



North Vernon Comprehensive Plan

November 2009

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Acknowledgements

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Acknowledgements

Community ownership is a key to the success of any plan. For this reason, we wish to acknowledge the participation and hard work of North Vernon's citizens. Residents who consented to be interviewed and who took part in the visioning workshop, focus groups and public meetings all made valuable contributions.

Special thanks are extended to the Steering Committee which guided the planning process.

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Members of the Economic Growth Team who facilitated the planning process are grateful for the opportunity to learn more about your community. It was an honor to work in North Vernon and we look forward to following the community's prosperous future.

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Introduction

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Introduction

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan is North Vernon's guide to the future. It answers fundamental questions such as: What do we want to change? What do we want to protect?

It also addresses another question that may arise during the process: Why does the city need this plan?

That question is best answered in reverse: What happens without a plan?

North Vernon will still have people wanting to build homes, start businesses and carry on other land uses, but unguided growth threatens what residents say are North Vernon's greatest assets: rural character and small city charm.

Decisions made without reference to a plan are frequently reactionary, responding only to specific problems or proposals. But a long-term view is needed to keep the city from growing simply by accident. It is vital for community leaders to have a shared reference point, or at least a collective set of relevant facts to base decisions upon.

Other potential benefits of planning include providing services more efficiently, directing development to areas with sufficient capacity to support it, making sure adjacent uses are compatible and protecting property values.

The document is an advisory tool for the mayor, board of public works, area plan commission, city council, staff and interested citizens when land use changes are proposed. These changes cover a wide range of topics such as new roads, subdivisions and commercial developments.

But the comprehensive plan is not the final word in land use decisions. A more detailed level of regulations is delivered by ordinances adopted during the zoning and subdivision control process. In many cases, though, the comprehensive plan builds the foundation for regulation changes.

This document expresses general community aspirations, as interpreted through a nine-month process including steering committee meetings, interviews, visioning workshops, focus groups and public hearings.

The plan unfolded in stages, starting with development principles and moving through goals, strategies and ultimately an implementation plan. It is long-range in orientation – intended to reach out 15 to 20 years – but is specific enough to guide the day-to-day activities of the city's elected and appointed officials.

Origins of the Plan

The City of North Vernon Comprehensive Plan was completed through a grant from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs. The city contributed a 10 percent match to receive the grant. The city worked with the Jennings County Area Plan Commission on this document.

The Planning Process

In Indiana, comprehensive planning is permitted by the 500 Series of Title 36-7-4 of the Indiana Code. This law empowers towns, cities and counties to adopt plans. Any plan adopted in Indiana must contain at least the following three 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.

In addition, the law provides for a number of optional elements, including, but not limited to parks and recreation, flood control, transit and natural resource

protection. While each planning process should be custom-designed to meet community needs, nearly all contain the same core elements as found in this plan:

- ◆ Evaluate existing conditions, including strengths and weaknesses, community character, demographics, natural features, etc.
- ◆ Establish goals and objectives for the future
- ◆ Identify alternatives for meeting the goals and objectives
- ◆ Select the most desirable alternative
- ◆ Devise and adopt tools to implement the plan (zoning, subdivision control, capital improvement programming, etc.)
- ◆ Evaluate the success of the plan
- ◆ Revise the plan

These steps are part of a continuing process. Plans must be evaluated, changed and updated as the community changes. These community changes can be gradual, such as demographic trends, technological change or slow economic growth or decline. Sometimes change is more sudden, such as the location of a large new industry in a small community or the loss of a major employer.

Using the Comprehensive Plan

For the comprehensive plan to produce results, it must be understandable and able to be implemented. We believe this plan meets those criteria. The following paragraphs will assist in understanding how to use the plan.

Topic Chapters

Topic chapters include land use, economic development, housing, the environment and natural resources, utilities, transportation and critical

subareas.

The chapters are mostly self-contained examinations of specific issues. They include research, an examination of major issues, strategies and recommendations. Besides making the reader well versed in the topic, they outline years of projects for tackling problems. All of the recommendations are gathered together in the Implementation Plan.

Critical Sub Areas

These are locations with specific land use issues that will have to be addressed in the short-term. The critical sub area plans list the issues and give recommendations to decision makers on tackling them.

Project Sheets

People who are intrigued by a topic or planning tool mentioned in the comprehensive plan can come to this section in the Appendix for background information (see example below).

For example, someone who just finished the section on housing may want to check the section on

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

A Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) identifies capital projects (and some major equipment purchases) during a five year period, providing a planning schedule and identifying opportunities for financing the projects in the plan. Capital Improvements Plans coordinate community planning, financial capacity, and physical development.

A CIP typically includes:

- List of capital improvements (projects or major equipment) to be made
- Projects ranked by priority
- Project cost estimates
- Plan for financing the projects
- Schedule for construction or completion of the projects

There are a number of benefits that may be realized from the Capital Improvements Plan process including:

- Coordination between capital needs and operating budgets
- Enhancement of the community's credit rating, control of its tax rate, and stability in debt service obligations
- Identification of the most economical means of financing capital projects
- Coordination of public capital investments with other public and private development initiatives (Massachusetts Municipal Association, 1997)

The process for developing a Capital Improvements Plan varies by community but may include the following steps:

- Establish a capital planning committee (often the department heads or superintendents)
- Inventory existing assets
- Evaluate projects that have been previously approved, are incomplete, or have not been implemented
- Assess the community's financial capacity

Project Sheets in the Appendix for ideas on Creating a Neighborhood Associations and Traditional Neighborhood Development.

Tips for City Officials and Plan Commissioners

When properly applied, a Comprehensive Plan can make the life of the decision-maker easier. Community leaders can point to the research or maps while explaining how they reached their decision. They can also refer to the input of the local residents whose opinions helped shape the plan's goals.

Local leaders can also ask themselves how they make decisions without a plan. Certainly their long experience in North Vernon guides their judgment, but a group of people making decisions based on their individual perceptions may not lead to a shared vision of the city's future. The Comprehensive Plan provides a defensible, unified vision.

Tips for Developers

Developers typically ask for "more predictability" from decision-makers in order to maximize their investments. This plan spells out the community's preferred future; where it wants to extend infrastructure and where it wants housing, industrial and commercial development.

The plan also suggests future changes to the city's zoning code and subdivision regulations. Whether you agree or disagree, now is the time to weigh in.

Tips for Citizens

After finding your house on the future land use map, the next step is to read up on community issues that interest you. For example, check on the future of housing or environmental protection.

Changes to the Comprehensive Plan

The final word on the City of North Vernon Comprehensive Plan is that circumstances change, and the plan should be modified to change along with it.

This may not mean a complete update, but every year or so the planning commission and others should review the tenets of the plan and make note of possible future changes. It could also go through the Implementation Chart annually to see what progress has been made.

It would be a poor use of the resources poured into creating this plan to let it slowly grow outdated, while the need for current planning does not.

Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

How can the comprehensive plan help North Vernon?

“I hope it helps the city take on an air of confidence and pride,” one steering committee member said.

“I hope it serves as a guide for the future, regardless of who the decision-makers are,” another said.

There were other, more specific answers, too, but all of the members agreed that the plan should be the starting point for improving North Vernon’s quality of life.

The steering committee agreed on most of the city’s top priorities, including:

- ◆ Preparing land for industrial growth.
- ◆ Careful planning so that the city gets the full benefit of the SR 50 bypass.
- ◆ Restoring downtown.
- ◆ Fully integrating the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center into the local economy.

In order for this comprehensive plan to succeed, the committee believes local leaders need to work with the public to explain the benefits of land use planning, particularly as a tool to protect natural resources and property values, as well as promote economic development.

Without first gaining this understanding and “buy in,” they believe the plan risks being adopted but not implemented. Proposals for creating a dialogue with the public are included in the Implementation Plan.

How Was the Comprehensive Plan Created?

Research began in April 2009 and the first draft was completed in October 2009. Highlights of the process include:

Community Visioning Workshop: A workshop was held in North Vernon at the Education and Training Center in May 2009 to give residents the opportunity to review research and help set priorities.

Key Stakeholder Surveys: Surveys were distributed at public workshops and steering committee meetings.

Focus Groups: Representatives from the school corporation, downtown businesses, area employers, utilities and real estate agents were interviewed.

Steering Committee Meetings: The committee met five times to set priorities and discuss options. They also reviewed documents and held discussions via e-mail.

What Are the Key Findings from the Research?

Highlights from the topic chapters of the report include:

Land Use

- ◆ Geographic and manmade restrictions to expansion of city limits underscore the importance of careful planning for future growth.
- ◆ While a complete overhaul is not necessary, some revisions and additions to existing zoning and subdivision regulations are needed to meet the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

Economic Development

- ◆ North Vernon and Jennings County are fortunate to have an active, forward-thinking economic development organization that is generally well known and regarded. It has become the “go to” group not only for economic growth, but also for the many facets of community development.
- ◆ Despite local efforts, the city and county face many economic challenges.

Housing

- ◆ The local housing market is slow, but that should not stop community leaders from working toward the future, including revitalizing older neighborhoods and widening the types of available housing units.

Utilities

- ◆ Future economic development areas for the city generally lie outside North Vernon's utility service territories. The city needs to develop a close working relationship with outside utility providers in growth areas north and west of the city to ensure utilities support its economic development plans.
- ◆ The most immediate need for the North Vernon Water utility is to improve fire flow and pressures throughout the system by looping mains and increasing line sizes.
- ◆ The future acquisition of a quarry for water storage has been proposed and could result in a higher quality of water delivered on a more consistent basis, even during dry periods. It is recommended that the city fully explore this option, as well as other ideas for improving the provision of water for residents.
- ◆ Adding Muscatatuck Urban Training Center to the city's wastewater system could result in peak flows approaching the capacity of the treatment facility. Since the existing wastewater treatment facility does not have room to expand, the city needs to take steps now to plan for a future satellite plant serve the future needs of the community.

Transportation

- ◆ Traffic congestion and lack of alternative routes apart from US 50 are key concerns in the community.

- ◆ Construction of the US 50 bypass will provide significant opportunity to enhance economic development efforts and relieve traffic congestion in the community. The city should work closely with INDOT in the final route and interchange selection process to make sure the route provides the most benefit to the community.

Environmental Impacts

- ◆ To protect and enhance local nature preserves, it is recommended that the community limit development along both sides of Brush Creek and the Muscatatuck River between the Brush Creek Fish and Wildlife area to the Crosley State Fish and Wildlife Area.
- ◆ To limit public safety risks associated with karst areas, it is recommended that the community establish ordinances that require a setback of 100 feet from known karst areas.

What Development Policies Does the Plan Include?

Development policies guide decisions makers as they interpret the comprehensive plan. They are more specific than goals, but not as detailed as objectives. In other words, they can be applied to many different decisions and shed light on how the steering committee arrived at its goals. The development policies for North Vernon's key areas are:

Community Image

- ◆ Using downtown as a starting point, North Vernon will develop and project an image that capitalizes on its close-knit, family oriented assets.

Economic Development

- ◆ The city's investment in making land and infrastructure available for growth is vital to

creating jobs and a prosperous future.

Downtown North Vernon

- ◆ Additional effort is needed to revitalize downtown. The city will lead the way by assisting with beautification projects, code enforcement, historic preservation and the creation of gateways to downtown.

The Highway 50 Bypass

- ◆ Construction of the bypass will help alleviate traffic problems and open up new areas for economic development. However, preparation is needed to build downtown into a regional destination.

Muscatatuck Urban Training Center

- ◆ The training center benefits North Vernon and accommodations will be made for the center and its associated facilities. The city supports their mission and will work to integrate the center and its people into the community.

Housing

- ◆ The city will support older neighborhoods through grants and other means and will prepare for a mix of new residential units, including moderate to higher end housing.

Infrastructure - Water supply

- ◆ The city needs to expand its capacity for supplying water. This includes tapping additional sources, upgrading existing water lines and working with other utilities to extend lines into new areas, particularly on the west side.

The Area Plan

- ◆ The city values its partnership with the area plan and wants to work with the organization to raise the resources needed to strengthen code enforcement and tackle other growth issues.

Goals & Strategies

The following pages include the goals set by the steering committee that pertain to land use issues. It is understood that in the short-term some of these goals may be beyond the capacity of city officials to implement. At any rate, they are designed to be incremental and to be adopted after the community dialogue proposal in the Implementation Plan.

Land Use

Goal: Preserve, enhance and develop residential neighborhoods with a focus on maintaining strong neighborhoods with community connections.

- ◆ Maintain and upgrade streets, sidewalks and infrastructure on regular basis, as provided in an annual capital improvements plan.
- ◆ Contemplate the creation of a historic preservation program that would preserve historic structures, neighborhoods and their appearance.
- ◆ Encourage infill on vacant lots to create a seamless neighborhood appearance by amending zoning codes and creating a streamlined permitting process.
- ◆ Increase code enforcement to eliminate and prevent blighted appearance in all neighborhoods.
- ◆ Require street connectivity and sidewalks in all neighborhoods to tie in with existing transportation network.
- ◆ Create city sponsored programs such as annual front yard landscaping awards or small annual grants that would acknowledge and promote pride in the community.

Goal: Ensure that downtown North Vernon continues to be a thriving, well balanced mix of uses while respecting its historic small town appearance and charm.

- ◆ Ensure that new and redeveloped properties in the downtown are compatible with the historic appearance of downtown.
- ◆ Provide sufficient parking areas downtown to accommodate a mix of users such as shoppers, residents and downtown employees.
- ◆ Concentrate several civic and government functions under one roof downtown to create a community destination point.
- ◆ Encourage outdoor sitting areas, benches, plantings and clear, delineated walkways to and from parking areas to provide a welcoming and pleasant atmosphere for pedestrians.
- ◆ Increase code enforcement to eliminate and prevent blighted appearance in downtown.
- ◆ Consider the rezoning of existing industrial properties in the downtown area to a commercial zoning classification, which is more compatible with the remainder of the downtown core.

Goal: Define areas for commercial and industrial growth to increase the local tax base and employment opportunities for residents, while respecting surrounding land uses.

- ◆ Expand existing commercial and industrial areas along Highway 3 and State Street, where existing utilities are available.
- ◆ Continue working on long-term plans to expand the infrastructure capability of delivering water to new businesses and residential areas
- ◆ Buffer surrounding residential and less intense uses by maintaining a combination of minimum setback distances, fencing and landscaping.

Consider the creation of minimal development standards for commercial and industrial structures.

Goal: Maintain preservation zone or buffer around the North Vernon Municipal Airport to promote compatibility and minimize encroachment into these areas.

- ◆ Continue to enforce the airport preservation zone / zoning district as documented in the North Vernon zoning code, restricting incompatible land uses around the airport.
- ◆ When and if the North Vernon Municipal Airport plans to expand from its current size, work with city and county officials, local landowners and other stakeholders on refining the airport preservation zoning district.

Goal: Maintain community facilities such as schools, government buildings and parks while focusing on providing quality services at these institutions.

- ◆ Concentrate several civic and government functions under one roof downtown to create a community destination point.
- ◆ Alleviate traffic surrounding schools by providing additional ingress or egress and creation of US 50 bypass.
- ◆ Seek and acquire land for new parks, trails and other recreational facilities (such as a YMCA) when possible, to increase the quality of life amenities desired by existing residents and as a tool to attract new residents.

Economic Development Goals

- ◆ Continue working on long-term plans to expand the infrastructure capability of delivering water to new businesses and residential areas.
- ◆ After selection of the final route by the Indiana Department of Transportation, create gateways and other projects to mitigate the potential diversion it will create for downtown businesses.

- ◆ Even without a bypass, more signage is needed downtown.
- ◆ Launch a branding campaign to create North Vernon as a regional destination.
- ◆ Increase code enforcement downtown to prevent the appearance of blighted buildings.
- ◆ Continue working with officials to fully integrate the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center into the local economy.

Housing Goals

Goal: Control and improve the quality of growth through annexation and by having developers raise the aesthetic qualities of their local projects.

- ◆ Keep Annexation Plan updated.
- ◆ Create and enforce landscaping requirements for new construction.
- ◆ Create and enforce basic design guidelines for new construction.

Goal: Restore the deteriorating core of existing housing while providing a full range of housing options, including upper-income homes.

- ◆ Explore options for neighborhood revitalization projects.
- ◆ Employ basic design standards to improve the appearance of new residential development.
- ◆ Develop a marketing program for residential developers.
- ◆ Working with the county, conduct a Housing Needs Assessment to determine gaps in Jennings County's housing stock.

Goal: Ensure the county becomes more sustainable by meeting the needs of its residents while protecting environmental resources for future generations.

- ◆ Integrate environmental concerns into decision making at all levels.
- ◆ Encourage the use of green building materials and techniques in new construction.
- ◆ Explore the recommendations of the National League of City's green initiatives.

Utilities Goals

- ◆ Develop and maintain a strong working relationship with adjoining water utilities.
- ◆ Continue with ongoing plans for water distribution system improvements.
- ◆ Initiate a detailed study of options for improving the community's water supply.
- ◆ Develop a prioritized assessment of needed stormwater improvements.
- ◆ Evaluate financing and grant funding options for implementation of priority stormwater improvements.
- ◆ Begin to investigate "green" options for addressing stormwater quality.
- ◆ Identify and estimate wastewater flows in the city's future growth areas.
- ◆ Evaluate options for providing additional wastewater treatment capacity including expansion of the current facility or construction of a satellite plant.
- ◆ Seek land rights for future wastewater treatment plant property as needed.
- ◆ Develop and maintain a strong working relationship with adjoining wastewater utilities.
- ◆ Encourage the ongoing extension and upgrade of electric, natural gas and telecommunications infrastructure.

Transportation Goals

- ◆ Complete current roadway projects in planning and design including Hayden Pike and Greensburg Street.
- ◆ Coordinate with INDOT to evaluate an upgraded roadway from O&M Avenue to US 50 (existing) during planning for US 50 bypass.
- ◆ Encourage INDOT to pursue the Alternative A bypass route for US 50. Coordinate future US 50 planning and intersection locations closely with INDOT.
- ◆ Preserve existing railroad lines/corridors for future needs.
- ◆ Work with CSX to improve maintenance and upkeep of rail corridors through the city, especially downtown.
- ◆ The city should work to acquire and restore the existing depot at O&M Avenue and Short Street.

Environment Goals

- ◆ Protect and/or restore the contiguous forests between the natural areas along the Muscatatuck River.
- ◆ Consider creation of a public space along Short Street.
- ◆ As new residential and commercial neighborhoods are developed, open space should be incorporated, particularly when such neighborhoods are adjacent to a woodlot, wetland, or forest block.
- ◆ Regulate buffers around known karst areas to be at least 100 feet. Within the buffer, no structures or roads should be permitted.

What Happens Next?

Implementation is the most important factor in ensuring the success of a comprehensive plan. The final chapter of this report includes a detailed implementation guide.

After implementation, periodic review is needed to keep the goals of the plan alive. Every year or so the city council and other leaders should review the implementation plan and make note of possible future changes. It could use the Implementation Chart to track its progress.

Land Use

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Land Use

Highlights

- ◆ Geographic and manmade restrictions to expansion of city limits underscore the importance of careful planning for future growth.
- ◆ While a complete overhaul is not necessary, some revisions and additions to existing zoning and subdivision regulations will be needed to meet the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

This chapter addresses key planning issues with regard to land use and development, and presents the Future Land Use Map and framework for the City of North Vernon.

Development Principles

Development policies guide decisions makers as they interpret the comprehensive plan. They are more specific than goals, but not as detailed as objectives. In other words, they can be applied to many different decisions and shed light on how the steering committee arrived at its goals. The development policies for North Vernon as it relates to Land Use are:

Community Image

Using downtown as a starting point, North Vernon will develop and project an image that capitalizes on its close-knit, family oriented assets.

Downtown North Vernon

Additional effort is needed to revitalize downtown. The city will lead the way by assisting with beautification projects, code enforcement, historic preservation and the creation of gateways to downtown.

The Highway 50 Bypass

Construction of the bypass will help alleviate traffic problems and open up new areas for economic development. However, preparation is needed to build downtown into a regional destination.

Muscatatuck Urban Training Center

The training center benefits North Vernon and accommodations will be made for the center and its associated facilities. The city supports their mission and will work to integrate the center and its people into the community.

Housing

The city will support older neighborhoods through grants and other means and will prepare for a mix of new residential units, including moderate to higher end housing.

The Area Plan

The city values its partnership with the area plan and wants to work with the organization to raise the resources needed to strengthen code enforcement and tackle other growth issues.

Goals & Objectives

The following goals and strategies were compiled over the course of this comprehensive plan project. Feedback was generated at steering committee meetings, public workshops and focus groups.

Goal:

Preserve, enhance and develop residential neighborhoods with a focus on maintaining strong neighborhoods with community connections.

Strategies:

- ◆ Maintain and up grade streets, sidewalks and infrastructure on regular basis, as provided in an annual capital improvements plan.

- ◆ Contemplate the creation of a historic preservation program that would preserve historic structures, neighborhoods and their appearance.
- ◆ Encourage infill on vacant lots to create a seamless neighborhood appearance by amending zoning codes and creating a streamlined permitting process.
- ◆ Increase code enforcement to eliminate and prevent blighted appearance in all neighborhoods.
- ◆ Require street connectivity and sidewalks in all neighborhoods to tie in with existing transportation network.
- ◆ Create city sponsored programs such as annual front yard landscaping awards or small annual grants that would acknowledge and promote pride in the community.

Goal:

Ensure that downtown North Vernon continues to be a thriving, well balanced mix of uses while respecting its historic appearance and charm.

Strategies:

- ◆ Ensure that new and redeveloped properties in the downtown are compatible with the historic appearance of downtown.
- ◆ Provide sufficient parking areas downtown to accommodate a mix of users such as shoppers, residents and downtown employees.
- ◆ Concentrate several civic and government functions under one roof downtown to create a community destination point.
- ◆ Encourage outdoor seating areas, benches,

plantings and clear, delineated walkways to and from parking areas to provide a welcoming and pleasant atmosphere for pedestrians.

- ◆ Increase code enforcement to eliminate and prevent blighted appearance in downtown.
- ◆ Consider the rezoning of existing industrial properties in the downtown area to a commercial zoning classification, which is more compatible with the remainder of the downtown core.

Goal:

Define areas for commercial and industrial growth to increase the local tax base and employment opportunities for residents, while respecting surrounding land uses.

Strategies:

- ◆ Expand existing commercial and industrial areas along Highway 3 and State Street, where existing utilities are available.
- ◆ Continue working on long-term plans to expand the infrastructure capability of delivering water to new businesses and residential areas.
- ◆ Buffer surrounding residential and less intense uses by maintaining a combination of minimum setback distances, fencing and landscaping.
- ◆ Consider the creation of minimal development standards for commercial and industrial structures.

Goal:

Maintain preservation zone or buffer around the North Vernon Municipal Airport to promote compatibility and minimize encroachment into these areas.

Strategies:

- ◆ Continue to enforce the airport preservation zone/zoning district as documented in the North Vernon zoning code, restricting incompatible land uses around the airport.
- ◆ When and if the North Vernon Municipal Airport plans to expand from its current size, work with city and county officials, local landowners and other stakeholders on refining the airport preservation zoning district.

Goal:

Maintain community facilities such as schools, government buildings and parks while focusing on providing quality services at these institutions.

Strategies:

- ◆ Concentrate several civic and government functions under one roof downtown to create a community destination point.
- ◆ Alleviate traffic surrounding schools by providing additional ingress or egress and creation of the US 50 bypass
- ◆ Seek and acquire land for new parks, trails and other recreational facilities (such as a YMCA) when possible, to increase the quality of life amenities desired by existing residents and as a tool to attract new residents.

Existing Land Use

Historically, growth and development in North Vernon was centered along the railroad tracks and in the central business district. In fact, North Vernon was once the third busiest rail crossing in Indiana. Evidence of this development and prosperity still exists today with a compact and walkable downtown core.

Gradually the growth pattern of North Vernon spread along major transportation corridors such as US 50 and Highway 7, resulting in lower density areas accessible mainly by automobile.

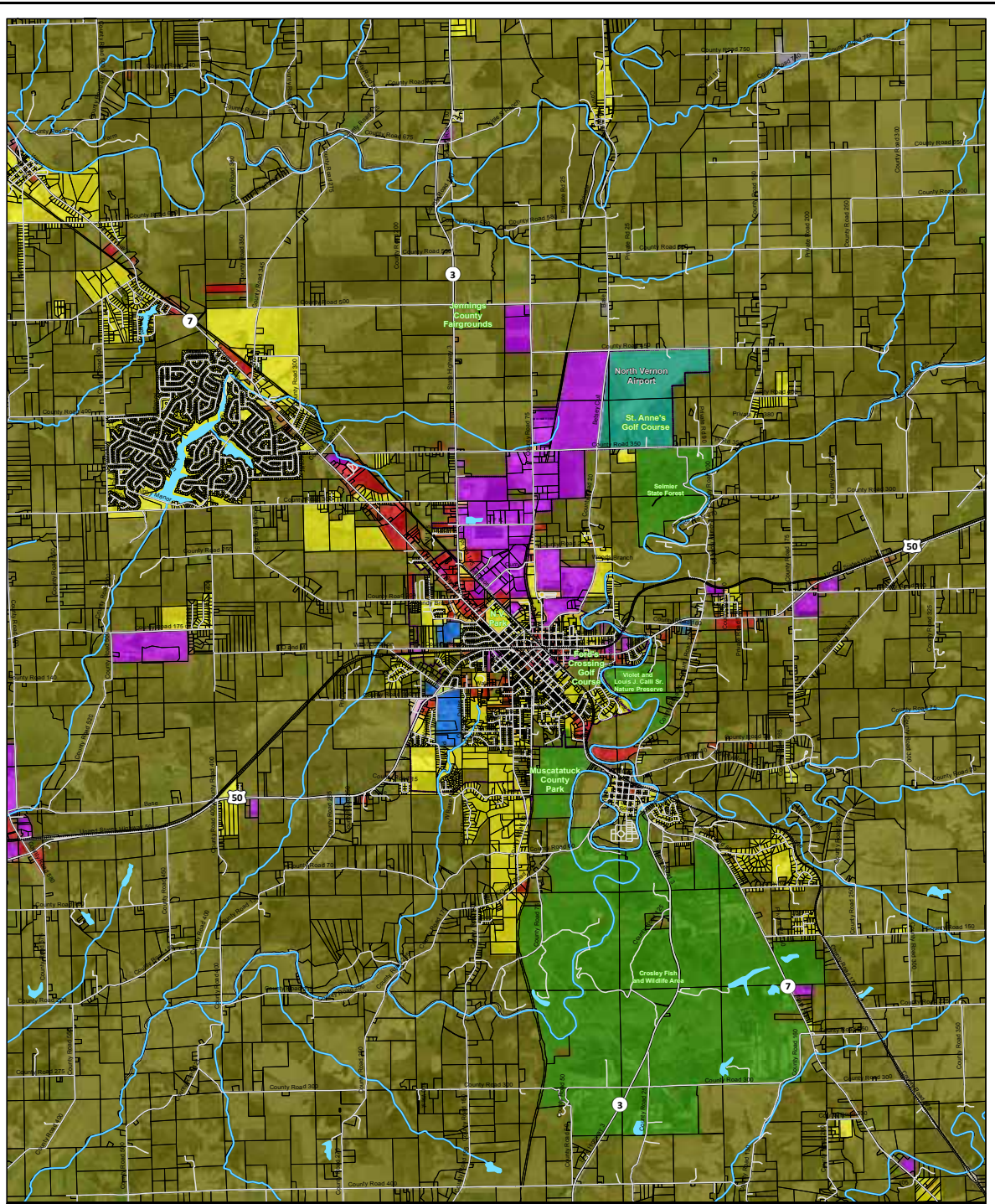
Residential

The largest existing land use in the City of North Vernon is single-family residential, accounting for the majority of the total land use. According to 2007 estimates, North Vernon had 2,909 total housing units – a 27.9% increase in units from 2000. In contrast, the state only had an increase of 12.7% and the county a 25.6% in total housing units between 1990 and 2000.

As noted in the Housing Section of this comprehensive plan, the most highly valued homes in North Vernon tend to be spacious two-story homes with plenty of land. Small ranch-style homes and mobile homes tend to hold lower values throughout the city.

Information gathered during the comprehensive plan process revealed that some residents believe that housing is limited. Most of the available housing in North Vernon is of older stock and targeted to moderate level incomes. The larger 3-5 bedroom / 2-3 bath homes on the upper end scale are hard to come by locally.

The community feels that there are ample multifamily units in today's market but it may need to grow in the next few years. However; before new construction takes place, North Vernon will need

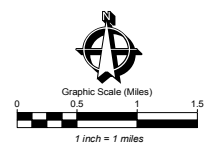


Legend

- Corporate Limits
- Managed Lands
- Agricultural
- Airport
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Non-Conforming Use
- PUD
- Residential
- Special Use

Existing Land Use Map

North Vernon Comprehensive Plan



to address how to bring all multifamily units into compliance, including the downtown area.

Commercial

Commercial land use in North Vernon varies from the compact, 3-4 story height, zero lot line development available downtown, to the more auto-oriented commercial development along Highway 7, or State Street and Highway 3. Some of the development along Highways 3 and 7 are non-conforming structures, which could produce opportunities for redevelopment in the future.

Industrial

Industrial land uses in North Vernon are scattered throughout the city. There is a large concentration of industrial sites north of the city off of Highway 3, with tenants such as Lowe's Distribution Center and Metaldyne Sintered Components.

There are several industrial sites located in and near the downtown area. These sites historically were ideally situated to take advantage of the railroad availability; however, the location of such industrial land uses may not be ideal in light of the direction of downtown development plans.

Land Use Resources & Limitations

North Vernon, like many communities, has man-made and natural limitations for land use. At the same time, the city has many opportunities to capitalize on their environment and available amenities.

Resources

◆ Central City or Core Neighborhoods

North Vernon has several traditional core neighborhoods that offer a historic presence, sidewalks and mature trees that portray the vibrant community character that the city desires to maintain.

◆ Downtown

The City of North Vernon is quite fortunate to have, as one steering committee member noted, "a downtown with no missing teeth". Most of the structures in the downtown area are original to the city, providing a historic presence unique to North Vernon. The downtown area has seen reinvestment in the past decade that includes updated storefronts, a return to brick streets in some areas and a strong mix of retail and office tenants.

◆ Major Transportation Corridors

While US 50 and Highways 3 and 7 can present local traffic concerns and obstacles, they also provide direct access to neighboring communities such as Columbus, Madison and Seymour. These connections ensure consistent access and traffic to North Vernon, providing a vibrant presence and captive audience to the city.

◆ Proximity to Muscatatuck Urban Training Center (MUTC)

The Muscatatuck Urban Training Center is a secluded, self contained community, once home to the Muscatatuck State Developmental Center. The 1,000-acre site was turned over to the Indiana National Guard in July of 2005 and since has been continually evolving into a full-immersion contemporary urban training environment. In its first year of operation the facilities at MUTC have been utilized by over 16,000 people from military, government and private agencies and is continually expanding training capabilities for future needs.

MUTC presents a large opportunity for North Vernon. The community has already seen the impacts associated with the center, such as increased traffic through downtown and

additional employment opportunities. The city will continue to be a resource for the training center in terms of housing availability and retail needs such as shopping and dining.

◆ North Vernon Municipal Airport

The North Vernon Municipal Airport is located



Training at MUTC

3 miles north of the city in Jennings County, but is locally identified as a large asset for the city in terms of industrial growth and MUTC operations.

In order to more fully accommodate the MUTC, the airport is contemplating extending the depth and length of the runways to land larger military aircraft.

◆ Bypass

The proposed bypass, or the new US Route 50 Corridor, was consistently discussed during the comprehensive plan process. Some residents are totally against the bypass, citing its effect on downtown as their primary concern. Other participants interviewed during the process see much benefit from its construction.

What most everyone can agree on is that the bypass will allow many trucks to be removed from the downtown area. US 50 currently routes through the middle of the North Vernon causing

congestion and associated problems with noise and vibration. Another potential benefit of the bypass is the creation development opportunities along the new corridor, especially at the limited access intersections.

Limitations

◆ Traffic

Traffic was an often cited issue in North Vernon, mostly along US 50. Congestion near the schools during start and end times was the most troubling aspect, as this area is served by one singular access point.

◆ Code Enforcement

Some residents and business owners felt that there needed to be a stronger enforcement presence in the city, to deal with maintenance issues downtown and in local neighborhoods. The Jennings County Area Plan is responsible for providing these services and the organization has most recently been faced with declining permit revenues and inconsistent annual funding. Their coverage area is also greater than North Vernon, covering Vernon and the county. Uncertainty with funding and the low ratio of enforcement officers to coverage area will continue to hinder the ability of the area plan to address these concerns. Further discussion of the area plan can be found at the end of this section.

◆ Infrastructure availability

The city's water supply is mostly limited to serving areas within the existing city limits. While provisions for looping will ensure adequate supply for schools and minor additional development, there is no additional capacity for future growth. The city is active in creating partnerships with other water companies to resolve this issue.

◆ Redevelopment Areas

Areas prime for redevelopment can be found in the Critical Sub Area Section of this plan.

Definitions of Land Use Categories

The following definitions match the categories given in the legend of the land use map.

Future Land Use

The future land use map is the community's visual guide to future planning; it is a map of what the community wants to happen over the next 15 or so years; not what it thinks will happen.

Managing land means directing the type, quantity and quality of development. Land uses are generally expressed in broad categories such as residential or commercial. The quantity of development considers how much growth is appropriate for the community.

A future land use map is essential to the smart growth and sustainability of a community.

