

DEKALB COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

PLANNING • BUILDING • GIS

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AGENDA

**DeKalb County Plan Commission
Commissioners Court – 2nd Floor DeKalb County Court House**

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

7:00 PM

To view the livestream, click here: <https://tinyurl.com/YouTubeDCPC>

1. Roll call
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Prayer
4. Approval of Minutes: January 21, 2026
5. Consideration of Claims: January 2026

Payroll	\$27,615.55
Granicus – Smart Gov	\$16,631.00
HWC Consultant Fees	\$9,574.50
Inspection Fees - City of Auburn	\$180.00
Lassus	\$118.80
Shepherds	\$283.79
Verizon	\$83.49
WestWood Car Wash	\$18.00
TOTAL:	\$54,505.13

6. Old Business: None
7. New Business:

Petition #26-04— During this hearing, the Plan Commission will review the DeKalb 2040 Comprehensive Plan. This plan is a rewrite of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan. The Plan Commission shall give a favorable, unfavorable or no recommendation to the County Commissioners.
8. Reports from Officers, Committees, Staff or Town/City Liaisons
9. Comments from Public in Attendance
10. Adjournment

Next Meeting: March 18, 2026

**If you cannot attend, please contact Meredith Reith
mreith@co.dekalb.in.us | (260) 925-1923**

***PLEASE ENTER THROUGH THE NORTH DOOR OF
COURTHOUSE LOCATED ON SEVENTH STREET.**

****No cellphones, tablets, laptops, or weapons are permitted.**

MINUTES
DEKALB COUNTY PLAN COMMISSION
Wednesday January 21, 2026

The Regular Meeting of the DeKalb County Plan Commission was called to order at 5:00 p.m. in the DeKalb County Commissioner's Courtroom by Plan Commission Vice-President, William Van Wye.

ROLL CALL:

Members Present: William Van Wye, Kellen Dooley, Suzanne Davis, Angie Holt, Sandra Harrison, Jerry Yoder, Frank Pulver, and Elysia Rodgers.

Members Absent: Jason Carnahan and Tyler Lanning.

Staff Present: Plan Commission Attorney Andrew Kruse, Director/Zoning Administrator Chris Gaumer, and Secretary Meredith Reith

Community Representatives Present: Mike Makarewicz

Public in Attendance: Jared Malcolm, Jim Miller, Sarah Delbecq, Larry Williams, Jared Rice, Jason Winik, Nolan Johnson, Chuck Knox, Andrew Provines, Ryan Jernigan, Stacy Herr, Brian Dill, Lucas and Cameron Straw, Susan Lawrence, David Holt, and Lynn Reinhart.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

William Van Wye led The Pledge of Allegiance.

PRAYER:

Jerry Yoder led in prayer.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Mr. Van Wye turned this over to Andrew Kruse to facilitate the election of officers.

Motion made by Suzanne Davis to nominate Jason Carnahan as President with Sandra Harrison seconding the motion. None opposed. Motion carried.

Motion made by Sandra Harrison to nominate William Van Wye as Vice-President with Kellen Dooley seconding the motion. None opposed. Motion carried.

Motion made by Sandra Harrison to appoint Meredith Reith as Secretary with Suzanne Davis seconding the motion. None opposed. Motion carried.

CITY AND TOWN REPRESENTATIVES:

Chris Gaumer explained that on the agenda it lists the date and time of the city and town representative meetings. He stated who previously attended these boards. He addressed that St. Joe has been added and if someone would be willing to go to Corunna they could. The meeting for St. Joe will be the first and third Tuesday of every month, this meeting is their Town Council until a Plan Commission has been established. He wasn't aware of what day Corunna held their meetings.

Mr. Van Wye stated that he would be willing to take Corunna.

Mr. Gaumer stated that all they have is Town Council due to us taking on their Plan Commission.

Mr. Kruse added that St. Joe is a little bit more of a critical issue because of their Comprehensive Plan and ETJ.

Mr. Gaumer addressed that Jerry Yoder did ask if he could be on that board. If everyone's okay with what's provided and adding Jerry as St. Joe a motion can be made. He stated that he will provide a schedule of when Corunna holds their meetings.

Suzanne Davis– Auburn

William Van Wye – Ashley and Corunna

Sandra Harrison – Hamilton and Butler

Frank Pulver – Garrett

Angie Holt – Waterloo

St. Joe – Jerry Yoder

Mr. Dooley motioned to approve the member appointments as proposed above seconded by Angie Holt. None opposed. Motion carried.

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS APPOINTMENT:

Frank Pulver motioned to retain the current appointment for the Board of Zoning Appeals member Jason Carnahan. Seconded by Mrs. Harrison. None opposed. Motion carried.

By a unanimous vote Mrs. Holt was retained as the current Plan Commission alternate member of the Board of Zoning Appeals for Jason Carnahan. None opposed. Motion carried.

PLAT COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS:

Motion was made by Mrs. Davis to retain the current members, Plan Commission members Elysia Rodgers, Sandra Harrison, Suzanne Davis, Jerry Yoder, and Jason Carnahan. Seconded by Mr. Dooley. None opposed. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motioned by Mrs. Harrison to approve the December 17, 2025 meeting minutes. Seconded by Mrs. Holt. Mr. Dooley abstained due to new appointment on board. None opposed. Motion carried.

CONSIDERATION OF CLAIMS:

Mr. Van Wye inquired about any comments, questions, or motions to approve December 2025 claims, totaling \$38,173.84.

Mrs. Harrison motioned to approve claims seconded by Mrs. Davis. None opposed. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Dekalb 2040 – Comprehensive Plan Draft Presentation: HWC Engineering

Mr. Gaumer thanked everyone in the public for attending the presentation of the Comprehensive Plan draft. We've been working on this for over a year now with our partners at HWC Engineering. He stated that Jennifer and Rachel are here to give a presentation to us. The copies of the presentation have been provided to everyone because I know it's a little awkward sometimes to look up there. He handed this over to Rachel to begin the presentation.

Rachel Christenson with HWC Engineering approached the podium and introduced herself as the planning studio lead. She explained that herself and Jen are here to present the DeKalb County 2040 Comprehensive Plan. This official public presentation would walk through the process, what their team has learned, community input, and the work completed with the steering committee. She noted that they would be happy to answer any questions throughout the presentation. Rachel added that after the presentation, the team would move downstairs to the Rotunda, where display boards were set up for additional public questions and comments. She introduced Jen as the project manager, mentioned planner Rees Wimmer, and noted that Allie Daugherty was downstairs serving as the client liaison. She continued by explaining what a comprehensive plan is and noted that DeKalb County's current plan dates back to 2017. She mentioned that she and Chris attended Ball State together and herself, Jen, and Chris graduated

together. Comprehensive planning, she said, is essential for guiding long-term community investment and is used by elected officials, staff, community groups, and property owners when making decisions about future growth or preserving areas from growth. She also emphasized that Indiana law requires a comprehensive plan to have zoning requirements. Rachel outlined the four phases of their planning process. Phase one, casting a vision, began in December 2024 with a coordination meeting with Chris and the formation of the steering committee. Phase two brought the public into the process to share their hopes and priorities that they wanted DeKalb County to follow. After that, the team began drafting the plan and held a “Big Ideas” open house to confirm that the concepts aligned with community input. We are now in phase four, focused on practical action steps and developing the implementation plan. Tonight’s presentation leads into the upcoming adoption phase. She then discussed community engagement, noting that it is one of the most enjoyable parts of the process because it gives their team the chance to hear directly from residents about their visions for DeKalb County and what amenities they currently leave the county to find.

She explained that the process began with a 22-member steering committee that provided critical guidance. Throughout the project, the team held several steering committee meetings. After gathering input from the public, they brought the information back to the committee to review, discuss, and determine next steps. The committee included members representing a wide range of roles. The project also included multiple public engagement opportunities. A project website, still active, received about 2,100 unique visits. Several focus groups were held on topics such as agribusiness, housing, youth, and land use, with a total of 62 participants. An online survey drew nearly 600 responses. Two in-person public workshops were conducted, attended by about 75 people, along with an online version. To increase accessibility, they offered two “do-it-yourself” workshop kits that allowed staff to present the project at other community meetings, gathering feedback from 41 participants. Later, a “Big Ideas” open house was held to review preliminary drafts of priorities, goals, and strategies. Forty-six participants attended in person, and 34 participated online. From this engagement, several key community themes emerged, a strong sense of community and small-town values, preservation of heritage, including agriculture, car culture, historic sites, and local events. Protection of natural assets such as farmland, waterways, and open spaces. Support for thoughtful, forward-thinking growth that balances tradition with new opportunities. A desire for collaboration among local government, nonprofits, and community partners. A focus on quality of life, economic resilience, and long-term prosperity. Using these themes, the team worked with the steering committee to craft a vision for DeKalb County’s future. The vision emphasizes strategic growth that strengthens the community while honoring its farming heritage, car culture, and unique identity. The county aims to be: A place of opportunity, where education, workforce development, and local businesses support success at all stages of life. A steward of land and water, balancing development with long-term protection of natural resources. A home where families and employers thrive, offering quality housing, amenities, and a strong sense of place. Rooted in tradition and growing with purpose, DeKalb County seeks to build a strong, welcoming future for current and future generations. After presenting the vision, Rachel turned the presentation over to Jen to walk through the plan’s structure and the specific goals and objectives developed with the steering committee.

Jen Barclay began by thanking everyone for attending and explained that the comprehensive plan is organized into several main sections. It opens with an executive summary highlighting the plan’s key recommendations, followed by an introduction describing the planning process, what was evaluated, and current community conditions. A public participation chapter then outlines who was involved and summarizes the engagement activities. Chapters 4 through 10 cover the seven major subject areas essential to a comprehensive plan. Each chapter describes existing conditions, sets a goal, and identifies strategies and specific objectives to achieve that goal. Chapter 11 focuses on the Town of Corunna and its unique needs, while Chapter 12 outlines implementation strategies designed to help the county begin turning the plan into action over the coming years. Jen emphasized that the core chapters are intended to be action-oriented moving from vision to real impact. Goals define what the county wants to accomplish,

strategies provide a broad approach, and objectives offer clear steps to make progress. This structure ensures the plan becomes a working document rather than something that sits on a shelf.

Land Use: Public feedback emphasized protecting farmland. In the online survey, 68% supported limiting large-lot housing to preserve agricultural land, and 65% supported allowing somewhat denser housing for the same reason. The proposed land-use map simplifies agricultural districts and continues directing growth toward areas with existing infrastructure—mainly near cities and towns.

Transportation: DeKalb County maintains roughly 700 miles of roadway, about 72% of all county roads. However, only 34% of survey respondents rated the roads as being in good condition. The plan reflects the strong desire to improve roadway conditions, make sustainable transportation investments, and preserve the rural character and safety of less-traveled roads.

Housing: Stakeholders expressed the need for more attainable housing options, rehabilitation of vacant or underused properties, and continued farmland preservation. The plan again encourages concentrating growth near municipalities and supporting a variety of housing types through county–municipality partnerships. **Community Facilities & Infrastructure:** Residents indicated they value the county's high quality of life and lower cost of living and want those benefits preserved. Childcare emerged as a significant concern, with 58% of online respondents dissatisfied with available options. While childcare isn't a county-run service, the plan encourages continued involvement and partnerships to support families. Strong support was also shown for investing in county-provided amenities such as trails, open spaces, and natural areas. The Poka-Bache Trail received near-unanimous support, and parks and outdoor recreation ranked as the top priority in the online public workshop. When asked what is missing in DeKalb County, community members highlighted the importance of continuing county support for philanthropic efforts such as trail development, including the Poka-Bache Trail. Economic development discussions emphasized the urgent need for skilled workers, particularly in manufacturing and trades.

Recommendations included strengthening training programs, expanding apprenticeships and school-based entrepreneurship, and creating stronger connections between students and local employers. Participants also expressed interest in attracting a wider mix of businesses such as ag-tech, logistics, manufacturing, arts, and culture. They noted the community's appreciation for local events, even though most are run by municipalities or organizations rather than the county. Many felt the county should develop its own identity to better represent itself regionally and attract younger residents and workforce talent. Chapter 11 focuses on the Town of Corunna, where the county manages planning and zoning under a 1965 ordinance. The chapter outlines existing conditions, public input, and specific strategies. Implementation actions from Chapters 4–10 have been grouped into short- and long-term strategies to build momentum once the plan is adopted. The full plan is available at dekalb2040.com, and public comments are accepted through February 1 at jbarclay@hwcengineering.com. A public hearing is scheduled for February 18, with tentative plan adoption on March 2. After the presentation, attendees were invited to view the boards in the rotunda and ask further questions.

Mr. Gaumer thanked Jen and Rachel for their year-long involvement and acknowledged the hard work they put into the project. He noted that copies of the comprehensive plan were available for Plan Commission members and the public. He encouraged everyone to read the plan thoroughly, explaining that although it has been reviewed carefully, details can still be missed. He invited Plan Commission members to ask questions during their review but asked that the public's questions be addressed downstairs in the rotunda.

Mrs. Christenson also expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to work with the county and noted that collaborating with Planning Director Chris had been positive and productive.

Mr. Van Wye asked if there were any questions.

Mrs. Holt inquired about the intended timeframe for the comprehensive plan. Mr. Gaumer explained that the plan looks ahead to 2040, giving it a lifespan of about 15 years, and stressed that it remains a flexible document that can be updated as needed.

Mrs. Holt said the explanation was helpful and then asked to what extent the plan considered emerging technologies particularly given recent developments across Indiana. She noted that new technologies, such as small modular nuclear reactors, data centers, and advanced water-conservation systems, are evolving quickly and could significantly impact local infrastructure. As a Plan Commission member, she relies on the comprehensive plan for guidance when specific issues aren't clearly addressed. She asked whether these types of leading-edge technologies were discussed during the planning process, emphasizing that they may arrive sooner than expected and that guidance within the plan would help inform future decisions.

Mrs. Barclay responded that the infrastructure chapter acknowledges emerging technologies and encourages ongoing review. She added that future committees or plan updates could be used to address new issues in greater detail.

Mrs. Holt followed up, asking whether any of these technologies had been raised during public engagement.

Mrs. Barclay noted that while such topics did not come up, many residents, especially in Butler expressed strong opposition to utility-scale solar. Accordingly, the plan does not recommend utility-scale solar anywhere in the county and instead suggests evaluating proposals case by case based on community character, infrastructure, and growth strategy.

Mr. Van Wye then asked whether the plan considered development of an industrial park, noting past attempts and recent interest from Representative Smaltz in creating an interchange at County Road 60 or 68 to support airport area development.

Mr. Gaumer explained that the future land use map acknowledges the possibility of an interchange, but specific land uses would be determined only if an interchange is confirmed. He added that industrial use areas were scaled back because many parcels between Butler and SDI considered as the Industrial Corridor, have been rezoned to agricultural as residents increasingly choose to build homes there. As a result, future industrial growth is now more focused on State Road 8. He clarified that the map reflects future land use not zoning and that the two former agricultural land-use categories have been consolidated into one. When asked whether this means there will be only one type of agricultural zoning, Mr. Gaumer explained that the plan recommends consolidating zoning districts generally but does not make specific zoning changes itself.

Suzanne Davis asked about earlier drafts showing industrial zoning on County Road 68 and raised concerns about changes near residential areas if an interchange is built.

Mrs. Barclay responded that further study led by the airport would determine whether an interchange is needed, where it should be located, and what impact it would have.

Mr. Gaumer added that such a project is likely many years away, and once formal studies are completed, the county will evaluate appropriate land uses and update the plan accordingly.

Mrs. Christenson added that clipboards with comment cards were available downstairs. She encouraged everyone to write down any comments or feedback that they may have while reviewing the boards. She noted that if someone prefers not to write on-site or wants to review the plan online later, they should still share their comments, as the team is happy to consider all additional feedback.

Mr. Van Wye asked what we should do now.

Mr. Gaumer asked that we adjourn the meeting and encouraged the public to visit the rotunda, where boards and copies of the plan draft will be available. He reminded everyone that comments should be submitted to Jen by February 1, and the next meeting will be held on February 18.

REPORTS FROM OFFICERS, COMMITTEES, STAFF OR TOWN/CITY LIAINSONS:

Mrs. Davis informed the board that there was no meeting for the City of Auburn.

Mrs. Holt informed the board that there was no meeting for the City of Waterloo.

Mrs. Harrison informed the board that the City of Hamilton held their meeting. They handed out zoning packets. They're having trouble with lot 198 that they approved, because the HOA has not recorded the Plat. So, they're going to send a letter out threatening to remove the approval. At Forest Park Beach 3 addition, they've approved eight home sites. But they found out that those home sites are incompatible with the gas lines because they were for cottages. The gas lines are currently 2 inches and need to be 4 inches. They will be working to rectify this problem.

Mr. Yoder informed the board that he attended St. Joe last night. They're in the process of coming up with their board members. The members will consist of two outside the town and three inside the town. He believed that there's five right now that they're considering, but they're only bringing two in from the ETJ area.

Mr. Gaumer asked to make sure you remind them that those members must get approved by the County Commissioners. That way they can get on the agenda before they start a plan commission.

Mr. Yoder asked if they're still planning on hiring our county inspector, right.

Mr. Gaumer stated that he will do the building inspections. This has already been in place with them for several years.

Mr. Yoder said that he had one thing that he'd like to talk about since we've got some time. This is about building permit fees for agricultural buildings. He asked what the fee is for these and are they commercial prices.

Mr. Gaumer stated that the building permit fees are controlled by the County Commissioners. The current building permit fee for agricultural buildings, such as if Kellen would build an agricultural barn for whatever it would be used for at \$0.10 per square foot. If it's a commercial agricultural building, like if you're doing chicken, cow, or hog barns, those types of things for commercial purposes are at \$0.15 per square foot. There's a minimum fee for this and he wasn't aware of how much. These building permit fees are controlled by the Commissioners.

Mr. Yoder stated that Allen County has fees for egg buildings at just \$0.02. He addressed that there ought to be some type of break there for agricultural.

Mr. Gaumer addressed that we still must go out and do our inspections. This is what's hard figuring out how much it costs to send an inspector out to do these inspections.

Mr. Yoder added that it's not near the amount of time it takes for a home or a commercial property.

Mr. Gaumer stated that yes, the fees are different based off commercial use versus a single-family use. The fees changed in 2024 and increased; they had been at \$0.05 per square feet for years.

Mr. Yoder addressed that he wanted to consider maybe a reduced price for agricultural buildings rather than pricing them out as commercial.

Mr. Gaumer added that he can work on getting the cost of what it is for our surrounding counties. His philosophy on this is that the building department side should not be taxed on taxpayer dollars. It's a user fee-based department that's really not a department for the entire county. Like the building inspector is only going out doing building inspections on people that are getting permits. So those permit fees should reflect that. Since 2024 the cost of gas has come down substantially, which was surprising. I think we all anticipated it going up, but you know for the inspector to go out and do the inspection and then cover the cost of mileage, gas, wear and tear on the vehicle. Our last vehicle lasted us only three or four years. So,

you know if we must buy a new truck every three or four years, this is part of it. He stated that this is why he suggested the fees get doubled.

Mr. Yoder stated that some of these larger agricultural guys, you know, paying a higher price for their building permits are filing for a tax break to try to compensate for this cost.

Mr. Gaumer stated that he hasn't received any complaints, but we do hear about the shook of large fees, but he doesn't hear the complaints. He feels like they're getting better service than they're getting in Allen County or Fort Wayne. We can investigate those fees and see what they are in surrounding counties.

Mr. Yoder added that he would appreciate it if you would because he's getting complaints about this.

Meredith Reith added that she is aware of some individuals that are unhappy because the fee schedule lists Commercial Agricultural Buildings, and believes the wording needs to be clarified. This does regulate Confined Feeding Operations that fall under this type of commercial use. She also noted that the minimum fee is \$100.

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE:

None

ADJOURNMENT:

William Van Wye adjourned the meeting at 6:03 p.m.

Vice-President – William Van Wye

Secretary – Meredith Reith

2026.02.18 ADOPTION DRAFT

DEKALB COUNTY, INDIANA

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

William Hartman, President

Kellen Dooley, Vice President

Jim Miller, Vice President

COUNTY COUNCIL

David Yarde, President (At Large)

William VanWye, Vice President
(District 2)

Rick Collins (District 1)

Amy Demske (District 3)

Robert Krafft (At Large)

Amy Prosser (At Large)

Richard Ring (District 4)

COUNTY ATTORNEY

Andrew Kruse, Kruse + Kruse P.C.

STAFF

Chris Gaumer, Director of
Development Services/Zoning
Administrator

PLAN COMMISSION

Jason Carnahan, President

Purdue Extension Representative

William VanWye, Vice President
County Council Representative

Glenn Crawford/Tyler Lanning (Alternate)
County Surveyor Representative

Suzanne Davis

Citizen Representative

Sandra Harrison

Township Trustee Representative

William Hartman

County Commissioners Representative

Angie Holt

Citizen Representative

Frank Pulver

Citizen Representative

Jerry Yoder/Jared Malcolm (Alternate)

Citizen Representative

Elysia Rodgers

Purdue Extension Representative
(non-voting)



STEERING COMMITTEE

Ryan Abbott, DeKalb County Eastern Community School Corporation

Dawn Ashcleman, Financial Institution Representative

Collin Bice/Anton King, DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership

Tresa Bishop, Town of Corunna

Amber Caccamo, Visit DeKalb County

Jason Carnahan, DeKalb County Plan Commission President

Russ Couchman, DeKalb County Airport

Sarah Delbecq, DeKalb County Farm Bureau

Chris Gaumer, DeKalb County Director of Development Services/Zoning Administrator

Bill Hartman, County Commissioner

Beth Holman, DeKalb County Eastern Community School Corporation

Justin Hoover, Industry Representative

Andrew Kruse, County Attorney

Larry Kummer, Agriculture Representative

Jared Malcolm, Citizen

Ben Parker, DeKalb County Highway Department

Nick Pranger, Agriculture Representative

Andrew Provines, Citizen

Elysia Rodgers, Purdue Extension

Dave Yarde, DeKalb County Council

Tanya Young, DeKalb County Community Foundation

Jesse Zehr, Amish Community Representative

James Schmucker, Amish Community Representative

PREPARED BY



135 Pennsylvania St. #2800
Indianapolis, IN 46204



Placeholder for Resolution



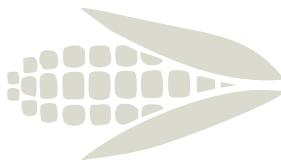


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



DEKALB 2040: PLANTING OUR FUTURE

DeKalb County, Indiana is more than farmland and small towns. It is a community rooted in neighborly values, proud traditions, and a shared love for the places we call home. From fertile fields and natural waterways to a rich history, car culture, and vibrant local events, DeKalb County honors the heritage that makes it unique.

At the same time, the county is planting the seeds for a future where opportunity, innovation, and community thrive together. DeKalb County is strengthened by strong partnerships among local governments, nonprofits, and community stakeholders.

DeKalb 2040 is the blueprint for that future, a bold vision for prosperity and progress over the next decade.

This comprehensive plan guides the community to a future that preserves what makes DeKalb County special, while embracing new ideas, investments, and partnerships. This balance will strengthen the economy, enrich the community, and enhance the quality of life for all. It is a framework rooted in public engagement, grounded in shared values, and designed to guide thoughtful and strategic decision-making.

The Community's Priorities

Residents shared a deep appreciation for DeKalb County's character and a strong desire to protect what makes it unique, while planning thoughtfully for the future. Key themes included:

- **Strong sense of community** rooted in neighborly values, local pride, and shared traditions.
- **Preservation of heritage**, including agricultural roots, car culture, historic places, and local events.
- **Protection of natural assets**, such as fertile farmland, waterways, and open spaces.
- **Support for thoughtful growth** that balances tradition with innovation and opportunity.
- **Desire for collaboration** among local governments, nonprofits, and community partners.
- **Focus on quality of life**, economic resilience, and long-term prosperity.



A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF DEKALB COUNTY

DeKalb County is intentionally shaping a future where strategic growth strengthens the local community to create lasting opportunity. While celebrating DeKalb County's heritage of farming, classic car culture, and the people that make DeKalb County unique, the county is striving to be:



A place of opportunity, where education, workforce development, and local businesses create pathways to success at every stage of life.



A steward of land and water, balancing thoughtful development with long-term care for farmland and natural systems.



A home where families and employers flourish, offering quality housing, amenities, and a strong sense of place.

Rooted in tradition and growing with purpose, DeKalb County is building a strong, welcoming future that supports today's residents and generations to come.

Photo Credit: Sarah Delbecq



DEKALB 2040 GOALS, DEKALB COUNTY'S FUTURE:

The DeKalb 2040 Comprehensive Plan is built around goals that capture the community's collective aspirations. Each goal represents a key step toward realizing the community's shared vision for the future – providing direction, focus, and inspiration for the policies and actions that will shape growth and improvement over time.

DeKalb 2040 is more than a plan; it is an invitation. It welcomes every resident, business leader, and stakeholder to join in shaping a county that balances growth with preservation, opportunity with character, and progress with tradition. By working together, DeKalb County will cultivate a future where the next generation can live, work, and thrive – a place that honors its past while planting seeds for a bold, prosperous, and sustainable future.

The time is now. **Let's plant our future together.**



Photo Credit: Sarah Delbecq



DeKalb 2040 Goals

LAND USE: Support DeKalb County's farmland and rural character by directing growth to areas that support vibrant communities, strengthen the rural economy, and efficiently use infrastructure.

