

Source: The Parke County CVC



PARKE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Adopted by Resolution 2025-11 on September 15, 2025

PARKE COUNTY, INDIANA
RESOLUTION NO. 2025-11

A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF PARKE COUNTY, INDIANA, APPROVING AND ADOPTING
THE 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

RECITALS

- A. The Parke County Plan Commission, in accordance with Indiana Code § 36-7-4-500 et seq., has held a public hearing on August 28, 2025 for the proposed 2025 update to Parke County's Comprehensive Plan.
- B. The Parke County Plan Commission certified its unanimous recommendation that the Commissioners of Parke County, Indiana ("County," respectively) approve and adopt the updated Comprehensive Plan.
- C. The Commissioners find that the proposed update provides for the continued responsible growth and development of the County.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Commissioners of the Parke County, as follows:

Section 1. The foregoing Recitals are fully incorporated herein by this reference.

Section 2. The Commissioners hereby approve and adopt the proposed update to Parke County's Comprehensive Plan which shall replace the current Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map upon adoption of this Resolution.

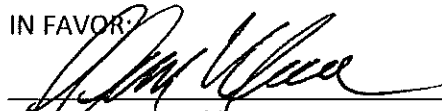
Section 3. This Resolution shall be in full force and effect from and after its adoption.

[Signature Page Follows]

2025.

THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE
PARKE COUNTY, INDIANA

IN FAVOR:



Jim Meece, President



Dan Collom, Vice President

Bruce Hartman, Member

OPPOSED:

Jim Meece, President

Dan Collom, Vice President

Bruce Hartman, Member

ATTEST:



Susan Kramer, Auditor

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We owe deep gratitude to the many residents who offered their time, energy, and local expertise to create an even stronger Parke County. This plan would not have been possible without their insight and the guidance of the project steering committee, county leadership, and staff.

Steering Committee

Beth Martin, Planning Commission Director

Chris Herschberger, Amish Community Representative, Business Owner

Chris Marsolf, Plan Commission President

Cyndi Todd, Parke County Partnership Executive Director

Elam Swarey, Amish Community Representative

Heather Thompson, Parke County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director

Jacob King, Plan Commission Vice President

Jim Meece, Parke County Commissioner, Parke County CVC, Business Owner

Joe Glick, Bishop in the Amish Community

Kurt Lanzone, Purdue Extension Director, Plan Commission

Samuel Zook, Amish Community Representative, Business Owner

Parke County Commissioners

Bruce Hartman

Dan Collom

Jim Meece

Parke County Council

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James Howard

Mary Alice Gregg

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Parke County Plan Commission

Chris Marsolf, President

Jacob King, Vice President

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Paul Myers

Steve Stewart

Warren Brown

Prepared by:



HWC
ENGINEERING

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Source: The Parke County CVC



01

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

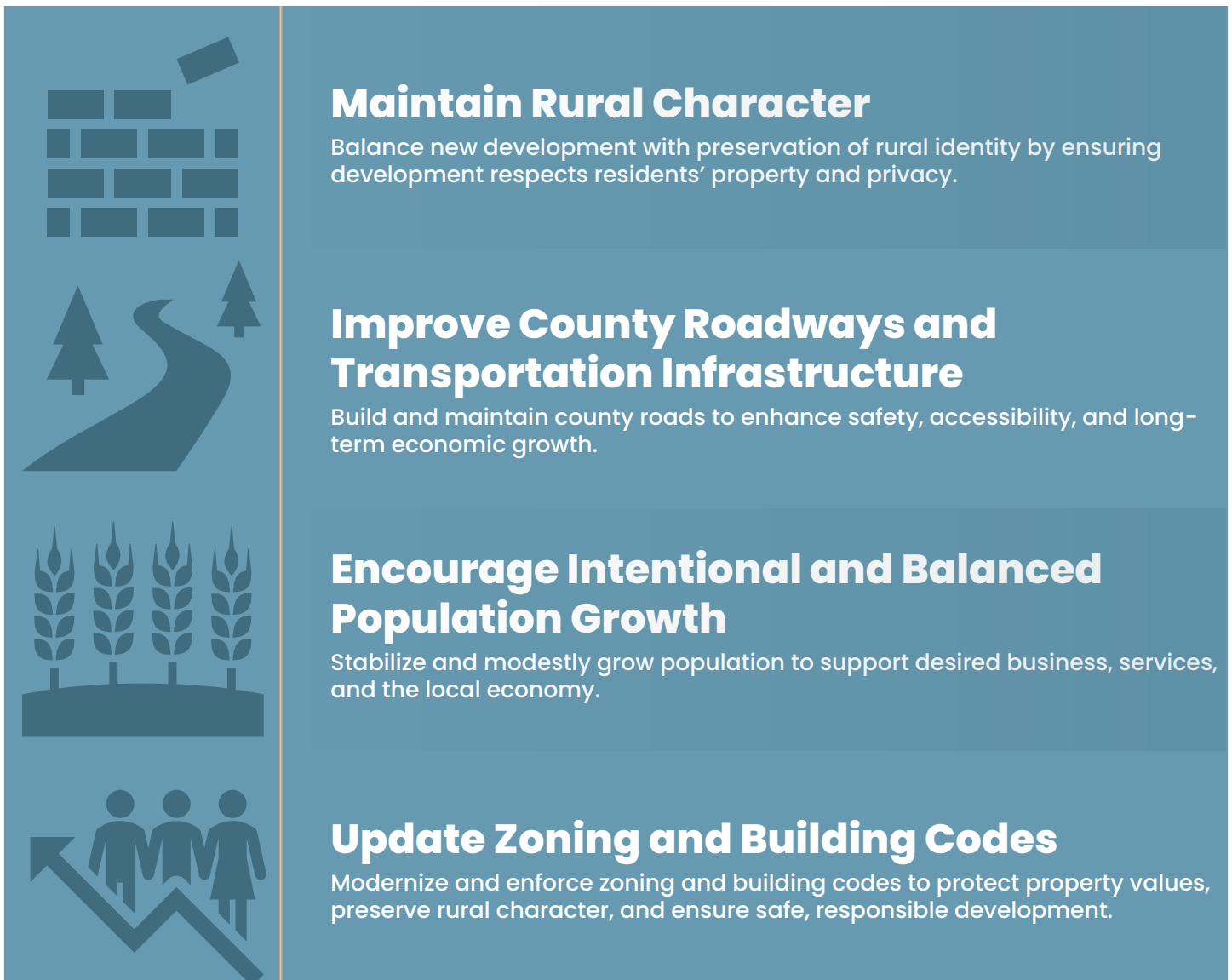
About the Plan

Parke County is defined by its rich agricultural heritage, natural beauty, and deep-rooted rural character. From the iconic Covered Bridge Festival to the serene landscapes of its state parks and lakes, these treasured assets not only reflect the county’s identity but also attract millions of visitors annually. As Parke County looks to the future, this comprehensive plan serves as a road map to build on these strengths while addressing key challenges and guiding responsible growth.

Developed through robust community engagement, including surveys, public meetings, and stakeholder discussions, the plan identifies shared values and goals that resonate across Parke County. It outlines a clear, actionable framework to support decision-making and coordinated investment among residents, businesses, local government, and community organizations.

At the heart of the plan are four central priorities that emerged from the planning process:

Figure 11: Plan Priorities



What Is a Comprehensive Plan?

The Parke County Comprehensive Plan is a long-term guide for land use, development, and community investment over the next 15–20 years. It provides local leaders with a framework for making decisions on transportation, utilities, growth, and related issues.

The plan includes an assessment of current conditions such as demographics and the built and natural environment – and reflects input from the community to establish a shared vision and goals.

Required by Indiana Code 36-7-4 (500 Series), the plan outlines objectives and policies for land use and public infrastructure, aiming to promote public health, safety, and general welfare. While it is not a regulatory document and does not change zoning, the plan includes a future land use map to help guide decisions made by the Parke County Advisory Plan Commission, Commissioners on zoning change requests and other development proposals.

Why Does Parke County Need a New Comprehensive Plan?

Parke County’s previous comprehensive plan is nearly 20 years old as there has been significant local, state, and global changes occurring since then. Economic shifts, evolving state and federal policies, and new community priorities all underscore the need for an updated plan. A new comprehensive plan will provide Parke County’s leaders with clear guidance on the county’s current direction, grounded in the values and vision of its residents and stakeholders.

This comprehensive plan will guide decisions related to policies, programs, and capital investments – especially those concerning land use and development. It also serves as a resource for understanding local conditions and demographics and articulating long-term goals for the community. As a living document, the plan should be updated regularly to remain relevant amid changing demographics, technologies, and environmental conditions.



Source: Parke County Covered Bridge Festival



Source: Christopher A Newcomb

Plan Organization

The comprehensive plan is organized into six chapters, which identify existing conditions, opportunities, and challenges which will influence the future of Parke County. These chapters include:

01 Executive Summary

Introduces the plan, its purpose, organization, and key initiatives.

02 Planning Overview

Introduces the Parke County Comprehensive Plan, including a description of the planning process, public engagement activities, and the scope of the plan.

03 Public Engagement

Presents the results of the engagement opportunities offered throughout the planning process and the emerging themes that were identified.

04 Future Land Use

Presents objectives and a map to guide development and land use decisions.

05 Priorities, Goals, and Objectives

Analyzes the existing conditions and provides goals and objectives to address key topics, including land use, housing, economic development, transportation, quality of place, community facilities and infrastructure, and parks and open space.

06 Implementation Plan

Details the actions and funding strategies needed to carry out the plan's goals.



Public Workshop on March 25, 2025



Public Workshop on March 25, 2025

Source: Christopher A Newcomb



Source: The Parke County CVC





02

PLANNING OVERVIEW

Comprehensive Planning Overview

A comprehensive plan is a long-range policy guide for a community based on its current demographic, economic, and development trends. To ensure the plan continues to align with the needs of residents, businesses, and community leaders, the goals and objectives within a comprehensive plan should be reviewed annually and updated from time to time.

Purpose of the Plan

This plan provides a framework for future land use and policy decisions, a tool to navigate emerging challenges while building on existing strengths. As required by Indiana Code 36-7-4 (500 Series), the plan outlines objectives and policies for land use and public infrastructure, aiming to promote public health, safety, and general welfare. Parke County's previous comprehensive plan was adopted in 2007, meaning nearly two decades have passed without an update. With advancements in technology, shifting commuting patterns and job demands, and evolving resident preferences, there is a growing need for a shared vision for the future one that residents, business owners, and community leaders can collectively support.

Scope of the Plan

The Parke County Comprehensive Plan outlines land use, policy, and programmatic recommendations for the unincorporated areas of Parke County. As a result, authorities and decision makers in incorporated communities such as Rockville, Montezuma, and Bloomingdale are not directly affected by the plan. However, the plan is intended to support the overall well-being of all county residents through informed decision-making. The county boundary in place at the time of the planning process is shown in Figure 1.1: County Boundary.

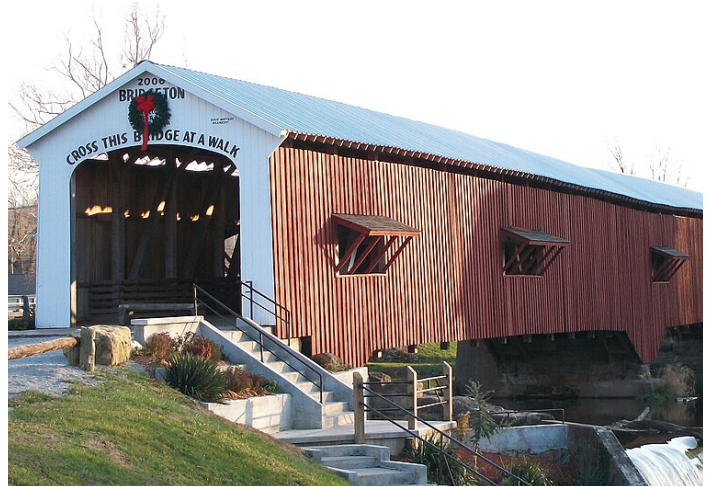


Photo Caption Placeholder

Who Does This Plan Impact?

County leadership is committed to making decisions that positively impact all who live, work, and visit Parke County. As Parke County Planning Commission oversees the unincorporated areas of the county, this plan applies specifically to those areas.

Unincorporated Parke County

- Unincorporated communities in Parke County include: Annapolis, Bellmore, Catlin, Guion, Howard, Judson, Mansfield, Tangier, West Union, and more.