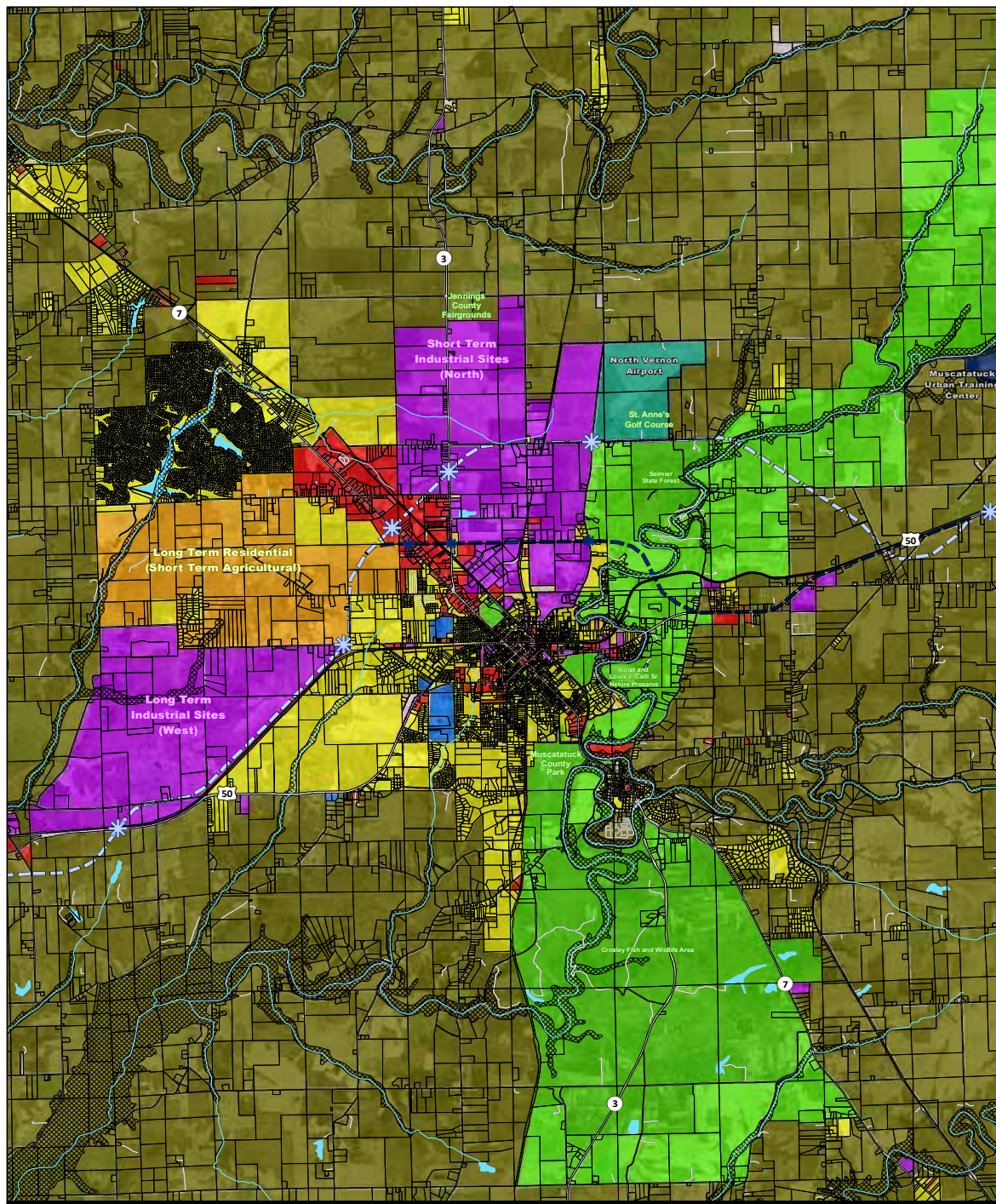
How to Use the Future Land Use Map

Plan commissioners, city council members, developers and others can use the future land use map to see the community's expectations on what the city will look like in the future.

For example, a developer wishing to build a new housing subdivision south of downtown off Highway 3 may find that much of the area has been designated for industrial uses. The land use map is general in nature, and the categories are broadly defined. The steering committee which created this plan wanted to keep the uses flexible in order to adapt to changing conditions.

This map is meant to be used in combination with the Critical Sub Area Plans and the goals and strategies to fully understand the steps that North Vernon will take to manage change in the next 15 years or more.

NORTH VERNON FUTURE LAND USE MAP CATEGORIES	
Agricultural	<p>This district is intended for rural areas where, due to topography, crop production is mixed with estate residences, rural home sites, stables, etc.</p> <p>Emphasis is still on agriculture, but with smaller lot sizes allowed. Residential subdivisions are discouraged.</p>
Airport	<p>This land is owned by the North Vernon Municipal Airport. The category is restricted to airport uses only.</p>
Commercial	<p>The purpose of this land use category is to provide a full range of commercial retail, office, and service uses for residents, businesses, and visitors.</p> <p>This applies to commercial activities with direct contact with customers ranging from neighborhood convenience stores to regionally oriented specialty stores.</p> <p>These areas are intended to accommodate both wholesale and retail sales and construction has coordinated design for: 1) shared parking areas, and 2) shared points of access to a roadway.</p>
IDNR Managed Lands	<p>These state-owned lands are controlled by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.</p>
Industrial	<p>The purpose of this category is to provide for a full range of light and heavy industrial uses. Types of uses that would be permitted include manufacturing, processing, distribution and storage.</p> <p>The designation will accommodate a variety of industrial establishments which: 1) employ high environmental quality standards; 2) may function as an integral part of an overall development area; 3) require large tracts of land because of their nature and function; and, 4) have minimal impacts on adjacent uses.</p>
Institutional	<p>The purpose of this category is to provide land for buildings for government or private institutional use such as schools, church, hospitals and utility facilities.</p>
Non Conforming Use	<p>Land uses such as open air markets (flea markets) and other commercial business that are not considered the “norms”.</p>
P.U.D.	<p>A planned unit development (PUD) is a type of residential, commercial, or industrial land development that provides more planning flexibility than traditional zoning and lot layout.</p> <p>Buildings are often clustered on smaller lots, permitting the preservation of natural features or open park-like areas.</p>
Residential	<p>The purpose of this category is to provide land suitable for housing. Zoning maps usually divide into sub-categories based on dwelling unit density and expressed as the number of dwellings permitted on each acre.</p>

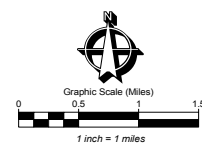


Legend

Corporate Limits	Commercial
US 50 Route: Alternate A	Industrial
US 50 Route: Alternate B	Institutional
US 50 Intersection: Alternate A	Non-Conforming Use
US 50 Intersection: Alternate B	PUD
Floodplain	Residential
Airport	Long Term Residential (Short Term Agricultural)
Agricultural	Managed Land - Forest Preservation - Open Space

Future Land Use Map

North Vernon Comprehensive Plan



Future Land Use – Residential

The development and maintenance of strong neighborhoods and quality housing is vital to the lasting success of North Vernon. Having a combination of well maintained and established homes in addition to newer homes is essential in maintaining the vitality of the community.

Redeveloping existing areas and infill development should be the priorities for North Vernon residential development. It is important to encourage infill and redevelopment because:

- ◆ Such development fills gaps in the urban fabric.
- ◆ Reinvestment in such development often encourages other redevelopment.
- ◆ Redevelopment in existing areas generates tax revenues for the local governments that serve the older parts of the community.
- ◆ New housing development in older areas may generate enough students to keep neighborhood schools open.
- ◆ Redevelopment typically brings people, and people bring activity, and activity brings life to the city and safety to its streets.

Redevelopment or infill projects can be encouraged through the use of expedited or streamlined review processes, tax exemptions, and zoning code changes. Examples of recommended zoning code changes to encourage infill include allowing small single-family lots, variances in nonconforming lots and higher densities in specific geographic areas.

Investments in North Vernon neighborhoods include continuing actions that the city already does such as annual maintenance and upgrading of streets, sidewalks and infrastructure on regular basis, as provided in an annual capital improvements plan. Other ideas to promote core neighborhoods of

the city include creating city sponsored programs such as annual front yard landscaping awards that would acknowledge and promote pride in home appearance; funding small annual grants that would support neighborhood block parties, right-of-way landscaping at key intersections of neighborhoods or compatible gateway signage for neighborhoods; and possibly a city sponsored newsletter that is delivered to all residents two to four times a year, celebrating local events and reminding residents of city processes and regulations applicable to the season (exterior residential storage in spring, leaf collection in the fall, etc).

Preserving the historic nature and appearance of some of the neighborhoods in North Vernon was cited as a priority during the comprehensive plan process. Basic design standards such as acceptable exterior materials, window to wall ratios, or roof styles could be incorporated into the zoning ordinance to ensure that infill development is compatible with its surroundings. Furthermore, overlay districts could be created to enforce these codes in specific areas that the city deems as historic and worthy of preservation.

On the future land use map, residential growth



areas are shown on the west and southwest side of the city, outside of the existing city limits. The

growth areas are shown in two phases. The Phase I boundaries are the railroad to the west, US 50 to the south and east and Brownstown Road to the northeast. Inherent to this residential expansion is infrastructure availability, where water and sanitary sewer utilities generally exist to support further development. North Vernon should only extend municipal services and sanitary sewers in this area as it is sufficiently in-filled.

Once the Phase I Residential Area is fully developed, only then should North Vernon entertain growth into the Phase II residential area, shown on the future land use map as Short Term Agricultural.

Due to the projected slight population decline, decreased building permit applications and the current state of the housing market and economy, it must be noted that the Phase I growth area is intended to provide for future housing for at least 20 years if not more.

New residential development on the periphery of North Vernon should maintain strong contiguous connections to the existing infrastructure of the city. Sidewalks and streets must be connected between neighborhoods to ensure these connections while preventing free standing and insular communities. Connected paths to schools, parks and community amenities are also encouraged. Amending the subdivision code to require such connections is recommended.

Contiguous development not only makes sense for North Vernon – it will ultimately save the city money. Sprawl is expensive. Some low-density development and much leapfrog development is built without such basic services as sewer and sidewalks. Retrofitting such developments with those services is far more expensive than providing them in the first place to compact, contiguous development.

The city should also work to encourage new multi-

family residential development, with an emphasis on bringing existing units into code compliance. This could include townhome development located within or near single-family neighborhoods, as well as apartment or lofts (most already in place) in the downtown area. An aging national population and an increase in empty-nesters combined with the housing needs of the MUTC could result in the need for multifamily residential development in North Vernon.

Future Land Use – Commercial

As noted in the previous section, redeveloping existing areas and infill development should also be the priorities for North Vernon commercial development. The many benefits of redevelopment and infill strongly outweigh usage of undeveloped land for such purposes. The reality is that most if not all the infrastructure is in place for properties that are redeveloped or the target of infill, ultimately reducing the potential financial burden on the city.

Site and architectural design considerations were voiced as issues during the comprehensive plan process. Some residents and business owners believe that North Vernon should have high quality and aesthetically appealing commercial areas and structures, especially along major commercial thoroughfares.

Implementing commercial design standards into the city's zoning ordinance can ensure a minimum design standard for new construction. If desired, these standards can also apply to redeveloped or expanded properties.

Commercial architectural standards can be as restrictive or as flexible as the community wishes. North Vernon's standards for commercial uses should require buildings to present an attractive image to the community. These standards can also be used to help establish a uniform look that could help further a sense of identity (e.g., common

streetscape elements, building materials, etc.).

The following table lists different components of commercial design standards and their typical implementation tools, indicating the difficulty in establishing each of the tools in most communities. It is intended to provide the city with options if they decide to pursue additional regulations for commercial development:

COMMERCIAL DESIGN STANDARDS			
	Tools that Require Little Political Will & Resources	Tools that Require More Political Will & Resources	Tools that Require Considerable Political Will & Resources
Building Orientation	Continue to allow building to be placed and oriented in any location on the site, as long as no other provisions of the zoning ordinance are violated (i.e., setbacks).	Amend the zoning ordinance to prohibit a commercial building from “turning its back” to the main thoroughfare.	Amend the zoning ordinance to require development plan approval by the plan commission for all commercial buildings.
Parking Location	Continue to allow parking to be placed in any location on the site, as long as no other provisions of the zoning ordinance are violated (i.e., sight distance).	Amend the zoning ordinance to limit the amount of parking that can be placed in front of the commercial building, in effect pulling the building closer to the road.	Amend the zoning ordinance to prohibit parking in front of a commercial building, so that resulting parking is on side and rear, opening up the commercial building to the road.
Exterior Building Materials	Amend the zoning ordinance to prohibit certain exterior building materials (i.e., concrete block and prefabricated steel panels)	Amend the zoning ordinance to include a section on exterior building materials that lists acceptable materials and gives the developer guidelines for using them (i.e., each wall must have at least 2 different materials, or 80% of the front elevation must be masonry).	Amend the zoning ordinance to create an architectural review committee to approve exterior building material selection for each commercial building elevation.
Signs	Follow existing zoning ordinance commercial sign regulations.	Amend the zoning ordinance to include unique sign regulations for main thoroughfare.	Amend the zoning ordinance to create a sign review committee to approve each commercial sign plan and design.
Landscaping	Rely on existing zoning ordinance landscape standards as only guide.	Amend the zoning ordinance to include a section on landscape standards for the corridor that sets minimum standards for things like buffers and lists multiple options for the developer of each site to choose from.	Amend the zoning ordinance to require the same landscaping for every commercial site on the main thoroughfare, resulting in a uniform look.

COMMERCIAL DESIGN STANDARDS (CONTINUED)			
	Tools that Require Little Political Will & Resources	Tools that Require More Political Will & Resources	Tools that Require Considerable Political Will & Resources
Building Design	Rely on existing zoning ordinance developmental standards (i.e., maximum height) as only guide.	Amend the zoning ordinance to include a section on architectural standards that sets minimum standards and lists multiple options for the developer to choose from.	Amend the zoning ordinance to create an architectural review committee to approve each commercial building design.
Trash & Recycling	Rely on existing zoning ordinance developmental standards as only guide.	Amend the zoning ordinance to prohibit this where visible from the road, in addition to requiring screening. Require mandatory curbside recycling.	Amend the zoning ordinance to require this be considered as part of development plan approval by the plan commission for all commercial buildings in the main thoroughfare.

As shown the future land use map, commercial land uses are scattered throughout North Vernon, with concentrations in the downtown area, on State Street and on Highway 50.

Downtown

North Vernon has many aspirations for the downtown area. Each of the comprehensive plan meetings involved a discussion about the downtown, and the endless possibilities that could occur in the area. Specific recommendations regarding the downtown can be found in the Critical Sub Area Section.

One aspect of downtown revitalization that the city may want to address is the existing zoning of industrial properties near the downtown area. As it exists today, these properties have the right to operate and redevelop the site (again) as an industrial use.

Historically the railroad was heavily used for commerce, and the industrial land use in the downtown area made sense. However, time has altered the purpose of downtown to a more pedestrian friendly, community gathering and retail oriented area.

Today, the community preference is to have truck traffic out of the downtown area and targeted to the periphery of the city in the industrial parks. In addition, the community would prefer to eliminate, over time, the perceived negative impacts of industrial properties on residential and neighborhood commercial areas.

As it relates to the redevelopment or future use of these properties, the city may want to have these properties rezoned from industrial to a commercial zoning classification, more compatible with the remainder of the downtown core.

It is clear that the city appreciates these industrial companies located downtown and wants them to be successful and profitable in North Vernon; as such, the city should continually work with the tenants to find an agreeable new location in the industrial section of town.

Neighborhood and Auto Oriented Commercial Areas

The future land use map reflects a potential commercial expansion area along north State Street, currently outside of the existing corporate limits. This commercial area also bisects the preferred route for US 50 Corridor.



Commercial areas near neighborhoods and along major corridors should enhance the character and function of the city, and be compatible with adjacent land uses. Commercial areas should be designed to interact in a positive manner with existing and future residential neighborhoods. Commercial development should enhance the local street network through connections that reduce traffic impact and enhance accessibility for local residents.

Access to primary roads should be carefully managed through shared access, access from secondary roads, limits on the number of curb cuts and other access management techniques.

Typical strip development along major roads can have unimaginative architecture and a limited life span. North Vernon should encourage commercial development or redevelopment using small building footprints with classic architectural details and site placement, which adds to the quality and character of the neighborhood rather than detracting from it.

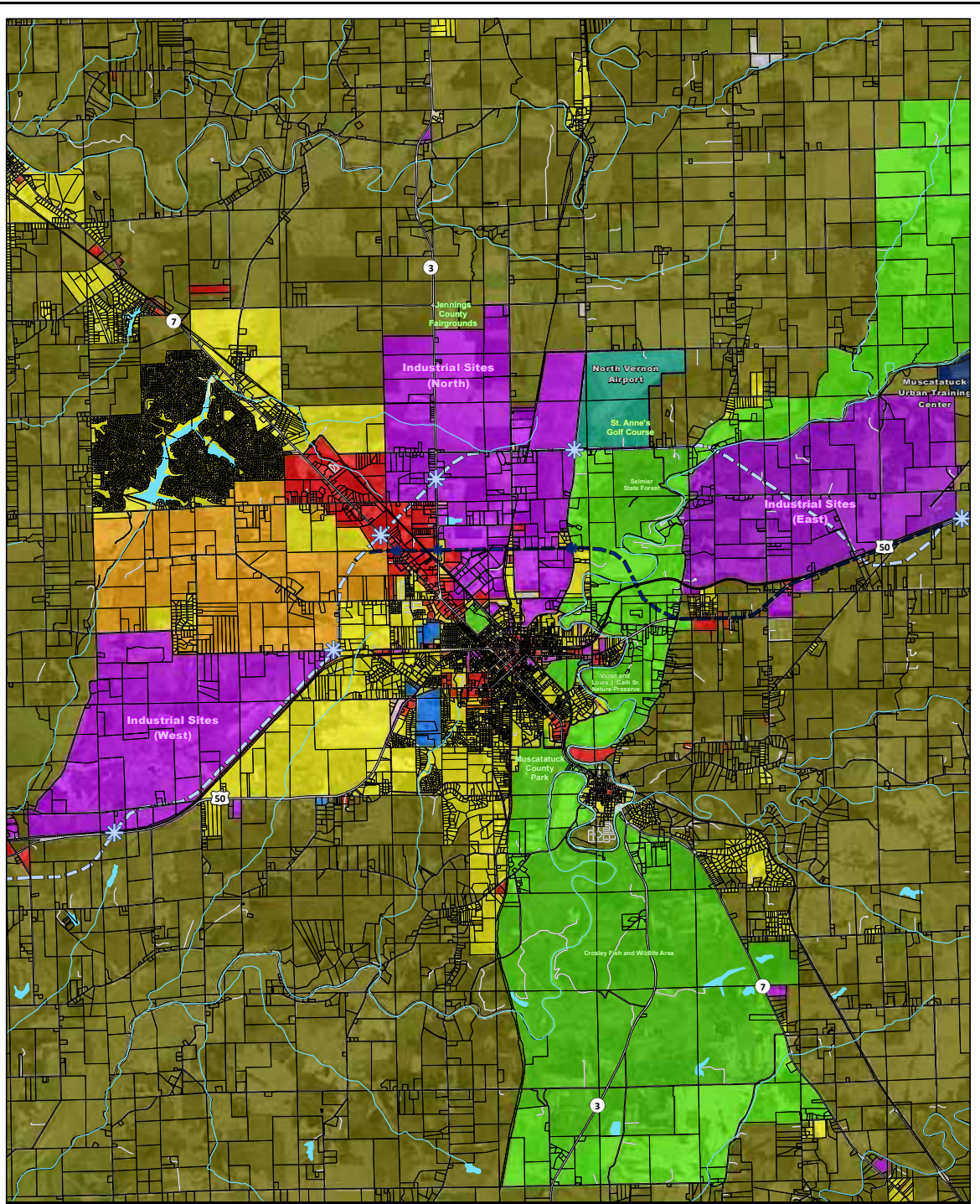
Future Land Use- Industrial

The future land use map reflects three scenarios for industrial growth in North Vernon. All three scenarios have pros and cons associated with their execution, as noted below. The city must be able to strike a balance between economic development and future growth, while preserving valuable agricultural lands and environmental assets.

It should be noted that the three choices will have to be narrowed down to a single growth area in the future; as it will be quite costly to extend infrastructure and utilities to all of the three areas. The city will need to choose one direction to implement a managed industrial growth pattern.

In addition to striking a balance between diverse land uses and resources, the city will also have to make decisions regarding the infrastructure expansion necessary for industrial development. Streets, waster water, storm sewers / other and water infrastructure must be expanded to accommodate these future industrial users. These capital improvement decisions must be made before the city can encourage and /or market the chosen growth areas.

A map of the three industrial growth scenarios is shown on the next page. Going west to east, the three proposed industrial growth areas are described as follows:

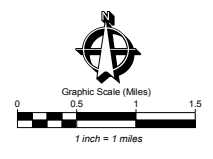


Legend

Corporate Limits	Commercial
US 50 Route: Alternate A	Industrial
US 50 Route: Alternate B	Institutional
US 50 Intersection: Alternate A	Non-Conforming Use
US 50 Intersection: Alternate B	PUD
Floodplain	Residential
Airport	Long Term Residential (Short Term Agricultural)
Agricultural	Managed Land - Forest Preservation - Open Space

Potential Industrial Sites Map

North Vernon Comprehensive Plan



West / Long-Term Industrial Growth Area – along proposed US 50 Bypass

This industrial growth area contains 2,132 acres for future development. It is buffered by residential growth areas on the north and east, with the proposed US 50 Bypass serving as its eastern boundary. Issues to consider with this growth area are as follows:

PROS:

- ◆ Ideal access to proposed US 50 Bypass, with two proposed intersections on the eastern border. This access would serve as an ideal route for shipments and deliveries, eliminating truck traffic on local city streets.
- ◆ Large land area that could be developed as a business park with mid-large lots available and streets that feed into the proposed bypass intersections.
- ◆ Access and land area available make it marketable to companies with mid-large scale land needs

CONS:

- ◆ Floodplain is present in the northwest quadrant of the growth area. This could restrict development in and around the floodplain; although, it could also be made into an amenity for a future business park scheme.
- ◆ Area is adjacent to proposed residential land use to the north, creating an undesirable situation, especially for future residential users. Extensive setbacks with dense landscaping buffering / berming / fencing or wall; no street connectivity between the land uses; and noise, light and emissions must be addressed by code revisions before development can occur.

UTILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- ◆ The sites are currently in the jurisdiction of Jennings Northwest Regional Utilities. However, the site is not provided with sanitary sewer service by this utility. To provide service, sanitary sewer would need to be extended to serve the sites by JNRU, or an agreement would need to be reached for North Vernon to serve the sites.
- ◆ Closest sewer infrastructure is on US 50 near the High School.

North / Short-Term Industrial Growth Area – along Hwy 3

This industrial growth area contains 554 acres and expands the existing industrial development along Highway 3. Issues to consider for this growth area are as follows:

PROS:

- ◆ The city's ability to extend utilities to this area is ideal, since they will be able to simply extend from their existing service area already established in the area
- ◆ Grouping new industrial land uses near the existing industrial tenants in the city will provide future efficiencies such as limiting truck traffic to this specific area and possibly combined signage for all tenants

- ◆ Ideal access to proposed US 50 Bypass, with a proposed intersection on the southern border. This access would serve as an ideal route for shipments and deliveries, eliminating truck traffic on local city streets.

CONS:

- ◆ This area serves as prime agricultural land for the city and county. The relatively flat terrain

provides an ideal situation for development, at the cost of eliminating this prime farmland.

- ◆ Existing agricultural operations and low density housing may experience negative effects of additional industrial operations such as noise, light and emissions.

UTILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- ◆ Infrastructure in place in adjacent infrastructure sites. However, the sites are technically in the jurisdiction of the Jennings Northwest Regional Utilities (JNRU). JNRU has not previously been in a position to serve these sites, and the City of North Vernon has provided service to the sites.
- ◆ Since the city has invested substantially in infrastructure for this site, the city prefers to also serve adjacent industrial areas. However, an agreement would need to be reached with JNRU.

East / Long-Term Industrial Growth Area – along proposed US 50 Bypass

This industrial growth area contains 2,535 acres for future development. It is buffered by the Selmer State Forest to the west, MUTC to the east and agricultural uses to the south. Issues to consider for this growth area are as follows:

PROS:

- ◆ Ideal access to proposed US 50 Bypass; however, there is only one proposed interchange at the southeast corner of the growth area.
- ◆ Large land area that could be developed as a business park with mid-large lots available and streets that feed into the proposed bypass intersections.

- ◆ Close proximity to MUTC could be appealing to industry and business that caters to the needs of the training center.

CONS:

- ◆ The proposed growth area conflicts with the MUTC one-mile buffer zone. While MUTC has indicated some latitude for industrial uses near the training center, this topic must be further defined before this area can be marketed.
- ◆ Development in this area would also have an environmental impact, as there is a large existing tree canopy.

UTILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- ◆ Sites are currently not provided with sanitary sewer infrastructure. Sites are not in the jurisdiction of another regional utility, so the City of North Vernon would need to extend service to the site.
- ◆ The closest utilities are on CR 350 near 4th Street.

Future Land Use – MUTC & North Vernon Municipal Airport

The MUTC and the City of North Vernon have great interest in minimizing encroachment into the training center grounds and reducing or avoiding potential conflicts over noise and other perceived obstacles, while promoting compatibility of land uses.

More discussion with county officials, local landowners, MUTC representatives and others is needed concerning new residential land uses in the area. Other land uses that have little to no night presence may be appropriate. Ideal land uses, such as a park, light industrial or other use compatible with the military mission would be an appropriate land use for this area.



North Vernon Airport

The North Vernon Municipal Airport is protected from incompatible land uses by the Airport Zoning Ordinance and Airport Zoning District (AZ), established in 1997. The city should partner with the county and airport to refine the AZ district when and if the airport expands from its current footprint. County officials, local landowners and other stakeholders should be included in the discussion.

The common thread between the MUTC offset rings and the airport's preservation area is the desire to complement these existing uses, while negating the potential for conflict between inappropriate land uses that could arise without a future land use plan. Both uses are assets for North Vernon, and should be protected and taken advantage of.

Future Land Use – Bypass

Future land uses around the bypass are identified on the future land use map, which reflects a mix of residential, commercial and industrial classifications. An additional consideration for the city is the appearance of North Vernon as drivers pass-through on the bypass. The city may want to create a targeted corridor plan to address issues such as corridor setbacks, architectural or building appearance, landscaping, lighting and signage elements for structures that will be constructed along the corridor. This plan could also address a wayfinding element, allowing the city to define preferred route

and appropriate signage to draw drivers to local points of interest, such as the downtown.

To achieve a unified appearance, the city will want to ensure that a plan is in place to assist in the subsequent development of uses along the bypass. The corridor plan should also address how to create gateways and other projects to mitigate the potential diversion it will create for downtown businesses.

Future Land Use – Community Facilities & Services

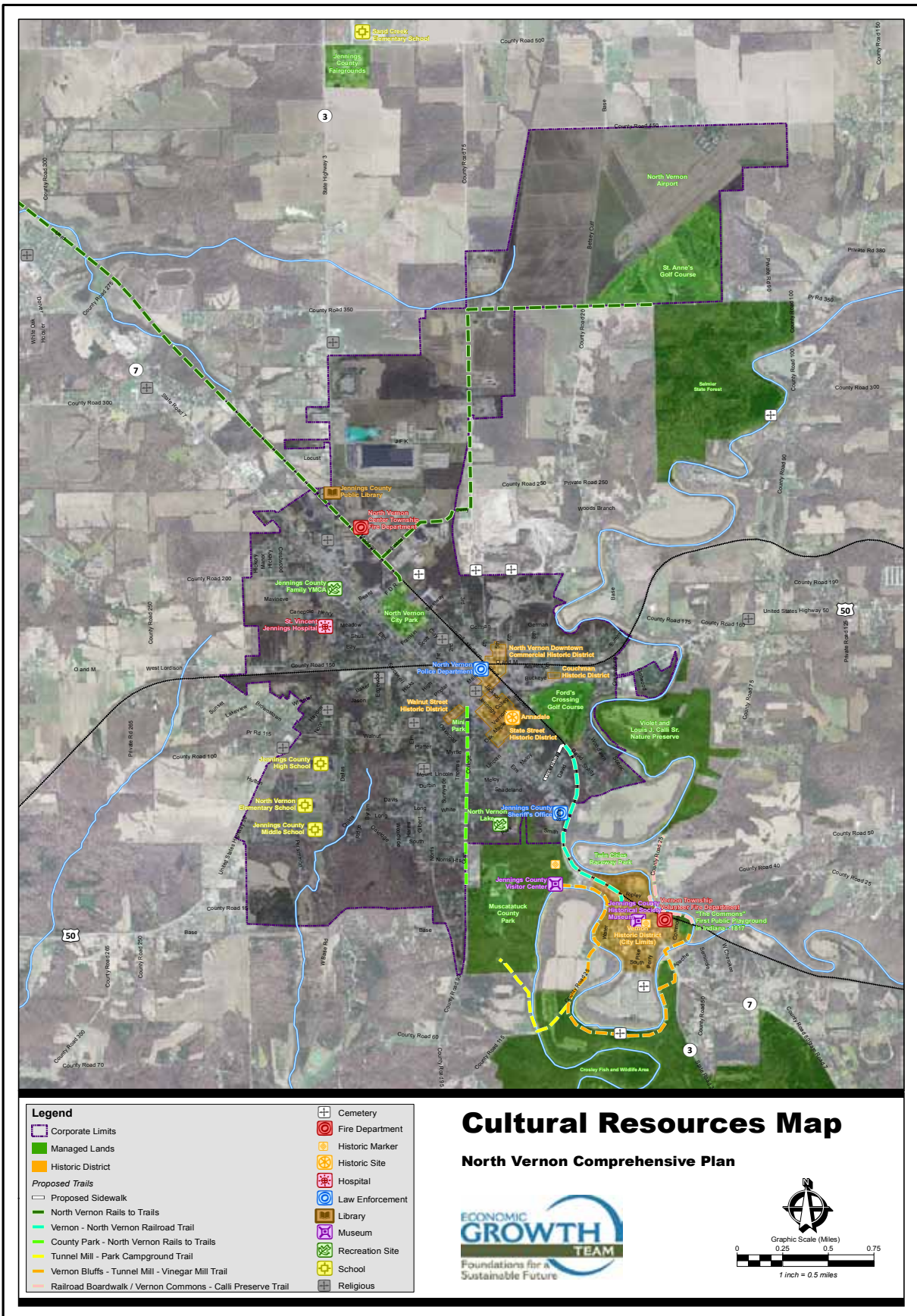
Government facilities, well equipped emergency services, schools, parks and recreational facilities are the basic building blocks of any community. These institutions define the quality of life in most communities by offering public access to education, relaxation and community involvement. It is no wonder that cities and towns are commonly judged and ranked by their school and recreational activity offerings. A map of North Vernon's Cultural Resources are shown on a map on the following page.

Schools

The City of North Vernon is fortunate to have a wide array of community facilities available to residents. The city is home to the majority of schools in the Jennings County School District (seven out of ten schools), in addition to two private schools. Overall, the community is very pleased with the public schools in the city, including the educational offerings and school facilities. Positive trends include three Indiana Gold Star School Counseling Awards, early graduation planning with students and their parents, and community collaboration between the schools and community.

Issues and concerns related to North Vernon schools voiced during the comprehensive plan process included:

- ◆ The current state of the economy is affecting the



children and their families. HB 1001 will affect school programming.

- ◆ Water needs, such as the pressure of the sprinkler system, are problems. The city's water supply as it relates to pressure and quality are the biggest issues. The school occasionally has water advisory days.
- ◆ Traffic on Highway 50 is a big issue, especially when schools opens and closes. The proposed US 50 may alleviate some of this traffic, and is seen as a benefit of the bypass.
- ◆ The schools on Walnut Street (Jennings County High School and Middle School and the North Vernon Elementary School) have only one ingress and egress. There is no emergency or secondary access.
- ◆ The City of North Vernon has strong connections to the local schools and district administration. Both parties should continue to work toward viable solutions for the school districts concerns, to ensure that the schools are able to provide their necessary services in an effective manner.

Parks & Recreation

There are several recreational offerings available to North Vernon residents and visitors alike. The North Vernon City Park is the crown jewel of the city, offering 29 acres of land for recreation and community gatherings. Local events such as the annual Easter egg hunt, July 4th fireworks and parade, and the Christmas in the Park are centered on the North Vernon City Park. In recent years a nature trail was added on the northwest side of the park, providing connectivity for more users of the park system.

According to the City's Parks and Recreation department, there is also a 1.6-acre mini park located off of Walnut Street and approximately 8

acres of undeveloped land used a greenway park located next to Jennings County Middle School.

Throughout the comprehensive plan process several long-term needs or issues for parks and recreation were identified. Primary concerns included:

- ◆ Drainage is large issue for the parks department – especially for the city park. After moderate to heavy rains the southwest corner of park is underwater. The drainage is very slow and it limits the accessibility of some of the park amenities, such as shelters.
- ◆ Developing alternative transportation corridors, or secondary thoroughfares, for bicycles and pedestrians with connectivity to city parks, the county park, civic institutions and other recreational opportunities.
- ◆ The city needs a series of bike trails that connect the county park, forest, fish and game areas.
- ◆ The city needs a YMCA for the community, especially for youth. The Y currently uses the school facilities for programming activities – with no stand along YMCA facility.
- ◆ The city should turn abandoned railways into multi use trails.
- ◆ The city should acquire more land for parks and recreation to expand the current system. New parks should be geographically dispersed to serve the entire community.
- ◆ The City of North Vernon Parks & Recreation Department is approaching the time to update their master parks plan. The majority of issues identified though the comprehensive plan process can be more thoroughly addressed in a master parks plan. At a minimum, developing an alternative transportation plan and strategically planning for acquisition of new park land should be priorities for the new master parks plan.

