks with new development to improve walkability
 - Implementing a Complete Streets approach on new and expanded State, local, and County roads
 - Coordinating with the Indianapolis Regional Airport to avoid conflicting land uses in growth areas surrounding the Airport
- F. **Leverage Broadband Infrastructure to Advance Smart Communities and Attract Internet-Dependent Businesses.** Local governments and schools throughout the County should utilize its excellent high-speed broadband backbone infrastructure for:
- Beginning the deployment of new, integrated technologies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services to residents in areas such as:
 - Transportation
 - Public safety
 - Water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater utilities
 - Attracting and expanding businesses such as:
 - Data and call centers
 - Financial services
 - Web hosting
 - Logistics
 - Research and development

Complete Streets is a term used to describe an overall goal to improve accommodations on streets and highways for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users instead of only prioritizing personal motor vehicle and freight transportation modes. Learn more about Complete Streets in the Thoroughfare Plan.

- Attracting remote workers who desire a more rural lifestyle by exploring strategies such as:
 - Increasing successful recruitment through programs and incentives
 - Marketing the County's competitive and locational advantages

- G. **Prioritize Growth Areas and Investments in Supporting Infrastructure and Services.** Proactively plan to responsibly balance and manage growth impacts and avoid haphazard development in targeted areas of the County by:
- Implementing the Mt. Comfort Corridor Plan land use and infrastructure recommendations
 - Leveraging Hancock County's unique position in the region by using the Comprehensive Plan to intentionally and proactively identify the location and timing of other growth areas and those areas to remain mostly rural/agricultural
 - Identifying opportunities to stabilize employment and housing in areas that are stagnant in growth
 - Using the Thoroughfare Plan and Capital Improvement Plan to direct infrastructure investments to growth areas and away from areas where development is not expected or desired, including in rural areas where agriculture is practiced actively
 - Using the Economic Development Strategy and its implementing policies to direct new businesses into identified growth areas and utilize robust funding strategies for the supporting infrastructure and services
 - Evaluating the potential use of development impact fees, development agreements, and similar mechanisms to ensure that new development pays its fair share of infrastructure and service costs

The comprehensive planning process was developed and viewed through the lenses of the Vision and Strategic Framework in order to ensure that they were elevated throughout the process and plan document. Additionally, all Plan recommendations, policies, and strategies repeatedly were examined through these lenses to examine how each advanced or hindered the County's objectives related to quality of life and economic vitality. Accordingly, each of these overarching objectives is emphasized and integrated throughout this Plan.

Many of the goals and objectives within this Plan are deeply intertwined. Tackling one challenge at a time is not likely to be successful due to the interrelated nature of many of these topics. For example, focusing on a singular objective (such as quality building design) could unintentionally impact another (such as affordable housing). For this reason, it is critical for the County and its partners to think about all components of the Plan comprehensively. When taken in consideration together, individual objectives can be mutually reinforcing rather than working towards goals that inadvertently obstruct each other. Therefore, this Comprehensive Plan attempts to leverage these co-dependencies and achieve multiple objectives at the same time.



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OVERVIEW

One of the key components in developing the Comprehensive Plan was the public engagement process. For a comprehensive plan to be successful, it must address the concerns and vision of the community. A variety of public engagement strategies and mechanisms was utilized during the planning process to gather as much information and community input as possible from the stakeholders and residents of Hancock County. A brief overview of the public input process is provided below.

Project Steering Committee

At the outset of the project, a Steering Committee was established to oversee and guide the comprehensive plan update. This Committee was composed of 11 members who provided their input as representatives of the wider County community. The Steering Committee met regularly to ensure that the Plan was on target.

Future Hancock Steering Committee

The Steering Committee was comprised of 11 members that represent the County government, towns, schools, businesses, and other area stakeholders.

Steering Committee Members:

- **Mary Gible**, Future Hancock Steering Committee Co-chair, Community Foundation Representative
- **Jack Parker**, Future Hancock Steering Committee Co-chair, Schools Representative
- **Jason Faucett**, Shirley Representative
- **April Fisher**, Hancock EDC Representative
- **Jeannine Gray**, County Council Member
- **Pat Haley**, Spring Lake Representative
- **Steve Long**, Hancock Regional Health Representative
- **Peter Uberto**, Airport Representative
- **Bill Spalding**, County Commissioner
- **Mike Burrow**, NineStar Connect Representative

Future Hancock Website & Future Hancock Email Listserv

As part of the project kick-off, a branded website was launched to house information about the Future Hancock planning process and was updated regularly with new information including public input event details and online questionnaires. In combination with the website, a Future Hancock email listserv of more than 500 recipients was created to make residents aware of the various engagement opportunities and was updated regularly throughout the process.

Pop-up Events & Small Town & Unincorporated Community Tours

At the beginning of the process, the project team had a Future Hancock booth at two highly attended community festivals, Riley Festival and Pumpkins and Peddlers Festival, where they provided information about the process, answered questions, and encouraged residents to sign up for email updates. The project team also held a multi-day tour across the County that covered more than 14 communities where residents were invited to come learn about the process and “chat with a planner.” The primary goal of these initial outreach efforts was to raise awareness and visibility of the Future Hancock planning process and encourage residents to engage in the process.

- Connected with **160+** people through project website, pop-up events, and small town tours
- Collected **300+** comments

- Engaged with **75+** stakeholders through Targeted Focus Groups

- **90+** in-person participants
- **70+** virtual workshop participants
- Collected **>1,000** comments

Key Stakeholder Interviews

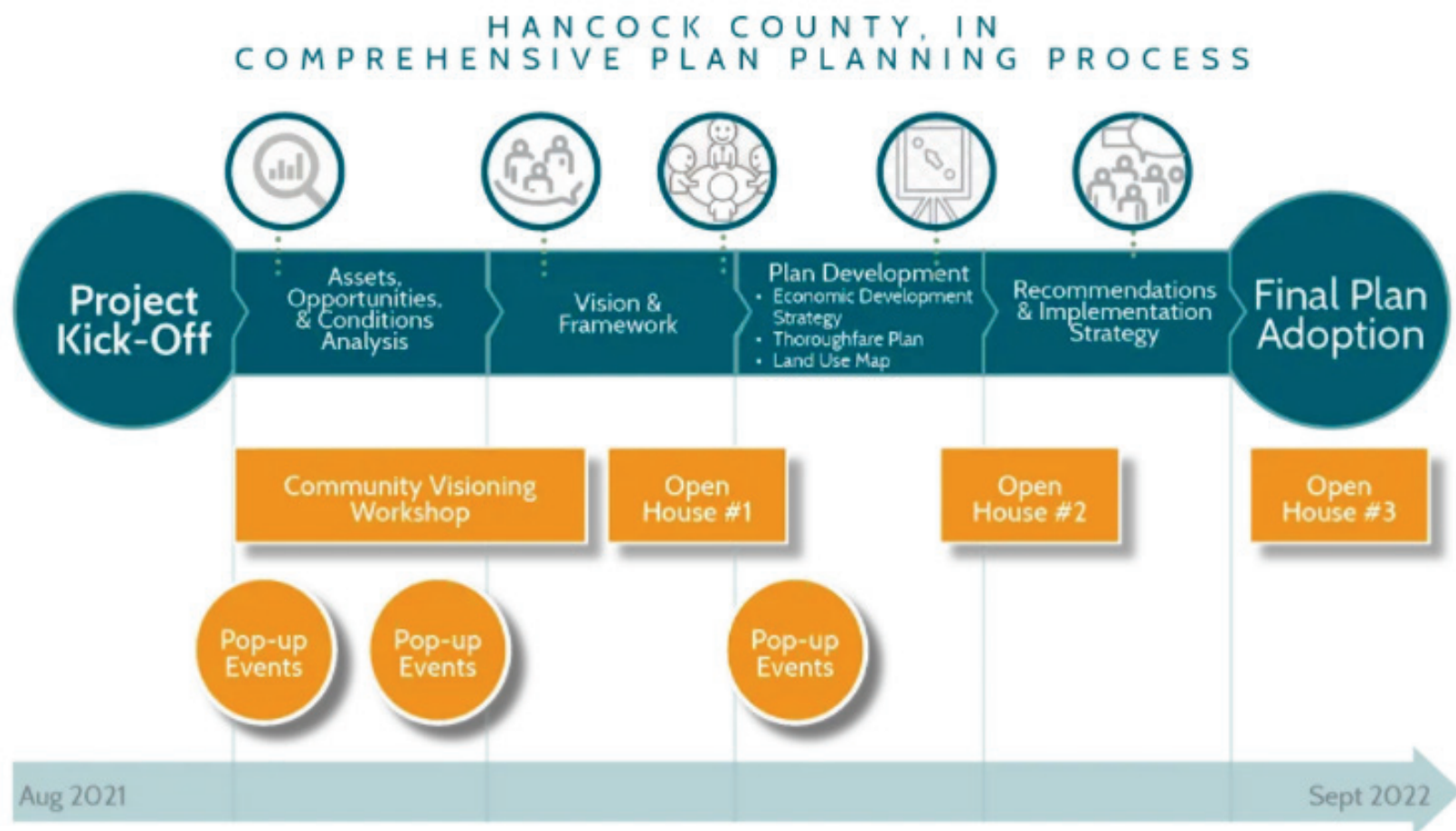
Key stakeholder groups were identified and invited to personal interviews. This allowed these groups to provide focused, detailed input about their concerns and wishes for the future of Hancock County. Among these groups were school district officials, public safety providers, tourism and chambers, civic and non-profit groups, farmers, government officials, and many others.

Visioning Workshop

Early in the development of the new plan, a public workshop was held at Mt. Vernon Community School with approximately 100 residents in attendance. This workshop was designed to facilitate discussion about the goals and priorities for the County through a series of activities. Following the in-person workshop, the project team launched the Virtual Workshop, which followed the same format and series of activities as the in-person workshop. This information was used to build the Vision and Framework that helped guide the development of the plan elements.

Open Houses

Three open houses were held at key milestones throughout the process, each with a specific purpose. The first open house gathered feedback on the Vision and Framework. The second open house previewed the draft Future Land Use Plan, Thoroughfare Plan, and Economic Development Strategy. The third open house was conducted in combination with the Plan Commission Public Hearing to view the final Comprehensive Plan recommendations and implementation strategy.





2

CONSERVATION, AGRICULTURE, AND NATURAL RESOURCES



CHAPTER 2: CONSERVATION, AGRICULTURE, AND NATURAL RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

Hancock County has a strong agricultural heritage and remains one of the last agricultural strongholds in the immediate Indianapolis metro area. Change to the agricultural industry and to the future of agriculture in Hancock County is one of the key issues identified in the development of this Plan and for Hancock County in the future. Hancock County is not only home to rich farmland that could be impacted by future land use and development decisions, but its open spaces and natural resources, including creeks, wooded areas, and open space areas, also could be diminished without careful conservation and preservation strategies.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND STRATEGIES

This chapter is intended to provide the goals, objectives, and policies related to both agricultural and natural resource preservation, protection, and improvement. It also details a set of key strategies to help advance or achieve them. Background information, data, and existing plans related to agricultural and natural resources can be found in Appendix A.

Goals

1. Protect the health, integrity, sustainability, and quality of natural resources and ecological systems for the benefit of present and future generations.
2. Work with county municipalities and other partners to preserve and protect agricultural uses from inefficient development in mutually agreed upon areas.

Objectives

1. Protect and preserve environmentally sensitive areas, isolated natural areas, and Environmental Corridors from new development and adverse development impacts.
2. Advance the County's role in becoming more sustainable, energy-conscious, and climate-resilient through regional partnerships and development of local policies and plans.
3. Promote compact development patterns within Sewer Service Areas.
4. Discourage land uses, land divisions, and activities that may conflict with agricultural uses or adversely affect farm investments in long-term farming areas outside of the County's long-term growth areas.
5. Prioritize the preservation of productive agricultural soils and environmentally sensitive areas in the County's planning area as a factor in decisions on future development.
6. Provide open space within two miles of all residents, including green space, parks, and other publicly owned and accessible open lands.



Policies

1. Protect the County's floodways and floodplains from development impacts.
2. Appropriately manage riparian areas around the County's drainageways through best management practices and in collaboration with regional environmental education and implementation partners.
3. Manage and regulate wellhead protection within the County.
4. Monitor and manage Hancock County's aquifers and water supply to ensure fresh water supply for Hancock County residents, businesses, and agriculture.
5. Promote wetland protection through coordinated efforts throughout Hancock County government, including the Surveyor's office.
6. Promote best practices in agricultural conservation, including cover crops and other runoff reduction techniques.
7. Continue education on drainage maintenance and development impacts.
8. Monitor and protect wildlife habitat.
9. Promote alternative transportation to reduce congestion and improve air quality, including by establishing bicycle and pedestrian paths and trails and transit.
10. Plan for the increased electrification of all transportation modes by working with public and private entities and integrating future technologies into the County transportation system.
11. Implement the Hancock County policy for the development of renewable energy installations, including solar and wind, particularly in agricultural areas.
12. Use the County's subdivision review, rezoning control, and Future Right of Way and Public Facilities Map to prevent premature rural development and work with County communities to encourage an orderly, efficient development pattern that minimizes conflicts between urban and rural uses. Specifically, avoid 5-10 acre carve-out developments and promote systematic growth through large plot neighborhood and development plans.
13. Support Smart Growth development patterns and control and limit the creation of scattered rural home sites and subdivisions that are not served by water and sanitary sewer utilities.
14. Support cluster subdivision design for rural residential development. Small subdivisions in rural areas of the county should be designed carefully to incorporate natural features and minimize their disruption to farming activities. Cluster subdivision design allows lots to be arranged in small clusters, providing sizable pieces of remaining land that can be preserved or farmed as desired.



Smart Growth is a planning and land use strategy that avoids urban sprawl by promoting compact, mixed use development patterns, creating more environmentally and financially sustainable development. Smart Growth can be characterized by 10 foundational principles:

1. Implement mixed-land uses.
2. Take advantage of compact building design.
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
4. Create walkable neighborhoods.
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.
7. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities.
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices.
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective.
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

These principles are integrated throughout the Future Hancock Comprehensive Plan. Learn more about the economic impact of Smart Growth vs. Urban Sprawl in Chapter Three: Housing.

Source: US Environmental Protection Agency, 2022

STRATEGIES

Develop or Enhance County Regulations to Protect Natural Features and Improve the Natural Quality in Hancock County

As one of the last counties in the metro-Indianapolis area to develop, Hancock County has a great asset in its open spaces, farmland, and natural resources. Therefore, carefully developed regulations and plans need to be developed in partnership with agricultural stakeholders and residents. The following are recommended actions to preserve Hancock County's natural quality:

- Consider developing a county-wide Climate and Sustainability Action Plan, potentially in partnership with Hancock County municipalities. This Plan would set ambitious goals and determine the County's priorities related to environmental protection and climate resiliency, including increasing renewable energy production, striving to become carbon-neutral, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to improve energy efficiency and consumption, to enhance surface or ground water quality, etc. Hancock County should use these priorities and goals to establish a framework for future decision making and planning efforts.
- Define Environmental Corridors and incorporate them into the County Zoning Ordinance to establish development standards that protect rivers, streams, riparian areas, and wildlife habitat.
- Add Wellhead protection measures to the County Zoning Ordinance, including the identification of overlay district boundaries and development practices that establish standards for appropriate land use and development practices within designated zones near water supply wells.
- Use the County's Zoning, Subdivision, and County Future Infrastructure and Public Facilities Map (see Land Use and Growth Management Chapter) to protect waterways, wetlands, surface water, aquifers, and floodplain areas.
- Require natural resource features to be depicted on all site plans and preliminary plats in order to facilitate preservation of natural resources. These should include wetlands, steep slopes, floodplains, drainageways, and wooded areas. Once identified, establish maximum clearance or removal standards for these features and require onsite mitigation where those standards cannot be met.
- Develop sustainable infrastructure standards and preferred strategies so that developers understand what are acceptable for meeting water quality and quantity control objectives.
- Implement the Hancock County Trails Plan and develop policies for the addition of bike lanes and sidewalks with new development to improve walkability.
- Work with municipal and utility partners to map impacts of the increased electrification of all transportation modes on the transportation system, including strategically locating charging stations.
- Explore opportunities to promote and encourage the construction of green buildings and consider adding green or sustainable standards into County codes and ordinances, including incorporation of LEED or LEED-equivalent criteria.
- Create waste-reduction programs for construction and demolition of waste in partnership with Recycle Hancock County and the Hancock County Solid Waste District.
- Codify best management practices to Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Practices for protection and continued improvement of its water quality.

Climate and Sustainability Action Plan

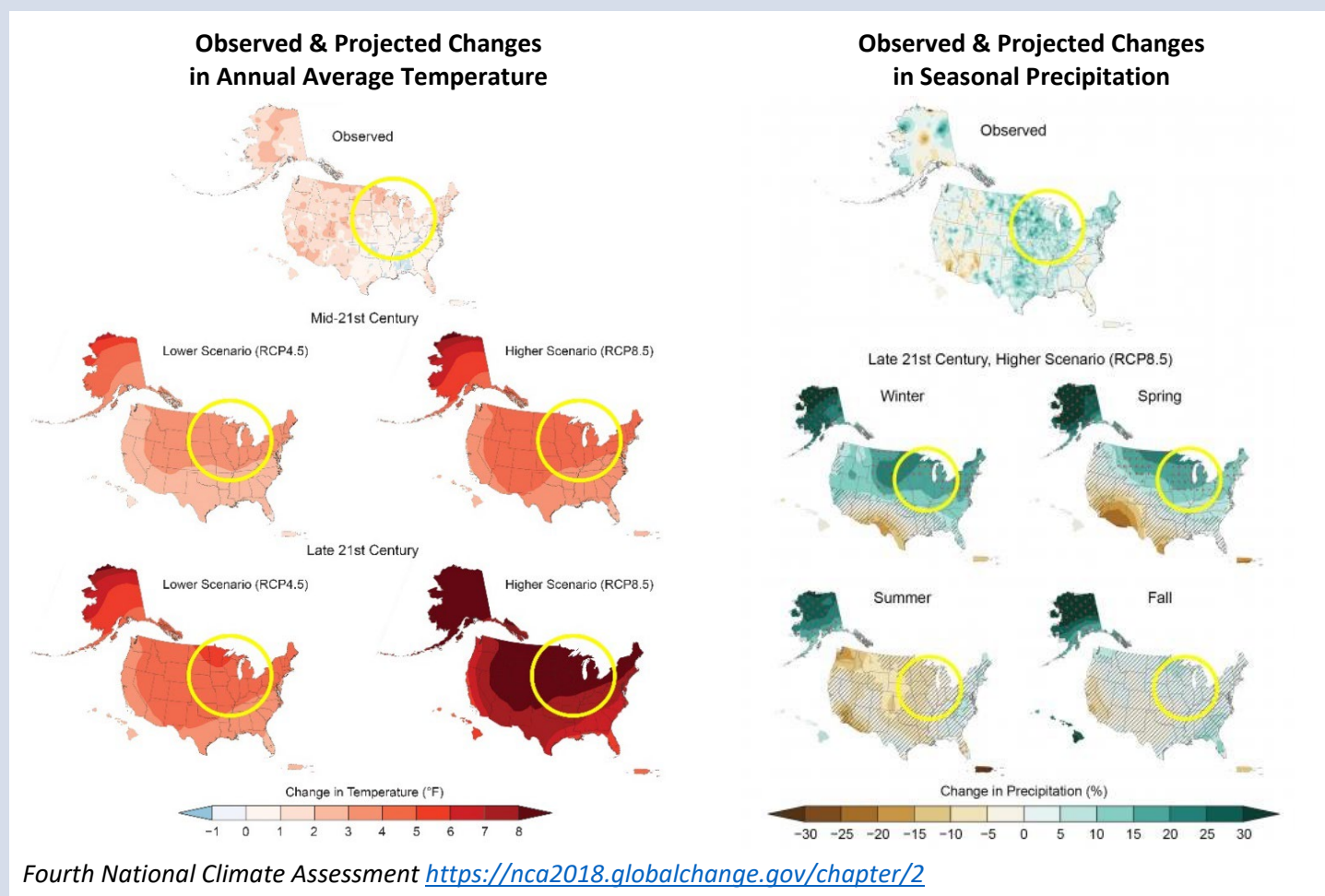
The purpose of a Climate Action Plan is to set ambitious carbon reduction and renewable energy goals for the community and develop an action plan for how to accomplish them. This process helps chart a course for how the County, its residents, public sector partners, and the private sector can work together to make these goals a reality. Key components of a Renewable Energy Action Plan include.

- Setting carbon reduction and renewable energy goals for the next 10 years.
- Developing strategies on how the community can advance and meet these goals.
- Establishing partnerships with overlapping jurisdictions, local businesses and community organizations, utility providers, and others.
- Identifying funding sources for implementation.
- Creating the framework for future programs, policies, and decision making.

Agriculture and Sustainability

The effects of climate change in the coming decades will profoundly interrupt the way we live and farm in the United States. It is projected that warming temperatures and changing rainfall patterns will drive agriculture and temperate climates northward, while sea level rise consumes coastlines and the entire country experiences more extreme weather events.

Projections for farm productivity suggest that growing food will become difficult across large parts of the country, including in the heart of the High Plains' \$35 billion agricultural industry. Current climate change models indicate that the environmental suitability for crop production in Hancock County and most of Indiana will allow the regional agricultural industry to increase its yields by as much as 6.5%. At the same time, the County will experience significantly more heat and humidity throughout the year.



To ensure that the quality of life and economy of Hancock County are resilient to the effects of climate change, the County should pursue and encourage sustainability initiatives. A sustainable community is focused not only on protecting natural resources and ecological systems, but also on ensuring a high quality of life for all residents, now and in the future. Promoting a compact development pattern will provide many benefits to the County's communities, especially by protecting environmentally sensitive areas and productive agricultural resources from the impacts of development.

Source: *New Climate Maps Show a Transformed United States*. Abraham Lustgarten, et. all. and ProPublica, Inc.

Stormwater Management Best Practices

Maximize permeable surface areas. This technique focuses on reducing the impervious footprint of development sites and breaking up large paved areas with permeable surfaces and/or natural ground cover and vegetation. The impacts of stormwater runoff are managed far more effectively by natural systems such as wetlands and forest ecosystems than by pervious ground cover that has been altered by construction or other human impacts (e.g., front lawns). This approach also includes the incorporation of narrower street widths into neighborhoods where possible and the development of smaller lots, which are associated typically with less impervious surface per lot (e.g., less street frontage needed per lot).

Incorporate progressive construction site erosion control practices. Construction sites generate a significant amount of sediment run-off if not managed properly. Progressive erosion control systems should be components of new development sites. These techniques include providing silt fencing surrounding the construction project, minimizing the amount of land area that is disturbed throughout the construction process, and quickly reestablishing displaced vegetation.

Include infiltration and retention areas. Where stormwater basins are necessary to effectively manage run-off, such basins and associated conveyance routes should be integrated carefully into the surrounding development pattern and should incorporate native/natural edge vegetation whenever possible. Other possible infiltration techniques include:

- **Rain gardens.** A rain garden is a landscaping feature that is designed, located, and installed for the purposes of capturing stormwater runoff and allowing it to infiltrate back into the ground. The County may consider codifying rain garden design standards and allowing the construction of rain gardens to apply toward meeting County landscaping requirements.
- **Rain barrels.** A rain barrel collects and stores the water that drains from rooftops to prevent it from running off-site. A hose can be connected to the barrel and the collected rain can be used to water the lawn or garden, or to wash the car. Barrels also can be set to slowly empty themselves, allowing the water to filter back into the ground. The County may actively promote this option and provide residents with information about how and where they can purchase their own rain barrels.
- **Permeable pavers.** Pavement and/or concrete is typically impervious, forcing water away from it. Permeable pavers aim to change that by allowing water to seep through the pavement itself or providing gaps for the water to seep into. Both methods allow stormwater to be controlled at the source, while helping to reduce runoff and increase the filtering of the water.
- **Vegetated buffer strips and berms.** Locating areas of vegetation either alone or in combination with landscaping berms around properties helps restrict the off-site flow of water. Also, the addition of organic material to soil aids in the decomposition and filtration of pollutants.
- **Retention ponds.** Retention ponds aim to filter out sediment and other solids from stormwater, while also retaining runoff on-site. These ponds usually have some water in them most of the time to allow materials in the water to separate out and sink to the bottom. These typically are used in larger-scale developments or subdivisions.
- **Bioswales.** A bioswale is a small-scale combination of a detention pond and vegetate buffer stip. It is typically designed to be sloped, so that it both filters the water with through organic materials that make up the buffer, and contains the water during rain events. Bioswales remove pollutants, silt, and other debris that might be in the water, while also mitigating peak stormwater flow.

