

Comprehensive Plan



Howard County, IN

Draft C

Foreword

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PLANNING OVERVIEW

Howard County undertook this comprehensive planning initiative as a step toward proactively planning for the community's future. This plan will enable the community to identify and record its future goals and challenges, as well as capitalize on opportunities. The documents' strength stems from a wide range of interest group, citizen and community leader input.

Howard County seeks to address growth, development, economic prosperity, environmental quality, agriculture, government services, and quality-of-life issues; and when conflicts exist, strive to balance the issues in a manner that best serves the community. This comprehensive plan will serve to document the direction and manner in which the county's issues will be addressed.

The Howard County planning initiative began in February of 2003 with the goal of creating a new comprehensive plan for the county. The county did not previously have an adopted comprehensive plan, but was utilizing zoning and subdivision control ordinances to manage growth.

The initial goals and objectives generated by the community in this planning process are intended to be relevant for the next ten years. However, in order for the plan to remain relevant, it must be reviewed and revised every five years. It has been determined that reviewing the plan every five years is the most fiscally responsible method for maintaining a comprehensive plan. Revisions every five years also results in a local culture that supports planning and assures the plan content will never be more than five years old.

BENEFICIARIES

The comprehensive plan is designed to benefit the entire community as a whole, as opposed to a single property owner or single municipality. As a result, from time to time, implementation of this plan may adversely affect a single property owner or a small group of property owners. However difficult or controversial, the greater good of the community will be served through the implementation of this plan. No community has ever successfully improved itself without some controversy, opposition or adverse effects on small numbers of property owners.

The county has committed to implement, to the extent possible, this plan with the greater good of the community in mind. As a check and balance, each project, program, or policy that results from this plan will first be evaluated to confirm the end result will positively move the community forward. Unforeseen conditions and situations must be considered in respect to where the community is at that time.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Planning Initiative was successful because of the large number of people who donated their time, talent and insight to the process. It is evident that the leadership of Howard County has pride in their past and looks forward to a bright future.

Communities that actively participate in planning their communities have a much greater chance at implementing their plans. This initiative was a true collaboration between the interest groups, steering committee, county staff, county leaders, Ground Rules Inc. and the citizens of the county.

The planning team would like to personally thank the following people who donated a considerable amount of time to ensure the Howard County Comprehensive Plan represents the needs and goals of the entire community. You have made Howard County the community it is today and will lead it toward an even better future.

It is believed that a plan that does not involve those it hopes to serve will not be as successful. For this reason, the residents and interest groups in the community were asked to put forth much effort, thoughts, ideas, goals and visions. It is appropriate and necessary to give special recognition and appreciation to the following people who were integral to this planning process.

Public and Interest Groups

Special thanks to the people of Howard County, particularly those that attended the workshops and the interest group interviews who provided their valuable input into the planning process.

In addition, the following people made this effort possible.

Steering Committee

Bradley Bagwell
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Foreword

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN MANDATE

The State of Indiana, through its Statutes, Title 36, Article 7, as amended, empowers counties to plan with the purpose of improving “the health, safety, convenience and welfare of the citizens and to plan for the future development of their communities to the end:

1. That highway systems (and road systems) be carefully planned;
2. That new communities grow only with adequate public way, utility, health, educational, and recreational facilities;
3. That the needs of agriculture, industry, and business be recognized in future growth;
4. That residential areas provide healthful surroundings for family life; and
5. That the growth of the community is commensurate with and promotive of the efficient and economical use of public funds”
[IC 36-7-4-201]

Indiana statutes state that counties may establish planning and zoning entities to fulfill the purpose [IC 36-7-4-201]. The Plan Commission is the body responsible for maintaining the comprehensive plan, which is required by state law to be developed and maintained [IC 36-7-4-501].

Indiana Code 36-7-4-502 and 503 state the required and permissible contents of a comprehensive plan. The required plan elements are listed below.

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

The permissible content stated in Indiana Code Includes:

1. Surveys and studies of current conditions and probable future growth within the jurisdiction and adjoining jurisdictions.
2. Maps, plats, charts, and descriptive material presenting basic information, locations, extent, and character of any of the following:
 - A. History, population, and physical site conditions.

- B. Land use, including the height, area, bulk, location, and use of private and public structures and premises.
- C. Population densities.
- D. Community centers and neighborhood units.
- E. Blighted areas and conservation areas.
- F. Public ways, including bridges, viaducts, subways, parkways, and other public places.
- G. Sewers, sanitation, and drainage, including handling, treatment, and disposal of excess drainage waters, sewage, garbage, refuse, and other wastes.
- H. Air, land, and water pollution.
- I. Flood control and irrigation.
- J. Public and private utilities, such as water, light, heat, communication, and other services.
- K. Transportation, including rail, bus, truck, air and water transport, and their terminal facilities.
- L. Local mass transit, including taxicabs, buses, and street, elevated, or underground railways.
- M. Parks and recreation, including parks, playgrounds, reservations, forests, wildlife refuges, and other public places of a recreational nature.
- N. Public buildings and institutions, including governmental administration and service buildings, hospitals, infirmaries, clinics, penal and correctional institutions, and other civic and social service buildings.
- O. Education, including location and extent of schools, colleges, and universities.
- P. Land utilization, including agriculture, forests, and other uses.
- Q. Conservation of energy, water, soil, and agricultural and mineral resources.
- R. Any other factors that are a part of the physical, economic, or social situation within the jurisdiction.

Foreword

3. Reports, maps, charts, and recommendations setting forth plans and policies for the development, redevelopment, improvement, extension, and revision of the subjects and physical situations (set out in subdivision (2) of this section) of the jurisdiction so as to substantially accomplish the purposes of this chapter.
 4. A short and long range development program of public works projects for the purpose of stabilizing industry and employment and for the purpose of eliminating unplanned, unsightly, untimely, and extravagant projects.
 5. A short and long range capital improvements program of governmental expenditures so the development policies established in the comprehensive plan can be carried out and kept up-to-date for all separate taxing districts within the jurisdiction to assure efficient and economic use of public funds.
 6. A short and long-range plan for the location, general design, and assignment of priority for construction of thoroughfares in the jurisdiction for the purpose of providing a system of major public ways that allows effective vehicular movement, encourages effective use of land, and makes economic use of public funds.
- Hold training seminars/retreats with elected and appointed officials to further their knowledge about planning.
 - Educate the public about the importance of planning and zoning in the community and how they can become involved and offer input.
 - Publish articles that reflect the successes of planning and zoning in local newspapers.
 - Revisit the Comprehensive Plan every 4 to 6 years by holding public workshops and conducting interviews with interest groups. Use these opportunities to confirm the existing content and to introduce new material.
 - Add subcomponents to the Comprehensive Plan periodically that add value and refine the future vision for the county (e.g. small area plans, corridor plans, detailed economic development plans, etc.). These improvements can be petitioned by any person or group, but ultimately the Plan Commission must formally consider and certify any changes to the plan.

HOWARD COUNTY'S FULFILLMENT OF THE MANDATE

Howard County has made a significant investment in this Comprehensive Plan through countless staff hours and a financial investment for consulting services. Also, numerous representatives of the community have volunteered their time and energy to participate in public workshops, interest group meetings, steering committee meetings, and provide reviews of the draft documents prior to adoption.

Out of respect of everything that went into creating this Comprehensive Plan, and for the purest need and desire to manage growth, the county will work hard to utilize, implement and maintain this document. To get the most out of the Comprehensive Plan the county will do the following:

- Make the published Comprehensive Plan available to the public through libraries, web, and/or purchase.

PROPERTY RIGHTS MANDATE

Our nation has developed a process, through public debate, the passage of legislation and the making of court decisions, for determining the balance between private, neighbor and community property rights. The process uses the open, public preparation and adoption of what is currently called a "Comprehensive Plan" for establishing policies describing community standards, hopes and desires.

The process implements the policies through the adoption of regulations, such as zoning, subdivision control and other ordinances, and the creation of programs and projects, such as economic development efforts and road and sewer improvements. The process permits the community determination of the balance between private, neighbor and community property rights within the context of constitutional rights, state and federal laws and court decisions.

Foreword

Part 1

Foundation

Community Profile

Chapter One



Community Profile

DEMOGRAPHICS INTRODUCTION

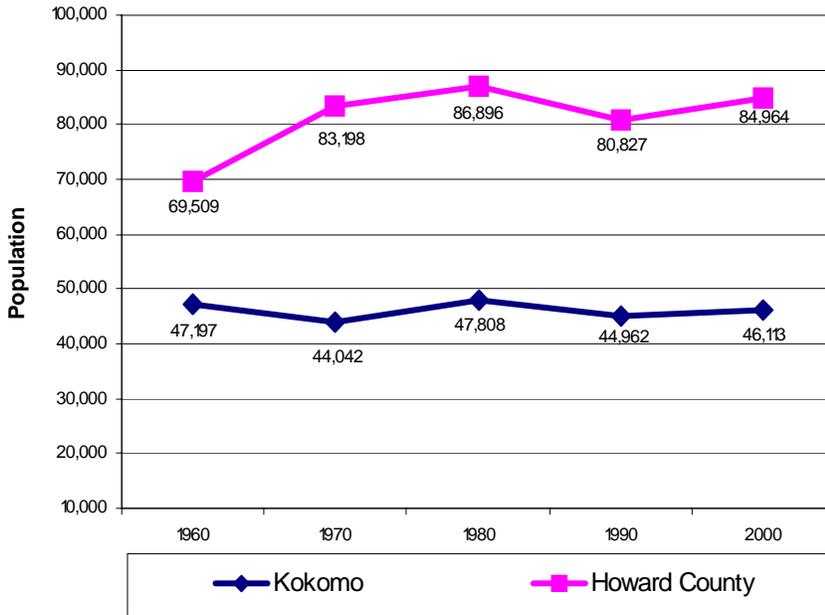
Planning for the future requires an investigation of the current influences and historical trends that have shaped a given area. This section contains demographic data including statistics and analysis for Howard County. In some illustrations, data collected on Howard County is compared to that of adjacent counties to better understand historical trends, and how the county measures up to the surrounding area.

Information was compiled in order to provide a “snapshot” of the community in population, income, educational level, housing characteristics, among other categories. Most information was taken from the U.S. Census that is conducted once every ten years. Since this section also documents demographic trends, census information from a series of years was used in some of the analyses.

The data on the following pages is from the most recent and available census unless otherwise stated. Although every effort was made to acquire the most accurate and up-to-date information, some of the data may vary depending on when, or from what source, it was gathered.

Community Profile

POPULATION

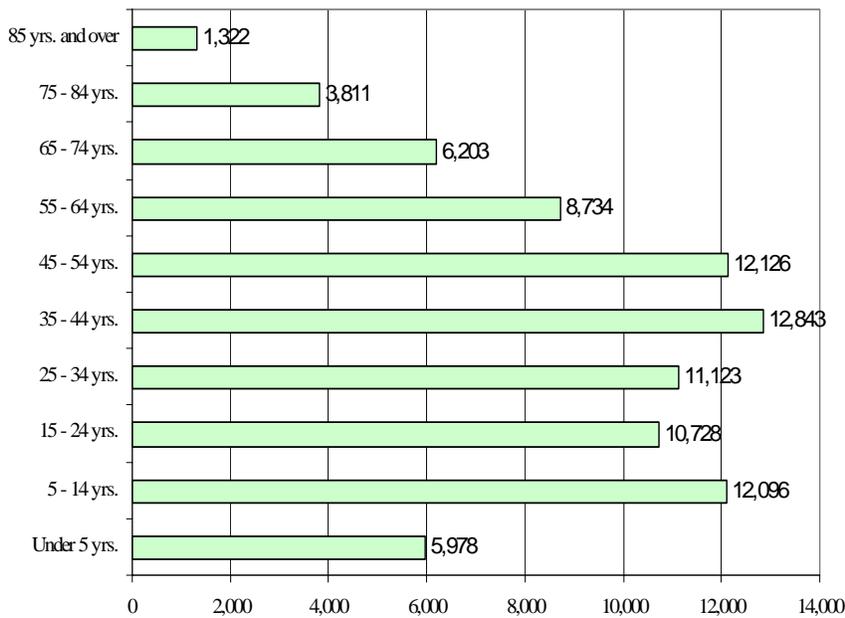


The 2000 Census data indicates that Kokomo and Howard County are below their 1980 population highs by 3.5% and 2.2% respectively. The state population has increased each of the last four decades, growing 10.8% since 1980.



NOTE: Population data was compiled from the U.S. Census website (www.factfinder.census.gov) dated January 19, 2004.

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION



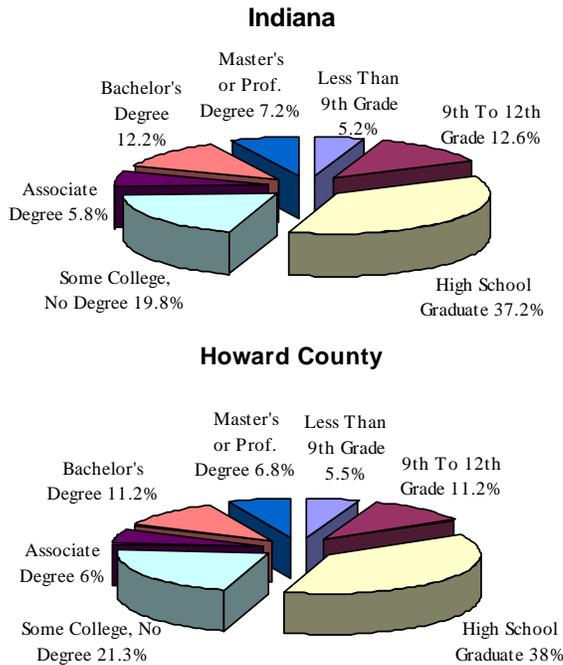
As the chart indicates, the largest segment of Howard County's population (15%) is between the ages of 35-44. Following closely behind at roughly 14% are the 45-54 year old persons and 5-14 year old persons.

As the 35-44 and 45-54 population ages, the county will need to be cognizant of the changing dynamics placed on the services it provides. Over the next thirty years, the county will need to ensure adequate health and emergency services, recreational, and housing opportunities for these groups of people.

NOTE: Population data was compiled from the U.S. Census website (www.factfinder.census.gov) dated January 19, 2004.

Community Profile

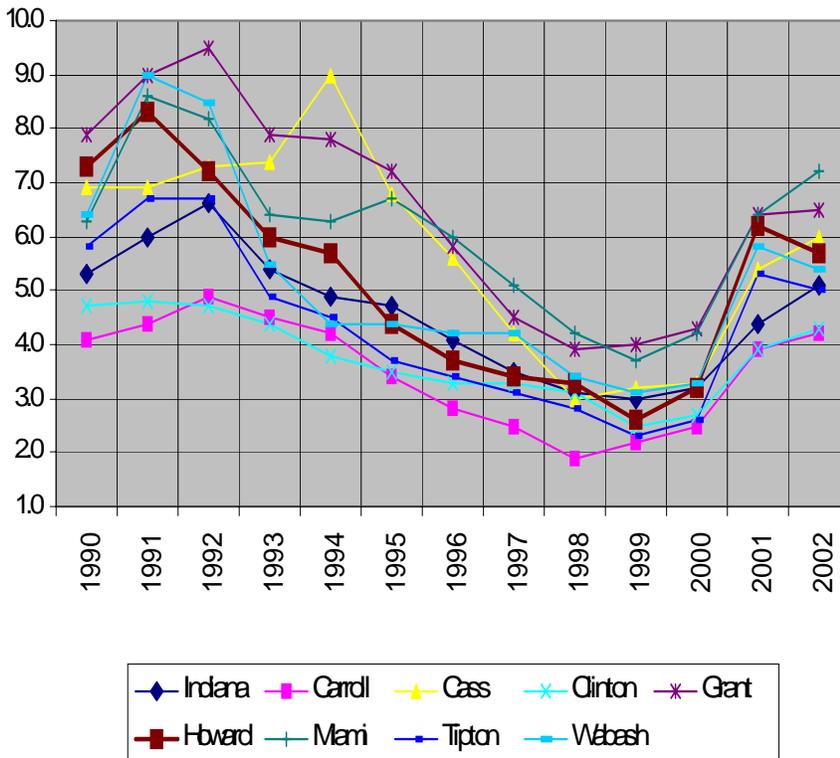
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



The accompanying pie charts show educational attainment levels for residents over age eighteen in Howard County and Indiana in 2000. As the pie charts illustrate, the educational attainment levels are strikingly similar for Howard County and Indiana. At each educational attainment level, Howard County is within two percentage points of the state level.

NOTE: Population data was compiled from the U.S. Census website (www.factfinder.census.gov) dated January 19, 2004.

