



Connersville Comprehensive Plan

Adopted - December 5, 2022

Connersville
ESTABLISHED 1813



LOCAL RESOLUTION APPROVING THE PLAN

WHEREAS, the City of Connersville had identified adequate reason to analyze a Comprehensive Plan, and

WHEREAS, the City of Connersville has hired Rundell Ernstberger Associates, Inc. to define and describe the issues, advise us of our options, and make recommendations to address this issue in the near future, and

WHEREAS, the City of Connersville has received federal Community Development Block Grant dollars from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs to fund this study and has contributed \$7,500 as local match for this project, and

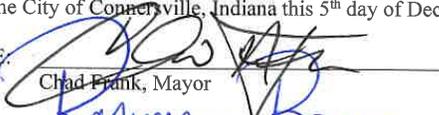
WHEREAS, the City of Connersville has reviewed the process and completed study thoroughly and is satisfied with the services performed, information contained therein, and methodology applied;

WHEREAS, the City of Connersville has received copies of this document for our records and will keep them on file in the city offices for future reference, and

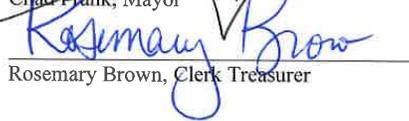
BE IT RESOLVED by the City of Connersville that the final document is hereby approved, contingent upon comments and approval received from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs. The City of Connersville will fully consider all comments and feedback received from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs and will direct its consultant to provide amended copies of this plan reflecting all said comments.

Adopted by the City of Connersville, Indiana this 5th day of December 2022, at 7:00 pm.

SIGNATURE:


Chad Frank, Mayor

ATTEST:


Rosemary Brown, Clerk Treasurer





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Connersville comprehensive plan would not have been possible without the residents, business owners, and other stakeholders who devoted their time and ideas to help aid in this process. We would like to thank the City staff and officials, City department members, County officials, and members of the Comprehensive Planning Committee for their time commitment and dedication in developing this plan.

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	7
GENERAL BACKGROUND	27
COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE.....	37
LAND USE	45
GOVERNMENT AND FISCAL CAPACITY.....	65
PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES	73
PLACEMAKING	83
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	99
HOUSING	113
TRANSPORTATION	125
AGRICULTURE.....	137
NATURAL RESOURCES.....	143
PARKS AND RECREATION.....	151
BROADBAND ACCESS.....	165
HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES	173
HAZARD MITIGATION	185
IMPLEMENTATION	195
APPENDICES	259



01

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN	8
SCOPE OF THE PLAN.....	10
PROCESS TO DEVELOP THE PLAN	10
PLAN SUMMARY	12
OVERALL VISION STATEMENT.....	12
OUTLINE OF KEY GOALS, STRATEGIES, AND DESIRED OUTCOMES	13
IMPLEMENTATION	25

Purpose of this Plan

The Connersville Comprehensive Plan outlines a vision and strategic framework for future development, redevelopment, and community projects within the City. It will help ensure that the City maintains a high quality of life for residents and visitors and improves its local economy through various economic development strategies. The previous comprehensive plan was created in 2011 and was a county-wide study that included Connersville. A summary and data report was completed in 2019 which supported the need to update the Fayette County Comprehensive Plan. The report was the result of a partnership between Connersville Community Foundation, Purdue Extension, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant, and the Purdue Center for Regional Development. The report summarized information from several groups and individuals that met to discuss issues within the community that included downtown beautification, pedestrian access, and healthy eating/living.

Since the 2011 plan was adopted, several changes have occurred including the growth of Connersville. To maintain this growth, the City applied for an OCRA-funded grant to develop a comprehensive plan that was separate from the County and focused solely on the needs of the City. Given the current opportunities and on-going challenges, this comprehensive plan is needed to assist local leaders, elected officials, and government staff, in responding to these changes and challenges, reflect current conditions, and identify a vision and goals for the community to work toward.

Indiana state law identifies the requirements that must be incorporated into a comprehensive plan (Indiana Code 36-7-4-502). A comprehensive plan must contain at least the following elements:

- » 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.

Supported by a Planning Grant from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs, and with the assistance of consultants Rundell Ernstberger Associates, Inc. the purpose of the new Connersville Comprehensive Plan is to:

- » Ensure the City can attract new jobs and residents while supporting growth,
- » Identify strategies that will enhance existing neighborhoods and locations for new development and annexation,
- » Improve marketing, communication, and programming initiatives across the community,
- » Increase community pride and develop a stronger sense of place within the community,
- » Create a plan that helps the City leverage its resources to capture additional grants and funding to support the implementation of plan recommendations, and
- » Manage and prioritize City investments to maximize the impact of redevelopment and new construction.



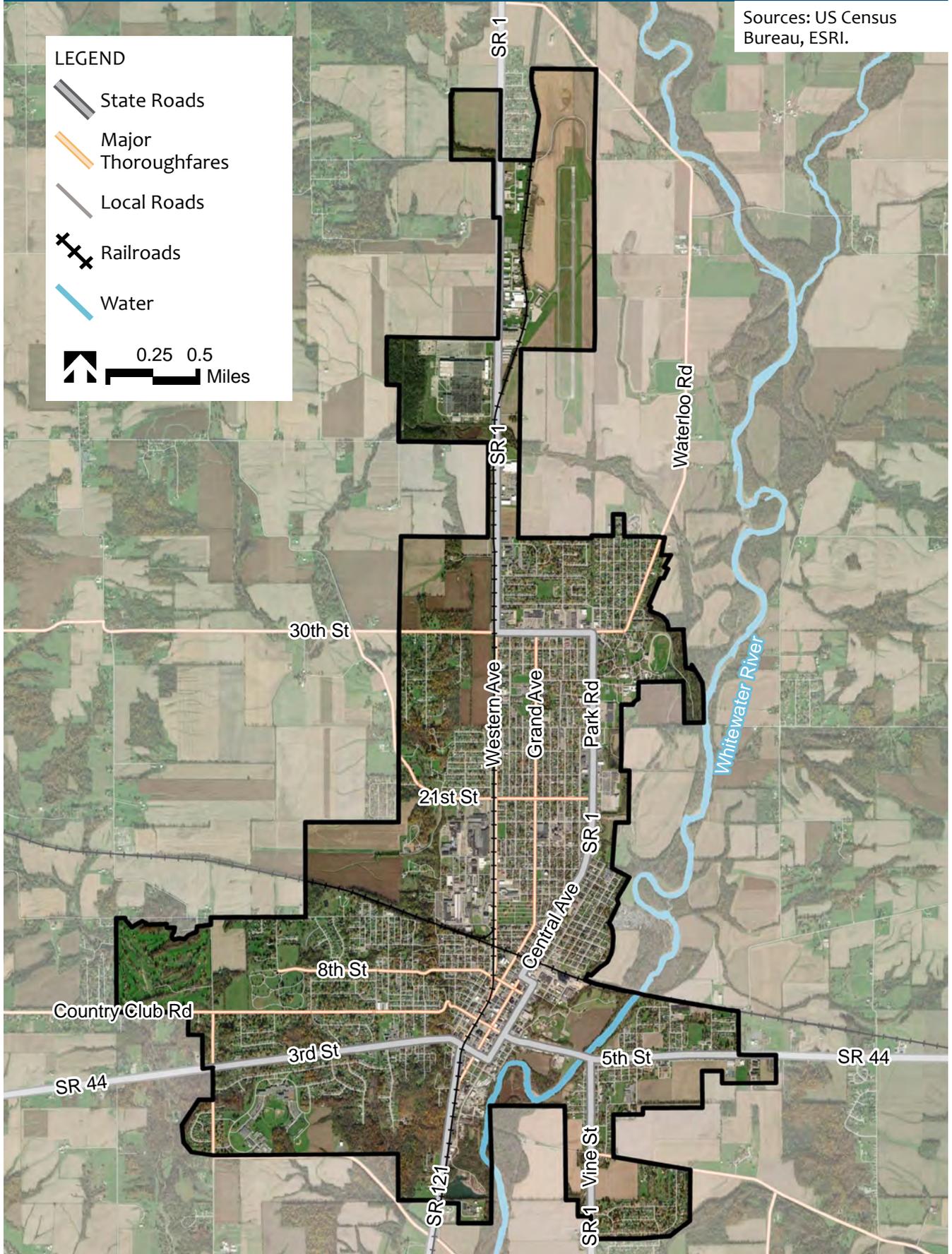
BASE MAP

Sources: US Census Bureau, ESRI.

LEGEND

- State Roads
- Major Thoroughfares
- Local Roads
- Railroads
- Water

0.25 0.5 Miles



Scope of the Plan

The City of Connersville has the ability to make planning and zoning decisions within its municipal boundaries. However, to ensure compatibility of future growth and land use changes, an area larger than the municipal boundaries was identified as the planning area. The planning area encompasses the current boundaries and extends south to Ziegler Road and Veterans Memorial Drive. It also includes some additional land north of the corporate limits to capture potential expansion areas near the airport. These areas are not an official extra-territorial planning jurisdiction as recognized by state law, but they will have an effect on the City's future tax base and utility service area as development continues and Connersville grows.

This plan is a guide that is meant to be used as a reference for the coming years. This plan should be used by appointed and elected officials to guide land use decisions, prepare a capital improvement program, and determine the rate, timing, and location of future growth. It establishes a vision that is supported by community input, goals, and projects to help direct investment and development activity.

This comprehensive plan is a policy guide for zoning and subdivision regulations. Because this plan examines the relationships between land use, transportation, utility services, and the local economy, it should be referenced when evaluating whether to approve a new development or improvement project.

City staff, County Council, and the Plan Commission should interpret the goals and projects of this plan as a reflection of the community's values. This plan was led by residents of the community and as such, reflects the needs and wants of the people living in Connersville. The goals and objectives allow government officials to know where they are in the process of achieving the vision. The projects and action steps in this plan are intended to help direct the day-by-day decisions concerning more specific tasks that will lead to the completion of the project. This plan should enable the Plan Commission and County Council to justify approval or denial of any proposed development or redevelopment projects, or policies that may be brought to the City.

When a new annexation, rezoning, subdivision proposal, or site plan review request is filed, it should be reviewed and evaluated against the comprehensive plan and other City plans and ordinances. The comprehensive plan is not a legal document or ordinance. However, it is a policy document that should be used to help guide and inform decision-making regarding land use, growth, public investment, and economic development. This document is representative of the community's vision for the future of Connersville and should be used as such.

Process to Develop the Plan

Planning is a continuous and ever-evolving process that had been initiated before this plan started and will continue after its adoption. This new Comprehensive Plan for the City is the result of a detailed process that brought together residents, business owners, stakeholders, students, and government officials to identify existing conditions throughout the community, recognize potential issues and opportunities, and create recommendations for the future of Connersville. This plan was developed over eight months with guidance from the Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC). The CPC was made up of the Mayor, an Area Plan Commission representative, a Chamber of Commerce representative, local staff and leaders in the community, and residents. The consultants and CPC members met several times throughout the process in-person and over Zoom to discuss the progress of the plan. These meetings were interactive work sessions which resulted in this final document.



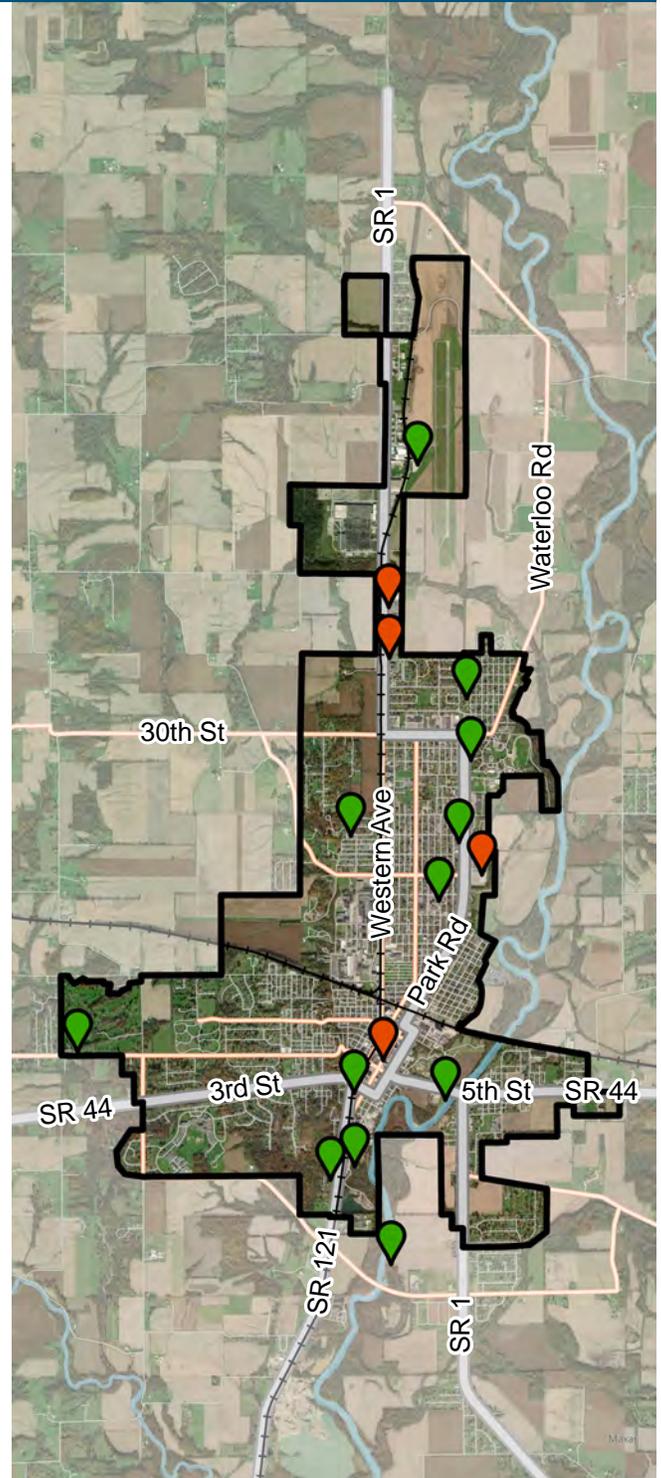
ONLINE MAP ACTIVITY

In addition to the CPC meetings, a series of focus group meetings were held during the middle of the process at the end of April. The goal of the focus group discussions was to assess the issues each of the groups was facing and learn about what they hoped to achieve through the comprehensive plan. These discussions were held with people representing the following groups across the community:

- » business owners,
- » investors,
- » elected officials,
- » local leaders,
- » City staff members,
- » philanthropic and non-profit board members,
- » high school students, and
- » residents.

A community event took place in May at the Celebration in the 'Ville event. The consultant team set up a table with two activities for the community to participate in. One activity presented the thirteen comprehensive plan topics with a short description of each one and their respective vision statements. Participants were asked to pick which of the topics were most important to them while using paper money to vote. They were allowed to distribute their six paper dollars however they wanted to correspond with the topics that were the most important areas of investment for them. The second activity asked people to write down their one wish, goal, or project they would like to see for Connersville. Projects and wishes submitted through this activity included revitalizing the downtown, bringing in more businesses, trail development, and building a splash pad.

In addition to the focus groups and community event, residents were able to visit a project website to learn about the planning process, background information on the community, and participate in an online mapping activity. This activity allowed participants to provide general comments and identify areas where there may be assets or opportunities for the City to expand on and issues that need to be addressed.



COMMENT TYPE

Asset or Opportunity

Issue or Concern

Source: Interactive Mapping Activity made by Social Pinpoint and available through the project website.



Plan Summary

The remainder of the plan is organized around a community background chapter, thirteen subject matter topics, and an implementation chapter. An appendix at the end of the document contains notes from Comprehensive Planning Committee Meetings, Focus Groups, and public engagement findings.

The thirteen subject matter topics are:

- » Land Use
- » Government & Fiscal Capacity
- » Public Facilities & Services
- » Placemaking
- » Economic Development
- » Housing
- » Transportation
- » Agriculture
- » Natural Resources
- » Parks & Recreation
- » Broadband Access
- » Historic & Archaeological Resources
- » Hazard Mitigation

Each chapter includes an overview of the existing conditions related to that subject, a vision statement, key goals, objectives, projects, and action steps. Each of these chapters provides information on how the goals and projects can be implemented and realized.

The Implementation chapter goes into more detail about how the plan should be interpreted, used to review development proposals, and monitored in case amendments need to be made. A list of ten priority projects for the City to start implementing is also provided. The priority projects detail how the project was identified, why it is important, and the action steps needed to achieve the project. A potential list of funding sources is also included in the Implementation chapter to help aid the City when undertaking any of the various projects recommended throughout this plan.

Overall Vision Statement

As a part of the comprehensive planning process, an overall vision statement was created to set the tone for the City's aspirations in the coming years. The statement is as follows:

The City of Connersville is a community teeming with pride and ambition that is focused on providing a quality place for all residents and businesses. Connersville is a community of many different people and ways of life where all live, work, learn, grow, and age together. The community is centered around strengthening neighborhoods, attracting, training, and retaining local talent and workforce, promoting local businesses and industries, and building upon the local character and quality of life that Connersville has to offer.



Outline of Key Goals, Strategies, and Desired Outcomes

Land Use (page 44)

Zoning and land use go hand-in-hand when discussing the development of a city. While zoning regulates how the land can be used and the characteristics of the buildings on the land, land use is irrespective of zoning and is how people are using and interacting with the land. Both zoning and land use play a key role in the future of Connersville and how it can accommodate population growth, encourage redevelopment, and prevent urban sprawl.

Currently, the Area Plan Commission, a County-based entity, manages the zoning for the City. The zoning code is divided into 14 districts. The existing zoning code is outdated and inadequate in that it does not provide the flexibility needed for mixed-use and institutional districts in key parts of the City, including downtown.

The majority of land use in the City is residential (40.1 percent) while the second-largest is agricultural (14.0 percent), though, with current development trends, this agricultural land is likely to be developed in the future. The patterns in land uses show how the City sprawled outward from its historic and cultural center, the downtown. Commercial and industrial uses have moved incrementally further from where the majority of Connersville's population resides, though there is still a strong industrial district to the northwest of downtown.

Vision:

Maintain a balance of land uses throughout the community that preserves historic character, encourages redevelopment, and promotes new development in strategic locations while preserving the "small town" character and assets of the community.

Goals:

1. Encourage new construction and redevelopment on vacant and underutilized lots within the City.
2. Focus commercial and industrial development to the SR 1, SR 44, and SR 121 corridors.
3. Promote downtown revitalization and become

a central location for retail, restaurants, and residential uses.

4. Develop more family, child, and teenager-friendly attractions across the community to further establish Connersville as a destination for families to live.
5. Consider annexation of developed areas outside of city limits that already receive municipal services and only extend municipal services to new development that will be annexed into the City.
6. Promote a healthy mixture of residential, commercial, and industrial development within the City.
7. Ensure new development reflects the goals and recommendations found in this plan, and that the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations are enforced by local officials.

Projects:

1. Review, amend, and ultimately replace the zoning and subdivision ordinances with a unified development ordinance to promote diversity and flexibility of development, allow housing development on smaller lot sizes, address design standards, protect environmentally sensitive areas, and incentivize the use of green infrastructure.
2. Continue to update the zoning map as rezonings take place, new districts are created, or underutilized districts become obsolete.
3. Rezone parcels to Mixed Residential or Mixed Use to encourage redevelopment in areas identified in the Future Land Use map.
4. Conduct an annual review of the Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use map to ensure it aligns with community growth and development goals, and amend as necessary.
5. Conduct an inventory of vacant lots within the community.
6. Implement maximum lot coverage standards to regulate building sizes in lieu of current lot and area requirements to allow more flexibility in vacant lot reuse.
7. Identify development opportunities along existing State Roads and primary thoroughfares.
8. Evaluate and update, or replace, dilapidated building ordinances.



Government & Fiscal Capacity (page 64)

To fund the basic operations within a community, provide services, and implement policy, the local government must be able to generate revenue. Government and fiscal capacity refers to the ability of the local municipality to generate such funds to reinvest and support the City. Connersville's fiscal capacity is dependent on the assessed value of property, residential incomes, and costs of services provided by the City.

Connersville has seen a steady increase in year end cash and investments from 2011 to 2021. The City experienced declines in 2012, 2013, and 2020 but always recovered. From 2017 to 2018, there was almost a five-million-dollar increase in the City's year end cash and investments total.

Vision:

The City of Connersville will expand local government capacity and grow income to continue providing high-quality services needed to support residents, businesses, and visitors.

Goals:

1. Increase the tax base by encouraging a mix of development types including residential, commercial, and industrial uses.
2. Pursue state, federal, and private grant opportunities to leverage additional investment in the community and attract development.
3. Examine and consider the fiscal impacts of new development as a part of the development review process, especially when incentives are offered or requested.
4. Determine if the creation of a dedicated funding source for improvements to existing properties for property owners will be fiscally beneficial for the City to increase property values and tax revenues.
5. Continue to improve and develop communication and marketing efforts with residents and business owners.

Projects:

1. Update plans and supporting documents to use as a tool when applying for grants.
2. Improve communications and outreach efforts between residents, businesses, and the local government.
3. Conduct a community survey to better understand resident and business perceptions of City services and how to improve local communication between the City staff, various boards and organizations, businesses, residents, and visitors.
4. Create and maintain a 5-year capital improvements program to help prioritize and budget for future capital expenditures (this is also [Project 1 in the Public Facilities and Services chapter](#)).



Public Facilities and Services (page 72)

The City of Connersville is organized into several departments tasked with providing public services and maintaining facilities for the community. These public facilities and services are critical to protecting the quality of life for residents, business owners, and visitors. The quality and adequate quantity of public facilities and services provided in Connersville have a large effect on the health, safety, and happiness of the community.

Vision:

Maintain and expand public facilities, utility infrastructure, and City services to support existing residents and businesses, and encourage future growth and development opportunities.

Goals:

1. Expand City utilities and infrastructure to support development of the industrial park north of the former Visteon facility.
2. Maintain and replace existing infrastructure as necessary to provide quality service to existing residents and businesses.
3. Ensure new development and redevelopment can be sufficiently served by municipal utilities and other services.
4. Attract and retain City employees to address staffing needs.
5. Promote physical and mental health across the community.

Projects:

1. Create and maintain a 5-year capital improvements program (CIP) to help prioritize and budget for future capital expenditures (this is also [Project 4 in the Government and Fiscal Capacity chapter](#)).
2. Create a new or update the City's website to be a centralized information portal/file sharing platform for various boards and organizations, local processes and procedures, upcoming meetings, recordings of past meetings, and meeting minutes for the community, local leaders, and developers to access and use the website to promote and market community events and initiatives happening around Connersville.
3. Provide emergency responders with updated and reliable equipment and facilities.
4. Connect residents with resources for health and wellness.
5. Hire a City/County Building Inspector.
6. Hire additional City/County code enforcement personnel.
7. Hire a City/County Engineer.
8. Develop an analysis process for extending municipal infrastructure to new development.
9. Hire a Municipal Marketing and Communications Coordinator.



Placemaking (page 82)

Placemaking consists of multiple attributes that contribute to local quality of life and quality of place. Broad categories include community wellness, culture, and education, but more specifically, these attributes include locally historic and significant places, festivals and events, access to quality housing, jobs, health care, and education, parks and recreation, and commercial centers. Placemaking is a subjective concept but boils down to the aspects of a community that make it a desirable place to live.

Connersville has a significant number of local assets that positively impact placemaking. These include a rich history celebrated through local events, attractive architecture, traditional neighborhood development patterns, and access to quality parks and natural resources among others. The City desires to capitalize on these assets and improve its weaknesses in order to make the City a more attractive place for existing and future businesses and residents to locate.

Vision:

Improve the quality of life of residents and visitors by promoting initiatives that support community health and well-being; diverse cultural and recreational opportunities through the enhancement of existing amenities, and establishment of new ones; community beautification; and increased community pride through encouraging more community-led, year-round events and programming.

Goals:

1. Increase community pride and involvement in redevelopment initiatives.
2. Encourage community beautification projects.
3. Develop a marketing campaign that showcases local events, amenities, assets, and businesses for residents and visitors.
4. Encourage physical improvements across the community that promotes health and well-being and celebrates local history and culture.
5. Improve access to physical and mental health care services.
6. Improve local access to childcare.

Projects:

1. Expand the pool of community champions, leaders, and volunteers.
2. Develop a medical professional recruitment strategy.
3. Collaborate with local business and industry on improved access to childcare.
4. Identify additional opportunities throughout the City for community gardens.
5. Develop a coordinated effort related to local, history-based placemaking.
6. Develop strong, thriving neighborhoods
7. Increase promotion of existing community events and develop additional community events and programming.
8. Develop design guidelines to be included in the zoning ordinance to focus on local beautification and placemaking.
9. Improve the sharing of positive information about the community and local businesses to spread good news and celebrate achievements, while combating negative attitudes and perceptions.



Economic Development (page 98)

Many small towns and cities across the United States are looking for ways to strengthen their local economy and enhance overall quality of life for residents and workers. Several midwestern communities have experienced significant changes due to major automotive and industrial employers closing their doors and leaving. As a result, these communities must find a way to reinvent themselves to not only attract jobs and build their population but boost their local economy to stay competitive with adjacent cities and towns.

The goals and recommendations found in this chapter were created to continue boosting the local economy. These strategies include:

- » Growing existing businesses and inspiring more local entrepreneurial culture,
- » Utilizing incentives to attract businesses that bring in quality, well-paying jobs, and
- » Building and creating partnerships between the school corporation, post-secondary education institutions and trade schools, and area employers.

Vision:

Improve the local economy by supporting existing employers, attracting employment opportunities, cultivating an environment that retains, trains, and attracts a skilled workforce, and capitalizing on tourism opportunities.

Goals:

1. Focus business attraction and retention efforts on industries that will provide quality, well-paying jobs to area residents, and bring in a competitive advantage to bridge gaps of the underserved and unmet needs of Connersville and adjacent communities.
2. Market and capitalize on the Amtrak connections and regional airport in Connersville.
3. Recognize and promote small businesses and local events as a component of local pride, increasing visitor interest, and boosting the local economy.

4. Utilize available incentives, such as tax increment financing (TIF) districts, the Opportunity Zone, tax abatements, and other tools to aid in business attraction and retention.
5. Continue developing partnerships between the City, institutional facilities, and employers to enhance workforce development and career programs.
6. Develop a marketing campaign that showcases local events, amenities, assets, and businesses for residents and visitors.

Projects:

1. Inventory and analyze existing brownfields for potential redevelopment.
2. Assist local economic development officials in purchasing options of properties for an industrial park, get proper zoning in place, and continue to promote development opportunities.
3. Create a downtown business plan in conjunction with the Main Street organization to focus a business recruitment strategy and prioritize needed physical improvements.
4. Create partnerships with higher education institutions such as Earlham College, Indiana University, Ball State University, Purdue University, Ivy Tech, and Miami of Ohio.
5. Expand the current Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district to target more industrial and business growth on the north side of the community and utilize those funds to help pay for necessary improvements and utility expansions in the future.
6. Create a business incubator.
7. Create a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district for the downtown to utilize those funds for reinvestment back into the area.



Housing (page 112)

The quality of local housing influences everything from the daily lives of residents to the impressions of people driving through town. Depending on the quality of housing, it can either enhance or detract from property values and the city's ability to attract growth.

Quality of life is key to the city's future growth. A large part of that quality is a housing market that supports a diverse population, enhances neighborhood character, and is within reach of local income levels. To attract new residents and businesses, Connersville needs more housing options and quality development that is move-in ready for residents.

Vision:

Continue to make Connersville an attractive community to live in by strengthening and maintaining existing neighborhoods while supporting new construction of varied housing types to support residents of all ages and incomes.

Goals:

1. Consider a residential rehabilitation program, similar to a façade improvement program, to promote home-owner improvements to residential structures across the City.
2. Identify non-compliant housing structures across the community and work with property owners to address safety needs and concerns.
3. Focus efforts on improving streetscapes and maintaining utility infrastructure to identify redevelopment areas to support market-driven reinvestment in housing stock.
4. Ensure there are available opportunities for the development of housing options for all ages and incomes, including first-time buyers, move-up and down-size buyers, and renters.
5. Encourage mixed-density neighborhoods that provide a variety of housing types including multi-family developments, townhomes, and single-family detached homes.
6. Encourage a variety of housing development for all incomes, including affordable housing.

Projects:

1. Identify and redevelop blighted areas across the City to construct new housing.
2. Continue code enforcement programs to work with local property owners on maintenance.
3. Update the zoning ordinance to correct "unbuildable" lot issues (minimum lot area) and permit a wider array of dwelling types, including accessory dwelling units, in residential districts.
4. Create a rental registration program to ensure accurate and up-to-date contact information for owners to better keep negligent landlords accountable for their properties.
5. Develop a program/policy to encourage coordination between the ordinance enforcer and health department.
6. Develop a policy to address and encourage transient housing and short-term rentals (i.e. Airbnb, Vrbo, etc.)



Transportation (page 124)

Many communities start from and develop around transportation networks. This is true for Connersville whose initial development centered around the canal, and then was bolstered by the railroad, and ultimately state roads. Transportation networks are a critical part of economic development and quality of place as they are the facilitators for the movement of goods, services, people, and specifically commuters. The most common mode of transportation in the City is by personal vehicle. The primary thoroughfares of the City that handle the majority of local traffic are Park Road (SR 1), 3rd Street, Western Avenue (SR 1 north of the city, and SR 121 south of the city), 5th Street (SR 44), and Eastern Avenue. These streets form the backbone of the transportation network in Connersville and are the primary gateways into the City.

Vision:

Improve and maintain a safe and efficient transportation system that connects community anchors, neighborhoods, and employers across Connersville, and is accessible using several modes of transportation including walking and biking.

Goals:

1. Improve safety, accessibility, and connectivity between existing neighborhoods and key destinations with improved pedestrian facilities, including sidewalks.
2. Consider improving and adding pedestrian and bicycle facilities when undergoing other public works projects.
3. Utilize City investments in transportation and utility infrastructure to leverage desired development types in appropriate locations.
4. Provide more opportunities for outdoor recreational activities and more active commuting patterns.
5. Ensure that any new street connections are complete streets that include adequate pedestrian and ADA facilities, as well as any on-street facilities that support other goals and objectives found in this plan.

Projects:

1. Continue to leverage local funds with state, federal, or private grant programs as they may be available.
2. Implement streetscape improvements throughout Connersville to improve pedestrian walkability and safety, on-street parking, lighting, and aesthetics.
3. Update and implement improvements included within the City's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan.
4. Develop a City Transportation Plan.
5. Develop and incentivize ride-share and food delivery opportunities.



Agriculture (page 136)

While the City of Connersville has a limited amount of agricultural use occurring within the corporate limits, agriculture has a major impact on the local culture and economy. The largest municipality in Fayette County, Connersville is surrounded by agriculture and serves as the primary destination for local farmers to conduct commerce. Many local producers partner with Connersville-based retailers to offer their products and exhibit at the local farmer's market on a weekly basis.

Within the City, urban agriculture provides an opportunity for utilizing vacant lots and providing healthy food options, a much-needed resource within the community. The City wishes to promote the expansion of urban agriculture within the corporate limits and to continue supporting the agricultural community that surrounds Connersville.

Vision:

Support the agricultural community that surrounds the City of Connersville and which is critical to the local economy, while encouraging urban agriculture within the City limits to promote community building and physical health.

Goals:

1. Provide affordable, fresh food opportunities for Connersville residents.
2. Support the surrounding, county farming community within the City.
3. Continue to promote local farms and businesses with the farmer's market, Farm-to-Table events, and future City programming activities.
4. Evaluate options for community gardens and urban agriculture on vacant lots throughout the City.
5. Educate citizens on the physical and mental health benefits of urban agriculture.
6. Investigate opportunities for businesses that can support county agriculture.
7. Partner with educational institutions to support agricultural training.

Projects:

1. Promote existing agriculture and food processing businesses as a means to attract additional employers.
2. Partner City leadership and the Parks and Recreation Department with the Purdue Extension office to identify additional opportunities throughout the City for community gardens and promote urban agriculture. (Refer to Placemaking chapter, Project 4.)



Natural Resources (page 142)

Natural resources are significant contributors to community character and local quality of life. They impact local aesthetics and general livability. Within Connersville, the Whitewater River, the Whitewater Valley Aquifer System, and the Fayette-Union Aquifer System serve as the City's primary natural resources. These primary water features, coupled with the City's water and sewer utility infrastructure, provide the City of Connersville with an abundance of water that supports the community's residential and commercial water needs with capacity to spare. Near the southern end of the community, and south of the City, the Whitewater River provides a significant tourism attraction for fishing, tubing, kayaking, and canoeing. Within Connersville city limits, however, public access to the river is lacking.

The City wishes to provide enhanced protection of its existing water resources while providing additional access, recreation, and tourism opportunities.

Vision:

Protect the community's natural resources to support improved health, local tourism, and economic development.

Goals:

1. Protect environmentally sensitive areas, such as floodplains, wetlands, rivers, streams, and aquifers to limit potential negative impacts from development and ensure long-term environmental quality.
2. Promote development of public and private recreational activities that preserve and provide access to significant natural resources.
3. Promote and market local natural resources to encourage local development and regional tourism in collaboration with key partners.

Projects:

1. Review and amend the zoning ordinance to better protect environmentally sensitive lands, significant wooded areas, and other natural resources, and adopt requirements as a part of a new unified development ordinance.
2. Adopt wellhead protection overlay districts into the existing zoning ordinance, and as a part of a future unified development ordinance.
3. Identify opportunities for trail development, and expansion, and access points along the Whitewater River.
4. Market the availability of freshwater to potential businesses and developers.
5. Coordinate with key partners on a marketing plan for natural resource-based tourism.



Parks and Recreation (page 150)

Parks and recreation amenities are significant contributors to local placemaking and promoting quality of life. They play a major role in attracting and retaining residents and businesses and protecting the City's natural resources. The City of Connersville is fortunate to have an excellent parks system and the citizens of Connersville vocalized their appreciation for it throughout the comprehensive planning process. Desires for the parks system include new amenities within existing parks and the expansion of the existing trail system.

Vision:

Enhance existing City parks and open spaces with additional amenities, staff, and programming to support an active and healthy community, provide youth with recreational opportunities, promote resident attraction and retention goals, and support economic development efforts.

Goals:

1. Expand programming and activities in parks and public spaces, with opportunities for all ages throughout the year, to promote general health and build community pride.
2. Provide improved park facilities and recreation opportunities to under-served portions of the community.
3. Improve access to, and protect, local natural resources such as the Whitewater River.
4. Upgrade amenities in existing park facilities.
5. Develop a trails system throughout the City to better connect the community's open spaces and park amenities.
6. Promote and market parks' amenities to existing and potential businesses and residents.

Projects:

1. Identify funding sources to support additional staff and parks improvements.
2. Develop a digital reservation system for park facilities.
3. Collaborate with City departments on a centralized marketing campaign for the parks and recreation department.
4. Develop and updated Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) approved Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan to identify system needs and priorities, garner public support, and become eligible for additional grant opportunities.
5. Expand the existing trails systems.



Broadband Access (page 164)

Reliable, high-speed internet is a required infrastructure and quality of life amenity for communities. It is a key attractor used for businesses and residents, and a supporter for economic and workforce development. Access to high-speed internet allows more flexibility in everyday lifestyles by providing greater access to education, work, communication, and entertainment options.

Vision:

Improve affordable access to quality internet services to support the growing needs of residents, visitors, businesses, and institutional facilities and enhance overall communication, business operations, and education efforts across the community.

Goals:

1. Work with local providers to determine what the barriers to improved services and speeds and expand broadband infrastructure where possible.
2. Coordinate utility, transportation, stormwater, and other infrastructure improvements with broadband utility expansion projects to reduce costs and overall construction time.
3. Promote broadband infrastructure to potential residents and businesses.

Projects:

1. Develop a list of current, viable broadband providers.
2. Work with local broadband providers to ensure competitive pricing for community businesses and residents.
3. Work with local broadband providers to pursue Next Level Connections Broadband Program funding to expand broadband service in and around Connersville in the future.
4. Expand the free downtown Wi-Fi system to better serve businesses, residents, and visitors, incentivize development, and promote downtown revitalization.

Historic and Archaeological Resources (page 172)

The City of Connersville has a rich history to be celebrated. As pioneers in transportation and industrialization, the community served as a model of prosperity and technological advancement during its heyday. Many of the City's historical features remain intact and can be visited by the public.

The City desires to protect these features, capitalizing on them to build local pride/interest within the community through new public/private partnerships.

Vision:

Protect and promote the City's unique historical and archaeological assets to preserve and celebrate the community's character and encourage local tourism and redevelopment.

Goals:

1. Preserve and protect historic buildings, structures, and sites throughout Connersville.
2. Promote Historic Connersville, Inc., the Fayette County Historical Museum, the Whitewater Valley Railroad, their resources, and events with City communications.

Projects:

1. Complete an Economic Development Plan focused on the downtown to develop additional strategies for protecting downtown structures and assets.
2. Adopt historic districts as overlay districts into the existing zoning ordinance, and as a part of a future unified development ordinance.
3. Develop design guidelines to be included in the zoning ordinance to ensure appropriate restoration of existing, historic structures and construction of new buildings in the downtown.
4. Collaborate with local, private, and non-profit entities on a centralized marketing campaign to promote local assets and amenities and coordinate local events.
5. Create a façade improvement program to help downtown property owners preserve and enhance important building stock.
6. Increase code enforcement efforts in the downtown to ensure buildings are not damaged beyond repair because of neglect or lack of investment by property owners.



Hazard Mitigation (page 184)

Like most communities throughout the State of Indiana and the Midwest, Connersville is susceptible to natural hazards like flooding, severe storms, drought, excessive heat, and blizzards, as well as more direct, human-inflicted events like groundwater contamination and contaminant spills. These events have occurred in the past, and it is highly likely that several, if not all, of them will occur again in the future.

Connersville has some attributes that make the community more susceptible to some of these events than others, and it is important that the community integrate hazard mitigation planning into day-to-day operations in order to be prepared for future events.

Vision:

Proactively plan efforts to reduce the risk to people and property from potential hazards, natural or otherwise, that could impact the City of Connersville in the future.

Goals:

1. Reduce flooding impacts to properties within the Whitewater River floodway and floodplain.
2. Ensure critical City facilities and systems are protected from damage during hazard events so that they may maintain or quickly resume key service functions.
3. Protect groundwater sources that could be impacted by existing and future development.
4. Coordinate with local City departments, county agencies, key businesses, industries, and residents on hazard mitigation planning and training.

Projects:

1. As the zoning ordinance is amended and replaced over time with a unified development ordinance, (1) include incentives for the use of green infrastructure in new developments and redevelopments and (2) include a wellhead protection overlay district.
2. Develop, refine, and train on emergency management protocols with local first responders, City Staff, and the general public.
3. Explore regional detention improvements to reduce the size of the Whitewater River floodplain, resulting in fewer structures within the floodplain, and lesser impacts during flood events.
4. Update the ADA Transition Plan for public facilities that may serve as emergency response shelters to the general public.
5. Provide an online resources of contact information related to hazard mitigation planning and reporting.



Implementation

The plan concludes with a detailed implementation matrix, priority initiatives, and potential funding mechanisms for proposed projects.

Priority Projects (page 200)

After meetings with the CPC and taking into consideration the described needs of the City, a list of ten priority projects was created. This list is intended to help the City start identifying the necessary funds and staff to implement proposed projects. These recommendations and associated action steps should be considered the priority for completion. During plan review periods, the City should reassess current conditions and adjust this list appropriately.

The list is more generalized than some of the recommended projects included within each respective chapter. This is because many of the individual projects are a part of a larger, more comprehensive, initiative, or project. The individual projects will be further defined in this list and will tie back to each of the respective topic chapters. The top projects that were identified are:

1. Review, amend, and ultimately replace the zoning and subdivision ordinances with a unified development ordinance to promote diversity and flexibility of development, allow housing development on smaller lot sizes, address design standards, protect environmentally sensitive areas, and incentivize the use of green infrastructure.
2. Create and maintain a 5-year capital improvements program.
3. Develop new and amend current TIF districts.
4. Hire additional City staff (as outlined in the plan including City Engineer, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, and Building Inspector).
5. Develop a current IDNR 5-Year Parks and Recreation Plan.
6. Create an Economic Development Plan for the downtown.
7. Update the City's ADA Transition Plan.
8. Develop a City Transportation Plan.
9. Conduct an inventory of lots within the community to identify areas for redevelopment, infill development, brownfield location, and the locations of critical buildings.
10. Continue and expand recurring events within the downtown.





CANAL HOUSE
1842 Built as Headquarters of The
Whitewater Valley Canal Co.
1854 Savings Bank of Indiana
Home of:
Dr. S. W. Vance 1857-1936
Congressman and Mrs. Finly H.
Gray 1936-1947
1947-1971 V.F.W. Post 571
1971-1973 Restored by Historic
Connersville, Inc.
PRESENTED BY HENRY GILL CHAPTER
NATIONAL SOCIETY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF INDIANA

02

GENERAL BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION.....	28
COMMUNITY ASSETS.....	28
POPULATION.....	30
HOUSING.....	32
ECONOMY.....	33

Introduction

Connersville was founded in 1813 by its namesake, John Conner, along the banks of the Whitewater River. The City is located in Fayette County, Indiana. Connersville is just under 7.7 square miles and is home to 13,324 residents as of 2020. It is approximately 9.7 miles south of Interstate-70. It is also located close to three major urban areas: 43 miles southeast of Indianapolis; 56 miles west of Dayton, Ohio; and 64 miles northeast of Cincinnati, Ohio. The City is at a crossroads for three state highways that travel through Downtown Connersville: State Road (SR) 1, SR 44, and SR 121. There are also a north-south and east-west railroad that meet within the City, owned by CNUR and CSX Transportation, respectively. Cropland surrounds most of the city, except for the Whitewater River to the east.

Once known as “Little Detroit,” Connersville was a hub for manufacturing during the early 20th century. The City has gradually lost its larger industrial employers since the late 1990s and early 21st century, including the closing of the Visteon plant in 2007. The former plant has been revitalized with the help of a tax increment financing (TIF) district and is receiving interest for redevelopment.

The Fayette County School Corporation operates all the public schools in the City. Connersville High School is the only high school in the City. There are three elementary schools, including Frazee, Grandview, and Eastview, and one middle school. According to the Indiana Department of Education’s (INDOE) INVIEW dashboard, there are 2,702 children enrolled in Connersville public schools. Additionally, there are two private, religion-based educational institutions in the City:

- » St. Gabriel Catholic School
- » Community Christian School

Several annual events attract people from all over the county and other neighboring areas. This includes the county fair held at the Fayette County Fairgrounds located next to the City’s historic Roberts Park and the wintertime Polar Express Train that takes place in downtown. Connersville has a recurring farmer’s market downtown during the summer months and a year-long farmer’s market (McDivitt’s Farm Market) that is a local favorite to get fresh and locally grown produce.

Community Assets

Community assets are landmarks and places of significance within the City that hold a high value not just to the community but also economically. For Connersville, this often means the asset has historical significance, such as the Canal House or Roberts Park. These assets are oftentimes amenities and quality of life features, which can help attract new residents and retain current residents.

The most important community assets can be found on the map to the right. Some of them include:

- » The regional airport, Mettel Field
- » Historic structures and districts, such as Newkirk Mansion and the Canal House
- » Downtown Connersville
- » The Amtrak Station
- » Employment centers
- » Schools
- » Grocery stores
- » Parks and trails
- » Connersville Waste Transfer Station
- » Reid Health Hospital
- » Whitewater Valley Railroad
- » Fayette County Historic Museum
- » Whitewater River



The horse track at Roberts Park draws in many visitors and residents when events are scheduled.

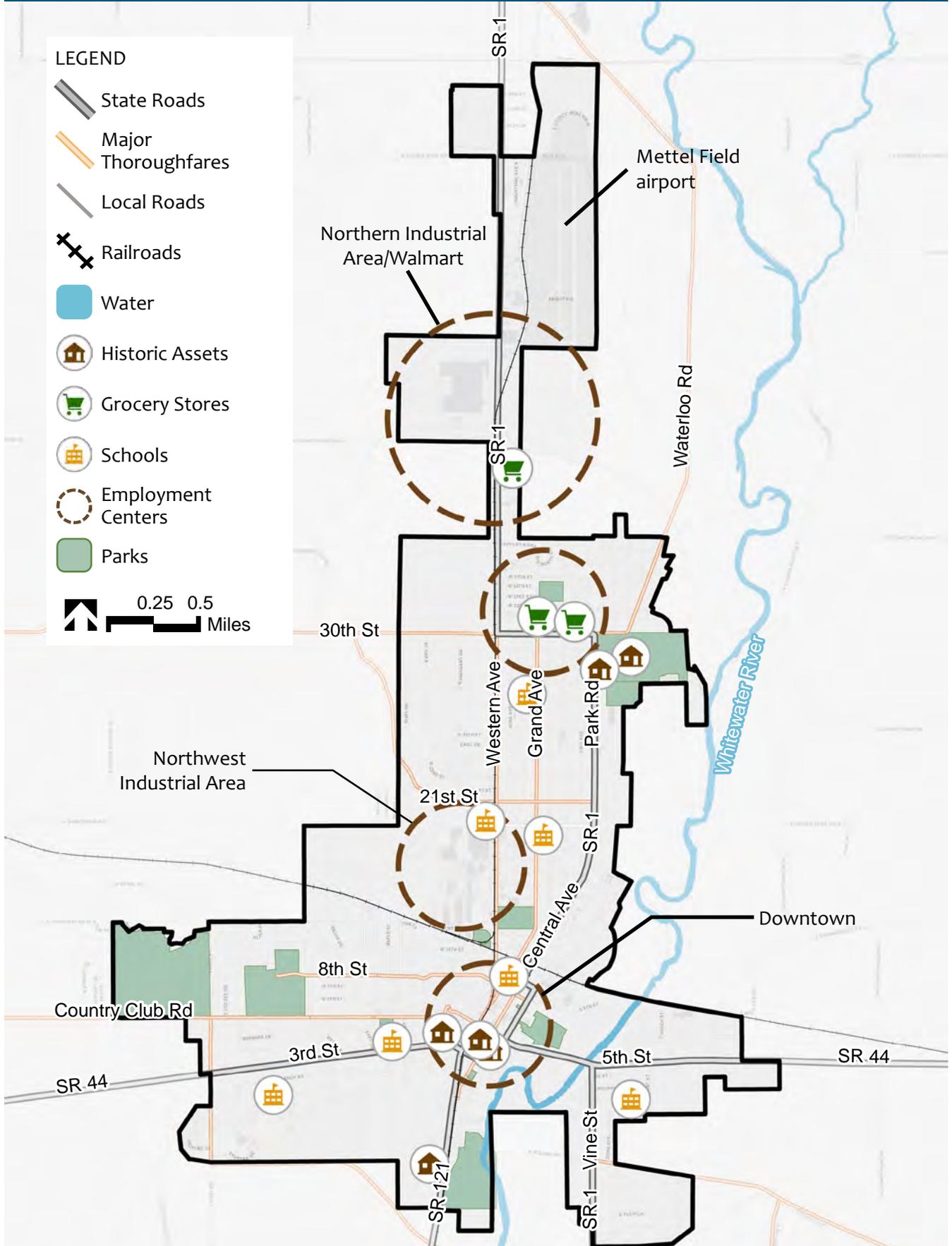


COMMUNITY ASSETS MAP

LEGEND

-  State Roads
-  Major Thoroughfares
-  Local Roads
-  Railroads
-  Water
-  Historic Assets
-  Grocery Stores
-  Schools
-  Employment Centers
-  Parks

 0.25 0.5 Miles

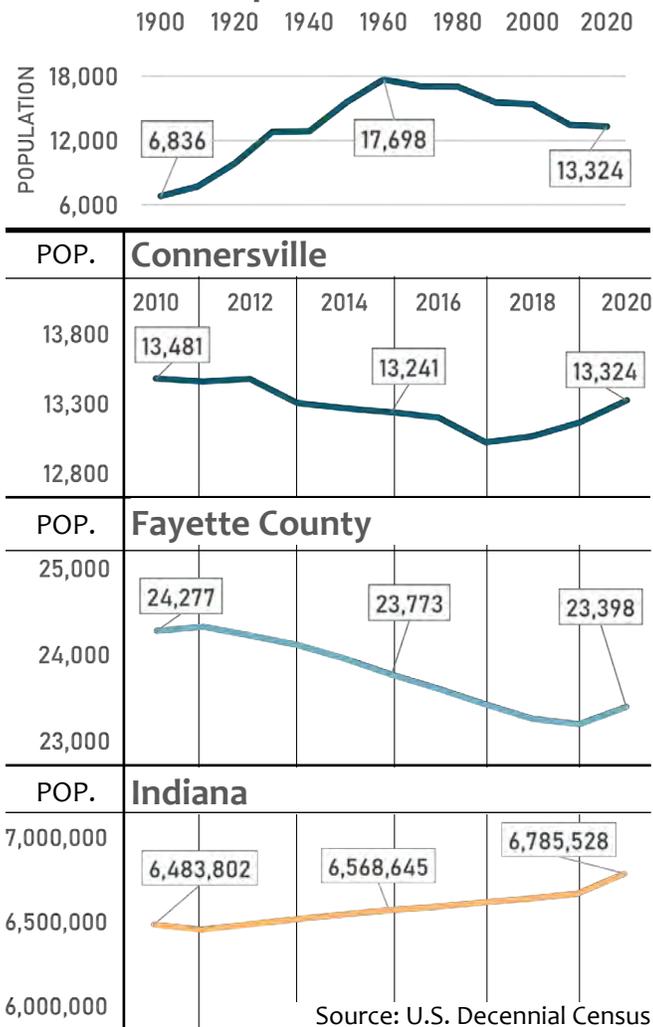


Population

Population Trends

In 1900, there were 6,836 residents. The population skyrocketed as railroads and industries developed to a population peak in 1960 with 17,698 residents. Since then, it has steadily declined at each 10-year census until the 2020 census which counted 13,324 residents, approximately 25 percent less people than in 1960. Specifically, between the 2010 and 2017 census, the City lost 459 residents. In recent years, however, the City added 302 residents between 2017 and 2020, according to American Community Survey (ACS) estimates. Although this trend may only be cyclical, it suggests population will continue to grow. This is likely because of recent investment in the downtown, a more affordable housing stock in the wake of rapid inflation, and local quality of life initiatives.

Connersville Population Counts



Population Pyramids

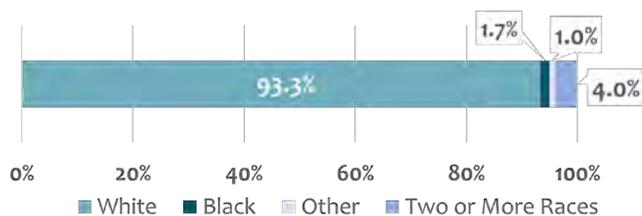
Population pyramids show the distribution of a population by age and gender. Normally, they will have a large youth population as the base and a small senior population at the top – just like a pyramid. This is important because the younger population will need to replace the jobs and other roles that the older population leave when they retire. However, the national and global trend in developed countries have seen the pyramid begin to reverse, with seniors making up a larger portion of the population. Connersville has followed this trend. The population pyramid for Connersville can be seen on the next page.

Between 2010 and 2020, the City’s senior-aged population increased by 308 people while the youth population decreased by 379 people. Additionally, age groups that make up the majority of the labor force population decreased by 455 people. Total population numbers may vary between the 10-year Census and ACS estimates, however, both show the same trend. As this trend will most likely continue, Connersville must find ways to attract families and younger populations to protect and grow the vitality of the community.

Population by Race

The City of Connersville is not very diverse as the majority of residents identify as white. Less than seven percent of the total population identifies as a race(s) other than white. The second largest group are people of two or more races, making up 4.01 percent of the population.

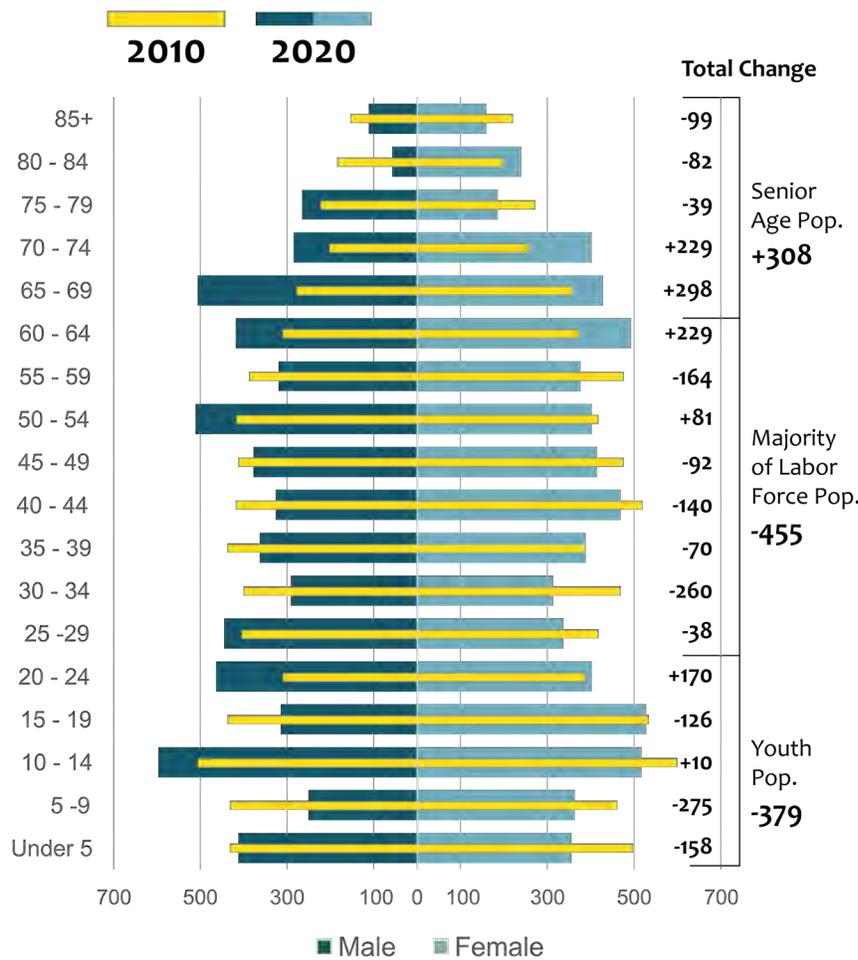
Population by Race (2020)



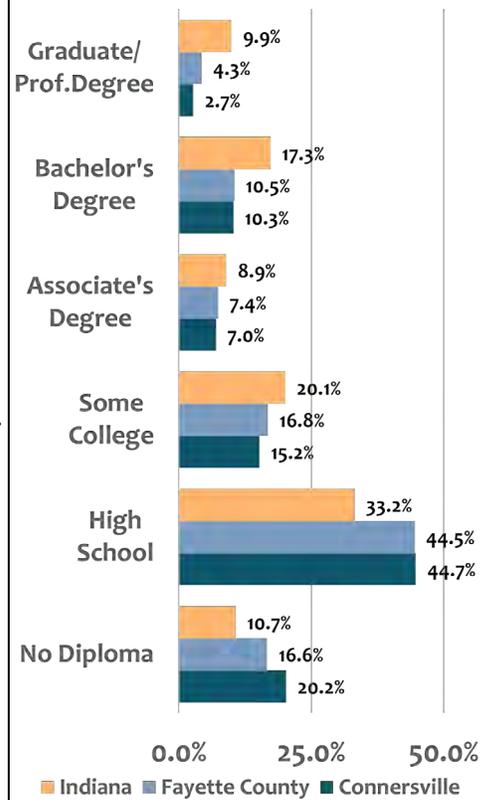
Source: Decennial Census



Connersville Population Pyramid



Educational Attainment (2020) of People 25+ Years



Educational Attainment

Most residents aged 25 and older have obtained at least a high school diploma or an equivalent. Connersville has higher levels of educational than both the county and the state, which means residents are generally well-educated. Specifically, there is a much higher percentage of residents who have a Bachelor's and a Professional Degree. The public school system has made this possible, with an average school rating of 'B' as scored by INDOE, and an Ivy Tech Community College branch that provides a general higher education and some specialized degrees for jobs in the area.

During the 2021 school year, there were 2,702 students enrolled at public schools in the City. On average, 58.5 percent of students were economically disadvantaged and 21.0 percent had a disability.

School Profiles (2021)

School	Student Pop.	Economically Disadvantaged	Students with Disabilities
Connersville Middle School	534	62.7%	20.6%
Connersville Sr High School	1034	50.8%	15.2%
Eastview Elementary School	321	59.5%	28.0%
Grandview Elementary School	482	54.1%	20.5%
Frazees Elementary School	331	65.6%	20.5%
Totals/Averages	2702	58.5%	21.0%

Source: INDOE



Housing

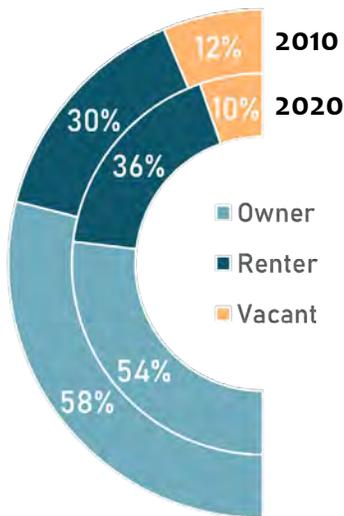
Housing Stock

There was a total of 6,553 housing units in Connersville in 2020. Approximately 12.4 percent (815) of units were vacant, which is higher than both the county (10.7 percent) and the state (8.75 percent). According to ACS 5-Year estimates, 60.1 percent were owner-occupied, and 39.9 percent were renter-occupied. Between 2010 and 2020, the number of vacant units decreased by 126. Additionally, the number of owner-occupied units decreased by 245 while renter-occupied units increased by 410. This could indicate that more people are choosing to rent or are unable to afford purchasing a home within the City. The state of the City’s housing is discussed further in the [Housing Chapter on page 112](#).

Home Values

Homes values are generally lower in Connersville than both the county and the state. However, values have grown in the City while they have decreased in the county. Median home value in Connersville was \$72,000 in 2010 and grew by 5.0 percent to \$75,600 in 2020. Comparatively, the county decreased 1.1 percent while the state increased a staggering 21.1 percent. The increased home values in the City could be attractive to investors, however, it may be limited because of higher profit potential in other parts of the state.

Housing Occupancy



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

Household Income

In 2020, the median household income in Connersville was \$38,890, which is \$2,514 more than in 2010 (\$36,466) when adjusting for inflation. In comparison, still adjusting for inflation, median household incomes in Fayette County added \$3,505 (\$43,960 to \$47,465), while throughout Indiana, households only added \$1,623 (\$56,612 to \$58,325). This means Connersville households not only make less than county residents but their incomes are growing more slowly. Additionally, while Connersville incomes are growing more than the state, residents also make significantly less. This will be discussed in the [Economy section on page 33](#).

Household Size

The median household size in 2020 for Connersville (2.23) was not only smaller than both the county (2.34) and the state (2.50) in 2020, but was also decreasing at a faster rate. Between 2010 and 2020, household size decreased 6.7 percent in Connersville, while it only decreased 3.7 percent in the county and 1.2 percent in the state. This means the City will need to provide and encourage housing types that suit a decreasing household size, such as smaller homes.

	Connersville	Fayette County	Indiana
Median Home Value	\$75,600 ↑ +5.0% from 2010	\$84,000 ↓ -1.1% from 2010	\$148,000 ↑ +21.1% from 2010
Median Household Income	\$38,900 ↑ +6.9% from 2010	\$47,465 ↑ +8.0% from 2010	\$58,235 ↑ +2.9% from 2010
Median Household Size	2.23 ↓ -6.7% from 2010	2.34 ↓ -3.7% from 2010	2.50 ↓ -1.2% from 2010

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates



Economy

Labor Force

Connersville is a micropolitan statistical area (MSA), which are urbanized areas that are highly connected with a population of more than 10,000 people but less than 50,000, designated for the purpose of collecting demographic and labor force data. The MSA comprises the entirety of Fayette County. Unemployment has been steadily decreasing over the past 10 years within the MSA, excluding the spike in unemployment during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, where 2,093 people were unemployed in April 2020 compared to only 492 in the previous month. The area recovered rapidly from the pandemic in terms of unemployment numbers with only 248 people being unemployed in April 2022, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. However, the low unemployment is partially a result of residents leaving the area, as the county's population decreased by a total of 879 residents between 2010 and 2020.

Within the City, specifically, there were 5,839 residents in the labor force in 2020, approximately 55.8 percent of the total of the population eligible to work (16+ years old). This was lower than the county (55.7 percent) and the state (63.8 percent). This means residents are not participating in the workforce as much as the county and state, which could indicate a gap in skills and/or a lack of job opportunities in the City.

Major Employers

The major employers in Connersville are:

- » Stant Corp
- » Walmart Supercenter
- » Premier Health Care
- » Ivy Tech Community College
- » Liberty Homes Inc.
- » Kroger
- » Fayette County High School
- » Connersville High School
- » McDonald's
- » Keener Corp.

Per Capita Income

The median per capita income for residents was \$20,468 in 2020, approximately 14.1 percent lower than Fayette County (\$23,839) and 33.3 percent lower than the state (\$30,693). Considering the City's median household income (\$38,890), this generally indicates that only one person was earning income for the entire household. In order to continue attracting investment and retaining residents, the City should pursue targeted incentives that bring in higher paying jobs, increased wages, and/or provide opportunities for higher educational attainment for residents to pursue higher paying jobs.