Foster a Compact Development Pattern to Protect Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Agricultural Resources

Careful implementation of land use policies and controlling the location, intensity and quality of development are some of the most important actions the County can take to preserve environmentally sensitive areas. Preventing sprawl, limiting spot developments in rural areas, and encouraging development in sewered areas align with the compact growth goals listed in Chapter Four: Land Use and Growth Management and will significantly protect Hancock County's open lands and agricultural resources. This Plan includes the following strategies and approaches to support the County's vision and values through a compact development pattern within its planning area:

- Work with Hancock County municipalities intentionally and proactively to identify the location and timing of future growth areas and those areas that will remain mostly rural/agricultural and to encourage compact development within these growth areas, requiring new development to be served by water and sanitary sewer utilities.
- Within the municipalities and their future growth areas, encourage compact new development and infill and redevelopment to preserve lands outside of the growth areas for agriculture, natural resources, or open space.
- Discourage the creation of scattered homes sites and subdivisions not served by public water and sanitary sewer within the County's planning area.
- Use public acquisition, dedication, conservation easements, and the Official Map to preserve critical natural resource areas, particularly in critical watershed areas and adjacent to existing natural areas, and Environmental Corridors.

Support and Encourage Agriculture Cultural Development and Advancement

Hancock County's agricultural heritage and its preservation and promotion are not just about the land, but about the people who make up Hancock County and its agricultural community. The following recommendations help to strengthen partnerships for the advancement of the agriculture community and its culture in Hancock County:

- Work with agricultural and environmental partners, including the County Sewer Water Conservation District, to promote and expand the use of water conservation and protection farming best practices, including cover crops.
- Collaborate with partner organizations, including Hancock County Purdue Extension, Farm Bureau, 4-H, and Future Farmers of America (FAA) chapters, to encourage positive interaction and improved understanding between the agricultural community and Hancock residents and businesses.
- Facilitate cooperation between the farming community and non-farming residents, particularly in Hancock County's transportation system by promoting safe driving, widening roads to support farm implement travel, and reduce points of conflicts between farm equipment, trucks, and personal vehicles, including through signage.
- Continue to support agricultural education in Hancock County schools, including through its 4-H and FAA chapters, and look for opportunities to expand the pipeline between students and the agricultural and ag-science community.

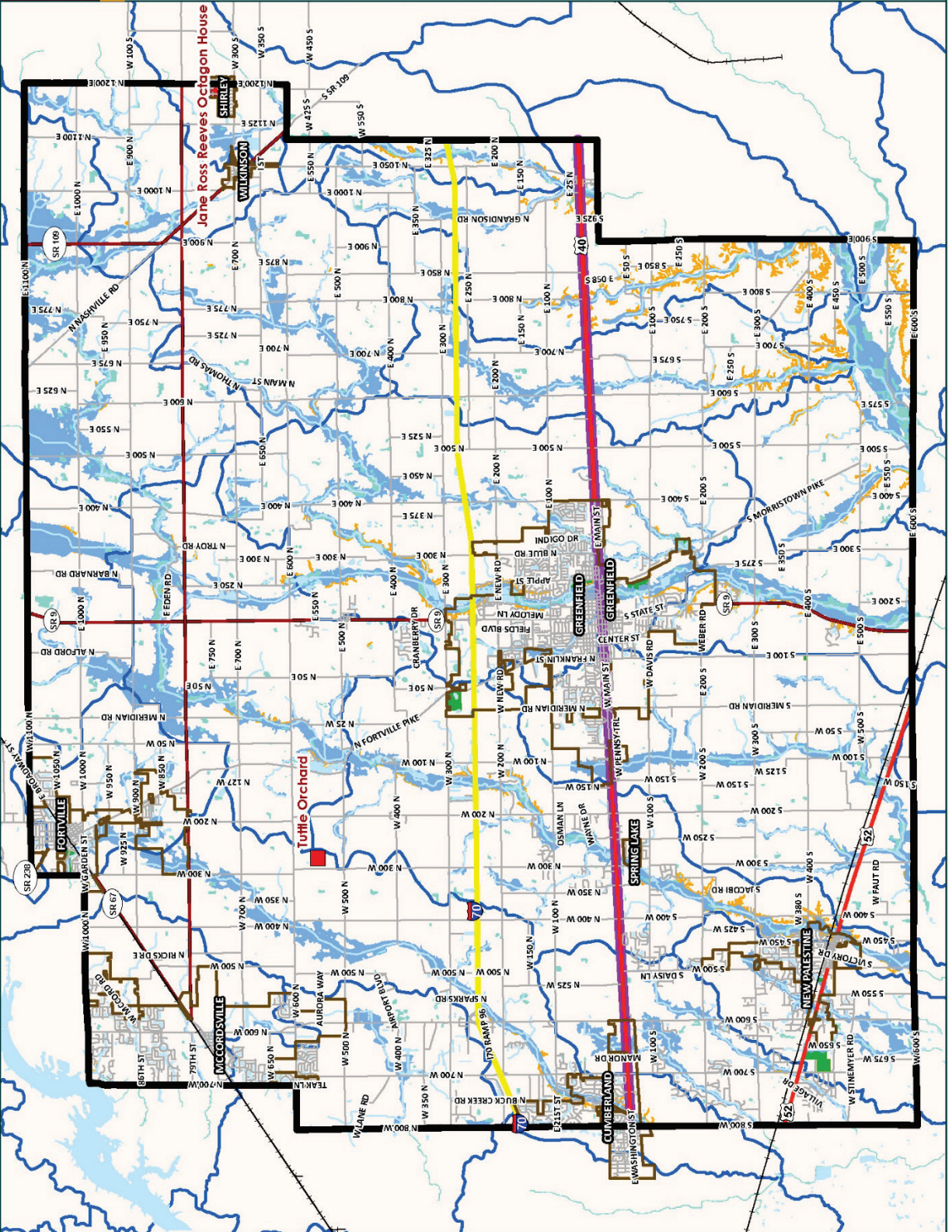


- Capitalize on Hancock’s proximity to major population centers, interstate highways, and rich agricultural land to encourage clustering of agricultural processing industries in the County. Hancock County is an attractive location for industries that process agricultural products for fuel, food, and other products (e.g., bio-products and pharmaceuticals). The County can accomplish this by implementing its Economic Development Strategy and by allowing agricultural businesses in its Agricultural future land use category.
- Support connecting local food and agriculture producers with consumers to ensure the economic viability of future agricultural operations. The County should work with its local and regional economic development partners to establish food- and agriculture-based economic development strategies to make Hancock County a destination for local food and tourism. These efforts could include promoting the following:
 - Farmer’s Markets: Local farmers markets provide a direct means for farmers and other value-add food producers and makers to sell their products to the consumer.
 - Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs: A CSA program allows farmers to sell shares of their products directly to consumers throughout the growing season.
 - Restaurants: The County should work with partners to build programs that expand the opportunity for restaurants, bakeries, and cafes to purchase, serve, and generally promote locally grown foods by reducing barriers between restaurants, food providers, and agricultural growers.
 - Schools and Institutions: Since it is necessary for schools and institutions like hospitals consistently to purchase large quantities of food, local food producers can offer fresh, in-season, healthful products that promote the health of students and patients.
 - Value-Add Food Producers: The County has the opportunity to pursue economic development strategies related to the expansion of value-add food production in Hancock County, including finding new ways to showcase, market, and sell local food-products to consumers and tourists.
- Link natural resource preservation with recreational opportunities and tourism. Natural resource preservation areas can serve as important initial components of a new County park and recreation system, providing opportunities for outdoor education, relaxation, and exercise.
- Expand community gardens in the County by identifying public lands that may be appropriate sites for community gardens, addressing community gardens in the County Zoning Ordinance, and continuing to partner with local municipalities, groups, and organizations on their efforts to develop new community gardens.

Hancock County Agriculture Partners

- Indiana Farm Bureau
- Purdue Extension
- Future Farmers of America
- Hancock County 4-H
- Hoosier Harvest Market
- Farmers Market at the Fairgrounds
- Local Food Providers

- LEGEND**
- Hancock County
 - City Boundaries
 - Rail
 - Interstate
 - US Highway
 - State Route
 - Other Road
 - US Highway 40
 - Cultural Features
 - Surface Water
 - Watersheds
 - Wetlands
 - 100 Year Floodplain
 - Slopes over 12%
 - Parks and Open Space



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3

HOUSING



CHAPTER 3: HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

Communities across the United States are facing housing shortages and challenges with housing affordability and accessibility. In Hancock County this has manifested itself differently throughout the County, with metropolitan areas experiencing growth in new housing units but struggling with housing affordability due to construction costs, while more rural communities are experiencing little or no housing growth. As a relatively affordable location to buy or build a home in the region, Hancock County is seeing population growth as residents migrate from other places in Central Indiana that are no longer affordable or no longer provide the small-town atmosphere they are looking for. Hancock County is challenged with providing a diversity of housing styles that will serve different family structures, and lifestyle preferences, whether urban, suburban or rural, and are accessible to workers' wages to become a place where people are able to live and work.

What is Affordable Housing?

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines affordable housing as housing in which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing costs, including utilities.

What is Low-Income Housing?

Per HUD, low-income housing is determined by the percentage of a household's annual income related to the median household income for that area. Low-income is defined as 80% of median family income for the area and very low-income is defined as 50% of median family income for the area. If the household's annual income falls within these parameters, the household is eligible for federally subsidized housing programs which are often administered at the County level.

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Glossary of Terms

What is Workforce Housing?

Workforce housing is homeownership, and rental housing, that can be reasonably afforded by households of moderate to middle income and located in acceptable proximity to centers of employment. The most common definition of workforce housing comes from the Urban Land Institute, which defines workforce housing as: "housing that is affordable to households earning 60% to 120% of the area median income." This term may be used by some to place housing in economic development terms and in an attempt to avoid misplaced stigmas of identifying something as "affordable" housing.

This chapter is intended to provide the goals, objectives, and policies to guide housing standards and policies in Hancock County. It also details a set of key strategies to help advance or achieve them. Background information, data, and existing plans related to housing trends can be found in Appendix A.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICES

Definitions of goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations are found in the Introduction Chapter of this Plan.

Goals

1. Provide an equitable, balanced, and sustainable diversity of housing types, densities, arrangements, and affordability levels to accommodate the needs, desires, and lifestyles of existing and future residents of all incomes, household compositions, and life stages.
2. Increase the amount, type, and availability of affordable and attainable housing options in the County.
3. Develop new neighborhoods that promote long-term fiscal sustainability in terms of utilities, infrastructure, and service provision.

Objectives

1. Identify opportunities to stabilize employment and housing in areas that are stagnant in growth.
2. Carefully plan new neighborhood development to provide a range of housing types, densities, and costs that promote a high quality of life and healthy lifestyles for existing and future residents.
3. Support an appropriate balance of denser rental and for-sale housing products that appeal to both younger and older households.
4. Design neighborhoods that provide open space amenities and serve residents' daily needs that are oriented towards pedestrians and well-served by sidewalks, bicycle routes, and trails.



Policies

1. Develop strategies for the rehabilitation and maintenance of the County's existing housing stock in areas that are experiencing significant housing vacancy and disinvestment.
2. Encourage initiatives that strengthen existing neighborhoods through maintenance of existing housing, creative reuse of vacant or underutilized buildings, infill development, mixing of uses, and maintenance and improvement of public lands and rights-of-ways.
3. Prevent monotonous "tract" housing by ensuring variations in architectural details and colors, preventing garages from dominating front or street side facades, and enforcing design standards recommended in this Plan.
4. Plan and design new multi-family residential development to complement surrounding land uses and integrate into a cohesive neighborhood. Require high-quality design for all development.
5. Create attainable housing types at a wide variety of price points to support the workforce of growing industries.
6. Require Neighborhood Plans guided by Smart Growth principles in advance of all new large-scale neighborhood development. Use detailed neighborhood development plans to tie the opening of new areas for development with continuity in road improvements, utilities, and public facilities to accommodate such development.
7. Promote the use of water saving technology, renewable energy production, electric vehicle charging, onsite composting, and other sustainability best practices in existing and new neighborhoods.
8. Promote denser housing developments in areas well-served by supporting infrastructure and near amenities.
9. Ensure areas for new housing are compatible with existing neighborhoods and are appropriately buffered for more intensive uses.
10. Continue to require all residential developments to dedicate land, or pay a fee in lieu thereof, for public park, recreation, and open space acquisition and development.
11. Partner with regional entities continuously to evaluate regional housing needs, collaborate on programming efforts, and leverage alternative funding sources in order to meet housing needs.
12. Provide training and educational sessions for local elected officials, committee members, local government staff, and the public on local and regional housing data, evolving trends, and gaps and needs.



STRATEGIES

Provide a Wider Mix of Housing Types, Sizes, and Costs Throughout the County

An overarching goal of this plan is to provide a greater variety of housing formats and build quality housing for families in all life stages and income levels. Housing formats can include duplexes, townhomes, apartments, condos, single family residences, and more. Introducing a variety of building types – such as rowhouses, 2-, 3-, and 4-unit buildings, tiny homes, bungalow courts, courtyard apartment buildings, accessory dwelling units, live-work buildings, and multifamily dwellings above shops – greatly increases the housing options within a neighborhood. This approach supports the County’s vision and overarching goals in several ways. First, inclusion of a broad range of housing types and price levels within neighborhoods fosters daily interaction among people of diverse ages, races, and incomes, thereby building a sense of community across various social groups and fostering more equitable access to employment and amenities. Diversifying housing options can give everyone more choices about where to live. It helps residents find appropriate housing within Hancock County as their housing needs change, it increases diversity of residents and families who are attracted to Hancock County, and it provides housing choices that are affordable to current and future residents. Finally,

providing a mix of housing types is an essential component of mixed-use neighborhoods and compact growth, other key goals of this Plan.

Site and neighborhood design are critical to ensure that these housing types interact well within neighborhoods with varied housing formats and scale. Most people interact with the urban environment based on what buildings look like and how large they appear. Dwelling unit density alone can be very misleading: two buildings of a similar size could have very different densities based on the lot area, dwelling unit size, or bedroom count of the building. Two buildings may be the same density or size and be received differently due to design characteristics such as porches, windows, materials, stepbacks, and other visual interest.

Regardless of its residential density, a new building should fit well within the fabric of nearby buildings. Height, form, placement of entrances, location of parking, and the distance between buildings of different scales often best prescribe how new development will fit into the surrounding context.



Life Cycle Housing. Although Hancock County is growing with new residents, housing must be provided to accommodate all stages of life and all abilities. Integrating life-cycle and accessible housing options within neighborhoods allows residents to upsize or downsize along with life milestones and changing situations without leaving the established social network of a neighborhood. This can include both accessible new construction, which already occurs, and retrofitting existing buildings. Older adults can stay in the neighborhoods of their choice if housing more appropriate to their changing needs is available throughout the County, especially in amenity-rich areas with good walkability and proximity to healthcare, basic needs, and programing and resources for seniors.

Having a variety of housing formats and accessible housing to accommodate different life milestones in the same neighborhood also allows housing to turn over, making different housing available to others in the community. For example, as older residents look to downsize from their family home, this housing stock becomes available to young families looking to move from a starter home to one that can accommodate a growing family. Having this turnover and housing churn adds to health of the market and prevents shortages in specific housing types.

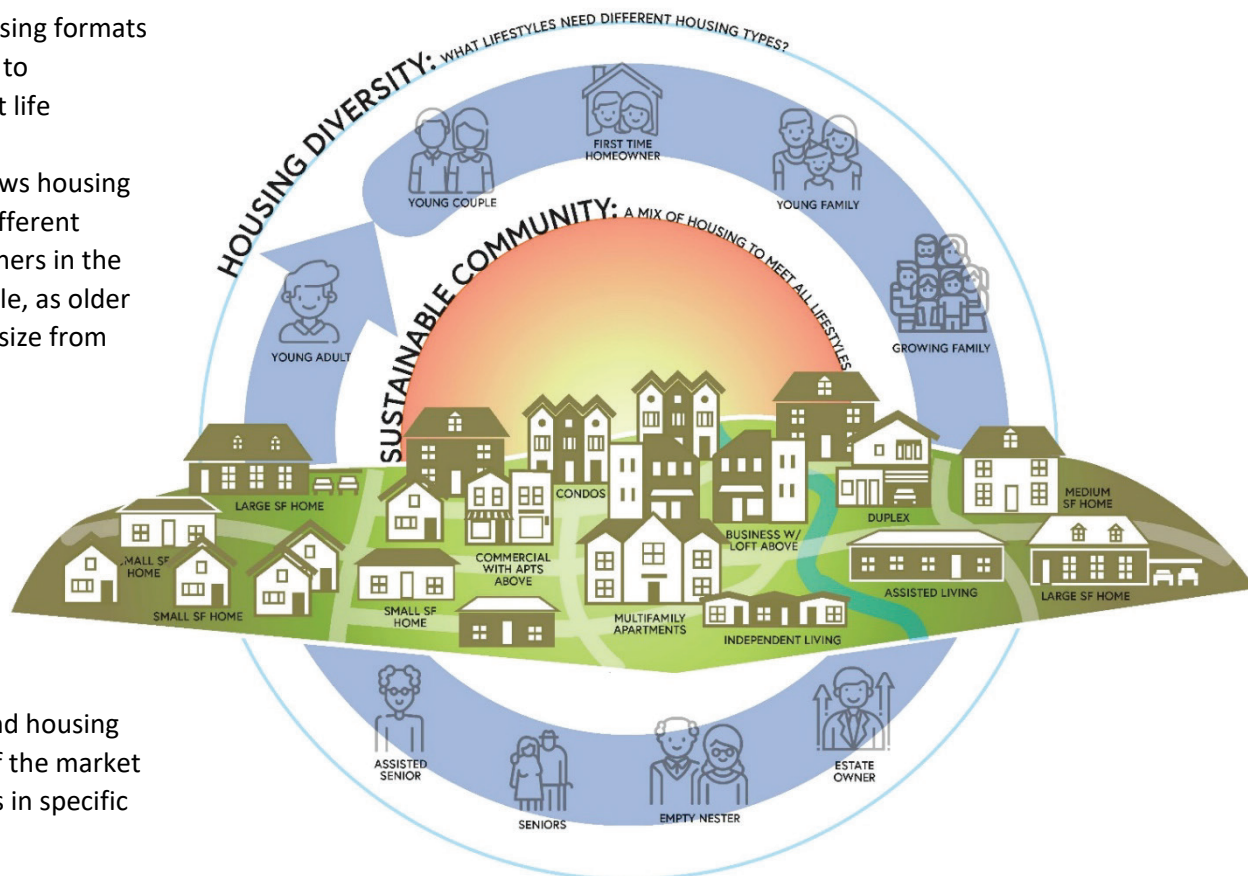


Figure 3.1. Housing Life Cycle

Affordable Options. Affordable and attainable housing was a consistently identified priority throughout the public engagement process, highlighting issues related to housing cost burden, housing attainable for older adults, and workforce housing close to employment. Affordable housing must go beyond simply options that are financially attainable. It must be clean, safe, and well-designed and fit the needs of the household. All housing, regardless of price, should meet standards of quality and provide a safe, healthy environment for those living there. True affordability must also consider proximity: lower-cost housing far from jobs and services may actually cost a household more than higher-cost housing that is close to jobs and transit due to transportation costs and access to services, schools, parks, and other amenities that impact health and other quality of life outcomes.

Affordable housing should be distributed throughout the County and within areas that have access to public services and amenities for daily living. Integrating affordable housing into neighborhoods makes it more likely that the housing and residents contribute to a stable neighborhood and may result in better outcomes for residents, whereas concentrations of low-income housing tend to isolate residents and result in greater demands for services. New lower-cost and subsidized housing should be located in areas that already have a high level of resources and amenities available at a range of income levels. Correspondingly, resources and amenities must also be located equitably throughout Hancock County.

What is Missing Middle Housing?

“Missing middle housing” is a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types scaled between single-family detached houses and larger apartment buildings. Missing middle housing is compatible in scale with most single-family residential areas, and can help meet the growing demand for urban living. Missing middle housing types contribute to a walkable neighborhood, require simpler construction types than larger buildings, and contribute to higher residential densities than single-family homes.

Despite the higher density, they have lower perceived density than other building types because the units are small and well designed. Housing types that should be considered as part of the missing middle include:

- Tiny homes
- Traditional small-lot single-family detached homes
- Side-by-side duplexes (two-family twin)
- Two-flat (over-under two-unit)
- Three-flat (three stacked units)
- Four-flat (2-up, 2-down)
- Townhouse / Rowhouse (single-family attached)
- Live-Work buildings (similar to rowhouses, but with small ground floor commercial spaces used by residents in the building)
- Accessory dwelling units
- Small apartment buildings

Source: Missing Middle Housing: Thinking Big and Building Small to Respond to Today's Housing Crisis. Daniel Parolek.



Ownership and Occupancy Types. Physical building type is only one aspect of housing variety. Different occupancy and ownership structures, including fee simple ownership, renting, owner-occupied two- and three- unit rentals, condominiums, co-housing, and housing cooperatives, are ways to provide residents with choices. While certain building formats lend to particular ownership and occupancy type – and this dynamic should not be overlooked – formats such as single-family detached homes most often associated with ownership are also frequently renter occupied.

Throughout the planning process, some community members expressed concern about the increase in the development of housing types that are intended for rental. This is a common anxiety shared by residents who may be skeptical of community change and recognize how our economic system currently favors home ownership as a primary method for families to accumulate wealth and stability. Family housing stability is also critical to the strength of the County’s schools and the success of its students.

The dramatic rise in demand for rental housing types is the result of a confluence of factors experienced by most growing communities due to a generation of stagnant wages and rapidly rising housing costs. However, there are housing types that enable ownership while also creating scale that can improve affordability. If well-designed, these scaling opportunities also contribute to other community goals such as Traditional Neighborhood Design, walkability, and others. Traditional Neighborhood Design is further explained below.

These housing types include many of those formats as noted above, such as twin-homes, two-flats, townhouses, and small-lot single family. Unfortunately, these types are called “missing middle” because very few of these housing formats have been constructed over the past several decades, although these types were common prior to mid-century suburban development trends and associated development regulations.



Promote Traditional Neighborhood Design Principles

Wherever possible, the County should promote Traditional Neighborhood Design. The implementation of Traditional Neighborhood Design aims to:

- Integrate a diversity of high-quality housing types to accommodate a variety of lifestyles, age groups, and financial capabilities.
- Ensure the long-term preservation of community character and high quality of life.
- Provide housing, parks, and schools with direct and efficient connections to shops, services, and jobs.
- Blend multi-modal transportation options into neighborhood design.
- Preserve environmental systems that define, sustain, and connect neighborhoods and communities.
- Reduce demand for fiscal resources needed for transportation, public infrastructure, services, and housing.

