

A photograph of the Warren County Courthouse, a large, ornate building with a prominent dome and classical architectural details. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green map of Warren County, Ohio, which serves as a background for the title text.

# **WARREN COUNTY**

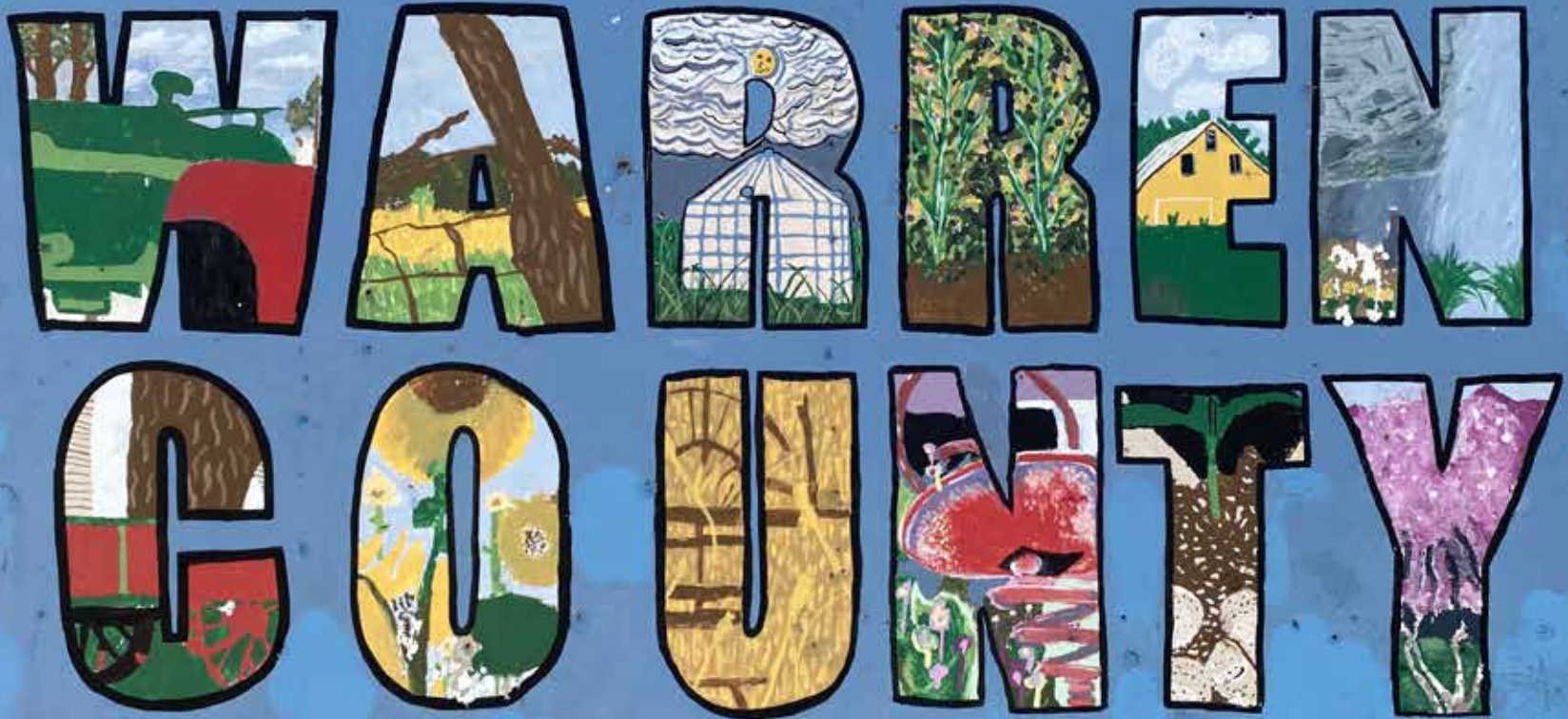
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# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

# **2022**



Greetings from



Mural in Williamsport, funded by the Warren County Community Foundation.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Warren County features numerous natural amenities, including Black Rock Nature Preserve *(Source: Warren County Auditor's Office)*

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# CHAPTER 1

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background

Warren County is a hidden gem of beauty in West Central Indiana. From the Wabash River, to the Williamsport Falls, to the NICHES Land Trust properties, Warren County offers thousands of acres of natural beauty for residents to enjoy on a daily basis. Whether a visitor or resident is looking to hunt, fish, kayak, hike or take in a starry sky, Warren County has all the desired amenities for a nature lover.

For as much as the county excels in its offering of natural amenities, it's lacking in built amenities. Warren County has a small offering of retail and food establishments and a limited number of things to do on the weekends. As a result, residents travel to neighboring communities, like Lafayette, Crawfordsville, and Danville, Illinois, for shopping, dining, and entertainment. The burden of traveling to neighboring communities for essential goods and services is likely contributing to a net outward migration and a declining population of residents in Warren County.

Population decline creates long-term uncertainty for a community and its major employers, especially. Currently, Warren County's major employers are in desperate

need of additional workers which is an issue that will only worsen if the county's population continues to decline.

As a result, the overarching goal of this comprehensive plan is simple - reverse population decline to ensure the county's long-term viability. This comprehensive plan outlines several short-term and long-term steps that, when implemented, will guide the county towards its desired future - one where the county retains its residents, and its employers have the availability of workforce they need.

## Public Engagement

Warren County's comprehensive plan was built by those most impacted by its goals and recommendations - Warren County residents. Throughout the process, residents, business leaders, high school students, and stakeholders were encouraged to contribute to the comprehensive plan through a series of activities:

- 3 public workshops
- 5 stakeholder workshops
- A youth workshop
- An online survey
- A public presentation

In total, **over 600** Warren County residents contributed to the community's first comprehensive plan update in over 40 years.

- 52 Public Workshop Participants
- 57 Stakeholder Group Participants
- 55 Youth Workshop Participants
- 448 Survey Participants
- 37 Public Presentation Participants



Public workshops, like the one above at Seeger Memorial Jr./Sr. High School, were held across the county.

# KEY FINDINGS FROM COMMUNITY INPUT AND RESEARCH

THE PLANNING PROCESS GATHERED INPUT THROUGH 3 PUBLIC MEETINGS, 5 STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS, A YOUTH WORKSHOP, AND 448 PUBLIC SURVEYS. THE KEY FINDINGS FROM THIS INPUT, AND RESEARCH COMPLETED BY THE PROJECT TEAM IS SUMMARIZED BELOW:

## Housing

65%

see a housing shortage as an issue.

73%

agree that the county should provide incentives for new housing.



## Economic Development

71%

want to work in Warren County but only

22%

feel there are appealing job opportunities in the county.



Only

15%

believe there are adequate childcare options in Warren County.

## Quality of Place

94%

agree that Warren County needs more options to shop local.

78%

feel there aren't enough things to do in Warren County on the weekends.



## Broadband

93%

believe expanded access to broadband should be a top priority.



Almost

70%

of Warren County broadband services fall below the federal broadband speed standard.

## Land Use

82%

of Warren County's total land area is farmland.



## Renewable Energy

72%

understand the reason energy producers are moving toward renewable energy production.

59%

see solar energy projects presenting an opportunity for land owners and the county.

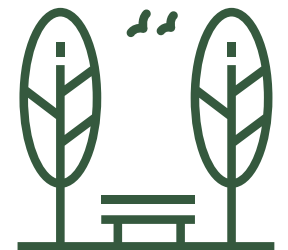
## Recreational Amenities

80%

say bike and pedestrian trails are important.

81%

believe there should be additional opportunities to interact with Warren County public waterways.



# VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

THE PRELIMINARY VISION FORMED DURING THE 2021 STRATEGIC PLAN WAS UPDATED TO EMPHASIZE THE COMMUNITY'S DESIRE TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS WHILE STILL PROTECTING THE RURAL CHARACTER OF THE COUNTY. THE UPDATED VISION IS AS FOLLOWS:



**Attract and retain youth to live in our community.**



**Offer a more complete array of shops, restaurants, and services within the county, allowing residents to access services and spend their dollars locally.**



**Protect the rural character of Warren County.**



**Stabilize and moderately grow our population.**



**Offer a high standard of living led by quality education, healthcare, and outdoor recreation.**



**Create higher wage-earning potential for Warren County residents by diversifying local employment opportunities and upskilling the local workforce.**

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

THE PLAN HAS IDENTIFIED SEVERAL TOP PRIORITIES, ALONG WITH DESIRED ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES. THESE HAVE BEEN EXPANDED AND REVISED FROM THE STRATEGIC PLAN BASED ON COMMUNITY INPUT.



## FUTURE LAND USE

- Support appropriate amounts of residential development in appropriate locations
- Protect natural assets and conservation areas
- Rebuild Warren County's downtown districts



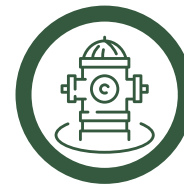
## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Attract and retain workforce for Warren County businesses
- Establish a series of shovel-ready sites
- Expand childcare options
- Diversify Warren County's job opportunities



## HOUSING

- Expand single-family, owner-occupied housing stock
- Increase the supply of rental housing stock
- Continue and strengthen the county's blight elimination programs



## PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

- Extend access to public water and sanitary sewer
- Evaluate options to expand natural gas service
- Evaluate options for a rail siding



## GOVERNMENT SERVICES

- Review emergency services
- Develop a leadership and volunteer development program
- Improve communication between local government and residents



## BROADBAND

- Implement a county-wide broadband solution
- Maintain a broadband taskforce to address future needs

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



## TRANSPORTATION

- Continue to improve the condition of county roads and bridges
- Partner with INDOT on key improvement projects
- Develop and implement a plan to improve county-wide drainage needs



## RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

- Establish protections for prime natural resources
- Encourage open and responsible use of the county's natural resources
- Increase number of public access points on Warren County waterways



## QUALITY OF PLACE

- Support and promote community festivals, events, and activities
- Support downtown revitalization in Warren County's towns
- Continue to support and promote educational institutions and assets

# CHAPTER 2

## INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose of a Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive plan is a guidance document for local leaders and staff to reference when making decisions about land use, transportation, utilities, and more. Residents, business owners, and developers may reference the document when making decisions about their home, business, or property.

By statute (IC 36-7-4-502), a Comprehensive Plan adopted in Indiana should include three things:

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

## Planning History

### 1979 Comprehensive Plan

Warren County has historically had very little planning activity. Prior to the 2022 comprehensive plan update, Warren County's comprehensive plan was adopted in 1979 and had been guiding policy in the county for 43 years. A comprehensive plan update was needed to ensure county

decision makers can reference a modern plan that establishes priorities for modern issues in Warren County. Many things have changed in Warren County over the past 40 years, including the introduction of high-speed internet technology and wind energy production in the county. Not to mention, several new generations of residents now call Warren County home, and a comprehensive plan should reflect the desires of current residents.

### 2021 Strategic Plan

To be responsible stewards of the over 8 million dollars of economic development payments from the Jordan Creek Wind Farm development, the Warren County Commissioners adopted a county strategic plan in 2021. The strategic plan established clear priorities for future county investments and identified necessary actions to address top community needs and build upon opportunities.