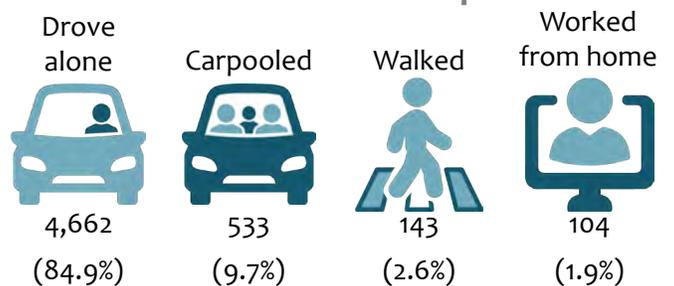
Employment Characteristics

The City relies on only three major industries for a majority of its residents' employment. More than half of workers are employed by only two industries: 1,646 workers in manufacturing (29.7 percent) and 1,479 workers in education/healthcare (26.7 percent). The third largest industry is retail trade, such as Kroger or Walmart, with 583 workers (10.5 percent). Most manufacturing workers occupy a labor-intensive role (70 percent), such as production, transportation and material moving. Education/healthcare workers occupy mostly management (40 percent) or service (52 percent) roles, such as teaching or nursing. Retail workers occupy mostly sales/office or production/transportation/material moving roles. This further indicates that the job market is limited to only a few types of industries and occupations in the City.

Commuting Patterns

There are 5,491 commuters in Connersville. The majority commute by car alone, with carpooling in second. Walking and working from home account for less than 5 percent of the chosen transportation mode to commute.

Commuters' Modes of Transportation

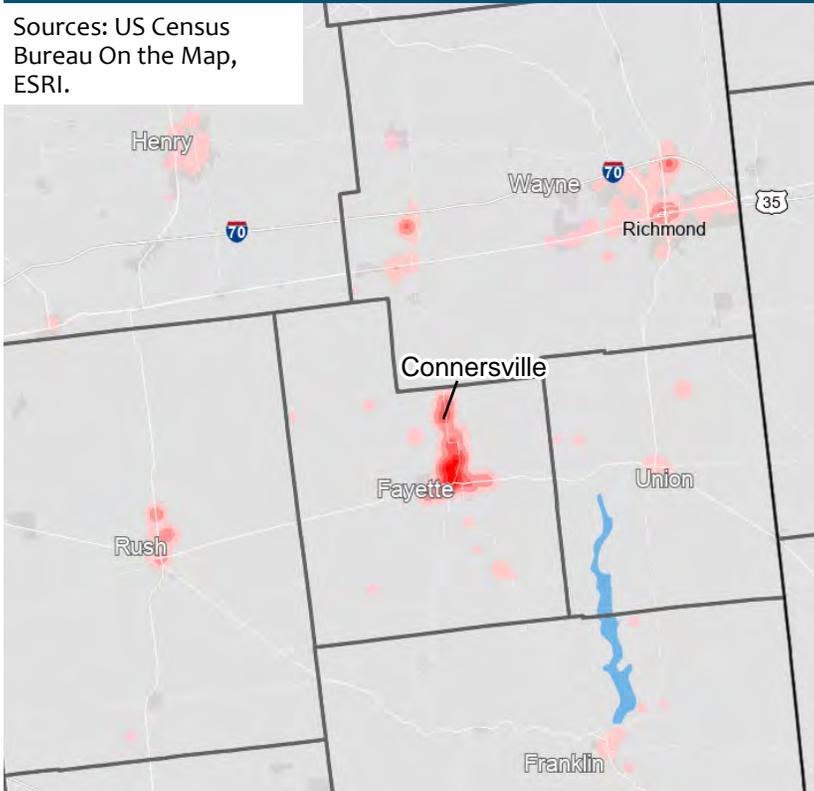


Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

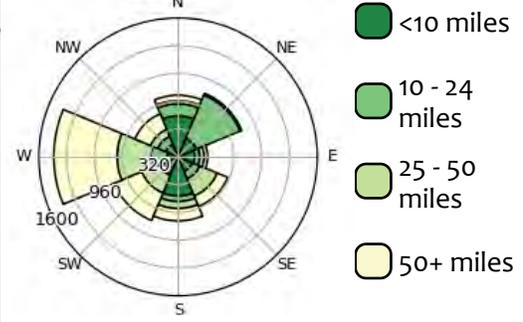


PEOPLE WHO COMMUTE TO CONNERSVILLE (2019)

Sources: US Census Bureau On the Map, ESRI.



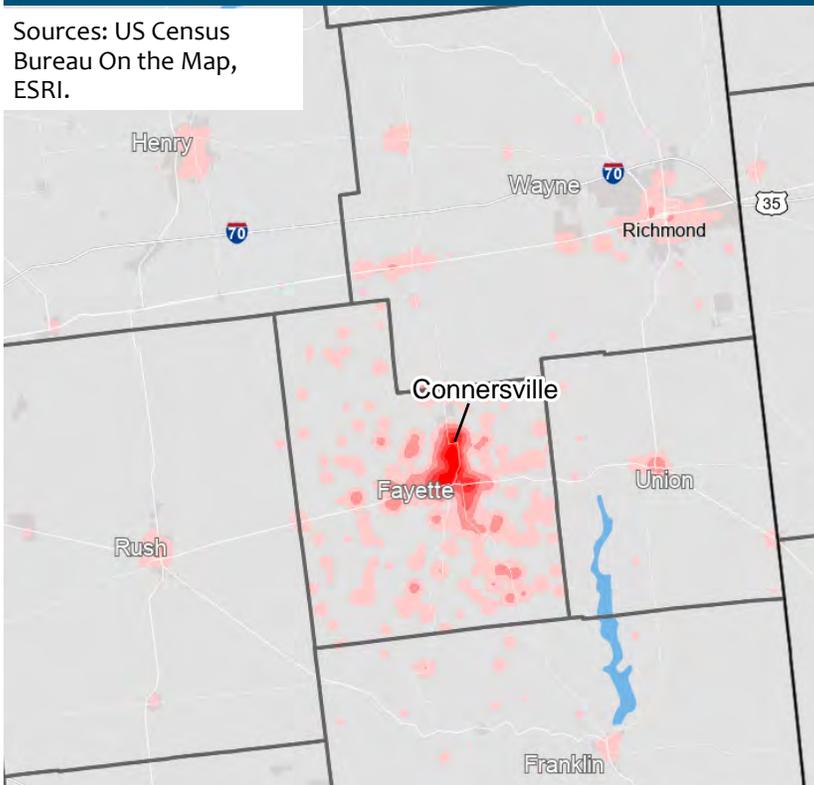
Job Counts by Distance/Direction in 2019
All Workers



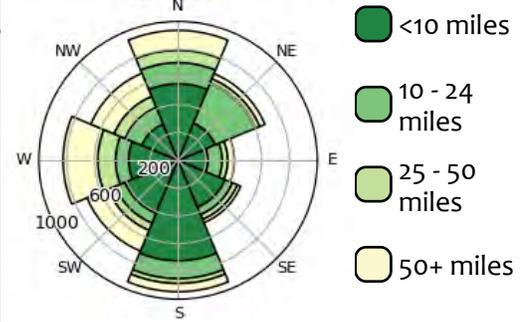
This map shows the location of people who commute to Connersville for work. Most workers live and work in Connersville, as shown by dark red where the City is located. However, workers living outside the City mostly commute from the west. Additionally, there are some concentrations of commuters in Richmond and Cambridge City.

WORK LOCATION OF CONNERSVILLE RESIDENTS (2019)

Sources: US Census Bureau On the Map, ESRI.



Job Counts by Distance/Direction in 2019
All Workers



The map shows the job location of Connersville residents. This illustrates that City residents are mostly commuting within Fayette County and some commute to Richmond, Cambridge City, and New Castle. Almost no Connersville residents commute to the three major urban areas near the City: Indianapolis; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Dayton, Ohio.



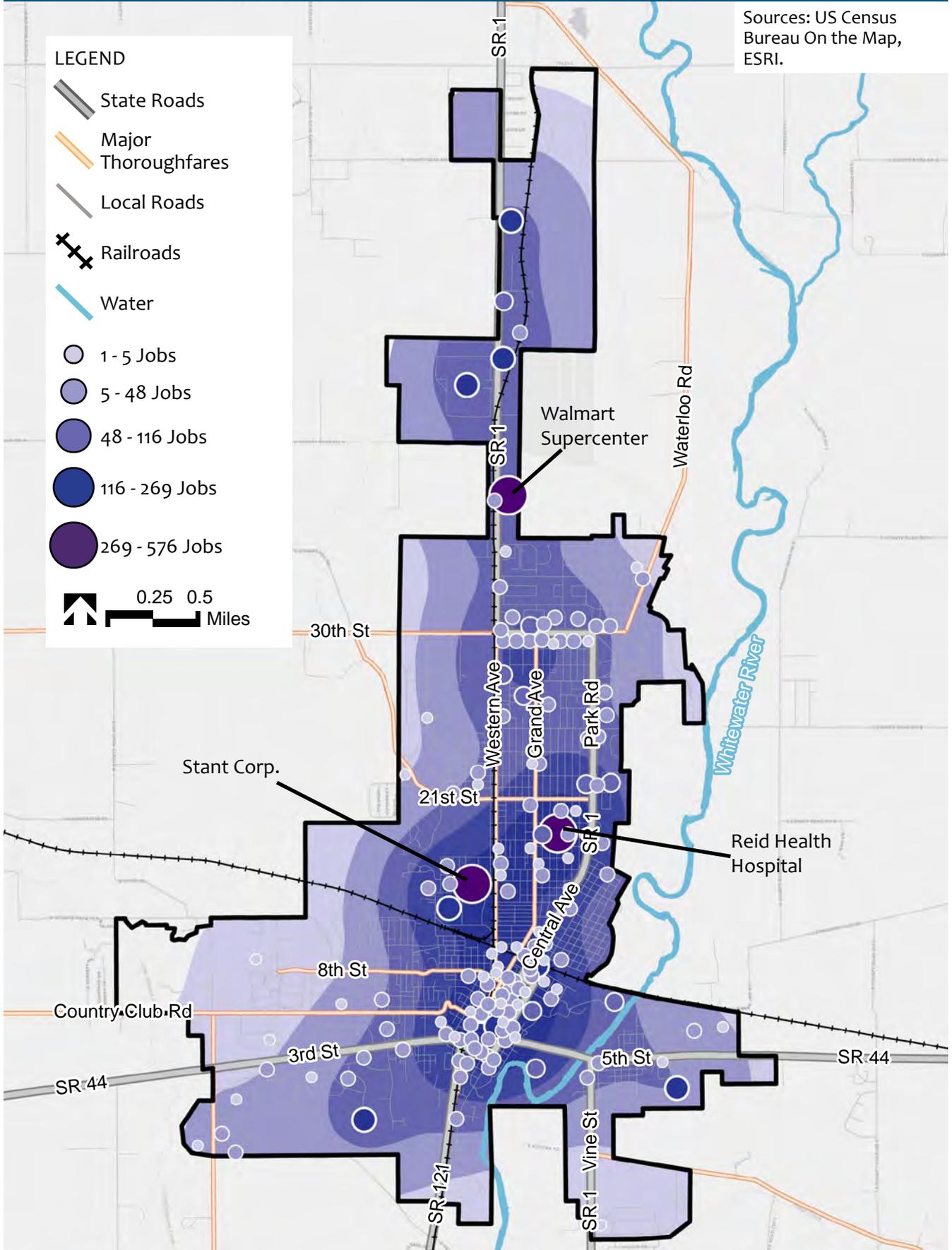
JOBS (WITHIN THE CITY) HEAT MAP (2019)

Sources: US Census Bureau On the Map, ESRI.

LEGEND

-  State Roads
-  Major Thoroughfares
-  Local Roads
-  Railroads
-  Water
-  1 - 5 Jobs
-  5 - 48 Jobs
-  48 - 116 Jobs
-  116 - 269 Jobs
-  269 - 576 Jobs

 0.25 0.5 Miles





03

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION.....	38
CPC MEMBERS.....	38
ROLE OF THE CPC.....	38
COMMITTEE'S WORK AND MEETINGS.....	39



Introduction

The Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC) was essential in leading the planning process. The CPC provided input to create the plan's vision, goals, and strategies, and confirmed proposed projects and implementation recommendations. The CPC includes the Mayor, an Area Plan Commission representative, a Chamber of Commerce representative, local staff and leaders in the community, and residents. The group was comprised of six individuals in total met several times during the planning process in-person and virtually to review various materials. CPC members were also involved in the focus groups held during the planning process.

The CPC will be essential in promoting the plan and ensuring the implementation and development of various goals and projects moving forward. The CPC members were selected based on their roles in the community and dedication to Connersville. Once adopted, they will help drive the action-oriented recommendations forward into reality and be leaders of change within the city.

CPC Members

Chad Frank

Mayor

Alexandra Pflug

Fayette Community Foundation

Bill MacDaniel

Fayette County Area Plan Commission

Brian Durham

Connersville Chamber of Commerce

Diana Phillips

Connersville City Council, At-Large

Rebecca Marvel

Community Wellness Coordinator, Purdue Extension
- Nutrition Education Program

Role of the CPC

The CPC's role included overall project guidance and providing specific recommendations for subject matter topics. The CPC served as the liaison between the consultant team and OCRA, partner organizations, City leaders, business owners, and residents. Members of the CPC will serve as the key implementers of this plan in the following months and years once the plan is adopted.

The CPC confirmed the community profile, demographic and economic analyses, and key findings presented by the consultant team. They also provided much of the background and existing conditions relevant to each subject matter topic, identified the issues and opportunities present in the community, and helped develop goals, projects, and the priority goals and project list found later in the plan (see the [Implementation Chapter on page 194](#)).

CPC meetings were facilitated by the consultant team with an emphasis on discussion-based interactions with CPC members. Meetings typically included handouts, maps, or presentations that helped guide the discussion. All of these meetings were informal discussions to help guide and review the consultant team's work while developing the plan. These discussions were focused on identifying the issues and opportunities present within the community to be able to craft an overall vision statement for the plan and vision statements, goals, and projects for each of the subject topics. The purpose of these meetings was to ensure that plan development was moving forward, and that it was a transparent process approved by the CPC. The CPC agreed with the vision statements, goals, and projects created during the process; any edits or issues that the CPC identified were discussed with the consultant team to continue moving the project forward. This collaborative process allowed the consultant team and CPC members to create a unique comprehensive plan specific for the needs of Connersville.



CPC members continued to show their support of the project through constant communication with the consultant team. Members would often review materials on their own and contact the consultants via email to ask questions. When the consultants sent out materials for review, it was paired with an online meeting via Zoom to discuss the content and gain feedback. CPC members also showed support by showing up to the community event to talk about their thoughts and attract community members to participate in the activities.

This plan would not have been possible without the continued participation of the CPC throughout the process, and their attention to detail in creating a future vision for Connersville.

Committee's Work and Meetings

This section outlines the work that the CPC has put into the plan, including the meetings and open house (public event) held throughout the process. Over the last year, multiple meetings were conducted with the CPC and led by the consultant team. The meetings and events held throughout the process were:

- » December 8, 2021 – Kick-Off Meeting with CPC Members
- » February 16, 2022 – CPC Meeting 1
- » March 28, 2022 – CPC Meeting 2
- » April 27, 2022 – Focus Group Meetings
- » May 4, 2022 – CPC Meeting 3 (Virtual)
- » May 14, 2022 – Celebration in the 'Ville Event (community engagement opportunity)
- » June 1, 2022 – CPC Meeting 4

December 8, 2021 – Kick-Off Meeting with CPC Members

The project kick-off and coordination meeting was the first meeting held during the planning process. The consultant team met with the CPC at the Mayor's Office and focused on introductions, expectations, and a review of the comprehensive planning process for the coming months. This included:

- » Identifying what the plan should address such as:
 - » Identifying a vision and timeline,
 - » Capitalizing on community assets
 - » Focusing on future land use direction and zoning and subdivision ordinance review, and
 - » Building community pride
- » Discussing additional members who could be a part of the Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC).
- » Creating a public engagement plan.
 - » Discussing focus group participants.
 - » Determining local events and locations to hold public meetings and engagement opportunities.
 - » Creating a project website.
- » Discussion of past plans and additional information or data the City could provide.

This meeting set the framework for the project and determined meeting schedules and upcoming public events that would provide additional public engagement opportunities. The Comprehensive Planning Committee was formed during this meeting. Six total members make up the CPC and the consultant team.



February 16, 2022 – CPC Meeting 1

This was the first official meeting of the CPC. The consultant team and CPC members discussed adding more members to the group. The consultant team reviewed the purpose a comprehensive plan, the OCRA requirements, and asked several questions that had been prepared for the meeting relating to each of the OCRA subject matter topics. By this time, the consultant team would have normally completed and reviewed a socioeconomic analysis with the members. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, census data was not released until the middle of March and the analysis was presented during CPC Meeting 4 in June.

This meeting focused on identifying what the group wanted to see the plan accomplish and the CPC helped identify assets, issues, and opportunities within the community.

Many of the comments focused on the following key factors:

- » Solidifying a vision for the community.
- » Multiple development and redevelopment opportunities.
- » Housing development adjacent to the city limits.
- » More investments locally in several neighborhoods.
- » Improving quality of life and place.
- » Enhancing connectivity across the community.
 - » Walking and biking around the community is difficult for residents.
- » Aging residents are leaving Connersville because of lack of available housing.
 - » There is a new housing development for seniors to begin construction in the near future.
- » City needs more staff to support local and governmental needs.

All of these comments are expanded on in the later chapters of this plan, with a full summary of notes found in the [Appendices Chapter on page 258](#). Additional topics brought up in this meeting included outdated zoning, underutilized buildings, expanding educational and training programs, and attracting and retaining people, businesses, and jobs.

March 28, 2022 – CPC Meeting 2

The second CPC meeting did not have a presentation. The consultants followed up with each CPC member to finish discussing the questions presented during the first meeting. A Google Doc was created for each of the members to review and add their thoughts and comments to in preparation for this meeting.

The consultant team gave a brief overview of what was heard at the last meeting and provided a handout with questions and answers from the Google Doc. The CPC and consultant team reviewed this handout together, talked about upcoming focus group meetings and attendees, and began thinking about activities and information to present at an open house or community event. It was determined that the consultant team would be able to use a booth at the Celebration in the 'Ville event and talk to the community about the plan and gain their thoughts and feedback on the process and materials that would be developed at that time.



The 13-topic outline was created by the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA). At the first CPC meeting, CPC members were shown and discussed the outline. The first and second meetings focused on specific topics to help the consultant team understand the existing conditions of the community. This information was then used to begin crafting a vision and realistic goals and projects that the community will be able to achieve over time.



April 27, 2022 – Focus Group Meetings

The consultants spent a day in Connersville with the Mayor holding focus group meetings with various individuals. Four meetings were held during the day for people to attend. Those invited to attend these meetings included business owners, investors, elected officials, local leaders, City staff members, board members, high school students, and residents.

The goal of these meetings was to continue learning about the relevant issues and opportunities in Connersville. Common themes across the focus groups included:

- » Lack of community pride.
- » No unifying vision.
- » Finding information about events and programs around the community is difficult.
 - » Need to Increase marketing efforts.
 - » Need to improve local communications between government bodies, businesses, and residents.
- » Wanting to see more investments from the residents, not just interested investors.
- » Need to address dilapidated/unsafe buildings, vacant properties, and replace aging infrastructure and buildings.
- » Need to bring in businesses to the downtown to occupy the vacant storefronts.
- » Need for overall beautification of the community.

May 4, 2022 – CPC Meeting 3 (Virtual)

In preparation for the Celebration in the ‘Ville event, the consultant team began preparing activities for the community to participate in. Utilizing the feedback heard from the CPC meetings and focus groups, the consultant team crafted vision statements for each of the 13 subject matter topics and a list of goals. These drafted materials were shared with the CPC members via Google Docs to collect their thoughts and comments and discuss any changes that needed to be made. Members could add their comments and track their suggestions for changes directly in the document.

The third CPC meeting was scheduled to review the drafted materials via Zoom. During this meeting, the CPC members and consultant team reviewed the drafted statements and made changes in real-time while asking and answering questions. This meeting allowed the consultant team to finalize the vision statements in preparation for the community event and begin developing projects to include in the plan.

May 14, 2022 – Celebration in the ‘Ville Event

The community event was held on Saturday, May 14, 2022. The consultant team set up a table with two activities for the community to participate in. One activity presented the 13 topics with a short description attached and presented the vision statement for each topic. Participants were then asked to pick which of the topics were most important to them by using paper money to vote. They were allowed to distribute six paper dollars however they wanted, meaning they could distribute a dollar across six topics, or put all six dollars under one category. This allowed them to vote for the topics that were the most important for them to see the community and local government invest local capital into.

The second activity asked people to write down their one wish, goal, or project they would like to see for Connersville. Projects and wishes submitted through this activity included revitalizing the downtown, creation of additional trails, attracting more businesses, and building a splash pad.

The results of these activities can be found in the [Appendices on page 258](#).



June 1, 2022 – CPC Meeting 4

The fourth CPC meeting was held in person at the Mayor’s Office in Connersville. A presentation and handout were prepared by the consultant team and were given to each of the CPC members.

This meeting allowed the consultants to present an overview of the socioeconomic status of the City and report what was heard at the community event. The consultants drafted an overall vision statement that was presented for the first time to the group and revised. The presentation and handout included the vision statements and goals that were already previously discussed for each topic matter, and presented the drafted projects list for each of the subject topics. By the end of the meeting, the CPC members asked for the project list to be shared with them via Google Doc to continue to provide comments about the projects and further refine them.

At the end of the meeting, the consultant team identified key dates for a fifth CPC meeting, and a general timeline to complete the draft plan, and submit a draft plan to OCRA for review.



An activity board at the Celebration in the ‘Ville event, where residents could share what they feel is the most important project(s) for the City to accomplish.





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04

LAND USE



INTRODUCTION.....	46
EXISTING CONDITIONS	46
VISION AND KEY GOALS	50
VISION STATEMENT	52
FUTURE LAND USE DEFINITIONS.....	55
IMPLEMENTATION	59
PROJECTS AND ACTION STEPS.....	60
PUBLIC INPUT	62



Introduction

Zoning and land use go hand-in-hand when discussing the development of a city. While zoning regulates how the land can be used and the characteristics of the buildings on the land, land use is irrespective of zoning and is how people are using and interacting with the land. Both zoning and land use play a key role in the future of Connersville and how it can accommodate population growth, encourage redevelopment, and prevent urban sprawl.

Zoning

Currently, the Area Plan Commission, a County-based entity, manages the zoning for the City. The zoning code is divided into 14 districts. The code does not have mixed-use districts, only single-use districts. The zoning code districts are: Prime Agriculture (A1), Agriculture (A2), Residential Suburban (RS), Single-Family Residence (R1), Two-Family Residence (R2), Multi-Family Residence (R3), Medical Services, (MS), Local Business (LB), Planned Business (PB), General Business (GB), Enclosed Industrial (I1), Open Industrial (I2), Unit Development Plan (UD), and Flood Plain (FP).

The existing zoning code is outdated and does not support the recent development needs of the community. For example, the code should provide flexibility which would allow for mixed-use districts in key parts of the City, including downtown. Additionally, it references outdated building codes and state law. There is a desire within the City and County to replace the existing zoning and subdivision ordinances with a more modern, unified development ordinance (UDO), that combines these two items into a single policy document that will help the community better respond to development and help avoid overlapping regulations. Amendments to the existing ordinances may be required as a temporary measure until a time when a comprehensive UDO can be adopted.

Land Use

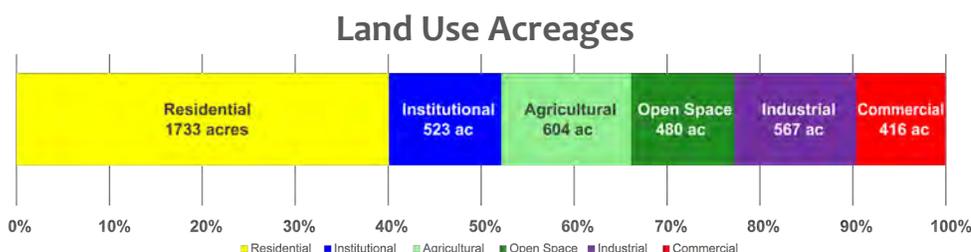
The majority of land use in the City is residential (40.1 percent) while the second-largest is agricultural (14.0 percent), though, with current development trends, this agricultural land may be developed in the future. The patterns in land uses show how the City sprawled outward from its historic and cultural center, the downtown. Commercial and industrial uses have moved incrementally further from where the majority of Connersville’s population resides, though there is still a strong industrial district to the northwest of downtown. See the Current Land Use map on the next page to see where development types are dispersed throughout Connersville.

Residential uses account for 40 percent of the land in Connersville and are by far the most prevalent land use in the City. This is common among most U.S. cities, however, the quality of the residential uses varies greatly and depends heavily on its age, which is explored in the [Housing Chapter on page 112](#). Residential development has a direct impact on municipal revenue and the City should consider a cost of services study to better inform future residential development areas and anticipated revenue from that development. All other land uses take up a similar percentage of land, as seen in the Land Use Acreage bar chart below.

Existing Conditions

Downtown

The backbone of Connersville’s historic downtown and commercial area sits along Central Avenue. The downtown is generally bounded to the north by 9th Street, to the south by SR 44, to the east by SR 1, and to the west by Western Avenue. The downtown offers a variety of commercial businesses and contains many of the offices for the County and the City, including the City Hall. City Hall is the headquarters for the Connersville Police and Fire Departments. The downtown offers a unique opportunity for



Source: GIS Data Set provided by County

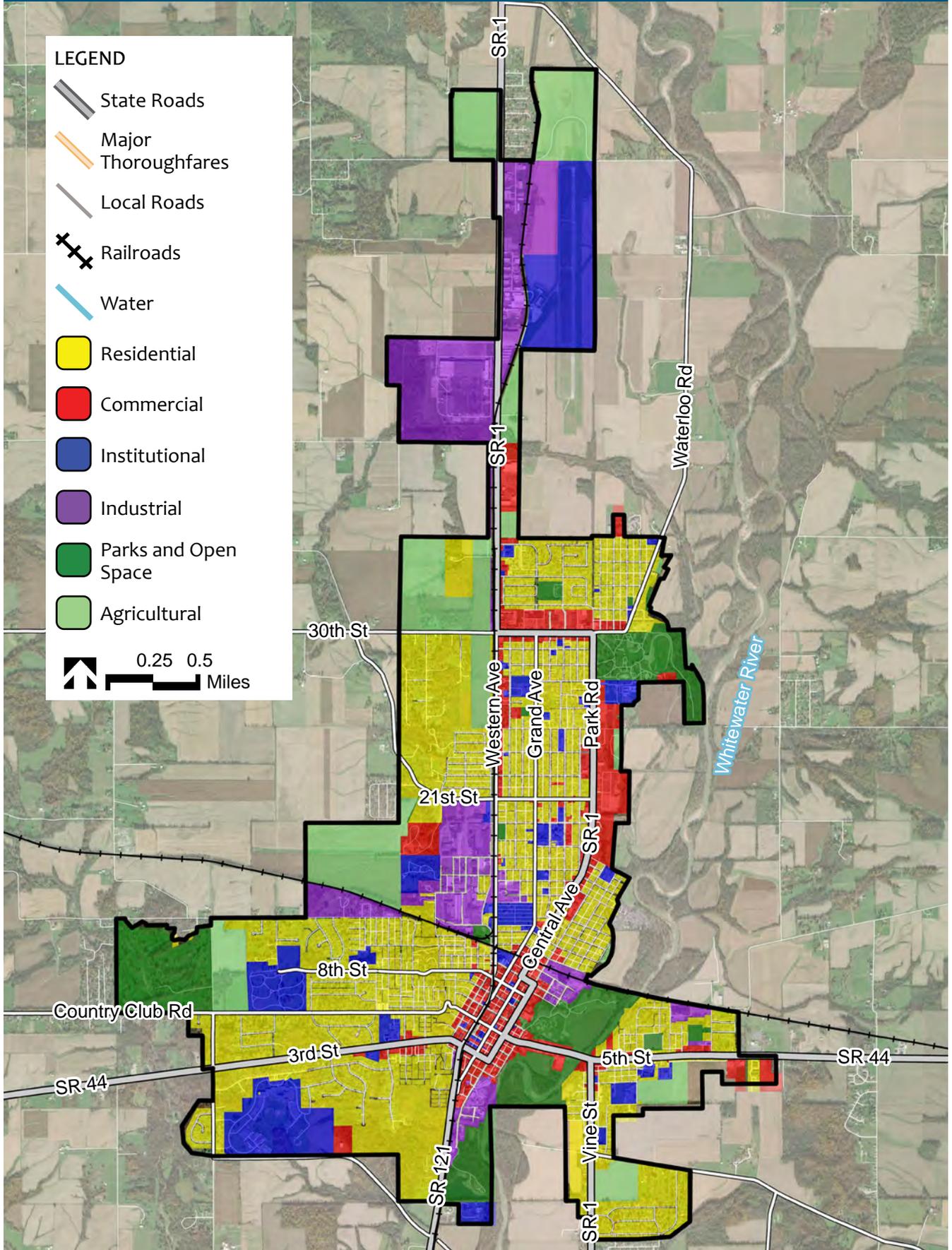


CURRENT LAND USE MAP

LEGEND

-  State Roads
-  Major Thoroughfares
-  Local Roads
-  Railroads
-  Water
-  Residential
-  Commercial
-  Institutional
-  Industrial
-  Parks and Open Space
-  Agricultural

 0.25 0.5 Miles



redevelopment that can help support the vitality of the larger community. National trends show that more people are looking to move back into mixed-use and walkable areas such as downtown Connersville, however, the current zoning does not support the type of mixed-use redevelopment that is needed to make the downtown viable. Consideration should be given to the creation of a unique district focused on the downtown that will promote its revitalization.

Some of the older housing stock, including some historically significant homes, near and within the downtown have fallen into disrepair as a result of little to no investment or occupancy over the years. There are several vacant storefronts in the downtown due to similar reasons. The newest housing developments are found primarily outside of the existing urban core to the southwest of Connersville, near the high school. There have also been a few multi-family housing projects on the outskirts of the City's urban core, including the Fountain Place



Residences north of downtown (top) and in downtown (bottom).

Apartments across the river along SR 1, Turtle Creek Apartments, and Towne Terrace Apartments north of 30th Street. However, a notable redevelopment project within the community is Pattern Mill. This project turned an abandoned industrial facility into an affordable, multi-family apartment complex just north of the downtown along Western Avenue.

Residential Uses

There are four main concentrations of residential land uses: (1) west of downtown, (2) east of downtown across the Whitewater River, (3) north of downtown bounded by 30th Street, Western Avenue, and SR 1, and (4) north of 30th Street. Low-density, suburban-style residential uses are the most common housing developments in the City. These residential areas have developed outward from the downtown area. Most development has occurred in the northern parts of the community. The residential areas in Connersville generally become less dense as they move farther away from the downtown. This trend is common for communities across the country – as development moves further away from the core of the community, development becomes less dense. Unfortunately, many of the older residences north of the downtown and across the Whitewater River east of the downtown have seen disinvestment over the years.

There are also several areas zoned residential on the outskirts of the City that were zoned that way with the anticipation of continued residential development during Connersville's industrial heyday. The undeveloped areas should be re-evaluated and



This commercial development along 30th Street has a large parking lot with stores setback far from the street. This encourages many people to drive here despite its proximity to residential uses.



it may be beneficial to revert their classification to Agriculture (A1) until a time when development pressure increases.

Commercial Uses

Commercial uses, which include shops and restaurants, have historically been located in the downtown. Some commercial development expanded north along SR 1, which was most likely a direct result of the residential growth that happened in that area. There are four commercial nodes in the City:

- » The downtown,
- » The strip center along SR 1 at 21st St.,
- » E. 5th St. (SR 1) between Water St. and Vine St.,
- » Kroger, and the strip development, on 30th St.,
- » Walmart, and the strip development, north of 30th Street along SR 1.

An unfortunate trend of commercial development in Connersville is that it continues to be developed further from the downtown. Several buildings remain vacant despite being great opportunities for businesses to locate. If commercial development continues to locate further from the downtown, the area will have a more difficult time attracting businesses and investors. As commercial areas have moved farther from the downtown, mobility has been focused on vehicle transportation. This makes it more difficult for residents to access these destinations by foot or bike.



The northwest industrial area serves as the oldest active industrial use in the community which is surrounded by neighborhoods. Industrial and residential uses are not typically promoted immediately adjacent to each other due to the intensity of industrial activities.



Industrial Uses

Industrial development has historically been concentrated near the downtown along the railroads that crisscross the city. This includes two areas: (1) just northwest of the downtown along Western Avenue and Mound Street, and (2) south of downtown along SR 121. These areas provide a large source of revenue and jobs for the City and community.

Industrial and residential land uses are often times in conflict with one another due to sound and pollutant contamination. The northwest industrial neighborhood is in close proximity of surrounding neighborhoods which encourages multi-modal travel, but comprehensive environmental regulations should be considered to provide protection for local residents and buffer them from industrial uses.

Institutional Uses

The Fayette County School Corporation, which serves the entire county including Connersville, manages the City's high school, middle school, and five elementary schools (Reference the Public Facilities and Services chapter to see the locations of these schools). In addition to public options, there are multiple private, religion-based schools in the northern part of the City along Western Avenue. These include St. Gabriel School, Faith Christian School, and Community Christian School. There is also a higher education facility, Ivy Tech, along Western Avenue, as well as opportunities for workforce development at the Whitewater Career Center located next to the high



Many institutional uses near the downtown are historic churches, such as the First United Methodist Church shown above, which add to the historic character of the community.

school. Additional institutional uses include the hospital and multiple churches which are prevalent throughout the Connersville community.

Open Space/Recreational Uses

The City operates and maintains eleven parks and properties throughout the community, most of which are near downtown. The largest park is Roberts Park, located on the northern side of town at Park Road and 30th Street. Many parks on the western banks of the Whitewater River act not only as recreational spaces, but also protection against the river's floodplain. There are several undeveloped areas within the Whitewater River floodplain that provide bountiful open space but have very limited access to the City's street network and nearby development.

There is a lack open space and recreational opportunities within several residential areas of the community. Residents have limited access to River's Edge Park and Industrial Park due caused by the railroads and distance from population.

There are many institutional spaces scattered throughout these two areas which could offset the lack of open space by offering amenities free for public use, such as the sports fields at Connersville High School. However, some spaces may not be available for public use. These uses also are not a sufficient substitute for a city park or greenspace. Park spaces at varying scales are meant to serve specific target audiences and are designed to offer various amenities and attractions. Vacant residential lots could provide an opportunity for these areas as



The Babe Ruth Sports Complex is an example of how the City can utilize the Whitewater River floodplain for recreational activities.

small-scale, pocket parks to serve residents within a short walking distance.

Vision and Key Goals

Future land use planning is an important part of the comprehensive plan because it translates the vision, goals, and objectives from an idea to a physical, written form that is achievable. The future land use map was created through examination of existing land use patterns, zoning, and input from the CPC. In many instances, the existing land use is the desired future use and expected to continue indefinitely.

A key issue that was raised across many public input opportunities and CPC meetings was specific to the quality of the existing housing. Vacant parcels, dilapidated buildings, and unkempt exteriors were some of the main concerns discussed. With this in mind, new opportunities for neighborhood shops and green space through vacant lots or buildings will be identified on the future land use map.

Changes and Opportunities

One of the major changes recommended in this plan is the long-term replacement of the existing zoning and subdivision ordinance with a unified development ordinance. Until a time when that can occur, short-term amendments to the zoning and subdivision ordinance may include adding a mixed-use (MU) zoning district and mixed-density residential (MR) zoning district. The code should also be reviewed to determine if an Institutional (I) zoning district is warranted, or if permitted use language for all zoning districts should be updated. If additional zoning districts are not warranted, but some areas of the City would support and benefit from additional development types within the zoning district, the creation of an overlay district may be an alternative solution. The creation of overlay districts allows for a specific area of a community to have additional standards to increase flexibility in development and design standards without affecting the original base zone of the property.

Some of these ideas and development types already exist within the community, but it is important to identify where the transition of densities are between areas. Specifically with these changes, the commercial node east of the 21st Street/Park Rd



intersection would become MU and MR areas with retail on the ground floor and residential uses above or behind the commercial uses. This change seeks to revamp the old Walmart strip mall by capitalizing on the underutilized parking lot to build MU and MR buildings. The area can also provide amenities for the broader community, such as greater access to the Whitewater River and open space currently hidden behind the strip mall.

Additionally, commercial uses will be extended along State Road 44, east of the Whitewater River. Residents should be able to walk and bike to these commercial businesses. These businesses can act as a small neighborhood hub with shops that serve the immediately surrounding residential uses. It is important that the commercial uses are neighborhood-scaled, such as a small café or convenience store, and do not detract or pull demand from businesses located in the downtown.

It is also critical that the City adopt the latest building code used by the State of Indiana in order to remain in compliance with current building practices and standards.

Land Use vs. Zoning

Land use should not be confused with zoning. While land use and zoning are related, they serve separate functions. Land use describes the activity that occurs on the land. Zoning implements the land use plan by regulating what can happen both in the private and public realm. Zoning specifically regulates the character, building size, density, and other development standards for a particular parcel of land.

Future Land Uses

The **Future Land Use map**, shown on page 54, is intended to be general in nature and not based on property lines. This allows development flexibility and interpretation on a project-by-project basis while still establishing the foundation by which to gauge appropriateness of future development proposals. Areas outside of the current municipal boundaries have been included on the future land use map. These areas were included because they are already or likely to be served by City utilities and services if developed. The future land use classifications for these areas should be used to inform zoning decisions for when and if these properties are annexed. The

future land use definitions (**starting on page 55**) and zoning districts are not synonymous with each other. The future land use definitions describe the character of development per each land use classification depicted on the Future Land Use map.



A residence north of downtown shows pride in their home by maintaining and beautifying their property.



VISION STATEMENT

Maintain a balance of land uses throughout the community that preserves historic character, encourages redevelopment, and promotes new development in strategic locations while preserving the “small town” character and assets of the community.

Goal 1

Encourage new construction and redevelopment on vacant and underutilized lots within the City.

- a. Emphasize redevelopment and infill, and identify government policies and incentives to prioritize redevelopment and infill. Map prime opportunities for both.
- b. Review potential drawbacks and environmental regulatory impediments to brownfield redevelopment.
- c. Create a plan for buildings that can be saved and demolished both within the downtown and across neighborhoods.
- d. Repurpose underutilized buildings and strip developments for new uses to continue attracting new businesses to the community.

Goal 2

Focus commercial and industrial development to the SR 1, SR 44, and SR 121 corridors.

- a. Identify the extent of appropriate development.
- b. Consider changes to zoning and zoning districts along these highways.
- c. As development occurs along these roadways, curb cuts and access to development need to be evaluated to avoid creating dangerous turning patterns into traffic.

Goal 3

Promote downtown revitalization and recreate downtown as a central location for retail, restaurants, and residential uses.

- a. Develop a downtown overlay district.
- a. Create a downtown revitalization plan and determine specific needs and standards for the area, such as housing, retail, restaurants, office space, lighting, and public seating.
- b. Leverage municipal funds to create an incentive program for downtown investment.

Goal 4

Develop more family, child, and teenager-friendly attractions across the community to further establish Connersville as a destination for families to live.

- a. Market available lots and buildings for development and rehabilitation to bring more businesses and investors to the City.
- b. Encourage more family-friendly businesses to locate in Connersville.
- c. Encourage businesses to post longer hours of operation to give families and teenagers places to spend more time at.
- d. Update and maintain existing amenities for families, children, and teenagers to utilize such as parks and play structures.



Goal 5

Consider annexation of developed areas outside of city limits that already receive municipal services and only extend municipal services to new development that will be annexed into the City.

- a. Develop evaluation criteria for annexation which may include, but is not limited to, if the property is served by municipal services, infrastructure and utility capacity, fiscal impact, environmental concerns, adjacent development, and planned future use and development opportunities.
- b. Identify potential areas for annexation.
- c. Conduct outreach to property owners regarding annexation.
- d. Create policies for providing municipal services to new development, and if services are extended to properties outside City limits, that the development be annexed into the City.
- e. Draft the annexation policy.
- f. Hold a public hearing and adopt the policy.

Goal 6

Promote a healthy mixture of residential, commercial, and industrial development within the City.

- a. Evaluate existing development patterns in the community.
- b. Utilizing a list of properties available for development or redevelopment, identify the best uses for that land based on demand for development type in the community.

Goal 7

Ensure new development reflects the goals and recommendations found in this plan, and that the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations are enforced by local officials.

- a. Refer to the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use map to determine if a potential development opportunity aligns with the plan.
- b. The City should refer to the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations to ensure that future development is compatible.
- c. If the development location of a particular location of a particular project does not align with the Future Land Use map, zoning ordinance, or subdivision regulations, the City must evaluate the project to see if it will address existing concerns of help accomplish other goals and projects found within this plan to make an informed decision to allow or deny projects moving forward.



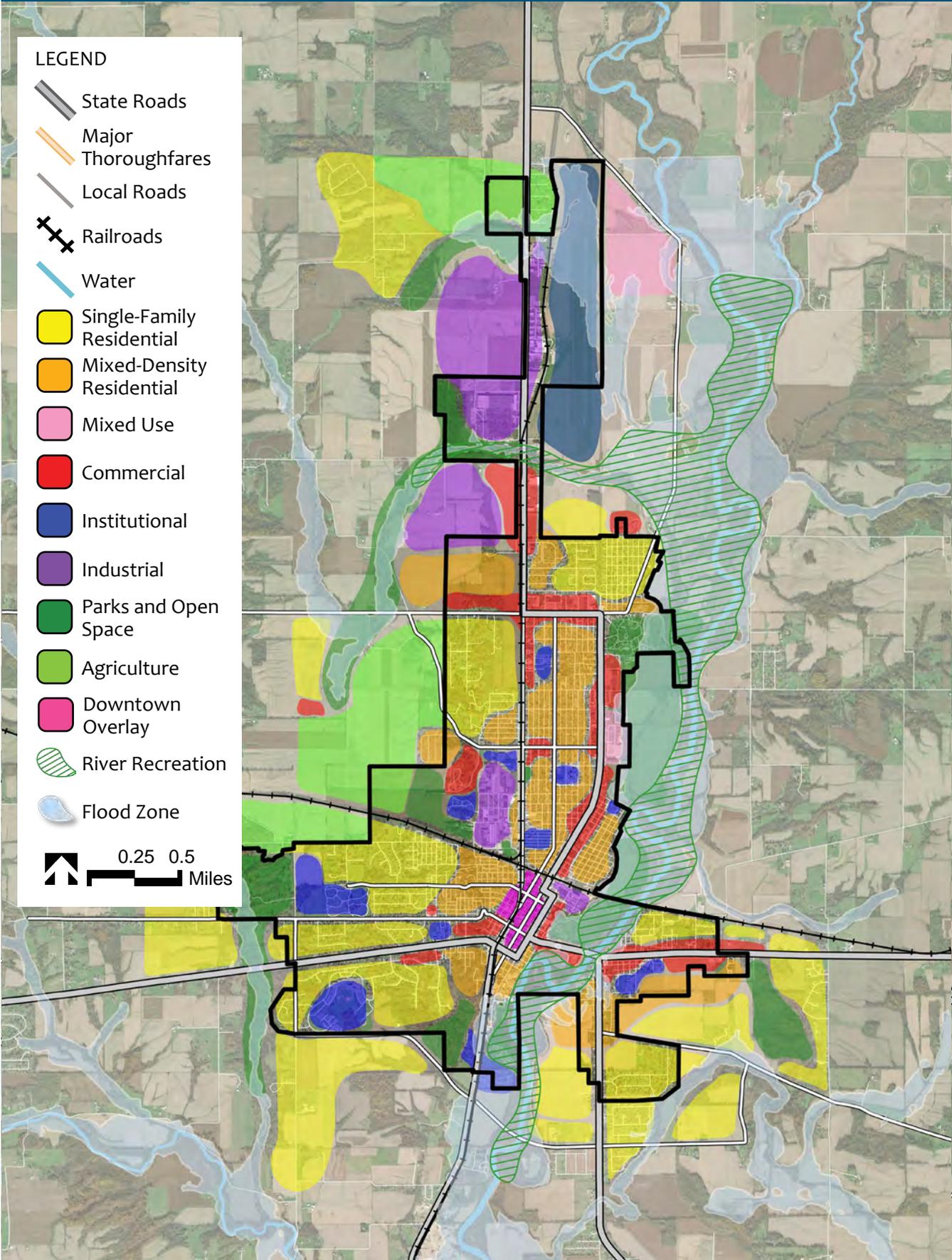
A “healthy mixture of residential, commercial, and industrial development” refers to a balance of multiple types of uses that support economic and social needs and demands of the community.



FUTURE LAND USE MAP

LEGEND

-  State Roads
 -  Major Thoroughfares
 -  Local Roads
 -  Railroads
 -  Water
 -  Single-Family Residential
 -  Mixed-Density Residential
 -  Mixed Use
 -  Commercial
 -  Institutional
 -  Industrial
 -  Parks and Open Space
 -  Agriculture
 -  Downtown Overlay
 -  River Recreation
 -  Flood Zone
-  0.25 0.5 Miles



Future Land Use Definitions

Single-Family Residential

The Single-Family Residential classification is designated primarily for established residential blocks and new subdivisions of varying lot and dwelling sizes. The defined character may vary by neighborhood, but new developments should include mostly single-family detached homes and single-family attached (duplex) homes that are suitable for transitioning from existing neighborhoods to new adjacent developments. New neighborhoods should have walkable, well-connected street systems that allow residents easy access to surrounding neighborhoods and nearby destinations, and their development should be in coordination with a City Transportation Plan. Neighborhoods should be designed around any existing natural features including tree stands, ponds, water, and topography, and should be used and promoted as accessible community amenities. Parks, schools, religious institutions, historic districts, and other community facilities may be included in this classification at appropriate locations.



A single-family residential home in Connerville whose residents take pride in their home by maintaining and adding decor to their home and lawn.

Mixed-Density Residential (MR)

The Mixed-Density Residential classification is intended for a wider range of housing types and an increased housing density compared to the single-family residential classification. The MR classification includes townhomes, condominiums, multi-family apartments, and any established mobile home parks. Densities and housing types may vary but should always consider surrounding character; denser portions of a development should be scaled down to reflect adjacent dwelling density and context. These residential areas allow for greater flexibility in form and scale to achieve active, cohesive, and affordable neighborhoods.

Mixed-residential developments should be designed around common open spaces and amenity areas. Multi-family apartments will only be appropriate at certain locations given surrounding development patterns and the transportation system. These areas should be developed in a walkable and connected manner and help transition adjacent development densities. Like single-family residential areas, natural features, such as existing trees, ponds, and water should be incorporated into the development as amenities for the community. Parks, schools, religious institutions, and other community facilities may be included at appropriate locations within this classification.



An example of a mixed-density residential development with similar design characteristics as a single-family home.



Mixed-Use (MU)

Typically, Mixed-Use areas create spaces within a community that have a combination of diverse, high activity uses within a connected and walkable block layout. MU developments can be horizontally mixed, meaning different, appropriate land uses are near each other in different buildings, or vertically mixed, meaning land uses are stacked on top of each other in one building. Appropriate uses include restaurants, small-scale retail and professional services, offices, multi-family apartments and condominiums, townhomes, and recreational amenities. Building height should range from two to four stories. Active commercial uses should be focused on the ground floor and office and residential uses on the upper floors.

Connersville's downtown will be the primary mixed-use district since it emphasizes pedestrian-scaled development and has several multi-story buildings with storefronts. The downtown should continue to coordinate development focused on walkability and bikeability, high-quality architecture, adaptive reuse of historic structures, plazas, and other pedestrian and bicyclist amenities to activate the street. By doing this, the downtown will continue to act as a connector to nearby neighborhoods and community assets. Building setbacks from the primary street should continue to be minimal to match the existing development pattern. Building entrances should be oriented towards the primary streets. First-floor non-residential uses should include large windows to allow views into and out of the space to better activate the adjacent streetscape.



An example of a mixed-use building with ground floor retail and apartments above. These developments improve access to shops and amenities for residents.

Commercial

The Commercial area designation is intended for activity centers including office, retail, restaurants, and professional service businesses. These areas have the potential to be employment and tax revenue generators for the City. Neighborhood-scaled commercial centers are also included in this classification and contain a mix of active uses at key intersections that serve the surrounding residential concentrations. These centers should be compatible with and contribute to neighborhood character and livability. They should be defined by building frontages and an activated street, with parking lots located mostly behind the building.

Regional commercial uses such as those found along State Road 1 may include higher intensity retail and office developments that attract users from a wider area. These corridors can handle higher traffic volumes that may be generated by people traveling from nearby towns and the county. New developments should have integrated designs with coordinated access points, amenities, and cohesive architecture that fits within the context of the larger corridor. Buildings should be arranged so that they frame and define the street network. Large expanses of surface parking, particularly between the building front and the street, should be avoided. Landscape plantings should be used to create more attractive developments and buffer adjacent residential areas from the more intense commercial and retail uses.

A coordinated pedestrian system should be provided throughout the commercial area, connecting uses found on and between the site to adjacent properties and destinations across Connersville.



An example of neighborhood-scaled commercial building. It mainly serves local residents and is inviting to pedestrians walking nearby.



Institutional

The Institutional classification includes uses such as schools, libraries, cemeteries, religious institutions, and government facilities. These uses may vary in scale and impact the transportation system during specific hours of a day. Large institutional uses should be located along thoroughfares with the capacity to handle the anticipated traffic generation. Institutional uses can be found within several of the future land use classifications including single-family residential, mixed-density residential, mixed-use, and commercial uses where appropriate.

Industrial

The Industrial use classification provides locations for manufacturing, warehousing, and office uses, and occasionally may have some supporting local commercial businesses. While these uses may produce some adverse impacts on the community in terms of traffic or aesthetics, they are incredibly important to the employment and economic base of Connersville. Building types may include both large footprint users with multi-story buildings on large parcels of land, or groups of smaller structures in a business park setting.

These uses may need extensive exterior storage or movement of goods and require additional methods of control to limit adverse environmental and visual impacts. When potential conflicts between uses occur, buffering and landscaping should be used to minimize these impacts. Where land is subdivided for the development of an industrial or business park, opportunities for shared open space and regional detention facilities should be explored. Industrial areas may include limited commercial support uses, but these should be a secondary element within or near an industrial development, such as businesses that can cater to employees. These areas should be located along rail and roadway corridors with the capacity to handle the necessary volumes of truck traffic and be built out in a planned manner to maximize investments in public infrastructure systems.



An institutional facility near downtown Connersville with an easily accessible entrance and blends well with other nearby commercial uses.



An example of an industrial development with an exterior landscaping to soften the building's exterior facade. It can also support small-scale commercial operations inside the building that cater to employees.



Parks & Open Space

The Parks & Open Space classification is established to distinguish and protect recreational areas, public parks, and general open space. Uses may include passive open spaces, ball fields, conservation areas, and environmentally sensitive lands. Public parks and open spaces further increase the overall quality of life for residents and should link to each other with bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Where facilities are lacking within neighborhoods, the City should consider partnerships with local institutions, such as public schools, and county facilities, to offer recreation and ensure equitable access throughout the community.

River Recreation

The River Recreation classification is not a specific future land use, but a general identified area surrounding the Whitewater River. This classification has been created to allow for the development along the river that is specific to water-related amenities and activities. Appropriate uses may include canoe and kayak launches, wildlife watching, designated overlooks with picnic tables and benches, and general open space. Appropriate structures may also be constructed near the river, such as a canoe, kayak, or tube rental business, that have little to no impact on the surrounding environment. These areas should be accessible through bicycle and pedestrian facilities, as well as by vehicle with adequate parking for visitors transporting personal equipment.

This classification is intended to act as a general district where river recreation amenities may be the most appropriate. Where there is an overlap between this classification and other land uses, the identified uses would all be appropriate based on need, context of the area, and developmental impacts.



Parks and open space should offer a variety of amenities including upgraded playground equipment, seating, and access to trails

Floodplain

While not specifically a recommended future land use, the floodway and flood hazard areas have been identified on the Future Land Use Map to help inform planning decisions regarding responsible development. The floodway includes the streams, creek, and river channels, and adjacent lands that are reasonably required to discharge flood waters downstream.

The flood hazard area is the land that is susceptible to being inundated by a flood event having a 1-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. This is also known as the base flood or 100-year flood. Future development should not be permitted within the floodway and floodplain; however, these areas may be protected and incorporated into open space on a development site or an appropriate use with little to no impact as it pertains to the river recreation classification. Any existing structures within the floodway present a danger to those property owners and other properties downstream. Long-term, the City should explore opportunities to reduce the size of the floodplain through regional detention improvements and remove critical structures from flood hazard areas as funding and resources become available.



Recreational paths can make riverfronts and views more accessible to the public, as well as encourage walking and biking.



An aerial from Google Earth of the Whitewater River on the City's eastern border.



Implementation

Land use is meant to be ever changing to accommodate the needs of the community. This can be addressed through repurposing vacant and underutilized spaces. Several buildings in the downtown and within neighborhoods need investment and refurbishment to improve overall appearance of the City and quality of life for residents. Introducing more quality housing developments, such as MR and MU housing, within the downtown and replacing or remediating dilapidated buildings for their original purpose or a new one will allow new opportunities and support varieties of land uses and activities.

Future development should fit within the context of the area or neighborhood and avoid incompatible uses next to one another where possible. If there are limited options, and incompatible uses are located next to one another (industrial and residential for example), additional screening, buffering, and beautification strategies through landscaping can be required by the City, and are strongly encouraged within this plan to be included in the zoning ordinance. These tactics help lessen the visual impacts of industrial sites experienced by residents and visitors.

Although it is recommended that demolition be avoided where possible, this plan acknowledges that the City may not be able to save every building without significant investment to bring them up to code and make them inhabitable. The downtown has prime space for small businesses, employment opportunities, and housing for seniors and young individuals. The City should create a plan to save existing buildings, especially within the downtown, where the costs of renovations and necessary upgrades do not exceed the cost for demolition and new construction. The benefit of this strategy is that density can be created without drifting far away from the existing scale and character of the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

Similarly, a survey of building conditions and vacant lots in the downtown may allow for the City to create a targeted incentive program for existing building owners and reinvestment to either make improvements to the property or sell to someone else who would invest in the property. The City should consider a separate downtown zoning district, or overlay zoning district, that extends the

limits of the downtown historic district to focus on the central portion of the City and guide revitalization efforts, architectural standards, and development recommendations.

Land use plays an important role in the form and character of a community. For the City of Connersville, land use has mainly been kept in an organized context that makes sense for the community. While the development pattern makes sense, the City must continue to encourage growth and development through a variety of opportunities for housing, commercial, and employment options. Several projects are recommended within this chapter.



Vacant or dilapidated buildings can serve the community when reimagined with new land uses, such as the Pattern Mill apartments (industrial to residential).



An example of how land uses work with each other to better the community. In the, mixed use and commercial buildings front a beautiful city park.



Projects and Action Steps

Project 1

Review, amend, and ultimately replace the zoning and subdivision ordinances with a unified development ordinance to promote diversity and flexibility of development, allow housing development on smaller lot sizes, address design standards, protect environmentally sensitive areas, and incentivize the use of green infrastructure.

- a. Create a steering committee to review and lead a comprehensive process to amend the zoning and subdivision ordinances and ultimately replace it with a unified development ordinance.
 - i. This steering committee should include City and County staff members.
- b. Consult with a zoning and land use professional to facilitate an update to the existing ordinances and draft a new unified development ordinance.
- c. Identify concerns with current ordinances.
- d. Draft short-term amendments to the existing zoning and subdivision ordinance to address recurring problems and near-term development concerns and priorities.
 - i. Write an amendment to implement the future land uses found in this plan, including Mixed Use, Mixed Residential, and Downtown Overlay districts.
 - ii. Consider amending the subdivision ordinance to require a certain amount of land be designated for recreational uses, such as trails, , as well as incentives for green infrastructure development.
- e. Draft a new unified development ordinance.
- f. Conduct an outreach and education campaign in advance of a public hearing by the Plan Commission and adoption by the County Council.
- g. Make the document(s) easy to access and navigate by publishing them online in the form of an Interactive PDF document.
- h. Update the planning and zoning applications to reflect any updated process and standards of the new ordinances.
- i. Adopt the short-term amendments, and

eventually the new unified development ordinance, through the County Council.

- j. Conduct training with City staff, Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, and County Council regarding administration and interpretation of the new ordinances.
- k. Continue to update the zoning map as rezonings take place, new districts are created, or underutilized districts become obsolete.

Project 2

Continue to update the zoning map as rezonings take place, new districts are created, or underutilized districts become obsolete.

- a. Revert land zoned R1 (Single-Family Residence District) to A1 (Prime Agriculture District) or A1 (Agriculture District) if development is unlikely.

Project 3

Rezone parcels to Mixed Residential or Mixed Use to encourage redevelopment in areas identified in the Future Land Use map.

- a. Market these parcels to developers.
- b. Work with the current landowners, businesses, and nearby residents of these areas to establish a unified vision for redevelopment.
- c. Work with the City's Street Department to create complete streets to encourage more walking and biking to and from these areas, especially the downtown.

Project 4

Conduct an annual review of the Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use map to ensure it aligns with community growth and development goals, and amend as necessary.

- a. If more land use categories need to be added, the new use should have a description and the Future Land Use map should be updated to reflect where it would best fit in the City.
- b. When a new development is proposed, ensure that the Area Plan Commission or the City Council are familiar with the Future Land Use map and its objectives.
 - i. Adopt a project review provision for independent review of the proposed



- project in relation to zoning and subdivision ordinances, or unified development ordinance, and include the cost in the application fee.
- c. Reference the Future Land Use map to inform the decision on whether to approve the development.
 - i. If the development is recommended to be approved, update the Future Land Use map to reflect any changes to it.
 - ii. If it is recommended that the development is changed to better align with the Future Land Use map, work with the developer to show them the City's vision and what they can change to seek approval.

Project 5

Conduct an inventory of vacant lots within the community.

- a. Identify staff to develop an inventory of vacant lots within the City.
- b. Develop a living of spreadsheet with metrics for tracking vacant lots and organize the document by address, ownership, land use, zoning classification, size, previous use, environmental concerns, easements, and encumbrances.
- c. Map vacant lots within the community based on the inventory, incorporating them into the GIS database.
- d. Utilize local planning documents to identify redevelopment opportunities for existing vacant lots.
- e. Develop incentives for redevelopment of key vacant lots.
- f. Coordinate with potential developers and investors on redevelopment opportunities.
- g. Update the vacant lot inventory and map on a regular basis, incorporating information into the GIS database.

Project 6

Implement maximum lot coverage standards to regulate building sizes in lieu of current lot and area requirements to allow more flexibility in vacant lot reuse.

- a. Consult with a zoning and land use professional to facilitate an update to the lot size requirements.

- b. Identify standards appropriate for the City of Connersville, and Fayette County, and in accordance with current building practices.
- c. Draft short-term amendments to zoning ordinance and adopt new language as a part of a new unified development ordinance.
- d. Adopt amendments through the legislative bodies.
- e. Conduct training with City staff, Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, and City Council regarding administration and interpretation of revisions.

Project 7

Identify development opportunities along existing State Roads and primary thoroughfares.

- a. Identify properties available for development and redevelopment.
- b. Encourage or incentivize redevelopment of vacant properties along main thoroughfares.
- c. Develop small subarea plans for key corridors that might have a large area that is in transition.

Project 8

Evaluate and update, or replace, the dilapidated building ordinance(s).

- a. Complete a dilapidated building inventory.
 - i. Identify buildings in the inventory on a scale from “rehabilitate” to “demolish.”
- b. Identify problems and successes in the process defined in the ordinance(s) for dealing with dilapidated buildings.
- c. Update, or replace, the ordinance(s) to streamline the process, if possible.



Public Input

“Land use” was not specifically touched on by many members of the public or within the focus groups, however, City staff, business and neighborhood leaders, and the Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC) had comments regarding land use. During the kickoff meeting with the CPC, it was noted that the previous comprehensive plan was too vague in terms of the direction the City wanted to plan for future land uses. The CPC and focus groups repeatedly put a high priority on updating the zoning ordinance for more development flexibility, housing types, and land uses.

The focus groups did express a common interest across all four groups related to the revitalization of downtown Connersville. Many participants would like to see more restaurants, housing options, and outdoor recreation.

During the Celebration in the ‘Ville event on May 14th, the public was asked to rank the comprehensive plan’s subject matter topics based on their perceived value. Of the 30 votes that were received, four votes were specifically for land use, or about 13 percent.





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05

GOVERNMENT AND FISCAL CAPACITY



INTRODUCTION.....	66
EXISTING CONDITIONS	66
VISION AND KEY GOALS	67
IMPLEMENTATION	69
PROJECTS & ACTION STEPS	70
PUBLIC INPUT.....	71

Introduction

To fund the basic operations within a community, provide services, and implement policy, the local government must be able to generate revenue. Government and fiscal capacity refers to the ability of the local municipality to generate such funds to reinvest and support the City. Connersville’s fiscal capacity is dependent on the assessed value of property, residential incomes, and costs of services provided by the City. Since 2011, Connersville has done an excellent job of providing necessary services to its residents and businesses and growing fiscal capacity. This chapter will look at the year-end cash and investments for the City of Connersville and the value of the current TIF district, recommend additional goals for the government to continue growing their fiscal capacity, and explore various projects to help achieve those goals.

end cash and investments total. When comparing the difference in expenditures over the 11 years, there is approximately an 11.4-million-dollar difference between 2011 to 2021. On average, Connersville had roughly 20 million dollars to spend annually between 2011 and 2021.