COUNTY ANNUAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATES



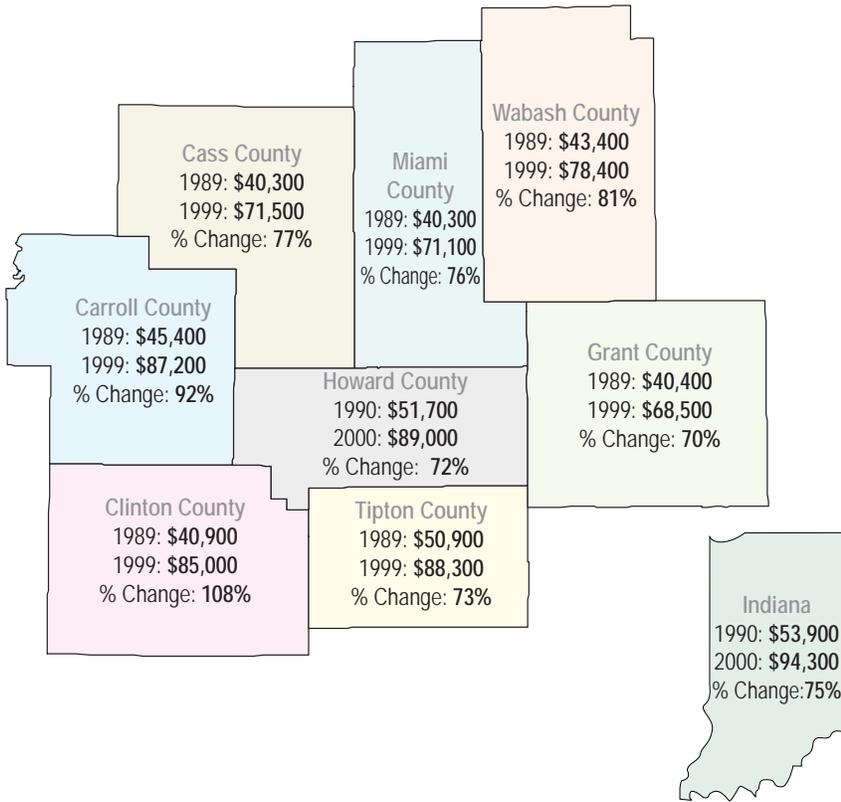
As a general trend, Howard County's unemployment rate has been in the middle when compared to the surrounding counties, yet slightly above the statewide average. Howard County's rate peaked as high as 8.3% in 1991, and was as low as 2.6% in 1999.

The rise and fall of employment levels for Howard and surrounding counties has been consistent with nationwide economic and labor trends. There was a slight upswing in unemployment between 2000-2001, but has held relatively steady since that time.

NOTE: Data was compiled from Indiana Dept. of Workforce Development and I.U. Kelley School of Business website (www.stats.indiana.edu) dated January 19, 2004.

Community Profile

MEDIAN HOUSE VALUE

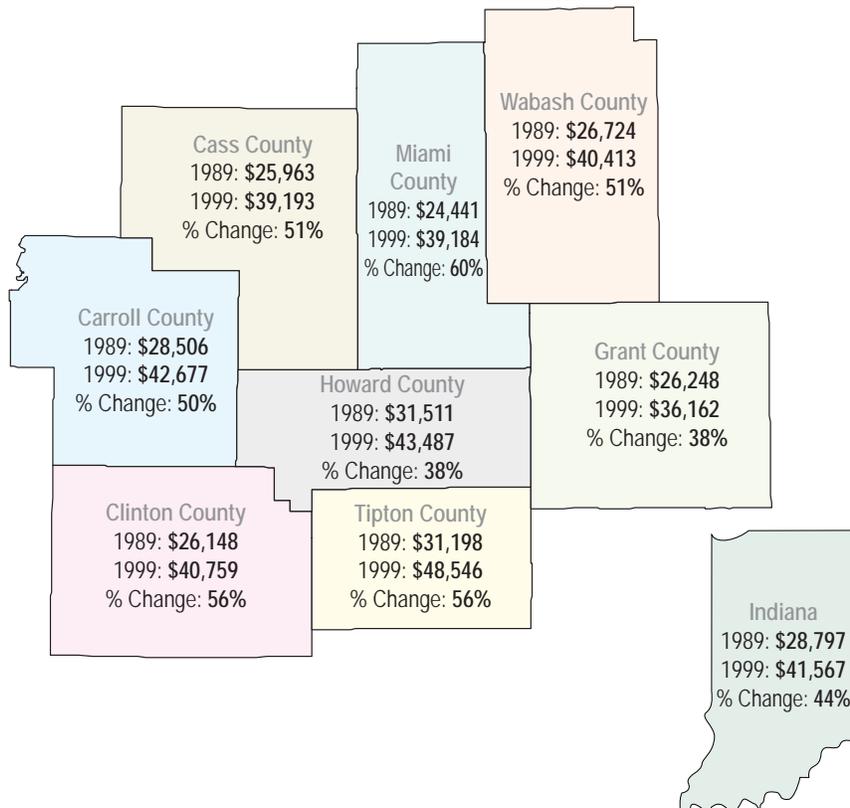


At the state level, housing values increased dramatically between 1990 - 2000 at a rate of 75% compared to a rate of 44% between 1980 and 1990. Howard and surrounding counties also witnessed a strong upswing in housing values.

High housing values strengthen the tax base within the county, but may also price some segments of the population out of home ownership. As the statistics below indicate, the pace of household income was nearly half the rate of housing prices.

NOTE: 1990 & 2000 data was compiled from U.S. Census website (www.factfinder.census.gov) dated January 19, 2004.

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

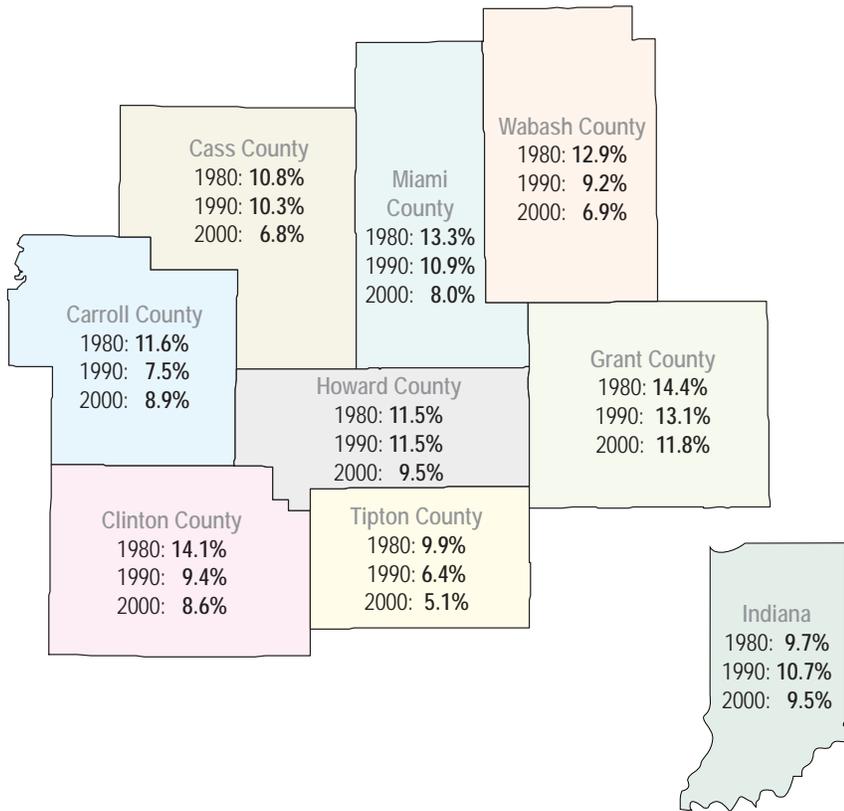


With the exception of Tipton County, Howard County's median household income has remained above that of surrounding counties and the State's. Unfortunately, Howard County's rate of growth between 1989 and 1999 was well below that of surrounding counties (with the exception of Grant County), and slightly below the State's rate of 44%.

NOTE: 1990 & 2000 data was compiled from U.S. Census website (www.factfinder.census.gov) dated January 19, 2004.

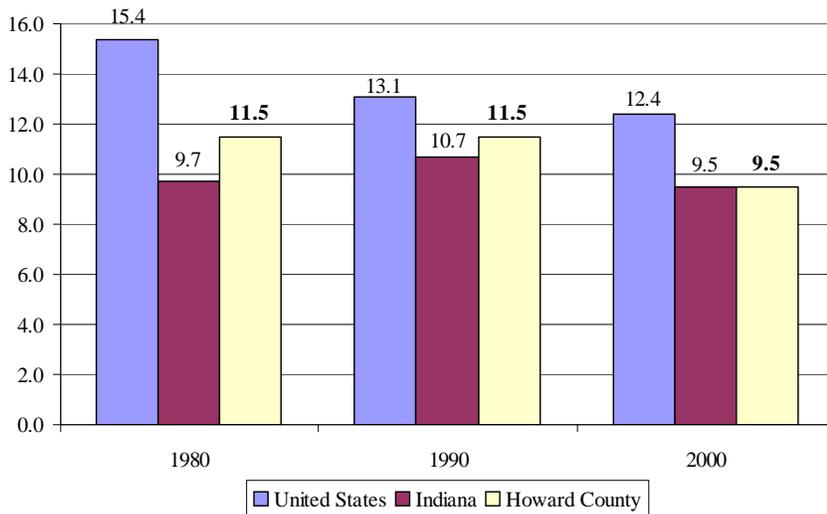
Community Profile

POVERTY STATUS



Determining the poverty rate for an area can vary greatly depending on what segment of the population is studied. The figures on these illustrations represent the poverty rate (percentage) of all individuals for whom poverty status is determined based on the total population.

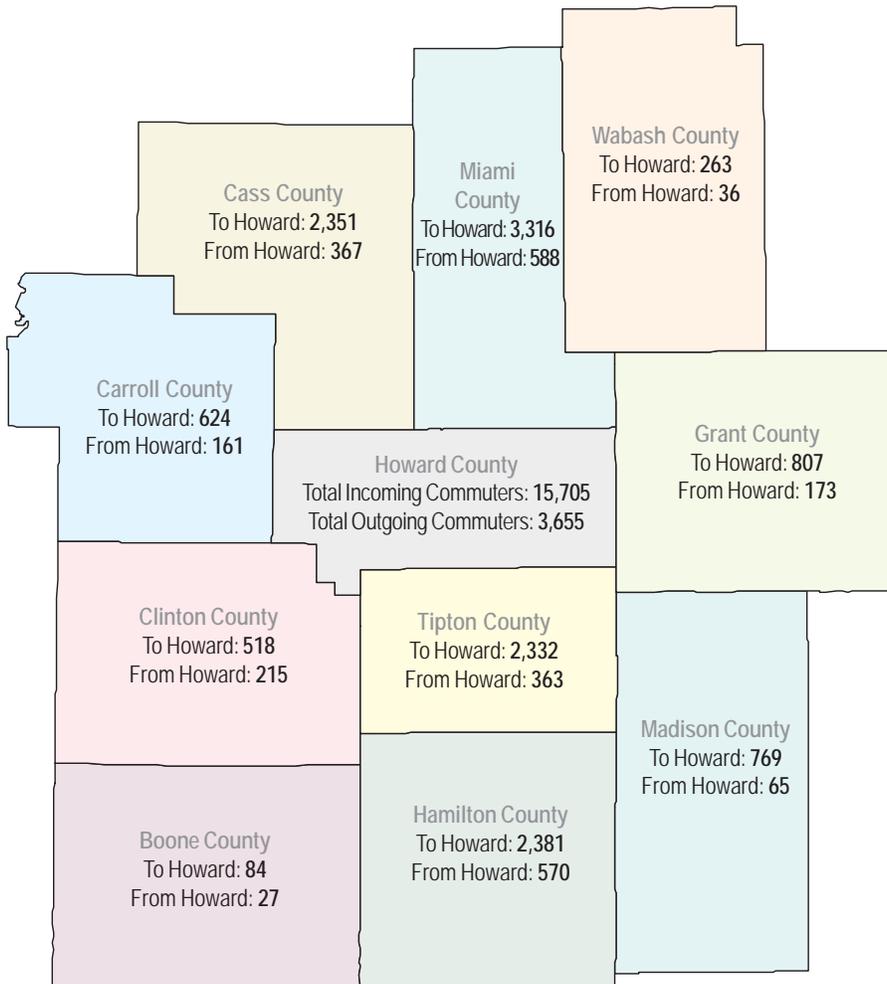
In 1980 and 1990, Howard County's poverty rate was higher than the state's, and equal to the state's in 2000. As a comparison, the poverty rate in the United States in 2000 was 12.4%. With the exception of Grant County, all of the surrounding counties recorded lower poverty rates in 2000 in comparison to Howard County.



NOTE: Data was compiled from U.S. Census and the Indiana State Data Center Division of the Indiana State Library

Community Profile

COMMUTING PATTERNS



This graphic illustrates the commuting patterns of workers 16 years of age and older in Howard and surrounding counties in the year 2000. All of the surrounding counties have a greater number of workers commuting into Howard County to work than Howard County has residents leaving to work in other counties. Miami, Tipton, Hamilton, Cass and Grant County's are the top five counties whose workers commute into Howard County.

In 1990, the commuting rate into Howard County was lower than in 2000. In 1990, 89.9% of Howard County residents stayed in the county to work. By 2000, the rate increased to 93.7%.

NOTE: Data was compiled from Indiana Dept. of Workforce Development and I.U. Kelley School of Business website (www.stats.indiana.edu) dated May 10, 2004

Community Profile

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION INTRODUCTION

Community participation is an essential part of the Howard County Comprehensive Plan. This section of the document summarizes the process and outcome of the community participation process.

In the early stages of the project, the planning team conducted three community participation activities.

They were:

- 1) Key interest group interviews,
- 2) Community leader workshop, and
- 3) Public input workshops.

These three community input activities, along with demographic information, and community study gave the planners the necessary information to prepare this comprehensive plan.

Key Interest Group Interviews

The key interest group interviews were held on March 25, 2003 and resulted in significant information and insight into the county. Over 150 people were invited either personally or through an open invitation to representatives of specific organizations. The interest groups invited to participate included agriculture, real estate, builders, developers, environment, business, chamber of commerce, industry, and schools. In total 22 persons participated. The results of these interviews can be found on page 82.

Community Leader Workshop

The community leader workshop was held on April 1, 2003 and included 30 individuals. This session resulted in a variety of ideas and opinions, as well as cautions. The summary results can be found on page 87.

Public Input Workshops

Five public input workshops were held throughout the county on April 15 and 17, 2003. These workshops were extensively publicized through articles and announcements in the local newspapers, radio broadcast, and made at various local meetings. Additionally, postcards were sent to a random sample of citizens. The number of and publication of meetings exceeded the requirements for public notification established by the State of Indiana.

In total, only 28 persons participated in the five public workshops. The number of attendees reflected a similarly low number that attended public workshops for the City of Kokomo's comprehensive planning effort just two years earlier.

The summary results from the public input workshops can be found on pages 88.

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KEY INTEREST GROUP INTERVIEW RESULTS

To kick off Howard County's planning process, key interest group interviews were conducted to gain a better understanding of the numerous issues affecting the county's economic, social, and environmental vitality. The information gathered during these interviews highlighted the collective concerns of each of the groups, and helped shape the format for the remaining public input sessions.

The following summaries represent the primary concerns or issues discussed by each of the groups. Refer to pages 82 in the Appendix for a complete listing of key interest group comments.

Agricultural Interests

The primary concern expressed by this group was drainage. They commented that poorly draining soils are impacted even further by new development at the outskirts of cities and towns. Additional concerns included the common conflicts between the farmers' right to farm versus the demands of encroaching development. Others mentioned the relatively high amount of quality agricultural land and the need to preserve it, along with the way of life it represents. This desire must also be balanced against an individual's right to sell such land if one so chooses.

Builder and Real Estate Interests

Most in this group agreed the Comprehensive Plan should represent a flexible vision for the future of Howard County rather than a set of rules relative to development. The plan should promote quality development where desired and avoid the problems associated with strip development. Utilizing the county's current or future infrastructure system, specifically sanitary sewers, as a tool to direct growth was considered to be one way to accomplish the county's development goals. Ensuring there is adequate housing for all segments of the population is also an issue that needs to be addressed. This group also highlighted the need for greater cooperation between county and city agencies in the future.

Environmental Interests

This group of citizens agreed that continued growth and development are pivotal to the future health and vitality of Howard County. It is hoped with the creation of this plan, county agencies will take a proactive, rather than reactive, stance toward future

development. What is needed is growth that is planned and directed away from environmentally-sensitive areas, and preserves the natural systems in the county. Protecting and improving the county's wetlands and water quality are an integral part of this goal. The practice of infilling floodplains should be stopped and a means of buffering or setting aside greenspace along waterways, needs to be established. Developing greenways (greenspace) would not only improve the quality of waterways like Wildcat Creek, but could also encourage greater public access and appreciation for the county's natural features.