Government & Emergency Services

The comprehensive plan process yielded satisfactory results for city government and emergency services. Garbage hauling, street maintenance, plowing and emergency response all rated average to good from public survey results received as part of this plan.

North Vernon should continue to invest in training and equipment for city departments to maintain the satisfactory rating from its residents. Furthermore, bi-annual surveys could be instituted amongst residents to gauge public opinion about local government services. Results of this survey could provide benchmarks for future improvements.

Annexation

The purpose of annexation planning is to ensure a smooth transition from county to city jurisdiction when and if unincorporated land is annexed to the city. The City of North Vernon has compiled an annexation plan that identifies areas for future incorporation. These areas are identified on the future land use plan by letter, at various locations around the city limits.

Annexation of unincorporated land adjacent to the city benefits the city, residents and property owners. Property owners and residents gain access to services provided by North Vernon, such as enhanced police protection.

For the city, annexation yields benefits that include the ability to control new development, thereby ensuring ease of future maintenance; control of impacts at their source and the ability to extend its boundaries in a logical, service-oriented manner. It is particularly desirable when an area receives city utilities but is not on its tax roles. A city also benefits from annexing adjacent land, because those landowners that have been using city services for free (e.g., driving on the city's streets and using municipal parks) will now pay for those services

through taxes they pay to the city.

The following criteria were applied in an examination of adjacent unincorporated land to identify potential annexation areas:

- ◆ Logical and historical community identification and affiliation with North Vernon.
- ◆ Financial and technical ability of the city to provide municipal services.
- ◆ Logical service areas through vehicular accessibility, public safety response and utility construction.
- ◆ Physical boundaries such as waterways, topography, watersheds and freeways.
- ◆ Protection of critical and resource areas significant to a particular jurisdiction.

Jennings County Area Plan Commission

The City of North Vernon receives planning, zoning and enforcement assistance from the Jennings County Area Plan Commission. The city has two representatives on the commission, in addition to providing funds to the organization as of 2009.

The Area Plan Commission is also responsible for providing planning and zoning services for Jennings County and the Town of Vernon. The area plan has historically received a general fund allotment from Jennings County to operate, in addition to using the fees generated from applications, permits and inspections. Over the past several years; however, application and permits fees are declining.

While the primary mission of the Jennings County area plan is to provide planning and zoning services, most of their time is spent on enforcement issues. The enforcement staff is spread across the entire county, not just North Vernon. Since North Vernon is the largest and most active of the government

entities, they do have the largest proportion of the enforcement cases in Jennings County.

There were many calls for increased code enforcement during the comprehensive plan process. The downtown area, several specific neighborhoods and general residential maintenance were cited as areas that needed demanded more attention from enforcement personnel.

Future funding for the Jennings County Area Plan Commission should be addressed on a long-term basis, considering the declining revenue from permits and the high level of enforcement desired for North Vernon. This issue is not the sole responsibility of North Vernon; all entities will have to deal with the issue at hand to continue to receive quality planning services.

One solution for the enforcement issue for North Vernon is to have the city include a line item in the annual city budget that includes enforcement actions. Alternatively, the city could fund a full time enforcement officer specific to North Vernon, assuring that full time efforts are spent on improving and inspecting properties in the city.

Sources:

Sensible Tools Handbook for Indiana, NIPRC, 2007

What to Do Next:

- ◆ Review the Future Land Use Plan and Critical Sub Area Plans for the city when faced with land use decisions.
- ◆ Review Project Sheets in the appendix for ideas on:
 - ◆ Bicycle & Pedestrian Plans
 - ◆ Conservation Subdivisions
 - ◆ Infill and Redevelopment
- ◆ Consult the Implementation Plan for a summary of specific action steps, including updates for the zoning and subdivisions codes

Economic Development

5

Economic Development

Highlights

- ◆ North Vernon and Jennings County are fortunate to have an active, forward-thinking economic development organization that is generally well known and regarded. It has become the “go to” group not only for economic growth, but also for the many facets of community development.
- ◆ Despite local efforts, the city, county and surrounding area face many economic challenges.

This section of the comprehensive plan assesses the economic base and labor force both locally and regionally. It also discusses local economic development programs, tools, and resources, and outlines goals for economic development in North Vernon.

Defining the Study Area

North Vernon is one of two incorporated communities in Jennings County. With an estimated population of 6,296 in 2008, North Vernon makes up 22.5 percent of the total Jennings County population of 28,040 (Vernon, the other incorporated town, has a population of 317, which makes up only 1.1 percent of the county’s population). The remainder of Jennings County residents live in unincorporated communities.

POPULATIONS, 2008

Area	Population
City of North Vernon	6,296
North Vernon Micropolitan Statistical Area	28,040
Jennings County	28,040
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau</i>	

Because of North Vernon’s position in the county as a residential and economic hub, it is regarded as an urban cluster and designated by the U.S. Census Bureau as a “Micropolitan Statistical Area.” According to the Census Bureau, such areas have “at least one urban cluster of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000 population, plus adjacent territory that has a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting ties.”

The Census Bureau defines North Vernon’s Micropolitan Statistical Area as Jennings County in its entirety, meaning that county data is identical to North Vernon Micropolitan Statistical Area data. This is shown in regard to populations in the table above.

Where possible, this report uses updated information. Because the most recent data for the City of North Vernon is nearly ten years old, coming from the 2000 U.S. Census, data from the North Vernon Micropolitan Statistical Area is used when applicable. This data was updated in 2007 through the American Community Survey issued by the U.S. Census Bureau. When the North Vernon Micropolitan Statistical Area is used rather than the city of North Vernon, it is always clearly specified.

Local & Regional Economy

Population trends, educational attainment, and recent unemployment figures all point toward a struggling local and regional economy.

Job Sectors

With 19.4 percent of the total employment in the North Vernon Micropolitan Statistical area, manufacturing was the largest industry in 2007. Transportation and warehousing and government jobs (each at 12 percent) were other prominent industries.

One concern is that North Vernon outpaces the state average in industries that are struggling - such as manufacturing and construction - but falls behind the state in growing sectors such as health care and technology jobs. In an economic downturn, having a higher than average amount of jobs that are less stable, such as manufacturing and construction, contribute to a sluggish economy.

Population Trends

POPULATION TRENDS			
	North Vernon	Jennings County	Indiana
1990	5,311	23,661	5,544,159
2000	6,515	27,554	6,080,485
2008	6,296	28,040	6,376,792
Total % Change:	18.5%	18.5%	15.0%
State Rank (2008):	99 (out of 566)	55 (out of 92)	
Source: U.S. Census Bureau			

Although North Vernon experienced population growth between 1990 and 2008, this growth occurred exclusively in the 1990s, during which time North Vernon's growth outpaced that of both Indiana and Jennings County.

Since 2000, North Vernon has seen a population decline of 3.3 percent. As a result, North Vernon's

population rank in the state fell from 93rd in 2000 to 99th in 2008.

Both the state and county have continued to grow, though much slower in this decade than in the 1990s. Indiana's population increased 4.8 percent from 2000 to 2008, compared with a growth rate of 9.7 percent from 1990 to 2000. Meanwhile, Jennings County grew 1.7 percent between 2000 and 2008, though the county's population has remained virtually unchanged since 2005.

Jennings County's population also is aging. The Indiana Business Research Center (IBRC) predicts that from 2010 to 2040, the median age in the North Vernon Micropolitan Statistical Area will increase from 37 to 42 and the amount of working age adults will increase by just 61 people, compared with an increase of 3,805 seniors (ages 65 and over).

Adult Education Attainment Rates

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT			
	North Vernon*	Jennings County**	Indiana**
High School Diploma or higher	75.2	80.1	85.2
B.A. or Higher Degree	12.6	8.4	21.6
* Most recent data is from 2000			
** Most recent data is from 2005-2007			
Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey			

Although more recent data was available for Jennings County and Indiana than the City of North Vernon, several conclusions can be drawn from the available information.

First, both North Vernon and Jennings County fall far behind the Indiana state average in the number

of adults with high school diplomas and the number with college degrees. In 2000, just 12.6 percent of adults in North Vernon had college diplomas, while the state average in 2007 was 22 percent. Jennings County had even more sobering numbers, with just 8 percent of adults having bachelor's degrees or higher in 2007.

Thriving economies continue to be increasingly dependent on knowledge-based jobs with college educated workers. As a result, having lower than average educational attainment rates could be a liability to North Vernon's economic growth.

Income

INCOME, 1999			
	North Vernon	Jennings County	Indiana
Per Capita Personal Income (Annual)	\$16,836	\$17,059	\$20,397
Median Household Income	\$34,244	\$39,402	\$41,567

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey

The most recent data for North Vernon comes from the 2000 U.S. Census, and is compared with Jennings County and Indiana. These income figures, from 1999, show that while North Vernon has a lower median household income than both Indiana and Jennings County, it has nearly identical per capita personal income figures as Jennings County. Both the city and county are below the state average.

More recent information is available for county and state-level income, particularly in regard to per capita income. From 2003 to 2007, Jennings County's per capita income increased at a higher rate than the state average (18 percent versus 15

percent). However, Jennings County is still in the bottom one-third of counties in both per capita and median household income in the economically depressed state of Indiana.

Unemployment Rates

Recent unemployment rates demonstrate that the North Vernon Micropolitan Area has been hit particularly hard by the nationwide economic downturn. From September 2008 to June 2009, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate more than doubled in the area, increasing from 6.7 percent to 13.6 percent. This trend was consistent with the state increases in unemployment, but both Indiana and North Vernon far outpaced the national average.

Jennings County has the highest unemployment rate in the seven-county region, according to figures released in the summer 2009 by the IRBC.

Commuting Patterns

JENNINGS COUNTY COMMUTING PATTERNS, 2007		
Trend	% of Labor/ Work Force	# of Workers
Commute In to Jennings*	9.1%	1,325
Commute Out of Jennings**	26.9%	4,904
* Uses "work force": # of people who work in Jennings County		
** Uses "labor force": # of people who live in Jennings County and work		

Source: Indiana Department of Revenue, STATS Indiana

The commuting table shows that Jennings County is a net exporter of workers. Only 9.1 percent of the Jennings County work force commutes in from nearby counties, while 26.9 percent of the Jennings County labor force commutes out of Jennings County

to other counties.

Over 2,900 members of the Jennings County labor force commute to Bartholomew County (16.1 percent) and over 1,400 commute to Jackson County (7.7 percent).

These figures indicate that money is leaving the North Vernon area economy. As workers travel to nearby counties, they combine their eating, shopping, and recreation with their commute.

Economic Development Programs, Tools & Resources

Jennings County has several programs, tools, and resources that are valuable for economic development.

LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLS & RESOURCES	
Resource	Web Address
Jennings County Economic Development Corp.	jenningsedc.com
Jennings County Government Website	jenningscounty-in.gov
Jennings County Chamber of Commerce	jenningscountychamber.com

The Jennings County Economic Development Corporation's (JCEDC) goal is to promote economic growth in the area by developing a strong local business climate with good leadership and a high quality of life. Some of the most valuable functions they provide are business retention and a workforce development program. Besides being involved in projects such as the North Vernon Education & Training Center, the JCEDC has become the "go-to" group for many community development projects.

The group also works regionally and statewide on projects that impact Jennings County. These attributes, among others, are what makes the JCEDC a strong tool for recruiting new businesses into the area.

The organization receives a majority of its funding from county government and the City of North Vernon (they contributed \$70,000 each in 2009). The goal areas and work plan for 2009 includes:

- ◆ Current Industries – continue good relationships with all industries for future expansions and possible supplier relocations to Jennings County.
- ◆ Business Retention – assist in maintaining current business and help promote new business for future expansions.
- ◆ Workforce Development Program – assist in training programs, assessing job skills of employees, training grants for industries through the State of Indiana and other programs in which need to be developed as need for industries.
- ◆ Local Officials – work with local officials when projects or leads develop.
- ◆ Area Developers – continue to work with area developers in Jennings County.
- ◆ Construction Companies – continue to work with local construction companies to develop new leads for existing and new industries.
- ◆ Utility Providers – continue to work with utility providers on new and existing projects to develop new leads. Jennings County Sites are located in data bases for Cinergy and Hoosier Energy.
- ◆ Parent Company Visits – frequently call on local company's parent companies possibly with local officials.

JCEDC is also involved in state and regional marketing campaigns. The community has development tools in place such as a tax increment finance district and a redevelopment commission.

Another valuable resource is the Jennings County Government Website (www.jenningscounty-in.gov), which can be used as a tool to attract businesses and residents. A community's website is frequently the first exposure for potential residents and companies and therefore can be beneficial or detrimental to economic growth.

Another resource, the Jennings County Chamber of Commerce, aims to “develop and maintain a prosperous business climate for Jennings County,” according to their website. Because it provides resources to businesses and local professionals, the chamber is a valuable tool for economic development.

Inventory & Assessment - Major Employers

According to the Jennings County Economic Development Corporation industry directory, the ten largest employers in Jennings County are all located in North Vernon. Most of these employers fall into the categories of manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, and construction – three of North Vernon's major industries. Many of the companies listed in the Major Employers chart below have lost jobs due to the 2008 recession.

JENNINGS COUNTY MAJOR EMPLOYERS		
Company	City	Description
Lowe's Distribution Center	North Vernon	Hardware, Lumber, & Home Dist.
Metaldyne	North Vernon	Powdered Metal Forgings, con rods
Martinrea Industry Group	North Vernon	Auto & Truck Fuel Tubes
Dave O'Mara Contractor	North Vernon	Highway and Street Construction
Hilex Poly, LLC	North Vernon	Plastic Bags & Bag Recycling Facility
ComponX, Inc.	North Vernon	Insert Molding and Wire Harnesses
Decatur Mold	North Vernon	Molds
Erler Industries, Inc.	North Vernon	Industrial Painting
Decatur Plastics	North Vernon	Plastic Injection Molding
North Vernon Industry Corp. (NVIC)	North Vernon	Counter Weights for Forklifts
<i>Source: Jennings County Economic Development Corporation</i>		

Inventory & Assessment: - Business Parks

The Jennings County Economic Development Corporation website provides information on business parks in and around North Vernon. In-depth information about the sites can be found at jenningsedc.com.

NORTH VERNON BUSINESS PARKS	
Site Name	Site Size
Miller Site	180 acres
Montrow – Blue Building	15,000 s.f.
Montrow Site	40 acres
North Vernon Municipal Airport Site	200 acres
North Vernon Park Three Shovel Ready	54 acres
Staublin Site	140 acres

Besides the acres listed, the JCEDC continues to work on other sites for development, including two new properties in the summer of 2009.

Major Issues: Manufacturing Sector

The community has not been spared from the national recession that was inflicting the country in 2009.

Representatives from North Vernon's manufacturing and industrial businesses gave generally bleak reports in the summer of 2009. All of the companies interviewed during a focus group reported struggles, and one of the companies interviewed filed for bankruptcy shortly afterward.

Accessing credit was listed as a problem, but others said that even if more money was available many people still wouldn't buy because of the weak national economy. Among manufacturers, some said that China's role in the international marketplace continues to grow at an alarming rate.

Frequently mentioned workforce issues included complaints about the work ethic, especially among younger and lower-paid employees. “About one out of 10 is worth the investment of training,” one employer said.

Looking ahead to when the economy improves, some people said the lack of infrastructure, particularly water, could negatively impact future growth.

On the positive side, almost everyone interviewed thought favorably of the Jennings County Economic Development Corporation’s staff and efforts, including expansion of land for development along SR 3. There was also widespread support for plans for the SR 50 bypass.

Commercial Land Use

North Vernon provides the county’s biggest commercial area, including downtown and the retail strip along SR 3.

Inventory & Assessment: Downtown

During the information gathering stage of this report, downtown North Vernon was frequently mentioned as both a major concern and a valuable asset.

At the most basic level, downtown is still essentially intact, with plenty of buildings still in use and in good condition. Also, there are not many “missing teeth,” that is, vacant lots between businesses.

Other positive trends include new businesses such as A Perfect Day Café and The White Front that can draw both local people and visitors. The Main Street square is a gem with a lot of potential for development, as is the train depot.

Downtown businesses include a mix of commercial and services. The chamber of commerce lists 13 member restaurants, a gym, three attorneys’ offices and a hardware store, among others. There are, however, few regional attractions; businesses that

draw tourists and thus bring “other people’s money” to town. The Park Theatre Civic Centre is a regional draw, and some of the new restaurants attract visitors.

After the expansion of the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center has been completed, the community will be able to better gauge its impact on the local economy. For now, downtown shop owners report only a small increase in businesses. They did note, however, the convoys that occasionally add to traffic congestion.

Major Issues: Commercial Sector

Downtown is the centerpiece of North Vernon’s commercial and service sectors. Through the focus groups, interviews and other research conducted during this report, stakeholders underlined several key issues vital to downtown development. They are:

- ◆ Branding downtown, creating an image that is easy to communicate and recognized by tourists.
- ◆ A lack of code enforcement. Many buildings need maintenance.
- ◆ Ensure that new or redeveloped properties downtown are compatible with its historic appearance.
- ◆ Increase the regulation and code enforcement of downtown residential units.
- ◆ Concern about what the proposed bypass will do to downtown, underscoring the need for attractive gateways into the commercial area.
- ◆ Heavy truck traffic that rumbles through downtown along SR 50.
- ◆ The Main Street Square is not well known by visitors because it is off the most traveled route.

Goals for Economic Development

- ◆ Continue working on long-term plans to expand the infrastructure capability of delivering water to new businesses and residential areas.
- ◆ After selection of the final route for the bypass by the Indiana Department of Transportation, create gateways and other projects to mitigate the potential diversion it will create for downtown businesses.
- ◆ Even without a bypass, more signage is needed downtown.
- ◆ Launch a branding campaign to create North Vernon as a regional destination.
- ◆ Increase code enforcement downtown to prevent the appearance of blighted buildings.
- ◆ Continue working with officials to fully integrate the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center into the local economy.

What to Do Next

- ◆ Review Critical Sub Areas in this Comprehensive Plan for:
 - ◆ Bypass North CSA
 - ◆ Bypass West CSA
 - ◆ Downtown CSA
- ◆ Review Project Sheets in the appendix for ideas on:
 - ◆ Downtown Plans
 - ◆ Capital Improvement Plans
 - ◆ Compact Urban Form
 - ◆ Design Guidelines
 - ◆ Overlay Zones

Housing

6

Housing

Highlights

- ◆ There is not a lot of activity in the local housing market, but that should not stop community leaders from working toward the future, including revitalizing older neighborhoods and widening the types of available housing units.

This section of the Comprehensive Plan documents the present need for housing, assesses the condition of the local housing stock and develops policies to address the demand for a range of housing options.

Inventory and Assessment – Single Family

The majority of housing units in North Vernon are occupied by single families. The most recent Census data reveals the following trends:

- ◆ The number of housing units in North Vernon increased 28 percent from 1990 to 2000. By contrast, units in the state increased by only 13 percent during that same period. While more recent information is not available for North Vernon, the Census estimates that between 2000 and 2007, there was a 10.1 percent increase in housing units in Jennings County. This is slightly higher than the state as a whole, which gained 8.7 percent more units during this time period.

- ◆ North Vernon's median home values increased by 80 percent between 1990 and 2000, outpacing the state average of 75 percent. However, the city's ranking in the state in terms of median home values fell from 276th in 1990 to 326th in 2000 because the median values in many other cities and towns grew at a higher rate.
- ◆ Between 1990 and 2000, North Vernon's population increased by 22.7 percent, making it the 85th fastest growing city or town in that time period (the state average during this period was 9.7 percent). Since 2000, North Vernon's population has decreased, with the city experiencing a 3.3 percent population loss between 2000 and 2008.

Building permit figures show that housing growth has slowed considerably since 2000, which is not surprising given the 3.3 percent decrease in population. After the number of building permits issued rose steadily throughout the 1990s to a peak of 212 in 1999, the figure has decreased every year since with the exceptions of 2001 and 2003. In 2007 and 2008, the number of building permits issued was 86 and 57, respectively. This marks the lowest number of permits issued over a two-year period in more than twenty years.

PRICE RANGE & NUMBER OF FOR SALE BY COUNTY, MAY 2009							
City	<\$100k	\$100-\$200k	\$200k - \$300k	\$300-\$500k	\$500-\$1m	> \$1m	All Housing
North Vernon	72	41	8	2	0	0	123
Seymour	97	116	16	8	0	1	238

Current Housing Market Snapshot

To get a better idea of the current housing market in North Vernon, EGT took a snapshot of data from the National Association of REALTORS' Multiple Listings Service in May 2009. The information gathered was the number of single-family homes listed for a given price range in the City of North Vernon. This data was then compared with the City of Seymour, a nearby municipality with similar demographics.

A comparison of North Vernon and Seymour provides valuable insight into current housing market in North Vernon, particularly in regard to future population trends and the present valuation of houses in the city.

HOUSES FOR SALE PER 1000 RESIDENTS, MAY 2009		
City	Pop	Houses on the Market Per 1,000 Residents
North Vernon	6,321	19.5
Seymour	19,146	12.4

North Vernon has seen negative population growth over the past several years, a trend which figures to continue based on an analysis of the North Vernon housing market snapshot comparison with Seymour. This conclusion is reached by creating a comparison of the number of houses on the market per capita for both cities, a number that is derived by dividing the municipality's population by the total number of houses on the market. North Vernon has 19.4 houses on the market per 1,000 residents, 156 percent of Seymour's 12.4. This means that many more North Vernon residents are attempting to sell their homes than in Seymour. This would not be an issue if homes on the market in North Vernon were being snatched up quickly. However, the vacancy rate is on the rise (this is discussed further in the "Housing Alternatives" section), meaning that there

are more sellers than buyers.

Regarding the present valuation of homes in the city, it is clear that homes tend to sell for less in North Vernon than in Seymour. Seymour has many more homes valued above \$100,000 relative to Seymour, particularly in regards to homes priced above \$300,000. The majority of homes in North Vernon (58.5 percent) tend to be priced below \$100,000, while the majority of homes in Seymour (59.2 percent) tend to be priced above \$100,000.

There are other possible explanations for the discrepancy in the value of homes on the market between North Vernon and Seymour. The most feasible alternate explanation is that low-income residents may be moving out of North Vernon in search of employment, leading to a disproportionate number of low-priced homes on the market.

While the valuation of homes is not completely uniform based upon shared characteristics of houses currently on the market, the most highly valued homes in North Vernon tend to be spacious two-story homes with plenty of land. Small ranch-style homes and mobile homes tend to hold lower values throughout the city.

Inventory and Assessment – Apartments and Rentals

% OF HOUSING OCCUPIED BY RENTERS		
Place	2000	1990
Indiana average	26.3	27.3
North Vernon	39.3	28.2

Apartments and rentals make up a relatively large percentage of occupied housing in North Vernon when compared to the Indiana state average. According to the 2000 Census, 39.3 percent of the city's total housing units were renter occupied,

which is a substantial jump from 1990, when just 28.2 of total occupied housing in North Vernon was by renters.

This spike indicates a trend toward renting that is at odds with Indiana trends. In the same time period of 1990-2000, rentals in the state fell as a percent of total occupied housing units from 27.3 to 26.3 percent.

The Census also reported that a majority of the city's vacant units are rental units.

The market snapshot taken in the spring of 2009 does not include information for rental units in North Vernon due to unavailability of information.

Major Housing Issues

The Steering Committee looked at several housing questions in various levels of detail. The solutions they devised are outlined in the strategies and action steps. Here is a summary of their thoughts on key issues.

Housing Alternatives

While there is a modest consumer preference for detached single-family housing in North Vernon, the number of occupants who choose this type of housing is far below the state average of 71 percent. Just over 60 percent of the occupied housing was owner occupied and just under 40 percent was renter occupied, according to the last Census.

The percent of vacant housing units increased from 5.1 percent in 1990 to 7.8 percent in 2000, making it almost identical with the state average of 7.7 percent.

The National Credit Crisis

As this comprehensive plan was being assembled, the national housing crisis continued to sweep through Indiana and into North Vernon. A company called Realty Trac reported that by the end of 2008,

home foreclosures had reached their highest level since the Great Depression and that Indiana was 10th among all states in foreclosures filed per household.

While exact foreclosure figures are not available for North Vernon, local real estate professionals indicate that the number of foreclosures has increased since the beginning of the credit crisis.

North Vernon is caught in a nationwide crisis and, unfortunately, there are few things local government can do in the short-term. However, this should not keep town leaders from planning for the future. Also, new construction is only one way for a community to increase its housing stock. Annexation can also add to the mix.

Subsidized Housing

DEVELOPMENT	ADDRESS	UNITS
Valley Court Apartments of North Vernon	500 Hayden Pike	27
More information available at http://www.in.gov/ihcda/2878.htm .		

Ohio Valley Opportunities Inc. manages low-income housing in Jennings County. While the county has no Section 8 rental housing, it does have community development funded rental housing. According to the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority website, "the owners of these properties are required to lease the units to income-eligible people and limit the rent they charge to tenants. These income and rent limits are based on the county in which the property is located, the number of people in the tenant's household, and the size of the unit (number of bedrooms)."

There is only one such unit in Jennings County – Valley Court Apartments – and it is located in North Vernon. Valley Court Apartments has 27 total units, according to the management.

Local Housing Organizations

Jennings County is within the region of three Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs), which assist communities with housing development. They are the Southern Indiana Housing and Community Development Corporation in Columbus, Ohio Valley Opportunities Inc in Madison and Southeastern Indiana Community Preservation and Development in Versailles.

As shown in the table below (as posted on the Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority's website) the county has received about \$1.5 million in state awards, however it has been almost eight years since the last grant.

for over \$200,000; the average price of a home last year was \$60,000-\$70,000.

- ◆ Because of the lack of upper-end homes, most business executives live in Columbus.
- ◆ There is a large stock of available affordable homes.
- ◆ Muscatatuck Urban Training Center has not had a local impact on housing yet, but it probably will. The center will have a bigger impact on rentals than owner-occupied homes.
- ◆ Country Squire Estates has an impact on North Vernon housing; there were 30 properties listed for sale.

RECIPIENT	BOARD AWARD DATE	CURRENT AWARD AMOUNT	ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION	ANTICIPATED # UNITS
Jennings County	6/26/1997	\$224,996.85	Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation	25
Ohio Valley Opportunities Inc	3/25/1999	\$750,000.00	Rental Rehabilitation	27
City of North Vernon	9/27/2001	\$18,950.00	Feasibility Study	0
County of Jennings	4/23/2002	\$30,000.00	Housing Needs Assessment	0
City of North Vernon	9/26/2002	\$496,625.00	Rental Rehabilitation	68

Focus Group with Real Estate Agents

During research for this plan a focus group was held with local real estate agents. Some highlights of the conversation include:

- ◆ North Vernon did not have a “big bubble” on real estate prices, so the crash did not have as large an impact.
- ◆ The local housing market is fairly sedate; there is not a lot of activity.
- ◆ Local prices are generally low: in the last 18 months only two houses in Jennings County sold

- ◆ When a developer expresses interest in building, they often complain about the slow administrative process (area plan review,, local approval, etc.).

Development Principles: Housing

Development principles guide decisions-makers as they interpret the comprehensive plan. The development principle for housing is:

- ◆ The city will support older neighborhoods through grants and other means and will

prepare for a mix of new residential units, including moderate to higher-end housing.

Goals & Strategies: Housing

Goal

Control and improve the quality of growth through annexation and by having developers raise the aesthetic qualities of their local projects.

Strategies:

- ◆ Keep Annexation Plan updated.
- ◆ Create and enforce landscaping requirements for new construction.
- ◆ Create and enforce basic design guidelines for new construction.

Goal

Restore the deteriorating core of existing housing while providing a full range of housing options, including upper-income homes.

Strategies:

- ◆ Explore options for neighborhood revitalization projects.
- ◆ Employ basic design standards to improve the appearance of new residential development.
- ◆ Develop a marketing program for residential developers.
- ◆ Working with the county, conduct a Housing Needs Assessment to determine gaps in North Vernon's housing stock.

Goal

Ensure the city becomes more sustainable by meeting the needs of its residents while protecting environmental resources for future generations.

Strategies:

- ◆ Integrate environmental concerns into decision making at all levels.
- ◆ Encourage the use of green building materials and techniques in new construction.
- ◆ Explore the recommendations of the National League of City's green initiatives.

What to Do Next

- ◆ Review Critical Sub Area Plans for the city
- ◆ Review Project Sheets in the appendix for ideas on:
 - ◆ Bicycle & Pedestrian Plans
 - ◆ Conservation Subdivisions
 - ◆ Creating a Neighborhood Associations
 - ◆ Green Cities
 - ◆ Traditional Neighborhood Development
- ◆ Consult the Implementation Plan

Utilities

7

Utilities

Highlights:

- ◆ Future economic development areas for the city generally lie outside North Vernon's utility service territories. The city needs to develop a close working relationship with outside utility providers in growth areas north and west of the city to ensure utilities support the city's economic development plans.
- ◆ The most immediate need for the North Vernon Water utility is to improve fire flow and pressures throughout the system by looping mains and increasing line sizes.
- ◆ The future acquisition of a quarry for water storage has been proposed and could result in a higher quality of water delivered on a more consistent basis, even during dry periods. It is recommended that the city fully explore this option, as well as other ideas for improving the provision of water for residents.
- ◆ Adding Muscatatuck Urban Training Center to the city's wastewater system could result in peak flows approaching the capacity of the treatment facility. Since the existing wastewater treatment facility does not have room to expand, the city needs to take steps now to plan for a future satellite plant serve the future needs of the community.

The utilities in North Vernon are provided by a mix of public, private, and member-owned entities. In order to focus on the utilities that have the greatest impact on land use, the Utilities Section of this comprehensive plan has chosen to address the areas of water, stormwater, wastewater, electricity, gas,

and telecommunications. The purpose of the plan is to provide guidance on the expansion or upgrade of infrastructure to better serve the city's goals and objectives.

Water Supply and Treatment

Area Water Utility Providers

Water service is provided in the North Vernon area by several municipal and private systems. North Vernon Water serves only the corporate limits of the City of North Vernon. The utility also supplies water to neighboring systems of Hayden Water, Vernon Water and Burnt Pines Water.

Outside the city, water service is provided in the northern half of Jennings County by Jennings Water, Inc. Vernon Water provides service within the Town of Vernon. Other rural water providers include Hayden Water, Stucker Fork Water, East Bartholomew Water, Burnt Pines Water, Jennings Northeast Regional Utilities and Dupont Water.

Since North Vernon only provides water service within the current city limits, future development areas are controlled by other utilities. While this means there is not an up front cost to the city associated with extension of utilities, it also means that the city has less flexibility in directing the development of utilities for economic development purposes. As a result, it is important that the city develops and maintains a strong working relationship with adjoining water utilities.

Introduction to North Vernon Water

The city's treatment plant has a capacity of 3.0 million gallons per day, and utilizes an average of 1.2 million gallons per day. Two elevated storage tanks provide pressure to the system. Each has 300,000 gallons of capacity. A 1.0 million gallon ground level tank also provides storage capacity at the treatment plant, bringing the total storage capacity to 1.6 million.

Distribution Improvements

The most immediate need for the water system is improved water distribution. The system has fire flow and pressure limitations, largely the result of small line sizes and inadequate looping of water mains. These concerns are especially prevalent on the west side of the community. In that area, it has been proposed that additional looping and a new elevated tank be installed to improve the water system. It is recommended that the city continue to work to improve pressure and looping throughout the system by selectively increasing main sizes, and by looping of water mains.

Water Supply, Storage and Treatment

North Vernon utilizes surface water from the Vernon Fork of the Muscatatuck River as its water source. While this is suitable during normal conditions, the flow of the river slows dramatically during dry weather. When there are reduced flows that would leave the city without water, the city has coordinated with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to release water impounded on the Muscatatuck River at the Brush Creek Reservoir. The 150 acre Brush Creek Reservoir was originally built by the State of Indiana 1953 to provide supplemental water supply for the Muscatatuck State School (now MUTC) and the City of North Vernon. It is located northwest of the city and is also used for fish and wildlife purposes, but remains a secondary water source for North Vernon.

While releases from the Brush Creek Reservoir help meet water supply needs, they also cause significant operational difficulties for the treatment plant. Releases from Brush Creek Reservoir disturb sediment in the river, resulting in a higher concentration of turbidity and solids in the city's raw water supply. In turn, this plugs up filters and causes other operating difficulties at the city's water treatment plant.

The variation in water conditions is what makes operation of a surface water treatment plant more complicated. Turbidity and solids increase with high water flows – whether from a Brush Creek Reservoir release or from rainfall. Average flows and low flows result in dramatically different qualities of raw water. As the quality of incoming water changes with weather conditions, the city crews must continually monitor the treatment process to ensure the city's drinking water supply is adequately treated before it reaches residents.

The discussion about how to improve the city's water supply has arisen because of the possibility of the future acquisition of an old quarry for water storage. The city is interested because it could help provide the community with high quality drinking water on a more consistent basis, without the risk of being interrupted during dry periods. This is an important community goal and should be considered. However, it is recommended that the city fully investigate other options for improving water quality before proceeding with any solution. A summary of the ideas to be considered follow:

- ♦ **Develop quarry for water storage:** There is an existing limestone quarry still in operation on the northwest side of the city. It has been proposed that the quarry be converted into a water storage reservoir for the city when the quarry closes in the future. The quarry reservoir could provide supplemental water storage for low flow periods. Regardless of flow conditions on the river, the quarry reservoir would act as a preliminary settling basin that would allow solids and turbidity to be reduced before primary treatment.

During low flow conditions, water could be pulled directly from the quarry reservoir for treatment. If the volume of the quarry reservoir is large enough, this might serve as a backup

source without requiring a release from the Brush Creek Reservoir. But, even if a release is required, water could be pumped into the quarry reservoir first for preliminary settling, allowing less turbid water to be pulled from the reservoir for treatment at the water plant.