TRANSPORTATION: Develop a safe, efficient, well-connected, and maintained transportation network that supports economic growth, reflects DeKalb County's rural character, and prioritizes strategic, long-term infrastructure investment.

HOUSING: Increase the supply of diverse, attainable, and well-connected housing options while revitalizing the existing housing stock, promoting common-sense growth patterns, preserving rural character, and aligning infrastructure and community needs.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE: Ensure DeKalb County's community facilities and infrastructure reliably support growth, public safety, health, education, and quality of life for all residents.

TRAILS, OPEN SPACES, AND NATURAL RESOURCES: Expand and diversify access to quality outdoor recreation, strengthen conservation of natural resources, and foster environmental stewardship to improve community health, protect natural assets, and enhance regional recreational connectivity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Foster a diverse, resilient economy by supporting the expansion of workforce training, entrepreneurship, and attracting a wide range of businesses, while preserving DeKalb County's community character and making it a place where residents of all ages and skill levels can live, work, and thrive.

ARTS, CULTURE, AND PLACEMAKING: Celebrate and strengthen DeKalb County's small-town identity and cultural assets by fostering vibrant, inclusive placemaking that enhances community pride and quality of life.



INTRODUCTION



Purpose of the Plan

DeKalb County's last comprehensive plan was adopted in 2017. Since then, shifts in demographics and technology have transformed the county's social and economic landscape, creating a need for an updated plan that responds to current demands and prepares for future development. Key challenges and opportunities, such as growth pressures from neighboring Allen County's rapid expansion, must be addressed through the context of the county's strong values, rooted in its long rural history.

This plan provides a framework that uses public engagement to unite stakeholders and apply community values to county issues. It outlines future land use and policy recommendations to guide decision-making rooted in DeKalb County's values.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a guidance document used by elected officials and community leaders which establishes a long-term vision for the community. Comprehensive plans are important tools that should be used daily to inform land use, infrastructure, and other community development decisions. Research and analysis of existing conditions provides a foundation for the goals and strategies outlined in the plan. Community stakeholders living in, working in, or with a strong interest in the future of DeKalb County were also asked to provide input to assist in the development of the plan.

Who Uses a Comprehensive Plan?

Planning Staff: evaluating whether proposed development and rezoning requests are consistent with the comprehensive plan and vision, evaluating and supporting grant writing for capital projects, guide regional planning efforts

Plan Commission: determining whether to recommend approval or denial of zoning requests, development plans, and zoning text amendments, including permitted uses and development standards

Commissioners: making final determinations on zoning requests, development approvals, and zoning text amendments, including permitted uses and development standards

Developers: identifying which areas are suitable for specific types of development and types of development the community desires

Community Organizations: aligning advocacy and investment priorities with the community's long-term vision, supporting grant applications and partnerships, and using the plan to inform projects that enhance quality of life



According to Indiana Code Title 36, Article 7, Chapter 4, the 500 Series (IC 36-7-4-500 et seq.), a comprehensive plan must contain a statement of objectives for future development, a statement of policy for land use development, and a statement of policy for the development of public ways, public places, public lands, public structures, and public utilities. However, comprehensive plans typically extend beyond these minimum requirements to address parks, natural resource protection, farmland preservation, redevelopment of blighted areas, and more.

While the DeKalb 2040 Comprehensive Plan provides a framework to guide future policy decisions and potential updates to local development ordinances, it is not a legally binding document. The vision and recommendations outlined in the plan must be implemented through deliberate actions by county leadership in partnership with local, regional, and statewide partners.

Figure 2.01 - Characteristics of a Comprehensive Plan



DEFINITION

- *Long range guide for community growth, development, and investment.*
- *Used by leaders, staff, organizations, and property owners when making decisions.*



LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

- *Objectives for future development.*
- *Policy for land use development.*
- *Policy for development of public ways, public lands, and public utilities.*



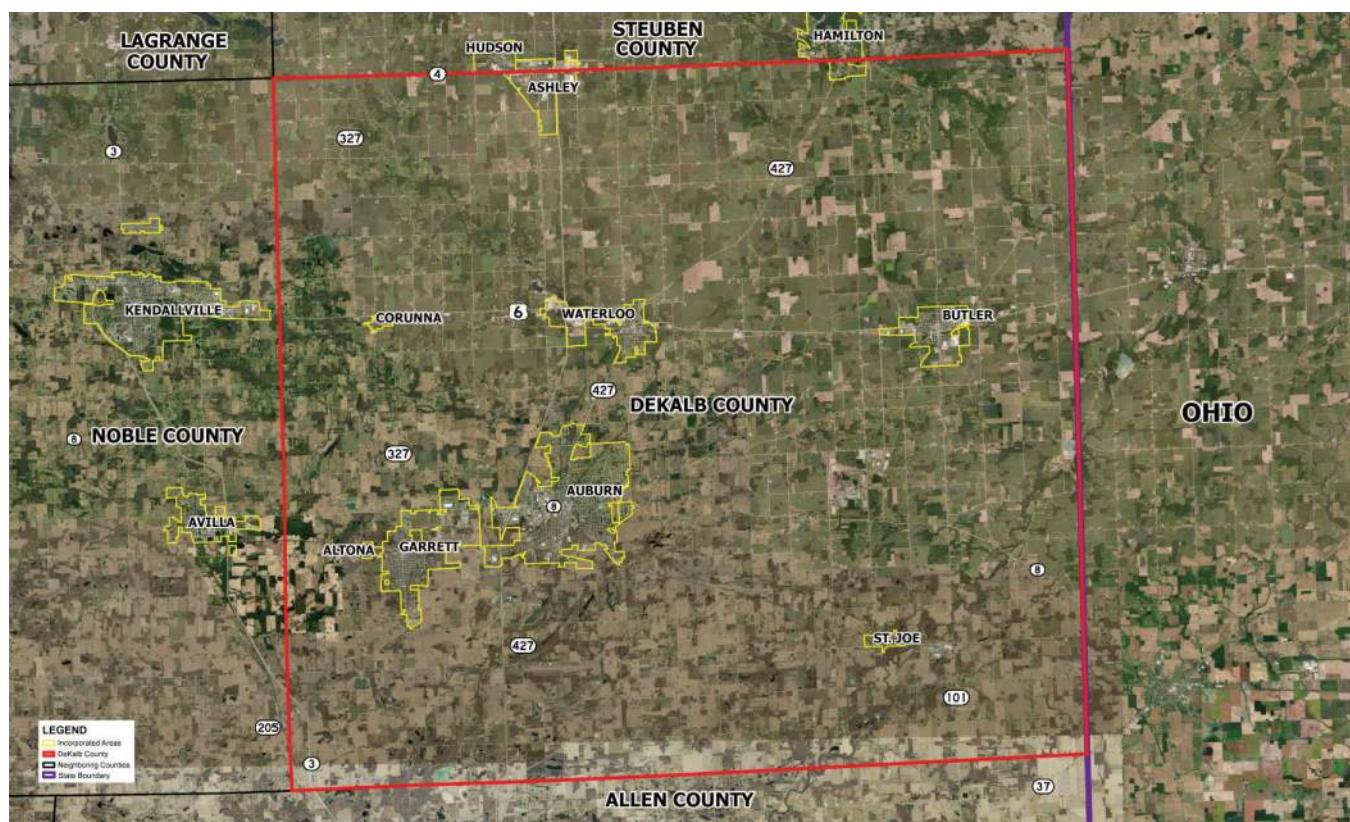
PLAN PURPOSE

- *Understand current community conditions.*
- *Set clear vision and goals.*
- *Identify actionable projects to implement the vision.*

Planning Area

The planning jurisdiction for this comprehensive plan is all unincorporated areas of DeKalb County (excluding applicable extra-territorial jurisdictions), as well as the town of Corunna, based off of Ordinance #23, adopted December 6, 1965. While this plan aims to make DeKalb County a great place for everyone, the county does not have planning authority in the towns of Altona, Ashley, Hamilton, St. Joe, and Waterloo and the cities of Auburn, Butler, and Garrett.

Figure 2.02 - Planning Area



Planning Process Overview

The DeKalb 2040 Comprehensive Plan was developed over a 15-month period within four phases designed to assess current conditions, incorporate recent planning efforts, and engage meaningfully with the community:

 Phase One – Kickoff
 Phase Two – Engagement
 Phase Three – Strategies
 Phase Four – Adoption
<p>January 2025</p> <p>A working relationship was built between the DeKalb County staff, HWC Engineering, and the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee was comprised of community leaders that represented a cross section of the community, including local experts in economic development, finance, developers, employers, builders, farmers as well as board members and elected officials. This phase included a review of existing conditions and set the stage for public engagement.</p>
<p>February – July 2025</p> <p>The project team facilitated a public engagement process to solicit feedback from stakeholders both in-person and online. Engagement opportunities included an online survey, two public workshops, and focus group meetings covering topics identified as essential for a successful plan. Project information was shared on the project website, through social media, and using word of mouth. The engagement opportunities provided an opportunity for the community to provide feedback that would inform the plan's recommendations. Additionally, the project team coordinated with the Town of Corunna and facilitated an in-person public workshop to solicit feedback from residents.</p>
<p>July – November 2025</p> <p>The project team used public input to form the plan's recommendations, including a Future Land Use map, as well as goals and strategies for each of the plan's topic chapters. Recommendations were presented as goals and strategies that aim to achieve desired outcomes and priorities. Recommendations were presented to the public for their review and feedback at the online and in-person Big Ideas Open House, which informed the final recommendations.</p>
<p>December 2025 – March 2026</p> <p>A public draft was prepared that included goals and strategies for each of the plan's topic chapters, a Future Land Use Map, and a Thoroughfare Map. This was another opportunity for public feedback. Additionally, an independent chapter was prepared for the Town of Corunna. The plan was revised based on feedback from the public, Steering Committee, and county staff. The final draft was presented to the Plan Commission, and finally to the County Council, for adoption.</p>



Plan Organization Overview

DeKalb 2040 is organized into 12 chapters that outline the county's current conditions, opportunities, and challenges, along with detailed plans to address each over the next decade and beyond. These chapters include:

- 1. Executive Summary:** Highlights the guiding principles and key recommendations of the plan.
- 2. Introduction:** Outlines the planning process, public input, and existing conditions shaping DeKalb County.
- 3. Public Participation:** Summarizes the recurring themes heard throughout public engagement.
- 4. Land Use:** Reviews existing land use patterns and presents future policy recommendations, including a future land use map.
- 5. Transportation:** Recommends strategies to maintain and enhance transportation systems for all users, including a thoroughfare map.
- 6. Housing:** Proposes strategies to proactively address housing needs across the county.
- 7. Community Facilities and Infrastructure:** Provides an inventory of existing municipal facilities and recommends strategies to improve public facilities and infrastructure.

8. Trails, Open Spaces, and Natural Resources: Provides an inventory of existing assets and outlines strategies to preserve and enhance them.

9. Economic Development: Recommends strategies to leverage local competitive advantages while addressing local and regional market constraints.

10. Arts, Culture, and Placemaking: Provides an inventory of existing assets and amenities, and recommends initiatives to strengthen local identity, pride, and quality of life.

11. Town of Corunna: Provides an overview of existing conditions and future land use recommendations specific to Corunna.

12. Implementation Plan: Provides implementation strategies with specific objectives that launch this plan. The strategies are designed to build momentum for implementation.

Existing Conditions

Decisions that shape the future of DeKalb County should be grounded in what is happening today with local trends, reliable data, and everyday experiences. This ensures that the county's future truly reflects the needs and priorities of the people who live here.

By studying information, such as population, education, income, and other community data, we gain a clearer understanding of who DeKalb County is and where its opportunities lie. This comprehensive plan uses that same data-driven approach to guide growth and decision-making.

DeKalb County has strong roots and a solid foundation for continued, steady growth. The county can build on this momentum by attracting new residents – something that benefits local businesses, industries, and schools alike. Growth also provides the opportunity to welcome more young people, helping to sustain vital community services.

As DeKalb County continues to plan for its future, it is important to focus on creating jobs that match the skills of residents, particularly those with high school diplomas or technical training. This approach will help ensure that growth benefits everyone and supports a thriving, balanced community for years to come.

Key Takeaways

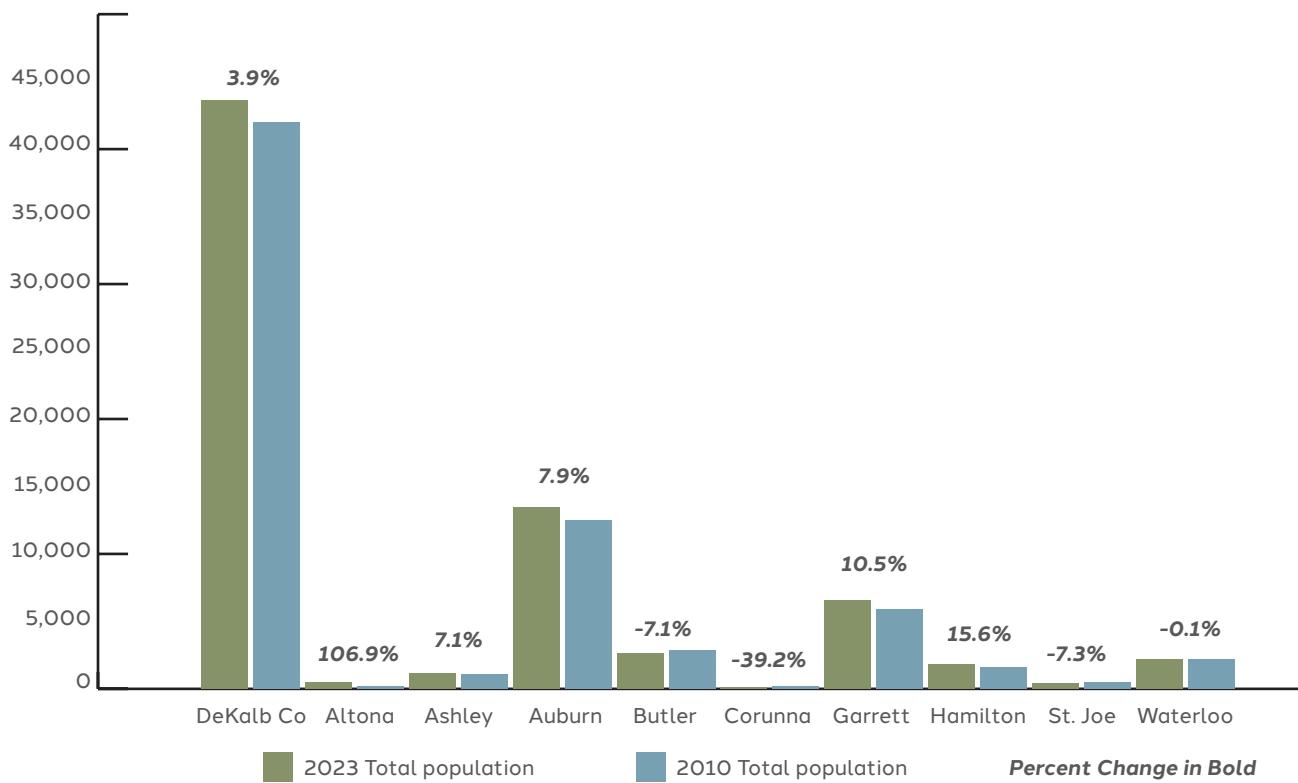
- 1. Population Growth:** DeKalb County is experiencing slow, steady growth as more people are drawn to its welcoming communities, strong schools, and easy access to larger cities, such as Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, Detroit, and Chicago.
- 2. Population Age:** DeKalb County's population is gradually getting older, following a trend seen across much of Indiana. This shift highlights the importance of planning for housing, healthcare, and services that support older adults while attracting and retaining younger families.
- 3. Educational Levels:** A higher percentage of DeKalb County residents have earned a high school diploma compared to the state average, strengthening the county's manufacturing and skilled-trade industries. However, the percentage of the county's population with a college degree is lower than the state average, limiting the ability to diversify job opportunities and attract new industries to the county.
- 4. Household Income:** Since 2010, household income has increased at roughly the same pace as inflation, meaning residents' purchasing power has remained the same over time. While this indicates that the county's local economy is steady, it also shows that residents have not seen significant gains in disposable income.



POPULATION

DeKalb County has experienced steady population growth over the past two decades. According to the American Community Survey 5-year estimate (Figure 2.01), the county's population grew from 41,968 in 2010 to 43,584 in 2023, an increase of 3.9%. This shows modest growth since 2020 as well, posting a net increase of 391 people over three years.

Figure 2.01 - Population Change 2010 - 2023



Source: ACS 2023 5-year Estimates; Note: Ashley and Hamilton are only partially located in DeKalb County.

EMPLOYMENT

DeKalb County boasts a low unemployment rate of 3.8%¹. As of October 2025, there are 959 unfilled positions across the county, including 553 full-time opportunities². The most in-demand occupations are in food preparation and service, followed by registered nursing. Given the low unemployment rate and high number of job openings, attracting a working-age population through targeted quality of life initiatives is vital to sustaining the county's economic prosperity.

¹ Hoosiers by the Numbers

² Chuma 2025 Job Openings in DeKalb County, Indiana



AGE DISTRIBUTION

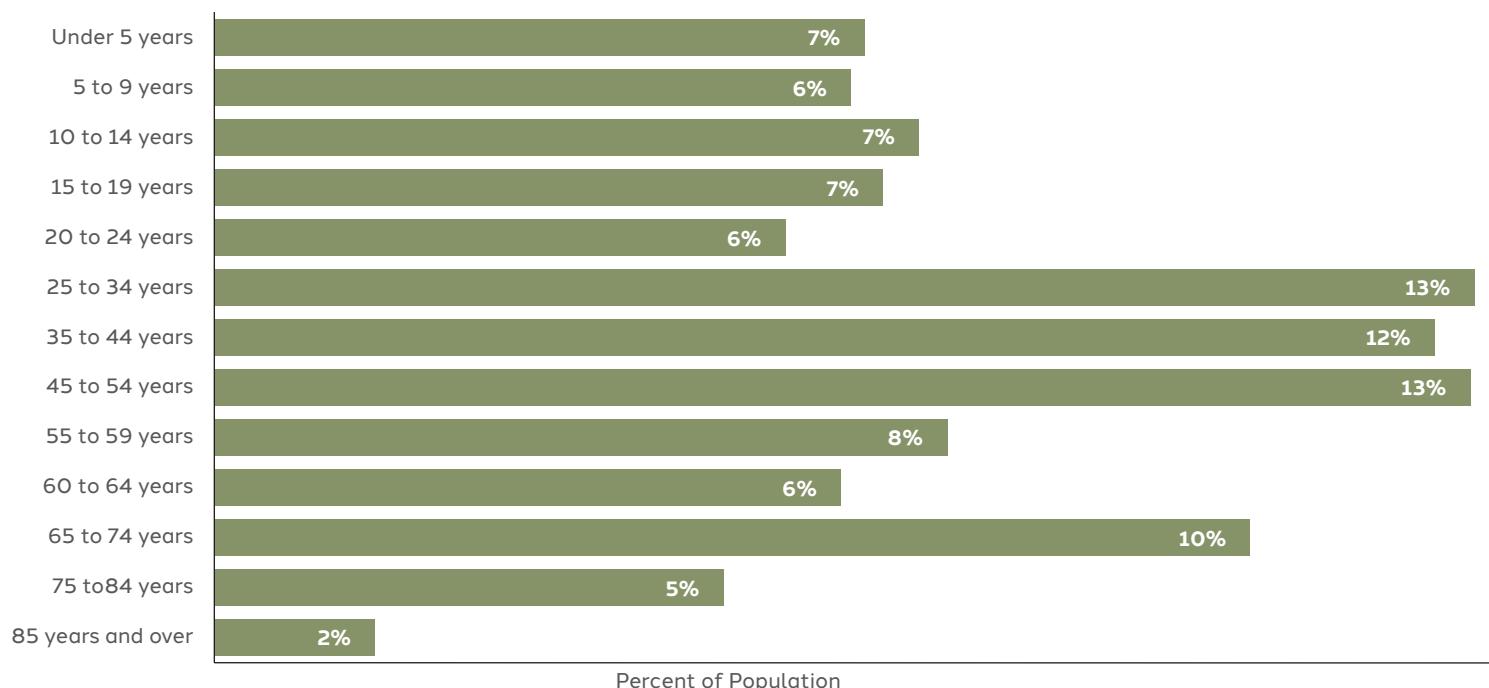
The median age in DeKalb County has risen since 2010, reflecting broader trends seen statewide and nationally. The current median age for DeKalb County is 38.4 (Figure 2.02), which is approximately one year older than in 2010. This increase is slightly below the state average increase of 1.4 years over that same time, and it raises important considerations for the county's future. Efforts to retain a strong working-age population, particularly those employed in the service and healthcare industries, will be essential as more residents choose to age in place.

Figure 2.02 - Median Age in Years

38.4	37.4	36.8	35.7	34.9	49.8	38.2	52.0	33.4	33.5
DeKalb Co	Altona	Ashley	Auburn	Butler	Corunna	Garrett	Hamilton	St. Joe	Waterloo

Source: ACS 2023 5-year Estimates; Note: Ashley and Hamilton are only partially located in DeKalb County.

Figure 2.03 - Age Distribution in DeKalb County, IN

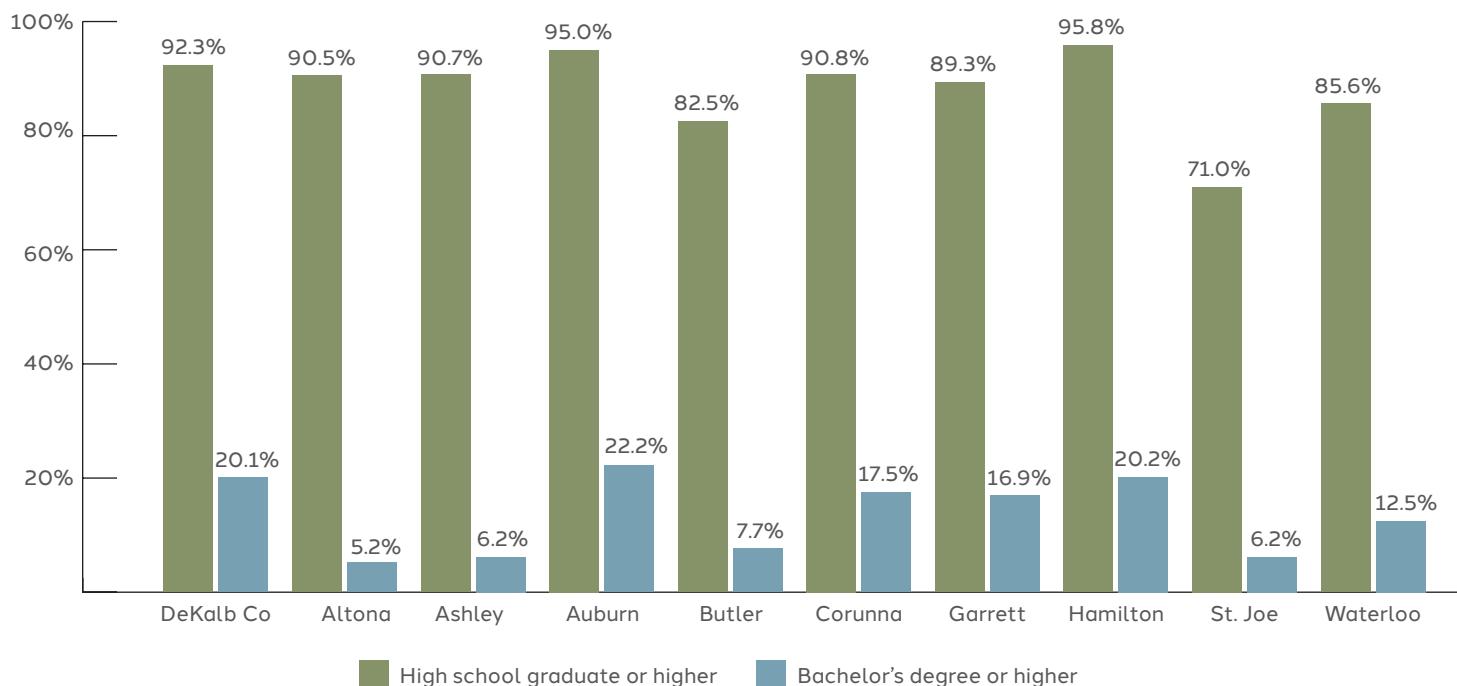


Source: ACS 2023 5-year Estimates

EDUCATION

92.3% of residents ages 25 and older have earned at least a high school diploma, slightly above the state average (Figure 2.04). However, only 20.1% hold a bachelor's degree or higher, reflecting a gap in higher education levels compared to state and national benchmarks. Higher than average high school graduation rates with slightly below average college graduation rates suggest significant participation in trades and alternative post-secondary educational options. Several of the local schools have taken advantage of this by offering introductory trades courses, such as the Vocational and Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses at the county's schools.

Figure 2.04 - Educational Attainment



Source: ACS 2023 5-year Estimates; Note: Ashley and Hamilton are only partially located in DeKalb County.



