

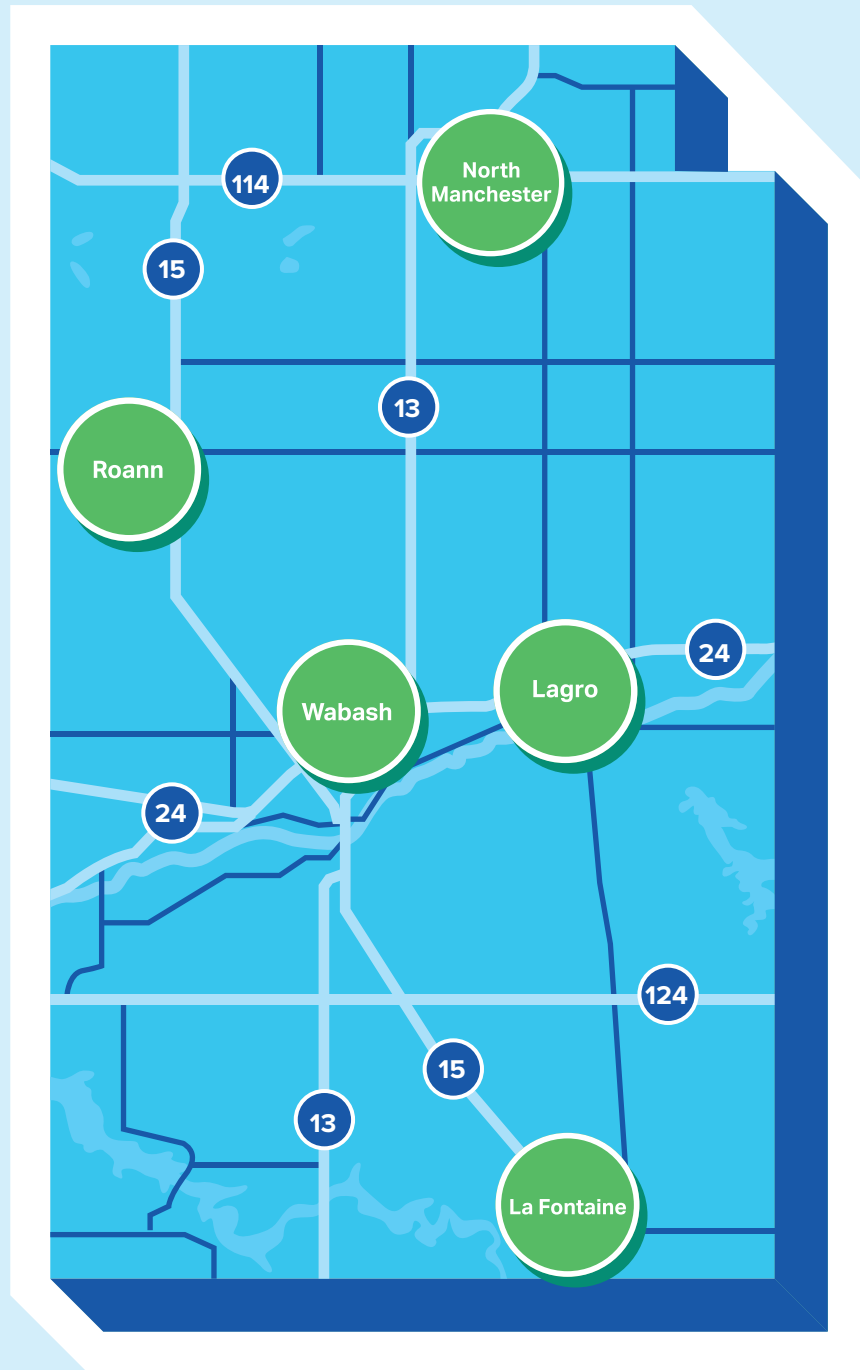


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RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY **DRAFT**
WABASH COUNTY

A BOLD PLAN FOR THE COMMUNITIES OF WABASH COUNTY
PRESENTED MARCH 2022

THE COMMUNITIES OF WABASH COUNTY



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“Good things can happen when a few capable citizens put their heads together toward a common cause.”

Focus on the Future Participant

THE ACTION AGENDA

The Imagine One 85 Comprehensive Plan is a collection of actions that, when achieved, will move the community closer to its vision and establish a strong growth trajectory for decades to come. These actions are discrete policies, projects or programs. They include existing initiatives to be lifted up and better supported and new actions applied from best practice research and community conversation. On the whole, the Action Agenda is a menu of community-supported and Wabash County-tailored opportunities to move the communities forward.

REPRESENTING THE COMMUNITIES

Wabash County is home to more than five unique communities each with its own story, stakeholders, and special set of opportunities. These places are connected by the county's rich agricultural heritage and abundant natural spaces. Each of these communities played a strong role in developing this plan. Through direct engagement and analysis the Steering Committee and planning team has gathered an action agenda (presented through the subsequent chapters) that will have a positive impact on each community.

WHY THESE RECOMMENDATIONS?

This Action Agenda includes dozens of proposals to enhance the quality of life and quality of place in Wabash County. These actions were derived through a robust community conversation, and strong research and analysis. These processes were conducted in parallel with the findings, one informing the other. The public process was an iterative conversation with the community and stakeholders about the future of the communities of Wabash County. Using real data and analysis to inform the discussion, community members were asked to consider the best way forward. At the same time, the planning team conducted its own research into the county's conditions and trends. This research, coupled with the input from the community, revealed areas for further study. Within the Imagine

One 85 recommendations, specific actions have been identified as community priorities due to their ability for immediate and transformative impact. These are listed on Page 6 and identified with a unique icon in the Action Agenda.

HOW TO READ THE AGENDA

The action recommendations represent resonant areas of discussion through the process and are introduced in this section. Each of these recommendations is responding to a central challenge or opportunity identified through the research or community conversation. These actions vary significantly in terms of scale, timing, responsibility, and cost. They range from small ideas to help carry forward the existing community momentum to transformational projects that will require significant resources and collaboration. Every one of the action proposals has been linked to an implementation strategy, detailed in the Implementation Chapter.

Implementation is a critical focus within the Action Agenda and at its core, the ability to fund these recommendations. Through the process, a detailed fiscal analysis was conducted on the communities existing capacity and untapped revenue sources. These takeaways along with an overview of each community are provided in the Comprehensive Plan. This information provides an important foundation when considering how to implement Imagine One 85 actions.

THE PRIORITIES

While all the actions identified in Imagine One 85 are important, several actions emerged as priorities for addressing the population decline. These priorities were identified based on community input and leadership insight to move the communities of Wabash County forward into the future. Criteria for evaluating priority actions is outlined below. The priorities are organized by the five topical areas and are not intended to be in a ranked order. The numbered actions are described in detail within the specific area of the action agenda.

CRITERIA FOR A “PRIORITY”

Priority actions serve a unique role within Imagine One 85. These represent pathways forward for the county and its communities by establishing a strong foundation for success. Listed below are the criteria used to evaluate the action recommendations and identify priorities.

Direct Challenge

The action squarely addresses the population decline in order to change the county’s trajectory.

Foundation Building

The action has a strong potential impact that supports multiple goals of Imagine One 85.

Visible

The action demonstrates the influence of Imagine One 85 and will continue to show progress for the county over time.

Catalytic

The action is capable of opening pathways for other action recommendations.

Return-on-Investment

The action has the potential to generate substantial investment returns for funding partners.

THE PRIORITY ACTIONS

Great Places (GP)

- GP 1.1 Pursue a strategic approach to countywide development and growth.
- GP 1.2 Fund a strategic land acquisition program.
- GP 3.1 Pursue the North Manchester Riverfront redevelopment project.
- GP 5.6 Continue to support the County’s commitment to a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community for all.
- GP 5.8 Launch the “Mighty Wabash County” micro-grant program.

Prosperity (PR)

- PR 1.1 Further develop small business/ entrepreneur recruitment and development programs.
- PR 2.1 Build a spec, flexible industrial and warehouse facility.
- PR 2.4 Develop a robust business and industry retention program.
- PR 3.1 Establish the vision for excellent education in Wabash County.
- PR 3.2 Expand access to quality and affordable childcare.
- PR 5.1 Pursue a diversified tax revenue model through new sources.

Housing and Community (CO)

- CO 1.1 Develop and monitor a spec-housing program.
- CO 2.1 Launch a housing remodel revolving fund.
- CO 2.3 Identify opportunities for quality affordable housing.
- CO 3.1 Conduct and regularly update a countywide Residential Market Analysis.

Foundations (FD)

- FD 2.1 Significantly expand access to high-speed internet.
- FD 2.3 Increase wastewater capacity and utility access.
- FD 3.4 Complete active transportation plans and implement recommendations.



To address population decline, we will...

Look for this symbol next to priority actions identified in Imagine One 85.