Even during normal flow conditions, water could still be pumped into the quarry reservoir first and then into the plant. This would make treatment of the water safer, more predictable, and would result in lower operation and maintenance costs at the plant.

It should be noted that there are several issues related to this option that need to be carefully considered. First, the real storage capacity of the quarry reservoir needs to be understood so that it can be determined if the quarry can be used for long-term water storage during dry months, or if the size would limit its use to only a settling basin and short term storage. Next, it needs to be determined if the reservoir would hold water, or if a liner would be needed. If the quarry is fed by groundwater, then the quality of the groundwater needs to be reviewed to determine if it will impact the water treatment process. There may also be a connection between river levels and quarry reservoir levels that need studied.

- ◆ **Pump untreated water directly from the Brush Creek Reservoir:** Another option to be considered is to investigate pumping some or all of the city's water supply directly from the Brush Creek Reservoir. A raw water main could be extended from the reservoir to the treatment plant. This would provide the city with a water supply of a more consistent quality, and would eliminate the variations currently experienced during dry weather conditions.

More investigation of this potential solution is

warranted. First, the city needs to work with DNR to determine if pumping water directly from the reservoir is feasible. Second, this option could result in less water being discharged into the river downstream of the Brush Creek Reservoir. Environmental studies need to be performed to understand the impact removing up 1.2 million gallons per day of water (the city's average daily use) would have on the river.

- ◆ **Purchase water from another provider:** Purchasing water from adjacent Jennings County Water is certainly an option. However, Jennings County Water purchases their water from Redington. While this would provide emergency water source, purchasing water from multiple providers is expected to be an expensive undertaking, and is not expected to be cost effective as a long term solution.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the city investigate specific issues and opportunities related to the development of the quarry reservoir and the option of acquiring water from another system. Other, larger scale options such as drilling wells at a distant aquifer should be given at least some consideration in this study. All options considered should fully consider operation and maintenance costs. Notably, the quarry reservoir option should reduce operational costs and effort at the plant – but would require additional costs associated with maintenance of the reservoir.

Action Steps:

- ◆ Develop and maintain a strong working relationship with adjoining water utilities.
- ◆ Continue with ongoing plans for water distribution system improvements.
- ◆ Initiate a detailed study of options for improving the community's water supply.

Stormwater

Inventory and Assessment

In recent years, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has worked to improve the quality of stormwater discharged by municipalities by designating and regulating municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s). Although North Vernon collects and conveys stormwater through a collection system, the city is not regulated as an MS4. Several municipalities are regulated in Indiana, but North Vernon has been exempt due to population requirements.

North Vernon is not unlike many other Indiana communities in that there are many areas of its stormwater system that need work. Locations such as Lincoln Avenue, Shaw Park and west O&M Avenue all have experienced stormwater problems.

Although not regulated, the city has begun to take steps to generate funding for the needed improvements to the stormwater system. This included the development of a stormwater utility. As currently established, the stormwater system generates \$50,000 to \$60,000 per year in revenue. Unfortunately, with most stormwater improvements costing hundreds of thousands of dollars to complete, there simply is not enough funding to address the many stormwater needs in the community.

It is recommended that the city make an assessment of the stormwater improvements that will be needed in the future, and then pursue all available financing and grant funding options to address these needs.

At the same time, stormwater quality is expected to be a future concern for the community. While not regulated today, that could change within the life of this plan. It is recommended that the city begin to take steps to prepare for future regulation changes in this area. Even more, the community should begin to investigate how to incorporate “green” stormwater

quality systems into future development to be a step ahead of future regulation.

Action Steps

- ◆ Develop a prioritized assessment of needed stormwater improvements.
- ◆ Evaluate financing and grant funding options for implementation of priority stormwater improvements.
- ◆ Begin to investigate “green” options for addressing stormwater quality.

Wastewater

Inventory and Assessment

There are three wastewater treatment plants in Jennings County. The largest treatment facility is the North Vernon Municipal Wastewater system. The Jennings Northwest Regional Utilities serves Country Squires Lakes, Scipio Hayden and neighboring areas in northwest Jennings County. This district also serves lands directly north and west of North Vernon. The Campbell Township Rural Sewer District serves MUTC and areas around Butlerville.

Prior to 1993, North Vernon’s wastewater treatment facility was failing to meet regulatory standards. At that time, the city took action and implemented a series of upgrades to the collection system and treatment facility. A detailed wastewater master plan was completed in 1998 and the city has taken progressive steps since then modernize the city’s wastewater system.

Today, the wastewater treatment plant has an average daily flow design capacity of 2.2 million gallons per day (MGD) and a peak hydraulic design flow of 4.76 MGD. The treatment plant has an apparent maximum hydraulic capacity of 6.0 MGD, based on observations made since the plant expansion/upgrades were placed on-line. Average

daily use is approximately 1.4 million gallons per day.

While wastewater systems have been modernized, the facilities are not expected to have the capacity to meet the mid and long-term growth opportunities that have been identified. Currently, the city is planning for the extension of sanitary sewers to MUTC. It is projected that addition of MUTC will bring flows at the treatment plant to within 80 percent of its rated capacity during peak periods of use at MUTC. In a growing community, this is a level that indicates the city needs to take steps to be ready to expand the treatment facility.

Further expansions of the wastewater treatment plan may not be the answer to future growth. The current facility, located on Greensburg Street south of US 50, has been expanded to the point where recent expansions of the facility have left the site nearly landlocked. It is bounded to the south by the Muscatatuck River, to the west by a popular municipal golf course, to the east by Greensburg Street and to the north by existing businesses. While there is some vacant land to the north in which the facility could grow, growth in that direction is limited due to topography and would prove costly. Another expansion approach would be to relocate Greensburg Street to exit onto US 50 west of the wastewater treatment facility (and east of the golf course). The current roadway might then be able to be used for expansion of the facility.

The city has also begun early discussions of the need for a satellite wastewater treatment facility to supplement current treatment systems. It has been proposed that the satellite facility be located on the southwest side of the community – possibly along Indian Creek.

As expanded service is considered, there is a limitation to the expansion of the city's wastewater utility. Jennings Northwest Regional Utilities (JNRU) serves the areas north and west of the city that are

most likely to grow in the future. Notably, growth areas associated with the proposed US 50 bypass are generally within JNRU's boundaries. Today, JNRU only provides sanitary service to Country Squire Lakes, but has developed and published plans to extend utilities to serve rural areas nearer to North Vernon.

Recommendations

With the addition of MUTC to the city's wastewater flows, the city needs to take steps to begin to plan for the future expansion of the wastewater treatment facility. In the short term, estimates should be made of the amount of growth that can be accommodated by the current treatment facility. Since much of the future growth of the city lies within the service territory of other providers, future growth estimates will inform decisions about how much wastewater treatment capacity needs to grow.

After future growth estimates are developed, the city will need to evaluate the costs and feasibility of expansion of the existing plant or construction of a new plant. Should construction of a new plant prove to be the most cost effective option, the city will need to identify sites for and then acquiring a site for the plant. It may be appropriate for the city to obtain an option to purchase property for the plant, and not finalize acquisition until future development begins to materialize.

As noted previously, the city's growth areas are beyond areas served the city's sanitary sewers. This includes future residential areas to the west, commercial growth north along SR 7, industrial growth north along SR 3, and future development around the airport. Since the current wastewater provider does not have service in many of these areas, the city has reached an agreement to serve these areas in the short-term. A key example of this is that the city's industrial park to the north side of the community is served by the city. Since the city

has made a substantial investment in utilities for this area already, it is preferred that the city continue to serve future development in this area. This will need to be coordinated with the regional sewer utility.

Nonetheless, in other growth areas where the city does not have direct control of the sanitary sewers, it is important for the city to develop and maintain a strong working relationship with utility providers in adjoining areas. More specifically, these adjoining utilities would include Jennings Northwest Regional Utilities and the Campbell Township Rural Sewer District.

Action Steps

- ◆ Identify and estimate wastewater flows in the city's future growth areas.
- ◆ Evaluate options for providing additional wastewater treatment capacity including expansion of the current facility or construction of a satellite plant.
- ◆ Seek land rights for future wastewater treatment plant property as needed.
- ◆ Develop and maintain a strong working relationship with adjoining wastewater utilities.

Electric, Natural Gas, and Telecommunications

Inventory and Assessment

◆ Electricity

Electric service in North Vernon is provided by Duke Energy. Areas outside North Vernon are served by Hoosier Energy through the Jackson County Rural Electric Membership Cooperative.

◆ Natural Gas

Midwest Natural Gas Company provides natural gas service to North Vernon and most outlying areas.

◆ Telecommunications

Verizon and SEI Communications provide telephone service to the majority of the county. High-speed internet and broad band access provided by Cinergy Metro Net and Comcast with fiber optic cable. Citizens Communication Corp. offers wireless high speed internet and broadband communication. The city has access to DSL, T1, Fiber Optic Cable and wireless communication.

Action Steps

- ◆ Encourage the ongoing extension and upgrade of electric, natural gas and telecommunications infrastructure.

Transportation

8

Transportation

Highlights:

- ♦ Traffic congestion and lack of alternative routes apart from US 50 are key concerns in the community.
- ♦ Construction of the US 50 bypass will provide significant opportunity to enhance economic development efforts and relieve traffic congestion in the community. The city should work closely with INDOT in the final route and interchange selection process to make sure the route provides the most benefit to the community.

The Transportation Section describes North Vernon's existing transportation system and provides an assessment of key issues. The key issues were determined through public input, discussion with stakeholders, and consideration of future land use. The purpose of this section of the plan is to provide a direction for future planning, guiding North Vernon towards achieving their long-term goals and objectives.

Overview of Road and Street Concerns

US 50 is the most heavily traveled road in the community and links North Vernon to I-65 to the west. While the highway is a tremendous asset to the community, traffic on US 50 has increased greatly in recent years especially with the development of MUTC. Traffic congestion has become a major concern between the Jennings County School campus and the SR 3/US 50 intersection. Along US 50 in downtown North Vernon, heavy truck traffic was noted by downtown merchants and residents to be a limiting factor in the redevelopment of the

downtown.

Highways in the city meet at the intersection of US 50 and SR 3/SR 7. Traveling north-to-south or east-to-west in the city most always requires traffic to route through this intersection. Consequently, high traffic volumes or an accident on the highway can severely hamper the movement of traffic in the city. The presence of multiple railroads in the city prevents widespread use of side streets as alternate routes to the highways, adding further traffic to this intersection.

Planning has begun for improvements to US 50 through the city to address these concerns. An initial study recommended two options for a bypass on the north side of the community. The bypass is generally supported by the community and is believed to benefit the city by providing direct access to industrial areas and the airport, while reducing truck traffic through downtown.

Road and Street System

Inventory

The Federal Highway Administration has established a functional classification system to group roads based on their intended use. The categories of the classification system include the following: principal arterials, minor arterials, urban collectors, major collectors, minor collectors, and local streets. Each category was created based on how the road addresses both the flow of traffic and access to land.

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF MAJOR ROADS NEAR NORTH VERNON	
Functional Classification	Road/Street
Principal Arterial	US 50, SR 3 (in North Vernon), SR 7
Minor Arterial	SR 3 (north of North Vernon), Madison Avenue, 5th Street, Norris Avenue
Urban Collector	Hayden Pike, 4th Street, Brownstown Road, CR 150.

◆ Principal Arterial

Principal arterial streets are intended for high traffic with minimal access to land. These types of roads are meant for long trips and high travel speeds. US 50, SR 3 (within North Vernon) and SR 7 are examples of two lane principal arterials running through North Vernon.

◆ Minor Arterial

Minor arterial streets connect with principal arterial streets, allowing a lower level of traffic mobility but more access to land. These types of roads are meant for moderate trips. They provide intra-community connectivity in urban areas and inter-regional connectivity in rural areas. Examples include SR 3 north of North Vernon, Madison Avenue, Fifth Street and Norris Avenue.

◆ Urban Collector

Urban collectors both circulate traffic and provide land access in residential, commercial and industrial areas. Unlike arterial streets, urban collectors can enter residential neighborhoods to link travelers with their destination area. Examples include Hayden Pike, Fourth Street, Brownstown Road and CR 150.

◆ Major Collector

Major collectors are rural roads that serve large towns not served by higher classified roads, and other important intra-county generators of traffic such as consolidated schools, county parks, and agricultural areas. There are no major collectors within North Vernon.

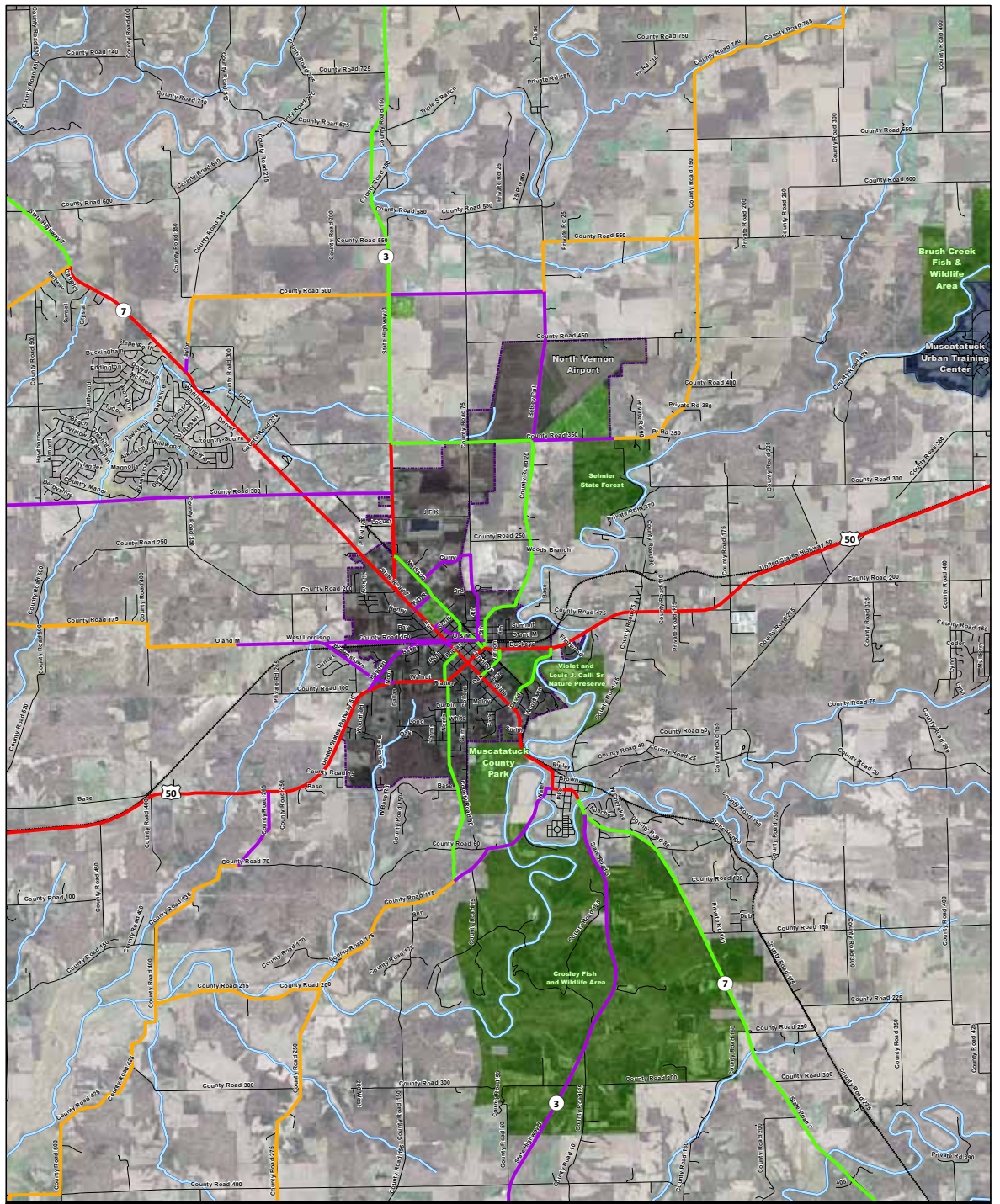
◆ Minor Collector

Minor collectors are rural roads, spaced at intervals, which guarantee all smaller developed areas are a short distance from a collector road. There are no minor collectors within North Vernon.

◆ Local Street

Local streets offer the lowest level of movement and provide direct access to abutting land. They include roads or streets that are not higher classified as arterials or collectors.

The Transportation Map provides a view of the existing road network in and around North Vernon. The various arterial and collector streets have been designated using color coding.

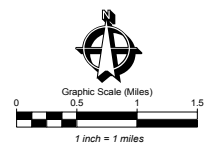


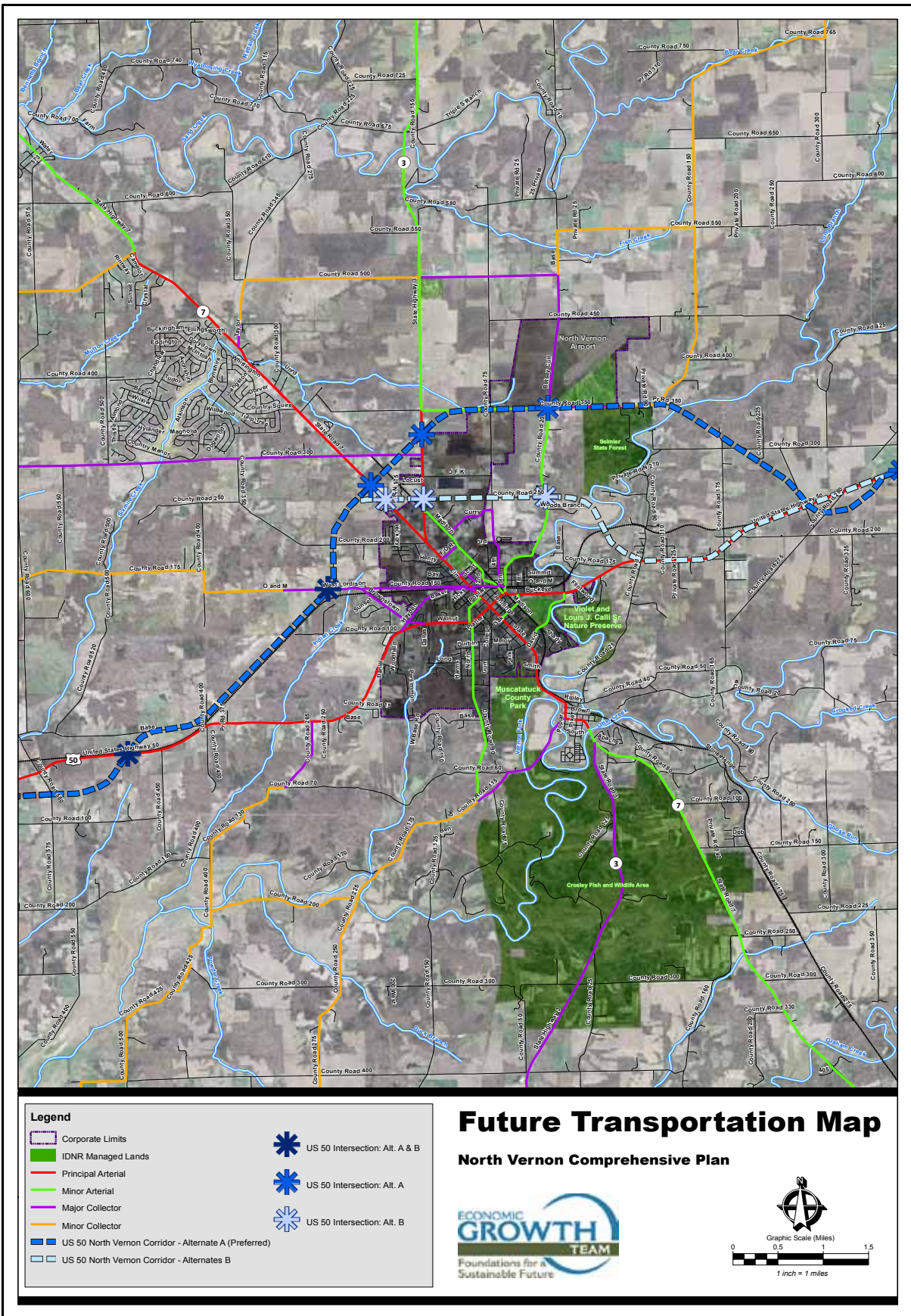
Legend

- Corporate Limits
- IDNR Managed Lands
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector

Transportation Map

North Vernon Comprehensive Plan





Planned INDOT Projects

INDOT plans the future investment strategy for the state highway system by means of a report called the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRP). This document was most recently updated in 2006 and plans ahead to 2030.

Two projects are included in INDOT's plan between 2010 and 2015. These projects are funded with Major Moves dollars. Included are added travel lanes on US 50 from US 31 in Jackson County to the west side of North Vernon, and a separate project to add travel lanes through North Vernon on US 50.

Long range projects (2025 or later) included in INDOT's long range plan include added travel lanes on US 50 east of North Vernon, added travel lanes on SR 7 north of SR 3.

US 50 Bypass

Background

INDOT first began to evaluate the need for improvements to US 50 in the North Vernon area in a 1992 study. While that study concluded that there were "no serious safety or capacity problems" at that time, subsequent increases in traffic prompted a new study beginning in 2006.

The new US 50 North Vernon Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment Study was completed in 2008 by Bernardin Lochmueller and Associates, Inc. The purpose of the plan was to assess the level of service provided by the existing roadway, and to assess whether improvements to the roadway would improve the level of service.

The study reviewed US 50 from US 31 in Jackson County (just east of I-65) to the east side of North Vernon. Two separate segments of the roadway were considered in the plan. First, several alternatives were considered between US 31 and the west side of North Vernon. Second, several alternatives were considered through and around North Vernon itself.

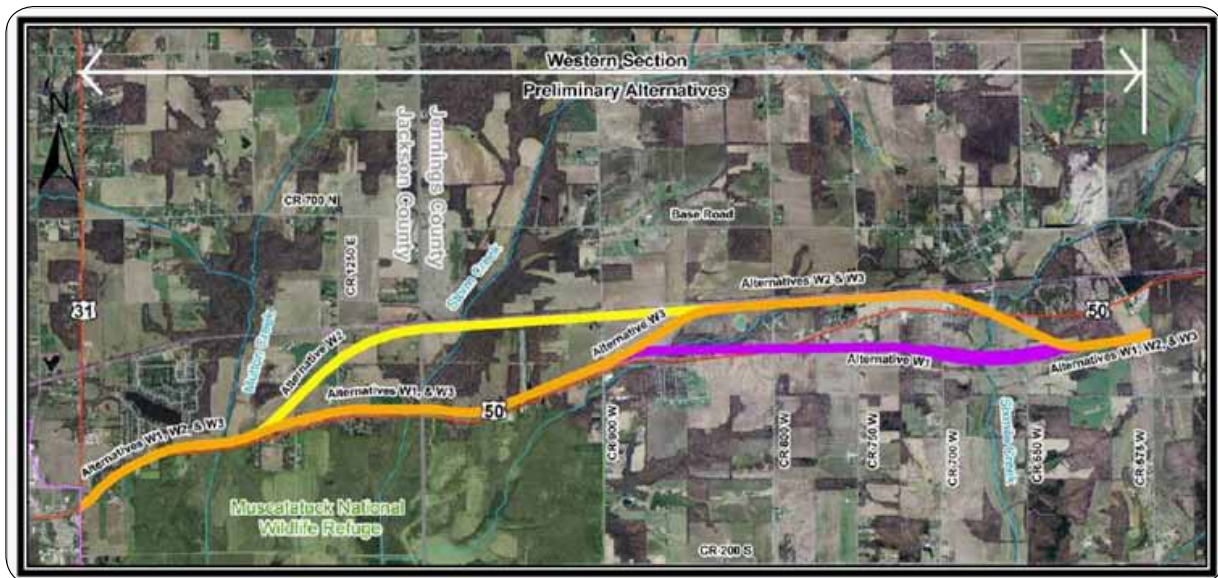
US 50 North Vernon Corridor Plan Conclusions

West of North Vernon (between US 31 and North Vernon) the study concluded that upgrading the existing alignment of US 50 would not achieve an acceptable level of service for the roadway. Instead, the plan recommended three alternative routes (Preliminary Alternatives W1, W2 and W3) for further study. In an addendum published soon after the February 2008 report, an additional western alternative was recommended for study. This alternative is similar to Alternative W in the report and incorporates improvements to the existing US 50 in combination with the Transportation System Management alternative. A map of the route alignments is included in this section.

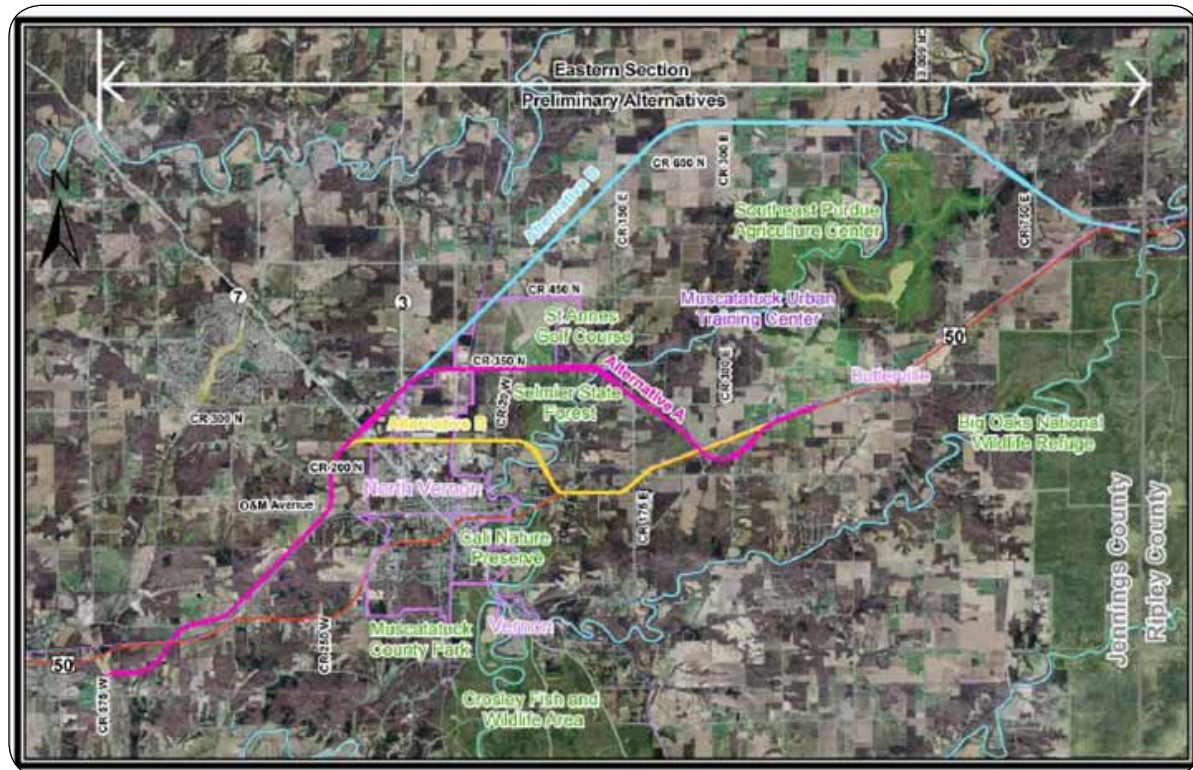
For the eastern part of the US 50 route through North Vernon, two alternatives for improvements the existing US 50 alignment through North Vernon were studied along with five additional "bypass" alternatives. The study concluded that improvements to the existing alignment or modification to a system of one way pairs of streets would not achieve an acceptable level of service.

Of the bypass alternatives, the one southern bypass option considered was not recommended for additional study. Of the northern bypass alternatives, Alternatives A, B and D were initially recommended for further study. However, in an addendum published soon after the February 2008 report, Alternative D was eliminated because of significant cost, environmental and right-of-way impacts.

In the end, Alternatives A and B were recommended for additional study.



Alternative US 50 Routes between US 31 and the west side of North Vernon. Source: Bernardin Lochmueller and Associates, Inc. US 50 North Vernon Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment Study.



Alternative US 50 Routes around North Vernon. Source: Bernardin Lochmueller and Associates, Inc. US 50 North Vernon Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment Study.

City Preferred Alternative

The city has supported plans for the construction of improvements to US 50 and a bypass around North Vernon. More specifically, the city is in favor of increasing the number of travel lanes between North Vernon and I-65, and is in favor of a northern route to the bypass that would more directly link the highway to the city's industrial areas while reducing truck traffic in the downtown business district.

Of the routes through the city being recommended for further study by INDOT, Alternative A is preferred by the city for the following reasons:

- ◆ It allows for expanded industrial development north and south of the bypass along SR 3.
- ◆ It allows for a closer connection to the airport.
- ◆ It allows MUTC to develop a direction connection between MUTC and the airport in the future (which is only possible with a route is south of the airport).
- ◆ It fees the Lowe's Distribution Center and accommodates their projected growth in truck traffic (which is the largest employer in the area). It is noted that the state promised upgrades to US 50 when Lowe's located in North Vernon, but those improvements have not yet been made.
- ◆ It allows trucks to be routed away from the downtown.

Potential Intersection Locations

The US 50 study provided some indication of the preferred route alternatives for the highway, but did not identify locations for intersections and interchanges along the route. While it is understood that the roadway would be limited access, a series of intersections surrounding the city will be needed to facilitate the connectivity and the future growth of the community. At this point, there is not sufficient information to guide final decision making relative

to intersections. However, the following general locations for interchanges must be considered during future planning of the roadway:

- ◆ Intersections at current US 50: The new highway will need to include an intersection to connect existing US 50 to new US 50 at the east and west ends of the project.
- ◆ Intersection at O&M Avenue: The new highway will need to include at least one intersection to serve long-term growth areas on the west side of the community. The preferred location for this intersection would be at O&M Avenue.
- ◆ Intersection at SR 7: This intersection would be the primary connection to existing and future commercial development along SR 7.
- ◆ Intersection at SR 3: This intersection would be the primary connection to existing and industrial development north of the city.
- ◆ Intersection at CR 20: Options for providing a direction connection to the airport from the bypass should be studied in the next phase of planning of the US 50 bypass. The most likely intersection would be CR 20.

On the east side of the community, it is preferred that no intersections be provided between the airport and existing US 50. Development on the east side of North Vernon is being discouraged so as not to interfere with development of MUTC. The locations of these recommended intersections are included on the CSA maps.

Associated Local Transportation Projects

Several additional local road and street projects are under consideration to address various community needs:

- ◆ Hayden Pike: This project improves Hayden Pike from US 50 to SR3/SR 7.

- ◆ Greensburg Street Pavement Replacement: This project involves replacement of pavement in two separate areas. The first is from SR 3/SR 7 to Woodlawn Drive (phase 1) and the second is from Woodlawn Drive to US 50 (phase 2).
- ◆ O&M Avenue to Jennings County Schools campus: The need for a connector road to link O&M Avenue to US 50 in the vicinity of the Jennings County Schools campus has been under discussion. The proposed roadway is seen as providing an important alternative access to the school campus apart from US 50.

Since future land use plans include residential growth on the west side of the community, this roadway will be an important link between those residential areas and the school. It is noted that this improved roadway will become especially important in the future when residential growth extends further west of the CSX Railroad and future US 50 bypass. More specifically, it is projected that the construction of the US 50 bypass will open up land west of CSX for development and therefore will necessitate the construction of this roadway at the same time as the US 50 bypass is constructed.

It is recommended that INDOT work with the city to study alternatives for this roadway, including an intersection on the US 50 bypass, as part of the next phase of planning for US 50 upgrades.

Potential routing of this roadway is included in the West US 50 Bypass CSA.

Action Steps

- ◆ Complete current roadway projects in planning and design including Hayden Pike and Greensburg Street.
- ◆ Coordinate with INDOT to evaluate an upgraded roadway from O&M Avenue to US 50 (existing) during planning for US 50 bypass.

- ◆ Encourage INDOT to pursue the Alternative A bypass route for US 50. Coordinate future US 50 planning and intersection locations closely with INDOT.

Railroads

Inventory

Two main railway lines route through North Vernon. Running east to west is a CSX line. CSX operates 2,800 miles of track in Indiana. This particular railroad line is part of a larger line segment that extends through Indiana from near Cincinnati, Ohio to near Vincennes, Indiana. This railroad runs through downtown North Vernon. There is currently one grade separated rail crossing in the community, and that is on SR 3/SR 7 near O&M Avenue.

Running north-south is the Madison Railroad. This railroad is owned and operated by the City of Madison. This railroad is a 25 mile segment extending from Madison to just north of North Vernon. Daily service between Madison and North Vernon is provided and the railroad provides interchange with CSX in north Vernon.

Assessment

Rail traffic on the Madison Railroad usually does not exceed two to three trains per day. No concerns with this rail line were noted during the planning effort.

The CSX line is much busier. Concerns were noted multiple times that the rail line in the downtown is a limiting factor for redevelopment. Beyond the number of trains and the barrier the line poses, the city has had ongoing problems with the maintenance and cleanliness of the railroad lines in the near-downtown area.

There is also a CSX owned building in the downtown area that was a former depot building. The city is interested in acquiring and restoring this building.

Action Steps

- ◆ Preserve existing railroad lines/corridors for future needs.
- ◆ Work with CSX to improve maintenance and upkeep of rail corridors through the city, especially downtown.
- ◆ The city should work to acquire and restore the existing depot at O&M Avenue and Short Street.

Alternative Transportation

Intent

Promote recreational opportunities by encouraging the use of alternative transportation.