According to Indiana Gateway, Fayette County only has one Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District which happens to be within Connersville. This TIF District is also the only Economic Development Area within the County and City. This TIF District is made up of five parcels of land and has an incremental assessed value of 7.78 million dollars. A TIF (tax increment financing) district is an area within a City where the base value of those properties are frozen for a period of time. During the lifespan of the TIF district, tax revenue generated from the base value of those properties is reinvested into the area for improvements, new construction, and overall maintenance purposes.

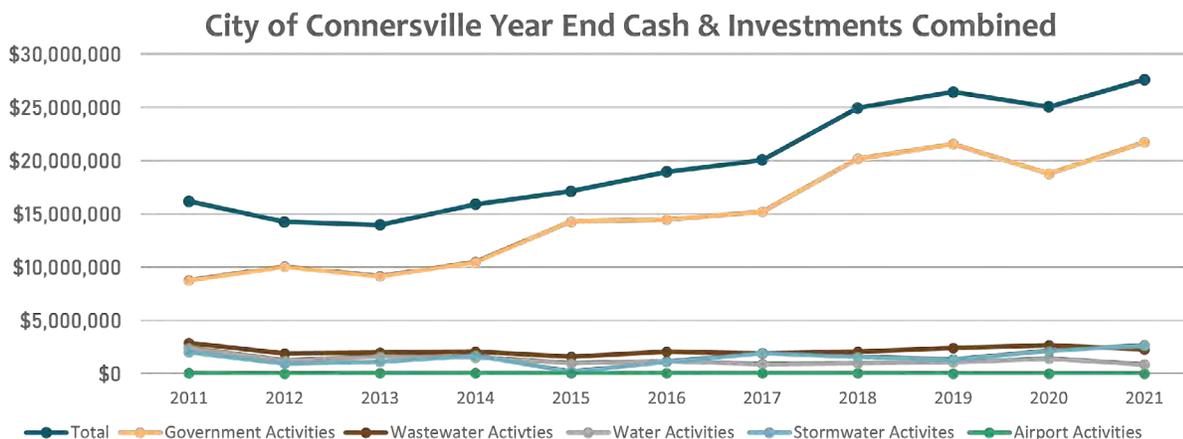
Existing Conditions

The City’s fiscal capacity is used to provide fire and police protection, operate and maintain infrastructure, and perform other developmental functions across Connersville. The following chart shows Connersville’s year end cash and investments, which details how money was spent over each fiscal year by the City. Government activity funds include the costs for fire, police, and contamination of land (brownfield) maintenance among several other funds. Connersville has seen a steady increase in year end cash and investments from 2011 to 2021. The City experienced declines in 2012, 2013, and 2020 but always recovered. From 2017 to 2018, there was almost a five-million-dollar increase in the City’s year

Connersville Wayzata TIF (T21001) Summary

The total number of properties in this TIF	5
Real property records in this TIF	4
The Gross Assessed Value for all property in this TIF	\$7,786,180
The Net Assessed Value for all property in this TIF	\$7,786,180
The Base Value for all property in this TIF	\$0
The Incremental Value for all property in this TIF	\$7,786,180
Total Revenues for this TIF	\$414,734
Total Expenses for this TIF	\$364,433

Source: Indiana Gateway



Source: Indiana Gateway



Vision and Key Goals

Connersville's revenues come mostly from property taxes within the City. Property taxes are based on tax assessments on the value of the land, improvements that may have been made to the property, and the structures on the property. Growing municipal revenue is directly related to the ability to attract new development to the City, redevelopment of vacant or underutilized properties, and growing city limits through annexation paired with current and future developments.

Revenues can also grow with continued investment and rehabilitation of existing properties to help increase property values. Maintenance of existing structures or the total reconstruction of a property is important for the City to explore and encourage to continue providing safe structures for residents to live in and for businesses to operate out of. This is particularly important for Connersville as it relies heavily on the revenues generated from residential development. Through the rehabilitation of inhabitable structures and reinvestment into the neighborhoods across the community, property values would increase for those properties and adjacent parcels, community pride would increase, and the overall quality of life and place would grow within each neighborhood.

Although Connersville relies heavily on residential development, it is important for the community to focus on a mixture of land uses. The City should plan for development that is compatible with the surrounding, existing development and overall context of the area. As described in the [Land Use Chapter starting on page 44](#), development patterns should be flexible to allow for fluid transitions between residential, commercial, and industrial developments, but still include a mixture of these development types to reduce dependency upon one use over another.

In 2008, the State of Indiana introduced property tax caps to help taxpayers save money. Tax caps have hurt municipalities and their ability to collect enough revenue through taxes to pay for the services they provide ultimately creating a loss of revenue for municipalities. Residential development is capped off at 1% of the assessed value of the home. Residential development typically consumes more services than it pays for with its tax revenue, making it a tax

negative development type for the City. Commercial and industrial developments are capped at 3% of the assessed value and are considered tax positive for the City, meaning the taxes pays more than the services received. It is important for the City to understand the fiscal impacts of new development in order to make informed decisions regarding growth, annexation, new development, and infrastructure improvements and maintenance. In the future, the City should consider developing fiscal impact studies for new development to determine whether or not the proposed development will be tax positive or tax negative. If structured appropriately, the costs for these studies may be born by the developer.

As Connersville continues to grow revenue and stay in alignment with recent trends, the City should improve local communication with residents and businesses. For communication to be successful, the City should create goals and identify target audiences to begin creating an outreach strategy. Target audiences for Connersville should include residents, visitors, developers, investors, and other economic development professionals. Sharing good news, new development within the community, other construction projects relating to upgrades and overall maintenance, business openings, and upcoming events and programs is a way to keep residents engaged and "in the know." The City's recent updates to its website may be used as a centralized location for community updates, city documents, payments for services, and as a way to submit ideas and complaints to the City. In addition to the website, additional means of communication may include email notifications and text messages about news and upcoming events in the area.



VISION STATEMENT

The City of Connersville will expand local government capacity and grow income to continue providing high-quality services needed to support residents, businesses, and visitors.

Goal 1

Increase the tax base by encouraging a mix of development types including residential, commercial, and industrial uses.

- a. Promote the redevelopment of vacant and underutilized commercial and industrial properties.
- b. Promote rehabilitation and infill strategies for residential properties to raise property values not only for that parcel, but also surrounding properties within the neighborhood.
- c. Focus additional City investments where they are likely to increase value for adjacent property owners and incentivize investment.

Goal 2

Pursue state, federal, and private grant opportunities to leverage additional investment in the community and attract development.

- a. Continue to apply for grants and other funding sources including but not limited to OCRA funds, INDOT Community Crossings, HOME Investment Partnership Program, and Indiana Finance Authority (IFA) Programs.
- b. Keep plans up-to-date to improve eligibility and scoring when applying for grants locally or federally by reviewing them on a semi-annual basis and amending or updating the plans when the projects and recommendations are completed or no longer relevant for the community.

Goal 3

Examine and consider the fiscal impacts of new development as a part of the development review process, especially when incentives are offered or requested.

- a. Encourage development in accordance with the future land use map and other recommendations found in the Land Use, Economic Development and Housing chapters.
- b. Ensure the zoning map and zoning ordinance support development that aligns with the future land use map.
 - I. If the zoning ordinance does not support desired development types, the City should review the ordinance, make amendments, and seek approval for the amendments from the Area Plan Commission and City Council during a public hearing.

Goal 4

Determine if the creation of a dedicated funding source for improvements to existing properties for property owners will be fiscally beneficial for the City to increase property values and tax revenues.

- a. Create specific criteria for property owners to follow to be able to apply for funding assistance.
- b. Award a specified amount per property that meets the criteria to help incentivize property owners to continue making improvements.



Implementation

Connersville's increasing population is a great sign indicating that the City could continue to grow, but property values and the municipal tax revenue would have to match that growth to continue providing quality services and amenities across the community. City staff and officials, fire, and police will have to continue working together to address the needs of residents. Resources are still limited within Connersville, meaning the City must prioritize what projects to invest in and consider what services are the most essential to the community in the short-term. This may require adjusting the available budget for the year to determine where money can be reallocated but still support other departments and utility services supported by the local government.

The projects and action steps found in this chapter are focused on increasing available revenue to help the City reinvest into itself and increasing communication and collaboration between the local government, residents, and businesses. Increasing local communications across the community is also expanded more in the [Public Facilities and Services Chapter, which starts on page 72](#). These projects tie directly into the goals and objectives in this chapter. It is important to note that these goals and projects complement other objectives and recommendations found throughout the plan. Through the achievement and implementation of goals and projects in this chapter, the City will be able to accomplish other recommendations more easily with an increase in local funds.

By exploring options for increasing the assessed values of property, obtaining additional funds, and developing a communications strategy, the City is improving overall quality of place for residents and visitors. Connersville's current leadership is emphasizing the importance of building the relationship between the various government official, residents, and business owners. These relationships are critical for enhancing local pride, restoring trust, and encouraging residents and business owners to invest in their properties.



Projects & Action Steps

Project 1

Update plans and supporting documents to use as a tool when applying for grants.

- a. Conduct an inventory of Connersville's current plans and develop a list of plans and supporting documents the City would like to create.
- b. Review existing plans to ensure they are still reflective of the needs and wants of the community.
- c. Determine if updates should be amended into existing plans, or if a new study and document would be more appropriate.
- d. Determine if these plans should be updated internally by City staff or outsourced to a consultant that specializes in various planning efforts such as parks plans, transportation studies, and feasibility analysis reports.
- e. Identify and seek out funds for plan development through grants, local donations, and by using existing allocated funds if available.
- f. Update the plan documents accordingly.
- g. Approve and adopt the amendments and plans at a Plan Commission meeting and City Council meeting.

Project 2

Improve communications and outreach efforts between residents, businesses, and the local government.

- a. Continue improving the City's website to become a centralized location for residents to share thoughts, opinions, and ideas, where developers and investors can access information about City processes, procedures, and other documents, and where the City can share important news, updates, and upcoming events.
- b. Consider developing a marketing strategy for upcoming events and programs.
- c. Consider creating a monthly newsletter and email and text blast to cater to residents who use any and all methods of receiving news and updates.

- d. Continue streamlining the process in which residents can provide their thoughts and opinions about what is happening around Connersville through Coffee with the Mayor and other methods such as a comment box and through email.
- e. Continue utilizing the existing social media platforms as a way to interact with the community and those who primarily access news from Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

Project 3

Conduct a community survey to better understand resident and business perceptions of City services and how to improve local communication between the City staff, various boards and organizations, businesses, residents, and visitors.

- a. Determine if a local survey should be City-led or outsourced to a communications professional.
- b. Advertise the importance of community feedback through the upcoming survey to attract attention and encourage residents and owners to participate through social media postings, public meetings, and flyers.
- c. Utilizing an online survey platform, create a survey that can be sent out to residents, business owners, and other property owners in the community.
- d. Provide residents, business owners, and visitors with the ability to fill out the survey or comment cards on paper to be submitted in person or through mail if access to internet is limited.
- e. Using the feedback received through the survey, develop a communications strategy for the City to implement.
- f. Hold a public meeting to review the feedback and present the communications strategy.

Project 4

Create and maintain a 5-year capital improvements program (CIP) to help prioritize and budget for future capital expenditures.

- a. Refer to [Public Facilities and Services Chapter, Project 1](#).



Public Input

Much of the community input related to governmental and fiscal capacity came from conversations with the CPC throughout the planning process. Additional comments were heard during the Focus Group meetings. It was noted by the CPC that communication was an issue the City was currently working to address, but it takes time to continue building trust within a community. Communication and transparency are large components of increasing community pride. Through the existing and future programming initiatives the City has developed, the hope is to drive residents and businesses to be more active with each other locally, and highlight what the community has to offer. Through public-private partnerships locally to create more events, and creating a centralized source of information for people to access, Connersville hopes to drive public engagement up.

The CPC also noted that while the City is doing well financially, all the money spent is going towards necessary improvements, but the funds still do not cover all the upgrades needed for police and fire. The City has devoted the necessary funding to provide adequate services, but with the increase in demand for various equipment needs, the shortage of available equipment, and the increasing prices for it, the City has been unable to replace the existing, overused equipment that has surpassed its lifespan. By increasing local tax revenues, Connersville hopes the additional funding will allow for more flexibility in reallocating their distribution of money to provide replacement equipment. This is outlined more in the [Public Facilities and Services chapter starting on page 72](#).

Diversifying development types within the City was discussed by the CPC. A more in-depth analysis can be found in the [Land Use chapter starting on page 44](#). Diversity of land uses, specifically increasing business opportunities, was identified to help boost local employment opportunities, attract businesses and development, and increase assessed values of properties. Several of the vacant buildings in the downtown create an opportunity for small business owners to have their own dedicated space, and the underutilized areas above the storefronts would increase available units for residents to live in. One of the primary goals of this plan is to attract and retain population regardless of age, ethnicity, and income. However, with the attraction of new development and the increase in property values, it is important to not displace existing residents but continue to support them and to continue living in the community.



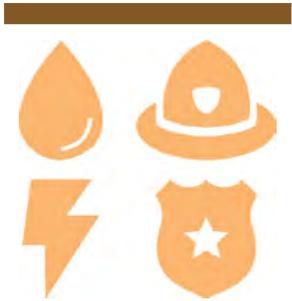
The Fayette County Building, home to many of the county government offices and a institutional landmark for the City.





06

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES



INTRODUCTION.....	74
EXISTING CONDITIONS	74
VISION STATEMENT	78
IMPLEMENTATION	79
PROJECTS AND ACTION STEPS.....	80
PUBLIC INPUT	81



Introduction

The City of Connersville is organized into several departments tasked with providing public services and maintaining facilities for the community. These public facilities and services are critical to protecting the quality of life for residents, business owners, and visitors. This chapter presents an overview of existing services and utilities provided by the City as well as recommendations on how to maintain superior services for existing residents and businesses while accommodating desired growth and redevelopment. Governmental functions of the City are overseen by the Mayor, the 7-member City Council, a City Clerk/Treasurer, and the Board of Public Works and Safety.

Existing Conditions

Fire Service

Fire services are run and operated by the Connersville Fire Department. There is one inactive station, Fire Station #2, and three active ones across the City. Fire Station #1 (Headquarters) is located in downtown, station #4 is located on the southeast side of the City, and station #3 is located on 30th Street. There is total of 29 staff, including the Chief and Assistant Chief.

Emergency Medical Service

In addition to the fire stations that have EMS operations, Reid Health Hospital and Fayette County also provide EMS to Connersville residents. There are 20 full-time EMS staff, including the EMS Chief, and 13 part-time staff.

Parks Department

The Parks Department is located within Roberts Park. It is responsible for installing and maintaining amenities at the City's nine parks and playgrounds.

Police Services

The Connersville Police Department is located in the City Hall building at 100 E 5th Street, which is also the only station in the City. There are three precincts in which the police operate. The police staff are comprised of 26 officers, including the Chief and Assistant Chief, one Ordinance Enforcer, and a Secretary. There is also an inactive Indiana State Police post, District 41, on State Road 1 across the river.

Street Department

The Connersville Street Department is responsible for operating the City's recycling trucks. The materials are transported to the Recycling Center on the southside of the City.

Utilities

The City operates a highly successful waste and transfer facility located at the southern municipal boundaries on State Road 121. The facility has a large excess capacity, which allows it to sell services to neighboring communities and county residents. The City serves more than 15,000 people, approximately 2,000 more people than within the municipal limits. The community's drinking water comes from the Fayette-Union Aquifer system. There are five wellheads located east of Robert's Park and three located just north of the Babe Ruth Sports Complex.

The City currently has a combined stormwater and sewer system, with multiple outlets into the Whitewater River. The City had previously led an effort to separate the systems but could not gather enough capital for the project.

On staff, there are currently 21 contracted employees (19 full-time and 3 part-time) and 11 non-contract employees (9 full-time and 2 part-time).

City Engineer

Connersville does not currently have a City Engineer. The City contracts with a private engineering company who is held on retainer for city review services and design needs. Fayette County does not have a county engineer or a private engineering firm on retainer. It has been noted by city and county staff, as well as the CPC, that a shared city/county engineer would benefit the city and county by assisting in the planning, design, and budgeting of public projects, the review of proposed development projects, and collaboration with local stakeholders on city and county improvement initiatives. Incorporating these services into a paid public position would help reduce private consulting costs and improve review times and efficiency.



Building Inspector

Within Fayette County and the City of Connersville, the Area Plan Commission Executive Director serves as the building commissioner/inspector for both the City and the County. This responsibility requires significant time to process building permit applications and make site visits to ensure code compliance. The City and County would benefit by having a shared individual whose job is solely focused on these responsibilities and the cost for this individual could be shared between the City and County. This would improve the local permitting and review timeline and allow the Executive Director to focus on other planning needs.

An individual hired for this position should be technologically savvy to promote and allow for online applications, should be knowledgeable in current building code, and should have past construction or building inspection experience.

Code Enforcement

Code enforcement within the City of Connersville is currently handled by one dedicated enforcement officer who is employed through the Police Department. The CPC expressed a need for additional code enforcement personnel to better service the needs of the City and County and to enforce the local zoning code. City enforcement of the zoning code would require amendments to the existing city code to allow the enforcement, but the results would be more appropriate and code compliant development. It was noted that additional personnel could be funded through a cost-sharing agreement between the City and the County.

Libraries and Schools

The schools and libraries in the City are operated by Fayette County. There is one public library located 828 Grand Avenue. The library is 21,522 square feet and staffed by 17 employees, including a director and two managers that oversee the Children's and Adult Departments. It first opened in April 1981 and, today, hosts several children's activities, including arts and crafts, academics, and social events. More information on the educational attainment of residents in Connersville can be found in the [General Background Chapter on page 31](#).

The public schools in Connersville enrolled 2,702 students during the 2020 academic year, which accounted for 82.5 percent of the total student population of the County. On average, the City has a higher percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged (58.5 percent) and/or with disabilities (21.0 percent) than the County (57.3 and 20.0 percent, respectively). Additionally, the ratio of students to teachers at schools in Connersville is 1:15 compared to 1:13 for the overall County.

Marketing & Communications

There is a significant amount of activity and energy within the City of Connersville that is being generated by both public and private entities and institutions. These positive intentions amongst multiple groups are great, however, with so much going on, it is common for multiple public and private institutions to be focused on similar goals without knowing it, and to even hold events on the same day which creates conflicts between programmed activities. Events are often advertised through various means and social media platforms, but there is not a single source related to programmed activities for all public and private institutions. Various entities have tried to accomplish this, but lack the staffing to be able to do so.

A recurring theme amongst the CPC and focus groups was the need for a full-time marketing and communications coordinator, employed by the City, who could stay abreast of local public and private initiatives, and work to better coordinate and market them. This would help reduce redundancy amongst institutions and create more well coordinated events to attract a larger population.

Hiring a full-time marketing and communications coordinator to organize events and programs would allow for additional advertising across the City through the incorporation of flyers and signs that can be posted throughout the community, and social media postings to be shared across multiple platforms. It is important to note that while Connersville is enhancing and improving access to broadband services ([see the Broadband Access Chapter starting on page 164](#)), not all residents may use social media or choose to opt into an email or text message subscription service. Traditional methods of posting flyers, creating a radio or TV ad, including a notice in a local newspaper or water bill, or creating a small monthly newsletter should be explored as well.



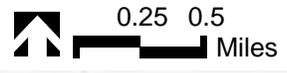
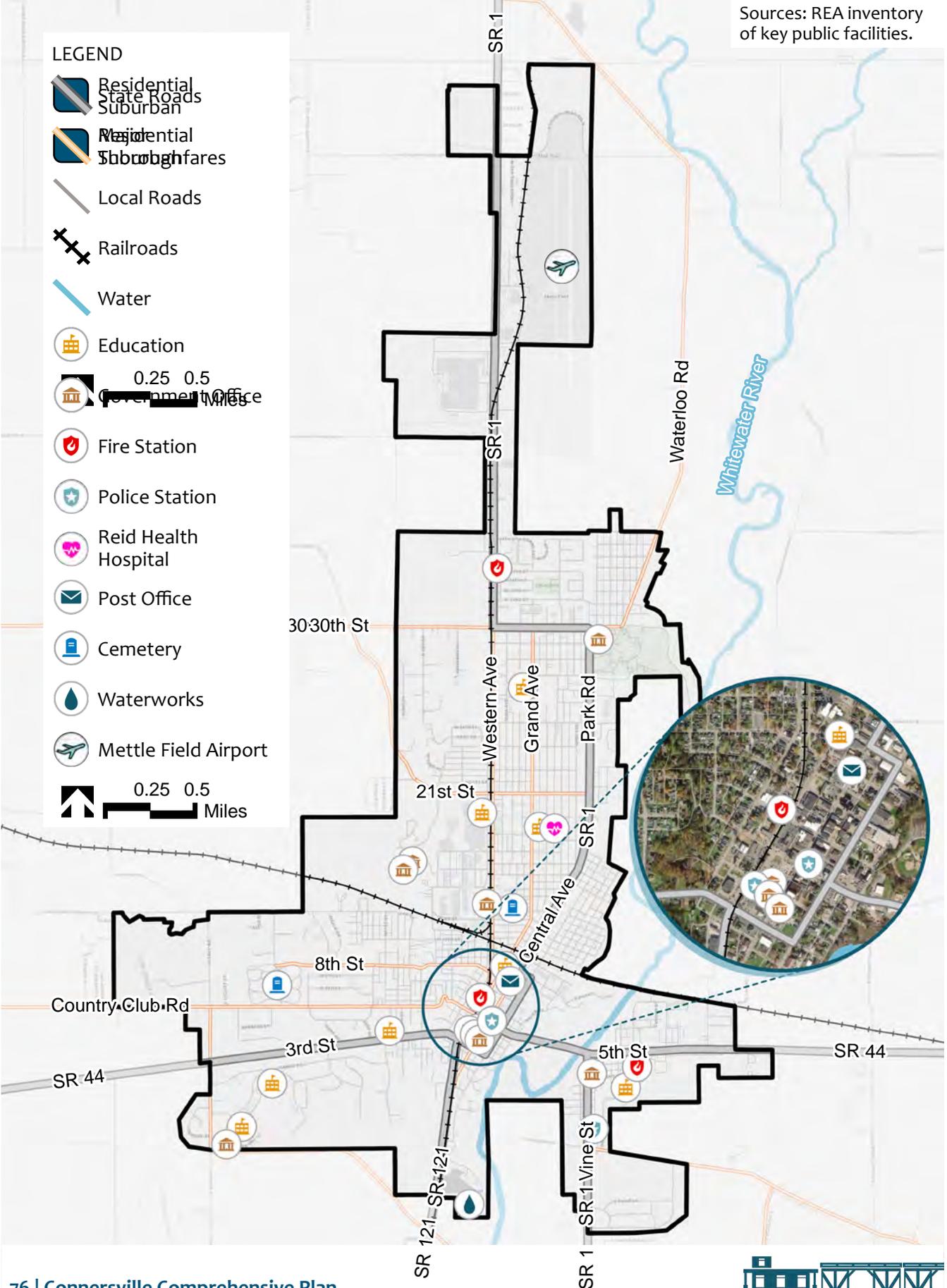
PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES MAP

Sources: REA inventory of key public facilities.

LEGEND

-  Residential State Roads
-  Residential Suburban
-  Local Roads
-  Railroads
-  Water
-  Education
-  Government Offices
-  Fire Station
-  Police Station
-  Reid Health Hospital
-  Post Office
-  Cemetery
-  Waterworks
-  Mettle Field Airport

0.25 0.5 Miles

Vision and Key Goals

The goal of the public facilities and services recommendations is to identify City investment and improvements needed to support desired growth and development. In general, a community's utility systems, in conjunction with the transportation network, play a central role in supporting and maintaining economic success and quality of life. These systems are costly to create, extend, and maintain. As such, additional utility planning will need to occur in coordination with development proposals.

The City should plan to serve an increased capacity of utilities at targeted development areas identified by the future land use map. Utility infrastructure is a vital component of any new development. By strategically locating infrastructure investments and service extensions, the City can direct development to desired locations and land uses designated in [the Future Land Use Map on page 54](#). Developers will be more likely to pursue opportunities at sites already served by municipal utilities and a robust transportation network, as opposed to paying for extensions to other sites. This strategy will allow the City to focus on infill first and reduce the amount of urban sprawl. Additionally, the City may consider rezoning undeveloped areas currently zoned residential to help alleviate some of the development pressure and eliminate the need for additional sprawl and annexation.

Utility upgrades and extensions are costly, and as such, the City must plan them carefully. A 5-year capital improvement program is useful in prioritizing projects and identifying funding for both utility and transportation improvements. Key capital improvement projects should be amended into the comprehensive plan when appropriate. Proposals or requests to extend municipal utility service to areas outside of the City should:

- » Be consistent with service extension plans
- » Consider being coupled with annexation
- » Meet City design and construction standards
- » Improve the development capacity of the area, consistent with the future land use map

Connersville is the primary service provider for water, stormwater, and transportation infrastructure within the municipal boundaries. Other providers include the Indiana Department of Transportation, internet providers, and Fayette County. When the City or another provider is undertaking a capital improvements project, such as a road reconstruction or sewer line replacement that requires disturbance to the right-of-way, other potential improvements should be considered to create time efficiencies and cost savings. By working to allow for coordinated construction of multiple projects at the same time, public exposure to the working zones and traffic congestion will be reduced, the overall cost of the projects will be reduced, and increased collaboration will allow for future planning to remain cohesive.

Additionally, City staff is critical to ensuring access to quality public facilities and services. To improve local processes and promote continued improvement, Connersville should allocate funds for a City/County Engineer to review and promote local development, a City/County Building Inspector and code enforcement personnel to oversee local development and ensure compliance with building and zoning codes, and a marketing and communications coordinator to advance local initiatives and promote the community.



Mettle Field airport, operated by the City, is discussed in the [Transportation Chapter starting on page 123](#).



VISION STATEMENT

Maintain and expand public facilities, utility infrastructure, and City services to support existing residents and businesses, and encourage future growth and development opportunities.

Goal 1

Expand City utilities and infrastructure to support development of the industrial park north of the former Visteon facility.

- a. Develop a Primary Engineering Report (PER).
- b. Utilize the PER in discussions with potential developers.
- c. Leverage local funding and financing opportunities such as tax increment financing (TIF), and planning results of the PER to pursue funding for improvements.
- d. Monitor service capacity to ensure there is adequate support for new development, redevelopment, and future needs within Connersville.

Goal 2

Maintain and replace existing infrastructure as necessary to provide quality service to existing residents and businesses.

- a. Upgrade outdated and undersized water lines where possible.
- b. Continue to expand and improve the storm sewer system to reduce localized flooding.

Goal 3

Ensure new development and redevelopment can be sufficiently served by municipal utilities and other services.

- a. Use investments in public facilities and services as a tool to direct desired development to appropriate locations.
- b. Increase water service capacity to accommodate new development across the City.
- c. Increase water service capacity to accommodate development and redevelopment throughout the City.

Goal 4

Attract and retain City employees to address staffing needs.

- a. Offer more competitive wages than surrounding cities.
- b. Consider working with surrounding cities to address staffing shortages collaboratively.
- c. See [Chapter 5, Government and Fiscal Capacity's projects and action steps, on page 70](#) for more staffing needs.
- d. Review ordinances regarding benefits for public staff and compliance with other government regulations.

Goal 5

Promote physical and mental health across the community.

- a. Maintain and improve existing community assets such as parks to help promote community wellness.
- b. Expand local community programs and classes to help improve quality of life opportunities.
- c. Explore the development and enhancement of trails, expanded upon in [Chapter 10, Transportation, starting on page 124](#).



Goal 5

Continue to improve and develop communication and marketing efforts with residents and business owners.

- a. The City, along with the marketing and communications coordinator, should develop a central information system in which residents can share concerns and ideas, and where the City can share important news and updates.
- b. Consider creating a monthly newsletter, email, and text blast to cater to residents who may not read a newsletter or have access to internet and social media accounts.
- c. Streamline the process in which residents can provide information by utilizing a comment box posted in town and through online submissions through the City website and direct contact via email.
- d. Continue utilizing existing social media platforms to advertise local events, programs, and news.

Implementation

Planning and budgeting for maintenance and expansion of public facilities and services is incredibly important given the costs associated with these tasks. A capital improvements plan (CIP) is a planning document that covers a timeframe of three to five years and is updated annually. It aids in plan implementation by providing the necessary funding for short-range infrastructure and capital improvement projects. The document states the City Council's prioritization of the financial resources available for capital project spending by identifying which projects should be included, when they should be constructed, and how they will be financed. The CIP represents the City's tentative commitment to comply with the plan unless circumstances or priorities change in the future. Nevertheless, it should not be considered an automatic authorization of the construction of projects, the allocation of resources and a public procurement process will still be needed.

The CIP can then be used to prioritize transportation, stormwater, and other municipal improvement projects. Transportation improvements are needed to continue improving the quality of life and health of the community. Plans to redesign streets in the downtown and main neighborhood streets should seek to carry the most efficient way to move the most amount of people safely. This includes cars, semi-trucks, bikes, and pedestrians. After finalizing a plan to improve transportation networks, the City will need to consider land uses that bring a greater return on investment of that street.



Projects and Action Steps

Project 1

Create and maintain a 5-year capital improvements program (CIP) to help prioritize and budget for future capital expenditures (this is also [Project 4 in the Government and Fiscal Capacity chapter](#)).

- a. Develop a list of capital projects, equipment purchases, and plans or studies needed.
- b. Determine cost estimates and a timeline for each project, purchase, plan, and study.
- c. Identify what projects, purchases, plans, and studies are most important or urgent to complete first.
- d. Identify funding options and create a financing plan. Funding may be from locally generated revenues, grants, donations, and public-private partnerships.
- e. Prepare the initial capital improvements plan for a five-year timeframe.
- f. Adopt the plan by City Council resolution.
- g. Update the plan on an annual basis to remove projects and initiatives that have been completed and add new ones.

Project 2

Create a new or update the City’s website to be a centralized information portal/file sharing platform for various boards and organizations, local processes and procedures, upcoming meetings, recordings of past meetings, and meeting minutes for the community, local leaders, and developers to access and use the website to promote and market community events and initiatives happening around Connersville.

- a. Hire and work with the City’s Municipal Marketing Manager to promote the City’s public facilities and services to prospective residents and developers.

Project 3

Provide emergency responders with updated and reliable equipment and facilities.

- a. Evaluate local budgets and expenditures.
- b. Create a budget plan that analyzes the costs of training for police and fire staff, and the cost of buying new equipment and

vehicles for emergency responders.

- c. Consider building a training facility for police and fire. Determine a location for the facility and budget for the costs of construction and equipment needs.
- d. Prepare a report with the cost breakdowns, a needs analysis for existing and future staff, and the benefits of upgrading and buying new equipment and building a training facility.
- e. Hold a public hearing and present the report to City Council for approval of funds.

Project 4

Connect residents with resources for health and wellness.

- a. Inventory public and private services for health and wellness in and around the City
- b. Create social media posts, articles or op-eds for local newspapers, and promote health and wellness on the City’s website.
- c. Consider organizing an annual “Month of Health” community event.
 - i. This could include a marathon, educational workshops about recovering from drug/alcohol addiction and removing stigma surrounding topics of mental health.
- d. Identify funding availability from the City, local sponsors, and possible organizers of the event if it is not organized by the City.

Project 5

Hire a City/County Building Inspector.

- a. Develop a job description for a Building Inspector.
- b. Identify funding for wages and benefits.
- c. Develop a recruiting plan for the job position.
- d. Post a job description and qualifications online for applicants.
- e. Interview potential candidates based on their skill set and experience.
- f. Hire selected individual.

Project 6

Hire additional City/County code enforcement personnel.

- a. Develop a job description for code enforcement personnel.



- b. Identify funding for wages and benefits.
- c. Develop a recruiting plan for the job position.
- d. Post a job description and qualifications online for applicants.
- e. Interview potential candidates based on their skill set and experience.
- f. Hire selected individual.

Project 7

Hire a City/County Engineer.

- a. Develop a job description for a City/County Engineer.
- b. Identify funding for wages and benefits.
- c. Develop a recruiting plan for the job position.
- d. Post a job description and qualifications online for applicants.
- e. Interview potential candidates based on their skill set and experience.
- f. Hire selected individual.

Project 8

Develop an analysis process for extending municipal infrastructure to new development.

- a. If utilities are extended, ensure that property owners sign an agreement to be annexed into the City.
- b. Identify the available capacity of City and other public infrastructure.
- c. Identify the available capacity of work with developers to share the cost of upgrades or extensions of infrastructure.

Project 9

Hire a Municipal Marketing and Communications Coordinator.

- a. Develop a job description for a Marketing and Communication Coordinator.
- b. Identify funding for wages and benefits.
- c. Develop a recruiting plan for the job position.
- d. Post a job description and qualifications online for applicants.
- e. Interview potential candidates based on their skill set and experience.
- f. Hire selected individual.

Public Input

The public discussion regarding public facilities and services was limited to mainly the City Staff/Departments Focus Group meeting and the first CPC meeting. During the CPC meeting, the committee members discussed the separation of its combined sewer overflow system. Ultimately, due to the massive costs of separating wastewater and stormwater systems, the City had decided to instead pursue ways to limit runoff into natural water features, such as the Whitewater River. Additionally, CPC members discussed the need for new police vehicles and the struggles to finance the three fire stations around Connersville.

During the City Staff/Departments Focus Group, a common theme brought up across all the City's departments was a lack of staff, competitive wages, and adequate training facilities, especially for the Fire, Police and EMS Departments. Specifically, EMS personnel noted that the closest training facility was in Kokomo, Indiana -- almost two hours away by car -- and that it was difficult to compete with the salaries offered by private companies, especially since the cost of medical education is higher than other professions. Many City staff, including airport and TV 3 staff, noted that the City needs to better market its facilities but struggles to do so because of the lack of funding. Additional comments and concerns from City staff can be found in the [Appendices Chapter on page 258](#).

At the Celebration in the' Ville event held on May 14th, the public was asked to rank the comprehensive plan's subject matter topics based on their perceived value. Of the 30 votes that were received, two votes were specifically for public facilities and services, or approximately 7 percent. Additional comments heard at the event emphasized collaboration with public and private organizations, including other cities, towns, and counties.





07

PLACEMAKING



INTRODUCTION.....	84
EXISTING CONDITIONS	84
VISION AND KEY GOALS	90
IMPLEMENTATION	93
PROJECTS AND ACTIONS STEPS	94
PUBLIC INPUT.....	96

Introduction

Placemaking consists of multiple attributes that contribute to local quality of life and quality of place. Broad categories include community wellness, culture, and education, but more specifically, these attributes include locally historic and significant places, festivals and events, access to quality housing, jobs, health care, and education, parks and recreation, and commercial centers. Placemaking is a subjective concept but boils down to the aspects of a community that make it a desirable place to live.

Connersville has a significant number of local assets that positively impact placemaking. These include a rich history celebrated through local events, attractive architecture, traditional neighborhood development patterns, and access to quality parks and natural resources among others. The City desires to capitalize on these assets and improve its weaknesses in order to make the City a more attractive place for existing and future businesses and residents to locate.

Existing Conditions

The Center for New Urbanism defines placemaking as “the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play, and learn in.” Placemaking typically focuses on public spaces, and can occur at both the site specific, and community-wide levels. At the site-specific level, it focuses on the elements of a space that make it successful. At the community-wide level, and for the purposes of comprehensive planning, it focuses on the attributes of a community that make it a desirable place to live. These include community wellness, culture, and education.

While these attributes are closely inter-related, community wellness focuses on the quality-of-life elements that support physical, mental, and economic health. Culture focuses on the shared history, pride, attitudes, values, and goals that shape a community. Education focuses on the local institutions that support community wellness and culture.

Community Wellness

According to countyhealthrankings.org, Fayette County ranks 91 of 92 for poorest health in the State of Indiana. Several factors contribute to this ranking including poor health behaviors, lack of access to clinical care, poverty rates, and the physical environment.

Connersville is serviced by one hospital. The previous provider, Fayette Regional Health System, filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy and was purchased by Reid Health based out of Richmond, Indiana in 2019. Reid provides multiple medical services, including emergency care, out of the facility, however, medical services at the hospital are limited from what they once were, and many medical needs require travel to Reid’s Richmond campus or another health care facility. The City also has several medical practitioners, however, access to clinical care is lower than the state average at nearly 1,780 residents per primary care physician. Similarly, access to dentists is lower than the state average at 2,860 residents per dentist. Connersville is also serviced by several mental health care facilities, including Centerstone, Healing Heart Center, Meridian Services, and Reid Health Care, but the City has less than one-half of the state’s average access to mental health providers. Connersville’s ratio is 1,090 residents for every provider whereas the State of Indiana’s average is 560 residents for every provider.



Industrial Park hosts a playground, baseball fields, and open space for residents and visitors to use.



In addition to health care, and like communities throughout the entire country, access to quality childcare is a major issue that also effects Connersville, its local quality of life, and available workforce. Due to low average wages, lack of public funding, and licensing regulations, the number of qualified childcare providers is limited. This forces parents, who are interested in working, to remain home rather than enter the workforce.

In terms of promoting physical and mental health, the City does manage several municipal parks and recreational opportunities as discussed in the [Parks and Recreation Chapter starting on page 150](#). With nearly a dozen properties, the City's Park system provides a variety of opportunities for recreation that include walking trails, various sports courts and ball fields, playgrounds, swimming, open play, picnic areas, and a kayak launch among others. Many of the smaller, neighborhood parks consist primarily of open space and a limited number of amenities, however, Roberts Parks serves as the City's primary community park and offers the largest number of amenities. Located on the north side of the City, access to Roberts Park is difficult for individuals with transportation challenges.



The Nickel Plate Trail provides an opportunity for residents to partake in recreational activities and healthier lifestyles.

The parks department also manages the Nickle Plate Trail, a three-quarter mile long, multi-use trail immediately north of Roberts Park. The trail extends from the intersection of Central Ave. and W. 32nd St. north to Erie Ave. and has become a beloved asset. It was noted throughout the comprehensive planning process by the CPC, focus group meeting attendees, and Celebration in the 'Ville participants, that the City needs to extend the Nickle Plate Trail and provide additional trails to promote local health and well-being, and to provide a more connected community and open space system. Currently, the Nickle Plate trail does not connect to any of the city's parks and destinations, many city sidewalks need repair, and there is a general lack of bicycle infrastructure.

The Fayette County Fairgrounds is located immediately south of Roberts Park and serves as an attraction for the city and county residents. During the summer, Roberts Park and the fairground share their physical resources to host the Fayette County Free Fair. Operating since 1852, the Fayette County Free Fair is said to be the oldest operating free fair in the State of Indiana. Serving as a regional attraction to the City and the County, the free fair supports a number of activities that include live music, 4-H exhibits and competitions, commercial vendors, a carnival, and number of programmed events such as truck and tractor pulls, and demolition derbies, among others.

Also located within Roberts Park is the John H. Miller Community Center which serves a special event facility. The building is available for rent to the public, and offers a banquet hall, meeting rooms, and a multi-purpose room with a full basketball court, volleyball court, and climbing wall. The facility has several regularly programmed activities that occur within it, and while this facility is a significant community asset, there was substantial public support during the focus group meetings for additional community centers and/or programming to provide youth and senior activity.

Although access is limited, the Whitewater River is another major asset within the community. Limited trail development occurs within the floodplain of the river, and a kayak launch is provided at Rivers Edge Park. During multiple focus group meetings, the river was noted as an underutilized asset and placemaking opportunity.



Culture

Connersville's history is a substantial contributor to the local culture. As further discussed in the [Historic and Archaeological Resources chapter on page 172](#), the community has a rich history dating back to the early 1800s. The City developed along with advancements in transportation and quickly grew with the construction of the Whitewater Canal that linked the City south to Cincinnati and the Ohio River. As train technology became more prevalent during the mid-1800s, the White Water Valley Railroad developed along the banks of the canal and became the prominent form of transportation. While train transportation has diminished locally with time, both the canal and the train continue to have significant local influence. The train now operates as a tourism train and is owned locally by the non-profit Whitewater Valley Railroad. Remnants of the Whitewater Canal still exist within the City and south to Metamora, and many of the industrial areas of the City that developed along the canal and train tracks continue to function as the City's primary industrial areas. The former headquarters of the canal system, known locally as the Canal House, still exists near downtown and serves as a local history museum.



John H. Miller Community Center has spaces to host events and dinners.

During the Fall, Metamora, a community approximately eighteen miles south of Connersville, celebrates the canal through their local festival called Canal Days. The festival is a regional attraction for both Metamora and Connersville and the tourism train provides families with a passenger train experience between the two communities during the festival. Also, during the Christmas holiday season, the Whitewater Valley Railroad sponsors the Polar Express, which is a local train ride experience and interpretation of the classic children's story. This event runs multiple weekends throughout November and December and attracts visitors from throughout Indiana and neighboring states. In the past, the railroad has participated in the Thomas the Train event that was a major attraction for families to the community during the Summer for children to ride on a train pulled by the PBS character, Thomas the Train. The economic and cultural impact of the railroad extends beyond the train tracks themselves and the railroad events support the local economy, and specifically that of the downtown where the Whitewater Valley Railroad Depot is located at the intersection of 5th Street and Grand Avenue.

Beyond the canal and the train, automobile transportation, and industry in general, has played a significant role in local culture. Connersville was once known as "Little Detroit" because of the number of vehicles and automobile parts that were manufactured locally prior to World War II, and the community is known for having been on the forefront of automobile technology and producing luxury automobiles including the Cord and Auburn. Examples of these automobiles, other items manufactured locally, and more about Connersville's local history, are exhibited in the Fayette County Historical Museum, located in downtown Connersville. Manufacturing continues to be the largest industry in the City and plays a large role in the community's blue-collar character.



Downtown is a cultural asset within the community as well. Characterized by historic structures developed throughout the mid to late 1800s, and early 1900s, the downtown offers an attractive, pedestrian-scaled environment. Like many, small community downtowns throughout the State and Midwest, Connersville's downtown commercial core has struggled over the past several decades as development has shifted towards the fringes of the City where land was cheaper and more available, and parking potential was abundant. There are several retailers, banks, and professional and philanthropic organizations who remain, however, much of the downtown has vacant or underutilized buildings. Recognizing the downtown's potential and understanding its importance to the health of the overall community, investors and entrepreneurs continue to focus on the district, and there is significant interest in its continued revitalization.

Events such as the weekly farmer's market and the Celebration in the 'Ville event occur downtown and bring thousands of visitors into the area on an annual basis. This energy has helped support new businesses and entrepreneurs, and while no formal downtown revitalization plan exists, the City continues to take steps towards revitalizing the district.

Another recent effort in the revitalization of downtown Connersville is the development of Market Street Plaza. Currently under design, Market Street Plaza will be a new urban plaza located on 5th Street, immediately east of the Whitewater Valley Railroad Depot, and immediately north of the Fayette County Courthouse. This space will feature a stage with lighting and sound infrastructure, small shade structures, and an open gathering area with a dance floor. The space will be programmed regularly with musical performances and events that will activate the downtown throughout the year and during all times of the day, attracting new investment and redevelopment within the downtown.

Other cultural assets within the community include historic structures such as Elmhurst and Newkirk Mansions. Immediately south of downtown, Elmhurst has been home to several U.S. political figures and now serves as the local Masonic Lodge. Open to the public for tours, the facility sponsors several local events including car shows, porkchop dinners, Christmas holiday events, and more. Newkirk Mansion is sited immediately west of the downtown on a hillside overlooking it. Currently undergoing a major renovation, the intent is to utilize the mansion to spur continued downtown redevelopment.

Surrounding the downtown and throughout the City, traditional neighborhoods help create the small community character that is attractive to many. Comprised of large Victorian homes dating back to the City's heyday, small working-class neighborhoods from the early to mid-20th century, and grand churches, the City's core residential areas are comprised of comfortably scaled streets designed for walkability. While some of the infrastructure needs repair, the urban fabric of these neighborhoods remains. Typical of late 20th century residential neighborhoods, the housing areas on the outskirts of the City do not provide pedestrian amenities like sidewalks, narrow streets, and pedestrian lighting, and they would benefit from targeted investment to better connect them to the City core.



Brian's Bistro, located in downtown Connersville, is a popular spot where residents socialize and enjoy the downtown amenities together.





A statue dedicated to John Conner in downtown Connersville, located next to the Fayette County historic building.

Related to food and entertainment, the City of Connersville is fortunate to have Showtime Cinemas, a multi-screen theater that plays, first-run movies, and Plaza Bowling Lanes, a multi-lane bowling alley that supports open and league play. The City is also home to many local restaurants including Jonesy’s, the Ole Rooste, Wings Etc., Daniel Girls Farmhouse Restaurant, Parkview Restaurant, Neuman’s Family Diner, El Camino Real, and many more. Kunkel’s Drive-In is a local staple and a 1950s style drive-up diner that serves as a regional attraction and sponsors frequent car shows.

Education

The city’s local, public schools contribute significantly to the community’s physical and economic health, and culture. The City of Connersville is a part of the Fayette County School Corporation which supports the following schools.

- » Little Spartans Preschool
- » Eastview Elementary School
- » Everton Elementary School
- » Fayette Central Elementary School
- » Frazee Elementary School
- » Grandview Elementary School
- » Connersville Middle School
- » Connersville High School
- » Whitewater Career Center

All of these except for Fayette Central Elementary School and Everton Elementary School are located within the City of Connersville. The elementary schools within the City have received “A” and “B” ratings from the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE), and the middle and high schools received “B” ratings. These letter grades serve as important academic indicators for families and businesses considering relocating to Connersville. They are also important indicators for existing residents who may be considering relocating outside of the City, and for families who have the ability to send their children to schools outside of Fayette County through the State of Indiana’s voucher system.



The Whitewater Career Center also serves as an important asset to the community. This vocational center services students from all surrounding counties and provides thirteen career programs and 39 industry certifications that range from automotive and building trades to cosmetology, culinary arts, and criminal justice. Local businesses and industry often collaborate with the career center on job placement for local students immediately following high school graduation.

In terms of higher education, Connersville is home to a branch of IVY Tech with offers classes in a variety of courses. Additionally, Connersville is within an hour of multiple higher education institutions such as IU East, Purdue Polytechnic, and Earlham College in Richmond, Ball State University in Muncie, multiple colleges and universities in the Indianapolis area, and Miami of Ohio in Oxford, Ohio.

Beyond the impact of local schools for preparing the future workforce, high school sports are a major contributor to local culture, pride, and entertainment. High school football, basketball, baseball, and soccer are major attractions for local students and families.

The City is also home to the Spartan Bowl, also known as “The Grand Palace on Grand Avenue.” The Spartan Bowl is an iconic gymnasium built during the glory days of Indiana basketball in the late 50s that is capable of seating over 5,100 people. The facility is connected to Connersville Middle School and is well maintained and beloved locally. During game nights, visitors can still find Grand Avenue congested with the automobiles of people rooting for the local team.



Connersville High School is the only high school in Fayette County.



Vision and Key Goals

Placemaking is a subjective concept that combines tangible and intangible elements of a community including social, cultural, economic, and physical characteristics. The relationship between these elements creates a unique community that influences the experiences of residents and visitors.

Placemaking is considered by people when deciding where to live, and positive placemaking attributes are often associated with housing character, job availability, access to health care, recreational and entertainment opportunities, quality schools, and overall healthy environment. Placemaking not only connects these attributes with one another and builds on them but connects residents with each other and helps to develop a sense of community within a municipality. These community characteristics are what help retain population and make a place more attractive to future residents and businesses. They help improve a community's reputation and image, and support local pride. In short, placemaking contributes to the overall quality of life and place a person can experience.

Successful placemaking requires public/private partnerships and an engaged business community and citizenry. The first step in successful placemaking involves strengthening and expanding local relationships, and identifying the community's local champions, or those who are passionate about the City of Connersville. Too frequently, it is the same group of individuals leading civic organizations, serving on City boards and commissions, and generally volunteering their time. These individuals are incredibly dedicated to the community, but they have limited capacity. City leadership must work to develop new relationships, identify local leaders, and increase the pool of local champions. One good way to start is through partnerships with the local schools and business community and through the organization of City led service projects where new volunteers can be identified. Once these individuals are identified and organized around common goals, the work can be more easily delegated and accomplished.

In terms of physical and mental health, the City should continue to foster relationships with local and regional health care providers to determine local opportunities and improve local access. This may

include expansion of existing services or establishing new ones. The City may also consider teaming with local businesses on incentive packages geared towards health care provider recruitment that offers a monetary lure such as relocation assistance, tax incentives, or reduced cost of physical space.

Related to local childcare, the City should collaborate with businesses to develop strategies for addressing local needs. Options and cost can vary greatly. On the lower end of the spectrum, employers may provide information on local childcare options and flexible working hours to accommodate parental schedules. Employers may also offer dependent care assistance plans where employees are able to defer a percentage of their compensation towards childcare. Other options include employer sponsored childcare where employers contract with local providers and provide vouchers for their employees, or where the employer purchases space within a local child care. Any of these options can be done independently or with collaboration among several businesses.

The City can also support physical and mental health through supporting access to healthy food. This starts with continued support of local food assistance programs and may include the expansion of community gardens on public property such as within City parks and/or on municipally owned, vacant lots. This expansion could be managed by the Parks and Recreation Department or a local philanthropic organization, but could be accomplished in coordination with the vacant lot inventory discussed in the land use chapter. These lots may permanently, or temporarily, transferred to a managing entity for use as community gardens. This, in combination with, training on gardening and food preparation will help empower residents to improve their diet and physical health, and these programs can be further developed in coordination

More information on childcare options can be found at

<https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/historicpublications/pubs/MF2399.pdf>



with the local Purdue extension, Whitewater Valley Career Center, and others.

Support of local parks is also critical to improving local health. This will require establishing priorities within the parks system and funding improvements. Specific areas of focus should include maintenance of existing structures and amenities, replacement of outdated play equipment, and expansion of park offerings. As noted by local students during the student focus group meeting, additional amenities such as trails, a skatepark, BMX track, or other amenities would provide youth with additional recreational opportunities, promote health and wellness, and reduce crime.

Related to recreation, the public input that was received overwhelmingly supported the expansion of trails within the community. The Nickle Plate Trail is well-used, but is only three-quarters of a mile long, and is located at the far north end of the City with limited accessibility to the majority of the City's residents. Expansion of the Nickle Plate Trail, improvements to existing neighborhood sidewalks, and construction of new trails throughout the City, will better connect the City's residential, recreation, and commercial centers, and improve transportation options for city residents with limited access to automobiles. While trail and sidewalk development can be a long and expensive process, trails can often be implemented in phases, through grant opportunities, and in collaboration with local philanthropic organizations and businesses.

Related to culture, the City can promote local culture through the continued celebration of the City's rich history and heritage. This may occur through regular meetings of local history-based organizations and an enhanced, and targeted marketing campaign to promote the efforts of all local entities so they are working in concert with one another. Related to trail development noted above, the City should consider establishing a history trail throughout the City that celebrates prominent places throughout the community.

Within the downtown, completion of a Downtown Revitalization Plan will provide a focused analysis of existing conditions and specific strategies for redevelopment. Additionally, continued, and enhanced programming, in combination with beautification efforts, will attract patrons to the

core of the community and help support and spur economic development. Design guidelines can also be a useful tool in ensuring compatible development within the community and should be adopted as a part of the transition towards a unified development ordinance. They should be considered as a part of development plan review and approval.

Surrounding the downtown, the City can support local neighborhoods through enforcement of local property maintenance ordinances, establishing neighborhood organizations where they don't exist, and advocating for regular neighborhood meetings. Through these efforts, there will be an increase in local pride that will manifest itself in physical improvements and neighborhood renewal.

Outside of the downtown core and traditional neighborhoods, support of surrounding neighborhoods, businesses, and industry is equally critical to the sustained viability and future redevelopment of the community. This begins with communication. These entities should be regularly consulted about how the City can better support them and encourage their growth. This may be through improvements to, or expansion of, existing utilities and infrastructure, promotion of local businesses, and working with the community to identify unmet needs and desires.

Equally important to placemaking is local education. Local education supports the next generation, and therefore subsequent generations, of leaders, workforce, and residents. The City should actively engage the student population to identify their perceptions of the City and local schools, and identify concerns, desires, and how the City can better support the youth. City leadership should instill, and promote, a culture of community service within the student population through programming of community events and engagement strategies.

The City can also support local education through partnerships with local businesses, and regional, higher education institutions, to provide needed training and encourage local job placement. Perhaps obvious, the City should always encourage and support a high degree of excellence in the local education experience. This starts with identifying current shortcomings and working to address them. It also includes the support of excellent educators. This requires rewarding existing educators and incentivizing new ones.



VISION STATEMENT

Improve the quality of life of residents and visitors by promoting: initiatives that support community health and well-being; diverse cultural and recreational opportunities through the enhancement of existing amenities, and establishment of new ones; community beautification; and increased community pride through encouraging more community-led, year-round events and programming.

Goal 1

Increase community pride and involvement in redevelopment initiatives.

- a. Expand the pool of local champions and volunteers actively working towards community improvements.
- b. Create new events and volunteer opportunities to promote community pride and foster deeper connections.
- c. Foster public-private partnerships to sponsor community events.
- d. Continue building a strong relationship with residents of all ages by offering opportunities for people to meet various members of the community, including government officials, police, fire, business owners, and faith-based leaders.

Goal 2

Encourage community beautification projects.

- a. Identify locations for projects.
- b. Make a list of improvements for each location including, but not limited to, additional or new plantings, lighting, signage, seating, public art, and general maintenance of roadways and sidewalks where applicable.
- c. Coordinate improvements with newly adopted design standards to ensure they complement local architecture and advance local beautification goals.

- d. If necessary, meet with the property owners or State representatives to discuss improvements.
- e. Determine what the cost of improvements will be.
- f. Begin improving the landscape and upgrading infrastructure as funding becomes available.

Goal 3

Develop a marketing campaign that showcases local events, amenities, assets, and businesses for residents and visitors.

- a. Develop a strategy with the Marketing and Communications Coordinator that will incorporate various marketing and advertising strategies including social media posters, flyers, and signage.
- b. Work with City leaders, department heads, and businesses to learn about what marketing efforts there currently are, and generate ideas for how to better advertise community events and attractions.
- c. Utilize local history to further capitalize on local attractions such as the Whitewater Valley Railroad.



Goal 4

Encourage physical improvements across the community that promotes health and well-being and celebrates local history and culture.

- a. Conduct an inventory analysis of existing parks and improvement of upgrade needs.
- b. Identify potential locations across the community for trail expansion ([see the Future Trail Network map on page 159](#)).
- c. Determine what the costs of improvements, upgrades, and expansion will be.
- d. If necessary, meet with property owners or State representatives to discuss improvements.
- e. Bid work and hire a team to design the projects.
- f. Allocate funding for various projects and begin construction.

Goal 5

Improve access to physical and mental health care services.

- a. Increase the number of available facilities in the community that offer physical and mental health services.
- b. Leverage Connersville's location as a central place for health care providers to expand.
- c. Ensure that facilities are accessible to people through any mode of transportation including vehicular, biking, and walking.
- d. Work with facilities to offer more affordable options for individuals and families who may be low-income earners.

Goal 6

Improve local access to childcare.

- a. Increase the number of available childcare and early education options in the community by pursuing public-private partnership opportunities.
- b. Work with businesses to make sure they are able to obtain proper licensing.
- c. Ensure that facilities are accessible to people through any mode of transportation including vehicular, biking, and walking.
- d. Work with the facilities to offer more affordable options for individuals and families who may be low-income earners or have two or more children in the program at a time.

Implementation

Placemaking is a broad concept encompassing a variety of community attributes, and for that reason, there is significant overlap between it and other subject matter covered by related chapters of the comprehensive plan. Implementation recommendations related to parks, trails, and access to the Whitewater River are covered in the [Natural Resources chapter starting on page 142](#), and in the [Parks and Recreation chapter on page 150](#). Implementation recommendations for downtown revitalization, design standards, and protection of historically significant structures are discussed in the [Historic and Archaeological Resources chapter on page 178](#). Implementation recommendations for code enforcement are covered in the [Land Use chapter starting on page 44](#).

There are multiple projects unique to placemaking as further discussed below. Some are short-term and inexpensive, while others are long-term and require more significant investment. Many of the placemaking projects focus on relationship building to provide a stronger network of local citizens to accomplish the City's goals and objectives and increase local pride and accountability. Others are focused on physical and programmatic projects such as beautification, event programming, and initiatives to support overall community well-being.



Projects and Actions Steps

Project 1

Expand the pool of community champions, leaders, and volunteers.

- a. Identify key stakeholder groups throughout the City.
- b. Establish initial and reoccurring meetings to communicate City goals and objectives to stakeholder groups.
- c. Identify action items based on areas of interest and delegate tasks.
- d. Establish regular check-in meetings with City leadership to promote accountability and track progress.

Project 2

Develop a medical professional recruitment strategy.

- a. Work with local health care providers to identify existing deficiencies.
- b. Identify opportunities for expansion within existing facilities.
- c. Work with the City's Marketing and Communications Coordinator (see [project 9 in the Public Facilities and Services chapter on page 81](#)) on the development of materials to promote Connersville to medical professionals.
- d. Collaborate with existing health care providers on financial incentives for locating within Connersville.

Project 3

Collaborate with local business and industry on improved access to childcare.

- a. Identify key business and industry within the City facing workforce challenges related to childcare.
- b. Identify local childcare providers and individuals interested in providing child care services.
- c. Establish recurring meetings amongst businesses leaders and child care providers to identify programs that can address local needs.

Project 4

Partner City leadership and the Parks and Recreation Department with the Purdue Extension office to identify additional opportunities throughout the City for community gardens and promote urban agriculture.

- a. Identify a managing entity for the community garden program.
- b. Identify areas throughout the community with lack of access to healthy food options.
- c. Coordinate with local institutions and philanthropic organizations to develop gardening and food preparation training.
- d. Using the vacant lot inventory discussed in [Chapter 4, Land Use](#), identify public property in target areas for implementation of community gardens.
- e. Develop an education program to assist residents and neighborhood leaders in establishing personal and community gardens.
- f. Coordinate with neighborhood groups on establishing community garden plots.

Project 5

Develop a coordinated effort related to local, history-based placemaking.

- a. Identify local organizations focused on the historic and cultural amenities within the City.
- b. Establish recurring meetings among the organizations and collaborate with the city's marketing and communication director on a marketing strategy for the City's historic amenities.
- c. Collaborate on hours of operation to the public and establish events centered around local history.

Project 6

Develop strong, thriving neighborhoods.

- a. Identify neighborhoods districts within the community.
- b. Identify community leaders within each neighborhood.
- c. Coordinate with City leadership to establish recurring meetings of local neighborhoods focused on community building and



neighborhood identity, beautification, and advancing city initiatives.

- d. Identify neighborhood priorities and problem properties.

Project 7

Increase promotion of existing community events and develop additional community events and programming.

- a. Collaborate with the city's marketing and communications coordinator to create an accurate inventory of existing public events within the City outlining the type and duration of the events, their location, and sponsoring organization(s).
- b. Identify areas of the community and times of the years that currently lack programmed events.
- c. Research peer community to identify ideas for additional community events to be implemented within Connersville.
- d. Identify new events that are appropriate for the community and potential financial sponsors from local residents, businesses, and organizations.
- e. Plan new events and promote them regularly through local media platforms.

Project 8

Develop design guidelines to be included in the zoning ordinance to focus on local beautification and placemaking.

- a. Consult with a design professional such as an urban planner to establish appropriate design guidelines focused on sign standards, outdoor storage, lighting, landscaping, and other pedestrian friendly amenities (such as benches, bicycle parking, and trash cans) along key corridors and around key anchors of the community.
- b. Engage the City and local property owners in the process.
- c. Educate the public about design guidelines.
- d. Adopt guidelines via Plan Commission.
- e. Incorporate design guidelines into the review process when considering new (re) development.

Project 9

Improve the sharing of positive information about the community and local businesses to spread good news and celebrate achievements, while combating negative attitudes and perceptions.

- a. Collaborate with City departments on a centralized marketing campaign related to placemaking and community pride.
- b. Use social media and monthly newsletter to promote activities and programs around the community.
- c. Highlight the achievements of residents, businesses, and youth.



Free libraries, such as the one shown above, are scattered around the Connersville community.



Public Input

Whether directly, or indirectly, placemaking was a significant point of discussion throughout the comprehensive planning process. During the first CPC meeting, representatives noted the various events and programs that occurred within the City but acknowledged the need for additional events to help promote placemaking and build community pride. Members also noted the importance of downtown as a community center and the need for a downtown gathering space to host regular events and promote downtown revitalization. It was also noted the downtown has a large building vacancy and absentee ownership rate and is not walkable from many parts of the community, suggesting the city would benefit from a trail system connecting the City's businesses and parks. The committee relayed parks and schools as a local assets that should be more heavily promoted but recognized access to local physical and mental health care as a challenge area requiring improvement.

During focus group meetings, the business group noted there are significant assets to capitalize on within the City, specifically citing the railroad and downtown, but suggested there are few things to do following events. Individuals cited the need to develop strategies for encouraging people to stay in the City and patronize local businesses. Additionally, the group realized the need for a centralized marketing effort and resource sheet to market the assets the community has.

The City employee group recognized the importance of parks related to creating quality of place and population attraction, and also cited the need for better marketing to promote local assets. A recurring theme amongst the City staff was the need for additional staff to assist in local marketing, programming, maintenance, and beautification.

The regional partners and community leaders recognized natural resources, and specifically, the Whitewater River, as an asset worth promoting. There was significant discussion about the importance of the train and the number of visitors that it attracts to the community on an annual basis, suggesting the City could benefit from enhanced partnerships with the railroad. Representatives from the railroad shared a vision for an interpretive center to be located on the south side of the community that could increase the railroad's presence and tourism lure. Members of the group noted challenges related to downtown vacancy, access to health care, and poor housing conditions. Additionally, the group described the need for additional collaboration within the community amongst various interest groups and the need to increase community pride.