Incorporated towns

- The incorporated communities in Parke County include: Rockville, Montezuma, Mecca, Rosedale, Bloomingdale, and Marshall

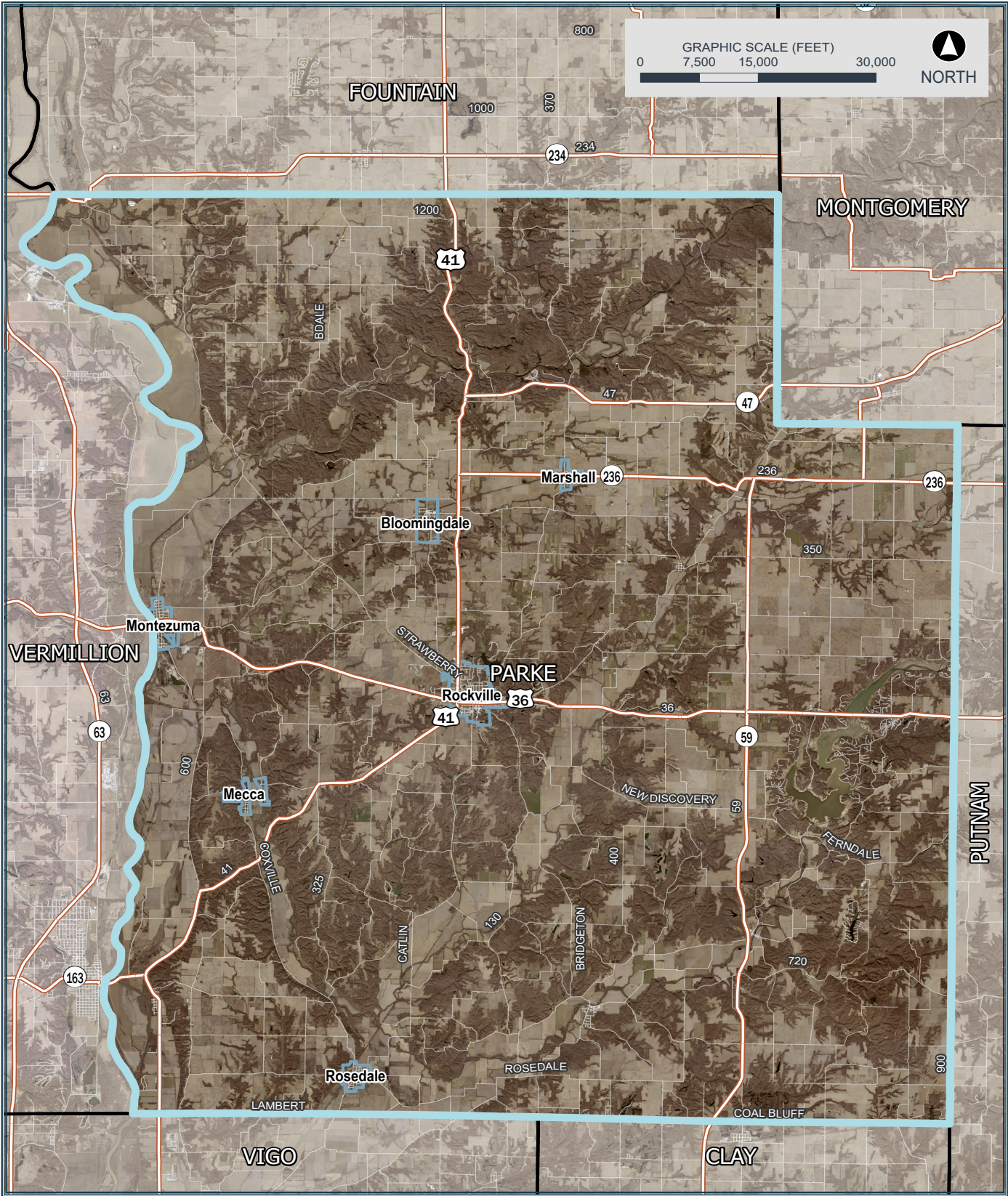


Figure 21: County Boundary

Planning Process

This comprehensive plan is a guide for development that builds on past planning successes, renewed public engagement, and guidance from community leaders. The planning process took place over a 9-month period and included multiple public engagement opportunities. They involved elected officials, local businesses, community organizations, county staff, and residents. Community input directly informed the goals and objectives outlined in this document. The development of a future land use map and long-term initiatives for the county were also directly influenced by public engagement. The planning process was organized into four distinct phases:

01 Cast a Vision

January 2025 - February 2025

The project team built a working relationship between staff, formed the steering committee, and conducted preliminary research. Activities completed:

- Steering Committee Pre-Meeting Survey
- Steering Committee #1
- Data Collection and Demographic Profile

02 Engagement

March 2025 - April 2025

This phase focused on public engagement, both online and in-person. Engagement opportunities included an online public input survey, public workshop, and a focus group discussion with stakeholders. Activities completed:

- Public Workshop
- Online Public Survey
- Focus Group Meeting
- Public Participation Report

03 Strategies

April 2025 - July 2025

The project team developed and refined recommendations for the plan based on feedback from the steering committee. Preliminary findings were presented to the public at the big ideas open house. Activities completed:

- Draft Goals and Objectives
- Steering Committee #2
- Steering Committee #3
- Big Ideas Open House
- Rough Draft of Plan
- Steering Committee #4

04 Adoption

August 2025 - September 2025

The project team prepared an action plan to guide implementation of the comprehensive plan. A public draft was made available for review and comment. Activities completed:

- Public Draft of Plan
- Public Presentation
- Plan Commission Public Hearing
- Commissioner Adoption

History and Existing Conditions

Parke County, Indiana, was established in 1821 and is known for its rich agricultural heritage and scenic landscapes. The county lies in the Wabash Valley region and stretches along the Wabash River, a natural feature that played a vital role in its early development.

Early History

Long before European settlement, the area was home to Native American tribes such as the Miami and Shawnee. In the early 1800s, settlers were drawn to the region's fertile soil and abundant natural resources, quickly establishing agriculture as the backbone of the local economy. Crops like corn, wheat, and tobacco thrived, and livestock farming followed. To this day, Parke County's rural character and productive farmland remain defining elements of its identity.

19th and 20th Centuries

By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Parke County had developed a national reputation for its covered bridges, which dotted the countryside and served as essential links in the rural transportation network. Today, the county is home to 31 of these historic bridges, more than any other place in the world, earning it the nickname "Covered Bridge Capital of the World."



1900s Parade, Source: Parke County Covered Bridge Festival

Parke County Today

The following is a snapshot of current conditions in the county. This data, along with public engagement results, provides a foundation for the plan's recommendations.

Population

As of 2022, Parke County's population stood at 16,327, reflecting a 6% decrease since 2010, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Forecasts suggest the county will continue to see a slight but steady decline, with an annual loss of about 0.05% projected through 2029. While small on a year-to-year basis, this gradual shrinking presents long-term challenges for growth, housing demand, planning for future services, and attracting employers.

Age

Parke County is aging. The median age is 43, about five years older than the state average, highlighting a growing need for infrastructure and services that support older adults. Without an influx of younger residents, the county may face workforce shortages and declining school enrollments, along with a narrower tax base to support community needs.

Education

Approximately 86% of Parke County residents age 25 and older have earned at least a high school diploma and 16.5% have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher, both falling short of the statewide average. A lower rate of higher education may make it more difficult to attract new industries and jobs that require advanced training or credentials.

Housing

The median home value in Parke County was \$139,300 in 2023, an increase of 52% since 2010, when the median home value was \$91,600. Much of this is accounted for by natural rates of inflation in the housing market, but still raises questions about affordability, especially if local wages do not keep pace. Adding to this concern is the loss of an estimated 500 housing units since 2010, limiting options for growing families, young professionals, or those looking to relocate to the area.

Workforce

Approximately 6,900 residents ages 16 and older are employed. Service industries (33.7%) and manufacturing (24.6%) employ the largest shares of local workforce. These sectors form the heart of the local economy but also come with vulnerabilities related to outsourcing and automation. Income levels vary widely: 38.2% of households earn less than \$50,000 annually, with 16.2% earning under \$25,000. Yet the mean household income is \$82,749, pointing to disparities in income across the population.

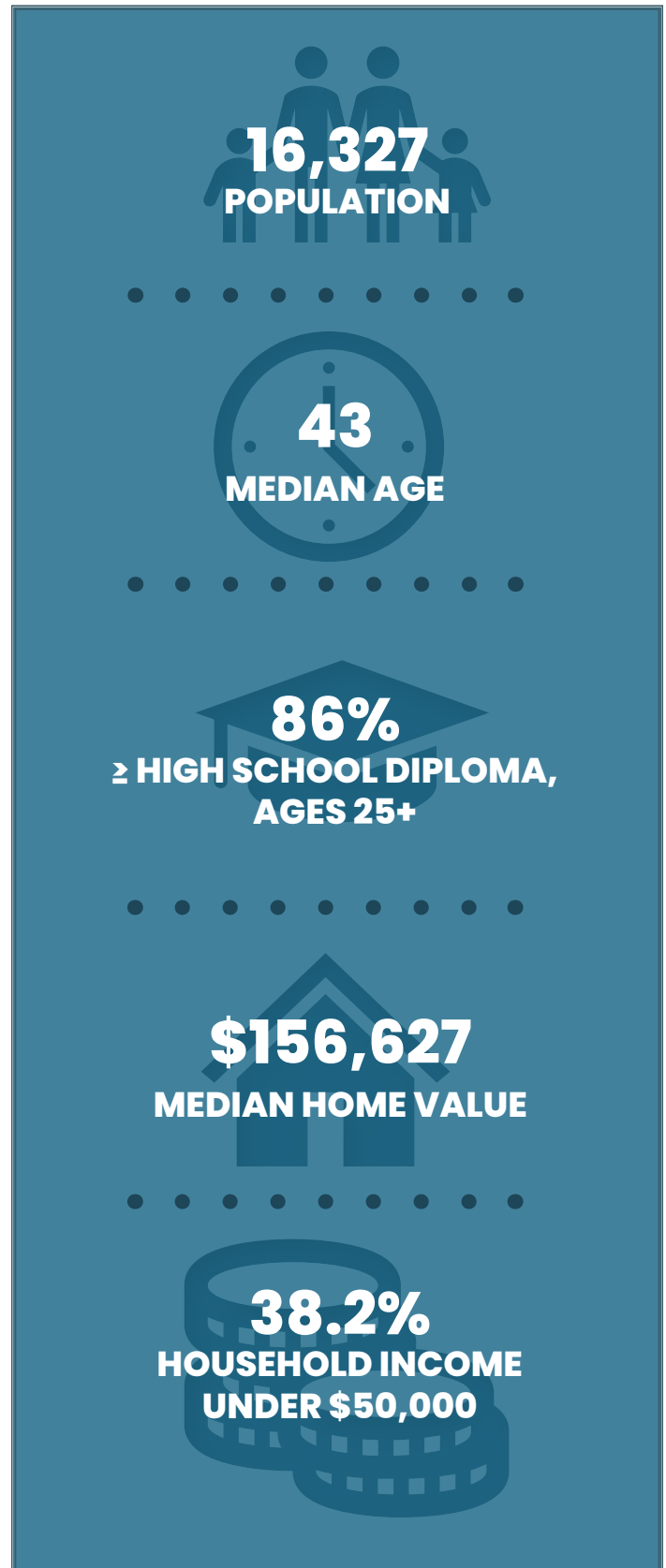
Commuting

Commuting patterns paint a picture of a community that offers a peaceful place to live, but a job market with limited opportunities. Each day, nearly 3,500 people leave the county for jobs, compared to about 1,300 who commute into Parke County. The largest share of outbound commuters travel to Vigo County (1,374 workers), followed by Vermillion County (481) and Clay County (395). These numbers highlight a key tension—Parke County is a desirable place to call home, but local job availability does not yet match that appeal.

Assets

No understanding of Parke County would be complete without mentioning its natural beauty, outdoor recreation, and vibrant festivals. Each year, nearly two million people make their way to Parke County to hike, camp, and unwind at Turkey Run and Shades State Parks, or to celebrate its rustic charm at the annual Covered Bridge Festival. These experiences help define the county, not just as a place to live or work, but as a destination. Tourism and recreation continue to support the local economy and reinforce what makes Parke County truly special: its deep connection to the land, its welcoming communities, and its celebration of tradition and natural wonder.

Sources:
 5-Year ACS Demographic Profiles, 2023
 5-year ACS Commuting Flows, 2023
 ACS Selected Housing Characteristics 5-Year Estimates Data Profile





Source: The Parke County CVC



03

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public Engagement Overview

The public engagement strategy was designed to find common ground among diverse perspectives. The team hosted a series of events to gather input on challenges, opportunities, past growth, and bold ideas for the future. Early engagement included a steering committee meeting, public workshop, focus group meeting, online survey, and open house – with a total of 527 responses gathered. A detailed summary of public engagement may be found in the appendix.

Steering Committee

A volunteer steering committee – made up of nine residents, business owners, elected officials, and local leaders – met three times throughout the planning process. The group guided decision-making around long-term challenges, goals, and objectives. They were also tasked with reviewing draft recommendations and supporting public engagement through promotion and community advocacy.

Online Survey

An online public survey was available from February 17 to April 30, 2025, and was promoted through Parke County’s media channels. A total of 465 people participated, offering feedback on housing preferences, development styles, economic development priorities, and overall perceptions of the county. Open-ended questions allowed respondents to share additional ideas, concerns, and suggestions.

Focus Group Meeting

A focus group was held on April 22, 2025, bringing together county leaders and subject matter experts for a guided discussion on key local issues and opportunities. The 12 participants identified community strengths and needs. Conversation focused on attainable housing, workforce shortages, and the need for updated planning tools such as a zoning ordinance and thoroughfare plan.



Public Workshop on March 25, 2025

Public Workshop

The public was invited to an in-person workshop on March 25, 2025. Facilitated exercises ranged from identifying existing assets and challenges on large aerial maps to identifying preferred types of development. Approximately 40 people attended the workshop.

Big Ideas Open House

An in-person open house was held on June 19, 2025. The lightly attended open house reviewed draft goals and objectives shaped by earlier public input and steering committee guidance. The participants voted on priority items, offered comments and revisions, and weighed in on key issues.