### 2022 Comprehensive Plan

Warren County Commissioners embraced the need to update its comprehensive plan and leveraged the momentum of the 2021 Strategic Plan to launch into a comprehensive plan update. This plan builds upon the strategic plan and aligns overall community vision and strategies around the established priorities. This plan considers a wide range of topics including

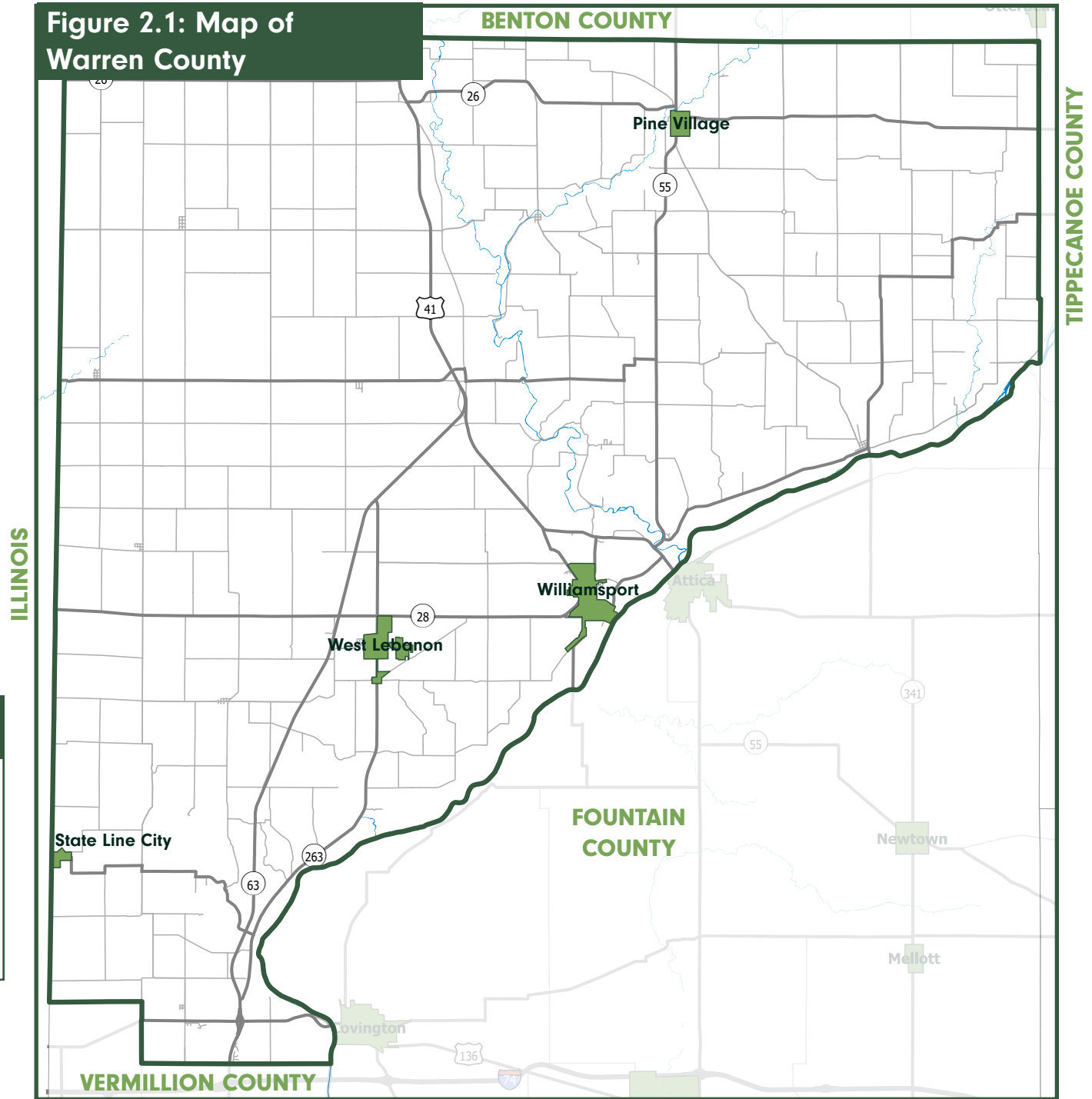
land use, infrastructure, transportation, placemaking and other community needs for the next 10-20 years.

## Plan Area

Warren County is located along the western border of Indiana about an hour and a half west of Indianapolis. The county borders Benton, Tippecanoe, Fountain, Vermillion (Indiana), and Vermillion (Illinois) counties and is part of the Greater Lafayette region. Although Warren County does a great deal of work and business in the Greater Lafayette region, the county is not included in the Lafayette-West Lafayette Metropolitan Statistical Area. The county is a short driving distance from several metropolitan and micropolitan areas including Lafayette and West Lafayette, Attica, Crawfordsville, Danville (Illinois) and Champaign (Illinois).

Warren County is home to four incorporated towns – Williamsport (county seat), West Lebanon, Pine Village, and State Line City. The geographic focus of this planning effort is the unincorporated areas of Warren County. With that being said, the four incorporated towns are an integral part of the county and several goals relate to the revitalization of each town; however, each incorporated town should engage in its own comprehensive planning process.

**Figure 2.1: Map of Warren County**



**Legend**

- Town Limits
- Roads
- Streams / Rivers

Scale: 1"=3 Miles

0 1.5 3 6

North

# INTRODUCTION

## Plan Organization

**Chapters** - This plan covers a wide variety of topics about Warren County's future. The topics contained in this plan are organized into chapters. The following chapters comprise the Warren County Comprehensive Plan:

- Future Land Use
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Public Infrastructure
- Government Services
- Broadband
- Transportation
- Recreational Amenities
- Quality of Place

**Goals and Objectives** - Each chapter contains several forward-looking goals and objectives. Each of these goals and objectives were formed based upon an extensive public engagement process and were refined by the plan's steering committee. Each goal contains a brief overview which provides context to the goal's relevance in relation to the plan's vision for the future of Warren County. Each goal also contains objectives which are meant to provide actionable steps for the county to achieve the related goal.

# CHAPTER 3

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

# DEMOGRAPHICS

## Introduction

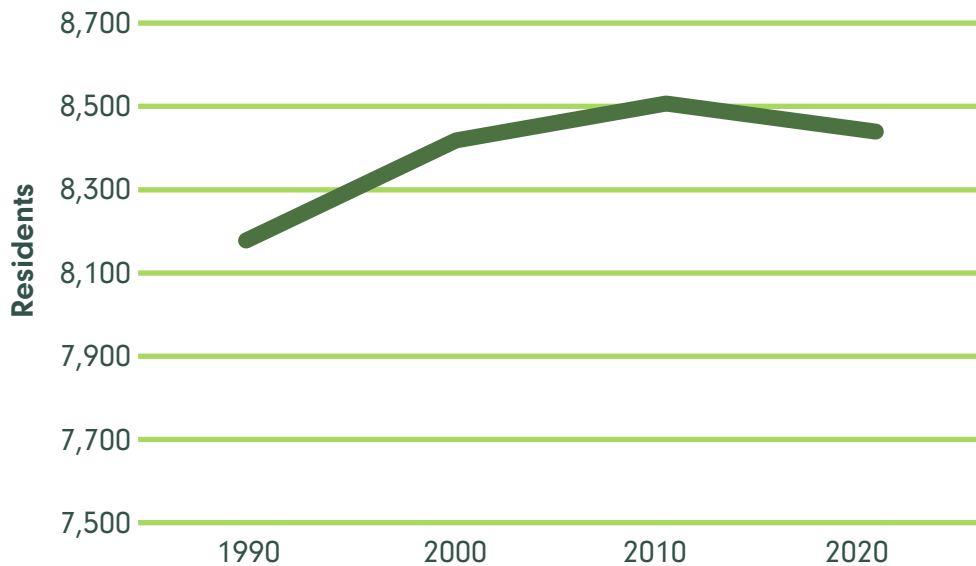
The existing conditions chapter is an analysis of the current state of Warren County. This chapter is meant to demonstrate the county's current trends relating to demographics, economics, economic development, land use, infrastructure, government services, transportation, natural resources, quality of place, and housing. These trends will inform the necessary actions for Warren County to achieve its desired future.

## Population

With a 2020 census of 8,440, Warren County is the third smallest county in the State of Indiana by population. After a period of modest population growth from 1990-2010 (+ 4.1%), Warren County's population entered a period of population decline from 2010-2020 (- 0.8%), nearly reaching the county's 2000 census (8,419). To build a stronger future, the community must continue to focus efforts on eliminating population decline.

From a regional perspective, Tippecanoe County is dominating the Greater Lafayette region from a population growth perspective. In fact, the only county in the region outside of Tippecanoe County to experience population growth from 2010-2020 was White County (+ 0.2%). Warren County's population decline from 2010-2020 (- 0.8%) was far exceeded by Benton (- 1.5%), Fountain (- 4.4%), and Vermillion (- 4.8%) counties.

**Figure 3.1: Warren County Population Change**



Source: US Census Bureau

**Figure 3.2: Regional Population Change**

	1990	2000	2010	2020	TREND (%) 2010-2020
<b>Warren County</b>	8,176	8,419	8,508	8,440	-0.8%
<b>White County</b>	23,265	25,267	24,643	24,688	0.2%
<b>Benton County</b>	9,441	9,421	8,854	8,719	-1.5%
<b>Vermillion County</b>	16,773	16,788	16,212	15,439	-4.8%

Source: US Census Bureau

**Figure 3.3: Components of Population Change**

	<b>1 YEAR CHANGE 2019-2020</b>
<b>Net Domestic Migration</b>	-50
<b>Net International Migration</b>	2
<b>Natural Increase (Births - Deaths)</b>	-20

Source: Stats America

## Components of Population Change

Taking a deeper look at the components of Warren County's population change shows that the county's population loss is driven by two factors: net outward migration due to more residents moving out of the county than are moving into the county and a natural decrease due to more deaths than births. Given these facts, it is crucial that the county find ways to keep residents in the community to reduce the number of residents leaving the county and increase the number of births in the community.

**Figure 3.4: Regional Median Age**

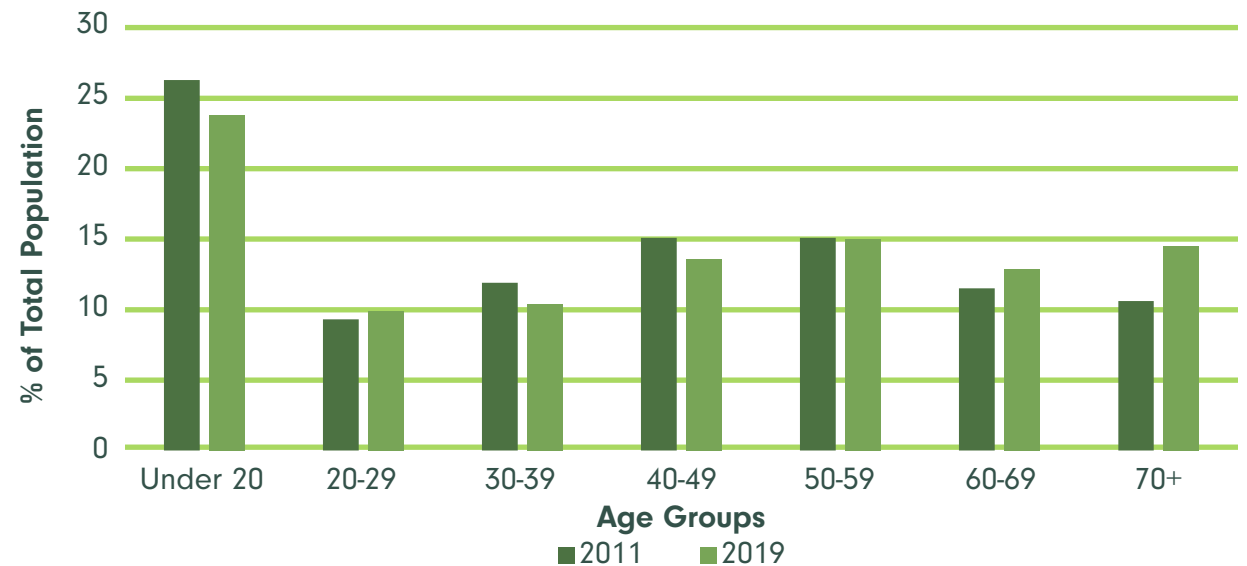
	<b>2019 ESTIMATES</b>
<b>Warren</b>	44.4
<b>White</b>	42
<b>Benton</b>	40.5
<b>Vermillion</b>	42.9
<b>Fountain</b>	43.4
<b>Tippecanoe</b>	28.2
<b>Indiana</b>	38.1

Source: US Census Bureau

## Median Age

The median age of a community has several implications on a county including demanded housing products and governmental services. Warren County is an aging community. In fact, Warren County has the highest median age in the Greater Lafayette region. From 2011 to 2019, Warren County's median age increased from 42.1 to 44.4, driven by a higher percentage of the population over the age of 60 (+ 5.3%) and a lower percentage of the population under the age of 30 (- 1.9%). If this trend continues, Warren County's median age will continue to rise.