INCOME

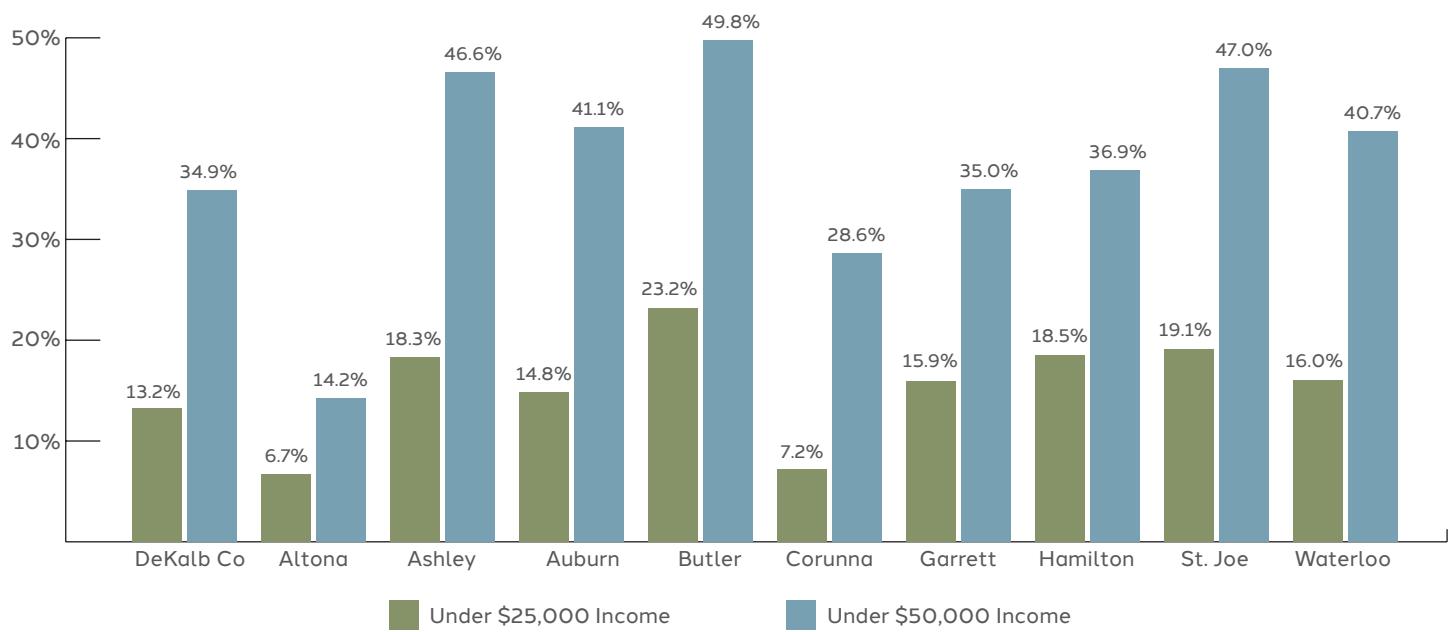
From 2010 to 2022, the median household income across the county increased by nearly \$20,000, around a 40% increase (Figure 2.05). This is generally in line with the nationwide rate of inflation over the same period, indicating that household income (Figure 2.06) in DeKalb County has neither outpaced nor fallen behind the rising cost of living, but instead kept pace, maintaining a similar level of purchasing power as in 2010.

Figure 2.05 - Median Household Income

	\$70,080	\$64,232	\$56,667	\$62,339	\$50,179	\$64,000	\$65,611	\$66,884	\$61,875	\$61,375
DeKalb Co										
Altona										
Ashley										
Auburn										
Butler										
Corunna										
Garrett										
Hamilton										
St. Joe										
Waterloo										

Source: ACS 2023 5-year Estimates; Note: Ashley and Hamilton are only partially located in DeKalb County.

Figure 2.06 - Income Levels



Source: ACS 2023 5-year Estimates; Note: Ashley and Hamilton are only partially located in DeKalb County.

Communities within DeKalb County

There are nine incorporated communities in DeKalb County, making up most of the county's population and developed areas. Incorporated communities are officially recognized by the state as their own town or city, where residents elect local leaders who make rules and decisions for the community with ordinances like zoning. All communities except the Town of Corunna have their own comprehensive plans, which under Indiana Code allow them to regulate their own zoning standards. In addition to zoning, incorporated communities in DeKalb County may have an extra-territorial jurisdiction up to two miles outside of the incorporated boundary. Six of the nine incorporated communities exercise an extra-territorial jurisdiction.

During DeKalb 2040's public engagement residents stated they preferred growth around existing towns rather than throughout rural areas, meaning that most development should occur within or immediately around incorporated boundaries or, where applicable, within extra-territorial jurisdiction. To achieve this goal, county leadership will need to collaborate with incorporated communities, promoting appropriate growth within the areas that cities and towns have planning jurisdiction.

Residents also expressed strong support during public engagement for investment in DeKalb County public schools. This represents an opportunity for partnership between the county, municipalities, and school districts themselves. The county's four public school districts are: DeKalb County Central United School District, DeKalb County Eastern Community School District, Garrett-Keyser-Butler Community Schools, and Hamilton Community Schools. Additionally, Lakewood Park Christian Schools offers a K-12 private school option.

2024-2025 Enrollment in DeKalb County Schools

- DeKalb County Central United School District: **3,578 Students**
- DeKalb County Eastern Community School District: **1,241 Students**
- Garrett-Keyser-Butler Community Schools: **1,657 Students**
- Hamilton Community Schools: **348 Students**
- Lakewood Park Christian Schools: **823 Students**

**Note: Hamilton Community Schools represent areas of both DeKalb and Steuben counties.*

What is an Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ)?

An ETJ is an area outside of a municipality's boundary or corporate limit where that city or town may exercise planning and zoning authority so that nearby development aligns with their long-term vision. This lets towns guide growth on their edges before or instead of annexation.

Indiana Code 36-7-4-205, governs extra-territorial planning, allows a municipality to plan for contiguous unincorporated areas up to two miles beyond its corporate boundary.



SNAPSHOT OF DEKALB COUNTY TOWNS AND CITIES

Altona:

- Incorporated (town): **1906**
- Population: **450**
- Housing Units: **155**
- School District: **Garrett-Keyser-Butler Community Schools**
- Largest Industries:
 1. Retail trade (68 Employees)
 2. Manufacturing (45 Employees)
 3. Educational services, health care, and social assistance (36 Employees)



Altona Town Hall; Photo Credit: Google Maps

Ashley:

- Incorporated (town): **1892**
- Population: **1,200**
- Housing Units: **540**
- School District: **DeKalb County Central United School District**
- Largest Industries:
 1. Manufacturing (215 Employees)
 2. Educational services, health care, and social assistance (89 Employees)
 3. Retail trade (85 Employees)



Ashley Town Hall; Photo Credit: ashley.in.gov

*Note: Ashley is located in both DeKalb and Steuben Counties.

Auburn:

- Incorporated (city) with an extra-territorial jurisdiction: **1900**
- Population: **13,500**
- Housing Units: **5,822**
- School District: **DeKalb County Central United School District**
- Largest Industries:
 - 1.** Manufacturing (2,347 Employees)
 - 2.** Educational services, health care, and social assistance (1,386 Employees)
 - 3.** Retail trade (787 Employees)



Auburn Town Hall; Photo Credit: commons.wikimedia.org

Butler:

- Incorporated (city) with an extra-territorial jurisdiction: **1866**
- Population: **2,650**
- Housing Units: **1,076**
- School District: **DeKalb County Eastern Community School District**
- Largest Industries:
 - 1.** Manufacturing (505 Employees)
 - 2.** Educational services, health care, and social assistance (110 Employees)
 - 3.** Retail trade (107 Employees)



Butler Town Hall; Photo Credit: cityofbutler.in.gov



Garrett:

- Incorporated (city) with an extra-territorial jurisdiction: **1875**
- Population: **6,500**
- Housing Units: **2,911**
- School District: **Garrett-Keyser-Butler Community Schools**
- Largest Industries:
 1. Manufacturing (1,467 Employees)
 2. Educational services, health care, and social assistance (628 Employees)
 3. Retail trade (346 Employees)



Garrett Town Hall; Photo Credit: garrettindiana.us

Hamilton:

- Incorporated (town) with an extra-territorial jurisdiction: **1914**
- Population: **1,850**
- Housing Units: **1,307**
- School District: **Hamilton Community Schools**
- Largest Industries:
 1. Manufacturing (351 Employees)
 2. Educational services, health care, and social assistance (193 Employees)
 3. Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (62 Employees)



Hamilton Town Hall; Photo Credit: Google Maps

*Note: Hamilton is located in both DeKalb and Steuben Counties.



St. Joe:

- Incorporated (town) with an extra-territorial jurisdiction: **1899**
- Population: **400**
- Housing Units: **178**
- School District: **DeKalb County Eastern Community School District**
- Largest Industries:
 1. Manufacturing (66 Employees)
 2. Retail trade (28 Employees)
 3. Educational services, health care, and social assistance (25 Employees)



St. Joe Town Hall; Photo Credit: stjoeindiana.org

Waterloo:

- Incorporated (town) with an extra-territorial jurisdiction: **1856**
- Population: **2,200**
- Housing Units: **963**
- School District: **DeKalb County Central United School District**
- Largest Industries:
 1. Manufacturing (369 Employees)
 2. Educational services, health care, and social assistance (211 Employees)
 3. Retail trade (130 Employees)



Waterloo Town Hall; Photo Credit: waterlooind.gov

*Note: The town of Corunna is detailed in chapter 11.

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Population Estimates

Indiana Department of Education, 2024-2025 school year



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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION



CHAPTER 03 -

Public Participation

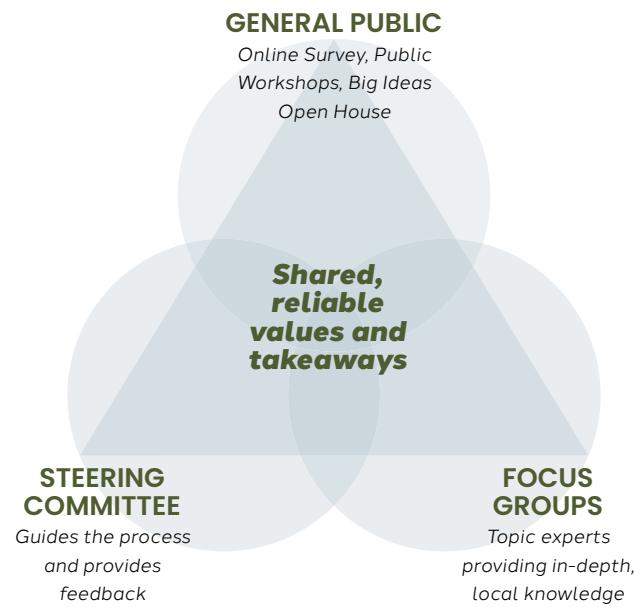
The DeKalb 2040 Comprehensive Plan creates a unified, actionable vision for the future of DeKalb County. To ensure the DeKalb 2040 plan reflects the community, a wide range of individuals were engaged through a robust public engagement process. This process united local knowledge with professional expertise to reflect DeKalb County's vision for the future. The vision, goals, strategies, and objectives identified throughout the Comprehensive Plan are a direct result of feedback collected through the public engagement phase.

Public input was received from three sources: the Steering Committee, focus groups, and the general public. While each played a slightly different role, all had the same goal of providing guidance to the county on future growth and reinvestment (see Figure 3.1). This chapter focuses on summarizing the engagement opportunities provided for the general public and key stakeholders.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION COMMON THEMES

While the large number of participants offered a wide variety of views and opinions, several shared values and concerns became clear. Overall, DeKalb County residents are ready to support growth, but only if it is intentional, balanced, and rooted in the county's identity. Clear land use policies, better communication and transparency, and strategic investments in families, small businesses, and downtown revitalization are seen as critical. By aligning land use, infrastructure, housing, and economic development in a way that enhances quality of life while protecting the rural character, DeKalb County can move forward with a clear sense of a shared vision.

Figure 3.1 - Public Input Approach



ONLINE PUBLIC SURVEY

The online public survey for the comprehensive plan was available February 2 to June 2, 2025, and collected 597 responses. Ninety-five percent of respondents live in DeKalb County. The survey was conducted to collect foundational input that would provide a launching point for understanding the opportunities and issues that exist in DeKalb County. A wide range of topics were addressed, from respondents' favorite things about the county to housing preferences. Open-ended questions provided opportunities to leave more in-depth information.

FOCUS GROUPS

Eight focus group meetings were held to gather in-depth information on targeted topics from 62 local professionals and experts.

Topics included:

- Agribusiness
- Utilities, Transportation, and Infrastructure
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Philanthropy
- Youth
- Quality of Life and Place
- Land Use

The discussion at each meeting was focused on that group's specific topic, including the unique opportunities and challenges of DeKalb County.

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

Two identical workshops were held on March 6 and April 3, 2025, to answer questions related to the assets, opportunities, and challenges facing DeKalb County. Workshop locations, which included the JAM Center in Garrett and the Butler City Hall, were chosen to offer accessible destinations for as wide a range of residents and stakeholders as possible.

At each workshop, participants were asked to respond to a series of activities presented on boards and to write or post their responses. Activities included asset and opportunity identification, prioritization of needs, and visual preference boards. Respondents also engaged in conversations with the project team to emphasize or clarify their insights beyond what could be captured in a written response. In total there were 75 participants.



ONLINE PUBLIC WORKSHOP

An online public workshop was hosted on the project website from May 30 to June 30, 2025, to give community members who could not attend the in-person workshops an opportunity to participate. The workshop was created to mirror the in-person public workshops, increasing the sample size and bolstering the significance of workshop results. Participants were asked to respond to a series of activities including asset and opportunity identification, prioritization of needs, and land use location. 19 people participated in the online workshop.

DIY MEETINGS

A Do-It-Yourself (DIY) workshop toolkit was available to staff and Steering Committee members between January 24 and July 1, 2025. Additionally, the toolkit was advertised on the project website for the public to request.

The DIY toolkit included many of the questions asked at the public, in-person workshops. The DIY format allowed community members to facilitate guided conversations with their co-workers, organizations, and others who may have been unable to attend or were unaware of the in-person and online workshops.

Two groups completed and returned the DIY toolkit: the DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership Board (DCEDP) and the DeKalb County Community Foundation (DCCF). Combined, the two groups hosted a total of 41 participants.



March 6, 2025 Focus Group Meeting



April 3, 2025 Focus Group Meeting



April 3, 2025 Butler Public Workshop

BIG IDEAS OPEN HOUSE

On September 18, 2025, the project team facilitated the Big Ideas Open House at the DeKalb County Courthouse south lawn. The open house was open to all residents, business owners, and stakeholders of DeKalb County. Respondents were asked to give feedback on the preliminary recommendations for the vision, goals, strategies, and future land use map. A total of 46 people attended and signed in. Many others were given flyers directing them to complete the online Big Ideas Open House, which mirrors the in-person open house.

ONLINE BIG IDEAS OPEN HOUSE

The online Big Ideas Open House was available between September 18 and October 3, 2025. The open house was offered as a survey and was open to all residents, business owners, and stakeholders of DeKalb County. The questions mirrored those from the in-person Big Ideas Open House, as both the in-person and online Big Ideas Open House asked respondents to give feedback on the drafted vision, goals, strategies, and future land use map for the DeKalb 2040. A total of 34 people completed the online Big Ideas Open House.

PUBLIC DRAFT AND PRESENTATION

The planning team compiled a public draft based on all the information gathered throughout the public engagement process. This draft was available to the public for comments January 12 to February 1, 2026. Additionally, a public presentation was hosted on January 21, 2026 at the DeKalb County Courthouse Rotunda. Approximately 20 people attended.

PUBLIC PRESENTATION AND VIDEO

The planning team created a video summarizing the planning process, key findings, and themes of the plan for public consumption. The video was posted on the DeKalb 2040 website.

PLAN COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING

After all public feedback was received and incorporated, the planning team presented the DeKalb 2040 Comprehensive Plan to the County Plan Commission for final feedback. After discussion, members voted to recommend approval of the plan, sending it to the County Commission for a final hearing and adoption. A total of **x people** attended and signed in.

COMMISSIONER ADOPTION

The DeKalb County Commissioner adoption meeting was the final step before adoption of the plan. The planning team presented the DeKalb 2040 Comprehensive Plan to the Commissioners on **X date**. After discussing the plan, the Commissioners voted to adopt the plan. A total of **x people** attended and signed in.



LAND USE



LAND USE

Balancing preservation, growth, and economic opportunity is central to DeKalb County's land use policy. Most new development occurs within incorporated areas or within cities and towns' extra-territorial jurisdictions (ETJs). An ETJ is the area just outside municipal boundaries where a specific community retains planning and zoning authority. Municipalities with ETJs include Auburn, Butler, Garrett, Hamilton, St. Joe, and Waterloo.

With new growth occurring within incorporated areas, it is a priority for the county to plan for and appropriately respond to municipal land use decisions where county and municipal jurisdictions meet for cohesive land use planning throughout the entire county.

Online public survey results show strong support for protecting farmland:

- 68% of respondents opposed developing agricultural land for large-lot housing.
- 65% supported allowing some higher-density housing to preserve farmland and limit scattered development.

In response, the county's land use policy focuses on directing growth to appropriate areas, refining zoning codes, and partnering with municipalities to encourage context-sensitive development in and around cities and towns.

68%

OF ONLINE
PUBLIC SURVEY
RESPONDENTS

OPPOSED

DEVELOPING AGRICULTURAL
LAND FOR LARGE-LOT HOUSING



65%

OF ONLINE
PUBLIC SURVEY
RESPONDENTS

SUPPORTED

ALLOWING SOME HIGHER-
DENSITY HOUSING TO PRESERVE
FARMLAND AND LIMIT SCATTERED
DEVELOPMENT



WHAT WE HEARD:



***“Embrace dual thinking;
we can have progress
and protection of land”***

– Big Ideas Open
House Participant

***“Maintain agricultural
areas to be farmland”***

– Big Ideas Open
House Participant

***“Repurpose under-utilized
existing buildings”***

– Big Ideas Open
House Participant

WHAT WE FOUND AND WHY IT MATTERS

KEY FINDING #1 BALANCE GROWTH AND PRESERVATION.

While maintaining farmland is a top priority for many, improving the variety of housing in a way that contributes to the walkability, vibrancy, and cohesion of communities is another key component of realizing the county's vision.

Agriculture is the most common land use in DeKalb County, making up 79% of the county's land use. Residential land use makes up 12% of the county's land, with no other land use surpassing 5% (See

Figure 4.01). While county stakeholders have expressed a desire to grow, they have emphasized that they do not want this to come at the expense of the farmland. Residents love the county's beautiful countrysides. In fact, when asked what they love most about DeKalb County, the "country lifestyle" and "farming" were the second and third most common responses in the online public survey, falling only behind the "friendly, supportive, close-knit community."

Figure 4.01 - Existing Land Use

CATEGORY	ACRES	% OF ALL ACRES
Agriculture	185,301	79.4%
Residential	29,152	12.5%
Tax Exempt (Municipal, Nonprofit)	6,665	2.9%
Industrial	4,796	2.1%
Commercial	3,169	1.4%
Utilities	357	0.2%
Total	233,503	100%

Source: DeKalb County Tax Parcel GIS Data



KEY FINDING #2 PLAN FOR RAPID GROWTH FROM THE SOUTH.

Building efficiently is a top priority for both residents and community leaders. Throughout the planning process, people emphasized the importance of using public funds wisely and encouraging new development in areas where roads, utilities, and other infrastructure already exist. This approach helps reduce costs, eases pressure on infrastructure, and supports walkable communities by preventing “leapfrog” development that skips over undeveloped land.

Community members also noted the rapid growth moving north from Allen County as both a challenge and an opportunity. By planning ahead, DeKalb County can help guide that growth into the right places, particularly along State Road 1, to support the continued development of Spencerville and St. Joe.

One barrier to managing growth effectively is the county’s complex zoning code. With numerous zoning districts, the current system can be confusing and time-consuming for both builders and administrators. Modernizing and simplifying the zoning code to align with today’s needs and the community’s future vision will be an important step toward smart, well-managed growth.

KEY FINDING #3 ADDRESS EMERGING TRENDS AND ALTERNATIVE ENERGY.

DeKalb County has supported home-based businesses to encourage small-scale entrepreneurship and improve residents’ quality of life. As conditions evolve, county leaders will also need to plan for emerging industries, including alternative energy and data centers.

During public workshops and focus group discussions, participants expressed concerns about the use of agricultural land for alternative energy, particularly industrial-scale solar development. While residents acknowledged the potential benefits of alternative energy, they emphasized that any future projects should be carefully planned, appropriately located, and designed to respect the county’s rural character and protect farmland. Industrial-scale solar should avoid prime farmland, follow stringent standards to ensure environmental health, and be located in a manner that does not detract from the rural character of the county.

Although large-scale solar and wind development may not be broadly supported, other emerging energy technologies may warrant future evaluation. County leadership should monitor additional trends such as data centers, high-speed rail, and other technological or manufacturing uses that may be suitable for DeKalb County if aligned with long-term goals and rural priorities. The county should determine their approach to such uses in the near-term to be prepared when such requests happen in the future.



LAND USE PLAYBOOK

The comprehensive plan outlines a clear vision for DeKalb County's future. Its goals, strategies, and objectives serve as a practical playbook, providing outcome-focused guidance to help implement that vision.

LAND USE GOAL

Support DeKalb County's farmland and rural character by directing growth to areas that support vibrant communities, strengthen the rural economy, and efficiently use infrastructure.

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO

Implementing this plan is a shared responsibility among county leaders, residents, businesses, and nonprofits. Bringing the vision to life is not a one-time action. It requires sustained, focused effort to transform the plan's recommendations into meaningful results.

Each objective is assigned an estimated timeframe—short-term, medium-term, long-term, or ongoing—to indicate the expected duration from start to finish. These timelines are intended to guide decision-makers, but should remain flexible, adjusting as needed to reflect community priorities, staff capacity, and funding availability.

Timeframe Definitions

- Short Term: 0–5 years
- Medium Term: 6–9 years
- Long Term: 10+ years
- Ongoing: Continuous, beginning immediately with no defined end



LAND USE STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
1.	MODERNIZE AND SIMPLIFY ZONING CODES TO SUPPORT A VARIETY OF LAND USES.	
a.	Consolidate the county's 24 existing zoning districts to improve clarity and flexibility.	Short
b.	Update and continue to provide clear, user-friendly land use guidance aligned with preservation and strategic growth goals – like publicized future land use maps and decision-making flowcharts.	Ongoing
c.	Update regulations to reduce barriers for commercial, industrial, and agribusiness in appropriate locations.	Short
2.	TARGET GROWTH IN PRIORITY AREAS WHERE INFRASTRUCTURE ALREADY EXISTS.	
a.	Focus new development near towns, infrastructure, and key corridors, including planned expansions and the potential Interstate 69 interchange.	Short
b.	Encourage infill, redevelopment, and mixed-use projects within and near growth corridors.	Short
c.	Require large-scale developments to ensure adequate road access and emergency service capacity.	Short

LAND USE STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
3.	<i>PROMOTE REDEVELOPMENT, REVITALIZATION, AND CONNECTED NEIGHBORHOODS.</i>	
a.	Partner with municipalities to remove regulatory hurdles to walkable, mixed-use areas that fit the community's character through updated ordinances.	Medium
b.	Support revitalization of under-utilized properties to foster small business growth, placemaking, and varied housing options.	Medium
c.	Encourage municipalities to update zoning to promote connected, traditionally designed neighborhoods with multiple access points, grid street layouts, and integrated parks/trails in ETJs.	Medium
4.	<i>CREATE A PLAN TO ADDRESS EMERGING INDUSTRIES AND ALTERNATIVE ENERGY IN WAYS THAT REFLECT AND PROTECT RURAL CHARACTER.</i>	
a.	Establish clear zoning standards for new and evolving industries, balancing economic opportunity with rural character.	Ongoing
b.	Allow small-scale industrial and commercial uses compatible with rural settings.	Short
c.	Create site and design guidelines for alternative energy projects to ensure compatibility with the landscape, infrastructure, and community values.	Short



LAND USE STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
5.	<i>COORDINATE LAND USE DECISIONS WITH MUNICIPALITIES TO ALIGN WITH SHARED GOALS.</i>	
a.	Collaborate with municipalities on projects in extra-territorial jurisdictions (ETJs) for alignment between planning and land use goals.	Ongoing
b.	Coordinate with municipalities to ensure ETJ land use decisions serve the best interests of residents.	Ongoing
c.	Collaborate on mutually beneficial land use plans that integrate infrastructure, economic development, and environmental stewardship.	Ongoing

FUTURE LAND USE

The future land use policy is a key part of the comprehensive plan. It turns the community's vision into a map that shows where and how land should be developed, preserved, or adapted to support DeKalb County's goals. This vision and the priorities behind it were shaped through extensive public input and collaboration.

Community feedback revealed a strong desire to maintain DeKalb County's rich agricultural character while still allowing for growth in and around existing towns and cities. In other words, the community wants to protect farmland while also planning for new homes, businesses, and community amenities in the right places.

It is important to note that the future land use map is not law and is not the same as a zoning map. It does not regulate how land can be used. Instead, it serves as a guide for local decision-makers, helping them direct development, infrastructure investments, and public resources in ways that align with the community's long-term vision.