Introduction

North Vernon has established it is interested in encouraging the use and development of alternative means of transportation, such as sidewalks, greenways, and multi-use paths. These initiatives are directed at promoting recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, by reducing the city's reliance on the automobile as the preferred means of transportation.



Greenway crossing at a highway. Source: nokenews.com.

This section of the report is intended to summarize existing and recommended policies related to larger scale transportation and alternative transportation issues. Specific transportation issues and impacts are described in the previous section of this report.

Pedestrians and Cyclists

Pedestrian and bicycle connectivity for the entire city could be compromised unless special accommodations are made for safe and convenient roadway crossings. Pedestrian and bicycle traffic should be accommodated not only for the benefits to human health but because it helps to mitigate pollution from conventional transportation like cars and trucks. Connectivity can be achieved by placing crosswalks and other well-designated crossings at the intersections of trails/greenways and roadways.



Separated bike lane Source: transitmiami.com

Cyclists sometimes use sidewalks in order to travel without conflicting with car traffic, but that can cause them to conflict with pedestrian movement. Another alternative is to create bike lanes where possible throughout the city. A 2006 study from the University of Texas showed that bike lanes improved safety for motorists because motorists passing cyclists when no bike lane exists veer into the next traffic lane. Bike lanes also increase safety for both the cyclists and pedestrians. In summary, bike lanes do the following:

- ◆ support and encourage bicycling as a means of transportation;
- ◆ help define road space;
- ◆ promote a more orderly flow of traffic;

- ◆ encourage bicyclists to ride in the correct direction, with the flow of traffic;
- ◆ give bicyclists a clear place to be so they are not tempted to ride on the sidewalk;
- ◆ remind motorists to look for cyclists when turning or opening car doors;
- ◆ signal motorists that cyclists have a right to the road;
- ◆ reduce the chance that motorists will stray into cyclists' path of travel;
- ◆ make it less likely that passing motorists swerve toward opposing traffic;
- ◆ decrease the stress level of bicyclists riding in traffic.

Where possible, it's best to separate the bike lane from the car lane for great safety, whether with a physical barrier like bollards or median, a painted median, or a landscaped strip.

Alternative Fuel Vehicles

Alternative fuel and plug-in vehicles are anticipated to become increasingly popular as time passes. Accommodations for these vehicles and others not yet invented should be provided within North Vernon.



Hydrogen Car Fueling, Source: sitemaker.umich.edu.

The city should consider incentives for developments to provide carpool, hybrid, plug-in, and alternative fuel vehicle parking and re-fueling stations. Priority parking spots could also be given to alternative fuel and carpooling cars in park-n-ride situations.

Sources:

- ◆ <http://www.utexas.edu/news/2006/09/18/engineering/>
- ◆ Federal Highway Administration, Safety Effectiveness of Highway Design Features, Volume VI, Pedestrians and Bicyclists, FHWA-RD-91-049, 1991.
- ◆ http://www.cambridgema.gov/~CDD/et/bike/bike_safety.html

Environmental Impacts

9

Environmental Impacts

Highlights:

- ♦ To protect and enhance the local nature preserves it is recommended that the community limit development along both sides of Brush Creek and the Muscatatuck River between the Brush Creek Fish and Wildlife area to the Crosley Fish and Wildlife Area.
- ♦ To limit public safety risks associated with karst areas, it is recommended that the community establish ordinances that require a setback of 100 feet from known karst areas.

Jennings County is home to a number of environmental resources important to Southern Indiana, such as the Selmier State Forest, the Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge, and the Crosley Fish and Wildlife area. The county is also home to a number of endangered animal, insect, fish, plant, and other living species such as the Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*), Indiana Bat (*Myotis sodalis*) and Butternut Tree (*Juglans cinerea*). Ecosystems are typically the healthiest when they are not disturbed by human activities.

This section of the report is intended to summarize existing and recommended policies related to environmental and ecological issues. Land use issues and impacts are described in the other sections of this report. A map of local environmental resources is shown on the next page.

Existing Forest Protection & Enhancement

Parts of Jennings County contain a number of significant habitats and critical ecosystems, which

are important assets to the area. It is important to protect forests and from degradation that may occur because of additional development. A common method of protecting forest and wetland ecosystems is to set aside areas of land where little to no human disturbance will be allowed. When forests are protected, the vegetation and wildlife that live in them are also protected to a great extent.

Jennings County has large forests like Muscatatuck County Park, where the human disturbances are mostly roads. In those areas, where human activity is so minimal, forests ecosystems can function healthily.

Economically, Jennings County and North Vernon directly benefit from the diversity and quality of their protected parks, forests, and other natural areas. In 1995, visitors to national wildlife refuges contributed \$401 million to businesses in their local communities across America. Visitors bring money to the region from camping, hunting, fishing, hiking, and other forms of recreation, and will continue to do so if the natural areas surrounding North Vernon continue to be seen as attractive and unique.

Also, the loss of biodiversity generates huge costs for communities. Polluted air and water increase illness and reduce productivity of people and ecosystems. A loss of bees, insects, birds, and ants directly results in a reduction in food availability because all plants require pollination, including corn, soybeans, apples, tomatoes, etc. Degraded wetlands and forests lose their capacity to filter and store water, forcing municipalities to build expensive water treatment plants, and to deal with the costs of flood damage and erosion.

Opportunities and Challenges

When forests are mostly undisturbed the forest is said to have a “continuous canopy.” Where there are areas of continuous canopy, an ecosystem may function correctly because wildlife and vegetation

are free to migrate naturally, with no human barriers. Where trees and the rest of the natural vegetation have been removed for housing, agricultural fields, and other human development, the forest is said to be “fragmented.”

A fragmented forest ecosystem contains different species of plants and than a naturally occurring forest, and usually the number of rare and endangered species decline the more forests are fragmented. As mentioned above, Jennings County is home to many endangered species, and measures should be taken down to the local level to protect them.

Since several remaining areas of large forests are already protected around North Vernon, smaller forests, wetlands, and woodlots between the larger areas require special attention, because those smaller blocks allow species to travel from large forest to large forest. When species can travel it protects genetic diversity, biodiversity, and helps to prevent extinctions.

For North Vernon, there are a series of forests and nature preserves along the banks of the Muscatatuck River. These include the the Crosley fish and Wildlife Area, Muscatatuck County Park, Violet and Louis J. Calli Sr. Nature Preserve, Selmier State Forest and Brush Creek Fish and Wildlife Area. Each represents a large area of protected forest, but there are also large areas of unprotected forest between the properties.

Next Steps

To protect and enhance the community’s natural areas, efforts should be made to protect and/or restore the contiguous forests between the natural areas along the Muscatatuck River. At a minimum, regulations should be considered to limit deforestation as development occurs along the River. Preferably, the community would take a further step and designate the areas as future park/open space – and therefore eliminate all new development in the

areas. To implement this goal, the future land use plan includes a future park/open space land use for areas along both sides of the Brush Creek and the Muscatatuck River from the Crosley fish and Wildlife Area to the Brusk Creek Fish and Wildlife Area.

Open Space

Open spaces are areas used for outdoor recreation and education programs for the public, like parks, preserves, and plazas. Public open space is also of great value to the community for social, cultural, and economic reasons. By focusing development in already built-up areas, open space can be preserved. Communities are demanding more parks that are conveniently located and bring recreation within reach of more people. Also, protecting natural resources will provide healthier air and cleaner drinking water.

Opportunities and challenges

As previously discussed, North Vernon has large parks like the Crosley Fish and Wildlife Area. It also has smaller parks like the Violet and Louis J. Calli Sr. Nature Preserve and the North Vernon City Park. The public has expressed interest in having additional parks in North Vernon. However, pressure to develop areas for commercial and residential areas often takes precedence over the desire for more public space. A balance should be struck between the need for new development and additional open space.

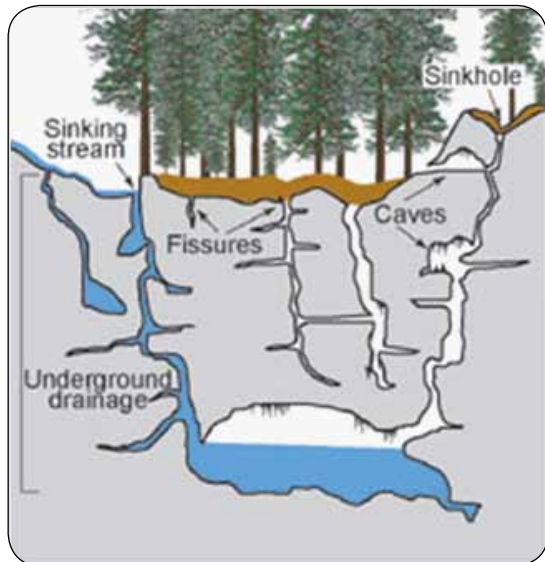
Next Steps

Open spaces are best located in areas easily accessible by foot or bicycle to the largest number of locals. Open spaces can be as simple as a lawn where people can play Frisbee or walk their dog or as elaborate as the city park, and beyond. A variety of open spaces are beneficial to the community, giving residents and visitors many choices. As discussed in the Downtown CSA section, a public space along

Short Street would be an example of a small but conveniently-located park. As new residential and commercial neighborhoods are developed, open space should be incorporated, particularly when such neighborhoods are adjacent to a woodlot, wetland, or forest block.

Karst Areas

There are karst areas in many portions Jennings County (See Environmental Resources Map). Karst is a landscape shaped by layers of bedrock which can dissolve under certain conditions, such as limestone or dolomite. Karst bedrock can resemble Swiss cheese because it has many holes, often large. As a consequence, there may be very limited surface water above karst formations. Many karst regions



Karst Features. Source: esi.utexas.edu.

display unusual surface features like the sinkholes commonly found near North Vernon.

Water supplies from wells and the general groundwater in karst topography may be unsafe, since the normal filtering that occurs underground is bypassed. The karst topography itself also poses difficulties for humans. Sinkholes can develop gradually as surface openings enlarge, but quite

often progressive erosion is unseen and the roof of a cave suddenly collapses. Such events have swallowed homes, cattle, cars, and farm machinery.

Opportunities and Challenges

Karst features are most common to the south of North Vernon. Two large areas are adjacent to the corporate limits and another is located at Seimier State Forest. Other areas around the county are mostly found in woodlots and agricultural fields.

Next Steps

Because of the likelihood of water contamination and sinkhole collapse, buffers around known karst areas should be at least 100 feet. Within the buffer, no structures or roads should be permitted.

Watershed Protection

Watersheds are regions where all the water from nearby rivers, streams, and creeks drain. They are easily defined areas and useful when planning for environmental management. Stormwater is the water that hits buildings and the ground when it rains, or when snow melts. Within watersheds, there are three important ways to control stormwater: rate, quantity, and quality. Rate is how fast water runs over the landscape. Quantity is how much water is in the landscape and quality is how clean the water is. It is important for communities to protect their watersheds to prevent flooding and polluted water. This can be done with a watershed protection plan.

Watershed Pollution

The United States suffers from many types of water quality problems. Forty percent of our surveyed rivers, lakes, and estuaries are not clean enough to meet basic uses such as fishing or swimming. Pollution occurs when rainfall, snowmelt, or irrigation runs over land or through the ground, picks up pollutants and deposits them into rivers, lakes, and the ocean, or introduces them into ground

water. Imagine the path taken by a drop of rain from the time it hits the ground to when it reaches a river, ground water, or the ocean. Any pollutant it picks up on its journey can become part of our pollution problem. Pollution can harm vegetation and living creatures in the water, as well as the people who use the water. It can also change the shape and flow of stream and river beds, which can make pollution problems worse.

Pollution is widespread because it can occur any time activities disturb the land or water. Agriculture, transportation, pet waste, forestry, grazing, septic systems, recreational boating, urban runoff, construction, physical changes to stream beds, and habitat degradation are potential sources of stormwater pollution.

Regulated Pollutant Sources

Pollution from specific sources like industry and housing developments is regulated by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM). However, there can be problems with specific polluters. In that case, you can request that IDEM assess whether the polluter is obeying the law. Stay in contact with IDEM to be sure those complaints or concerns are followed up.

Managing Stormwater

Plans for New Development

New developments should try to keep the amount of stormwater runoff leaving a site to the same amount that was leaving the site before it was built on, which is called the “pre-development level.” That pre-development level can be maintained using methods like detention ponds and constructed wetlands. Construction activities should stick to a management plan, which will lay out how the site will be operated. Management plans protect wildlife and vegetation, keep soil and pollution from getting washed off a site, protect river and stream beds, protect human

life, and prevent flooding.

Plans for Existing Development

Controlling runoff from existing urban areas tends to be more expensive than managing runoff from new developments. However, existing urban areas can make their stormwater runoff control projects more economical. Runoff management plans for existing areas can first identify the worst sources of pollution, and then protect natural areas that help control runoff, and finally restore natural areas. This will help clean up polluted water bodies. Citizens can help prioritize the clean-up strategies, volunteer to help with restoration efforts, and help protect ecologically valuable areas.

Public Education

Schools can teach students how to prevent pollution and keep water clean. In addition, educational outreach can target specific businesses, such as service stations, that have opportunities to control stormwater runoff. Many communities have implemented storm drain stenciling programs that discourage people from dumping trash directly into storm sewer systems.

Limit Paved Surfaces

Urban and suburban landscapes are covered by paved surfaces like sidewalks, parking lots, roads, and driveways. These are called “impervious surfaces.” Impervious surfaces prevent water from seeping down into the ground, which causes runoff to build up and funnel into storm drains at high speeds. When quickly flowing runoff empties into streams and rivers it can severely erode their banks. Paved surfaces also transfer heat to runoff, thereby increasing the temperature of streams and rivers. Native species of fish and other aquatic life cannot survive in these warmer waters. To limit pollution from paved surfaces, households can, for example, plant grasses and natural ground cover as an attractive and practical substitute for asphalt

driveways, walkways, and patios. Wooden decks, gravel or brick paths, and rock gardens keep the natural ground cover intact and allow rainwater to slowly seep into the ground.

Landscape with Nature

Native plants are those which grow naturally in Indiana. They are used to the conditions in our area and so they don't need fertilizer or a lot of water. Planting non-native plants that need fertilizer and extra water can increase the potential for higher runoff volumes, increase erosion, and introduce chemicals into stormwater. In contrast, native landscaping allows homeowners to reduce their pollution. Other more appropriate landscaping techniques include: using native soils, small turf areas, proper irrigation, using mulch, and keeping the landscaping maintained. By using native plants that are well-suited to a regions climate and pests, households drastically reduce their need for irrigation and chemical pollutants. Less irrigation results in less runoff, while fewer chemicals keeps runoff clean.

Proper Septic System Management

Malfunctioning or overflowing septic systems release bacteria and nutrients into stormwater, contaminating nearby lakes, streams, and estuaries, and ground water. Septic systems must be built in



Vegetated swale

the right place. Trampling the ground above a system compacts soil and can cause the systems pipes to collapse. Also, septic systems should be located away from trees because tree roots can crack pipes or obstruct the flow of wastewater through drain lines. Finally, septic systems should be situated away from open waters and sensitive resources like wetlands and floodplains. Proper septic system construction and maintenance is also important, and a system should be inspected during construction and emptied as required. By maintaining water fixtures and by purchasing water-efficient showerheads, faucets, and toilets, households can limit wastewater levels, reducing the likelihood of septic system overflow. These techniques provide long-term economic and environmental benefits.

Proper Chemical Use, Storage, and Disposal

Household cleaners, grease, oil, plastics, and some food or paper products should not be flushed down drains or washed down the street. Over time chemicals can corrode septic system pipes and might not be completely removed during the filtration process. Chemicals poured down the drain can also interfere with the chemical and biological breakdown of the wastes in the septic tank. On household lawns and gardens, homeowners can try natural alternatives to chemical fertilizers and pesticides and apply no more than the recommended amounts. Natural predators like insects and bats, composting, and use of native plants can reduce or entirely negate the need for chemicals. If chemicals are needed around the home, they should be stored properly to prevent leaks and access by children. Most cities have designated sites for the proper disposal of used chemicals.

Eight Tools for Watershed Protection

The Center for Watershed Protection's Rapid Watershed Planning Handbook includes the following information about the eight tools that

should be used to protect a water body within a community.

1. Watershed Planning is perhaps the most important because it involves decisions on the amount and location of development and impervious cover, and choices about appropriate land use management techniques.
2. Land Conservation involves choices about the types of land that should be conserved to protect a sub-watershed.
3. Aquatic Buffers include choices on how to keep streams, shorelines, and wetlands clean.
4. Better Site Design seeks to design individual development projects with less impervious cover which will reduce pollution in local streams.
5. Erosion and Sediment Control deals with the protection of site during construction, when runoff can carry high quantities of soil into nearby waterways.
6. Stormwater Best Management Practices involves choices regarding how, when, and where to provide stormwater management within a watershed, and which combination of best management practices can best meet watershed objectives.
7. Non-stormwater Discharges involves controlling pollution from wastewater disposal systems and illegal connections to stormwater systems, and reducing pollution from household and industrial products.
8. Watershed Stewardship Programs involves careful choices about how to promote private and public stewardship to prevent stormwater pollution.

Sources

- ◆ http://www.in.gov/dnr/naturepreserve/files/np_jennings.pdf
- ◆ <http://www.epa.gov/ecopage/R5/era/IN-areas.html#SOUTHEAST>
- ◆ <http://www.biodiversityproject.org/html/biodiversity/economics.htm>
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- ◆ Dramstad, W. E. (1996). *Landscape Ecology Principles in Landscape Architecture and Land Use Planning*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- ◆ Dramstad, W. E. (1996). *Landscape Ecology Principles in Landscape Architecture and Land Use Planning*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- ◆ http://www.bouldercolorado.gov/index.php?Itemid=1922&id=3073&option=com_content&task=view
- ◆ <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/whatis.html>
- ◆ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KarstIndiana> Watershed Planning Guide. <http://www.in.gov/indem/catalog/documents/water/iwpg.pdf>.
- ◆ Water Quality Model Code and Guidebook. <http://www.oregon.gov/LCD/waterqualitygb.shtml>.

Critical Sub Areas

10

Critical Sub Areas

This section of the report provides a summary of existing conditions, current development patterns, and recommended land use principles for specific Critical Sub Areas (CSAs). The following sections are intended to present a strategy for future land use planning in North Vernon.

For clarity, areas that have similar development considerations have been grouped and presented together. Transportation, infrastructure, and environmental impacts are discussed in other sections of this report.

Downtown CSA

Intent

Develop downtown into a vibrant area that draws locals and visitors of all ages.

Introduction

America's urban and downtown areas began a long period of decline in the fifties and sixties as the popularity of the automobile rose.

As downtowns declined, flight to the suburbs accelerated, which caused a vicious cycle in which downtown businesses closed because of population decline, which increased the rate at which people left downtowns. However, cities began to re-invest in their downtowns beginning in the 1990's.

Research shows that a healthy and vibrant downtown boosts the economic health and quality of life in a community. Specifically, it creates jobs, incubates small businesses, reduces sprawl, protects property values, decreases crime rates, and increases the

community's options for goods and services. A healthy downtown is a symbol of community pride and history.

Opportunities and Challenges

Downtown North Vernon has many viable amenities already; including the Park Theater Civic Center, the Carnegie Library, the Sears, and various retail shops and restaurants like the White Front Cafe.

However, the downtown also faces challenges. The railroads cut through downtown in two places, creating a feeling of disconnection and dispersal of businesses. The state highways like US 50 also divide the downtown and create a lot of truck traffic, which discourages residents and visitors from going

downtown. When the US 50 bypass is constructed, people may be more comfortable with visiting the downtown, but they will need activities to entice them to come. Also, existing buildings are underutilized, with some store front housing families instead of businesses.



Park Theater Civic Center, Source: park-theatre.com

Next Steps

In order to draw people into the downtown after the bypass is constructed, a more unified downtown should be created, which would involve taking several steps. The first would be to create a central public space, which would benefit the community socially, economically, culturally, and recreationally. One possible location for this could be the area around the Walnut/Buckeye/Fifth/Short Street intersection. Traffic could be rerouted to create a public space adjacent to Short Street, and the park could be



Short Street Public Park Perspective

host to activities like a farmers market, festivals, or concerts (See illustrations on the following pages). The existing CSX rail depot could be used as a historical museum with a gift shop, art gallery with a coffee shop, or some other active use associated with a local interest. It would be important for the reuse of the depot to be an active use with extended daily hours, to work in cooperation with the active nature of the public space.

It is recognized that closing a public street to automobiles is a bold move, and would not be supported by all downtown businesses. Much more discussion is needed. The city could acquire the CSX depot, and CSX could move operations within the building elsewhere in town. Having this as a central public space downtown would act as a draw and spur downtown growth, even after the bypass is built.

The next step in creating a vibrant downtown is to bring in new, local businesses. Having a public space in the center of downtown would help create a sense

of continuity because many businesses would have direct access to a common point of interest. The resulting influx of businesses could reuse the existing buildings, opening up the storefronts for economic use while leaving the upper stories free for housing. New buildings could be built in under-utilized, existing parking lots, to make use of valuable space.

Development should focus on preserving historical architecture and promoting traditional architecture through zoning and adaptive reuse of existing structures.

A traditional mixed-use setting would attract visitors to downtown, as well as people who want to live in a small urban area. Successful downtowns attract a wide range of individuals by offering housing, work, shopping, culture, entertainment, government, and tourist attractions.

Another step to draw people into a traditional downtown is to focus on pedestrians. Downtowns



Short Street Public Park from above

have an advantage over suburban developments not only because their historical character, but because of their compact, walking-friendly size.

People should feel safe walking in downtown and getting around should be easy. Sending truck traffic on the bypass will aid in this goal since large, noisy trucks make pedestrians uncomfortable. Other upgrades to existing sidewalks and crosswalks would also help, as well as the addition of bike lanes, street trees, and on-street parallel parking.

Downtowns should also improve conditions for pedestrians by installing attractive lights, benches, and flowers, which would also help to draw shoppers and other visitors.

New businesses that come to downtown should focus on the local culture and what is needed in the area. Market research aids in determining which projects are needed. It is also crucial to take advantage of the particular skills of residents and local program

coordinators. A local-orientation helps not only better the chances that a business will be successful, but helps to foster a unified image of the community and give pride to residents.

Businesses will also need the assistance of institutions like local government, chambers of commerce, the private sectors, and civic organizations, in order to get started and remain viable. Governments should provide assistance with financing, parking areas, zoning, and building design.

Projects should also secure multiple sources of funding, but assistance from local governments is particularly important for long-term project sustainability.

In 2000, four of the five factors most helpful to development cited in the survey-securing favorable zoning codes, retaining government offices, increasing housing stock, and approving historic preservation codes-all require local government

involvement. Governments can use their regulatory powers to make it easier for a wide variety of small businesses to locate downtown, as well as help preserve existing housing and promote new, affordable housing.

A final important step to ensuring the success of a downtown is to include socially-oriented programs. Downtown revitalization should include not only new housing and commercial businesses, but also after-school programs, anti-crime initiatives, youth development and employment services, arts, recreational opportunities, and public transit. Plans for improving the downtown must address as many of these ideas as possible simultaneously to increase the likelihood of success.

All of these measures will help to create a sense of place for downtown that will attract locals and visitors alike. A 1999 census of programs by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, which has partially funded community development programs for twenty-one years, finds that “supporting community development in the next ten years needs to mean supporting the whole community development agenda—the human, social, and economic dimensions as well as the physical.”

For more information:

- ◆ A Manual for Small Downtowns
Martin Shields and Tracey Farrigan
<http://retailmarkets.aers.psu.edu/images/manual.pdf>
- ◆ Downtown Rebound
Rebecca S. Sohmer and Robert E. Lang
http://www.knowledgeplex.org/kp/facts_and_figures/facts_and_figures/relfiles/downtown_rebound.pdf
- ◆ Smart Towns: A Community Guide to Downtown
Idaho Department of Commerce, Division of

Community Development

<http://www.idoc.state.id.us/idcomm/comdev/pdfs/DowntownHandbook.pdf>

- ◆ Downtown Research and Development Center
<http://www.downtowndevelopment.com/>
- ◆ National Main Street Center
<http://www.mainstreet.org/index.htm>
- ◆ University of Wisconsin Extension Service-Center for Community Economic Development
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced>



Downtown North Vernon; Source: city-data.com

Bypass North CSA

Intent

To grow an economically viable business zone north of downtown.

Introduction

Some businesses are more comfortable operating in suburban areas than downtown. While maintaining a vibrant downtown is important for the economic and social health of a community, it is sometimes appropriate to site large commercial businesses and industrial/manufacturing facilities away from the heart of the city.

Opportunities and challenges

The area north of the city around SR 3, County Road 75, SR 7, and the airport is predominantly industrial (See Bypass North CSA Map). When the US 50 bypass is built, opportunities for large businesses will open up as this area is more easily accessed by trucks. The airport is an important asset for attracting businesses.

Also, the area north of the city contains some large woodlots and prime agricultural land. Those resources will need to be protected from development (See

Cultural Resources Map & Environmental Resources Map). Further discussion about the woodlots can be found in the Environmental section of this document.

Next Steps

Because this area is suited well for large commercial businesses and industry, residential uses should be largely discouraged. Industrial businesses and airport should be surrounded by mixed-use retail and commercial businesses, in order to transition to the residential areas beyond. This transition zone is important to protect the property values of residences and the environmental and agricultural resources nearby.

All development should be clustered in order to act as neighborhoods within themselves, instead of the commonplace “strip centers” and isolated sites. Industrial and business parks should have a physical depth to them that increases their functionality and improves their appearance, as well as contain compatible business types. They should also incorporate greenspace and be easily accessed by those who live in other parts of the city. That could be accomplished not only through efficient roadways but also through sidewalks, bike lanes, or multi-use paths that connect the various areas of the city. More information about travel

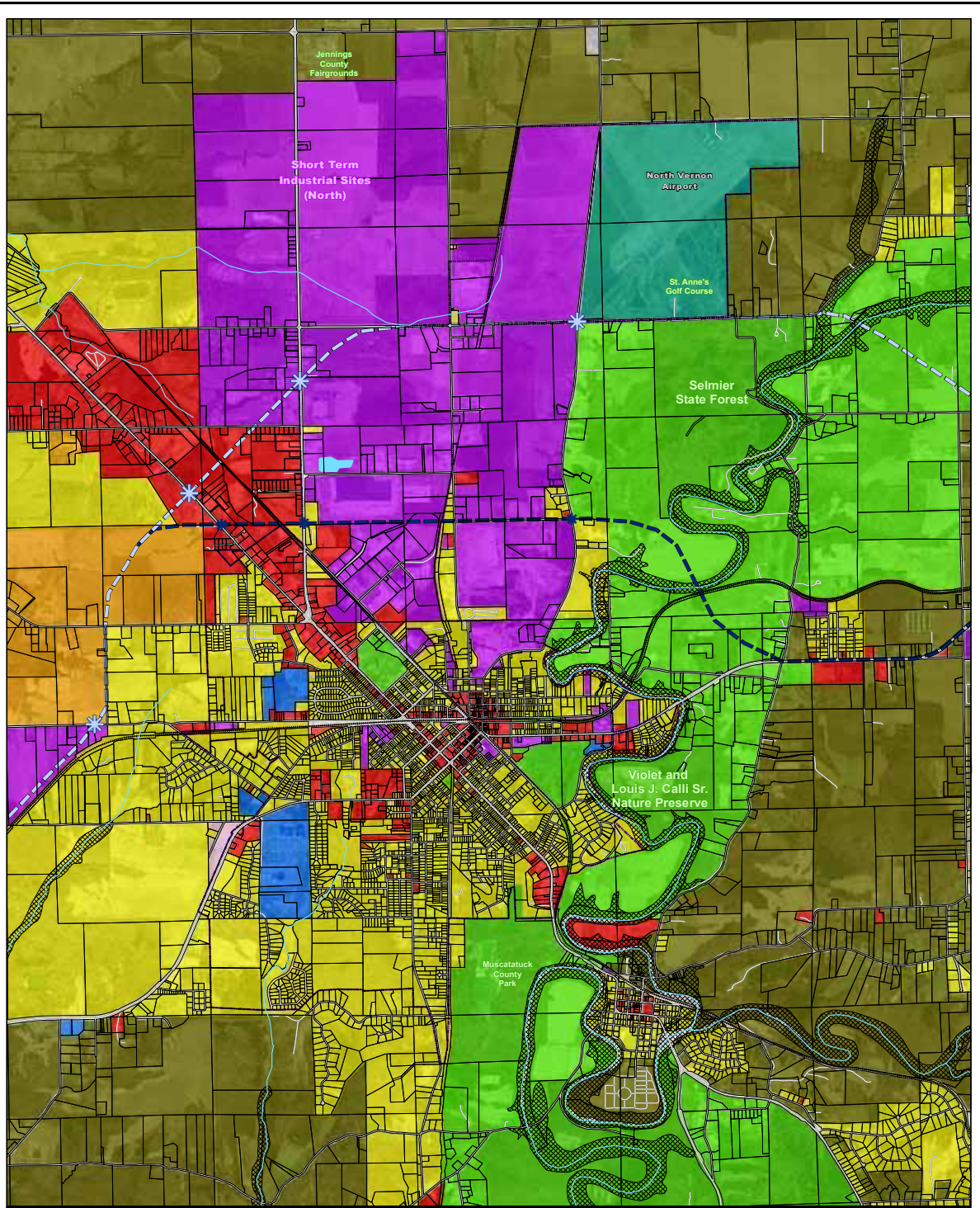


Example Neighborhood Center

options can be found in the Transportation Section of this document. By clustering the businesses in this area, it will help the city limit the amount of land cleared for development. This will especially protect environmental and agricultural resources. That protection will be particularly important when housing to the west of the city is expanded in the future, which is discussed in the “Bypass West CSA” part of this section. Development clusters should be cited to avoid these important community resources. It will also be important to develop the clusters in staged phases as demand grows over time.

An appropriate amount of commercial development would be feasible along the SR 7 corridor northwest of the city. Like the bypass business and industrial recommendations above, new commercial development should be clustered, but possibly more varied in the types of businesses, so as to appeal to a large range of community needs.

It will also be important to provide a transition area around the airport, to protect surrounding neighborhoods from airport-related noise. The width of the transition area must be determined by further study. Transition area widths are often determined by a decibel level more so than a certain linear distance. The transition width shown on the accompanying land use maps is preliminary until such studies can be done to document a more specific location.

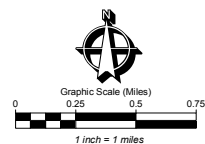


Legend

Corporate Limits	Commercial
US 50 Route: Alternate A	Industrial
US 50 Route: Alternate B	Institutional
US 50 Intersection: Alternate A	Non-Conforming Use
US 50 Intersection: Alternate B	PUD
Floodplain	Residential
Airport	Long Term Residential (Short Term Agricultural)
Agricultural	Managed Land - Forrest Preservation - Open Space

Bypass North CSA

North Vernon Comprehensive Plan



Bypass West CSA

Intent

To provide attractive housing opportunities for residents that will not decrease the value of the existing housing stock in the city.

Introduction

As cities grow, they at some point will fill their existing housing stock and need to build more outside of their current limits. Growing beyond a city's limits can cause the decline of the existing housing stock inside of a city if it is built before it's truly necessary. But having a variety of housing types and settings is important once a city has a large enough population that such variety is in demand.

Opportunities and Challenges

The area to the west of the city, along O and M Avenue north of US 50 and south of SR 7, is a suitable place in which to locate new residential neighborhoods (See Bypass West CSA Map) to avoid prime farmland and karst areas (See Environmental Resources Map). The area is a rural, agricultural landscape where many people would enjoy living. This area is bisected by the railroad that leaves the city near O and M Avenue and would meet up with US 50 near the proposed bypass west of the city.

Next Steps

North Vernon should dedicate its resources first to improving the housing stock within the city, working on infilling vacant and abandoned lots, and maximizing the amount of "small urban" housing downtown.

Concurrently, new development would fit logically

into the area between the railroad and US 50 (See Bypass West CSA Map). All new residential areas should have not only single family homes, but also open space, and limited, neighborhood-scale commercial businesses and retail shops.