**Figure 3.5: Age of Warren County Residents 2011 vs 2019**



Source: US Census Bureau

# ECONOMICS AND WORKFORCE SUMMARY

## Educational Attainment

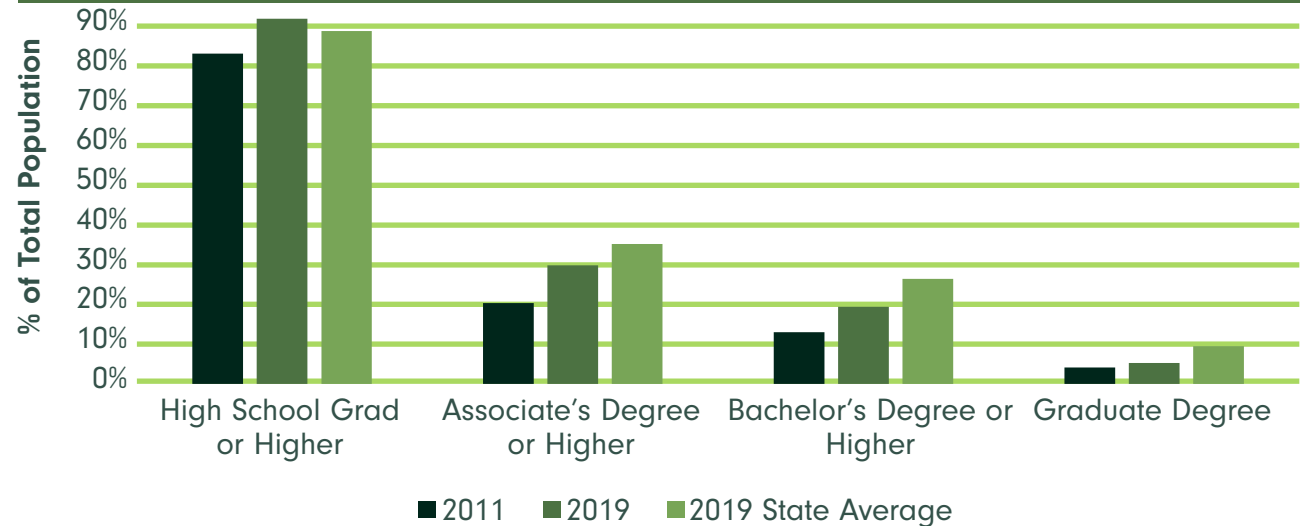
Education attainment is viewed as a key indicator of the income-earning potential of a community, especially in a modern economy driven on technological advancement. For Warren County, educational attainment is one of county's greatest strengths. The percentage of Warren County adults with a college degree has grown from 20.4% in 2011 to 29.9% in 2019 enabling the county to exceed all other counties in the region, except Tippecanoe County, in the same category. While Warren County has lots to be proud of from a regional perspective, the county still falls short of the state average (35.2%).

**Figure 3.6: Regional Educational Attainment**

	WARREN	BENTON	FOUNTAIN	TIPPECANOE	VERMILLION	WHITE	INDIANA
<b>High School Grad or Higher</b>	91.90%	89.90%	89.00%	91.70%	91.00%	88.80%	88.80%
<b>Associate's Degree or Higher</b>	29.90%	24.00%	23.90%	46.30%	24.90%	25.80%	35.20%
<b>Bachelor's Degree or Higher</b>	19.40%	16.10%	14.90%	38.80%	14.20%	16.40%	26.40%
<b>Graduate Degree</b>	5.20%	3.70%	5.10%	17.40%	3.80%	5.60%	9.50%

Source: US Census Bureau

**Figure 3.7: Educational Attainment of Warren County Residents 2011 vs 2019**



Source: US Census Bureau

## Median Household Income

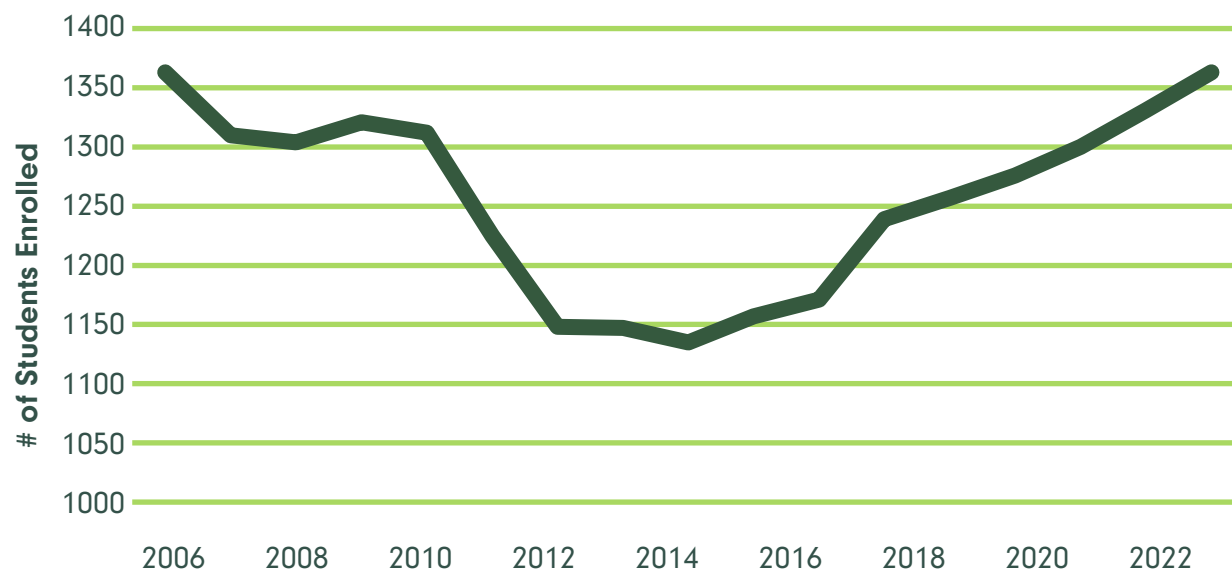
Median household income is a key indicator for the economic well-being of the county's residents. For Warren County, median household income is another impressive strength for the community. Warren County's 2019 median household income (\$60,553) far exceeded the rest of the Greater Lafayette region and the average for the State of Indiana. Warren County's income growth from 2010 to 2019 (23%) shows promise that the county's income growth will remain strong in the future.

**Figure 3.8: Regional Median Household Income**

	2010	2019	% GROWTH
<b>Warren</b>	\$49,238	\$60,553	23%
<b>Benton</b>	\$46,318	\$49,488	7%
<b>White</b>	\$42,817	\$52,874	23%
<b>Tippecanoe</b>	\$42,632	\$53,130	25%
<b>Vermillion</b>	\$41,904	\$50,243	20%
<b>Indiana</b>	\$47,697	\$56,303	18%

Source: US Census Bureau

**Figure 3.9: MSD of Warren County Enrollment**



Source: Indiana State Department of Education

## Employment

According to the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority, five industries make up nearly 40% of Warren County's employment offerings – manufacturing, agriculture, government, health care, and transportation and warehousing. Of these industries, manufacturing (18.6%) and agriculture (17.0%) dominate the county's employment opportunities. Warren County's top five employers are: Ascension St. Vincent Williamsport, TMF Center, MSD Warren County, Williamsport Nursing and Rehab, and Hubner Industries LLC.

## Public School Enrollment

Public school enrollment plays an important factor in determining the viability of the local school corporation and the larger community as a whole. Warren County offers some of the greatest educational assets in the region and there are numerous anecdotal examples of families choosing to live in Warren County for its school system. As a result, unlike many rural communities across the state, Warren County's school enrollment has been increasing in recent years. Since 2013, MSD of Warren County school enrollment has risen by nearly 19%, building enrollment back to levels not seen since 2006.

# EXISTING LAND USE

## Land Use Patterns

### **Agriculture:**

As one might expect in this rural county, a majority of the land use is comprised of agricultural uses as depicted in the Warren County existing land use map. As a result, agriculture plays a pivotal role in Warren County's economy. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there are approximately 187,854 acres of agricultural land in Warren County which encompasses just over 82% of the county's total land area (228,579 acres). This is an increase of 7% from 2012 when the total farm acreage was 175,961. The number of farms increased slightly during that same period from 413 in 2012 to 417 in 2017. Approximately 89% of the land is classified as cropland, only 5% is covered in woodlands, and the remaining 6% of land is set aside for pastureland or other uses. From an economic perspective, the average net cash income per Warren County farm in 2017 was \$98,311, nearly double the State per farm average of \$50,171. Also of note is that of the 687 "producers" or farm operators in the county, 27% of them are 65 years old or older, and only 10% are under the age of 35.

Warren County's agricultural economy continues to grow. In 2015, Benton Group founded a large-scale dairy operation in Warren County. Currently, the farm milks 5,900 cows, employees 55 residents of the region, and contributes \$81 million in regional economic impact annually. Benton Group partners with local farmers to grow the inputs that are necessary to run their operation.

In addition, the 27,000-acre Jordan Creek Wind Farm in Prairie, Jordan, Liberty and Steuben Townships will likely focus the types of future land uses in that area to agriculture and/or low-density residential development. Given the existing renewable energy infrastructure, this area might also become a logical location for future additional investment in renewable energy such as solar or wind farms.

### **Industrial:**






There are pockets of industrial uses along the Norfolk Southern rail line in the southern section of the county, along the Vermillion Valley rail line in Foster, and on the outskirts of Williamsport and West Lebanon.

### **Residential:**

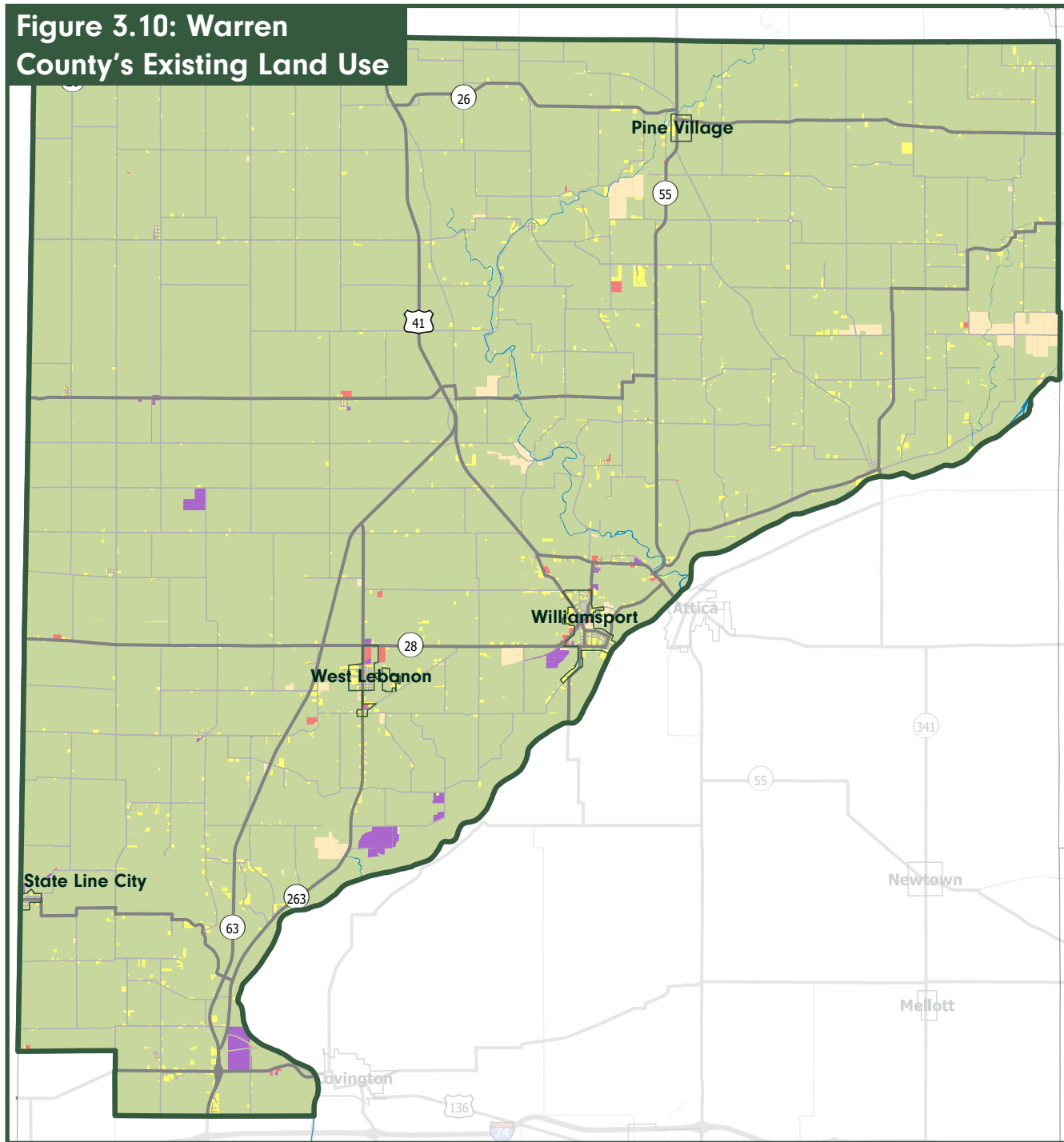
Residential development is focused in the various towns, with rural (low-density) residential lots scattered throughout the county – primarily adjacent to county roads and highways. A vast majority of recently built homes in Warren County are rural residential homes, located on large, scenic lots within a short drive from towns.