Economic Development Interests

This group felt the county is viewed as very business-friendly, and the existing workforce is a solid asset for the county. The county needs to develop policies that expand and strengthen existing businesses and focus its efforts within the county to encourage start-up companies. Currently the airport is viewed as under-utilized and needs to be promoted as an economic development tool. For better or worse, the system of state highways is the primary rationale behind Howard County's economic development. As such, the county needs to be prepared for the impact of the proposed U.S. 31 bypass around Kokomo.

Educational/Library Interests

The library system has become an integral part of the cultural network in Howard County. The various library services are successfully serving the needs of the public. The group agreed there is a good history of the educational institutions, at all levels, sharing their resources with the larger community. Existing school facilities appear to be meeting current demands, but there needs to be a greater, coordinated planning effort between county schools when addressing future needs. The continuing education curriculums at IU-Kokomo and IVY Tech are strong assets to the county and continue to meet the demands of a changing workforce. Howard County's educational system(s) must also address the growing minority populations as well.

Community Profile

PUBLIC LEADER WORKSHOP RESULTS

In addition to the key group interviews, another public input session was conducted to gain the perspective of various government leaders in Howard County. Approximately 30 representatives shared their concerns and hopes for the future of the county.

Listed below is a summary of the various comments made during the course of the workshop. The comments are grouped into four general categories based on the discussions. For a detailed listing of the comments, refer to page 89 in the Appendix.

General

The key to creating a successful plan for the county is to develop a framework for reviewing the document every five years rather than simply creating a new plan after twenty years. The group also mentioned the need to create a flexible plan that puts forth a vision for the community and establishes a rational process for future development. Planning for the future will also require greater collaboration between city and county agencies. This will ideally reduce the redundancy of services, thus alleviating potential conflicts and save both levels of government time, money, and resources.

Infrastructure

The group also expressed specific concerns about how best to manage and promote growth in the future. The group agreed on the need for city and county cooperation when extending infrastructure, especially storm and sanitary sewers, to various parts of the county. Another option mentioned was the creation of a county sewer district promoting proper on-site sewer systems that result in cost-effective building sites. The issue of the proposed U.S. 31 bypass was also discussed. The county should plan for the future impact of the new route rather than react to negative development patterns after it has occurred.

Economic

Maintaining and striving for a well-educated workforce was mentioned as one of the keys to a strong economic base in Howard County. Providing reasonable tax incentives to retain and expand existing businesses, or attract new ones, should also be an issue addressed in the comprehensive plan. However, the group cautioned against using such incentives at the risk of the county's economic health.

Environmental

The group felt it was important to manage and direct future development in order to protect and enhance the county's natural systems. Soil conditions and characteristics should be one of several criteria considered when determining the location, intensity and type of land use. Matching the capacity of certain soils with appropriate land uses is one way to minimize drainage issues in a particular area. Such an exercise could also assist in determining areas in the county containing prime agricultural land. The group also highlighted the importance of vegetated buffer strips along waterways to protect the water quality of Howard County.

Summary

In general, the group of community leaders echoed similar concerns expressed by those attending the key group interviews. A proactive approach to future development will need to be directed, or based on the carrying capacity of the county's natural and man-made systems. An efficient use and expansion of the county's infrastructure will need to be balanced with preserving the natural environment--specifically the county's water quality. Increased coordination and cooperation between city and county entities will also be an essential factor in the future of Howard County.

Community Profile

PUBLIC WORKSHOP RESULTS

The first series of workshops were conducted on April 15th and 17th at five locations throughout Howard County. Multiple dates and locations were chosen in order to provide the greatest opportunity for public input across a cross section of the community. In spite of a strong promotional effort, only 28 people participated in the five workshops.

The purpose of the workshop was to determine the strengths, weaknesses, needs and dreams of the county. Attendees were divided into small groups to ensure everyone had the opportunity to voice his or her opinion. Listed below is a summary of the findings generated from the workshop discussions. For a detailed list of the liabilities, assets, needs and dreams, refer to the “Workshop Results” on page 90 in the Appendix.

Liabilities

Liabilities represent real and/or perceived weaknesses of a community. A critical look at some of the negative aspects of the county can help citizens and public officials prioritize the needs of the community. Many of the liability concerns expressed during the workshops centered on infrastructure and quality of life issues. Listed below is a summary of the discussion(s) focusing on the county’s liabilities. Refer to pages 90-91 in the Appendix for a complete listing of liabilities.

Many of the liabilities mentioned in the workshops were also discussed in the previous two input sessions. Several environmental issues were discussed including insufficient drainage and the overall water quality in the county. Haphazard development with little regard to the county’s natural systems, or the efficient use of public money and infrastructure were common concerns. Several comments were also made about street, storm and sanitary sewer issues.

The lack of government cooperation was also seen as a liability to the future health of the county and its communities. Government entities need to proactively plan for future development in a coordinated effort to avoid, or mitigate, some of the problems that have developed over the years. Job losses and the lack of a diversified industrial base were two of several weaknesses mentioned about the

economic health of Howard County. Improving the appearance of communities, creating attractive community entries, and the lack of cultural activities or opportunities were some of the quality of life liabilities discussed.

Assets

The assets or strengths of a community enhance the quality of life of its residents. Howard County has many strengths from which to build on and utilize as catalysts for future development. Many of the assets highlighted during the workshops focused on various positive quality of life issues in the county. The following paragraphs summarize the “assets” portion of the workshop discussion. A detailed listing of community assets can be found in the Appendix on page 92.

Howard County’s numerous natural amenities were mentioned as positive aspects in the community. The waterways and greenways and the natural habitat or setting they provide, should continue to be protected and enhanced. The large amount of prime agricultural land is also a valuable asset that needs to be preserved for future generations.

Additional assets mentioned during the workshops included the county’s system of highways and the airport. As mentioned previously, many of the assets discussed centered on quality of life issues. The small-town atmosphere and community pride found in the county’s smaller communities was highlighted. Comments about the cultural and educational amenities, and availability of quality housing were also expressed.

Community Profile

Needs

Toward the conclusion of each workshop, those attending were asked to identify and then prioritize the needs of the county. Each participant was given three stickers for “voting”. The individual had the option of placing all three stickers on a single need he or she felt was most important, or placing a single sticker next to three different needs. Listed below are the top five needs as determined by the participants of each workshop.

- Extend sewers to the county or develop rural sewer districts (10)
- Protect natural areas such as Wildcat Creek for use as public outdoor recreation (5)
- Planned growth to minimize urban sprawl (5)
- Better coordination between the cities, towns and county (5)
- Create a county administrator position (5)

The remaining needs expressed by the workshop participants are listed in the Appendix on page 93.

Dreams

Lastly, participants were asked to dream for their community’s future. They were asked to describe what they would like changed if there were no political, time, or financial barriers. Many of the dreams expressed by the workshop participants centered on strengthening the quality of life in Howard County. Improving and protecting the natural environment and infrastructure improvements throughout the county were the primary themes in each of the workshops. A detailed listing of dreams can be found in the Appendix on page 94.

Part 2

Goals and Objectives

General Themes

Chapter Two



General Themes

GENERAL THEMES INTRODUCTION

The following two pages list and describe Howard County's broad and overriding themes. These themes are considered essential for successful and meaningful community planning. Because these themes are broad, their essence can also be found interlaced throughout the entire document. In other words, they address community-wide issues and cannot be written into any single topic discussed later in this comprehensive plan.

The General Themes for Howard County are:

HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE

THEME: Protect and improve the health, safety and welfare within Howard County.

The health, safety and welfare theme is the only theme in this chapter that was not directly derived from community input. Health, safety and welfare is the core to which all community planning is based. In fact health, safety and welfare is a part of the enabling legislation (State Code) that allows communities to establish comprehensive plans and zoning. Health, safety and welfare is still considered the primary reason for implementing planning in a community.

Howard County should always strive to protect its residents from potentially hazardous situations and environments. The areas of protection include, but are not limited to the following:

- fire,
- disease,
- flood,
- dilapidated structures,
- terrorism or other man-made threats
- community-wide economic deterioration, and
- hazardous materials.

For community planning to be successful, decisions should be made to benefit the community as a whole and doing so may adversely affect some persons or properties. In addition, increasing property values community-wide should be considered a means to improve health, safety and welfare. Community decisions shall strive to avoid decreasing any district's property values.

QUALITY OF LIFE

THEME: Preserve and enhance the quality of life for the residents of Howard County.

The quality of life in Howard County is influenced by a lot of factors, both tangible and non-tangible. Some of the factors include:

- economic vitality,
- consumer opportunity,
- infrastructure,
- transportation,
- public services,
- health and safety,
- education,
- spirituality/religious opportunity,
- housing,
- land-use and growth management,
- environment,
- recreation,
- arts and culture,
- community character, and
- community life.

Part of the purpose of this Comprehensive Plan was to determine which of the above factors are most likely to improve quality of life. It is clear from the public and interest group input that all of the factors are desirable, but certain categories seem to be more important than others.

Out of the above "quality of life" factors infrastructure, economic vitality, land use and growth management, environment quality and recreation are clearly more important issues to the community. That is not to say the others factors are not important. Rather the others, in many cases already meet or exceed the public's expectations.

The tone of this comprehensive plan emphasizes the need to improve infrastructure, economic vitality, land use and growth management, environmental quality, and recreation. It also buttresses the need to maintain the other quality of life factors as they are in place today.

General Goals

PRESERVE RURAL CHARACTER

THEME: Protect and preserve the rural character within Howard County.

Most rural residents of Howard County live outside of a municipality because of its rural character and features. These character and features include:

- friendly people,
- farming,
- low density population,
- little traffic and congestion,
- greenspace,
- natural amenities,
- low crime rate, and
- simplicity.

Throughout Howard County this character is prevalent and abundant. However, some of the residents feel this rural character may be lost if the community does not work to maintain it by managing its growth.

It is inevitable the community will change, so this goal strives to maintain the rural character of the area in the midst of evolution. It is believed and supported that a community can grow and still maintain its rural character:

To help protect and preserve rural character, the following physical features should be considered as changes are made throughout the county:

- natural character of the creeks,
- natural character of the reservoir and small lakes,
- forest lands and greenspaces,
- fence rows,
- farmland, and
- rural village character.

In no way should this section be construed as a barrier to growth and development. Rather, it is an instruction for large new development to either locate adjacent to a municipality, or locate sensitively into the rural fabric of the county (e.g. conservation subdivisions). This goal also discourages strip housing along county roads.

ECONOMIC STABILITY

THEME: Strive to diversify employers and reduce the county's risk of economic downturns.

Howard County should focus to maintain and expand upon the industry and businesses already located in the county. It should also work to nurture new industry and business that diversify the county's employment base.

The county should also build on its many assets including quality urban and suburban development. Howard County is a national leader in providing housing a reasonable price and maintains a very high home ownership rate.

Howard County residents don't always recognize agriculture as an industry, yet agriculture remains one of the largest industries in the county. Working to maintain and embrace this industry will help to stabilize Howard County's economy.

To further stabilize the county's economy, effort should be taken to build class and cultural diversity. Executives and blue collar workers still chose to commute into the county every day, rather than commit to Howard County. Ending the commuting pattern by encouraging them to move their families to reside in Howard County will greatly improve the economy and open new opportunities.

General Goals

Land Use

Chapter Three



Land Use

INTRODUCTION

The land use section of this comprehensive plan is considered a core component and is mandated by State statute. This section has the potential of positively or negatively affecting the future of the community; and therefore, has been developed with significant public input and research.

This section conveys the preferred makeup and distribution of land uses on the land within the community. The Howard County Comprehensive Plan promotes the following land use categories to exist within its jurisdiction:

- environmentally sensitive,
- park, recreation and open space,
- agriculture,
- residential,
- institutional,
- commercial, and
- industrial.

The bases for deciding the type of district, size of district, and location of the district includes:

- suitability of the use with the land,
- compatibility with the topography,
- contiguous proposed or existing land uses,
- availability of public and private services,
- protection of the health, safety and welfare of the community as a whole.

On this and the following page the Land Use goal, objectives, and strategies are listed. The pages following describe in more detail the components of the plan as they relate to land use.

GOAL

Provide opportunities for community growth and development which results in enhanced quality of life, a wide range of housing opportunities, economic vitality, and enhanced recreation while preserving environmental integrity.

Land Use

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Ensure adequate and suitable land exists for all uses and reflects the market demand.
- 2) Maximize the opportunity to provide adequate housing for all income levels within the community.
- 3) Ensure residential land uses are designed to be safe, accessible, sanitary and aesthetically appealing.
- 4) Allow residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, parks and open space to occur in areas planned for such uses and discourage the same uses from occurring where they are not planned.
- 5) Protect prime agricultural land because of its importance to the economy by encouraging development elsewhere.
- 6) Ensure that land uses are compatible with adjacent environmental features.
- 7) Discourage incompatible and conflicting land uses from being adjacent or in close proximity to one another.
- 8) Highly restrict development or filling-in of the floodplain.
- 9) Plan for development along the proposed new route for U. S. 31, east of Kokomo, including utility expansion.

STRATEGIES

- 1) Adopt, maintain and utilize the Howard County Comprehensive Plan.
- 2) Adopt, maintain and utilize the Howard County Zoning Ordinance.
- 3) Adopt, maintain and utilize the Howard County Subdivision Control Ordinance.
- 4) Encourage high quality construction and design standards and compliance with the state building code in a way that enhances the county character.
- 5) Provide incentives for alternative development patterns (cluster and conservation developments) to reduce strip housing on county roads and multiple driveway access points.
- 6) Employ a county building inspector to insure code compliance.
- 7) Strongly encourage residential developments to provide pedestrian networks.
- 8) Maintain a detailed and accurate zoning map.
- 9) Protect the Kokomo Airport by discouraging residential development, other noise sensitive development, and incompatible land uses within one mile of the airport boundaries.
- 10) Protect public groundwater, surface water, and environmentally sensitive areas like riparian corridors and wetlands.
- 11) Prepare a plan to absorb subdivisions with failing septic systems and tie them into waste water districts.
- 12) Encourage developers to use innovative ideas, materials, practices, and preserve environmental features.
- 13) Encourage a wide range of housing development opportunities.
- 14) Increase awareness of new rural residents of the impacts of agricultural practices and of the other aspects of rural life.
- 15) Inform the community on land use laws and policies.

Land Use

ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS

Description: Lands that are primarily comprised of environmentally sensitive areas. These areas include wetlands, floodplains, water features, riparian corridors, large tree lots, and unique vegetation. It is believed these areas are considered local amenities and places which make living in the community an enjoyable and healthier experience.

Existing Conditions: Many of county's natural features have been lost to farming and development. In recent years, degradation of the natural features of the county has slowed, and in some areas stopped.

The most significant loss of environmental feature in Howard County is that of flood plains. Tied to the loss of floodplains is the loss of riparian corridors which serve to slow and filter water prior to it entering water bodies. The loss of floodplains and encroachment of floodplain was well noted during the 2003 floods.

There are several creeks in Howard County and a few wetlands and woodlands. Because these amenities are not abundant in the county, the public and interest groups have conveyed they are important to protect and maintain.

Specific Recommendations:

- 1) Document and identify floodplains and sensitive water bodies on the future land use map. Use this information to strongly restrict filling and development in the floodplain.
- 2) Encourage higher density residential, commercial, and industrial development in areas away from environmentally sensitive areas. Primarily focus this type of development in areas contiguous to existing municipalities.

More detailed environmental information is contained in Chapter Seven of this plan.

PARKS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE

Description: Land used primarily for parks, recreation or open space. These properties can include privately owned parks, recreational facilities and open space, and does not have to be publicly accessible.

Existing Conditions: Like its surrounding neighbors, Howard County does not have an abundance of parks, recreation and open space. Historically, agricultural communities have not actively promoted parks, recreation and open space.

The county seat, Kokomo, has been investing in parks and recreation facilities and continues to improve the park system that is in place. Even with these improvements, it is perceived by the public that more parks, recreation and open space is necessary.

Specific Recommendations:

- 1) The future land use plan should clearly identify the parks, recreation and open space currently located in the community.
- 2) Investigate reestablishing a parks department and developing a parks system.

Additional park, recreation and open space information can be found in Chapter Nine of this plan.

Land Use

AGRICULTURAL

Description: Agricultural land use is land primarily used for the business of crops, pasturage, confined feeding, conservation reserve program, farm buildings, farm houses, and the like.

Existing Conditions: Agriculture is the most significant land use in the county when considering acreage. Although it is the dominant land use, introduction of conflicting land uses can be detrimental to an agricultural operation. Agricultural land uses function best in large tracts of land isolated from businesses and industries. Further, houses scattered in an agriculture district can have a negative affect as well.