In the design and approval of new neighborhoods (subdivisions), the County and developers should look to incorporate the following Traditional Neighborhood Design principles:

- Establish Community Gathering Places: Design neighborhoods around community gathering places such as parks, public squares, outdoor dining establishments, schools, churches, and other community facilities.
- Provide Housing Variety: Ensure that a variety of housing types are included and arranged in a compact and interconnected form. Particular attention should be paid to the scale of buildings, walking distances, direct and efficient connections to amenities, and the design of other neighborhood features such as streetlights and signage.
- Advance Equity and Inclusion: Through creation of neighborhoods with a variety of housing formats, sizes, and price points, people from a diversity of ages, family sizes, and incomes can live in proximity to improve social cohesion. Multi-family and renter-oriented housing formats are integrated into diverse neighborhoods rather than marginalized. Diverse neighborhoods are shown to improve community resilience and equity through shared investment, familiarity, and access to opportunity.
- Blend Land Uses: Integrate well-designed and cohesively incorporated commercial and office uses and other community facilities in appropriate locations, generally along busier streets and intersections to draw on a broader market.
- Promote Walkability: Design the neighborhood to facilitate pedestrian movement and enhance mobility within the neighborhood and between the neighborhood and other nearby destinations, such as parks, schools, and business and job districts. Provide sidewalks or paths along all streets, and multi-use trails in the environmental corridor and park network. Require street trees to be planted along all new streets with native species selected for canopy and climate resilience.
- Promote Connectivity: Interconnect streets, trails, drainageways, parkways, and similar facilities both within the neighborhood and to existing and future adjoining neighborhoods and development areas. Limit cul-de-sacs and dead ends, except in places where environmental features or topography require them.
- Calm Traffic: Design and manage neighborhoods as collections of places where people live, rather than areas to move through. Integrate design elements that slow vehicle movements to improve safety and livability, with features selected for the context. These may include accommodating on-street parking and permitting narrower streets to calm traffic and increase pedestrian safety, traffic circles, medians, and curb extensions.



- Create Attractive and Active Streetscapes: Incorporate site and building design strategies such as decreased setbacks, front porches, balconies, and other interesting architectural features that help create a safe, pleasant walking environment. Set back garages from the main body of the house wherever possible and incorporate alley-loaded garage options where practical. Locate vehicle access to prioritize pedestrian safety.
- Highlight Natural Areas: Integrate environmental features into the neighborhood as common open spaces for active or passive recreation, public gathering spots, or flood protection and stormwater management. Provide adequate vegetated buffers between development and natural features. Locate, design, and maintain storm water features as neighborhood assets.
- Incorporate Public Health and Sustainability: Use sustainability and public health as lenses in which all new neighborhoods are designed. This can be done through the thoughtful integration of sustainability best practices such as onsite stormwater management, renewable energy production, waste reduction, and energy-efficient fixtures and building materials. Additionally, both the short-term and long-term public health impacts should be considered carefully through multi-modal transportation opportunities, mixing of compatible land uses, and prevention of isolated, standalone neighborhoods that are not fully integrated into the larger community.

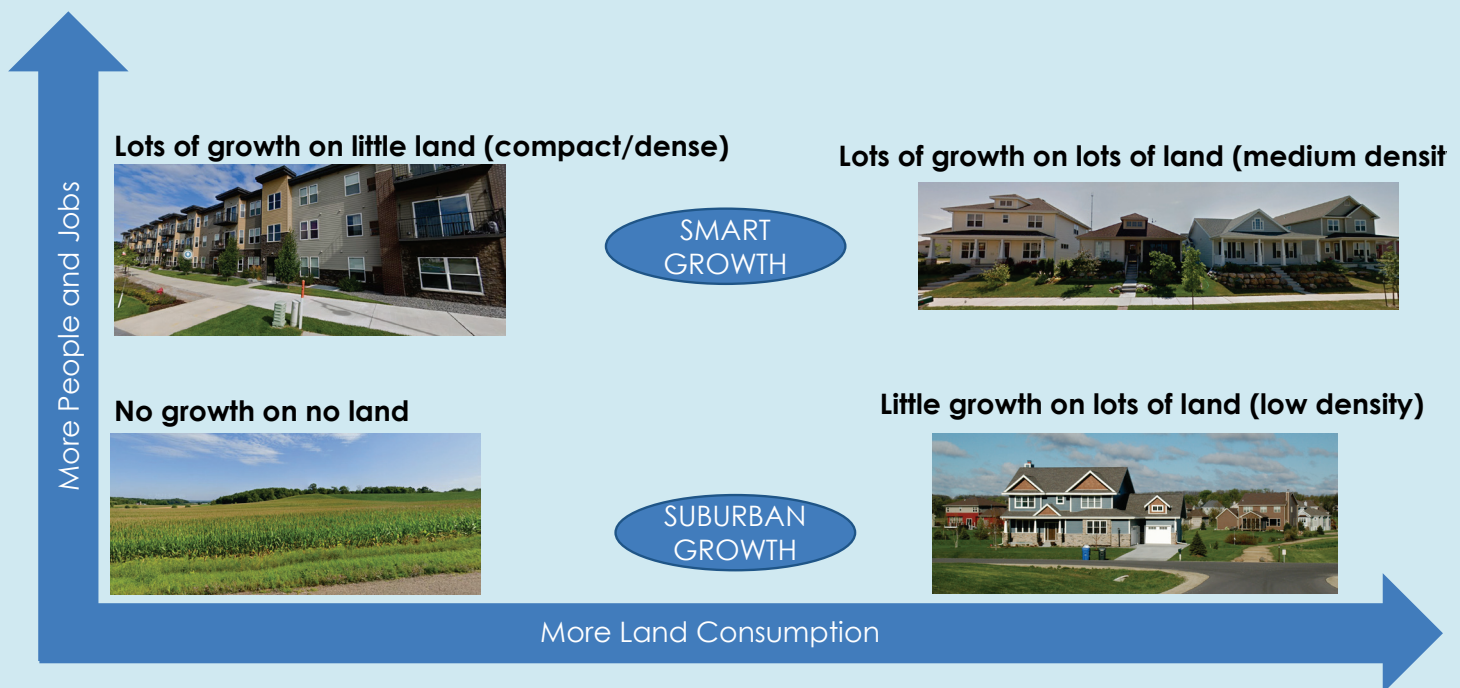


Implementing the design recommendations above will require Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance amendments or rewrites, coordination and collaboration with developers and landowners, and the development of detailed neighborhood plans for all new neighborhoods.

Economic Impacts of Sprawl vs. Density

Implementing Smart Growth policies to increase the density of future development creates a more efficient use of land, which has a multiple social, environmental, and economic benefits for communities. Historic land use practices found in conventional suburban development are characterized by land uses that are separated and far apart from one another, resulting in a development style that is designed primarily for automobile travel and less sustainable, both environmentally and economically.

By developing a mixture of land uses located closer together, increased development density creates more connections between streets and neighborhoods, resulting in walkable streets and increases access to goods, services, and housing. Responsibly developing land at higher densities helps conservation efforts, allowing for the preservation of natural areas, open spaces, and local park lands, providing more active transportation options, and reducing transportation system greenhouse gas emissions. Compact development is also more fiscally responsible because sprawling development does not efficiently use land or public infrastructural investments efficiently. The public investment in utility infrastructure and roadways required to serve our buildings is significantly more expensive for a sprawling community than it is for one that is compactly developed, as Smart Growth saves an average of 38% on upfront road, sewer, water, and other infrastructural costs. Smart Growth development and mixed land uses also generate 10 times more tax revenue per acre than conventional suburban development.





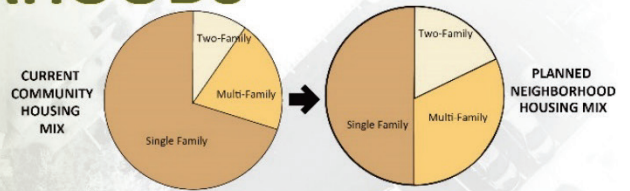
PLANNED NEIGHBORHOODS

Planned Neighborhoods provide attractive places to live, play and take care of day-to-day service needs.

Planned Neighborhoods support predominately single-family housing mixed with two-family homes, multi-family housing, institutional uses, parks, and neighborhood office and retail uses.

Characteristics of Planned Neighborhoods include:

- Mix of housing types and densities
- Mix of lot sizes: small lot (6,000 sf), mid-size (8,000 sf, and large lot (10,000 sf)
- Diverse ages & incomes
- Homes within a comfortable walk of parks and services
- Opportunity to center around plazas, parks, public spaces
- Streets connected internally and to larger community
- Neighborhood-wide multi-use path system with interconnected sidewalks, bike lanes, and routes
- Natural areas protected and made central to development
- Integration of neighborhood focal points such as schools, churches or shopping



A Single Family Homes



B Townhomes



C Two-Family



D Multi-Family – Apartments & Condos



E Neighborhood Mixed-Use



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Figure 3.2. Planning Neighborhoods



TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD

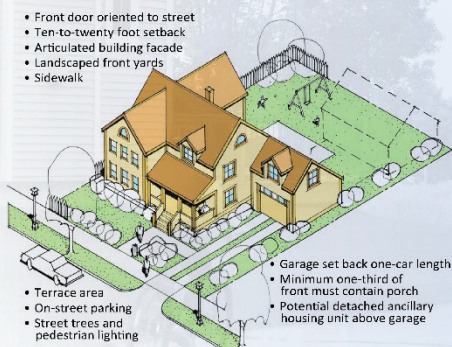
Traditional Neighborhood design aims to enhance quality of life and community character through integrated multi-modal transportation options, diverse housing types, parks, schools, services, and jobs within walking distance of one another, preserving environmental systems, and reducing long-term demand for fiscal resources.

This can be accomplished by implementing the following guiding:

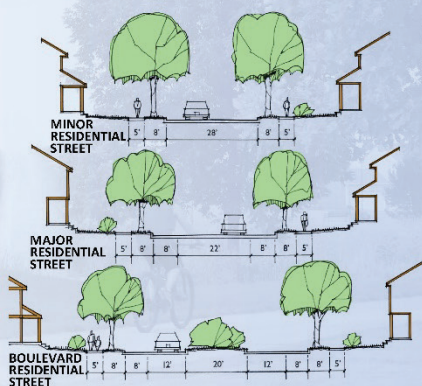
- Establishing community gathering places
- Providing housing variety
- Advancing equity and inclusion
- Blending land uses
- Promoting walkability
- Promoting connectivity
- Calming traffic
- Creating attractive and active streetscapes
- Highlighting natural areas
- Incorporating public health and sustainability



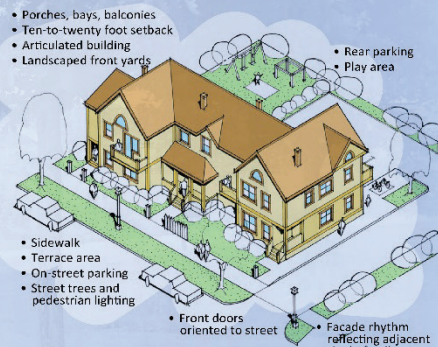
Streetscape



Single Family Parcel



Street Cross-Sections



Multi-Family Parcel

VANDEWALLE & ASSOCIATES, INC.

Figure 3.3. Traditional Neighborhoods

Implement High-Quality Design Standards

To pursue the goals and objectives described in this Plan, design standards are recommended for all development. These standards may be achieved through Subdivision and Zoning Ordinance changes, the adoption of manuals, or a combination of both. These design standards must complement, be integrated with, and align with Traditional Neighborhood Development Principles, resulting in a coherent and complete approach to creating and curating highly functional, livable, sustainable, and attractive neighborhoods and places.

Multi-family housing is an important component of the community to provide a diversity of housing options, for both owner-occupied and renter-occupied situations. These formats are often chosen by senior citizens, younger residents, employees for local businesses, and individuals and families seeking this lifestyle option. Such housing also can be part of an overall economic development strategy. The design and scale of these formats should fit within the fabric of the community and surrounding neighborhoods. The County intends to review proposals for multi-family residential developments against the guidelines listed below:

- Incorporate architectural design and building scale that relate to the context of the surrounding neighborhood and community character. Encourage diverse building layouts (individual unit walk-ups and interior hallway design), high-quality exterior materials, architectural features, and varying densities and formats.

- Use brick and other natural materials on building facades. Avoid monotonous facades and box-like buildings. Incorporate balconies, porches, garden walls, varied building and facade setbacks, varied roof designs, and bay windows.
- Orient buildings to the street with modest front yard setbacks, bringing street-oriented entries close to public sidewalks to increase pedestrian activity. Include private sidewalk connections.
- Locate parking, dumpsters, and other unattractive uses behind buildings.
- For parking lots and garages:
 - Locate garage doors and parking lots so they are not the dominant visual element.
 - Screen parking areas from public view.
 - Break up large parking lots with landscaped islands and similar features.
 - Provide direct links to building entrances by pedestrian walkways physically separated from vehicular movement areas.
 - Although large parking garages are undesirable, where necessary, break up facades with foundation landscaping, varied facade setbacks, and recessed garage doors.
 - Utilize alleys and side-accessed garages wherever possible.
- Provide generous landscaping along:
 - All public and private street frontages and around all building foundations.
 - The perimeter of all paved areas and in islands within larger parking lots.
 - Yards separating land uses which differ significantly in intensity or character.
 - All outdoor storage areas such as trash receptacles and recycling bins (also include screening walls in these areas) and around all utility structures or mechanical structures visible from public streets or less intensive land uses.
- Provide onsite recreational and open space areas to serve the needs of residents. Whenever possible, develop contiguous rear yards as a unit to encourage use by building residents and guests.





4

LAND USE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT



CHAPTER 4: LAND USE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is intended to outline the goals, objectives, and policies related to land use and community character in a county that has experienced rapid and sustained growth over the past decade. Recommendations serve to guide the future preservation and development of public and private lands in Hancock County. Background information and data related to land use and community character can be found in Appendix A.

Future Hancock's Land Use and Growth Management goals, policies, objectives, and strategies were developed through detailed review of the County's existing land use policies, zoning map and ordinance, state and locally approved sanitary sewer service areas, recent development activity and trends, input from Hancock County staff, municipal staff, the Future Hancock Steering Committee, and the general public. Maps and background information related to these inputs can be found in Appendix A.

Compact Growth

As highlighted elsewhere in this Plan and its Vision, the Future Land Use and Growth Management chapter advocates for prioritizing land within sewer service areas for compact growth and preserving open space and retaining rural characteristics in the areas outside of the municipal growth areas. Pursuing "compact growth" means employing growth patterns and policies that use land more efficiently and thoughtfully, thus reducing growth patterns that consume farmland, open space, and sensitive environmental areas, or create isolated pockets of sprawl development that drain resources and are disconnected from amenities. Directing development to sewer service areas (and not to rural areas) is essential for providing an environmentally sustainable development pattern and for preserving open space and agricultural lands.

Controlled, well-planned, balanced, diverse, and compact growth are all key components to the health, viability, and sustainability of the future of Hancock County. Compact growth can be achieved by advancing a combination of mutually reinforcing policies, including those that encourage development to occur in areas with utility access, support increased and varied residential densities, and advance upfront neighborhood and development planning. These policies are integrated throughout this chapter and the Comprehensive Plan.



EXISTING LAND USE

An accurate depiction of Hancock County's existing land use pattern is the first step in planning for a desired future land use pattern. The Existing Land Use Map categories (below) depicts the existing land uses within the County's boundaries as of 2022.

Existing Land Use Map Categories

Land Use Category	Land Use Description	2022 Acres	2022 Percent of Total Land Use
Agricultural	Agricultural uses, farmsteads, open lands, and very low-density single family residential development.	148,623	83.60%
Single family Residential	Single family residential land uses developed primarily in suburban-style subdivisions.	14,476	8.14%
Two-Family Residential	Two-family residential development (2 dwelling units) typically developed as a two-flat, or duplex, twin-home.	30	0.02%
Multi-Family Residential	Mostly multi-family residential buildings of three or more dwelling units.	89	0.05%
Mobile Home	Single family mobile home dwellings, and the associated sanitary, washing, recreational, and office facilities to service mobile home dwellings.	1,124	0.63%
Commercial	Indoor commercial, office, and retail land uses.	1,413	0.79%
Commercial Vacant	Vacant lands designated for commercial use.	71	0.04%
Government/Institutional	Small and large-scale public facilities such as City Hall, Library, Public Works, and other government buildings.	3,597	2.02%
Industrial	General industrial manufacturing, production, assembly, warehousing, research and development facilities, and similar land uses.	1,010	0.57%
Industrial Vacant	Vacant lands designated for industrial use.	130	0.07%
Park and Open Space	Public parks, recreational areas, open space, trails, greenways, and conservancy lands, or private recreational-based businesses with significant open space, as well as conservation areas.	156	0.09%
Utility	Small and large-scale public, quasi-public, and private utilities and stormwater management facilities.	99	0.06%
Vacant Subdivided	Mostly open spaces that have been subdivided or platted and are ready to be developed, including residential, business/office, or industrial land uses.	933	0.53%
Right-of-Way	Areas reserved for public infrastructure and uses such as transportation facilities, utilities, and green infrastructure.	4,643	2.61%
Surface Water	Lakes, rivers, and perennial streams.	1,342	0.75%

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICES

Definitions of goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations are found in the Introduction Chapter of this Plan.

Goals

1. Promote a future land use pattern that accommodates a compact mix of uses, densities, land use types, and affordability levels, while preserving and enhancing natural resources, large agricultural areas, community character, and high quality of life.
2. Encourage development patterns that promote density and urban-style development in the future growth areas adjacent to municipalities and within Sewer Service Areas.

Objectives

1. Support efficient land use patterns that limit non-utility served development patterns, preserve open space, and agricultural lands, facilitate human interaction, advance economic growth, and foster increased sustainability, climate resiliency, and equity.
2. Thoroughly integrate infrastructure, utility, public safety, and public facility capacity and resources in the development review process.
3. Foster new economic and housing opportunities through a balanced approach to redevelopment, infill development, and new development.
4. Preserve the resources that contribute to Hancock County's character, including new parks and open spaces, environmental corridors, trail systems, and community entryways.
5. Foster a sense of place within the built environment and create memorable places designed for people and interactions through high-quality design.

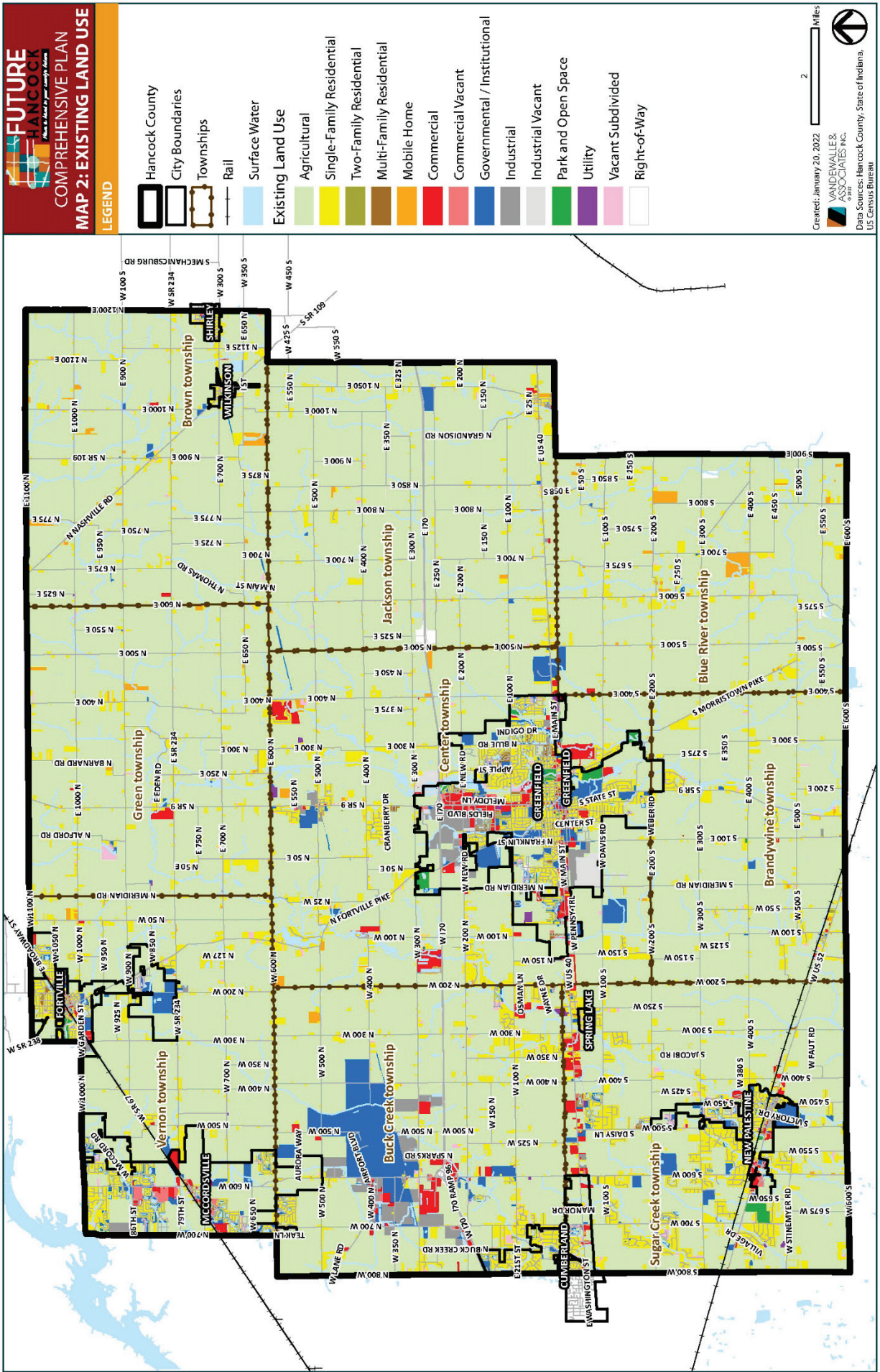


Policies

1. Follow the future land use recommendations that are mapped on the Future Land Use Map and described in this Plan when reviewing new rezoning requests and making detailed land use decisions.
2. Practice fiscal sustainability by encouraging infill development to utilize existing infrastructure, and by directing new development to areas adjacent to existing development and where logical extensions to streets, sewer lines, and water lines may occur.
3. Work collaboratively with Greenfield and the Towns to identify future growth areas, ensure compatible land uses at jurisdictional boundaries, and encourage Smart Growth in the County's urbanized areas.
4. Implement the Mt. Comfort Corridor Plan land use and infrastructure recommendations.
5. Invest in transportation system improvements concurrent with development to maintain safe and efficient roadways even in times of change and development.
6. Require detailed development plans, neighborhood plans, or corridor plans prior to the platting of large-scale new development of 10 or more acres. Development plans should include traffic, public safety, utility, and fiscal impacts.
7. Coordinate with the Hancock County school districts on development projects and future planning of needed facilities.
8. Coordinate with the Hancock County public safety providers to determine staffing impacts from development projects and future facility needs.

9. Evaluate and communicate the fiscal impacts of development incentives on other units of government prior to development decisions and approvals.
10. Encourage compact, Traditional Neighborhood Design (see Chapter Three: Housing for more information) to better manage the rate of community expansion, preserve farmland, and protect natural resources.
11. Ensure new neighborhoods contain a wide mix of housing formats, costs, and tenancy in order to create well-balanced and varied neighborhoods. Each neighborhood should accommodate individuals and households of a variety of sizes, ages, income levels, and lifestyles.
12. Coordinate with the Indianapolis Regional Airport to avoid conflicting land uses in growth areas surrounding the Airport.
13. Use the Thoroughfare Plan and Capital Improvement Plan to direct infrastructure investments to growth areas and away from areas where development is not expected or desired, including in rural areas where agriculture is actively practiced.
14. Use the Economic Development Strategy and its implementing policies to direct new businesses into identified growth areas and utilize robust funding strategies for the supporting infrastructure and services.
15. Evaluate the potential use of development impact fees, development agreements, and similar mechanisms to ensure new development pays its fair share of infrastructure and service costs.
16. Minimize incompatible land uses and conflicts through high-quality design standards for residential, commercial, and industrial development as well as implementing rigorous landscaping and buffering standards.