The student focus group recognized the community's rich history as an important placemaking asset but noted a general apathy and lack of pride amongst the community. The students were interested in the revitalization of the downtown and additional park amenities to provide the youth with more recreational options.

During the Celebration in the 'Ville event, placemaking received 13% of the total vote for public value, equal to that of housing. When asked about desires for placemaking in the City, respondents noted a Christmas drive through at the park, a community center, an expanded trail system, more downtown music, more local restaurants, and a splash pad.



Historic structures, such as the one shown above, are part of the City's heritage and architectural character.





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08

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



INTRODUCTION.....	100
EXISTING CONDITIONS	100
VISION AND KEY GOALS	104
IMPLEMENTATION	107
PROJECTS AND ACTION STEPS.....	108
PUBLIC INPUT	110

Introduction

Many small towns and cities across the United States are looking for ways to strengthen their local economy through enhancing the quality of life for residents and workers. Many midwestern communities, in particular, have experienced significant economic changes due to major automotive and industrial employers closing/moving their operations. As a result, these communities must find a way to reinvent themselves to not only attract jobs and build their population but also make their local economies more resilient and competitive with adjacent cities and towns.

With the changes in the market over the last two decades, residents have located to more urbanized areas while smaller communities maintained or lost their population. However, the COVID-19 Pandemic created a unique opportunity for smaller communities to market themselves for prospective residents and boost their local economy. Connersville has been experiencing an increase in total population and seen an increase of employed residents in recent years.

The goals and recommendations found in this chapter were created to continue boosting the local economy. These strategies include:

- » Growing existing businesses and inspiring more local entrepreneurial culture,
- » Utilizing incentives to attract businesses that bring in quality, well-paying jobs, and
- » Building and creating partnerships between the school corporation, post-secondary education institutions and trade schools, and area employers.

Existing Conditions

The following statistics were gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2010 and 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. In some cases, data are not available for Connersville specifically. In lieu of this, Fayette County data was used. To review this data with supporting graphics and charts, please see the [General Background Chapter on page 26](#).

Total Population

Connersville's population has fluctuated between 2010 and 2020 experiencing an increase in population, decline, and increase again. The total population for the City has just barely surpassed its 2010 total – experiencing an increase of 19 people (0.14 percent) during the span of those 10 years. However, from 2017 to 2020 the population of Connersville increased by 302 people or 2.7 percent within that three-year timeframe.

Median Household Income

The median household income for residents in Connersville (\$38,980) is 33 percent lower than the state (\$58,235), and 17.9 percent lower than Fayette County (\$47,465). This may indicate that residents are working lower-wage jobs and that only one person may be bringing in an income for a household on average. Another factor to take into consideration would be the aging population that may rely on social security as a main source of income.

Employment

Between 2010 and 2020, the total number of employed residents ages 16 and older grew by just over three percent. The U.S. Census estimates that there were just over 5,500 people working in the labor force in 2020. Nearly 300 residents were listed as unemployed.

Connersville residents are mostly employed in the manufacturing industry (1,646 employed), followed by the education services, health care, and social assistance industry (1,479 employed). Together, both industries employ 56.4 percent of workers in Connersville.



Educational Attainment

The educational attainment and skill sets of the local workforce help determine what companies move into a community as communities become more knowledge-based and demand.

Between 2010 and 2022 the overall educational attainment has remained consistent. The 2020 Census indicated the following trends in the population aged 25 and older:

- » The number of people with high school degrees increased.
- » The number of people with Associate's and Bachelor's degrees increased.
- » The number of people with Graduate or Professional degrees decreased.

In general, Connersville has a more educated population than it did for 2010. Despite this positive shift in having a more educated population, it may not be enough to attract more technology-driven and logistics businesses to the area. Across the nation, people earning degrees are moving to more urbanized areas to utilize their education. This is directly related to a few factors including higher wages, availability of jobs, and quality of life.

Major Employers

The major employers across Fayette County are all located in Connersville. These employers are:

- » Stant Corp
- » Walmart Supercenter
- » Premier Health Care
- » Ivy Tech Community College
- » Liberty Homes Inc.
- » Kroger
- » Fayette County High School
- » Connersville High School
- » McDonald's
- » Keener Corp.

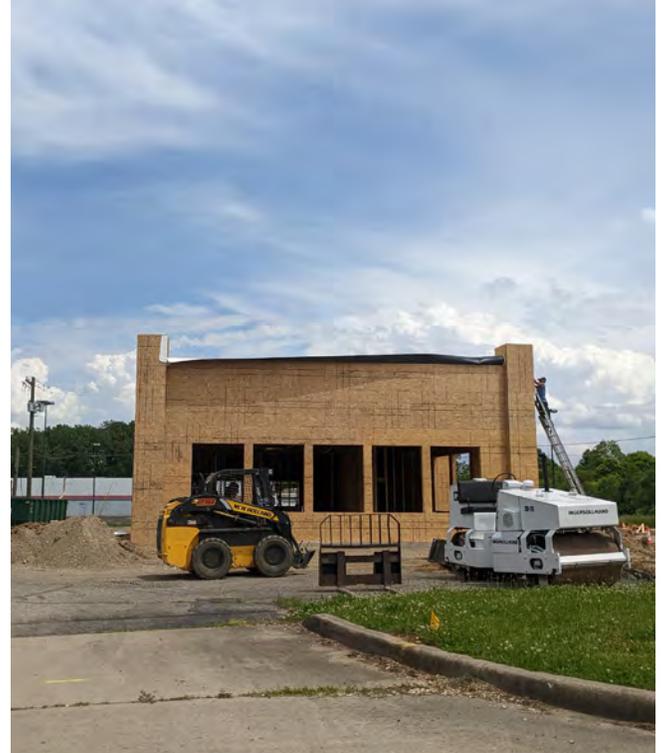
Commuting Patterns

According to ACS 5-Year Estimates data from 2020, approximately 55 percent of residents work in Connersville. In turn, 45 percent are commuting outside of Connersville for work. About half of people working only have to travel 15 minutes or less to their job, but the mean travel time is about 25 minutes when taking into account those traveling outside of Connersville. Although the City is employing several of its residents, the downfall of nearly half the community working outside the corporate limits is that commuters may spend more money on food and other goods closer to their place of employment instead of home.

For more information, please reference the [General Background Chapter on page 33](#).

Local Economic Development Resources

Currently, the City does not have many economic development partners or partner organizations. Much of the work that is achieved in the community starts through the efforts made by city staff, local revenue, and additional funding sources.



A new business building being constructed on Park Road in Connersville.



Industrial Properties

The closing of Connersville's many history automotive manufacturing plants has left the community with several empty buildings. While the community may not have as many vacant industrial structures compared to other communities that were also automotive manufacturing hubs, these structures are still difficult to replace or repopulate with industrial uses due to necessary upgrades and repairs. Replacing these jobs in the community with alternate manufacturing or logistics jobs would be a huge economic boost, but attracting those businesses can be a difficult task.

One option for the City to explore would be through the future development of a business or industrial park on the north side of the community. While it does not bring new businesses into the vacant structures within the community, it provides the opportunity for businesses to locate to an area with access to State Road 1 and to expand as the business grows to meet demand needs. Much of the land in this area is not currently annexed into Connersville, but could be annexed in the future and marketed as a business or industrial park to attract employers. The City could also explore creating a tax increment financing district for this area to help alleviate funding for development and the extension of utilities and infrastructure and beautification. While this funding would not likely be available in the early stages of this process to attract the first employers, the City could consider offering incentives to help alleviate some of the costs associated with utility and infrastructure expansion.

The vacant properties in the City could be transitioned from their former primary uses to options for residential units and employment opportunities. Partnerships with local businesses, entrepreneurs, and developers could reimagine these properties as additional spaces that address the missing needs of the community by providing spaces for people to live, work, shop, and eat. These vacant buildings will need to be inspected to ensure that they are up to code and able to withstand construction as the building is remodeled. Demolition of unsafe structures will have to be considered if the costs of bringing the building up to code outweigh new construction costs.

Utilities

Investments in infrastructure are economic drivers for communities. These investments in water, sewer, electric, gas, roads, and broadband internet attract businesses and new residents. In cases where communities cannot provide these services, it makes it difficult to not only attract growth but also provide for the existing residents and businesses. Connersville has invested in water, stormwater, and sewer facilities to expand capacity and is able to extend services to development in the future.

People want to live in communities where there is access to the internet, which is explored more in the [Broadband Access Chapter on page 164](#). Internet is no longer a luxury but a necessity in today's world, making it critical to provide the necessary infrastructure to support broadband access.



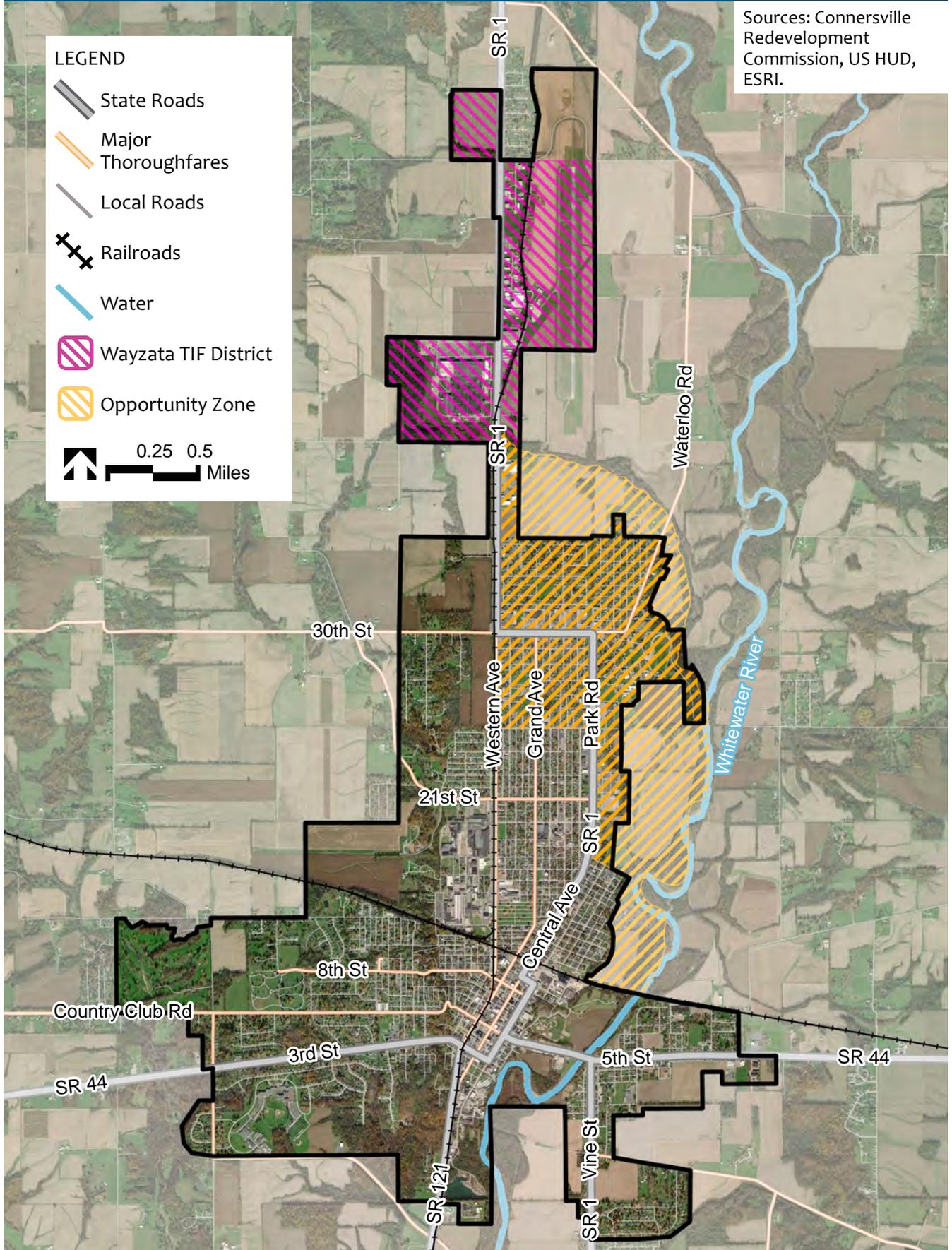
INCENTIVIZED DEVELOPMENT AREAS MAP

Sources: Connersville Redevelopment Commission, US HUD, ESRI.

LEGEND

-  State Roads
-  Major Thoroughfares
-  Local Roads
-  Railroads
-  Water
-  Wayzata TIF District
-  Opportunity Zone

 0.25 0.5 Miles



Vision and Key Goals

Economic development opportunities constantly shift and change with the market, nationally and locally, and as a community grows or shrinks. To protect the City from adverse shifts in the economy, it must focus on economic development efforts that diversify the job base, increase wages locally, and encourage investment. There is no one strategy that guarantees a diverse economy, however, a combination of programs and strategies can be used to build local wealth and bring in additional job opportunities. These approaches may include:

- » Developing local and regional collaboration,
- » Promoting entrepreneurial development and spirit by providing technical assistance to small and start-up businesses,
- » Leveraging existing assets to support growth opportunities,
- » Enhancing the skills and capacity of the local workforce, and
- » Encouraging reinvestment of local wealth back into the economy

Economic development activities often focus on business attraction efforts with the promise of job creation. With additional development and growth comes the need to provide services. The City should work to ensure that as new development is proposed, approved, and built, they are adequately staffed with police and fire and are able to extend water and sewer.

Not all efforts should be placed on attracting development. Connersville is a community with several successful businesses already. The City can work with these business owners to identify what issues may be prohibiting them from expanding and work around these roadblocks to be more successful

in the future. Barriers to being more successful may include a lack of skilled workforce, financial capabilities, and experience. It is important to note that someone in the City should have economic development experience to be able to work with business owners and provide helpful advice. Any programs, seminars, or training opportunities should be open to anyone with any experience level in owning and operating their business. The City may also develop its own financial incentive program to help attract new local businesses, but also as a tool for established businesses looking for additional help.

The common thread between attracting new businesses and expanding existing businesses is that the City is working to increase the number of quality jobs available locally, increase the diversity of jobs for various backgrounds and experience levels, and increase the wages for residents. As noted previously, higher-paying jobs tend to be in more urbanized areas because of a higher concentration of people and specialized labor. Higher-paying jobs are often attached to highly specialized jobs that require expert knowledge and skills. Medium to lower-wage jobs typically do not require the same specific knowledge and skill sets as the more specialized jobs. Unfortunately, these jobs have had a negative connotation associated with them as these careers have not seen the same amount of growth in recent years compared to their counterparts.



Quality jobs are characterized by steady improvement in overall quality of life and standard of living for workers and an opportunity for advancement of low-income households. Quality jobs pay at least a living wage for the region and include healthcare benefits, paid time off, advancement opportunities, and a level of job security.



Middle-class and medium-wage jobs are making a comeback due to the pandemic and a shift in the economy. Now that the country is experiencing shortages in various goods, increased prices of materials, and overall delivery delays, trade jobs and others with an industrial focus that are deemed “lower-skilled” are increasing wages to attract employees to meet demands.

Connersville can build off its existing industry to develop an industrial park. Through marketing efforts that establish access to Indianapolis, Cincinnati, and Dayton, and ample land for development, new industries may seek to locate in the community. These industries may not be direct competitors of businesses already in the City, which will allow them to grow in Connersville and brings new job opportunities for residents and commuters to the area. These attractions efforts should not be specific to just manufacturing and trade jobs, but also high-tech jobs. The City will have the final say on whether or not the business is a good fit to locate in the community. Elected and appointed officials should take into consideration the number of jobs and competitive edge the company will bring not only locally to Connersville but also on a regional scale, and if it can be used as an additional attractor for residents of various educational backgrounds.



A commercial business in downtown Connersville.



VISION STATEMENT

Improve the local economy by supporting existing employers, attracting employment opportunities, cultivating an environment that retains, trains, and attracts a skilled workforce, and capitalizing on tourism opportunities.

Goal 1

Focus business attraction and retention efforts on industries that will provide quality, well-paying jobs to area residents, and bring in a competitive advantage to bridge gaps of the underserved and unmet needs of Connersville and adjacent communities.

- a. Identify business clusters that are potential strengths or emerging strengths for the community.
- b. Identify local businesses associated with those targeted clusters that would help fill the supply chain.
- c. Determine where the skill gaps are across the community.
- d. Create a recurring round table meeting for business owners and local leaders to collaborate with City staff to discuss needs for current and existing businesses.
- e. Develop a strategy with the round table meeting attendees for business retention and expansion opportunities.
- f. Prioritize incentives for local business startups.

Goal 2

Market and capitalize on the Amtrak connections and regional airport in Connersville.

- a. Advertise the regional airport to capitalize on more commercial flight opportunities
- b. Partner with Amtrak to help advertise local assets and destinations within the community.

Goal 3

Recognize and promote small businesses and local events as a component of local pride, increasing visitor interest, and boosting the local economy.

- a. Leverage existing business successes and momentum to attract additional entrepreneurs to the City.
- b. Encourage existing business owners to expand their operations.
- c. Work with other nearby communities to grow and support a regional entrepreneurship and innovation cluster.
- d. Prioritize incentives for local business startups.
- e. Develop public-private partnerships to support the establishment of an entrepreneurship and co-working facility to grow the local businesses.

Goal 4

Utilize available incentives, such as tax increment financing (TIF) districts, the Opportunity Zone, tax abatements, and other tools to aid in business attraction and retention.

- a. Evaluate current financial incentive programs and evaluate success in reaching intended results.
- b. Develop overall criteria to determine eligibility for each incentive type/ program.
- c. Refine scoring system for incentive eligibility based upon criteria to encourage a fair and objective evaluation process for presentation to decision-making bodies.



Goal 5

Continue developing partnerships between the City, institutional facilities, and employers to enhance workforce development and career programs.

- a. Determine industry clusters that would require higher levels of experience or training, are experiencing worker shortages, or whose growth would best benefit the City.
- b. Continue partnerships between industry leaders and local secondary and postsecondary training providers (i.e. the career center and Ivy Tech).
- c. Continue and improve existing training programs and develop new training and certification programs for industry clusters that would help provide “ready to work” employees with credentials and experience.
- d. Develop multiple training programs for multiple job positions and people with any type of experience including entry-level, mid-level, and advanced-level employees.
- e. Strengthen relationships between the City, Career Center, and high-education institutions.

Goal 6

Develop a marketing campaign that showcases local events, amenities, assets, and businesses for residents and visitors.

- a. The City, along with the marketing and communications coordinator, should develop a central information system where important news and updates can be shared, a calendar created for upcoming events, and a map of amenities, assets, and business locations can be made readily available for visitors to find and download.
- b. Consider creating a monthly newsletter, email, and text blast to cater to residents who may not read a newsletter or have access to internet and social media accounts.
- c. Continue utilizing existing social media platforms to advertise local events, programs, and news.

Implementation

Long-term economic growth for communities comes from fostering the development of ideas, creating new businesses and growing job opportunities, and utilizing existing assets. Traditional economic development efforts have focused mainly on attracting new industries and services. While this is still an important part of the local economy, all of the City’s efforts cannot be driven by this one idea. It is important to develop and connect small businesses and promote economic growth from within. Connersville’s industrial decline of automotive manufacturing has left the community with space to fill. While it is unlikely that automotive manufacturing will return to what it once was in the community, Connersville can use this opportunity to bring in other industries that may shy away from traditional manufacturing jobs and make the job market and local economy more diverse, resilient, and innovative. It is important for the community to focus economic development efforts on these other industries where there are job or skill gaps in the community.

The recommended projects recognize that there is a need to balance attraction efforts related to the current market, the market the City wants to enter into, and the possible future establishment of an industrial or business park on the north side of the community. Generally, the City is growing and as expansion occurs, the redevelopment of brownfields is important. A community may not always understand the extent of damage that has been done or know what limitations there are for redevelopment to occur on a site. Placing a focus on these sites to clean and redevelop them is an important economic development strategy because it maximizes the available land within the City. Partnerships are critical for the development and retention of population and business. Public-private partnerships allow the City to be able to help make projects more feasible for all parties involved.



Projects and Action Steps

Project 1

Inventory and analyze existing brownfields for potential redevelopment

- a. Establish and maintain a database, including in GIS, of brownfield and vacant sites, including information on environmental hazards, existing structures, and other potential issues as available.
- b. Research and contact property owners to maintain name and contact information for each property.
- c. Work with property owners to evaluate and understand potential impediments to redevelopment.
- d. Promote redevelopment of these properties in accordance with the future land use map and other plan recommendations.
- e. Meet with property owners to discuss willingness to sell their properties.
- f. Market for-sale properties to try to attract new buyers.

Project 2

Assist local economic development officials in purchasing options of properties for an industrial park, ensure that updated zoning is in place, and continue to promote development opportunities.

- a. Explore annexation for nearby properties on the north side of Connersville so appropriate zoning districts can be applied to parcels that will support future development in the area.
- b. Share planning and engineering updates with economic development staff and potential business owners for the extension of utilities and development of an industrial park.

Project 3

Create a downtown business plan in conjunction with the Main Street organization to focus a business recruitment strategy and prioritize needed physical improvements.

- a. Partner with the Main Street organization on a business recruitment strategy.
 - i. Projects may include expanding the summer farmer's market to provide a winter farmer's market too, and creating a pop-up retail village to facilitate small business start-ups and foster entrepreneurial spirit.
- b. Contact peer communities and identify economic development policies and strategies that have been successful.
- c. Prioritize physical improvements to the downtown that would support economic development goals. and align with the City's Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) and Downtown Overlay District, and Historic Preservation Commission goals.
- d. Add priority projects to the CIP.
- e. Use the comprehensive plan as a starting point for continued downtown planning and explore additional OCRA planning and construction grants for downtown improvements.

Project 4

Create partnerships with higher education institutions such as Earlham College, Indiana University, Ball State University, Purdue University, Ivy Tech, and Miami of Ohio.

- a. Utilize Connersville as a training ground for residents and students in nearby communities to gather information about higher education options and opportunities.
- b. Partner with higher education institutions to market their career path options.
- c. Work with the schools to offer small sessions throughout the school year for students to attend and learn about the various training programs, majors choices, and application processes offered by the higher education institutions.



TIF proceeds can be utilized to pay for public improvements, roadway and sidewalk enhancements, the construction and extension of utility lines, parking facilities, and street lighting.



Project 5

Expand the current tax increment financing (TIF) district to target more industrial and business growth on the north side of the community and utilize those funds to help pay for necessary improvements and utility expansions in the future.

- a. Evaluate land across the northern area of the City that can be designated as a part of the existing TIF district.
- b. Work with local groups, business owners, and leaders to determine if they are interested in becoming a part of a TIF district.
- c. Determine what properties would be captured in the TIF designated area.
- d. Reach out to property owners about annexation.
 - i. Determine if a property owner desires to be annexed into the City. Fill out annexation paperwork and submit to the City.
- e. Hold a public hearing about the annexation of land and get the approval for the annexation of the land from City Council.
- f. Annex desired properties.
- g. Create the TIF boundary.
- h. Hold a public hearing and get the approval of the TIF district from the Redevelopment Commission.
- i. Adopt the resolution.

Project 6

Create a business incubator.

- a. Identify a space in the community that can be used as a designated space for training and work sessions.
- b. Identify potential funding opportunities through grants and private investors to develop an incubator and co-working space.
- c. Work with industry leaders and local secondary and postsecondary training providers to help fund the project and gauge their interest in leading training programs.
- d. Continue and improve existing training programs and develop new training and certification programs for people to obtain and enter the workforce with experience.

- e. Recruit additional experienced individuals to lead training sessions.
- f. Develop a co-working space as a part of the larger building that fosters entrepreneurial spirit and allows people to create.

Project 7

Create a tax increment financing (TIF) district for the downtown to utilize those funds for reinvestment back into the area.

- a. Evaluate land across the community that can be designated as a TIF district.
- b. Determine if, over time, the TIF designation will be beneficial in generating additional revenue that can be reinvested back into the area.
- c. Work with local groups, business owners, and leaders to determine if they are interested in becoming a part of a TIF district.
- d. Determine what properties would be captured in the TIF designated area and create the boundary.
- e. Hold a public hearing and get the approval of the TIF district from the Redevelopment Commission.



Pros of TIF:

- » Can alleviate some of the burden on developers
- » Can grow the local tax base
- » Can revitalize parks of a community that are declining
- » Funded by new taxes generated within the TIF; and the generated funds can only be spent back in the TIF area to help finance infrastructure and public improvements.

Cons of TIF:

- » TIF debt is unlimited. The community takes on a high risk to pay back money when the lifespan of the TIF ends.
- » TIF freezes the tax base for a period of time which can hurt the properties when the lifespan of the TIF ends.



- f. Adopt the resolution.

Project 8

Utilize the Opportunity Zone to incentivize development and bring in investors.

- g. Hold educational sessions on the benefits of an OZ for businesses and investors, including that the zone offers three tax incentives: : temporary deferral, step-up in basis, and permanent exclusion.
- h. Work with residents and property owners in the OZ to define a unified redevelopment vision of the area and attract investment.

Public Input

Given the importance of economic development efforts, it was a common topic of conversation that was brought up. The long-term success of the City was something discussed constantly throughout the CPC meetings. Attracting new residents and opening new businesses are necessary for the continued growth and development of the community.

During the first two CPC meetings, members talked about ongoing development both within and outside of the community. Several strategies were discussed about how to capture people and businesses.

One of the most prominent points of discussion was about a marketing strategy and how to not only increase community pride but continue improving the overall desirability and appearance of the City. Plans for future development were discussed and several interested investors have sought out potential development opportunities in Connersville. To continue this momentum, a marketing strategy would continue to bolster the community and showcase the opportunities available to future investors.

When asked if the City was able to take on future development and potential for expansion, it was noted that the City was proactive in its approach by upgrading its water capacity. In the past, Connersville has acted as a provider of water and sewer utilities to multiple developments and communities outside of the city limits. Along with these upgrades, the City acknowledges that pipelines may need to be upgraded as development occurs. Since development may be difficult to attract with a stagnant population and the possibility of not being able to provide a skilled workforce to fill those jobs locally, the community’s ability to be able to extend utilities to new development immediately can be leveraged as a reason to locate to the community. Additionally, Connersville’s location between Indianapolis, Cincinnati, and Dayton makes the community an ideal location for being able to access three major metropolitan areas.

Although not directly related to economic development as a topic, placemaking and quality of life were driving topics of conversation. While this chapter does not focus on placemaking and quality of life elements (see the [Placemaking Chapter on page 82](#) and [Parks and Recreation Chapter on page 150](#)), members of the CPC throughout several of the meetings noted that there is an undeniable connection between quality of life and economic development. Revitalizing neighborhoods and the downtown and beautifying the community through placemaking strategies will encourage residents to stay in the community, new residents, and businesses to move to the community, businesses to grow. Members of the CPC discussed ways of finding a balance between investing in quality of life amenities and other economic development initiatives in the short term to build up community pride and attract interested parties to settle in Connersville.

“The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 (P.L. 115-97) allowed governors to nominate certain census tracts as Opportunity Zones, subject to approval from the U.S. Department of the Treasury. Up to 25% of a state’s low-income census tracts were eligible for designation.”

“The 156 Opportunity Zones in Indiana were selected based on a combination of factors including existing economic development programs and local coordination, economic and community data, likelihood of attracting short- and long-term investment, and growing industry sectors within the community.”

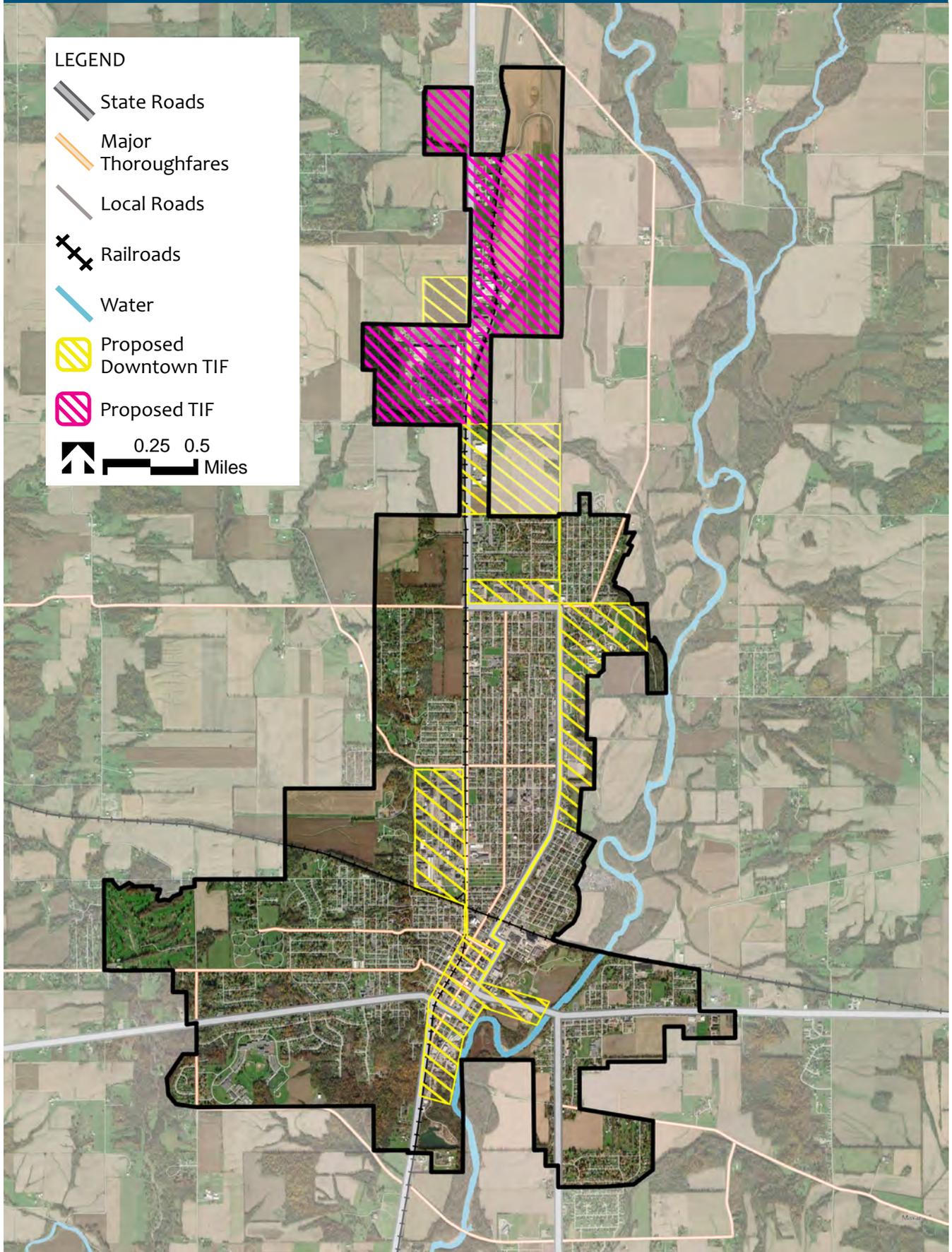
Source: Indiana Economic Development Corporation



PROPOSED TIF DISTRICT MAP

LEGEND

-  State Roads
 -  Major Thoroughfares
 -  Local Roads
 -  Railroads
 -  Water
 -  Proposed Downtown TIF
 -  Proposed TIF
-  0.25 0.5 Miles





09



HOUSING

INTRODUCTION.....	114
EXISTING CONDITIONS	114
VISION AND KEY GOALS	119
IMPLEMENTATION	122
PROJECTS AND ACTION STEPS.....	122
PUBLIC INPUT	123

Introduction

The quality of local housing influences everything from the daily lives of residents to the impressions of people driving through town. This is especially true at the gateways into the city, which heavily impact the first impression that people have of the city. Depending on the quality of housing, it can either enhance or detract from property values and the city's ability to attract growth. If Connersville reasonably hopes to entice new residents and businesses, it needs more and better housing choices. Specifically, it needs a sufficient supply of homes with modern amenities and that are move-in ready.

Almost half of residents work elsewhere and return to the community in the evening. This may change soon with the City's plans for a new industrial/business park, however, that means more diverse housing options must be built and encouraged within the city to accommodate the planned growth and the necessities for different lifestyles and households.

Quality of life is key to the city's future growth. A large part of that quality is a housing market that supports a diverse population, enhances neighborhood character, and is within reach of local income levels.



A Connersville residence north of downtown.

Existing Conditions

Multi-Family Residences

Connersville has many multi-family units located across the city. They are usually built as apartment complexes, although some smaller multi-family developments under 10 units can be found scattered around the City. These complexes are usually found on the outskirts of the City, which generally means the development required more parking due to its distance from major commercial areas, such as the downtown or 30th Street. They are usually clustered around a school and act as a transition between commercial areas and lower-density homes. The following list contains some of the larger multi-family developments within the City:

- » Fountain Place Apartments (701 Fountain Place)
- » Valley Place Apartments (625 McCann Street)
- » 428 W 3rd Street
- » Pattern Mill (1220 Illinois Avenue)
- » Turtle Creek Apartments (3600 Western Avenue)
- » Town Terrace Apartments (3507 Grand Avenue)
- » Fayette Apartments (3100 Waterloo Road)

Some of these developments provide private amenities for its residents, such as a swimming pool or a small park/open space. While the majority do not provide such private amenities, this may be offset by their proximity to public amenities, such as city greenspace and schools. Their access to these amenities, however, may be hindered by a lack of sidewalks which can create unsafe walking/biking conditions for residents. This can encourage less healthy, sedentary mobility choices and lifestyles, such as automobile dependency.



Single- and Two-Family Residences

Single-family units are the most prevalent housing type. The quality of these units varies greatly and highly depends on the age of the housing unit. The oldest housing is found near the downtown, while the newest housing is found near the high school. Two-family units are mostly located just north of the downtown and are generally older than single-family units. The trend of the housing stock in Connersville is that the older the housing unit, the less quality it is. This has resulted in higher vacancy rates and empty lots near the downtown, which indicates two trends occurring in the housing market:

1. Residents/landlords are deferring maintenance because they do not see a return on investment in doing so
2. They are deferring maintenance because they do not have sufficient or excess income to cover their housing costs.

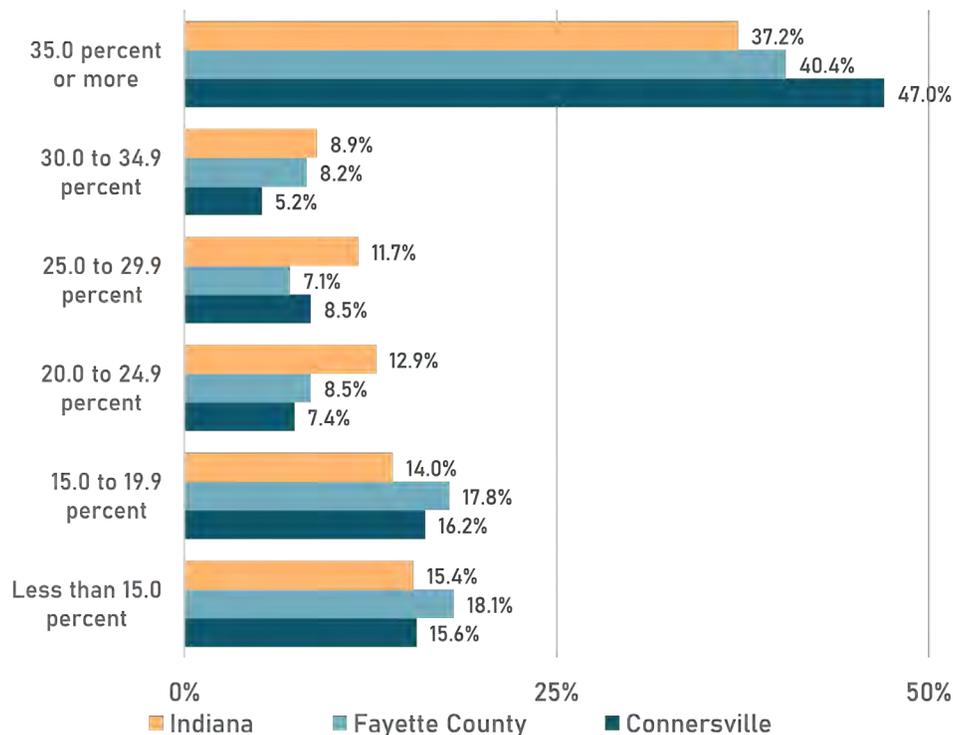
While both trends can be occurring simultaneously, the extent to which residents experience housing cost burdens is unevenly spread over the City. This will be discussed in the next section.

Affordability

In total, there are 2,287 renter-households in Connersville. These households spend a higher proportion of their income on rent than both Fayette County residents and the state. According to American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates from 2020, 47% of renters spend 35% or more of their household income on rent alone (see chart below). This is a significant portion of the population that has less income for other necessities, such as groceries, car repairs, and housing upkeep. The areas of Connersville most-burdened by rents are north of downtown along State Road 1 and Grand Ave, as shown on the [Rent Costs map on page 116](#).

The 2020 median home value in Connersville was \$75,600 which is about 1.9x the 2020 median household income of \$38,980. Generally, housing should not be more than 3x the median household income to be considered affordable. Like rent costs, though, the affordability of homes differs around the City. As shown on the [Affordability map on page 116](#), the most affordable areas, shown in a light yellow, are located near Roberts Park, the intersection of Grand Avenue/21st Street, and east of downtown.

Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income (2020)



Source: ACS 5-year estimates (2020).



When compared to the [Rent Costs map below](#), the area at Grand Avenue/21st Street has more affordable homes but is also one of the areas paying the highest rents. This could indicate that the residents should buy their homes instead of renting, if possible.

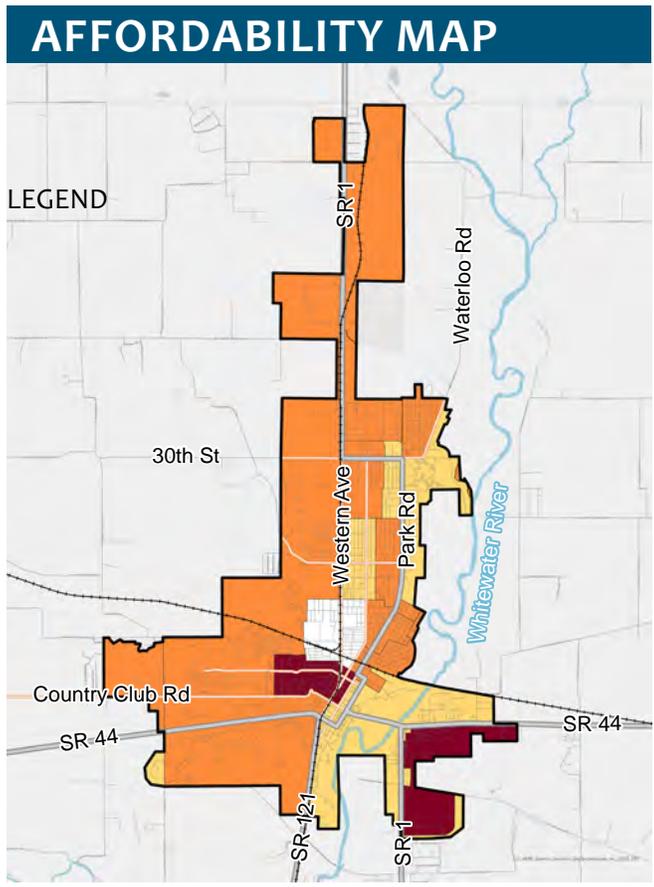
Data for both the Affordability and Rent Costs maps are available in the [Appendices Chapter on page 270](#).

Vacancy

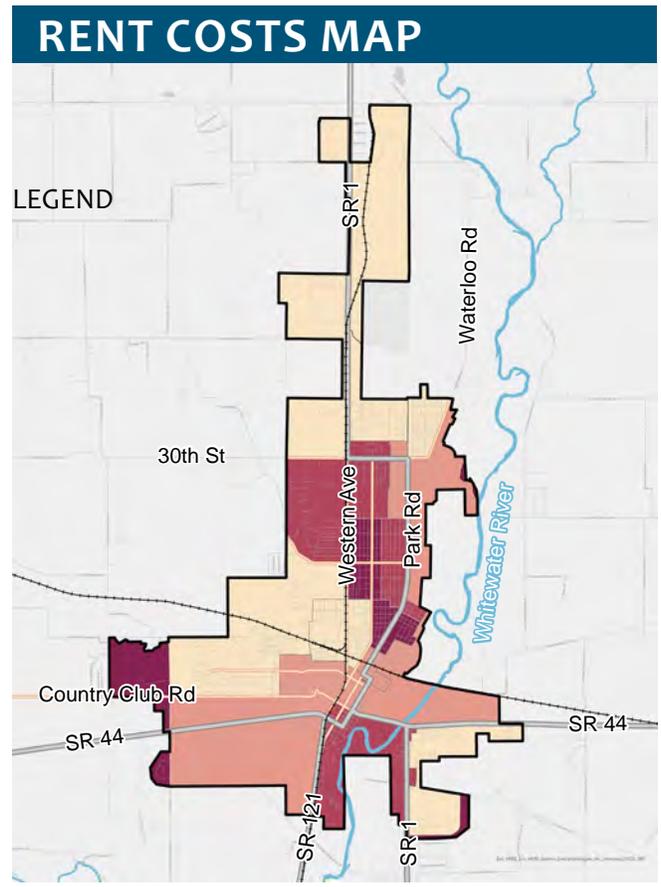
The vacancy rate for Connersville in 2020 was 10% compared to 12% in 2010. Between these years, there was a decrease of 126 vacant units, from 811 in 2010 to 685 in 2020. This could be due to an increase in the population from 2017 to 2020, which added 302 people to the City. This could also be due to

an increase in uninhabitable/blighted homes as the Census does not count these types of vacancies.

As shown in the [Block Vacancy map on page 117](#), there are concentrations of vacant units to the just northwest near the downtown where multiple blocks are comprised of 50 to 100 percent vacant units. In the northwest, this is most likely due to nearby industrial and environmental pollution, such as brownfields. The vacancy near downtown is likely due to disinvestment and old age of building stock. Blocks with only one housing unit, or without any, are not included because in most cases, they are geographically misrepresented on the Block Vacancy map.



- No Data
- Generally Affordable
- Most Affordable
- Least Affordable



- Less than \$650/month
- \$750 - 850/month
- \$650 - 750/month
- More than \$850/month

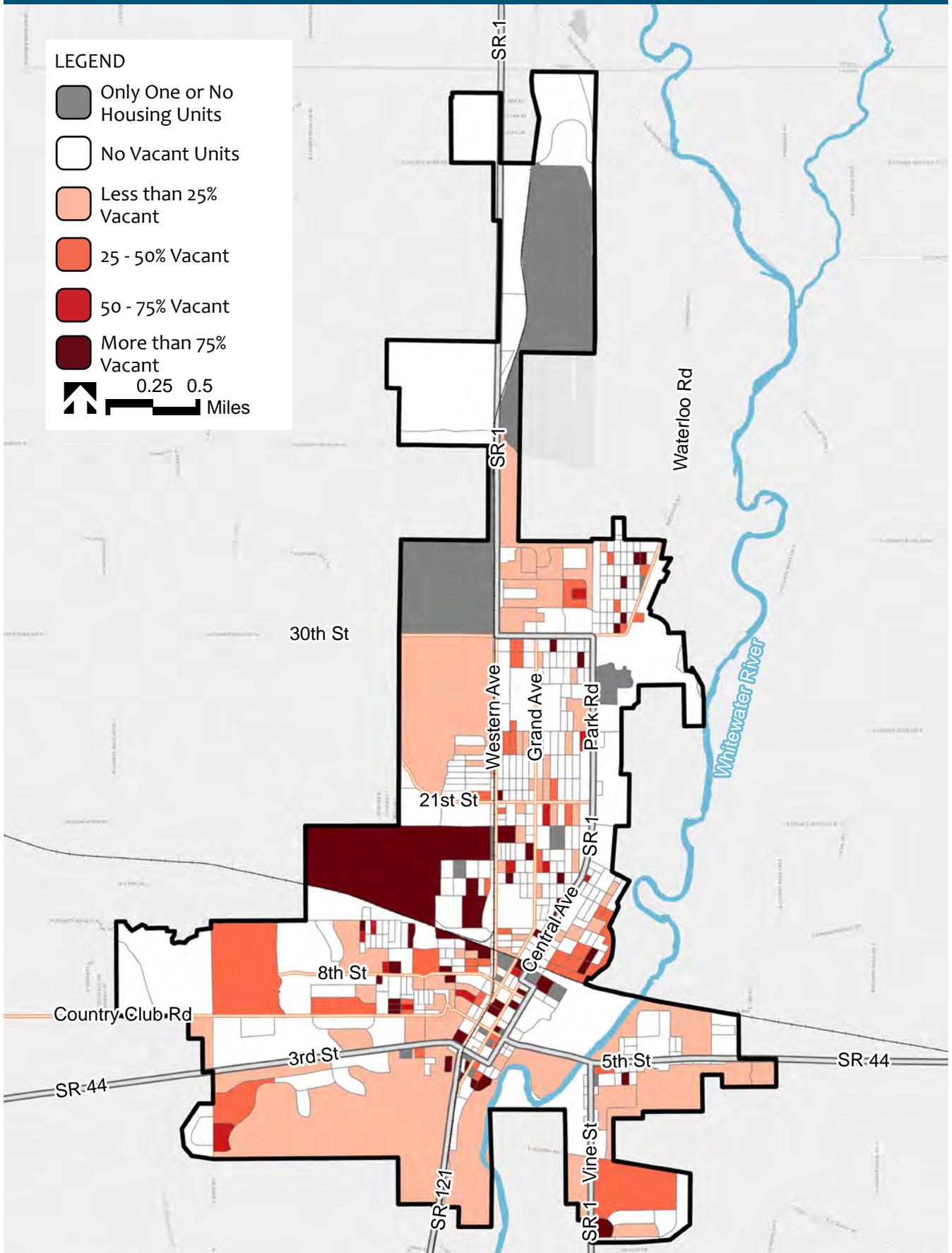


BLOCK VACANCY MAP

LEGEND

-  Only One or No Housing Units
-  No Vacant Units
-  Less than 25% Vacant
-  25 - 50% Vacant
-  50 - 75% Vacant
-  More than 75% Vacant

 0.25 0.5 Miles



Housing Age

The historic housing stock in Connersville is the primary reason for the City’s historic character, as it currently stands though, its age is one of its greatest weaknesses due to dilapidated structures, outdated appliances, and overall lower quality homes. In 2020, there were 3,686 homes, or 57.4% of the housing stock, before 1980. This year is significant because homes built before the 1978 ban by the Consumer Products Safety Commission could still contain lead-based paint, which negatively affects inhabitants’ health. This is especially true for children. Homes under construction when the ban took effect were allowed to continue to be built, which is why 1980 was used as a checkpoint. Connersville is faring better than both Fayette County and the state with 76.5 percent and 58.2 percent of their housing stocks being built before 1980, respectively. However, since more than half of the City’s housing stock may contain lead-based paint, the City could help residents update their homes by applying for grants from Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes (OLHCHH).



The homes above are representative of the condition of many downtown residences which are in need of refurbishment.

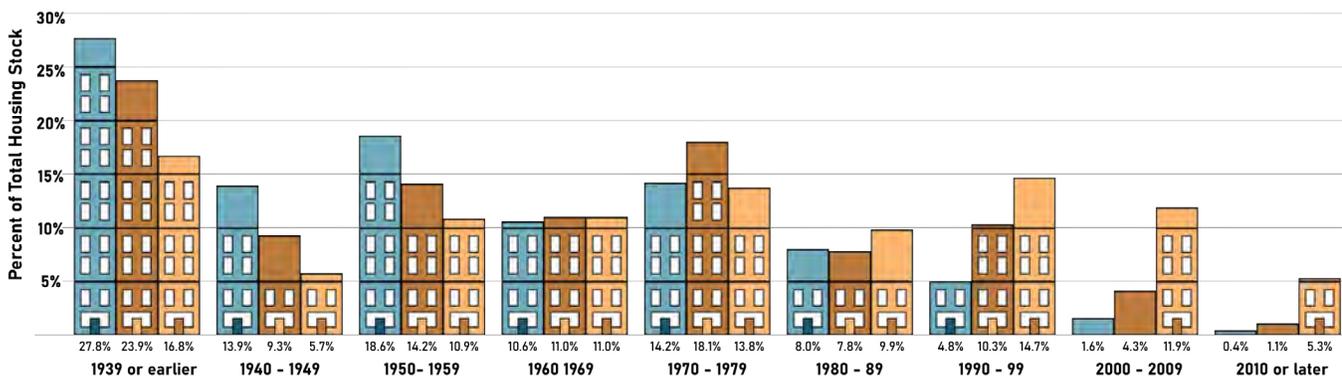
Additionally, 27.8 percent of homes in the City were built before the 1940, compared to 23.9 percent in the county and 16.8 percent in the state. This means homes in Connersville are generally more at-risk of becoming blighted or needing maintenance than the county and the state. Furthermore, only 127 housing units were built after 2000 compared to 580 units in Fayette County. This could indicate that not enough, or the right type of housing is being built within the City to meet residents’ needs and market preferences.



For more information about OLHCHH grants and programs, see https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/healthy_homes.

The Lead and Healthy Homes grant has a maximum award of \$1,000,000 million and a minimum of \$300,000, if awarded.

Housing by Decade Built as a Percentage of Total Housing Stock



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates



Short-Term Rental

Connersville has been experiencing increased interest in short-term rentals such as Vrbo and Airbnb over the last several years and there are several facilities operating within the community. The demand is attributed to local tourism, individuals traveling to Connersville to visit family, visitors traveling for temporary work, and new workers who are still looking for permanent housing. The City wishes to continue supporting these uses and would like to see expansion, especially as it relates to local tourism. Currently, the City does not have a mechanism for regulating or tracking short-term rentals.

Vision and Key Goals

Connersville must focus on creating new housing opportunities to continue attracting residents. Responsible annexation of land near existing City amenities would help to physically grow while minimizing the cost of providing new amenities and infrastructure. In cases where annexation might be difficult, emphasis needs to be placed on redeveloping existing properties within the City. By thinking strategically about where existing amenities and infrastructure are, and where new amenities could be constructed, Connersville can begin to investigate new development areas or retrofit existing areas that will help to grow land value, community character, and increase city revenue through property taxes. This should also accommodate those looking for more affordable housing options and smaller spaces.

Additional dwelling types, such as accessory dwelling units, could also serve existing residents as they age and want to downsize or attract younger populations that are looking for more affordable housing. By allowing more duplexes, multiplexes, and townhomes within some existing neighborhoods where the overall character of the neighborhood would not be greatly affected, more people can begin to move and live in Connersville.

Renovations of existing homes that are in need of repair would also help in restoring older buildings and preserving the City's historic character. Incentives for residential rehabilitation, as well as grant funding, could help alleviate renovation costs for residents, which may help encourage reinvestment. Supporting short-term rentals could also help encourage single family home restoration by creating a market for using underutilized properties, providing a supplemental income to residents, and supporting local tourism. The City should consider mechanisms for tracking short-term rental use within the community.

Adaptive reuse of structures for housing should also be considered. Depending on the building and location, adaptive reuse of multi-storied buildings in the downtown or nearby could adapt upper stories for use as apartments. Additionally, the renovation of vacant or underutilized industrial sites could provide opportunities for residential reuse assuming the site is free from environmental contamination. A successful example of this in the City is Pattern Mill, where a vacant industrial mill was adapted into senior-living apartments while preserving the area's historic character.



VISION STATEMENT

Continue to make Connersville an attractive community to live in by strengthening and maintaining existing neighborhoods while supporting new construction of varied housing types to support residents of all ages and incomes.

Goal 1

Consider a residential rehabilitation program, similar to a façade improvement program, to promote home-owner improvements to residential structures across the City.

- a. Research similar programs and define eligibility criteria.
- b. Allocate local funds to seed the program and try to leverage these with additional grants.
- c. Advertise successful home rehabs as a way to promote continued investment in City neighborhoods.

Goal 2

Identify non-compliant housing structures across the community and work with property owners to address safety needs and concerns.

- a. Hire a Building Inspector.
- b. Increase local coordination between ordinance enforcement and the health department.
- c. Determine what process, fines, and penalties will be issued to property owners if a structure or property does not comply with the local housing standards.
- d. Contact the property owner and notify them that the property is in need of rehabilitation and maintenance.
- e. Inform the property owner of any processes, fines, and penalties to incentivize improvements.

Goal 3

Focus efforts on improving streetscapes and maintaining utility infrastructure to identified redevelopment areas to support market-driven reinvestment in housing stock.

- a. Identify streets with high redevelopment potential in the City.
- b. Gather input and support for possible redevelopment initiatives and incentives.
- c. Work with property owners and State representatives to inform them of potential roadway improvements.
- d. Emphasize walking and biking where appropriate.
- e. Offer incentives to developers, such as waivers, if they agree to share the cost of upgrading nearby streetscapes in designated locations.

Goal 4

Ensure there are available opportunities for the development of housing options for all ages and incomes, including first-time buyers, move-up and down-size buyers, and renters.

- a. Ensure the zoning ordinance allows higher density housing options than what is currently permitted.
- b. Identify areas appropriate for residential growth and ensure the proper zoning is in place for the desired residential product. Refer to the [Future Land Use Map on page 54](#).
- c. Support land use and zoning changes that will head to the construction of more diverse housing types.



Goal 5

Encourage mixed-density neighborhoods that provide a variety of housing types including multi-family developments, townhomes, and single-family detached homes.

- a. Ensure the zoning ordinance allows a variety of residential dwelling types in residential districts.
- b. Identify areas appropriate for residential growth and ensure the proper zoning is in place for the desired residential product. Refer to the [Future Land Use Map on page 54](#).
- c. Establish criteria to evaluate potential dwelling types and mixes, based on surrounding context and density, affordability, impact to infrastructure and municipal services, and open spaces and amenities.
- d. Rather than prescribe a use or dwelling type mix, projects should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with regard to defined criteria.
 - i. Provide examples for various housing development types that are easily understood by City staff and residents to help make clear what appropriate development types could be.

Goal 6

Encourage a variety of housing development for all incomes, including affordable housing.

- a. Ensure the zoning ordinance allows a variety of residential dwelling types in residential districts.
- b. Ensure the zoning code addresses short-term rentals for those looking to stay in Connersville for a short period of time.
- c. Work with developers to offer incentives that would encourage more affordable housing development to be built for low-income earners.



Implementation

Housing is essential for any community to have in order to attract and retain people. By looking at future housing goals that a community wants to reach, it is critical to assess the available land and resources to determine where housing should be developed. Development of all types will cost money and identifying strategic areas across the City for investment can help the community think about the costs and benefits of construction, revitalization, and future housing expansions.

Additionally, as housing becomes available either through new development or rehabilitation, the community should consider what types of housing are in demand for the area. More diverse housing types and styles are good because they allow for flexibility in style and price. Affordable housing should be considered throughout development to ensure that existing residents can continue to live within Connersville.

The City should always be looking for ways to retain current residents and attract new residents and investors to the area. Public plans, such as this Comprehensive Plan and incentive programs show residents and investors that the City is serious about the community and attracting new development. This plan, and the goals, objectives, projects, and action steps should be at the forefront of deciding whether to approve or amend development proposals.

Projects and Action Steps

Project 1

Identify and redevelop blighted areas across the City to construct new housing.

- a. Work with local residents to find more suitable housing if their property is unsafe to live in.
- b. Identify and evaluate blighted properties.
 - i. Develop criteria to assess blighted housing.
 - ii. Conduct field reviews to identify blighted properties and research and analyze why these areas became blighted.
 - iii. Create a report on the findings and map their locations.
- c. Update the county's dangerous building ordinance and develop strategies to address blighted properties.
- d. Utilize existing and planned economic development tools to encourage redevelopment of blighted areas, such as existing Opportunity Zone, Wayzata TIF district, and planned downtown TIF district.
- e. Consider short-term zoning and land use changes that promote infill development or relax regulations for redevelopment of blighted properties and further address as a part of a new unified development ordinance.

Project 2

Continue code enforcement programs to work with local property owners on maintenance.

- a. Work with a bank to develop a granting process or low-cost loans that provide maintenance assistance for homeowners and renters.
- b. Consider the creation of a land bank to purchase and auction off vacant or blighted properties for prospective residents and/or redevelopment opportunities.
- c. Research local, state, and federal grant programs that help fund reinvestment and maintenance efforts.



Project 3

Update the zoning ordinance to correct “unbuildable” lot issues (minimum lot area) and permit a wider array of dwelling types, including accessory dwelling units, in residential districts.

- a. Refer to Chapter 1, Land Use, Project 6.

Project 4

Create a rental registration program to ensure accurate and up-to-date contact information for owners to better keep negligent landlords accountable for their properties.

- a. Research registration programs found in other cities and towns.
- b. Create a portal on the City’s website to streamline the registration process for landlords and renters.
- c. Enforce the rental registration program with a Building Inspector.
- d. Work with homeowners, landlords, and renters to address maintenance and code issues.

Project 5

Develop a program/policy to encourage coordination between the ordinance enforcer and health department.

- a. Develop and promote a program that allows residents to report unsafe structures.
- b. Beginning with assumptions based on the age of housing stock, inventory homes that contain lead contaminants, such as lead painting.
- c. Research and utilize available local funding, donations, and grant opportunities to address and improve unhealthy or unsafe living conditions.
- d. Identify areas in the community with a lack of recreational and wellness opportunities.
- e. Develop a plan to improve access to these opportunities and involve other City departments as necessary.

Project 6

Develop a policy to address and encourage transient housing and short-term rentals (i.e. Airbnb, Vrbo, etc.)

- a. Analyze existing conditions and research similar policies from other cities.
- b. Gather public input at events, meetings, and community leaders.
- c. Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of considering short-term rentals as accessory uses or special exemptions.
- d. Draft a policy document and zoning plan
- e. Include recommendations for registration of short-term rental properties as a part of permitting processes so that the City can track short-term rental use within the City.
- f. Review the proposed policy with legal counsel.
- g. Hold a public hearing for adoption of the policy and plan from the City Council and Plan Commission

Public Input

Housing was a widely discussed topic among the focus groups, public engagement sessions, and Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC) meetings. Common themes across many discussions were the lack of housing options, homeownership affordability for current and prospective residents, rehabilitation, and redevelopment strategies. The CPC noted that a major barrier to housing reform and construction was the outdated zoning code. During the Focus Group meetings, many participants expressed their concern about vacant properties but also that these properties are opportunities to build something better than what was there.

During the Celebration in the ‘Ville event on May 14th, the public was asked to rank the comprehensive plan’s subject matter topics based on their perceived value. Of the 30 votes that were received, four votes were specifically for land use, or approximately 13 percent.





10

TRANSPORTATION



INTRODUCTION.....	126
VISION AND KEY GOALS	126
IMPLEMENTATION	132
PROJECTS AND ACTION STEPS.....	132
PUBLIC INPUT.....	135

Introduction

Many communities start from and develop around a transportation network. Connersville's growth has centered around a variety of networks starting with the Whitewater Canal during the 19th century. The canal ran through downtown and transported goods and people from Cincinnati, Ohio to Hagerstown, Indiana. As the canal was phased out, the City developed its major industries around the railroad network which replaced it. The City also received passenger train service which is still in operation by Amtrak. As rail travel became less popular with affordable private automobiles in the mid to the 20th century, car infrastructure, such as garages and highways, became the driving force behind the City's development. Today, there are three state roads that traverse the City: State Road (SR) 1, 44, and 121.

Transportation networks are a critical part of economic development and quality of place as they are the facilitators in the movement of goods, services, people, and specifically commuters. The most common mode of transportation is by car with 4,662 commuters (84.9 percent) driving alone and 533 carpooling (9.7 percent). Additionally, 143 people (2.6 percent) walked and 104 people (1.9 percent) worked from home. There were no commuters who biked to work; however, many non-commuters, such as children and others not in the labor force, use bikes to see friends and travel to local shops and services.



The Nickel Plate Rail Trail stretches one mile northward and provides many benefits, including recreation, to the community.

Existing Conditions

Street Network

Connersville is located about 10 miles south of Interstate 70 traveling on SR 1. The city's street network is mostly gridded and has two different alignments. The downtown grid is aligned at a little less than 45 degrees northeast-southwest while the rest of the City is generally aligned north-south. The network is generally well-connected across the City except for the railroad along Western Avenue, which cuts access to a large industrial area and the downtown from the west when a train is present. The east-west railroad along 10th Street is elevated above the ground except at SR 1, locally named Eastern Avenue. This results in many drivers using the Central Avenue, Grand Avenue, and Western Avenue underpasses. These underpasses are only 11 feet 1 inch and 12 feet tall, respectively – the Western Avenue underpass does not have height signage - which means most large transport vehicles and semi-trucks must wait at the SR 1 crossing.

The City's primary thoroughfares, besides state roads, are as follows:

- » Park Road (aka SR 1)
- » 3rd Street (aka SR 44)
- » Western Avenue
- » 5th Street (aka SR 44)
- » Eastern Avenue (aka SR 1)

These streets form the backbone of the transportation network and carry the majority of the daily traffic through the City. They are also the primary gateways through which many visitors gain their first impression of Connersville. Based on an estimated number of vehicles using these roads and location within the City, the secondary gateways are Grand Avenue, 30th Street, and Waterloo Road. These streets are lined with homes, corner shops, and institutions, such as Connersville Middle School on Grand Avenue. Local connectors, used for travel within the City, are Country Club Road, Virginia Avenue, 20th Street, and 8th Street.