Specific Recommendations:

- 1) Protect agricultural areas from conflicting land uses.
- 2) Encourage all residential, business and industrial growth in areas adjacent to existing municipalities.
- 3) Consider using incentives to promote nonagricultural development in or adjacent to existing municipalities.
- 4) Recognize agriculture as an industrial operation to highlight that residential development may not be an appropriate adjacent use.
- 5) Consider using incentives to promote cluster and conservation subdivisions.

RESIDENTIAL

Description: Residential land use is land primarily used for single family homes, multiple family homes, nursing homes, or assisted living facilities.

Existing Conditions: Single family residential land uses in the county's planning jurisdiction tend to follow one of four development patterns. These patterns include spot housing, strip housing, subdivision development or trailer parks.

For the purposes of this comprehensive plan, four densities for single family housing are used. These four classifications are rural residential, low density residential, medium density residential and high density residential. These classifications are described further on page 36.

Multiple family residential development (duplexes, apartments, etc.) is limited in the county and tends to be close to a municipality.

Nursing homes and assisted living facilities are also very limited in the county and tend to be close to municipalities.

Residential land uses makeup the second largest classification in terms of acreage. Further, the vast majority of residential land uses are single family detached homes.

Specific Recommendations:

- 1) Encourage residential uses in or adjacent to existing municipalities where utilities and services are most available.
- 2) Limit driveway accesses on roads in rural areas to protect the character, but more specifically to maintain public safety.
- 3) Promote higher density residential land uses to consume less land, and to improve the feasibility of providing infrastructure to them.
- 4) Encourage redevelopment of older residential areas.
- 5) Prohibit residential development when drainage cannot be accommodated on site or a tile is not able to be installed in an easement.
- 6) Extend water and sewer from municipalities into adjacent areas and growth corridors.

Land Use

INSTITUTIONAL

Description: Institutional land uses include churches, schools, libraries, government buildings, fire stations, cemeteries, airports, and the like. Generally speaking, institutional uses are public properties, but they can be private facilities as well. A hospital is a good example of a private company providing an institutional use.

Existing Conditions: Howard County is like many of the counties in the state in regards to institutional uses. Most institutional uses are located within a municipality, but churches, cemeteries, and schools are distributed throughout the county.

Throughout the community input process, it was clear that most people felt the community was well served by the institutional uses in the county. In fact, the schools were frequently given praise for their quality and accessibility.

The library has been moving forward with several facility improvements, including a new library to the southeast of Kokomo. Specifically, the library board is working hard to make its services more accessible to county residents.

Specific Recommendations:

- 1) Continue to encourage accessibility to public services and institutional uses. Allow these uses wherever deemed suitable and feasible in relation to the surrounding land uses.
- 2) Discourage noise sensitive land uses in close proximity to the municipal airport to help protect their property values and to avoid conflicts with future expansions of airport.

COMMERCIAL

Description: Commercial land uses include retail, services, offices, entertainment, restaurants, and similar commercial establishments. Although most land uses classified as commercial are for-profit businesses, this classification includes also includes not-for-profit operations like organizations and clubs.

Existing Conditions: The distribution of commercial land uses in Howard County is primarily in one of the municipalities. However, numerous sites around the county have been developed as commercial land uses. Notably are businesses along U.S. 31 north and south of Kokomo. Other pockets exist in unincorporated communities or major crossroads. Generally speaking there are no significant commercial districts outside of the cities and towns within the county.

For the purposes of this comprehensive plan, three types of commercial designations are utilized. These designations include village commercial, general commercial, and office/technology park. Further description can be found on page 36.

Specific Recommendations:

- 1) Encourage a business district in or immediately adjacent to existing municipalities where services are available and critical mass can be achieved.
- 2) Allow home based businesses when they do not generate client/patron visits or utilize outside employees.
- 3) Encourage the revitalization of commercial areas.

Land Use

INDUSTRIAL

Description: Industrial land uses include manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, assembly, processing of raw goods, power generating plants, foundries and similar operations.

Existing Conditions: The vast majority of existing industrial land in the county is contained within one of the municipal jurisdictions. Few industrial lots exist in the rural areas in the county.

For the purposes of this comprehensive plan, two types of industrial categories are utilized. These designations include light industrial and heavy industrial. Further description of these categories can be found on page 36.

Specific Recommendations:

- 1) Support retention and expansion of existing industry.
- 2) Encourage new industrial development in or immediately adjacent to existing municipalities or other industrial areas where services are available, they are in close proximity to workers and support services are available.
- 3) Mingle industrial land uses with commercial parks or districts when appropriate.
- 4) Encourage the revitalization of industrial areas.

Land Use

FUTURE LAND USE

On the following page is the Future Land Use Map developed for Howard County and its planning jurisdiction. This land use plan incorporates input from interest groups, community leaders, public input and the county's planning consultant.

The plan shows the distribution of the primary land uses described earlier in this chapter. It is intended to be a conceptual depiction of the desired land uses within the county. This map geographically depicts the land use goals and objectives of the community. All current and future land use decisions of the county shall utilize this map for reference and guidance.

Land Use Descriptions

On the Future Land Use Map several terms are used to describe land use categories. Below is a description of each land use category used on the map.

Environmentally Sensitive: Land used or designated for minimal disturbance due to the potential negative effects caused to environmental features.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space: Land used for or designated for parks, recreation or open space. These properties can include privately owned parks, recreational facilities and open space, and does not have to be publicly accessible.

Agriculture: Land used for the business of crops, pasturage, confined feeding, conservation reserve program, farm buildings, farm houses, and the like.

Rural Residential: Land used or designated for single family housing below a density of one dwelling unit per acre. Typical rural residential would be farmsteads, hobby farms, and rural single family detached homes.

Low Density Housing: Land used or designated for single family housing below a density of three dwelling units per acre. Typical low density housing would be single family detached homes.

Medium Density Housing: Land used or designated for single family housing of varying types between three to six dwelling units per acre. Typical medium density housing would be single family detached homes, duplexes, triplexes, condominiums, townhomes, and cluster housing.

High Density Housing: Land used or designated for single family and multifamily housing of varying types over six dwelling units per acre. Typical high density housing would be townhomes, cluster housing, apartments, and condominiums.

Government/Institutional: Land used or designated for public services, government operations and facilities. This category also includes uses commonly associated with public and private institutions like schools, churches, libraries, and cemeteries.

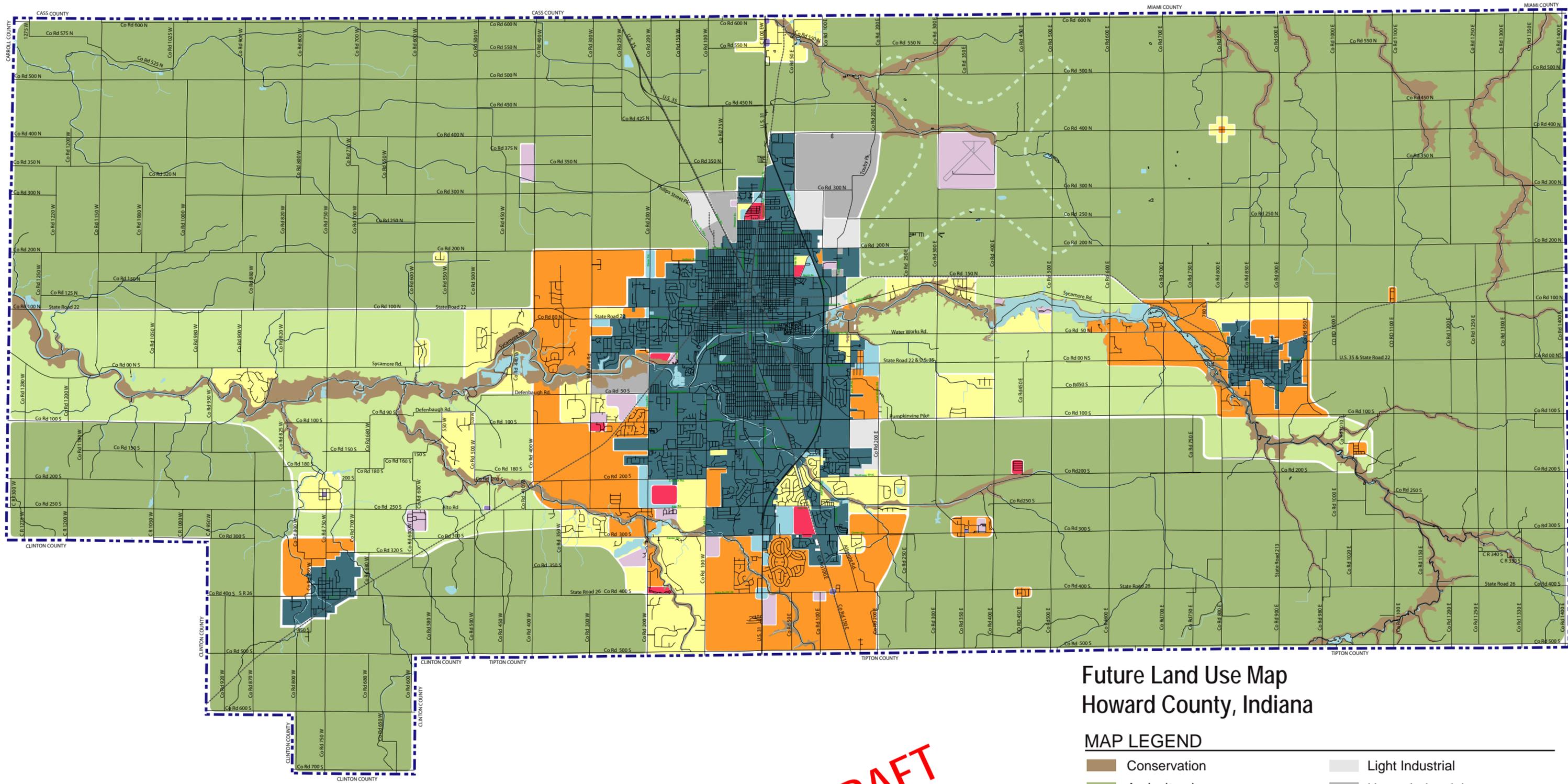
Village Commercial: Land used or designated for village downtown commercial uses that accommodates a wide variety of small scale commercial uses. Typically this category is for rural unincorporated towns to provide local goods, services and restaurants.

General Commercial: Land used or designated for commercial land uses that accommodates a wide variety of small to large scale commercial uses. Typically this category is for commercial uses that cater to vehicle traffic with high visibility from major roadways.

Light Industrial: Land used or designated for light manufacturing or assembly of products. This land use designation includes operations that have very low to moderate traffic, environmental, or aesthetic impact on surrounding areas.

Heavy Industrial: Land used or designated for heavy manufacturing or assembly of products. This also includes utilities, processing of raw goods and the like. This land use designation includes operations that can have moderate to high traffic, environmental, or aesthetic impacts on surrounding areas.

Airport Hazard Zone: A region around the airport with limitation on development to protect the airspace and long-term operations of the airport. This area would discourage or disallow uses that would be adversely affected by the noise from aircraft.



DRAFT

Future Land Use Map Howard County, Indiana

MAP LEGEND

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Conservation | Light Industrial |
| Agricultural | Heavy Industrial |
| Rural Residential | Streets |
| Low Density Residential | Railroad |
| Medium Density Residential | Creek/Stream |
| High Density Residential | Municipal Jurisdiction |
| Government/Institutional | Currently Not Used |
| Village Commercial | Airport Hazard Zone |
| General Commercial | |

Land Use

Growth Management

Chapter Four



Growth Management

INTRODUCTION

Howard County has a significant interest in focusing and managing growth and development. The high quality of life, rural character, good schools and significant industrial jobs will likely continue to draw people into the county. The county wishes to embrace growth while maintaining these valuable traits.

Along with preserving the character of the community, Howard County must also realize the costs associated with unmanaged and unfocused growth. The costs of extending public services, improving roads, enlarging schools, expanding emergency services, and providing other government services all must be realized. By focusing growth near the city and towns in the county, the cost of providing services will decrease significantly thereby increasing the economic vitality of the county and keeping tax rates low.

On this and the following page the Growth Management goal, objectives, and strategies are listed. The pages following describe, in more detail, the growth management strategies mentioned above.

GOAL

Minimize sprawl and manage growth by requiring comprehensive planning for new development in order to minimize the long term infrastructure costs for Howard County.

Growth Management

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Preserve the rural character throughout Howard County.
- 2) Encourage growth within the service capabilities of a municipality.
- 3) Be sensitive to the farming industry throughout Howard County by discouraging urban sprawl and spot zoning.
- 4) Ensure that new development fits in with the character of its surroundings.
- 5) Focus new business and industrial development along existing routes leading out to the realigned US 31 Corridor.
- 6) Develop green spaces or buffers between developments with significantly different intensities.
- 7) Focus business, industrial, and medium to high density residential growth around existing cities and towns.
- 8) Strategically expand and develop sewer systems in fringe areas around municipalities, and then focus new development in those areas.

STRATEGIES

- 1) Work with municipalities to extend utilities into fringe areas.**
 - 2) Prepare a corridor and sewer development plan once the U.S. 31 realignment route is chosen and investment begins.**
 - 3) Adopt, maintain and utilize the Howard County Comprehensive Plan.
 - 4) Adopt, maintain and utilize the Howard County Zoning Ordinance.
 - 5) Adopt, maintain and utilize the Howard County Subdivision Control Ordinance.
 - 6) Develop and maintain a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) for expansions and upgrades to county facilities.
 - 7) Follow the Long-Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
 - 8) Evaluate and determine capacities of soils to utilize septic systems, as well as public facilities like schools, parks, sewers, and roadways to determine if an area can support new development.
 - 9) Provide incentives to developers for providing additional greenspace.
 - 10) Provide incentives to developers for protecting floodplains and floodways.
 - 11) Encourage shared detention or retention facilities.
 - 12) Discourage spot zoning and incompatible land uses.
- * The bold strategies listed above are considered higher priorities based on citizen and steering committee input.

Growth Management

EXPANSION OF UTILITIES

Through the interest group and public input process, the need for sewers was emphasized. Specifically, there is a belief that the lack of sewers is an obstacle for new growth and development.

It is the recommendation of this comprehensive plan for the county leaders to work with city and towns to coordinate and plan the extension of utilities. In addition the following recommendations apply:

- 1) Extend sewers into a few areas that have the highest interest, suitability and feasibility for residential growth and development.
- 2) Extend a trunk-line for developments to tap into. It is common practice in Indiana for developers to participate in the cost of infrastructure. Therefore, the municipalities do not have to absorb all of the cost. Further, it is believed that no more than one mile of sewer main is necessary to provide access to enough land to provide adequate building sites.
- 3) Utilize a growth management plan to coordinate when sewers will be extended, how far, and what size they will be.
- 4) Discourage the use of forced mains and septic systems especially within 1.5 miles from a municipality. Although these facilities are acceptable, the county should strive to promote growth and development in patterns that can be served by a municipal sewer system upon construction or in the future. Low density growth on septic systems and forced mains make tying into municipal systems more difficult and expensive.
- 5) Encourage cluster subdivisions in areas beyond 1.5 miles from a municipality with public sewer systems.
- 6) Onsite sewer systems, when properly installed and maintained are acceptable in rural areas.

In summary, to accommodate the need for additional housing units from population growth and to diversify the building sites available in the county, new residential subdivisions should be encouraged. For the immediate need, these subdivisions should include sites for moderate income families to high income families. Each five years the need for additional building sites and the type of housing needed should be evaluated and adjusted. Free market will dictate and adjust accordingly, but additional assistance from government sources can be helpful.

Growth Management

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP)

Capital improvements include any physical improvements identified and needed by a community. The most common projects usually involve construction and maintenance of roads, municipal buildings, acquisition of real property, or acquisition of equipment.

A capital improvement budget is usually adopted each fiscal year and includes a timetable or schedule identifying all planned capital improvements to be made over a period of time, usually five years. The improvements are prioritized as to importance, given an approximate date they will be completed, and cost estimates are made for each project with anticipated funding sources.

The benefits of a capital improvement plan include:

- long range financial planning,
- identifying opportunities to purchase land before prices go up,
- ensuring long term projects are handled in a coordinated and timely manner,
- preventing costly mistakes such as repaving a road, then ripping it up a year later to repair or install some type of utility, and
- better management of capital funds.

Capital improvement plans can shape where growth and development locate. For instance, a new fire station or new fire equipment can encourage growth in close proximity in order to assure excellent fire protection of a home or business owner's investment. Excellent roads, driving safety, and accessibility also play a role in where people want to live.

Howard County should strive to use a capital improvements plan to guide growth and development.

Growth Management

Transportation

Chapter Five



Transportation

INTRODUCTION

As the city and county population continues to grow, transportation planning becomes increasingly important. The efficient movement of goods, services and people directly effect the quality of life of residents.