Key Takeaways

The public engagement process revealed that the community is deeply connected to its rural character, natural beauty, and small-town feel. However, participants consistently highlighted the need for better road maintenance, a wider range and more affordable housing options, expanded childcare and healthcare options, and stronger workforce development – particularly in trades and agriculture. Residents expressed a desire to preserve agricultural land and character while supporting local businesses, embracing new opportunities in tourism, capitalizing on remote work, and securing opportunities for residents to ‘age in place’. Ultimately, stakeholders want to harness community pride to support thoughtful growth that improves quality of life while protecting farmland and small-town character.



Public Workshop on March 25, 2025

Identified Top Concerns



Poor Road Conditions



Diverse and Affordable Housing



Local Business Support



Senior Living



Childcare Options



Workforce Development



Agricultural Preservation



Tourism



Source: The Parke County CVC



04

FUTURE LAND USE

Future Land Use Overview

The future land use map and typologies are tools to achieve the community’s long-term vision. Unlike zoning, future land use is not legally binding. Rather, it is a guide for decision makers dealing with rezone requests, infrastructure investment, and land development.

Who Uses the Future Land Use Map and Typologies ?

- **Builders:** identifying which areas are suitable for specific types of development
- **Planning Staff:** evaluating whether proposed development and rezoning requests are consistent with the comprehensive plan and vision for growth
- **Plan Commission:** determining whether to recommend approval or denial for rezoning requests and development plans
- **County Commissioners:** making final determinations on rezonings and development approvals

Future Land Use Typologies



Agricultural:

The Agricultural classification designates land used for farming, including cropland, pastures, and orchards. Agricultural activity should be limited in intensity, and industrial-scale agriculture, such as confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs), should be closely monitored. Agriculture land is low density, detached single-family dwellings on large lots, and agriculture-related businesses. Although not the priority, other acceptable uses within this classification may include community facilities, religious institutions, and parks, especially when these uses contribute to the area’s rural character.

Primary Uses

Crop and Livestock Production, Equestrian Farms, Hobby Farms

Secondary Uses

Single-family Detached Dwellings, Agribusinesses, Community Facilities, Religious Institutions, Parks and Open Space, Accessory Dwelling Units

Additional Notes

Major subdivisions should not be permitted unless served by water and sewer utilities and rezoned to the appropriate district.



Residential:

The Residential classification allows for a variety of housing types and densities, depending on adjacent context and supporting transportation and infrastructure. Housing types may include, but are not limited to, single-family dwellings, duplexes, triplexes, town homes, and apartments. Regardless of the type of housing, residential development should seek to preserve and enhance existing natural features, such as trees, ponds, streams, and wetlands, as accessible community amenities. Parks, schools, religious institutions, and other community facilities may be permitted within this classification. If developed, community facilities should connect to surrounding neighborhoods via adequate bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Neighborhood commercial, intended to serve nearby residents, may be allowed on a limited scale.

Primary Uses

Single-family Detached Dwellings, Duplexes, Triplexes, Apartments, Condominiums, Senior Living, Assisted Living

Secondary Uses

Community Facilities, Religious Institutions, Parks and Open Space, Accessory Dwelling Units, Neighborhood Commercial along higher classification roadways and intersections

Additional Notes

New neighborhoods should include a mix of lot sizes and dwelling types. Major subdivisions should not be permitted unless served by water and sewer utilities and rezoned to the appropriate district.



Mixed Use:

The mixed-use classification is intended to support vibrant districts with a combination of complementary residential and commercial uses. These uses may be adjacent to one another, or within a single development. Mixed-use areas tend to attract a healthy flow of residents and visitors and should be served by adequate transportation and utility infrastructure.

Primary Uses

Restaurant, Retail, Hotel, Professional Office, Medical Office, Personal Services, Single-family Detached Dwellings, Duplexes, Triplexes, Apartments, Condominiums, Senior Living, Assisted Living

Secondary Uses

Community Facilities, Religious Institutions, Parks and Open Space

Additional Notes

Mixed-use should be located around major and minor arterials and intersections. Development should not be permitted unless served by water and sewer utilities and rezoned to the appropriate district.



Commercial/Office:

The Commercial/Office land use classification captures nearly all business and office uses, from commercial strip centers to standalone retail anchors. Similar uses may include restaurants, retail stores, personal and professional services, offices, hospitality, and automotive businesses. Commercial development should be located where it can be adequately served by the transportation network, and should be buffered from surrounding, low-intensity uses, such as residential neighborhoods.

Primary Uses

Restaurant, Retail, Hotel, Professional Office, Medical office, Personal Services

Secondary Uses

Community Facilities, Religious Institutions, Residential, Parks and Open Space

Additional Notes

New commercial uses should reflect modern, pedestrian-scale design which includes small-scale parking lots. Development should feature a vehicular and pedestrian network with connections to adjacent businesses and neighborhoods. Development should not be permitted unless served by water and sewer utilities and rezoned to the appropriate district.



Industrial:

The Industrial classification provides for manufacturing, logistics, and research and development activities which are generally clean, quiet, and free of hazardous or objectionable elements. These uses should be limited to areas with access to major transportation corridors where increased traffic will not impact existing neighborhoods. Forms may include multi-story buildings with a large footprint on individual sites or smaller structures in a business park setting. These areas may include supporting commercial uses, such as restaurants and personal service businesses, but these should be limited.

Primary Uses

Manufacturing, Warehouse and Distribution, Research and Development, Professional Office, Agribusiness

Secondary Uses

Community Facilities, Religious Institutions, Parks and Open Space, Restaurant, Retail, Medical Office, Personal Services

Additional Notes

Within business parks, opportunities for open space and shared amenities should be explored. Development should not be permitted unless served by water and sewer utilities and rezoned to the appropriate district.



Parks and Open Space:

The Parks and Open Space classification is intended to provide both active and passive recreation opportunities for residents and visitors, and to preserve natural landscapes.



Floodplain:

The Floodplain classification is for areas within the 100-year floodplain where development is discouraged. This area may be suitable for parkland and natural space.

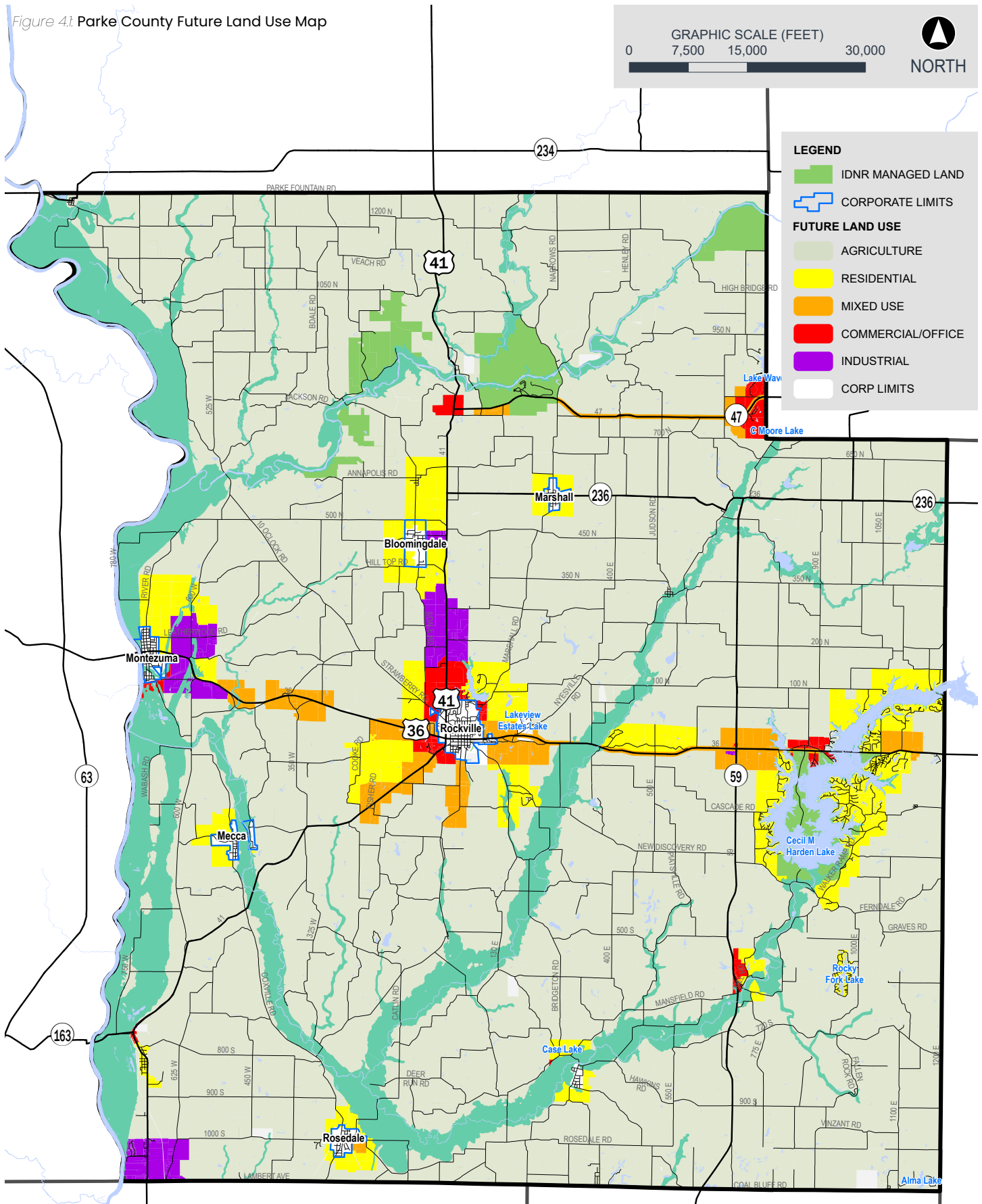
Future Land Use Map

The future land use map reflects the shared goals and priorities of the Parke County community, guiding planning decisions and ensuring new development aligns with the community vision. Refer to the future land use map below to see how land use typologies have been applied to guide thoughtful development, aligned with community character and expressed desires.

Source: Christopher A Newcomb



Figure 4.1: Parke County Future Land Use Map



Source: The Parke County CVC





Land Use | 37

Housing | 41

Economic Development | 43

Transportation | 47

Quality of Place | 49

Parks / Open Space | 51

Community Facilities / Infrastructure | 54

05

PRIORITIES, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

Priorities, Goals, and Objectives

The priorities, goals, and objectives of a comprehensive plan serve as the foundation for achieving Parke County’s vision for the future. It consists of the essential elements that create a well-rounded, all-encompassing approach to growth and development. Each goal and objective is designed to address specific needs and opportunities, guiding the county’s progress over the next decade. The categories for goals and objectives include:

- Land Use
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Transportation
- Quality of Place
- Parks/Open Space
- Community Facilities/Infrastructure

Framework Hierarchy

Each framework ties into the comprehensive plan’s priorities, which were identified through the public engagement process. A visual representation of the element hierarchy is in Figure 5.1.

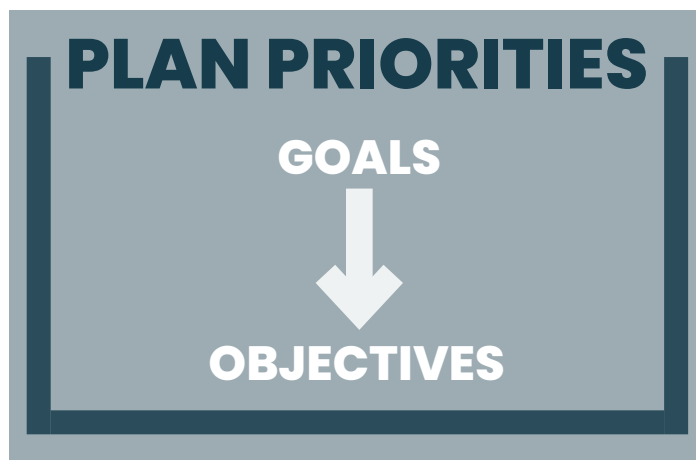


Figure 5.1: Plan Priorities Explanation



Camp Store along Highway 41; Source: landsearch.com



Source: Christopher A Newcomb

Priorities

Priorities are the guiding themes that shape policies, goals, and actions across the plan. Priorities provide a clear direction for decision-makers and are the foundation of the comprehensive plan. They keep the plan grounded in the community’s vision, so growth and development happen in a way that reflects shared values and long-term goals. Plan Priorities are outlined in Figure 5.2.

01 Maintain Rural Character

Balance new development with preservation of rural identity by ensuring development respects residents’ property and privacy.

Why it Matters:

Parke County’s rural charm, natural beauty, and close-knit communities are deeply valued. While growth is important to sustain jobs and services, it must be carefully planned to protect privacy, property rights, and public trust. Preserving the county’s rural identity while allowing space for progress ensures that residents feel respected, that property rights are upheld, and that the character of the community is not lost in the name of development. Smart, transparent planning helps unify the community rather than divide it.

02 Improve County Roadways and Transportation Infrastructure

Build and maintain county roads to enhance safety, accessibility, and long-term economic growth.

Why it Matters:

The condition of county roads is one of the most persistent concerns among residents, impacting all. Poor conditions hurt economic development by deterring new investment and increasing costs for farmers, employers, and commuters. By prioritizing road repair and long-term maintenance, the county can improve quality of life, support economic growth, and ensure residents and visitors can travel safely and efficiently.