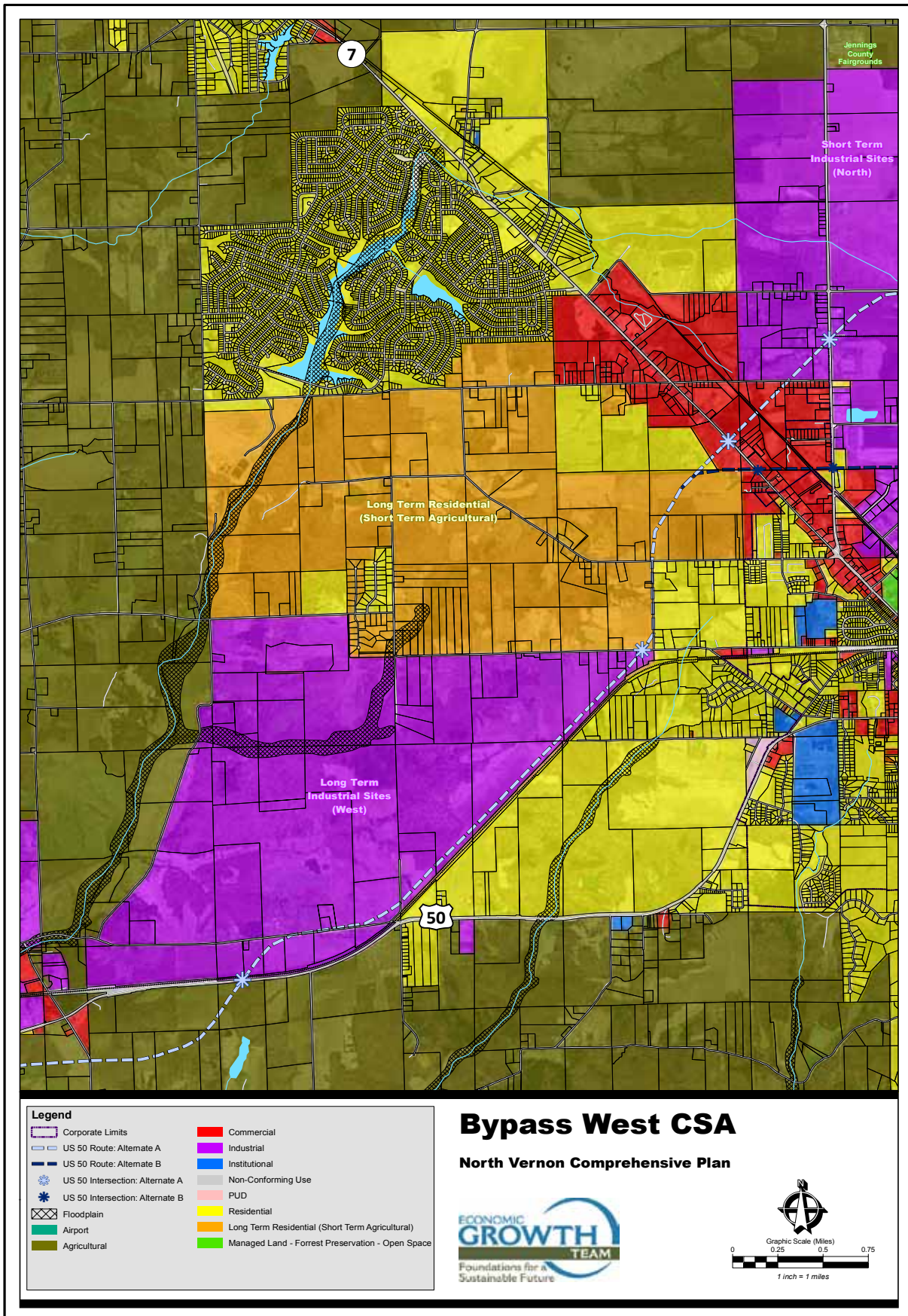
Mixed use neighborhood center.

Clustering a mixture of land uses helps to keep new neighborhoods viable and attractive, and makes travelling around easier. When land uses are mixed, congestion is managed, pollution is reduced, and energy is saved. "Those who want to drive can, but people who would rather not drive everywhere or don't own a car have other choices."

Once the existing housing stock shows no signs of decline and additional housing is needed, the city should expand to the west with paced residential development, placed in appropriate locations. The next phase of residential growth should be located between the US 50 bypass and the city, both north and south of O and M Avenue. Once again, mixed-use neighborhoods would be the best use of available land. Keeping the area taken up by neighborhoods to a minimum is important to preserve the rural character of the area while limiting the amount of woodlots and farm fields removed. Connecting new neighborhoods to the city and schools with roads and

other means of transportation will be important and is discussed further in the Transportation Section of this narrative.

A final phase of residential growth could be cited north of the future US 50 bypass/CSX railroad, south of Country Squire Lakes (See Bypass West CSA Map). All the new phases of housing growth are recommended west of the city, although the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center is to the east of town. This is to help create an integrated community, rather than a North Vernon intended for the use of locals and visitors and a separate military housing area elsewhere. Because many of the military personnel will live in North Vernon for approximately three years, it will be important to include rental properties within both downtown and the new neighborhoods, because those residents will be less likely to buy property.



Irish Hill Subdivision

Intent

To revitalize and redevelop over time the Irish Hill subdivision to become a diverse, mixed use neighborhood.

Introduction

The Irish Hill subdivision was identified as a local neighborhood in need of revitalization during the comprehensive plan process. Lack of home and lawn maintenance, outdoor storage, vacant lots and a general disheveled appearance were reasons cited for the need for revitalization.

Opportunities and Challenges

The Irish Hill subdivision has a wealth of land uses, from industrial and commercial properties to single family residential. This type of mixed-use development brings housing, commercial, and retail into closer proximity, placing more destinations within reach of a short walk, bike ride or transit trip. The area also benefits from creek watershed in the northeast section of the neighborhood, which presents a source for wildlife habitat.

Challenges include the railroad bisecting the middle of the subdivision, making it difficult to promote connectivity from the north to the south end of the area. The presence of rail can also have negative effects on adjacent properties, such as noise.

Next Steps

There are many important benefits of reinvestment in the core neighborhoods and business areas. Revitalizing older neighborhoods is not about nostalgia. Preservation-based community development not only protects a community's heritage, it is a viable alternative to sprawl that creates affordable housing, generates jobs, supports independent businesses, increases civic participation, and bolsters a community's sense of place.

Without attractive areas within the core of the city, people often will choose to live in newer developments in the fringe area. Development around the perimeter of the city requires extension of new infrastructure that the city is ultimately responsible for upgrading and maintaining. Even more, local services such as fire and police must serve a greater area – meaning higher costs for those services.

Cities have found that if they reinvest in their traditional neighborhoods first, they will reduce the cost of infrastructure and services, spur private reinvestment in the neighborhoods, reduce crime and ultimately increase the tax base in a sustainable manner.

Steps that can be taken to reinvest in traditional neighborhood districts include:

- ◆ City sponsored “clean up days” help to reduce the trash and debris in neighborhoods.
- ◆ City subsidized grant and loan programs for home repairs/remodeling help spur private reinvestment.
- ◆ Street and/or sidewalk reconstruction projects in deteriorated areas have been shown to drive community pride and reinvestment.
- ◆ Establishment of neighborhood groups to help coordinate small scale, block-by-block clean up campaigns.
- ◆ Local efforts should be directed toward code enforcement, sidewalk and curb maintenance where applicable and street upgrades.

Long-term land use changes could include a conversion of the existing railroad into a multi-use trail, providing a recreational amenity for the entire community. Such an asset would provide an excellent outlet for residents in the community, in addition to bringing users from other parts of town

to the Irish Hill subdivision.

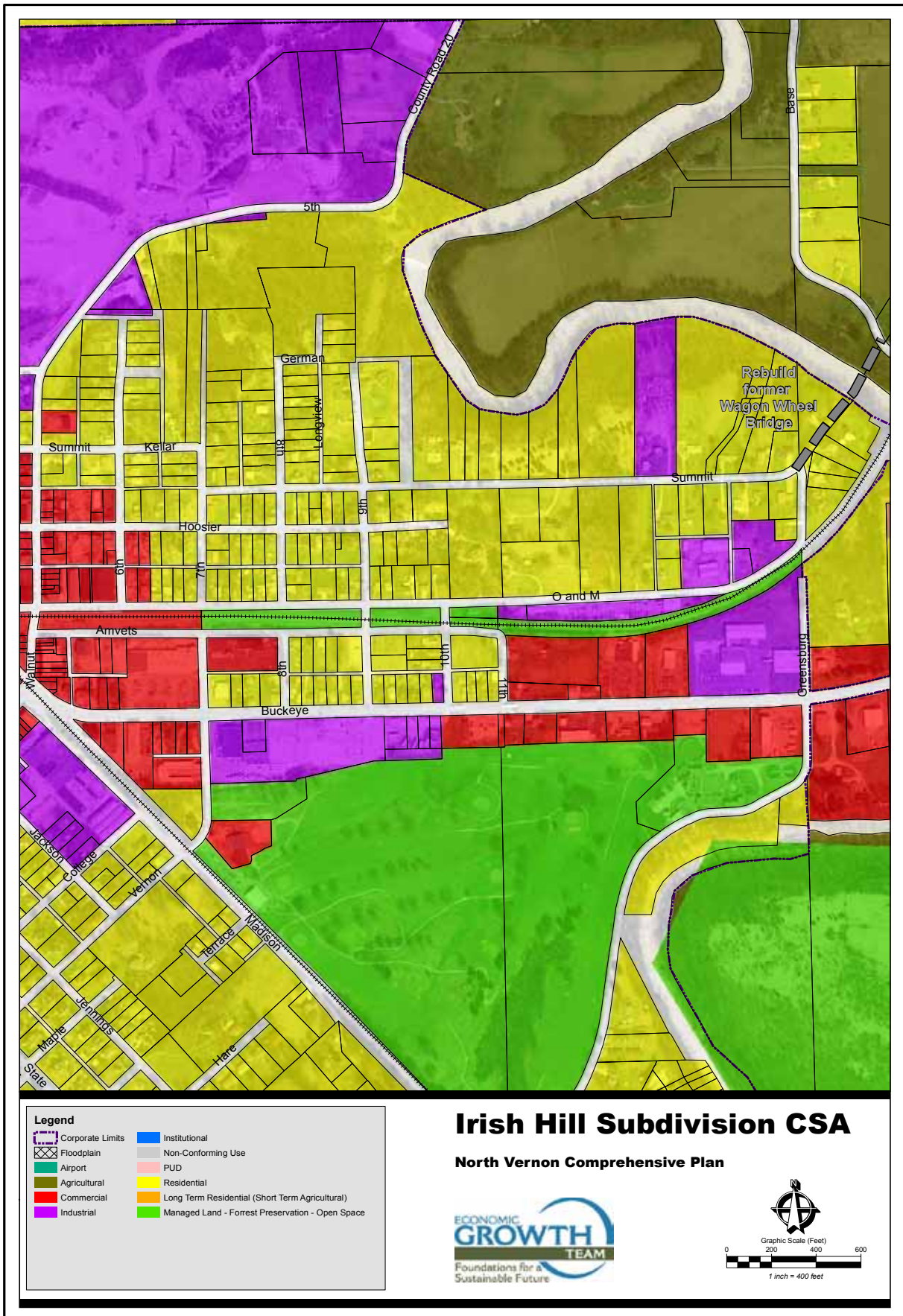
One possible community building project would be restoration of the Wagon Wheel Bridge, which collapsed decades ago. The new bridge could transport vehicles and pedestrians and would link to US 50.

There are also opportunities in the northeast section of the CSA for residential development, outside of the floodplain. This area should be developed in a careful and thoughtful manner, respecting the watershed to the north while enjoying the amenities the creek provides such as tree cover and wildlife habitat. When possible, incorporate the natural features the area provides rather than defaulting to clear cutting.

There is also an accommodation for the expansion of the wastewater treatment plant along Greensburg Street, which would allow for the city to increase capacity for future development in the city.

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Implementation Plan

11

Implementation Plan

A lot of community time and money went into the completion of this comprehensive plan and it will take even more resources for it to succeed. This section details the steps needed to implement the plan, but it starts with a discussion about what could go wrong.

Implementing the plan raises these questions for community leaders:

- ◆ Why do some comprehensive plans fail?
- ◆ What is our capacity to do this plan?
- ◆ What additional planning is needed?
- ◆ What is the Implementation Plan?
- ◆ Who is going to do it?

Why Comprehensive Plans Fail

Most plans aren't plans; they are just high-level ideas.

Many comprehensive plans can be found in pristine condition, untouched atop of filing cabinets. Although every unsuccessful plan fails under its own set of circumstances, there are some miseries common often enough to warrant further attention.

The obstacles that get mentioned most when a community plan doesn't deliver include:

Lousy Communication

Some communities do little or nothing to distribute their plans, not even making them available on a public website. This means that citizens are not sufficiently informed about the process, do not participate in decisions or don't identify with the goals.

Creators of the strategy have to get out enough information for people to understand what they're

supposed to do. In a related failure, expectations about the plan are not shared openly or effectively.

To tackle this problem, a specific group – or better yet, specific person – must be assigned to spreading the word and generating momentum through an overall communication plan.

Who's in Charge?

When responsibility for decision-making about capital improvements and provision of services is diffused among public agencies, private vendors and individual citizens, confusion is bound to follow. This diffusion makes accountability and coordination even more difficult. In short, who are we following?

Weak leadership brings improper resource allocation, poor follow-through, and inefficient rewards and punishments. In this category, there is enough blame to go around: the problem doesn't just rest with the main person in charge, but includes the lack of ability or willingness from other people who are needed to step up. We are all called to lead from wherever we are, even if we're not at the top.

What's in it for Me?

Government is often focused on self-preservation while some businesses ignore public welfare to achieve their own ends.

Many planning initiatives fail because the people responsible for implementing them are not convinced of their value. More effort is needed to help people understand how getting behind the community's goals can support their personal goals. This solution leads back to communication and education.

No Money

There's rarely enough money to get everything done, and in tough times even the most worthy and desirable projects can get delayed. Neighborhoods lack needed amenities and economic development is inadequately organized and focused.

The first step – and one that must be revisited constantly – is setting priorities.

Lack of Capacity

This bedeviling circumstance is similar to lack of money, but it's wider ranging and warrants a longer look. Capacity refers to a community's resources to carry out a project, including:

- ◆ Technical (someone with expertise)
- ◆ Managerial (someone to oversee)
- ◆ Funding
- ◆ Political Will

The first two bulleted items could be covered by a staff member or a volunteer of heroic proportions.

The third bullet might include tools such as Tax Increment Financing. The fourth bullet is the most difficult to quantify but easy to spot. Local resources should be considered before determining future planning. For example, a solution which requires an extensive amount of staff to administer would not be appropriate for a community with few or no planning staff.

Implementing the Plan

There are different ways to implement a comprehensive plan. One method is for local leaders to create the regulations and direct the money and other resources needed to support the plan's goals.

But where resources or widespread agreement may be lacking, the comprehensive plan can be used to create a vision for the community's growth and then to launch a dialogue about how planning can help obtain that vision.

The steering committee believes this plan will have a greater chance of success if more time is taken to develop public understanding and acceptance of its

goals.

And so the first priority of this plan is an outreach campaign to elected and appointed officials who did not take part in the process, and to county residents.

It is not necessary for residents to become professional planners, but a basic familiarity with the concepts of planning can only help local leaders direct the county's future. This basic familiarity should include:

- ◆ Land use planning processes, procedures, and vocabulary
- ◆ Physical processes that effect land uses and development
- ◆ Costs and benefits of development
- ◆ Map reading
- ◆ Goal and problem identification
- ◆ Problem solving
- ◆ Agency responsibilities

Most of those issues are covered in the following section, "Making the Case for Planning." When determining how to convey this information and gain understanding of how planning works, community based workshops are often effective. Lecture-based workshops are less useful. Instead, create a problem solving exercise where a hypothetical situation is presented along with the type of data needed to solve it (available regulations, restraints in resources, etc.).

The following section can be used independently of the rest of this document as a primer on planning. It should serve as a foundation for creating community dialogue.

How is the Plan Adopted?

After a comprehensive plan is completed and adopted, there is still one more important step to finish in the planning process. The comprehensive plan is not official until it is adopted. Both the Area Plan Commission and the North Vernon City Council review the plan.

What Additional Planning is Needed?

Comprehensive plans include all of the major land use elements, but they do not take the place of technical studies for issues such as infrastructure and roads. To complete future planning for the city some additional research is needed. These studies are:

- ♦ **Stormwater and Waste Water Master Plan:** This report should plan for the extension and rehabilitation of water and sewer lines and other services. It needs to distinguish between rehabilitation of existing infrastructure (paid for by ratepayers) versus new infrastructure for economic development (paid by developers/economic development funds). It should also recommend future utility corridors.
- ♦ **Capital Improvement Plan:** This document is related to the Infrastructure Master Plan but is broader in scope. It lists the approximate location, size, time of availability and estimates of costs for public facilities or improvements to be financed with public facility fees, usually over a five-year period.
- ♦ **Parks Master Plan:** This plan takes a long-term look at the outdoor and recreational needs of a community. It is required in order to qualify for park grants from the state.
- ♦ **Thoroughfare Plan:** This plan identifies the general location and classification of roadway facilities that serve traffic from existing and

planned development in the city. The plan also indicates where major roadway improvements – either on existing or new alignments – are to be implemented.

- ♦ **Downtown Revitalization Plan:** This plan would lay the groundwork for the marketing, landscaping and promotional efforts needed to pump new life into downtown North Vernon.

Making the Case for Planning

If you don't know where you're going, you might end up someplace else.

—Casey Stengel

You got to be careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there.

—Yogi Berra

Why Do Communities Plan?

Historically communities in the United States were planned, even before the advent of modern comprehensive plans. The earliest settlements were laid out according to plans. To make the settlements easier to defend, pioneers sought locations with clear views of the surrounding area.

Settlers also tried to select areas with abundant water, but located on uplands, where there was safety from floodwaters. Central locations were chosen for efficiency in commerce and in the affairs of local government. Farms were established in outlying areas, providing a buffer of green space for the city and protecting the city from the dust and odors from animals and cultivation. Industrial areas were separated from residential areas. All these actions were proactive efforts to make a successful community, a place people would want to settle in.

The basic reason for planning our communities has not changed over time: to make the best

community we can. Today, most Indiana counties, cities and towns engage in comprehensive planning. These communities recognize that there are many benefits to taking their own future in hand. Other groups, such as utility companies and the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), are making plans that impact local communities. If local government does not plan for their own future, they will be in a position where they are reacting to the plans of others, which is never a position of power.

Establishing your own plan for your community's future will allow you to have a major influence on the plans that others create. A plan for the future will help elevate your community from an ordinary place to a great place. The comprehensive plan helps focus on two things that distinguish a great place: satisfactory local government services and desirable amenities (a high quality of life). Remember, comprehensive planning's fundamental goal is to improve your community.

Planning offers many benefits for the community:

1. It can be used to link local government spending to the community's priorities
2. It results in managed growth that helps keep taxes low
3. It helps local government provide services efficiently
4. It helps ensure that developers pay their fair share of improvements
5. It directs development to areas with sufficient infrastructure capacity to support it (i.e., new subdivisions in locations where there are available classrooms, industries where utilities are available)
6. It coordinates development and future capital expenditures such as streets, sewage treatment plants, civic buildings, and schools
7. It saves state and local government and utility providers from paying for remedies for poorly planned development, such as purchasing right-of-way or easements to widen streets or extend utilities
8. It protects property values by ensuring that adjacent properties are not developed in a way that will have negative impacts
9. It preserves and enhances community character
10. It improves quality of life by consciously spotlighting it in the plan
11. It helps determine how to make different uses more compatible
12. It can make communities healthier by making development "walkable"
13. It provides local standards for safe streets and sidewalks
14. It can prevent unwise development, such as residences in flood areas or without proper sewage disposal
15. It can protect environmental quality

Why Can't We Just Use Someone Else's Plan?

While it is tempting to just find a successful community and "borrow" their plan, saving time and resources, comprehensive plans are definitely not "one size fits all". Comprehensive plans are intended to help a community achieve a character of its own, one that residents of the community recognize and support.

If all our communities were the same, one plan would suffice for all. But each county, city and town is different, and a plan should enhance the unique characteristics of each place. One county may wish to emphasize its historical importance while another

may pride itself on being a community of the future. Many Indiana communities have a distinct character that makes them different from one another. A plan that works for one community will not work for another! Through the planning process, residents decide what their community character should be. Attitudes and values differ from one place to another, and a good plan will reflect the local culture and values.

What is the Comprehensive Planning Process?

While each comprehensive planning process should be custom-designed to meet community needs, nearly all contain the same basic steps:

- ◆ Evaluate existing conditions, including strengths and weaknesses, community character, demographics, natural features, etc.
- ◆ Establish goals and objectives for the future
- ◆ Identify alternatives for meeting the goals and objectives
- ◆ Select the most desirable alternative
- ◆ Devise and adopt tools to implement the plan (zoning, subdivision control, capital improvement programming, etc.)
- ◆ Evaluate the success of the plan
- ◆ Revise the plan

These steps are part of a continuing process. Plans must be evaluated, changed and updated as the community changes. These changes can be gradual, as through demographic trends, technological change, or slow economic growth or decline. Sometimes change is more sudden, such as the location of a large new industry in a community, the loss of a major employer, or a natural disaster (flood, earthquake, etc.).

Who Does What in the Comprehensive Planning Process?

Local officials are trustees of the future, and have a responsibility to help prevent growth patterns that result in wasteful and inefficient use of public resources. When you engage in the comprehensive planning process, you establish and implement public policy for the community, creating a guideline for decisions on development.

In Indiana, it is the plan commission's responsibility to prepare and adopt a plan and to recommend it to the legislative body for adoption. In preparing a plan, state law says the commission may be assisted by planning staff, by consultants, by volunteers, or by any combination of the three.

Elected officials are also essential to the planning process. The decisions they make determine the shape of the community. The comprehensive plan should guide their votes on such things as petitions for rezoning land, where to construct and upgrade public streets and utilities, where to locate public facilities and when to build them. If elected officials don't agree with the contents of the plan or don't understand what is in it, their decisions won't further the plan's objectives, so it is very important that they are part of the entire planning process.

A comprehensive plan must have the support of the majority of those who will be affected by it, or it will fail. The planning process relies on community input and consensus. Not only do we need citizen observations and views about the community, we need to ensure that the input includes a full range of views.

Specifically it is helpful to understand what the role of each group is in the planning process:

- ◆ City Council members are the elected officials, so they have a responsibility to balance all things (they have to look at the big, wide picture). The

council members adopt the comprehensive plan by resolution (IC 36-7-4-509), including any amendments.

- ◆ The Plan Commission is the local expert on land use and the comprehensive plan. They are charged with preparing the comprehensive plan (IC 36-7-4-501) and all updates and amendments. The plan commission holds the official public hearing for a plan and provides a recommendation to the legislative body (county commissioners). The advisory committee or steering committee for a comprehensive plan is generally considered a subcommittee of the plan commission and it is the commission's responsibility to appoint steering committee members. North Vernon is part of the Jennings County Area Plan.
- ◆ The Board of Zoning Appeals is the relief valve for zoning. They do not have a direct role in creating the comprehensive plan, but are expected to support the process.
- ◆ Planning staff are typically responsible for coordination of the planning process, including communication and logistics for meetings. Planning staff may be assigned to prepare the comprehensive plan or to assist with research and preparation if a consultant is involved. Planning staff supports the process and assists others involved in the process. It is recognized that North Vernon relies upon staff from the Area Plan Commission.
- ◆ The Steering Committee is composed of members that act as representatives of the entire community, from different geographic areas, with differing experiences and interests. Their primary role is to give feedback to whoever is preparing the plan and to make sure the rest of the community gets a chance to participate in the planning process.

- ◆ A planning consultant is a professional planner who guides the comprehensive planning process. Major responsibilities are typically to educate planning process participants and to prepare the plan as directed.

Training for Public Officials

All planning process participants have the responsibility to explain and support the comprehensive planning process, respect the others involved and to encourage citizen participation. It is important that elected and appointed officials get the training they need to do the best job they can on planning and zoning matters.

State law and even our local ordinances are often complicated. Kentucky now requires their plan commission members receive training in order to serve; Indiana's laws do not currently require that, but training is always a good idea. The following suggestions can assist the city in getting that training to public officials:

- ◆ Take advantage of membership in the American Planning Association (APA). This group publishes a magazine, several newsletters, books and reports on planning topics, and also hosts an annual national conference that includes sessions for citizen planners. For more information contact www.planning.org
- ◆ Become a member of the Indiana Chapter of the American Planning Association (IN-APA). This group offers annual conferences that includes sessions for citizen planners and offers the INDIANA CITIZEN PLANNER'S GUIDE free online at www.indianaplanning.org. This publication contains several chapters that can be used as training materials for elected officials, plan commission members, board of zoning appeals members, neighborhood organizations, and citizen committees and contain information

specific to Indiana. The chapters include:

- ◆ Part 1: Plan Commission Basics
- ◆ Part 2: Board of Zoning Appeals Basics
- ◆ Part 3: Avoiding Pitfalls
- ◆ Part 4: Communications
- ◆ Part 5: Rules of Procedure
- ◆ Part 6: Ethics
- ◆ Part 7: Comprehensive Plans
- ◆ Part 8: Zoning Ordinances
- ◆ Part 9: Subdivision Control Ordinances
- ◆ Part 10: Site Plan Review
- ◆ Attend or offer to host a "Nitty Gritty" Training Session. These low-cost basic training sessions for citizen planners are held several times per year around Indiana, and are sponsored by IN-APA, Indiana Farm Bureau, Purdue Cooperative Extension Service, Ball State's College of Architecture and Planning, the Metropolitan Indianapolis Board of Realtors and IUPUI's Center for Urban Policy & the Environment.
- ◆ Use Purdue Extension's Land Use Team Publications, on such topics as Public Hearings and Agricultural Land Preservation, available at <http://www.ces.purdue.edu/landuse/landuse2/pubs.html>. The Purdue Land Use Team is also available to present several different land use programs in your community; contact your local extension office for more information. Purdue also offers their "IP Video Series" training, which is free and broadcast live to extension sites around Indiana. Past presentations are available at <http://www.ces.purdue.edu/landuse/video.html> and have included topics such as, "Green Infrastructure" and "Staying Legal."

- ◆ Support planning staff in their efforts to receive continuing education, and request that they share the results with local planning officials. It is recognized that North Vernon relies about staff from the Area Plan Commission.

Educating the Public about Planning and Zoning

Most citizens do not understand planning and zoning because it is not something they encounter every day. The normal human reaction is often to fear what we do not understand. For this reason it is important to educate the public on the importance of planning and zoning and how it works.

During creation of a comprehensive plan, it is important to keep the process in the spotlight. Developing a relationship with local media representatives will help get the message out in newspapers and on radio. The city's website should include updates about the promise and dates of upcoming public meetings. All public meetings and hearings should have an educational component, where the purpose of the plan and an overview of the process are explained. After the public hearing and adoption of the plan, the county should make the plan available on-line and in local libraries, as well as considering a training session for anyone interested on how to use the plan.

Plan Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals hearings can also be educational opportunities. Many people in the audience have never attended one of the meetings and don't know what to expect. The surrounding property owner notification letters should be written so they are easily understood. The commission or board president can help make the meeting more understandable by making some remarks at the beginning, explaining what will happen at the meeting. He can also assist by delivering a "play-by-play" or translation of the meeting, so that it is understandable to people in

the audience.

The commission and board can also take much of the mystery of why they make certain decisions by sharing what state and/or local law criteria they are required to consider. The criteria can be posted on the wall, included on the back of the agenda, etc. Having a public discussion before voting will also help clarify why you are voting the way you do.

Giving Up a Little for Lots of Protection

One of the reasons that communities engage in a planning process is to ensure that the needs of the whole community are considered, not just benefits to individuals. Local planning and zoning is based upon a concept of the public interest or public good. Some flexibility in the use of individual land is given up in exchange for creating a community in which the interests of all are considered. Having a community plan and the zoning to back it up ensures that individual property owners are protected from development or uses nearby that might negatively impact their property.

How Does Zoning Fit In?

Zoning is one of the two major implementation tools for your comprehensive plan (the Subdivision Control Ordinance is the other one). Without these implementation tools, which are local laws, the comprehensive plan will be ineffective because it is only a guideline with very few "teeth." Zoning is the basic way that your community can control how land is developed and it is considered an expression of police power.

This means that zoning has the power to regulate activity by private persons for the health, safety, morals and general welfare of the public. That power is delegated to state legislatures by our federal system, and local governments only have that power when it is delegated to them by the state ("planning

and zoning enabling legislation"). The U.S. Supreme Court has upheld zoning as a valid use of that power.

Indiana Code's enabling legislation says that when a legislative body adopts a zoning ordinance, it shall act for the purposes of:

1. securing adequate light, air, convenience of access, and safety from fire, flood, and other danger;
2. lessening or avoiding congestion in public ways;
3. (promoting the public health, safety, comfort, morals, convenience, and general welfare; and otherwise accomplishing the purposes of this chapter.

Zoning Enforcement

One of the biggest problems with zoning is the actual enforcement of these local laws. Typically there are two major problems with enforcing zoning: a cumbersome system and lack of uniform enforcement. Most communities use a cumbersome enforcement system that includes the following steps:

- ♦ informal contact with the property owner or on-site representative to make them aware of the ordinance violation.
- ♦ a follow-up letter to the property owner documenting the violation and setting a deadline for correction.
- ♦ additional letters when the property owner doesn't comply.
- ♦ finally a court case filed by the county's attorney.

This process is very time-intensive and can take months, if not years to resolve.

An alternative system is available and is currently

being used by many communities in Indiana - the ticketing system. Under this system, a zoning violation is identified. Typically the planning staff issues a warning ticket first, giving the property owner a chance to correct the violation without receiving a fine. If the violation is not corrected within the specified time period, then a ticket is issued that includes a monetary fine. This system can be compared to the ticket system used by the County Sheriff's Department.

Because the current system is so time-intensive, the lack of manpower effectively limits zoning enforcement to a complaint-only basis, meaning someone has to make a formal complaint before the enforcement begins. The ticketing enforcement system takes less time and could result in planning staff being more proactive with enforcement, such as targeting different parts of the city for review or targeting certain uses or cases to follow-up on.

Public education can also be a big help when it comes to applying the zoning ordinance, as can public access. Public outreach could include training sessions and information packets for local realtors, developers, businesses, etc. can help prevent violations in the first place.

Rezoning of Land to Match the Comprehensive Plan

After a comprehensive plan is adopted, local governments may choose to initiate rezoning of property in the community, which can be very controversial, so that it will match the desired future land use reflected in the plan. Without this action change of zoning and closer adherence to the comprehensive plan is done on a voluntary basis, and may happen very slowly, if at all.

One possible strategy would be to rezone land slated for future commercial or industrial use, which might help promote development.

Occasionally a desirable project may be proposed that does not meet the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. In that case, the city should reexamine the plan to determine if conditions have changed and if they have, the plan should be amended to allow that development. An amendment to the comprehensive plan requires the same procedures as its initial adoption.

Strategies for Implementing the Comprehensive Plan

Bypass North CSA

- ◆ Encourage large commercial businesses and industry; discourage residential uses
- ◆ Maintain a buffer around the industrial businesses and airport.
- ◆ Cluster all development to create “neighborhoods within themselves,” instead of the commonplace “strip centers.”
- ◆ Industrial and business parks should have a physical depth to them that increases their functionality and improves their appearance.

Bypass West CSA

- ◆ Dedicate resources first to improving housing stock within the city, working on infilling vacant and abandoned lots, and maximizing the amount of “small urban” housing downtown.
- ◆ Once the existing housing stock shows no signs of decline and additional housing is needed, the city should:
 - ◆ First expand to the west with paced residential development, placed in appropriate locations. The first phase of development would fit logically into the area between the railroad and US 50 (See Bypass West CSA Map).

- ◆ Direct the next phase of residential growth between the US 50 bypass and the city, both north and south of O and M Avenues.
- ◆ A final phase of residential growth could be cited north of the US 50 bypass, south of Country Squire Lakes (See Bypass West CSA Map).
- ◆ All new residential areas should have not only single-family homes, but some mixed-use spaces, open space, and limited, neighborhood-scale commercial businesses and retail shops.

Downtown

- ◆ Create a central public space around the Walnut/Buckeye/Fifth/Short Street intersection.
- ◆ Renovate the rail depot for use as a Visitors Center or museum.
- ◆ Preserve historical architecture and promote traditional architecture through zoning and adaptive reuse of existing structures.

Economic Development

- ◆ Continue working on long-term plans to expand the infrastructure capability of delivering water to new businesses and residential areas.
- ◆ After selection of the final route by the Indiana Department of Transportation, create gateways and other projects to mitigate the potential diversion it will create for downtown businesses.
- ◆ Even without a bypass, more signage is needed to downtown.
- ◆ Launch a branding campaign to create North Vernon as a regional destination.
- ◆ Increase code enforcement downtown to prevent the appearance of blighted buildings.
- ◆ Continue working with officials to fully integrate

the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center into the local economy.

Environmental

- ◆ As discussed in the Downtown CSA section, a public space along Short Street would be an example of a small but conveniently-located park.
- ◆ As new residential and commercial neighborhoods are developed, open space should be incorporated, particularly when such neighborhoods are adjacent to a woodlot, wetland, or forest block.

Housing

- ◆ Keep Annexation Plan updated.
- ◆ Create and enforce landscaping requirements for new construction.
- ◆ Create and enforce basic design guidelines for new construction.
- ◆ Explore options for neighborhood revitalization projects.
- ◆ Employ basic design standards to improve the appearance of new residential development.
- ◆ Develop a marketing program for residential developers.
- ◆ Working with the county, conduct a Housing Needs Assessment to determine gaps in North Vernon's housing stock.
- ◆ Integrate environmental concerns into decision making at all levels.
- ◆ Encourage the use of green building materials and techniques in new construction.
- ◆ Explore the recommendations of the National League of City's green initiatives.

Transportation

- ◆ Complete current roadway projects in planning and design including Hayden Pike and Greensburg Street.
- ◆ Coordinate with INDOT to evaluate an upgraded roadway from O&M Avenue to US 50 (existing) during planning for US 50 bypass.
- ◆ Encourage INDOT to pursue the Alternative A bypass route for US 50. Coordinate future US 50 planning closely with INDOT.
- ◆ Preserve existing railroad lines/corridors for future needs.
- ◆ Work with CSX to improve maintenance and upkeep of rail lines through the city, especially downtown.
- ◆ Improve pedestrian facilities within the corporate limits.
- ◆ Develop external multi-use trails that link North Vernon with other towns or recreational areas.

Utilities

- ◆ Prepare a Watershed Protection Plan on the north end of town, possibly in conjunction with a stormwater master plan.
- ◆ Prepare a Stormwater Master Plan for North Vernon and influencing watersheds.
- ◆ Identify and estimate wastewater flows from short term future growth areas, and from long term growth areas associated with the US 50 bypass.
- ◆ Evaluate options for providing additional wastewater treatment capacity including expansion of the current facility or construction of a satellite plant.

- ◆ Seek land rights for future wastewater treatment plant property as needed.
- ◆ Complete planning for an interceptor sewer parallel to the US 50 bypass in conjunction with INDOT's progress on the design of the roadway.
- ◆ Encourage the ongoing extension and upgrade of electric, natural gas and telecommunications infrastructure.