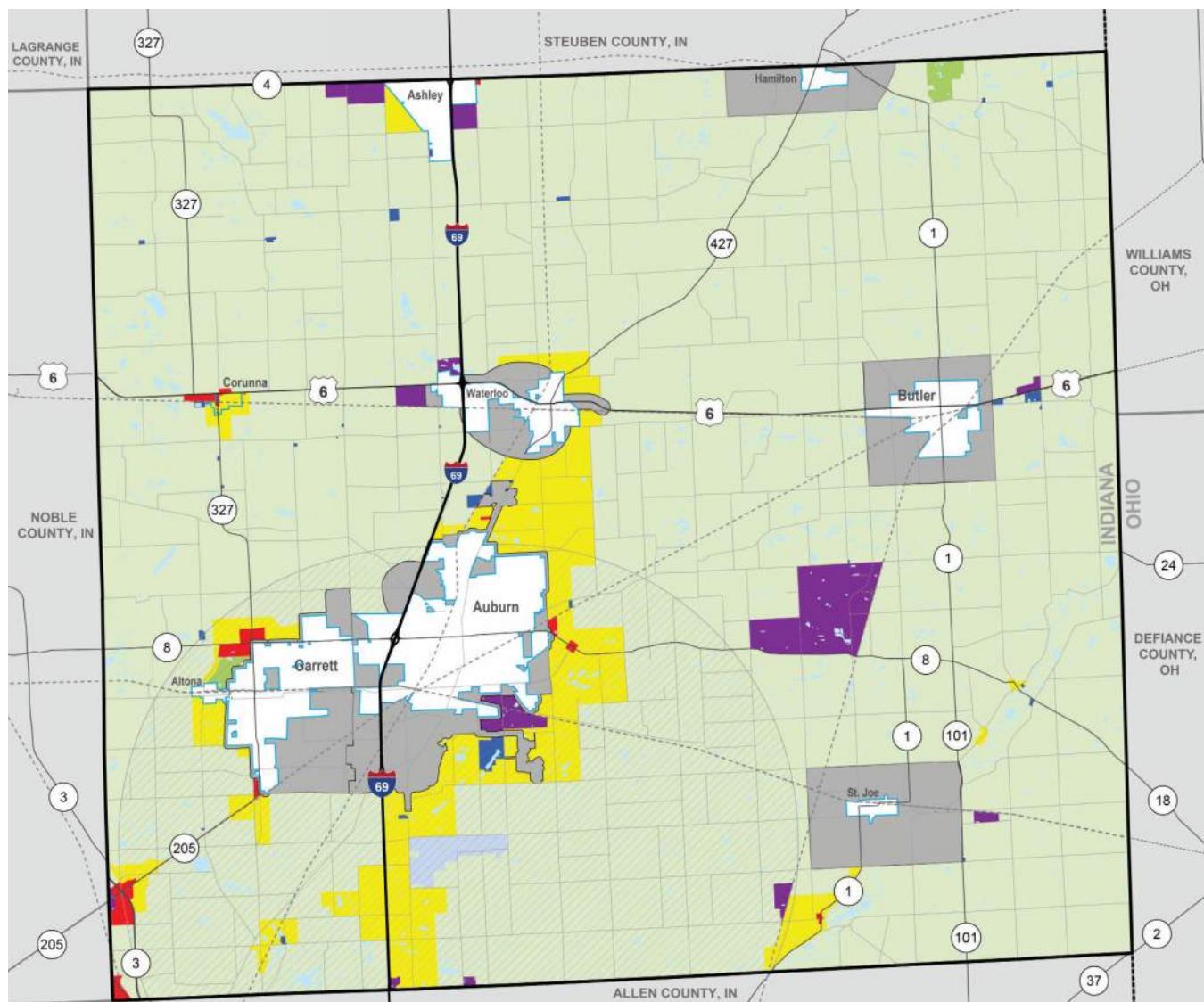
Farm in DeKalb County



Businesses in Downtown Waterloo



Figure 4.02 - Future Land Use Map



LEGEND

Municipal	DeKalb County
Airport	Extra Territorial Jurisdictions
Airport Compatible Use Area	Neighboring Counties
Agricultural	Rivers, Streams, and Waterbodies
Parks/Open Space	Railroad
Commercial	
Industrial	
Community	
Residential	

Figure 4.03 - Land Use Classifications

		
Description	AGRICULTURAL	RESIDENTIAL
	<p>The agricultural classification designates land primarily used for farming, including cropland, pastures, and orchards. Agricultural areas may also include low-density, detached single-family dwellings on large lots and agriculture-related businesses. Although not the primary focus, other compatible uses may include community facilities, religious institutions, and parks, especially when these uses take place on large lots and contribute to the area's rural character.</p>	<p>The residential classification allows for a variety of housing types. While single-family houses are appropriate in this district, more compact multi-unit housing may be considered at an appropriate scale if they are integrated cohesively with surrounding land uses. Housing types may include, but are not limited to, duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, apartments, accessory dwellings, and single-family dwellings. Developments should be walkable within the neighborhood but also be accessible to community amenities, such as trails, parks, schools, religious institutions, and other community facilities, which may also be permitted in this classification.</p>
Primary Uses	Crop and livestock production, equestrian farms, and hobby farms.	Single-family detached dwellings, duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, apartments, senior living, assisted living, and accessory dwelling units.
Secondary Uses	Single-family detached dwellings, agribusinesses, grain bins and silos, community facilities, religious institutions, parks and open space, agritourism, accessory dwelling units, alternative energy production, and medium and high intensity livestock production.	Community facilities, religious institutions, parks and open space, and neighborhood commercial uses.
Additional Notes	Residential subdivisions (multiple lot) may be considered on well and septic systems on a case-by-case basis. If served by water and sewer utilities, should be rezoned to the appropriate district.	Neighborhood commercial uses that are intended to serve nearby residents may be considered on a case-by-case basis and may be rezoned if appropriate.



	 COMMERCIAL	 INDUSTRIAL
Description	<p>The commercial classification includes a wide range of business and office uses, from commercial strip centers to standalone retail anchors. Typical uses may include restaurants, retail stores, personal and professional services, offices, hospitality, and other context appropriate retail/service facilities. 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.</p>	<p>The industrial classification provides for manufacturing, logistics, and research and development activities. These uses should be limited to areas with access to major transportation corridors where increased traffic will not impact existing neighborhoods. Building types may include multistory 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.</p>
Primary Uses	<p>Restaurant, retail, hotel, professional office, medical office, and personal services.</p>	<p>Manufacturing, research and development, professional office, warehouse and distribution.</p>
Secondary Uses	<p>Community facilities, religious institutions, upper floor residential, and parks and open space.</p>	<p>Community facilities, religious institutions, agribusinesses, grain elevator, parks and open space, restaurant, retail, medical office, personal services, and alternative energy production.</p>
Additional Notes	<p>New commercial uses should reflect modern, pedestrian-scale design. Development should feature a pedestrian network with connections to adjacent businesses and neighborhoods.</p>	<p>Within business parks, opportunities for open space and shared amenities should be explored.</p>

		
Description	COMMUNITY	PARKS/OPEN SPACE
	The community classification accommodates significant community uses, such as parks, schools, hospitals, government facilities, religious institutions, and utilities. These local facilities have an established role in the community and occupy a defined space. New development should align with existing community character, complementing other development in the area.	The parks/open space classification is land used for nature preservation, protection, and passive recreation. This typology also supports properties and facilities devoted to supporting indoor and outdoor active recreation.
Primary Uses	Schools, hospitals, government uses, religious institutions, and utilities.	Parks, trails, open space, and undeveloped areas.
Secondary Uses	Parks and open space.	None.
Additional Notes	Smaller, neighborhood-based community facilities, like daycares, fire stations, and some churches, may be incorporated within other land use classifications. For instance, a fire station surrounded by residential neighborhoods may fall within the residential land use classification. This ensures that, if a small community facility moves or closes, the site retains the land use classification of the surrounding area. This prevents a higher intensity use from coming in if the area does not have adequate infrastructure to support the reuse.	For protection, rezone parks and open spaces to the appropriate zoning designation.



		
	AIRPORT COMPATIBLE USE AREA	AIRPORT
Description	The airport compatible use area aligns with the county's Airport Compatibility Overlay (ACO) District, which sets standards of safety and compatibility for the occupants of land in the immediate vicinity of the DeKalb County Airport by regulating incompatible land uses and setting development standards that supplement or supersede the underlying zoning district. A detailed description can be found in the county's <i>Unified Development</i>	The airport land use is used for aviation uses and associated facilities owned by the DeKalb County Airport Authority.
Primary Uses	The permitted uses shall be those of the underlying zoning district, except uses prohibited in the ACO district under the Unified Development Ordinance are not allowed.	Airfields, terminals, hangars, and related transportation or logistics uses.
Secondary Uses	None.	None.
Additional Notes	Communication with DeKalb County Airport Authority should be taken into consideration with potential land use changes.	None.

TRANSPORTATION



TRANSPORTATION

Transportation planning in DeKalb County aims to balance the needs of today's infrastructure with the mobility demands of future generations. The county's transportation system is centered around Interstate 69, which runs north-south and provides vital connections across the state. Freight rail also plays an important role in the local economy, moving agricultural and industrial goods within and beyond the county. Additionally, the Waterloo Depot is served by Amtrak and was the second-busiest after Indianapolis in 2017, boarding or detraining an average of approximately 62 passengers daily or 22,849 per year.

Online public survey feedback shows:

- Only 34% of residents rate county roads as being in good condition.

This highlights the community's strong desire for roadway improvements. Residents value DeKalb County's rural character and want transportation investments that support growth in key areas while keeping local roads safe and less congested, especially for farmers using large equipment.

Moving forward, efforts to maintain and upgrade roadways, improve unpaved roads, and enhance rail crossings will benefit from an updated transportation plan, which will help cast an overall vision and provide a playbook for improvement. Stakeholders reported the DeKalb County 2014 Transportation Plan is not regularly referenced in decision-making processes, in part because the transportation plan is not readily available.

WHAT WE FOUND AND WHY IT MATTERS

KEY FINDING #1 ADDRESS ROAD CONDITIONS.

Road conditions are a top concern among DeKalb County residents. Despite these concerns, 64% of survey respondents agreed that it is safe and easy to get around the county for daily needs. This suggests that while roads adequately support local trips, residents are increasingly worried about growing traffic and the pressure it places on existing infrastructure. Additionally, investing in updated planning resources, such as a current transportation plan, would provide valuable guidance for addressing these concerns and preparing the county for future growth.

DeKalb County maintains around 700 miles of county roads, making up nearly 72% of all roadway miles in the county. By comparison, Warren County and Jefferson County, the two counties closest to DeKalb County in geographic size, both maintain fewer than 550 miles of county roads¹. The large amount of road miles combined with limited funding opportunities creates a strain on road maintenance efforts.

The increasing number of commuters in and out of the county adds to the county's maintenance burden. In 2022, nearly 6,000 workers commuted into DeKalb County each day, while about 5,500 county residents traveled outside the county for work. These numbers are expected to rise as both DeKalb and neighboring Allen County continue to grow. See Figures 5.01 and 5.02 for a detailed breakdown of commuting patterns.

¹ INDOT 2022 Centerline Jurisdictional Mileage



Figure 5.01 - Commuting Patterns: Top five counties sending workers INTO DeKalb County, 2022

COUNTY	NUMBER	PERCENT SHARE
Allen County	2,566	45.0%
Steuben County	1,143	20.1%
Noble County	1,032	18.1%
LaGrange County	152	2.7%
Ohio (State)	804	14.1%

Figure 5.02 - Commuting Patterns: Top five counties receiving workers FROM DeKalb County, 2022

COUNTY	NUMBER	PERCENT SHARE
Allen County	3,311	60.7%
Noble County	1,085	19.9%
Steuben County	790	14.5%
LaGrange County	138	2.5%
Ohio (State)	135	2.5%

Source: Hoosiers by the Numbers 2022 Commuting Data

KEY FINDING #2 ENSURE SAFE, EFFICIENT ROADS AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING.

Some of DeKalb County's main roads may become more congested or less safe without strategic improvements. Key corridors, including the intersection of Interstate 69 and State Road 8, serve as vital transportation hubs, providing access to major grocery stores and acting as gateways into Auburn. State Road 8 east of Auburn supports industrial businesses, while State Road 327 and State Road 1 are expected to carry increasing traffic due to growth in Auburn and Garrett and travel between Allen County and DeKalb County.

Given the high concentration of employers in these areas, regular monitoring and targeted improvements will be essential to maintain a safe, efficient, and reliable road network. Residents and stakeholders support long-term transportation investments but are concerned about funding. Fully utilizing existing and potential funding sources, including the recently passed wheel tax, passed by the County Council in 2025, will help to address the full spectrum of maintenance concerns. Transparent communication and public engagement will also be critical to ensure that decisions reflect community priorities and maintain trust in how resources are allocated.

KEY FINDING #3 INVEST IN AN ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK.

While cars remain the most common form of transportation in DeKalb County, there are expanding options for walking and biking as the county continues to grow. Trails and pedestrian pathways provide recreational opportunities that improve residents' quality of life and health.

Community feedback from focus groups and public workshops highlighted the need to fill gaps in the Poka-Bache Trail and create additional connections to key destinations, such as downtown areas within cities and towns. These investments will make it easier for residents to get around safely and enjoyably without relying solely on automobiles.



Poka-Bache Trail; Photo Credit: United Trails Poka-Bache Connector



KEY FINDING #4 PROMOTE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.

Focus groups identified public transportation as an important need for older residents and students, especially those traveling for internships or apprenticeships. While most households in DeKalb County (94.2%) have access to a car, about 5.8% of residents depend on alternative forms of transportation, such as DeKalb Area Regional Transit (DART). This service provides scheduled door-to-door rides shared with other passengers across the county.

DART also offers subsidies for passengers over 60, helping older adults maintain independence and stay connected to essential services and community activities. Expanding and promoting these services will ensure mobility options for all residents, not just those with access to a car.



DART Bus; Photo Credit: DART

KEY FINDING #5 IMPROVE RAIL CROSSINGS.

Trains frequently stop on the tracks, sometimes blocking rail crossings for local traffic and delaying travel. In the public survey, several residents noted concerns about these regular blockages.

Overall, 52% of survey respondents feel that rail crossings are safe, while 20% view them as unsafe. Beyond safety improvements, residents want solutions that reduce long waits at crossings, helping drivers get where they need to go more efficiently. Addressing these concerns will improve both safety and daily mobility for the community.



TRANSPORTATION PLAYBOOK

The Comprehensive Plan outlines a clear vision for DeKalb County's future. Its goals, strategies, and objectives serve as a practical playbook, providing outcome-focused guidance to help implement that vision.

TRANSPORTATION GOAL

Develop a safe, efficient, well-connected, and maintained transportation network that supports economic growth, reflects DeKalb County's rural character, and prioritizes strategic, long-term infrastructure investment.

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO

Implementing this plan is a shared responsibility among county leaders, residents, businesses, and nonprofits. Bringing the vision to life is not a one-time action. It requires sustained, focused effort to transform the plan's recommendations into meaningful results.

Each objective is assigned an estimated timeframe—short-term, medium-term, long-term, or ongoing—to indicate the expected duration from start to finish. These timelines are intended to guide decision-makers, but should remain flexible, adjusting as needed to reflect community priorities, staff capacity, and funding availability.

Timeframe Definitions

- Short Term: 0–5 years
- Medium Term: 6–9 years
- Long Term: 10+ years
- Ongoing: Continuous, beginning immediately with no defined end



TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
1.	MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE EXISTING TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE.	
a.	Create a road improvement plan that is available online and that prioritizes investment and upkeep of strong county roads and bridges to ensure safety and longevity.	Medium
b.	Implement a pavement management program to guide investments based on condition and usage.	Medium
c.	Design and maintain roadside drainage systems to prevent flooding and protect roadways.	Medium
d.	Coordinate stormwater improvements with roadway projects to maximize efficiency and reduce costs.	Medium



TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
2.	<i>ADVOCATE FOR A NEW INTERSTATE 69 INTERCHANGE TO ENHANCE ACCESS TO THE DEKALB COUNTY AIRPORT AND SUPPORT REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.</i>	
a.	Engage INDOT early to understand required criteria, timelines, and processes for interchange justification studies and incorporate this into local planning efforts.	Short
b.	Assist the DeKalb County Airport in completing its Economic Impact Study by providing data, letters of support, or stakeholder outreach as needed.	Short
c.	Collaborate with local, county, and state elected officials to present study findings to INDOT and identify appropriate next steps in the interchange evaluation process.	Medium
d.	Align land use planning and infrastructure improvements around the proposed interchange area to demonstrate readiness and maximize economic development potential.	Medium
e.	Build a coalition of regional partners, including businesses, emergency services, and economic development organizations, to demonstrate broad community support for improved interstate access.	Short



TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
3. SUPPORT SAFE AND EFFICIENT FREIGHT AND RAIL MOVEMENT.		
a.	Maintain roadway connectivity across the county by providing multiple alternative routes over railroads in the event of train blockages.	Short
b.	Designate, maintain, and enforce truck routes to reduce conflicts in residential areas and preserve local roads.	Short
c.	Upgrade infrastructure near industrial and agricultural hubs to accommodate heavy vehicles.	Medium
d.	Improve safety and traffic flow at railroad crossings through upgraded warning systems, grade separations, and coordinated scheduling with rail operators.	Medium
4. STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS TO EXPAND TRANSPORTATION FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES.		
a.	Partner with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), regional agencies, and neighboring counties to align priorities.	Short
b.	Seek state and federal funding to support major projects and reduce local cost burdens.	Short
c.	Partner with local organizations to promote and increase awareness of DeKalb Area Rural Transit (DART) services.	Short



THOROUGHFARE MAP

A thoroughfare map is a long-range planning tool that establishes the community's vision for its future roadway network by identifying the hierarchy, general alignments, and connections of major streets. The map guides the development, rehabilitation, and expansion of roadways and trails to align with future land uses and changing transportation needs. It also serves as a key implementation tool for the Plan Commission, providing the basis for acquiring necessary right-of-way as subdivisions are created and development occurs. By using the thoroughfare map and

roadway classifications, the County can coordinate growth, infrastructure investment, and transportation improvements in a consistent and forward-looking manner.

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS

The Thoroughfare Map shows roads and their functional classification, such as major arterial, collector, or local streets. These classifications were developed in coordination with the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC). For more detailed definitions of each roadway classification, please refer to NIRCC's official descriptions.



Waterloo Depot is served by Amtrak and was the second-busiest after Indianapolis in 2017, boarding or detraining an average of approximately 62 passengers daily or 22,849 per year. Photo Credit: Waterlooin.gov



Figure 5.03 - Thoroughfare Map



LEGEND

Incorporated Cities and Towns

Proposed Roads: Functional Classification

- County - Minor Arterial (100' R/W)
- County - Collector (80' R/W)
- County - Local (60' R/W)

Existing Roads: Functional Classification

- County - Interstate/Limited Highway (300' R/W)
- County - Major Arterial - Class I (150' R/W)
- County - Major Arterial - Class II (120' R/W)
- County - Minor Arterial (100' R/W)
- County - Collector (80' R/W)
- County - Local (60' R/W)
- Incorporated Area - Street

「HOUSING」



HOUSING

Housing is a top priority in DeKalb County. Residents, stakeholders, and experts have highlighted concerns about housing affordability, the condition of existing homes, and how new development is occurring. Stakeholders throughout the planning process expressed strong interest in:

- Expanding attainable housing options (homes priced under \$250,000).
- Rehabilitating vacant or underused properties.

- Preserving farmland and limiting sprawling development.

Most of the housing in DeKalb County is found within towns and cities. (See Figure 6.01). Because of this, the county can achieve residents' vision for housing by being a supportive partner to municipalities, offering a variety of housing types and price points that complement existing communities and respecting the rural and agricultural heritage of the county.

Figure 6.01 - Housing Units

COMMUNITY	HOUSING UNITS	% OF ALL HOUSING UNITS
Altona	155	0.8%
Ashley	540	3.0%
Auburn	5,822	31.8%
Butler	1,076	5.9%
Corunna	80	0.4%
Garrett	2,911	15.9%
Hamilton	1,307	7.1%
St. Joe	178	1.0%
Waterloo	963	5.3%
Unincorporated DeKalb County	5,248	28.7%
Total	18,280	100%

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates



WHAT WE FOUND AND WHY IT MATTERS

KEY FINDING #1 BUILD ENTRY-LEVEL HOUSING.

Community feedback throughout the public engagement process highlighted a strong need for entry-level homes and apartments near towns. As 2023 median appraised home values reached \$216,904¹ and assessed values reached \$177,900², rising housing costs have become a major concern, leading some residents to look for housing in neighboring Allen County, even when they work or have family in DeKalb County. Since 2010:

- Home values have risen 58%.
- Median rent has increased 40%.
- Nearly 40% of renters are “rent burdened,” meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on rent.

At the same time, the share of residents spending more than 35% of their income on rent has decreased by 7%, suggesting some progress in helping those with the highest rent burden. Still, more work is needed to make housing affordable and accessible for all.

¹ Zillow 2023 Home Value Index

² ACS 2023 5-Year Estimates

KEY FINDING #2 EXPAND HOUSING OPTIONS.

DeKalb County needs housing that serves a wide range of residents, from young workers entering the workforce to recently retired professionals. Quality, affordable, and walkable housing can help grow the population, boost the local economy, and retain young families, as long as new development reflects the county’s character.

Currently, nearly 80% of housing in the county is detached single-family homes. Only 13% of units are multifamily, such as townhomes, duplexes, triplexes, or apartment complexes³ – housing types often referred to as “missing middle housing.” Higher interest rates in recent years make buying a home more difficult, especially for those seeking entry-level homes options to downsize. Building a variety of housing types will help meet a wider range of needs, increase affordable homeownership, and expand rental opportunities for residents.

³ ACS 2023 5-Year Estimates

What is Missing Middle Housing?

A range of housing types that fit between single-family homes and larger apartment buildings. Missing middle housing includes:

- Duplexes
- Triplexes
- Townhomes
- Shared-Courtyard Homes



Figure 6.02 - Top 5 Housing Preferences

EXAMPLE	HOUSING TYPE	% PREFER
	Bungalows: Compact single-family homes, typically one story with a broad front porch.	59%
	Suburban Single-Family Homes: Single-family homes, often characterized by front-facing garages, driveways, and large lots.	50%
	Accessory Dwelling Units: Secondary units on the same lot as a primary residence, such as a detached garage conversion or a backyard cottage.	37%
	Agrihoods: A community built around a working farm, where residents have access to fresh produce and green spaces.	35%
	Garden Apartments: Small apartment complexes (one to three stories) on lots with shared green spaces.	35%

Online Public Survey Responses to the Question "Which of the following housing styles would you like to see built in DeKalb County?"



KEY FINDING #3 PROTECT THE COUNTY'S CHARACTER.

Residents are strongly concerned about how new housing will affect DeKalb County's character and farmland. While many support new housing, they want it to occur without sacrificing agricultural land.

Online public survey results show:

- 65% of respondents agree that the county should allow some housing density to preserve farmland and limit sprawling development, while only 8% disagreed.
- Only 23% support developing agricultural land for homes with large yards, compared to 48% who oppose it.
- 88% of respondents want to rehabilitate existing and vacant housing rather than build on undeveloped land, with only 2% opposed.

These findings highlight a strong community preference to focus growth inward revitalizing existing properties and protecting farmland while guiding new development to fit the county's character.

KEY FINDING #4 BUILD AROUND EXISTING COMMUNITIES.

Stakeholders see an opportunity to protect farmland while supporting population growth by focusing on new housing in and around existing cities and towns. Residents expressed a strong preference for development near existing infrastructure not only to protect the county's rural character but also to reduce costs by making the most of roads, utilities, and other services already in place.



Detached Single-Family Home in DeKalb County



Detached Single-Family Home in DeKalb County



HOUSING PLAYBOOK

The comprehensive plan outlines a clear vision for DeKalb County's future. Its goals, strategies, and objectives serve as a practical playbook, providing outcome-focused guidance to help implement that vision.

HOUSING GOAL

Increase the supply of diverse, attainable, and well-connected housing options while revitalizing the existing housing stock, promoting common-sense growth patterns, preserving rural character, and aligning infrastructure and community needs.

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO

Implementing this plan is a shared responsibility among county leaders, residents, businesses, and nonprofits. Bringing the vision to life is not a one-time action. It requires sustained, focused effort to transform the plan's recommendations into meaningful results.

Each objective is assigned an estimated timeframe—short-term, medium-term, long-term, or ongoing—to indicate the expected duration from start to finish. These timelines are intended to guide decision-makers, but should remain flexible, adjusting as needed to reflect community priorities, staff capacity, and funding availability.