Detailed Neighborhood Plans—A Recommended Process:

The following planning process has a proven track record of success:

Analysis: A wide variety of site-specific information must be collected about both existing and emerging conditions:

- A. Establish and confirm the full neighborhood design process, including the creation of an ad-hoc or blended oversight committee including and/or reporting to County staff, the Plan Commission, and County Council and County Commissioners.
- B. Collect existing map and plan data for the area and its surroundings related to parcels, topography, soils, land cover and uses, utilities, transportation, recreation, public services, plan recommendations, zoning, and property ownership.
- C. Evaluate the existing and emerging real estate market.
- D. Employ meaningful public participation to help identify opportunities and constraints, and to help create a vision for the area.
- E. Conduct property owner, agency, and stakeholder interviews.

Plan: Based on the results of the Analysis phase, and under the guidance of the committee, adopt a Detailed Neighborhood Plan as derived from the consideration of a Preliminary Concept Plan, Alternative Neighborhood Plan, and a Refined Draft Neighborhood Plan:

- A. Refine and confirm the neighborhood vision.
- B. Draft and confirm a Preliminary Concept Plan depicting the general arrangement of land uses, development character, main roads and stormwater management facilities, pedestrian and bicycle networks, and the open space system.
- C. Produce and confirm one or more Alternative Neighborhood Plans for presentation and review by the public, stakeholders, agencies, and the committee.
- D. Produce and confirm a Draft Detailed Neighborhood Plan based on the responses to the Alternative Neighborhood Plan.
- E. Refine and adopt the Detailed Neighborhood Plan, and ultimately integrate it into the Comprehensive Plan as an amendment.

Implementation: Following Plan adoption, establish and apply the appropriate regulatory and procedural foundation to ensure full implementation:

- A. Facilitate developments consistent with the Plan.
- B. Require compliance with the Plan as a condition of development.
- C. Establish zoning districts and boundaries in compliance with the Plan.
- D. Review proposed land divisions, conditional use permits, and planned developments based on conformance with the Plan, including consideration of land use pattern, density/intensity, community character, and infrastructure recommendations.

*An identical process can be developed and implemented for commercial/industrial developments.

FUTURE LAND USE

What is a Future Land Use Map?

The Future Land Use map and related policies described below should be used as a basis to update the County's regulatory land use tools, particularly the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map. They should also be used as a basis for all public and private sector development decisions, including zoning map amendments, special exception use permits, subdivision approvals, extension of utilities, arrangement of transportation facilities, and other public or private investments. This Plan does not automatically compel property owners or the County to change the use of land or grant entitlements required for development to occur. Instead, changes in land use to align with the recommendations of this Plan will generally be initiated by property owners or private developers. The County must also consider land uses beyond the immediate study period of 20 years to ensure cohesive and strategic long-term pursuit of the community's vision and values, and efficient outlook for infrastructure and services.

To effectively manage growth, this Plan identifies desirable land use patterns adjacent to municipal boundaries and within municipal Sewer Service Areas. This approach recognizes that Hancock County's growth, public health, economic vitality, environmental sustainability, and other dynamics described in this Plan are directly facilitated or impeded by the patterns of growth and land uses in incorporated and unincorporated areas. For example, if lands adjacent to the City of Greenfield's boundary develop within the County without access to utility services, there are limited opportunities for the County or City to potentially grow beyond that development due to impediments and constraints in providing future utility and infrastructure connections and contiguous annexation boundaries. This kind of development also strains County resources as public safety and other services are still required from the County. Implementing many of the recommendations of this Plan will be greatly aided by intergovernmental cooperation, which is the focus of the Intergovernmental Chapter of this Plan.

Future Land Use Categories

The Future Land Use Map provides recommended future land uses in Hancock County into the categories listed below. These future land use categories and the designation of property on the Future Land Use Map represent the desired future pattern of development in the County's planning area. It is important to note that these future land use categories do not directly reflect zoning; however, they are intended to be compatible with the County's zoning districts.

Not all land shown for development on the Future Land Use maps will be immediately appropriate for annexations, rezoning, or other land use approvals following adoption of this Plan. Given service demands and other factors, careful consideration to the amount, mix, and timing of development is essential. Hancock County advocates the phased development of land that focuses growth in areas that can be efficiently served with transportation, utilities, public services, and community facilities.

Future Land Use Categories, 2022	Acres	Pct
Conservation/Open Space	28,533	16.0%
Agricultural/Rural*	92,015	51.6%
Institutional	1,867	1.0%
Rural Residential	1,118	0.6%
Town Residential	227	0.1%
Suburban Residential	7,603	4.3%
Multi-Family Residential	2	0.0%
Planned Neighborhood	26,871	15.1%
Village Commercial	63	0.0%
Mixed-Use Corridors	2,334	1.3%
Village Center	1,195	0.7%
Regional Center	3,494	2.0%
Business Park	2,061	1.2%
Industrial	5,285	3.0%
Manufacturing	1,016	0.6%
Water	57	0.0%
Right-of-Way	4,724	2.6%
Total	178,464	

*Includes 26,382 acres of Future Growth Area

Future Growth Areas

Future Growth Areas are designated as Agriculture/Rural but have a long-term land use shown in stripes on the Future Land Use Map. These areas are within designated sanitary sewer service areas but currently are not served by centralized potable water and sanitary sewer services and are not expected to over the 20-year time period addressed in this Comprehensive Plan. As a result, they are planned to remain in their existing land use, which is agricultural in most cases, during the planning time horizon.

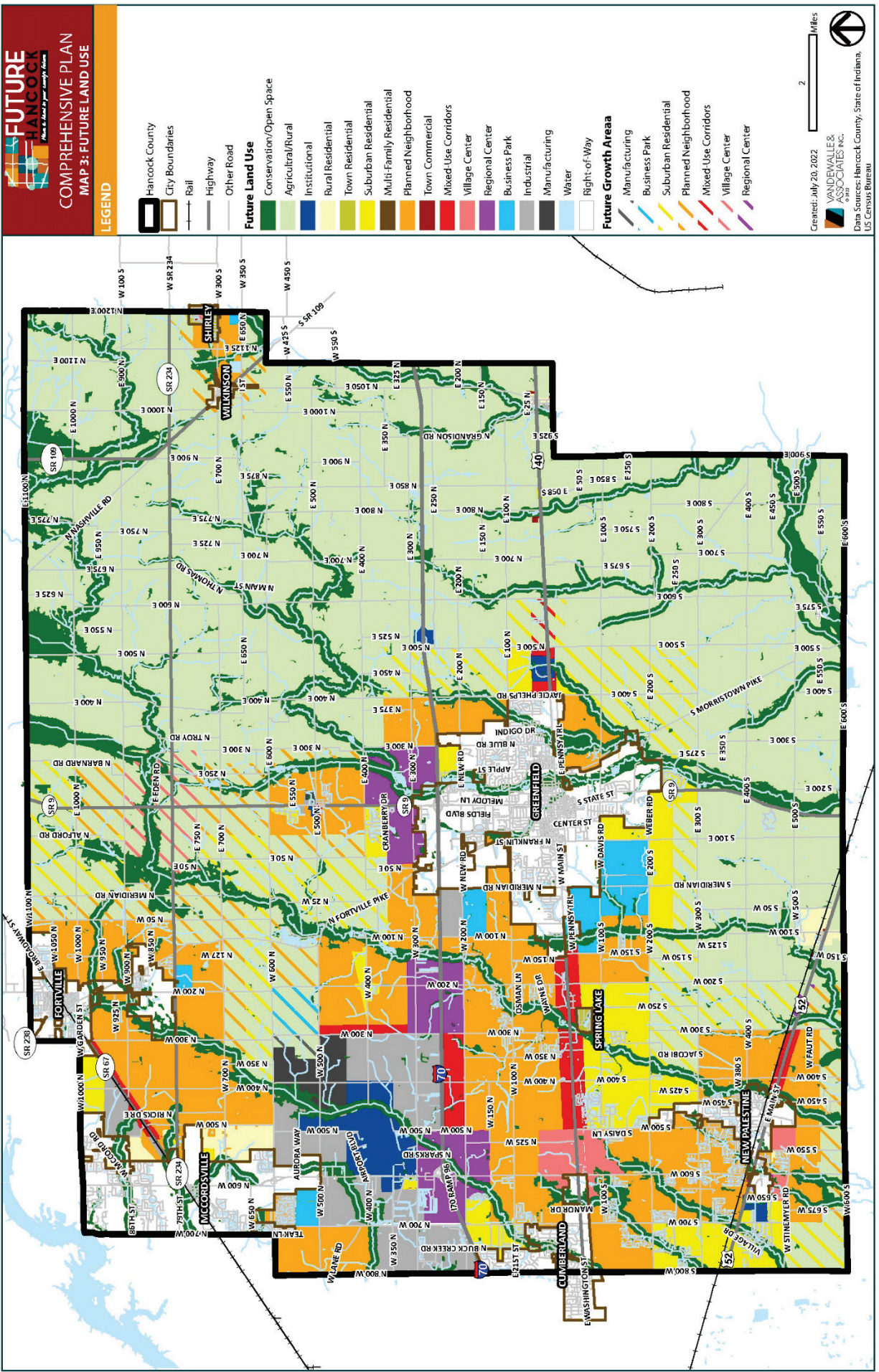
The land uses on the Future Land Use Map shown in solid colors are thought to provide more than enough capacity to absorb the projected growth within the County over the next 20 years and represent the most logical extensions of infrastructure and development over that time consistent with the Smart Growth Principles. However, it's difficult to predict exactly when and where development may occur, so the Future Growth Areas depict the recommended future land uses should they become ripe for development in the next 20 years or beyond. Considerations for determining the ripeness of extending development into Future Growth Areas include demonstrating that:

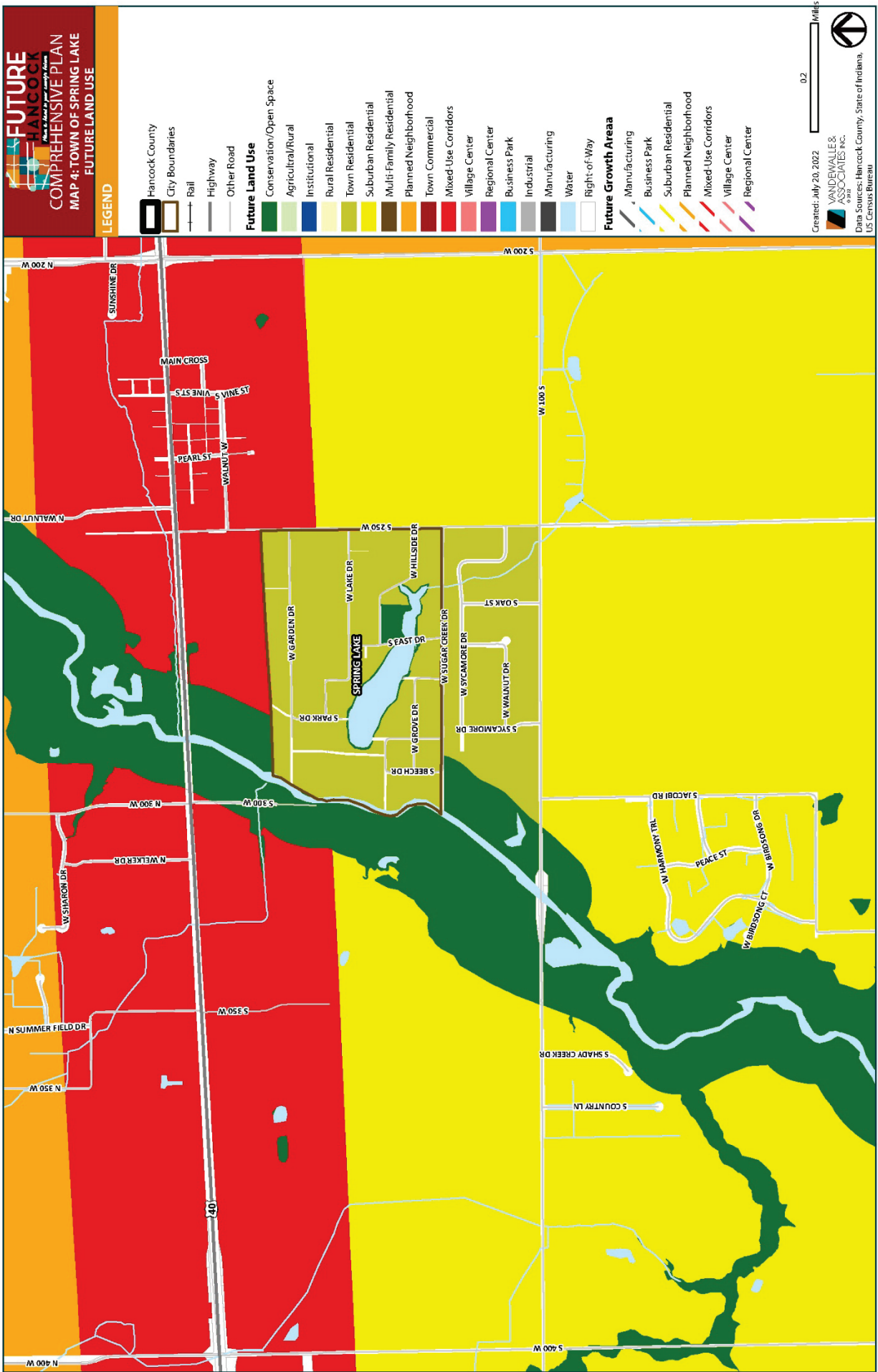
- Other properties within the planning region designated for development on the Future Land Use Map have been developed or are not available for development
- The area adjoins existing development and will not be an isolated pocket of development
- Development of the area would not create conflicts with nearby agricultural areas including but not limited to creating isolated pockets of agriculture, creating traffic conflicts on public roads between agriculture equipment and non-farm vehicles, or likely lead to complaints about farm odors and noise
- Infrastructure – including centralized potable water, sanitary sewer, and roads – can be cost-effectively extended into the area or already exist
- Adequate public services – including fire, EMS, and law enforcement – can be cost-effectively extended into the area
- The extension is consistent with the Smart Growth Principles

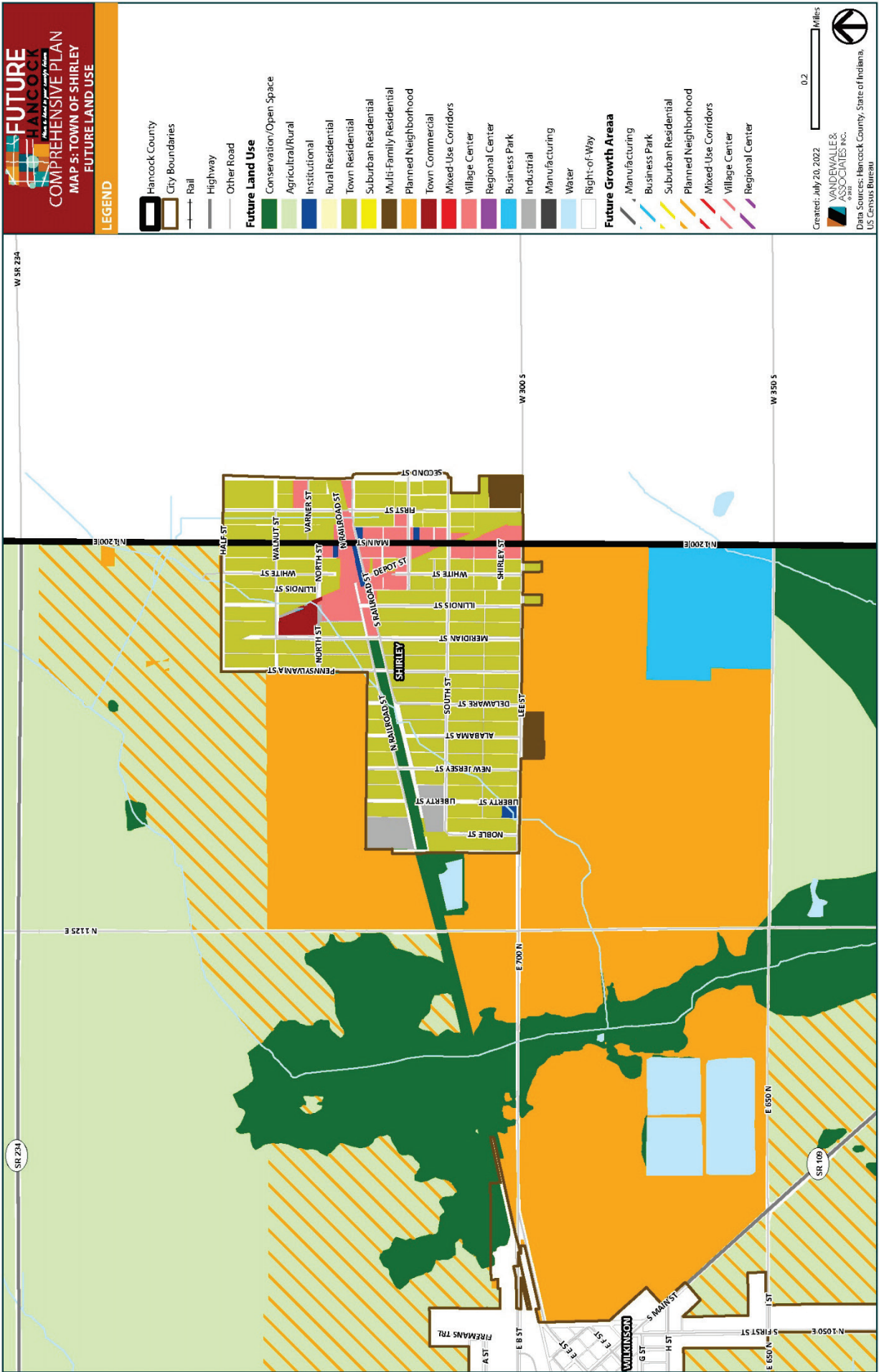
Extensions of development into the Future Growth Areas will require approval of a Comprehensive Plan amendment prior to or concurrent with rezonings and other development approvals. Proposed amendments should include detailed technical analyses such as traffic studies, utility extension feasibility studies, public safety service studies, public finance/economic impact studies, and a land use and market analysis documenting that the extension in the Future Growth Area is warranted and is consistent with the above considerations.

Zoning Districts and Future Land Use Map Categories

Zoning District	Land Use Description	Future Land Use Category
Agricultural		
A	Agricultural operations	Agriculture/Rural
Residential		
RR	Agricultural operations and single-family rural uses	Rural Residential
R1.0	Single-family suburban uses	Suburban Residential, Town Residential, Village Center
R2.5	Single-family suburban uses	Suburban Residential, Town Residential, Village Center
R3.5	Single-family suburban uses	Suburban Residential, Town Residential, Village Center
R5.0	Single-family suburban uses + some TF and MF	Suburban Residential, Town Residential, Village Center
RMH	Mobile home parks	Rural Residential, Suburban Residential
RM	Two-family and multi-family uses	Multi-Family Residential, Planned Neighborhood, Town Commercial, Mixed Use Corridors, Village Center, Regional Center, Business Park
Commercial		
CN	Convenience shopping	Town Commercial, Mixed Use Corridors, Village Center, Regional Center, Business Park
CC	Small to mid-sized commercial uses	Town Commercial, Mixed Use Corridors, Village Center, Regional Center, Business Park
CR	Regional commercial uses	Town Commercial, Mixed Use Corridors, Village Center, Regional Center, Business Park
Institutional		
IN	Public facilities	Institutional Small-scale institutional = any category
Industrial		
IBP	Small-scale light industrial	Business Park, Industrial, and Manufacturing
IL	Warehousing and other light industrial (all inside)	Business Park, Industrial, and Manufacturing
IG	Large-scale industrial	Industrial and Manufacturing
PUD		Any land use category, Planned Neighborhood
New Overlay		Conservation/Open Space







2022 Future Land Use Implementation & Rezoning Policies:

- A. Land use categories are intentionally broad and provide general guidance on how the property should be used and zoned in the future.
 - i. Specific uses listed in each category are illustrative and not meant to be an all-inclusive list.
 - ii. All uses may not be appropriate in all categories
- B. Land uses shown on the FLUM (Future Land Use Map) are generalized and not intended to be parcel-specific or hard boundaries. Ultimate boundaries will be determined as rezonings occur.
- C. Land uses shown on the FLUM and in the Comprehensive Plan text are policy recommendations, not zoning or regulations that have the force of law.
- D. Where the FLUM and existing zoning conflict, existing zoning will continue to govern until changed.
- E. Rezonings and land use approvals should be consistent with the FLUM and plan, but consistency is not mandatory under state law.
- F. In almost all instances, the County should not rezone property on its own or preemptively rezone based on the Future Land Use Map – rezonings should be driven by requests with specific development plans.
- G. Growth should emanate out from existing developed areas and along backbone infrastructure – avoid leapfrog development. The County should work with each utility and infrastructure provider to prepare detailed expansion plans to determine where and when development is appropriate.
- H. Within designated sewer service areas, the following should be coordinated with the respective providers:
 - i. Rezonings
 - ii. Subdivisions
 - iii. Extension of utilities
 - iv. Road improvements
 - v. Providing development incentives
- I. New development on septic and well should be prohibited in sewer service territories.
- J. Along transportation corridors, create more intensive nodes – avoid strip development.
- K. Higher density residential development should be integrated with supporting commercial uses and amenities.
- L. Significant buffering should be provided between residential and higher intensity, non-residential uses.
- M. Large development and redevelopment initiatives should develop a detailed plan/master plan prior to any rezonings or development approval. Master plans can be completed by the County or by developers. The County should lead residential master plan development while developers are the appropriate party to lead commercial or industrial master planning.
- N. A memo reviewing the County’s zoning code for consistency with this plan’s recommendations is included in the Appendix.

FUTURE LAND USE STRATEGIES

Each of the future land use categories listed and shown on the Future Land Use Map (Map 3) are described below. The text under each listed land use category includes a description of that category, an outline of where that type of land use should be promoted, and the policies related to future development in areas designated under that category. As previously stated, land use categories are intentionally broad and provide general guidance on how the property should be used and zoned in the future. Specific uses listed in each category are illustrative and not meant to be an all-inclusive list.