**Figure 3.10: Warren County's Existing Land Use**

**Legend**

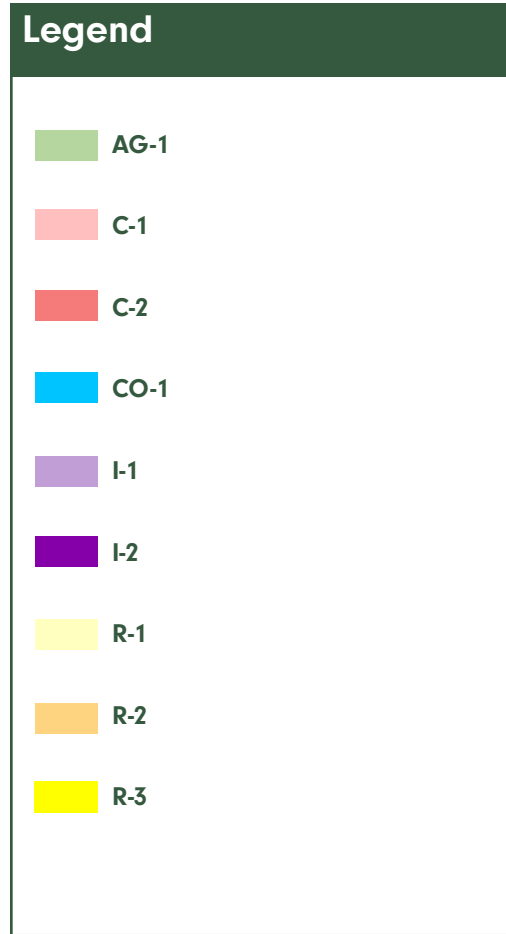
-  Agriculture
-  Industrial
-  Commercial
-  Residential
-  Government/Institutional

Scale: 1"=3 Miles

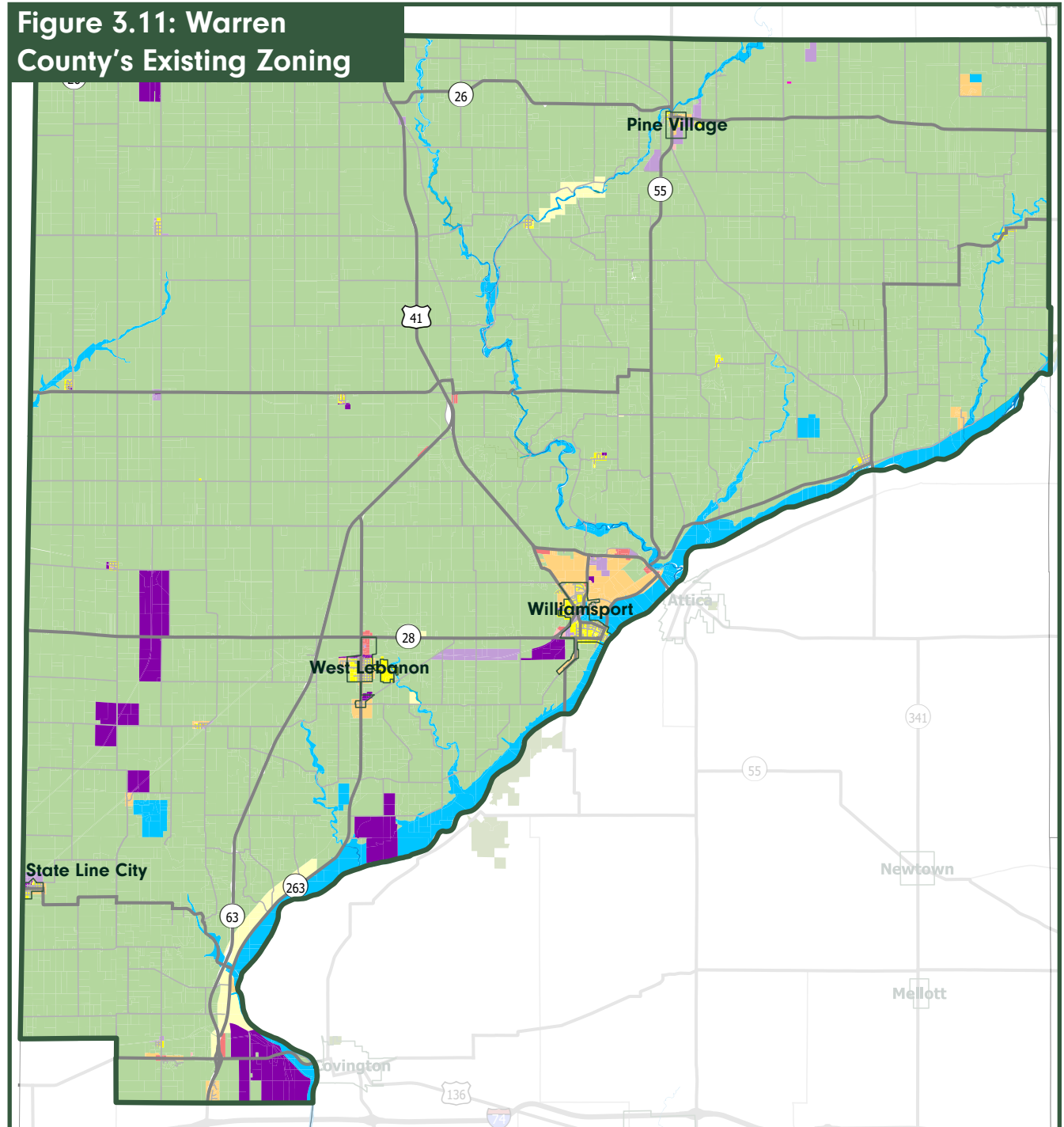


## Existing Zoning

Warren County's current zoning map is featured in Figure 3.11. Currently, a vast majority of parcels in Warren County are zoned for agricultural uses.



**Figure 3.11: Warren County's Existing Zoning**



## Topography

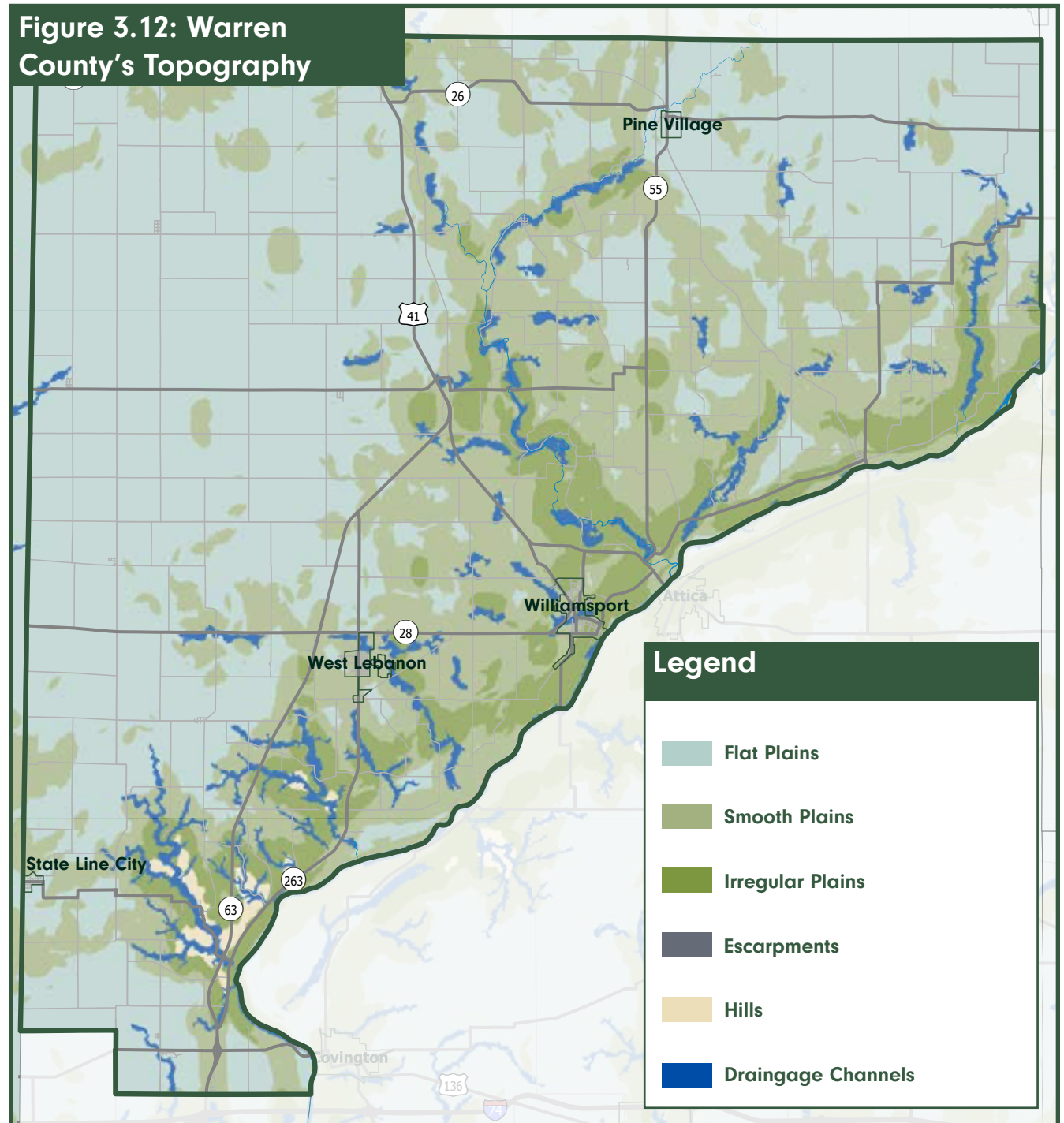
Warren County's topography varies widely from one portion of the county to the next. As the map to the right showcases, the western portion of the county, and specifically the northwestern portion of the county, is characterized by flat topography. As a result, this portion of the county is home to the county's wind farm and the county's strongest agricultural production. The northeastern portion of the county is also characterized by a flat topography and agricultural production.

Inversely, the southern and middle portion of the county is characterized by a more rolling topography with vegetation, lowlands, and riverbeds. Due to its natural beauty, this portion of the county has been home to recent housing developments. This portion of the county is also home to timber production.