Timeframe Definitions

- Short Term: 0–5 years
- Medium Term: 6–9 years
- Long Term: 10+ years
- Ongoing: Continuous, beginning immediately with no defined end



HOUSING STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
1.	<i>PARTNER WITH MUNICIPALITIES TO ENSURE A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES IS OFFERED ACROSS THE ENTIRE COUNTY.</i>	
a.	Advocate for municipalities to promote missing middle housing types like duplexes, fourplexes, and cottage courts that blend with existing neighborhoods.	Ongoing
b.	Encourage municipalities to promote flexibility near existing towns and extra-territorial jurisdictions (ETJs) to accommodate a variety of housing types where infrastructure and services already exists.	Medium
2.	<i>UPDATE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS TO MORE WIDELY INCLUDE ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS AND REMOVE MINIMUM DWELLING SIZE REQUIREMENTS.</i>	
a.	Update the zoning code in agricultural and residential zones to reduce or eliminate the minimum dwelling size requirement.	Short
b.	Legalize accessory dwelling units (ADUs) by right in agricultural residential zones across the county.	Short

HOUSING STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
3.	<i>INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF MODEST-SIZED, ATTAINABLE HOMES FOR RESIDENTS AT ALL STAGES OF LIFE IN AND AROUND EXISTING COMMUNITIES.</i>	
a.	Incentivize compact, infrastructure-efficient housing, particularly 800 – 1,500 sq.ft., near existing utilities and community services.	Medium
b.	Collaborate with developers to reduce construction costs through expedited approvals, reduced fees, and infrastructure assistance for more affordable housing.	Medium
4.	<i>REVITALIZE AND REPURPOSE VACANT AND UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES.</i>	
a.	Provide targeted incentives, like waiving permit fees or property tax abatements, and update the zoning code to encourage rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of properties.	Medium
b.	Support community-driven projects that transform vacant properties into safe, high-quality, viable properties.	Medium
c.	Work with DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership to gather and track properties that are ready for development, such as properties that are approved but unbuilt subdivisions, vacant properties, dilapidated or currently uninhabitable homes.	Medium





COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE



COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

DeKalb County's community facilities and infrastructure need to keep pace with a growing population. To continue offering high-quality public services, the county must make careful decisions about when and how to expand the facilities and utilities the county is responsible for, like roadways and public safety services. The county also plays an important role in supporting and coordinating with other entities, including nonprofit organizations, healthcare providers, and local municipalities, which operate many of the community services residents rely on.

Residents choose to live in DeKalb County because it offers a high quality of life at a lower cost of living, but some challenges remain. Issues such as failing septic systems on small parcels and childcare, an area in which only 11% of survey respondents felt there were enough options, as well as healthcare access and youth facilities, are largely managed by private or nonprofit partners. While these are not county-run services, they affect residents' quality of life. In the years ahead, the county will need to collaborate closely with these partners to help address these challenges while continuing to invest in the public services it directly controls.

WHAT WE FOUND AND WHY IT MATTERS

KEY FINDING #1 MAINTAIN CURRENT FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE.

DeKalb County is home to many high-quality facilities that provide important benefits to the community and keeping them in good condition requires ongoing care. Facilities such as the DeKalb County Courthouse, the DeKalb County Fairgrounds, and the DeKalb Outdoor Theater serve as hubs for community and civic engagement and are especially valuable given residents' interest in more family and youth activities, as highlighted in community focus groups.

The county also benefits from a strong network of private and nonprofit services. Parkview Health and other major providers offer a range of health services not commonly found in counties of similar sizes. Additional organizations provide support for mental health, elder care, and youth health, while nonprofit and community organizations such as employment services, addiction recovery centers, and food pantries strengthen the county's safety net.

Public safety is another strength of DeKalb County. Survey respondents frequently noted appreciation for county's sense of safety. The Sheriff's Office oversees public safety efforts, including Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and the county supports volunteer fire departments in Ashley, Auburn, Butler, Corunna, Waterloo, St. Joe, Garrett, and Spencerville.



Figure 7.01 - Existing Municipal Facilities



LEGEND

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- County Office
- City/Town Hall Office
- Township Trustee Office
- Police Station
- Fire Station
- Hospital
- School
- Cemetery

Townships

- Incorporated Cities and Towns
- Flood Hazard Zones
- Lakes and Ponds
- Rivers and Streams
- Railroad
- Parks

Pokebache Trail

- Existing Trails
- Planned Trails
- Proposed Trails

KEY FINDING #2 INVEST IN CHILDCARE.

Childcare providers play a crucial role in supporting working parents and guardians. The YMCA in Auburn and the JAM Center in Garrett are among the county's most well-known providers, alongside many in-home, center-based, and ministry-based care options. Across the county, there are roughly 950 childcare seats available, with over half located in Auburn. On average, DeKalb County families spend 7.7% of their income on childcare—lower than neighboring Allen County, where the average is 13.3%.



Figure 7.02 - Quality Childcare

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILDCARE?		
VERY SATISFIED	6	2%
SATISFIED	51	14%
NEITHER SATISFIED NOR DISSATISFIED	130	35%
DISSATISFIED	106	28%
VERY DISSATISFIED	76	28%
TOTAL	372	100%

Source: Public Online Survey



YMCA Center in Auburn; Photo Credit: YMCA



JAM Center in Garrett; Photo Credit: JAM Center



KEY FINDING #3 INVEST PROACTIVELY TO SUPPORT GROWTH.

As DeKalb County's population grows, smart investments in infrastructure will be essential to meet future needs. Many residents see expanding water, sewer, and broadband services as key to attracting new housing and residents, though funding these improvements is a significant challenge.

In recent years, the county has worked to improve broadband access, helping more homes connect to high-speed internet. Companies like Mediacom and Noble REMC have expanded service, though some rural areas remain without reliable connections. Broadband is increasingly important, not only for residents but also for local farmers, who rely on connectivity for precision agriculture. Only about half of survey respondents feel there are affordable high-speed internet options in the county.

Sewer improvements in the St. Joe/Spencerville Regional Sewer District have created capacity for growth, though rate increases are a concern for some residents. Additionally, DeKalb County leaders are exploring potential benefits of establishing a county sewer district to support existing rural residential homes with septic tanks. Overall, 72% of survey respondents say water and sewer services are generally reliable. However, both survey and focus group participants expressed concern about the need for upgrades to water and sewer infrastructure, especially in less urban areas where funding is more limited.

KEY FINDING #4 SUPPORT EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES.

Emergency services are a vital part of DeKalb County, but they face growing challenges. Focus group participants noted that volunteer fire departments are seeing fewer volunteers, even as incidents and equipment costs rise. Emergency medical services (EMS) also face staffing challenges, and there are occasional times when all ambulances in the county are in use. Supporting these critical services will be essential to keep the community safe as the county grows.



Parkview Health EMT Paramedics; Photo Credit: Parkview Health



Parkview DeKalb Hospital; Source: Parkview Health

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLAYBOOK

The comprehensive plan outlines a clear vision for DeKalb County's future. Its goals, strategies, and objectives serve as a practical playbook, providing outcome-focused guidance to help implement that vision.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE GOAL

Ensure DeKalb County's community facilities and infrastructure reliably support growth, public safety, health, and quality of life for all residents.

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO

Implementing this plan is a shared responsibility among county leaders, residents, businesses, and nonprofits. Bringing the vision to life is not a one-time action. It requires sustained, focused effort to transform the plan's recommendations into meaningful results.

Each objective is assigned an estimated timeframe—short-term, medium-term, long-term, or ongoing—to indicate the expected duration from start to finish. These timelines are intended to guide decision-makers, but should remain flexible, adjusting as needed to reflect community priorities, staff capacity, and funding availability.

Timeframe Definitions

- Short Term: 0–5 years
- Medium Term: 6–9 years
- Long Term: 10+ years
- Ongoing: Continuous, beginning immediately with no defined end



COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

TIME FRAME

1.	COORDINATE AND MANAGE INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT STRATEGIC GROWTH.	
a.	Align utility, road, and public service expansions with designated growth areas and land use priorities.	Ongoing
b.	Prioritize drainage improvements in targeted growth areas around municipalities and corridors.	Medium
c.	Reestablish the county utility coordination committee, formally known as Addressing Septic Issues: Collaborative Solutions, to address failing septic systems, monitor existing municipal sewer capacity, update priorities based on development patterns, and explore merit of establishing a county sewer district.	Medium
d.	Work and negotiate with utility providers to secure state and federal funding for upgrades in and near communities and key corridors.	Medium
2.	CONTINUE TO EXPAND BROADBAND AND CELL PHONE COVERAGE TO DISCONNECTED AREAS.	
a.	Create and implement a countywide Broadband Deployment Plan in coordination with municipalities.	Medium
b.	Establish a regular review period to engage citizens, evaluating the quality of broadband service in different locations.	Medium
c.	Prioritize expansion to areas near interstate interchanges and employment hubs.	Medium

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
3.	<i>IMPLEMENT FUNDING MECHANISMS TO SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE EXPANSION.</i>	
a.	Explore creative financing such as tax increment financing (TIF) districts and other innovative tools to fund roads, drainage, and public safety improvements.	Long
b.	Identify grant opportunities and partnerships to supplement local funding sources.	Long
c.	Assess the viability of roadway impact fees for new large-scale developments.	Medium
4.	<i>SUPPORT THE EXPANSION OF AFFORDABLE, QUALITY CHILDCARE CAPACITY TO AID FAMILIES AND WORKFORCE RETENTION.</i>	
a.	Support the DeKalb County Early Childcare Coalition and other providers to increase childcare capacity.	Medium
b.	Support childcare programs offering extended hours and family-friendly services.	Short
c.	Review local ordinances to address any regulations that limit efficiency for childcare providers.	Long



COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

TIME FRAME

5.	IMPROVE EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS) CAPACITY AND HEALTHCARE ACCESS.	
a.	Assess gaps in EMS, fire, and law enforcement staffing and coverage; develop targeted recruitment and funding plans.	Short
b.	Work with healthcare providers to improve response times for EMS and expand access to mental health and maternity care, focusing on underserved areas.	Medium
c.	Promote services offered by various local healthcare providers and groups working to expand healthcare access on the county website.	Medium



Crosswalk on Cedar St. in Auburn



Telecommunication tower in DeKalb County



「 TRAILS, OPEN SPACES, AND NATURAL RESOURCES 」



CHAPTER 08 -

TRAILS, OPEN SPACES, AND NATURAL RESOURCES

DeKalb County is well-positioned to expand outdoor recreation for its residents, thanks to strong community support, beautiful natural surroundings, and a convenient location. The county's countryside and waterways, like Cedar Creek, offer abundant opportunities for residents to enjoy nature and improve their well-being. DeKalb County's proximity to neighboring counties that have invested in outdoor recreation also provides a chance to build on the region's successes.

Residents have noted the need for a wider variety of recreational options to serve both current and future populations. There is strong public interest in extending the Poka-Bache Trail, but opportunities for paddling and other water-based activities are still limited. The 2021 DeKalb County Trails Plan is a launching point to expand trail-based recreation, offering priorities and guidance for decision-makers. At the same time, it is important that the county plans to continue protecting the Western Lake Erie Basin, ensuring that these resources remain available for generations to come.

Figure 8.01 - “My favorite thing about DeKalb County is...”

Beautiful Land!

Farmland

Small-town feel and nature

The river

Rural nature and community

WHAT WE FOUND AND WHY IT MATTERS

KEY FINDING #1 EXPAND TRAIL AND WATER-BASED RECREATION.

Expanding trail and water-based recreation received near-unanimous support during the planning process. Residents consistently identified extending the Poka-Bache Trail and opening Cedar Creek for paddling as top priorities in focus groups and public workshops. In the online public workshop, “Parks and Outdoor Recreation” was the second most common response to the question, “What’s missing in DeKalb County?” highlighting strong demand for more recreational opportunities. County leaders have demonstrated support for trail development by actively pursuing partnerships with philanthropic organizations and leveraging grants and private funding to advance these



priorities. The 2021 DeKalb County Trails Plan identifies priority investments which charts a path toward satisfying the desire for more outdoor recreation opportunities.

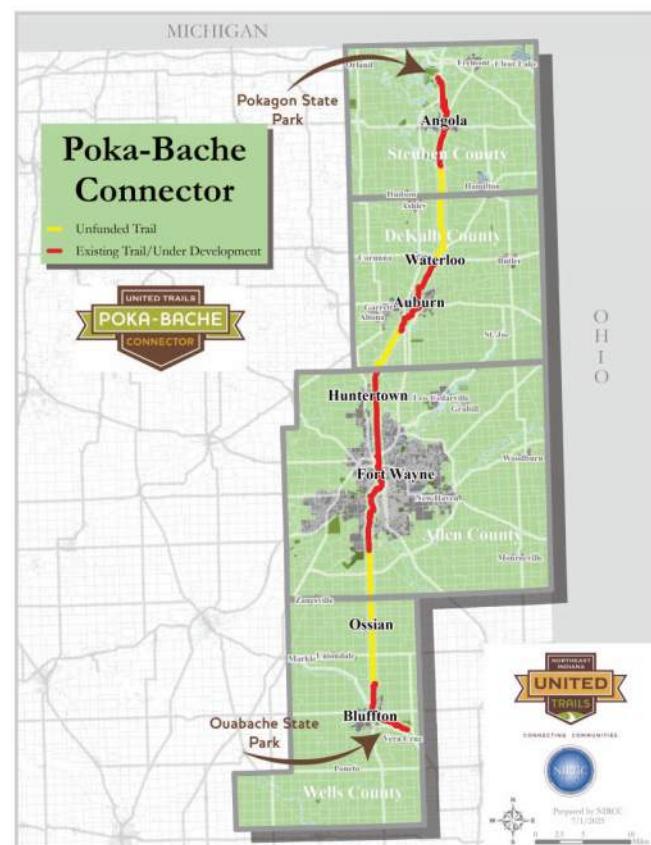
Support for trails and diverse recreation attracts and retains families. Focus group participants noted that younger generations increasingly value trails and outdoor activities, and the lack of such amenities could influence where they choose to live. Some participants even suggested developing housing near trails to improve access to recreation and, for some, provide alternative transportation options.

The Poka-Bache Trail offers a major opportunity for the county. Currently, the trail stretches from Fort Wayne to the southern border of DeKalb County, with completed segments in parts of Steuben County and between Auburn and Waterloo. Filling in these gaps could create a continuous 81-mile trail connecting over 120,000 people. The route could link Ouabache State Park in Wells County to Pokagon State Park in Steuben County and connect the cities of Angola, Waterloo, Auburn, Huntertown, Fort Wayne, Ossian, and Bluffton along the way.

KEY FINDING #2 PROTECT THE COUNTY'S NATURAL RESOURCES.

DeKalb County residents care deeply about their natural surroundings and want to protect them. At the public workshop, when attendees were asked about their favorite thing in the county, many highlighted the landscape and environment:

To preserve these valued features, the county must coordinate effective conservation and protection efforts. Wetlands and smaller water bodies, including parts of the St. Joseph River Watershed and the Western Lake Erie Basin, are essential for maintaining water quality and supporting wildlife habitats. Managing stormwater runoff and reducing nonpoint source pollution are critical steps to ensure these natural resources are protected for future generations.



Source: Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council; pokabacheconnectortrail.com

TRAILS, OPEN SPACES, AND NATURAL RESOURCES PLAYBOOK

The comprehensive plan outlines a clear vision for DeKalb County's future. Its goals, strategies, and objectives serve as a practical playbook, providing outcome-focused guidance to help implement that vision.

TRAILS, OPEN SPACES, AND NATURAL RESOURCES GOAL

Expand and diversify access to quality outdoor recreation, strengthen conservation of natural resources, and foster environmental stewardship to improve community health, protect natural assets, and enhance regional recreational connectivity.

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO

Implementing this plan is a shared responsibility among county leaders, residents, businesses, and nonprofits. Bringing the vision to life is not a one-time action. It requires sustained, focused effort to transform the plan's recommendations into meaningful results.

Each objective is assigned an estimated timeframe—short-term, medium-term, long-term, or ongoing—to indicate the expected duration from start to finish. These timelines are intended to guide decision-makers, but should remain flexible, adjusting as needed to reflect community priorities, staff capacity, and funding availability.

Timeframe Definitions

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TRAILS, OPEN SPACES, AND NATURAL RESOURCES STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
1.	<i>EXPAND AND CONNECT TRAIL NETWORKS FOR REGIONAL AND LOCAL CONNECTIVITY.</i>	
a.	Complete segments of the Poka-Bache Trail throughout DeKalb County.	Long
b.	Actively participate in the Poka-Bache regional trail committee to support cross-county connectivity.	Ongoing
c.	As part of the 2021 DeKalb County Trails Plan, work with municipalities to plan and execute trail extensions that allow for inter-city transportation.	Medium
d.	Work with regional and statewide organizations to secure long-term funding solutions for maintenance of the expanded trail system.	Medium
2.	<i>SUPPORT THE ENHANCEMENT AND DIVERSIFICATION OF WATER-BASED RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES.</i>	
a.	Develop additional kayak and canoe access points along Cedar Creek and other waterways, incorporating environmental safeguards.	Medium
b.	Support and coordinate with the City of Auburn to complete the Cedar Creek Activation Plan.	Medium
c.	Offer educational programs on safe, responsible, and sustainable water recreation.	Medium



TRAILS, OPEN SPACES, AND NATURAL RESOURCES STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
3.	<i>CONTINUE TO PROTECT WATER QUALITY AND NATURAL RESOURCES.</i>	
a.	Establish regular meetings with local conservation groups and regional partners to protect farmland, forests, wetlands, waterways, and ground water.	Medium
b.	Integrate stormwater best management practices into land use and development policies.	Short
c.	Promote watershed protection, including the Western Lake Erie Basin, by partnering with subject matter experts to offer educational resources on the county website.	Medium
d.	Coordinate standard conservation and environmental protection practices and advocate for municipal adoption through local ordinances.	Medium
4.	<i>STRIVE TO INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND USE OF LOCAL PARKS AND NATURAL ASSETS.</i>	
a.	Support coordinated outreach campaigns highlighting local parks, trails, and nature-based attractions.	Short
b.	Use parks, trails, and natural spaces as placemaking tools to attract residents and boost tourism.	Medium



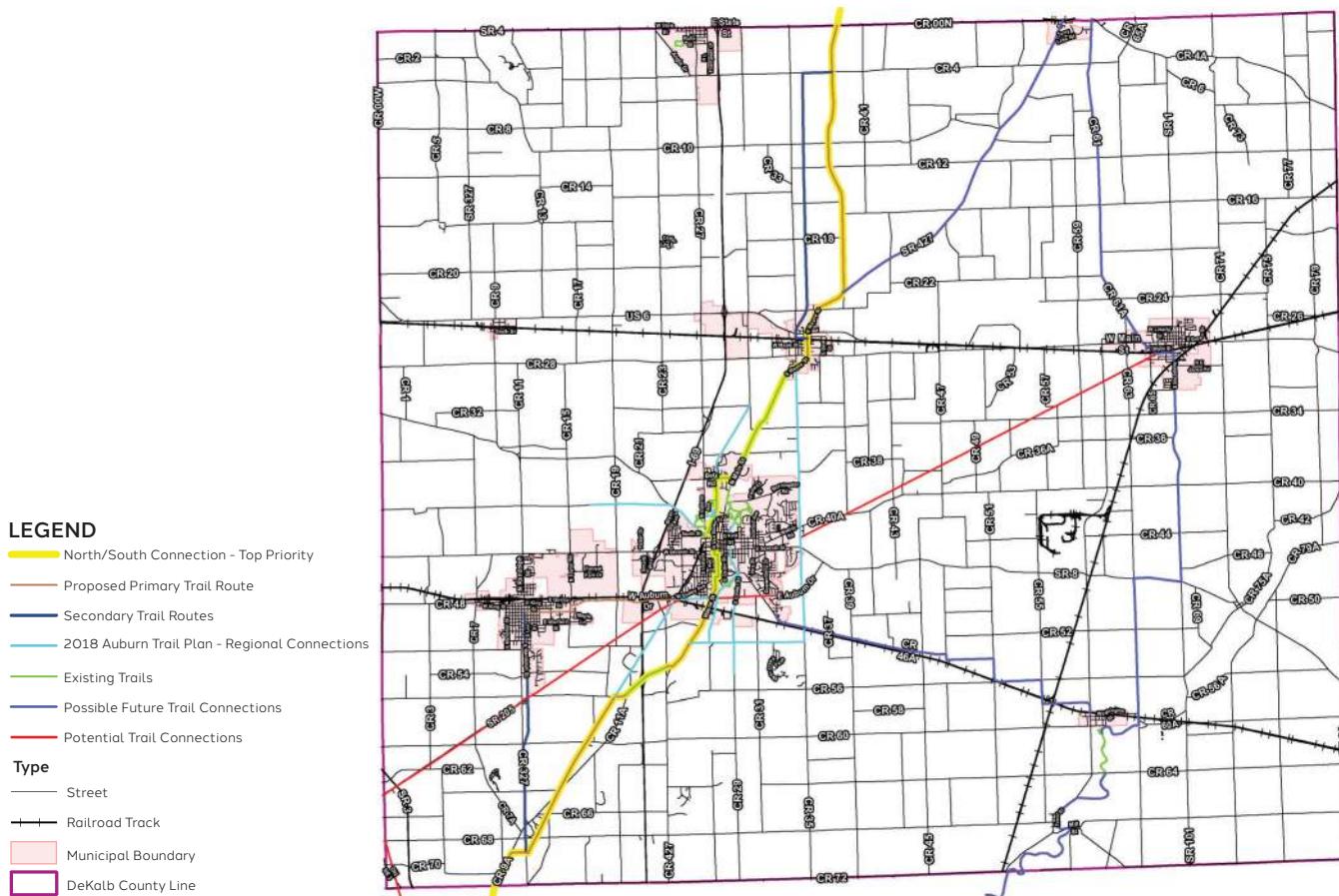
2021 DEKALB COUNTY TRAILS PLAN

The 2021 DeKalb County Trails Plan is used to guide the future planning and development of trails in unincorporated DeKalb County with connections to the neighboring counties, municipalities, and their existing trail networks. The plan generally depicts where new trail systems will be located and where to expand existing trails.

The plan identifies several types of trail routes, shown in the legend below. This includes the “North/South Connection –

Top Priority” category, which outlines the Poka-Bache trail as a crucial component of the trail network. Additional routes, like “Proposed Primary Trail Routes,” “Secondary Trail Routes,” “Possible Future Trail Connections,” and “Potential Trail Connections” all highlight various alternative routes that should be pursued as funding availability and strong community support and collaboration overlap. For additional information, review the 2021 DeKalb County Trails Plan, found in the appendix.

Figure 8.02 - 2021 DeKalb County Trails Map



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

DeKalb County is a community with growing economic opportunities, but local businesses, workers, and residents would like to see the range of options increase. Conversations with local economic development experts highlighted several key priorities. Finding skilled workers especially in manufacturing and trades can be difficult, and there is a need to strengthen training programs that connect students with local employers. Local experts also emphasized:

- expanding apprenticeship programs,
- introducing entrepreneurship education in schools, and
- finding ways to keep young residents in the county.

Looking ahead, there is strong interest in attracting a wider variety of businesses, including agritech, logistics, and other industries beyond manufacturing.



Entrance to Steel Dynamics, Inc.

Figure 9.01 - DeKalb County Top Employers

TOP EMPLOYERS
1. Therma Tru (Butler)
2. Steel Dynamics (Butler)
3. Carlex Glass (Auburn)
4. Walmart Distribution Ctr (Auburn)
5. Walmart Supercenter (Auburn)
6. Vulcraft7961 (St Joe)
7. Ti Fluid Systems (Ashley)
8. CSX Transportation (Garrett)
9. Vulcraft Div Of Nucor Corp (St Joe)
10. Nucor Building Systems (Waterloo)

Source: Hoosiers by the Numbers, Major Employers for DeKalb County

WHAT WE FOUND AND WHY IT MATTERS

KEY FINDING #1 BUILD AN ECONOMY THAT MEETS CURRENT NEEDS.

DeKalb County is ready for population and economic growth, and this growth can reflect the community's needs by supporting local businesses, investing in key infrastructure, and focusing on education and workforce development. With a strong economic foundation, the county is well-positioned to build a thriving future for residents and businesses alike. Between 2010 and 2023, the median income for residents over 25 grew by 48%¹, increasing faster than overall inflation of 39.75% during that time². This suggests strong, proactive economic decision-making and a workforce representative of the county's hardworking community.



Despite the strong wage growth, DeKalb County's labor force has struggled to keep pace with the population growth in recent years. From 2019 to 2023, the labor force shrank by 2.25% and unemployment increased to 2.7%. This decrease is largely reflected by the decrease in employment among some of the county's largest industries, such as a nearly 6% decrease in manufacturing. At the same time, retail trade and construction jobs have increased the number of employed workers, offsetting some losses from DeKalb County's larger industries.

¹ 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

² CPI Inflation Calculator (<https://www.in2013dollars.com>)

KEY FINDING #2 ENCOURAGE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT.

DeKalb County residents want leaders to prioritize investing in the county's people and businesses before looking to attract new employers. Participants in the online workshop emphasized the importance of supporting existing businesses, encouraging entrepreneurship, and preserving small-town shops over large "box-store" development. Focus group attendees agreed on supporting local businesses but also highlighted the need to attract new suppliers to strengthen the county's industries.

Figure 9.02 - Average Employment by Sector

INDUSTRY SECTOR	2019	2023	5-YEAR % CHANGE
Manufacturing	9,950	9,368	-5.85%
Federal, State, and Local Government	2,070	2,014	-2.71%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	1,703	1,426	-16.27%
Transportation and Warehousing	1,490	1,483	-0.47%
Retail Trade	1,462	1,565	7.05%
Accommodation and Food Service	1,382	1,392	0.72%
Construction	657	690	5.02%
Total Employment	22,220	21,720	-2.25%

Source: ACS 5-Year Economic Estimates



KEY FINDING #3 INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT BUSINESS GROWTH.