FINDING THE FOCUS: WHAT DO WE CONTROL?

It’s easy in community planning to try and “boil the ocean”, with action recommendations that balloon in scale and intended impact. The scale of the challenges present a root cause dilemma where a solution to one challenge reveals the next, deeper challenge, and so on. The Imagine One 85 Steering Committee were committed to an open and iterative planning process where the emergent challenges would be studied and addressed. But the team also committed to taking on actions recommended through the plan. The Action Agenda is, therefore, tightly focused around the initiatives for which the communities of the county have some degree of control or influence.

ACTION AGENDA

GREAT PLACES

Great places are known for their unique character that is defined by the built and natural environment. Preserving, enhancing, and strengthening these places is a critical element of the Comprehensive Plan. This chapter provides guidance for Wabash County’s physical development within the communities, preservation of agricultural land, and protection of natural resources and features. It addresses strategies for supporting main streets, efficient land distribution and use, physical connections between areas, and community experiences around historic, cultural, and natural assets.

GOAL

A range of diverse and beautiful environments – thriving town centers, productive agricultural lands, verdant natural spaces – that, collectively, define Wabash County.

OBJECTIVES

1. Strengthen the efficient use of developed and undeveloped land.
2. Enhance community character through the built environment.
3. Embrace rivers in city and town development.
4. Sustain agriculture as a critical part of the county’s identity.
5. Celebrate unique community experiences through attractions and amenities.
6. Ensure physical connections within and between communities.

CHAPTER TOPICS

- Land Use
- Development
- Agriculture
- Natural Resources and Parks
- Historic and Archaeological Resources
- Placemaking

OBJECTIVE 1

Strengthen the efficient use of developed and undeveloped land.

Actions

GP 1.1 Pursue a strategic approach to countywide development and growth. The conceptual development framework leverages the county’s previous planning efforts and existing zoning regulations to define appropriate areas for development. This framework along with the future land use and character types provide a pathway for redevelopment, infill development, and new development across the communities of Wabash County. Policies and regulations at all levels of government should strive to support the framework and future land use and character types. Zoning regulations should align with the recommendations of Imagine One 85 to encourage development that helps stimulate the local economy, elevates community character, and provides new attractions and amenities.



GP 1.2 Fund a strategic land acquisition program. Land acquisition and consolidation is one of many economic development tools for attracting business growth. Local organizations can monitor strategic properties to develop an incentive package and process that makes establishing a new business easier. By establishing a funded acquisition program, local economic professionals can purchase strategic sites for marketing to emerging or growing industries. This program could also support landbanking, where properties that are underused, abandoned, or foreclosed are purchased for future redevelopment opportunities. They can work with communities to understand zoning limitations, utility infrastructure, and site amenities that reduce barriers for relocating an industry to Wabash County. The fund should operate through a strong partnership to ensure that all groups are represented and involved when acquiring and selling property. Efforts should focus on promoting economic development and neighborhood revitalization that enhances the local community.

GP 1.3 Support continued reinvestment in Downtown Lagro. The Town of Lagro has seen significant recent investment. Where possible, programs and projects should build on this momentum to encourage additional investment in Downtown Lagro, providing local entrepreneurs incentives for enhancing the community. This includes leveraging opportunities for restaurants, trail connections, housing options, and other similar investments.

GP 1.4 Encourage reuse and rehabilitation of existing industrial structures. Projects that revitalize vacant or run down industrial sites - especially those located in central parts of a community - can bring new life to areas that have been neglected. These sites provide opportunities for creative and adaptive reuse tailored to each community.

GP 1.5 Develop a pop-up retail and temporary use program on vacant lots and in vacant buildings. This program would allow small businesses to rent tenant space in Downtown or Town Center areas of the county. Short-term leases would promote local business growth while activating vacant storefronts and reducing underutilized buildings.



LANDBANKING

Landbanking is an economic development tool where governmental entities or non-profit organizations purchase vacant, abandoned, or foreclosed properties. Consolidating land allows for future resale and redevelopment opportunities, converting the land into productive use that benefits local property taxes. Examples in Wabash County may include the ongoing redevelopment of the East Market Street corridor and the former General Tire site.

OBJECTIVE 2

Enhance community character through the built environment.

Actions

- GP 2.1 Fund a countywide Facade Improvement Fund.** The City of Wabash recently gained access to \$1.3 million in matching funds to restore 23 historic building facades in the Downtown area. Expanding a facade improvement program to serve and benefit all communities will provide a greater distribution of revitalization efforts around the county.
- GP 2.2 Maintain an endangered historic building list.** This list would serve as an inventory of endangered historic buildings and could include a prioritization scheme for future preservation efforts.
- GP 2.3 Support eligibility determinations and designation of structures and districts on the National Register of Historic Places.** Wabash County has pursued historic designations for over four decades. Continuing this legacy of preservation will require proactive efforts to ensure that the county retains its historic character and heritage.

OBJECTIVE 3

Embrace rivers in city and town development.

Actions

- GP 3.1 Pursue the North Manchester Riverfront redevelopment project.** The riverfront redevelopment project is a significant recommendation that emerged from the North Manchester Comprehensive Plan. The project establishes a regional amenity along the Eel River that connects green and open space to Downtown North Manchester. It includes a river trailway, pedestrian plaza and boardwalk, community pavilion, river access, and many other amenities that build upon the core of the community. This project would redefine downtown, providing economic opportunities for local businesses and recreational attractions for residents and visitors. Efforts should strive to support the implementation of the riverfront redevelopment project as a catalyst for the community. Partnerships should be established to identify and advocate for funding to pursue property acquisition along the river. A phased buildout should be evaluated that seeks to establish the riverfront project over time, making design and funding less burdensome.



GP 3.2 Continue to build access and use of the Eel and Wabash Rivers.

The county's rivers are great assets for outdoor recreation, but limited public access has kept these resources from reaching their full potential. Creating additional boat launches and other access points will provide community members and visitors with more opportunities to responsibly enjoy the county's natural features.

GP 3.3 Create incentives to encourage wide natural buffers along streams. Vegetative buffers offer environmental health incentives by filtering sediment and contaminants from stormwater before they reach the water body. Incentives to create and preserve these buffers may encourage developers and landowners to make wise environmental decisions that will help maintain water quality in the county.

OBJECTIVE 4

Sustain agriculture as a critical part of the county's identity.

Actions

GP 4.1 Expand opportunities for agritourism across the county.

Attracting visitors to farms for recreational, educational, or retail purposes may increase profit margins for local farmers. Supporting and promoting activities such as farm tours, animal interactions, pick-your-own produce, and other experiences would capitalize on existing agricultural assets.

GP 4.2 Study the impact of tile drainage on local flooding. Tiling practices recently introduced in the county have raised concerns about increased flooding in communities downstream such as La Fontaine. A study should be conducted to understand the impacts of these tiling practices and how to mitigate potential flooding.

GP 4.3 Build on the local farm-to-table movement. In 2017, six percent of Wabash farms were already selling directly to consumers and several farms were selling directly to schools. Encouraging and expanding these types of transactions could help support the local economy and foster a greater sense of community.

OBJECTIVE 5

Celebrate unique community experiences through attractions and amenities.

Actions

GP 5.1 Explore a state park designation for the areas around Salamonie Lake. The Salamonie Lake Reservoir area covers more than 12,500 acres in the western part of the county. Attaining a State Park designation has the potential to increase tax revenues, drive tourism, increase amenities, and strengthen environmental preservation efforts.

GP 5.2 Work with local entrepreneurs to build a restaurant in Downtown La Fontaine. Increasing amenities and attractions along main streets can serve both nearby residents and members of other communities within the county. La Fontaine has an opportunity to grow local business while providing a destination for Wabash County residents.

GP 5.3 Build a community park in Roann. Roann is a small but beautiful community that would benefit immensely from a designated community park. Providing a park amenity would enhance the character of Roann while providing residents with direct access to recreational opportunities.

GP 5.4 Expand summer arts offerings. Building upon the successes of the Honeywell Arts Academy for professionally pathed musicians, opportunities to create additional summer arts (visual and performing) and other “camp” experiences for all ages should be explored. This initiative could involve connecting with agri-tourism, farm-to-table efforts, as well as rivers, trails, and reservoirs to build a summer “camp” experience.

GP 5.5 Prepare a comprehensive marketing plan. The communities of the county have important assets and opportunities. They could better realize their potential, but more needs to be done to “tell the story.” A comprehensive marketing strategy would include research of the assets and opportunities and specific markets that could be targeted. It would also include the leadership of unique and impactful institutions like the Honeywell Foundation and Manchester University. The marketing strategy should look inward to the county as well as externally as the first step to advance the way residents, employees, businesses, and institutions experience the communities. Branding efforts around the County’s economic opportunities, ecotourism, and agritourism along with wayfinding and county signage should further support the message. It should also identify opportunities for strengthening resident’s and worker’s emotional attachment to place.