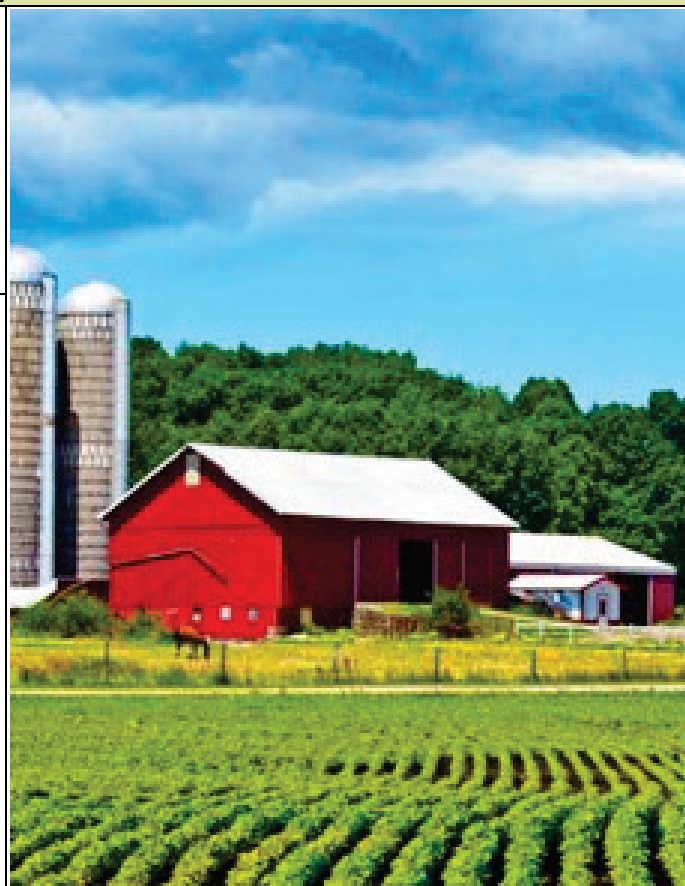
Conservation/Open Space	
Character: Conservation/Open Space areas primarily are mapped in or adjacent to environmental sensitive areas such as along creeks and water bodies or areas of large-scale outdoor recreation. As such, they support a diversity of plant and animal species with some also providing important natural functions such as drainage. Natural areas should be preserved and restored to a natural state with minimal development or disruption.	
Uses: • Agricultural uses such as: crops, livestock, silviculture, nurseries, related accessory uses, etc. • Extractive uses and related materials processing such as: gravel pits, mines, cement plants, asphalt plants, etc. • Renewable energy systems such as: solar arrays, wind turbines, geothermal, etc. • Large-scale outdoor recreation uses such as: regional parks, golf courses, recreation trails, off-road riding facilities, riding stables, campgrounds, camps, zoos, wildlife sanctuaries, hunting preserves, natural preserves, etc. • Community and neighborhood parks and recreation such as: playgrounds, ballfields, pools, recreation centers, sports clubs, etc. • Very low density residential such as: detached single-family homes at densities equal to or greater than one unit per 20 acres	
Supporting Infrastructure: • Utilities: utilities within Conservation/Open Space should be kept to a minimum • Transportation: roads within Conservation/Open Space should be kept to a minimum	
Implementation: • Conservation/Open Space areas should remain in very large, contiguous tracts and include appropriate buffer areas • Appropriate zoning districts may include creation of a new Conservation overlay district	

Agriculture/Rural

Character: Agricultural areas are intended to remain largely rural and undeveloped with uses primarily focusing on agriculture and agriculture-related processing and support functions in addition to outdoor recreation uses. Residential subdivisions and development unrelated to agriculture should be kept to a minimum and be located in areas where they will be least disruptive to near-by agricultural operations.

Uses:

- Agricultural uses such as: crops, livestock, silviculture, nurseries, related accessory uses, etc.
- Agricultural product storage, processing, and distribution such as: grain elevators, washing, packaging, canning/bottling, rendering, etc.
- Agricultural support uses such as: agricultural equipment sales and service, feed stores, lumber and building supplies; fuel depots, etc.
- Extractive uses and related materials processing such as: gravel pits, mines, cement plants, asphalt plants, etc.
- Large-scale outdoor recreation uses such as: regional parks, golf courses, recreation trails, off-road riding facilities, riding stables, campgrounds, camps, zoos, wildlife sanctuaries, hunting preserves, natural preserves, etc.
- Community and neighborhood parks and recreation such as: playgrounds, ballfields, pools, recreation centers, sports clubs, etc.
- Institutional uses such as: schools, churches, local government facilities, utility facilities, etc.
- Very low density residential such as: farmhouses, farm worker housing, and detached single-family homes at densities equal to or greater than one unit per 20 acres



Supporting Infrastructure:

- Utilities: on-site well and septic systems
- Transportation: uses expected to generate significant traffic should be located in close proximity to collector or arterial roads

Implementation:

- To the extent possible, areas used and zoned for agriculture should remain in large, contiguous tracts
- Appropriate zoning districts may include: A. Agricultural

Institutional

Character: The Institutional land use category supports the full range of public facilities, utilities, and private/non-profit institutional land uses. These typically are mapped as single parcels or as campuses and are located throughout the County in both developed and undeveloped areas. As result, water and sanitary services availability also varies, so uses without such services should be located on lots that are large enough to adequately accommodate on-site systems for an indefinite period. For more intensive uses and those with outdoor components, adequate screening and buffering should be provided from adjacent residential development and along collector and arterial roads.

Uses:

- Community and neighborhood parks and recreation such as: playgrounds, ballfields, pools, recreation centers, sports clubs, etc.
- Public facility uses such as: government offices, schools, libraries, recreation facilities, cemeteries, public safety facilities, public works facilities, airports, etc.
- Utility facility uses such as: offices, sub-stations, switch stations, treatment plants, communication towers, water towers, etc.
- Private institutions such as: religious facilities, non-profit clubs and fraternal organizations, medical treatment facilities, etc.



Supporting Infrastructure:

- Utilities: on-site well and septic systems or centralized systems
- Transportation: uses expected to generate significant traffic should be located in close proximity to collector or arterial roads

Implementation:

- Appropriate zoning districts may include: IN. Institutional

Rural Residential

Character: The Rural Residential land use category primarily is mapped in existing low-density residential subdivisions serviced by on-site septic systems and wells where the provision of future centralized utilities is unlikely. Future subdivisions of this type should be kept a minimum and adjoin existing subdivisions in order to not break-up larger tracts in agricultural production. Further, conservation subdivision designs should be used in lieu of traditional subdivisions. A conservation subdivision is a housing development that while located in a rural area contains compact lots, common open space, and where natural land features are preserved as much as possible. Because these areas are unlikely to ever have water and sanitary services available, lots should be large enough to adequately accommodate on-site systems for an indefinite period. For more intensive uses and those with outdoor components, adequate screening and buffering should be provided from adjacent residential development and along collector and arterial roads.

Uses:

- Community and neighborhood parks and recreation such as: playgrounds, ballfields, pools, recreation centers, sports clubs, etc.
- Institutional uses such as: government offices, schools, libraries, recreation facilities, cemeteries, public safety facilities, public works facilities, airports, etc.
- Utility facility uses such as: offices, sub-stations, switch stations, treatment plants, communication towers, water towers, etc.
- Private institutions such as: religious facilities, non-profit clubs and fraternal organizations, medical treatment facilities, etc.

Supporting Infrastructure:

- Utilities: on-site well and septic systems and stormwater management facilities
- Transportation: new streets should be privately constructed, owned, and maintained

Implementation:

- Rural subdivision developments should be no larger than 10 acres or a maximum of five lots
- Appropriate zoning districts may include: RR. Residential Rural



Suburban Residential	
Character: The Suburban Residential land use category primarily includes single-family homes on large lots in areas with water and sanitary sewer services.	
Uses: • Medium density residential uses such as: detached single-family homes at densities no greater than four units per acre • Conservation subdivisions (as defined in Rural Residential) • Large-scale outdoor recreation uses such as: regional parks, golf courses, recreation trails, off-road riding facilities, riding stables, campgrounds, camps, zoos, wildlife sanctuaries, hunting preserves, natural preserves, etc. • Community and neighborhood parks and recreation uses such as: playgrounds, ballfields, pools, recreation centers, sports clubs, etc. • Institutional uses such as: schools, churches, local government facilities, utility facilities, etc.	
Supporting Infrastructure: • Utilities: centralized water and sewer services with on-site or regional stormwater management facilities • Transportation: new streets may be public or private and include curb, gutter, and sidewalks; off-street trails should be included that connect residential areas to key area destinations both within a particular development project and those in the surrounding area	
Implementation: • Suburban Residential developments should be 10 acres or larger • Appropriate zoning districts may include: R1.0, R2.5, R3.5	

Town Residential	
Character: Town Residential is mapped in the Towns of Shirley and Spring Lake to reflect existing single-family neighborhoods where platted lots are as small as 7,000sf.	
Uses: • Medium density residential uses such as: detached single-family homes at densities no greater than six units per acre • Community and neighborhood parks and recreation uses such as: playgrounds, ballfields, pools, recreation centers, sports clubs, etc. • Institutional uses such as: schools, churches, local government facilities, utility facilities, etc.	
Supporting Infrastructure: • Utilities: centralized water and sewer services • Transportation: new streets should be public, continue the existing street pattern in the community, and include curb, gutter, and sidewalks; off-street trails should be included that connect residential areas to key area destinations both within a particular development project and those in the surrounding area	
Implementation: • Appropriate zoning districts may include: R1.0, R2.5, R3.5, R5.0	

Planned Neighborhood

Character: The Planned Neighborhood land use category is intended to include large, compact, master planned tracts with a wide range of integrated and compatible uses that provide a variety of housing types, basic services, supporting public facilities, and recreation/open spaces. Use of Traditional Neighborhood Design and concepts is strongly encouraged. Planned Neighborhoods are further described in Chapter 3: Housing.

Uses:

- Medium density residential uses such as: detached single-family homes at densities no greater than six units per acre and comprising 50% to 70% of the area
- Duplex residential uses at densities no greater than fourteen units per acre and comprising 5% to 15% of the area
- Multi-family residential uses such as: town homes and apartments limited to no more than four stories at densities no greater than 20 units per acre and comprising 2% to 10% of the area
- Traditional Neighborhoods as defined in Chapter 3: Housing
- Community and neighborhood parks and recreation uses such as: playgrounds, ballfields, pools, recreation centers, sports clubs, etc. comprising at least 10% of the area
- Institutional uses such as: schools, churches, local government facilities, utility facilities, etc. comprising up to 10% of the area
- Neighborhood commercial and office uses such as: retail, restaurants, personal services, offices, medical clinics, etc. limited to two stories with floor area ratios no greater than 0.5 and comprising up to 10% of the area



Supporting Infrastructure:

- Utilities: centralized water and sewer services; regional stormwater management facilities
- Transportation: all new roads should be public, include connections to adjoining existing and future development areas, and include both collectors and local streets with curb, gutter and sidewalks; collector streets should incorporate Complete Street designs; off-street trails should be included that connect residential areas to key area destinations both within a particular development project and those in the surrounding area

Implementation:

- Planned Neighborhood development should be larger than 20 acres and preferably 40 acres or larger.
- The mix of land uses in each development project should comply with the land use percentages listed above. All projects should have mix of residential uses and outdoor recreation, but smaller projects may not include institutional and commercial uses. The county should monitor the overall percentage of uses within each sub-area as shown on the Future Land Use Map to ensure a mix of uses is provided in the appropriate proportions.
- All projects should be approved under PUD zoning only.

Multi-Family Residential

Character: This future land use category is intended to accommodate a variety of residential uses, including multi-family apartment complexes, condominiums, townhouses, and single- and two-family residences, and mobile home subdivisions and parks, all served by public sanitary sewer and water systems. Use of Traditional Neighborhood design and concepts is strongly encouraged.

Uses:

- Higher density multi-family residential uses such as: town homes, duplexes, and apartments, limited to no more than four stories at densities no greater than 32 units per acre
- Traditional Neighborhoods as defined in Chapter 3: Housing
- New mobile home subdivisions and parks should be limited to densities of 3 to 6 units per acre
- Community and neighborhood parks and recreation uses such as: playgrounds, ballfields, pools, recreation centers, sports clubs, etc.
- Institutional uses such as: schools, churches, local government facilities, utility facilities, etc.



Supporting Infrastructure:

- Utilities: centralized water and sewer services; regional stormwater management facilities
- Transportation: all new roads should be public and include both collectors and local streets with curb, gutter and sidewalks; collector streets should incorporate Complete Street designs; off-street trails should be included that connect residential areas to key area destinations both within a particular development project and those in the surrounding area

Implementation:

- Development should comply with the High-Quality Design Standards contained in the Housing Chapter of this plan
- Appropriate zoning districts may include: RM. Residential Multi-family, PUD

Town Commercial	
Character: Town Commercial is mapped in the Town of Shirley, in some of the unincorporated villages, and smaller parcels interspersed throughout the County. Accordingly, these consist of a variety of commercial uses in various configurations with specific intensities determined by zoning. Use of this category outside of the Towns should be limited.	
Uses: • Multi-family residential uses such as: town homes and apartments • Mixed-use such as: residential, commercial and/or office uses • Community and neighborhood parks and recreation uses such as: playgrounds, ballfields, pools, recreation centers, sports clubs, etc. • Institutional uses such as: schools, churches, local government facilities, utility facilities, etc. • General commercial and office uses such as: retail, restaurants, accommodations, entertainment, personal services, offices, medical clinics, etc. • Intensive commercial uses such as: service stations, auto repair, auto sales, contractor shops, repair shops, fabrication, storage, etc.; outdoor storage is discouraged and should be screened at a minimum	
Supporting Infrastructure: • Utilities: centralized water and sewer services required in Shirley or where such services are available • Transportation: all new roads should be public and include both collectors and local streets with curb, gutter, and sidewalks; individual private driveways on adjoining arterial streets are discouraged, with shared access points or access from internal streets preferred	
Implementation: • Appropriate zoning districts may include: RM. Residential Multifamily, CN. Commercial Neighborhood, CC. Commercial Community, CR. Commercial Regional	

Mixed-Use Corridors

Character: Mixed-Use Corridors are located along primary transportation links, and the existing character of the Corridors varies widely across the County including older commercial and housing uses developed when US 40 served as the National Road to small neighborhood commercial parcels in unincorporated villages to vacant land in areas expected to be developed in the future. Most areas currently do not have water and sanitary sewer services, but all are located in designated sewer service areas and are expected to have service extended to them over time. Accordingly, significant new development and redevelopment should be timed with the availability of such services. The Regional Community Profiles address the future character of each of these areas, but in general, strip-type development should be avoided with a focus more on nodes and internal connectivity and integration among different uses/developments. Appropriate densities, intensities, and mix of uses for a particular Corridor or site will be determined during the development review/zoning process.



Uses:

- Multi-family residential uses such as: town homes and apartments
- Mixed-use such as: residential, commercial and/or office uses
- Community and neighborhood parks and recreation uses such as: playgrounds, ballfields, pools, recreation centers, sports clubs, etc.
- Institutional uses such as: schools, churches, local government facilities, utility facilities, etc.
- General commercial and office uses such as: retail, restaurants, accommodations, entertainment, personal services, offices, medical clinics, etc.
- Intensive commercial uses such as: service stations, auto repair, auto sales, contractor shops, repair shops, fabrication, storage, etc.; outdoor storage is discouraged and should be screened at a minimum

Supporting Infrastructure:

- Utilities: centralized water and sewer services for significant new development and redevelopment
- Transportation: all new roads should be public and include both collectors and local streets with curb, gutter, and sidewalks; individual private driveways on adjoining arterial streets are discouraged, with shared access points or access from internal streets preferred

Implementation:

- Mixed- Use Corridor development should be 5 acres or larger
- Appropriate zoning districts may include: RM. Residential Multi-family, CN. Commercial Neighborhood, CC. Commercial Community, CR. Commercial Regional, with PUD zoning preferred

Village Center

Character: Village Centers are located at major crossroads where water and sewer facilities are or will be available in addition to supporting public facilities. These are intended to be compact and highly integrated master planned developments with a range of uses similar to Planned Neighborhoods but with more dense and intensive uses. Traditional Neighborhood Design principles should be employed to create unique and inviting mixed-use environments that are somewhat self-contained. Each Village Center should include usable public space connected by safe and inviting pedestrian spines that promote walkability to goods and services that meet the daily needs of the residents. The central core of each Village Center is expected to be more intensive with lower density areas, if included, located closer to the periphery.

Uses:

- Medium density residential uses such as: detached single family homes at densities no greater than six units per acre
- Duplex residential uses
- Multi-family residential uses such as: town homes and apartments limited to no more than six stories at densities no greater than 32 units per acre
- Traditional Neighborhoods as defined in Chapter 3: Housing
- Mixed-use such as: residential, commercial and/or office uses limited to no more than six stories with floor area ratios no greater than 2.0
- Community and neighborhood parks and recreation uses such as: playgrounds, ballfields, pools, recreation centers, sports clubs, etc.
- General commercial and office uses such as: retail, restaurants, accommodations, entertainment, personal services, offices, medical clinics, etc. limited to no more than six stories with floor area ratios no greater than 2.0
- Intensive commercial uses such as: service stations, auto repair, auto sales, contractor shops, repair shops, fabrication, storage, etc. limited to buildings no larger than 20,000 square feet and no more than two stories with no outdoor storage

Supporting Infrastructure:

- Utilities: centralized water and sewer services; regional stormwater management facilities
- Transportation: all new roads should be public and include both collectors and local streets with curb, gutter and sidewalks; collector streets should incorporate Complete Street designs; private driveways on arterial streets is discouraged, with access preferred from internal streets; off-street trails should be included that connect residential areas to key area destinations both within a particular development project and those in the surrounding area
- Parking: surface parking should be kept to a minimum with shared parking encouraged and parking for larger buildings located under the building or in structures

Implementation:

- A wide mix of land uses should be included in each development with no single use occupying more than 60% of the area. The County should monitor the overall percentage of uses within each Village Center to ensure an appropriate mix of uses are included
- Village Centers should be developed under a single PUD or at least in quadrants



Regional Center

Character: Regional Centers are compact, dense nodes offering a mix of uses. Although these areas are accessed primarily by cars, pedestrian movement within a node should be encouraged and accommodated. Critical densities are required to achieve the kind of animation and activity envisioned within these nodes. To accomplish this, uses should be mixed vertically and in progression of scale that allows the built form to transition from highest intensity in the middle to lower scale development that would be complimentary to its adjacent uses at the periphery. Considerations to design should include provisions for open space, Complete Street typologies to support walking and cycling, amenities that support the broader development, recreation centers, and institutional uses such as libraries.

Uses:

- Multi-family residential uses such as: town homes and apartments
- Mixed-use such as: residential, commercial and/or office uses
- Community and neighborhood parks and recreation uses such as: playgrounds, ballfields, pools, recreation centers, sports clubs, etc.
- Institutional uses such as: schools, churches, local government facilities, utility facilities, etc.
- General commercial uses such as: retail, restaurants, accommodations, entertainment, personal services, etc.
- Office and research use such as: regional and corporate offices, medical clinics and hospitals, research and development, call centers, etc.
- Intensive commercial uses such as: service stations, auto repair, auto sales, contractor shops, repair shops, fabrication, storage, etc.; no outdoor storage

Supporting Infrastructure:

- Utilities: centralized water and sewer services; regional stormwater management facilities
- Transportation: all new roads should be public and include both collectors and local streets with curb, gutter, and sidewalks; collector streets should incorporate Complete Street designs; private driveways on arterial streets is discouraged, with access preferred from internal streets; off-street trails should be included that connect residential areas to key area destinations both within the Regional Center and those in the surrounding area
- Parking: surface parking should be kept to a minimum with shared parking encouraged and parking for larger buildings located under the building or in structures

Implementation:

- Regional Centers should be developed under a single PUD or at least in quadrants



Business Park

Character: Business Parks' primary uses include office campuses, research and development, and light industrial while allowing supportive uses such as commercial and residential uses. All supporting uses should be limited to no more than 25% of the total area of a business park. Any intensive commercial and industrial activities should be conducted within an enclosed building and should not include heavy industrial, production-based uses, or those that generate significant truck traffic such as logistics and warehousing. These areas are intended to be compact and highly integrated master planned developments that create a campus atmosphere with a focus on high-quality building designs, materials, and landscaping. Each Business Park should include usable public space connected by safe and inviting pedestrian spines that promote walkability between primary employment and supporting uses.



Uses:

- Multi-family residential uses such as: town homes and apartments limited to no more than six stories at densities no greater than 32 units per acre
- Mixed-use such as: residential, commercial and/or office uses limited to no more than six stories with floor area ratios no greater than 3.0 comprising no more than 20% of the area
- Community and neighborhood parks and recreation uses such as: playgrounds, ballfields, pools, recreation centers, sports clubs, etc.
- Institutional uses such as: schools, churches, local government facilities, utility facilities, etc. comprising no more than 10% of the area
- General commercial uses such as: retail, restaurants, accommodations, entertainment, personal services, etc. limited to no more than six stories with floor area ratios no greater than 3.0 comprising no more than 10% of the area
- Office and research use such as: regional and corporate offices, medical clinics and hospitals, research and development, call centers, etc.
- Intensive commercial uses such as: service stations, auto repair, auto sales, contractor shops, repair shops, fabrication, storage, etc. limited to buildings no larger than 200,000 square feet and no more than two stories with fully screened outdoor storage comprising no more than 10% of the area
- Light industrial uses such as: assembly, fabrication, packaging, processing, etc. that generate minimal noise, soot, odors and other potential nuisances for adjoining properties; warehousing and logistics as principal uses are discouraged; limited to buildings no larger than 200,000 square feet and no more than two stories with fully screened outdoor storage

Supporting Infrastructure:

- Utilities: centralized water and sewer services; regional stormwater management facilities
- Transportation: all new roads should be public and include both collectors and local streets with curb, gutter, and sidewalks; individual private driveways on adjoining arterial streets are discouraged, with access from internal streets preferred; off-street trails should be included that connect to supporting commercial, open space, and residential areas

Implementation:

- Business Park development should be 10 acres or larger and preferably 20 acres or larger
- Appropriate zoning districts may include: IBP. Industrial Business Park, IL. Industrial Light, IG. Industrial General, with PUD zoning preferred

Industrial

Character: Industrial areas are intended to support a full range of intensive commercial, manufacturing, and logistics uses with supportive commercial and residential uses. All supporting uses should be limited to no more than 25% of the total area. Outdoor storage and operations should be screened along roads at the periphery of an Industrial area, and deep, dense landscape buffers should be provided where Industrial areas abut or are across the street from residential uses. Master planned Industrial areas are preferred that include trails and pedestrian spines that connect to nearby supporting commercial and residential uses.

Uses:

- Multi-family residential uses such as: town homes and apartments limited to no more than six stories at densities no greater than 32 units per acre and comprising no more than 10% of the area
- Mixed-use such as: residential, commercial and/or office uses limited to no more than six stories with floor area ratios no greater than 3.0 comprising no more than 20% of the area
- Community and neighborhood parks and recreation uses such as: playgrounds, ballfields, pools, recreation centers, sports clubs, etc.
- Institutional uses such as: local government facilities, utility facilities, etc. comprising no more than 10% of the area
- General commercial uses such as: retail, restaurants, accommodations, entertainment, personal services, etc. comprising no more than 20% of the area
- Office and research use such as: regional and corporate offices, medical clinics and hospitals, research and development, call centers, etc.
- Intensive commercial uses such as: service stations, auto repair, auto sales, contractor shops, repair shops, fabrication, storage, etc.
- Light industrial uses such as: assembly, fabrication, packaging, processing, etc. that generate minimal noise, soot, odors and other potential nuisances for adjoining properties; outdoor operations and storage areas should be fully screened where they adjoin non-industrial properties or arterial roads
- Warehousing and logistics use
- Manufacturing uses

Supporting Infrastructure:

- Utilities: centralized water and sewer services; regional stormwater management facilities
- Transportation: all new roads should be public and include both collectors and local streets with curb, gutter, and sidewalks; individual private driveways on adjoining arterial streets are discouraged, with access from internal streets preferred; off-street trails should be included that connect to supporting commercial, open space, and residential areas

Implementation:

- Industrial development should be 10 acres or larger and preferably 20 acres or larger
- Appropriate zoning districts may include: IBP. Industrial Business Park, IL. Industrial Light, IG. Industrial General, with PUD zoning preferred



Manufacturing

Character: Manufacturing areas are intended to support large-scale, employment-intensive uses primarily engaged in manufacturing with all supporting commercial and institutional uses limited to 10% of the area. Due to their associated lower job density and wages, warehousing and logistic uses are allowed only as accessories to a principal manufacturing use on the same site. Outdoor storage and operations should be screened along roads at the periphery, and deep, dense landscape buffers should be provided where Manufacturing areas are adjacent to residential uses.