03 Encourage Intentional and Balanced Population Growth

Stabilize and modestly grow population to support desired business, services, and the local economy.

Why it Matters:

Parke County must address population decline and disinvestment to remain a vibrant rural community. Proactive planning for modest growth and targeted reinvestment helps strengthen local services, expand housing options, and support the economy while preserving the small-town character residents value. Without a clear plan, the county risks continued decline and missed opportunities for future generations.

04 Update Planning and Zoning Codes

Modernize and enforce zoning and building codes to protect property values, preserve rural character, and ensure safe, responsible development.

Why it Matters:

Outdated and unclear zoning and building codes have led to confusion, disputes between neighbors, and declining property standards. By modernizing these codes, the county can guide growth in a way that protects property values and maintains the rural character that residents value. Clear and fair regulations ensure that builders are accountable for quality and environmental impact, helping preserve the safety, privacy, and integrity of surrounding properties.

Figure 5.2: Plan Priorities

Goals

Goals are long-term statements that define what the community wants to achieve over the next 10 to 20 years. They serve as a bridge between big-picture priorities and more detailed objectives. Goals are not specific projects or policies– they do not say how something will happen or when– but they provide the overall direction for each goal. Every goal should support one or more of the community’s priorities and guide decisions related to land use, housing, economic development, transportation, quality of place, parks/open space, and community facilities/infrastructure.



Source: Christopher A Newcomb



Source: Christopher A Newcomb

Land Use

Residents love the rural, agricultural lifestyle found in the county and want leadership to ensure development respects and enhances these traits. Parke County’s residential land use is concentrated in towns surrounded by agriculture and parks. When asked what survey respondents love about Parke County, several of the most common responses included “quiet,” “country,” and “farming community”, indicating a desire to maintain the rural, farming land uses that currently dominate the county. However, modest population growth is needed to maintain and increase the quality of businesses, services, schools, and infrastructure across the county.

County leaders and participants in the planning process identified outdated and difficult-to-understand ordinances as a challenge. The current zoning code was created in 1976, meaning that no large-scale modifications have been made in roughly five decades. The regulations of the time do not fully cover the needs of current administrators or builders, who face a lack of clarity in the regulatory document.

Based on the current needs and challenges facing Parke County, the following goals and objectives were developed.

LAND USE

Goal 1: Define and direct businesses to appropriate retail districts:

Coordinate with municipalities to clearly define retail district boundaries and guide new and existing businesses to locations that align with zoning, market demand, and community development goals. This strategic alignment will support a balanced business ecosystem, strengthen district identities, and enhance the overall economic vitality of the area.

Objective A: Develop a land use strategy to support existing towns and commercial districts.

Collaborate with municipal leaders to develop clear development priorities, zoning guidelines, and growth targets for central business districts. This ensures cohesive planning and alignment across jurisdictions.

Objective B: Assist with identifying funding sources to revitalize downtown and rural districts.

Research and support pursuit of grants, public-private partnerships, and other funding opportunities to finance revitalization efforts, including façade improvements, infrastructure upgrades, and placemaking initiatives.

Objective C: Support the development and operation of main street organizations.

Assist communities in launching and sustaining Main Street organizations that lead local revitalization efforts, support small businesses, coordinate events, and preserve the unique character of historic retail areas.

Why It Matters

Directing businesses to appropriate retail districts ensures commercial growth is strategic, sustainable, and beneficial to the community as a whole. Well-defined and thoughtfully populated retail areas foster a cohesive shopping and visitor experience, prevent underutilization of key locations, and support infrastructure planning. This approach helps attract complementary businesses, strengthens district branding, and increases foot traffic, ultimately boosting local economies and enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors.

Goal 2: Preserve rural character and agricultural heritage:

Preserve productive farmland, support active farming operations, and maintain the scenic beauty and identity of the countryside. This includes utilizing land use policies and zoning that prioritize agricultural uses and discourage sprawling, incompatible development.

Why It Matters

Protecting the rural character and agricultural roots of the County involves preserving productive farmland, supporting active farming operations, and maintaining the scenic beauty and identity of the countryside. This includes utilizing land use policies and zoning that prioritize agricultural uses and discourage sprawling, incompatible development.

Objective A: Identify and protect productive agricultural lands.

Map and classify high-value agricultural soils and areas for targeted preservation through zoning and growth management policies.

Objective B: Promote agribusiness and value-added agriculture.

Encourage diversification and innovation in agriculture through support for farm markets, wineries, agritourism, and on-site processing to make farming economically viable.

Objective C: Develop rural design guidelines.

Create common-sense design guidelines that help maintain scenic rural views and cluster development patterns while accommodating necessary growth.

Objective D: Safeguard productive farmland near new and adjacent development.

Consider requiring an affidavit with each subdivision and plat application acknowledging that the proposed residential development is located within an active agricultural area.

Goal 3: Encourage development within and adjacent to established towns:

Focus growth within and around incorporated towns to strengthen communities by utilizing existing infrastructure, reducing development pressure on farmland, and enhancing small-town vibrancy. These actions will also support more efficient land use and walkable, livable neighborhoods.

Why It Matters

Focusing development within and around existing towns helps Parke County make the most of existing infrastructure, reducing costs and preserving valuable farmland. It strengthens small-town centers, supports walkable and connected neighborhoods, and fosters community vitality. This approach promotes more efficient, sustainable land use while reinforcing the character and identity of Parke County's towns.

Objective A: Create town growth area plans.

Work with municipalities to define priority growth boundaries and land use strategies for targeted expansion that respects town character and capacity.

Objective B: Inventory and market vacant or underused properties.

Identify key infill sites and assist property owners with redevelopment opportunities, including access to funding or incentives.

Objective C: Promote compact, mixed-use zoning ordinances.

Prioritize updates to local zoning code to allow for flexible, mixed housing types, and mixed-use developments that foster walkability.

Goal 4: Balance growth with conservation:

Take a balanced approach to development to protect sensitive natural features, support clean water and air, and provide recreational opportunities for residents. This involves integrating conservation into land use decisions and using sustainable design practices.

Why It Matters

Natural areas contribute to public health, biodiversity, and climate resilience. As the county grows, protecting floodplains, wetlands, and woodlands safeguards against environmental degradation, reduces long-term costs from flooding or erosion, and enhances quality of life. Conservation ensures future generations can enjoy the same natural assets.

Objective A: Protect natural resources.

Identify and map critical environmental areas, like Sugar Creek, to guide development away from vulnerable ecosystems.

Objective B: Incentivize low-impact (LID) design.

Promote the use of LID techniques, like swales (ditches), rain gardens, and permeable pavements, in both urban and rural developments to manage stormwater and reduce runoff.

Objective C: Expand greenway and open space networks.

Coordinate with parks departments and conservation groups to connect natural areas through trails, greenways, and protected lands.

Goal 5: Support strategic infrastructure planning and coordination:

Coordinate land use decisions with infrastructure planning, particularly around sewer, water, transportation, and broadband, in order to align growth with infrastructure capacity and ensure that public investments are used efficiently and growth is sustainable.

Why It Matters

Poorly coordinated growth strains public services, creates traffic congestion, and inflates maintenance costs. Strategically timed and placed infrastructure investments support economic development, protect the environment, and improve residents' access to essential services. Intergovernmental collaboration prevents redundancy and ensures regional consistency.

Objective A: Create a county-wide infrastructure investment map.

Coordinate with utilities and municipalities to align infrastructure improvements with priority growth areas.

Objective B: Establish growth management agreements.

Partner with local governments to manage extensions of services and land use in a way that supports long-term planning goals and protect rural character.

Objective C: Leverage utilities for smart growth.

Use utility availability to steer development to suitable areas around towns, encouraging efficient land use while preserving rural character.

Objective D: Study Renewable Energy Impact

Create a taskforce to research renewable energy land use impacts and present recommendations for regulation.

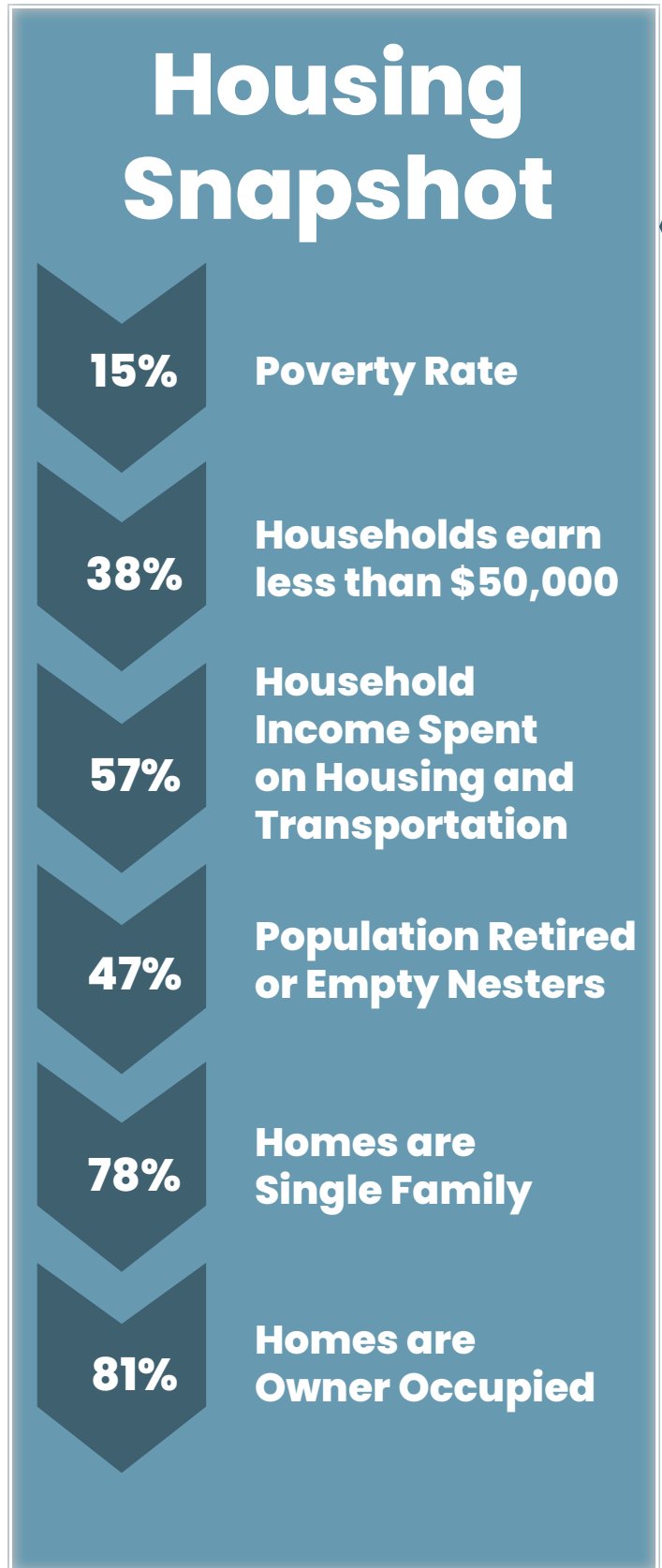
Housing

Parke County needs more attainable housing options. Although the county’s housing costs are lower than the statewide average, a higher than average 15% poverty rate creates barriers for residents’ ability to afford housing in the county. Additionally, combined housing and transportation costs consume nearly 60% of residents’ income annually. An aging housing stock and limited opportunities for families and aspiring homeowners are also top concerns.

There is an increasing demand for more of a mix of housing options. The county’s population of 16,237 residents includes a significant portion of emptynesters and retirees (47%), with 65% of households comprising only one or two individuals. Additionally, 38.2% of households earn less than \$50,000 in a year, yet 78% of housing units are single-family detached and 81% of housing units are owner-occupied – indicating limited opportunities for lower-income residents. These findings point to a market opportunity for various housing types including rentals, townhouses, and non-traditional detached houses, to cater to different preferences and needs.

These goals and objectives are intended to build upon the foundation established by the Parke County Partnership and other local efforts. When paired with the findings from the residential market potential study and the strategies outlined at the 2022 Parke County Housing Summit, they provide a strong framework to advance the county’s housing objectives.

To address the housing needs of Parke County the following goals and objectives have been identified:



HOUSING

Goal 1: Promote affordable, quality housing that meets the need of young individuals, families, and the elderly:

Develop a housing strategy that increases the availability of affordable, quality homes.

Objective A: Complete an overhaul of the 1976 Zoning Code to allow for greater mix of housing types.

Review and amend the county-wide zoning ordinance to allow for housing options such as duplexes, accessory dwelling units, and other middle housing options by right, and reduce the requirements and review processes to accelerate housing production.

Objective B: Continue to support young home buyers and senior residents.

Partner with Thrive West Central Housing Resource Hub home buyers programs—targeting young families, single individuals, and fixed-income seniors to increase homeownership and housing stability.

Goal 2: Enforce property maintenance standards:

Create and enforce clear property maintenance codes and provide incentives for property owners to maintain their buildings, yards, and public spaces, improving the overall appearance and safety of the community.

Objective A: Establish and adopt uniform property maintenance codes.

Develop and implement a standardized set of property maintenance codes with clear guidelines for building upkeep, yard maintenance, and public-facing areas.

Objective B: Amplify property rehabilitation and cleanup programs.