GP 5.6 Continue to support the County’s commitment to a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community for all. Wabash County is committed to celebrating the diversity of its residents and welcoming all backgrounds to its communities. Resources should ensure that existing programs and initiatives are supported, accessible, and made available to all residents of the county. Efforts to celebrate the county’s diversity should be explored, aligning with local opportunities including fairs, festivals, and civic events to share the unique characteristics of the community. Services should also encourage aging in place that provides resources for all age groups in the community.



GP 5.7 Establish a Wabash County peer community program. A peer community program encourages neighboring communities to evaluate and share programs, policies, or initiatives that have been successful in their community for potential countywide implementation. The communities would collaborate with one another to share lessons learned, discuss regional challenges and opportunities, and scale unique or strategic investments throughout the county.



GP 5.8 Launch the “Mighty Wabash County” micro-grant program. Micro-grants allow anyone to seek funds in small amounts (approximately \$1000 or less) for fun creative projects that take place in the county. These efforts build pride in the community and encourage taking action around projects or programs that excite residents. Establishing a micro-grant program enables the community to get involved in shaping their quality of life and quality of place. The program could define different categories of projects that support the vision and objectives of Imagine One 85 such as entrepreneurship and beautification, offering annual opportunities to apply for funding. Grant opportunities can extend over several years to maintain ongoing success stories or help elevate programs or projects to new scales.

GP 5.9 Initiate an inter-community visitation program. The county should establish a program to encourage visiting local sites or businesses across the county. Local “passports” or unique trails can incentivize residents to explore the distinct places in their county and become a “visitor” in their own towns. Tourism connections can attract additional activity, showcasing the places that local residents frequent along with regional destinations.

OBJECTIVE 6

Ensure physical connections within and between communities.

Actions

GP 6.1 Improve connections between the University and Main Street in North Manchester. Manchester University is a distinct asset to the community and through increased and improved connections will strengthen ease of access for Manchester students to enjoy downtown North Manchester.

GP 6.2 Conduct a study on opportunities for trail extensions. Trails serve as a major recreational resource for residents and attract visitors to the County that help support local businesses. Conducting a study would identify major corridors for extending the existing trails based on community feedback and local destinations.

GP 6.3 Perform a feasibility analysis for pedestrian improvements on Miami Street in the City of Wabash. Improvements such as sidewalks, crosswalks, and other streetscape elements may increase pedestrian safety and enhance the overall design. Miami Street, in the City of Wabash, could serve as an initial pilot project for pursuing improvements that can be scaled to other corridors.

ACTION AGENDA

PROSPERITY

Prosperity, both personal and community, is a core element of the Comprehensive Plan. Wabash County’s economy is dependent on fostering a strong entrepreneurial spirit that attracts growing industries and a talented workforce. This chapter emphasizes the economic advantages the county and its communities can leverage to grow its industrial portfolio, support educational and professional development, and advance the local economy. The strategies identified will ensure that the communities of Wabash County achieve a strong and sustainable future.

GOAL

A strong and growing network of communities built through their commitment to competitive and lifelong education, support for entrepreneurs and local businesses, and investment into bold projects and initiatives.

OBJECTIVES

1. Provide support for local entrepreneurs.
2. Encourage continued growth of the county’s industrial areas.
3. Elevate an environment to develop, attract, and retain talent.
4. Advocate for improving personal prosperity, health, and safety.
5. Maintain a fiscally strong economy.

CHAPTER TOPICS

- Economic Development
- Fiscal Health and Resiliency
- Education
- Public Health

OBJECTIVE 1

Provide support for local entrepreneurs.

Actions

PR 1.1 Further develop small business / entrepreneur recruitment and development programs. The communities of Wabash County are supported by a strong network of local business owners and innovators. These individuals continue the tradition, providing new opportunities and investment to grow their unique industries. Building upon local entrepreneurs, a recruitment and development program would seek out like minded individuals who can provide essential goods and services to the greater Wabash County community. Emerging industries can be marketed to identify “what’s missing” in the county today and the resources in place to support start-ups. Connecting these new businesses to the entrepreneurial community will ensure they leverage all of the county’s assets in establishing, maintaining, and expanding their business. Economic incentives, both current and potential, can also be shared with local business start-ups as an incubation method for remaining in their community. Resources and local partnerships should be aligned to continue and expand programs offered through Grow Wabash County.



PR 1.2 Revisit local business support systems to ensure the right services are being provided. Many local partners have offered long standing and successful systems to support local business growth. As industries shift, these courses, incentives, and programs should be reviewed and evaluated for potential updates to ensure that the local business community has a strong and vibrant support network.

PR 1.3 Expand internship opportunities to support workforce needs. There is a widespread need for employees. The Grow Wabash County is working to address this need, but university students should be considered a resource, from short-term internships to long-term careers. Internships can be a pathway for the students and fill the needs of employers. This could be a comprehensive program or handled by the employers individually. With either option a tracking and reporting a process should be created.

OBJECTIVE 2

Encourage continued growth of the county’s industrial areas.

Actions

PR 2.1 Build a spec, flexible industrial and warehouse facility. The county is currently limited in the diversity and availability of specific industrial spaces. Although land is readily available, the cost of new construction and infrastructure connectivity presents a considerable challenge for attracting business growth. To address this challenge, the county should collaborate on the construction of a spec industrial and warehouse facility within an industrial park. The facility would be an appropriate size to allow for large single-tenant users while also providing sufficient space for subdivision to encourage smaller, multi-tenant industries. The “skeleton” structure would provide the essential services and framework for companies to fit out their individual spaces in a timely and cost-effective manner. Similar communities across Indiana and the country have leveraged this as an economic incentive, paving the way for Wabash County to establish its own marketable facility.



PR 2.2 Continue to support and adapt the county’s industrial parks. These industrial parks provide opportunities for economic growth and job creation for current and future residents. With significant land available for development, these parks should receive the support necessary to attract new industries such as zoning alignment, utility connections, marketing, and economic incentives.

PR 2.3 Establish a Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Strategy. Wabash County and the State of Indiana have a robust history of attracting international investment into the community as evidenced by the four internationally owned companies currently located in the county. Wabash County should create a robust foreign direct investment strategy to pursue international investment and further explore opportunities to support these efforts such as establishing key Sister City relationships and creating the environment to support these new investments.

PR 2.4 Develop a robust business and industry retention program. Wabash County should build upon its existing business retention and expansion (BRE) efforts to ensure that businesses already invested in Wabash County have the necessary support to not only survive but thrive. A strong existing industry base is critical to attracting new businesses to Wabash County.



OBJECTIVE 3

Elevate an environment to develop, attract, and retain talent.

Actions

PR 3.1 Establish the vision for excellent education in Wabash County. Recent studies have revealed opportunities for the county to strengthen and expand its educational system. As an important first step, the county should collaborate on a vision for the future of lifelong learning across the communities of Wabash County. Major stakeholders including school districts, public agencies, local governments, non-profit organizations, and private groups should convene an ongoing discussion around the existing educational system and desired outcomes for the county. This should result in a unified vision that defines the end result and clear steps towards achieving the outcomes identified by the group.



PR 3.2 Expand access to quality and affordable childcare. Early Childhood Education has many known benefits for the developing child. Early childhood education programs also has benefits for families who work full time, employers who want to attract young workers, and communities that count on workforce participation for revenue. Lack of reliable, high quality childcare in Wabash County was responsible for millions of dollars in lost wages, hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost tax revenue, and the loss of the full-time equivalent of nearly 200 employees. In 64% of households with children under five, all adults are working and in need of care for their children. Affordable, quality care is essential for positive education outcomes for children, our future workforce, the retention of current employees and the recruitment of new employees.



PR 3.3 Invest in arts-infused learning opportunities for early childhood education. In collaboration with Honeywell Arts and Entertainment, opportunities should be explored to invest in Visual Thinking Strategies and Arts Integrated Residencies. These learning opportunities will strive to provide curriculum-based, arts-infused learning for all Wabash County students between grades 1-5.

PR 3.4 Strengthen Community Foundation Early Award Scholarship and the Wabash County Promise as public school/private charity collaborations. To create a generation of educated, engaged, and self-sufficient citizens who possess post-secondary preparedness, we champion investments in these programs, which harness the motivational power of saving and early scholarships to create identity, agency, self-sufficiency and a view of the future as education dependent. Early assets help families see post-secondary education and training as the pathway to success, higher paying jobs and a bright future. Assets earned early raise parental and student educational expectations and serve to reduce financial barriers to pursuing training and education after high school.