Scale: 1"=3 Miles



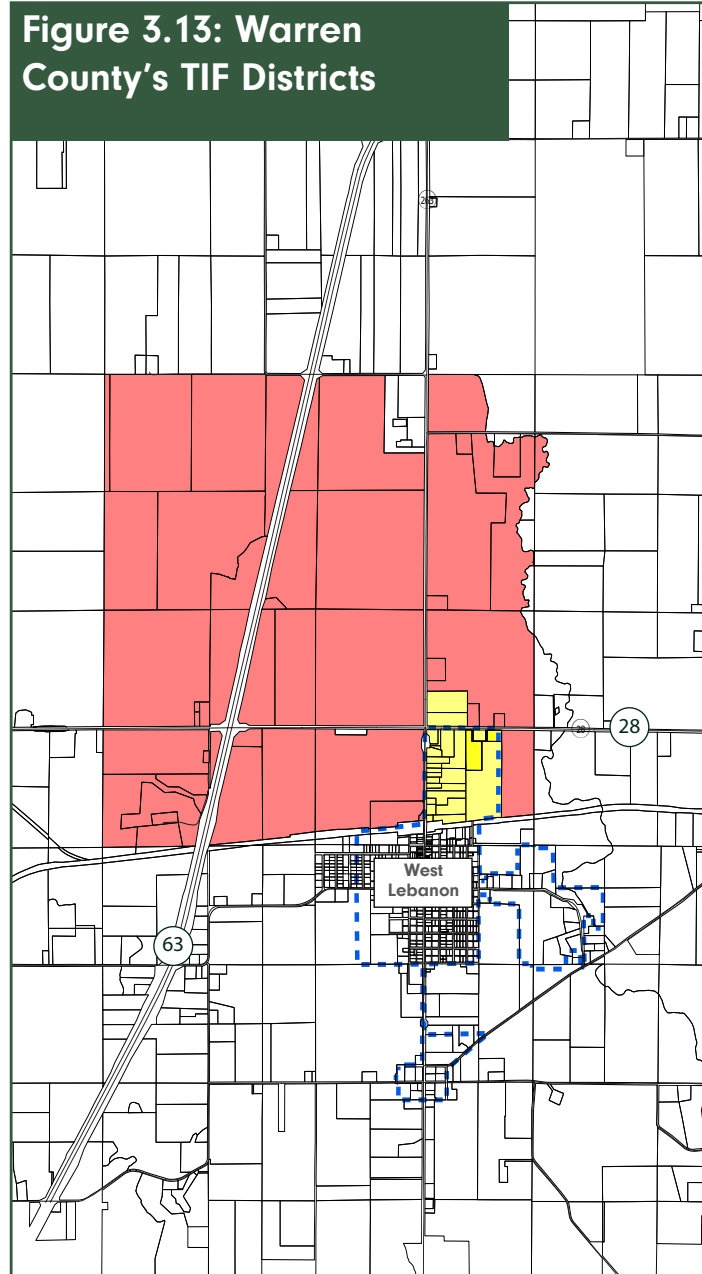
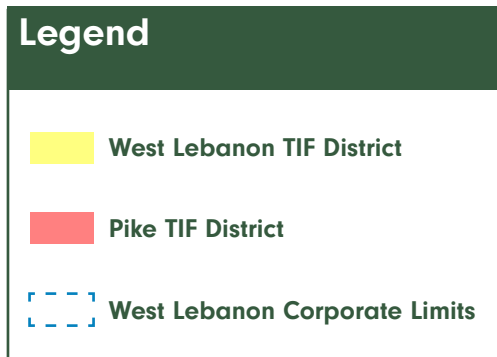
**Figure 3.12: Warren County's Topography**



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## TIF Districts

Warren County is currently taking advantage of Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) to capture additional local government revenues for future investment in economic development. Warren County is serviced by two (2) TIF districts – Pike TIF and West Lebanon TIF. Both TIF districts are located near the intersection of IN-28 and US-263 just north of West Lebanon. The Warren County Redevelopment Commission was established to enable the creation of TIF districts, with particular focus to strengthening infrastructure in the West Lebanon area.



## Existing Sites

Warren County has several existing sites that are primed for economic development. Generally, the county's top prospective sites for future economic development are aligned on three key corridors:

- 1 IN-28 and IN-263 Intersection –** Located just north of West Lebanon, this corridor is a community priority location for economic development. This corridor is serviced by water and sewer from West Lebanon and is located within the county's only two Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) Districts.
- 2 Bowman Business Park –** This 30-acre site (expandable to 80 acres) is located just outside of Pine Village which is just 20 minutes from Purdue University. This site is currently undeveloped, but it is serviced by Nipsco natural gas, electric, and underground fiber optics.

### Legend

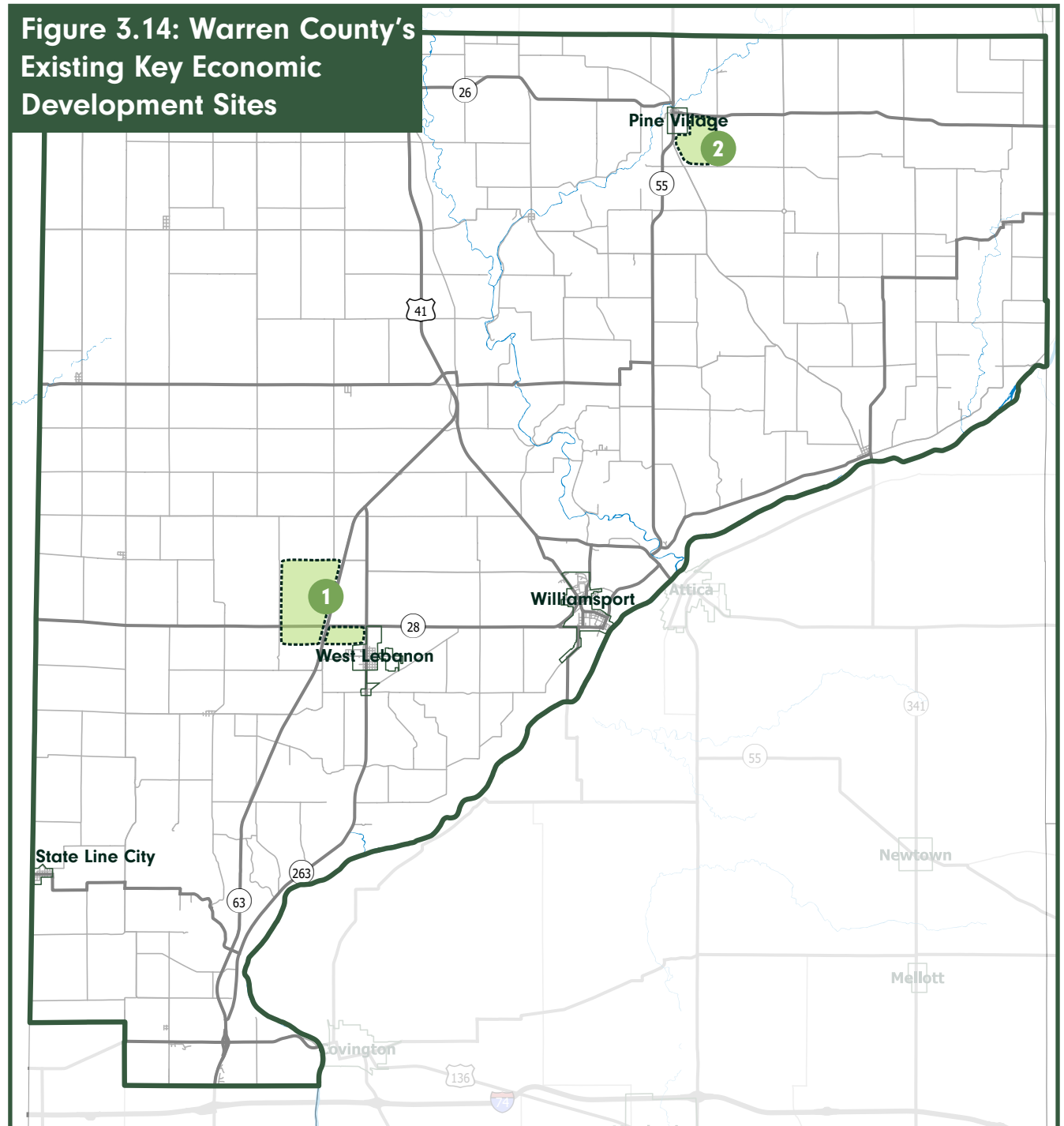
 Key Economic Development Site

Scale: 1"=3 Miles

0 1.5 3 6



**Figure 3.14: Warren County's Existing Key Economic Development Sites**



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Commuting Patterns

Warren County’s commuting patterns showcase that a large percentage (40%) of Warren County’s labor force chooses to live in Warren County but work outside the county. A large portion of Warren County workers that travel outside of the county for work are traveling to Tippecanoe County (41.7%). On one hand, these statistics demonstrate that Warren County has an opportunity to attract residents to work within the county. On the other hand, a large portion of residents working in Tippecanoe County could be a possible explanation for the county’s elevated median household income, given the county’s higher education and advanced manufacturing positions.

**Figure 3.15: Where Warren County Residents Work**



■ In Warren County (60%)   ■ Outside Warren County (40%)

Source: Stats Indiana

## Economic Leakage

Currently, an overwhelming majority of Warren County retail dollars are being spent outside of the county. Due to proximity to neighboring retail and economic centers, like Lafayette, Crawfordsville, Attica, and Danville, Illinois, and a lack of retail establishments within the county, county residents are choosing to spend their retail dollars elsewhere. In fact, 85.8% of the county’s retail dollars are being spent outside of Warren County. Specifically, from a food and beverage retail perspective, 92.1% of food and beverage retail dollars are being spent outside of Warren County. This data solidifies a testament that was repeated across the public participation process – Warren County needs a greater number of local retail establishments.

## Jordan Creek Wind Farm

The Jordan Creek Wind Farm is a 150-turbine wind farm in Warren and Benton Counties. 2016, Warren County’s Board of Zoning Appeals approved an exemption to allow for the construction of the Jordan Creek Wind Farm in Jordan, Liberty, Prairie, and Steuben townships. The wind farm, which became fully operational in 2020, will provide a total of at least \$8 million in economic development payments to Warren County from 2021- 2024 as part of an agreement between Warren County and the wind farm’s ownership.



Jordan Creek Wind Farm

# INFRASTRUCTURE

## Water and Sewer Infrastructure

Throughout the public participation process for this comprehensive plan update, participants expressed the need to expand and improve public infrastructure across the county. Warren County is limited in its development opportunities by its existing water and sanitary sewer infrastructure. Currently, Warren County has public water and sanitary sewer service in three of its incorporated towns.

### Williamsport:

**Wastewater:** The Town of Williamsport Wastewater Treatment Facility serves more than 900 residential and commercial customers. Williamsport currently operates a Class II, 0.3 MGD gallons per day sequencing batch reactor (SBR) treatment facility consisting of a flow equalization basin, a comminutor, two SBR units, ultraviolet light disinfection, an effluent flow meter, two aerobic digesters, and four drying beds.

**Water:** Williamsport's water is provided by the Town of Williamsport's Water Department. Williamsport's groundwater system has three wells located within the corporate limits and 12-miles of main and supply lines. A 500,000-gallon elevated storage tank provides additional water storage capacity for the town. The average demand on the system is 180,000 gallons per day. Williamsport provides more than 900 residences and commercial customers with water services.