This section of the comprehensive plan focuses on transportation and circulation considerations in Howard County. The elements of transportation and circulation that are in this section include:

- highways and roads,
- pedestrian networks,
- public transportation,
- municipal airport, and
- railroads.

On this and the following page the Transportation goals, objectives and strategies are listed.

The pages following the strategies describe in more detail the components of the plan as they relate to transportation.

GOALS

Vehicular Transportation: Promote a fiscally responsible network of roads and strive to mitigate traffic congestion, unsafe roadways and intersections.

Alternative Transportation: Provide a safe, appropriate and aesthetically pleasing alternative transportation system in conjunction with the thoroughfare plan.

Transportation

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Develop and actively encourage the use of the widest possible range of transportation alternatives.
- 2) Provide and maintain pedestrian and bicycle access for all citizens of Howard County.
- 3) Maintain the condition of existing paths/sidewalks.
- 4) Promote safe circulation for bicycles and pedestrians within and between communities.
- 5) Preserve adequate right of way for future expansions or improvements to roads that will allow for pedestrian pathways and/or bicycle lanes within and between communities.
- 6) Encourage alternative transportation linkages to schools, parks and other public resources.
- 7) Develop a transportation/circulation network that complements the land use goals and objectives of the Howard County and each of the municipalities within the county.
- 8) Maintain the condition of existing roadways.
- 9) Minimize dangerous intersections and roadways.
- 10) Limit private access points along arterials.
- 11) Require that adequate right of way is preserved for future expansion or improvements to roads.
- 12) Ensure adequate right-of-way is preserved for future expansion or improvements to roads and for proper drainage capacity.
- 13) Assure accessibility for police, emergency and fire vehicles to properties in their jurisdiction.
- 14) Consider traffic calming devices where through traffic is undesirable and hinders residential character.
- 15) Minimize congestion on primary transportation routes.
- 16) Encourage the installation of a greater hierarchy of streets in developing areas to better distribute and convey vehicular traffic.
- 17) Continue to evaluate alternate forms of public transportation to meet current transit needs.
- 18) Encourage the expansion of the Municipal Airport and protect its long-term interests by discouraging inappropriate growth within one mile.
- 19) Maintain railroad service connection and at least one linkage to Indianapolis to preserve access to industry, agriculture and future mass transit opportunities.

STRATEGIES

- 1) **Maintain and utilize the Howard County Thoroughfare Plan.**
- 2) **Maintain a Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for construction, upgrade, and maintenance of pedestrian-ways, roads, and bridges.**
- 3) **Regularly train the planning commission and board of zoning appeals regarding land use management strategies and transportation planning.**
- 4) **Develop and maintain a funding program for alternative transportation to best utilize grants, low interest loans, local resources, bonding capacity, and miscellaneous funding sources.**
- 5) **Amend thoroughfare plan to reflect realignment of US 31 and to prevent development in that alignment.**
- 6) Adopt and utilize Kokomo's street and pedestrian-way standards for residential subdivisions, especially when they are near the city.
- 7) Minimize and/or eliminate dangerous roadways and intersections.
- 8) Consider adding new or alternative streets to mitigate congestion on major routes.
- 9) Strongly encourage subdivision road systems to link to neighboring subdivisions for ease of emergency vehicles and daily traffic flow.
- 10) Consider the impact of new development on existing roadways and pedestrian-ways when reviewing new development proposals.
- 11) Explore conversion of abandoned railroad into future rail-to-trail projects.
- 12) Explore public transit ridership interest and determine cost effective and feasible improvements.
- 13) Strive to understand and support the needs of local businesses and air travellers dependent on the municipal airport.
- 14) Maintain a roadway classification system.
- 15) Review abandonment proposals to preserve railroad access to Indianapolis and at least one other connection with the railroad system.
- 16) Require maintenance of access roads through associations or other legally binding means.

* The bold strategies listed above are considered higher priorities based on citizen and steering committee input.

Transportation

PEDESTRIAN NETWORKS

Sidewalks, dedicated paths and wide shoulders in a community make up the transportation and circulation network for pedestrians. As a county, an extensive pedestrian network is not easily achieved due to the high costs to install facilities and minimal population densities. For this reason, Howard County will strive to utilize the least expensive facilities and be very selective choosing routes. In time, increased populations and interest in pedestrian networks may justify a more extensive system. In the meantime, the County will focus on bicycle linkages between municipalities and pedestrian linkages between primary destinations and neighborhoods.

Bicycle Linkage

Howard County will plan to utilize wide shoulders to create linkages between communities and county destinations for cyclists. These bicycle linkages should provide safe and efficient routes for cyclists to travel from one community to another. The facility upgrade should include adding a four-foot shoulder to existing roads, marking the bicycle lane, and adding signs to denote the route.

Walking Linkages

Howard County encourages sidewalks in moderate to high density subdivisions that are in growth corridors and in close proximity to municipal boundaries. The county will also strive to build and ask developers to participate in pedestrian linkages between neighborhoods, park, schools and other community facilities, when practical. These pedestrian linkages should provide uninterrupted, safe and efficient linkages for walkers, cyclers, and other modes of non-motorized transportation. Generally, sidewalks and paths should link all the primary destinations in urbanizing areas.

US 31 ENHANCEMENT

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) has conducted several studies of the U.S. 31 corridor from Indianapolis to South Bend in order to upgrade the route to a limited access highway. INDOT is currently focusing on environmental impact studies of the metropolitan areas in the U.S. 31 corridor. It will be important for Howard County to participate in and provide input throughout the process.

Three primary and two minor alignment alternatives are being considered by INDOT. Each has pros and cons in regards to their affect on neighborhoods, property owners, environmental features, economic development, circulation and land use patterns.

The following are strategies for mitigating the potential negative impacts of the upgrade.

- 1) Aggressively protect the “interchange” areas from new entrances and driveways off of the intersection roads, especially curb cuts within 300 feet of ingress and egress points (i.e. exit ramps).
- 2) Direct new commercial development along connecting corridors and away from interchanges.
- 3) Keep the county’s comprehensive plan and thoroughfare plan up to date.
- 4) Strictly limit access onto the realigned U.S. 31 corridor. Allow no additional access points after the interchanges are established.

Transportation

KOKOMO MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

Municipal Airports are expected to become more vibrant in the future due to new aircraft being developed to carry small numbers of passengers for reasonable rates to distant destinations. Local and regional airports are anticipated to handle a more dispersed set of air carriers. For these reasons and more noted below, the Kokomo Municipal Airport should be firmly protected.

The Kokomo Municipal Airport is a multimillion dollar facility owned and operated by the City of Kokomo and located outside the city's corporate limits in the center of Howard Township. The airport is appropriately sized to serve the current needs of Howard County and is comparable in size to Anderson, Miami County, and Lafayette airports.

A significant number of corporate and industrial businesses in the area utilize the airport for efficient and rapid transportation of people and freight in and out of the Howard County area. Air transport saves significant travel time especially during times of the year when road transportation can be challenging due to inclement weather. Passenger aircraft that utilize the Kokomo Municipal Airport typically range in size from 4 to 30 passengers. The economic contribution of the airport to the local economy is substantial, averaging 5 million dollars per year.

The city and county should work in partnership to:

- 1) Minimize conflicting land uses in the Airport Hazard Area noted on the Future Land Use Map on page 37. The Airport Hazard Area has been designated to protect property owners, developers and businesses from adversely being affected by noise and operations. It is also designated to protect the airport from potential remonstrators of expansions of the airport's facilities or flight operations.
- 2) Enhance the four and one-half miles of road between the airport terminal and U.S. 31. In addition to road improvements, add a high quality "way-finding" sign system to direct people to the airport facility.

Airport Hazard Area

In the event that noise sensitive development (residential, nursing homes, churches, schools, theaters, etc.) occurs in the Airport Hazard Area, Howard County should require those property owners to waive their right to remonstrate against expansions to the airport facility and air operations. The county should also make the property owners aware that the airport may expand its operations; therefore, noise levels would increase and be more frequent.

Appropriate land uses in the Airport Hazard Area include agriculture, general business, office parks, warehouses and industries. These land uses are not only compatible, but would support the air freight and passenger transportation opportunities. The county should determine the market demand and consider infrastructure and zoning changes to allow this type of nonresidential growth in close proximity to the airport.

ROAD SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Howard County should be very proud of the network of roads serving the needs of drivers. The roads in Howard County make up one of the best maintained systems in comparison to all other counties in the state. The criteria used to make this determination included general smoothness, appropriateness of pavement width, signs of deterioration, road signage, bridge restrictions, shoulders, and the like. Due to the quality of the roadways, this comprehensive plan recommends that the county continue the current road maintenance program.

Circulation and New Roads

In regards to vehicular circulation, the county road network provides excellent north/south and east/west options for drivers. However, in a few locations, new roads would improve circulation throughout the county. Howard County has identified new road locations and has noted these improvements on the Thoroughfare Plan Map on page 51.

The Thoroughfare Plan Map indicates proposed roads in locations deemed necessary. The exact alignment should not necessarily be interpreted as a straight line as drawn. Rather, the line drawn is a conceptual linkage to indicate a connection from one point to another. Exact alignment should be determined by engineers to address site specific conditions and situations (i.e. poor soils, natural resources and existing structures).

Transportation

Intersections

Through public, interest group and steering committee input it was noted that several intersections need modified to improve safety. It is the wish of Howard County to maintain an inventory of hazardous intersections and prioritization of improvements. As funding becomes available, the county will make the necessary changes, starting with the most dangerous intersections in the county.

Some of the noted intersections included: U.S. 31 and Markland; Judson and Phillips; S.R. 22 and Malfalfa; Dixon and S.R. 26; Malfalfa and Alto; all unsignaled intersections along U.S. 31; and intersections near the county high schools.

Curb Cut Restrictions

Many times heavily travelled roads, such as state highways and primary arterials are prone to excessive curb cuts. Curb cuts should be limited to reduce accidents and traffic congestion, especially along heavily traveled roadways and roads expected to be heavily traveled in the future. When curb cuts do exist or are justified, they should be a minimal width and be adequately defined with curbs. Passing blisters, and acceleration and deceleration lanes should be required when necessary and installed as per best engineering practices. Additionally, the County should require the maintenance of access roads through associations or other legal means.

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

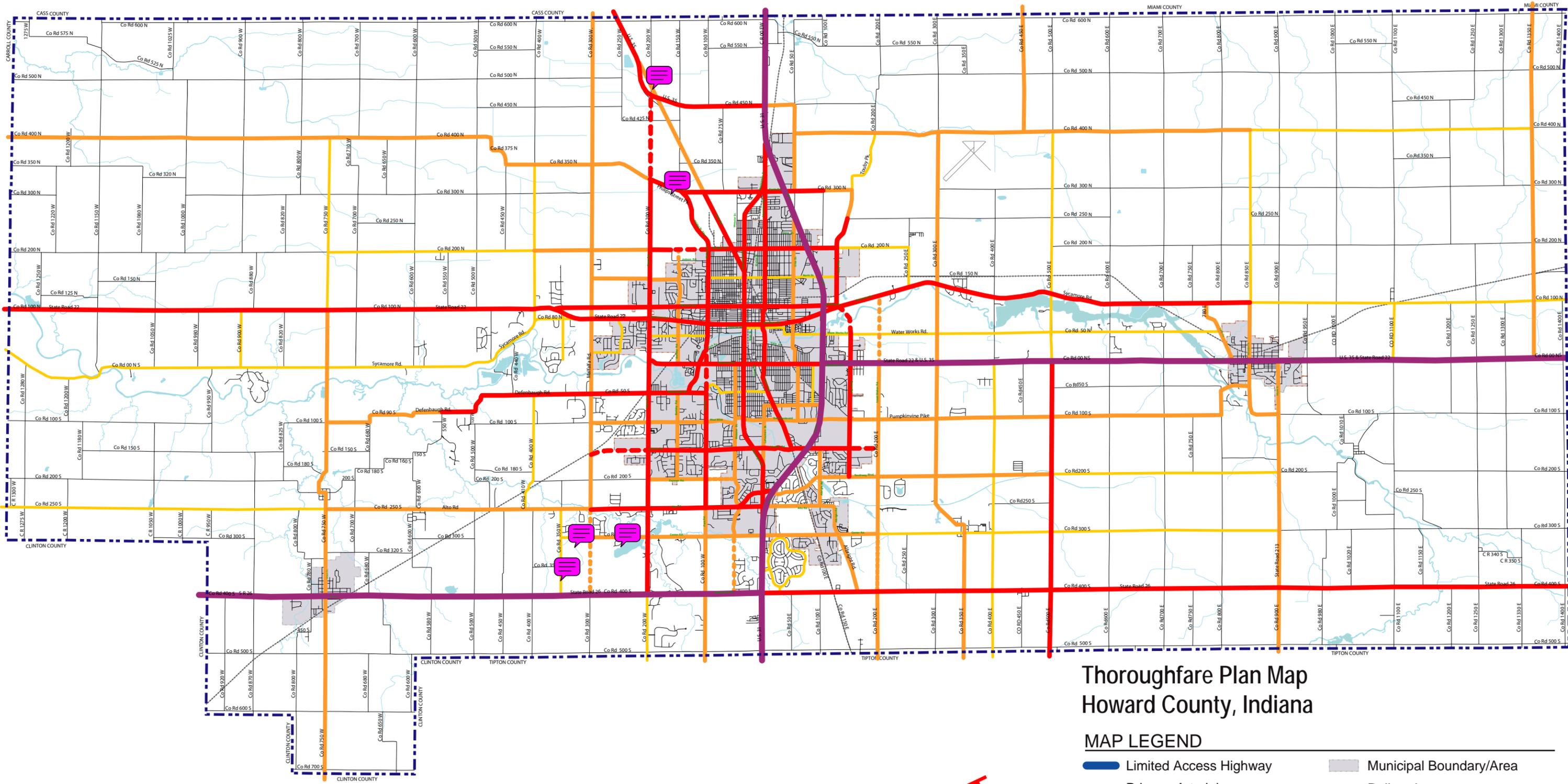
A road hierarchy is a system where roads are classified based on their purpose and their travel demand. For instance a state highway (primary arterial) serves a different purpose and has different travel demands than a neighborhood road (local street). The road classification system for Howard County is as follows:

- **Limited Access Highway** (300 feet of right-of-way): A road with strict access control, minimum speed limits, and used primarily for travel to distant destinations.
- **Primary Arterial** (120 feet of right-of-way): A road with access control, restricted parking, and that collects and distributes traffic to and from minor arterials.
- **Minor Arterial** (100 feet of right-of-way): A road that collects and distributes traffic to and from collector and primary arterial roads.
- **Major Collector** (80 feet of right-of-way): A road designed to facilitate the collection of traffic from minor collectors and local streets. A major collector also provides circulation within commercial areas and convenient ways to reach arterial roads.
- **Minor Collector** (60 feet of right-of-way): A road designed to facilitate the collection of traffic from local streets. Minor collectors also provide circulation within neighborhood areas and convenient ways to reach major collectors or arterial roads.
- **Local Streets** (50 feet of right-of-way in subdivisions and 60 feet of right-of-way for county roads): A street designed primarily to provide access to residential or farm properties. In residential areas, through traffic is discouraged, but connectivity from one neighborhood to another is encouraged.

It is the intent of the classification system to categorize roads as they will ~~be~~ exist and be constructed in the future. Generally, the road classification system considers the anticipated demand in 20 years.

Establishing a road hierarchy can offer several advantages to a county including increased safety, efficiency, residential quality, and land use efficiency.

On page 51 is the Thoroughfare Plan Map which illustrates the road classification system. This map is used to determine the desired right-of-way for each road and is tied to the county zoning ordinance for front yard setback requirements.



Thoroughfare Plan Map Howard County, Indiana

MAP LEGEND

- Limited Access Highway
- Primary Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Proposed Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Proposed Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Proposed Minor Collector
- Local Streets or County Road
- Municipal Boundary/Area
- Railroad
- Creek/Stream

DRAFT

Transportation

Public Services

Chapter Six



Public Services

INTRODUCTION

County jurisdictions are responsible for a variety of public services. As populations grow and shift, one of the biggest challenges is to maintain public services and meet the community's needs.

For the purposes of this section of the comprehensive plan, public services should be construed to mean drainage, recreation facilities, police and public health. This section also addresses public utilities such as fire services, EMS, social services, education and wastewater collection and treatment, although they are not a public service offered directly by the county.

Streets and pedestrian linkages are other types of public services that are or can be provided by a county. Streets and sidewalks are discussed in Chapter Five within this document.

On this and the following page the Public Services goals, objectives and strategies are listed.

GOALS

Community Facilities and Services: Provide essential public facilities and services through public and private initiatives to maintain a reasonable quality of life for all residents.

Infrastructure: Ensure adequate and economically viable public utilities to accommodate appropriate future growth and economic development.