PR 3.5 Continue the Community Foundation's College Scholarship program for grades 9-12. Build on the consciousness-raising work of early award scholarships by exposing students in grades 9-12 to traditional senior scholarships. The longtime practice of awarding college scholarships to 12th grade students robs the foundation's substantial scholarship funds of the power they have to incentivize college-going during the early years of high school when school work gets more difficult and some students give up on education after high school. Expand senior scholarship application process downward to the ninth grade as a way to build self-confidence in one's own ability to afford college.

PR 3.6 Expand exposure programs for students to include advanced manufacturing and agricultural jobs. The County has a strong history with agricultural innovation and is home to several technical and vocational programs such as Heartland Career Center. These provide unique hands-on-training in emerging industries located within local communities. With the growth potential for advanced manufacturing and agricultural jobs, efforts should support connecting local school districts with local businesses to expose this as an alternative career paths to those currently covered.

PR 3.7 Work with employers to adapt workforce training for adults based on the needs of employees. As industry innovation continues and the workforce demographic changes, employee training needs will shift. Periodic review and evaluation of training courses, programs, and initiatives ensures that employees are provided essential skills to support local industries. Continue funding grants to employees and individuals who are willing to train for a high demand job or skill up in a high demand field.

PR 3.8 Explore the potential for a Purdue Polytech Campus. The Purdue Polytechnic Institute is a growing extension of Purdue University that offers access to technology degrees in a local setting. These extensions provide additional post-secondary options that align with the strong industries in Wabash County. An open dialogue should be established with Purdue University to explore a potential extension in the county, leveraging Wabash County’ strong relationship with agricultural and manufacturing industries to guide the conversation.

OBJECTIVE 4

Advocate for improving personal prosperity, health, and safety.

Actions

PR 4.1 Prepare a countywide health response report to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The adequacy of the health system, resiliency of local businesses, and adaptability of the education system have all been dramatically tested throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic. A countywide report will help to understand how various sectors within the county were affected and how they responded. It will also provide insights into strategies for improving resiliency in the future.

PR 4.2 Initiate a Safe Routes to School Program. The Safe Routes to School program encourages youth activity while defining safe and efficient ways for children to get from their neighborhood to school. Establishing this program will promote an active lifestyle through collaborative efforts to identify routes throughout every community.

PR 4.3 Connect residents without health insurance to applicable federal programs. 6.8% of the County’s population age 19 and over does not have health insurance. Providing information and/or assistance in applying for relevant federal programs may decrease the portion of the population without health insurance coverage.

PR 4.4 Work with local hospitals and healthcare providers to address transportation gaps. Healthcare facilities are concentrated in the City of Wabash and North Manchester. Older residents, particularly from the smaller communities, often face difficulties accessing these locations due to transportation limitations and a lack of mobility options. Exploring new and creative transportation options may help improve health access and outcomes for community members. Partnerships with local institution can assist in funding mobility options that provide direct service for those individuals seeking healthcare.

PR 4.5 Create a kindness initiative. The past five or so years saw a significant decline in civility in the country. These are tough times for many people, whether it is a pandemic or economic opportunity. The communities of Wabash County are not immune to this phenomenon. In general, people are less inclined to live and or invest in places that are divisive. Some of this is about politics, some of it is about race and much of it could traced to fear and uncertainty. Some in the county are addressing this. In October 2021, the Board of Trustees of Manchester University adopted an anti-racism resolution to declare the institutions intent on treating people better. To facilitate greater civility and kindness—and stronger brand—a kindness initiative should be created and executed. This can start small and grow to be comprehensive, but it should with visible and impactful activities.

PR 4.6 Develop a strategic plan for a community support network for university students. Manchester University has numerous outwardly focused programs to assist the community. This asset—and its impact on Wabash County—could be greatly enhanced with a focused external program. In other words, a focus by the Town of North Manchester to look inward, to see what the community could do to impact the non-academic challenges of students. A strategic plan should be developed to understand the needs and to create opportunities to support the university students. This could take many forms, from providing additional amenities to addressing food insecurity to expanding internship opportunities in the community.

OBJECTIVE 5

Maintain a fiscally strong economy.

Actions

PR 5.1 Pursue a diversified tax revenue model through new sources.

Wabash County is dependent on two primary sources of revenue for local services: property tax and income tax. The fiscal analysis identified that while the county has seen significant growth in income tax, it is nearing the maximum threshold leaving little room for additional revenue. Property taxes on the other hand, while more consistent, have seen little change over time due to the lack of development across the county. As the communities of Wabash County plan for the future, additional revenue sources should be incorporated into the general services stream. Wheel tax and Food and Beverage taxes represent two primary streams that can greatly improve the financial stability of the county. Pursuing these and additional revenue streams will strengthen resources that can be used for capital improvements and county services, providing long-term benefits and returns.



PR 5.2 Review the fiscal model for county and city expenditure

allocations. Complementing new revenue streams, the county and city should evaluate how funding is allocated based on the detailed fiscal model. This analysis identified critical areas for how the county and city could better utilize existing revenue to provide high-levels of service and address essential infrastructure. An annual or periodic review cycle should be established to monitor progress of new revenue streams and allocations for expenditures to maximize return-on-investments.

PR 5.3 Communicate bonding capacity and “best use” analysis to

local leadership. The analysis and evaluation revealed through Imagine One 85 provides an in-depth understanding of the county’s financial structure. This information will have a significant impact on how local governments can and should operate moving forward. Local leadership should be convened in a series of conversations to share the results of the analysis and discuss potential pathways forward that improve the fiscal resiliency of Wabash County.

PR 5.4 Align local plans and Imagine One 85 priorities for federal

funding opportunities. Several federal programs, such as the American Rescue Plan of 2021 and the pending national Infrastructure Bill, offer a variety of resources to local governments. Establishing partnerships and collaboration among different agencies may help to apply for federal funding to implement priority actions.

PR 5.5 Adopt a countywide Capital Improvement Plan funding model.

A Capital Improvement Plan identifies priority investments for the County that support the business community and residents. Major infrastructure is monitored for maintenance and significant upgrades, allowing the county to plan for large-scale investments several years in advance. The Plan should be continuously monitored and updated to align investment with other local and regional agencies to repair aging infrastructure and pursue improvement projects to bring systems and networks to modern standards.

ACTION AGENDA

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY

Neighborhoods represent the quality of life characteristics that attract people to a community. They reflect the lifestyles, personality, and features that residents desire and are essential to the future of Wabash County and its communities. This chapter focuses on the residential options and design elements that compose neighborhood character. It addresses strategies for diversifying housing stock across each community, elevating aesthetics in established neighborhoods, and pursuing opportunities for appropriate growth and revitalization efforts.

GOAL

A healthy housing system with a wide range of options, safe and attractive neighborhoods, and choices for residents of all ages and lifestyles.

OBJECTIVES

1. Increase community housing options and opportunities.
2. Strengthen the vitality, character, and design of existing neighborhoods.
3. Establish models for monitoring housing demand and promoting Wabash County as a welcoming community.

CHAPTER TOPICS

- Housing
- Neighborhoods

OBJECTIVE 1

Increase community housing options and opportunities.

Actions

CO 1.1 Develop and monitor a new spec-housing program. Spec-housing refers to move-in ready homes that are constructed by a homebuilder for a target residential market. The county has seen little to no recent residential development with many homebuilders focused on other areas of the region. Developing a program in collaboration with local homebuilders can provide the county and its communities with new residential growth. A partnership should be established to analyze the residential market to identify specific housing types to pursue. Model home plans should consider existing character in each community, matching the aesthetic and architectural features. Expedited permitting and inspections can ensure the spec-housing is constructed quickly and timely, further supporting new residential growth. Periodic review and updates should occur that refine the program as new housing is constructed across the county.



CO 1.2 Expand housing options for students and workers. Supporting the next generation of workforce is an essential component for the county’s population growth. The county should encourage the creation of diverse housing options that serve students, young professionals, and working families. Housing may include single-family, small-lot single-family, townhomes, triplexes and duplexes, or other similar missing housing types.

CO 1.3 Build and launch a countywide housing development task force. Stimulating the housing market will require a diverse group of stakeholders. A task force composed of key public, private, and non-profit organizations should be established to identify the critical challenges for the housing market and develop methods for supporting new residential growth.

CO 1.4 Enable Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) countywide. ADUs provide increased housing diversity and affordability without altering the character of a neighborhood. Allowing development of ADUs countywide, through the zoning ordinance, reduces barriers that would increase the cost of housing development and provides unique options for current and future residents.

CO 1.5 Align resources and regulations to support infill development. Resources for funding opportunities, loan programs, and development regulations should be reviewed and updated to support strategic infill development. Prioritizing smaller communities protects outward growth and encourages investment outside of main streets.

CO 1.6 Establish a countywide Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO). Wabash County should establish a countywide housing development organization (CHDO) responsible for launching and monitoring new housing initiatives. This can include incentives for residential development or programs like My Chatt House which reduce barriers for constructing infill residential while protecting existing neighborhoods.