Figure 3.16: Williamsport Existing Sewer Service



Figure 3.17: Williamsport Existing Water Service



# INFRASTRUCTURE

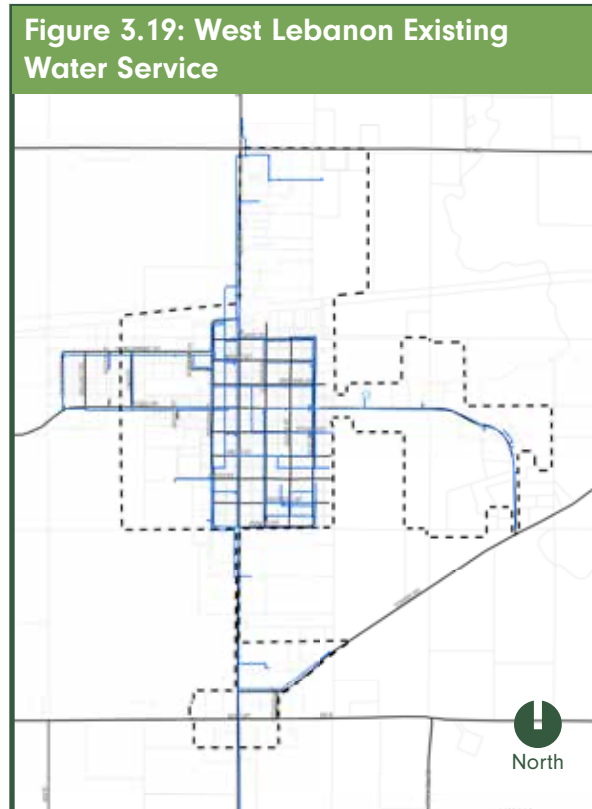
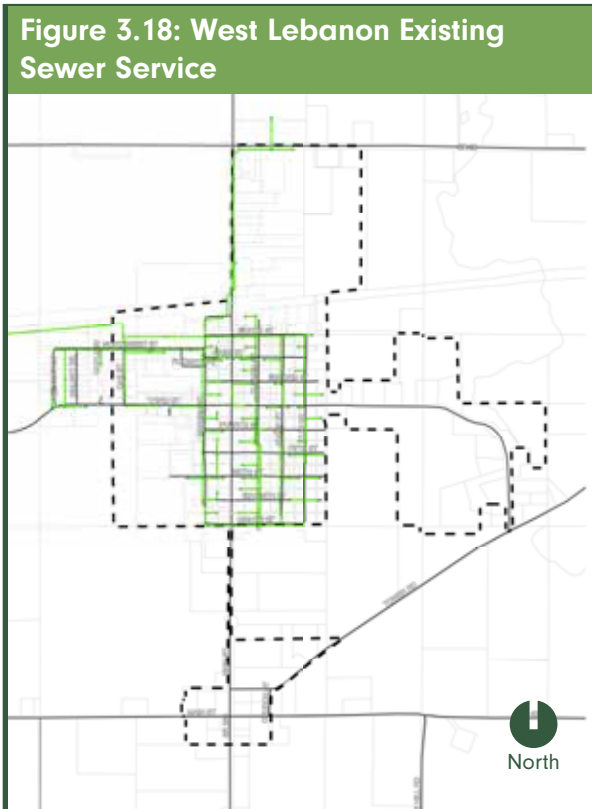
## West Lebanon:

**Wastewater:** The Town of West Lebanon wastewater system consists of a gravity septic tank effluent small diameter sanitary sewer collection system consisting with approximately 6.5 miles of sanitary sewer, ranging in size from 4-inch to 8-inch diameter. The collection system also includes three (3) sanitary lift stations. The Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) includes a Class I-SP, 0.078 MGD controlled discharge facility with an

influent structure, influent meter, a two-cell 9.72 acre facultative lagoon, chlorination/dechlorination, effluent flow meter, and stream gauge. The average flow at the WWTP in was approximately 0.069 MGD, which is approximately 88% of the rated design capacity.

**Water System:** The Town of West Lebanon is currently supplied water by two (2) wells located south of the Town. The two wells pump from the wellfield, where

chlorine is injected, towards Town, which requires an intermediate inline booster station before reaching the distribution system. The water system has a capacity of approximately 288,000 gpd, with an average daily demand of approximately 75,000 gpd. The distribution system consists of approximately 9 miles of water main ranging in size from 2-inch to 8-inch in diameter. The Town has one (1) elevated water storage tank located on the west side of Town with a capacity of 150,000 gallons.



### Pine Village:

Wastewater: The Town of Pine Village wastewater system consists of a low pressure sewer collection system consisting of individual grinder pump stations and low pressure sewers ranging in size from 1.5" to 4" diameter. The Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) includes a Class I, 0.037 MGD recirculating sand filter treatment facility with primary settling tanks, recirculating sand filters, phosphorus settling/removal facilities, nitrification

reactor, ultraviolet disinfection, and effluent flow metering. The average flow at the WWTP in 2021 was approximately 0.022 MGD, which is approximately 60% of the rated design capacity.

Water System: There is no public water system in Pine Village. The water system for Pine Village consists of private water wells at each residence.

## Natural Gas

CenterPoint Energy provides natural gas service in portions of the county, mainly in and around the Town of Williamsport. Expanding natural gas access in the county remains a priority, but current pressure constraints have prevented further expansion of natural gas service. For those that are not connected to natural gas service, bulk propane service is provided by several companies throughout the region.

## Electrical Providers

Warren County is serviced by several electric providers.

- Duke Energy serves much of the county.
- The Warren County REMC, a member-owned cooperative, serves 4,800 members in Warren, White, Benton, Tippecanoe, and Vermillion counties throughout the region. The Wabash Valley Power Association provides Warren County REMC's power.
- The Town of Williamsport is serviced the Town of Williamsport's Electric Department, a member of the Indiana Municipal Power Agency.



# GOVERNMENT SERVICES

## County Leadership

### Elected Officials:

Warren County is served by a team of elected officials.

- Board of County Commissioners – 3 commissioners serve as the legislative and executive authority for the county. The board oversees the construction and maintenance of county bridges, roadways, and properties; has direct authority over the county highway, emergency management agency, and zoning departments.
- County Council - A 7-member county council has the ultimate decision-making power regarding fiscal affairs in Warren County. The council has authority to view or review fiscal matters, determine proper policy, and set priorities for the allocation and expenditure of county funds.
- Auditor – The county auditor serves as the secretary to the county commissioners, administers the county payroll, accounts payable, budgets, abatements, employee benefits, property deductions, and maintenance of the property transfer books.
- Assessor – The county assessor is responsible for establishing equal, just, and fair assessed values for all taxpayers in Warren County.

- Clerk – The county clerk is responsible for the county’s elections and voter registration.
- Recorder – The county recorder ensures that the county’s records are accurately recorded and preserved for history.
- Surveyor - The surveyor’s manages the construction, reconstruction and maintenance of all Warren County regulated (legal) drains in conjunction with the Warren County Drainage Board.
- Treasurer – The county treasurer collects all tax payments for real estate, personal property, mobile homes and inheritance taxes.



Warren County Courthouse

### County Departments:

Warren County residents are served by several county departments.

- Highway Department: The Warren County highway department is responsible for the maintenance of 555 miles of county roads and all county bridges and culverts.
- Emergency Management: It’s the responsibility of the emergency management department to create, train, maintain, and exercise disaster plans for Warren County.
- Solid Waste: The Warren County solid waste district reduces the amount of solid waste going into regional landfills by educating the public on the importance of preserving and enhancing the environment through reduce, reuse, recycle.
- Area Plan and Zoning: The Warren County area planning and zoning office issues building permits, oversees special exceptions and variances, oversees building projects, and explains and enforces the county’s ordinances.

## Economic Development

Warren County Local Economic Development Organization (LEDO) serves as the county's economic development authority. The LEDO was formed in 2001 and is supported by county funding with other financial support coming from grant opportunities. Warren County LEDO is a not-for-profit organization and was originally charged with supporting local business with a focus towards available and affordable job training to enhance employment opportunities.

As the county's lead economic development organization, it markets Warren County to prospective companies that are seeking a location to start or grow their business. It also supports existing local businesses by connecting businesses to local, state, and federal initiatives for expansion of employment and technology enhancement.



Source: Warren County LEDO

## Emergency Services

### Fire:

Warren County is serviced by three fire departments – Williamsport, West Lebanon, and Pine Village. All three of the county's fire departments are staffed by volunteers. Due to the county's relatively small number of fire department personnel and a lack of public water access in a majority of the county's towns, ISO ratings for the county are low and negatively impact the insurance premiums paid by county residents.

In an effort to consolidate resources, Warren County recently restructured its fire territories. Williamsport's fire department will operate as an independent fire territory, servicing Williamsport and Washington Township. West Lebanon and Pine Village Fire Departments will form a separate fire territory and will service both towns and eight townships.

### Law Enforcement:

The Warren County Sheriff's Department provides law enforcement services for a vast majority of the county. The Town of Williamsport is served by a police department consisting of a town marshal, a deputy town marshal, one full-time deputy, and two reserve deputies. The Town of West Lebanon also has a town marshal.

# BROADBAND

## Coverage

According to the Warren County Broadband Taskforce, approximately 10% of county residents do not have access to broadband. Those who have access to internet in the county do not have adequate speeds available to them. In fact, almost 70% of broadband services in Warren County fall below the federal broadband minimum standard of 25 mbps download speed and 3 mbps upload speed. For the success of students, businesses, and remote workers, Warren County's broadband infrastructure desperately needs speeds that far exceed the federal broadband minimum standard.

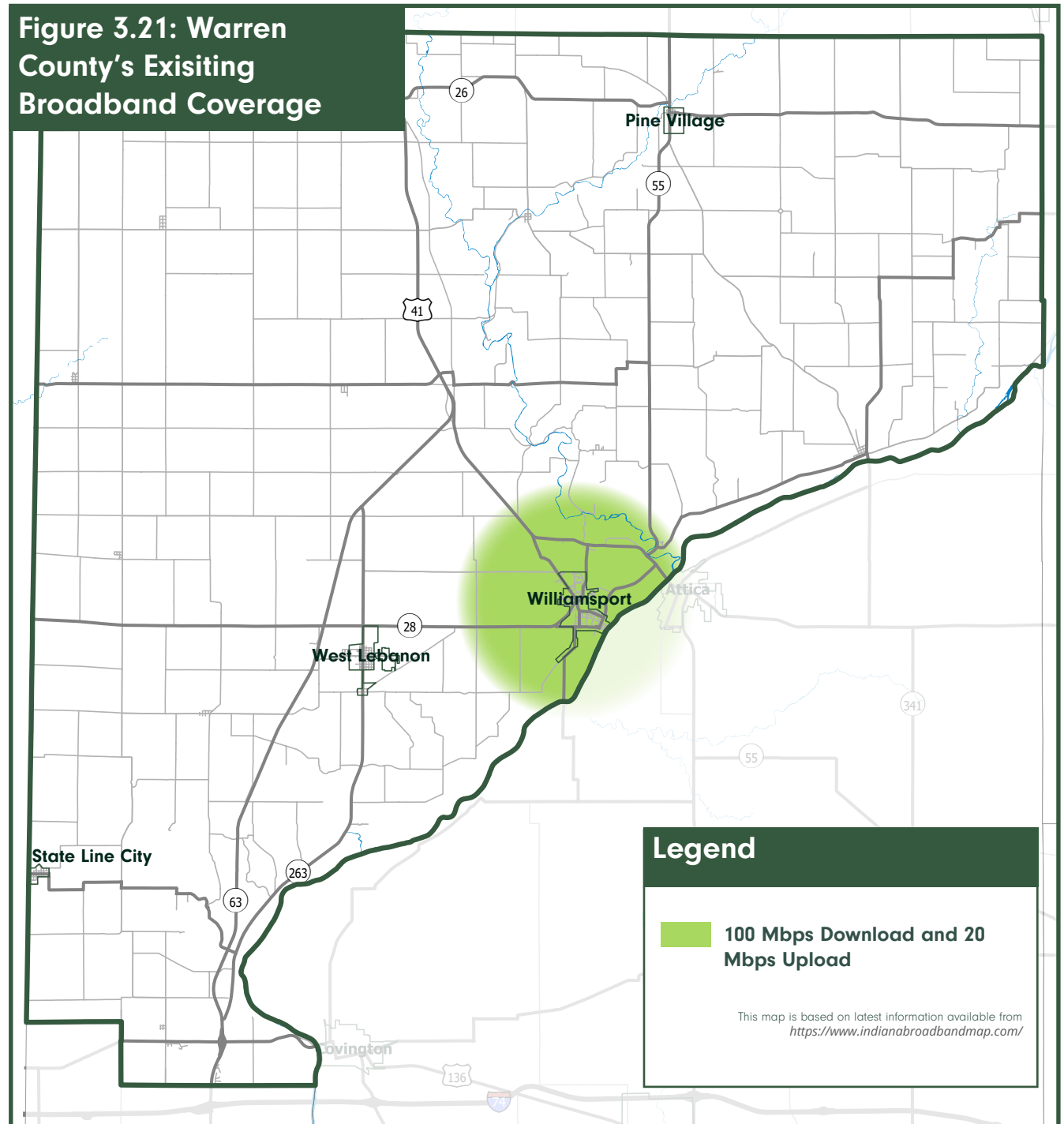
## Recent Investment

In February 2022, the Warren County Broadband Taskforce advised county officials to pursue proposals for a large-scale broadband project in the county that would invest in broadband services of 100 mbps download speed and 20 mbps upload speed. Warren County LEDO is currently pursuing such proposals from internet providers. To make the project feasible for internet providers, the Warren County Council has approved a county investment of up to \$5 million.