Public Services

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Develop and maintain an expansion plan for public services to correspond with county growth.
- 2) Enhance public facilities and services available for physically disabled, children, young adults and the elderly.
- 3) Encourage high quality educational facilities and opportunities for citizens of Howard County.
- 4) Provide public infrastructure within reasonable capital expenditure with a design and distribution plan which ensures adequate service to the community.
- 5) Provide basic infrastructure such that it supports the other goals and objectives of the community as found in this document.
- 6) Develop and maintain a funding program to best utilize grants, low interest loans, local resources, bonding capacity and miscellaneous funding sources.
- 7) Encourage development practices that minimize public capital burden and debt.
- 8) Develop guidelines to allow facilities to connect to utilities outside corporate limits.
- 9) Assure that public health, safety and welfare programs are in place, efficient and effective.

STRATEGIES

- 1) Coordinate with the municipalities in the county to jointly provide public parks and recreation facilities.**
- 2) Encourage the municipalities in the county to prepare annexation plans and utility service area plans to better predict and manage growth.**
- 3) Maintain a five-year priority list of regulated drain improvements necessary to re-establish the original capacity of drains and promote effective drainage of the county.**
- 4) Strongly restrict building in floodplains and strive to purchase homes that are in floodplains and in harms way.**
- 5) Maintain a high quality police, fire, and emergency services for the existing and future community.
- 6) Ensure that planning and zoning services are maintained and adequately address the needs of the community.
- 7) Work with the municipalities to identify residential growth areas and to provide adequate public infrastructure.
- 8) Maintain a public infrastructure plan which supports the future land use goals of the community.
- 9) Ensure that high quality public services are maintained in order to complement economic development efforts.
- 10) Increase awareness of health screenings and events within the community.
- 11) Work with schools and other existing organizations to increase substance abuse counseling and prevention programs.
- 12) Encourage immunization in the county through education and coordination with clinics.
- 13) Maintain a public health system that keeps pace with growth.

* The bold strategies listed above are considered higher priorities based on citizen and steering committee input.

Environmental

Chapter Seven



Environmental

INTRODUCTION

Clean water, clean air, and an aesthetically pleasing environment are as important to quality of life as good infrastructure and high-quality roads. The importance of environmental integrity in a community is often overlooked until it is too late. Howard County is blessed with a number of environmental resources including the Wildcat Creek. These assets must be maintained and in some cases improved to enhance the quality of life in Howard County.

The citizens of the county recognize the natural resources and the need to protect those assets while keeping in mind the rights of property owners to use their land. Finding the balance between these two sometimes opposing forces can be challenging. The best interest of the community as a whole should be the guiding principle used in determining solutions to conflicts that arise.

As the community continues to be developed, the threats to the environment increase. The pollutants typically arise from sedimentation, industrial waste, combined sewer overflow, sewage treatment plants, septic systems, agricultural practices, road maintenance and use, and lawn chemicals to name a few.

New development near waterways can cause increased risk of flooding. Flooding not only is a nuisance but also contributes to loss of life and property.

Throughout the planning process, various groups suggested that the comprehensive plan incorporate strategies for protecting and enhancing the environment. The environmental features that the community is most desirous of protecting through effective land use, development and conservation practices include:

- Air and Water Quality
- Soil Quality (Erosion)
- Streams, Creeks, and Lakes
- Wetlands
- Woodlands
- Floodplains

On this and following page the Environmental goal, objectives, and strategies are listed.

The pages following the strategies describe in more detail the components of the plan as they relate to Environmental issues.

GOAL

Promote an ecologically sound community by balancing the needs of the human, plant and animal life forms and to the fullest extent possible, protect and enhance the natural systems in Howard County.

Environmental

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Protect the quality and quantity of water in Howard County's streams and reservoir.
- 2) Preserve natural areas such as forest land and wetlands.
- 3) Protect and enhance the character of the natural environment in Howard County.
- 4) Protect and enhance the streams throughout the county.
- 5) Minimize conflicts between growth and the natural environment.
- 6) Protect and preserve natural drainage areas and the 100-year floodplain.
- 7) Protect the local groundwater supply.
- 8) Encourage the use of innovative methods of storm water management such as wetlands and swales.

STRATEGIES

- 1) **Revise the county's zoning and subdivision control ordinance, as necessary, to minimize soil erosion and to prevent negative impacts on water quality.**
- 2) **Maintain the flood storage potential of the county with well-designed detention and retention ponds, and the use of regulations to strongly restrict filling of the floodplain.**
- 3) **Work with municipalities to help minimize the impacts of combined sewer overflow (CSO) events and support implementation of their Long Term Control Plan.**
- 4) **Support a basin-wide effort to protect floodplain storage capacity.**
- 5) Discourage moderate to large-sized subdivisions when not contiguous or near a municipality that can provide infrastructure.
- 6) Encourage small cluster subdivisions rather than strip subdivisions in rural areas.
- 7) Establish a legally binding means for on-site retention or detention to be maintained by the adjacent or benefiting property owners.
- 8) Adopt an ordinance to restrict the percentage of impervious surface within a development.
- 9) Adopt an ordinance requiring new developments to be sensitive and buffer natural features and habitats of vegetation and wildlife.
- 10) Strongly restrict the construction of residential and commercial structures in the floodplain.
- 11) Encourage composting of yard waste and recycling of paper, plastics, and metals where practical.
- 12) Continue to work with and encourage local groups to volunteer to remove debris and trash from; and to monitor the water quality of Wildcat and Kokomo Creeks.
- 13) Adopt ordinances and land use policies that respond to water supply well head protection programs.
- 14) Maintain the regulated drains in the county, but be sensitive to environmental features when possible.
- 15) Support the implementation of a separate municipal storm sewer system.
- 16) Provide more canoe access points along streams.
- 17) Require retention/detention ponds outside of floodplains.

* The bold strategies listed above are considered higher priorities based on citizen and steering committee input.

WILDCAT CREEK WATERSHED

The Wildcat Creek Watershed is 804 square miles, covers seven counties, and includes three major metropolitan areas: Kokomo, Lafayette, and Frankfort. Within the watershed, the Kokomo Reservoir at Greentown is the largest impoundment of water.

Land uses within the watershed have a significant impact on the quality of water and wildlife habitats of the river. Maintaining streamside forests, limiting encroachment of development along the banks and in floodplain areas, and reducing large areas of impervious surfaces are effective methods to reduce pollutants and sediments from depleting the water quality.

The Wildcat Guardians, a local environmental group, is dedicated to improving the health and beauty of Wildcat Creek. Their priorities include: eliminating trash dumping along the banks and in the watershed, eliminating illegal pollutant discharges, reducing streambank erosion, eliminating channel obstructions and habitat degradation, and improving recreational value of the Wildcat.

IDEM has completed a draft Restoration Action Strategy for the Wildcat Creek Watershed. Howard County and Kokomo cooperated with IDEM in the preparation of the document and provided comments to IDEM during its development. The county and city should continue to work toward protecting the watershed. Howard County should also continue to work with IDEM and other stakeholders to insure sound and effective watershed management.

FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT

Flooding causes more damage to communities across the country than all other types of natural disasters combined. Flooding is costly, not only in terms of the value of the property lost, but also lives lost. If natural areas within floodplains are protected, greenspace will be flooded frequently instead of commercial and residential structures located within the floodplain. This minimizes economic losses attributed to flooding.

Floodplains act as sponges, soaking in rain and snow and slowing the overland flow of water. This is in contrast to impervious surfaces, such as parking lots, rooftops and roadways, which serve to speed up stormwater flow. The more pervious floodplains are within the watershed, the less severe flooding will be in downstream areas.

Howard County should strongly discourage development in the floodplain. If development must occur, mitigation measures must be required so that there is a minimum of “no net loss” of floodplain storage capacity.

Because of past flooding events in the county and surrounding region, Howard County adopted a Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan in 2000. Howard County must continue its efforts, both independently and in conjunction with other agencies to ensure that development does not occur in flood hazard areas. The purpose is to protect not only those within and adjacent to the floodplain but also downstream properties and the environment.

The county should not permit retention or detention ponds in the floodplain. Retention ponds and detention ponds store stormwater runoff and release it slowly into a drainageway. Locating them in floodplains would negate their storage capacity during floods. Flood water would fill the pond preventing their storing any storm water runoff. This provision should not apply to built ponds that do not serve as retention or detention ponds.

Howard County should also support a basin-wide effort to protect flood storage capacity. This would entail working with multiple counties to preserve the capacity of each watershed.

Environmental

RIPARIAN FORESTS

Forests located along Wildcat Creek, Kokomo Creek and their tributaries have significant ecological and aesthetic values. These areas, often referred to as riparian forests, are some of the richest holdings of plants and animals. Healthy streamside forests are able to stabilize the banks of the waterways, filter sediments and pollutants from stormwater runoff before they reach the waterways, and reduce flooding and drainage problems. The destruction of these areas, would greatly impact the environment and Howard County's quality of life.

Such land can be vulnerable to developmental pressures. Additional review of proposed development along these waterways must be taken to ensure that development does not crowd the banks and that the integrity of the natural areas are not destroyed.

WOODLOT MANAGEMENT

Howard County has several small to medium-sized woodlots. Woodlots should be managed because of the many benefits they provide. A forest stand can:

- Reduce air temperatures in the summer by about 10 degrees Fahrenheit
- Reduce wind velocities by 20 to 60 percent
- Provide vital wildlife habitat
- Clean pollutants from the air by absorbing an estimated ten tons of carbon dioxide per year per acre of woodlot
- Reduce the erosion of soil on construction sites

For the property owner, saving a few trees on a site can reduce energy bills and increase the value of the property.

The county will encourage new development to be designed to minimize the impact on existing woodlots and tree stands through development incentives. Development incentives could include decreasing the lot size or required yards or increasing the allowed density if significant woodland is conserved.

Additionally, the county will utilize incentives to protect woodlots from being clear-cut by developers, farmers, and other entities.

Environmental

WATER QUALITY

The residents of municipalities, adjacent subdivisions, and rural areas all receive their drinking water from either a public water system or from private wells. Due to this, the county is sensitive to land use practices that could contaminate or otherwise weaken water resources. Designated wellhead protection areas should be located, mapped and made available to the community to avoid potential land use conflicts. In addition, the county should develop guidelines for future development that minimize any potential contamination to ground water.

Any development that poses a unreasonable risk to surface water (e.g. the reservoir) or ground water must be prohibited unless proven and technologically acceptable measures are used to protect the water resources.

To protect water quality, the county will encourage developers to submit development and redevelopment plans that provide for:

- Surface stabilization measures such as tree preservation, retaining walls, and use of sod,
- Runoff control such as swales, small culverts, and vegetative buffers,
- Sediment control measures such as sediment traps and filter strips,
- Stormwater management practices such as retention ponds and infiltration swales, and
- Stream protection measures such as stream bank protection and setbacks.

The county should also restrict certain land uses in wellhead protection areas. The land uses that should be prohibited include, but are not limited to the following:

- junk yards,
- heavy industry,
- gas stations,
- dry cleaners, and
- chemical storage facilities.

There is also concern about soil erosion from agricultural practices. Most specifically, when soil erosion ends up in water bodies causing siltation. The use of buffer strips to prevent siltation can be an effective means to prevent such siltation.

WETLAND CONSERVATION

Howard County has areas with wetlands, low flow streams/ditches, and wet soils. The county will strive to ensure that state and federal laws for wetland mitigation are met when their jurisdiction applies. The county will also consider ways to limit development in these areas. Some possible alternatives include purchasing property for use as open space amenities and encouraging the use of conservation easements.

Image and Identity

Chapter Eight



Image & Identity

INTRODUCTION

Howard County's image and identity are derived from its community-minded people, history, economy, location and the physical environment. The "small town" and rural character the community has developed is very important to the residents of the community. There is a strong desire to maintain this character but still allow progress and development.

Community image and identity rely on physical features, community vitality, cleanliness, land use patterns, mix of land uses, cultural amenities and reputation among other factors. By transforming the vision of the community into growth and development policies, a community can set itself apart as a distinctive place to live and work.

Howard County will strive to maintain the rural character of the community while accepting and encouraging new commercial, industrial and residential growth. The county wishes to maintain the integrity of the small municipalities within the jurisdiction as well as preserving agricultural character in the very rural areas of the county.

The county also wishes to minimize the use of billboards and reduce the aesthetic impact of telecommunications towers.

On this and following pages the Image & Identity goal, objectives, and strategies are listed.

GOAL

Develop and maintain an identity that will promote a sense of community pride and that showcases each municipalities uniqueness.

Image & Identity

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Enhance local assets and heritage to develop an overall community identity.
- 2) Enhance and enforce local zoning and nuisance ordinances.
- 3) Portray and promote Howard County as an alternative to the “hustle and bustle” of a metropolitan area.
- 4) Demonstrate Howard County’s pride in home ownership.
- 5) Creatively promote the image of Howard County as a place to invest, live and raise a family.
- 6) Promote and develop the arts culture and recreation opportunities.
- 7) Add and enhance parks and open space amenities.
- 8) Promote Howard County as a safe community.
- 9) Protect the unique natural features of Howard County, like Wildcat Creek.

STRATEGIES

- 1) Utilize the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision Control Ordinance, to encourage character appropriate for the area each development is proposed.**
- 2) Set a standard for development with high quality design and materials for all public facilities and public structures, including, but not limited to buildings, signs, fences, park equipment and sidewalks.**
- 3) Actively promote Howard County as a great place to live, especially to people that commute into the county to work.**
- 4) Enhance gateways and gateway corridor into the county to ensure a positive first impression.
- 5) Provide “wayfinding” signs to enable people to easily navigate through the county.
- 6) Encourage appropriate lighting, odor and noise standards that minimize nuisances.
- 7) Establish a long-term public relations effort to constantly promote the county’s favorable attributes and successes.
- 8) Strive to adopt a more aggressive ordinance to discourage illegal dumping.

* The bold strategies listed above are considered higher priorities based on citizen and steering committee input.

Image & Identity

Economic Development

Chapter Nine



Economic Development

INTRODUCTION

The quality of economic development is typically measured by quantity of jobs, wage rates, cost of living, diversity of employment opportunities, and the frequency of expansions or start-up of companies. Howard County has enjoyed plentiful industrial jobs with some of the highest pay in the State. In fact, more people commute into the county each day than commute out. The primary employers and highest paying industries in the county revolve around the automotive industry. This provides a worldwide market for Howard County products and exposes the county to fluctuations in the economy.

Howard County functions as a regional center for the surrounding counties, offering entertainment, culture, retail, and services not otherwise offered in those counties. For this reason, the county's economy is partially founded on the success of businesses supported by people that dwell outside of the county.

During the planning process the public, interest groups and steering committee indicated that the health of the county is "Fair" and that Howard County did not offer a good mix of employment opportunities. It was clear that participants were not comfortable with Howard County's economy hinging on the automobile industry. In the same breath, everyone was very appreciative for the jobs that were offered by those industries and hoped for further expansions.

This chapter of the comprehensive plan focuses on Economic Development for Howard County and addresses several concepts for the county to consider including:

- expansion and retention of existing businesses,
- attracting new businesses,
- diversification of businesses, and
- focusing on improving quality of life.

On this and following page the Economic Development goal, objectives, and strategies are listed. The pages following the strategies describes in more detail the components of the plan as they relate to Economic Development.

GOAL

Strengthen and diversify the local economy and enhance the standard of living for all citizens of Howard County.

Economic Development

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Promote orderly economic growth and stability.
- 2) Promote commercial businesses and industries which are suitable, feasible, compatible, and do not conflict with other community goals and objectives.
- 3) Promote and support locally owned and operated businesses.
- 4) Provide suitable space and exposure for smaller businesses to thrive.
- 5) Promote infill of vacant lots and redevelopment of vacant buildings.
- 6) Strive to overcome obstacles that prevent business districts from thriving.
- 7) Support the Chamber of Commerce, Howard County Economic Development Commission, and the Kokomo Technology Center.
- 8) Develop and promote tourism plan to continue to build on the county's amenities.
- 9) Encourage partnerships and coordination between organization to enhance their events.
- 10) Provide support to the small municipalities in their economic development efforts.

STRATEGIES

- 1) Encourage the preparation and regular maintenance of a strategic economic development plan.**
- 2) Identify quality-of-life factors and strongly encourage improvement and expansion of those qualities, thus using quality-of-life as an economic development strategy.**
- 3) Market and promote the qualities of the county to encourage residency and investment.**
- 4) Support efforts to fully utilize the Kokomo Municipal Airport.**
- 5) Assure coordination of government, nonprofit, and private organizations, utilizing their unique strengths to implement economic development projects.
- 6) Provide assistance to businesses who are striving to expand their facilities, when they will expand the tax base and achieve the goals of the comprehensive plan.
- 7) Provide assistance to businesses wishing to locate in Howard County or within any of the municipalities within the county, when they will expand the tax base and achieve the goals of the comprehensive plan.
- 8) Promote and encourage large employers to locate in industrial or business parks in one of the municipalities where public services can be provided.
- 9) Focus economic development efforts on diversifying employment opportunities.
- 10) Promote appropriate infrastructure to allow and encourage new development.
- 11) Promote upscale housing to attract upper income families.
- 12) Strive to enhance the quality of schools such that Howard County offers one of the best educations in central Indiana.
- 13) Conduct an image and identity study to better understand "outsiders" impressions of Howard County.
- 14) Develop the potential of the Kokomo Municipal Airport for economic development.