Partner with Thrive West Central to launch a county-wide initiative to identify and rehabilitate or remove neglected or unsafe properties annually, offering incentives for private property owners to participate.

Objective C: Increase code enforcement capacity and outreach.

Hire or designate at least one code enforcement officer by 2027 and launch a public education campaign to raise awareness about maintenance standards, reporting processes, and available incentives.

Objective D: Streamline the building inspections and permitting process.

Evaluate the current permitting system to identify redundancies and inefficiencies. Develop a clear, comprehensive inspection process that is easy for applicants to understand and follow.

Why It Matters

There is demand for attainable housing options, senior living, and better maintenance of properties that affect quality of life.

Why It Matters

Many residents have expressed frustration with buildings that have not been maintained to the county building and health standard.

Economic Development

A nationwide trend of rural depopulation has not spared Parke County, which saw a 6% population decrease since 2010. This presents an ongoing challenge to the local economy, which is also home to a disproportionately large aging population – roughly five years older than the statewide average. These challenges will create strains on local businesses and industries if left unaddressed.

One theme was particularly prominent throughout the planning process: local employment options are a top concern for stakeholders, evidenced by its selection as the top challenge facing the county at the public workshop. Stakeholders also see great potential to leverage its unique tourism assets, such as the covered bridges and scenic parks, to drive economic growth through increased visitation and business opportunities.

Additionally, stakeholders addressed the need to promote a more durable economy during multiple engagement opportunities. Continuing broadband expansion, providing greater access to groceries, and attracting new industries to the region are priorities to achieve this goal.

To address the economic development needs of Parke County the following goals and objectives have been identified:

Goal 1: Expand employment and economic opportunities:

Attract and support industries to create more full-time, well-paying jobs that support residents and retain young families.

Objective A: Attract and support industries.

Develop a targeted business recruitment strategy focused on industries such as advanced manufacturing, agribusiness, and healthcare/services.

Objective B: Create an available land inventory.

Keep and maintain a list of potential developable land to market to potential businesses.

Objective C: Enhance workforce development programs.

Partner with local schools, community colleges, and regional employers to support and/or launch job training and apprenticeship programs.

Objective D: Market economic development incentive tools.

Market and continue partnership with the Indiana Small Business Development Center and Parke County Redevelopment Commission with the county-level funds such as providing tax incentives, infrastructure support, and start-up grants for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Why It Matters

Many residents struggle with low wages, lack of industry, and limited job prospects, leading to outmigration.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal 2: Strengthen and celebrate small businesses across the county:

Support small business success and visibility throughout Parke County by expanding access to resources, increasing awareness of available services like those offered by Indiana Small Business Development Center, and recognizing the diverse ways local businesses contribute to the community including those that serve seasonal and year-round needs.

Objective A: Expand the revolving loan program to benefit tourism-complementing businesses.

Expand utilization of Thrive West Central SPARK revolving loan program and explore amending the Partnership Parke County and Parke County Redevelopment Commission revolving loan programs. Maintain support for all small businesses, while placing specific focus on supporting restaurants and shops that complement tourism and attract visitors from the state parks into town.

Objective B: Market the county-wide small business resource hub.

Create a marketing strategy to ensure businesses across the county are aware of, and have access to, the business resource hub provided by Partnership Parke County and the West Central Indiana Small Business Development Center.

Objective C: Promote sector diversification through local policies.

Utilize the “Buy Parke County” initiative encouraging local institutions and governments to source goods and services from county-based businesses.

Goal 3: Improve access to affordable, healthy groceries:

Encourage creative small businesses that offer fresh, affordable food, especially in underserved areas, and reduce over-reliance on convenience markets.

Objective A: Support farm to table cottage businesses.

Recruit at least one farm to table business within the county through incentives such as tax incentives, site development assistance, or public-private partnerships.

Why It Matters

Small businesses are a cornerstone of Parke County’s economy and community identity. Whether open seasonally or year-round, they provide local jobs, unique services, and a strong sense of place. While tourism boosts many businesses, especially in food and retail, not all rely on it – and many thrive because of their adaptability and niche offerings. Rather than shifting business models, what is needed is broader recognition of small businesses’ impact, especially those outside traditional visitor corridors. By enhancing outreach, resource access, and visibility, the county can help more entrepreneurs succeed – on their own terms – and ensure that the local economy remains vibrant, diverse, and community-driven.

Why It Matters

Many residents expressed frustration with limited, high-priced, or unhealthy food options, emphasizing the need for better access to nutrition for all income levels.

Objective B: Support mobile markets and local food initiatives.

Launch a county-supported mobile grocery or farmers market program that brings fresh, affordable produce to underserved areas in the county. Partner with local farms, co-ops, and local businesses to ensure a bottom-up and locally funded process.

Goal 4: Fully capture Parke County tourism revenue:

Explore the Innkeeper’s Tax policy to potentially generate additional revenue to support tourism-related infrastructure improvements and ensure sustainable growth of the local tourism economy.

Objective A: Evaluate and enhance innkeeper’s tax revenue collection.

Establish a dedicated task force to explore strategies for expanding and fully capturing innkeeper’s tax revenue. This group will assess the economic, legal, and tourism-related impacts of including RV sites or other lodging opportunities under the tax, and evaluate methods to ensure tax compliance from short-term rental platforms like Airbnb and Vrbo. The task force will engage stakeholders, analyze potential revenue, study best practices from other regions, and develop policy recommendations to strengthen and modernize the county’s approach.

Objective B: Reinvest new revenue into tourism infrastructure.

Direct additional funds generated from the expanded tax toward high-impact infrastructure projects that support tourism, such as road improvements, utilities, or services. Establish clear criteria for project selection and mechanisms for accountability.

Goal 5: Increase the number of overnight stays in Parke County:

Develop and implement a targeted plan to expand lodging options, implement a marketing campaign of available accommodations, and coordinate events that encourage visitors to stay overnight and engage with the community.

Why It Matters

Expanding the innkeeper’s tax to encompass additional revenue sources like RV sites, can generate sustainable funding that directly supports the infrastructure and services essential to a positive visitor experience. This strategy ensures that all overnight guests contribute fairly to the local economy, helping to maintain roads, expand utilities, improve amenities, and strengthen the tourism sector. Investing these funds in infrastructure not only enhances the quality of life for residents but also makes the region more attractive and accessible to future visitors, promoting long-term economic resilience.

Why It Matters

Each year, approximately two million people visit Parke County for the Covered Bridge Festival and its state parks. However, only a small portion of those visitors stay overnight – missing an opportunity to contribute more fully to the local economy. By increasing both the supply and visibility of overnight lodging, the county can boost revenue through the innkeeper’s tax, support local businesses, and encourage visitors to explore downtowns and other attractions. This investment benefits not only tourism but also the county’s year-round residents.

Objective A: Attract a variety of lodging options.

Identify the types, styles, and locations of lodging units that would encourage visitors to stay overnight. This may include traditional hotels, cabins, or weekend-style camp facilities. Pinpoint suitable locations and identify potential partners to help attract and develop new lodging accommodations.

Objective B: Expand the tourist experience to increase the length of stays.

Increase the average duration of tourist visits by diversifying and enhancing the range of activities, attractions, and services available. This includes offering immersive cultural experiences, a variety of robust dining options, curated itineraries, seasonal events, unique boutique and cottage retail opportunities, and easily accessible local insights. In addition, improving visitor services, upgrading infrastructure, and promoting lesser-known, off-the-beaten-path destinations will help deliver a memorable and rewarding visit that fosters extended stays and return tourism.

Goal 6: Increase participation and engagement in regional partnerships:

Continue to engage in regional partnerships that support shared goals in marketing, planning, and economic development. By collaborating with neighboring communities and counties, Parke County can strengthen its local economy, attract investment, and expand opportunities for its residents.

Why It Matters

Regional collaboration enhances Parke County’s ability to compete for state and federal funding, which increasingly favors multi-jurisdictional efforts. Economic development initiatives are more impactful and sustainable when approached regionally, enabling communities to share resources, align strategies, and create a more resilient economy. Parke County residents benefit not only from local job creation but also from growth in nearby counties, making regional partnerships essential to long-term prosperity.

Objective A: Strengthen engagement with regional economic development initiatives.

Continue active collaboration with Thrive West Central and West Central Indiana Partnership to support the implementation of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy to advance regional economic goals that benefit Parke County.

Objective B: Encourage county-wide collaboration to support shared priorities.

Promote cooperation among Parke County’s towns and rural areas to identify and advance county-wide projects, align planning efforts, and pursue joint funding opportunities that improve infrastructure, workforce readiness, and quality of life.

Objective C: Support regional marketing and business attraction efforts.

Participate in and contribute to coordinated regional marketing campaigns and business recruitment strategies that elevate the visibility of Parke County while strengthening the region’s appeal to investors, entrepreneurs, and visitors.

Transportation

Transportation infrastructure was the most common concern expressed throughout the planning process. Among survey respondents, 80% disagreed that the county's roads are maintained and generally in good condition. The county's roadway infrastructure is strained by commuters that comprise roughly 25% of the workforce, as well as the nearly 2 million visitors traveling to parks and festivals within the county each year. Additionally, the county faces financial challenges in maintaining its roadways, as a result of the high number of users that do not reside in or pay taxes in the county.

Tourism and the growing number of commuters make key routes like US 36, US 41, and state highways vital to Parke County's economy. Public transportation also supports economic strength, especially for seniors and lower-income residents. Thrive West Central provides free door-to-door service for seniors and disabled residents, along with limited general public transit by advance request.

To address the transportation needs in Parke County, the following goals and objectives have been identified:

Goal 1: Improve county roads and infrastructure:

Continue to improve the quality of county roads, particularly in rural areas, through strategic planning, prioritization, and accountability in spending with a capital improvement plan.

Why It Matters

Poor road conditions were the most cited issue across the survey, workshop, and focus group respondents, with concerns related to safety, health, and access.

Objective A: Formalize a county-wide capital improvement plan (CIP).

Continually update a comprehensive CIP that prioritizes rural road maintenance based on condition, usage, and safety data. Additionally, leverage available state and federal funding programs to meet needs.

Objective B: Establish a transparent infrastructure accountability system.

Create a public dashboard, tracking infrastructure projects, timelines, costs, and outcomes to ensure transparency and build community trust in spending and prioritization.

Objective C: Maximize the capture of available funding sources for transportation improvements.

Proactively identify and pursue regional, state, and federal funding opportunities to support priority transportation improvement projects.

Objective D: Prepare a county-wide safety action plan.

Prepare a Safety Action Plan to identify road safety concerns in the community based on available crash data, and develop recommendations for improvements to address safety concerns. This will make the county eligible for safety related grant dollars which can help address key transportation needs in the county.

Goal 2: Prioritize upgraded connections between Parke County's towns and destinations:

Improve roadway infrastructure to support safe and efficient travel between destinations.

Objective A: Upgrade key commuter routes.

Collaborate with Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) to prioritize improvements on U.S. Routes 36 and 41, which are vital for connecting Parke County to neighboring employment hubs to out-of-county employment centers, focusing on road surface quality, signage, and safety enhancements.

Goal 3: Strategically upgrade roadways to encourage travel from state parks to nearby towns:

Enhance road quality, signage, and wayfinding to create inviting, convenient routes that connect popular parks with local businesses and attractions.

Objective A: Improve roadway conditions on key tourism corridors.

Identify and prioritize roads connecting Turkey Run State Park, Shades State Park, and Raccoon Lake to nearby towns like Rockville, Marshall, and Bloomingdale for resurfacing and safety improvements. Coordinate with INDOT for funding and project alignment.

Objective B: Enhance directional signage and wayfinding systems.

Install uniform, visually appealing signage directing visitors from park entrances to downtown areas in order to highlight mileage and attractions, while developing branded wayfinding markers that reflect Parke County's historic tourism identity.

Why It Matters

Parke County's employment hubs are a strength for the county, and many residents have expressed a desire to connection destinations for locals and tourist.

Why It Matters

Parke County draws in many visitors as a result of its festivals and parks. Local businesses can benefit from these visitors if emphasis is placed on attracting visitors into town centers.

Quality of Place

Expanding resources and opportunities for families, children, and seniors is a key determinant for residents' quality of life. Nearly 70% of planning participants agreed that Parke County is a great place to raise a family, but youth attraction remains a challenge that residents want to solve. Tactics for attracting younger families include more activities and options for youth, as well as access to childcare to provide parents with greater economic mobility. When asked directly about childcare access, only 5% of survey respondents stated that they were satisfied, compared to 14% that were dissatisfied, with all others stating that they felt neutral or did not have kids or need childcare access.

While the county aims to attract youth, current trends show that residents over the age of 60 make up 28% of the total county population, compared to 23% across the state. This growing segment of the population highlights the need to identify targeted investments that provide greater opportunities to all ages.

These goals and objectives are intended to build upon the foundation established by the Parke County Partnership and other local efforts to avoid duplication of efforts and foster partnerships.

To address the quality of place needs in Parke County, the following goals and objectives have been identified:

Goal 1: Provide activities and resources for families and youth:

Expand and enhance recreational opportunities (like a YMCA, community centers, trails, and youth programs) to better serve families and help reduce youth disengagement.

Objective A: Support a multi-use community and recreation center.

Conduct a feasibility study for scaling up existing or new community center facilities offering fitness, youth programs, childcare, and community meeting space and partner with regional nonprofits, school districts, and healthcare providers for programming and funding support.