CO 1.7 Explore the establishment of residential housing incentives. The county should explore establishing residential development tools that will help incentivize further investment in the community such as new residential Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts or other housing designations as available. Local, state, and federal initiatives should also be monitored as they become available to implement.

MY CHATT HOUSE

My Chatt House is a resource developed for the Chattanooga, TN community to encourage appropriate development in two established neighborhoods. A key component of this program is the preparation of pre-designed building plans for both single-family and multi-family homes. The homes are based on architectural styles found in the neighborhoods and include details for the minimum lot size, floor plans, gross square footage, and design elements such as porches, patios, etc. These plans streamline the process for homebuilders by outlining the requirements for homes that match the existing neighborhood character. Local manufacturers are identified for building material specifications to further encourage high-quality design from local industries. The information and supporting graphics reduce the risk for infill development, defining clear expectations for architectural character while reducing overall building costs for the homebuilder.

OBJECTIVE 2

Strengthen the vitality, character, and design of existing neighborhoods.

Actions

CO 2.1 Launch a housing remodel revolving fund. Wabash County has an aging housing stock which places an increasing burden on homeowners to maintain and modernize their homes. Providing financial incentives to lessen this burden provides residents with a system for seeking renovations that enhance return-of-investment for individuals and the surrounding neighborhoods. A remodel revolving fund is one potential option where renovation funding is provided to a homeowner, in partnership with a local lender. These loans provide low interest options with specific deadlines for repayment where the money returned through the loan is leveraged to fund additional remodels. As more residents use the loan, more funding returns allowing the application to expand across the county and its communities. This financial incentive ensures the housing stock, despite its overall age, retains modern amenities and investment is continuously provided toward neighborhood revitalization. The county should identify local partners to support the initial fund and develop clear application guidelines and requirements based on best management practices.



CO 2.2 Launch a rental property registration and management program.

Renters are often vulnerable to cost, condition, and maintenance factors due to lack of policy and management. Requiring registration and adherence to general requirements will ensure that rental properties protect renters and contribute to the aesthetics of the community.

CO 2.3 Identify opportunities for quality affordable housing. Providing a diverse array of housing includes ensuring that quality affordable housing options are readily available. In some areas, properties have deteriorated or been neglected to the point where they become health and safety hazards for the neighborhood. Efforts should inventory where existing quality affordable housing exists today, where options are needed, and align resources to support expanding the quality housing stock. Priority should be given to those areas where housing was removed due to condition to ensure communities have a access to a wide array of types, available to all income levels in the county.



CO 2.4 Establish development standards for “complete” neighborhood design.

These standards should specify a street pattern of walkable blocks and multiple connections to adjacent neighborhoods. Residents living in these neighborhoods should have easy access to pocket or community parks and direct connection to local businesses.

CO 2.5 Create countywide blight abatement guidelines. Targeted demolition for deteriorating buildings can serve to improve neighborhood safety and promote stabilization. The program should include evaluation criteria for a structure’s viability and procedures for supporting efforts to redevelop the site that benefits the neighborhood and greater community. Support should be given to existing code enforcement officers and procedures to assist with addressing blight across the county.

OBJECTIVE 3

Establish models for monitoring housing demand and promoting Wabash County as a welcoming community.

Actions

CO 3.1 Conduct and regularly update a countywide Residential Market Analysis. A market analysis will reveal the latent demand for certain types of housing which can be leveraged for strategic housing development. Maintaining an up-to-date analysis will ensure that Wabash County is attracting the right type of housing for current and future residents.



CO 3.2 Update and modernize the County Government website.

By improving the user-friendliness and connections to local resources, the website can serve as an online gateway for Wabash County and its communities.

CO 3.3 Build a “Welcome to Wabash County” package and program for new residents. Developing a welcome package for new residents embraces the people who make the county unique and offers an opportunity to share highlights about the assets and amenities available across the county.

CO 3.4 Develop a model short-term rental policy (AirBnB, VRBO, etc.).

Short-term or seasonal rentals can impact a neighborhood if not monitored or managed. Establishing a policy on nuisance, maintenance, and registration requirements will prevent short-term rentals from negatively impacting the surrounding community.

CO 3.5 Create a model employment-residence policy. A major institution/employer recently created policy that requires senior-level employees (executive and directors) to live in Wabash County. This is a new (2021) policy intended to increase the number of residents living in Wabash County. Given the significant trend of declining population in the county, a model employment-residence policy should be created. This model could be used by any employer in the County on a voluntary basis.

CO 3.6 Design a “Welcome to the Communities of Wabash County” program for college students. The 1,500 students of Manchester University represent about 25 percent of the population of North Manchester and significant part of Wabash County. Every one of these students represents a potential resident and or employee of the County. In short-term, they also represent four-year tourists. While there are efforts to welcome students in North Manchester, the efforts could be more robust and include other parts of the County. It is reported that many students do not feel comfortable on their adopted community. A welcome program could be a collaborative and impactful to connect students to the community and, in doing so, strengthen the community.

ACTION AGENDA

FOUNDATION

A community is strengthened by foundational elements including infrastructure, mobility, and emergency preparedness. These components have a strong correlation to how the community experiences the built and natural environment and will support the realization of many recommendations. This chapter explores the relationship of the county's infrastructure systems, roadway network, and mobility options on achieving the vision for Wabash County. It outlines strategies that build upon the recommendations of the previous chapters, providing the pathway towards a strong, safe, and vibrant future.

GOAL

A reliable base of enabling infrastructure helps to connect, grow, and protect our communities, while also supporting logical investments that expand opportunities for residents and businesses.

OBJECTIVES

1. Strengthen infrastructure management programs and funding.
2. Modernize and upgrade infrastructure throughout the county.
3. Improve community connections, design, and efficiency.

CHAPTER TOPICS

- Transportation
- Facilities and Infrastructure
- Hazard Mitigation

OBJECTIVE 1

Strengthen infrastructure management programs and funding sources.

Actions

FD 1.1 Increase funding for maintenance of local roads and bridges, and continue pursuing matching funds. The calculated deferred maintenance backlog is quite large for Wabash County, La Fontaine and, to a less extent for Wabash and North Manchester. Roads in poor condition often have degraded to the point that they need an overlay of asphalt or to be reconstructed, driving most of the backlog - estimated to be at least \$146 million for the County and \$1.2 million for La Fontaine. While pavement conditions are generally better in Wabash and North Manchester, pavement condition backlogs are estimated at \$4.5 million and \$1.2 million respectively. With respect to local bridges which are maintained by the county, a backlog of at least \$34 million has been estimated. The need is great and additional funding will be needed to slow the decline and make progress toward improving pavement and bridge condition ratings. Additional work may need to be performed by area maintenance superintendents to forecast

pavement deterioration and the construction and maintenance program that can be funded given anticipated revenues. With this information, it should be possible to estimate the amount of additional funding required to slowly improve conditions to state standards over a plan horizon, e.g. 10 years. This may serve as a justification for pursuing additional funding from taxpayers.

FD 1.2 Prioritize maintenance activities across the roadway

network. While roadway pavement conditions are reported in aggregate, poor conditions on heavily traveled roads create a disproportionate impact on the traveling public. As such, some agencies prioritize maintenance based on a road’s importance within the overall network. With such a system, routes are assigned to a tier based on functional classification, importance to emergency response, and/or traffic volumes. Each tier may then have corresponding pavement condition standards, funding priority, or both. Over time, conditions will improve and be more consistent across the network of higher tier (priority) roads, and this may be achieved more quickly. This is of particular importance given how large the pavement maintenance is, and presumably how many years and more funding it may take to substantially address this issue. Local maintaining agencies should add a tiered maintenance approach to the strategies listed in their Asset Management Plans. This approach should include the establishment of tier categories and their respective condition rating targets. This could be done by assigning a higher share of funding per lane mile to higher tiers, tackling rehabilitation projects on high tier roads first, and / or by some other strategy.

OBJECTIVE 2

Modernize and upgrade infrastructure throughout the county.

Actions

FD 2.1 Significantly expand access to high-speed internet.

The COVID-19 Pandemic revealed the importance of internet connectivity for both education and work and the discrepancies with the current infrastructure network. As an essential utility for the county, priority should be placed on rural areas with communities that are underserved in this respect. Additionally, the availability of high speed internet can assist in attracting businesses considering locating in the County. Ensuring communities and specifically employment centers have access to high-speed internet will provide an additional asset for attracting and retaining emerging businesses.



FD 2.2 Pursue a phased approach to improving downtown streetscapes in Wabash and North Manchester.

The downtowns of Wabash and North Manchester are both charming places supported by substantial streetscape investments. Yet, more could be done to help activate and enhance these places. Examples may include the creating sidewalk dining parklets and introducing more planters or street trees. Further, some crosswalks may benefit from being marked with high-visibility pavement markings patterns such as ladder style crosswalks. For this recommendation, local leaders and businesses are encouraged to assess their respective downtowns and look for opportunities to enhance these spaces with a focus being increasing comfort, safety, and access through incremental improvements.

