Ratio Study Narrative 2026

General Information			
County Name STARKE COUNTY			
Person Performing Ratio Study			
Name **Phone Number**		**Email** **Vendor Name (if applicable)**	
John Viveiros	574-772-9166	Jviveiros@starke.in.gov	Accurate Assessments, Inc.
Sales Window **1/1/2024 to 12/31/2025**			
If more than one year of sales were used, was a time adjustment applied?			
☐ No		Explain, why not:	
☒ Yes	Explain the method used to calculate the adjustment: A +5.5% per year time adjustment was used for all IMPROVED RESIDENTIAL sales. This rate was derived from an analysis of resold properties. See supplemental file '2026 Starke Time Adjustment' for details. The same +5.5% per year time adjustment was used for all VACANT RESIDENTIAL sales because those sales indicated a similar level of underassessment as the improved ones. No time adjustment was used on COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL sales. This amount was chosen because: The unadjusted median ratios for all 2024 commercial sales versus the 2025 sales are ALREADY relatively balanced without a time adjustment. (the sales show no conclusive evidence of market appreciation)		
Groupings			
Please provide a list of townships and/or major class groupings (if any). Additionally, please provide information detailing how the townships and/or major classes are similar in the market. ****Please note that groupings made for the sole purpose of combining due to lack of sales with no similarities will not be accepted by the Department****			
For Residential Improved, JACKSON and RAILROAD TOWNSHIP RESIDENTIAL IMPROVED SALES were grouped together (as **JackRR**). Reason: There were only (3) Residential Improved Sales in Jackson Township. Jackson and Railroad are both very rural townships that are completely contained within the North Judson-San Pierre school district and exhibit similar economic characteristics.			

For Residential Vacant, the following townships were grouped together for the reasons noted:

CALIFORNIA, CENTER and WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP RESIDENTIAL VACANT SALES were grouped together (as **CalCenWas**). Reason: These three townships primarily comprise the Knox – Center school district and exhibit similar economic characteristics.

DAVIS and OREGON TOWNSHIP RESIDENTIAL VACANT SALES were grouped together (as **DavOre**). Reason: These two townships are primarily agricultural, with the exception of the Town of Hamlet and the Koontz Lake Area. The Town of Hamlet straddles the border of these townships. Together these two townships comprise the entirety of the Oregon-Davis School District. *There were no valid vacant land sales in Davis Township*.

RAILROAD, JACKSON and WAYNE TOWNSHIP RESIDENTIAL VACANT SALES were grouped together (as **RRJacWay**). Reason: These three townships are completely contained within the North Judson-San Pierre school district and exhibit similar economic characteristics.

For COMMERCIAL IMPROVED SALES: ALL TOWNSHIPS were grouped together (as **ComImpAll**). Reason: Historically, there has been no identifiable difference between the market trends of Commercial sales in all nine townships in Starke County. Starke is a rural county with relatively few Commercial parcels and is not likely to have a very segmented Commercial Market. Since we began trending 20 years ago, every year we have always used the same improvement trending factor on the Commercial parcels in all nine townships. Not once have sales ever demonstrated that there needed to be any variation. This includes a number of years in which we had 5 or more sales in both of the two primary townships for Commercial parcels (Center & Wayne).

Please explain clearly which property classes and groupings in the ratio study were trended.

If by 'trended' you mean: any change to the Improvement Annual Adjustment Trending Factor from the prior year, then, absolutely ALL improved property had to be 'trended' THIS year because of the net result of the value increases resulting from the updated cost tables far exceeded all indications from the sales data.

The residential sales demonstrated a market appreciation of about 5-10%, while commercial and industrial sales demonstrated no obvious market appreciation (that is why they were not time-adjusted).

In general, Trending Factors were reduced in order to offset the cost table increases - to the degree that the sales indicated.

In Starke County, we have not been able to compile enough data to effectively use the income or market approach to value Industrial (or Commercial) properties. We rely on the cost approach, using the relatively few sales that we have.

For 2026, the cost tables, which form the underlying foundation of our (cost approach) assessments, have been increased by over 20% on average. The pre-existing (2025) trending factors were chosen in 2025 to be applicable to 2025 valuations, which were based on the 2025 cost tables. Each tax year stands alone. If we were to leave the 2025 trending factors untouched, *without any confirming data*, this would result in a sudden and arbitrary increase in valuations for 2026. From an appraisal point of view, we believe such a decision would be completely unsupportable.

This year, the improvement factor used to trend all Commercial parcels (grouped together) was also used to trend all Industrial Parcels. Since we began trending 20 years ago, every year we have always utilized the same improvement trending factor on the Commercial and Industrial parcels in all nine townships. Not once have sales ever demonstrated that there needed to be any variation. When Industrial sales have occurred, we have found that the existing Commercial trending factors produce Industrial sales ratios that are commensurate with the Commercial sale ratios.

Starke is a rural county with relatively few Industrial parcels. There were only three valid Industrial Improved sales in the past five years. The mean and median sale ratio of these sales (as shown on the Industrial Improved tab of this Ratio Study) are comfortably close to that of all the other classes of property this year.

Cyclical Reassessment

Please identify the townships included in the current phase of the cyclical reassessment. Additionally, specify any townships where the number of parcels reviewed exceeded the total outlined in the approved reassessment plan. Ensure all reviewed parcels meet the 25% requirement, with a 2% tolerance (acceptable range 23-27%).

The 2026 cyclical reassessment included the majority of Jackson (87.8%) and Davis (62.1%) Townships; a portion of Center (46.6%), Wayne (36.1%) and Washington (19.1%) Townships; and smaller portions of Railroad (11.2%). North Bend (9.7%), California (6.4%) and Oregon (1.1%) Townships.

Land Order

The land order used for January 1, 2026, assessment along with the Narrative (optional) will be published on Department's website. Please provide the following information:

Date the land order was submitted to PTABOA.
10/27/2022

Action taken by the PTABOA (if any).
☒ Approved
☐ Denied
☐ Other (describe)

Effective date of the land order.

1/1/2023

Was the land order updated as part of the 2025 cyclical reassessment?

☐ Yes

☒ No

Any other changes or issues?

No

Comments

In this space, please provide any additional information you would like to provide the Department with to help facilitate the approval of the ratio study. Such items could be standard operating procedures for certain assessment practices (e.g. effective age changes), a timeline of changes made by the assessor's office, or any other information deemed pertinent.

Included with files we are submitting this year is a five-tab workbook**: Starke County Effective Age SOP** which explains the *weighted depreciation method* which we are using to determine effective age. The fifth tab of the workbook is a template which abstracts the entire method down to a formula that automatically calculates the Effective Year Built when all five of the contingent variables are entered into the appropriate cells.

Sales in which significant physical changes occurred between the date of sale and the assessment date were typically considered not valid for that reason. However, a few such sales have been utilized in this Ratio Study in cases where the changes can be very simply accounted for. (i.e., the value of newly built outbuilding can be subtracted from the improvement value of a parcel to reflect the status of the parcel at the time of sale.) Sales for which these types of adjustments occurred are marked in the ratio study with yellow shaded cells to indicate where the Land Value, Improvement Value, Total Value and/or the Property Class differ from the current workbook data in order to reflect the status of the parcel at the time of the sale.

This narrative is submitted alongside five other files:

1. Starke County Ratio Study (.xlsx)
2. Starke County Workbook (.xlsx)
3. 2025 Starke County Land Order (.pdf)
4. 2025 Starke Time Adjustment (.pdf)
5. Starke County Effective Age SOP (.xlsx)