Many residents believe the county should invest more in infrastructure that supports business growth, such as expanding water and sewer services near existing communities. Focus group participants also highlighted opportunities for growth in transportation and logistics but emphasized the importance of maintaining high-quality roads to support workers and local industries. Survey results reflect these priorities. When asked whether the county should focus on transportation and utility improvements to attract new businesses, 49% agreed, while only 14% disagreed. Additional economic development preferences from the online survey are shown in Figure 9.03.

KEY FINDING #4 CONTINUE TO DEVELOP A SKILLED WORKFORCE.

The availability of skilled workers emerged as a challenge throughout the planning process. Focus group participants noted that this issue is especially significant in manufacturing and trades, and emphasized the need for strong workforce training programs that connect students with local employers.

Most residents (92.3%) aged 25 and older have at least a high school diploma, slightly above the state average. However, only 20.1% hold a bachelor's degree or higher, highlighting a gap in higher education compared to state and national levels. This reflects strong participation in trades and alternative post-secondary programs.

Local schools are already responding to this need by offering introductory trades courses, such as the vocational and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs at DeKalb Central Schools. Expanding these programs could benefit both workers and employers by strengthening the local workforce.

County stakeholders recognize that attracting skilled workers and employers depends on attracting families. Open-ended survey responses revealed that residents see childcare and housing as key barriers to bringing families to the area and supporting economic growth. Focus groups and public workshops reinforced this concern, emphasizing the need to invest in childcare solutions and expand housing options to support a growing workforce.

KEY FINDING #5 INVEST IN AGRICULTURE AS A PILLAR OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY.

Agriculture is a major economic pillar in DeKalb County. According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, over 800 farms manage nearly 192,000 acres and produce over \$166 million in agricultural revenue. The consistently strong presence of agriculture contributes to a steady economy, providing significant jobs, income, and intergenerational wealth to DeKalb County families. Continued efforts to support both traditional and modernized agricultural practices through farm-friendly land-use policies, infrastructure, and workforce training will help preserve rural livelihoods, support local food markets, and ensure long-term resilience in the county.



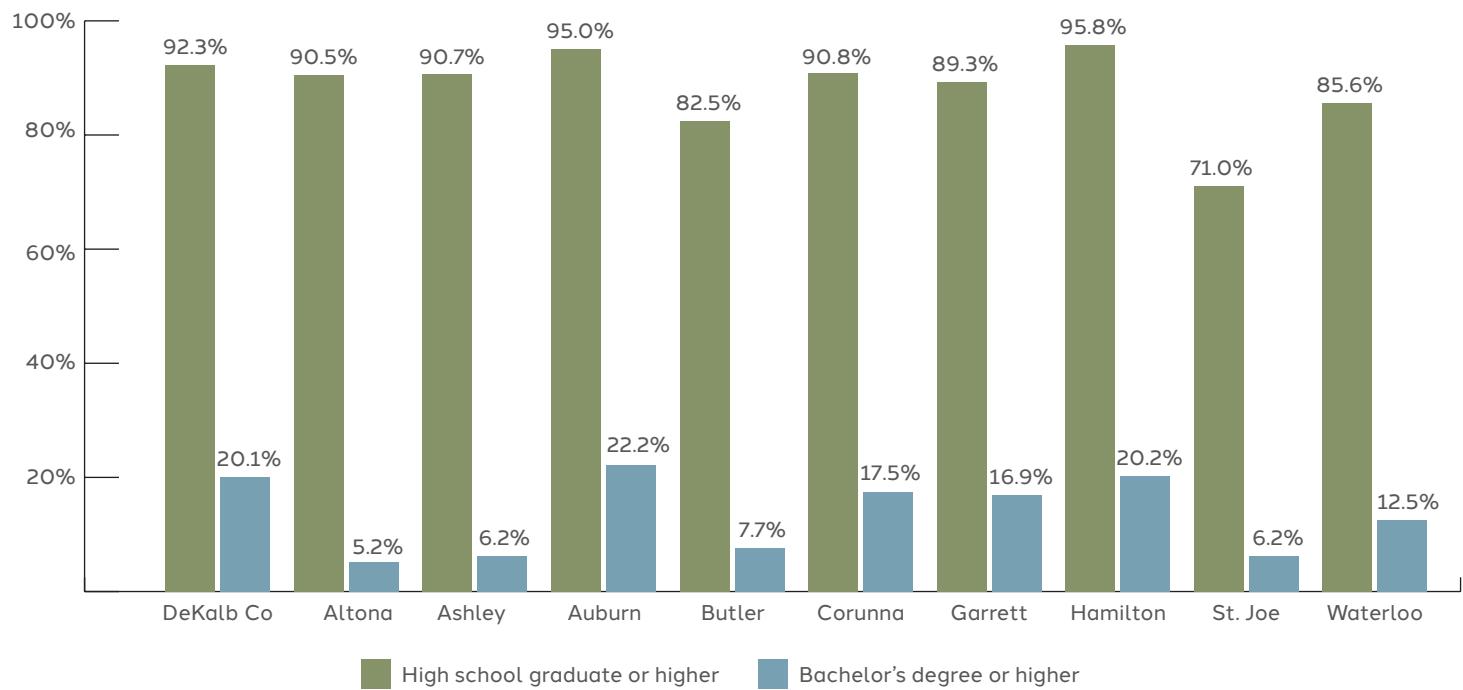
Figure 9.03 - Economic Development Strategy Preferences

CHOICES	COUNT	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS SUPPORTING THIS STRATEGY
Redevelop aging commercial areas.	346	58%
Pursue initiatives to promote and expand existing businesses.	269	45%
Support entrepreneurial initiatives.	186	31%
Grow the local population/ workforce.	176	29%
Pursue initiatives to attract new businesses.	168	28%
Attract more manufacturing jobs.	130	22%
Pursue additional alternative energy production.	77	13%
Provide more commercial development opportunities.	44	7%
Attract more logistics and distribution centers.	42	7%
Provide new business park development opportunities.	32	5%

Online Public Survey Responses to the Question "Which economic development strategies should be prioritized in DeKalb County? Select your top three choices."



Figure 9.04 - Educational Attainment



Source: ACS 2023 5-year Estimates; Note: Ashley and Hamilton are only partially located in DeKalb County.



Harvesting Crops in DeKalb County; Photo Source: DeKalb County Farm Bureau Connections



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAYBOOK

The comprehensive plan outlines a clear vision for DeKalb County's future. Its goals, strategies, and objectives serve as a practical playbook, providing outcome-focused guidance to help implement that vision.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL

Foster a diverse, resilient economy by supporting the expansion of workforce training, entrepreneurship, and attracting a wide range of businesses, while preserving DeKalb County's community character and making it a place where residents of all ages and skill levels can live, work, and thrive.

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO

Implementing this plan is a shared responsibility among county leaders, residents, businesses, and nonprofits. Bringing the vision to life is not a one-time action. It requires sustained, focused effort to transform the plan's recommendations into meaningful results.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
1.	<i>CONTINUALLY SUPPORT THE EXPANSION OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER PATHWAYS.</i>	
a.	Partner with schools, career centers, and employers to promote trades education, career and technical programs (including agriculture), and apprenticeship opportunities.	Medium
b.	Launch initiatives that connect students and young professionals to local employers, including those in agriculture, FFA programs, and skilled trades, with a focus on retaining youth and talent within the county.	Medium
2.	<i>MAINTAIN AN UPDATED INVENTORY OF DEVELOPMENT-READY SITES AND REDEVELOPMENT SITES.</i>	
a.	Continue collaborating with property owners, realtors, neighborhood groups, and economic development partners to track site availability, infrastructure status, and landowner readiness for development.	Medium
b.	Focus marketing and recruitment efforts on priority sites near key corridors.	Medium



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
3.	<i>SUPPORT THE EXPANSION OF SMALL AND LOCAL BUSINESSES.</i>	
a.	Encourage and support local maker markets, pop-up events, farmers markets, and small business showcases that highlight DeKalb County-made products, agricultural goods, and services.	Medium
b.	Work with the DeKalb Chamber Partnership to connect local entrepreneurs, farmers, and small businesses to funding, training, and marketing resources.	Medium
c.	Promote the inclusion of shared workspaces, commercial kitchens, food hubs, and small-scale production facilities as part of adaptive reuse projects in municipalities.	Medium
4.	<i>COLLABORATE WITH THE DEKALB COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP, INDIANA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, AND NORTHEAST INDIANA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR CONTINUED LEADERSHIP IN REGIONAL INITIATIVES.</i>	
a.	Schedule regular check-ins with Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC), the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership (NIRP), and the Local Economic Development Organization (LEDO) to ensure DeKalb County is an active participant in economic development initiatives.	Medium
b.	Maintain and share with partners an ongoing list of priority projects, programs, and undertakings based on the comprehensive plan in preparation for new regional initiatives.	Medium



ARTS, CULTURE, AND PLACEMAKING



CHAPTER 10

ARTS, CULTURE, AND PLACEMAKING

DeKalb County residents value arts, culture, and placemaking as essential elements of the county's rural identity and overall community well-being—especially those that offer engaging opportunities for youth. This sense of place is shaped not only by everyday traditions and local creativity, but also by the county's nationally recognized historic and cultural assets, including the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Facility, historic downtown districts in communities such as Auburn, Butler, and Garrett, the Eckhart Public Library and Park, and several community mausoleums and historic farmsteads listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Understanding how these individual places and stories contribute to both local pride and a shared countywide identity is central to effective placemaking. At the same time, promoting and investing in existing arts, culture, and heritage-based efforts will be vital. Strategic support for these initiatives will help ensure that DeKalb County continues to offer a vibrant cultural landscape that enriches the lives of residents, attracts visitors, and celebrates the county's unique character.

WHAT WE FOUND AND WHY IT MATTERS

KEY FINDING #1 BUILD ON CURRENT COMMUNITY EVENTS.

Events and festivals are a big part of what makes DeKalb County special. When residents were asked what they love most about the county, events and festivals was the seventh most common response among survey responses.

DeKalb County has rich cultural roots, celebrated through well-known events like the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Festival, Spencerville Covered Bridge Festival, Culture Fest, DeKalb County Fall Fair, Butler and Garrett Days Festivals, and more. These gatherings showcase the county's strong community bonds and provide engaging experiences for both residents and visitors.

However, only 33% of survey respondents said they are satisfied with the number of arts and cultural activities offered. This shows that while residents treasure the events that already exist, there is a clear desire for more opportunities to come together and celebrate the county's culture.



Spencerville Covered Bridge; Photo Credit: KPC News



KEY FINDING #2 ARTICULATE THE COUNTY'S IDENTITY

Conversations at multiple community engagement events revealed that DeKalb County does not yet have a distinct countywide identity. Many of the county's most well-known events are organized by individual municipalities with support from the county. While residents value the county's role in helping bring arts and cultural events to life, many also feel it is time for DeKalb County to develop its own unique identity. Responses to the question, "What's one thing you LOVE about DeKalb County?" highlight characteristics the county can build on as it works toward a recognizable, countywide identity (See Figure 10.01).

Figure 10.01 - "What's one thing you LOVE about DeKalb County"?



KEY FINDING #3 EXPAND EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES.

Survey results show that residents overwhelmingly view DeKalb County as a great place to raise a family, with a welcoming, attractive environment that leaves a positive impression on visitors. At the same time, public input highlighted a strong desire for more arts and cultural events that actively engage youth and families. As one steering committee member stated, "There can be no towns without families." There is also a perception that "more" is needed to meaningfully engage teenagers and students. This aligns with survey responses, where open-ended comments mentioned the need for additional youth- and family-focused arts and cultural opportunities 26 times. Residents expressed interest in interactive, live, and accessible programming throughout the county, not just in the urban centers.



Sunny Meadows County Home; Photo Credit: DeKalb County Government

ARTS, CULTURE, AND PLACEMAKING PLAYBOOK

The comprehensive plan outlines a clear vision for DeKalb County's future. Its goals, strategies, and objectives serve as a practical playbook, providing outcome-focused guidance to help implement that vision.

ARTS, CULTURE, AND PLACEMAKING GOAL

Celebrate and strengthen DeKalb County's rural identity and cultural assets by fostering vibrant, inclusive placemaking that enhances community pride and quality of life.

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO

Implementing this plan is a shared responsibility among county leaders, residents, businesses, and nonprofits. Bringing the vision to life is not a one-time action. It requires sustained, focused effort to transform the plan's recommendations into meaningful results.

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ARTS, CULTURE, AND PLACEMAKING STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
1.	<i>ESTABLISH A CLEAR IDENTITY AND BRAND FOR THE COUNTY THAT IS EASILY IDENTIFIED WITHIN THE COUNTY AND REGION.</i>	
a.	Collaborate with marketing professionals to engage with the public to create a brand.	Medium
b.	Through collaboration with the public and municipalities, adopt an updated brand that incorporates a countywide narrative while distinguishing the county from the brands of its municipalities.	Medium
2.	<i>SUPPORT MUNICIPALITIES IN DEFINING, PROMOTING, AND SHOWCASING THEIR UNIQUE LOCAL IDENTITIES THROUGH LOCAL EVENTS.</i>	
a.	Encourage municipalities in their branding efforts that reflect heritage and rural character.	Long
b.	Partner with nonprofits and Main Street programs to support events, theaters, galleries, and cultural programming.	Medium
c.	Promote signature festivals, such as the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Festival, to boost community engagement and tourism.	Medium



ARTS, CULTURE, AND PLACEMAKING STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
3.	<i>SUPPORT BUSINESS, TOWN, AND CITY EFFORTS TO EXPAND AND ENHANCE RECREATIONAL, CULTURAL, AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY AMENITIES.</i>	
a.	Encourage new and improved spaces, both indoor and outdoor, in towns and unincorporated areas to enhance quality of life.	Medium
b.	Support inclusive programming at accessible locations that serves all age groups and backgrounds.	Medium
c.	Support agritourism businesses and initiatives like pumpkin patches, corn mazes, and wineries.	Medium
4.	<i>ESTABLISH A CENTRALIZED COMMUNICATION PLATFORM TO HIGHLIGHT AND ELEVATE KEY CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AS ANCHORS OF IDENTITY AND TOURISM.</i>	
a.	Continue partnering with Visit DeKalb to maintain a countywide website or social media hub for event calendars and volunteer opportunities.	Short
b.	Promote signature attractions like the Excelsior Arts Academy and DeKalb County Outdoor Theater.	Medium
c.	Leverage these institutions in marketing efforts to enhance cultural tourism and community pride.	Medium

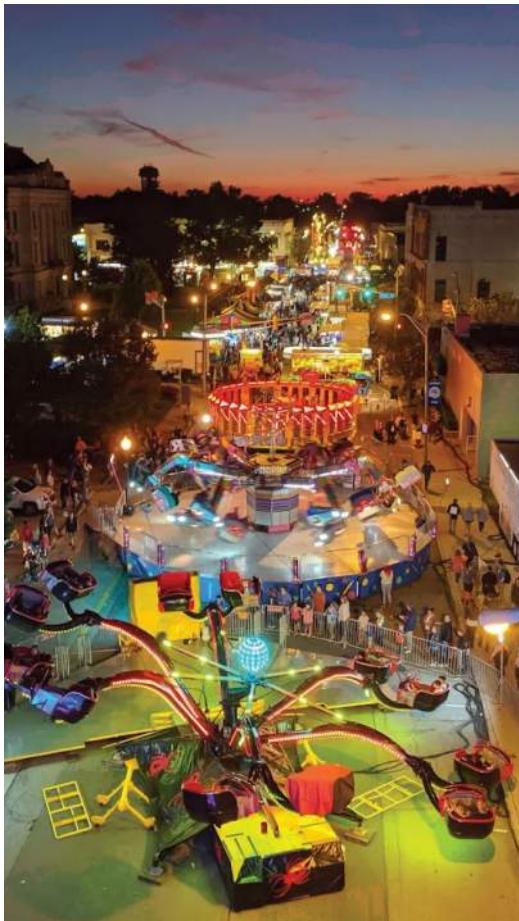




Spencerville Covered Bridge Annual Dinner;
Photo Source: DeKalb County Historian



St. Joe Pickle Fest; Photo Source: KPC News



DeKalb County Free Fall Fair; Photo Source:
sg.trip.com



International Monster Truck Museum and Hall of Fame; Photo Source:
Wheree.com





The logo for the Town of Corunna features the text "TOWN OF CORUNNA" in a bold, serif font, colored in a dark red-brown. The text is enclosed within a gold-colored rectangular frame. The frame has a thin gold border and a thick gold bar extending from the top-left corner downwards and to the right, creating a stylized bracket effect.

**TOWN OF
CORUNNA**



CHAPTER 11

TOWN OF CORUNNA

In 1965, the Town of Corunna partnered with the DeKalb County Commissioners, formalized in Ordinance #23, adopted December 6, 1965, to align local and county planning efforts. Through this collaboration, the DeKalb County Plan Commission assumed responsibility for overseeing planning and zoning within the Town of Corunna. This arrangement has remained in place for nearly six decades, ensuring consistency in land use decisions and coordinated growth between the town and the county.

Today, the DeKalb County Plan Commission continues to represent Corunna's planning and zoning interests. This chapter explores the town's unique opportunities and challenges, highlighting how local context, development patterns, and community priorities shape Corunna's role within the broader framework of DeKalb County's future.



Corunna Fire Department Mural

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Located in west-central DeKalb County, Corunna was established in 1858, 21 years after the first settler, Ira Allen, built the town's first home. Today the town is home to roughly 120 residents, offering a small-town lifestyle with access to destinations Auburn, Angola, and the Fort Wayne area within a half-hour drive.

LAND USE AND HOUSING

The Town of Corunna is primarily residential with several shops, a town hall, and churches located along N Bridge Street. Commercial use is primarily centered around the intersection of N Bridge Street and US 6. The town contains approximately 80 homes, around 93% of which are single-family detached houses. Housing quality varies, as roughly 62% of homes were built before 1950, meaning that the quality of homes now, 75 or more years later, is largely dependent on the consistency of upkeep and maintenance. While Corunna is an incorporated town, DeKalb County retains planning and zoning jurisdiction within the town's boundaries, meaning that any changes to existing planning and zoning should be executed through a partnership between the town and county.



TRANSPORTATION

The Town of Corunna is located at the intersection of US 6 and State Road 327 (locally known as N Bridge Street). US 6 serves as the primary east–west route, linking Corunna with Kendallville to the west and the communities of Waterloo and Butler to the east. State Road 327 provides a key north–south connection to Garrett and beyond. Both routes offer convenient access to major regional corridors, including Interstate 69 and US 8, which connect Corunna to larger population centers and employment markets across the region.

No other regional corridors go through the town, meaning that travel to neighboring communities and destinations relies primarily on US 6 and State Road 327.

The Norfolk Southern rail line runs east–west through the heart of Corunna, physically dividing the community into two sections. These areas are linked only by the N Bridge Street overpass and the East Street at-grade crossing near the town’s eastern boundary. While the rail line presents opportunities for future industrial or logistics-related development, there are currently no active rail spurs serving local properties.

UTILITIES

The Town of Corunna provides water and sewer to its residents. Corunna receives electric and natural gas services through NIPSCO. The current infrastructure is considered to be adequate for the existing population. Moderate population growth should be supported by available capacity for new water and sewer customers, however it is imperative to monitor capacity as new customers come online.



Corunna Bridge over railroad tracks



ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

Roughly 70% of town residents are employed, with the remaining 30% classifying as “not in the workforce”. This is distinct from being unemployed and likely reflects spouses of an employed person that choose not to work a paid job. The most common occupation among the town’s 89 employed individuals is production, transportation, and material moving.

Roughly 60 people are employed within the town’s limits, with the top employer being Albright’s One Stop which employs 45 people. Other top employers include Friskney Gear and Machine Corporation, B & P Crane service, and Corunna Town Hall. The town’s businesses were projected to sell nearly \$9 million in goods in 2025, creating a strong commercial base for the town.¹

¹ESRI Business Locator Corunna Indiana

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

Corunna Park is the primary recreational destination for residents. The park includes a playground, basketball court, and green space for playing. Multiple public workshop attendees commented that this park has potential to be a significant asset to the community with the right investment. Several churches, like the Corunna United Brethren in Christ Church and the Corunna Church of Christ, offer additional gathering spaces for the community.

The Town of Corunna is protected from fire hazards by the volunteer fire department, which operates out of Corunna Fire Department building. The station serves Richland and Fairland Townships, providing a consistent sense of safety for residents. The Corunna Fire Department building was opened in 2006. The building boasts a mural that was painted in 2022, welcoming travelers of US 6 into the community.



Corunna Town Hall; Photo Credit: Christopher Crawford

FIGURE 11.01 - OCCUPATIONS IN CORUNNA

Category	QTY	Percentage
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	36	40.4%
Sales and office occupations	20	22.5%
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	17	19.1%
Service occupations	11	12.4%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	5	5.6%
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	89	100%

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Economic Characteristics Estimates



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The goals and strategies crafted for the Town of Corunna are based on existing conditions and local insight. Some public insight was received from the countywide public input survey from respondents who mentioned Corunna, but most public input came from the Corunna public workshop.

The Corunna public workshop took place on August 20, 2025, allowing residents to offer insights into the assets, challenges, and opportunities facing the town. The workshop was open to all Corunna residents, business owners, and stakeholders in the pavilion at Corunna Park.

The workshop was advertised with flyers that were posted at the park, grocery store, and town hall, and a postcard was sent to each household. Three residents attended the workshop to offer their local expertise. Participants were asked to answer questions that were mounted on boards and to discuss their thoughts with the planning team. The following chapters are a summary of their responses.

What Are Corunna's Assets?

- 1. Albright's One Stop** was mentioned as an asset by each respondent; residents appreciate the unique value of a grocery store in a town of Corunna's size.
- 2. The town's affordability and rural character**, including the fact that you can own large lots with dogs and chickens, are strengths that the town can lean into.
- 3. Recent cleanup efforts** have made significant progress toward improving the town's appearance and making it an even more pleasant place to live.



Corunna Workshop on August 20, 2025



WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE IN CORUNNA'S FUTURE?

1. **Improvements to Corunna Park** was stated as an interest by all three attendees, with one participant specifically requesting a designated dog area. Another noted that the park is expected to receive new equipment soon, which sparked optimism among the group.

2. **New high-quality homes** were identified as a need. Land on the southeastern corner of town was pointed out for its potential as a future location of new homes.

3. **A larger tax base** is seen as necessary for the town to be able to make the investments that residents would like to see. This will require a growing population.

4. **Attracting a new community “destination,”** like the former tavern that once served as a gathering place for residents and visitors, is a top priority for some. Another workshop attendee mentioned gas stations as a destination that could benefit the town, remarking that the closest gas station now is four miles away.

5. **Affordability** is a strength of the town and residents would like to see it stay that way. Recent increases in utility costs are a concern for some residents, and they would like to see long-term planning consider ways to keep costs low.

6. **Walkability** is limited in and around Corunna, and additional sidewalks or trails would make it easier for residents to walk with their families, friends, or pets.

WHAT IS YOUR HOUSING PREFERENCE?

High-quality development is the top priority among participants, as it relates to housing. When asked to identify a preference between single family homes, townhomes, bungalows, duplexes/triplexes, accessory dwelling units (in-law suites), and shared courtyard homes, one participant commented, “type doesn’t matter, just needs to be well thought out and well maintained.” All other attendees agreed.

Beyond emphasizing high-quality development of all types, one participant pointed out **duplexes and triplices**, as well as townhomes, as desirable because of the walkability they promote. Another participant remarked that they liked the look of **shared courtyard homes**.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations for the Town of Corunna are grounded in the strengths, challenges, assets, and priorities identified by residents, as well as findings from existing conditions research and data analysis. Each recommendation includes a goal that outlines what the community seeks to achieve, supported by strategies that describe how those goals can be realized. Together, these recommendations will guide Corunna's local leaders in advancing the community's shared vision, with support from the county to help ensure that the town's goals are successfully achieved.



Corunna United Brethren in Christ Church; Photo Credit: Google Maps



Homes in Corunna

RECOMMENDATION #1 LEVERAGE CORUNNA'S ASSETS TO ATTRACT NEW FAMILIES.

Residents at the public workshop noted several key assets that the county can build around to attract new investment. This includes Albright's One Stop, a high-quality grocery store that residents note is uncommon for a town of Corunna's size. Additionally, the low cost of living and rural character were pointed to as attractions for the community.

The town is working to complement the value these assets bring to the community, particularly through town cleanup. Residents note that considerable progress has been made to make the town a cleaner, even more attractive place that will make it more appealing to visitors and potential future residents. Initiatives like this and future efforts must continue to encourage more visitors, such as those who have already travelled to Albright's, to stay longer and experience more of the community.



Albright's One Stop



Strategies:

- 1.** Partner with Indiana Office of Technology (IOT) to develop a website with no cost to the town, including a choice of three website designs that are accessibility-compliant and mobile-friendly.
- 2.** Participate in Association of Indiana Municipalities (AIM) Community Showcase Video Program which is designed to entertain, educate, and inform the public about the community.
- 3.** Promote Corunna through regional partnerships with the DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership, chambers of commerce, and tourism organizations to highlight the town's strengths to prospective residents.
- 4.** Identify potential locations for art in the public right-of-way or murals on local buildings that would welcome visitors from high-traffic destinations like Albright's. This should be done in preparation for any regional arts grant programs that arise.

RECOMMENDATION #2 ATTRACT NEW, QUALITY HOUSING.