Objective B: Partner with local organizations to launch targeted youth engagement and development.

Partner with local organizations such as after-school and summer programs in collaboration with local schools and 4-H. Establish a youth advisory council to involve teens in community planning and activities.

Why It Matters

A lack of activities for kids and families was a major concern, tied to broader quality of place goals.

Goal 2: Expand access to affordable, quality childcare through improved communication:

Building upon the Parke County Early Care and Education Coalition Strategic Plan (2022-2026), enhance awareness of available licensed childcare options in the county and support efforts to increase affordable, safe, and reliable childcare for families.

Why It Matters

While licensed childcare options exist within the county, many families may not be fully aware of available seats, providers, or financial assistance programs. Improving communication and marketing about childcare availability helps families find care that fits their needs and supports working parents.

Objective A: Stabilize support of early child care referral network.

Create a taskforce to explore options for a local organization to operate and fund the child care referral network, formally operated under Chances and Service for Youth (CASYS).

Objective B: Increase awareness of available childcare seats and providers.

Develop and maintain a marketing tool, such as a website tab, to share real-time information on available childcare openings, provider locations, program types, and costs. Use county websites, social media, and public spaces to promote this tool widely.

Objective C: Promote use of childcare assistance programs.

Work with local partners and childcare providers to raise awareness of Indiana's Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), On My Way Pre-K vouchers, and employer-supported childcare options among families and businesses.

Objective D: Support licensed childcare providers through partnerships.

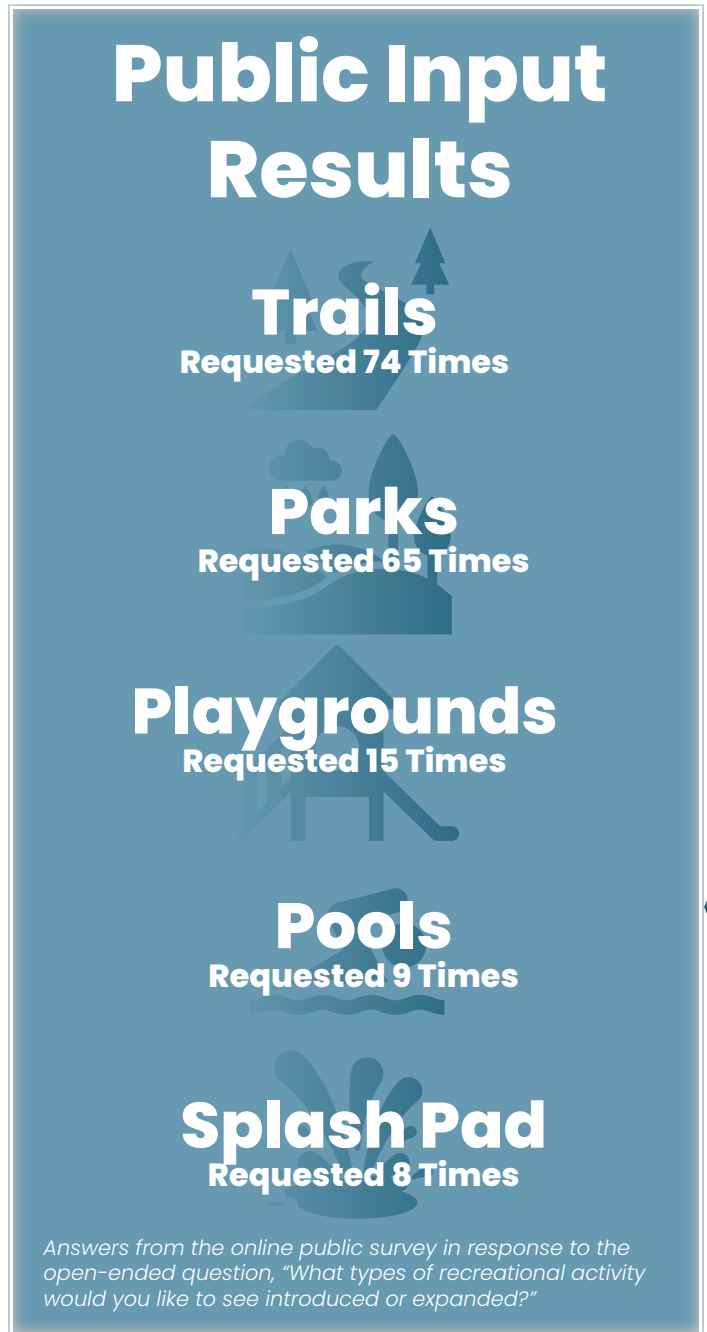
Collaborate with state agencies and local economic development organizations to offer technical assistance and resources to current and prospective licensed childcare providers, including guidance on licensing processes and business development support.

Parks / Open Space

Despite regionally renowned parks, the county must work to expand recreational access for residents. Amenities like trails, parks, and playgrounds are reportedly lacking according to public workshop attendees and survey respondents. There are ongoing efforts in the community to implement trails such as the B+O trail, which would pass through Montezuma and Bloomingdale. Additionally the incorporated communities each have their own parks that serve the greater community.

Given that 28% of the county's population is 60 years or older, advancing passive recreational opportunities near senior housing and community hubs will expand quality of life. This may include improved walkability or recreational facilities open to all ages.

To address the parks and open space needs in Parke County, the following goals and objectives have been identified:



PARKS / OPEN SPACE

Goal 1: Coordinate and collaborate with incorporated towns to improve and expand services:

Gather incorporated areas to develop a comprehensive, long-term plan to guide investments in parks, trails, sports facilities, pedestrian infrastructure, and recreational programming. The plan will ensure resources are allocated efficiently and equitably, based on community needs and priorities, while enhancing the quality of life for Parke County residents.

Why It Matters

A county-wide recreation master plan provides a unified vision that helps coordinate recreation efforts, avoid duplication, and ensure equitable access across communities. It serves as a valuable tool to attract state and federal funding, promote public health, support youth and senior engagement, and stimulate economic growth through outdoor tourism and eco-recreation. By planning strategically, Parke County can build a more connected, inclusive, and vibrant recreational network that benefits residents and visitors.

Objective A: Support 5-year parks and recreation master plans.

Support communities as they prepare and implement their 5-year parks and recreation master plan that the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) requires for communities to be eligible for state and federal grant programs like the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

Objective B: Improve pedestrian infrastructure in high-need areas.

Prioritize pedestrian improvements in areas near schools, senior housing, and commercial centers. Invest in targeted safety enhancements such as sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, and curb extensions to improve accessibility and safety – especially for those without access to personal transportation.

Objective C: Participate in regional trail initiatives.

Actively engage in regional trail planning efforts to ensure Parke County is included in broader trail networks. Enhance connectivity and outdoor recreation opportunities while positioning the county to benefit from increased eco-tourism, external grant funding, and collaborative regional economic development.

Goal 2: Support local park and public space development:

Enhance the livability and attractiveness of Parke County by investing in the development and revitalization of parks, public spaces, and trails that foster recreation, community engagement, and social connection. Address residents’ desire for more youth activities, family-friendly programs, and gathering places by creating accessible, well-designed public environments. Leverage available funding and cost-effective strategies to expand recreational opportunities and support a vibrant, inclusive quality of place that appeals to both current and prospective residents.

Objective A: Secure funding to support park and active public spaces.

Pursue state, federal, and private grant opportunities to fund improvements and programming in local parks, green spaces, and public gathering areas.

Objective B: Collaborate with local organizations to lead programming and planning.

Identify and partner with community organizations, nonprofits, and institutions—such as the County Public Library—to serve as fiscal agents and lead the development of creative, community-driven programming for parks and public spaces.

Objective C: Establish consistent, small-scale events in downtown and public spaces.

Partner with local Main Street organizations to develop and maintain a year-round calendar of smaller-scale community events, such as “First Fridays,” pop-up markets, or outdoor movie nights, to activate downtown districts and local parks while encouraging foot traffic and public engagement.

Why It Matters

Parks, public spaces, and trails are more than just recreational amenities—they are vital to a community’s identity, health, and economic appeal. In Parke County, residents have expressed a need for more youth activities, social opportunities, and accessible gathering spaces. Investing in these areas enhances quality of life, encourages community interaction, and creates destinations that attract new residents and visitors. Well-maintained parks, vibrant public spaces and safe trails also support local businesses by drawing foot traffic to downtown areas and creating opportunities for events and programming. With available grants and cost-effective strategies, Parke County has the opportunity to build a stronger, more connected community while positioning itself as a welcoming and desirable place to live, work, and play.

Community Facilities / Infrastructure

Parke County must continue efforts to expand services to its residents while ensuring the services provided are well marketed and understood. The county boasts strong approval of its utility service, with 75% of residents stating that electrical service is reliable. Broadband access receives mixed reviews from the public, with only 50% agreeing that there are fast and affordable internet options. While great progress has been made on both fronts in recent years, constant efforts to improve the two community services will be essential for the well-being of residents.

However, community services are only as strong as the county’s ability to spread awareness about their availability and benefits. For this reason, ongoing communication and participation between the government and citizens will be a crucial component of the success of any service provided by the government. Intentional engagement and transparency will lead to greater trust, stronger relationships, and more precise enactment of the values and needs of the community over time.

To address the community facilities and infrastructure needs in Parke County, the following goals and objectives have been identified:

Goal 1: Increase government transparency and community engagement:

Foster accountable, transparent leadership that actively engages citizens in decisions and equitably supports all towns.

Why It Matters

Some community members feel their perspectives have not been fully reflected in past decision-making.

Objective A: Establish consistent and accessible communication channels.

Launch and maintain a centralized, user-friendly county website with meeting agendas, minutes, budgets, and project updates. Use social media and email newsletters to share information and gather feedback from residents.

Objective B: Establish quarterly meetings with county and town officials.

Work with the county’s six incorporated communities to increase knowledge sharing and information flow, while promoting transparency and fostering collaboration.

Objective C: Maintain strong relationships with marketing partners.

Continue to foster a strong, collaborative relationship with the Parke County Convention and Visitor Commission (CVC) by actively supporting Parke County Incorporated and its marketing initiatives. Ensuring that marketing strategies remain aligned with evolving goals and desired outcomes by maintaining open communication, regularly reviewing campaign effectiveness, and adapting approaches to reflect current trends and opportunities.

Goal 2: Improve public services and utilities:

Enhance services such as internet, electricity, and public safety, especially in underserved areas.

Why It Matters

Reliable utilities and basic services are critical for attracting residents and businesses alike.

Objective A: Reach 85% internet fiber coverage by 2030.

Partner with internet service providers and apply for state and federal broadband grants such as Indiana Next Level Connections and Federal Communications Commission Rural Digital Opportunity Fund while identifying and mapping broadband gaps across the county to prioritize areas most in need.

Objective B: Study Renewable Energy Impact

Create a taskforce to research renewable energy impacts on providing reliable and safe energy. Present findings and recommendations to Parke County Commissioners.

Objective C: Establish free community wi-fi hubs in public spaces such as libraries, schools, or governmental buildings.

Identify locations based on areas with limited broadband access while utilizing local information technology personnel to manage network security and maintenance to ensure safe, equitable access.

Conclusion

Together, these priorities, goals, and objectives form a practical, values-driven roadmap for Parke County's future. Working together, they uphold community values while fostering long-term resilience. This intentional and forward-thinking approach will help ensure Parke County remains a place where families can thrive, property is respected, and communities grow stronger — not just for today, but for generations to come.

Source: getindiana.com





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06

IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the Parke County Comprehensive Plan is the process of turning the plan’s recommendations into meaningful change within the community. It is critical that key stakeholders, including the county commissioners, county council, plan commission, staff, business leaders, and not-for-profit organizations play a key role in implementing plan recommendations. While work to implement some of the goals and objectives have already started, others will take more time to realize. For this reason, the plan must be treated as a living document and should continue to evolve over time as physical, economic, and social conditions change, and as resources become available.

One key challenge when implementing a comprehensive plan is turning the plan’s vision, goals, and recommendations into the day-to-day work necessary to realize the vision. As Parke County puts this plan into action, it will be important to regularly revisit the reasons behind each policy or action – whether rooted in community values, available resources, or findings from the planning process. This ongoing reflection helps give the plan life while ensuring it remains relevant, actionable, and tied to the community’s priorities.

The comprehensive plan must be viewed as a living document that adapts over time in response to impactful changes and the availability of resources. As Parke County moves forward, it is essential to honor the integrity of the planning process by meaningfully integrating the vision, goals, and strategies of the plan into the daily decision making and operations of the county government. By staying rooted in community values, being mindful of available resources, and remembering the intent behind each recommendation, the plan will remain a robust tool to tackle evolving challenges and opportunities.

INTERPRETING AND UPDATING THE PLAN

Planning is not a one-time event, it is a continuous, adaptive process that responds to evolving conditions and new information. The comprehensive plan is intended to serve as Parke County’s primary guide for land use and development policy, promoting thoughtful, orderly growth aligned with the community’s long-term vision. Its goals, action items, and supporting maps are designed to inform decision-making and direct development in ways that reflect the collective priorities of Parke County residents.