Timeline & Responsible Parties

This document, along with the implementation suggestions in the two communities' comprehensive plans, provide years worth of suggestion on what needs to be done.

They do not list who needs to do them or when. Admittedly, it can be overwhelming to think about undertaking all of the recommendations. The steering committee, though, have been consistent in one main strategy: Launch a public education campaign while building toward an update of regulations.

With that main goal in mind, it is possible to look ahead to the near future and take the steps needed to begin steering the community's future. Following are a few benchmarks to get started.

First 3 Months

- ◆ Communicate the plan to the media and to the general public.
- ◆ Incorporate the plan into the Area Plan Commission ordinance.

First 6 Months

- ◆ Work toward downtown revitalization projects such as the acquisition of both the old library and the CSX terminal.

- ◆ Work with the Area Plan Commission on code changes and staffing issues.

First 12 Months

- ◆ Move forward on other short-term goals such as the downtown revitalization plan, code changes and working with Muscatatuck Urban Training Center.

Funding Sources

A list of potential funding sources for the implementation items derived from the North Vernon Comprehensive Plan is included in the following table.

FUNDING SOURCES				
FUNDING TYPE	FINANCING	ADMINISTERED BY	WHO QUALIFIES	FUNDING TO BE USED FOR
<i>State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF)</i>	Low interest loans 20-year term note Additional 0.50% reduction may be permitted if a non-point source project is financed along with a point source project	Indiana Finance Authority SRF	Incorporated cities and towns Counties Sanitary/conservation or regional sewer/water districts Private and not-for-profit facilities are eligible only for DWSRF loans	Planning/design/construction of treatment plant improvements Water line extensions Water storage facilities Wetland protection and restoration On-site sewage disposal BMP for ag and stormwater Riparian buffers and conservation Wellhead protection planning/design/construction of treatment plant improvements Sewer line extensions to unsewered Combined sewer overflow corrections
<i>Small Issue Loan Program</i>	Low-interest 10-year term up to \$150,000 Reduced closing costs no cost SRF per review	Indiana Finance Authority	SRF-eligible communities	Any project addressing existing pollution abatement: wastewater, drinking water non-point source

FUNDING SOURCES (CONTINUED)				
FUNDING TYPE	FINANCING	ADMINISTERED BY	WHO QUALIFIES	FUNDING TO BE USED FOR
<i>Arsenic Remediation Grant Program</i>	Grant Program	Indiana Finance Authority	Municipalities Political subdivisions Privately owned community water systems and non-profit nontransient noncommunity water system must serve less than 10,000 residents	Construction of treatment facilities (precipitate process, adsorption process, ion exchange processes, membrane filtration, point of use devices) Planning/design activities system consolidation system restructuring
<i>Rural Community Assistance Partnership Revolving Loan Fund</i>	Short-term financing \$100,000 for pre-development costs associated with proposed water and wastewater	Rural Community Assistance	Rural areas that are not located within the boundaries of a municipality with a population of 10,000 or greater	Existing water or wastewater systems and the short-term costs incurred for replacement equipment Small-scale extension of services Other small capital projects that are not part of O&M
<i>Rural Development (RD)</i>	Grants up to 75% of project costs and loans 40-year term 4.25-4.5% interest	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture	Rural areas and towns with populations <10,000 including municipalities, counties, special-purpose districts, not-for-profit corporations Must be qualified for the "poverty" bracket - 80% of the statewide nonmetro MHI	Developing water and wastewater disposal systems in rural areas

FUNDING SOURCES (CONTINUED)				
FUNDING TYPE	FINANCING	ADMINISTERED BY	WHO QUALIFIES	FUNDING TO BE USED FOR
<i>Rural Development Planning Grants</i>	Grants for up to 75% of cost of planning or up to \$15,000 25% match required	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture	Rural areas and towns with populations <10,000 including municipalities, counties, special-purpose districts, not-for-profit corporations Must be qualified for the “poverty” bracket - 80% of the statewide nonmetro MHI	Water and wastewater infrastructure planning
<i>Rural Development Community Connect Grant Program</i>	Broadband grants Minimum \$50,000 (no maximum) Matching funds required	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture	Project must: (a) serve a rural area (b) serve one and only one community recognized in latest U.S. Census (c) deploy basic broadband transmission service free for 2 years to all critical community facilities (d) offer basic broadband (e) provide a community center with at least 10 computer access points	Establish broadband access to rural communities which are unserved

FUNDING SOURCES (CONTINUED)				
FUNDING TYPE	FINANCING	ADMINISTERED BY	WHO QUALIFIES	FUNDING TO BE USED FOR
<i>Community Focus Fund (CFF)</i>	Grants up to \$600,00 Minimum 10% local match (\$350,000 for Fire Stations)	Office of Community & Rural Affairs	Non-entitlement cities, towns, or counties Must either benefit areas at least 51%+- low-to-moderate income OR eliminate slum or blight Cost per beneficiary may not exceed \$5,000	Projects that contribute to long-term community planning and development Projects that will prevent/eliminate slums or blight Projects that serve a low-to-moderate income population Note: Often requires income survey to determine low-income eligibility
<i>CFF Planning Grant</i>	Grants up to \$50,000 (\$30,000 for single utility) Minimum 10% local match	Office of Community & Rural Affairs	Non-entitlement cities, towns, or counties Must either benefit areas at least 51%+- low-to-moderate income OR eliminate slum or blight Cost per beneficiary may not exceed \$5,000	Planning activities for projects that will prevent/eliminate slums or blight or projects that serve a low-to-moderate income population Planning activities must be completed within 12 months Note: Often requires income survey to determine low-income eligibility
<i>Watershed Projects Grant (104(b)(3))</i>	Grants 5% local match	Indiana Dept. of Environmental Management		Projects that lead to the reduction and elimination of pollution, increase the effectiveness of the NPDES program

FUNDING SOURCES (CONTINUED)				
FUNDING TYPE	FINANCING	ADMINISTERED BY	WHO QUALIFIES	FUNDING TO BE USED FOR
<i>Flood Control Revolving Fund: Rural Water Supply</i>	Loans up to \$150,000	Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources	Cities, towns, conservancy districts, special assessment districts with populations <1,250 who have been authorized to maintain and operate the system Entity is unable to borrow funds elsewhere Cannot exceed 2% of assessed valuation	Projects that establish or modernize water supply systems
<i>Public Works & Economic Adjustment Grants</i>	Grants up to 50% of project costs (80% if severely distressed) 20-50% match required	U.S. Economic Development Administration	Counties, cities, towns, sewer districts Sometimes townships and economic development corporations	Projects that will lead to job creation and retention in severely distressed communities including water and wastewater projects
<i>Industrial Development Grant Fund (IDGF)</i>	Grants (typically \$2,500 per job) Typically not to exceed 50% of cost	Indiana Economic Development Corporation	Cities, towns, counties, special taxing districts, economic development commissions, nonprofit corporation established under IC 23-17, regional water, sewage, or solid waste districts, conservancy districts	Construction of airports, facilities, tourist attractions Sanitary sewer lines, storm sewers or drainage Roads, sidewalks, rail spurs and sidings Information and high tech infrastructure Property Surveys

FUNDING SOURCES (CONTINUED)				
FUNDING TYPE	FINANCING	ADMINISTERED BY	WHO QUALIFIES	FUNDING TO BE USED FOR
<i>Special Appropriations Projects (SAP)</i>	Grants average award \$2,000 - \$300,000 45% local match required	Congressional Appropriation	Incorporated cities, towns, counties, sanitary/conservation or sewer/water districts qualify for SAP (also known as the State and Trial Assistance Grants (STAG))	Water, wastewater, non-point source and stormwater infrastructure SRF, CDBG, USDA, RD can be used as local match
<i>Federal Transportation Aid to Local Communities</i>	Federal aid approximately \$30M available per year 80/20 match	INDOT	Roadway must be on Federal Aid System Group III cities and towns (<50,000 but above 5,000) Group IV towns (<5,000 population)	Roadway improvements
<i>Hazard Elimination and Safety (HES)</i>	Federal aid approximately \$6M available per year 90/10 match	INDOT	Roadway must be on Federal Aid System Group III cities and towns (<50,000 but above 5,000) Group IV towns (<5,000 population)	Safety improvements at intersections Signage Pavement markings Signal modifications Lighting improvements

Implementation Chart

	ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE			RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		SHORT TERM (1-5 YEARS)	MID RANGE (6-12 YEARS)	LONG RANGE (13-20 YEARS)	
ADMINISTRATION	Maintain and upgrade streets, sidewalks and infrastructure on regular basis, as provided in an annual capital improvements plan.		X		Mayor and City Council
	Contemplate the creation of a historic preservation program that would preserve historic structures, neighborhoods and their appearance.	X			City Council & Area Plan Commission
	Increase code enforcement to eliminate and prevent blighted appearance in all neighborhoods.	x			City Council & Area Plan Commission
	Create city sponsored programs such as annual front yard landscaping awards or small annual grants that would acknowledge and promote pride in the community.	X			Mayor

	ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE			RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		SHORT TERM (1-5 YEARS)	MID RANGE (6-12 YEARS)	LONG RANGE (13-20 YEARS)	
ADMINISTRATION	Provide sufficient parking areas downtown to accommodate a mix of users such as shoppers, residents and downtown employees.		X		Mayor & Street Department
	Concentrate several civic and government functions under one roof downtown to create a community destination point.	X			Mayor
	Seek and acquire land for new parks, trails and other recreational facilities (such as a YMCA) when possible, to increase the quality of life amenities desired by existing residents and as a tool to attract new residents.		X		Mayor & Park Board
	Include a line item in the annual city budget that includes enforcement actions for the Area Plan Commission. Alternatively, fund a full time enforcement officer specific to North Vernon.	X			City Council

	ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE			RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		SHORT TERM (1-5 YEARS)	MID RANGE (6-12 YEARS)	LONG RANGE (13-20 YEARS)	
ZONING CODE REVISIONS	Encourage infill on vacant lots to create a seamless neighborhood appearance by amending zoning codes and creating a streamlined permitting process.			X	City Council & Area Plan Commission
	Consider implementing design standards for new and renovated residential and commercial structures.		X		Area Plan Commission & Engineering
	Encourage outdoor sitting areas, benches, plantings and clear, delineated walkways to and from parking areas to provide a welcoming and pleasant atmosphere for pedestrians.	X			Mayor & Engineering
	Develop landscaping standards for large scale residential, commercial and industrial development.	X			Engineering & Area Plan Commission

	ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE			RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		SHORT TERM (1-5 YEARS)	MID RANGE (6-12 YEARS)	LONG RANGE (13-20 YEARS)	
ZONING CODE REVISIONS	Consider the rezoning of existing industrial properties in the downtown area to a commercial zoning classification, which is more compatible with the remainder of the downtown core. Include incentives for clean up of properties.	X			City Council
	Continue to enforce the airport preservation zone / zoning district as documented in the North Vernon zoning code, restricting incompatible land uses around the airport.	X			Zoning
	When and if the North Vernon Municipal Airport plans to expand from its current size, work with city and county officials, local landowners and other stakeholders on refining the airport preservation zoning district.		X		Airport & Zoning

	ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE			RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		SHORT TERM (1-5 YEARS)	MID RANGE (6-12 YEARS)	LONG RANGE (13-20 YEARS)	
SUBDIVISION CODE REVISIONS	Require street connectivity and sidewalks in all neighborhoods to tie in with existing transportation network			X	City Council
	Explore the use of Conservation or Cluster Subdivisions.			X	City Council & Engineering
	Buffers around known karst areas should be at least 100 feet. Within the buffer, no structures or roads should be permitted.	X			Engineering
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	Continue working on long-term plans to expand the infrastructure capability of delivering water to new businesses and residential areas.	X			Utilities
	After selection of the final route by the Indiana Department of Transportation, create gateways and other projects to mitigate the potential diversion it will create for downtown businesses.			X	Mayor & City Council
	Even without a bypass, more signage is needed to downtown.	X			Mayor & INDOT
	Launch a branding campaign to create North Vernon as a regional destination.		X		EDC & Chamber of Commerce

	ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE			RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		SHORT TERM (1-5 YEARS)	MID RANGE (6-12 YEARS)	LONG RANGE (13-20 YEARS)	
	Continue working with officials to fully integrate the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center into the local economy.	X			EDC
HOUSING	Keep Annexation Plan updated.	X			City Council
	Create and enforce landscaping requirements for new construction.	x			Area Plan Commission
	Create and enforce basic design guidelines for new construction.	X			Area Plan Commission
	Explore options for neighborhood revitalization projects.		X		Mayor
	Employ basic design standards to improve the appearance of new residential development.		X		City Council
	Develop a marketing program for residential developers.		X		City Council

	ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE			RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		SHORT TERM (1-5 YEARS)	MID RANGE (6-12 YEARS)	LONG RANGE (13-20 YEARS)	
HOUSING	Working with the county, conduct a Housing Needs Assessment to determine gaps in Jennings County's housing stock.	X			Area Plan Commission
	Integrate environmental concerns into decision making at all levels.	X			Mayor
	Encourage the use of green building materials and techniques in new construction.	X			Mayor
	Explore the recommendations of the National League of City's green initiatives.	X			Mayor
ENVIRONMENT	Require new developments to keep the amount of stormwater runoff leaving a site to the "pre-development level."	X			Utilities & Engineering
	Limit paved surfaces to control stormwater.		X		Stormwater Utilities

	ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE			RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		SHORT TERM (1-5 YEARS)	MID RANGE (6-12 YEARS)	LONG RANGE (13-20 YEARS)	
ENVIRONMENT	Forested connections, such as river and stream banks, hedgerows, utility easements, and recreational trails surrounded by vegetation, should be preserved between woodlots, wetlands, and forests to allow wildlife and vegetation opportunities to migrate.		X		Parks & Recreation
	Incorporate open space as new residential and commercial neighborhoods are developed.	X			Parks & Recreation
	Because of the likelihood of water contamination and sinkhole collapse, buffers around known karst areas should be at least 100 feet. Within the buffer, no structures or roads should be permitted.	X			Area Plan Commission
	Continue working on long term plans to expand the infrastructure capability of delivering water to new businesses and residential areas			X	Water Utility & EDC

	ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE			RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		SHORT TERM (1-5 YEARS)	MID RANGE (6-12 YEARS)	LONG RANGE (13-20 YEARS)	
UTILITIES	Prepare a Watershed Protection Plan on the north end of town, possibly in conjunction with a stormwater master plan.		X		Engineering
	Prepare a Stormwater Master Plan for North Vernon and influencing watersheds.		X		Engineering
	Identify and estimate wastewater flows from short term future growth areas, and from long term growth areas associated with the US 50 bypass.		X		Engineering
	Evaluate options for providing additional wastewater treatment capacity including expansion of the current facility or construction of a satellite plant.		X		Utility Board & City Council
	Seek land rights for future wastewater treatment plant property as needed.		X		Engineering & City Attorney
	Complete planning for an interceptor sewer parallel to the US 50 bypass in conjunction with INDOT's progress on the design of the roadway.	X			Utilities

	ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE			RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		SHORT TERM (1-5 YEARS)	MID RANGE (6-12 YEARS)	LONG RANGE (13-20 YEARS)	
	Encourage the ongoing extension and upgrade of electric, natural gas and telecommunications infrastructure.	X			Engineering
TRANSPORTATION	Complete current roadway projects in planning and design including Hayden Pike and Greensburg Street.	X			Mayor & City Council
	Coordinate with INDOT to evaluate an upgraded roadway from O&M Avenue to US 50 (existing) during planning for US 50 bypass.	X			Mayor & City Council
	Encourage INDOT to pursue the Alternative A bypass route for US 50. Coordinate future US 50 planning closely with INDOT.		X		Mayor & City Council
	Preserve existing railroad lines/ corridors for future needs.	X		X	Mayor & City Council
	Work with CSX to improve maintenance and upkeep of rail lines through the City, especially downtown.	X			Mayor & City Council
	Improve pedestrian facilities within the corporate limits.	X			Parks & Rec and City Council

	ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE			RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		SHORT TERM (1-5 YEARS)	MID RANGE (6-12 YEARS)	LONG RANGE (13-20 YEARS)	
TRANSPORTATION	Develop external multi-use trails that link North Vernon with other towns or recreational areas.			X	Parks and Rec and City Council
	Alleviate traffic surrounding schools by providing additional ingress or egress and creation of US 50 bypass		X		INDOT
SPECIAL STUDIES	Stormwater Master Plan		X		Utilities
	Watershed Protection Plan		X		Engineering
	US 50 Bypass Corridor Plan		X		Mayor & City Council
	Parks Master Plan	X			Parks & Rec & City Council
	Thoroughfare Plan		X		Mayor, City Council & EDC
	Downtown Plan	X			Mayor & City Council

Appendix



Survey Results & Analysis for

NORTH VERNON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Sunday, October 11, 2009

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Executive Summary

This report contains a detailed statistical analysis of the results to the survey titled *North Vernon Comprehensive Plan*. The results analysis includes answers from all respondents who took the survey in the 107 day period from Tuesday, June 23, 2009 to Wednesday, October 07, 2009. 9 completed responses were received to the survey during this time.

NOTE: Data has been sorted to rank and reflect the majority response, where applicable.

Survey Results & Analysis

Survey: North Vernon Comprehensive Plan

Author: SDG

Responses Received: 9

1) How satisfied are you with the quality of life in North Vernon?

Response	Count	Percent
Satisfied	4	44.4%
Unsatisfied	2	22.2%
Very Unsatisfied	2	22.2%
Very Satisfied	1	11.1%
Uncertain	0	0.0%

2) If you checked Unsatisfied or Very Unsatisfied in question #1, please explain why:

If you checked Unsatisfied or Very Unsatisfied in question #1, please explain why:
We could do much better.
clean up the town
You need to eliminate the meth lab reputation for North Vernon
Do not care what the think.
There is no zoning. Put up businesses with housing and vice versa. Not thought out. Recommend visiting other communities for guidance. You are shielded from real world life in the rest of the united states. Use what they have learned and learn from it. You can't know everything, don't try and think you can. Ask for input from abroad.

3) What are the main reasons that you live in North Vernon?

Response	Count	Percent
Born and raised here, decided to stay	5	55.6%
Near family and/or friends	5	55.6%
Close to work	3	33.3%
Crime rate / safety	2	22.2%
Employment opportunities	1	11.1%
Geographic location	1	11.1%
Quiet	1	11.1%
Other (please specify)	1	11.1%
Community appearance	0	0.0%
Community atmosphere	0	0.0%
Cost of living	0	0.0%
Emergency services	0	0.0%
Parks / Recreation	0	0.0%
Property taxes	0	0.0%
Schools	0	0.0%

Other Responses:

live in Madison

4) How would you rate the quality of housing in North Vernon?

Response	Count	Percent
Fair	7	77.8%
Good	2	22.2%
Excellent	0	0.0%
Poor	0	0.0%

5) As North Vernon continues to grow, what types of housing would you like to see encouraged?

Response	Count	Percent
Assisted / senior living	4	44.4%
Affordable housing	3	33.3%
Subdivisions	3	33.3%
Duplexes / two-family units	2	22.2%
Apartments	1	11.1%
Condominiums	1	11.1%
Mixed use housing	1	11.1%
Single family homes	1	11.1%
Mobile home parks	0	0.0%
Other (please specify)	0	0.0%

6) Focusing on neighborhood preservation and development, which top two items should North Vernon concentrate on during the next five years?

Response	Count	Percent
Beautifying the area	7	77.8%
Expanding neighborhood shopping opportunities	3	33.3%
Preservation in core neighborhoods	3	33.3%
Affordable housing	1	11.1%
Recreation	0	0.0%
Other (please specify)	0	0.0%

Other Responses:

clean up

7) How would you rate the following transportation services for North Vernon residents?

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Bicycle / pedestrian trails	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	28.6% (2)	71.4% (5)
Downtown parking availability	0.0% (0)	12.5% (1)	50.0% (4)	37.5% (3)
Local road conditions	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	87.5% (7)	12.5% (1)
Road maintenance	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	87.5% (7)	12.5% (1)
Snow plowing	0.0% (0)	42.9% (3)	57.1% (4)	0.0% (0)

8) Please rank the following issues for North Vernon.

	Serious Problem	Moderate Problem	Not a Problem	Uncertain
Agricultural land preservation	25.0% (2)	50.0% (4)	25.0% (2)	0.0% (0)
Ambulance service	0.0% (0)	25.0% (2)	75.0% (6)	0.0% (0)
Broadband / telecom availability	0.0% (0)	37.5% (3)	37.5% (3)	25.0% (2)
Drainage overflows during rains	37.5% (3)	62.5% (5)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Environmental protection	37.5% (3)	37.5% (3)	25.0% (2)	0.0% (0)
Garbage collection	12.5% (1)	25.0% (2)	50.0% (4)	12.5% (1)
Government planning for the future	42.9% (3)	28.6% (2)	14.3% (1)	14.3% (1)
Litter or garbage on local streets	37.5% (3)	25.0% (2)	25.0% (2)	12.5% (1)
Maintaining community atmosphere	12.5% (1)	50.0% (4)	12.5% (1)	25.0% (2)
Police / Fire protection	14.3% (1)	14.3% (1)	71.4% (5)	0.0% (0)
Recreational activities for all ages	14.3% (1)	57.1% (4)	28.6% (2)	0.0% (0)
School facilities and programs	0.0% (0)	42.9% (3)	42.9% (3)	14.3% (1)
Sewage service	0.0% (0)	28.6% (2)	42.9% (3)	28.6% (2)
Traffic congestion	12.5% (1)	50.0% (4)	37.5% (3)	0.0% (0)
Water service	0.0% (0)	57.1% (4)	28.6% (2)	14.3% (1)

9) What types of industries should North Vernon focus on retaining / securing? Please check your top three choices.

Response	Count	Percent
Light industry / manufacturing	6	66.7%
Retail / shopping	6	66.7%
High tech industries	3	33.3%
Recreational facilities	3	33.3%
Agriculture	2	22.2%
Hotels, tourism	2	22.2%
Medical services	2	22.2%
Restaurants	2	22.2%
Arts and entertainment venues	1	11.1%
Professional services (financial, etc)	0	0.0%
Other (please specify)	0	0.0%

10) Which of the following do you believe are the most important economic development issues for North Vernon to focus on over the next several years?

	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Capital investments	12.5% (1)	50.0% (4)	37.5% (3)
Creation of local jobs	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)	0.0% (0)
Developing an industrial park	12.5% (1)	37.5% (3)	50.0% (4)
Promoting tourism	12.5% (1)	50.0% (4)	37.5% (3)
Recruiting new businesses	62.5% (5)	25.0% (2)	12.5% (1)
Retaining and expanding existing businesses	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)	0.0% (0)
Downtown North Vernon	75.0% (6)	25.0% (2)	0.0% (0)
Utilizing vacant facilities	42.9% (3)	57.1% (4)	0.0% (0)
Workforce training	28.6% (2)	57.1% (4)	14.3% (1)

Building Local Planning Capacity

Along the I-69 corridor, the use and implementation of planning tools and techniques varies greatly among communities. While some communities have embraced many planning tools, others have not for various reasons. Accordingly, the capacities of the communities to manage and subsequently administer plans formulated in the I-69 Community Planning Program may vary as well.

For communities to choose the most appropriate tool(s), the community's planning resources and capacity should be analyzed. This discussion of local planning capacity focuses on the **technical, managerial, financial and political ability of a local government** to carry out a project or task. It is recognized that many other influences can impact or determine a community's planning capacity. All local influences and considerations should be analyzed before determining future planning endeavors.

The purpose of discussing planning capacity is to identify the conditions under which individual tools are ideally used. For example, a tool which requires an extensive amount of staff to administer would not be the most appropriate tool for a community with few or no planning staff to implement.

Throughout this toolbox, tools are listed by their recommended level of planning capacity. This is a suggestion when communities should utilize each tool. The intention of organizing tools by recommended level of planning capacity is not to limit or restrict any community from using or implementing a desired tool; rather, its purpose is to serve as a **guide** to help communities select the tool that will be most effective for the topic(s) they are trying to address. However, any community can use any tool described in this toolbox. A community may be able to implement a tool above their capacity if resources are dedicated to that particular tool or if the community uses a simplified version of the tool.

For example, after assessing a community's planning capacity, the local decision makers determine their community falls within the "level 2" planning capacity. The tool they choose from any of the categories should be within level 1 or level 2. Because local decision makers assessed the community's planning capacity as a level 2, it does not restrict or preclude them from implementing a level 3 or level 4 tool. A community can always choose to implement a tool beyond their self assessed capacity.

Example Planning Capacity Matrix			
Tools in gray boxes are <u>not</u> recommended for that level of planning capacity.			
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Increasing Fundamental Planning Capacity	Land Ownership and Conservation Easements	Land Ownership and Conservation Easements	Land Ownership and Conservation Easements
	Conservation Subdivision Ordinance	Conservation Subdivision Ordinance	Conservation Subdivision Ordinance
	Hillside / Steep Slope Protection	Hillside / Steep Slope Protection	Hillside / Steep Slope Protection
	Tree Protection Ordinance	Tree Protection Ordinance	Tree Protection Ordinance

If a tool is beyond a community's planning capacity, capacity can be acquired through external resources, such as universities, regional planning organization, metropolitan planning organizations, other resource organizations and consultants. Many communities that have a higher planning capacity use outsourced services to assist them in completing various projects. When capacity is acquired in this manner, a key consideration in the plan should be the long-term administrative requirements for successful implementation. Additionally, each community should analyze the different approaches to increasing local planning capacity. If external resources are used, a plan should be developed to gradually increase their own capacity in various ways, such as analyzing or expanding the structural capacity of the planning staff.

In order to efficiently use the I-69 Community Planning Toolbox, a community should understand the level of their planning resources and capacity.

It is suggested that each community complete the following checklist to determine its current planning capacity.

Evaluate Your Local Planning Capacity

Planning capacity is determined by the highest level that has all or the most items checked.

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
<input type="checkbox"/> We have thought about planning for our community but do not have a plan commission. <input type="checkbox"/> We do not have any planning staff. <input type="checkbox"/> We have no financial resources designated for planning projects.	<input type="checkbox"/> We have a plan commission and a board of zoning appeals with rules of procedure. <input type="checkbox"/> We have a building commissioner/ planner on staff. <input type="checkbox"/> We rarely designate financial resources planning projects. <input type="checkbox"/> We have someone who focuses part of their time on economic development or redevelopment. <input type="checkbox"/> Our focus of planning is on plan review. <input type="checkbox"/> We have no or limited inspections. We have zoning and subdivision regulations. <input type="checkbox"/> We have a comprehensive plan. We have a redevelopment commission.	<input type="checkbox"/> We have a plan commission and a board of zoning appeals that consistently follow rules of procedure. <input type="checkbox"/> We have a professional full time planner. <input type="checkbox"/> We occasionally designate financial resources for community planning projects. <input type="checkbox"/> We have a full-time staff member who is dedicated to economic development or redevelopment. <input type="checkbox"/> Our focus is on some longer range planning and visioning. <input type="checkbox"/> We have limited inspections and enforcement personnel. <input type="checkbox"/> We regularly update our comprehensive plan and development codes. <input type="checkbox"/> We have additional ordinances such as architectural review, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> We have a plan commission and a board of zoning appeals that consistently follow rules of procedure and annual training. <input type="checkbox"/> We have a professional full time staff of planners and other trained technical staff. <input type="checkbox"/> We annually designate financial resources for community planning projects. <input type="checkbox"/> We have a full-time staff member who is dedicated to economic development or redevelopment in addition to other trained technical economic development staff. <input type="checkbox"/> Our focus is on long range planning. <input type="checkbox"/> We have full range of inspections and full time enforcement personnel. <input type="checkbox"/> We have additional ordinances such as historic preservation, etc.

Protecting Natural Resources

Natural resources in southwest Indiana are integral to the identity of the region and many individual communities within it. These important resources include but are not limited to: agricultural lands; forestlands, karst terrain; stream and the associated corridors and floodplains; wetlands; groundwater resources, including public and private drinking water; wildlife and wildlife habitat, including endangered, threatened, or rare species; and high quality natural communities.

Select the tools below. Tools in gray boxes are **not** recommended for that level of planning capacity.

LEVEL 1:	LEVEL 2:	LEVEL 3:	LEVEL 4:
See Increasing Local Fundamental Planning Capacity	Land Ownership and Conservation Easements	Land Ownership and Conservation Easements	Land Ownership and Conservation Easements
	Hillside / Steep Slope Protection	Hillside / Steep Slope Protection	Hillside / Steep Slope Protection
	Open Space Planning	Open Space Planning	Open Space Planning
	Scenic Viewshed Protection	Scenic Viewshed Protection	Scenic Viewshed Protection
	Tree Protection Ordinance	Tree Protection Ordinance	Tree Protection Ordinance
	Forest Protection	Forest Protection	Forest Protection
	Agricultural Land Preservation	Agricultural Land Preservation	Agricultural Land Preservation
	Stream Corridor Protection	Stream Corridor Protection	Stream Corridor Protection
	Wetland Protection	Wetland Protection	Wetland Protection
	Watershed Protection	Watershed Protection	Watershed Protection
	Groundwater / Wellhead Protection	Groundwater / Wellhead Protection	Groundwater / Wellhead Protection
	Karst Landscape Preservation	Karst Landscape Preservation	Karst Landscape Preservation
	Biodiversity / Habitat Protection	Biodiversity / Habitat Protection	Biodiversity / Habitat Protection

The benefits provided by the region's set of natural resources are as varied as the resources themselves. Natural resources contribute directly to the local economies within the region through the production of agricultural and forest commodities and value-added products, as well as through the recreation and tourism industries. Less directly, natural resources provide quality of life and aesthetic benefits that retain current residents and attract new ones. Natural resources also provide many of the environmental services often associated with hard infrastructure at a much lower cost, such as storm water conveyance, wastewater treatment, and drinking water provision.

The construction of I-69 from Indianapolis to Evansville is likely to spur new development along the highway and place pressure on the region's resources. Sustainable development and decision making is particularly important to southwest Indiana communities as they seek to maximize the benefits derived from the new highway and manage the potential negative consequences. Sustainable development incorporates social, economic, and environmental considerations to ensure that future generations continue to have a rich quality of life. Contrary to popular belief, the protection of natural resources and building a healthy economy are not mutually exclusive.

The incorporation of natural resources into community planning efforts and public education will be particularly critical to sustainable development and decision making. Comprehensive planning throughout the state typically involves only cursory review of a limited number of resources, commonly including only steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, and the soil conditions appropriate for the location of individual on-site wastewater treatment (septic) systems. Development regulations often deal with natural resources issues as an after-thought. More complete consideration and treatment is needed to manage and protect these important resources effectively.

Public education, while critical, is likely to be a challenge. Residents often take these important resources for granted and few understand the complexity of relationships between individual natural resources or between

natural resources and the built environment. Because natural resources are interconnected in complex ecosystems and sometimes hidden, development and land use actions can have significant consequences in near and seemingly distant locations. A lack of knowledge also can have significant consequences for land owners and communities when decisions are made independent of the realities of natural hazards such as stream or karst floodplains or the contamination of drinking water supplies.

To assist local communities in their efforts to incorporate natural resources into community planning, the tools presented in this section include resource data, public education resources, and a variety of regulatory and non-regulatory implementation options. Communities should consider their needs and local implementation capacity when selecting among potential tools and various treatments, from simple to complex, within those tools.

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Encouraging Economic Development

The nature of economic development practice has changed significantly over the last two decades to focus on competitively-advantaged industry clusters and the elements necessary to attract firms within those clusters. Maximizing the benefits of the new highway will require the utilization of these contemporary strategies tailored to local circumstances.

Select the tools below. Tools in gray boxes are **not** recommended for that level of planning capacity.

LEVEL 1:	LEVEL 2:	LEVEL 3:	LEVEL 4:
See Increasing Local Fundamental Planning Capacity	Tax Abatement	Tax Abatement	Tax Abatement
	Economic Development Strategic Plan	Economic Development Strategic Plan	Economic Development Strategic Plan
	Tax Increment Financing	Tax Increment Financing	Tax Increment Financing
	Special Improvements Districts	Special Improvements Districts	Special Improvements Districts
	Agricultural Development	Agricultural Development	Agricultural Development
	Agriculture and Nature Tourism	Agriculture and Nature Tourism	Agriculture and Nature Tourism
	State Economic Development Programs	State Economic Development Programs	State Economic Development Programs
	Competitive Industry / Targeted Industry Studies	Competitive Industry / Targeted Industry Studies	Competitive Industry / Targeted Industry Studies
	Brownfield / Infill Development	Brownfield / Infill Development	Brownfield / Infill Development

States and local units of government began to develop economic development programs in response to a series of economic downturns in the late 70s and early 80s. Initially economic development efforts consisted primarily of the offering of incentives to reduce costs and influence the location decisions of business. During this period, a city or region competed to offer the lowest public sector costs in hopes of capturing relocating businesses. Critics suggested that long-term competitive advantages of particular areas drove actual location decisions and that short-term tax breaks had little effect. They surmised that firms merely used these incentive negotiations to lower the cost of doing business in their preferred location.

The primary goals of current economic development are attracting private investment and creating jobs. Many economic development efforts also seek to create a positive fiscal impact (growing new tax revenues faster than increasing new service costs). Over time, economic development practice has expanded to include a focus on the following strategies:

- **Providing state and local incentives**
- **Identifying and capitalizing upon competitively advantaged industry clusters**
- **Developing programs to improve the quality of the local workforce**
- **Addressing quality of life or cultural and environmental assets to attract human capital.**

Focus on competitively advantaged industry clusters emerged to address concerns about use of incentive packages. Rather than “shooting at anything that flies,” cities and states began to use knowledge of the local economy to fine tune and focus the use of incentive programs. The basic premise of the competitive advantage and industry cluster approach was that communities and regions provided some industry groups (clusters) with an economic environment that enables them to be more successful in that area than in other regions. As competitive advantage theory gained traction cities and states across the nation engaged in studies to identify their competitive industry clusters and adjusted economic development policies to focus on nurturing them.