* The bold strategies listed above are considered higher priorities based on citizen and steering committee input.

Economic Development

DIVERSIFY THE ECONOMY

Howard County should strive to attract businesses and industries that provide diversity in the economy as the community grows and expands. In addition, Howard County should support existing businesses and industry. On the contrary, the county should aggressively work to retain all existing businesses and industries.

The county can strive for diversification by utilizing financial incentives pointedly to attract specific types of businesses. This means evaluating the mix of business or industry and determining if a segment is missing or underdeveloped. When an employment sector is identified, the county can devise a strategy develop, expand or lure those businesses as necessary. The county can also search for new companies that complement and enhance existing companies in the community to create synergy, such as has been created around the auto-makers.

TAX ABATEMENTS

Benefits can stem from economic incentives when properly used. In Howard County, tax abatements should be used when the short-term and long-term goals and objectives of the county are met by an employer, thus providing reasonable gain to the county.

Abatement offers should be consistent and the process to get them predictable. Predictability and consistency is in fact essential to luring sophisticated industries. These businesses need to know when they are prospecting what to expect. They will often not invest the time and money going through a process to find out what the county can offer.

The best tax abatement program should utilize guidelines and standards necessary to be eligible for tax abatement. These guidelines and standards can also include a formula for calculating a range of abatement applicable to a prospective industry or business. The final determination would be made by the County Council based on unique considerations and commitments made by the industry or business.

When considering tax abatement, the county should carefully weigh the pros and cons of its use. Their full impact to schools should be clearly realized before

incorporating them as an economic incentive to businesses. Further, the County should monitor participating businesses and hold them accountable for their performance commitments.

QUALITY SCHOOLS

More and more businesses and industries are gravitating toward communities that have quality schools. Businesses depend on educated individuals to fill positions within their companies as well as attract and retain good employees, especially those with families.

Howard County has several well respected school systems and several recognized universities and colleges. These institutions include Indiana University at Kokomo (IUK), Purdue University, Indiana Wesleyan University, and Ivy Tech.

Individuals and businesses attempting to stay current at high-tech jobs require local facilities for training and continuing education. Cooperative high-tech training programs are available in the county through the schools and career center.

It is the recommendation of this report to further improve the public education system and to regularly achieve statewide recognition for academic excellence, quality of extracurricular activities and facilities. It is believed that public schools are and can be enormous economic drivers in a community. It is anticipated that the county can attract families who have one or more adults commuting to Howard County for a job to locate in the county if the schools are improved.

Economic Development

PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN

It is believed that a well crafted public relations campaign to overcome stereotypes and missperceptions, and to promote and share the positive attributes of the county will reap great benefit. Such a campaign should be renewed and refined regularly to build upon what was successful and learned from previous PR campaigns.

The county should look into hiring or securing a public relations expert to represent the county's best interest.

The role of this person should include:

- Build awareness of the county's positive attributes amongst persons living in other counties.
- Strive to put a positive spin on any neutral or negative event or feature within the county.
- Celebrate successes within the county such that all local residents and surrounding county residents hear of the news.
- Regularly promote the arts, cultural and recreational opportunities within the county.

Economic Development

Parks and Recreation

Chapter Ten



Parks & Recreation

INTRODUCTION

Parks improve the quality of life by providing family recreation, access to natural resources and creating a cleaner environment. Parks are also a good economic investment because they attract new residents, businesses and visitors. Howard County contains many natural features that easily lend themselves to become parks and recreation facilities.

During the numerous public input sessions held to develop this plan, the public voiced the need to increase recreational facilities and opportunities in the county. Facilities are the places available for recreational activity, from passive picnic areas to active soccer fields; and from canoe launches to recreation trails.

This component of the comprehensive plan addresses methods for the community to improve its parks and recreation system. It also recognizes that a county park systems needs to focus on passive recreation, public accessible natural areas, canoe launches, and trails. The county should not compete with municipalities who are appropriately providing active recreation facilities. Therefore, the city/town and county park systems will ideally complement one another.

On this and following page the Parks & Recreation goal, objectives, and strategies are listed.

GOAL

Maintain recreational opportunities and/or facilities to meet the current and future needs of Howard County.

Parks & Recreation

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Develop the park system in a coordinated manner such that expenditures match the community's growth.
- 2) Protect future park lands and recreational areas from undesirable, conflicting and potentially hazardous land uses and developments.
- 3) Strive to maintain the parks and recreational amenities at a level that attracts frequent use.
- 4) Ensure a mix of sizes and locations of public parks and open spaces to provide opportunities for passive and active recreation.
- 5) Interconnect the parks, recreation amenities, natural areas and public facilities with a network of trails suitable for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- 6) Develop a trail/historic bicycle tour using existing county roads connecting each community (i.e. Wabash County model).
- 7) Keep the community informed of the recreational opportunities available.

STRATEGIES

- 1) Develop and utilize a Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan, approved by the Dept. of Natural Resources to enable the county to receive grant dollars from the State of Indiana.**
- 2) Establish county parks that provide passive recreation, public-accessible natural areas, canoe launches, and recreational trails.**
- 3) Maintain the comprehensive plan to incorporate the community's goals, objectives and strategies related to parks, and that creates a vision for the park system.**
- 4) Prepare a park plan to coordinate and assure resources are available to entire county.**
- 5) Protect future park and recreational areas from undesirable, conflicting and potentially hazardous developments and land use.
- 6) Keep the community informed of available recreational opportunities.
- 7) Inform the public about its interest in county parks and encourage donation of land.
- 8) Continue to utilize the talents of local residents by involving them in maintenance and improvements.
- 9) Connect parks to neighborhoods and community amenities via sidewalks, trails or wide shoulders along a road to improve accessibility.
- 10) Maximize the range of recreational opportunities by providing park facilities that are not available in the city or towns.
- 11) Encourage participation in recreational facilities by the school systems.
- 12) Expand on the 1983 Bikeway Plan and the Indiana Trails 2000 guide to develop and expand trails and linear paths (e.g. along greenways on Kokomo and Wildcat Creek).
- 13) Call for the establishment of a regional park system to operate and manage all parks.
- 14) Plan to connect Kokomo to the reservoir as development occurs.

* The bold strategies listed above are considered higher priorities based on citizen and steering committee input.

Parks & Recreation

PARK ENHANCEMENTS

Many times people think of active recreation (e.g. sports fields and playgrounds) when the term “park” is used. However, passive recreation, such as picnic areas, shelters, and natural areas are essential complements to a high quality park system. Passive recreation is becoming the most demanded additions to park systems nationwide, and reciprocally are becoming heavily used facilities in park systems.

In addition to natural areas, trails and paths that connect parks, schools, neighborhoods and other destinations are seen as important components. Kokomo has already begun developing trail amenities in conjunction with its parks and has had marked success.

Most cities and towns in the county have directed their resources to develop active recreational opportunities, as they should. To complement these existing facilities, the county should focus primarily on creating passive recreational opportunities. Several excellent opportunities exist in the county that can serve as catalysts. One of these opportunities include improving the facilities at the reservoir. Additional opportunities for passive recreation include utilizing undevelopable floodplain areas along Wildcat Creek and Kokomo Creek. These areas can serve as linear parks and green space.

It is anticipated that the county could receive land donations if it advertises and promotes such an idea. It is believed that the atmosphere is ripe for passive recreation and that interested persons will want to aid in the county’s desire to improve park amenities.

The Trust for Public Land and other agencies can be instrumental in organizing and facilitating the transfer of land to the county. The Trust for Public Land is capable of maximizing tax benefits to donors of land and minimizing costs to the county.

Even in the event the county can receive donations, the county must consider the loss of tax base from those parcels, the cost of improving the land, and maintenance costs. To mitigate these costs, a “Friends of the Park” organization can be established to help maintain parks and local talent can be used to make the initial improvements.

As mentioned in the economic development chapter, quality-of-life factors contribute to economic vitality. It is believed that parks contribute to an increased quality-of-life, and therefore, improve upon the county’s economic vitality.

Parks improve community aesthetics, provide places to de-stress and exercise, and promote a clean environment. They can also provide educational opportunities for school systems and are popular places for family recreation. National surveys have indicated that active and passive parks are important to home buyers. Other studies have concluded that homes built next to public greenways or parks are likely to command the same or greater premium (value of home) as a home built on a golf course.

Interjurisdictional Cooperation

Chapter Eleven



Interjurisdictional Cooperation

INTRODUCTION

All developments and changes in the county have the potential for affecting the municipalities in the county. Essentially, the positive and negative impacts of development do not stop at jurisdictional lines. The municipalities and county must share the responsibility to work together to provide an environment that enhances the positive impacts while minimizing the negative. Therefore, communication, coordination and inter-local agreements are the key to successful management of growth throughout the county.

Communities plan not because laws allow them to, but in order to better provide for the health, safety and general welfare of their citizens. They also plan in order to assure fiscally responsible growth. For these reasons, each community has a need to influence growth and development in close proximity and within its corporate limits.

It is the hope of this plan that community participate in drafting, adopting and following the policies and guidelines necessary to establish cooperative planning. The policies and guidelines must then be consistently followed by each municipal jurisdiction to maintain consistency and predictability in cooperative planning.

On this and following page the Interjurisdictional Cooperation goal, objectives, and strategies are listed.

GOAL

Improve Interjurisdictional communication and interaction in order to provide for coordinated growth and development of the county and efficient provision of services.

Interjurisdictional Cooperation

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Develop a Technical Review Committee comprised of various representatives of city/town and county government to better coordinate the review of development proposals within the county.
- 2) Develop a regular (quarterly/semiannual) round table to discuss inter-jurisdictional issues.
- 3) Publicize examples of cooperation between government entities to the public.
- 4) Establish written policies and guidelines to clearly define the roles of each government agency in extraterritorial areas.
- 5) Develop and promote zoning ordinances, subdivision control ordinances, and procedures that are complementary between communities.

STRATEGIES

- 1) Work with each community to determine ways to synchronize and improve consistency between regulatory documents.**
- 2) Work to coordinate transportation, facility, infrastructure, environmental and economic development planning. Also coordinate park and recreational facility improvements.**
- 3) Study opportunities to combine some municipal and county services to more efficiently serve the public (e.g. building inspections and park maintenance).**
- 4) Establish inter-local agreements as necessary to solidify policies and coordination processes.
- 5) Conduct a study to determine significant differences in land management, zoning, subdivision control, and procedures between each community.
- 6) Howard County should strive to understand the annexation and growth goals for each municipality within the county.
- 7) Develop a transitional plan regarding the shift in public services when annexations take place.
- 8) Strive to establish a clear vision for the county with buy-in from each municipality.
- 9) Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the county and municipalities when development is proposed in extraterritorial areas.
- 10) Call for a plan/study to provide fire and basic life services (i.e. ambulance) more effectively to citizens.

* The bold strategies listed above are considered higher priorities based on citizen and steering committee input.

Interjurisdictional Cooperation

Conclusion

Chapter Twelve



Conclusion

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

An important part of a successful comprehensive plan is a plan for its implementation. While it is an enormous accomplishment for the county just preparing this document, the real “work” is still to come.

The intent of this comprehensive plan is to provide a framework for implementation, but not the exact course of action. To determine the exact course, the county should first prepare an implementation plan to complement the Howard County Comprehensive Plan. The next step is to implement some of the objectives and strategies listed throughout the comprehensive plan.

The implementation plan should outline the five most important issues to address and then devise the means to accomplish those projects. The plan should only address what can be done in a one to three year timeframe and then be reviewed and updated every year following. The implementation plan will likely only need to be five to ten pages in length to explain:

- What needs to be accomplished,
- How it will be accomplished,
- Who or what group will be responsible for the implementation,
- What financial or staff resources will be necessary to complete the project, and
- What is the priority of the projects, programs and policies.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN MAINTENANCE

The comprehensive plan cannot be viewed as a static “set in stone,” series of unalterable ideas and projects. To be effective, it must be reviewed, evaluated, and when necessary, updated to reflect changing trends, outlooks, and big picture thinking in the community. In doing so, the community can collectively plan for the future in a proactive manner, thus capturing opportunities and avoiding potential pitfalls.

To achieve this result, the County Plan Commission will strive to:

- 1) Annually review the Howard County Comprehensive Plan. This review should look for minor amendments and be used to familiarize the Plan Commission with its content; and
- 2) Comprehensively review the Howard County Comprehensive Plan every five years. This review should include public workshops, interest group interviews, and full scrutiny of the content and maps. A five year revision schedule is the most cost effective means to maintain the comprehensive plan and will result in greater appreciation for community planning.

Part 3

 **Appendix**

Appendix A - Key Interest Group Interview Results

KEY INTEREST GROUP INTERVIEWS

Key interest group interviews were held on March 25, 2003 and resulted in significant insight into current conditions in the county. The interest groups invited to participate included agriculture, real estate, builders, developers, environment, business, chamber of commerce, industry, and schools. In total, 22 persons participated in the key interest group interviews.

All of the following information is included in this Appendix is for information purposes and is not a formal part of the Howard County Comprehensive Plan. The following pages list by group the comments recorded during the five interview sessions.

Agricultural Interests

- Less than 2% of population is involved in production
- Agriculture is a strong economic base – farmers are an economic force and should be considered
- Land is poorly drained – water table within 3 ft. of surface on 70% of land
- Shouldn't use prime agricultural land for housing
- Strips of frontage homes are bad (strip development)
- Homes cause drainage issues for others
- Drainage must be considered
- High water table is good for farming
- Septic systems/wells in county compound future problems
- Brookston-Crosby soils are prime
- Good county road system comparatively
- Increased traffic and number of mailboxes causes problems for maneuvering farm equipment
- Size of implements have increased greatly
- Threat to freedom to farm as people move out to the country and do not like the noise, dust and chemicals that come along with living in the “country”
- Gardens are placed too close to farms
- Need to recognize farming as a sophisticated industry just like Delphi
- Few alternative crops grown – some small organic, some tomatoes, some pretty large hog operations, some dairy, a few beef
- Main crops are corn and soybeans
- Large amount of prime agricultural land in Howard County
- Should identify prime agricultural areas and natural resource areas and protect them from development
- Southeast/Taylor Township approximately 90% prime agricultural land
- Legal drains can't handle the drainage from subdivisions
- No one has studied which drains are at capacity
- Five-acre lot in the country is too much because it is too much to mow, not enough to support a horse; one acre is plenty big for a house in the country
- Need to balance farmland preservation and the right to make a profit on your land
- Lots in the country should be designed as a subdivision with community septic systems and retention ponds with one driveway on the county road
- Need to increase the road fee attached to county lots
- People move out to the country for the life-style, property tax advantages, and certain school districts
- Need a plan – now we are “going through water without an oar”
- Major water quality issues
- Government is giving money to provide buffer on waterways
- 90% of farmers are environmentally-conscious but many do not have the resources to follow through
- Silting is the primary agricultural pollution concern

Appendix A - Key Interest Group Interview Results

Realtors/Builders/General Interests

- Want a good plan for Howard County that lays out the vision; don't want a plan that is a rule book for what you can/cannot do
- Mission statement should be growth – challenge is how can we do that responsibly?
- Community that is not growing is dying
- Need to provide a vision and the infrastructure to get there
- To have good housing need to deliver sewers further out
- City isn't interested in extending sewers into the county
- Need to overcome some problems between county/city government
- Good to go through the last planning effort – was a learning experience
- Need to protect private property rights in light of community's best interest
- Encourage commercial growth – jobs = homes
- Strip development can cause traffic problems/safety issues but internal streets can increase development costs
- Don't want to tie the farmers hand to sell but also don't want sprawl
- Growth is best contiguous to the city
- Should consider county sewer districts that are strategically placed to encourage development in areas where growth has already occurred
- Bad perception about septic systems but not backed up by science – with new technology septic systems can be a long-term answer to on-site sewage disposal
- Not one case of septic contributing to ground water contamination in Indian Guidelines to discourage the wholesale spread of homes in prime agricultural land is OK; should allow development but set standards for drainage, road capacity, etc. That would increase the cost of land to limit growth without prohibiting it
- Logical corridors for growth mostly follow streams/topography – to get growth to happen in that direction, extend sewers in that area
- Most people choose to live in communities than in the country
- People live everywhere in Howard County – not really an agricultural community; growth patterns have already occurred
- Give people options – things to overcome but still allow development
- Running out of lots for high end development
- 450 lots on the market – has remained constant over the last 5 years; high for a community this size
- Housing industry will match first quarter 2002 numbers by the end of March
- Concerned about low-income housing – more problematic in the city limits
- 106,000 is the average home price in Howard County
- High vacancy rate in apartment and rental properties
- Condominium market is really strong
- What is quality of life? What is able to be implemented?
- Worried that the community isn't growing
- Don't think the Comprehensive Plan can't start growth but it could stop growth
- Need to be diversified
- People have the incomes but don't want to pay for certain things, will go out of town to buy things available in town
- There is a shortage of high-end lots but not sure the demand is there
- Needs to be an easier way to connect to sewers
- Demand is for \$150,000-200,000 but not building that product; building at the ends of the spectrum
- Desire to build in the city limits due to schools/sports
- Don't want the county to be filled with ½ complete subdivisions
- Not growing, trading houses, not demolishing as fast as building