Some local neighborhood streets, such as Iowa and Vermont Avenues, are narrow for two-way traffic as they currently accommodate parallel parking on both sides of the roadway. Additionally,

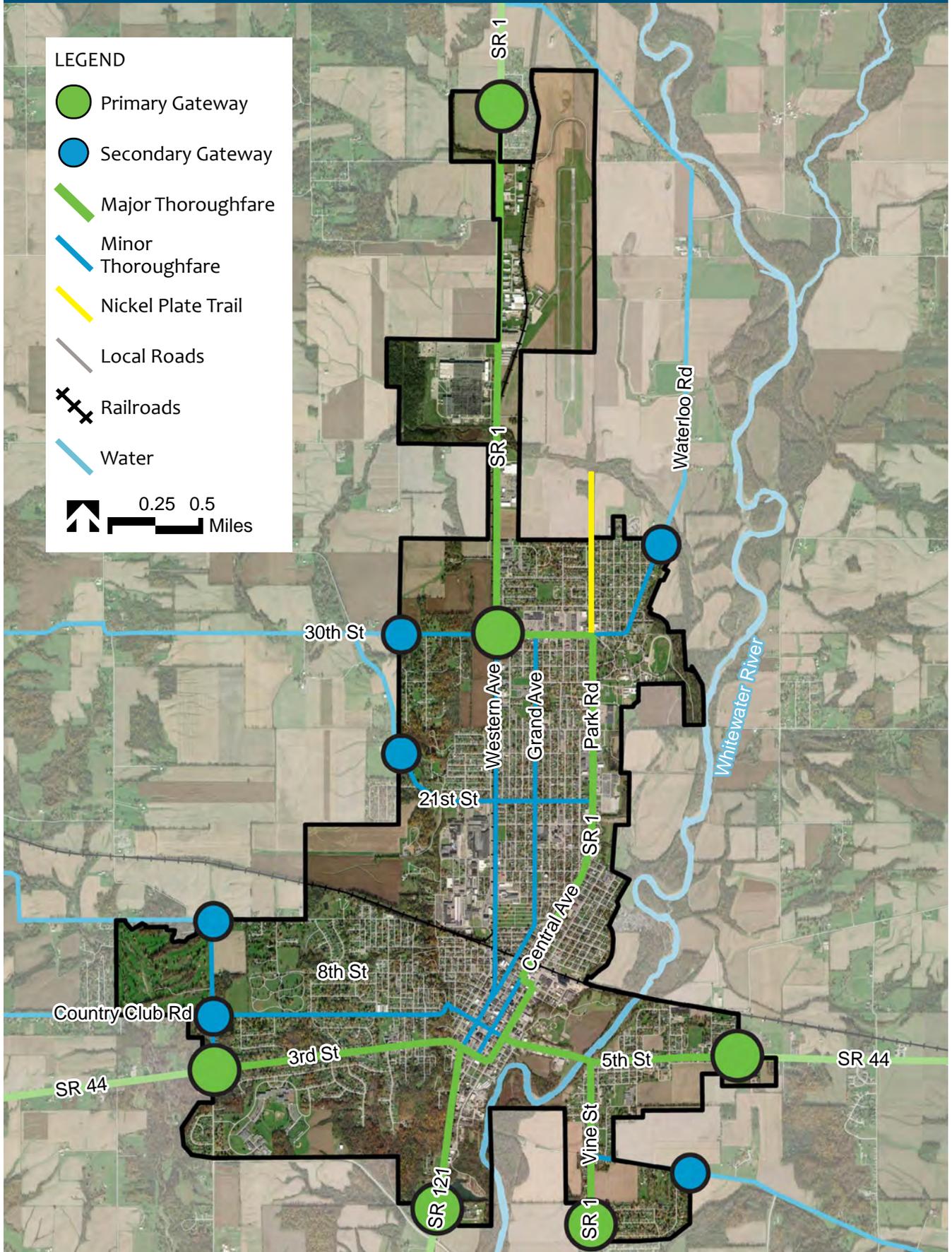


IMPORTANT STREETS AND GATEWAYS MAP

LEGEND

-  Primary Gateway
-  Secondary Gateway
-  Major Thoroughfare
-  Minor Thoroughfare
-  Nickel Plate Trail
-  Local Roads
-  Railroads
-  Water

 0.25 0.5 Miles



roadway connections between the downtown and neighborhoods to the west are challenging, specifically 5th Street, which would benefit from alignment changes to improve efficiency and remove hairpin turns and dangerous roadway geometry. The City would benefit from a more comprehensive transportation plan to analyze existing roadways and prioritize investments and improvements.

Trails and Sidewalks

Many of the streets in Connersville have sidewalks and they are generally in good condition, especially in and north of the downtown. However, the majority of development north of 30th Street and west of the downtown have no sidewalks or are in poor condition. Specifically, Waterloo Road, 30th Street, 3rd Street, SR 121, and SR 1 across the river have unsafe or no sidewalks despite being heavily trafficked streets.

The majority of sidewalks were constructed as housing developments were built, most of which occurred before the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (development and housing age are discussed more in the [Housing Chapter on page 118](#)). Although some sidewalks have been updated to comply with ADA standards, many are still inaccessible because there are no curb ramps, signage or utility poles are blocking the path, and there are sidewalk gaps in some locations.

Connersville has invested in a recreational trail, the Nickel Plate Rail Trail, starting from the trailhead at Central Avenue and 32nd Street. The trail was built on the foundations of an abandoned rail line and stretches north for about 3/4 mile. The trail provides many benefits for the community, such as recreational opportunities, increased property values, and a safe route away from cars for pedestrians and bicyclists.



A bench located in downtown Connersville. Although benches are an excellent feature, they should not block parts of a sidewalk.

Mettle Field Regional Airport

The regional airport is not only unique for a rural community to have, but also one of Connersville's greatest assets. It better connects local residents and businesses to the broader, regional economy. Mettel Field is a publicly operated airport in the northern part of the City along SR 1. It has two runways with the larger runway having an approximate length of 2,601 feet. According to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), there were 8,272 operations in 2019. 'General Aviation' operations was the most common, making up 96.5 percent of the total. This type of operation includes pilot training, banner towing, medevacs (medical evacuations), and recreational flying.

In 2016, a report commissioned by the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) found that the airport was in overall good condition. However, the runway was in significantly poorer condition with only around 25 percent of the runway in good condition and close to 20 percent of the runway in poor condition.

Land uses around the airport consists of mostly industrial and commercial uses. However, residential uses have encroached into the northern portion of the along SR 1 and Country Road 450 N. This has resulted in noise complaints and safety concerns for residents living in or near the flight path. Federal programs and funding, such as the FAA's Airport Improvement Program, and other initiatives like a capital improvement plan can help to redirect the development of incompatible land uses away from the airport.



Mettle Field airport.



Railroads

Two railroads run through the City. The east-west along 10th Street railroad is owned by CSX Transportation and services the Amtrak Station at 10th Street and Eastern Avenue just northeast of downtown. Amtrak operates one passenger line about once a week at the station. The next stations on the line are Indianapolis to the west and Cincinnati to the east; travel times are about 1.5 hours and 2 hours, respectively.

The north-south railroad through the norther portion of Connersville had been leased by the Connersville and New Castle Railroad from Norfolk Southern for many years, however, operations ceased in late 2021. The near-term future of the rail line is unknown. On the south side of Connersville, the rail line is owned by the local not-for-profit, White Water Valley Railroad. This section of railroad, connecting to Metamora, Indiana, has been repurposed for a popular winter event, the Polar Express, which attracts people from across the country. During the event, tourists and residents can ride a historic locomotive while being served hot chocolate and food while listening to the timeless Christmas story, the Polar Express.

Local Transit Services

Local transit services are entities that offer alternative transportation options, such as buses. The options for local transit services for residents are limited. There are three services available in Connersville, privately owned:

- » Fayette Community on Aging & Aged, Inc.
- » B&L Transportation & Logistics, LLC
- » Transportation Services Ventures Inc.

Vision and Key Goals

The first step in implementing transportation enhancements is to create standards for street development and maintenance and record an existing conditions analysis of the roadway network. A successful strategy for improving roadways is to make a commitment through zoning and development standards that not only accommodate but also enhance land use activities along the street. This typically includes the adoption of standards for crosswalks, sidewalk width and separation from the street, landscaping such as street trees, lighting, signage, curbs, and on-street facilities such as parking, bike lanes, and possible outdoor seating for businesses.

Connersville's limited funding makes sidewalk development and maintenance difficult. Therefore, construction projects should be selected that align with a future Capital Improvements Plan, as discussed in the [Public Facilities and Services chapter on page 77](#). The City should focus on projects that are highly visible, promote and connect community assets, encourage active transportation, leverage private interest and investment, and offer the most opportunity for new development and redevelopment. The following list contains focus areas that will work harmoniously to achieve the City's vision in this chapter, as well as the goals and objectives found in the [Parks and Recreation chapter on page 160](#):

- » Extending the Nickel Plate Trail
- » Improving pedestrian and ADA access on SR 1, (Park Road and Eastern Avenue), SR 121, 30th Street, Western Avenue
- » Better connecting the downtown with residential neighborhoods

These focus areas provide the groundwork to connect several important community assets. Connersville will work to protect, preserve, and enhance the nearby neighborhoods and development in the downtown, encourage preservation and upkeep of buildings, and increase overall investment especially within the downtown by strengthening the accessibility and overall appearance of the City.



VISION STATEMENT

Improve and maintain a safe and efficient transportation system that connects community anchors, neighborhoods, and employers across Connersville, and is accessible using several modes of transportation including walking and biking.

Goal 1

Improve safety, accessibility, and connectivity between existing neighborhoods and key destinations with improved pedestrian facilities, including sidewalks.

- a. Replace non-compliant curb ramps.
- b. Replace sidewalks where low maintenance has made them unusable.
- c. Develop new sidewalks where there are gaps or are none but should be.
- d. Create a connectivity plan for the City that identifies the location best suited for multi-use paths, trails, sidewalks, and crosswalks should be implemented and get an estimate of the fiscal impact the City will be taking on.

Goal 2

Consider improving and adding pedestrian and bicycle facilities when undergoing other public works projects.

- a. Determine where bike racks, benches, and crosswalks with appropriate signalized signage, along with other pedestrian and bicyclist friendly amenities should be installed.
- b. Create an inventory of locations with necessary improvements and determine which are the highest priority to install first.
- c. Ensure that these improvements align with the development of the City's Capital Improvements Plan (CIP).

Goal 3

Utilize City investments in transportation and utility infrastructure to leverage desired development types in appropriate locations.

- a. Focus transportation infrastructure improvements at key destinations within the community such as the downtown and along major corridors.
- b. Improvements in these areas may leverage other private investment and development such as businesses and new housing opportunities.
- c. Ensure that transportation improvements and future development align with the [Future Land Use Map on page 54](#), and the Future Street and Sidewalk Networks on the following page.

Goal 4

Provide more opportunities for outdoor recreational activities and more active commuting patterns.

- a. Expand the Nickel Plate Trail to connect further north and south throughout the community.
- b. Develop a system of recreational trails that connect residents with natural resource assets, such as the Whitewater River. See the [Future Trail Network Map on page 159](#).

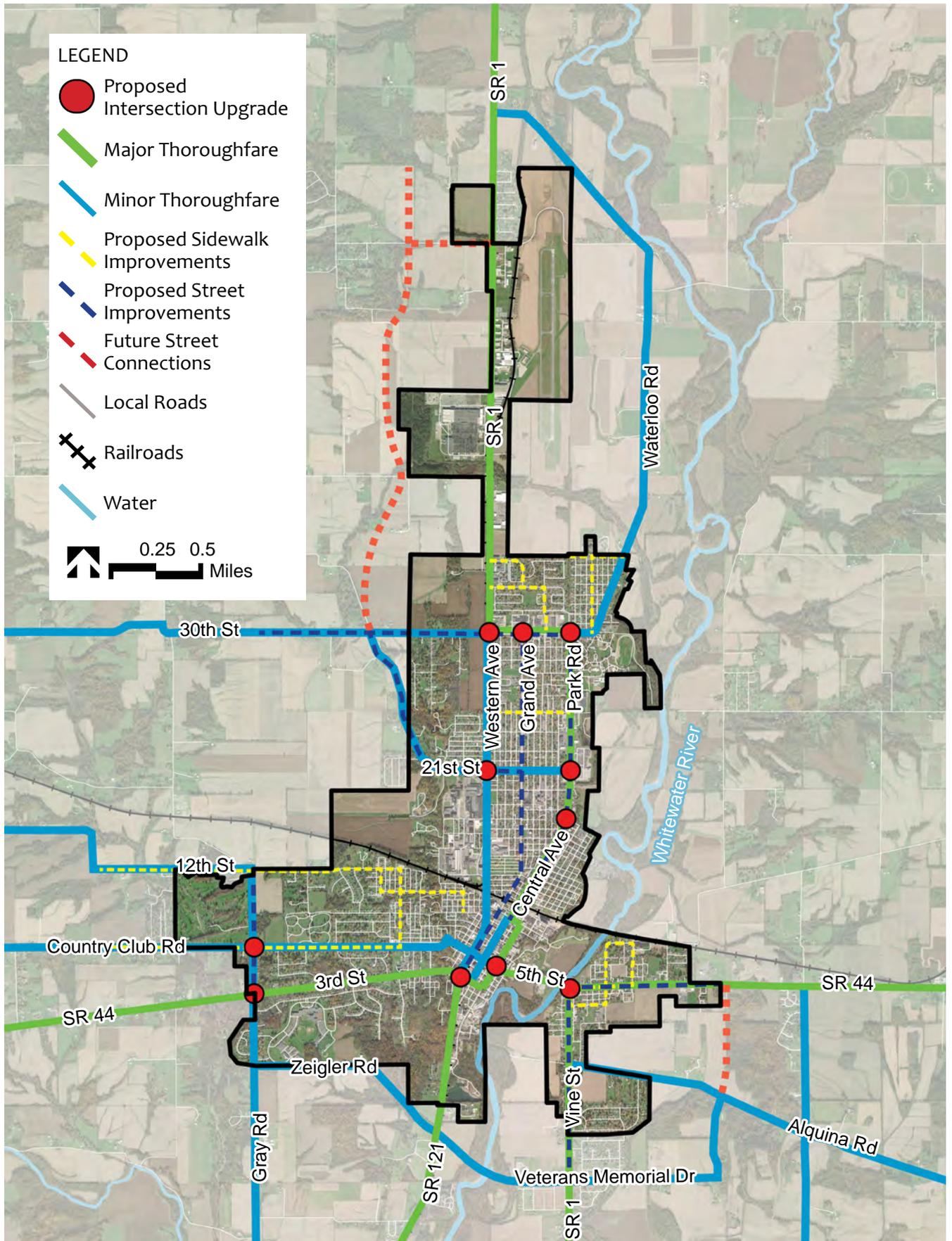


FUTURE STREET AND SIDEWALK NETWORKS MAP

LEGEND

-  Proposed Intersection Upgrade
-  Major Thoroughfare
-  Minor Thoroughfare
-  Proposed Sidewalk Improvements
-  Proposed Street Improvements
-  Future Street Connections
-  Local Roads
-  Railroads
-  Water

 0.25 0.5 Miles



Goal 5

Ensure that any new street connections are complete streets that include adequate pedestrian and ADA facilities, as well as any on-street facilities that support other goals and objectives found in this plan.

- a. Reduce the number of unnecessary off-street parking for commercial and industrial developments by providing on-street parking.
- b. Update the zoning and subdivision ordinances to reflect these goals and objectives.

Implementation

The transportation networks within Connersville should support the existing and future development pattern of the community. This means that the City should be proactive and work on roadways improvements and development of other amenities. Generally speaking, roadways need to be able to support increased pedestrian and bicyclist use and well maintained for there to be continued use. This will help to increase the overall aesthetic of the community and enhance the community's character and increase property values. Connersville is a community where people are looking to move to, as shown by the population increase in the [General Background chapter on page 30](#). By increasing the amount and quality of available outdoor amenities for existing and future residents to utilize and overall safety across the community, the City will be able to capture additional investment opportunities that bring more commercial, retail, entertainment, and employment options.

It should be noted that transportation projects are expensive. While all the projects were identified and deemed important during the planning process, limitations in City funding should also be considered. If any of these projects are to be implemented in the near-term, they will likely be dependent on grant funding, new development and investment, and/or state funding when related to roadways under INDOT jurisdiction, such as State Road 1 and 121. Where and when possible, improvements should be made in

coordination with utility and other infrastructure projects. This will help keep costs down and reduce overall construction and roadway closure times, especially if the costs can be shared by a developer.

Projects and Action Steps

Project 1

Continue to leverage local funds with state, federal, or private grant programs as they may be available.

- a. Conduct additional studies and develop additional plans, including a corridor study and comprehensive transportation plan for State Roads, to help leverage state funds for improvements to INDOT controlled roadways.
- b. Using existing plans, such as this comprehensive plan, apply for funding through state, federal, and private grant opportunities specific for transportation and infrastructure improvements.
- c. Adopt key plans and priority projects as amendments to the comprehensive plan.

Project 2

Implement streetscape improvements throughout Connersville to improve pedestrian walkability and safety, on-street parking, lighting, and aesthetics.

- a. Form a local project committee of City officials, members of the Main Street organization, and community members to determine appropriate project limits, phasing and scope.
- b. Refine the goals of the projects and develop a program to implement the projects.
- c. Consult with and hire a design professional for completion of design and construction documents.
- d. Develop a phasing plan for how the corridors would be reconstructed.



- e. Identify and start to obtain funding including grants and reallocate existing City funds.
- f. Coordinate with business owners, property owners, and residents by holding informative meetings about the cost, construction time, and phasing of the projects.
- g. Bid projects.
- h. Begin construction of the projects starting at the first phase when funds are available, and repeat until all phases of the projects are complete.

Project 3

Update and implement improvements included within the City's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan.

- a. Inventory existing sidewalks within the City and the conditions regarding ADA accessibility.
- b. Inventory and map sidewalks and ramps that do not meet ADA accessibility requirements.
- c. Identify and map priority areas across the City for ADA improvements.
- d. Research and identify available funding, grant opportunities, and local fundraising/donation opportunities to improvement and repair sidewalks.
- e. Review the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan when planning for improvements or upgrades to roadway infrastructure.
- f. Organize projects to address more than one issue at any time, including upgrading sidewalks and necessary infrastructure to be ADA compliant, or through the completion of a project already within the Transition Plan.
- g. Implement the ADA Transition Plan in conjunction with other capital improvements identified in the City's CIP.

- i. Investigate a cost-share program to repair sidewalks and curbs.

Project 4

Develop a City Transportation Plan.

- a. Consult with a transportation engineer on the development of a City Transportation Plan.
- b. Engage residents in public meetings to identify what transportation improvements are most important to the public.
- c. Identify the most dangerous roads for pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, and other road users, and map using county GIS.
- d. Identify roads that fail to meet the city development standards and include projects in a CIP plan. Map identified roads using county GIS.
- e. Rebuild sidewalks and curbs that are missing or not functional.
- f. Ensure that the City Transportation Plan aligns with goals and objectives in this Comprehensive Plan and the City's Capital Improvement Plan.

Project 5

Develop and incentivize ride-share and food delivery opportunities.

- a. Research existing online delivery services and programs in other cities and towns.
- b. Compile a public resource list and steps that local businesses can take to setup food-delivery services.
- c. Promote the resource list in newspapers, the City website, and TV 3.

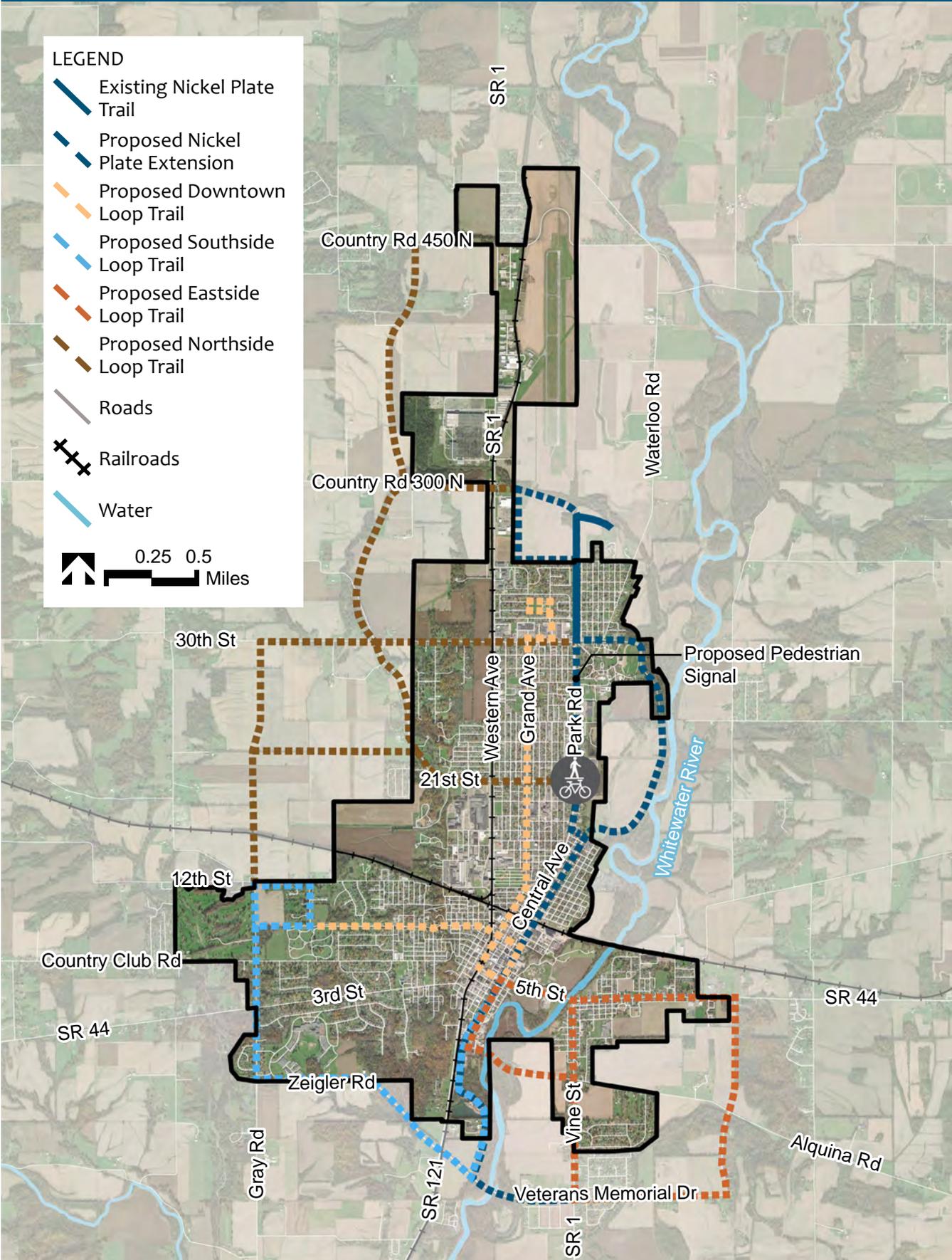


FUTURE MULTI-USE TRAIL NETWORK MAP

LEGEND

- Existing Nickel Plate Trail
- Proposed Nickel Plate Extension
- Proposed Downtown Loop Trail
- Proposed Southside Loop Trail
- Proposed Eastside Loop Trail
- Proposed Northside Loop Trail
- Roads
- Railroads
- Water

0.25 0.5 Miles



Public Input

Discussions surrounding transportation occurred at many of the Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC) meetings and the Student Government Focus Group, however, it was limited in conversations with the other focus groups. The public also had comments about transportation at the annual Celebration in the ‘Ville event held in downtown Connersville. Common themes were safety concerns, better connectivity to key public assets, especially downtown Connersville, and more opportunities and infrastructure for outdoor recreation.

Members of the committee and the student focus group identified the Nickel Plate Trail as a significant asset and potential driver for redevelopment and new development in Connersville. Students had a large interest in seeing more investment into recreational trails and outdoor activities,

During the Celebration in the ‘Ville event on May 14th, the public was asked to rank the comprehensive plan’s subject matter topics based on their perceived value. Transportation received no votes, but many public comments gathered at the event, listed in the [Appendix on page 269](#), include expanding the City’s walking and biking trails.



Many students in the Student Government Focus Group desired an expansion of the City’s trails not only for exercise but also daily travel around the City.





11

AGRICULTURE



INTRODUCTION.....	138
EXISTING CONDITIONS	138
VISION AND KEY GOALS	139
IMPLEMENTATION	141
PROJECTS AND ACTION STEPS.....	141
PUBLIC INPUT	141

Introduction

While the City of Connersville has a limited amount of agricultural use occurring within the corporate limits, agriculture has a major impact on the local culture and economy. The largest municipality in Fayette County, Connersville is surrounded by agriculture and serves as the primary destination for local farmers to conduct commerce. Many local producers partner with Connersville based retailers to offer their products and exhibit at the local farmer’s market on a weekly basis.

Within the City, urban agriculture provides an opportunity for utilizing vacant lots and providing healthy food options, a much needed resource within the community. The City wishes to promote the expansion of urban agriculture within the corporate limits and to continue supporting the agricultural community that surrounds Connersville.



Agricultural land near 5th Street.

Existing Conditions

Agriculture use within the corporate limits of Connersville is limited to isolated parcels located near the fringes of the City. A few parcels zoned “Agriculture” are located along the City’s eastern boundary, however, most sizable parcels actively used for agriculture within the City are zoned a form of “Residential” or “Industrial.” The City supports urban agriculture and food production through local community gardens provided at Offutts Park and the Oasis, an interactive, educational garden and source of free food for the community, that is located in the heart of the downtown immediately across from City Hall. A weekly farmer’s market is also held every Saturday between mid-May and the end of October in the Fayette County Courthouse parking lot. These initiatives provide local residents with affordable and healthy food options, as well as food production education. This is important to the community since Fayette County ranks 91 out of 92 for health outcomes in the State of Indiana, and 92 out of 92 for health factors according to the 2022 State Report for Indiana on County Health Rankings and Roadmaps. One of the leading health factors that determines health outcomes is diet and exercise.

While the City does not have substantial agriculture use within the corporate limits, Fayette County does. According to the most recent Census of Agriculture data (2017), the county is comprised of 343 farms operating on 85,928 acres. This equates to approximately 62% of the county’s total land area. This agriculture use has a significant impact on the local culture and economy and several farms sell fresh produce to Connersville residents. For example, McDivitt’s Farm Market, located on the north side of the City, provides fresh meat, produce, flowers, and other sundries to local residents. Additionally, many of the county’s farms provide various products to local, large retailers such as Kroger and Walmart, and exhibit at the local farmer’s market. The relationship of county farmers to the City is generally positive, however, some complaints from residents do occur during the application of manure fertilizer near the fringes of the City.



The Fayette County Fairgrounds is located within Connersville as well. This local fairgrounds serves as a hub of activity for the local farming and Connersville communities, and multiple agriculture related events are held at the facility throughout the year. Immediately adjacent to Connersville's Roberts Park, the fairgrounds and park are the location of the Fayette County Free Fair every summer which serves as a regional draw for thousands of visitors. The fairgrounds also support the local 4-H organization, a national, youth-based cooperative extension that collaborates in Indiana with Purdue University and which has significant focus on agriculture education.

The City of Connersville is also home to many local services and businesses that serve the agriculture community. The county's Purdue Extension Office and the USDA's Farm Service Agency are both located in Connersville. These two resources provide invaluable education and agriculture resources to the Fayette County farming community including information on farming best practices, conservations programs, access to farm loans and disaster relief programs, and much more. Private businesses such as the Consolidated Grain and Barge Co., which is a major, local grain elevator, and numerous banks, farm supply stores, retailers, and service industries, support the surrounding agriculture industry as well.

Vision and Key Goals

The county's agriculture community will continue to play a significant role in the culture and economy of Connersville into the foreseeable future. While the City does not anticipate significant agriculture use within the corporate limits in the future, the City recognizes the local importance of agriculture and wishes to support and promote growth within the industry. This will be accomplished through the continued support of local agribusiness and fostering relationships between the surrounding farm community and City residents, businesses, and higher education institutions. These relationships will help promote crop diversification, improved production, job creation, and access to fresh and affordable food options.

The success of the summer farmer's market has provided both an economic and health benefit to the community. The event draws people into the downtown on a regular basis and has provided additional access to fresh food options. The City supports the creation of a winter's farmer's market to allow the expansion of these benefits and to further encourage farm to table initiatives that will help improve community health.

Furthermore, the City will continue to support the Oasis and local community garden efforts to promote urban agriculture and healthy food options. Vacant lots and underutilized park spaces throughout the community provide opportunity for the expansion of these food production efforts.



Agricultural land south of Mettle Field airport.



Agricultural land near 30th St/State Road 1.



VISION STATEMENT

Support the agricultural community that surrounds the City of Connersville and which is critical to the local economy, while encouraging urban agriculture with the City limits to promote community building and physical health.

Goal 1

Provide affordable, fresh food opportunities for Connersville residents.

- a. Continue supporting the Oasis.
- b. Continue supporting the local farmer's market, farm-to-table events, and community gardens.
- c. Encourage partnerships between local grocers and the farming community.

Goal 2

Support the surrounding, county farming community within the City.

- a. Identify agribusiness opportunities within the City.
- b. Expand services within existing City businesses to better support the agriculture community.

Goal 3

Continue to promote local farms and businesses with the farmer's market, Farm-to-Table events, and future City programming activities.

- a. Continue to support the Summer Farmer's Market.
- b. Identify opportunities for the creation of a winter farmer's market.
- c. Encourage local grocers and restaurants to use local farm produce.
- d. Use social media, newsletters, and flyers to attract local farmers and small businesses to set up a booth at the Farmer's market in the summer to sell their produce.

Goal 4

Evaluate options for community gardens and urban agriculture on vacant lots throughout the City.

- a. Develop a partnership between City government, local philanthropic organizations, and the Fayette County Purdue Extension.
- b. Identify food deserts throughout the City and areas of greatest need.
- c. Inventory vacant lots throughout the City that may be suitable for community gardens.
- d. Develop a proposal for turning vacant lots into a community garden and seek approval from the City Council.

Goal 5

Educate citizens on the physical and mental health benefits of urban agriculture.

- a. Incorporate curriculum into the schools to educate children on healthy food options and agriculture.
- b. Promote workshops on urban agriculture.

Goal 6

Investigate opportunities for businesses that can support county agriculture.

- a. Survey local farmer's on needs for additional services and businesses within the community.

Goal 7

Partner with educational institutions to support agricultural training.

- a. Collaborate with the local Career Center, IVY Tech, and Purdue extension on training opportunities.



Implementation

Long-term physical and economic health within Connersville is significantly impacted by local agriculture. In order to improve local health and wellness within the community, the City must continue to support fresh, healthy food options and active lifestyles. This can be accomplished through the continuation and expansion of the farmer's market and the Oasis, establishing additional urban agriculture opportunities within the City, and educating the citizenry on food production and preparation.

Connersville also wishes to support local agribusiness within the City and surrounding county. This will be accomplished through promoting partnerships between local producers, retailers, and restaurants, and through the identification of needed services and products with local retailers. The projects outlined below focus on advancing these initiatives.

Projects and Action Steps

Project 1

Promote existing agriculture and food processing businesses as a means to attract additional employers.

- a. Continue partnerships with higher education institutions to promote agribusiness such as hydroponics, equipment sales, food distribution and processing, biofuel producers, and agritourism among others..
- b. Market the Oasis as a place for fresh produce for anyone to visit.
 - i. Utilizing the position of the Marketing and Communications Coordinator, include advertisements for the Oasis community garden.

Project 2

Partner City leadership and the Parks and Recreation Department with the Purdue Extension office to identify additional opportunities throughout the City for community gardens and promote urban agriculture.

- a. Refer to [Placemaking chapter, Project 4](#).

Public Input

Public input related to agriculture was limited and occurred primarily during CPC Meeting 2. During the discussion, the CPC noted that while there is limited agricultural use within the City, the agricultural activity in the county is critical to the local economy and it is in the City's best interest to continue supporting the farming community. The CPC also noted the importance of urban agriculture and public gardens within the City, including the Oasis, and suggested that additional garden facilities are needed to promote health, wellness, and local food production. The CPC noted conflict between urban and agricultural uses is limited to the City's fringes where traffic congestion with farming equipment and odors from manure fertilizer occur.

During the Celebration in the 'Ville event on May 14th, attendees were asked to rank the comprehensive plan's subject matter based on their perceived value. Of the 30 votes that were received, two votes were specifically for agriculture, or approximately 7 percent.



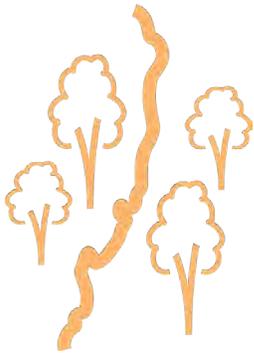
Farmland northwest of the City.





12

NATURAL RESOURCES



INTRODUCTION.....	144
EXISTING CONDITIONS	144
VISION AND KEY GOALS	145
IMPLEMENTATION	147
PROJECTS & ACTION STEPS	147
PUBLIC INPUT.....	148

Introduction

The Whitewater River, the Whitewater Valley Aquifer System, and the Fayette-Union Aquifer System serve as the City of Connersville's primary natural resources. These primary water features, coupled with the City's water and sewer utility infrastructure, provide the City of Connersville with an abundance of water that supports the community's residential and commercial water needs with capacity to spare. Near the southern end of the community, and south of the City, the Whitewater River provides significant tourism attraction for fishing, tubing, kayaking, and canoeing. Within Connersville city limits, however, public access to the river is lacking.

The City wishes to provide enhanced protection of its existing water resources while providing additional access, recreation, and tourism opportunities.

Existing Conditions

Natural resources within the City of Connersville are significant contributors to local economic development and quality of life. The west fork of the Whitewater River serves as one of the City's most prominent natural resource. Flowing from north to south, the Whitewater River combines with multiple other water bodies north of the City including Nolands Fork River, Butlers Creek, and Shaker Run among others. The river flows along, and outside of, the eastern boundary of the City north of downtown and the CSX rail line, with its floodplain encroaching into the boundary at several locations. South of the CSX rail line, the river flows within the corporate limits until reaching the City's southern extents. The historical development of the City adjacent to, and not within, the floodplain has helped minimize flood risk within the community, however it has also limited physical access to the river to a few locations within the City. Public access points are limited to the Babe Ruth Sports Complex, John Conner Nature Preserve, and River's Edge Park, all of which are operated by the City of Connersville Parks and Recreation Department.

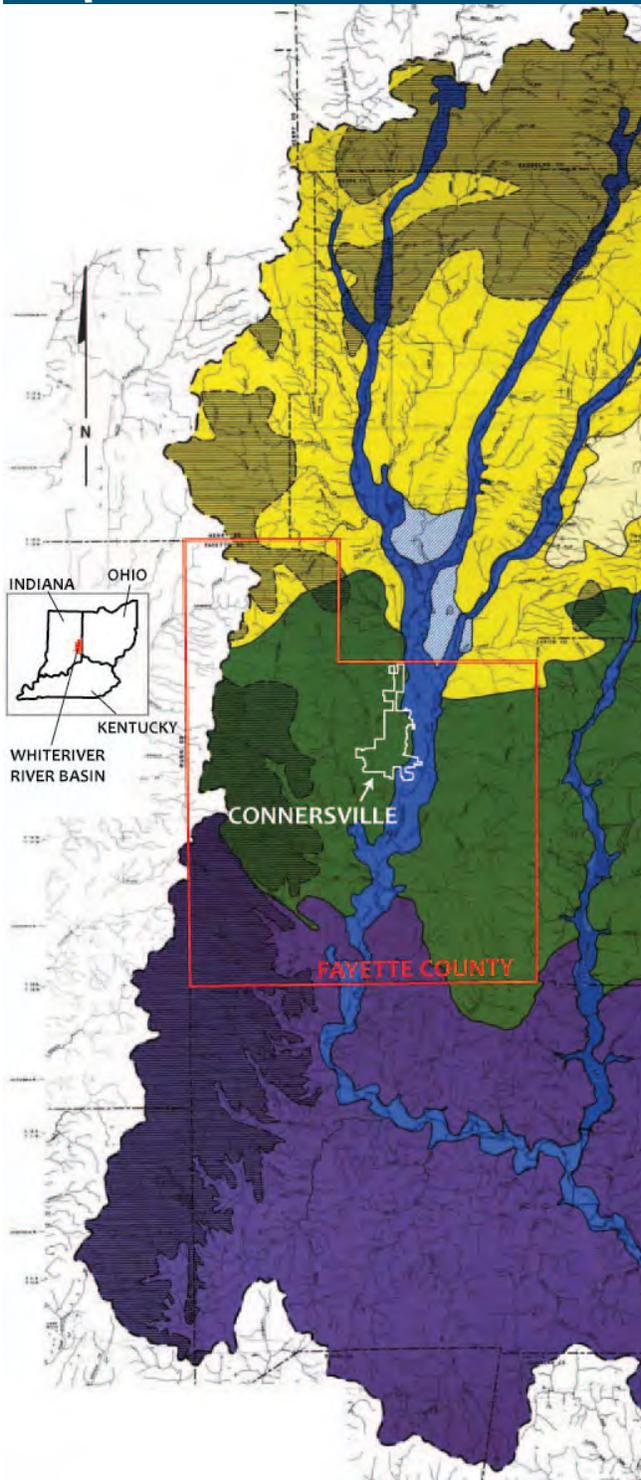
South of Connersville, the Whitewater River serves as a significant recreational asset. Robinson's Whitewater River Campground, 1.5 miles south of Connersville, offers river tubing, canoeing, and kayaking, and buses patrons back into the City where they begin their adventure near the 5th St. bridge before floating back downstream. Further south of Connersville, near Brookville, Indiana, the river becomes larger and more navigable, and significant river recreation occurs, taking advantage of the tourism that results in conjunction with Brookville Lake/Reservoir, and the adjacent Mounds State Recreation Area.

The Whitewater River, and its numerous tributaries, also contribute to the Whitewater Valley Aquifer system. These aquifers are major assets to the community, and combined with the City's significant water utility infrastructure, provide an abundance of fresh water to the City of Connersville and surrounding communities and developments. This makes the community attractive to potential new businesses and manufacturers who have significant water needs. A wellhead protection program does exist, however, zoning overlay districts for the wellhead protection zones do not. These overlay districts would provide additional protection for the wellhead and should become a priority for the City.

Other natural resources within the City of Connersville are primarily limited to additional City Parks (further discussed in the [Parks and Recreation Chapter on page 150](#)), woodlots typically located in non-developable areas, and street trees.



AQUIFERS



LEGEND

- | | |
|---|---|
|  Dearborn Aquifer |  Wayne-Henry Aquifer |
|  Fayette-Union Aquifer |  Whitewater Valley Aquifer |

Source: Report on the Whitewater River Basin by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (1988).

Vision and Key Goals

The City of Connersville recognizes the importance of its natural resources to the community's long-term viability. These assets are critical to resident and business retention and attraction, economic development, and long-term sustainability. The overarching goal is to sustain, improve, promote, and protect the City's natural resources into the future. Perhaps the community's greatest asset, its water, must be protected if it is going to continue to support existing and new development, and encourage local and regional tourism. With protections in place, the City can strategically promote its water resources to new businesses that will support the local economy and create new jobs.

Additionally, the City would like to increase river access for residents through new trail development and canoe and kayak launches, and develop regional strategies with key partners for promoting additional recreation and tourism within the City. Increased tourism and recreation will not only support the local economy, but promote healthy living and physical activity.

Beyond water, the City would like to see additional street trees within the community. Street trees improve the aesthetic of community corridors, improve sustainability through a reduction in the urban heat island effect, and promote walkability and traffic calming.



VISION STATEMENT

Protect the community's natural resources to support improved health, local tourism, and economic development.

Goal 1

Protect environmentally sensitive areas, such as floodplains, wetlands, rivers, streams, and aquifers to limit potential negative impacts from development and ensure long-term environmental quality.

- a. Identify environmentally sensitive areas using floodplain mapping.
- b. Identify potential sources of contamination to environmentally sensitive areas through review of existing land use maps.
- c. Implement zoning protection of natural resources.

Goal 2

Promote development of public and private recreational activities that preserve and provide access to significant natural resources.

- a. Identify opportunities within existing public rights-of-way and city properties for trail and river access development.

Goal 3

Promote and market local natural resources to encourage local development and regional tourism in collaboration with key partners.

- a. Identify local and regional partners currently involved in natural resource-based tourism and recreation.



Implementation

Protection, and simultaneous use, of natural resources is a fine balance. It requires a stewardship, and conservation approach, that allows access to, and use of, resources while not over-exploiting and degrading them. Accomplishing this will require updates to the City's zoning ordinance. Existing water sources are protected through a wellhead protection program, however, adoption of wellhead overlay districts into the city's zoning ordinance would provide further protection by defining the activities and land uses that are allowed within the wellhead protection area. Similar zoning overlays could also be provided in the future for other environmentally sensitive areas such as areas of significant slope and erosion potential.

Marketing the City's natural resources to potential new residents, businesses, and tourists will require a collaborative approach among the City's various departments and with regional partners across county lines. While the City is competing with every other community in the region for new development and population, a regional approach to economic development and tourism will benefit all involved communities.

Projects & Action Steps

Project 1

Review and amend the zoning ordinance to better protect environmentally sensitive lands, significant wooded areas, and other natural resources, and adopt requirements as a part of a new unified development ordinance.

- a. Inventory and map environmentally sensitive lands, wooded areas, waterways, and water sources.
- b. Identify critical areas that are prone to development.
- c. Temporarily amend the zoning ordinance with a conservation overlay district that ensures the protection of these areas and incorporate the district into a new unified development ordinance.
 - i. This overlay district could include trails and educational pathways, nature education facilities, and limitations on some developments.

- d. Hold a public hearing and present the amendment to the Plan Commission for approval.

Project 2

Adopt wellhead protection overlay districts into the existing zoning ordinance, and as a part of a future unified development ordinance.

- a. Review wellhead overlay district ordinances and similar ordinances from peer communities.
- b. Identify areas of coverage in coordination with the existing wellhead protection plan.
- c. Draft a wellhead protection overlay district amendment for review and revision.
- d. Hold a public hearing and adopt the amendment via Plan Commission approval.

Project 3

Identify opportunities for trail development, and expansion, and access points along the Whitewater River.

- a. Ensure that trail development aligns with the Future Trails Map and the City's Parks Plan.
- b. Coordinate with the Parks Department to identify available land and funding.

Project 4

Market the availability of freshwater to potential businesses and developers.

- a. Collaborate with the Municipal Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Economic Development Corporation, and others on a marketing plan.
- b. Develop a marketing cut sheet of local facts about water and sewer infrastructure capacity, local quality of life, and amenities within the City of Connersville and region.

Project 5

Coordinate with key partners on a marketing plan for natural resource-based tourism.

- a. Collaborate with the Municipal Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Fayette County Tourism Bureau, and surrounding convention and tourism entities on a regional marketing plan for local tubing, canoeing, kayaking, and other tourism attractions.



Public Input

Public input specific to natural resources was limited. Most input specific to natural resources was received in relation to parks and recreation and is further discussed in Chapter 13. During CPC Meeting 2, participants specifically noted the relationship of natural resources to parks and recreation, and noted the Whitewater River as an underutilized resource. During focus group meetings, members of the city employees and regional partner's groups noted need for better access to the river. Additionally, the river, and fresh water, was noted as the City's most significant resource and a top priority for protection. During the student focus group meeting, additional trees within the City were noted as a high priority for general beautification and sustainability reasons.

During the Celebration in the 'Ville event, natural resources did not receive any votes in terms of high public value, however, parks and recreation received the most votes, a total of twelve, accounting for 40 percent of the total vote. Based on comments received during the event, these votes were primarily geared towards the need for additional trail development, however, many of the comments were also made in the context of connecting to the river.



The clearest and most public viewing point of the Whitewater River in the City is on the 5th Street bridge east of downtown.





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13

PARKS AND RECREATION



INTRODUCTION.....	152
EXISTING CONDITIONS	152
VISION AND KEY GOALS	158
IMPLEMENTATION	161
PROJECTS AND ACTION STEPS.....	161
PUBLIC INPUT	162

Introduction

Parks and recreation amenities are significant contributors to local placemaking and promoting quality-of-life. They play a major role in attracting and retaining residents and businesses and protecting the City's natural resources. The City of Connersville is fortunate to have an excellent parks system and the citizens of Connersville vocalized their appreciation for it throughout the comprehensive planning process. Desires for the parks system include new amenities within existing parks and the expansion of the existing trail system.

Existing Conditions

Parks and recreation within Connersville is managed by the Connersville Parks and Recreation Department. The department is led by a park superintendent with the support of six full-time employees, four part-time employees, and 70 seasonal employees. During the City employee focus group meeting, the parks superintendent noted the department is understaffed and in need of additional full-time administrative, maintenance, marketing, and sports staff. The City does have an active, six member park board comprised of four Mayor appointed members and two ex-officio members. The City does not have a current, Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) approved, Five-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and is not currently eligible for INDNR grant funding for that reason. The last completed parks master plan was adopted in 2016 and expired in 2020.

The Parks and Recreation Department manages eleven parks and properties that are comprised of nearly 200 acres. These facilities include Roberts Park, Offuts Park, John Conner Nature Preserve, J. Long Memorial Second Street Park, Babe Ruth Sports Complex, Soccer Complex, Industrial Park, Frazee Park, River's Edge, Clio Fountain, and the Nickle Plate Trail.

Roberts Park

Roberts Park serves as the City's primary community park. Located on the north side of the City, Roberts park is comprised of 66 acres and includes the following amenities: pool, John H. Miller Community Center, park administration and maintenance facilities, James Roberts Memorial Building, basketball courts, pickle ball courts, dog park, restrooms, shelters, volleyball courts, picnic areas, playgrounds, horseshoe pits, a historic covered bridge, open play, a horse track and amphitheater, and horse barns and buildings.

The park is a beloved asset for Connersville residents and receives consistent use all year long. During the summer months, the Family Aquatic Center is bustling with activity and the park is regularly programmed with events. Roberts Park is also sited immediately adjacent to the Fayette County Fairgrounds, and for one week near the end of July/early August every year, the park and fairgrounds transform into the Fayette County free fair which is a regional attraction to the community. During this event, the park and fairgrounds support numerous activities that include 4-H exhibits, car and tractor shows, various entertainment within the amphitheater, and a carnival on the midway, among others.

Because Roberts Parks is so well used, and due to limited budget and under staffing, the park needs investment and attention. Much of the playground equipment is aging and outdated, and some has been removed for those reasons. Shelters and structures need general maintenance and repairs, and existing mature trees need pruning, and in some cases, removal.



A small pavilion in Roberts Park.

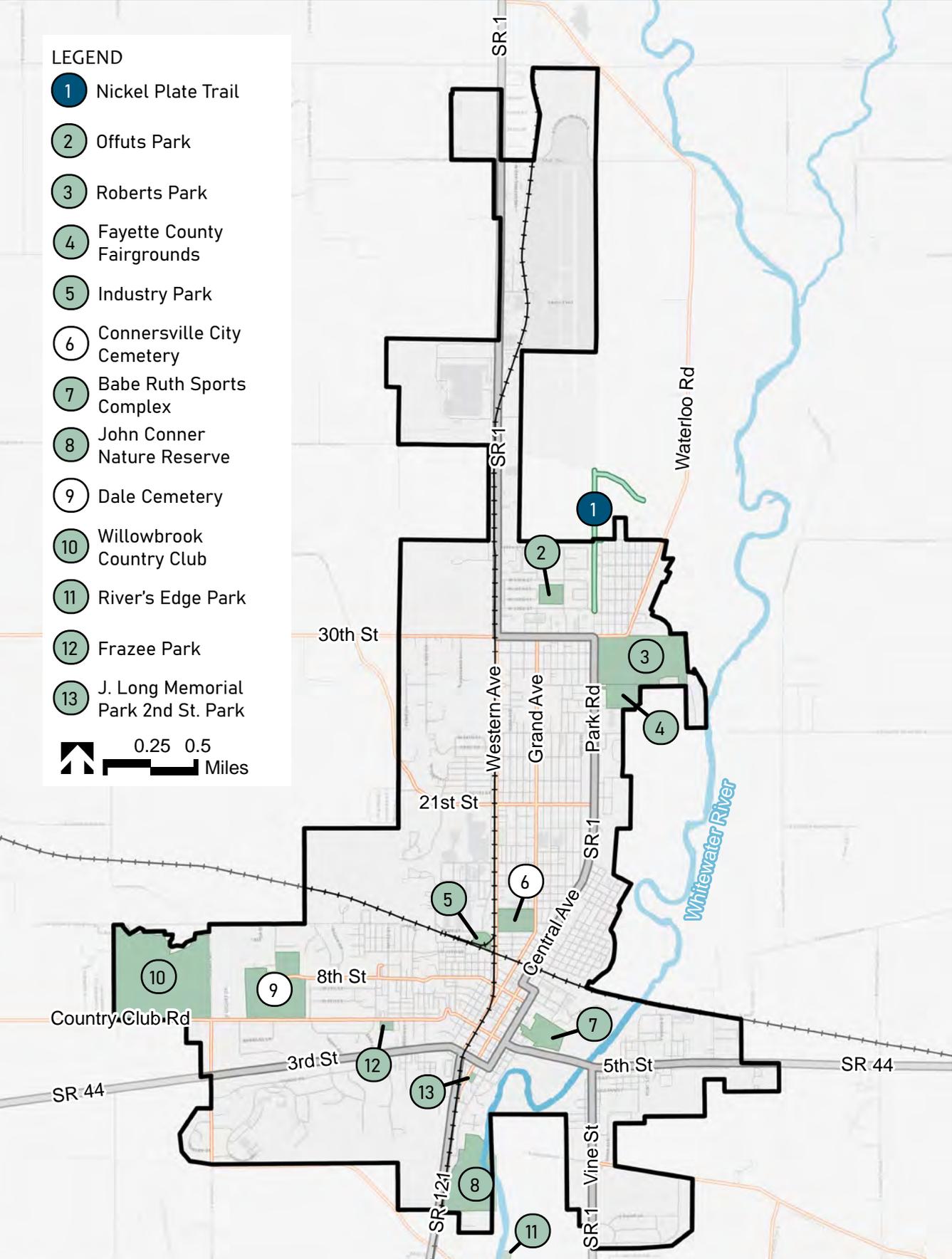


PARKS, OPEN SPACES, AND RECREATION MAP

LEGEND

- 1 Nickel Plate Trail
- 2 Offuts Park
- 3 Roberts Park
- 4 Fayette County Fairgrounds
- 5 Industry Park
- 6 Connersville City Cemetery
- 7 Babe Ruth Sports Complex
- 8 John Conner Nature Reserve
- 9 Dale Cemetery
- 10 Willowbrook Country Club
- 11 River's Edge Park
- 12 Frazee Park
- 13 J. Long Memorial Park 2nd St. Park

0.25 0.5 Miles



Offuts Park

Offuts Park is located on the north side of the community, northwest of Roberts Park. It is bounded by Grand St. on the west, Virginia Avenue on the east, 35th Street on the north, and 32nd Street on the south. Comprised of approximately nine acres, the park provides a basketball court, playground, open play, community garden, picnic areas, and public parking.

The parks receives significant use from the adjacent neighborhood and there is interest in continued improvements to the facility. Future improvements should consider public input because of the parks proximity to the City’s largest park, Roberts Park.



Playground equipment at Offuts Park.

John Conner Nature Preserve

John Conner Nature Preserve is a nature park comprised of 22 acres that is located on the south side of Connersville between SR 121 (Grand Avenue) and the Whitewater River. Primarily located within the floodplain of the Whitewater River, the park consists of shelters, trails, picnic areas, and fishing areas. Due to its secluded nature, enhanced lighting would be useful for providing improved security.



The welcome sign for the John Conner Nature Preserve Trail Park.

Babe Ruth Sports Complex

The Babe Ruth Sports Complex is located immediately north of 5th Street in close proximity of the western bank of the Whitewater River. Located within the floodplain, and comprised of 18 acres, the facility offers seven total baseball and softball fields, public restrooms, shelters, picnic areas, a playground, and open play areas.



Baseball fields and benches at the Babe Ruth Sports Complex.



Connersville Soccer Complex

The soccer complex is located immediately adjacent to River's Edge Park, outside of the corporate limits of the City, and immediately adjacent to E. Veterans Memorial Drive, locally referred to as the Connersville bypass. The complex provides five soccer fields, a parking lot, and public restrooms.



Children play soccer at the complex; uploaded by Martin Cabela on Google Maps.

River's Edge Park & Soccer Complex

River's Edge Park is comprised of approximately twenty acres and is located outside of the corporate limits of the City, immediately adjacent to the Whitewater River and E. Veterans Memorial Drive, locally referred to as the Connersville bypass. The park provides an outdoor amphitheater, concession building, playground, open air shelter, canoe launch, and walking trail.

The soccer complex is located immediately east of River's Edge Park, outside of the floodplain.



View of the Veterans Memorial Dr. bridge from the park; uploaded by Jenny Barrett on Google Maps.

Industrial Park

Industrial Park is uniquely sited just northwest of downtown, between the City's industrial core, traditional neighborhoods, and adjacent to railroad tracks and Western Avenue. The park is approximately four acres in size, and amenities include a basketball court, picnic areas, public restrooms, a playground, softball field, and open play.



Playground equipment at Industrial Park.



Frazee Park

Frazee Park is a neighborhood park located immediately adjacent to Frazees Elementary School on the City’s west side. The park is approximately four acres in size and provides public restrooms, picnic areas, playgrounds, and open play. The elementary school immediately adjacent to the park also has a playground, basketball court, walking trail, soccer field, and open play among other amenities.



Frazees Park located north of Frazees Elementary School. Source: Google Streetview.

Nickle Plate Trail

The Nickle Plate Trail is a three-quarter mile long trail extending north of 32nd Street from the intersection of N. Central Ave. and W. 32nd St. A small trailhead is located at the southwest corner of the intersection with public parking. The trail has become a well-used amenity within the community and there is significant interesting in seeing the trail’s expansion into other parts of the community, as well as other trail development.



The entrance of the Nickle Plate Trail.

Clio Fountain

The Clio Fountain is a historical fountain located at the intersection of Virginia Avenue and Central Avenue that was donated to the City in 1916 by the Clio Club, a women’s organization, to commemorate Indiana’s centennial celebration. The fountain is a recognizable and beloved landmark within the City that has been decorated over the years to celebrate various events and holidays. The fountain is currently operational, but the fountain would benefit from permanent surveillance equipment to deter any future vandalism.



Clio Fountain; uploaded to hmbd.org by Tom Bosse.



J. Long Memorial Second Street Park

J. Long Memorial Second Street Park is also located on the south side of the community near the intersection of W. 2nd St. and Grand Avenue, immediately adjacent to the Whitewater Valley Railroad. The park primarily serves as a neighborhood park and playground. While the park has received very little investment for decades, the City is currently investing in a major renovation of the park to provide a new playground,

shelter, accessible walks, seating, and parking.

This is an important investment for the City to provide amenities in an area of the community that is under served by parks facilities.



The current conditions of the open space designated for the J. Long Memorial Second Street Park.



One of the renderings of the finished park space by Rundell Ernstberger Associates.



Vision and Key Goals

It is an undisputed fact that municipal parks and recreational facilities are a quality-of-life amenities that assist in placemaking, economic development, and resident and business retention and attraction. They promote mental and physical well-being and increase the sustainability of communities. During CPC meetings, focus group meetings, and the Celebration in the 'Ville event, parks were noted as high priority and as a focus area for community investment and attention.

The public expressed significant interest in maintaining and improving existing parks facilities. Specifically, replacement of outdated playground equipment was noted, as was the need to maintain existing buildings and structures such as the historic bridge in Roberts Park. The public also noted the need to broaden recreational offerings with the parks system. Specific suggestions from the student focus group included a skate park, trampoline park, skating rink, BMX bike track, and community center among others.

Another reoccurring theme amongst all groups was the desire for additional trails and the expansion of the Nickel Plate Trail. Trails are viewed by the community as not only a recreational amenity, but transportation infrastructure. It was noted that a significant portion of the population does not have access to automobile transportation and that a trail system could provide an alternative for those individuals. The community noted a desire for trails to connect existing parks amenities to commercial centers, downtown, schools, neighborhoods, and other civic amenities.

While additional trail planning is needed, trails could be accommodated within the community through use of public rights-of-way and publicly owned property. The adjacent graphic illustrate one suggestion for a trail network within the City that could better connect the communities various assets through the use of public property. The typical cross sections also illustrate examples of how bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure can be accommodated within parks, large city arterials, and local neighborhood streets.

Additional parks and recreation specific planning is needed to further establish overall goals and objectives for the parks system, garner public input and support, determine system shortfalls, and identify priorities. The City should consider completion of an Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) approved, Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan to accommodate this planning and to allow the City's eligibility for future IDNR grant funding.

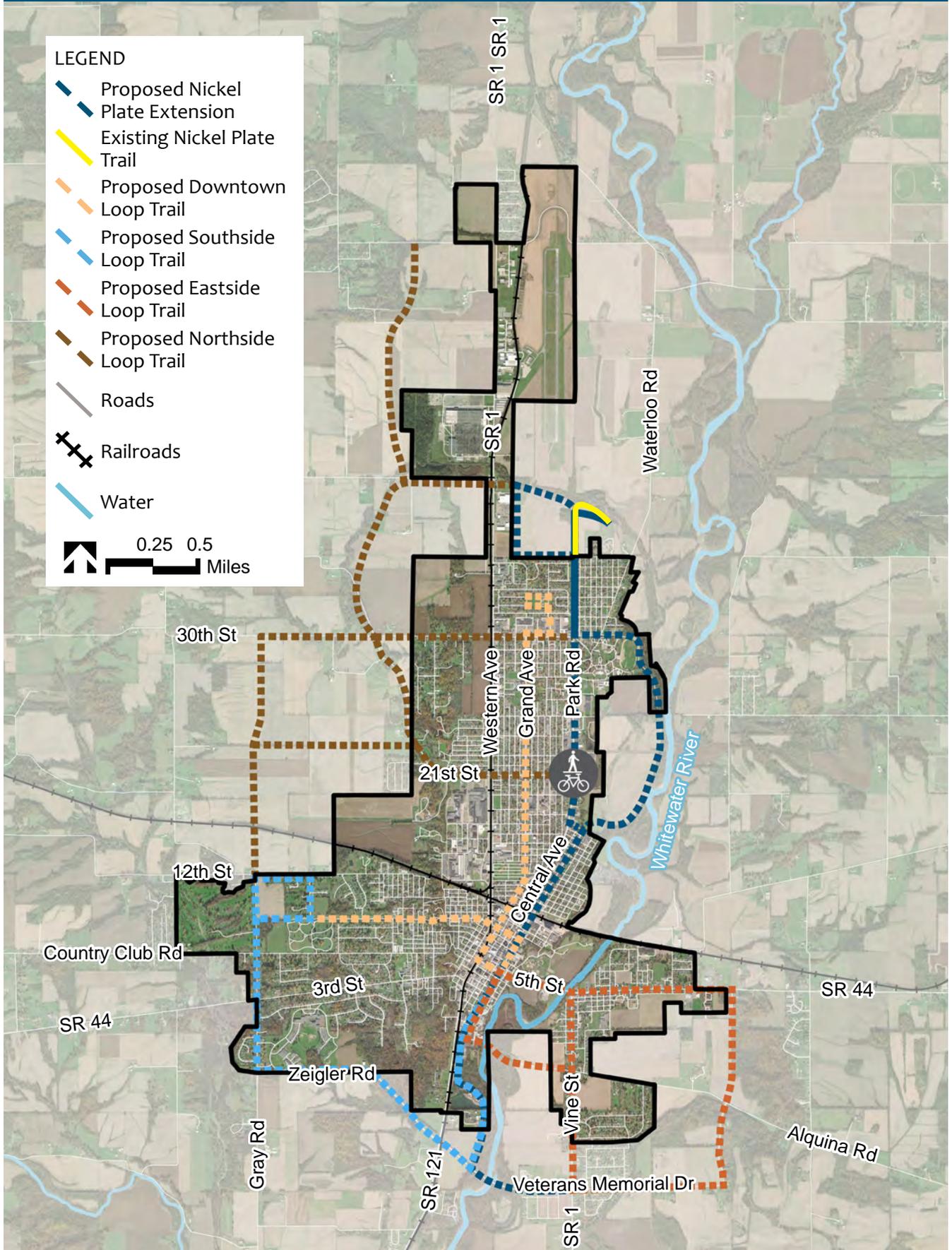


FUTURE TRAIL NETWORK MAP

LEGEND

- Proposed Nickel Plate Extension
- Existing Nickel Plate Trail
- Proposed Downtown Loop Trail
- Proposed Southside Loop Trail
- Proposed Eastside Loop Trail
- Proposed Northside Loop Trail
- Roads
- Railroads
- Water

0.25 0.5 Miles



VISION STATEMENT

Enhance existing City parks and open spaces with additional amenities, staff, and programming to support an active and healthy community, provide youth with recreational opportunities, promote resident attraction and retention goals, and support economic development efforts.

Goal 1

Expand programming and activities in parks and public spaces, with opportunities for all ages throughout the year, to promote general health and build community pride.

- a. Develop volunteer led programs for parks maintenance and clean-up.
- b. Implement inexpensive community events to engage local residents.

Goal 2

Provide improved park facilities and recreation opportunities to under-served portions of the community.

- a. Identify areas within the community without adequate access to parks and recreation.
- b. Establish programmed activities in underutilized open spaces and community centers.

Goal 3

Improve access to, and protect, local natural resources such as the Whitewater River.

- a. Establish additional trail connection and river access points to the Whitewater River.
- b. Develop a long-range plan for the development and maintenance of the City's park and recreation facilities.
- c. Participate in a municipal budgeting strategy for parks and recreation.