Uses:

- Community and neighborhood parks and recreation uses such as: playgrounds, ballfields, pools, recreation centers, sports clubs, etc.
- Institutional uses such as: schools, churches, local government facilities, utility facilities, etc. comprising no more than 10% of the area
- General commercial uses such as: retail, restaurants, accommodations, entertainment, personal services, etc. comprising no more than 10% of the area
- Office and research use such as: regional and corporate offices, medical clinics and hospitals, research and development, call centers, etc.
- Intensive commercial uses such as: service stations, auto repair, auto sales, contractor shops, repair shops, fabrication, storage, etc.
- Light industrial uses such as: assembly, fabrication, packaging, processing, etc. that generate minimal noise, soot, odors and other potential nuisances for adjoining properties; warehousing and logistics as principal uses are discouraged; outdoor storage should be fully screened
- Warehousing and logistics uses are limited to accessory uses that support a principal, on-site manufacturing use that is at least half of the size of the warehouse component
- Manufacturing uses



Supporting Infrastructure:

- Utilities: centralized water and sewer services; regional stormwater management facilities
- Transportation: all new roads should be public and include both collectors and local streets with curb, gutter, and sidewalks; individual private driveways on adjoining arterial streets are discouraged, with access from internal streets preferred; off-street trails should be included that connect to supporting commercial, open space, and residential areas

Implementation:

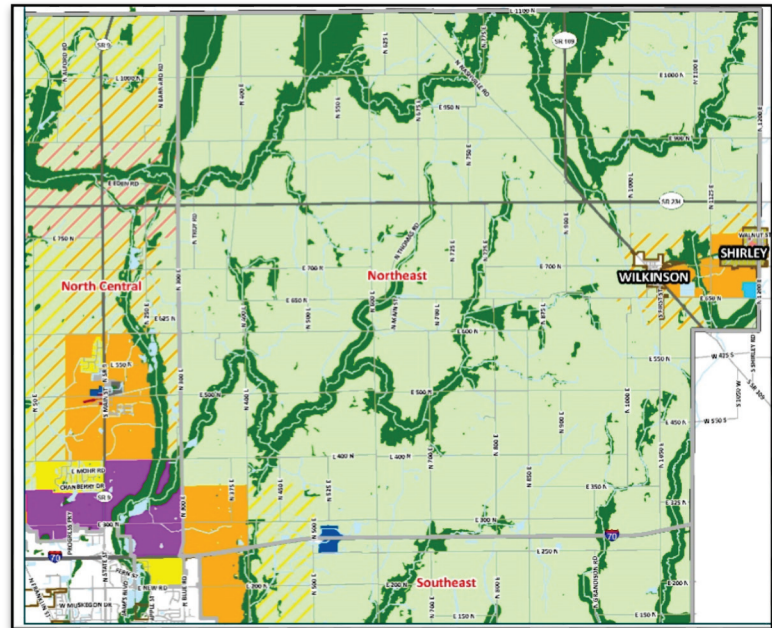
- Manufacturing development should be 20 acres or larger and preferably 40 acres or larger
- Appropriate zoning districts may include: IBP. Industrial Business Park, IL. Industrial Light, IG. Industrial General, with PUD zoning preferred

REGIONAL COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

Northeast Region

General Land Uses and Character

- Predominately agriculture now and in the future
- Limited development potential adjacent to municipalities where utilities are available
- Residential subdivisions should be kept to a minimum



City, Towns, and Villages

City of Greenfield

- Long term growth of residential within City sewer service area

Town of Shirley

- Minimal changes to existing or planned uses within municipal limits
 - Limit expansion of non-residential uses on north side of town
- Long term growth of residential development adjacent to municipal limits as utilities become available
- Potential for new business park south of Town as utilities become available

Town of Wilkinson

- Long term growth of residential development adjacent to municipal limits as utilities become available

Village of Willow Branch

- Infill vacant parcels, but maintain densities that can be served adequately by on-site septic and wells
- Minimize development expansion onto adjacent agricultural land

Transportation Recommendations

- Evaluate reclassification of 700 N between Shirley and Wilkinson to collector or minor arterial
 - Incorporate Complete Streets design
- Improve pedestrian/bike path connection between Shirley and Wilkinson
 - Incorporate pedestrian/bike path along 700 N
 - Use former rail corridor to extend Shirley Trail to Wilkinson
- I-70 interchange in region not warranted in next 20 years
 - Consider additional setbacks along 600 E to permit future right-of-way expansion

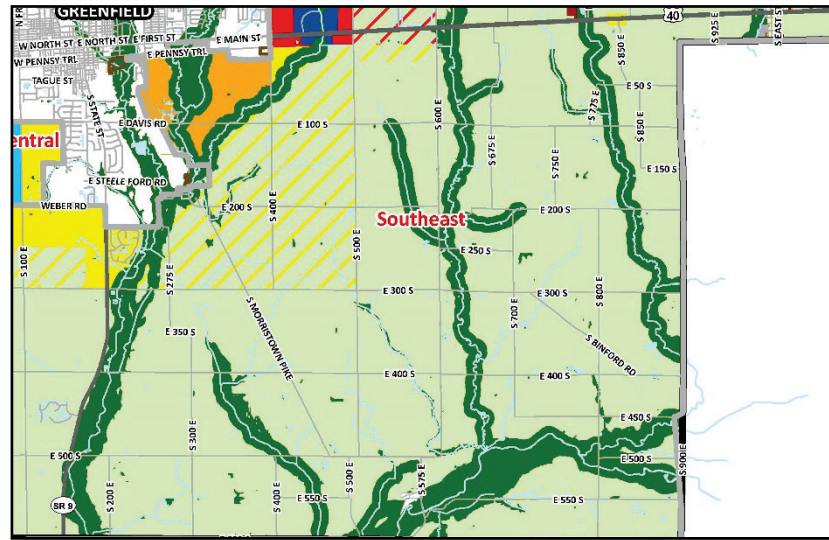
Utilities Recommendations

- Maintain existing limit of Greenfield sewer service area
- Address Shirley sewer treatment deficiencies to permit limited growth
- Seek County and state approval of Shirley sewer service area boundary beyond current municipal limits

Southeast Region

General Land Uses and Character

- Predominately agriculture now and in the future
- Limited development potential adjacent to municipalities where utilities are available
- Residential subdivisions should be kept to a minimum
- Prepare US 40 corridor plan to:
 - Improve appearance of this important gateway to the County
 - Determine detailed land uses particularly within the villages
 - Honor and reflect heritage as National Highway



City, Towns, and Villages

City of Greenfield

- Long term growth of residential within City sewer service area

Village of Charlottesville

- Infill vacant parcels that can be served adequately by on-site septic and wells
- Minimize development expansion onto adjacent agricultural land

Village of Cleveland

- Infill vacant parcels, but maintain densities that can adequately be served by on-site septic and well
- Minimize development expansion onto adjacent agricultural land

Village of Westland

- Infill vacant parcels, but maintain densities that can adequately be served by on-site septic and well
- Minimize development expansion onto adjacent agricultural land

Village of Carrollton (Finley)

- Infill vacant parcels, but maintain densities that can adequately be served by on-site septic and well
- Minimize development expansion onto adjacent agricultural land

Transportation Recommendations

- See the Hancock County Trails Plan for priority trail improvements in the region

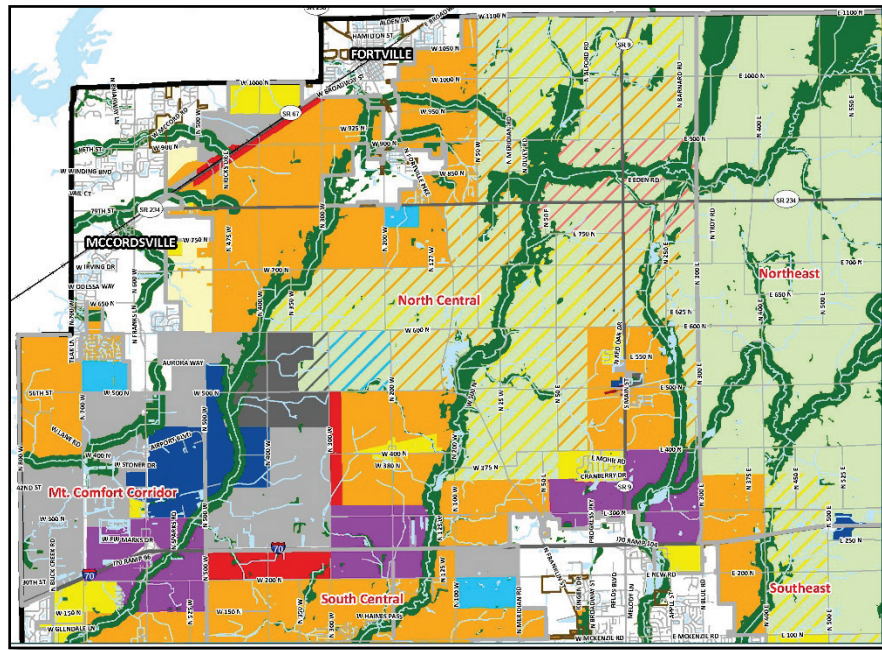
Utilities Recommendations

- Maintain existing limit of Greenfield sewer service area
- Address failing septic systems in Charlottesville

North Central Region

General Land Uses and Character

- Significant growth potential with extensions of utilities and transportation corridors
- Non-residential development along SR 9 should be limited to nodes, not strips
- Build Regional Center on both sides of planned I-70/200 W interchange
- Develop area east of airport with airport-compatible industrial uses
- Retain significant industrial land east of airport for large manufacturers/higher wage employers
- Transition to mixed residential development east of 300 W
- Preserve more rural/pastoral character along Fortville Pike
- Separate and buffer areas of higher intensity development from low density residential



City, Towns, and Villages

Greenfield

- Build Regional Center on both sides of I-70/SR 9 interchange
- Develop mixed density neighborhoods within sewer service area

Fortville

- Build mixed density neighborhood around schools at 200 W/SR 234
- Develop mixed density neighborhoods within Sewer Service Area

Eden

- Build Village Center at SR 9/SR 234 intersection when utilities become available

Maxwell

- Concentrate non-residential development in area around SR9/500 N intersection

Mohawk

- Build mixed-density neighborhoods around existing village
- Provide adequate buffers to more intensive development to the south and west

Transportation Recommendations

- Construct interchange at I-70 and 200 W
- Classify 200 W/300 W as major arterials
- Classify 300 N and 500 N as minor arterials
- Use Complete Streets design concepts for all road upgrades
- See the Hancock County Trails Plan for priority trail improvements in the region

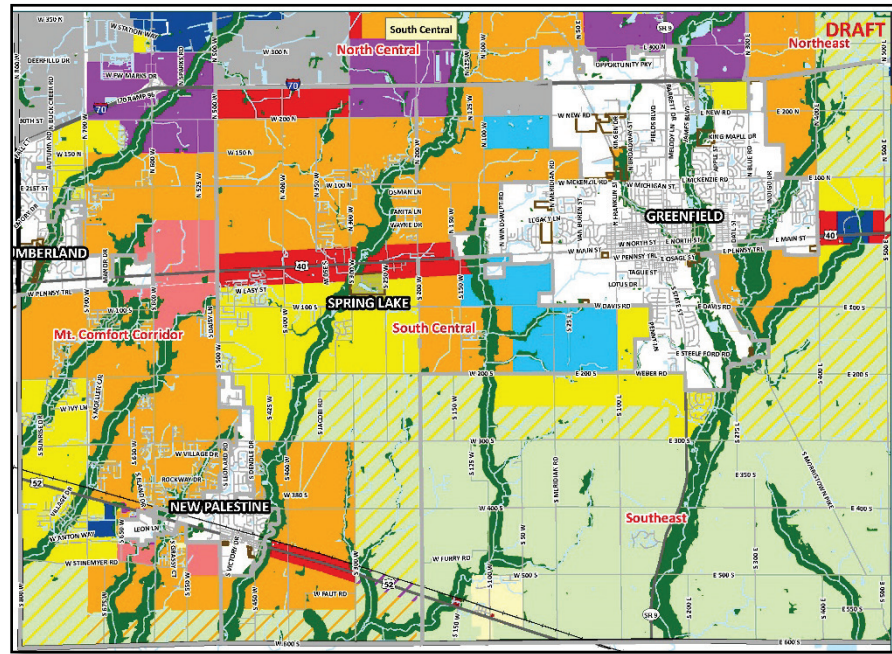
Utilities Recommendations

- Work with NineStar to develop long term phasing plan to extend utilities throughout the region
- Work with NineStar and Greenfield to develop long term utility phasing plan north along SR 9
- Work with Fortville to develop long term utility phasing plan to the east and south

South Central Region

General Land Uses and Character

- Significant growth potential with extensions of utilities and transportation corridors, generally between I-70 and US 40
- Extend mixed-use corridor between 300 N and I-70, encourage nodal development and limit logistics and warehouse uses
- Development in Planned Neighborhood areas to follow utility expansion
- Prepare US 40 corridor plan to:
 - Improve appearance of this important gateway to the County
 - Determine detailed land uses particularly within the villages
 - Honor and reflect heritage as National Highway



City, Towns, and Villages

Greenfield

- Expand employment uses south of US 40 and west of current City limits
- Develop mixed-density neighborhoods within sewer service area

New Palestine

- Develop phased approach to utility extensions and development within Sewer Service Area
- Promote commercial development in nodes rather than strips along US 52

Cumberland

- Develop phased approach to utility extensions and development within Sewer Service Area

Spring Lake

- Maintain existing land use pattern and consider infill opportunities for new homes
- Preserve and monitor water quality and protect natural resources, including Spring Lake, through development policies that reduce runoff

Philadelphia

- Infill vacant parcels, but maintain densities that can be served adequately by on-site septic and well
- Prepare more detailed growth and development plan with centralized utilities as part of US 40 study

Gem

- Infill vacant parcels, but maintain densities that can be served adequately by on-site septic and well
- Prepare more detailed growth and development plan with centralized utilities as part of US 40 study

Transportation Recommendations

- Upgrade 200 N to Minor Arterial
- Upgrade 200 W to Major Arterial
- See the Hancock County Trails Plan for priority trail improvements in the region

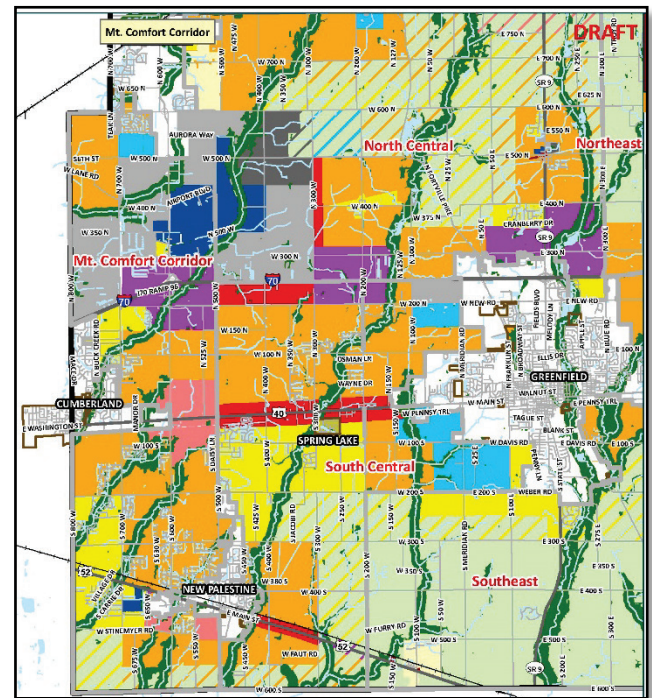
Utilities Recommendations

- Develop long term phasing plans to extend Cumberland and NineStar utilities into the region
- Address New Palestine sewer treatment deficiencies

Mount Comfort Corridor Region

General Land Uses and Character

- Rapidly developing with mostly industrial development north of I-70 interchange area
- Develop Regional Center on both sides of I-70 interchange
- Significant potential for mostly residential growth south of I-70 interchange area
- Detailed land uses and character in recent Corridor Plan override this Comprehensive Plan



City, Towns, and Villages

McCordsville

- Enter into agreement with the County for long term expansion to the south
- Enter into agreement with Fortville to establish growth area boundaries

Cumberland

- Build Village Center at intersection of Mount Comfort Road and US 40

New Palestine

- Continue building Village Center west of 600 W south of US 52
- Build Village Center west of 500 W across from high school
- Develop phased approach to utility extensions and development within City Sewer Service Area

Mount Comfort

- Prepare for transition away from lower density residential use to more intensive development

Transportation Recommendations

- Upgrade 525 W to Minor Arterial between US 400 and 200 N
- Connect 500 W and 525 W west of Gem
- See Mount Comfort Corridor Plan for additional transportation recommendations
- See the Hancock County Trails Plan for priority trail improvements in the region

Utilities Recommendations

- Coordinate McCordsville growth with Aqua Utilities
- Work with Cumberland to develop long term utility phasing plan to the east
- Address New Palestine sewer treatment deficiencies
- Extend New Palestine sewer service to subdivisions with failing septic systems northeast of Town

ADDITIONAL LAND USE STRATEGIES

Coordinate with Hancock County Municipalities on Strategic Growth Areas

As highlighted elsewhere in this Plan, Hancock County's future growth and development should be prioritized in areas already served by utilities. These utility service areas correspond with the future growth areas surrounding Hancock County's municipal jurisdictions. Encouraging growth in the areas nearest municipalities reduces sprawl and the loss of agricultural land to spot development. The process and criteria for reviewing potential development should be created with opportunities for direct communication and collaboration between Hancock County and the relevant municipalities and should primarily be prompted by rezoning requests. Additionally, as municipalities develop and implement their own plans and policies or grow beyond their current boundaries, they should work with the County to limit conflicts with the County's Plans. Further discussion of this is described in Chapter 8: Intergovernmental Cooperation.

Hancock County Smart Growth Policies:

The following Smart Growth Policies take the foundational principles described on page 19 of the Plan and further applies them to Hancock County and its vision for the future:

- Provide a mix of land uses and include adequate buffering between uses of differing intensity
- Take advantage of compact and green/sustainable building design
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
- Create walkable neighborhoods
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
- Provide a variety of transportation choices and develop them concurrently with new development
- Make development and incentive decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

Develop a County Impact Fee Policy

Preparing for and enabling development can be an expensive endeavor for the County with the costs for infrastructure construction and maintenance, impacts on public safety staffing, and other public facilities and services. These costs often fall to the County; however, alternative financing strategies are available to lessen the burden and have potential developers shoulder some of the cost. The County should complete an Impact Fee Study and develop a policy for implementing development impact fees.



Incorporate Public Safety and Public Facilities into the Development Review Process

As mentioned above, development and the additional residents, employees, and traffic that it generates can have significant impacts on public resources. Hancock County Fire Districts and Sheriff's Department are currently feeling the strain of increased emergency calls and traffic accidents, particularly on the west side of the County. Additionally, the design, site layout, and traffic circulation of new developments can impact the ability of public safety personnel to respond to emergencies. Public Safety leadership, including Fire District chiefs and the County Sheriff, should be engaged early in the development review process to have the opportunity to provide input on development proposals and identify potential impacts on their departments. Hancock County, in collaboration with its public safety partners, should develop and codify a development review process that incorporates public safety review as well as concept approval criteria based on public safety impacts. Additionally, development proposals should require applicants to include impacts to public safety as part of their submittals.

Create and Maintain a Future Right of Way and Public Facilities Map

A Future Right of Way and Public Facilities Map is a county-wide map that serves as a public and internal record to indicate where Hancock County government is likely to require rights-of-way, easements, or land for future roads, drainageways, utilities, recreation facilities, and public facilities. The Future Right of Way and Facilities Map will enable staff as well as landowners to plan for construction projects and helps implement the Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map. It is recommended that the County develop a process for preparing the map based on the recommended improvements as shown in the Thoroughfare Plan and Trails Plan and the Future Land Use Map as it relates to the need for future public conservation and open space lands.





5

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



CHAPTER 5: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hancock County Economic Development Strategy is a framework that builds off of the Future Land Use Plan and Thoroughfare Plan with strategic steps that help guide economic growth and development into the future. The Economic Development Strategy is centered around six key themes that emerged from the conversations, interviews, and data analysis. They are intended to serve as the core elements of Hancock County's economic development strategy moving forward and introduce an Implementation Program. Each theme includes three strategies. The strategies provide a detailed roadmap for how to achieve the Economic Mission Statement & Themes as well as specific actions to guide day-to-day implementation between HEDC, County staff, partner organizations, and the community.

The following executive summary provides a synthesized version of the Economic Development Strategy. The complete Hancock County Economic Development Strategy is included as a subsection to the Comprehensive Plan at the end of the document.



As part of the Economic Development Strategy, a draft mission statement was developed to serve as the organizing element for each of the themes. Overall, goal of the economic development strategy was designed to begin with the end in mind. The end, is encompassed in the following economic mission statement:

“To ensure future growth produces an exceptional environment for Hancock County residents and businesses to live, work, and prosper.”

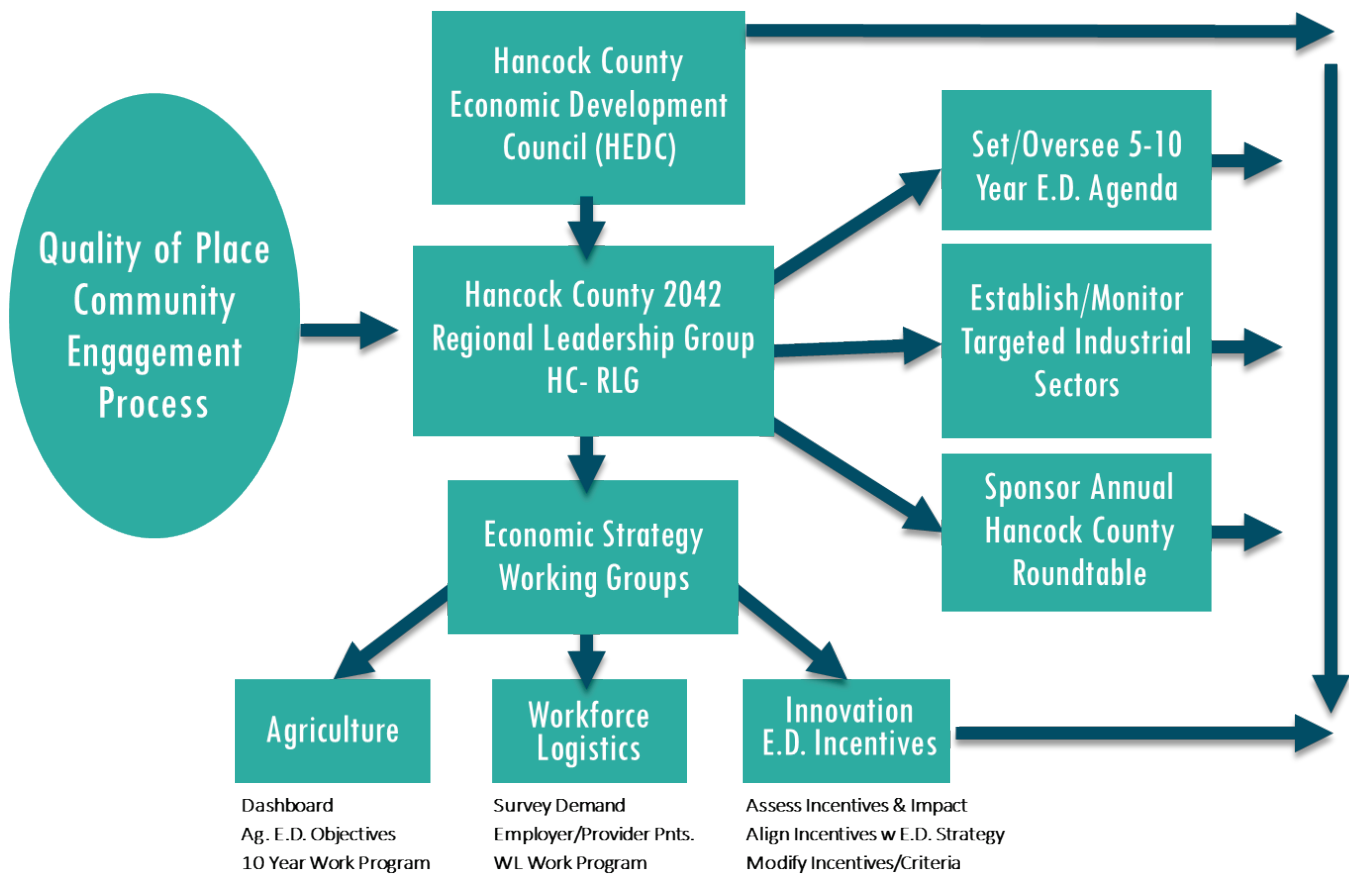
Economic Development Strategy Themes & Strategies

The themes, strategies, and detailed initiatives were developed to make it easier for county and economic development leaders to move seamlessly from the adoption of the economic development strategy to its implementation. They are intended to address the first eighteen to thirty-six months of activity for each theme. It is assumed that those working with each theme will expand and extend the work where appropriate.