Scale: 1"=3 Miles



**Figure 3.21: Warren County's Existing Broadband Coverage**



# TRANSPORTATION

## Transportation

A number of Indiana State roads and highways traverse Warren County making up approximately 105 miles of roadway linking destinations within the county and connecting residents to points beyond the county. These roadways include:

- U.S. Highway 41
- State Road 26
- State Road 63
- State Road 55
- State Road 28
- State Road 263

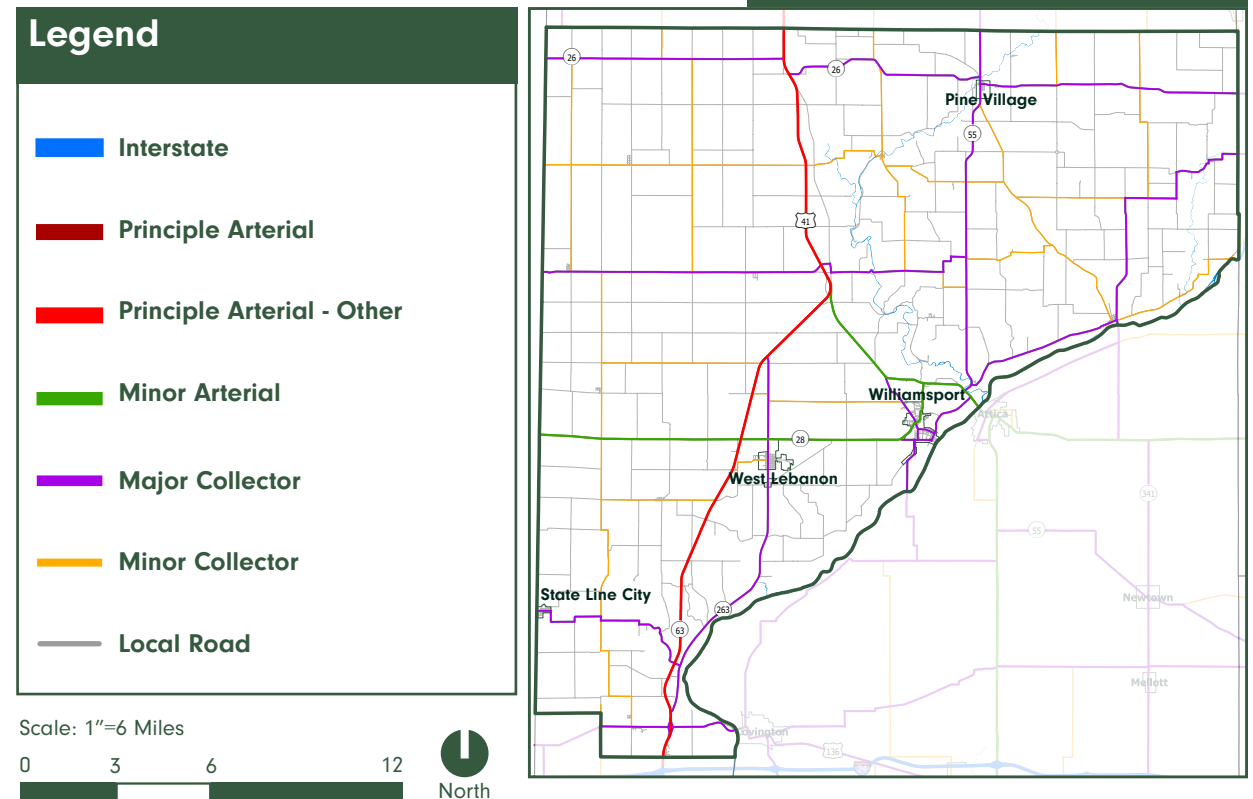
Currently, INDOT is planning a \$14.7 million improvement project along a 15.7-mile section of S.R. 26 from U.S. 41 to the Warren/Tippecanoe County line. Construction is tentatively scheduled between 2022 and 2023. These improvements include increasing the travel lanes to 12 ft. wide and adding a 5 ft. shoulder along both sides. Within Pine Village, improvements will encompass:

- Improved access and turning radii for trucks at the intersection of SR 26 & SR 55
- New curb lines on either side of the new sidewalk along the south side of SR 26 from SR 55 to Jefferson St in order to raise the sidewalk up and delineate vehicular traffic from pedestrians.

- Curbs are being added on either side of SR 26 from Jefferson St. to Pine Village Elementary School
- New ramps throughout the town to meet ADA standards

According to INDOT's State Transportation and Improvement Program (STIP) for fiscal years 2020-2024, INDOT does not have any other major projects planned for Warren County's highways or bridges through 2024.

**Figure 3.22: Functional Classification**



# TRANSPORTATION

## Gravel/ Paved Road Inventory

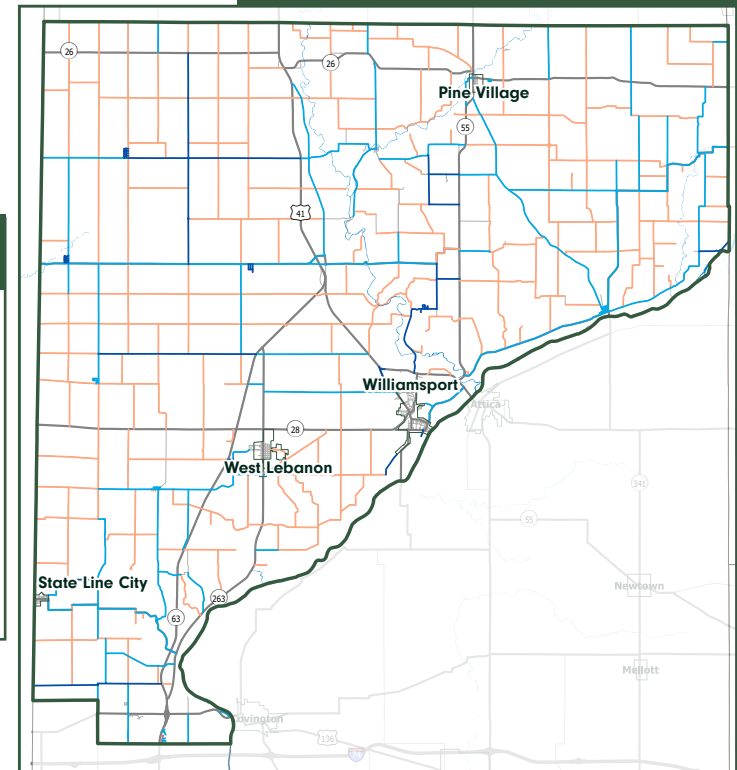
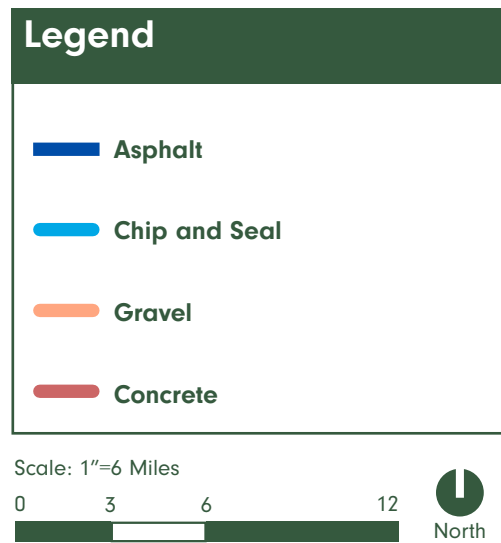
The remaining county roads and local streets are a combination of gravel, “chip and seal”, asphalt and concrete surfaces. A recent Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) report visually evaluated the condition of approximately 530 miles of roads throughout Warren County. As the table below indicates, 60% of the county roads in Warren County are gravel. The county completes a regular assessment of its roadways using the PASER rating system. This system rates each road segment on a scale of 1 – 10 with 1 being the worst condition and 10 being the best condition. Typically, ratings of 1-3 indicate Poor Condition, 4-6 represent Fair, and 7-10 represent Good Condition. This report outlined the condition of county roads rating their condition between 3 and 9 as illustrated in the table to the right.

**Figure 3.23: Warren County Roadway Surface Inventory**

SURFACE TYPE	TOTAL MILES	MILES IN GOOD CONDITION (7-10)	MILES IN FAIR CONDITION (4-6)	MILES IN POOR CONDITION (1-3)
<b>Gravel</b>	318.1	6.4	311.7	0
<b>Chip Seal</b>	171.8	134.2	35.2	2.4
<b>Asphalt</b>	39.4	38.9	0	0.5
<b>Concrete</b>	0.5	0	0.5	0

Source: Warren County PASER Assessment

**Figure 3.24: Warren County Roadway Surface**



# NATURAL RESOURCES

## Natural Resources

The natural setting of Warren County includes a wide array of landscape features including the Wabash River and Big Pine Creek waterways, associated riparian corridors, sandstone bluffs, and native woodlands and grasslands. The Indiana DNR lists Big Pine Creek as a scenic canoe trail. The only public access site to the Wabash River in Warren County is the boat ramp in Old Town Williamsport. Currently, plans are being developed for a canoe and kayak launch and at Cicott Park in Independence. Warren County residents also have nearby access to the Wabash River in neighboring counties – Granville Bridge in Tippecanoe County and Ouabache Park in Fountain County.

### NICHES Land Trust Properties:

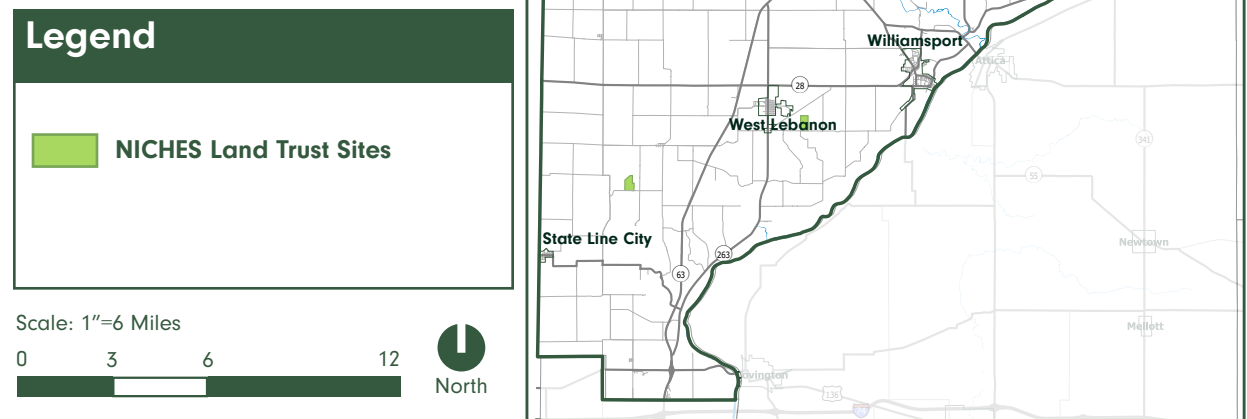
The NICHES Land Trust owns and manages twelve nature preserves comprising nearly 1,000 acres of Warren County’s natural beauty. The Trust works to preserve, maintain, and restore Indiana’s natural treasures along the Wabash River and within its watershed. The organization’s mission focuses on water quality, habitat restoration, environmental stewardship and connecting people with nature. NICHES Land Trust properties can be found throughout Warren County, with a majority located along the Wabash River and its tributaries. This

includes areas as small as the 10-acre Carr Island on the Wabash River, to the 308-acre Weiler-Leopold Nature Preserve.