Goal 4

Upgrade amenities in existing park facilities.

- a. Identify priority amenities for improvement.
- b. Determine costs of upgrades and allocate funding to be used for improvements.

Goal 5

Develop a trails system throughout the City to better connect the community's open spaces and park amenities.

- a. Identify key pedestrian and cycling routes throughout the City.
- b. Utilize public right-of-way and property for the incorporation of multi-use trails.
- c. Replace existing dilapidated sidewalks and implement sidewalks where they don't currently exist.

Goal 6

Promote and market parks' amenities to existing and potential businesses and residents.

- a. Utilizing the position of the Marketing and Communications Coordinator, include advertisements for park attractions and any events or activities that may take place in a park space.



Implementation

Investing in parks improvements projects can be challenging and expensive. Small communities with limited revenue streams often find it difficult to allocate money for parks improvements when it is required for other municipal services and basic infrastructure. Grants can often be helpful but require matching money and don't typically fund the full cost of a project.

Implementing parks and recreation projects will require significant planning and budgeting. This should begin with updating the Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan to help identify system needs and priorities, and garner public support. The City may also consider allocating additional funds from the general budget, incorporation of key facilities within future TIF districts, general obligation bonds, additional parks' use fees, and/or special sales or use taxes on specific products or goods that can be directed towards parks improvements.

Projects and Action Steps

Project 1

Identify funding sources to support additional staff and parks improvements.

- a. Coordinate with City leadership on the completion of a five-year capital improvements program that includes priority parks and recreation expenditures.

Project 2

Develop a digital reservation system for park facilities.

- a. Compile a list of park facilities and spaces that are reservable.
- b. Develop a portal on the City website that allows people to reserve the park facility/space.
- c. Coordinate with City departments on website updates to incorporate online reservation systems as necessary.
- d. Promote the reservation system to the community.

Project 3

Collaborate with City departments on a centralized marketing campaign for the parks and recreation department.

- a. Work with the City's marketing director/coordinator (see Chapter 6, [Public Facilities and Services on page 75](#)) on park promotion strategies using the City's website, social media, local public broadcasters, Tour Connersville, and other local agencies.

Project 4

Develop and updated Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) approved Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan to identify system needs and priorities, garner public support, and become eligible for additional grant opportunities.

- a. Visit the IDNR website and review the requirements for completing a Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- b. Identify staff capacity to complete the master plan in accordance with the IDNR planning guidelines. (If capacity exists, skip to Step e.)
- c. If no capacity exists, identify funds to hire a consultant specializing in parks and recreation to complete the plan.
- d. Prepare a Request for Proposals in accordance with State guidelines and solicit proposals from qualified consultants.
- e. Complete the Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan in accordance with IDNR guidelines.
- f. Submit the plan to the IDNR for review and approval.
- g. Adopt the plan as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.
- h. As parks are constructed or improved, coordinate accessibility needs of the parks



The Indiana DNR website can be accessed at:
<https://secure.in.gov/dnr/state-parks/recreation/planning/park-planning-information-and-guidelines/>

system with the City’s ADA Transition Plan.

Project 5

Expand the existing trails systems.

- a. Develop recommendations for a comprehensive trail system in coordination with an updated Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan, City Transportation Plan, and Capital Improvements Plan.
 - i. Identify key districts, places, and amenities throughout the City that would benefit from enhanced trail development.
 - ii. Identify inexpensive ways of denoting trails for near-term projects and identify goals and funding opportunities for long-term trail projects.
- c. Develop an inexpensive sign and pavement marking program to denote bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and official routes within the City for use on near-term projects.
 - i. Implement signage and striping on existing infrastructure as a starting point for developing a long-term trail system.

Public Input

A significant amount of public input was received related to parks and recreation throughout the comprehensive planning process. As early as CPC Meeting 2, it was noted that the city parks system is a significant asset for the community, offering a large variety of recreational activities, however, it was noted that areas of southeast Connersville seemed to be underserved by park’s amenities. It was also noted that additional recreation equipment for seniors and young children is needed.

During focus group meetings, city employees reiterated the assets within the parks system, but noted the need for better marketing to raise community awareness, and the need for additional staff to better promote and maintain the existing parks’ assets. During the focus group meeting at the school, students were vocal supporters of Connersville parks. Students noted a limited amount of private and commercial recreation opportunities within the City, and relayed their appreciation for Parks providing the spaces for them to recreate and socialize with their friends. There were also multiple suggestions for additional amenities focused on youth recreation as noted previously in this chapter.

During the Celebration in the ‘Ville event, Parks and Recreation received the largest number of votes for public value. This equated to twelve of the thirty votes, or approximately 40%. When asked what one project they would like to see completed in the City, multiple people noted expanded walking and biking trails, additional open space programming, and additional recreation opportunities for youth.

As a part of the comprehensive plan’s website, and interactive map was provided where people were asked to list assets, opportunities, and general comments. Specific comments noted Roberts Park, John Conner Nature Preserve, and the Nickle Plate trail as major community assets. Additionally, River’s Edge was noted as a major asset not yet completed, and community members noted their excitement for the improvements to J. Long Memorial 2nd Street Park. There was also a comment received suggesting a canoe launch near the existing sports complex.





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14

BROADBAND ACCESS



INTRODUCTION.....	164
EXISTING CONDITIONS	164
VISION AND KEY GOALS	165
IMPLEMENTATION	167
PROJECTS AND ACTION STEPS.....	167
PUBLIC INPUT	168

Introduction

Reliable, high-speed internet is a required infrastructure and quality of life amenity for communities. It is a key attractor used for businesses and residents, and a supporter for economic and workforce development. Access to high-speed internet allows more flexibility in everyday lifestyles by providing greater access to education, work, communication, and entertainment options.

Broadband access is critical in supporting education and workforce goals through virtual learning and training programs and remote work. Without adequate access, students may face a digital divide preventing them from keeping pace with their peers who do have internet access. Similarly, without access to broadband, communities lose the ability to market themselves as a place for employees to work from home; especially if their job requires a commute greater than an hour. This allows the community to open new doors to entertainment and communication options like movie and television streaming and various social media platforms.

Existing Conditions

Connersville is well served by internet providers, but Fayette County is not well served, by comparison, due to its rural character. Connersville is served by a few different providers including:

- » Frontier through fiber connection,
- » Xfinity (Comcast) through cable connection,
- » MetroNet through fiber connection,
- » Viasat through satellite connection, and
- » HughesNet through Geo Satellite.

HughesNet and Viasat cover the whole area of Connersville while Metronet offers 99 percent coverage, Frontier provides 95 percent coverage, and Xfinity provides 73 percent coverage.



A cell tower located near Roberts Park.

Source: Scott Richardson Photography



Vision and Key Goals

The use of the internet is central to most of everyone's daily lives. High-speed and affordable internet services should be made easily available for the residents and businesses of Connersville. Internet is not a luxury item for residents and businesses to opt into, but a necessary utility and infrastructure need in today's world. Internet is a tool that residents and businesses use to evaluate their quality of life in a community, and since the pandemic in 2020, is an asset that helps retain the local population and businesses. Access to quality internet will allow employees to work from home, eliminating the need to drive to their place of employment, and allow students the ability to take online courses and continue pursuing their education. Utilizing this asset is a way for Connersville to attract future residents who may be seeking the "slower lifestyle" associated with smaller communities and to raise a family.

High-speed internet can open new doors to entertainment and communication options like movie and television streaming and various social media platforms. This is a crucial point for local communication as advertising through newspapers and magazines is more costly than posting online. While newsletters and newspapers may be a popular form of communication locally, people in other communities may go online for news, updates, job listings, and to learn about events happening around them, or who may be looking to relocate.

As an additional way of attracting businesses to the community, Connersville can focus these specific efforts by creating an active space in the downtown. By exploring a "free downtown Wi-Fi" initiative, small business owners and entrepreneurs may seek to relocate to the vacant storefronts. Residents with slower internet access at their homes may begin utilizing existing and future businesses as a place for work or study, or as an alternative to working or studying from home. In creating a space for people to go to and spend time in, and by giving those people a reason to stay there for an extended period of time, the downtown will see an increase in foot traffic and possible investment from business owners and entrepreneurs to open businesses and beautify the space. Free public Wi-Fi contributes to better connections and interactions between residents and visitors, especially those who may have to use pre-paid cellphone plans that have data limits. Free Wi-Fi can be used to aid those with less income and resources, while also supporting nearby businesses and restaurants. Ultimately, a City Wi-Fi network is a tool for empowerment, social inclusion, and marketing.



VISION STATEMENT

Improve affordable access to quality internet services to support the growing needs of residents, visitors, businesses, and institutional facilities and enhance overall communication, business operations, and education efforts across the community.

Goal 1

Work with local providers to determine what the barriers to improved services and speeds and expand broadband infrastructure where possible.

- a. Meet with providers to determine how improved services could be provided to residents in the City and County.
- b. Identify where there are service gaps for the providers, including if upgrading from cable to fiber would improve speed, to better serve residents and businesses.
- c. Develop public policies that support broadband development, including right-of-way access and coordination with City public works projects, streamlined permitting, and potential financial support.
- d. Use City resources to support additional broadband deployment and free community Wi-Fi networks at key locations, starting with the downtown area.

Goal 2

Coordinate utility, transportation, stormwater, and other infrastructure improvements with broadband utility expansion projects to reduce costs and overall construction time.

- a. Maintain relationships with area utility and service providers.
- b. Maintain an ongoing list of potential projects and anticipated funding needs.
- c. Periodically update the City's Capital Improvement Plan based on anticipated project needs.
- d. Communicate planned capital improvements with utility and service providers outside of City government and vis versa.
- e. Coordinate infrastructure and utility maintenance projects where possible to reduce overall construction times.

Goal 3

Promote broadband infrastructure to potential residents and businesses.

- a. Market available providers and their services to the community and investors.
- b. Work with providers to offer and promote reduced costs of services for low-income earners and special deals for new residents and businesses.
- c. Offer resources to low-income residents through community assets such as schools, the county library, and workforce programs.



Implementation

The broadband projects focus on improving services already available in Connersville with the potential to expand their reach in the future. Affordability is a big component of this and making sure that residents are able to pay for internet is a barrier to access. Most broadband infrastructure is privately owned by service providers, but the City can still position itself to help dedicate funding to improve the infrastructure and expand serviceable areas. The City can also work with the networks already available in the community to support the downtown and downtown businesses with a free Wi-Fi system and infrastructure needs to make it accessible. While this system would have a startup and ongoing maintenance costs, this project should be used as an economic development strategy and quality of life investment.

Projects and Action Steps

Project 1

Develop a list of current, viable broadband providers.

- a. Collaborate with local entities such as the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Group to collect the names of providers, services they offer, and contact information.
- b. Make a list of these items to post on the City's website and hand out as flyers as a source of information for people to access.
- c. Link each of the provider's information back to their respective websites.

Project 2

Work with local broadband providers to ensure competitive pricing for community businesses and residents.

- a. Meet with providers to determine what programs can be created that may reduce pricing.
- b. Create a flat-rate offer that can be give to low-income households meeting a determined set of criteria.
- c. Create a roll-out plan to help improve

services to residents.

- d. Market new programs, incentives, and deals as they become available.

Project 3

Work with local broadband providers to pursue Next Level Connections Broadband Program funding to expand broadband service in and around Connersville in the future.

- a. Begin discussions with broadband service providers before the next funding round opens.
- b. Consider collaborating with surrounding towns and Fayette County.
- c. Develop a list of potential projects.
- d. Evaluate projects in terms of greatest return on investment to unserved end users, including households, businesses, and community anchor institutions.
- e. Develop a project budget and identify local matching funds.
- f. Submit a letter of intent when the next funding round opens.
- g. Submit a project application.

Project 4

Expand the free downtown Wi-Fi system to better serve businesses, residents, and visitors, incentivize development, and promote downtown revitalization.

- a. Work with the current provider of the downtown internet services to determine how to best improve speeds.
 - i. Identify where additional infrastructure can be set up in the downtown to increase service range.
- b. As business owners come to the downtown, allow them to utilize the free Wi-Fi for their operations to reduce their start-up costs.
- c. Market the downtown as a place for access to Wi-Fi to increase resident and business attraction to the area.



Public Input

During our CPC meetings and community engagement event, there was very little said about internet access. The CPC were the only members to discuss internet and confirmed that the City is well served by several providers, and that the downtown currently offers free Wi-Fi to users, but it could be expanded.

During CPC meeting 2, it was noted during our review under the economic development chapter that there was “uneven access to high-speed internet” and that “high-speed internet in most rural areas is lacking.” After discussing these points, it was clarified that internet is available in Connersville and that there were several providers, but county residents are limited in their ability to gain access to quality internet connections. This is important because identifying those barriers to improving services is incredibly vital for communication and quality of life purposes. Additionally, the importance of broadband has been highlighted because of schools shutting down in-person classes and moving to e-learning (electronic learning) courses virtually. Students who live in more rural or smaller communities struggled with this transition due to not having infrastructure in place to make this switch.





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15

HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES



INTRODUCTION.....	174
EXISTING CONDITIONS	174
VISION AND KEY GOALS	178
IMPLEMENTATION	180
PROJECTS AND ACTION STEPS.....	180
PUBLIC INPUT	182

Introduction

The City of Connersville has a rich history to be celebrated. As pioneers in transportation and industrialization, the community served as a model of prosperity and technological advancement during its heyday. Many of the City's historical features remain intact and can be visited by the public.

The City desires to preserve and protect these features, capitalizing on them to build local pride and interest within the community through increased public/private partnerships.

Existing Conditions

Connersville has a very rich history dating back to the early 1800s. The first settler to arrive in Connersville was John Conner in 1808. He established a trading post along the west fork of the Whitewater River and eventually laid out the City in 1813. The State of Indiana established Fayette County in 1818 and made Connersville the county seat. The first courthouse was complete in 1822 on the site of the current house which was completed in 1890. The courthouse is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and continues to be the primary location of county government offices.

The Whitewater Canal was the impetus for growth in Connersville. It was approved for construction by the State of Indiana in 1836 with the intent of providing improved transportation between East Central Indiana, Cincinnati, and the Ohio River. The canal arrived in Connersville in 1845 spurring rapid growth and investment in the community. The canal eventually continued north to Hagerstown. The Whitewater Valley Canal Company managed the canal system and established its headquarters in Connersville. The building, known as the Canal House, is still present today and it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It serves a local history museum at 111 East 4th Street with limited operating hours.

In 1847 the Whitewater Canal suffered severe flood damage and never fully recovered. It continued to operate in limited capacity, and as railroad development occurred throughout the mid-19th century, the canal was eventually purchased by a subsidiary of the Indianapolis and Cincinnati Railroad known as the White Water Valley Railroad. The railroad established its tracks along the former canal tow path and established service to Connersville in 1867. The canal itself remained in limited use for powering local mills until the mid-20th century when Western Ave. was developed and covered it up. Remnants of the canal still exist south of Connersville and adjacent to the railroad, although the majority has been lost with time. Metamora, a community approximately eighteen miles south of Connersville, has preserved portions of the canal and a historic wooden aqueduct.



Fayette County courthouse (above) and the historic Canal House (below) that used to primarily maintain land records around the Whitewater Canal.



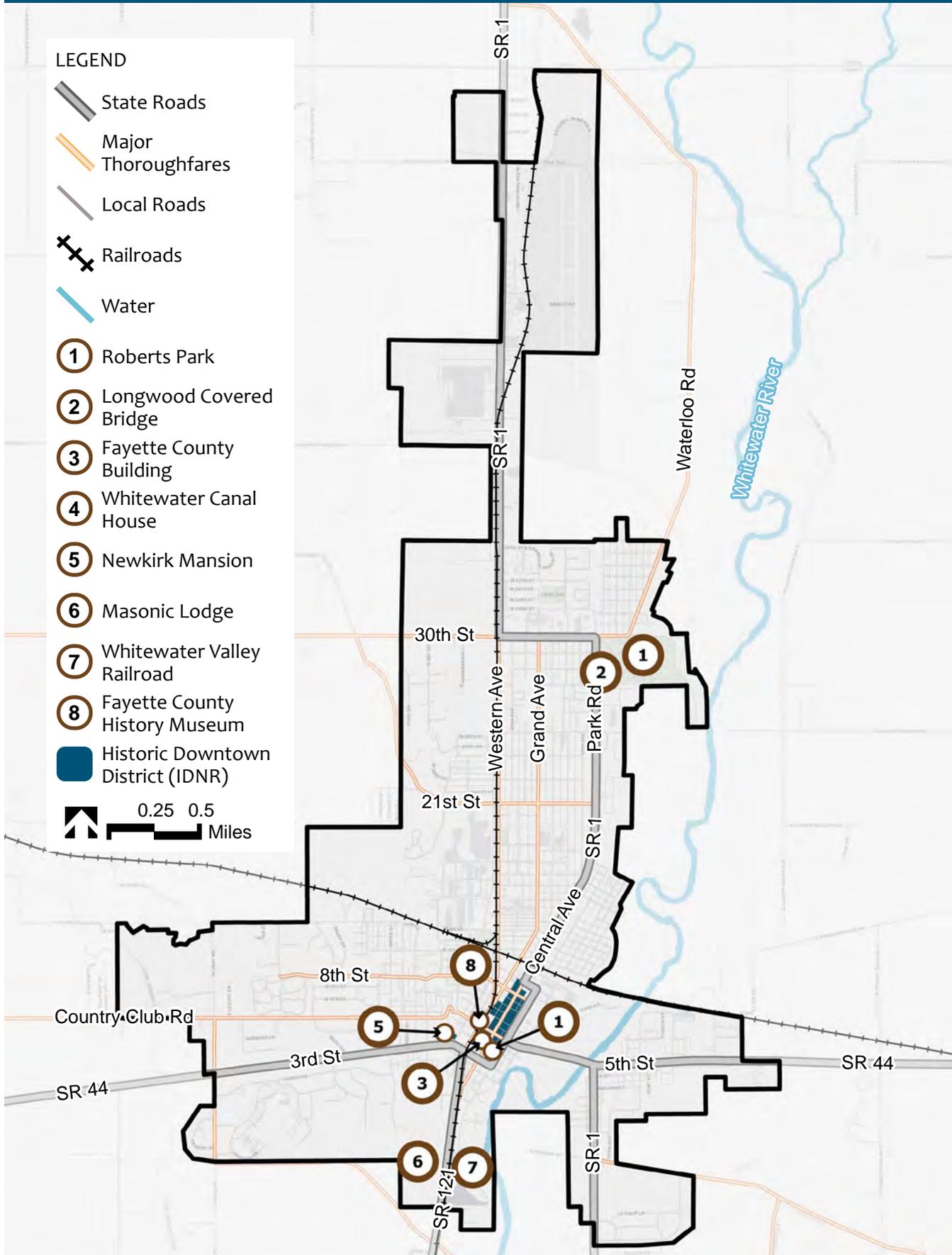
HISTORIC ASSETS MAP

LEGEND

-  State Roads
-  Major Thoroughfares
-  Local Roads
-  Railroads
-  Water

-  Roberts Park
-  Longwood Covered Bridge
-  Fayette County Building
-  Whitewater Canal House
-  Newkirk Mansion
-  Masonic Lodge
-  Whitewater Valley Railroad
-  Fayette County History Museum
-  Historic Downtown District (IDNR)

 0.25 0.5 Miles



The railroad continued to spur growth within Connersville despite changing hands several times until automobile transportation became more prevalent. The railroad was eventually purchased by the non-profit Whitewater Valley Railroad organization in 1972 . The Whitewater Valley Railroad continues to operate and maintain the railroad as a tourist train between Connersville and Metamora. The train attracts thousands of people to the community each year who ride it between Connersville and Metamora during Metamora’s Canal Days Festival. The railroad also sponsors the “Polar Express” train ride, a re-creation of the classic children’s story, that operates during the Christmas holiday season and serves as a major regional attraction to the City.

Connersville established itself as an industrial center during the early and mid-19th centuries, and as automobile transportation gained popularity, the City quickly became a center for automobile production and automobile parts. There were seven automobiles manufactured in the community during the early 1900s and the City became the go-to location for Indiana automobile manufacturers to source parts and materials. This reputation as an automobile hub of activity earned the City the nickname “Little Detroit.” Connersville was also home to one of the nation’s earliest industrial parks. Locally known as Edgewood, the park was developed by John. McFarland, an established carriage manufacturer, who encouraged automobile manufacturers to establish their businesses on his property. The park remains today immediately west of Western Avenue between 11th and 21st Streets.

While the local automobile industry waned with the onset of World War II, and small companies were eventually purchased by larger ones, Ford maintained a strong presence within the community as the county’s largest employer until 2007. Examples from the City’s rich automobile history can be found at the Fayette County Historical Museum in downtown Connersville.



Old Whitewater Canal lock in Connersville (IU Bloomington, 1974)



Historic Amtrak station located in the heart of downtown Connersville.



Historic Edgewood Industrial District northwest of downtown (Library of Congress).



Industry, in general, flourished within Connersville through the mid-20th century and according to Indiana Public Media, “Industry was so concentrated in Connersville during its heyday that the city qualified as the manufacturing capital of the world, per capita.” Although many have been purchased by larger companies over time, multiple local manufacturers have remained in operation for multiple generations. One example of this is the Roots Blower Company which was founded in 1860 and continues to operate as a part of the UK based Howden Company. The factory building is still in use today and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

As the City developed and grew, so too did its commercial center. Downtown Connersville has many notable, historic commercial structures that have been maintained with time and the City is fortunate to have several blocks of intact downtown streetscape. While many of the structures are vacant or underutilized, the friendly density of the downtown makes it an attractive place for mixed-use redevelopment. The stretch of downtown extending from E. 9th St. on the north to E. 3rd St. on the south along Central Avenue is a part of the Connersville Downtown Historic District that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

As industry flourished in Connersville and wealth was earned, impressive residences and churches were built throughout the City that still remain today. One example of this is the Newkirk Mansion that sits immediately west of, and overlooks, the downtown. It was constructed by William Newkirk in 1880 who was a local industrialist and owner of the Indiana Furniture Company which was based in Connersville. The home remains intact and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Other notable structures within Connersville include the Elmhurst Mansion built in 1831. Originally established as a farm, the mansion has been owned by prominent individuals including: Oliver Smith, a former U.S. representative; Caleb Smith, a former U.S. Representative, and Secretary of the Interior under President Lincoln; and Samuel Parker, a former U.S. Representative. Today, the mansion serves as the local masonic lodge and is available to the public for tours and rentals. The structure is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Also noteworthy, Roberts Park is listed on the National Register of Historic Places for retaining significant historic integrity. Developed in the early 20th century, the park maintains many of its original architectural features and amenities. Also located within Roberts Park, Longwood Bridge is a covered wooden bridge that was relocated to the park in the mid-1980s from a site within Fayette County. The bridge is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Historic Roots Blower Company, originally located south of downtown -- now demolished (Indiana SHAARD Database).



Historic buildings in downtown Connersville.



Vision and Key Goals

Connersville's rich history continues to influence its local character and charm. Historical structures and places throughout the City contribute to local placemaking and quality of life, and the historic development pattern of the community creates the friendly pedestrian scale and walkability that many newer communities do not offer. In order to maintain these desirable characteristics, it is important for the City to take steps to protect them. Especially within the downtown, failure to protect key structures will result in their loss, and the loss of those qualities that make it attractive.

There are multiple tools for protecting and restoring historic structures. One option is to encourage the formation of a local investment group of like-minded individuals to work with City officials on the purchase, stabilization, and marketing of buildings to potential investors. For investment groups to be successful, they must be comprised of individuals who are interested in the long-term vitality of the community, and not simply a quick profit. This strategy is often effective in downtown areas and can help minimize the loss of structures to lack of maintenance and absentee ownership.

Another tool for protecting historic structures is to incorporate Design Guidelines into the community. Design guidelines are not intended to restrict renovation of existing buildings or construction of new ones, but to offer guidance and best practices for maintaining historic structures and their character, and to ensure new construction does not

negatively impact historic development. Related to new construction, design guidelines provide direction on building heights, setbacks, appropriate building materials, and more.

The City may also want to consider incentives and programs to catalyze and promote private investments. This may include a façade improvement program whereby grants and/or low-interest loans are given to building owners to help offset the cost of building renovations. These programs can often be funded through state available grants.

Specific to the downtown, completion of a Downtown Revitalization Plan can provide a more in-depth review of the community's historic commercial core, including a review of key buildings, and strategies for redevelopment. Downtown Revitalization Plans can be funded through grants received from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA), and upon their completion, communities become eligible for additional OCRA grant opportunities focused on construction.

Additionally, Connersville should continue to promote its historical assets both locally and regionally. This will build awareness of opportunities and challenges, creating public buy-in for their long-term protection. The community may consider marketing history and cultural heritage trails with regional partners and nearby communities as well. This will broaden the awareness of the City's assets and introduce additional revenue to support business development and protection of historic and cultural resources.



Newkirk Mansion, just west of downtown.



Elmhurst Masonic Lodge, south of downtown.



VISION STATEMENT

Protect and promote the City's unique historical and archaeological assets to preserve and celebrate the community's character and encourage local tourism and redevelopment.

Goal 1

Preserve and protect historic buildings, structures, and sites throughout Connersville.

- a. Build relationships with local historic property owners and entities.
- b. Develop, research, and share recommendations for renovating and protecting historic resources.
- c. Implement financial tools, such as a facade improvement program, to encourage renovation and restoration of historic structures.
- d. Where necessary, use code enforcement and ordinance violation fines to remedy unsafe buildings and promote better maintenance.

Goal 2

Promote Historic Connersville, Inc., the Fayette County Historical Museum, the Whitewater Valley Railroad, their resources, and events with City communications.

- a. Encourage collaboration between City agencies and local, private entities and non-profits.



Implementation

Because historic structures are a defining characteristic for Connersville, it is critical they be protected. That said, renovation and restoration of historic structures and places can be expensive, and depending on the level of structural damage, it can sometimes be more costly to renovate a structure than to demolish it and build new.

The projects listed below seek to provide the community tools that will assist in the protection and restoration of historic structures and features. These projects include completing a downtown revitalization plan, developing design guidelines for existing and new structures in the downtown, forming a local investment group, creating a façade program to assist building owners with maintenance and repair, increasing local code enforcement efforts, creating a centralized marketing campaign for historic features, and establishing regular meetings of local, historical organizations.

Projects and Action Steps

Project 1

Complete an Economic Development Plan to develop additional strategies for protecting downtown structures and assets.

- a. Consult with a grant writer on pursuing an OCRA funded Economic Development Plan.
- b. Prepare an RFP and hire a consultant to lead the economic development planning process.
- c. Develop the plan with community input.
- d. Gain formal approval of the plan from OCRA.
- e. Adopt the Economic Development Plan as an amendment to the comprehensive plan.
- f. Pursue construction grant funding opportunities based on the outline priorities.

Project 2

Adopt historic districts as overlay districts into the existing zoning ordinance, and as a part of a future unified development ordinance.

- a. Review historic overlay district ordinances and s from peer communities.
- b. Identify areas of coverage in coordination with the existing historic districts.
- c. Draft a historic overlay district amendment for review and revision.
- d. Hold a public hearing and adopt the amendment via Plan Commission approval.
- e. Adopt requirements as a part of a future unified development ordinance.

Project 3

Develop design guidelines to be included in the existing zoning ordinance and future unified development ordinance to ensure appropriate restoration of existing, historic structures and construction of new buildings in the downtown.

- a. Consult with a design professional such as a preservation architect to establish appropriate design guidelines.
- b. Engage the City and local property owners in the process.
- c. Educate the public about design guidelines.
- d. Adopt guidelines via the Plan Commission.



Project 4

Collaborate with local, private, and non-profit entities on a centralized marketing campaign to promote local assets and amenities and coordinate local events.

- a. Establish regular meetings between the city's marketing and communications coordinator and local historical organizations for a collaborated approach to marketing and promoting local assets.
- b. Identify funds for marketing collateral such as brochures, radio and television advertising, etc.
- c. Implement a method for tracking marketing results.

Project 5

Create a façade improvement program to help downtown property owners preserve and enhance important building stock.

- a. Identify potential funding sources to support a façade improvement program such as grants or TIF district revenue.
- b. Consult with a historic preservation architect to evaluate and determine specific building needs for key structures in the downtown, including cost estimates for needed work.
- c. Incorporate these evaluations and cost estimates into marketing materials for vacant and underutilized downtown structures.
- d. Develop and host educational sessions about the program, design guidelines, and historic preservation techniques.
- e. Encourage immediate restoration through a “quick fix” approach for storefronts, that would include simple repairs to wood, touch up painting, removing abandoned signs, and creating community displays in empty windows.
- f. Evaluate program successes and make modifications as needed.

Project 6

Increase code enforcement efforts in the downtown to ensure buildings are not damaged beyond repair because of neglect or disinvestment by property owners.

- a. Conduct an information campaign about City codes and widespread code enforcement violations such as abandoned buildings, poorly maintained buildings, trash, tall grass and weeds, graffiti, and inoperable vehicles.
- b. Enforce the existing ticketing system and collaborate with private property owners on compliance instead of directly issuing court orders for code enforcement violations.
- c. Consult with peer communities about successful efforts and explore recommendations of the American Association of Code Enforcement.
- d. Consider creation of a code enforcement board or delegate such responsibility to the Plan Commission as part of the zoning ordinance and their official Rules of Procedure.
- e. Develop a pilot program to target a specific issue within the City for a 6-month time frame to gauge how successful the program can be.
- f. Seek approval from City Council on pilot program.
- g. Implement pilot program and monitor results, including number of existing violations prior to start of program, number of owners/tenants/landlords contacted, number of violations remedied, and the number of citations issued.



Public Input

The rich history of Connersville came up during multiple CPC meetings, focus group meetings, and public input sessions. During CPC Meeting 2, the CPC noted key historical assets including Elmhurst, the Canal House, Newkirk Mansion, Whitewater Valley Railroad, Spartan Bowl, Longwood Bridge, the Fayette County Historical Museum, and the Glass House. The CPC also noted the importance of Edgewood Industrial Park as one of the nation's earliest industrial parks and its integral role in the city's rich automobile history. The CPC also discussed the challenges of protecting these historic assets when they are in private ownership, and the need to build relationships with the owners and leverage the City's history with potential investors.

During business leader and student focus group meetings, attendees noted the beauty of the historic downtown and the desire for its revitalization and redevelopment. Community leaders and students also noted the train as a unique asset for the community and the opportunity it provides for tourism and economic developments. There was a general consensus that the City needs to do a better job of marketing and capitalizing on the local history.

During the Celebration in the 'Ville event, Historic and Archaeological Resources received one vote in terms of high public value. Related to the community's one wish or project for the City, one comment was received regarding the desire to revitalize downtown. Within the interactive map provided on the comprehensive plan website, there was a comment regarding the potential of the Elmhurst Mansion to serve as a local community center and gathering space. Another comment was "as a younger resident, I would love to see our downtown come back to life. Our downtown is the heart of our community and the issues we see in the downtown corridor are a reflection of broader issues."



A view from the west, overlooking historic downtown Connersville at 5th Street/Meyer Avenue.





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16

HAZARD MITIGATION



INTRODUCTION.....	186
EXISTING CONDITIONS	186
VISION AND KEY GOALS	190
IMPLEMENTATION	192
PROJECTS AND ACTION STEPS.....	192
PUBLIC INPUT	193

Introduction

Like most communities throughout the State of Indiana and the Midwest, Connersville is susceptible to natural hazards like flooding, severe storms, drought, excessive heat, and blizzards, as well as more direct, human inflicted events like groundwater contamination and contaminant spills. These events have occurred in the past, and it is highly likely that several, if not all, of them will occur again in the future.

Connersville has some attributes that make the community more susceptible to some of these events than others, and it is important that the community integrate hazard mitigation planning into day-to-day operations in order to be prepared for future events.

Existing Conditions

Hazard mitigation, as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), “is any sustainable action that reduces or eliminates long-term risk to people and property from future disasters.” Within Connersville, hazard mitigation planning is primarily done by the Fayette County Emergency Management Agency and the City’s first responders, including police, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS).

When it comes to hazard mitigation planning, it is always better to be proactive rather than reactive. Often, planning does not occur until after a natural disaster or significant event. Within Connersville, the primary disasters to plan for include flood, drought, severe heat, fresh water contamination, tornado, blizzard, other severe storms, and contaminant spills.

Flooding

The severity of floods can be influenced by multiple factors including the amount and intensity of precipitation, soils and their ability to allow infiltration, and development activity. Natural factors such as the amount of rainfall or types of soils cannot be controlled, but Connersville can control the location and intensity of new development. The floodway and floodplain are designated by FEMA; this area is then used to administer the national flood insurance program (NFIP). Development in the floodway and 100-year floodplain, which together make up the FEMA flood hazard area, can reduce available floodwater storage areas, increase stormwater flow rates, and reduce infiltration into the ground. Additionally, buildings and infrastructure in flood hazard areas are more susceptible to damage.

Fortunately for Connersville, the City has maintained most of its development outside of the regulated floodway and floodplain. There are a limited number of parcels along the community’s eastern boundary, E. 5th St. (SR 44), and Vine St. (SR 1) that encroach into the floodway of the Whitewater River. Additionally, portions of Roberts Park, the Babe Ruth Sports Complex, and John Conner Nature Preserve exist within the regulated floodplain. It is typical for floodplain areas to be developed into municipal parks, however, it is important to be conscientious of the level and type of development in parks when considering improvements. New development within floodways and floodplains should continue to be restricted and carefully regulated in order to protect public health and natural systems. Critical municipal facilities should not be developed within these areas.

Drought

A drought is brought on by a lack of precipitation over an extended period of time, usually a season or more, and results in a water shortage. Droughts are not always associated with extreme heat. Because impacts are not localized, a drought may affect all of Connersville. Times of drought may require water conservation measures to maintain adequate supplies to residents and businesses, as well as measures to limit the risk of fire.



Severe Heat

Severe heat events are those where temperatures are 10 degrees of more above the average high temperature for several days to several weeks. Severe heat affects people and animals, especially children, the elderly, and those with compromised health. Effects may include heat exhaustion, heat stroke, or sun stroke. Severe heat would likely affect all of Connersville given the typical large geographic impact. During severe heat events, the City should consider cooling stations for residents who may not have regular access to air conditioning.

Freshwater Contamination

Freshwater contamination occurs when harmful substances degrade water quality. The severity of contamination can vary, but severe cases can lead to water that is toxic to humans and/or the environment. The most common types of freshwater contamination include: physical pollutants, such as sediment or organic material; chemical, whether natural or man-made, such as nitrogen, bleach, salts, pesticides, bacterial toxins, and human or animal drugs; biological, like bacteria, viruses, protozoa, and parasites; and radiological, such as cesium, plutonium, and uranium. The common sources of these pollutants are industry and agriculture, human and animal waste, water treatment and distribution, and natural sources, such as soil conditions.

The City of Connersville is fortunate to have abundant freshwater thanks to the Whitewater River, Whitewater Valley Aquifer System, and the Fayette-Union Aquifer System. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources notes the Whitewater Valley Aquifer System is comprised of primarily sand and gravel, however, due to its lack of clay layers above the sand and gravel, it is “highly susceptible to contamination.” The Fayette-Union Aquifer System serves as the primary aquifer for the City of Connersville and is less susceptible to contamination because of a layer of clay that exists above the sand and gravel. It is important the City take action to prevent and minimize contaminants from leaching into the subsoils. The City has adopted a Wellhead Protection Plan to protect local groundwater, however, the zoning ordinance does not currently identify specific areas for protection.

Tornadoes

Tornadoes can result in wind speeds of 65 miles per hour to over 300 miles per hour. Damage from lighter tornadoes may be limited to roofs, gutters, and tree limbs. Stronger tornadoes may result in leveled structures, large flying debris, and significant damage. In 2019, Indiana experienced 32 tornadoes, however, there aren't any records of tornadoes within proximity of Connersville since 1961. Because the area affected by a tornado is difficult to predict, the entire Town is at potential risk. Preparing for tornadic activity is difficult because of the number of unknowns and unpredictability, but the City should maintain a plan for responding to damage and providing shelter for displaced residents.

Other Severe Storms

Severe storms may include high wind speeds, lightning, and/or hail. The National Weather Service classifies a thunderstorm as “severe” when wind speeds exceed 58 miles per hour, it produces a tornado, or it results in hail at least three-quarters of an inch in diameter. Damage resulting from severe storms may come from failing limbs, downed power lines, or the hail itself. Again, impacts will typically be wide ranging and may affect all areas of the community.

Contaminant Spills

Contaminant spills can result in degradation to soil, water, and air quality. Typical sources of contaminant spills include poor waste management, illegal dumping and unsafe storage practices, and poor construction, industrial, or agricultural practices. Other sources of contaminant spills can include vehicular accidents and failing storage containers. While most contaminant spills remain localized, contamination in significant volumes, or over an extended period, can lead to spreading contamination. This often occurs through windblown migration, contaminated surface water run-off, contaminants leaching into groundwater, and groundwater flowing off-site.

Connersville's location along major state roads and an active CSX railway means that potentially hazardous contaminants are traveling through the community on a regular basis. Additionally, the City's active industrial and agricultural base utilizes contaminants which must be stored, used, and transported with caution.

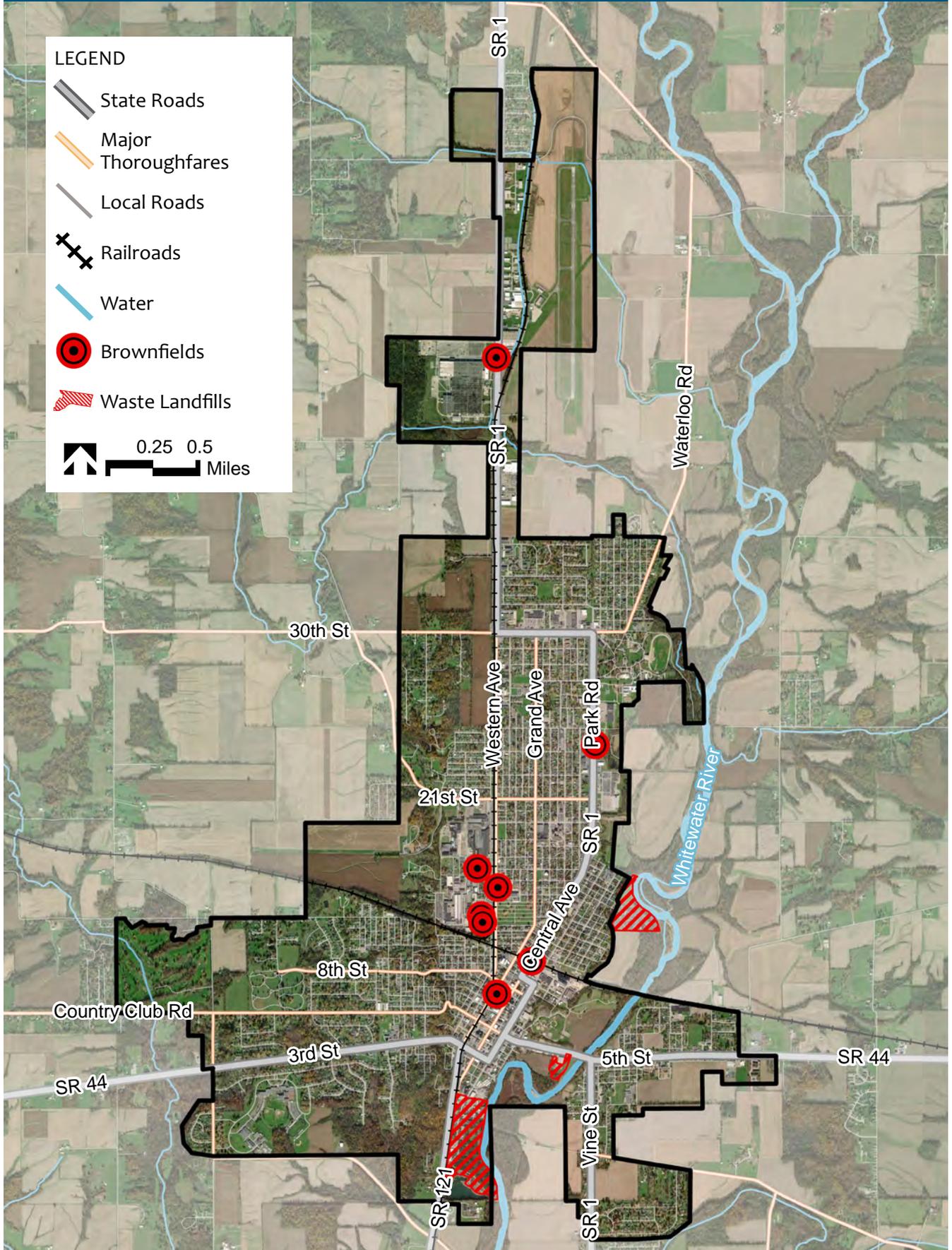


CONTAMINATED SITES AND LANDFILLS MAP

LEGEND

-  State Roads
-  Major Thoroughfares
-  Local Roads
-  Railroads
-  Water
-  Brownfields
-  Waste Landfills

 0.25 0.5 Miles



Vision and Key Goals

Human development has a significant effect on the natural environment; consequently, communities must balance growth and development with protection of natural areas that help in mitigating the impact of hazards. Zoning and subdivision ordinances are the primary way local governments shape the built environment. The City's ordinances should reflect current best management practices. It is important to identify areas of the ordinance that prevent or prohibit the use of these best practices and then identify where incentives and encouragement can be placed into the ordinances so future development is in alignment with the vision of natural area protection and hazard mitigation.

Future development should not be permitted within the floodway and floodplain; however, these areas may be protected and incorporated into open space on a development site. Existing structures within the floodway and floodplain present a danger to those property owners as well as others downstream. Additional study is needed to better identify the most at-risk structures and those that play a significant role in altering natural drainage during flood events. Connersville should consider a program to remove these structures as funding and resources become available or at a minimum, prevent reconstruction of them if damaged in a flood.

Additionally, as the zoning ordinance is amended and replaced over time, it should promote the use of green infrastructure in future development and redevelopment. Conventional development includes buildings, roads, and sidewalks that are all impervious surfaces. These impervious surfaces do not allow stormwater to infiltrate and recharge groundwater supplies. Instead, stormwater travels over the land and runs off at a rate much higher than would occur on the site before development. This stormwater runoff carries pollutants and sediment to receiving lakes, streams, and rivers thus degrading water quality. Increased stormwater volumes can also contribute to greater downstream flooding. Green infrastructure practices have been developed to mitigate the negative impacts of stormwater at the site, municipal, and watershed levels. Green infrastructure improvements can minimize runoff by: preserving existing natural features on a site, reducing the amount of impervious coverage,

disconnecting drainage flows, and increasing opportunities for infiltration.

Due to the nature of the Whitewater Valley Aquifer System, the City of Connersville is susceptible to groundwater contamination. Maintaining groundwater quality for the City is critical to the City's long-term viability and ability to attract future residents and businesses. In order to better protect local groundwater, the City should consider the establishment of wellhead protection overlay districts, or zones, within the zoning ordinance to codify permissible activities within the critical wellhead protection zones. These overlay districts may prohibit certain uses such as junkyards and landfills. Additionally, these zones can limit density and regulate the use, and handling, of certain chemicals.

Contaminant spills will occur within the City at some point in time. Given their unavoidable risk, it is critical the City undergo proactive planning for how to address contaminant spills when they do occur. This requires collaboration among local, City first responders and departments, and county agencies. Contaminant spill response plans should be maintained and communicated amongst the agencies, and with key businesses and industries, and regular training on those should occur. Additionally, the City and County should collaborate on a centralized information resource for residents and businesses when spills do occur.

Drought, severe heat, tornadoes, blizzards, and other severe storms can happen anywhere and everywhere in Connersville. Many of the factors that lead to these events are outside of City control, and as such, it is impossible for the City to completely mitigate their impacts. That said, the City can work to increase community understanding of the danger posed by these disasters, as well as what to do when they are forecast, and after they occur. This may include the creation of an online resource that includes key contact information and locations for emergency shelters during natural disasters.



VISION STATEMENT

Proactively plan efforts to reduce the risk to people and property from potential hazards, natural or otherwise, that could impact the City of Connersville in the future.

Goal 1

Reduce flooding impacts to properties within the Whitewater River floodway and floodplain.

- a. Encourage green infrastructure and stormwater best management practices in new development and redevelopment to reduce overall stormwater flows and help to reduce the impacts of flooding events.

Goal 2

Ensure critical City facilities and systems are protected from damage during hazard events so that they may maintain or quickly resume key service functions.

- a. Train City employees on actions for mitigating natural disasters and emergency scenarios.
- b. Identify critical facilities that are at risk of damage from natural hazards.
- c. Upgrade and ensure new facilities are constructed with structural improvements that will prevent or minimize hazard-caused damage.

Goal 3

Protect groundwater sources that could be impacted by existing and future development.

- a. Enhance existing water protection ordinances and zoning.

Goal 4

Coordinate with local City departments, county agencies, key businesses, industries, and residents on hazard mitigation planning and training.

- a. Develop resources for hazard mitigation planning.



Implementation

Hazards can have a significant negative impact on a community's quality of life and it is critical that Connersville proactively plan for, and provide policy direction on, how to prevent hazardous conditions from happening and better manage them when they do. For the City to achieve this, there must be an understanding of the underlying natural conditions and past event history to develop hazard mitigation and prevention programs.

Land use planning, development regulations, and emergency management play key roles in assessing and reducing the risk to people and property. The following projects utilize these tools to help the City increase local hazard mitigation prevention and response efforts.

Projects and Action Steps

Project 1

As the zoning ordinance is amended and replaced over time with a unified development ordinance, (1) include incentives for the use of green infrastructure in new developments and redevelopments and (2) include a wellhead protection overlay district.

- b. See [Land Use chapter 4, Project 1](#) and [Natural Resources chapter, Project 2](#).

Project 2

Develop, refine, and train on emergency management protocols with local first responders, City Staff, and the general public.

- a. Establish reoccurring meetings between local first responders and the Fayette County Emergency Management Agency (EMA).
- b. Review and analyze existing policies and procedures and provide updates to existing hazard mitigation procedures.
- c. Collaborate with the Fayette County EMA on updates to the county website to provide additional information regarding key contact information and training.
- d. Implement a city-wide information campaign on hazard mitigation resources.

Project 3

Explore regional detention improvements to reduce the size of the Whitewater River floodplain, resulting in fewer structures within the floodplain, and lesser impacts during flood events.

- a. Examine local waterways, flood areas, and soils to determine potential regional detention facility location(s).
- b. Consider design options that may allow the facility to be used as a recreation destination when not fully inundated.
- c. Consult with an engineering professional to develop potential cost estimates.
- d. Evaluate financing mechanisms such as additional stormwater impact fees, sale of usage rights for private development so that they don't have to construct and maintain their own detention systems, and state and federal grants or low interest loans.
- e. Conduct cost/benefit analysis on potential stormwater improvements, reduction of flood area, and number of structures that could be removed from flood hazard areas.
- f. Pursue funding opportunities and construct the facilities.

Project 4

Update the ADA Transition Plan for public facilities that may serve as emergency response shelters to the general public.

- a. Consult with an architect, building inspector, or other professional to write an ADA Transition Plan Update.
- b. Review and analyze the existing ADA Transition Plan to determine facilities that have been improved, removed, or added to the City's infrastructure.
- c. Analyze existing facilities to determine deficiencies in accessibility.
- d. Prepare the ADA Transition Plan Update.
- e. Prioritize facility improvements.
- f. Pursue funding to construct necessary improvements.



Project 5

Provide an online resources of contact information related to hazard mitigation planning and reporting.

- a. Develop a committee of City and County representatives to develop an online resources.
- b. Review websites of peer communities, including Richmond and Wayne County.
- c. Update the City and County's website with critical information for hazard mitigation planning and reporting.

Public Input

A very limited amount of public input was received on hazard mitigation throughout the comprehensive planning process. During CPC Meeting 2, the CPC noted the importance of protecting the local groundwater and aquifer, and during focus group meetings, the City's police and fire departments noted the need for training facilities to help with emergency preparedness. Hazard mitigation received one vote in terms of high public value during the Celebration in the 'Ville event.





17



IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION	196
INTERPRETATION	197
ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW	198
MONITORING AND UPDATES.....	199
FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	199
PRIORITY PROJECTS.....	200
IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX.....	214
POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES.....	256

Implementation

Implementation is the process by which the recommendations of the comprehensive plan are translated into meaningful change within the community. This chapter lays out the next steps for the City to accomplish the goals and projects outlined in the earlier chapters to achieve the overall vision. It is important that key stakeholders, including the City Council, Plan Commission, City Staff, business leaders, and not-for-profit organizations play a key role in implementing this comprehensive plan.



Community values, such as preserving the City's history, should be upheld and inform decisions, especially when managing historic properties like Newkirk Mansion.

The goals and projects have been organized under several subject matter topics, but they are all interconnected. This plan, and the recommendations found in it, was designed to allow the City to be able to use projects in one chapter to leverage the completion of other projects in the future. This plan provides policies, programs, and recommendations within the context of reality with the intention that each goal and project is achievable. Not all of the goals and projects can be completed immediately. It will take time to implement and find funding for the various recommendations in this plan, so it must be treated as a living document. This means that the plan should continue to evolve over time as physical, economic, and social conditions change, and as resources become available. The City must consider the necessary staff and budget resources and prioritize actions in order to successfully implement the comprehensive plan.

An effort was taken to ensure that the comprehensive plan reflects the desired land use pattern for the community and identifies what improvements may be needed for current, undeveloped, and targeted redevelopment areas. This plan will take several years to complete to allow adequate time to create new development ordinances, update regulations, and improve and expand services as needed. This long timeline also allows the City time to create capital improvement strategies and identify funding sources to implement the recommendations and reap the benefits of this planning effort.

While the planning and implementation process will take years to realize and bring to fruition, the plan will need to be reviewed and updated every few years. City leaders and staff must track any progress in meeting the plan goals and projects, determine when an update should be initiated, what changes should be incorporated, and how those changes will be made. Any amendments should include an evaluation of the existing conditions, vision, goals, projects, and other key strategies.

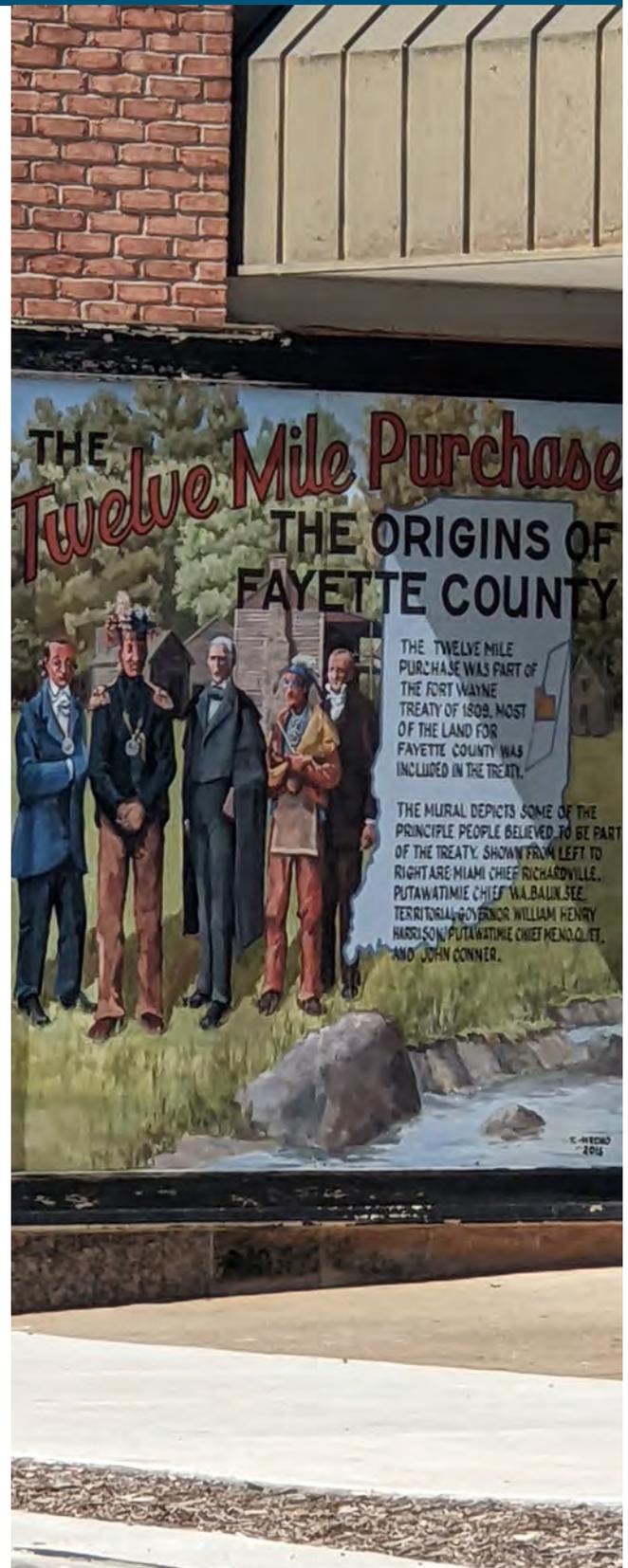


Interpretation

The comprehensive plan should serve as Connersville's guide for land use and development policies to promote growth and redevelopment within city limits. The long-range goals, objectives, and strategies, along with the supporting maps, are intended to guide development decisions toward the community's collective vision of the future. City staff, the Area Plan Commission, and City Council should interpret the goals and objectives as a long-term and deliberately broad vision. The Commission and Council should keep in mind that this plan reflects the community's values. While the City will not be able to control all the decisions made by the Commission and Council, the plan should be adhered to in order to ensure that the community's values are maintained. Through the use and interpretation of this plan, the Commission and Council will be able to justify their approval, or denial, of any proposed development or redevelopment in Connersville.

When a new annexation, rezoning, or subdivision request is filed with the City, staff should review and evaluate the application against the Connersville Comprehensive Plan and the City's other ordinances, and provide a staff report with a formal recommendation to the Plan Commission regarding its findings. The staff report should include an evaluation of the development and the degree to which the proposed project conforms to the plan's goals, projects, and future land use map.

This Plan does not contain any of the decisions that should be made; however, it does serve as a reminder and provide guidance to the Commission and Council members of the community's collective vision for the future growth and development of the area.



A mural in Connersville painted on the side of a building.



Zoning and Development Review

The purpose of zoning is to regulate the use of land. Zoning establishes districts and the uses permitted within them, and design standards that must be met for each type of development. Zoning helps protect the rights of individual property owners while promoting the overall health of the community. The future land use map generalizes where appropriate development may be located in the future, so the zoning of the land may need to change to reflect those development patterns. As development patterns shift in the community, the City must consider public utilities, road access, and the established development pattern of the area as new development is proposed.

From a policy standpoint, this plan will provide guidance for changes in land use through rezonings or future land use amendments. The City Council and Area Plan Commission should consider the Land Use Chapter as a tool to use when reviewing applications for development. The review of these proposals and applications should determine if a rezone request or land use amendment is consistent with the comprehensive plan, applicable recommendations found within the plan, and the future land use and transportation maps. If the proposal or application is supported by the comprehensive plans, then the rezoning or amendment should be approved. If it is not supported by the plan, the Council and Commission should either deny the project because it is not appropriate for the area or approve it with specific commitments that will make the project consistent with the intent of the comprehensive plan.

A situation may arise where changes happen locally in Connersville that make the comprehensive plan inconsistent with the value and goals of the community. Community wants and needs will change over time as development occurs and the implementation of projects are realized. This is not out of the ordinary, but the City Council and Area Plan Commission should note when projects are approved that are inconsistent with the plan, and make appropriate updates to the plan. If the Plan Commission recommends approval to the City Council for numerous rezones that are substantially inconsistent with the future land use map, the plan should be amended. This is an indication that the area's conditions, issues, and/or priorities have changed.

In general, the Plan Commission and City Council should consider that a rezone is justifiable under the following circumstances:

- » When the requested rezoning is consistent with long-range land use plans adopted by the City Council.
- » When there was an error or oversight in the original zoning of the property.
- » When changes have occurred to conditions in the vicinity of the property which prevent the reasonable use of the property as currently zoned.
- » When the requested rezoning benefits the community at large.



Monitoring and Updates

Planning is an ongoing process with no defined beginning and end. Planning responds to new information and circumstances while incorporating new information and changing conditions into decisions. These circumstances may include the change of physical building structures and infrastructure, economic shifts, the natural environment, and social and community goals.

Once this plan is adopted, it is important to revisit and revise the text from time to time and ensure it stays relevant to current conditions. City staff should monitor and update this plan as time allows. A plan update should occur approximately every five years. The purpose of the plan update is to re-evaluate the goals, policies, and strategies contained within this plan. The update should note what contents have changed and remove the goals and projects that have been achieved. New goals and implementation projects should be added as needed to make sure the plan remains effective and provides the City with direction.

Fiscal Considerations

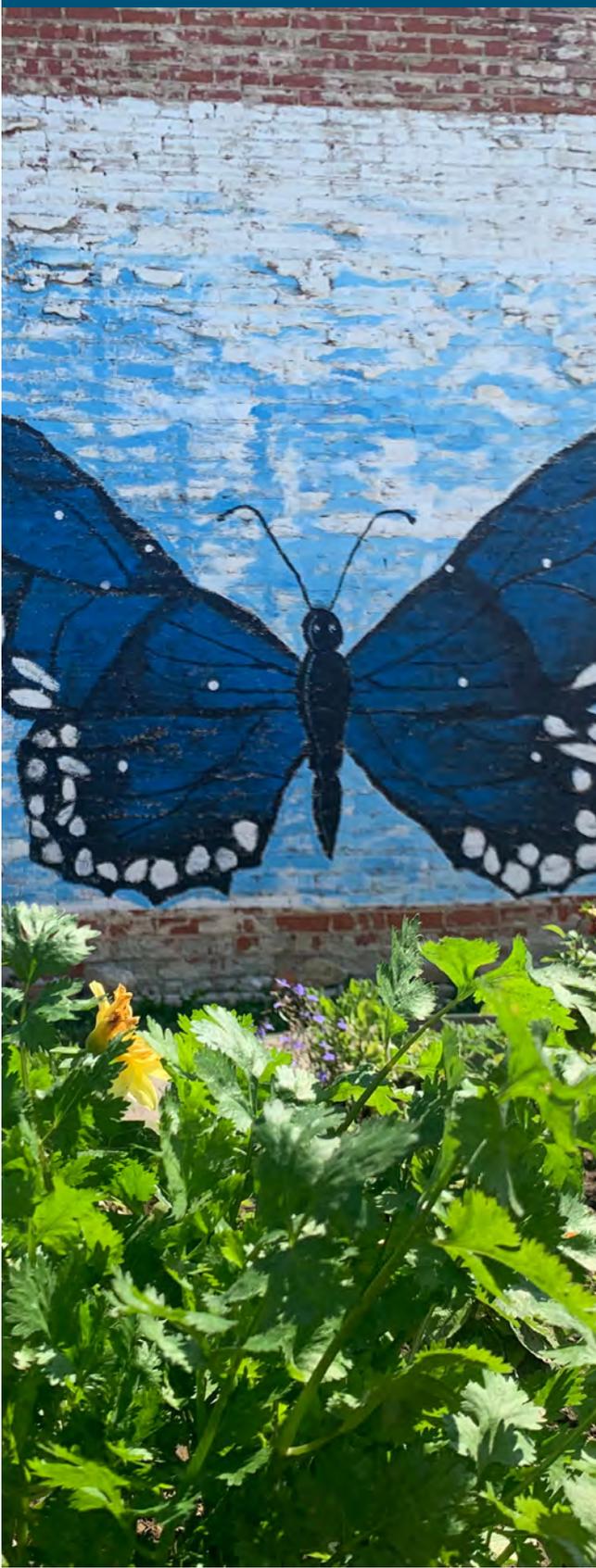
The implementation of the comprehensive plan will require the City's financial commitment and support. Although it is the City's intent to administer this plan with the current financial resources available, funding may need to be set aside in future budgets to carry out some of the recommended actions.

The adoption of the comprehensive plan does not authorize expenditures for its implementation. The City Council, in accordance with state statutes and Connersville's policies, may authorize the financial resources to implement the plan. Additional funding may be available from outside sources. When opportunities become available and make sense financially, the City should seek these funds through federal, state, or local grants, loans, and other resources.



This poster in the window of a downtown shop is a reminder that implementation takes time and perseverance.





A mural in the Oasis, a community garden in downtown Connersville.

Priority Projects

After meetings with the CPC and taking into consideration the described needs of the City, a list of priority projects was created. This list is intended to help the City start identifying the necessary funds and staff to implement proposed projects. These recommendations and associated action steps should be considered the priority for completion. During plan review periods, the City should reassess current conditions and adjust this list appropriately.

The list is more generalized than some of the recommended projects included within each respective chapter. This is because many of the individual projects are a part of a larger, more comprehensive, initiative, or project. The individual projects will be further defined in this list and will tie back to each of the respective topic chapters. The top projects that were identified are:

1. Review, amend, and ultimately replace the zoning and subdivision ordinances with a unified development ordinance to promote diversity and flexibility of development, allow housing development on smaller lot sizes, address design standards, protect environmentally sensitive areas, and incentivize the use of green infrastructure.
2. Create and maintain a 5-year capital improvements program.
3. Develop new and amend current TIF districts.
4. Hire additional City staff (as outlined in the plan including City Engineer, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, and Building Inspector).
5. Develop a current IDNR 5-Year Parks and Recreation Plan.
6. Create an Economic Development Plan for the downtown.
7. Update the City's ADA Transition Plan.
8. Develop a City Transportation Plan.
9. Conduct an inventory of lots within the community to identify areas for redevelopment, infill development, brownfield location, and the locations of critical buildings.
10. Increase promotion of existing community events and develop additional community events and programming.