THEMES	STRATEGIES
1. Establish Hancock County as a Prominent Voice in the Region	1.1 – Organize "Hancock County 2042 Regional Leadership Group (HC-RLG)
	1.2 – Set 5- & 10-Year E.D. Agenda (using Themes and CEDS as guides)
	1.3 – Annual Hancock County Regional Roundtable
2. Agriculture as a Foundational Asset	2.1 – Establish Hancock County Agricultural Dashboard
	2.2 – Establish 10 Year Quantitative Objectives – Farm Activity
	2.3 – Formulate Policies/Programming/Incentives to Support 10 Year Quantitative Objectives
3. Diversify Business Base	3.1 – Confirm and Commit to Targeted Industrial Sectors
	3.2 – Establish 3-5 Year Goals and Benchmarks for Each Industrial Sector
	3.3 – Formulate Hancock County E.D. Targeted Industry Strategy – Align w Region and State
4. Comprehensive Workforce Logistics	4.1 – Define Workforce Provider Eco-system and Potential Service Gaps
	4.2 – Overview of Workforce Demand – Present and Future
	4.3 – Outline Short- & Long-Term Responses to Address Workforce Challenges
5. Quality of Place as an Economic Development Incentive	5.1 – Build understanding and consensus on how quality of place supports positive growth outcomes
	5.2 – Establish County and Growth District Quality of Place and Amenity Priorities
	5.3 – Quality of Place/Amenities 10 Year Implementation Program
6. Innovative Use of Economic Development Incentives	6.1 – Assess Current Economic Development Incentives
	6.2 – Perform best practices review aligned with proposed E.D. Themes
	6.3 – Formalize E.D. Objectives and Incentives Required to Realize Them

Economic Development Implementation Program

The Economic Development Strategy Implementation Program below provides an overview of the key groups and programs, that if organized and executed upon will produce the outcomes identified in each of the economic development themes. The Hancock County Economic Development Council (HEDC) will be accountable for activating the implementation program on behalf of local public and private sector leaders. The implementation groups and programs should start the work as envisioned in each theme's strategies and initiatives.





6

THOROUGHFARE PLAN



CHAPTER 6: THOROUGHFARE PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

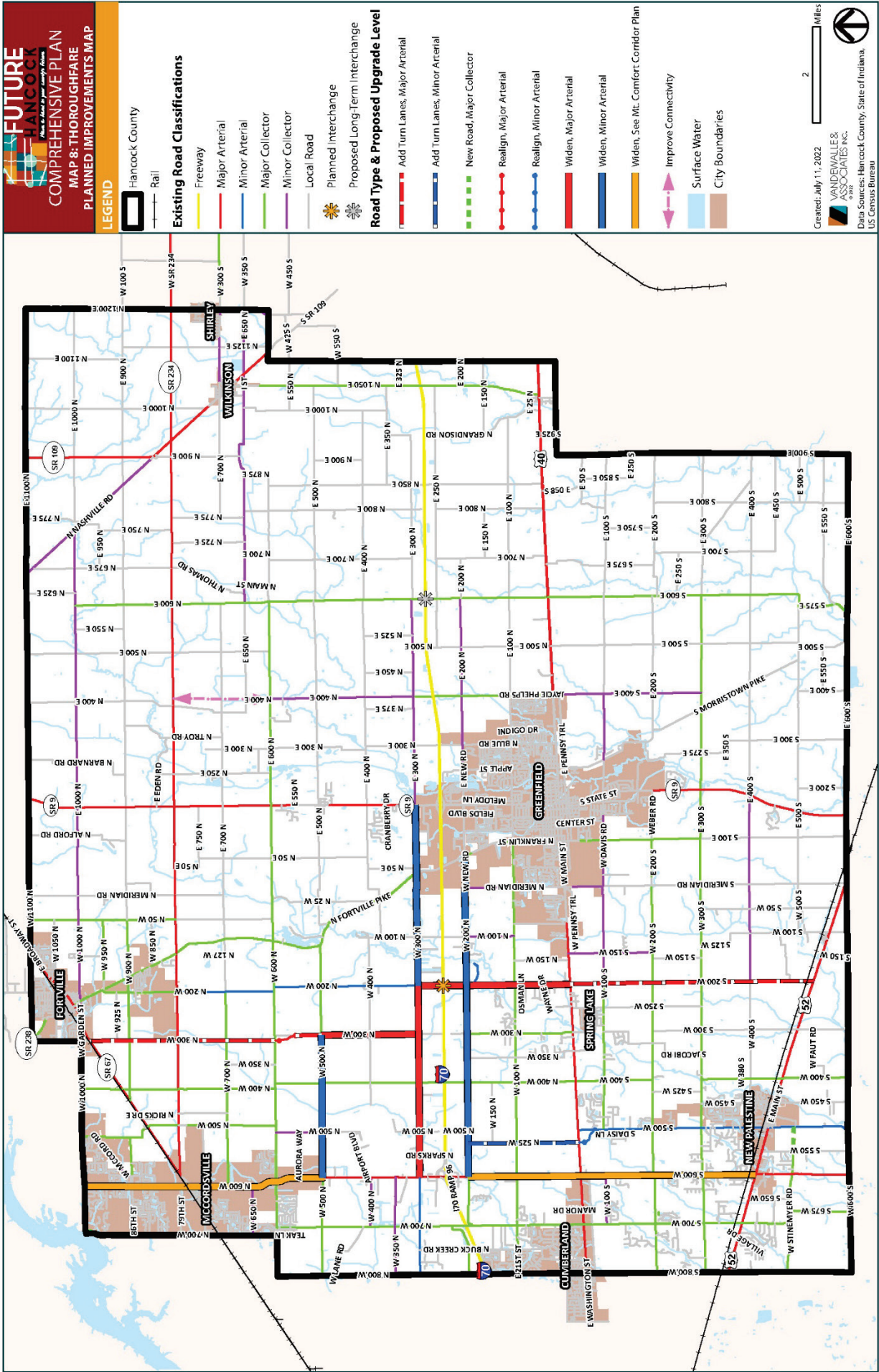
The Hancock County Thoroughfare Plan provides a vision for the County's future transportation system and the projects and priorities for achieving it. The transportation system and its condition, maintenance, and efficiency are of the utmost importance in the quality of life of residents and businesses in Hancock County. Using the Future Hancock Vision and Strategic Objective as a guiding principle, the Thoroughfare Plan was developed based on public input and discussions with County, regional, and state transportation professionals. It was informed by the Future Land Use Map's land use recommendations' potential impacts on traffic. It is a long-term plan with much of the implementation expected to be 5-10 years out. The Thoroughfare Plan includes detailed analysis of existing transportation conditions in the County as well as future traffic models.

The Thoroughfare Plan will support and implement the Mt. Comfort Corridor Visioning Project as well as the 2018 Hancock County Trails Plan recommendations. Final recommendations of the Thoroughfare Plan suggest the future change in the designation of different county roads and what kinds of upgrades or classifications are most appropriate.

Future Hancock Vision Strategic Objective E: Invest in a Robust and Efficient Transportation System Concurrent with Development

Due to global and national shifts in supply chain management, inventory control, and logistics, as well as shifting population dynamics bringing personal vehicle traffic, it is imperative that the County maintain a highly functional, multi-faceted transportation system for goods and people by:

- Working with State, regional, and local partners to have a safe, efficient network of roads within the County to improve both freight and passenger mobility
- Working with the state to make improvements to I-70 and interchanges and state roads
- Working with IndyGo, Central Indiana Regional Transit Authority, and Hancock Area Rural Transit to create a strong multimodal transportation system that supports Hancock's economic development objectives, that may include:
 - Workforce Connector services
 - Transit expansion
 - Innovative private partnerships to address employer demands
- Planning for the increased electrification of all transportation modes by working with public and private entities to strategically locate charging stations
- Implementing the Hancock County Trails Plan and develop policies for the addition of bike lanes and sidewalks with new development to improve walkability
- Implementing a Complete Streets approach on new and expanded State, local, and County roads
- Coordinating with the Indianapolis Regional Airport to avoid conflicting land uses in growth areas surrounding the Airport



Prioritized Projects

The study team prioritized potential future projects for roads and trails in Hancock County based on the following criteria:

Urgency: the degree to which the project is needed in the near-term to address existing or imminent motor vehicle congestion, or to fill a critical gap in the pedestrian and bicycle system.

Synergy: the degree to which the project provides multiple benefits for mobility, accessibility, safety, and economic impacts.

Value: a planning-level assignment of relative level of benefit vs. relative project costs.

Each project included in the Thoroughfare Plan Map and the Tier 1 and Tier 2 Priority Trails in the Trails Plan Map were scored from 1 to 3 on the three criteria above with 1 being higher or better compared to 3 being lower or poorer. Consequently, the lowest priority scores (PS) have the highest priority. Therefore, a score of PS of 3 represents the highest priority, while a PS of 9 represents a low priority project.

Motor Vehicle Project	Priority Score
Tier 1	
CR 600 W from US 40 to CR 200 N	4
CR 600 W from CR 500 N to E 96th Street	4
CR 600 W from US 52 to US 40	4
Tier 2	
CR 200 W from CR 200 N to CR 300 N	6
CR 200 W/CR 300 W from CR 300 N to CR 500 N	6
CR 200 W from US 40 to CR 200 N	6
CR 300 N from CR 600 W to CR 300 W	7
CR 300 N from CR 200 W to SR 9	6
CR 500 N from CR 600 W to CR 300 W	7
CR 200 N from CR 600 W to Fortville Pike	6
Tier 3	
CR 525 W from US 40 to CR 200 N	8
CR 300 E/CR 400 E from I-70 to SR 234	8
Trails Project	Priority Score
Tier A	
CR 600 W Multiuse Trail/Protected Bike Lane from US 52 to CR 500 N	3
Pennsy Trail Multiuse Trail from CR 600 W to CR 150 W	3
Tier B	
CR 700 W Multiuse Trail from US 52 to Pennsy trail	5
CR 700 W Multiuse Trail from CR 100 N to CR 600 N	5
CR 500 W Multiuse Trail from CR 300 S to CR 100 S	5
SR 9 Multiuse Trail from CR 300 N to CR 500 N	5
Railroad Street Multiuse Trail from Wilkinson to Shirley	5
Tier C	
Pennsy Trail from CR 400 E to the County Line	6
Sugar Creek Multiuse Trail from New Palestine to Eden	7
Fortville Pike Multiuse Trail from Beckenholt Park to Fortville	7



7

COMMUNITY LIVABILITY



CHAPTER 7: COMMUNITY LIVABILITY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses several broad and interrelated elements that are critical to the long-term viability and success of Hancock County. Many Hancock County residents enjoy a high quality of life due to its community character, small-town feel, and accessibility within the Indianapolis metro region. However, in many of the conversations throughout the planning process residents, officials, stakeholders, and the Future Hancock Steering Committee raised the need for more amenities within the County that make it a desirable and attractive place to live and that as the population within the County grows additional public and private gathering spaces, parks and recreation, entertainment, transportation improvements, and community development opportunities are needed. These enhancements improve quality of life for all residents and in this Plan are described as community livability enhancements.

What is Livability?

Specifically, livability refers to the suitability of a place to support a high quality of life that contributes to holistic health and happiness of its residents. While livability is defined by each individual community, it often encompasses topics such as the built environment, housing options, physical and mental wellbeing, ease of access and traveling throughout the community, parks and open space, economic vitality, social infrastructure, cultural resources, safe transportation options, and more.

While this chapter focuses specifically on livability and includes discussion of sustainability, amenities, public health, and quality of life, these topics are overarching in nature and influence nearly every other element of the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, references to these concepts and related themes are found throughout this Plan. This is by design, as they are inseparable from other Comprehensive Plan elements such as land use, natural resources, economic development, etc.



GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICES

Definitions of goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations are found in the Introduction Chapter of this Plan.

Goals

1. Continue to build on and improve the quality of life for Hancock County residents.
2. Establish Hancock County as a community of choice for the Indianapolis region that provides a range of attractive public and private amenities.
3. Proactively advance public health through planning, regional collaboration, targeted policies, and initiatives.

Objectives

1. Recognize the link between the built environment and public health outcomes, continue to work with public health organizations to improve housing, equity, education, food access, clean air, literacy, and other social determinants of health.
2. Expand open space, recreation, and parkland opportunities in Hancock County, potentially through a County Parks Board and County parkland acquisition strategy.
3. Preserve Hancock County's distinct historic and cultural features.
4. Develop a Hancock County brand and identity as a community of choice in the greater-Indianapolis region to attract families, amenities, services, and employers.
5. Help strengthen Hancock County's municipalities so that they are successful and continue to positively contribute to Hancock County's character and identity.
6. Continue to support Hancock County's schools as one of Hancock County's strongest and most attractive assets.
7. Strive for increased civic engagement and encourage increased participation in the County decision making process.

Policies

1. Expand multi-modal transportation opportunities and connections throughout the community to minimize the reliance on automobiles.
2. Reserve right-of-way to widen County roads where needed to facilitate safe, efficient travel that minimizes congestion and conflicts.
3. Continue to promote education programs and events that highlight and celebrate Hancock County's history.
4. Work with community partners to better connect Hancock County's agricultural community with residents and developers to foster better communication and understanding.
5. Highlight and promote Hancock County's attractive features to remote workers who desire a more rural lifestyle.
6. Identify and promote new and expanded businesses to stabilize and enhance the County's smaller communities that are appropriate to their rural nature.
7. Recognize and promote Hancock County's rural and small-town character.
8. Coordinate with the school districts to ensure their long-term quality and fiscal health as growth continues.
9. Increase communication with Hancock County residents through a variety of media channels and public engagement activities, including improvement to the County website, outreach and communication network, and public input opportunities.



Figure 7.1. Environmental and Social Determinants of Health



Social Determinants of Health
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Healthy People 2030

Source: Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Retrieved April 19, 2022

from <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health>

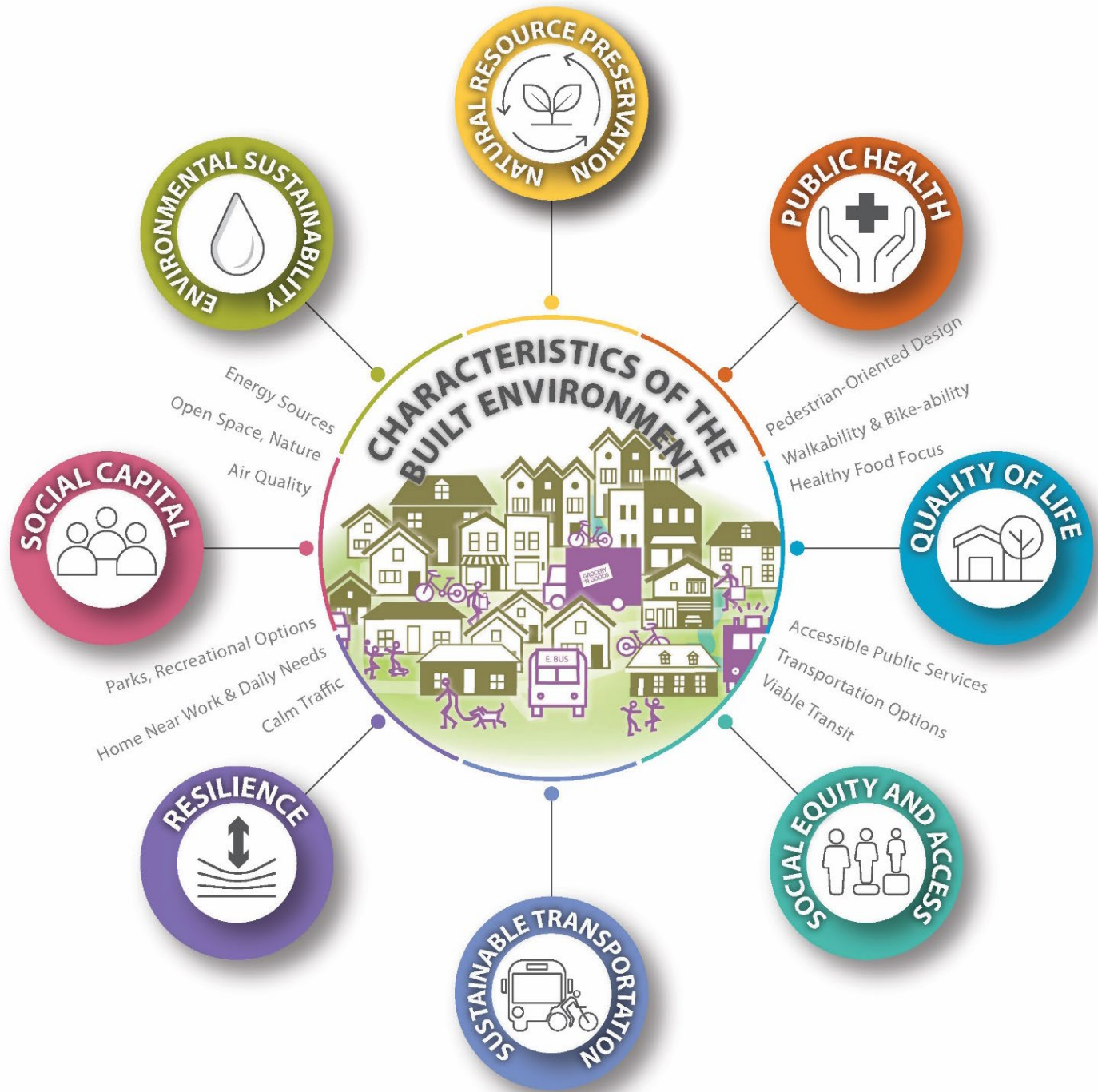


Figure 7.2. Characteristics of the Built Environment

STRATEGIES

Expand Community Engagement Opportunities

While the majority of Hancock County residents live within the boundaries of one of the County's municipal towns or city, Hancock County plays an important role in the lives of its residents. Decisions and policies made at the County level impact citizens and businesses regardless of their location within the County. With that in mind, it is essential that Hancock County, as a governmental body, effectively communicate and engage with its constituents. This not only increases participation in the decision making process so that outcomes can better reflect the desires and priorities of the community, but it makes residents more comfortable and informed on the direction of the County and increases transparency, accountability, and public trust.

The Future Hancock planning process has helped establish and expand a number of the County's communication and public engagement channels, but the County should continue to diversify its engagement. Potential strategies include:

- Keeping residents involved and informed through social media channels, websites, newspaper articles, flyers, and newsletters.
- Coordinating the communication and outreach process within the Hancock County government and various departments so that messages are consistent.
- Utilizing the numerous events throughout the year that provide opportunities for the community to get together for recreation and educational purposes and including outreach from the County on upcoming decisions, plans, or initiatives.
- Finding opportunities to meet residents where they are and bring official meetings to various locations within the community.
- Working with Hancock County elected and appointed officials to increase direct communication with constituents through events and forums such as listening sessions.
- Increase opportunities for residents to be involved in Hancock County on a volunteer basis through issue-based committees or task forces.
- Expand outreach and education to residents on the opportunities to serve as an elected or appointed official in Hancock County, and diversify participation in the decision-making process to include residents who might not typically engage with County government.



Hancock County Community Foundation – Thrive Hancock County

Closely aligned with the quality of life goals of this Plan and the Future Hancock vision, Hancock County Community Foundation (HCCF) has the potential to be a critical partner in the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan as well as the Economic Development Strategy specifically. HCCF is currently enhancing its role as a community connector through the development of Thrive Hancock County.

Thrive Hancock County is a concept for countywide collaboration, ideation, and planning that features these components: education on effective Quality of Life principles and practices, the fostering of deeper relationships and crucial governance skills among public officials, an upgrade of the HCCF's physical space to serve as an impartial host and convener, and consequently the community-informed design to raise social cohesion, joy, and health across Hancock County.

Develop Plans to Preserve and Enhance Community Character

“Community Character” is a term often used to describe the way a community looks, feels, and functions. It is a function of the relationship between the built environment, natural environment, and people who live, work, and visit the community. Communities are usually comprised of different, but ideally compatible, components (downtown, residential neighborhoods, employment or shopping districts, etc.) that make up their overall character. Maintaining and preserving Hancock County’s unique community character requires collaboration between the County, municipalities, and other stakeholders to develop standards and plans for key areas central to the County’s character and image. Efforts to enhance community character should be completed in coordination with recommendations of the Economic Development Strategy to determine quality of place initiatives for the County.

These community character areas include corridors and community entryways that span jurisdictional boundaries and therefore require intergovernmental partnership. Plans and standards can include aesthetic components of development, architectural styles, building materials, mix of land uses and integration of parks and open space, placemaking and gathering spaces, and preservation of community historic and cultural features. Potential community development plans could include:

- US 40 Corridor Plan
- County Gateways
- Future Interchange Area at 200 W and I-70
- Public Art Plan



Develop a County Park and Open Space System

Quality of life amenities and access to open space and recreation were among the most popular public input requests in the visioning process for this plan. Access to safe outdoor recreation opportunities have been in particularly high demand following the COVID-19 pandemic, and Hancock County has seen the increase in popularity of these facilities as the Trails Plan has been implemented, including the development of the Pennsy Trail. Hancock County does not currently have any County-owned parkland, and the majority of parks or recreational open spaces in Hancock County are located in the municipalities or are privately owned. Hancock County also does not have a Park Board, government body, or department responsible for parks. This plan recommends the creation of these governing structures as well as a system for parkland acquisition to begin the development of a Hancock County Park System. In addition to the governing structure to oversee financing, acquisition, and maintenance, the County should create a County Park and Open Space Plan to identify criteria for County park development and identify specific parkland opportunities. Development of the parkland acquisition strategy and Park and Open Space Plan should include the following considerations:

- Establish criteria for evaluating potential parkland in the County. Potential parkland acquisitions should be large tracts of land, include natural features like creeks, woodlands, wetlands, etc., and lands that might have low development value due to environmental constraints.
- County Parks are ideally open natural spaces that enable passive recreation like hiking, walking, biking, nature trails, etc. and have lower maintenance needs than highly developed parks.
- Initially, parks could have lower intensity development with basic features like trails, boardwalks, picnic grounds, dog parks, and basic parking facilities.

- The County should identify partners that can play a role in the land identification and acquisition process, including Hancock County Townships.
- The County could partner with local organizations to incorporate interpretation and education features as well as signage and public art.
- Parks could feature specialized signature uses appropriate for the natural setting including bird or animal habitats, pollinator gardens, or sculptures and public art to help brand and distinguish the County Park System from other parks in the region.
- Over time, the County might look at more improved facilities for active recreation and sports, including playing courts and fields.
- Park planning and location identification should get ahead of development and identify potential growth areas where parks are accessible and needed.
- Planning for the County Park System and development of the Park and Open Space Plan will require input from the community on what residents want and need from parks as well as collaboration with municipalities to avoid duplication of park facilities available in municipal jurisdictions. The County and municipal park systems and facilities should complement each other to provide residents with well-rounded recreation opportunities.