Appendix A - Key Interest Group Interview Results

- Shouldn't take away farmer's right to sell or develop by protecting farmland
- Do we have more farmland than we need?
- Have to accommodate people who don't want to live in subdivisions
- Is there a boilerplate formula for the number of curb cuts and speed limits that increase traffic accidents
- Sharing services creates need for homeowner associations which can be difficult
- Larger homeowner association works better than small ones
- Should accept forced mains/lift stations rather than needing gravity mains
- Give planning office some discretionary powers
- Silting is the primary agricultural pollution concern
- Not opposed to sidewalks or bikeways if part of the plan

Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development Interests

- Economy/infrastructure are the issues not the plan
- Seen as an easy place to do business
- Economic development people bring together government entities to the table
- Infrastructure/utilities are in place
- Good workforce
- Perception is a major factor
- Can get a great education if you want it – diverse experiences are available
- Worry about restaurant saturation but they all seem to be busy
- Higher end retail is needed – only 2 places in Kokomo to buy a suit
- Housing is not an issue – large range of prices, several higher end areas available
- Economic development focus is 1st on retention/expansion, 2nd on attraction, 3rd on growing our own (incubator concept – using engineering talents in the area, technology focus); 1 and 3 are legit, 2 is not very viable)
- Have not felt the impact of plants downsizing because there have been offsets
- Kokomo has weathered the economy extremely well
- Taxes/state budgets are an issue
- Momentum for US 31 is for it to be built on the east side of Kokomo
- Not having an interstate is like not having a waterway
- 26 from I-65 to I-69 is important and vital for economic development but not on the state's radar beside typical improvement
- Only so much growth potential in the city, so need to be able to grow on the borders
- Greentown wants to be a bedroom community – no industrial growth
- Bypass on east side would help the airport
- The airport is not well used

Appendix A - Key Interest Group Interview Results

Environmental Interests

- Need a well balanced plan that looks to the future and discourages random/haphazard growth
- Housing development is very scattered
- Strip development is a problem
- Developments should be more community focused
- Development in farming areas/wetlands is not sustainable in the long run
- Need a setback from ALL water bodies (50-100', or use the county drain standard of 75') and require maintenance. Should be treated as a minimum building setback; should apply to anything man made but at a minimum structures; mowing and dumping are problems
- Runoff during construction is an issue; should define runoff control in plans.
- Less than 5% of streams are buffered
- There are a number of impaired streams in the county mainly due to E. Coli, PCBs, mercury
- Reactive methods of doing business in the county
- Should use the knowledge about how to manage the environment and be proactive so problems do not need to be fixed later and at a greater expense
- Need to maintain natural systems
- Ideally no filling in the floodplain
- County spends money to tear down flooding but allows haphazard filling in the floodplain which decreases storage capacity and water quality
- Howard County is one of the few community's who drink surface water – need to protect it
- We are moving wetlands like we move furniture
- Wetlands in floodplain and bottomlands can't be replaced
- Need a clear definition of wetlands
- Need timely wetland mitigation
- To be technical ¾ of county is a swamp
- Septic systems shouldn't be allowed in unsuitable soils
- Buffers should be addressed – should be around agriculture to protect farmers to continue their operations, also around the airport and industry
- Identify areas that are better to be built on than others and steer growth in that direction
- Wildcat Creek has aesthetic benefits that should be addressed, outstanding recreation resource that should be recognized, help the state establish public access sites
- Sedimentation and erosion control are issues
- Population density changes the character and needs of an area
- Drainage ditches are different from streams – man made verses natural area/habitat
- Safety issues which rise with sprawl/strip development
- Shouldn't treat (dredge) natural drainage ways like legal drains
- Baby steps are good – rather take small steps than lose out all together
- Need to get people to see the Wildcat Creek and appreciate it
- On any parcel of land should try to have a certain percent of greenspace, impervious surface, and trees to make a difference to the environmental health of the community
- Need definitions of legal drains and streams
- A greenways plan would help define and regulate different areas
- Should seek larger undeveloped park areas for hiking and nature study
- Provide parking access sites to creek where parking is safe and access for fishing or hiking is available
- Create some sort of extended hiking trail along the creek or convert abandoned railroad bed to hiking, biking, rollerblading trail (e.g. railroad track from Kokomo through Russiaville to Frankfort)
- Promote preservation of wildlife habitat of all sizes using education and incentives but especially wooded areas along creeks

Appendix A - Key Interest Group Interview Results

Educational and Library Interests

- Library now has 26 public computers
- More library programming, libraries are becoming community/cultural centers
- Library is asking the arts groups what they could do to help
- Next 5 years – library becoming cultural center, small theatre, art gallery
- Senior citizens using library services greatly
- Northwestern School has an ongoing strategic plan – updated annually; also has a task force working on facility improvements
- Northwestern is wrestling with what to do with a new elementary school – do they consolidate or maintain two schools
- Student population at Northwestern has remained stagnant over the last 10 years
- Western is probably the only growing school district
- Space wise schools are adequate
- Could improve cultural/aesthetics
- A few continued education opportunities but highly coordinated with K-12 like parenting class
- Library has morning computer classes but more special interest quality of life
- Ivy Tech – IU Kokomo have outreach programs that don't require you to be in school
- IU Kokomo library is open to the public
- Educationally/culturally there is a lot available
- Better parks with facilities would be useful – most are dedicated to traditional parks uses, trails would be good, youth activity centers at parks
- County parks system was abandoned in the 80's and given to the trustees
- Trail would be good, a large contingent of bicycle users are in the county
- There are shortcomings with alternative education – dealing with at-risk youth
- Struggle with the size of schools and the classwork being offered
- Kokomo CLEA – provides vocational, special education. This is a mechanism to cooperate between schools, may have to use this mechanism to provide certain content areas
- Many universities are nearby so finding teachers is not an issue
- Staffing issue is due to budget constraints not availability
- Library just completed a feasibility study regarding the main branch – called for 80,000 square foot facility
- Increasing Chinese population
- Growing Hispanic population
- 8 western townships in Howard County are served by the Kokomo-Howard County public library; 3 eastern townships are served by the Greentown library which is combination school/library
- Might be better if one library for the whole county – people served by Greentown do not get the full range of services that others get

Appendix B - Community Leaders Workshop Results

In addition to the key interest group interviews, another input session was conducted to gain the perspective of various government leaders in Howard County. Approximately 30 representatives shared their concerns and hopes for the future of the county.

All of the following information is included in this Appendix is for information purposes and is not a formal part of the Howard County Comprehensive Plan. The information listed below is a summary of the various comments recorded during the course of the discussion.

- The community would benefit from working toward offering the best school system and educated workforce in the state
- City and county governments should collaborate in extending infrastructure, especially storm and sanitary sewers, into the county to promote prosperous growth
- Should create a county sewer district and promote the proper applications of on-site sewer systems to generate cost effective building sites
- Should establish incentives to attract new business such as tax breaks, free utilities for industries and land at low or no cost; what we are currently doing is not working, should be creative and make changes in order to move forward
- The community would benefit from a new spirit of cooperation between city and county governments, there are good examples of the entities working together but could be improved
- Should take the proposed upgrades of US 31 into consideration when preparing the plan
- Tax breaks and other incentives sound good but the county does not always have the resources to offer incentives, the money would have to be provided from within the community. There is a price to pay for this type of growth, should be research and education regarding where the finances would come from
- Kokomo's quality of life is better than most crowded communities. The community is geographically located, having a stone quarry, train terminal, public reservoir and various other amenities. We are strategically located so residents can find a large variety of things to do within an hour's drive or less from Kokomo
- County has done fairly well without a comprehensive plan
- Should identify soil types before deciding which areas are prime farm ground that should be preserved
- Concerned about protecting property owner's rights
- Water quality related to the Wildcat Creek is very important
- Farmers have already implemented buffer strips to filter out pesticides and animal waste to help protect the water quality in streams
- Natural waterways should not be disturbed
- Man doesn't do as good of a job as the natural systems already in place – shouldn't disturb our natural systems, in the long run money would be saved if development locates further away from streams
- The plan should identify land use areas that might encroach upon each other in order to reduce islands of a particular type of use
- The comprehensive plan shouldn't just focus on 20 years, should be an ongoing project and be reviewed every 5 to 7 years
- The plan should be flexible
- Should review the progress of the community in the past 10 years
- The steering committee needs ample time to review the draft of the plan
- The new plan needs to have vision for the community and establish a process to help it grow
- The plan should inspire home ownership, extend infrastructure into the county, offer incentives for business growth, promote superior education, protect natural resources and not contain unreasonable restrictions

Appendix C - Public Workshop Results

A series of workshops were conducted on April 15th and 17th at five locations throughout Howard County. Multiple dates and locations were chosen in order to provide the greatest opportunity for public input across a cross section of the community. The purpose of the workshop was to determine the strengths, weaknesses, needs and dreams of the county.

All of the following information is included in this Appendix is for information purposes and is not a formal part of the Howard County Comprehensive Plan. Listed below are the findings generated from the workshop discussions.

LIABILITIES

Environment & Recreation

- Lack of outdoor recreation opportunities
- No protection of the natural environment
- Too much wetland mitigation & uncoordinated relocation of wetlands
- Not thinking about ditches, wetland, floodplain in regards to water quality
- Environment suffers from development
- Building in the floodplain
- Unsafe water through parks – kids can't play in them
- High mercury in streams
- Lack of activities for kids (especially middle/high school age)
- Parks aren't people, family or user friendly

Land Use/Growth

- Currently developing regardless of overall costs to the community
- Not reusing/rebuilding
- Lack of creative developers
- Easy to develop in county due to lack of regulation
- Spotty growth in rural areas
- Development in airport hazard areas
- Do not have low income, smaller housing (lowest price points)
- Not aesthetically appealing or clean
- More people
- People buy land along roads because they do not have options

Infrastructure

- No sewers in the county; Utilities not moved out to county
- Greentown sewers are over capacity
- Highway through Greentown severs pedestrian traffic – “like a river with no bridge”
- Through traffic needs an alternate route through Greentown
- Increased truck traffic threatens small community character
- Road improvements in city end when they hit the county
- County roads need improvement
- Traffic planning & foresight such as ensuring building setbacks and ROW
- Unclean side ditches
- No utilities or sewer plan
- Failing septic systems with no sewers or plan for them
- Lot size is too small to accommodate septic systems

Appendix C - Public Workshop Results

- Increased traffic/difficult traffic flow
- Greentown on sewer bans
- Increased state regulation regarding septic systems
- No hierarchical thoroughfare plan

Government

- Cities & county do not work well together
- Lack of real planning
- No county administrator – too micro-managed
- Lack of government foresight
- Reactive not proactive government
- Lack of coordination/vision in the county & city governments

Economy

- Loss of jobs and employment opportunities
- Can not exchange money in town
- Not enticing people who grew up here to stay
- County moving backward
- What are major employers doing to promote the community?
- Industrial jobs leaving faster than coming in
- Lack of service oriented businesses

Quality of Life

- Signage
- Aesthetics could be improved
- Gateways not appealing
- Lack of small coffee shops
- No place for kids to congregate or hang out
- Small community
- Lack of cultural events, opportunities and activities
- Lack of diversity
- Known as “factory” or “blue collar” town
- No classy nice restaurant
- Crime rate – north end of Kokomo reputation of drug problems
- High divorce rates
- Unused, damaged buildings are not addressed

Appendix C - Public Workshop Results

ASSETS

The following are the assets as indicated by the public.

Environment/Recreation

- Wildcat Creek
- Highland Park
- Reservoir
- PAL facilities
- Excellent farmland

Economy

- Good high paying jobs
- New business incubator
- Close to family and work – easy to commute to work and get to destinations
- Good industrial layout – central location in Kokomo
- Small communities not pestered by commercialism or industry

Infrastructure

- County road condition and maintenance program; good county road improvement system, especially compared to other counties
- Taylor sewer district
- Not that many failing septic systems
- Russiaville – planning for water and wastewater

Quality-of-Life

- Clean healthy community
- Friendly, warm people; Small town atmosphere and community pride
- Community theatre
- Symphony
- Conveniences yet not a big city; quiet, peaceful small towns
- Small towns to live in close to Kokomo
- IU Kokomo
- Golf courses
- Safe community; Low crime
- Increase in population brings more business
- Sense of your own space – country life-style
- Good schools, especially in the county
- Family roots
- High quality of life
- Affordable, high quality housing
- Johanning Center
- City and county are working better together
- Different size of communities to pick from
- Libraries
- Two hospitals
- Variety of shopping and eating establishments

Appendix C - Public Workshop Results

NEEDS

At the conclusion of each workshop, those attending were given the opportunity to prioritize the needs of Howard County. Each participant was given three stickers for “voting”. The individual had the option of placing all three stickers on a single need he or she felt was most important, or placing a single sticker next to three different needs. Listed below are all the needs mentioned at the workshops. They are ranked according to the number of votes each received as indicated by the number in parentheses.

- Extend sewers to the county or develop rural sewer districts (10)
- Protect natural areas such as the Wildcat Creek for public access and outdoor recreational uses (5)
- Planned growth to minimize urban sprawl (a guide not a set of restrictions) (5)
- Better coordination between the cities, towns and county (5)
- County administrator (5)
- Encourage reuse, rehabilitation and historic preservation (4)
- Infrastructure (4)
- County sewage treatment facility (4)
- Partnerships between government entities, utilities, and businesses to draw new businesses and provide support for start up or small businesses (4)
- Better promotion of Howard County, sell the community better (3)
- Orderly change that uses tax dollars effectively (3)
- Better planning and protection of the environment (3)
- Improved aesthetics and cleanliness (3)
- Diversification of industry (3)
- Balance environmental quality and development (3)
- Community/social center/YMCA for kids to hang out, possibly a joint venture with the private sector (3)
- Establish/increase cultural amenities (3)
- More parks and recreation/Improve safety and usability of parks/county parks board (2)
- Keep younger generations in the community – give them reasons to come back (1)
- Protect prime farmland (1)
- Look for additional funding mechanisms (1)
- Houses set back more from road (1)
- Activities in parks for kids (1)
- Commercial park and incentive package for small and start up businesses (1)
- Improve perceptions or perceived value of the community so that more people choose to live here (1)
- More community involvement from major employers (1)
- Quality low-income housing
- Mass transportation
- Small retail (food and goods)
- Capturing commuters to live in the county
- Utilize airport and develop appropriately around it
- Restaurants on the west side of town
- Encourage better site work and details such as landscaping
- Keep Wildcat Creek clean
- Attract services/convenience activities and facilities
- Upscale, nice restaurant(s)
- Better use of the Johanning Center
- Increase white collar verses blue collar jobs
- Shopping mixed use villages

Appendix C - Public Workshop Results

DREAMS

- Cultural center – arts, small performances and lectures
- Move people away from Wildcat Creek – make it all park land
- Give monetary awards for property owners to set aside greenspace – to establish greenspace corridors
- Greenspace in downtown (trees, fountains, green) or business districts
- Public restroom downtown
- Public mushroom parks
- Control water runoff and water quality
- Series of villages with a mix of uses
- Buy reservoir and land around it
- County infrastructure plan to be cohesive with the city
- Casino on the reservoir
- Good road system/bypass loop around Kokomo (Center Road/Alto/Morgan Street/E-W artery)
- Restaurants on the west side
- Like Columbus, Indiana – landscaping, parks, hide industrial areas
- Wilderness recreation opportunity (i.e. like a state park)
- Improve housing, infrastructure on the north side of Kokomo
- Nice industrial park for new businesses – trails/daycare
- Build a major theater for performances in a park
- County leaders working together on the same plan
- Opportunities for kids, safe parks/activities, children’s museum
- Dinner theater
- Community would diversify – not reliant on two businesses
- Updated sewer/storm system so you can fish in Wildcat Creek
- Cohesive, intelligent land use plan