REVIEW, AMEND, AND ULTIMATELY REPLACE THE ZONING AND SUBDIVISION ORDINANCES WITH A UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY AND FLEXIBILITY OF DEVELOPMENT, ALLOW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ON SMALLER LOT SIZES, ADDRESS DESIGN STANDARDS, PROTECT ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS, AND INCENTIVIZE THE USE OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE.

The needs that guided this recommendation:

The purpose of updating and replacing the zoning and subdivision ordinances with a unified development ordinance is to allow for more flexible, sustainable, and appropriate development in the future. During several Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC) and focus groups meetings, attendees discussed the City's need to be more flexible in allowing development. Under the current ordinances, development, especially for residential uses, can be difficult to get approval for because of lot size restrictions.

Despite this, Connersville is experiencing growth and seeing development interest. New commercial spots such as Domino's and Dunkin', and a retirement facility, have recently been attracted. A new grocery store is being built immediately south of the corporate limits which will serve Connersville and surrounding communities, and a new City park, River's Edge, is under development and will become a major destination for Connersville and Fayette County residents, and regional tourists to the community.

Connersville's ability to tap into these assets, and annex and develop land is critical to the local economy. Without a zoning and subdivision ordinance that supports new development, redevelopment, and infill development, the community will struggle to meet residents' needs, improve local quality of life, and increase the tax base. Flexible ordinances will allow the community to provide unique opportunities and solutions to problems they are currently facing, and those they may face in the future, while also avoiding nonconformities.

About this recommendation:

This comprehensive plan is a statement of policy and not a regulatory document. This plan is meant to be a guide that decision-makers reference when future development projects, variances, and permits are applied for. Zoning and subdivision ordinances are the most common regulatory means for implementing the comprehensive plan. This means that the ordinances should help support the recommendations found in this plan.

Zoning controls the size, density, and character of development within a district using development standards. Zoning classifications are broken into permitted land uses within each district, and conditional uses or special exception uses may be outlined if not explicitly stated in those districts. Conditional uses and special uses will need approval from the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) and may require that additional standards be met for the development to be allowed. In addition to restricting uses, zoning ordinances also dictate the bulk of development (typically through height requirements, floor-area ratios, maximum lot coverage, and/or minimum open space) and building placement on the site (typically with building setbacks).

The subdivision regulations control how parcels are subdivided to create smaller lots. This includes residential, commercial, or industrial lots for development. In addition to standards for lot creation, the subdivision regulations also control the construction of infrastructure and utilities that will be dedicated to the City when complete.



When a comprehensive plan is updated, a review of the zoning and subdivision ordinances are recommended to determine if any changes are needed. Additionally, zoning ordinances have continued to evolve over the years in response to the following:

- » Technological advances,
- » The need for more flexibility in development,
- » Changes in demographics,
- » Lack of attainable housing,
- » Multi-modal transportation options,
- » Amendments to Indiana planning statutes, and
- » Changes in communications.

Given the age of the City’s zoning and subdivision ordinances and the adoption of the comprehensive plan update, the City should undertake a comprehensive review and audit of the ordinances to identify all of their shortcomings and to develop short-term strategies for helping them align with current best practices and support the recommendations of the comprehensive plan.

Ultimately, the City should adopt the short-term amendments to support current development needs and recurring issues, but long-term replacement of the zoning and subdivision ordinances with a unified development ordinance should be undertaken. A unified development ordinance serves as a single regulatory document that guides development within a jurisdiction. It typically combines the requirements of the zoning and subdivision regulations, and often includes other city standards such as infrastructure requirements, design guidelines, landscape standards, and sign regulations among others.

Combining these requirements into a single unified development ordinance streamlines city requirements, reduces inconsistencies amongst them, and creates more accessible and understandable code to be interpreted by the public, designers, and city staff.

Action Steps

1. Create a steering committee to review and lead a comprehensive process to amend the zoning and subdivision ordinances and ultimately replace it with a unified development ordinance.
 - a. This steering committee should include City and County staff members.
2. Consult with a zoning and land use professional to facilitate an update to the existing ordinances and draft a new unified development ordinance.
3. Identify concerns with current ordinances.
4. Draft short-term amendments to the existing zoning and subdivision ordinance to address recurring problems and near-term development concerns and priorities.
 - a. Write an amendment to implement the future land uses found in this plan, including Mixed Use and Mixed Residential districts.
 - b. Consider amending the subdivision ordinance to require a certain amount of land be designated for recreational uses, such as trails, as well as incentives for green infrastructure development.
5. Draft a new unified development ordinance.
6. Conduct an outreach and education campaign in advance of a public hearing by the Plan Commission and adoption by the County Council.
7. Make the document(s) easy to access and navigate by publishing them online in the form of an Interactive PDF document.
8. Update the planning and zoning applications to reflect any updated process and standards of the new ordinances.
9. Adopt the short-term amendments, and eventually the new unified development ordinance, through the County Council.
10. Conduct training with City staff, Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, and County Council regarding administration and interpretation of the new ordinances.
11. Continue to update the zoning map as rezonings take place, new districts are created, or underutilized districts become obsolete.



CREATE AND MAINTAIN A 5-YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The needs that guided this recommendation:

This project was created to help the City prioritize funds for upcoming projects and future improvement needs. While there are numerous goals and projects in this plan, every one of them will take some sort of funding to achieve. As the City's expenses continue to grow, it is important to plan how that money can be spent effectively, as well as how to maintain the community, enhance amenities, and capture new revenue.

Connersville's emphasis on quality of life and enhancing the community as a place for families to live makes this project an important one to pursue. This project will allow the City to develop a list of projects, determine funding needs, and budget for proposed projects while still managing the day-to-day needs of the community.

About this recommendation:

Capital improvements refer to major, non-recurring physical expenditures such as land, buildings, public infrastructure, and equipment. A Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) is a planning document for these expenditures that covers a time frame of three to five and is updated annually. It aids in plan implementation by providing the necessary funding for short-range infrastructure and capital improvement projects. The document provides guidance and planning for capital improvements through the City and allocates financial resources to various community needs and requests.

The CIP states the City's priorities of financial resources and should generally align with the comprehensive plan. The CIP does not provide automatic authorization for projects given necessary procurement processes and allocation of funds. The CIP will help develop a road map for completing projects within the comprehensive plan.

Action Steps

1. Develop a list of capital projects, equipment purchases, and plans or studies needed.
2. Determine cost estimates and a timeline for each project, purchase, plan, and study.
3. Identify what projects, purchases, plans, and studies are most important or urgent to complete first.
4. Identify funding options and create a financing plan. Funding may be from locally generated revenues, grants, donations, and public-private partnerships.
5. Prepare the initial capital improvements plan for a five-year time frame.
6. Adopt the plan by City Council resolution.
7. Update the plan on an annual basis to remove projects and initiatives that have been completed and add new ones.



DEVELOP AND AMEND A NEW TIF DISTRICT

The needs that guided this recommendation:

This project was created as a way to help the City incentivize more development and attract more private investments to the area. During several of the meetings with the CPC, conversations were had with the consultant team about bringing in more investment opportunities to the area and strategies that could be used. While discussing ideas, TIF districts were identified as a tool that could be used.

Connersville has one TIF district, but it is located in the northernmost portion of the City and does not benefit many properties. The City could explore expanding the current district to incentivize more development to the north in the future, including the creation of a new industrial park. The City may also consider creating a new TIF district, or multiple districts, in the commercialized areas or downtown, to help encourage and fund redevelopment initiatives.

About this recommendation:

TIF (Tax Increment Finance) Districts are areas within communities that help generate funding to be invested back into the designated area. A TIF is an area of land where the base tax value of the properties within the district are frozen for a period of time. During the lifespan of the TIF, tax revenue that is generated above the base tax value is reinvested back into the same area – typically for new construction, physical improvements, maintenance purposes and redevelopment projects.

This project will allow the City to generate money to be invested back into areas without pulling from its typical budget revenue sources. Some money may be used if additional funding is necessary to implement a project, but TIFs are a money generator for the areas contained within them. TIF money can alleviate some of the cost burden on developers by putting funds towards a project, can grow the local tax base by incentivizing more development and redevelopment opportunities, and can revitalize parts of a community that are on the decline.

However, TIF debt is unlimited, and communities can take on a high risk when creating these districts if they are unable to pay back the money when the TIF ends. Plus, because TIFs freeze the tax base for a period of time, once the lifespan of the TIF ends, property owners may no longer be able to afford and maintain the property. The City should consult with a municipal financial advisor and attorney to further discuss the potential advantages and disadvantages of TIF expansion and the creation of new TIFs.

Action Steps

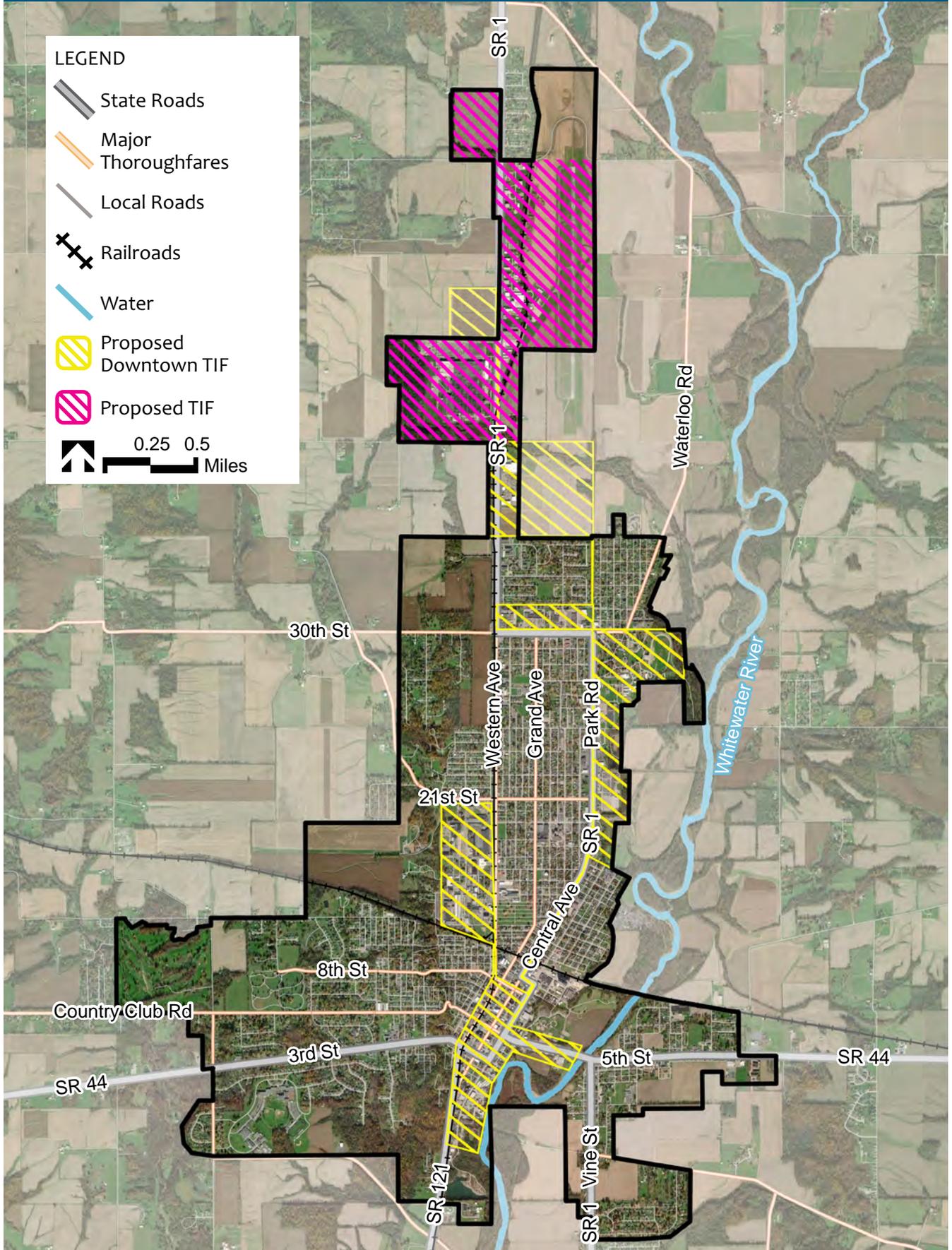
1. Consult with a municipal financial advisor and attorney on creating new TIFs within the City.
2. Evaluate land across the area that can be designated as a part of the existing TIF district or a new TIF district.
 - a. Determine if, over time, the TIF designation will be beneficial in generating additional revenue that can be reinvested back into the area.
3. Determine what properties would be captured in the TIF designated area and create the boundary.
 - a. Annex desired properties that would be a part of the TIF district into the City if needed.
4. Work with local groups, business owners, and leaders to determine if they are interested in becoming a part of a TIF district.
5. Hold a public hearing about the annexation of land and get the approval for the annexation of the land from City Council.
6. Hold a public hearing and get the approval of the TIF district from the Redevelopment Commission.
7. Adopt the resolution.



PROPOSED TIF DISTRICT MAP

LEGEND

-  State Roads
 -  Major Thoroughfares
 -  Local Roads
 -  Railroads
 -  Water
 -  Proposed Downtown TIF
 -  Proposed TIF
-  0.25 0.5 Miles



HIRE ADDITIONAL CITY STAFF (AS OUTLINED IN THE PLAN INCLUDING CITY ENGINEER, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR, AND BUILDING INSPECTOR).

The needs that guided this recommendation:

This project was created to begin addressing staffing needs within the City and County. A recurring theme throughout the comprehensive planning process was that various City departments are understaffed. The lack of staff requires existing staff to take on more responsibility, often overwhelming them, and decreases the City's ability to perform certain tasks. For example, the lack of a dedicated building inspector makes it difficult to enforce local ordinances which can perpetuate run-down properties and blighted neighborhoods if issues are not addressed.

In some instances, under staffing is due to budget constraints, and in others, it is due to competitive labor markets. It is often difficult for a City the size of Connersville to compete with the wages and benefits of larger municipalities. Additionally, larger urban areas often provide the quality-of-life amenities that young professionals find attractive. Often, young staff receive their training and begin their careers in Connersville, but eventually leave for larger, urban areas.

While staffing is a challenge for multiple departments including public works, parks and recreation, police, fire, and EMS, four critical positions were repeatedly discussed throughout the planning process. These included the need for a City/County Engineer, City/County Building Inspector, City/County Code Enforcement staff, and a Marketing and Communications Coordinator. Hiring staff for these three positions will address many of the City's current needs.

About this recommendation:

The City is working hard to encourage redevelopment, attract new development, increase local pride, and improve quality of life. The City is beginning to see results from these efforts. The population is growing, public and private beautification projects are taking place in the City, and there is increasing interest from the development community to locate and build in Connersville.

To support and build upon these promising indicators, it is critical for the City to hire key staff including a City/County Engineer, City/County Building Inspector, City/County Code Enforcement staff, and Marketing and Communications Coordinator.

City Engineers are typically civil engineers employed by local government. They oversee many duties that include planning, budgeting, and managing public infrastructure projects in alignment with the City's Capital Improvements Plan. They typically manage other City personnel and work closely with leadership on local initiatives. Currently, Connersville does not have a City Engineer employed locally and they consult with a private engineering firm on local, public engineering needs who is held on retainer.

This is not unique to Connersville and many communities operate in a similar fashion, however, having a dedicated City/County Engineer employed by the City and County allows the individual to focus solely on the needs of one community, rather than several, and can often improve response times for local duties. Additionally, the costs to employ a City Engineer can often be less than the costs of consulting with a private engineering firm. Having a locally employed City/County Engineer would allow the City and County to focus on maintenance of existing infrastructure and targeted infrastructure investment to promote growth. It would allow for long-term budgeting and expedited review of development proposals. Additionally, because an Engineer is a need at the County level as well, this position could likely be a cost-sharing opportunity between the City and County to help reduce the cost burden to the City.



Building inspectors review existing and new construction to confirm that it meets local and national building codes and ordinances, zoning regulations, and typical construction requirements. Currently, the Fayette County Area Planning Department's Executive Director acts as the local building inspector. Because this individual has numerous duties that span the jurisdiction of the county, their ability to focus on ordinance enforcement is limited. A dedicated City/County Building Inspector would be able to help enforce local ordinances, create a database of unfit and dilapidated structures, and structures that may be of concern but not unstable, determine the structural soundness of buildings and construction projects, and inventory vacant lots. This would ultimately result in more habitable residences, city beautification, and improved quality of life. Similar to the engineering position, this could be a cost-sharing opportunity between the City and County to help reduce the cost burden to either of the entities.

Dedicated City/County code enforcement staff would allow for better enforcement of the local zoning code, and relieve pressure from other County staff. City enforcement of the zoning code would require amendments to the existing city code to allow the enforcement, but the results would be more appropriate and code compliant development. Similar to other share positions, this staff could be shared between the City and County.

A Municipal Marketing and Communications Coordinator would help maximize the visibility of the City of Connorsville and celebrate its local assets. This individual would meet with various City departments, private corporations, and non-profits, to oversee communications materials across various platforms. This could include regular updates to the City's website and social media platforms, public television station, marketing brochures, and helping coordinate local events and interest groups. This marketing and communications coordinator would work with, and promote, the City's departments, initiatives, and events, and help create a common message to promote them. Information being funneled through a common individual would ease the creation of a centralized marketing campaign to promote the City, in conjunction with an online source of local assets, and ultimately create more well-informed tourists and citizenry.

Action Steps

1. Determine what the City and County needs from a local engineer, marketing and communication coordinator, and building inspector to identify what type of experience a person would need to apply for a job position.
2. Identify funding sources for potential new staff.
3. Create a job position within the City and County .
4. Post a job description and qualifications online for applicants.
5. Interview potential candidates based on their skill set and experience.
6. Hire selected individuals.



DEVELOP A CURRENT IDNR APPROVED 5-YEAR PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN.

The needs that guided this recommendation:

This project is recommended to promote additional parks' planning, determine community needs, and prioritize parks' spending. Local parks are a beloved asset within Connersville and the community recognizes their contribution to local quality-of-life and the overall health of the City. Throughout the planning process, parks received a significant amount of positive community input and support, however, the public also recognizes the need for investment in local parks to replace aging equipment and address deferred maintenance needs. Additionally, constituents feel that portions of the community are under-served by public parks and there is significant support for the development of additional trails to support local recreation and residents who do not have access to reliable transportation.

Beyond physical projects and improvements, the Parks and Recreation Department has noted the need for additional staff to support maintenance, programming, and administration. The City of Connersville has a Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan that expired in 2020. Completion of an updated master plan will allow for a more detailed review of the existing parks, their facilities, and amenities, as well as the structure of the department, and help prioritize investment moving forward.



The main pavilion at Roberts Park.

About this recommendation:

Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plans allow for a detailed examination of a community's existing parks system and helps analyze local, public recreation needs and preferences, as well as strategies for addressing those needs. The planning process engages the community and determines what park facilities and programs are desired, and the process helps prioritize and plan for parks' investment.

Detailed information for what should be included in a Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan can be found on the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) website at <https://www.in.gov/dnr/state-parks/files/outdoor-recreation/or-planningguidelines.pdf>. Upon completion of the master plan, communities within Indiana typically submit the plans to the IDNR for review and approval. Upon their review and approval, communities become eligible for construction grants that are administered through the IDNR

Action Steps

1. Visit the IDNR website and review the requirements for completing a Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
2. Identify staff capacity to complete the master plan in accordance with the IDNR planning guidelines. (If capacity exists, go to Step 5.)
3. If no capacity exists, identify funds to hire a consultant to complete the master plan.
4. Prepare a Request for Proposals in accordance with State guidelines and solicit proposals from qualified consultants.
5. Complete the Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan in accordance with IDNR guidelines.
6. Submit the master plan to the IDNR for review and approval.
7. Adopt the Five Years Parks and Recreation Master Plan as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.



CREATE AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE DOWNTOWN.

The needs that guided this recommendation:

This project is recommended to provide a focused study and strategy for revitalizing downtown Connersville. Downtown is the historic core of the community around which the City developed. It not only represents the community's history, but its mixed-use nature, comfortable density, and pedestrian scale support the type of development and quality of life that is attractive to many urban residents. It also connects to several community amenities and integrates into the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

The downtown was a bustling center of commerce that supported numerous retail and service businesses, as well as housing. Over the course of the past several decades, however, most businesses have shifted away from downtown and there is very little housing that remains. While several historic buildings are occupied by local restaurants, retailers, service businesses, philanthropic organizations, and government facilities, many are underutilized and partially vacant.

While there has always been an interest in the downtown, there is currently significant support for its revitalization and there is a renewed energy toward its redevelopment. Several new businesses have recently located in the downtown and the downtown is the primary destination for public events, including the farmer's market, on a weekly basis. Additionally, the City is investing in a new downtown performance and gathering space that will further support programmed music and events. With this momentum toward downtown renewal, it is critical that the City develop a strategy for the downtown in the form of a targeted Economic Development Plan.

About this recommendation:

Economic development plans provide a comprehensive overview of the local economy, set policies for economic growth, and identify strategies, projects, and programs to improve local economic health. In the context of downtown Connersville, an Economic Development Plan can help analyze existing economic conditions and identify community assets and opportunities. They also help establish the vision and goals and identify strategies and action steps for accomplishing those goals.

The Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) provides planning grants for the completion of Economic Development Plans through their Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. More information can be found at <https://www.in.gov/ocra/cdbg/planning-grants/>. Grants up to \$40,000 are available and require a 10% local match.

Action Steps

1. Consult with a grant writer on pursuing an OCRA-funded Economic Development Plan.
2. Prepare an RFP and hire a consultant to lead the downtown-focused economic development planning process.
3. Develop the plan with community input.
4. Gain formal approval of the plan from OCRA.
5. Adopt the Economic Development Plan as an amendment to the comprehensive plan.
6. Pursue construction grant funding opportunities based on the outline priorities.



UPDATE THE CITY'S ADA TRANSITION PLAN.

The needs that guided this recommendation:

This project was created based on the need for the City to be in compliance with the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) civil rights law that intended to eliminate discrimination of individuals with disabilities. The law requires that public entities with 50 or more employees have a grievance procedure, an ADA Coordinator, and an ADA Transition Plan. ADA Transition Plans primarily focus on the public right-of-way (streets and roads), but they also apply to municipally owned facilities, buildings, structures, and parks that are accessed by the general public.

The City of Connersville has an ADA Transition Plan that was completed in 2014, however, to remain eligible for federal transportation funding administered through the Indiana State Department of Transportation (INDOT), the community must maintain an updated plan and show progress toward completing recommendations within the plan.

About this recommendation:

General requirements that apply to the City of Connersville related to ADA can be found on the U.S. Department of Justice's website at https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/titleII_2010/title_ii_primer.html. The website also outlines basic requirements for the ADA Transition, but more specific information, and an example, can be found on INDOT's website at <https://www.in.gov/indot/files/21-ADA-Transition-Plan.pdf>. Minimum requirements for ADA transition plans include the name of the individual responsible for implementing the transition plan, an inventory of the existing barriers to accessibility, a schedule for addressing the barriers, specific methods for how barriers will be addressed, and a process for public involvement. More specific information can be found on the INDOT website.

Action Steps

1. Consult with an architect, building inspector, or other professional to write an ADA Transition Plan Update.
2. Review and analyze the existing ADA Transition Plan to determine facilities that have been improved, removed, or added to the City's infrastructure.
3. Analyze existing facilities to determine deficiencies in accessibility.
4. Prepare the ADA Transition Plan Update.
5. Prioritize facility improvements and develop a schedule for improvement.
6. Pursue funding to construct necessary improvements.



An example of an ADA-compliant sidewalk in downtown Connersville.



DEVELOP A CITY TRANSPORTATION PLAN.

The needs that guided this recommendation:

This project was developed to help the City of Connersville prioritize and budget for transportation network spending. Development follows connectivity and the ability to create and ship goods, and access jobs, as evidenced by Connersville's local history. The city's initial development was accelerated with the creation of the Whitewater Canal and then was further bolstered with the creation of local railroads and state road development that efficiently linked the community to larger urban areas. With the development of the interstate system and the decline in railroads, development began shifting towards the interstate systems. Now as much as ever, it is critical the City invests in its local transportation system to continue to attract future development and provide convenient access to larger urban areas such as Indianapolis, Cincinnati, and Dayton.

Beyond promoting economic development, a city's transportation network supports how local citizens and tourists experience the City. Currently, Connersville has numerous streets that lack sidewalks and several neighborhoods that have sidewalks in need of repair. Many street intersections lack curb ramps and/or have curb ramps that are not in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. This reduces pedestrian connectivity and mobility. Additionally, there is an expressed need for additional trails to promote recreation and health, and to support residents who may not have access to reliable automobile transportation.

The City's primary roadways also act as gateways to the community and provide visitors with initial impressions. Currently key corridors such as SR 1, SR 121, and SR 44 lack sidewalks, consistent lighting, and landscape enhancements. Improvements to these street amenities could enhance the arrival experience into the community.

About this recommendation:

City Transportation Plans allow communities to plan their long-term transportation strategies and vision, and then program specific projects to implement that vision. These plans can be as comprehensive as the community desires, but specific to Connersville, a transportation plan may focus on streets and roadways, sidewalks and trails, and railroads. Typical goals for transportation plans include promoting access to employment, freight mobility, safety and security, system reliability, congestion mitigation, improved environment and air quality, multi-modal connectivity, and preservation and maintenance. These plans can focus on improving the pedestrian and bicycle experience, targeting investment in key areas, or on key roadways and corridors, and can improve general community appearance and gateways.

City Transportation Plans typically focus on vision, goals, and objectives; existing and future conditions; needs assessments; strategies for improvement; project selection and prioritization; project funding and implementation; and system performance monitoring. Once completed, these plans help inform the Capital Improvements Plan that was previously discussed in this report and prioritize local transportation spending.

Action Steps

1. Define the goals for a City Transportation Plan.
2. Coordinate with City leadership on the creation of an RFP to develop a City Transportation Plan or determine the City's capacity to complete one with internal staff.
3. If internal capacity doesn't exist, commission an Engineer or Transportation Planner to develop the plan.
4. Develop a bike and pedestrian plan.
5. Adopt the City Transportation Plan as an amendment to the City's comprehensive plan.
6. Coordinate the City Transportation Plan with the Capital Improvements Plan
7. Implement infrastructure improvements.



CONDUCT AN INVENTORY OF LOTS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY TO IDENTIFY AREAS FOR REDEVELOPMENT, INFILL DEVELOPMENT, BROWNFIELD LOCATION, AND THE LOCATIONS OF CRITICAL BUILDINGS.

The needs that guided this recommendation:

This project was developed to assist the community in identifying parcels for redevelopment within the City. Over the last decade or so, vacant lots have become more prevalent as local businesses and industries have evolved, or left, and as the City has focused on blight elimination within residential neighborhoods. The vacant lots are potential assets within the community, however, there is no readily accessible inventory of them related to their total number, size, location, and environmental history.

These vacant lots are potential opportunities for addressing some of the needs expressed throughout the planning process and for promoting urban infill. The CPC committee and focus groups repeatedly noted development interest within the community related to housing, but sites for development are unknown or limited because of local zoning restrictions. These lots are opportunities for redevelopment to support new housing of various types and sizes, new public green space, community gardens, and mixed-use development.

About this recommendation:

To promote the redevelopment of vacant lots, the City must establish an updated and accurate inventory of them. This can be accomplished through an analysis of local tax and GIS data. Lot ownership should be identified to confirm whether lots are abandoned, municipally or privately owned, in tax default, or potentially available for purchase. Additionally, inventory information could include address, existing land use, zoning classification, size, previous use, environmental concerns, and other known easements or encumbrances.

Once developed, the list can be used to locate development opportunities on available parcels based on compatibility and the metrics noted above. In some cases, parcels may be able to be re-platted to support larger redevelopments such as higher density housing or larger neighborhood parks, and the City may be able to use municipally owned parcels as incentives for new development by offering property at a discounted rate.

The vacant lot inventory should be updated on a regular basis, ideally as parcels change ownership and/or use. The list should be updated on an annual basis.

Action Steps

1. Identify staff to develop an inventory of vacant lots within the City.
2. Develop a living spreadsheet with metrics for tracking vacant lots and organize the document by address, ownership, land use, zoning classification, size, previous use, environmental concerns, easements, and encumbrances.
3. Map vacant lots within the community based on the inventory.
4. Utilize local planning documents to identify redevelopment opportunities for existing vacant lots.
5. Develop incentives for redevelopment.
6. Coordinate with potential developers and investors on redevelopment opportunities.
7. Update the vacant lot inventory and map on a regular basis.



INCREASE PROMOTION OF EXISTING COMMUNITY EVENTS AND DEVELOP ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING.

The needs that guided this recommendation:

This project is recommended to build off positive energy within the City, support continued revitalization, increased community pride. Stigma is often placed on a community based on how it looks, how residents feel about where they live, and the events and activities that a person can do while visiting. After years of decline and battling local stigma, Connersville has experienced growth over recent years and there is a renewed interest in community redevelopment. This can be attributed to many factors and strategies that include strong city leadership, support of existing businesses, the attraction of new businesses, and a focus on quality-of-life and placemaking initiatives, including community events. The City government has been making a concerted effort to improve existing community-wide events and start new ones that bring residents and visitors together.

In recent years, Connersville has established a recurring farmer's market in the downtown and has created the Celebration in the 'Ville event, which is a summer celebration with food, entertainment, and market vendors. These events complement other public and privately supported events throughout the year and help bring people together which supports community pride and local commerce. A new event taking place in the Fall of 2022 is the "Farm to Table" event where the community will have the opportunity to gather for a meal prepared by local chefs that utilize local ingredients. In addition to providing another community bonding moment, the event will educate the citizenry on food preparation and give individuals access to food options they may not typically have.

The City is also in the process of designing and developing Market Street Plaza, a new downtown gathering space that will support performances of all kinds. This space will host regular events and attract community members to the downtown on a regular basis which will support business development. In order to support this new gathering space and continue the process of community revitalization and building local community pride, the City must promote additional community events.

About this recommendation:

Developing and promoting community events is an ongoing, full-time job. It is done by public and private entities comprised of governmental employees, local city departments, and philanthropic institutions among others. Creating a coordinated community event strategy is important and will be more easily accomplished once the City is able to hire a municipal Municipal Marketing Manager. This individual will be able to assist in inventorying existing events and coordinating the efforts of multiple organizations. They will also be instrumental in coordinating new events and identifying funding opportunities.

Creating and supporting additional community events can also be done through research and sponsorship opportunities. The City should review what other communities throughout the state are doing to develop new event ideas. Depending on the type of event, Connersville could coordinate events with other communities to create a more regional approach to tourism and potentially reduce local costs. As Market Street Plaza finishes construction, the City may consider developing sponsorship opportunities by local residents and businesses to support a weekly concert and event series.

Action Steps

1. Collaborate with the city's marketing and communications coordinator to create an accurate inventory of existing public events within the City outlining the type and duration of the events, their location, and sponsoring organization(s).
2. Identify areas of the community and times of the years that currently lack programmed events.
3. Research peer community to identify ideas for additional community events to be implemented within Connersville.
4. Identify new events that are appropriate for the community and potential financial sponsors from local residents, businesses, and organizations.
5. Plan new events and promote them regularly through local media platforms.



Implementation Matrix

The following table lists each of the proposed projects under each of the subject matter topics. For each project, its respective action steps, the type of recommendation (policy, program, or project), timeline assumption, and cost estimates are identified. These time frames are intended to serve only as a guide for implementation and be considered flexible. The implementation of these projects will be dependent on funding limitations, staff availability and capacity, citizen involvement, and other changing conditions.

Recommendation Types

These recommendations have been broken down into three categories. None of these classifications should be rated as more important than the other. Each recommendation type works together with the others to support future goals and opportunities.

Policy recommendations will typically be low-cost recommendations that can be achieved by City staff. The completion of these recommendations will be dependent on staff availability and capacity to bring on the project. These recommendations will involve the development and coordination of plans and documents, amendments to existing codes, standards, and plans, and occasional public hearings to gain approval from the Area Plan Commission and City Council.

Program recommendations may range from low to moderate costs depending on the program and will likely take more coordination between parties compared to policy recommendations. Programs will be more involved and require additional funding. Programs may have to start with a City staff member to coordinate with other local boards, leaders, and volunteers.

Project recommendations will involve the physical construction of a structure or system, and require a significant amount of funding. Projects will have the most impact on the community from a development and implementation standpoint because they directly integrate into the community. However, these recommendations should not be the driving forces of the whole plan, but an element of enhancing Connersville to achieve the vision.

Timeline Assumptions:

- » Short-term: 0 – 3 years
- » Mid-term: 4 – 7 years
- » Long-term: 8+ years
- » On-going

Cost Assumptions:

- » Low Cost (\$): \$0 - \$149,999
- » Moderate Cost (\$\$): \$150,000 - \$499,999
- » High Cost (\$\$\$): \$500,000+

Responsible Parties

There will be many parties who can help achieve these projects including the following:

- » Local groups, such as “Friends of...” groups
- » Local organizations, such as neighborhood councils
- » Business owners
- » School Board members
- » City staff and officials
- » County staff and officials

Volunteers should be reached out to during the implementation of these projects to help make the vision a reality. State and local government entities, non-profits, private consultants, and public-private partnerships should be utilized where possible to alleviate some of the workload from City staff members and complete the various goals and projects within this plan.



Land Use Vision Statement

MAINTAIN A BALANCE OF LAND USES THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY THAT PRESERVES HISTORIC CHARACTER, ENCOURAGES REDEVELOPMENT, AND PROMOTES NEW DEVELOPMENT IN STRATEGIC LOCATIONS WHILE PRESERVING THE “SMALL TOWN” CHARACTER AND ASSETS OF THE COMMUNITY.

Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Land Use Project 1: Review, amend, and ultimately replace the zoning and subdivision ordinances with a unified development ordinance to promote diversity and flexibility of development, allow housing development on smaller lot sizes, address design standards, protect environmentally sensitive areas, and incentivize the use of green infrastructure.				
a. Create a steering committee to review and lead a comprehensive process to amend the zoning and subdivision ordinances and ultimately replace it with a unified development ordinance.	Program	Short-term	\$	Area Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Mayor
i. This steering committee should include City and County staff members.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
b. Consult with a zoning and land use professional to facilitate an update to the existing ordinances and draft a new unified development ordinance.	Program	Short-term	\$ to \$\$	Steering committee members and zoning and land use professional
c. Identify concerns with current ordinances.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Steering committee members and zoning and land use professional
d. Draft short-term amendments to the existing zoning and subdivision ordinance to address recurring problems and near-term development concerns and priorities.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Steering committee members and zoning and land use professional
i. Write an amendment to implement the future land uses found in this plan, including Mixed Use, Mixed Residential, and Downtown Overlay districts.	Policy	Mid-term	N/A	Steering committee members and zoning and land use professional
ii. Consider amending the subdivision ordinance to require a certain amount of land be designated for recreational uses, such as trails, as well as incentives for green infrastructure development.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	Steering committee members and zoning and land use professional
e. Draft a new unified development ordinance.	Policy	Mid to Long-term	\$\$	Steering committee members and zoning and land use professional



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
f. Conduct an outreach and education campaign to educate the public about the comprehensive plan after the plan has been adopted.	Program	On-going	N/A	Steering committee members and zoning and land use professional
g. Make the document(s) easy to access and navigate by publishing them online in the form of an Interactive PDF document.	Policy	Mid to Long-term	N/A	Zoning and land use professional
h. Update the planning and zoning applications to reflect any updated process and standards of the new ordinances.	Policy	Mid to Long-term	\$	APC Staff and Zoning and land use professional
i. Adopt the short-term amendments, and eventually the new unified development ordinance, through the County Council.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	APC, County Council, Zoning and land use professional
j. Conduct training with City staff, Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, and County Council regarding administration and interpretation of the new ordinances.	Program	On-going	\$	APC and zoning and land use professional
k. Continue to update the zoning map as rezonings take place, new districts are created, or underutilized districts become obsolete.	Policy	On-going	\$	APC and zoning and land use professional
Land Use Project 2: Continue to update the zoning map as rezonings take place, new districts are created, or underutilized districts become obsolete.				
a. Revert land zoned R1 (Single-Family Residence District) to A1 (Prime Agriculture District) or A1 (Agriculture District) if development is unlikely.	Program	Short-term	\$	City/County staff
Land Use Project 3: Rezone parcels to Mixed Residential or Mixed Use to encourage redevelopment in the areas identified in the Future Land Use map.				
a. Market these parcels to developers.	Program	Mid- to Long-term	\$	City staff
b. Work with current landowners, businesses, and nearby residents of these areas to establish a unified vision for redevelopment.	Program / Policy	Short-term	\$	City staff
c. Work with the City's Street Department to create complete streets to encourage more walking and biking to and from these areas, especially the downtown.	Project	Mid- to long-term	\$\$\$	City staff



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Land Use Project 4: Conduct an annual review of the Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use map to ensure it aligns with community growth and development goals, and amend as necessary.				
a. If more land use categories need to be added, the new use should have a description and the Future Land Use map should be updated to reflect where it would best fit in the City.	Policy	On-going	N/A	City staff/APC
b. When a new development is proposed, ensure that the Area Plan Commission or the City Council are familiar with the Future Land Use map and its objectives.	Program / Policy	On-going	N/A	City staff/APC
i. Adopt a project review provision for independent review of the proposed project in relation to zoning and subdivision ordinances, or unified development ordinance, and include the cost in the application fee.	Policy	Mid to Long-term	\$	City staff, APC, land use and zoning professional
c. Reference the future land use map to inform the decision on whether to approve a proposed development.	Policy	On-going	N/A	City staff and Plan Commission
i. If the development is recommended for approval, update the future land use map to reflect any changes to it.	Policy	On-going	N/A	City staff and Plan Commission
ii. If it is recommended that the development is changed to better align with the Future Land Use map, work with the developer to show them the City's vision and what they can change to seek approval.	Program / Policy	On-going	N/A	City staff and Plan Commission



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Land Use Project 5: Conduct an inventory of vacant lots within the community.				
a. Identify staff to develop an inventory of vacant lots within the City.	N/A	Short-term	N/A	Building inspector, Fayette County GIS, and other City staff
b. Develop a living spreadsheet with metrics for tracking vacant lots and organize the document by address, ownership, land use, zoning classification, size, previous use, environmental concerns, easements, and encumbrances.	Program	On-going	N/A	Building inspector, Fayette County GIS, and other City staff
c. Map vacant lots within the community based on the inventory, incorporating them into the GIS database.	Program	Short-term	N/A	Building inspector, Fayette County GIS, and other City staff
d. Utilize local planning documents to identify redevelopment opportunities for existing vacant lots.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff, developers, and property owners
e. Develop incentives for redevelopment of key vacant lots.	Policy	Short- to Mid-term	\$ to \$\$	Mayor, Fayette County Economic Development
f. Coordinate with potential developers and investors on redevelopment opportunities.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	N/A	City staff and property owners
g. Update the vacant lot inventory and map on a regular basis, incorporating information into the GIS database.	Program	On-going	N/A	Building inspector, APC Staff and other City staff
Land Use Project 6: Implement maximum lot coverage standards to regulate building sizes in lieu of current lot and area requirements to allow more flexibility in vacant lot reuse.				
a. Consult with a zoning and land use professional to facilitate an update to the lot size requirements.	Policy	Short to mid-term	\$	APC, City staff, and Zoning and land use professional
b. Identify standards appropriate for the City of Connersville, and Fayette County, and in accordance with current building practices.	Policy	Short to Mid-term	\$	APC, City staff, and Zoning and land use professional
c. Draft short-term amendments to zoning ordinance and adopt new language as a part of a new unified development ordinance.	Policy	Short to Mid-term	\$	APC, City staff, and Zoning and land use professional
d. Adopt amendments through the legislative bodies.	Policy	Short to Mid-term	\$	APC, County Council, Zoning and land use professional
e. Conduct training with City staff, Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, and City Council regarding administration and interpretation of revisions.	Program	Short to Mid-term	\$	APC, City/County staff, Zoning and land use professional



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Land Use Project 7: Identify redevelopment opportunities along existing State Roads and primary thoroughfares.				
a. Identify properties for development and redevelopment.	Policy			City staff, Fayette County GIS
b. Encourage or incentivize redevelopment of vacant properties along main thoroughfares.	Policy	Mid- to Long-term	\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator and City staff
c. Develop small subarea plans for key corridors that might have a large area that is in transition.	Project	Mid- to Long-term	\$\$	APC, City staff, Consultant
Land Use Project 8: Evaluate and update, or replace, dilapidated building ordinances.				
a. Complete a dilapidated building inventory.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	\$\$	Building inspector, APC staff
i. Identify buildings in the inventory on a scale from “rehabilitate” to “demolish.”	Program	Short-term	\$\$	Building inspector and City engineer
b. Identify problems and successes in the processes defined in the ordinance(s) for dealing with dilapidated buildings.	Policy	Short-term	\$\$	Building inspector and City engineer
c. Update, or replace, the ordinance(s) to streamline the processes.	Policy	Short-term	\$\$	City staff



Government and Fiscal Capacity Vision Statement

EXPAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY AND GROW INCOME TO CONTINUE PROVIDING HIGH QUALITY SERVICES NEEDED TO SUPPORT RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES, AND VISITORS.

Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Government and Fiscal Capacity Project 1: Update plans and supporting documents to use as a tool when applying for grants.				
a. Conduct an inventory of Connersville’s current plans and develop a list of plans and supporting documents the City needs to complete to apply for grants and plan for future projects.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff
b. Review existing plans to ensure they are consistent with the vision of the City.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff
c. Determine if updates should be amended into existing plans, or if a new study and document would be more appropriate.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff
d. Determine if these plans should be updated internally by City staff or outsourced to a consultant that specializes in various planning efforts such as parks plans, transportation studies, and feasibility analysis reports.	Policy	Short-term	\$\$	City staff, Consultants
e. Identify and seek out funding for plan development through grants, local donations, and by using existing allocated funds if available.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	N/A	City staff
f. Update planning documents accordingly.	Policy	Short-term	\$ to \$\$	City staff, APC
g. Approve and adopt the amendments and plans at a Plan Commission meeting and City Council meeting.	Policy	Short- to Mid-term	N/A	City staff and City Council



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Government and Fiscal Capacity Project 2: Improve communications and outreach efforts between residents, businesses, and the local government.				
a. Continue improving the City’s website to become a centralized location for residents to share thoughts, opinions, ideas, where developers and investors can access information about City processes, procedures, and other documents, and where the City can share important news, updates, and upcoming events.	Program	On-going	\$	Marketing and communications coordinator and City staff
b. Consider developing a marketing strategy for upcoming events and programs.	Policy	On-going	\$	Marketing and communications coordinator and City staff
c. Consider creating a monthly newsletter, email, and/or text blast to cater to residents who use any and all methods of receiving news and updates.	Program	On-going	\$	Marketing and communications coordinator and City staff
d. Continue streamlining the process in which residents can provide their thoughts and opinions about what is happening around Connersville through Coffee with the Mayor events and other methods, such as a comment box and through email.	Policy	On-going	N/A	Marketing and communications coordinator, City staff and elected officials
e. Continue utilizing the existing social media platforms as a way to interact with the community and those who primarily access news from Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and other platforms.	Policy	On-going	N/A	Marketing and communications coordinator, City staff and elected officials



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Government and Fiscal Capacity Project 3: Conduct a community survey to better understand resident and business perceptions of City services and how to improve local communication between the City staff, various boards and organizations, businesses, residents, and visitors.				
a. Determine if a local survey should be City-led or outsourced to a communications professional.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Marketing communication coordinator and Mayor
b. Advertise the importance of community feedback through the upcoming survey to attract attention and encourage residents to participate through social media postings, public meetings, and flyers.	Policy	On-going	\$	Marketing communication coordinator and elected officials
c. Utilizing an online survey platform, create a survey that can be sent out to residents, business owners, and other property owners in the community.	Program	Short-term	\$	Marketing communication coordinator, elected officials, and Chamber of Commerce
d. Provide residents, business owners, and visitors with the ability to fill out the survey or comment cards on paper to be submitted in person or through mail, if access to the internet is limited.	Program	Short-term	\$	Marketing communication coordinator and City staff
e. Using the feedback received through the survey, develop a communications strategy for the City to implement.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Marketing communication coordinator, City staff, Mayor and City Council
f. Hold a public meeting to review the feedback and present the communication strategy.	Program	Short-term	\$	Marketing communication coordinator, City staff, Mayor and City Council
Government and Fiscal Capacity Project 4: Create and maintain a 5-year capital improvements program (CIP) to help prioritize and budget for future capital expenditures.				
a. Refer to Public Facilities and Services Chapter, Project 1.				



Public Facilities and Services Vision Statement

MAINTAIN AND EXPAND PUBLIC FACILITIES, UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE, AND CITY SERVICES TO SUPPORT EXISTING RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES, AND ENCOURAGE FUTURE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Public Facilities and Services Project 1: Create and maintain a 5-year capital improvements program (CIP) to help prioritize and budget for future capital expenditures				
a. Develop a list of capital projects, equipment, purchases, and plans or studies needed.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff, Mayor, City Council, and City Engineer
b. Gather public input from residents and businesses about what the community wants prioritized.	Program	Short-term	\$	City staff, Mayor, City Council, and City Engineer
c. Determine cost estimates and a timeline for each project, purchase, plan, and study.	Program	Short-term	\$	City staff, Mayor, City Council, and City Engineer
d. Identify what projects, purchases, plans, and studies are most important or urgent to complete first.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff, Mayor, City Council, and City Engineer
e. Identify funding options and create a financing plan. Funding may be from locally generated revenues, grants, donations, and public-private partnerships.	Policy	Short- to Mid-term	N/A	City staff, Mayor, City Council, and City Engineer
f. Prepare the initial CIP document for a five-year time frame.	Policy	Short-term	\$	City staff, Mayor, City Council, and City Engineer
g. Adopt the plan by City Council resolution.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff, Mayor, City Council, and City Engineer
h. Update the plan on an annual basis to remove projects and initiatives that have been completed and add new ones.	Policy	On-going	N/A	City staff, Mayor, City Council, and City Engineer
Public Facilities and Services Project 2 Create a new or update the City's website to be a centralized information portal/file sharing platform for various boards and organizations, local processes and procedures, upcoming meetings, recordings of past meetings, and meeting minutes for the community, local leaders, and developers to access and use the website to promote and market community events and initiatives happening around Connorsville.				
a. Hire and work with the City's Municipal Marketing Manager to promote the City's public facilities and services to prospective residents and developers.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Marketing and Communication Coordinator and other City staff



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Public Facilities and Services Project 3: Provide emergency responders with updated and reliable equipment and facilities.				
a. Evaluate local budgets and expenditures.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	Mayor and City Council
b. Create a budget plan that analyzes the costs of training for police and fire staff, and the cost of buying new equipment and vehicles for emergency responders.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Police and Fire Chiefs, Mayor, and City Council
c. Consider building a training facility for police and fire. Determine a location for the facility and budget for the costs of construction and equipment needs.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Police and Fire Chiefs, Mayor, and City Council
d. Prepare a report with the cost breakdowns, a needs analysis for existing and future staff, and the benefits of new equipment and building a training facility.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Police and Fire Chiefs, Mayor, and City Council
e. Hold a public hearing and present the report to City Council for approval of funds.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	Police and Fire Chiefs, Mayor, and City Council
Public Facilities and Services Project 4: Connect residents with resources for health and wellness.				
a. Inventory public and private services for health and wellness in and around the City.	Program	Short-term	\$	City staff, Emergency Responders, Emergency Management Coordinator, and County Health Department
b. Create social media posts, articles or op-eds for local newspapers, and promote health and wellness resources on the City's website.	Program	On-going	\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator and City staff
c. Consider organizing an annual "Month of Health" community event.	Program	On-going	\$ to \$\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator, City staff, and County Health Department
i. This could include a marathon, educational workshops about recovering from drug/alcohol addiction and removing stigma surrounding topics of mental health.	Program	N/A	\$	County Health Department
d. Identify funding availability from the City, local sponsors, and possible organizers of the event if it is not organized by the City.	Program	On-going	N/A	City staff



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Public Facilities and Services Project 5: Hire a City/County Building Inspector.				
a. Develop a job description for a Building Inspector. Contact surrounding jurisdiction to collect job description samples.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City/County staff
b. Identify funding for wages and benefits.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City/County staff
c. Develop a recruiting plan for the job position.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City/County staff
d. Post a job description and qualifications online for applicants.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City/County staff
e. Interview potential candidates based on their skill set and experience.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City/County staff
f. Hire selected individual.	Policy	Short-term	\$	City/County staff
Public Facilities and Services Project 6: Hire additional City/County code enforcement personnel.				
a. Develop a job description for code enforcement personnel.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City/County staff
b. Identify funding for wages and benefits.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City/County staff
c. Develop a recruiting plan for the job position.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City/County staff
d. Post a job description and qualifications online for applicants.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City/County staff
e. Interview potential candidates based on their skill set and experience.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City/County staff
f. Hire selected individual.	Policy	Short-term	\$	City/County staff
Public Facilities and Services Project 7: Hire additional City/County Engineer.				
a. Develop a job description for a City/County Engineer.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City/County staff
b. Identify funding for wages and benefits.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City/County staff
c. Develop a recruiting plan for the job position.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City/County staff
d. Post a job description and qualifications online for applicants.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City/County staff
e. Interview potential candidates based on their skill set and experience.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City/County staff
f. Hire selected individual.	Policy	Short-term	\$	City/County staff



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Public Facilities and Services Project 8: Develop an analysis process for extending municipal infrastructure to new development.				
a. If utilities are extended, ensure that property owners sign an agreement to be annexed into the City.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff
b. Identify the available capacity of City and other public infrastructure.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff and Utilities Department
c. Identify the available capacity of work with developers to share the cost of upgrades or extensions of infrastructure.	Program	Short-term	N/A	City staff, Mayor, and Utilities Department
Public Facilities and Services Project 9: Hire a Municipal Marketing and Communications Coordinator.				
a. Develop a job description for a Marketing and Communications Coordinator.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff
b. Identify funding for wages and benefits.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff
c. Develop a recruiting plan for the job position.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff
d. Post a job description and qualifications online for applicants.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff
e. Interview potential candidates based on their skill set and experience.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff
f. Hire selected individual.	Policy	Short-term	\$	City staff



Placemaking Vision Statement

IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF RESIDENTS AND VISITORS BY PROMOTING INITIATIVES THAT SUPPORT COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING; DIVERSE CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH THE ENHANCEMENT OF EXISTING AMENITIES AND ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW ONES; COMMUNITY BEAUTIFICATION; AND INCREASED COMMUNITY PRIDE THROUGH ENCOURAGING MORE COMMUNITY-LED, YEAR-ROUND EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING.

Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Placemaking Project 1: Expand the pool of community champions, leaders, and volunteers.				
a. Identify key stakeholder groups throughout the City.	Program	Short-term	N/A	City staff, Chamber of Commerce, Lions Club, and other non-profit organizations
b. Establish initial and reoccurring meetings to communicate City goals and objectives to stakeholder groups.	Program	On-going	\$	City staff
c. Identify action items based on areas of interest and delegate tasks.	Program	Short-term	\$	City staff
d. Establish regular check-in meetings with City leadership to promote accountability and track progress.	Program	On-going	\$	City staff
Placemaking Project 2: Develop a medical professional recruitment strategy.				
a. Work with local health care providers to identify existing deficiencies.	Program	Short-term	\$	City staff, Reid Health, County Health Department, Emergency Medical Services, and other care facilities in the City
b. Identify opportunities for expansion within existing facilities.	Program	Short-term	N/A	City staff, Reid Health, County Health Department, Emergency Medical Services, and other care facilities in the City
c. Work with the City's Marketing and Communications Coordinator on the development of materials to promote Connersville to medical professionals.	Program	Short-term	\$ to \$\$	City staff, Reid Health, County Health Department, Emergency Medical Services, other care facilities in the City, Chamber of Commerce, local banks, and the Fayette County Economic Development Group
d. Collaborate with existing health care providers on financial incentives for locating within Connersville.	Program	Mid- to Long-term	\$ to \$\$	Same as previous step



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Placemaking Project 3: Collaborate with local business and industry on improved access to childcare.				
a. Identify key businesses and industries within the City facing workforce challenges related to childcare.	Program	Short-term	\$	City staff, residents, business leaders, childcare providers, local economic development specialist, East Central READI
b. Identify local child care providers and individuals interested in providing and expanding childcare services.	Program	Short-term	\$	City staff, childcare providers, faith-based organizations, schools, and non-profits
c. Establish recurring meetings among business leaders and child care providers to identify programs that can address local needs.	Program	On-going	\$	City staff, childcare providers, faith-based organizations, schools, and non-profits
Placemaking Project 4: Partner City leadership and the Parks and Recreation Department with the Purdue Extension office to identify additional opportunities throughout the City for community gardens and promote urban agriculture.				
a. Identify a managing entity for the community garden program.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City Staff, Parks & Recreation Department, Philanthropic Organizations
b. Identify areas throughout the community with lack of access to healthy food options.	Policy	Short-term	\$	City staff
c. Coordinate with local institutions and philanthropic organizations to develop gardening and food preparation training.	Program	Short-term	\$	City staff, Purdue Extension, master gardeners
d. Using the vacant lot inventory discussed in the Land Use Chapter, identify public property in target areas for implementation.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff, volunteer groups, and philanthropic organizations
e. Develop an education program to assist residents and neighborhood leaders in establishing personal and community gardens.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	\$	City staff, volunteers, Purdue extension, master gardeners
f. Coordinate with neighborhood groups on establishing community gardens plots.	Project	Mid- to Long-term	\$ to \$	City staff, volunteer groups, and philanthropic organizations



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Placemaking Project 5: Develop a coordinated effort related to local, history-based placemaking.				
a. Identify local organizations focused on the historic and cultural amenities within the City.	Program	Short-term	N/A	City staff
b. Establish recurring meetings among the organizations and collaborate with the City's Municipal Marketing and Communications Coordinator on a marketing strategy for the City's historic amenities.	Program	On-going	\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator
c. Collaborate on hours of operation to the public and establish events centered around local history.	Program	Short-term	\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator and City staff
Placemaking Project 6: Develop strong, thriving neighborhoods.				
a. Identify neighborhood districts within the community.	Program	Short-term	N/A	City staff
b. Identify community leaders within each neighborhood.	Program	Short-term	N/A	City staff
c. Coordinate with City leadership to establish recurring meetings of local neighborhoods focused on community building and neighborhood identity, beautification, and advancing City initiatives.	Program	On-going	\$	City staff and identified community leaders
d. Identify neighborhood priorities and problem properties.	Program	On-going	N/A	City staff and identified community leaders
Placemaking Project 7: Increase promotion of existing community events and develop additional community events and programming.				
a. Collaborate with the city's marketing and communications coordinator to create an accurate inventory of existing public events within the City outlining the type and duration of the events, their location, and sponsoring organization(s).	Policy	On-going	\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator
b. Identify areas of the community and times of the years that currently lack programmed events.	Policy	On-going	N/A	Marketing and Communications Coordinator, City staff and business leaders
c. Research peer community to identify ideas for additional community events to be implemented within Connersville.	Program	On-going	N/A	Marketing and Communications Coordinator
d. Identify new events that are appropriate for the community and potential financial sponsors from local residents, businesses, and organizations.	Program	On-going	\$ to \$\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator and City staff
e. Plan new events and promote them regularly through local media platforms.	Policy	On-going	N/A	Marketing and Communications Coordinator and City staff



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Placemaking Project 8: Develop design guidelines to be included in the zoning ordinance to focus on local beautification and placemaking.				
a. Consult with a design professional, such as an urban planner or designer, to establish appropriate design guidelines focused on sign standards, outdoor storage, lighting, landscaping, and other pedestrian-friendly amenities (such as benches, bike parking, and trash cans) along key corridors and around key anchors of the community.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	\$\$	City staff and design professional/consultant team
b. Engage the City and local property owners in the process.	Program	Short-term	\$	City staff and design professional/consultant team
c. Educate the public about design guidelines.	Program	On-going	\$	City staff and design professional/consultant team
d. Hold a public meeting to adopt the guidelines via the Plan Commission.	Policy	Mid-term	N/A	City staff and design professional/consultant team
Placemaking Project 9: Improve the sharing of positive information about the community and local businesses to spread good news and celebrate achievements, while combating negative attitudes and perceptions.				
a. Collaborate with City departments on a centralized marketing campaign related to placemaking and community pride.	Program	On-going	\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator and City staff
b. Use social media and monthly newsletters to promote activities and programs around the community.	Policy	On-going	\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator
c. Highlight the achievements of local residents, businesses, organizations, and youth.	Program	On-going	\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator



Economic Development Vision Statement

IMPROVE THE LOCAL ECONOMY BY SUPPORTING EXISTING EMPLOYEES, ATTRACTING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, CULTIVATING AN ENVIRONMENT THAT RETAINS, TRAINS, AND ATTRACTS A SKILLED WORKFORCE, AND CAPITALIZING ON TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES.

Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Economic Development Project 1: Inventory and analyze existing brownfields for potential redevelopment.				
a. Establish and maintain a database, including in GIS, of brownfields and vacant sites, including information on environmental hazards, existing structures, and other potential site issues.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Fayette County Economic Development Group, Building inspector, City Engineer, City staff, APC, Fayette County GIS
b. Research and contact property owners to maintain name and contact information for each property.	Policy	On-going	\$	Building inspector and City staff
c. Work with property owners to evaluate and understand potential impediments to redevelopment.	Program	Long-term	\$	Building inspector and City engineer
d. Promote redevelopment of these properties in accordance with the future land use map and other plan recommendations.	Policy	Long-term	\$\$	Building inspector and City staff
e. Meet with property owners to discuss willingness to sell their properties.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	\$	Building inspector and City staff
f. Market for-sale properties to try to attract new buyers.	Program	On-going	\$	Marketing Communications Coordinator and City staff
Economic Development Project 2: Assist local economic development officials in purchasing options of properties for an industrial park, ensure that updated and appropriate zoning is in place, and continue to promote development opportunities.				
a. Explore annexation for nearby properties on the north side of Connersville so appropriate zoning districts can be applied to parcels that will support future development in the area.	Policy	Mid- to Long-term	\$\$	City staff
b. Share planning and engineering updates with economic development staff and potential business owners for the extension of utilities and development of an industrial park.	Program	On-going	N/A	City staff



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Economic Development Project 3: Create a downtown business plan in conjunction with the Main Street organization to focus a business recruitment strategy and prioritize needed physical improvements.				
a. Partner with the Main Street organization on a business recruitment strategy.	Program	Short-term	N/A	Main Street Organization and City staff
i. Projects may include expanding the summer farmer's market to provide a winter market, and creating a pop-up retail village to facilitate small business start-ups and foster entrepreneurial spirit.	Program	Long-term	\$ to \$\$	N/A
b. Contact peer communities and identify economic development policies and strategies that have been successful.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	N/A	Main Street Organization and City staff
c. Prioritize physical improvements to the downtown that would support economic development goals and align with the City's Capital Improvements Plan (CIP), Downtown Overlay District, and Historic Preservation Commission goals.	Project	Long-term	\$\$\$	Main Street Organization and City staff
d. Add priority projects to the CIP.	Policy	Long-term	N/A	City staff with the recommendations give to them by the Main Street Organization
e. Use the comprehensive plan as a starting point for continued downtown planning and explore additional OCRA planning and construction grants for downtown improvements.	Policy	Long-term	N/A	Main Street Organization and City staff
Economic Development Project 4: Create partnerships with higher education institutions such as Earlham College, Indiana University, Ball State University, Purdue University, Ivy Tech, and Miami of Ohio.				
a. Utilize Connersville as a training ground for residents and students in nearby communities to gather information about higher education options and opportunities.	Program	On-going	\$\$	City staff
b. Partner with higher education institutions to market their career path options.	Program	On-going	\$\$	City staff, local schools, and higher education institutions
c. Work with the schools to offer small educational sessions throughout the school year for students to attend and learn about the various training programs, majors, and application processes offered by the higher education institutions.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	\$\$	City staff, local schools, and higher education institutions



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Economic Development Project 5: Expand the current Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district to target more industrial and business growth on the north side of the community and utilize those funds to help pay for necessary improvements and utility expansions in the future.				
a. Evaluate land across the northern area of the City that can be designated as a part of the existing TIF district.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City engineer, City staff, Mayor, City Council, and Redevelopment Commission
b. Work with local groups, business owners, and leaders to determine if they are interested in becoming a part of a TIF district.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	N/A	City engineer, City staff, Mayor, City Council, and Redevelopment Commission
c. Determine what properties would be captured in the TIF designated area.	Project	Short- to Mid-term	N/A	City engineer, City staff, Mayor, City Council, and Redevelopment Commission
d. Reach out to property owners about annexation.	Program	Short-term	N/A	City staff
i. Determine if a property owner desires to be annexed into the City. Fill out annexation paperwork and submit to the City.	Program	Short-term	N/A	City staff and property owner
e. Hold a public hearing about the annexation of land and request approval from the City Council.	Program	Short-term	N/A	City engineer, City staff, Mayor, City Council, Redevelopment Commission, and property owners
f. Annex desired properties that would be a part of the TIF district into the City.	Program	Short-term	§	City engineer, City staff, Mayor, City Council, Redevelopment Commission, and property owners
g. Create the TIF boundary.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City engineer, City staff, Mayor, City Council, and Redevelopment Commission
h. Hold a public hearing and request approval of the TIF district from the Connersville Redevelopment Commission.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City engineer, City staff, Mayor, City Council, and Redevelopment Commission
i. Adopt the resolution.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City engineer, City staff, Mayor, City Council, and Redevelopment Commission



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Economic Development Project 6: Create a business incubator.				
a. Identify a space in the community that can be used as a designated space for training and work sessions.	Project	Short-term	\$\$	City staff, building inspector, City engineer, Mayor, Fayette County Economic Development Group (EDG)
b. Identify potential funding opportunities through grants and private investors to develop an incubator and co-working space.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	\$	City staff, Mayor, local economic development official, Fayette County EDG
c. Work with industry leaders and local secondary and post-secondary training providers to gauge their interest in funding the project and leading training programs.	Program	On-going	\$	City staff, Mayor, local economic development official, Fayette County EDG, business leaders, local vocational training program employees
d. Continue and improve existing training programs and develop new training and certification programs for people to obtain and enter the workforce with experience.	Program	On-going	\$\$	City staff, Mayor, local economic development official, Fayette County EDG, business leaders, local vocational training program employees
e. Recruit additional experienced individuals to lead training sessions.	Program	On-going	\$\$	City staff, Mayor, local economic development official, Fayette County EDG, business leaders, local vocational training program employees
f. Develop a co-working space as a part of the larger building that fosters entrepreneurial spirit and allows people to experiment and create business enterprises.	Project	Short- to Mid-term	\$\$	City staff, Mayor, local economic development official, Fayette County EDG, business leaders, local vocational training program employees, developers
g. Promote the business incubator to the community on the City's website.	Policy	On-going	\$	City staff, Mayor, local economic development official, Fayette County EDG, and Marketing Communications Coordinator



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Economic Development Project 7: Create a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district for the downtown to utilize those funds for reinvestment back into the area.				
a. Evaluate land in and around downtown Connersville that can be designated as a TIF district.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	Mayor, Local economic development official, Redevelopment Commission, City engineer, and City staff
b. Determine if, over time, the TIF designation will be beneficial in generating additional revenue that can be reinvested back into the local residents, businesses, and physical improvements.	Program	Short-term	\$	Mayor, Local economic development official, Redevelopment Commission, City engineer, and City staff
c. Work with local groups, business owners, and leaders to determine if they are interested in becoming a part of a TIF district.	Program	Short-term	\$	Mayor, Local economic development official, Redevelopment Commission, City engineer, and City staff
d. Determine what properties would be captured in the TIF-designated area and create the boundary.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	Mayor, Local economic development official, Redevelopment Commission, City engineer, and City staff
e. Hold a public hearing and get the approval of the TIF district from the Connersville Redevelopment Commission.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	N/A	Mayor, Local economic development official, Redevelopment Commission, City engineer, and City staff
f. Adopt the resolution.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	Mayor, Local economic development official, Redevelopment Commission, City engineer, City staff, and City Council



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Economic Development Project 8: Utilize the existing Opportunity Zone (OZ) to incentivize development and bring in investors to the area.				
a. Market the benefits of an Opportunity Zone to businesses, and developers as place for investment in the community.	Policy	On-going	\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator, City staff, local economic development official, and the Fayette County EDG
b. Hold educational sessions on the benefits of an OZ for businesses, and investors, including that the zone offers three tax incentives: temporary deferral, step-up in basis, and permanent exclusion.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	\$	Local economic development official, the Fayette County EDG, City staff, and state representative.
c. Work with residents and property owners in the OZ to define a unified redevelopment vision of the area and attract investment.	Program	Mid- to Long-term	\$\$	Local economic development official, and the Fayette County EDG, and City staff



Housing Vision Statement

CONTINUE TO MAKE CONNERSVILLE AN ATTRACTIVE COMMUNITY TO LIVE IN BY STRENGTHENING AND MAINTAINING EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS WHILE SUPPORTING NEW CONSTRUCTION OF VARIED HOUSING TYPES TO SUPPORT RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES AND INCOMES.

Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Housing Project 1: Identify and redevelop blighted areas across the City to construct new housing.				
a. Work with local residents to find more suitable housing if their property is unsafe to live in.	Program	On-going	\$\$	City staff
b. Identify and evaluate blighted properties.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	Building inspector and City staff
i. Develop criteria to assess blighted housing.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City Council/staff, Mayor, Fayette County GIS
ii. Conduct field reviews to identify blighted properties and research and analyze why these areas became blighted.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	Building inspector and City staff,
iii. Create a report on the findings and map their locations.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Building inspector, City staff, Fayette County GIS
c. Update the county's dangerous building ordinance and develop strategies to address blighted properties.	Policy	Short-term	\$	City staff, APC
d. Utilize existing and planned economic development tools to encourage redevelopment of blighted areas, such as existing Opportunity Zone, Wayzata TIF district, and planned downtown TIF district.	Policy	Long-term	\$\$ to \$\$\$	City staff, developers, and Redevelopment Commission
e. Consider short-term zoning and land use amendments that promote infill development or relax regulations for redevelopment of blighted properties and further address as a part of a new unified development ordinance.	Policy	Short- to Mid-term	N/A	City staff and APC
Housing Project 2: Continue code enforcement programs to work with local property owners on maintenance.				
a. Work with a bank to develop a granting process or low-cost loans that provide maintenance assistance for homeowners and renters.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Neighborhood representatives, City staff, Mayor City Council, and local banks
b. Consider the creation of a land bank to purchase and auction off vacant or blighted properties for prospective residents and/or redevelopment opportunities.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	\$	City staff, City Council, and Redevelopment Commission
c. Research local, state, and federal grant programs that help fund reinvestment and maintenance efforts.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	Neighborhood representatives and City staff



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Housing Project 3: Update the zoning ordinance to correct “unbuildable” lot issues (minimum lot area) and permit a wider array of dwelling types, including accessory dwelling units, in residential districts.				
a. Refer to Chapter 1, Land Use, Project 6.				
Housing Project 4: Create a rental registration program to ensure accurate and up-to-date contact information for owners to better keep negligent landowners accountable for their properties.				
a. Research registration programs found in other cities and towns.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff
b. Create a portal on the City’s website to streamline the registration process for landlords and renters.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator and City staff
c. Enforce the rental registration program with a Building Inspector.	Policy	On-going	\$\$	City staff and building inspector
d. Work with homeowners, landlords, and renters to address maintenance and code issues.	Program	On-going	\$\$	Building inspector



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Housing Project 5: Develop a program/policy to encourage coordination between the ordinance enforcer and health department.				
a. Develop and promote a program that allows residents to report unsafe structures.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	\$\$	City staff and building inspector
b. Beginning with assumptions based on the age of housing stock, inventory homes that contain lead contaminants, such as lead painting.	Policy	Mid- to Long-term	\$\$	Building inspector and County Health Department
c. Research and utilize available local funding, donations, and grant opportunities to address and improve unhealthy or unsafe living conditions.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff
d. Identify areas in the community with a lack of recreational and wellness opportunities.	Policy	Short-term	\$	City staff and Parks Department
e. Develop a plan to improve access to these opportunities and involve other City departments as necessary.	Policy	Short- to Mid-term	\$	City staff
Housing 6: Develop a policy to address and encourage transient housing and short-term rentals (i.e. Airbnb, Vrbo, etc.)				
a. Analyze existing conditions and research precedent policies from other cities.	Policy	Short-term	\$	City staff, APC Staff
b. Gather public input at events, meetings, and community leaders.	Program	Short-term	\$	City staff, APC Staff
c. Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of considering short-term rentals as accessory uses or special exemptions.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	APC Staff
d. Draft a policy document and zoning plan.	Policy	Short-term	\$	City staff, Mayor, APC, and City Council
e. Include recommendations for registration of short-term rental properties as a part of permitting processes so that the City can track short-term rental use within the City	Policy	Short-term	N/A	APC Staff
f. Review the proposed policy with legal counsel.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	APC Staff
g. Hold a public hearing for adoption of the policy and plan from the City Council and Plan Commission	Program	Short-term	N/A	City staff, Mayor, APC, and City Council



Transportation Vision Statement

IMPROVE AND MAINTAIN A SAFE AND EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM THAT CONNECTS COMMUNITY ANCHORS, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND EMPLOYERS ACROSS CONNERSVILLE, AND IS ACCESSIBLE USING SEVERAL MODES OF TRANSPORTATION, INCLUDING WALKING AND BIKING.

Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Transportation Project 1: Continue to leverage local funds with state, federal, or private grant programs as they may be available.				
a. Conduct additional studies and develop additional plans, including a corridor study and comprehensive transportation plan for State Roads, to help leverage state funds for improvements to INDOT controlled roadways.	Program	Short to Mid-term	\$\$	City staff and City engineer
b. Using existing plans, such as this comprehensive plan, apply for funding through state, federal, and private grant opportunities specific for transportation and infrastructure improvements.	Program	Short to Mid-term	N/A	City staff and City engineer
c. Adopt key plans and priority projects as amendments to the comprehensive plan.	Program	Short to Mid-term	N/A	City staff, City engineer, and APC
Transportation Project 2: Implement streetscape improvements throughout Connersville to improve pedestrian walkability and safety, on-street parking, lighting, and aesthetics.				
a. Form a local project committee of City officials, members of the Main Street organization, and community members to determine appropriate project limits, phasing and scope.	Program	Short-term	N/A	City Staff, Parks Department, Street and Utilities Department, Main Street Organization, and City engineer
b. Refine the goals of the projects and develop a program to implement the projects.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City Staff, Parks Department, Street and Utilities Department, Main Street Organization, and City engineer
c. Consult with and hire a design professional for completion of design and construction documents.	Policy	Short-term	\$ - \$\$	City Staff, Parks Department, Street and Utilities Department, Main Street Organization, and City engineer
d. Develop a phasing plan for how the corridors would be reconstructed.	Policy	Short-term	\$	City staff, Parks Department, Street and Utilities Department, City engineer, and consultant
e. Identify and start to obtain funding including grants and reallocate existing City funds.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff, Parks Department, and Street and Utilities Department



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
f. Coordinate with business owners, property owners, and residents by holding informative meetings about the cost, construction time, and phasing of the projects.	Program	Short-term	N/A	City staff, Parks Department, and Streets Department
g. Bid projects.	Program	Short-term	\$ - \$\$\$	City staff, Parks Department, and Streets Department
h. Begin construction of the projects starting at the first phase when funds are available, and repeat until all phases of the projects are complete.	Project	Short- to Mid-term	\$ - \$\$\$	City staff, Parks Department, and Streets Department
Transportation Project 3: Update and implement improvements included within the City's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan.				
a. Inventory existing sidewalks within the City and the conditions regarding ADA accessibility.	Program	Short-term	\$	Street Department
b. Inventory and map sidewalks and ramps that do not meet ADA accessibility requirements.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Street Department
c. Identify and map priority areas across the City for ADA improvements.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Street Department and City Staff
d. Research and identify available funding, grant opportunities, and local fundraising/donation opportunities to improvement and repair sidewalks.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	Street Department and City Staff
e. Review the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan when planning for improvements or upgrades to roadway infrastructure.	Policy	Short-term	\$\$	City engineer, Street Department, and City staff
f. Organize projects to address more than one issue at any time, including upgrading sidewalks and necessary infrastructure to be ADA compliant, or through the completion of a project already within the Transition Plan.	Program	Short-term	\$	City engineer, Street Department, and City staff
g. Implement the ADA Transition Plan in conjunction with other capital improvements identified in the City's CIP.	Project	Long-term	\$\$\$	Street Department and City Staff
i. Investigate a cost-share program to repair sidewalks and curbs.	Policy	Mid- to Long-term	N/A	Street Department and City Staff



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Transportation Project 4: Develop a City Transportation Plan.				
a. Consult with a transportation engineer/consultant on the development of a City Transportation Plan.	Policy	Short-term	\$\$	City engineer, Street Department, Transportation consultant
b. Engage residents in public meetings to identify what transportation improvements are most important to the public.	Program	Short-term	\$	City engineer, Street Department, and Transportation consultant
c. Identify the most dangerous streets for pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, and other road users, and map using county GIS.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City engineer, Street Department, City staff, and Fayette County GIS, and Transportation consultant
d. Identify roads that fail to meet the city development standards and include projects in a CIP plan. Map identified roads using county GIS.	Policy	Short- to Mid-term	N/A	City engineer, Street Department, consultant, and Fayette County GIS, and Transportation consultant
e. Rebuild sidewalks and curbs that are missing or not functional.	Project	Long-term	\$\$\$	City engineer and Street Department
f. Ensure that the City Transportation Plan aligns with the goals and objectives in this Comprehensive Plan, the ADA Transition Plan, and the Capital Improvements Plan.	Policy	On-going	N/A	City engineer, Street Department, and City staff, and Transportation consultant
Transportation Project 5: Develop and incentivize ride-share and food delivery opportunities.				
a. Research existing online delivery services and programs in other cities and towns.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff
b. Compile a public a resource list and steps that local businesses can take to setup food-delivery services.	Policy	Short-term	\$	City staff
c. Promote the resource list in newspapers, the City website, and TV 3.	Program	On-going	\$	Marketing and Communication Coordinator and City staff



Agriculture Vision Statement

SUPPORT THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY THAT SURROUNDS CONNERSVILLE AND WHICH IS CRITICAL TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY, WHILE ENCOURAGING URBAN AGRICULTURE WITHIN THE CITY LIMITS TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY BUILDING AND PHYSICAL HEALTH.

Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Agriculture Project 1: Promote existing agriculture and food processing businesses as a means to attract additional employers.				
a. Continue partnerships with higher education institutions to promote agribusiness such as hydroponics, equipment sales, food distribution and processing, biofuel producers, and agritourism among others.	Program	On-going	\$	City staff, business owners, volunteers, Purdue extension, and the local economic development official
b. Market the Oasis in downtown Connerville as a place for fresh produce and agricultural/ healthy foods education for children.	Policy	On-going	\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator, City staff, volunteers, and the local economic development official
i. Utilizing the position of the Marketing and Communications Coordinator, include advertisements for the Oasis community garden.	Program	On-going	N/A	Marketing and Communications Coordinator
Agriculture Project 2: Partner City leadership and the Parks and Recreation Department with the Purdue Extension office to identify additional opportunities throughout the City for community gardens and promote urban agriculture.				
a. Refer to Placemaking chapter, Project 4.				



Natural Resources Vision Statement

PROTECT THE COMMUNITY’S NATURAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT IMPROVED HEALTH, LOCAL TOURISM, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Natural Resources Project 1: Review and amend the zoning ordinance to better protect environmentally sensitive lands, significant wooded areas, and other natural resources, and adopt requirements as a part of a new unified development ordinance.				
a. Inventory and map environmentally sensitive lands, wooded areas, waterways, and water sources.	Policy	Short-term	\$	City staff, Fayette County GIS
b. Identify critical areas that are prone to development.	Policy	Short-term	\$	City staff, Fayette County GIS
c. Temporarily amend the zoning ordinance with a conservation overlay district that ensures the protection of these areas and incorporate the district into a new unified development ordinance.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff and Plan Commission
i. This overlay district could include trails and educational pathways, nature education facilities, and limitations on some developments.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
d. Hold a public hearing and present the amendment to the Plan Commission for approval.	Program	Short-term	N/A	City staff and Plan Commission
Natural Resources Project 2: Adopt wellhead protection overlay districts into the existing zoning ordinance, and as a part of a future unified development ordinance.				
a. Review wellhead overlay district ordinances and similar ordinances from peer communities.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	Utilities Department and City staff
b. Identify areas of coverage in coordination with the existing wellhead protection plan.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Utilities Department and City staff
c. Draft a wellhead protection overlay district amendment for review and revision.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Utilities Department and City staff
d. Hold a public hearing and adopt the amendment via Plan Commission approval.	Program	Short-term	N/A	Utilities Department and City staff, and Plan Commission
Natural Resources Project 3: Identify opportunities for trail development, and expansion, and access points along the Whitewater River.				
a. Ensure that trail development aligns with the Future Trails Map and the City’s Parks Plan.	Policy	On-going	N/A	City Staff, Parks Department, and City engineer
b. Coordinate with the Parks Department to identify available land and funding.	Program	Short-term	N/A	City Staff, Parks Department, and City engineer



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Natural Resources Project 4: Market the availability of freshwater to potential businesses and developers.				
a. Collaborate with the Municipal Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Economic Development Corporation, and others on a marketing plan.	Program	Mid- to Long-term	\$\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator, business leaders, and stakeholders
b. Develop a marketing cut sheet of local facts about water and sewer infrastructure capacity, local quality of life, and amenities within the City of Connersville and region.	Program	On-going	\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator, business leaders, and stakeholders
Natural Resources Project 5: Coordinate with key partners on a marketing plan for natural resource-based tourism.				
a. Collaborate with the Municipal Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Fayette County Tourism Bureau, and surrounding convention and tourism entities on a regional marketing plan for local tubing, canoeing, kayaking, and other tourism attractions.	Program	On-going	\$\$	City staff, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Parks Department, Convention and Tourism Bureaus, local tourism businesses, and the Chamber of Commerce



Parks and Recreation Vision Statement

ENHANCE EXISTING CITY PARKS AND OPEN SPACES WITH ADDITIONAL AMENITIES, STAFF, AND PROGRAMMING TO SUPPORT AN ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITY, PROVIDE YOUTH WITH RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, PROMOTE RESIDENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION GOALS, AND SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS.

Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Parks and Recreation Project 1: Identify funding sources to support additional staff and parks improvements.				
a. Coordinate with City leadership on the completion of a five-year capital improvements plan that includes priority parks and recreation expenditures.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	\$\$	City staff, City engineer, Mayor, Parks Department, and City Council
Parks and Recreation Project 2: Develop a digital reservation system for park facilities.				
a. Compile a list of park facilities and spaces that are reservable.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Parks Department
b. Develop a portal on the City website that allows people to reserve the park facility/ space.	Program	Short-term	\$	Parks Department and Marketing and Communications Coordinator
c. Coordinate with City departments on website updates to incorporate online reservation systems as necessary.	Program	Short-term	\$	Parks Department, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, City staff, and City Departments
d. Promote the reservation system to the community.	Policy	On-going	\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator and City staff
Parks and Recreation Project 3: Collaborate with City departments on a centralized marketing campaign for parks and recreational facilities within the City.				
a. Work with the City’s Municipal Marketing and Communications Coordinator on park promotion strategies using the City’s website, social media, local public broadcasters, Tour Connersville, and other local agencies.	Program	On-going	\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator and Parks Department



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Parks and Recreation Project 4: Develop and updated Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) approved Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan to identify system needs and priorities, garner public support, and become eligible for additional grant opportunities.				
a. Visit the IDNR website and review the requirements for completing a IDNR-approved plan.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	Parks Department
b. Identify staff capacity to complete the master plan in accordance with the IDNR planning guidelines. (If capacity exists, skip to Step e.)	Policy	Short-term	N/A	Parks Department
c. If no capacity exists, identify funds to hire a consultant specializing in parks and recreation to complete the plan.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	Parks Department
d. Prepare a Request for Proposals in accordance with State guidelines and solicit proposals from qualified consultants.	Program	Short-term	N/A	Parks Department
e. Complete the Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan in accordance with IDNR guidelines.	Policy	Short-term	\$\$	Parks Department
f. Submit the plan to the IDNR for review and approval.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	Parks Department
g. Adopt the plan as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.	Policy	On-going	N/A	Parks Department, City staff, and City Council
h. As parks are constructed or improved, coordinate accessibility needs of the parks system with the City's ADA Transition Plan.	Project	Long-term	\$\$\$	Parks Department, City staff, Street Department, and City engineer
Parks and Recreation Project 5: Expand the existing trails systems.				
a. Develop recommendations for a comprehensive trail system in coordination with an updated Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan, City Transportation Plan, and Capital Improvements Plan.	Policy	Short- to Mid-term	\$	Parks Department and Street Department
i. Identify key districts, places, and amenities throughout the City that would benefit from enhanced trail development.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Parks Department and Street Department
ii. Identify inexpensive ways of denoting trails for near-term projects and identify goals and funding opportunities for long-term trail projects.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Parks Department and Street Department
b. Develop an inexpensive sign and pavement marking program to denote bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and official routes within the City for use on near-term projects.	Policy	Short- to Mid-term	\$	Parks Department and Street Department
i. Implement signage and striping on existing infrastructure as a starting point for developing a long-term trail system.	Project	Mid-term	\$\$	Parks Department and Street Department



Broadband Access Vision Statement

IMPROVE AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO QUALITY INTERNET SERVICES TO SUPPORT THE GROWING NEEDS OF RESIDENTS, VISITORS, BUSINESSES, AND INSTITUTIONAL FACILITIES AND ENHANCE OVERALL COMMUNICATION, BUSINESS OPERATIONS, AND EDUCATION EFFORTS ACROSS THE COMMUNITY.

Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Broadband Access Project 1: Develop a list of current, viable broadband providers.				
a. Collaborate with local entities such as the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Group to collect the names of providers, services they offer, and contact information.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff
b. Make a list of these items to post on the City’s website and hand out as flyers as a source of information for people to access.	Policy	Short-term to On-going	\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator
c. Link each of the provider’s information back to their respective websites.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	Marketing and Communications Coordinator
Broadband Access Project 2: Work with local broadband providers to ensure competitive pricing for community businesses and residents.				
a. Meet with providers to determine what programs can be created that may reduce pricing.	Program	Short-term	N/A	City staff, Mayor, and City Council
b. Create a flat-rate offer that can be give to low-income households meeting a determined set of criteria.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	\$\$ to \$\$\$	City staff, internet/ broadband providers, Mayor, and City Council
c. Create a roll-out plan to help improve services to residents.	Policy	Mid- to Long-term	\$\$	City staff and internet/ broadband providers
d. Market new programs, incentives, and deals as they become available.	Policy	On-going	\$\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator and internet/ broadband providers



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Broadband Access Project 3: Work with local broadband providers to pursue funding from the State's Next Level Connections Broadband Program to expand broadband service in and around Connersville in the future.				
a. Begin discussions with broadband service providers before the next funding round opens.	Program	Short-term	N/A	Mayor, City Council, City staff, and internet/broadband providers
b. Consider collaborating with surrounding towns and Fayette County.	Program	N/A	N/A	Mayor, City Council, and City staff
c. Develop a list of potential projects.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Mayor, City Council, City staff, and internet/broadband providers
d. Evaluate projects in terms of greatest return on investment to unserved end users, including households, businesses, and community anchor institutions.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Mayor, City Council, and City staff
e. Develop a project budget and identify local matching funds.	Policy	Short- to Mid-term	\$	Mayor, City Council, and City staff
f. Submit a letter of intent when the next funding round opens.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Mayor, City Council, and City staff
g. Submit a project application.	Policy	Short-term	\$	Mayor, City Council, and City staff
Broadband Access Project 4: Expand the free downtown Wi-Fi system to better serve businesses, residents, and visitors, incentivize development, and promote downtown revitalization.				
a. Work with the current provider of the downtown internet services to determine how to best improve speeds.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	\$	Mayor, City Council, City staff, and internet/broadband providers
i. Identify where additional infrastructure can be set up in the downtown to increase service range.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	\$	Mayor, City Council, City staff, and internet/broadband providers
b. As business owners come to the downtown, allow them to utilize the free Wi-Fi for their operations to reduce their start-up costs.	Program	On-going	N/A	Mayor, City Council, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, and City staff
c. Market the downtown as a place for access to Wi-Fi to increase resident and business attraction to the area.	Program	On-going	\$	Mayor, City Council, and Marketing and Communications Coordinator



Historic and Archaeological Resources Vision Statement

PROTECT AND PROMOTE THE CITY’S UNIQUE HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSETS TO PRESERVE AND CELEBRATE THE COMMUNITY’S CHARACTER AND ENCOURAGE LOCAL TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT.

Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Historic and Archaeological Resources Project 1: Complete an Economic Development Plan to develop additional strategies for protecting historic downtown structures and assets.				
a. Consult with a grant writer on pursuing an OCRA-funded Economic Development Plan.	Program	Short-term	N/A	City staff
b. Prepare a Request-for-Proposal and hire a consultant to lead the economic development planning process.	Program	Short-term	\$\$	City staff
c. Develop the plan with community input.	Program	Short-term	\$	City staff and consultant
d. Gain formal approval of the plan from OCRA.	Program	Short-term	N/A	Consultant and OCRA representative
e. Adopt the Economic Development Plan as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff and City Council
f. Pursue construction grant funding opportunities based on the outlined priorities.	Policy	Mid- to Long-term	N/A	City staff
Historic and Archaeological Resources Project 2: Adopt historic districts as overlay districts into the existing zoning ordinance, and as a part of a future unified development ordinance.				
a. Review historic overlay district ordinances and s from peer communities.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff, APC
b. Identify areas of coverage in coordination with the existing historic districts.	Policy	Short-term	\$	City staff, APC
c. Draft a historic overlay district amendment for review and revision.	Policy	Short-term	\$	City staff, APC
d. Hold a public hearing and adopt the amendment via Plan Commission approval.	Program	Short-term	N/A	City staff, APC
e. Adopt requirements as a part of a future unified development ordinance.	Program	Short-term	N/A	City staff, APC
Historic and Archaeological Resources Project 3: Develop design guidelines to be included in the existing zoning ordinance and future unified development ordinance to ensure appropriate restoration of existing, historic structures and construction of new buildings in the downtown.				
a. Consult with a design professional such as a preservation architect to establish appropriate design guidelines.	Policy	Short-term	\$\$	City staff
b. Engage the City and local property owners in the process.	Program	Short-term	\$	Consultant and City staff
c. Education the public about design guidelines.	Program	Short-term	\$	Consultant and City staff
d. Adopt guidelines via the Plan Commission.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	Consultant and Plan Commission



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Historic and Archaeological Resources Project 4: Collaborate with local, private, and non-profit entities on a centralized marketing campaign to promote local assets and amenities and coordinate local events.				
a. Establish regular meetings between the City's Municipal Marketing and Communications Coordinator and local historical organizations for a collaborative approach to marketing and promoting local assets.	Program	On-going	\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator and City staff
b. Identify funds for marketing materials, such as brochures, radio and television advertising, etc.	Program	Short-term	N/A	Marketing and Communications Coordinator and City staff
c. Implement a method for tracking marketing results.	Program	Short-term	\$ to \$\$	Marketing and Communications Coordinator
Historic and Archaeological Resources Project 5: Create a facade improvement program to help downtown property owners preserve and enhance important building stock.				
a. Identify potential funding sources to support a facade improvement program such as grants or TIF district revenue.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff, Mayor, City Council, Redevelopment Commission
b. Consult with a historic preservation architect to evaluate and determine specific building needs for key structures in the downtown, including cost estimates and timelines for needed work.	Policy	Short-term	\$\$	City staff and consultant
c. Incorporate these evaluations and cost estimates into marketing materials for vacant and underutilized downtown structures.	Policy	Short- to Mid-term	\$\$	City staff
d. Develop and host educational sessions about the program, design guidelines, and historic preservation techniques.	Program	Short-term	\$	City staff
e. Encourage immediate restoration through a 'quick fix' approach for storefronts, which include simple repairs to wood, touch-up painting, removing abandoned signs, and creating displays in empty windows.	Project	On-going	\$\$	City staff
f. Evaluate the successes and possible shortcomings of the program and make modifications as needed.	Policy	Mid-term	\$	City staff



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Historic and Archaeological Resources Project 6: Increase code enforcement efforts in the downtown to ensure buildings are not damaged beyond repair because of neglect or disinvestment by property owners.				
a. Conduct an information campaign about City codes and widespread code enforcement violations, such as abandoned or poorly-maintained buildings, trash, tall grass, weeds, graffiti, and inoperable vehicles.	Program	On-going	\$	Building inspector and City staff
b. Enforce the existing ticketing system and collaborate with private property owners on compliance instead of directly issuing court orders for code enforcement violations.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff
c. Consult with peer communities about successful efforts and explore recommendations of the American Association of Code Enforcement.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	Building inspector and City staff
d. Consider the creation of a code enforcement board or delegate responsibility to the Plan Commission as part of the zoning ordinance and their official Rules of Procedure.	Policy	Short-term	\$\$	City staff, Mayor, and City Council
e. Develop a pilot program to target a specific issue within the City for a 6-month time frame to gauge how successful the program can be.	Policy	Short-term	\$\$	City staff
f. Seek approval from the City Council for the pilot program.	Program	Short-term	N/A	City staff and City Council
g. Implement the pilot program and monitor results, including number of existing violations prior to the start of the program, number of owners/tenants/landlords contacted, number of violations remedied, and the number of citations issued.	Program	Short- to Mid-term	\$\$	City staff



Hazard Mitigation Vision Statement

PROACTIVELY PLAN EFFORTS TO REDUCE THE RISK TO PEOPLE AND PROPERTY FROM POTENTIAL HAZARDS, NATURAL OR OTHERWISE, THAT COULD IMPACT THE RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES, CITY FACILITIES, AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE FUTURE.

Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Hazard Mitigation Project 1: As the zoning ordinance is amended and replaced over time with a unified development ordinance, (1) include incentives for the use of green infrastructure in new developments and redevelopments and (2) include a wellhead protection overlay district.				
a. See Land Use and Natural Resources chapters				
Hazard Mitigation Project 2: Develop, refine, and train on emergency management protocols with local first responders, City staff, and the general public.				
a. Establish reoccurring meetings between local first responders and the Fayette County Emergency Management Agency (EMA).	Program	On-going	N/A	City staff, Fire Department, Police Department, Utilities Department, and Fayette County Emergency Management Agency (EMA)
b. Review and analyze existing policies and procedures and provide updates to existing hazard mitigation procedures.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff and Fayette County EMA
c. Collaborate with the Fayette County EMA on updates to the County website to provide additional information regarding key contact information and training.	Program	On-going	\$	City staff, Fire Department, Police Department, Utilities Department, and Fayette County EMA
d. Implement a citywide information campaign on hazard mitigation resources.	Program	Short- to Mid-Term	\$\$	City staff, Fire Department, Police Department, Utilities Department, Fayette EMA, and Marketing and Communications Coordinator



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Hazard Mitigation Project 3: Explore regional detention improvements to responsibly reduce the size of the Whitewater River floodplain, resulting in fewer structures within the floodplain, and lesser impacts during flood events.				
a. Examine local waterways, flood areas, and soils to determine potential regional detention facility location(s).	Program	Mid-term	\$\$	City engineer, City staff, and Utilities Department
b. Consider design options that may allow the facility to be used as a recreation destination when not fully inundated.	Policy	Short-term	\$\$	City engineer, City staff, and Utilities Department
c. Consult with an engineering professional to develop potential cost estimates.	Program	Short-term	\$\$ to \$\$\$	City engineer, City staff, and consultant
d. Evaluate financing mechanism, such as additional stormwater impact fees, sale of usage rights for private developments so that they don't have to construct and maintain their own detention systems, and state and federal grants or low interest loans.	Program	Mid-term	\$\$	City engineer and City staff
e. Conduct cost-benefit analyses on potential stormwater improvements, reductions of the flood area, and the number of structures that could be removed from flood hazard areas.	Program	Mid-term	\$\$	City engineer and City staff
f. Pursue funding opportunities and construct the facilities.	Project	Long-term	\$\$\$	City engineer, City staff, and Mayor
Hazard Mitigation Project 4: Update the ADA Transition Plan for public facilities that may serve as emergency response shelters to the general public.				
a. Consult with an architect, the City's Building Inspector, or another professional to write an ADA Transition Plan update.	Program	Short-term	\$\$	City engineer, Mayor, City staff, Street Department and consultant
b. Review and analyze the existing ADA Transition Plan to determine facilities that have been improved, removed, or added to the City's infrastructure.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City engineer, Mayor, City staff, Street Department and consultant
c. Analyze existing facilities to determine deficiencies in accessibility.	Policy	Short-term	\$	City engineer, Mayor, City staff, Street Department and consultant
d. Prepare the ADA Transition Plan update.	Policy	Short-term	\$	City engineer, Mayor, City staff, Street Department and consultant
e. Prioritize facility improvements.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City engineer, Mayor, and City staff
f. Pursue funding to construct the necessary improvements.	Project	Long-term	\$\$\$	City engineer, Mayor, City staff, and Street Department



Projects/Action Steps	Type	Timeline	Cost	Responsible Parties
Hazard Mitigation Project 5: Provide an online resource of contact information related to hazard mitigation planning and reporting.				
a. Develop a committee of City and County representatives to compile and develop a resource list for the City and County websites.	Program	Short-term	\$\$	City staff
b. Review websites of peer communities, including Richmond and Wayne County.	Policy	Short-term	N/A	City staff and Marketing and Communications Coordinator
c. Update the City and County’s website with critical information for hazard mitigation planning and reporting.	Program	On-going	N/A	City staff and Marketing and Communications Coordinator



Potential Funding Sources

The following list provides a description of agencies and organizations that could potentially fund recommendations and projects described earlier in the plan. Because individual programs change from time to time and funding may not always be available in a given budget year, Connersville should continue to search for and monitor grants and other funding programs to identify new opportunities as they become available.

INDIANA HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (IHCD)

IHCD helps communities build upon their assets to create places with ready access to opportunities, goods, and services. They also promote, finance, and support a broad range of housing solutions, from temporary shelters to homeownership. IHCD's work is done in partnership with developers, lenders, investors, and nonprofit organizations that use their financing to serve low- and moderate-income Hoosiers. Programs may focus on preservation and construction of affordable housing, redevelopment and reuse of vacant and underutilized structures, and down payment assistance directly to borrowers.

INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (INDOT)

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) offers funding to Indiana municipalities through its Local Public Agency Program. Specific funding opportunities and fiscal resources vary by year, but programs are typically in the form of partnerships between INDOT and Hoosier communities, both urban and rural, to invest in infrastructure projects that catalyze economic development, create jobs, and strengthen local transportation networks. Projects that are eligible for funding may include roads, bridges, and active transportation projects such as trails and multi-use paths.

INDIANA ARTS COMMISSION (IAC)

The Indiana Arts Commission is an agency of State Government funded by the Indiana General Assembly and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. The Arts Commission advocates arts development opportunities across the state, and stewards effective use of public and private resources for the arts. It stimulates public interest in, and

participation with, Indiana's diverse arts resources and cultural heritage. The Arts Commission works to enhance public awareness of the arts, life-long learning opportunities, and arts education programs. They support arts organizations with operational funds as well as fund individual public arts projects.

INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) administers programs utilizing both federal and state funds. Program goals and funding cycles vary; past and present programs focus on historic preservation; land conservation; parks and recreation planning, construction, and programming; and trail construction.

INDIANA FINANCE AUTHORITY (IFA) PROGRAMS

The Indiana Finance Authority offers several financial programs and incentives to businesses, manufacturing facilities and communities. This includes assisting in the redevelopment of brownfield properties; providing low-interest loans for municipal water and wastewater infrastructure; and issuing tax-exempt bonds to lower the cost of financing for manufacturing projects, health care facilities, private institutions of higher education and certain other qualified projects.

INDIANA LANDMARKS

Indiana Landmarks makes grants available to nonprofit organizations to rescue and restore jeopardized historic properties. Some programs will fund professional architectural and engineering feasibility studies and other preservation consulting services, as well as organizational development, while others fund loans to buy and/or restore historic properties. In making loan decisions, special consideration is frequently given to projects that will save buildings listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or located in a National or State Register historic district.



INDIANA OFFICE OF COMMUNITY AND RURAL AFFAIRS

The Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) works with Indiana communities to build relevant and economically thriving places where people want to live, work and grow. The Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs works with local, state and national partners to provide resources and technical assistance to aid communities in shaping and achieving their vision for community and economic development.

OCRA frequently operates a variety of programs funding many different types of improvements at any given time. Past and present programs have focused on preservation and rehabilitation of historic properties; economic development activities for sites, buildings, and equipment; public facilities; stormwater infrastructure; municipal water and wastewater systems; trails; and broadband infrastructure deployment.

INDIANA HUMANITIES

Indiana Humanities offers a competitive grants program which awards funding to Indiana not-for-profit organizations, schools, and other institutions. These grants respond to initiatives from not-for-profit organizations that wish to sponsor public programs such as town hall meetings, workshops, lectures, exhibits, reading and discussion programs, and production of humanities resources.

COMMUNITY LOANS

A Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) provides capital, credit, and financial services to markets and populations that are underserved by traditional financial institutions. Communities can rebuild their physical environments and help businesses create jobs by accessing the capital and services of a CDFI. There are several CDFIs currently serving Indiana communities.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA)

The USDA offers loans, grants, and loan guarantees to support essential services such as housing, economic development, health care, first responder services and equipment, and water, electric and communications infrastructure. Technical assistance is also offered to help communities undertake community empowerment programs.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (EDA)

The EDA uses federal funds to establish a foundation for sustainable job growth and the building of durable regional economies throughout the United States. EDA encourages its partners around the country to develop initiatives that advance new ideas and creative approaches to address rapidly evolving economic conditions. EDA works directly with communities and regions to help them build the capacity for economic development based on local business conditions and needs. EDA's grant investments in planning, technical assistance, and infrastructure construction are designed to leverage existing regional assets to support the implementation of economic development strategies that make it easier for businesses to start and grow.

EDA's varied programs and structure enable nimble operations and allow for innovation and responsiveness to changing economic needs and conditions faced by its local and state government partners. Grants made under these programs are designed to leverage existing regional assets to support the implementation of economic development strategies that advance new ideas and creative approaches to advance economic prosperity in distressed communities.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

Grants are available to support the creation of art that meets the highest standards of excellence, public engagement with diverse and excellent art, lifelong learning in the arts, and the strengthening of communities through the arts. The National Endowment for the Arts funds both organizations and individuals.

U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (SBA)

SBA provides a number of financial assistance programs for small businesses that have been specifically designed to meet key financing needs, including debt financing, surety bonds, and equity financing.





18

APPENDICES

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETINGS.....	260
CPC KICK-OFF MEETING	260
CPC MEETING 1.....	262
CPC ONLINE ACTIVITY	264
CPC MEETING 2	265
CPC MEETING 4.....	265
FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS	265
BUSINESS FOCUS GROUP	265
CITY STAFF/DEPARTMENTS FOCUS GROUP	265
STUDENT GOVERNMENT FOCUS GROUP	266
GENERAL FOCUS GROUP	266
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	267
CELEBRATION IN THE ‘VILLE EVENT	267
VOTING ACTIVITY	268
“MY ONE PROJECT FOR CONNERSVILLE” BOARD COMMENTS:.....	269
MAP DATASETS	270

Comprehensive Planning Committee Meetings

CPC Kick-Off Meeting

Agenda (8 December 2021)

1. Introductions
2. Project Expectations
 - a. What must this plan address?
3. Scope & Schedule Review
4. Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC)
 - a. Members
 - b. Meeting date, time, and location
5. Community Engagement
 - a. Focus groups
 - b. Public workshops
 - i. Potential locations or events
 - ii. Dates (or dates to avoid)
6. Project website
7. Information Needs
 - a. Past plans and studies
 - b. Recent, in-progress, upcoming transportation and utility improvements
 - c. GIS data
8. Next Steps
 - a. CPC invitations
 - b. CPC meeting 1
 - c. Focus group participant list

Notes

1. Attendees
 - a. Chad Frank, Mayor
 - b. Dale Strong, County Commissioner
 - c. Diana Phillips, City Council
 - d. Alexandra Pflug, Fayette Community Foundation
 - e. Brian Durham, Fayette County Chamber – Exec. Director
 - f. Bill MacDaniel, Fayette County APC
 - g. Adam Peaper, REA
 - h. Cecil Penland, REA

2. Project Expectations
 - a. What must this plan address?
 - i. Identify vision and timeline to get there
 - ii. Not sit on shelf for ten years
 - iii. City has potential, need help to better capitalize on it
 - » Tourism and history (Canal House, Historical Museum)
 - iv. Land use direction
 - » Problems arise and plan is too vague
 - v. Analysis with zoning and subdivision codes
 - » County uses an old MPO code
 - » Practicality of zoning districts, general business/commercial district is same for downtown and highway areas
 - b. Needs to consider institutional knowledge and necessary skills, will they always be here, approaching retirement
 - c. Help to facilitate conversion to Unified Development Ordinance
 - d. Consider multiple audiences and user bases
 - e. More usable, incremental recommendations
 - i. Short, med, long term and responsible parties
 - f. Community engagement, plan should feel like this is from the community
 - i. Would like to get feedback from prior residents
 - » People who left after school and never came back
 - » Those who willingly moved away
 - g. Not going to have past industrial base, but could be bedroom community to Indy, Cincinnati, Dayton



- h. Broadband process highlighted some issues, how can we enhance technology to make ourselves more attractive as a bedroom community and/or e-community (remote work) and better support/attract online businesses (or transition existing brick and mortar to more online)
 - i. What amenities are needed for these people
 - ii. Meeting/planning fatigue, don't duplicate same questions and exercises, build from these past processes
 - » Thoughtful about where meetings are held because transportation is an issue
 - iii. Zoning increasing cost of development without necessarily resulting in a better built product
 - iv. Slumlord issues
 - v. Construction standards – require streets that are too wide, houses that are too big, difficult to get an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) permitted
 - » Aging population doesn't need big houses on big lots
 - vi. Tourism/hospitality – don't have hotels, could we better support Airbnb market
 - vii. Review permitted uses by district, example of a bed and breakfast not permitted in R-1 when it makes sense
 - viii. Low-income residents have historically had least input
 - » Difficult to get involved, more suspicion towards process
 - ix. Missing engagement of 20-30 year old age range.
1. Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC)
 - a. Members
 - i. REA to send list of potential groups to be represented
 - ii. REA to share draft invite letter
 - b. Meeting date, time, location
 - i. Thursdays are better (except 4th Thursday)
 - ii. 2nd or 4th week probably preferred
 2. Community Engagement
 - a. Focus groups
 - i. REA to send list of potential groups to be represented
 - b. Public workshops
 - i. Potential locations or events
 - ii. May 14th - festival
 - iii. Early July – County Fair
 - iv. Should use city buildings – Miller or Roberts buildings
 - v. Would like to see a virtual option
 3. Information Needs
 - a. Past plans and studies
 - b. Recent, in-progress, upcoming transportation and utility improvements
 - c. GIS data
 - i. WTH maintains
 - ii. Need to request through Commissioners
 - iii. Have up to date flood, airport overlay, wellhead protection layers
 4. Next Steps
 - a. CPC invitations
 - b. Meeting 1 in January
 - c. Develop focus group participant list
 5. Miscellaneous
 - a. Just approved a new senior housing project
 - b. Have interest in another
 - c. Housing study recently completed
 - d. Connersville selected for new OCRA Hope program, will start in 2023



CPC Meeting 1

The CPC did not have time discuss every subject matter in this meeting. In order to continue receiving feedback and concerns from the CPC, an online activity was setup after this meeting by the consultants.

Agenda (16 February 2022)

1. Additional CPC Member Discussion
2. Subject Matter Discussion Questions
 - a. Land Use
 - b. Government and Fiscal Capacity
 - c. Public Facilities and Services
 - d. Placemaking
 - e. Economic Development
 - f. Housing
 - g. Transportation
 - h. Agriculture
 - i. Natural Resources
 - j. Parks and Recreation
 - k. Broadband Access
 - l. Historic and Archaeological Resources
 - m. Hazard Mitigation
3. Next Steps

Notes

1. Attendees
 - a. Chad Frank, Mayor
 - b. Alexandra Pflug, Fayette Community Foundation
 - c. Brian Durham, Fayette County Chamber - Executive Director
 - d. Bill MacDaniel - Fayette County APC
 - e. Becky Marvel, Purdue Extension - NEP Coordinator
 - f. Adam Reaper, REA
 - g. Cecil Penland, REA
 - h. Catherin Kazmierczak, REA

2. Land Use
 - a. Zoning ordinance and zoning map need to be amended to better align with current use and/or future vision
 - b. There are several opportunities for development/redevelopment on the north side of the city
 - c. Opportunity for growth surrounding the airport
 - d. A lot of new neighborhood development is happening outside the city limits
 - e. Several neighborhoods within the city are seeing an increase in investment
 - f. Vacant lots
 - i. Several scattered vacant lots, but no formal records are kept
 - ii. An inventory of vacant lots is needed
 - g. Limited opportunity to convert industrial or commercial uses into residential
 - h. The airport was voted “best airport east of the Mississippi”
 - i. An existing agricultural strip on the west side of Western Avenue could be developed
 - j. The City is experiencing an outward migration of seniors to Liberty
3. Government and Fiscal Capacity
 - a. City needs additional staff
 - i. City Engineer
 - ii. Marketing and Communications
 - iii. Utilities Staff
 - iv. Planner
 - v. Building Inspector
 - » Keep staff members working in their own line of work, not doing several jobs
 - b. Assessed Values
 - i. May have increased in some areas but likely have decreased when looking at the city more broadly
 - » Overall, the tax base is not balanced
 - ii. Tax caps make it hard for the city to increase revenues
 - c. Additional capital needs
 - i. City could always use more funding
 - ii. Main problem the city is facing is the continued decrease in population
 - iii. Inflation is hurting the city



4. Public Facilities and Services

- a. Two stormwater systems
 - i. Completely separated storm sewer, mostly newer/north development
 - ii. Combines system
 - » Rather than continue to try to separate the combines system, the City is investing \$17 million in improvements at existing treatment plan to increase temporary storage capacity
 - iii. Want to limit how much runoff goes into the river
- b. The City has three fire stations, which isn't sustainable financially, but is needed to provide adequate service to all parts of the community and the local industry
- c. In need of new police vehicles
 - i. City has been purchasing used vehicles and fleet age is above average

5. Placemaking

- a. Events:
 - i. Polar Express (largest attended event bringing in about 80,000 people)
 - ii. Free Fair that happens every year
 - iii. 4th of July fireworks
 - iv. Armed Forces Parade
 - v. Celebration in the 'Ville
 - vi. Farm to Table
 - » The point is to grow community pride
 - » Allows the community to come out, showcase cooking skills, utilize local foods and goods, and hang out together
 - vii. Farmer's Market
 - » Last 23 weeks out of the year
- b. The City does not have a main downtown gathering space but would like to have something for dedicated events
- c. There are not enough enclosed facilities to host events
- d. Several of the downtown buildings are empty
- e. John Conner's Nature Preserve is an underutilized asset in the city
- f. Downtown is not well connected
- g. City working to expand programs with Ivy Tech
- h. The high school is an early college school

- i. Some graduating students have 1-2 semesters worth of college credits
- ii. Students travel from the region to take vocational classes in Connersville
- i. The City is lacking in health care and community services
 - i. Several facilities have closed and not been reopened
 - ii. Majority of procedures go to Reid or Rush County
 - iii. Vision and dental services are available in the city, but basic medical services are lacking
 - iv. Mental health care is not prevalent
 - v. Centerstone serves 600 to 800 families locally

6. Housing

- a. Mix of housing quality
 - i. Some housing conditions may be so poor that people should not live in those structures
- b. City has some interest in developing new housing types including condos
 - i. Would be located near the country club
- c. Need for transitional housing

7. Next Steps

- a. Reach out to various individuals and try to get them to join the CPC
- b. Develop focus group participant list
- c. Will send remaining questions to group for response
- d. Meet again in March



CPC Online Activity

For this online activity, CPC members typed their responses to subject matter questions and additional thoughts on the matter into a text box

1. Economic Development: What are the limiting factors regarding the City's economic development efforts?
 - a. Quality of life amenities; workforce availability; transportation
 - b. Streets and sidewalks
 - i. The City is making progress regarding the ADA transition plan, but there are still many areas that lack sidewalks or have sidewalks that create hazards for people with physical and eyesight disabilities
 - c. Workforce quality/education makes Connersville and Fayette County less desirable for high skill, good paying jobs
 - d. Limited local entertainment and associated activity options also affects desirability as a bedroom community
 - e. Uneven access to high speed internet
 - f. Especially with the long-term trends we will see regarding the price of gasoline, an hour drive from Indy/Dayton/Cincinnati is not a great advantage that some people assume
2. Housing
 - a. Not enough housing types available for the community
 - b. Due to continuous decline in the community affluence and an aging population reliant on fixed sources of income, affordable homeownership options and quality rental options are limited
 - c. Current zoning square footage requirements and minimum dwelling size have a negative effect on affordability. Due to aging local builders, there are fewer trades people that are local. The void is being filled by out-of-town builders.
3. Transportation
 - a. Too many safety concerns. A windshield survey will be beneficial to understanding the extent of safety hazards along with sidewalks and curb conditions
 - b. No capacity or congestion issues
 - c. The City is poorly linked via safe pedestrian and bicycle routes
 - d. The Nickel Plate Trail has many opportunities to connect the community
4. Agriculture
 - a. Should identify opportunities for urban agriculture, such as community gardens
5. Natural Resources
 - a. City underutilizes its connection to the Whitewater River
 - b. A Wellhead Protection Plan was created but not adopted as overlay districts in the zoning code
6. Parks and Recreation
 - a. More equipment for small children to play on in underserved areas of the City
 - b. Outdoor and indoor equipment suitable for seniors and wheelchairs needed
 - c. Eastern Connersville, south end of the City, and the area between the Babe Ruth Complex and Robert's Park are not adequately served
7. Historic and Archaeological Resources
 - a. Historic assets are not adequately protected



CPC Meeting 2

Agenda (28 March 2022)

1. New or Noteworthy Updates
2. Update on Additional Members
3. Community Engagement
 - a. Focus groups
 - i. Attendee list
 - ii. Virtual or in-person
 - iii. Date(s)
 - b. Community Workshop
 - i. Format
 - ii. Location
 - iii. Date
4. Project Website
 - a. www.planconnersville.com (or alternative)
 - b. Live by end of week
5. Information Needs
6. Subject Matter Discussions Review
7. Next Steps

CPC Meeting 4

Agenda (1 June 2022)

1. Socioeconomic Analysis
2. Vision, Goals, and Projects
3. What is missing?
4. Next Steps

Notes

1. Socioeconomic Discussion
 - a. More education is needed to support future workforce needs
 - b. City should plan to regularly update the Comprehensive Plan
 - c. Most new housing development is happening outside of the City
2. Vision, Goals, and Projects Review
 - a. Land use plans should include a statement about annexation
 - b. The City needs to hire a City Engineer and a Building Inspector
 - c. Build community by organizing neighborhood meetings and organizations
 - d. More community events, such as a Winter Farmer's Market

Focus Group Meetings

Business Focus Group

1. Downtown renovations and investment
 - a. Hesitation to invest because of perception that there isn't money to go around
 - b. Recent renovations have helped improve the look of the area
 - c. Railroad is a tourist attraction, but there's nothing to do in downtown after events
2. Local available resources
 - a. Business resources are not well-known; resource sheet needed
 - b. Lack of nutrition and fitness in the City
 - c. Possibly start a "health month" to increase excitement around healthier lifestyles
 - d. Interested in an innovation hub
3. Local organizations are not collaborating enough; unified vision needed and coordination

City Staff/Departments Focus Group

1. Individual and/or departmental needs
 - a. Fire Department
 - i. Improved fire training facility
 - » Ball park on the southside could be a good training ground
 - ii. Aging apparatus needing replaced
 - iii. Could use more staff
 2. Police Department
 - a. Training facility would be a huge benefit
 - b. Equipment is good condition but not enough staff
 - c. Wages are good but not competitive with nearby towns and cities
 - d. Concern about people transferring laterally
 3. EMS
 - a. Difficult to compete with private companies
 - b. Cost of medical education makes employment opportunities locally difficult
 - c. Nearest facility training is in Kokomo, IN
 4. Parks Department
 - a. Root of problem is in population growth
 - i. Parks can provide quality of life amenities that attract new employees
 - b. Need better marketing; people don't know what we have
 - c. More access to the river needed



5. Street Department
 - a. Need a plan to address aging infrastructure
 - b. Missing City Engineer position
 - c. Better/streamlined area planning process
 - i. Existing process is slow
 - d. Need to prepare for possible development
 - i. Sidewalk improvements
 - ii. Aesthetic improvements
 - e. Need to update ADA transition plan
6. Other Departments
 - a. Airport needs new hanger and a marketing program
 - b. Airport can accommodate a Boeing 737 aircraft
 - c. TV 3 needs more staff and funding; cable streaming fees have declined
 - d. City is not well-served by broadband

Student Government Focus Group

1. Lack of job opportunities
2. Lack of activities
 - a. Would like to see a skate park
 - b. Would like to see reuse of old buildings
 - c. Rejuvenate existing parks
 - d. More programmed and public activities
 - e. Would like to see the addition of bike paths
 - i. Central Avenue
 - ii. Regional connections and greenways
 - f. Additional shopping
3. The City has a rich history but it is not marketed well
 - a. Roberts Park
 - b. Local museums
 - c. History and natural assets like the river
 - d. Railways
4. Unfairness within the school system; bullying
5. Disrespect and apathy within the community
6. Other community wants and needs
 - a. Expanded outdoor recreation
 - b. BMX bike track/motorsports track
 - c. Public transit/city bicycles
 - d. Healthier dining options
 - e. Attract larger industries

General Focus Group

1. Organizations need to work together and collaborate
 - a. Barriers to collaboration include ‘turfism’
 - b. Unwillingness to change the ways things are done now
 - c. Government systems don’t always work well together
2. Bring more pride back into the community
3. Location is ideas - between three larger urban areas (Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Dayton)
4. Retaining talent is a major issue
 - a. Ask people/workers what attracted them to Connersville
5. Need to better understand local healthcare needs and better practices
6. Need qualified workforce
7. The Whitewater Valley Aquifer is a major asset
8. Need better housing standards
 - a. New ordinances attempted in the past, but have seen overwhelming protest
9. Need updated ordinances to support building pride
10. Need to leverage private investment to support community development
11. Not a lot of opportunity for youth activity



Community Engagement

Celebration in the 'Ville Event

Welcome Board:



CITY OF CONNERSVILLE Comprehensive Plan

Celebration in the 'Ville
Saturday, May 14, 2022

The City of Connersville is currently engaged in a process to update their Comprehensive Plan. Today is an opportunity for you to participate in developing the future vision for the community and reviewing several of the goals that have been developed.

This is an informal event. Consultant team members are happy to talk and answer any questions you may have. Your input is critical and the feedback collected from today's event will be used in the plan and to guide project recommendations.

Thank you in advance for your participation!

For more information and input opportunities, please visit the project website at:

Scan this with your
phone's camera



planconnersville.com

CITY OF CONNERSVILLE Comprehensive Plan
Celebration in the 'Ville | 14 May 2022



Voting Activity

At the Celebration in the ‘Ville event, there were two activities in which the public could partake. Participants were asked to pick which of the topics were most important to them by using paper money to vote. They were allowed to distribute six paper dollars however they wanted. For example, they could distribute one dollar across six topics, or put all six dollars under one category. This allowed them to vote for the topics that were the most important for them to see the community and local government invest local capital into.

A total of 30 votes were cast. The following are the totals for each subject matter topic included in the plan:

1. Land Use: 2 votes (7%)
2. Government and Fiscal Capacity: No votes
3. Public Facilities and Services: 2 votes (7%)
4. Placemaking: 4 votes (13%)
5. Economic Development: 1 vote (3%)
6. Housing: 4 votes (13%)
7. Transportation: No votes
8. Agriculture: 2 votes (7%)
9. Natural Resources: No votes
10. Parks and Recreation: 12 votes (40%)
11. Broadband Access 1 vote (3%)
12. Historic and Arch. Resources: 1 vote (3%)
13. Hazard Mitigation: 1 vote (3%)



“My ONE PROJECT for Connersville” Board

Comments:

- » Christmas Drive Thru
- » Community Center
- » Expand bike trail
- » Revamp Downtown
- » Utilize open green spaces
- » More stuff for kids o do after school, weekends, etc.
- » Downtown music
- » Splash pad
- » More restaurants
- » Coordinate business owners and do more car shows
- » Expand walking trail

**My ONE PROJECT
for Connersville is...**

PLACE STICKY
NOTES HERE

If the City could do develop one project, what would you like it to be? Please use a sticky note to record your idea and add it to the board.

CITY OF CONNERSVILLE Comprehensive Plan
Celebration in the 'Ville | 14 May 2022

REA RUSSELL
SMITHSBERGER
ASSOCIATES



Map Datasets

US Census Geographic Identifier ¹	Map ID	Median Household Income ²	Median Home Value	Affordability ³	Median Gross Rent
180419545003	0	\$57,452	\$105,800	1.84	\$722
180419542003	1	\$88,967	\$149,300	1.68	\$879
180419543001	2	\$48,707	\$73,400	1.51	\$803
180419543002	3	\$51,354	\$70,200	1.37	\$1,002
180419540002	4	\$82,313	\$113,300	1.38	\$945
180419541002	5	\$25,298	\$39,700	1.57	\$641
180419545002	6	\$75,096	\$62,500	0.83	\$826
180419546001	7	\$62,917	\$81,500	1.3	\$1,055
180419541001	8	\$37,596	\$70,300	1.87	\$599
180419541003	9	\$26,320	\$62,900	2.39	\$755
180419540001	10	\$60,987	\$114,100	1.87	\$1,056
180419542001	11	\$45,625	\$73,500	1.61	\$615
180419541004	12	\$54,583	\$76,400	1.4	\$719
180419543003	13	\$53,101	\$84,100	1.58	\$751
180419544001	14	\$25,850	\$72,900	2.82	\$1,015
180419544002	15	N/A	\$60,000	0	\$579
180419544003	16	\$45,536	\$80,700	1.77	\$528
180419544004	17	\$27,750	\$101,500	3.66	\$703
180419544005	18	\$31,136	\$53,600	1.72	\$679
180419544006	19	\$63,472	\$76,500	1.21	\$681
180419545001	20	\$26,417	\$103,400	3.91	\$611

1) Some Census Block Groups extend across the City's boundaries.

2) All data are from 2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates unless otherwise stated.

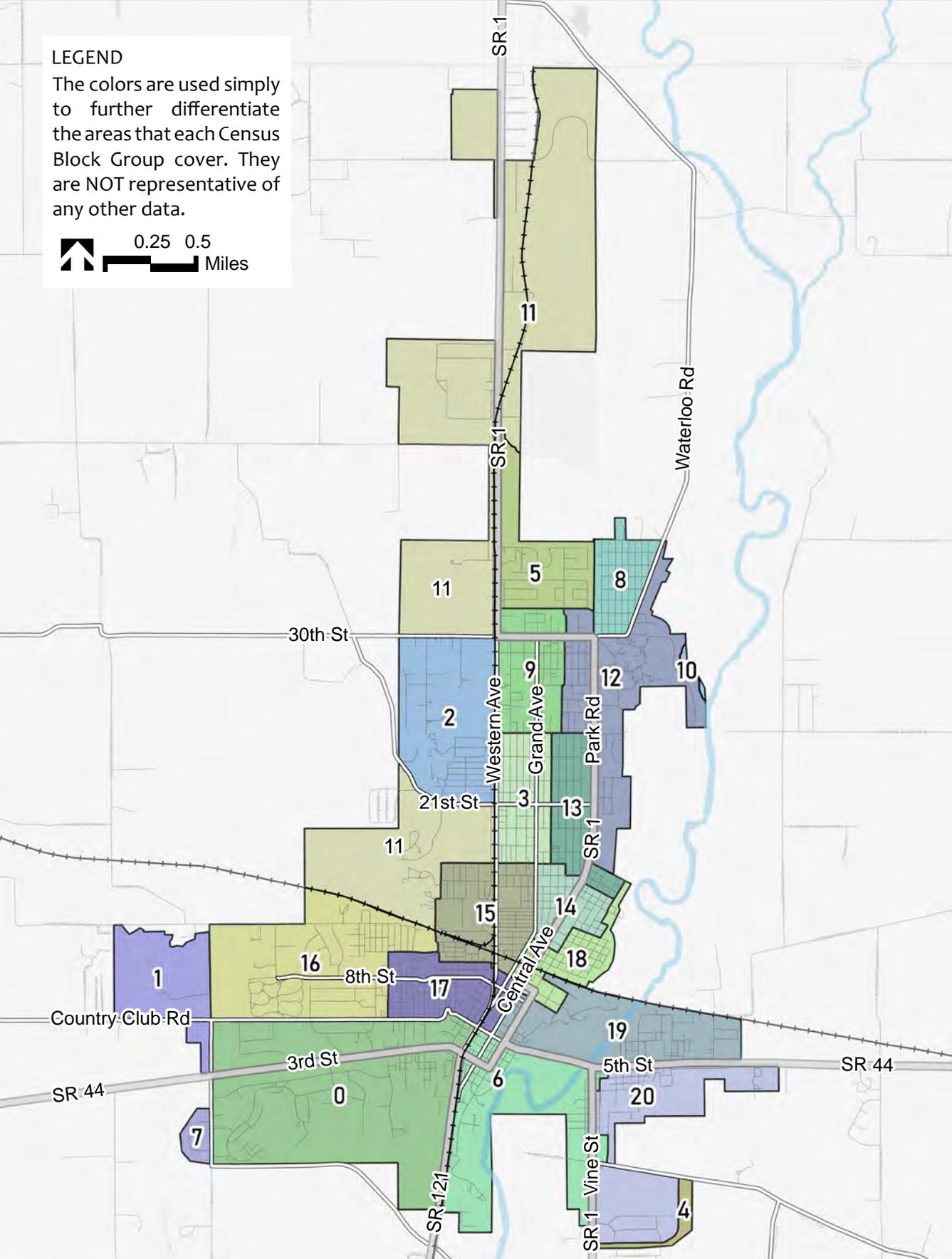
3) Affordability metrics were calculated by dividing the Median Home Value by the Median Household Income. Categories were made as follows: <1.5 is "Most Affordable"; 1.5 - 3.0 is "Generally Affordable"; >3.0 is "Least Affordable."



2020 CENSUS BLOCK GROUPS MAP

LEGEND
The colors are used simply to further differentiate the areas that each Census Block Group cover. They are NOT representative of any other data.

0.25 0.5 Miles



Connersville
ESTABLISHED 1813