While public workshop participants believe the town has increased its attractiveness in recent years, they also point out that there is a lack of availability of quality housing. Public workshop attendees see an opportunity to improve the housing stock by building on some of the town's available land. However, several participants in the countywide public online survey stated that they want to see farmland protected in and around Corunna specifically. Any new housing will need to balance the rural character with the need for new homes.

All three workshop attendees agreed that housing is a need. Additionally, all three believe that the style of housing matters less than the quality of the housing. This means that they would welcome single-family homes, duplexes, triplexes, shared courtyard homes, and townhomes, so long as they were high-quality homes.

Strategies:

- 1.** Partner with the DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership to coordinate with property owners of large undeveloped lots to identify the likelihood and potential cost of selling the land to builders.
- 2.** Work with the county to ensure that zoning and land use planning in Corunna accommodates high-quality housing that matches the preferences of residents – including single-family homes, duplexes, triplexes, shared courtyard homes, and townhomes.



RECOMMENDATION #3 UTILIZE LOCAL BUSINESS TO ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY GATHERING DESTINATION.

The Town of Corunna is home to a close-knit community; however, one workshop participant noted that the town misses the now-closed tavern that drew people together and created community. A respondent to the countywide online public survey also noted that “Corunna needs businesses.” The attraction of a new business and community-building destination could help foster a greater sense of belonging and community buy-in.

Strategies:

- 1.** Identify underutilized or vacant properties or buildings that could house a new business.
- 2.** Engage Corunna residents to determine what type of business residents would most like to attract – whether it be a restaurant, coffee shop, pub, tavern, gas station, or something else.
- 3.** Coordinate with the DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership to recruit and assist a small business start-up that fills the need for a community gathering place.

RECOMMENDATION #4 INVEST IN CORUNNA PARK.

One workshop participant pointed out that Corunna Park has the potential to be a community-building destination with proper investment. While the park is a great asset, improvements to the park may make it much more attractive and popular for community events or recreational gatherings. One workshop participant commented that the park expected to receive new equipment soon, which will jumpstart efforts to create a high-quality gathering and playing place. This investment, and other future investments, will expand recreational opportunities for youth and families.

Strategies:

- 1.** Invest in improvements such as new signage and upgraded sports facilities, like better basketball hoops and soccer nets, in addition to the planned equipment upgrades.
- 2.** Identify state grant and local funding opportunities, like through the Community Foundation of DeKalb County, to support the planned upgrades to Corunna Park.



Corunna Park



RECOMMENDATION #5 IMPROVE WALKABILITY.

The Town of Corunna contains sidewalks on several residential roads and along Bridge Street, but walkability remains limited overall because of the few sidewalks and trails in and around the town. Some residents feel safe walking on residential roads because of the low volume of cars. However, one workshop attendee expressed a desire for expanded and improved sidewalks, especially for residents with children.

Strategies:

- 1.** Create a pedestrian plan that identifies priority investments based on community input and need.
- 2.** Apply for INDOT's Small Communities Sidewalk program to invest in sidewalk expansion and maintenance.



Streetscape along Michigan Ave. near Albrights; Photo Credit: Google Maps

RECOMMENDATION #6 INCREASE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

Several residents in the countywide public online survey expressed concern that Corunna's interests are not always fully represented in countywide decision-making. To ensure that the county considers the needs of Corunna when making decisions, it is important for Corunna to have an involved and informed population that is willing to show up to events that impact the town to advocate for the town's needs.

Strategies:

- 1.** Ensure that county meetings and events that may impact Corunna are posted outside the town hall and on town website.
- 2.** Develop a "how to get involved" handout explaining when and where residents can attend town and county meetings, as well as the purpose for each event.
- 3.** Partner with local organizations to hold joint outreach events, like game days at Corunna Park, where residents are encouraged to gather and express thoughts about how the county can best assist the town.

IMPLEMENTATION



IMPLEMENTATION

The residents and stakeholders of DeKalb County set an aspirational vision that will require collaboration and dedicated work from county leaders, businesses, nonprofits, and the public to execute. Implementation of this vision is not a one-time action, but rather an ongoing and targeted effort that turns the recommendations of this plan into real-life achievements.

The DeKalb 2040 Comprehensive Plan contains goals of varying timeframes for completion; some have already begun or are ongoing while others will take years to complete. The comprehensive plan will rely on decision-makers incorporating the recommendations of the comprehensive plan into everyday operations, ensuring that, as the social or economic context of the county evolves, county leadership will be able to address new and emerging opportunities and challenges.

County staff, the Plan Commission, County Council, and County Commissioners should regularly reference the comprehensive plan when reviewing development petitions and making fiscal decisions. The comprehensive plan should be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that goals are being met, whether goals are still relevant, and whether new goals have emerged since the plan's adoption.

WHAT DOES IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PLAN LOOK LIKE?



Coordinate among departments and local partners to align projects with plan priorities.



Use the plan to guide updates to zoning, subdivision, and other regulatory codes.



Ensure development, infrastructure, and budget decisions reflect the intent of the plan.



Track the completion or progress of goals, strategies, and objectives.



Celebrate completed projects and milestones that advance the plan's vision.



Revisit and update the plan regularly to reflect changes affecting the community.



WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO

The implementation strategies outline actions associated with specific objectives that launch the comprehensive plan. These strategies will build momentum and position the county for long-term success of the implementation of the DeKalb 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Each objective can be championed and initiated by county officials soon after the plan's adoption. This section references objectives from Chapters 4 through 10 and provides detailed actions to advance those objectives.

HOW TO USE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

This section provides direct guidance to the DeKalb County government and their partners. To guide the implementation of the objectives, each first step includes:

- **Action Items:** The steps needed to successfully accomplish the initiative.
- **Key Partners:** The individuals, organizations, and entities involved in implementation. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather a starting point for collaboration.
- **Implementation Time Frame:** The length of time the initiative should take to complete from start to finish.
- **Funding Recommendations:** Potential funding sources to support implementation of the initiative. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but serves as a starting point for consideration.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

1. MODERNIZE THE UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE.

Discussed in the Land Use and Housing chapters, throughout public engagement, residents and stakeholders consistently identified housing availability, affordability, and limited housing choice as top concerns. The community's feedback emphasizes aligning regulations with current needs and directing growth toward existing communities, but complex and outdated zoning standards limit flexibility and restrict the types of housing that can be built. Modernizing the Unified Development Ordinance is a foundational step to implementing the plan's land use and housing goals, expanding housing options, supporting reinvestment, and guiding growth in line with the county's long-term vision.

Objectives Addressed:

- **Land Use, Objective 1a:** Consolidate the county's 24 existing zoning districts to improve clarity and flexibility.
- **Housing, Objective 2a:** Update the zoning code in agricultural and residential zones to reduce or eliminate the minimum dwelling size requirement.
- **Housing, Objective 2b:** Legalize accessory dwelling units (ADUs) by right in agricultural residential zones across the county.

Action Items:

1. Establish a zoning ordinance review committee including DeKalb County Plan Commission members and staff, a County Commissioner, real estate professionals, and residential builders to conduct a review of the existing ordinance and compare to statewide and regional norms. Evaluate the merits of hiring a consultant to assist with the zoning ordinance updates.
2. Work with stakeholders and affected parties with insight into each of the topics addressed in the ordinance update.
3. Draft ordinance language that addresses the primary barriers to accomplishing each objective, as was discovered during ordinance review and stakeholder engagement.
4. Review Indiana code with legal to ensure consistency with Indiana Code and DeKalb County ordinances.
5. Seek public input on the recommendations proposed by the ordinance update committee through public workshops and online surveys.



6. Review proposed ordinance updates with Plan Commission members and staff, as well as with County Commissioners prior to starting the adoption process.

7. Create educational materials, such as physical and online brochures, to help community members understand the new standards and the permitting processes.

8. Monitor desired outcomes for two years post adoption to determine necessary refinements to the ordinance.

9. Items to Consider:

- *Consolidating zoning districts: Identify redundancies or outdated uses. Coordinate with Plan Commission staff to develop training and take advantage of existing training for Plan Commission members on the updated ordinance.*
- *ADUs: Define size limits, design compatibility standards, and sewage and septic requirements. Coordinate with DeKalb County municipalities to promote consistent ADU policies across the county. Consider developing pre-approved building plans for ADUs.*
- *Minimum livable areas: Collaborate with realtors to assess demand for homes with smaller livable areas and use that information to evaluate whether the current minimum requirement should be reduced or removed. Reference the 2022 DeKalb County Housing Strategy Guide to ensure recommendations align with local needs. Test potential changes using sample building footprints to confirm they preserve the county's character while allowing alternative housing types and smaller home designs.*

Key Partners: DeKalb County Plan Commission, DeKalb County Commissioners, DeKalb County Planning Department, DeKalb County Building Department, local residential builders, architects, and Realtors, DeKalb County key stakeholders, DeKalb County municipalities, Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC), and general public

Implementation Time Frame: 5 years

Potential Funding Sources: County General Fund

2. UPDATE THE TRANSPORTATION PLAN.

Residents and stakeholders repeatedly emphasized the importance of safe, reliable roads and bridges, as well as the need for clear priorities for maintenance and investment. Discussed in the Transportation chapter, the planning process uncovered a need for data-driven prioritization in decision-making, coordination with regional partners, and improved access to state and federal funding. Updating the transportation plan will align infrastructure investments with community needs, improve transparency, and ensure the county is positioned to maintain and fund its transportation system over the long term.

Objectives Addressed:

- **Transportation, Objective 1a:** Create a road improvement plan that is available online and that prioritizes investment and upkeep of strong county roads and bridges to ensure safety and longevity.
- **Transportation, Objective 1b:** Implement a pavement management program to guide investments based on condition and usage.
- **Transportation, Objective 4a:** Partner with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), regional agencies, and neighboring counties to align priorities.
- **Transportation, Objective 4b:** Seek state and federal funding to support major projects and reduce local cost burdens.

Action Items:

1. Establish a task force with knowledge of the local transportation system, including the Highway Department, Planning Department, and GIS Department. Evaluate the merits of hiring a consultant to guide the process.
2. Assess the current transportation plan, identifying which elements are still relevant, and which new elements are needed.
3. Assess all county roads and bridges, detailing the condition, traffic volume, and safety data.
4. Based on road and bridge assessments, establish a 5-, 10-, and 20-year maintenance schedule.
5. Incorporate updated PASER (Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating) data into the key findings of the updated plan.
6. Develop a matrix to prioritize repairs, including data for pavement condition, safety risk, traffic volume, and economic importance.



- 7.** Create an online interactive map that shows road conditions, planned improvements, and completed projects.
- 8.** Work with INDOT and NIRCC to coordinate how DeKalb County's roadway needs can be integrated into regional projects. Collaborate with surrounding counties and reference recent plans, including thoroughfare plans, to ensure alignment of projects.
- 9.** Consider how roadways and utility maintenance can interact to support growth areas.
- 10.** Gather public input on the planned schedule through public workshops and online surveys.
- 11.** Review proposed ordinance updates with County Commissioners prior to starting the adoption process.
- 12.** Use the plan to apply for state and federal funding.
- 13.** Update the plan annually based on progress and evolving needs.

Key Partners: DeKalb County Highway Department, DeKalb County GIS Department, DeKalb County Commissioners, DeKalb County Council, Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC), DeKalb County municipalities, Indiana Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP), and DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership

Implementation Time Frame: 5 - 8 years

Potential Funding Sources: County Motor Vehicle Highway Fund, Community Crossings Matching Grant Program, Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) Planning Grant, Wheel Tax, County Highway Fund, and Potential Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Funds

3. ASSES THE MERITS OF IMPLEMENTING A TIF DISTRICT THAT SUPPORTS KEY GROWTH AREAS.

Throughout public engagement, residents and stakeholders emphasized the need for growth to improve overall quality of life and increase workforce, but growth should occur in the right places where infrastructure can keep pace with that development in a financially responsible way. Exploring financial options like TIF districts allows the county to evaluate whether new growth can help fund needed infrastructure improvements in designated growth areas. This assessment supports more intentional and targeted growth while protecting existing taxpayers from bearing the full cost of new development.

Objectives Addressed:

- **Community Facilities and Infrastructure, Objective 1a:** Align utility, road, and public service expansions with designated growth areas and land use priorities.
- **Community Facilities and Infrastructure, Objective 3a:** Explore creative financing such as tax increment financing (TIF) districts and other innovative tools to fund roads, drainage, and public safety improvements.

Action Items:

1. Establish an infrastructure coordination committee, including staff from the Highway Department, Planning Department, GIS Department, and the DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership, as well as municipal representatives, for regular meetings.
2. Establish a countywide growth map that layers existing utilities, roadways, environmental constraints, and future land use.
3. Update review procedures to ensure new developments demonstrate alignment with targeted growth areas.
4. Develop criteria for identifying potential TIF districts that support growth.
5. Once potential TIF districts are identified, run a benefit analysis for establishing TIF districts in potential growth areas to improve infrastructure.

- 6.** Draft an Economic Development Plan to establish the TIF that describes targeted improvements, timelines, and expected outcomes.
- 7.** Work with the county's legal team to follow all legal procedures to adopt and establish the Economic Development Plan.
- 8.** Monitor impacts of the Economic Development Plan over five years based on identified benchmarks.

Key Partners: DeKalb County Commissioners, DeKalb County Plan Commission, DeKalb County Planning Department, DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership, DeKalb County Highway Department, DeKalb County Economic Development Commission, DeKalb County Redevelopment Commission, DeKalb County Auditor's Office, DeKalb County GIS Department, DeKalb County municipalities, and utility providers

Implementation Time Frame: 2 - 5 years

Potential Funding Sources: County General Fund, Potential Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Funds, County Motor Vehicle Highway Fund, and Community Crossings Matching Grant Program

4. CONNECT DEKALB COUNTY.

Residents and stakeholders expressed strong support for expanded trail connections and safer options for walking and biking between communities explored in the Trails, Open Spaces, and Natural Resources chapter. Once external funding becomes available, developing a connected countywide trail system, centered on completing the Poka-Bache Trail, will enhance the county's quality of life by improving transportation choices, recreation, tourism, and long-term regional connectivity.

Objectives Addressed:

- **Trails, Open Spaces, and Natural Resources, Objective 1a:** Complete segments of the Poka-Bache Trail throughout DeKalb County.
- **Trails, Open Spaces, and Natural Resources, Objective 1c:** As part of the 2021 DeKalb County Trails Plan, work with municipalities to plan and execute trail extensions that allow for inter-city transportation.
- **Trails, Open Spaces, and Natural Resources, Objective 1d:** Work with regional and statewide organizations to secure long-term funding solutions for maintenance of the expanded trail system.

Action Items:

1. Evaluate the merits of hiring a consultant to manage alignment planning, funding options, and construction of the trail.
2. Explore options for the organization, ownership structure, and ongoing maintenance for countywide trails.
3. Finalize a preferred trail alignment for each segment within the county and document updated right-of-way needs. Ensure that municipalities are involved in the planning process so that county and municipal alignments match.
4. Begin discussions with property owners early, negotiating right-of-way acquisition and easements before pursuing construction grants.
5. Complete preliminary engineering for all segments in the unincorporated county, making the project "shovel ready" when grant funding is secured.



- 6.** Develop cost estimates and establish a funding and construction schedule, including continued maintenance costs.
- 7.** Apply for state and federal trail grants during each funding cycle.
- 8.** Work with the NIRCC and DeKalb County Community Foundation to determine which long-term maintenance financing options are available to the county.
- 9.** Begin construction when funding is secured.
- 10.** Create a trail infrastructure condition inventory and a maintenance schedule. Update both annually.

Key Partners: DeKalb County Commissioners, DeKalb County Community Foundation, DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership, DeKalb County Planning Department, municipal planning departments, DeKalb County GIS Department, Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC), and Indiana Department of Natural Resources

Implementation Time Frame: 10-15 years

Potential Funding Sources: Next Level Trails Grant, Next Level Conservation Trust Grant, Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant, Indiana Trails Program Grant, and Lily Endowment Inc. Grants

5. DEVELOP A ‘MADE IN DEKALB’ BRAND.

Throughout public engagement, residents, employers, educators, and members of the agricultural community emphasized the importance of retaining local talent, strengthening career pathways, and promoting pride in DeKalb County’s workforce, priorities echoed in the Economic Development and Arts, Culture, and Placemaking chapters. Honoring the community’s recommendations, this plan emphasizes the connection of education, training, and employment while celebrating local industries, including agriculture, and employers who sustain them. Developing a “Made in DeKalb” brand will support these goals by aligning workforce development efforts, highlighting local career opportunities (from farms to manufacturing to creative enterprises), and creating a shared identity that strengthens retention, recruitment, and long-term economic vitality.

Objectives Addressed:

- **Economic Development, Objective 1a:** Partner with schools, career centers, and employers to promote trades education, career and technical programs (including agriculture), and apprenticeship opportunities.
- **Economic Development, Objective 3a:** Encourage and support local maker markets, pop-up events, farmers markets, and small business showcases that highlight DeKalb County-made products, agricultural goods, and services.
- **Arts, Culture, and Placemaking, Objective 1a:** Collaborate with marketing professionals to engage with the public to create a brand.

Action Items:

1. Work with the DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership to champion a countywide workforce retention and branding task force that includes representatives for schools, employers, business support organizations, tourism professionals, and agricultural leaders and producers. Evaluate the merits of hiring a marketing consultant.
2. Conduct a workforce needs assessment by surveying local employers, including farms, agribusiness, and food-related enterprises, to understand job openings, skills gaps, and future labor needs. Share findings with schools to help shape curriculum and programs.
3. Explore providing incentives to employers, including agricultural and food system businesses, who help develop the local workforce through apprenticeship programs and job shadowing.



- 4.** Host public workshops with community members, including farmers, youth, and agricultural stakeholders, to identify what makes DeKalb County, DeKalb County. Utilize their input to form a county brand.
- 5.** Incorporate the new brand to develop a “Made in DeKalb” workplace marketing initiative that highlights available training pathways across all sectors, including agriculture, and celebrates local employers that offer student partnerships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job learning opportunities.
- 6.** Collect data annually from participating employers and schools, including agricultural education programs, that track total job placements and retention rates.

Key Partners: DeKalb County Commissioners, DeKalb County Council, DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership, DeKalb Chamber Partnership, DeKalb County Vistors Bureau, private sponsorships and local businesses, local schools, Don Wood Foundation, Dekko Foundation, local agricultural producers, DeKalb County Farm Bureau, DeKalb County Future Farmers of America (FFA), and J. Kruse Education Center

Implementation Time Frame: 2 - 5 years

Potential Funding Sources: Don Wood Foundation, private sponsorships, and local businesses

APPENDIX



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A. IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

LAND USE GOAL		TIME FRAME
LAND USE STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		
1.	<i>modernize and simplify zoning codes to support a variety of land uses.</i>	
a.	Consolidate the county's 24 existing zoning districts to improve clarity and flexibility.	Short
b.	Update and continue to provide clear, user-friendly land use guidance aligned with preservation and strategic growth goals – like publicized future land use maps and decision-making flowcharts.	Ongoing
c.	Update regulations to reduce barriers for commercial, industrial, and agribusiness in appropriate locations.	Short
2.	<i>target growth in priority areas where infrastructure already exists.</i>	
a.	Focus new development near towns, infrastructure, and key corridors, including planned expansions and the potential Interstate 69 interchange.	Short
b.	Encourage infill, redevelopment, and mixed-use projects within and near growth corridors.	Short
c.	Require large-scale developments to ensure adequate road access and emergency service capacity.	Short



LAND USE STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
3.	<i>promote redevelopment, revitalization, and connected neighborhoods.</i>	
a.	Partner with municipalities to remove regulatory hurdles to walkable, mixed-use areas that fit the community's character through updated ordinances.	Medium
b.	Support revitalization of under-utilized properties to foster small business growth, placemaking, and varied housing options.	Medium
c.	Encourage municipalities to update zoning to promote connected, traditionally designed neighborhoods with multiple access points, grid street layouts, and integrated parks/trails in ETJs.	Medium
4.	<i>create a plan to address emerging industries and alternative energy in ways that reflect and protect rural character.</i>	
a.	Establish clear zoning standards for new and evolving industries, balancing economic opportunity with rural character.	Ongoing
b.	Allow small-scale industrial and commercial uses compatible with rural settings.	Short
c.	Create site and design guidelines for alternative energy projects to ensure compatibility with the landscape, infrastructure, and community values.	Short



LAND USE STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
5.	<i>coordinate land use decisions with municipalities to align with shared goals.</i>	
a.	Collaborate with municipalities on projects in extra-territorial jurisdictions (ETJs) for alignment between planning and land use goals.	Ongoing
b.	Coordinate with municipalities to ensure ETJ land use decisions serve the best interests of residents.	Ongoing
c.	Collaborate on mutually beneficial land use plans that integrate infrastructure, economic development, and environmental stewardship.	Ongoing



TRANSPORTATION GOAL

Develop a safe, efficient, well-connected, and maintained transportation network that supports economic growth, reflects DeKalb County's rural character, and prioritizes strategic, long-term infrastructure investment.

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

TIME FRAME

1.	MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE EXISTING TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE.	
a.	Create a road improvement plan that is available online and that prioritizes investment and upkeep of strong county roads and bridges to ensure safety and longevity.	Medium
b.	Implement a pavement management program to guide investments based on condition and usage.	Medium
c.	Design and maintain roadside drainage systems to prevent flooding and protect roadways.	Medium
d.	Coordinate stormwater improvements with roadway projects to maximize efficiency and reduce costs.	Medium



TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
2.	<i>ADVOCATE FOR A NEW INTERSTATE 69 INTERCHANGE TO ENHANCE ACCESS TO THE DEKALB COUNTY AIRPORT AND SUPPORT REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.</i>	
a.	Engage INDOT early to understand required criteria, timelines, and processes for interchange justification studies and incorporate this into local planning efforts.	Short
b.	Assist the DeKalb County Airport in completing its Economic Impact Study by providing data, letters of support, or stakeholder outreach as needed.	Short
c.	Collaborate with local, county, and state elected officials to present study findings to INDOT and identify appropriate next steps in the interchange evaluation process.	Medium
d.	Align land use planning and infrastructure improvements around the proposed interchange area to demonstrate readiness and maximize economic development potential.	Medium
e.	Build a coalition of regional partners, including businesses, emergency services, and economic development organizations, to demonstrate broad community support for improved interstate access.	Short



TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
3. <i>SUPPORT SAFE AND EFFICIENT FREIGHT AND RAIL MOVEMENT.</i>		
a.	Maintain roadway connectivity across the county by providing multiple alternative routes over railroads in the event of train blockages.	Short
b.	Designate, maintain, and enforce truck routes to reduce conflicts in residential areas and preserve local roads.	Short
c.	Upgrade infrastructure near industrial and agricultural hubs to accommodate heavy vehicles.	Medium
d.	Improve safety and traffic flow at railroad crossings through upgraded warning systems, grade separations, and coordinated scheduling with rail operators.	Medium
4. <i>STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS TO EXPAND TRANSPORTATION FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES.</i>		
a.	Partner with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), regional agencies, and neighboring counties to align priorities.	Short
b.	Seek state and federal funding to support major projects and reduce local cost burdens.	Short
c.	Partner with local organizations to promote and increase awareness of DeKalb Area Rural Transit (DART) services.	Short



HOUSING GOAL

Increase the supply of diverse, attainable, and well-connected housing options while revitalizing the existing housing stock, promoting common-sense growth patterns, preserving rural character, and aligning infrastructure and community needs.