Increase Public Health Awareness and Collaboration

The County's land use pattern, transportation infrastructure, local and regional park and trail system, and community facilities all play a large part in the promotion and sustainability of improving public health. It is recommended that the County work collaboratively to address and advance public health initiatives in the region in collaboration with its healthcare and non-profit partners. The County has the ability to play a role in improving public health outcomes through.

- Education and programming
- Data collection and sharing on key health outcomes.
- Strengthening partnerships with local healthcare and non-profit service providers, including Hancock Regional Health on their "Health 365" program.
- Fostering youth leadership programs that can assist in leading health initiatives.
- Building awareness of mental health programming.
- Increasing local access to services like mobile clinics or medicine disposal locations.
- Improving connection between public safety personnel and the community to improve outcomes.
- Promoting healthy land use patterns that emphasize walking and provide adequate open spaces and recreation facilities.

Hancock County – A Healthy County

Quality of Life is a cornerstone for economic development in the 21st Century. While quality of life is traditionally associated with great schools, pleasant neighborhoods, safe environments, and access to amenities, underlying it all is the assumption that a community resident is physically and emotionally well enough to enjoy these community features. In order to achieve this foundational level of wellness, Hancock County desires to be the healthiest county in the state of Indiana, as measured in the county health rankings. In 2014, the County ranked 27th in the state of Indiana. 2020 and 2021 however, have seen that ranking rise to 5th and the improvement was not accidental.

Eight years ago, Hancock Regional Hospital worked with many community partners to establish a blueprint to achieve this goal. This blueprint brought into existence a movement called "Healthy 365" which itself spawned programs focused on food as medicine, family-oriented outdoor events, mental health and substance abuse resources, the county-wide trails program, and tobacco cessation initiatives.

A continued focus on creating healthy environments at home, work, school, and in the community is a fundamental component of future economic and community development efforts.

Finally, Hancock County can utilize policies to advance public health through the development and adoption of a “Health in All Policies” approach that integrates public health in all decision-making processes. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the interrelationship between public health, planning, and the built environment. Moving forward, all County planning processes and policies should embrace this concept in order to foster improved and equitable public health outcomes in the future.

Continue to Coordinate with Hancock County School Districts on Future Planning Decisions

With rapid growth being experienced in some parts of Hancock County, while other areas of the County see less population change, Hancock County’s school districts are regularly evaluating the space and facility needs as well as staffing to meet the demands of their students and families. The County and school district have had a longstanding working relationship, and collaboration regarding development projects, transportation needs, and other relevant planning issues should continue in the future.

Schools are catalysts for creating community as children’s activities, daily social interactions, and community projects are methods for creating connections and establishing strong neighborhoods. Beyond their impact on the character of neighborhoods and housing values, schools serve their primary purpose of educating youth and preparing them to participate in the workforce and contribute to society. Schools also are among the largest employers in the area, creating stable middle-income jobs.

Schools and other civic and institutional uses should be embedded in neighborhoods and accessible to residents, not isolated in remote locations. Neighborhoods should be designed and planned in conjunction with existing and future schools and civil uses at their center and seek complementary synergies. New schools should be sized and located to be easily accessible by children, parents, and staff on foot or bicycle. When well placed in neighborhoods, schools can provide amenities to the community, such as outdoor spaces and potential for after-hours community or recreation uses.

As the County continues to grow and new neighborhoods are planned, the County and school districts should plan and coordinate very intentionally to create complete, compact neighborhoods with future schools in strategic, central locations. It is recommended that the County continue to coordinate land use and development decisions with the Hancock County school districts’ long-range planning efforts. As enrollment changes, it is likely that the school districts will need to consider the acquisition of land for new schools. The County intends to work with the school district to proactively identify appropriate sites for school facilities before land costs escalate and or other development occurs in the most desirable areas.





8

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION



CHAPTER 8: INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

INTRODUCTION

Intergovernmental cooperation is the relationships, the culture of collaboration, and the formal or informal agreements in which officials of two or more jurisdictions communicate visions, coordinate on plans and policies, and address and resolve issues of mutual interest. Many longstanding challenges related to land use, transportation, natural resources protection, and more have been difficult for a single jurisdiction to address, as they exist within regional systems, independent of municipal boundaries. Regional economic and development pressures also have impacted municipalities and the County at different rates, revealing diverse goals and visions for the area. For this reason, implementation of this Plan and other plans and policies developed in the County and municipalities will require action and cooperation with other jurisdictions within the region. As noted throughout this Plan, Hancock County has many different overlapping, adjoining, or abutting governmental jurisdictions. Without communication, coordination, and partnerships with these entities, it will be impossible for the County to fully achieve the vision, goals, and recommendations of the public as summarized in this Plan.

This chapter is intended to promote consistency between this Plan and plans for County jurisdictions, provide opportunities for increased collaboration and partnerships, and promote efficiencies between jurisdictions. All regional context and existing plans related to neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions can be found in Appendix A.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICES

Definitions of goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations are found in the Introduction Chapter of this Plan.

Goals

1. Enhance intergovernmental collaboration and coordination to the benefit of all county residents.

Objectives

1. Work with Hancock County's incorporated communities to encourage an orderly, efficient land use pattern that minimizes conflicts between urban and rural uses and preserves farming, open space, and natural resources in mutually agreed upon areas.
2. Encourage collaboration and coordination among Hancock County and its incorporated municipalities regarding planning initiatives, utilities, and development policies.
3. Continue to build upon existing and establish new partnerships with incorporated municipalities, Hancock County school districts, Hancock County Townships, and State agencies on providing shared services and facilities.
4. Work with the Hancock County school districts on school district planning, transportation, potential school siting, joint recreational spaces and programming, workforce development, equity, diversity and inclusion efforts, and other areas of mutual concern.



Policies

1. Consider additional joint services and facilities where consolidating, coordinating, or sharing services or facilities will result in more efficient service provision or cost savings.
2. Cooperate with other governments and nonprofit agencies on planning for natural resources, recreation, climate action, sustainability, housing, social equity, public health, transportation, and other regional systems within Hancock County.
3. Actively monitor, participate in, and review and comment on other future planning initiatives that are undertaken by overlapping jurisdictions or Hancock County municipal entities.
4. Pursue intergovernmental boundary agreements with the incorporated communities in Hancock County to identify strategic future growth areas.
5. Work to resolve identified and possible differences between the Hancock County Comprehensive Plan and plans of Hancock County municipalities.
6. Partner with the Hancock County school districts and other local educational institutions on planning for future facilities and boosting workforce development.

STRATEGIES

Pursue Intergovernmental Agreements with Hancock County Jurisdictions and Municipalities

Hancock County should initiate and participate in intergovernmental discussions with surrounding governments with the goal of achieving consistency among comprehensive plans and implementation programs. These discussions ideally would result in formal intergovernmental agreements committing each community to the mutually acceptable outcomes of these discussions.

In general, formal agreements help communities minimize competition for development, ensure that future development is of high quality and appropriately managed, provide all parties with a greater sense of certainty on the future actions of others, and promote municipal efficiency in an era of diminishing government resources. Formal intergovernmental agreements may cover:

- Municipal Boundary Agreements: Intergovernmental boundary agreements frequently suggest limits or guidelines to long-range city and town annexation, generally in exchange for some compromises with the County. Such compromises may include the County's agreement not to legally contest any annexation petition that is within the agreed annexation area and/or to limit County development in the possible future annexation area. Provisions for future maintenance, upgrades, or extensions of roads affected by annexations often are also covered in intergovernmental agreements.



- **Future Land Use Agreements:** Frequently, intergovernmental agreements include maps or descriptions that specify future land uses or development densities considered acceptable or unacceptable. Some agreements also include provisions that the communities will then amend their comprehensive plans to be consistent with the future land use provisions in the agreement, or to not amend their comprehensive plans in a manner that would be inconsistent with the agreement. Mutually acceptable, more detailed arrangements with all neighboring jurisdictions would come into effect with a potential intergovernmental agreement.
- **Shared Services Agreements:** As budgetary constraints continue to evolve over time in the region, intergovernmental agreements for services may become increasingly critical. For example, shared agreements could be for police, fire, EMS, parks, sanitation, utilities, and other services. Cooperation and a collaborative approach to evaluating the service needs of the entire region may point to the need for increased service-based agreements between the County and neighboring jurisdictions.

Any one or combination of the intergovernmental agreements listed above should specify the length of time that it is applicable. Twenty years is a typical timeframe (e.g., through 2042), as this corresponds with the comprehensive plan time horizon. Occasionally, agreements have provisions for automatic extensions if neither party decides to withdraw. Most agreements also include provisions for periodic review and possible amendments if both parties agree. This keeps the agreement top of mind and allows for adaptations as conditions change. It is recommended that the County actively pursue intergovernmental agreements following adoption of this Plan.

Develop and Expand Opportunities for Intergovernmental Cooperation and Communication

Communication is key to facilitating productive intergovernmental relationships and collaborative policy implementation. Cooperation and communication between jurisdictions, including between the County and the City and Towns within the County and with overlapping jurisdictions like the school districts and Townships, are needed at both the staff and elected official level. These lines of communication build trust and working relationships that directly benefit all Hancock County residents. Key actions to build lines of communication include:

- **Provide Regular Opportunities for Discussion.** Create regular opportunities for discussion between jurisdiction staff, such as planning and development discussions. The County should utilize partners such as the Hancock County Community Foundation as a facilitator for these discussions.
- **Create and Follow Policies.** Codify policies on decision making within growth areas regarding land use, development, and infrastructure.
- **Connect Early in the Process.** Engage in interjurisdictional communication early in the planning and development process to address any conflicts or concerns head on, rather than at the time of approval.
- **Connect Elected Officials.** Utilize engagement opportunities and facilitator partners to bring elected officials together to understand initiatives and decision making within each jurisdiction.
- **Engage with Constituents.** Encourage all elected officials to engage directly with their constituents through open houses, meet and greets, neighborhood meetings, etc. Elected officials across jurisdictions should look for opportunities to collaborate or partner on this engagement, such as hosting joint meetings.

Advance Coordination within Hancock County Government, Departments, and Elected Bodies

Hancock County is a vast and impactful organization made up of dedicated staff and elected officials. Each department contributes to the well-being of the County and has a role in the implementation of the Future Hancock Comprehensive Plan. The two-body governance structure of the County and lack of a single executive and the variety of elected departmental positions, like clerk and treasurer, can make coordination and communication challenging. It is essential, however, that all departments and offices contribute to the same future vision and use a variety of tools not only to work together, but to communicate and keep other departments and the public informed of their efforts and decisions. Key opportunities to build and expand coordination with the Hancock County government include:

- Improved Website for Outreach and Communication. Increase and expand communication and outreach with the public via an improved and well-organized Hancock County website and digital media channels. Currently, updates to the website and even the website-hosting platforms are not uniform across all County offices. As the landscape for local news outlets continues to change across the country and readership of local papers declines, it is important that Hancock County take responsibility for spreading its message and communicating its policies and decision-making with the public. The County should take steps to improve its website in the short term and consider a long-term public information officer position to lead outreach and communication efforts. A public information officer works across County departments to facilitate messaging and communication with the public and is responsible for managing and growing the County's media channels and public engagement.
- Improved Coordination Among County Bodies. Increase and expand communication and outreach with the public via an improved and well-organized Hancock County website and digital media channels. Currently, updates to the website and even the website-hosting platforms are not uniform across all County offices. As the landscape for local news outlets continues to change across the country and readership of local papers declines, it is important that Hancock County take responsibility for spreading its message and communicating its policies and decision-making with the public. The County should take steps to improve its website in the short term and consider a long-term public information officer position to lead outreach and communication efforts. A public information officer works across County departments to facilitate messaging and communication with the public and is responsible for managing and growing the County's media channels and public engagement.
- Informed Officials. Hancock County elected officials must make very important decisions in a fast-paced and often changing local and regional economic and political landscape. This Plan intends to provide them with tools and vision to move the County forward. It is important, however, that all elected officials are fully informed on the issues so they can make the best decisions possible. Therefore, the County staff and officials should take advantage of new partnership opportunities like the Community Foundation's Thrive Center and new internal procedures to provide officials with the facts, context, and implications of the key issues they are making decisions on. One immediate action to take is the staff reporting protocol to elected officials by making sure that staff communication and recommended actions on key decisions is provided to elected bodies in advance of meetings and that elected officials are accountable to reviewing this material prior to making decisions.
- Utilization of the Communication and Stakeholder Network: The communication and stakeholder network was developed during the Future Hancock planning process as a foundation for County outreach, including the email listserv and stakeholder groups.



Coordinate with Public Safety in the Development Process

New development has far-reaching implications in a community like Hancock County. Increased population, housing units, and vehicles can mean changes to traffic and infrastructure demand and increases to public safety services, such as police, fire, and EMS. It is important to bring public safety district representatives from the Sheriff's department, fire districts, and Townships into the development review and implementation process in its early stages to determine impacts on public safety services, personnel, and resources and to provide input on the design and layout of developments to ensure public safety access. Upon receiving a development proposal or request, County Planning and

Highway Department staff should meet with relevant public safety personnel to review the request for public safety impacts.

Coordinate with Private Utilities in the County

Hancock County is in the unique position to have both public and private utility providers operating within the County. The private utilities operating primarily in the unincorporated areas of the County provide sewer, water, electrical, and broadband services. Implementation of this Plan's land use policies requires coordination with the County's private utilities, including NineStar Connect, Aqua Indiana, and Duke Energy, due to its emphasis on Smart Growth and focusing higher intensity development within utility service areas. County staff and utility personnel should communicate regularly on future plans and projects.

Collaborate on and Take a Leadership Role in Regional Initiatives

Because many of the County's goals and objectives relate to issues that extend beyond municipal boundaries, Hancock County intends to maintain an active and open dialogue with its communities, jurisdictions, and entities. A few specific opportunities to participate in regional initiatives include:

- Economic Development. It is recommended that the County continue to play an active role in all regional economic development activities.
- Natural Resources, Parks, and Trails. Inherently, these amenities transcend boundaries in terms of their location, jurisdiction, and connectivity. Because they play a pivotal role in providing a high quality of life to residents and act as regional tourism amenities and destinations, it is recommended that Hancock County work with IDEM, municipal jurisdictions, Townships, adult and youth sports organizations, and others to enhance the connectivity, protection, and usability of these assets and to develop the Hancock County Park and Open Space Plan.
- Transportation. Maintaining, planning, and improving County roadways requires coordination between local, county, regional (MPOs), and state jurisdictions. As the County continues to evolve and change, it is increasingly important to evaluate needs and collaborate on major projects to increase efficiency and allocate resources effectively.
- Climate Action, Sustainability, Equity, and Public Health. There are many local and regional groups working on various projects and programs related to advancing these initiatives. As documented throughout this Plan, Hancock County should play a key leadership role in advancing these topics at the local and regional level to improve health outcomes, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and waste, increase energy efficiency, improve social equity, evaluate and expand equitable services, and prepare for climate change.
- Housing. Hancock County should play a leadership role in partnering with regional entities continuously to evaluate regional housing needs, collaborate on programming efforts, and leverage alternative funding sources in order to better align housing development with community goals and values and to meet housing needs.

Contribute to Statewide Initiatives

Local government services and duties are diverse and complex, ranging from infrastructure to policing and from economic development to natural resources and recreation. Encouraging County staff and officials to participate in and contribute to state-wide initiatives and professional associations are tools to maintain County services and activities consistent with current best practices. This participation is also valuable to contribute to dialog among and between governments and their partners on issues that transcend any single jurisdiction. This participation also can result in learning about examples of creative and innovative actions or activities to bring back to Hancock County.

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9

IMPLEMENTATION



CHAPTER 9: IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

To advance the vision and goals of this Plan, specific actions will be required based on the strategies described in each individual chapter. This chapter provides a roadmap for the County with prioritized action items for implementation, including potential partners and timing.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Goals

1. Implement the policies and strategies of the adopted Hancock County Comprehensive Plan to realize the goals and vision identified in the Plan.
2. Keep the Comprehensive Plan relevant and applicable to Hancock County and its needs and goals through timely updates.

Objectives

1. Educate and inform Hancock County staff, elected officials, stakeholders, and residents about the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Track and communicate progress on the implementation of the Comprehensive Plans with Hancock County staff, elected officials, and residents.
3. Develop a process for updating and amending to make future changes to the Comprehensive Plan and for fully updating the Plan every 10 years.

Policies

1. Provide education and training to staff and elected officials on incorporating Comprehensive Plan implementation into their decision making and policy review.
2. Indicate items or topics relevant to Comprehensive Plan implementation on public meeting agendas.
3. Incorporate Plan implementation into annual budget and capital improvement plans.
4. Post and display up-to-date Comprehensive Plan document and materials on the Hancock County website, and in County offices, and other community locations, such as public libraries.
5. Develop an educational presentation on the Comprehensive Plan to share with the public and local stakeholder groups. County staff and elected officials should use this presentation to talk about the Plan with constituents and at other civic meetings, such as service clubs, Chamber of Commerce meetings, etc.
6. Require that any request for a Zoning Map Amendment be accompanied by an analysis of the amendment's consistency with the goals, objectives, and policies contained in Comprehensive Plan and the recommended Future Land Use.
7. Track and report progress on the implementation of the Plan to the Area Plan Commission via staff reports and presentations to the Area Plan Commission, Council, and County Commissioners at least twice a year. This should include a review of any previous Zoning Map Amendments that were deemed to be inconsistent with the goals, objectives, and policies contained in the Plan or that varied from the recommend Future Land Use and the potential need to amend the text of the Plan and/or Future Land Use Map accordingly.



PLAN AMENDMENTS

The County is strongly encouraged to make decisions consistent with the policies, goals, and vision of this Plan. The consistency analysis when reviewing land use decisions in particular can help keep the Comprehensive Plan central in the County's policies and processes. Amendments may be appropriate, however, in the years following initial plan adoption as the County continues to evolve, particularly in instances where the Plan is becoming irrelevant or contradictory to emerging policy or trends or does not provide specific advice or guidance on an emerging issue. "Amendments" are generally defined as minor changes to the Plan maps or text (as opposed to an "update," described later). The Plan should be evaluated for potential amendments regularly. However, frequent amendments only to accommodate specific development proposals should be avoided, or else the Plan will become meaningless.

As a dynamic County facing a myriad of growth issues, the County should establish a single plan amendment consideration cycle every year. The County can use an annual plan review and amendment process to ensure these evaluations and adjustments are handled in a predictable and efficient manner. This approach requires that all proposed plan amendment requests be submitted officially to the County by a designated date of each year, including those proposed by the Plan Commission and/or County Commission. A full draft of the proposed amendments is then presented to the Plan Commission at a public hearing for its evaluation and recommendation to the County Commissioners. The County Commission then acts on the proposed amendment(s), and updated Plan materials are published online and in print with a new amendment date.

PLAN UPDATES

As opposed to an amendment, an update is often a substantial re-write of the Plan document and maps, updating content, goals, and strategies for each Plan element. It is recommended that the County complete an update of the Plan every 10 years. Based on this deadline, the County should update this Comprehensive Plan before the year 2033 (i.e., ten years after 2022), at the latest.

STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION

The table below provides a detailed list and timeline of the major actions that the County intends to complete to implement this Plan. Often, such actions will require substantial cooperation with others, including other jurisdictions, governments, and groups. This list is not exhaustive. It includes the strategies and recommendations that are likely to be near-term actions. The County may choose to pursue additional actions or prioritize other actions as conditions change. Implementation actions for the Economic Development Strategy and Thoroughfare Plan are found in those documents.

The table has four different columns of information, described as follows.

- **Topic:** The first column identifies the chapter or topic area of this Plan where additional information regarding the recommendation may be found or more generally describes the overarching category in which the Action Item falls under.
- **Strategy:** The second column lists the specific steps, strategies, and actions recommended to implement key aspects of the Plan.
- **Vision Principle:** The third column identifies the Vision Framework Principle that the strategy advances.
- **Implementation Timeframe:** The fourth, fifth, and sixth columns provide the suggested timeframes for the completion of each recommendation. Each timeframe is defined as follows:
 - **Short** means that the Action Item should be pursued over the next 1 to 4 years, following the adoption date of this Plan.
 - **Medium** means that the Action Item should be pursued over the next 5 to 9 years, following the adoption date of this Plan.
 - **Long** means that the Action Item should be pursued 10+ years, following the adoption date of this Plan.

Figure 9.1.: Implementation Action Items

Topic	Strategy	2042 Vision Principle	Short (1-4 Years)	Medium (5-9 years)	Long/Ongoing (10+ years)
Conservation, Agriculture & Natural Resources	Develop a county-wide Climate and Sustainability Action Plan	B			
	Define Environmental Corridors and incorporate into Zoning Ordinance	B			
	Add Wellhead Protection measures to the Zoning Ordinance	B			
	Use County ordinances to protect waterways, wetlands, surface water, aquifers, and floodplain areas	B			
	Require that natural resource features be depicted on site plans and preliminary plats	B			
	Develop County sustainable infrastructure standards	B			
	Work with partners to map electrification of the transportation system	E			
	Create a construction waste reduction program	B			
	Codify erosion control and stormwater management best practices	B			
	Foster a compact development pattern	G			
	Restrict the creation of scattered homes sites and subdivisions not served by public water and sanitary sewer	G			
	Use public acquisition, dedication, conservation easements, and the County Future Infrastructure and Public Facilities Map to preserve critical natural resource areas	G			
	Work with partners to promote water conservation farming best practices	B			
	Facilitate cooperation between the farming community and non-farming residents	B			
	Link natural resource preservation with recreation and tourism opportunities	B			
	Expand community gardens	B			
Housing	Provide a wider mix of housing types, sizes, and costs throughout the County	D			
	Promote Traditional Neighborhood Design principles in housing development	D			
	Update and implement high-quality housing design standards	D			

Topic	Strategy	2042 Vision Principle	Short (1-4 Years)	Medium (5-9 years)	Long/Ongoing (10+ years)
Land Use & Growth Management	Implement Future Land Use category strategy recommendations and the Future Land Use Map	G			
	Implement Regional Community strategy recommendations	G			
Land Use & Growth Management	Coordinate with Hancock County municipalities on strategic growth areas and land use implementation	G			
	Develop a County Impact Fee policy	G			
	Incorporate public safety and public facilities into development review process	G			
	Create and maintain a County Future Right of Way and Public Facilities Map	G			
Community Livability	Expand community engagement and direct communication with residents (see chapter for action items)	B			
	Develop plans to preserve community character, including County gateways, US 40, and future interchange areas	B			
	Create a County Park and Open Space plan that includes criteria for evaluating potential parklands and establishing land standards for per capita park and open space	B			
	Establish a governing body for parks and open space in the County	B			
	Adopt a “Health in All Policies” approach that integrates public health in all decision-making processes	B			
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Pursue intergovernmental agreements with Hancock County municipalities and jurisdictions, regarding growth boundaries, land use implementation, and share use/shared services	A			
	Establish opportunities for interjurisdictional communication between staff and elected officials	A			
	Create opportunities for interjurisdictional stakeholder and constituent engagement	A			
	Update and improve the Hancock County website	A			
	Establish increased communication among County elected bodies and departments	A			

Topic	Strategy	2042 Vision Principle	Short (1-4 Years)	Medium (5-9 years)	Long/Ongoing (10+ years)
	Create or improve internal County communications and staff reporting to elected bodies to aid in informed decision making	A			
Implementation	Establish an annual Comprehensive Plan amendment process				
	Update the Comprehensive Plan within 10 years of adoption				
	Provide education and training on the Comprehensive Plan and implementation to County staff and officials				
	Track and review Comprehensive Plan implementation, including annual reports to elected bodies				
Economic Development Strategy	See Economic Develop Strategy for Relevant Implementation Actions				
Thoroughfare Plan	See Thoroughfare Plan for Relevant Implementation Actions				