County staff, the plan commission, county council, and county commissioners should consistently reference the plan when evaluating development petitions and allocating county resources. Once adopted, the plan should be reviewed and updated periodically to remain relevant to current conditions, emerging challenges, and shifting community goals. Establishing a regular review schedule helps ensure continued alignment with the plan, allows for tracking its successes, and builds momentum for future planning efforts. Similarly, identifying areas where the plan falls short or where development decisions deviate from its guidance can signal the need for revisions or targeted amendments to strengthen its effectiveness.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The matrix on the following pages lists each of the plan goals and objectives, organized in Chapter 5. For each objective, the groups or partners necessary for implementation and relative timeframe are identified. These timeframes are intended only to serve as a guide for plan implementation and should be considered flexible. Implementation will depend on funding availability, staff capacity, investment, and other changing conditions.

Ongoing: Already in process

Short-Term: 0 to 5 years

Medium-Term: 5 to 10 years

Long-Term: 10+ years

LAND USE

			Timeframe	Responsibility
GOAL	1.	Define and direct businesses to appropriate retail districts		
OBJECTIVES	A.	Develop a land use strategy to support existing towns and commercial districts. Collaborate with municipal leaders to develop clear development priorities, zoning guidelines, and growth targets for central business districts. This ensures cohesive planning and alignment across jurisdictions.	Medium-Term	Plan Commission; County Commissioners; Municipalities
	B.	Assist with identifying funding sources to revitalize downtown and rural districts. Research and support pursuit of grants, public-private partnerships, and other funding opportunities to finance revitalization efforts, including façade improvements, infrastructure upgrades, and placemaking initiatives.	Medium-Term	OCRA; Partnership Parke County; Main Street Groups; Non-profits; Local Businesses; Parke County Chamber of Commerce
	C.	Support the development and operation of main street organizations. Assist communities in launching and sustaining Main Street organizations that lead local revitalization efforts, support small businesses, coordinate events, and preserve the unique character of historic retail areas.	Medium-Term	Main Street Rockville; Parke County Chamber of Commerce; Local Businesses; Parke County CVC
GOAL	2.	Preserve rural character and agricultural heritage		
OBJECTIVES	A.	Identify and protect productive agricultural lands. Map and classify high-value agricultural soils and areas for targeted preservation through zoning and growth management policies.	Medium-Term	Purdue Extension; Soil & Water Conservation District; Sycamore Land Trust; Plan Commission; Farmers
	B.	Promote agri-business and value-added agriculture. Encourage diversification and innovation in agriculture through support for farm markets, wineries, agritourism, and on-site processing to make farming economically viable.	Medium-Term	Partnership Parke County; Farmers; Local Businesses

LAND USE

OBJECTIVES	C.	Develop rural design guidelines. Create common-sense design guidelines that help maintain scenic rural views and cluster development patterns while accommodating necessary growth.	Medium-Term	Plan Commission; County Commission; Municipalities; Stakeholders
	D.	Safeguard productive farmland near new and adjacent development. Consider requiring an affidavit with each subdivision and plat application acknowledging that the proposed residential development is located within an active agricultural area.	Medium-Term	Plan Commission; Planning Staff; County Commissioners
GOAL	3.	Encourage development within and adjacent to established towns		
OBJECTIVES	A.	Create town growth area plans. Work with municipalities to define priority growth boundaries and land use strategies for targeted expansion that respects town character and capacity.	Medium-Term	Plan Commission; County Commissioners; Town Staff; Town Councils
	B.	Inventory and market vacant or underused properties. Identify key infill sites and assist property owners with redevelopment opportunities, including access to funding or incentives.	Short-Term	Partnership Parke County; Parke County Redevelopment Commission; Municipalities
	C.	Promote compact, mixed-use zoning ordinances. Prioritize updates to local zoning code to allow for flexible, mixed housing types, and mixed-use developments that foster walkability.	Short-Term	County Commissioners; Plan Commission; Planning Staff

GOAL	4.	Balance growth with conservation		
OBJECTIVES	A.	Protect natural resources. Identify and map critical environmental areas, like Sugar Creek, to guide development away from vulnerable ecosystems.	Medium-Term	Plan Commission; IDNR; County Commissioners; Soil & Water Conservation
	B.	Incentivize low-impact (LID) design. Promote the use of LID techniques, like swales (ditches), rain gardens, and permeable pavements, in both urban and rural developments to manage stormwater and reduce runoff.	Medium-Term	Plan Commission; County Commissioners; Soil & Water Conservation
	C.	Expand greenway and open space networks. Coordinate with parks departments and conservation groups to connect natural areas through trails, greenways, and protected lands.	Medium-Term	County Commissioners; Parke County Trails Alliance; IDNR; Neighboring Counties
GOAL	5.	Support strategic infrastructure planning and coordination:		
OBJECTIVES	A.	Create a county-wide infrastructure investment map. Coordinate with utilities and municipalities to align infrastructure improvements with priority growth areas.	Short-Term	Planning Staff; County Highway Department; County Commissioners
	B.	Establish growth management agreements. Partner with local governments to manage extensions of services and land use in a way that supports long-term planning goals and protect rural character.	Medium-Term	County Commissioners; Municipalities; Utility Providers; Partnership Parke County
	C.	Leverage utilities for smart growth. Use utility availability to steer development to suitable areas around towns, encouraging efficient land use while preserving rural character.	Ongoing	Water/Sewer Providers; Broadband Providers; Partnership Parke County
	D.	Study Renewable Energy Impact Create a taskforce to research renewable energy land use impacts and present recommendations for regulation.	Short-Term	County Commissioners; Planning Staff; Partnership Parke County

HOUSING

			Timeframe	Responsibility
GOAL	1.	Promote affordable, quality housing that meets the need of young individuals, families, and the elderly		
OBJECTIVES	A.	<p>Complete an overhaul of the 1976 Zoning Code to allow for greater mix of housing types.</p> <p>Review and amend the county-wide zoning ordinance to allow for housing options such as duplexes, accessory dwelling units, and other middle housing options by right, and reduce the requirements and review processes to accelerate housing production.</p>	Short-Term	Plan Commission; County Commissioners; Planning Staff
	B.	<p>Continue to support young home buyers and senior residents.</p> <p>Partner with Thrive West Central Housing Resource Hub home buyers programs—targeting young families, single individuals, and fixed-income seniors to increase homeownership and housing stability.</p>	Ongoing	Thrive West Central; USDA Rural Development; Partnership Parke County; Local Banks

GOAL	2. Enforce property maintenance standards			
OBJECTIVES	A.	<p>Establish and adopt uniform property maintenance codes.</p> <p>Develop and implement a standardized set of property maintenance codes with clear guidelines for building upkeep, yard maintenance, and public-facing areas.</p>	Short-Term	<p>Planning Staff; Plan Commission; County Commissioners; Municipalities</p>
	B.	<p>Amplify property rehabilitation and cleanup programs.</p> <p>Partner with Thrive West Central to launch a county-wide initiative to identify and rehabilitate or remove neglected or unsafe properties annually, offering incentives for private property owners to participate.</p>	Short-Term	<p>Parke County Redevelopment Commission; Planning Staff; County Health Department; IHADA</p>
	C.	<p>Increase code enforcement capacity and outreach.</p> <p>Hire or designate at least one code enforcement officer by 2027 and launch a public education campaign to raise awareness about maintenance standards, reporting processes, and available incentives.</p>	Medium-Term	<p>County Commissioners; County Council; Planning Staff</p>
	D.	<p>Streamline the building inspections and permitting process.</p> <p>Evaluate the current permitting system to identify redundancies and inefficiencies. Develop a clear, comprehensive inspection process that is easy for applicants to understand and follow.</p>	Medium-Term	<p>Planning Staff; Plan Commission</p>

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

			Timeframe	Responsibility	
GOAL	1.	Expand employment and economic opportunities			
	OBJECTIVES	A.	Attract and support industries. Develop a targeted business recruitment strategy focused on industries such as advanced manufacturing, agribusiness, and healthcare/services.	Ongoing	Partnership Parke County; Accelerate West Central Indiana; IEDC
		B.	Create an available land inventory. Keep and maintain a list of potential developable land to market to potential businesses.	Ongoing	Partnership Parke County; Parke County Redevelopment Commission; Municipalities; Property Owners
		C.	Enhance workforce development programs. Partner with local schools, community colleges, and regional employers to support and/or launch job training and apprenticeship programs.	Medium-Term	Purdue Extension; Wabash River Career & Technical Education; Ivy Tech; Indiana Department of Workforce Development; Local Employers
		D.	Market economic development incentive tools. Market and continue partnership with the Indiana Small Business Development Center and Parke County Redevelopment Commission with the county-level funds such as providing tax incentives, infrastructure support, and start-up grants for small businesses and entrepreneurs.	Ongoing	Indiana Small Business Development Center; Partnership Parke County; Parke County Chamber of Commerce

GOAL	2. Strengthen and celebrate small businesses across the county			
OBJECTIVES	A.	<p>Expand the revolving loan program to benefit tourism-complementing businesses.</p> <p>Expand utilization of Thrive West Central SPARK revolving loan program and explore amending the Partnership Parke County and Parke County Redevelopment Commission revolving loan programs to maintain support for all small businesses, while placing specific focus on supporting restaurants and shops that complement tourism and attract visitors from the state parks into town.</p>	Medium-Term	<p>County Commissioners; Local Financial Institutions; Partnership Parke County; Indiana Small Business Development Center; Parke County Redevelopment Commission</p>
	B.	<p>Market the county-wide small business resource hub.</p> <p>Create a marketing strategy to ensure businesses across the county are aware of, and have access to, the business resource hub provided by Partnership Parke County and the West Central Indiana Small Business Development Center.</p>	Short-Term	<p>Thrive West Central; Partnership Parke County; Parke County Chamber of Commerce</p>
	C.	<p>Promote sector diversification through local policies.</p> <p>Utilize the “Buy Parke County” initiative encouraging local institutions and governments to source goods and services from county-based businesses.</p>	Medium-Term	<p>Plan Commission; Municipalities; Partnership Parke County</p>

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL	3.	Improve access to affordable, healthy groceries		
OBJECTIVES	A.	Support farm to table cottage businesses. Recruit at least one farm to table business within the county through incentives such as tax incentives, site development assistance, or public-private partnerships.	Medium-Term	Purdue Extension; Indiana State Department of Health; Local Farmers and Entrepreneurs
	B.	Support mobile markets and local food initiatives. Launch a county-supported mobile grocery or farmers market program that brings fresh, affordable produce to underserved areas in the county. Partner with local farms, co-ops, and local businesses to ensure a bottom-up and locally funded process.	Short-Term	Purdue Extension; Parke County Food Pantry; Municipalities
GOAL	4.	Fully capture Parke County tourism revenue		
OBJECTIVES	A.	Evaluate and enhance innkeeper’s tax revenue collection. Establish a dedicated task force to explore strategies for expanding and fully capturing innkeeper’s tax revenue. This group will assess the economic, legal, and tourism-related impacts of including RV sites or other lodging opportunities under the tax, and evaluate methods to ensure tax compliance from short-term rental platforms like Airbnb and Vrbo. The task force will engage stakeholders, analyze potential revenue, study best practices from other regions, and develop policy recommendations to strengthen and modernize the county’s approach.	Short-Term	County Commissioners; County Auditor/ Assessor; Parke County CVC; Partnership Parke County
	B.	Reinvest new revenue into tourism infrastructure. Direct additional funds generated from the expanded tax toward high-impact infrastructure projects that support tourism, such as road improvements, utilities, or services. Establish clear criteria for project selection and mechanisms for accountability.	Long-Term	County Commissioners; County Auditor; Partnership Parke County

GOAL	5. Increase the number of overnight stays in Parke County			
OBJECTIVES	A.	<p>Attract a variety of lodging options.</p> <p>Identify the types, styles, and locations of lodging units that would encourage visitors to stay overnight. This may include traditional hotels, cabins, or weekend-style camp facilities. Pinpoint suitable locations and identify potential partners to help attract and develop new lodging accommodations.</p>	Medium-Term	Partnership Parke County; Private Developers; Municipalities; IEDC
	B.	<p>Expand the tourist experience to increase the length of stays.</p> <p>Increase the average duration of tourist visits by diversifying and enhancing the range of activities, attractions, and services available. This includes offering immersive cultural experiences, a variety of robust dining options, curated itineraries, seasonal events, unique boutique and cottage retail opportunities, and easily accessible local insights. In addition, improving visitor services, upgrading infrastructure, and promoting lesser-known, off-the-beaten-path destinations will help deliver a memorable and rewarding visit that fosters extended stays and return tourism.</p>	Medium-Term	Parke County CVC; Local Businesses and Event Organizers

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL	6.	Increase participation and engagement in regional partnerships		
OBJECTIVES	A.	<p>Strengthen engagement with regional economic development initiatives.</p> <p>Continue active collaboration with Thrive West Central and West Central Indiana Partnership to support the implementation of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy to advance regional economic goals that benefit Parke County.</p>	Ongoing	West Central Indiana Partnership; West Central Indiana EDC; Neighboring Counties; ACT Work Ready Communities Initiative
	B.	<p>Encourage county-wide collaboration to support shared priorities.</p> <p>Promote cooperation among Parke County’s towns and rural areas to identify and advance county-wide projects, align planning efforts, and pursue joint funding opportunities that improve infrastructure, workforce readiness, and quality of life.</p>	Short-Term	County Commissioners; County Council; Town Councils
	C.	<p>Support regional marketing and business attraction efforts.</p> <p>Participate in and contribute to coordinated regional marketing campaigns and business recruitment strategies that elevate the visibility of Parke County while strengthening the region’s appeal to investors, entrepreneurs, and visitors.</p>	Medium-Term	Partnership Parke County; Accelerate West Central; IEDC