HOUSING STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
1.	PARTNER WITH MUNICIPALITIES TO ENSURE A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES IS OFFERED ACROSS THE ENTIRE COUNTY.	
a.	Advocate for municipalities to promote missing middle housing types like duplexes, fourplexes, and cottage courts that blend with existing neighborhoods.	Ongoing
b.	Encourage municipalities to promote flexibility near existing towns and extra-territorial jurisdictions (ETJs) to accommodate a variety of housing types where infrastructure and services already exists.	Medium
2.	UPDATE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS TO MORE WIDELY INCLUDE ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS AND REMOVE MINIMUM DWELLING SIZE REQUIREMENTS.	
a.	Update the zoning code in agricultural and residential zones to reduce or eliminate the minimum dwelling size requirement.	Short
b.	Legalize accessory dwelling units (ADUs) by right in agricultural residential zones across the county.	Short



HOUSING STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
3.	<i>INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF MODEST-SIZED, ATTAINABLE HOMES FOR RESIDENTS AT ALL STAGES OF LIFE IN AND AROUND EXISTING COMMUNITIES.</i>	
a.	Incentivize compact, infrastructure-efficient housing, particularly 800 – 1,500 sq.ft., near existing utilities and community services.	Medium
b.	Collaborate with developers to reduce construction costs through expedited approvals, reduced fees, and infrastructure assistance for more affordable housing.	Medium
4.	<i>REVITALIZE AND REPURPOSE VACANT AND UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES.</i>	
a.	Provide targeted incentives, like waiving permit fees or property tax abatements, and update the zoning code to encourage rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of properties.	Medium
b.	Support community-driven projects that transform vacant properties into safe, high-quality, viable properties.	Medium
c.	Work with DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership to gather and track properties that are ready for development, such as properties that are approved but unbuilt subdivisions, vacant properties, dilapidated or currently uninhabitable homes.	Medium



COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE GOAL

Ensure DeKalb County's community facilities and infrastructure reliably support growth, public safety, health, and quality of life for all residents.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

TIME FRAME

1.	<i>COORDINATE AND MANAGE INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT STRATEGIC GROWTH.</i>	
a.	Align utility, road, and public service expansions with designated growth areas and land use priorities.	Ongoing
b.	Prioritize drainage improvements in targeted growth areas around municipalities and corridors.	Medium
c.	Reestablish the county utility coordination committee, formally known as Addressing Septic Issues: Collaborative Solutions, to address failing septic systems, monitor existing municipal sewer capacity, update priorities based on development patterns, and explore merit of establishing a county sewer district.	Medium
d.	Work and negotiate with utility providers to secure state and federal funding for upgrades in and near communities and key corridors.	Medium



COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
2.	<i>CONTINUE TO EXPAND BROADBAND AND CELL PHONE COVERAGE TO DISCONNECTED AREAS.</i>	
a.	Create and implement a countywide Broadband Deployment Plan in coordination with municipalities.	Medium
b.	Establish a regular review period to engage citizens, evaluating the quality of broadband service in different locations.	Medium
c.	Prioritize expansion to areas near interstate interchanges and employment hubs.	Medium
3.	<i>IMPLEMENT FUNDING MECHANISMS TO SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE EXPANSION.</i>	
a.	Explore creative financing such as tax increment financing (TIF) districts and other innovative tools to fund roads, drainage, and public safety improvements.	Long
b.	Identify grant opportunities and partnerships to supplement local funding sources.	Long
c.	Assess the viability of roadway impact fees for new large-scale developments.	Medium



COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
4.	<i>SUPPORT THE EXPANSION OF AFFORDABLE, QUALITY CHILDCARE CAPACITY TO AID FAMILIES AND WORKFORCE RETENTION.</i>	
a.	Support the DeKalb County Early Childcare Coalition and other providers to increase childcare capacity.	Medium
b.	Support childcare programs offering extended hours and family-friendly services.	Short
c.	Review local ordinances to address any regulations that limit efficiency for childcare providers.	Long
5.	<i>IMPROVE EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS) CAPACITY AND HEALTHCARE ACCESS.</i>	
a.	Assess gaps in EMS, fire, and law enforcement staffing and coverage; develop targeted recruitment and funding plans.	Short
b.	Work with healthcare providers to improve response times for EMS and expand access to mental health and maternity care, focusing on underserved areas.	Medium
c.	Promote services offered by various local healthcare providers and groups working to expand healthcare access on the county website.	Medium



TRAILS, OPEN SPACES, AND NATURAL RESOURCES GOAL

Expand and diversify access to quality outdoor recreation, strengthen conservation of natural resources, and foster environmental stewardship to improve community health, protect natural assets, and enhance regional recreational connectivity.

TRAILS, OPEN SPACES, AND NATURAL RESOURCES STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

TIME FRAME

1.	EXPAND AND CONNECT TRAIL NETWORKS FOR REGIONAL AND LOCAL CONNECTIVITY.	
a.	Complete segments of the Poka-Bache Trail throughout DeKalb County.	Long
b.	Actively participate in the Poka-Bache regional trail committee to support cross-county connectivity.	Ongoing
c.	As part of the 2021 DeKalb County Trails Plan, work with municipalities to plan and execute trail extensions that allow for inter-city transportation.	Medium
d.	Work with regional and statewide organizations to secure long-term funding solutions for maintenance of the expanded trail system.	Medium



TRAILS, OPEN SPACES, AND NATURAL RESOURCES STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
2. <i>SUPPORT THE ENHANCEMENT AND DIVERSIFICATION OF WATER-BASED RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES.</i>		
a.	Develop additional kayak and canoe access points along Cedar Creek and other waterways, incorporating environmental safeguards.	Medium
b.	Support and coordinate with the City of Auburn to complete the Cedar Creek Activation Plan.	Medium
c.	Offer educational programs on safe, responsible, and sustainable water recreation.	Medium
3. <i>CONTINUE TO PROTECT WATER QUALITY AND NATURAL RESOURCES.</i>		
a.	Establish regular meetings with local conservation groups and regional partners to protect farmland, forests, wetlands, waterways, and ground water.	Medium
b.	Integrate stormwater best management practices into land use and development policies.	Short
c.	Promote watershed protection, including the Western Lake Erie Basin, by partnering with subject matter experts to offer educational resources on the county website.	Medium
d.	Coordinate standard conservation and environmental protection practices and advocate for municipal adoption through local ordinances.	Medium

TRAILS, OPEN SPACES, AND NATURAL RESOURCES STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
4.	<i>STRIVE TO INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND USE OF LOCAL PARKS AND NATURAL ASSETS.</i>	
a.	Support coordinated outreach campaigns highlighting local parks, trails, and nature-based attractions.	Short
b.	Use parks, trails, and natural spaces as placemaking tools to attract residents and boost tourism.	Medium

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL

Foster a diverse, resilient economy by supporting the expansion of workforce training, entrepreneurship, and attracting a wide range of businesses, while preserving DeKalb County's community character and making it a place where residents of all ages and skill levels can live, work, and thrive.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

TIME FRAME

1.	<i>CONTINUALLY SUPPORT THE EXPANSION OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER PATHWAYS.</i>	
a.	Partner with schools, career centers, and employers to promote trades education, career and technical programs (including agriculture), and apprenticeship opportunities.	Medium
b.	Launch initiatives that connect students and young professionals to local employers, including those in agriculture, FFA programs, and skilled trades, with a focus on retaining youth and talent within the county.	Medium
2.	<i>MAINTAIN AN UPDATED INVENTORY OF DEVELOPMENT-READY SITES AND REDEVELOPMENT SITES.</i>	
a.	Continue collaborating with property owners, realtors, neighborhood groups, and economic development partners to track site availability, infrastructure status, and landowner readiness for development.	Medium
b.	Focus marketing and recruitment efforts on priority sites near key corridors.	Medium

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
3. SUPPORT THE EXPANSION OF SMALL AND LOCAL BUSINESSES.		
a.	Encourage and support local maker markets, pop-up events, farmers markets, and small business showcases that highlight DeKalb County-made products, agricultural goods, and services.	Medium
b.	Work with the DeKalb Chamber Partnership to connect local entrepreneurs, farmers, and small businesses to funding, training, and marketing resources.	Medium
c.	Promote the inclusion of shared workspaces, commercial kitchens, food hubs, and small-scale production facilities as part of adaptive reuse projects in municipalities.	Medium
4. COLLABORATE WITH THE DEKALB COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP, INDIANA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, AND NORTHEAST INDIANA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR CONTINUED LEADERSHIP IN REGIONAL INITIATIVES.		
a.	Schedule regular check-ins with Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC), the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership (NIRP), and the Local Economic Development Organization (LEDO) to ensure DeKalb County is an active participant in economic development initiatives.	Medium
b.	Maintain and share with partners an ongoing list of priority projects, programs, and undertakings based on the comprehensive plan in preparation for new regional initiatives.	Medium



ARTS, CULTURE, AND PLACEMAKING GOAL

Celebrate and strengthen DeKalb County's rural identity and cultural assets by fostering vibrant, inclusive placemaking that enhances community pride and quality of life.

ARTS, CULTURE, AND PLACEMAKING STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

TIME FRAME

1.	ESTABLISH A CLEAR IDENTITY AND BRAND FOR THE COUNTY THAT IS EASILY IDENTIFIED WITHIN THE COUNTY AND REGION.	
a.	Collaborate with marketing professionals to engage with the public to create a brand.	Medium
b.	Through collaboration with the public and municipalities, adopt an updated brand that incorporates a countywide narrative while distinguishing the county from the brands of its municipalities.	Medium
2.	SUPPORT MUNICIPALITIES IN DEFINING, PROMOTING, AND SHOWCASING THEIR UNIQUE LOCAL IDENTITIES THROUGH LOCAL EVENTS.	
a.	Encourage municipalities in their branding efforts that reflect heritage and rural character.	Long
b.	Partner with nonprofits and Main Street programs to support events, theaters, galleries, and cultural programming.	Medium
c.	Promote signature festivals, such as the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Festival, to boost community engagement and tourism.	Medium



ARTS, CULTURE, AND PLACEMAKING STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES		TIME FRAME
3.	<i>SUPPORT BUSINESS, TOWN, AND CITY EFFORTS TO EXPAND AND ENHANCE RECREATIONAL, CULTURAL, AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY AMENITIES.</i>	
a.	Encourage new and improved spaces, both indoor and outdoor, in towns and unincorporated areas to enhance quality of life.	Medium
b.	Support inclusive programming at accessible locations that serves all age groups and backgrounds.	Medium
c.	Support agritourism businesses and initiatives like pumpkin patches, corn mazes, and wineries.	Medium
4.	<i>ESTABLISH A CENTRALIZED COMMUNICATION PLATFORM TO HIGHLIGHT AND ELEVATE KEY CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AS ANCHORS OF IDENTITY AND TOURISM.</i>	
a.	Continue partnering with Visit DeKalb to maintain a countywide website or social media hub for event calendars and volunteer opportunities.	Short
b.	Promote signature attractions like the Excelsior Arts Academy and DeKalb County Outdoor Theater.	Medium
c.	Leverage these institutions in marketing efforts to enhance cultural tourism and community pride.	Medium



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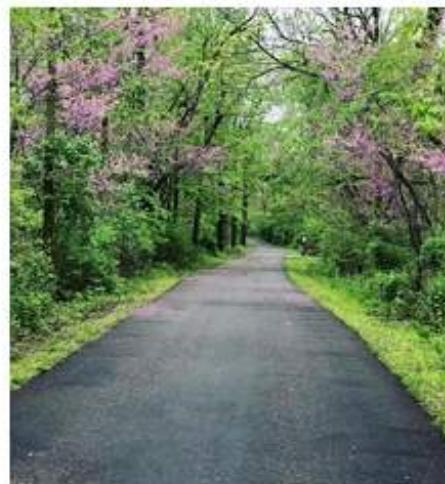
B. 2021 DEKALB COUNTY TRAILS PLAN

INTRODUCTION:

The DeKalb County Trails Plan will be used to guide the future planning and development of trails in unincorporated DeKalb County with connections to our neighboring counties and to the municipalities and their existing trails network.

DeKalb County, Indiana has been growing steadily in population over recent years, mostly due to the build out of Allen County land to the south for those looking to live in a “country like” setting. With that growth, there is now a greater need to improve the trail connectivity options for the County. With this in mind, an enthusiast biking group of local and regional trail supporters was formed in 2013 as the DeKalb County Trails, Inc., a 501(c) not-for-profit corporation. This organization has been looking for ways to develop a connected trail system with in the County from the existing and proposed trails ending at the Allen County/ DeKalb County line and with connections to Steuben County and Pokagon State Park.

DeKalb County Trails Inc. along with the Auburn/Waterloo Trail Committee – an existing trails committee dedicated to improving and extending the existing Auburn/Waterloo Trail in DeKalb County – are an energetic group of pedestrian trail users, biking enthusiasts, and enjoyers of the outdoors. These organizations are eager to plan for the development of trails that can be utilized safely by a wide range of community members with different mobility levels.



All images used are from the DeKalb County Trails & Auburn Waterloo Trail Facebook Pages.



INVOLVEMENT & LEADERSHIP:

The development of a trails plan began with the January 25, 2019 reorganization meeting of the DeKalb County Trails Inc. The groups mentioned above are responsible for spearheading this 2021 DeKalb County Trails Plan. The DeKalb County Trails Inc. and the Auburn/Waterloo Trail Committee have been focusing on the development of trails in DeKalb County for many years. They are the true leaders when it comes to the DeKalb County Trails Plan. The leadership in DeKalb County through various elected and appointed positions as well as other individuals involved in the creation of this plan are:

Auburn Waterloo Trails – Richard Shankle

City of Auburn, Michael Ley – Mayor

City of Auburn Building, Planning & Development

City of Butler, Mike Hartman – Mayor

City of Butler Planning Department

City of Garrett, Todd Fiandt – Mayor

City of Garrett Planning Department

Cody Burniston

City of Garrett Planning Department

DeKalb County Commissioners:

William Hartman – President

Todd Sanderson – Vice President

Mike Watson – Vice President

DeKalb County Council:

Richard Ring – President

William Van Wye – Vice President

Bob Krafft

Eldonna King

David Yarde

Amy Prosser

Amy Demske

DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership

DeKalb County Highway Department

DeKalb County Plan Commission

Chris Gaumer – Zoning Administrator

Sarah Delbecq – President

Frank Pulver – Vice President

Sandra Harrison

William Van Wye

Mike Watson

Elysia Rogers

Jason Carnahan

Jerry Yoder

Taiylor Wineland

Mike Kline

DeKalb County Trails, Inc.

Larry Getts

Town of Hamilton, Brent Shull – Planning Department

Town of Waterloo, Pam Howard – Town Manager

William Spohn



PROCESS:

Pedestrian trails and bikeways have become a major factor in the economic development of communities, as well as, a recreational source for a healthier population and an improved quality of life. Trails can provide easier and safer connections to points of interest, alternative means for commuting to work, and connections to schools, shopping and other recreational facilities. Trails, if extensive enough, can also provide for regional and local connections with other trails, municipalities, counties and possibly other states. DeKalb County's location gives it the benefit to make many of these connections feasible, as it supports the trails being proposed or developed within the surrounding counties that border our County.

For this DeKalb County Trails Plan to be adopted, the DeKalb County Plan Commission must make a recommendation to the DeKalb County Commissioners. Once the recommendation is approved, the DeKalb County Commissioners will vote on adopting the Plan.



All images used are from the DeKalb County Trails & Auburn Waterloo Trails Facebook Pages

DeKalb County Elected & Appointed Officials have spearheaded the creation of this plan for the use of any group in DeKalb County to further the development and construction of trails in the County. Furthermore, the primary focus for DeKalb County should be the North/South connection trail from Allen County to Steuben County with connection to the existing trail along County Road 11A just east of County Road 56 up to County Road 23, the existing trail through the City of Auburn, the Rieke park Trail and the Auburn/Waterloo Trail along County Road 427. The existing trail within the City of Auburn begins at the intersection of S Van Buren St and Wayne St near the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Museum. From here it runs north along S Van Buren St to 20th St, then east to S Jackson St where it continues north to 9th St. At 9th St the trail heads back west to Van Buren St and then north until it connects to North St. From North St the trail runs west to connect with the Rieke Park Trail where it then heads north to Betz Rd and east to connect with the existing Auburn/Waterloo Trail at CR 427. From here the Poka-Bache Connector heads north along the Auburn Waterloo Trail to the south edge of the Town of Waterloo, where the trail will continue heading north along CR 427 up to Wayne St once the town of Waterloo completes a section of trail that will be constructed in 2021. It's important that we recognize this as the primary trail but also understand there is potential for secondary trails to connect to the communities of Ashley, Butler, Garrett, Hamilton and St. Joe.



The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC) was involved in this plan. NIRCC strives to implement community development and transportation improvements that assure healthy and orderly growth. In fact, much of the plan has been around since the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for Northeast Indiana was developed in 2007, with months of public meetings and conversations amongst counties in the region. This regional trail plan was rebranded in 2017 as the “Northeast Indiana United Trails System”. Public input has come from a number of different resources throughout the region that include consultation with local governments, special project organizations, planners and highway officials, concerned citizens, advocacy groups, and parks representatives. Various community plans and comprehensive plans from communities throughout the region have also been incorporated into the regional plan. The United Trails Plan covers 12 counties in Northeast Indiana which include the counties of: Adams, Allen, DeKalb, Grant, Huntington, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Wabash, Wells, Whitley, and the communities within.

The primary DeKalb County Trail will be 20.6 miles long – including 6.5 miles of existing trail, .7 miles of planned trails & 13.5 miles of proposed trails. The DeKalb County Trail makes up 25.4% of the Poka-Bache Trail – between Allen, Steuben and Wells Counties – which totals 81.3 miles!



GOALS and OBJECTIVES:

The DeKalb County Trails Plan generally depicts where new trail systems will be located and where to expand existing trails. With existing road rights-of-way being a priority to help expand the development of trails, it will take other creative ways to connect. Examples include: the use of abandoned railroad beds, unused government owned properties, underutilized properties not being developed for other uses, and/or private owners willing to donate or sell property or right-of-way that support new trail development.

- Develop an Inventory of all existing trails within DeKalb County and its municipalities.
 - Meet with DeKalb County municipal corporation officials to determine and collect data on any existing trails within their boundaries.
 - Review current trail plans of regional and state agencies for connectivity with the surrounding counties. Examples are the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC) and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR).
- Look for opportunities to expand upon or extend any existing municipalities' trails into the County areas to provide for connectivity to various points of interest or destinations.
 - Work with local plan commissions and developers to recommend trail development where projects can connect to existing and proposed trails.
 - Encourage private property owners to donate or sell portions of their property where potential trail development could connect to existing or proposed trails.
 - Encourage local elected officials to support future trail development where connectivity is available as a means to reach various points of interest or destinations. An example would include acquiring additional right-of-way when new road projects are being planned and help develop a trail along those roadways.
- Promote trails that connect to regional and state trail systems
 - Work with NIRCC to promote regional and state-wide trail systems.
 - Work with Indiana Department of Natural Resources to promote regional and state-wide trail systems.
 - Work with neighboring counties with similar goals of connecting to regional and state-wide trail systems.



Image provided by Cody Burmiston

- Promote the creation and use of trails to the citizens of DeKalb County through social media and educational events
 - Identify utilized social media resources within the County to promote public service announcements, narratives, or material that helps to educate the citizens on the benefits of Trail development.
 - Hold public meetings, seminars, or training sessions addressing the benefits of trail development in the County.
- Prioritize specific projects for development
 - The primary north/south trail is DeKalb County's top priority for development.
 - The "spurs" off the primary trail to the other municipalities of Garrett, Butler, St. Joe, Hamilton and Ashley should be developed when projects present themselves.
 - Future trail projects should be developed when projects present themselves.
- Create a trail user signage system within the County
 - Review the trail signage Brand & Wayfinding Signage Guidelines that were prepared by NIRCC and in signage that is being used in Auburn and Allen County.

DEFINING TRAIL PRIORITY & MAPS:

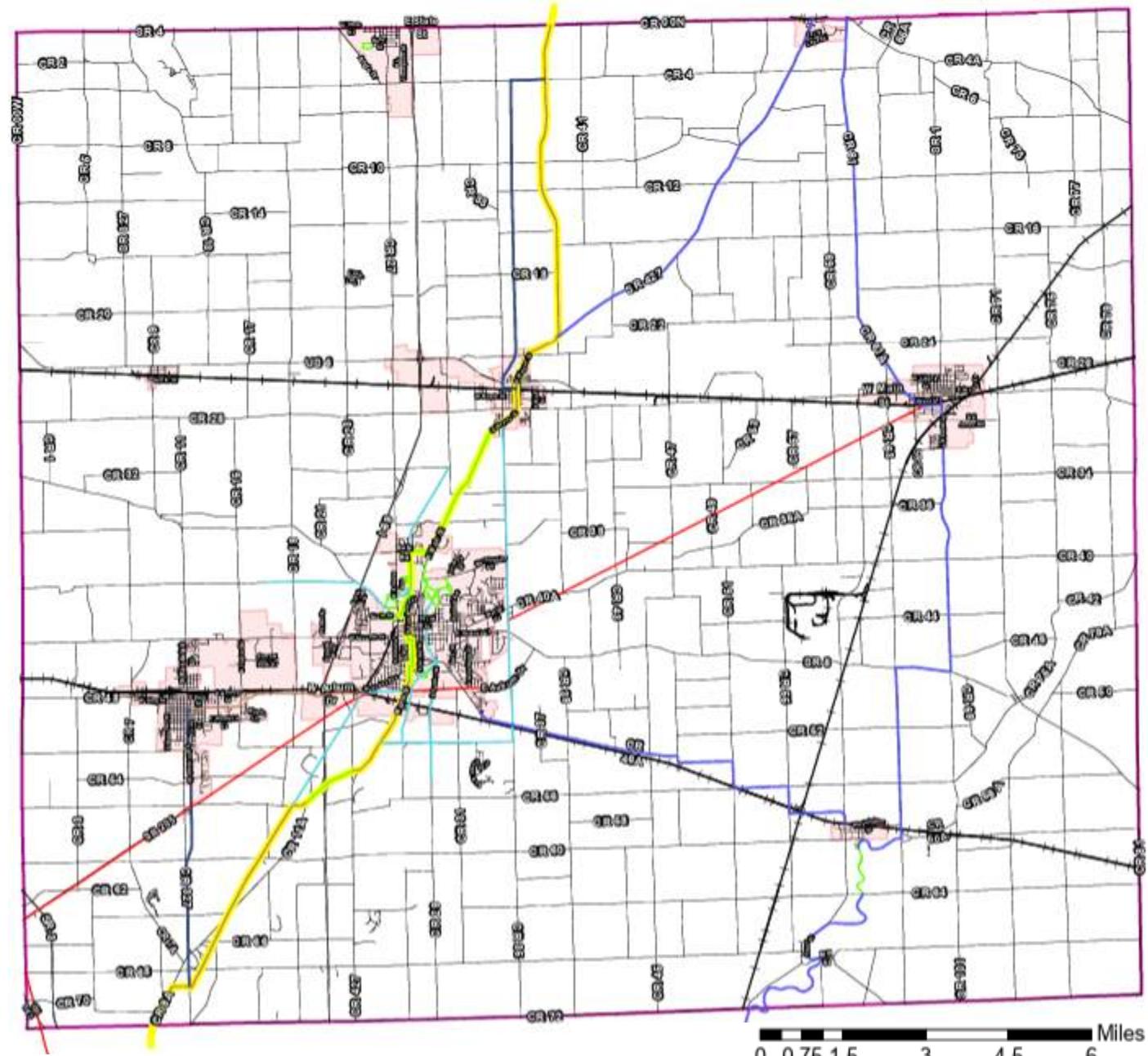
- Map of the DeKalb County Trail Plan
 - Top Priority – North/South Connection
From Allen County at County Road 9A to abandoned rail corridor up to County Road 56 & County Road 11A to County Road 427 through the City of Auburn and the Auburn/Waterloo Trail through the Town of Waterloo to County Road 39 (Old US 27) to Steuben County
 - Secondary Trail Routes
These Secondary Routes are important if the top priority route cannot be achieved. These connections are also important and can provide connections to Garrett and Auburn and then to connection waterloo to Steuben County.
 - Future Trail Connections
DeKalb County recognizes the desire to connect the municipalities of Butler, Hamilton and St. Joe to the primary North/South route.
- Regional Trail Map Prepared by NIRCC
 - Poka-Bache Connector
State Priority Trail highlighted along with a portion of the Northeast Indiana United Trails Plan covering Adams, Wells, Allen, DeKalb and Steuben Counties.
 - Northeast Indiana Regional Trails Priorities
The Northeast Indiana United Trails Plan and identified “Regional Trail Priority Corridors” which cover the counties of Adams, Allen, DeKalb, Grant, Huntington, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Wabash, Wells, Whitley, and the communities within.

DEKALB COUNTY TRAILS PLAN

- North/South Connection - Top Priority
- Proposed Primary Trail Route
- Secondary Trail Routes
- 2018 Auburn Trail Plan - Regional Connections
- Existing Trails
- Possible Future Trail Connections
- Potential Trail Connections

Type

- Street
- Railroad Track
- Municipal Boundary
- DeKalb County Line



2026.02.18 ADOPTION DRAFT

202105285
07/19/2021 02:23:08 PM
RECORDER OF DEKALB CO, IN
LETA HULLINGER
RECORDED AS PRESENTED
FEE AMOUNT: 0.00

RESOLUTION 21-R- 16 AN AMENDMENT TO THE DEKALB COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2017 TO INCLUDE THE DEKALB COUNTY TRAILS PLAN

WHEREAS, The General Assembly of the State of Indiana granted powers to the counties to adopt and amend a comprehensive plan in accordance with IC 36-7-4-500 series; and

WHEREAS, The DeKalb County Commissioners adopted the current DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan on February 27, 2017 and adopted subsequent amendments; and

WHEREAS, The DeKalb County Plan Commission did seek and consider public input and held a legally advertised public hearing on July 7, 2021 and voted to certify with a favorable recommendation to the DeKalb County Commissioners for an amendment to the DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan 2017 to include the DeKalb County Trails Plan. The DeKalb County Trails Plan will be used to guide the future planning and development of trails in unincorporated DeKalb County with connections to neighboring counties and to the municipalities and their existing trails network; and

WHEREAS, The DeKalb County Commissioners believes this to be in the best interest of the residents, property owners and for the County's future growth and development to approve the amendment to the DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan 2017 to include the DeKalb County Trails Plan; now, therefore be it

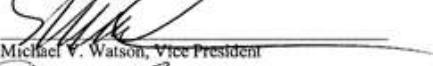
RESOLVED by the County Commissioners of DeKalb County, Indiana as follows:

Section 1: That the DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan 2017 is amended to include the DeKalb County Trails Plan.

Section 2: That this resolution shall be in full force and effect upon its passage by the DeKalb County Commissioners.

DULY PASSED, ORDAINED AND ADOPTED on this 19 day of July 2021, by the
County Commissioners of DeKalb County, Indiana
by a vote of 3 in favor and 0 opposed.


William L. Hartman, President


Michael V. Watson, Vice President


Todd R. Sanderson, Vice President


Attest, Jan Bauman, Auditor

Prepared by: Chris Gaumer "I affirm under the penalties of perjury, that I have taken reasonable care to redact each social security number in this document, unless required by law."

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