One of the most important aspects of the competitive advantage approach was a focus on locally skilled and specialized workforce. Economic development efforts expanded to include programs directed to increasing the skills and productivity of the local workforce.

In response to the workforce focus that emerged from the competitive advantage approach and, in part, to Richard Florida's notion that creative and innovative people were the driving force behind new business start-ups and greater economic activity, recent economic development efforts have focused on developing and supporting a quality of life that makes a city/region attractive to creative human capital.

The discussion below provides some practical advice about adopting a successful, contemporary economic development approach on the local level.

As the notion of what constitutes economic development has expanded, so has the responsibility of the economic development practitioner. First, it has become essential that economic development practitioners build the partnerships required to address the community's quality of life and thus support economic growth. Economic development practitioners should consider a wide range of public, private, not-for-profit, and university-based partners. For example, in the new economy, supporting the arts, culture, and general quality of life (to make the region attractive) are as important as education and workforce development programs (to increase worker productivity), capitalizing on competitive industry clusters and research universities (to develop new, local industries), and the development of incentive packages (to attract major employers to the region). While the list of potential partners will vary by community, economic development practitioners should consider those described above and others that may be unique to their community and mission.

Secondly, while economic development programs are primarily directed towards attracting private investment and creating jobs, sound economic development practice must consider the impact on the local tax base (new costs attributable to the development compared to new tax revenues). An analysis of tax impacts should consider any property tax revenues generated by the new facility and any local income tax attributable to employment at the facility relative to the new public costs generated by the project and by any new employees who move to the community. If the project attracts a large number of new workers to the community it is particularly important to consider the impact on the local school district. Any study of tax impact on the school system should consider new property tax attributable to residential construction and the ability of the local school system to absorb new students prior to the need for new hires and new construction.

While economic development projects that have a continuing positive impact on the local tax base are desirable, it should be recognized that some projects may be slow in offsetting increased costs for governmental services with local tax revenue and still be beneficial to the community. For example, in a community that has been suffering from population loss and the attrition of local shopping, dining, and entertainment facilities, the attraction of 500 or more new workers may be thought of as an investment in the long-term quality of life in the community.

Finally, patience is an important attribute in any economic development strategy. Communities must believe in the integrity of their carefully considered economic strategies. The first opportunity may not always be the best opportunity. If the community's economic development strategy suggests that there are higher and better uses for a parcel of land than are offered by a particular opportunity, communities may consider passing on the current proposal while working to attract a more desirable project. In doing so, the community can ensure that land and resources required to develop the more desirable project will be available.

The economic development tools presented here are organized in three categories (basics, local incentives, and strategies). These tools provide practitioners with the capacity to develop programs and address issues related to incentives, competitive industries, and workforce development. Many of the tools provided in other sections of the tool kit provide practitioners with the capacity to address issues related to the quality of life in the local community.

The basics section includes the development of economic development plans and the state programs that support local economic development efforts. Tax abatement, tax increment financing, and special improvement districts are included in the local incentive section. The strategy section includes: agricultural development, agricultural tourism and tourism corridor planning, competitive industry/ targeted industry studies, and brownfield development programs.

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Managing Transportation and Infrastructure

This section of the toolbox presents methods and techniques to effectively direct and manage the development and improvement of transportation and infrastructure systems. Although I-69 will be the major transportation investment in each community, other systems will be influenced by its construction. Careful planning is essential to ensure that transportation and infrastructure systems are capable of handling the changes in local travel demand associated with I-69.

Select the tools below. Tools in gray boxes are **not** recommended for that level of planning capacity.

LEVEL 1:	LEVEL 2:	LEVEL 3:	LEVEL 4:
See Increasing Local Fundamental Planning Capacity	Capital Improvement Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Fort Wayne City of Indianapolis Town of Highland 	Capital Improvement Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Fort Wayne City of Indianapolis Town of Highland 	Capital Improvement Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Fort Wayne City of Indianapolis Town of Highland
	Access Management Plan & Policies Areawide Thoroughfare Plan Comprehensive Corridor Plan Interchange Area Plan Areawide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan	Access Management Plan & Policies Areawide Thoroughfare Plan Comprehensive Corridor Plan Interchange Area Plan Areawide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan	Access Management Plan & Policies Areawide Thoroughfare Plan Comprehensive Corridor Plan Interchange Area Plan Areawide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
	Traffic Calming Plan & Policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Indianapolis 	Traffic Calming Plan & Policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Indianapolis 	Traffic Calming Plan & Policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Indianapolis
	Design and Construction Standards for Infrastructure Traffic Impact Study Guidelines Urban Growth Boundaries / Urban Service Area Traffic Control Device / Signal Warrant Studies	Design and Construction Standards for Infrastructure Traffic Impact Study Guidelines Urban Growth Boundaries / Urban Service Area Traffic Control Device / Signal Warrant Studies	Design and Construction Standards for Infrastructure Traffic Impact Study Guidelines Urban Growth Boundaries / Urban Service Area Traffic Control Device / Signal Warrant Studies
	Impact Fees	Impact Fees	Impact Fees

Transportation planners typically work with land use planners to predict future patterns of demand. In most cases, various alternatives are considered for meeting this demand, leading to the development of a transportation plan. The link to the land use plan is key to the development of an effective transportation plan. Good planning practice extends beyond the function of the system, however. It considers the broader effect of the transportation system on the community, addressing historic preservation, environmental protection, aesthetic appeal and other issues.

Proper working water, sewer, and other utilities are also vital to the smooth operations of a community. As growth occurs, existing system and facility conditions must be evaluated according to current and predicted use. The availability of infrastructure plays a key role in guiding the type and density of development into rural areas. Development should be encouraged only where existing and new infrastructure improvements can support it. In addition to identifying future functional needs in terms of system capacity, infrastructure planning must address alternative options for growth considering environmental protection, construction and operating costs, and development policies.

If addressed before development occurs, transportation and infrastructure improvements can influence development in a positive way. Transportation and infrastructure planning can strongly influence:

- **Where growth occurs**
- **What scale and type of growth occurs**
- **How much growth occurs**

Various tools are included in this resource to identify and address future infrastructure needs and to manage urban and rural growth. These tools relate specifically to transportation and infrastructure development, but to be most effective, they should be linked with other tools such as land use planning and overall community visioning. As with all planning resources, the tools should serve as a guide for communities wishing to manage their growth and development and should be shaped to fit each individual community's needs and desires.

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Directing Development and Growth

This section of the toolbox presents methods and techniques to effectively direct the growth and development of each community. Generally, growth management covers numerous community development methods and strategies that tackle economic, social, environmental matters in a changing environment. Many of the tools are designed to prevent or limit the occurrence of negative development effects such as loss of open space, undesired mixture of land uses, uncontrolled growth, poor aesthetics, etc.

Select the tools below. Tools in gray boxes are **not** recommended for that level of planning capacity.

LEVEL 1:	LEVEL 2:	LEVEL 3:	LEVEL 4:
See Increasing Local Fundamental Planning Capacity	Comprehensive Plan	Comprehensive Plan	Comprehensive Plan
	Zoning Ordinance	Zoning Ordinance	Zoning Ordinance
	Land Use Plans	Land Use Plans	Land Use Plans
	Downtown Plan / Main Street Program	Downtown Plan / Main Street Program	Downtown Plan / Main Street Program
	Subdivision Regulations	Subdivision Regulations	Subdivision Regulations
	Signage & Billboards	Signage & Billboards	Signage & Billboards
	Overlay Zones	Overlay Zones	Overlay Zones
	Landscape Overlay	Landscape Overlay	Landscape Overlay
	Planned Unit Developments	Planned Unit Developments	Planned Unit Developments
	Neighborhood Planning / Sub Area Plan	Neighborhood Planning / Sub Area Plan	Neighborhood Planning / Sub Area Plan
	Annexation:	Annexation:	Annexation:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geist Annexation Fiscal Plan, Town of Fishers • Geist Annexation Ordinance, Town of Fishers • Riverbend Commons Ordinance, City of Muncie • Shirey Road Annexation Fiscal Plan, City of Muncie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geist Annexation Fiscal Plan, Town of Fishers • Geist Annexation Ordinance, Town of Fishers • Riverbend Commons Ordinance, City of Muncie • Shirey Road Annexation Fiscal Plan, City of Muncie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geist Annexation Fiscal Plan, Town of Fishers • Geist Annexation Ordinance, Town of Fishers • Riverbend Commons Ordinance, City of Muncie • Shirey Road Annexation Fiscal Plan, City of Muncie
	Cluster Development	Cluster Development	Cluster Development
	Traditional Neighborhood Development	Traditional Neighborhood Development	Traditional Neighborhood Development

Traditional approaches to planning address growth issues by designating land uses through zoning regulations. The separation of conflicting uses (such as residential and industrial) helps to create a more comfortable and safe environment. While this tool is effective in many ways, it does not always address the issues of sprawl and uncontrolled growth. There are multiple ways to approach regulating development that address these issues such as prescribing the quantity and quality of growth in a community. By doing so, land uses and services can be mixed in a more unified way to create vibrant, healthy communities.

Growth management approaches must be developed to address specific local conditions. The tools included in this resource provide *guidelines* for how to manage growth, and are not intended to be a perfect fit or fix for each community. Instead, they must be tailored by the local planning leaders and community members to meet the needs and desires for that individual community.

Key principles are listed below to evaluate and apply in ways that best fit the vision and needs of each community. Evaluating these principles in addition to implementing selected tools described in this section will help guide the community's future growth.

The Key Principles include:

- **Housing for all incomes**
- **Provide walkable neighborhoods, including desirable places to live, work, learn, and play**
- **Establish community and stakeholder collaboration**
- **Create a vision and standards for development that reflect what the community wants**
- **Foster fair and cost effective development**
- **Promote mixed land uses**
- **Protect a community's critical and significant environmental areas by encouraging growth in areas with existing development**
- **Provide transportation choices**
- **Encourage growth in existing communities to preserve open space and natural resources on the urban fringe**
- **Encourage compact building design**

(Source: Smart Growth Network <http://www.smartgrowth.org>)

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Increasing Local Fundamental Planning Capacity

This section of the toolbox presents the most fundamental ways for communities to improve their local planning capabilities. These tools will help communities increase their technical, managerial, financial and political abilities within local government. Generally, these tools will be more helpful for communities with a capacity level of one or two to begin the planning process. For more information on assessing a community's local planning capacity, refer to the [Building Local Planning Capacity](#) discussion.

Many of the tools described in this toolbox require a certain level of planning capacity according to Indiana Code. For example, a plan commission and board of zoning appeals is required in order to implement planning techniques such as creating a comprehensive plan, zoning, etc.

As a community's planning capacity increases, they become more capable of tackling increasingly complex and involved planning issues as well as being able to better influence their future. Planning initiatives should come from leaders within the community; however, when additional guidance is needed, it may be obtained through external resources. As communities grow, the planning qualifications within community leadership should increase. Additional training and hiring of planning professionals eliminates the need to outsource simple yet important planning tasks. In addition, communities can gain many advantages from partnering with other local governments on providing certain services. For example, if a small town and rural county partner to provide planning services, they could benefit by hiring one planning director instead of duplicating this service in each government entity.

Developing a COMMUNITY VISION:	Establishing the ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE:	Acquiring EXTERNAL RESOURCES:
Community Visioning and Strategic Planning	Advisory / Area Plan Commission	Request for Proposal (RFP) Using Qualifications Based Selection (QBS)
	Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA)	Partnering
	Common Rules of Procedure: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fulton County	
	Redevelopment Commission	
	Creating an EDA or RDA	

* Tools Under Construction

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BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN PLANS

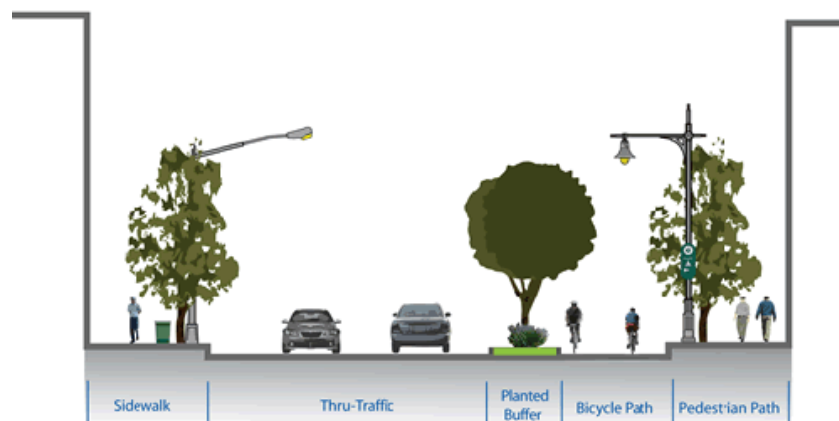


Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans recognize walking and biking as legitimate forms of transportation. Generally, Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans provide guidance for policy and project plans for creating or improving access and mobility for bicyclists and pedestrians. These plans can identify a network of bike and walking paths to connect community assets such as parks, schools, employment areas, retail areas and residential neighborhoods.

Federal legislation officially recognizes bicycling and walking as modes of transportation. According to the Federal Highway Administration, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) increased federal spending on bicycle and pedestrian improvements from \$4 million annually to an average of \$160 million annually. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) continued the call for the mainstreaming of bicycle and pedestrian projects into the planning, design, and operation of the national transportation system.

Establishing a bicycle and pedestrian plan can have many goals. Ideally, the main goals of such a plan are to reduce the reliance on vehicles by reducing the amount of trips. Community quality of life can also be improved with a viable bicycle and pedestrian network, where residents can walk to accomplish their errands and safety is perceived.

A Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan can not only identify a network for travel, it can identify improvements that a community can undertake to make their transportation network more accessible and welcoming to bikers and pedestrians.



Source: Brooklyn Greenway

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

A Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) identifies capital projects (and some major equipment purchases) during a five year period, providing a planning schedule and identifying opportunities for financing the projects in the plan. Capital Improvements Plans coordinate community planning, financial capacity, and physical development.

A CIP typically includes:

- List of capital improvements (projects or major equipment) to be made
- Projects ranked by priority
- Project cost estimates
- Plan for financing the projects
- Schedule for construction or completion of the projects

There are a number of benefits that may be realized from the Capital Improvements Plan process including:

- Coordination between capital needs and operating budgets
- Enhancement of the community's credit rating, control of its tax rate, and stability in debt service obligations
- Identification of the most economical means of financing capital projects
- Coordination of public capital investments with other public and private development initiatives (Massachusetts Municipal Association, 1997)

The process for developing a Capital Improvements Plan varies by community but may include the following steps:

- Establish a capital planning committee (often the department heads or superintendents)
- Inventory existing assets
- Evaluate projects that have been previously approved, are incomplete, or have not been implemented
- Assess the community's financial capacity

- Identify new projects by soliciting and evaluating requests from staff
- Prioritize projects
- Develop a financing plan
- Adopt a Capital Improvements Plan
- Monitor and manage the projects included in the plan
- Update periodically (typically annually)

The inventory of assets should include all buildings and major equipment and, if possible, utilities, roads, and sewers. It should document the need for replacement, expansion, or repair of all physical assets in the community. This is facilitated by documenting the year the facility (or equipment) was purchased or acquired, the date(s) of improvement(s), the condition and extent of use of the facility or equipment, and any scheduled dates for reconstruction, expansion, or replacement (Massachusetts Municipal Association, 1997).

While some communities use specific “grading systems” for establishing the priority ranking of their projects, including cost-benefit analysis is not always necessary. Some priorities are difficult to establish using fixed systems and may not reflect the social or political realities of the community. Nonetheless, establishing a prioritization for projects is important for scheduling and budgeting purposes.

The financing plan should include not only the estimated initial cost of construction, but also estimates of the annual operating and maintenance costs. These represent long-term financial commitments and should be included in the long-term operating budget.

Source: I-69 Community Planning Program Toolbox

COMPACT URBAN FORM

The term “compact urban form” refers to the physical layout and design of a city. Compact urban form is about more than just higher densities and clear community edges. The city must also address land-use mix and distribution, transit availability, infrastructure phasing, and resource management. Advantages of compact urban form are listed below:



- Creates pedestrian oriented environment with mix of uses – reasons for residents to walk (services, jobs, recreation, open space)
- Reduces dependence of the automobile, encourages walking
- More efficient use of land resources (reducing sprawl)
- Increased diversity with range of housing and job opportunities
- More efficient infrastructure, reducing costs (initial, service, and maintenance)

According to several studies on greenhouse gas emissions, single-use, dispersed neighborhoods, located far from downtowns/urban cores, produce nearly 3 times more annual emissions per household than mixed-use, compact neighborhoods near the downtown/urban core. Developing more compact neighborhoods with mixed-use and pedestrian oriented designs can decrease greenhouse gas emissions by 24 to 50 percent.

Ensuring compact urban form requires that new development is contiguous to the existing urban areas and would add to the physical and perceptual compactness the existing urban form. Communities must also ensure that new development is at an intensity to ensure a long-term compact urban form.

Source: Chico, CA General Plan Update

CONSERVATION SUBDIVISION

A conservation or cluster subdivision generally sites single-family homes on smaller parcels of land, while the additional land that would have been allocated to individual lots is converted to common open space for the subdivision residents. Typically development standards, including road frontage, lot size, setbacks, etc. are changed to allow the developer to better preserve the desirable open space. Some definitions from Zoning Ordinances around the country are noted below:

- A subdivision in which the lot sizes are reduced below those normally required in the zoning district in which the development is located, in return for the provision of permanent open space. (*Muskegon, Mich.*)
- A residential use that divides land into not more than the number of lots permissible in a conventional subdivision of the same property in the same zone, but where the size of individual lots may be reduced in order to gain common open space. (*Deering, N.H.*)
- A form of development for single-family residential subdivisions that permits a reduction in lot area and bulk requirements, provided there is no increase in the number of lots permitted under a conventional subdivision and the resultant land area is devoted to open space. (*Bondurant, Iowa*)
- A clustered neighborhood design with gross density comparable to nearby rural/semirural subdivisions. (*Wayne, OH*)

Note: most communities have standards for what is and is not acceptable as common open space. Common open space should be land area that the community wants to preserve, such as historic sites, wetlands, floodplains, wooded areas, pasture or cropland, or even regular ground that stays undeveloped.

Differences between Conservation or Cluster Subdivisions and Regular Subdivisions

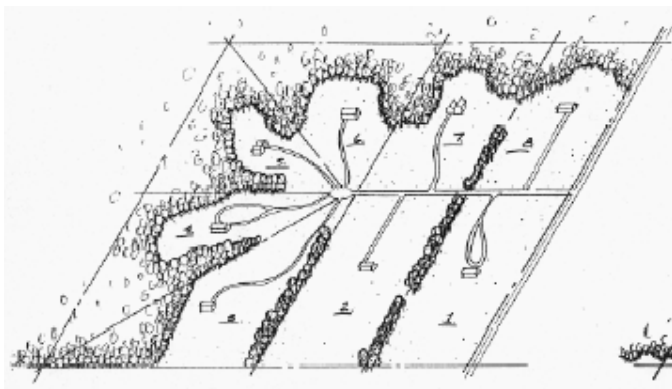
Consider the following distinction between a conventional subdivision and a conservation or cluster subdivision. With a conventional subdivision in mind, imagine a developer subdividing a 100-acre piece of land into 50 two-acre parcels, each with a single-family home. Under a conservation or cluster subdivision design, a developer would plan differently to get the 50 single-family homes, this time putting each on 0.5-acre parcels, "clustered" together in groups. This would only use 25 acres of land for residences and would

leave 75 acres of "open space." Typically, the open space areas are in the midst of the development and are designed around the natural or man-made features of the landscape. In our hypothetical 100-acre parcel, for example, we might have three separate areas of open space averaging 25 acres each. One might be centered around a section of woods, one around a pond or a creek, and one around a meadow.

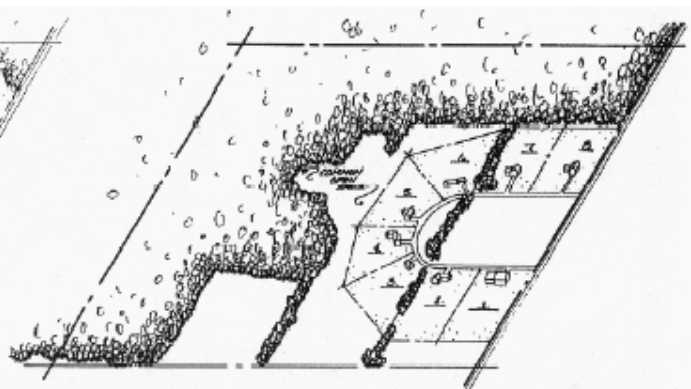
In a typical cluster subdivision, each homeowner has access to all of the open space areas, which may be permanently preserved by a conservation easement -- a restrictive covenant forbidding any type of development in perpetuity. To provide maximum protection for both the open space and the residents, the conservation easement should be assigned to at least two organizations, a homeowners' association, whose membership includes all the homeowners in the subdivision, and a local government agency or land trust. The conservation easement should specify the types of activity permitted on the open land, i.e., recreation, type of agriculture, woodland protection, or stream buffers. The easement should be placed on the property prior to the development of the conservation or cluster subdivision.

Cluster or conservation subdivisions have been very popular in rural areas in the eastern United States. Surveys show that residents generally rate them very highly as places to live, and they have maintained their property values. In Indiana, Michigan City's *Tryon Farm* is a well-known example that preserves 120 of the property's 170-acres.

The following illustrations are from the State of Wisconsin's Model Conservation Subdivision Ordinance



Standard Subdivision



Conservation Subdivision

Advantages of a Conservation or Cluster Subdivision

- Maintaining rural character of the area
- Open space for residents
- Preserving critical land
- Cheaper infrastructure costs, leaving developers more money for amenities
- Meeting a market need for low-maintenance housing
- Reducing the impacts of development on watersheds
- Can provide a buffer between residential lots and agricultural

Disadvantages of a Conservation or Cluster Subdivision

- Current zoning and subdivision regulations don't support this type of development
- Takes extra effort for developer if regulations aren't already in place (variances, etc.)
- Maintenance of common open space requires creation of homeowners' association
- Homeowners have extra cost for maintenance fees (taxes, insurance, and general upkeep) not typically incurred in a conventional subdivision
- Smaller-sized lots result in close proximity to neighbors' homes

Sewage disposal in a Conservation or Cluster Subdivision

In areas where public sewers are not available, advances in technology allow creation of small community systems where wastewater is transported and treated in a safe, economically feasible, and aesthetically pleasing manner.

Differences between Conservation or Cluster Subdivisions and Planned Unit Developments

Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) may include a mix of residential, commercial, industrial, or other uses, whereas the conservation or cluster subdivision normally only includes single family housing. Within the PUD, development standards need not be uniform with the community's zoning code. One major difference between PUDs and conservation or cluster development is the amount of open space. Where PUDs typically contain 20 percent open space or less, most conservation or cluster developments strive for 40 percent.

Source: Conservation or Cluster Subdivision Fact Sheet, by K.K. Gerhart-Fritz, AICP of the Planning Workshop

CREATING A NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Neighborhood associations can be defined as a voluntary association of homeowners and businesses gathered together to protect their property values and to improve the neighborhood. A neighborhood association can build relationships among neighbors, create a unified voice in local government decision making and provide the basis for neighborhood improvement.

Neighborhood associations are different from homeowner associations, where developers create a set of covenants, conditions and restrictions for each lot in their subdivision in addition to common areas in the development. Homeowner associations are generally mandatory for property owners where they exist, and they can be recorded on individual property deeds.

Components of a successful neighborhood association include:

- **Defining Clear Goals & Objectives**

Clearly defined goals promote communication and provide members with direction and a sense of accomplishment. Goals and objectives need to be realistic and attainable.

- **Written Operating Procedures**

To ensure continuity from year to year, especially when officers and leaders change, your association needs to have written operating procedures and policies, such as a set of bylaws. The written procedures should address the purpose of the association, the boundaries it serves, titles and duties of your group's leadership, when and how leaders are selected, frequency of meetings, voting procedures, definition of membership, etc.

- **Democratic Process of Leadership/Officer Elections**

Through the election of officers/leadership, members are able to participate in the development and direction of the association. Election of officers such as president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer, also helps to promote officer/leadership accountability to the members.

- **Solid Leadership**

A neighborhood leader needs to have the vision and the ability to build consensus, to delegate duties and authority to others, to encourage neighbor involvement and maximize neighborhood talent.

- **Committees**

Committees allow the neighborhood leadership to delegate issues (identify and research problems and solutions) and meet its goals by involving a number of members. Standing committees, which operate continually, could address key issues such as newsletter and communication, welcome, safety, social functions, etc.

- **Neighbor Input and Involvement**

The key to a vital and active association is members - neighbors involved in their association. A neighborhood association serves as the foundation to bring neighbors together to address neighborhood issues, promote team building, and serve as a vehicle for neighbors to pool their resources and maintain the integrity of their neighborhood.

- **Funding**

Neighborhood associations have expenses and should operate with a budget capable of supporting association goals. Membership dues are the main source of funding for neighborhood associations. The association leadership, specifically the treasurer, should provide a monthly report of the revenues, expenses and balance on hand.

The Hillsborough County Office of Neighborhood Relations in Florida suggests the following steps to determine if there is support for a neighborhood association in your area:

1. Inventory the neighborhood – get together with neighbors and friends and form a committee to identify housing, schools, businesses, recreation areas. Determine what can be improved.
2. Find a meeting place and select a meeting date convenient to most.
3. Create meeting announcement flyers and distribute as many places as you can think of.
4. Request articles in local papers announcing meeting.

5. Invite community leaders (both local and surrounding areas), heads of community organizations, House and Senate representatives, police and/or sheriff, city/county department heads, etc who can explain the benefits of an association in your neighborhood.
6. Night of meeting – have your committee set-up tables and chairs; set out refreshments; have greeters at the door with sign up sheets and “interest lists” – put out nametags.
7. Introduce your special guests and have them say a few motivating words.
8. Have audience members introduce themselves (name/occupation).
9. Discuss if there’s a need for an association.
10. Invite questions, comments or concerns from the audience.
11. Invite attendees back to second meeting
12. Thank everyone for coming.
13. Have the committee assist with clean up.

Source: Organizing Neighborhood Associations, Hillsborough County, Florida Office of Neighborhood Relations, 2003 (full text available at www.hillsboroughcounty.org)

DOWNTOWN PLAN / MAIN STREET PROGRAM



Rensselaer, IN Downtown Plan

Downtown plans and “Main Street” programs are similar in that they are plans with specific goals for specialized areas. Downtown plans refer generally to a type of plan that can be prepared by the local planning authority or a consultant. Using a range of approaches, Main Street Programs are more structured and are accredited by a national entity that reserves the right to the name Main Street as a protected brand. Both serve the community for a common goal, and are able to complement each other in revitalizing the downtown area(s).

Problems evolving in many small community downtown’s stem from a number of trends ranging from access and parking, changing roles of the downtown, and the phenomenon of big box retail offering more varieties of goods, to name a few. Historically, downtowns and main streets have been the vibrant centers of many communities. However, when chain stores and strip developments are located on the fringes of a community, these areas suffer. Fueled by the automobile and convenience of the one-stop-shop, many downtowns and main streets have become less competitive for business and a lively citizen presence.

There are many good examples of small Indiana communities such as Madison, Crawfordsville, and Newburg which have revitalized their downtowns through well conceived planning programs.

Downtown plans generally identify ways to revitalize downtowns that have suffered from population and commercial decline. They are meant to be a guide for the future. They promote smart use of existing land, identify area development needs, encourage pedestrian friendly streetscapes, analyze existing traffic and plan for future traffic, and identify methods and incentives to spur growth and revitalization.

General issue categories are usually condensed into unique goals with milestones—based on cost—to reach them (immediate, short-term, long-term). The ultimate goal of a downtown plan is to provide a lasting influence that revitalizes an area to where it becomes self-sustaining.

In addition to making recommendations for physical development, downtown plans may also include an economic analysis of the current conditions. From this they can include

suggestions on how to increase the economic vitality based on community needs or how to institute promotion and marketing programs for the downtown area.

Main Street Programs

Most Main Street programs exist as nonprofit, single-entity organizations, or as a sub-entity of organizations that already have a vested interest in the area in which the Main Street program is to be implemented.

Main Street programs seek to revitalize downtown areas that have lost pedestrian traffic and commercial activity into the sustainable areas they once were. This established process has been distilled into four points:

1. Organization
2. Promotion
3. Design
4. and Economic Restructuring



Mooresville, IN

These four points are further supported by eight principles that guide the implementation of a successful Main Street program. For more information on these principles, as well as the four points and the entire Main Street program visit <http://mainstreet.org/>.

The Main Street program is monitored by a national organization that oversees and accredits all Main Street programs. This allows for a strong network of cities with Main Street programs and provides credibility for the endeavor.

Source: I-69 Community Planning Program

OVERLAY ZONES

An overlay district is a “transparent” zone that lies on top of the existing zoning. It is typically used to add additional design standards or restrictions beyond those required by the existing zoning. Unless specifically modified by the overlay district, development adheres to the base district (existing zoning).

Overlay Districts are used differently in different communities, but they generally are used to unify streetscape and architecture without monotony, control traffic problems and signage, and provide for open space and landscaping. Overlay Districts do not attract development, but they ensure that the development that occurs is higher quality.

An overlay district is usually used when there is a special public interest to be served that does not coincide with already mapped traditional zones. An overlay district may cover parts of several zones or only a portion of an underlying zone. Generally, the underlying zone determines the permitted land uses, while the overlay district restricts the design, requires additional setbacks, or sets into place any other restrictions that meet the district’s purpose. In cases where there is a conflict between the requirements of the overlay district and the underlying zoning, the overlay restrictions apply (Zoning News, 1991).

Overlay districts are most common for:

- Downtown areas
- Historic areas
- Corridors
- Airport development
- Natural resource areas (rivers, shore lines, etc.)

Some of the other types of overlay districts are:

- Transit supportive (or oriented) development
- Infill
- Pedestrian walkability

In some cases the overlay district may reduce the requirements for setbacks, landscaping, or parking to preserve a specific character (such as in a downtown area). An overlay district in some instances will modify the permitted uses of the district in order to preserve or promote the character of the district.

The following can be regulated in an overlay district:

- Lot size
- Accessory buildings
- Building height and area
- Architectural design
- Landscaping
- Storage and loading areas
- Parking
- Lighting
- Signage
- Access points
- Development review procedure
- Land uses



Westbrook, ME Overlay Zone

A local government's authority to create an overlay district is implied in the delegation of the power to enact zoning restrictions and create zoning districts. One purpose of zoning is to ensure consideration for the character of areas and their suitability for conserving the value of buildings and encouraging the most appropriate use of the land (Pace, 2001). In Indiana the statutes say that "A geographic area may be subject to more than one (1) district," hence authorizing the use of overlay zones.

Overlay zones are adopted the same as any other zoning amendment. When the text amendment is made creating the regulations for the overlay zone, a map amendment should also be adopted to establish the boundaries for the overlay zone. When an applicant seeks to vary from the requirements of an overlay district, they must apply to the Board of Zoning Appeals for a variance just as they would if they were varying from the requirements of the base district.

Source: I-69 Community Planning Program Toolbox

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND), loosely interchangeable with the term New Urbanism, combines certain common principles from a history of neighborhood development and uses these principles to direct development of new neighborhoods. These principles and their importance vary depending on the developer and location, but can be generally recognized by the terms listed below.

Walkability and Connectivity

A central idea for a TND is to have the majority of a resident's necessary amenities within a walkable distance from his/her residence and/or place of work. A part of this is a gridded road network with pedestrian friendly design elements—sidewalks, buildings next to the sidewalks, trees, on-street parking, lower vehicular speed limits, etc.

Mixed-Use and High Density

For a walkable and connected community, the zoning must allow for mixed-use development and encourage high density development.

Traditional Neighborhood Structure

The typical structure of a TND includes boundaries that are easy to define and a “center” that serves as a hub of activity. Usually development in and near the “center” is the highest density, decreasing as development moves towards the outer edge.

Housing Diversity

A range of housing styles and prices should be included in the neighborhood to diversify the offers to future residents.

Quality Architecture

An emphasis is placed on creating beauty in the architecture of the buildings and the craft of the infrastructure and elements surrounding them. This encourages pedestrian travel, and provides a greater sense of place and comfort.



Chicago, IL

Sustainability

High-density development and an emphasis on walkability and connectivity usually produce a more sustainable environment. There is less pollution from driving and less strain on the infrastructure due to centralization. In general, with a focus on local consumption and recreation, less energy is used.

A TND can be developed by a private developer, much like a regular subdivision, or a municipal/developer partnership can be organized. Incentives such as tax increment financing (TIF) or other funding benefits for the private developer can be used to foster TND. However, many benefits of TND are being recognized by developers outside of municipality encouragement. These benefits include: Potential for greater income due to higher density development, quick approval for communities that have adopted TND principles, less impact on transportation and utility infrastructure, and faster sales due to interest in TND and more diverse offerings to consumers in the various residential and commercial ranges.



Dunn Street Development
Bloomington, IN

The benefits of TND for municipalities can be quantifiable as well: less strain on infrastructure, a steady tax base, less traffic due to the inherent walkability of the area, less crime because of more people in a smaller area, a greater sense of place and pride in the neighborhood and more. TND can be implemented on a small scale (single buildings, city blocks, etc.) or on a large scale (full neighborhoods, towns, etc.). The best way to encourage TND is to plan for it by integrating it into existing zoning and development codes.

Source: I-69 Community Planning Program Toolbox