FD 2.3 Increase wastewater capacity and utility access. Access to utilities is critical to both public health and economic development. Efforts should strive to provide additional capacity for all utilities but specifically with wastewater management. The City of Wabash and Town of North Manchester in particular has an immediate need for additional capacity due to outward development growth. State and federal funding should be explored for expanding and upgrading existing facilities.



FD 2.4 Plan for the long-term phase out of community septic in small communities. Several areas in the county are dependent on outdated and aging septic systems. The county should collaborate with small communities to identify critical infrastructure needs and the long-term removal of private septic systems.

FD 2.5 Support opportunities for “homegrown” ridesharing businesses and organizations. Alternative mobility options would both serve community members with limited access to transportation and promote small business development. Efforts in line with these priorities should be encouraged and supported.

FD 2.6 Improve Cass Street (SR-15) between Harrison and Wedcor avenues in the City of Wabash to include complete street accommodations. Today, N. Cass Street has no sidewalk or path to serve those walking and biking in the corridor between Harrison and Wedcor avenues. This is particularly problematic because this stretch likely has pedestrian and bicyclist activity due to a high concentration of retail uses and multifamily residential developments. Preferable accommodations may include a shared use path on both sides of the road, a shared use path on one side and sidewalk on the other side, or buffered bike lanes and sidewalks on both sides of the road. The same multimodal treatment does not need to be used along the entire corridor. Beyond these improvements, the corridor could benefit from the addition of street trees, aesthetic enhancements, and consolidation of access points.

FD 2.7 Improve County Road 1200 N (SR-114) in North Manchester to include complete street accommodations. The most recent traffic counts in INDOT's count database show traffic volumes vary from 6,200 to 6,500, much less than the 25,000 to 35,000 vehicles a similar five-lane road facility can typically accommodate. Given the lack of sidewalks or side paths and lack of traffic, it's recommended to consider reallocating some of the roadway for pedestrians and bicyclists. Practically, this may occur by closing the outside or curb-adjacent travel lanes. In the short-run, these can be marked as a shoulder; however, the best long-term option is to provide physical separation between traffic and both pedestrians and bicyclists. Separation can be provided by removing pavement, followed by possibly installing curb and gutter adjacent to the remaining travel lanes. A tree lawn and either sidewalks or path should be placed behind the curb.

OBJECTIVE 3

Improve community connections, design, and efficiency.

Actions

FD 3.1 Explore rerouting SR-15 around Canal and Market streets to reduce traffic in downtown Wabash. While there is an official truck route for SR-15 that avoids Market and Canal streets, the route is circuitous and at least some truck drivers don't take it. Rerouting SR-15 along a more direct alignment will reduce traffic volumes on Market and Canal streets, reducing noise and pollution. This will improve the experience of visiting downtown Wabash and make activities such as sidewalk dining more attractive. Further, it may be possible to adjust traffic operations on both streets such as allowing two-way traffic. If implemented, the project is likely to impact some residents or businesses. The intent would be to improve or build one of the options as a two-way connection. Options south of Market and Canal show optional realignments of Cass Street to allow a more direct connection to existing or proposed streets leading to Wabash Street (SR-13).

FD 3.2 Establish a task force to consider transit operations, and methods to maintain and even expand service. There is a need for community leaders to come together to consider how to best support and even expand transit operations. Before and now into the pandemic, Wabash Transit's budget has been tight and it struggles to find skilled workers at pay rates it can afford. And without sufficient staffing, some customers may not be able to schedule trips when desired. Further, the cost of providing some trips for out-of-county medical care vastly exceeds reimbursement rates and funding provided by Medicaid, Medicare, and/or the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). At the same time, there is a desire to maintain a fixed-route service between Wabash and North Manchester. Clarity is needed to define these and other specific issues, and to work with local leaders to consider how those issues can be addressed, potentially through expanded partnerships.

FD 3.3 Establish a cycling connection between North Manchester and Wabash. Improving connectivity between North Manchester and Wabash is a priority of the plan, including for bicyclists. A two-pronged approach may be pursued, including signing an alternate route along parallel local roads, most of which are paved but have very low traffic volumes. Signage along local roads, parallel to SR-13, such as CR 400 E, which directly connects to the City of Wabash and Town of North Manchester, would help create a dedicated and safe route. Extending the asphalt paved shoulder to six feet would effectively provide a bike lane but the speed of traffic is still a substantial safety and comfort issue.

FD 3.4 Complete active transportation plans and implement recommendations. Each community is encouraged to perform an active transportation plan to further understand barriers and identify countermeasures to make their community more walkable and bikeable. These planning processes should be led by local agencies and supported by a consulting engineer familiar with pedestrian and bicyclist planning, as well as best practices and Indiana design standards for streets, traffic control, and ped/bike facilities. At minimum, these plans should identify desired destinations and travel corridors as well as areas where walking and biking is difficult due to lack of facilities and high traffic volumes and/or speeds. The final plan should address any proposed policy changes and provide a list of locations where capital improvements such as new crosswalks, sidewalks, and trails are recommended.

FD 3.5 Pursue an extension of the primary runway at Wabash Municipal Airport using cost-containment strategies. Aviation insurance companies will only cover jets hangared at airports with a runway that exceeds 5,000 feet in length. Wabash's runway is just 4,401-feet and needs to be extended an additional 600 feet to satisfy this requirement. This extension may improve the attractiveness of doing business in Wabash County; however, the airfield is less than 22 miles away from three airports which have longer runways and hangar space. Clarity is needed to determine if this investment will pay off and, if possible, allow for cost-containment so resources are not diverted from other needs in the community.

FD 3.6 Evaluate options for improved mobility for university students. The students at Manchester University are reliant on walking, biking, public transit, or carpooling in and around Wabash County. If the students are to experience the County—including spending their money, accessing key services—other mobility options are needed. Alternatives such as bike share programs, electric scooter rentals, bus routes, and ride share programs should be evaluated that improve their access to opportunity and provide potential benefits to local businesses and institutions.



ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

A number of resources are available to help guide the process for walking and biking plans. These include FHWA's Guide for Improving Pedestrian Safety at Uncontrolled Crossing Locations. This guide describes a thorough and effective planning process for improving pedestrian and bicyclist accommodations. It also provides the latest guidance for choosing appropriate countermeasures at unsignalized crossings. A second resource to consider is the Ohio Department of Transportation's Active Transportation Plan Guide which provides a step by step planning process and resources to support those undertaking such a project. Available INDOT resources pertain to trail development, which has been identified as a statewide priority.



IMPLEMENTATION

Imagine One 85 is intended to be used on a daily basis as both public and private decisions are made for the future of Wabash County and its communities. It is recommended that businesses, community groups, and organizations align their efforts with the priorities of this plan to help realize recommendations and achieve a Might Wabash County. The following is a summary of how decisions and processes should align with the goals and actions of Imagine One 85.

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

A comprehensive plan is a decision making guide for community leaders. The process to develop the plan integrated thorough technical research and analysis with robust community and stakeholder engagement. The vision, goals, and recommendations reflect the best thinking of the Imagine One 85 Steering Committee based on these two crucial sources.

Plan implementation is an ongoing process that invokes a regular cycle of prioritization, work planning, funding, evaluation, and celebration. This is a management cycle that involves multiple organizations around the community. More broadly, however, long term implementation involves several practices summarized or through the governance-focused action recommendations.

ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMS AND BUDGETS

Individual departments, administrators, boards, and commissions should familiarize themselves with the plan's actions when preparing annual work programs and budgets. Specific actions that align with the vision and mission of an organization can guide investment in achieving the unified vision for Wabash County.

DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS

Administrative and legislative approvals of development proposals may be pursued as a means of implementing recommendations of the plan. Decisions by appropriate entities and organizations should reference the Imagine One 85 Comprehensive Plan in their analysis.

ECONOMIC INCENTIVES

Economic incentives should be reviewed to ensure consistency with supporting the actions of the plan.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Decisions regarding infrastructure investment such as utilities or transportation should align with recommendations and intended growth areas throughout the county.

PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS

Property owners and developers should consider the goals and strategies of the plan in their land planning and investment decisions. New development, infill development, or redevelopment should complement the plan's actions.

CONSISTENT INTERPRETATION

Planners and policymakers throughout the County should collaborate to ensure clear and consistent interpretation of major actions in this plan.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The following actions support the ongoing implementation of Imagine One 85.

OBJECTIVE 1

Promote Imagine One 85 and its recommendations.

Actions

IM 1.1 Appoint a Director of Imagine One 85. As the first step towards implementation, a position should be established to facilitate the recommendations of Imagine One 85. This director will coordinate efforts across the communities to achieve the recommendations of the comprehensive plan.