Source: Christopher A Newcomb

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TRANSPORTATION

			Timeframe	Responsibility	
GOAL	1.	Improve county roads and infrastructure			
	OBJECTIVES	A.	Formalize a county-wide capital improvement plan (CIP). Continually update a comprehensive CIP that prioritizes rural road maintenance based on condition, usage, and safety data. Additionally, leverage available state and federal funding programs to meet needs.	Medium-Term	Parke County Highway Department; County Commissioners; INDOT
		B.	Establish a transparent infrastructure accountability system. Create a public dashboard, tracking infrastructure projects, timelines, costs, and outcomes to ensure transparency and build community trust in spending and prioritization.	Short-Term	County Commissioners; Information Technology; Communications Staff
		C.	Maximize the capture of available funding sources for transportation improvements. Proactively identify and pursue regional, state, and federal funding opportunities to support priority transportation improvement projects.	Ongoing	County Highway Department; INDOT; Federal/State Grant Partners
		D.	Prepare a county-wide safety action plan. Prepare a Safety Action Plan to identify road safety concerns in the community based on available crash data, and develop recommendations for improvements to address safety concerns. This will make the county eligible for safety related grant dollars which can help address key transportation needs in the county.	Short-Term	Parke County Highway Department; County Commissioners; INDOT

GOAL	2. Prioritize upgraded connections between Parke County’s towns and destinations		
OBJECTIVES	<p>A. Upgrade key commuter routes.</p> <p>Collaborate with Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) to prioritize improvements on U.S. Routes 36 and 41, which are vital for connecting Parke County to neighboring employment hubs to out-of-county employment centers, focusing on road surface quality, signage, and safety enhancements.</p>	Long-Term	County Highway Department; County Commissioners; INDOT; Municipalities
GOAL	3. Strategically upgrade roadways to encourage travel from state parks to nearby towns		
OBJECTIVES	<p>A. Improve roadway conditions on key tourism corridors.</p> <p>Identify and prioritize roads connecting Turkey Run State Park, Shades State Park, and Raccoon Lake to nearby towns like Rockville, Marshall, and Bloomingdale for resurfacing and safety improvements. Coordinate with INDOT for funding and project alignment.</p>	Medium-Term	INDOT; County Highway Department; Parke County CVC; Local Businesses
	<p>B. Enhance directional signage and wayfinding systems.</p> <p>Install uniform, visually appealing signage directing visitors from park entrances to downtown areas in order to highlight mileage and attractions, while developing branded wayfinding markers that reflect Parke County’s historic tourism identity.</p>	Medium-Term	INDOT; County Highway Department; Parke County CVC; County Commissioners; Partnership Parke County; Local Businesses

QUALITY OF PLACE

			Timeframe	Responsibility
GOAL	1.	Provide activities and resources for families and youth		
OBJECTIVES	A.	Support a multi-use community and recreation center. Conduct a feasibility study for scaling up existing or new community center facilities offering fitness, youth programs, childcare, and community meeting space and partner with regional nonprofits, school districts, and healthcare providers for programming and funding support.	Long-Term	Purdue Extension; Nonprofits and Philanthropies
	B.	Partner with local organizations to launch targeted youth engagement and development. Partner with local organizations such as after-school and summer programs in collaboration with local schools and 4-H. Establish a youth advisory council to involve teens in community planning and activities.	Short-Term	Schools; 4-H Extension; Municipal Recreation Departments; Local Nonprofits

GOAL	2. Expand access to affordable, quality childcare through improved communication			
OBJECTIVES	A.	<p>Stabilize support of early child care referral network.</p> <p>Create a taskforce to explore options for a local organization to operate and fund the child care referral network, formally operated under Chances and Service for Youth (CASY).</p>	Short-Term	Partnership Parke County; Indiana Child Care Resource & Referral; Department of Family Resources
	B.	<p>Increase awareness of available childcare seats and providers.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a marketing tool, such as a website tab, to share real-time information on available childcare openings, provider locations, program types, and costs. Use county websites, social media, and public spaces to promote this tool widely.</p>	Short-Term	Partnership Parke County; Indiana Child Care Resource & Referral; Department of Family Resources
	C.	<p>Promote use of childcare assistance programs.</p> <p>Work with local partners and childcare providers to raise awareness of Indiana’s Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), On My Way Pre-K vouchers, and employer-supported childcare options among families and businesses.</p>	Ongoing	Partnership Parke County; Department of Family Resources
	D.	<p>Support licensed childcare providers through partnerships.</p> <p>Collaborate with state agencies and local economic development organizations to offer technical assistance and resources to current and prospective licensed childcare providers, including guidance on licensing processes and business development support.</p>	Medium-Term	Licensed Childcare Providers; County Health Department; Department of Family Resources

QUALITY OF PLACE

PARKS / OPEN SPACE

			Timeframe	Responsibility
GOAL	1.	Coordinate and collaborate with incorporated towns to improve and expand services		
OBJECTIVES	A.	<p>Support 5-year parks and recreation master plans.</p> <p>Support communities as they prepare and implement their 5-year parks and recreation master plan that the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) requires for communities to be eligible for state and federal grant programs like the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).</p>	Ongoing	Plan Commission; County Commissioners; Parke County CVC; Purdue Extension; Stakeholders
	B.	<p>Improve pedestrian infrastructure in high-need areas.</p> <p>Prioritize pedestrian improvements in areas near schools, senior housing, and commercial centers. Invest in targeted safety enhancements such as sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, and curb extensions to improve accessibility and safety – especially for those without access to personal transportation.</p>	Medium-Term	County Highway Department; County Commissioners; Municipalities
	C.	<p>Participate in regional trail initiatives.</p> <p>Actively engage in regional trail planning efforts to ensure Parke County is included in broader trail networks. Enhance connectivity and outdoor recreation opportunities while positioning the county to benefit from increased eco-tourism, external grant funding, and collaborative regional economic development.</p>	Ongoing	County Commissioners; Parke County Trails Alliance; IDNR; Partnership Parke County; Parke County CVC; Neighboring Counties

GOAL	2. Support local park and public space development			
OBJECTIVES	A.	<p>Secure funding to support park and public space activation.</p> <p>Pursue state, federal, and private grant opportunities to fund improvements and programming in local parks, green spaces, and public gathering areas.</p>	Short-Term	IDNR; OCRA; Parke County Community Foundation; County Commissioners; County Council
	B.	<p>Collaborate with local organizations to lead programming and planning.</p> <p>Identify and partner with community organizations, nonprofits, and institutions—such as the County Public Library—to serve as fiscal agents and lead the development of creative, community-driven programming for parks and public spaces.</p>	Medium-Term	Parke County Community Foundation; Schools; 4-H Extension; Local Nonprofits
	C.	<p>Establish consistent, small-scale events in downtown and public spaces.</p> <p>Partner with local Main Street organizations to develop and maintain a year-round calendar of smaller-scale community events, such as “First Fridays,” pop-up markets, or outdoor movie nights, to activate downtown districts and local parks while encouraging foot traffic and public engagement.</p>	Short-Term	Town Councils; Local Businesses; Parke County Chamber of Commerce; Main Street Groups; Parke County CVC

COMMUNITY FACILITIES / INFRASTRUCTURE

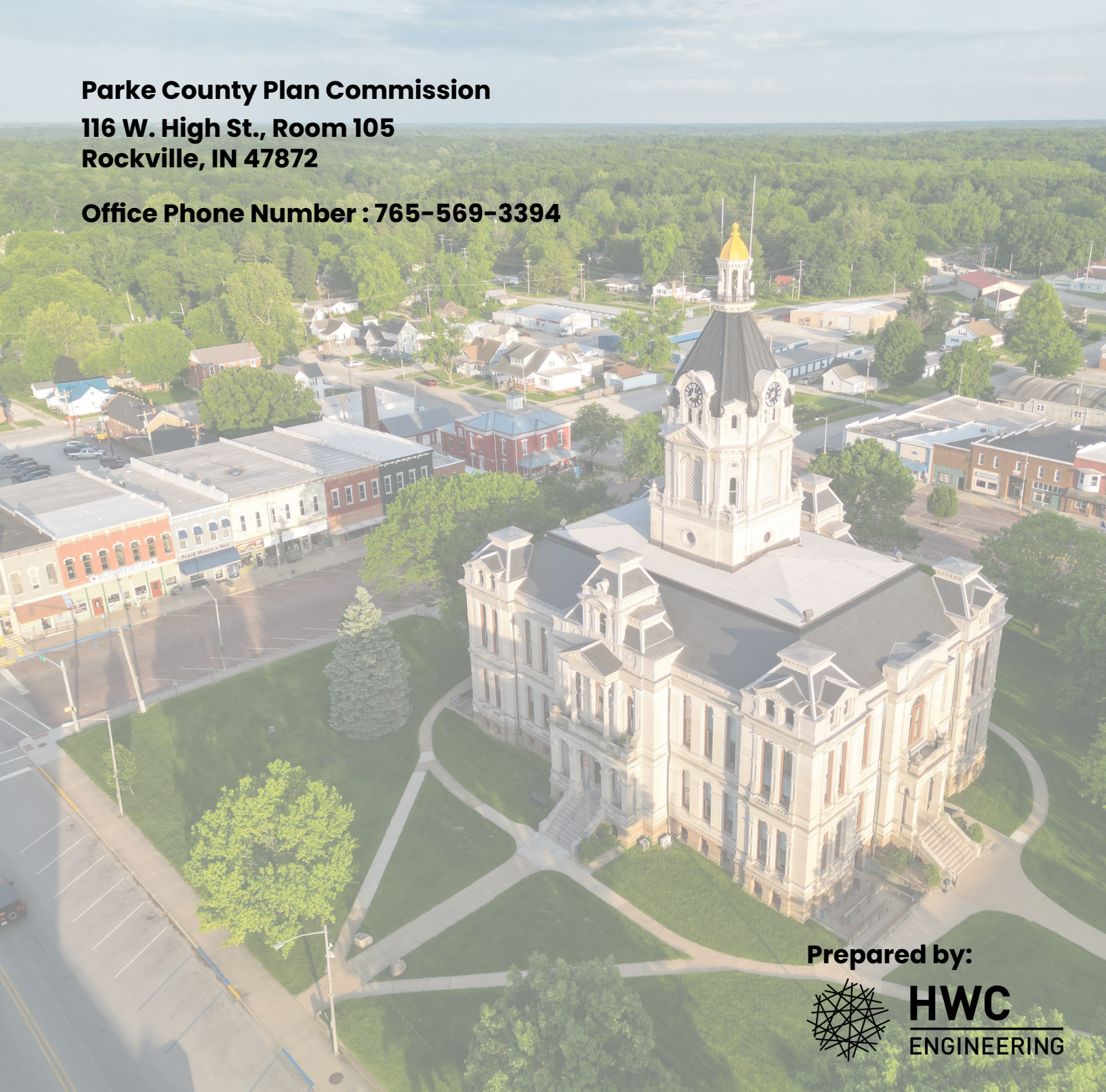
			Timeframe	Responsibility
GOAL	1.	Increase government transparency and community engagement:		
OBJECTIVES	A.	<p>Establish consistent and accessible communication channels.</p> <p>Launch and maintain a centralized, user-friendly county website with meeting agendas, minutes, budgets, and project updates. Use social media and email newsletters to share information and gather feedback from residents.</p>	Short-Term	County Commissioners; County Information Technology; Local Media
	B.	<p>Establish quarterly meetings with county and town officials.</p> <p>Work with the county’s six incorporated communities to increase knowledge sharing and information flow, while promoting transparency and fostering collaboration.</p>	Short-Term	County Commissioners; County Council; Town Councils
	C.	<p>Maintain strong relationships with marketing partners.</p> <p>Continue to foster a strong, collaborative relationship with the Parke County Convention and Visitor Commission (CVC) by actively supporting Parke County Incorporated and its marketing initiatives. Ensuring that marketing strategies remain aligned with evolving goals and desired outcomes by maintaining open communication, regularly reviewing campaign effectiveness, and adapting approaches to reflect current trends and opportunities.</p>	Ongoing	County Commissioners; County Council; Partnership Parke County; Parke County CVC

GOAL	2. Improve public services and utilities			
OBJECTIVES	A.	<p>Reach 85% internet fiber coverage by 2030.</p> <p>Partner with internet service providers and apply for state and federal broadband grants such as Indiana Next Level Connections and Federal Communications Commission Rural Digital Opportunity Fund while identifying and mapping broadband gaps across the county to prioritize areas most in need.</p>	Short-Term	OCRA; Broadband Providers; Utility Providers
	B.	<p>Study Renewable Energy Impact</p> <p>Create a taskforce to research renewable energy impacts on providing reliable and safe energy. Present findings and recommendations to Parke County Commissioners.</p>	Short-Term	County Commissioners; Partnership Parke County; Local Stakeholders
	C.	<p>Establish free community wi-fi hubs in public spaces such as libraries, schools, or governmental buildings.</p> <p>Identify locations based on areas with limited broadband access while utilizing local information technology personnel to manage network security and maintenance to ensure safe, equitable access.</p>	Short-Term	Partnership Parke County; Parke County CVC; Nonprofits

Parke County Plan Commission

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