IM 1.2 Provide copies of the Plan throughout the communities. Once adopted, Imagine One 85 should be made available in each community as well as online on partner websites.

IM 1.3 Provide educational sessions and training on the plan recommendations. Many policies, programs, and projects may be new to Wabash County while others seek to strengthen the county's assets. Sessions should be held throughout the county where residents and business owners can learn more about Imagine One 85 and ask questions about the plan's recommendations.

OBJECTIVE 2

Support, monitor, and share implementation progress.

Actions

IM 2.1 Identify and secure funding for plan recommendations. Funding sources could include grants, tax measures, bonds, private investments, public-private partnerships, and many others. These should be identified and implemented based on the community priorities.

IM 2.2 Prepare a countywide Annual Growth Report about development, population change and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. On an annual basis, the county should release a progress report for Imagine One 85 and its effect on the communities of Wabash County.

IM 2.3 Prepare updates to Imagine One 85 at regular milestones. The county should anticipate the need for updating the plan and action recommendations at major milestones. Minor updates should be considered every five years with major updates occurring every 10 years to ensure Imagine One 85 remains up-to-date.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

The following table summarizes the plan’s objectives and actions. The table is organized by the plan’s five thematic chapters to assist with tracking implementation over time. Priority recommendations are shown below followed by a list of all recommendations organized under the goals and objectives. For each action, essential details are defined including the tentative timeframe for implementation, lead group / organization, potential partners, and the level of resources necessary to implement the recommendation. A legend is provided below.

Timeframe

Ongoing	Underway and expected to continue
Immediate	Implemented in 2022
Short-Term	1 to 3 years
Mid-Term	3 to 6 years
Long-Term	Beyond 6 years

Cost



Low level of resources; for example, a minimal amount of staff time and/or a nominal amount of funding.



Moderate level of resources; for example, a moderate amount of staff time and/or a notable amount of funding that could be covered by normal budgets or may depend on multiple sources.



Significant resources; for example, a high amount of staff time and/or funding from multiple sources beyond normal budgets.

Community Priorities



Priority actions for establishing a strong foundation for success








Group / Organization Abbreviations

CFWC	Community Foundation of Wabash County
CHDO	Community Housing Development Organizations
COA	Council on Aging
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
DEI	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee
EMA	Emergency Management Agency
FFA	Future Farmers of America
GWC	Grow Wabash County
HLC	Higher Learning Commission
IDNR	Indiana Department of Natural Resources
IEDC	Indiana Economic Development Corporation
INDOT	Indiana Department of Transportation
IO85	Imagine One 85 Committee
LMC	Learn More Center
MA	Manchester Alive
MU	Manchester University
NCI-SHRM	North Central Indiana SHRM




NIPSCO	Northern Indiana Public Service Company
PU	Purdue University
PUE	Purdue University Extension
SBDC	Small Business Development Center
VWC	Visit Wabash County
WCHSEC	Wabash County High School Entrepreneurship Collaborative
WCSWCD	Wabash County Soil and Water Conservation District
WMI	Wabash Marketplace, Inc.
WRT	Wabash River Trail
YPWC	Young Professionals of Wabash County

CODE	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	COST
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OBJECTIVE 1: STRENGTHEN THE EFFICIENT USE OF DEVELOPED AND UNDEVELOPED LAND

 GP 1.1	Pursue a strategic approach to countywide development and growth.	Ongoing	IO85	Plan Commissions, Local Governments, GWC, MA	
 GP 1.2	Fund a strategic land acquisition program.	Short-Term	Local Governments	County Government, Plan Commissions	
GP 1.3	Support continued reinvestment in Downtown Lagro.	Ongoing	Canal Foundation	GWC, Town of Lagro	
GP 1.4	Encourage reuse and rehabilitation of existing industrial structures.	Ongoing	GWC	Local Government, Private Businesses	
GP 1.5	Develop a pop-up retail and temporary use program on vacant lots and in vacant buildings in small towns and cities.	Short-term	GWC	MA, WMI	



OBJECTIVE 2: ENHANCE COMMUNITY CHARACTER THROUGH THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

GP 2.1	Fund a countywide Facade Improvement Fund.	Mid-Term	Local Governments	County Government, Property Owners	
GP 2.2	Maintain an endangered historic building list.	Short-Term	Indiana Landmarks	Local Government, Property Owners	
GP 2.3	Support eligibility determinations and designation of structures and districts on the National Register of Historic Places.	Ongoing	Indiana Landmarks	Property Owners	

OBJECTIVE 3: EMBRACE RIVERS IN CITY AND TOWN DEVELOPMENT

 GP 3.1	Pursue the North Manchester Riverfront redevelopment project.	Immediate	Local Governments	MA, Property Owners, Non-Profits	
GP 3.2	Continue to build access and use of the Eel and Wabash Rivers.	Ongoing	WRT, Upper Eel River Watershed Alliance	White Rock, Wander Brand, IDNR, River Defenders, WCSWCD, Sweeten	
GP 3.3	Create incentives to encourage wide natural buffers along streams.	Ongoing	WCSWCD	IDNR, Upper Eel River Watershed Alliance	

OBJECTIVE 4: SUSTAIN AGRICULTURE AS A CRITICAL PART OF THE COUNTY'S IDENTITY

GP 4.1	Expand opportunities for agritourism across the county.	Short-Term	VVC	Local Farms, CSA	
GP 4.2	Study the impact of tile drainage on local flooding.	Immediate	County Government	Town of La Fontaine, Wabash County Drainage Board	

CODE	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	COST
GP 4.3	Build on the local farm-to-table movement.	Ongoing	Local Farms	School Districts, Private Businesses	

OBJECTIVE 5: CELEBRATE UNIQUE COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES THROUGH ATTRACTIONS AND AMENITIES

GP 5.1	Explore a state park designation for the areas around Salamonie Lake.	Short-Term	Wabash River Defenders	IDNR, State Government, Army Corps of Engineers	
GP 5.2	Work with local entrepreneurs to build a restaurant in Downtown La Fontaine.	Mid-Term	Town of La Fontaine	Private Businesses	
GP 5.3	Build a community park in Roann.	Short-Term	Town of Roann	Non-Profits	
GP 5.4	Expand summer arts offerings.	Mid-Term	Honeywell Foundation	MU, Eagles	
GP 5.5	Prepare a comprehensive marketing plan.	Short-Term	IO85	VWC, GWC, CFWC, MA, County Government, Local Governments	
GP 5.6	Continue to support the County's commitment to a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community for all.	Ongoing	DEI	County Government, Local Governments, GWC, CFWC, MU, School Districts	
GP 5.7	Establish a Wabash County, peer community program.	Short-Term	VWC	MA, GWC	
GP 5.8	Launch the "Mighty Wabash County" micro-grant program.	Mid-Term	CFWC	IO85	
GP 5.9	Initiate an inter-community visitation program.	Ongoing	VWC	MA, GWC	

OBJECTIVE 6: ENSURE PHYSICAL CONNECTIONS WITHIN AND BETWEEN COMMUNITIES





GP 6.1	Improve connections between the University and Main Street in North Manchester.	Ongoing	Town of North Manchester	MU	
GP 6.2	Conduct a study on opportunities for trail extensions.	Mid-Term	Local Governments	Plan Commissions, IDNR, WRT, Property Owners	
GP 6.3	Perform a feasibility analysis for pedestrian improvements on Miami Street in the City of Wabash.	Short-Term	City of Wabash	Plan Commissions, VWC	

PROSPERITY (PR)







26 ACTIONS

CODE	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	COST
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OBJECTIVE 1: PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS



 PR 1.1	Further develop small business / entrepreneur recruitment and development programs.	Ongoing	GWC	SBDC, SCORE, MU, INGUARD, IEDC	
PR 1.2	Revisit local business support systems to ensure the right services are being provided.	Immediate	GWC	SBDC, MU	
PR 1.3	Expand internship opportunities to support workforce needs.	Mid-Term	MU	GWC, Private Businesses, Local Governments	

OBJECTIVE 2: ENCOURAGE CONTINUED GROWTH OF THE COUNTY'S INDUSTRIAL AREAS







 PR 2.1	Build a spec, flexible industrial and warehouse facility.	Short-Term	City of Wabash, County Government	GWC, NIPSCO, IEDC, Duke	
PR 2.2	Continue to support and adapt the county's industrial parks.	Ongoing	GWC	County Government, City of Wabash, Town of North Manchester	
PR 2.3	Establish a Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Strategy.	Ongoing	GWC	County Government, Local Governments, Private Businesses	
 PR 2.4	Develop a robust business and industry retention program.	Ongoing	GWC	WMI, MA	

OBJECTIVE 3: ELEVATE AN ENVIRONMENT TO DEVELOP, ATTRACT, AND RETAIN TALENT







 PR 3.1	Establish the vision for excellent education in Wabash County.	Short-Term	CFWC	School Districts, GWC, MU, Local Governments	
 PR 3.2	Expand access to quality and affordable childcare.	Ongoing	CFWC	School Districts, First Five Committee, Transform Consulting	
PR 3.3	Invest in arts-infused learning opportunities for early childhood education.	Immediate	CFWC	School Districts, Non-Profits, Honeywell Foundation	
PR 3.4	Strengthen Community Foundation Early Award Scholarship and the Wabash County Promise as public school/private charity collaborations.	Immediate	CFWC	School Districts, Non-Profits	
PR 3.5	Continue the Community Foundation's College Scholarship program for grades 9-12.	Ongoing	CFWC	School Districts, Non-Profits	
PR 3.6	Expand exposure programs for students to include advanced manufacturing and agricultural jobs.	Short-Term	Private Businesses	GWC, Ivy Tech, WorkOne, HLC	

CODE	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	COST
PR 3.7	Work with employers to adapt workforce training for adults based on the needs of employees.	Ongoing	Private Businesses	GWC, Ivy Tech, CFWC, WorkOne, HLC, UFWC, LMC, NCI-SHRM	
PR 3.8	Explore the potential for a Purdue Polytech Campus.	Mid-Term	PU	School Districts, HLC, GWC, CFWC	

OBJECTIVE 4: ADVOCATE FOR IMPROVING PERSONAL PROSPERITY, HEALTH, AND SAFETY

PR 4.1	Prepare a countywide health response report to the COVID-19 Pandemic.	Immediate	Health Department	Local Governments, UFWC, EMA, Bowen Center	
PR 4.2	Initiate a Safe Routes to School Program.	Mid-Term	Local Governments	School Districts, EMA, Property Owners	
PR 4.3	Connect residents without health insurance to applicable federal programs.	Mid-Term	CFWC	UFWC, Non-Profits, Health Department, Bowen Center, Parkview Hospital	
PR 4.4	Work with local hospitals and healthcare providers to address transportation gaps.	Mid-Term	Living Well Wabash County	Parkview Hospital, CFWC, Non-Profits	
PR 4.5	Create a kindness initiative.	Short-Term	CFWC	MU, School Districts	
PR 4.6	Develop a strategic plan for a community support network for university students.	Short-Term	Town of North Manchester	MU, CFWC, GWC, VWC, Local Governments, Private Businesses	

OBJECTIVE 5: MAINTAIN A FISCALLY STRONG ECONOMY

 PR 5.1	Pursue a diversified tax revenue model through new sources.	Short-Term	Local Governments	-	
PR 5.2	Review the fiscal model for county and city expenditure allocations.	Short-Term	Local Governments	-	
PR 5.3	Communicate bonding capacity and “best use” analysis to local leadership.	Short-Term	IO85	GWC, CFWC	
PR 5.4	Align local plans and Imagine One 85 priorities for federal funding opportunities.	Immediate	IO85	GWC, CFWC, Living Well Wabash County, UFWC	
PR 5.5	Adopt a countywide Capital Improvement Plan funding model.	Mid-Term	Local Governments	GWC	

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY (CO)








18 ACTIONS

CODE	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	COST
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OBJECTIVE 1: INCREASE COMMUNITY HOUSING OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

 CO 1.1	Develop and monitor a new spec-housing program.	Short-Term	County Government	GWC, HPG Network, Local Governments, Plan Commissions, Private Businesses, Developers	
CO 1.2	Expand housing options for students and workers.	Mid-Term	Local Government	GWC, MU, Local Governments, HPG Network, Plan Commissions, Developers, Private Businesses	
CO 1.3	Build and launch a countywide housing development task force.	Short-Term	IO85	GWC, Plan Commissions, HPG Network, Developers, Private Businesses	
CO 1.4	Enable Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) countywide.	Short-Term	Local Governments	GWC, Plan Commissions, HPG Network, Developers, Private Businesses, Property Owners	
CO 1.5	Align resources and regulations to support infill development.	Mid-Term	Local Governments	GWC, Plan Commissions, HPG Network, Developers, Private Businesses, Property Owners	
CO 1.6	Establish a countywide Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO).	Mid-Term	IO85	GWC, Plan Commissions, HPG Network, Developers, Private Businesses, Property Owners	
CO 1.7	Explore the establishment of residential housing incentives.	Ongoing	Local Governments	GWC, Plan Commissions, HPG Network, Developers, Private Businesses, Property Owners	

OBJECTIVE 2: STRENGTHEN THE VITALITY, CHARACTER, AND DESIGN OF EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS

 CO 2.1	Launch a housing remodel revolving fund.	Mid-Term	GWC	CFWC, Local Governments, Non-Profits, Developers, Private Businesses	
CO 2.2	Launch a rental property registration and management program.	Long-Term	CHDO	Local Governments, Plan Commissions	
 CO 2.3	Identify opportunities for quality affordable housing.	Long-Term	CHDO	Local Governments, Plan Commissions	
CO 2.4	Establish development standards for “complete” neighborhood design.	Long-Term	CHDO	Local Governments, Plan Commissions, Developers	
CO 2.5	Create countywide blight abatement guidelines.	Mid-Term	CHDO	Local Governments, Plan Commissions	

CODE	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	COST
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OBJECTIVE 3: ESTABLISH MODELS FOR MONITORING HOUSING DEMAND AND PROMOTING WABASH COUNTY AS A WELCOMING COMMUNITY





CO 3.1	Conduct and regularly update a countywide Residential Market Analysis.	Short-Term	CHDO	GWC, Local Governments	
CO 3.2	Update and modernize the County Government website.	Short-Term	County Government	-	
CO 3.3	Build a “Welcome to Wabash County” package and program for new residents.	Short-Term	VWC	GWC, CFWC, Private Businesses, Local Governments	
CO 3.4	Develop a model short-term rental policy (AirBnB, VRBO, etc.).	Short-Term	Local Governments	-	
CO 3.5	Create a model employment-residence policy.	Short-Term	CHDO	Private Businesses, Non-Profits, Local Governments	
CO 3.6	Design a “Welcome to the Communities of Wabash County” program for college students.	Short-Term	VWC	MU, GWC, YPWC, Local Governments	

FOUNDATION (FD)

15 ACTIONS








CODE	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	COST
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OBJECTIVE 1: STRENGTHEN INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS AND FUNDING

FD 1.1	Increase funding for maintenance of local roads and bridges, and continue pursuing matching funds.	Immediate	Local Governments	County Government, INDOT	
FD 1.2	Prioritize maintenance activities across the roadway network.	Immediate	Local Governments	County Government, INDOT	








OBJECTIVE 2: MODERNIZE AND UPGRADE INFRASTRUCTURE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY



FD 2.1	Significantly expand access to high-speed internet.	Immediate	Local Governments	Utility Providers	
FD 2.2	Pursue an incremental approach to improving downtown streetscapes in Wabash and North Manchester.	Ongoing	City of Wabash, Town of North Manchester	Manchester Alive, Wabash Marketplace, Private Businesses	
FD 2.3	Increase wastewater capacity and utility access.	Immediate	Local Government	Utility Providers	
FD 2.4	Plan for the long-term phase out of community septic in small communities.	Long-Term	County Government	State Government, WCSWCD	
FD 2.5	Support opportunities for “homegrown” ridesharing businesses or organizations.	Mid-Term	Local Governments	GWC, Private Businesses	
FD 2.6	Improve Cass Street (SR-15) between Harrison and Wedcor avenues in the City of Wabash to include complete street accommodations.	Long-Term	INDOT	Local Government, Private Businesses	
FD 2.7	Improve County Road 1200 N (SR-114) in North Manchester to include complete street accommodations.	Long-Term	INDOT	Local Government, Private Businesses	

CODE	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	COST
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OBJECTIVE 3: IMPROVE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS, DESIGN, AND EFFICIENCY

FD 3.1	Explore rerouting SR-15 around Canal and Market streets to reduce traffic in downtown Wabash.	Mid-Term	INDOT	Local Governments	
FD 3.2	Establish a task force to consider transit operations, and methods to maintain and even expand service.	Mid-Term	COA	INDOT	
FD 3.3	Establish a cycling connection between North Manchester and Wabash.	Mid-Term	IO85	County Government, VWC, Manchester Alive	
 FD 3.4	Complete active transportation plans and implement recommendations.	Mid-Term	IO85	County Government, VWC, Manchester Alive	
FD 3.5	Pursue an extension of the primary runway at Wabash Municipal Airport using cost-containment strategies.	Mid-Term	Wabash Airport Board	State Government, Property Owners	
FD 3.6	Evaluate options for improved mobility for university students.	Short-Term	Manchester University	Local Government, County Government	

WABASH

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