The NICHES Land Trust recently acquired and now maintains the 136-acre Fall Creek Gorge Nature Preserve (The Potholes”) located north of Williamsport near the confluence of Fall Creek and Big Pine Creek. The preserve contains steep walled canyons, tumbling waters, and numerous

potholes – circular openings in the sandrock that were shaped over time by the rapid waters of Fall Creek. However, due to overuse and heavy visitation over the last couple of years, the Fall Creek Gorge Nature Preserve is currently closed to public use, but a plan is in place to re-open the preserve to the public in the near future.

**Figure 3.25: NICHES Land Trust**



# NATURAL RESOURCES

## Indiana Department of Natural Resources Properties:

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) owns and manages the Roger McClellan Gamebird Habitat Area located north of Independence. There are a number of benefits to preserving Indiana's and Warren County's natural areas. Preservation areas provide recreational, scientific, and educational benefits for humans, as well as intact habitat for flora and fauna. The 130-acre Roger McClellan Gamebird Habitat Area also offers a number of recreational benefits, and offers a historical glimpse into one of Warren County's natural areas.

## Nature Conservancy Initiatives:

The mission of the Nature Conservancy of Indiana is to protect and maintain the rich collection of natural landscapes and waterways throughout Indiana. The Nature Conservancy is also partnering with Warren County landowners and farmers in the Big Pine Creek watershed in to improve water quality through the targeted implementation of conservation practices that reduce the runoff of fertilizer and sediment.

In spite of all of the natural beauty comprising Warren County, there are relatively few opportunities for the general public to enjoy these features. A number of the nature preserves described previously have limited parking, are only accessible by waterways, and/or do not have designated trails. However, there are a few public parks scattered throughout the county that are open for public use. These areas include:

- Williamsport Falls – located near Williamsport, this area features a waterfall and Falls Branch Park which includes a 1.6-mile loop trail.
- Weiler-Leopold Nature Preserve – located along the Wabash River upstream of Williamsport, contains two 1-mile loop trails among the native woodlands and grasslands.
- Gladys and Al Wright Rock Creek Nature Reserve – this area located southwest of West Lebanon includes a 0.8-mile trail among this 80-acre reserve containing small sandstone cliffs and native woodlands.
- Crow's Grove – located north of Williamsport, this 34-acre preserve features a 0.4-mile trail among old growth pine trees, small wetlands and streams.
- Cicott County Park in Independence

- Fleming Woods County Park - A new 30-acre park in West Lebanon
- Williams Woods – This 116-acre preserve managed by the Niches Land Trust in western Warren County contains forested and restored prairie lands along Possum Run. The Laura Hare Forest Prairie Border Trail includes examples of Grover and Millie Williams's poetry on posts.

The Pine Creek Camp, located southwest of Pine Village, is a 336-acre wooded retreat owned and operated by the United Methodist Churches of Indiana. The camp offers programs for middle school and elementary students, as well as for families across Indiana. The camp is also available for corporate and staff retreats, family events, banquets, weddings among many other events.

Hanging Rock Christian Camp, located south of West Lebanon, is a 208-acre wooded retreat originally established in 1946. The camp is supported by 83 Church of Christ and Christian Churches in west-central Indiana and east-central Illinois. In addition to camping and cabin facilities in this natural setting, the camp also includes an indoor gym, dining facility, dorms, large meeting rooms for retreats/conferences, and small 8-room motel.

# QUALITY OF PLACE

## MSD of Warren County

The Metropolitan School District (MSD) of Warren County serves 1,400 students in the community. MSD of Warren County has three elementary schools - one north of West Lebanon, one in Williamsport, and one in Pine Village. In 2020, MSD of Warren County announced plans to build a new elementary school in Pine Village after the school had doubled its enrollment in the past ten years. Construction for the new facility is now underway.

Seeger Memorial Junior/Senior High School, the school system's only high school, offers several quality programs for its students including advanced college placement programs for students with post-secondary aspirations and strong vocational programs in welding, machine trades, auto mechanics, horticulture/landscaping, health careers, and computer-assisted drafting for students looking to enter the workforce with a strong set of vocational skills. Recently, the Ura Seeger Memorial Auditorium was built on the campus of Seeger Memorial Junior/Senior High School and offers a state-of-the-art space for community events, concerts, and performances.

## Washington Township Public Library and Williamsport Learning Center

Located in Williamsport, the Williamsport-Washington Township Public Library has been serving adults and children in Warren County since 1914. The facility has been rated a 4-Star Library by the American Library Journal since 2008.

This same facility also houses the Williamsport Learning Center which offers enrichment classes to the community on a variety of subjects. The Learning Center works with students to help them obtain a High School Equivalency Diploma and/or a career certification.



Washington Township Public Library and Williamsport Learning Center

## Warren County Community Foundations

The Warren County Community Foundation (WCCF) was established in 1998 and serves as a vehicle for people of all means to make a lasting difference in the county. In 1999 WCCF qualified for a Lilly Endowment GIFT program of \$1.5 million.

Since that time, the WCCF has continued to invest in the facilities and people that make Warren County a special place to live. Most recently, WCCF received a Community Leadership Grant of \$250,000 through the Lilly Endowment's Giving Indiana Funds for Tomorrow (GIFT VII) initiative. These funds will be used for park improvements in Independence, West Lebanon, Williamsport.

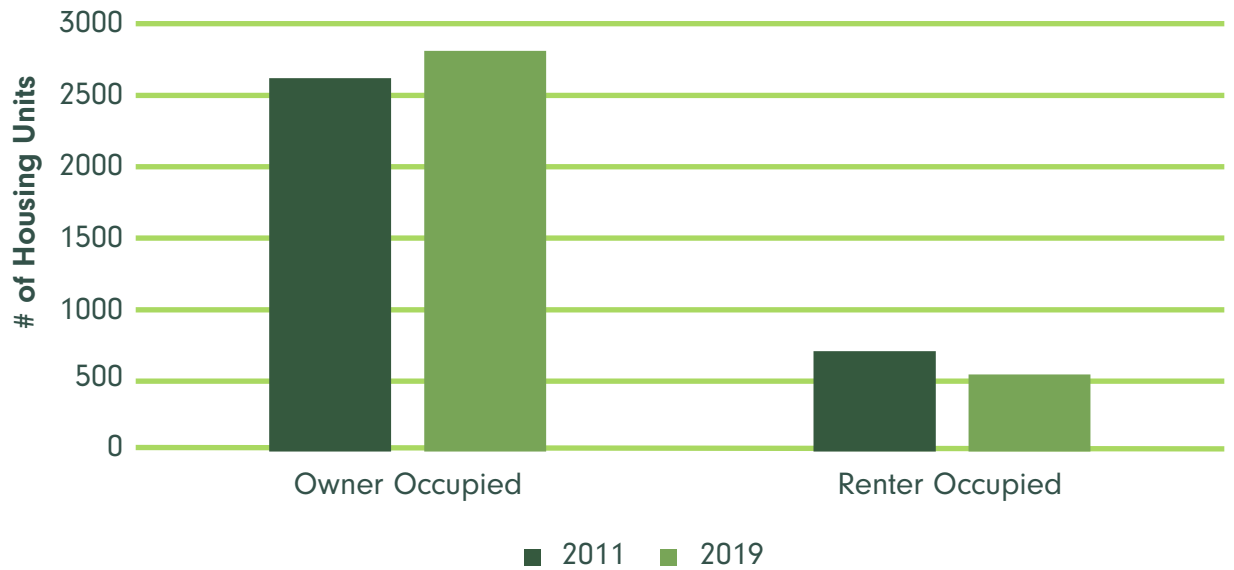
# HOUSING

## Occupancy Rate

Warren County’s housing is dominated by owner-occupied units. The percentage of owner-occupied units is also growing. In 2019, only 16.1% of Warren County housing units were occupied by renters. As was expressed throughout the community’s public participation process, potential new residents (such as new teachers in the Warren County school district) struggle to find options to ‘try before they buy’ in the county.

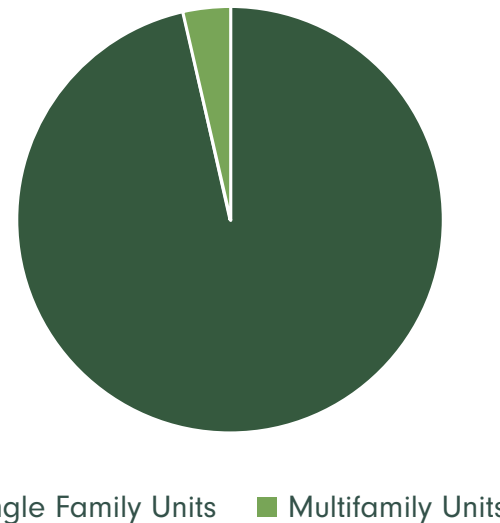
A vast majority of Warren County’s rental housing units are single-family dwellings. In fact, in 2019, 96.5% of Warren County’s housing units were considered single-family housing units. This reflects the sentiment expressed in the public participation process that multi-family apartments, townhomes, and condos units should be considered in the county’s future housing strategy to ensure that a supply of all housing types are offered within the community.

**Figure 3.26: Warren County Housing Occupancy Status 2011 vs 2019**



Source: US Census Bureau

**Figure 3.27: Single Family vs Multifamily Units in Warren County**

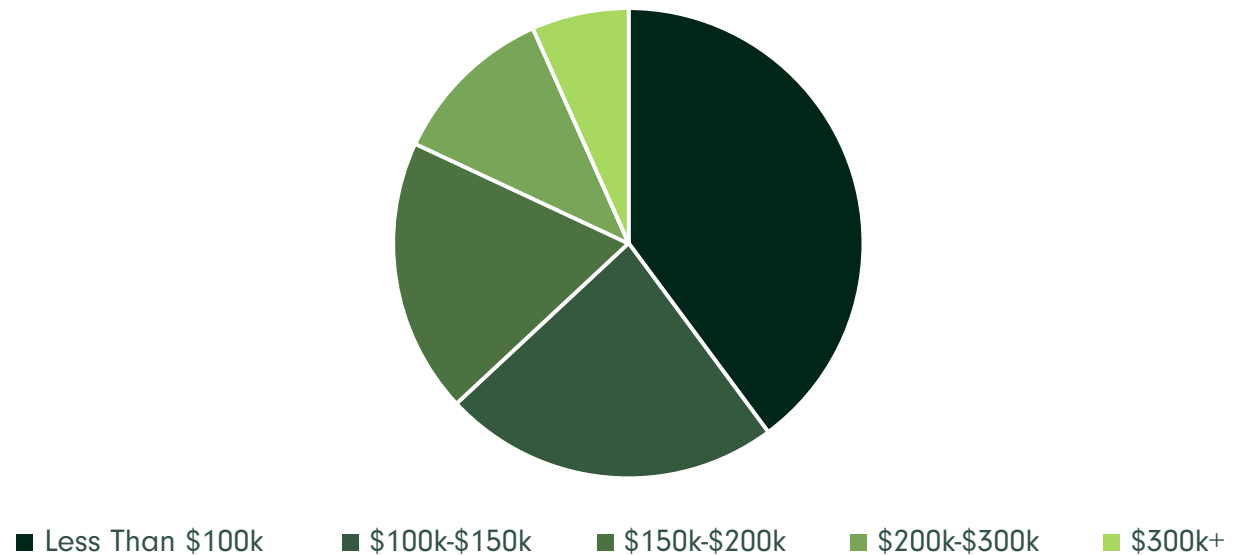


Source: US Census Bureau

## Home Values

Warren County's 2019 home values shows that an overwhelming majority (63.1%) of homes are valued under \$150,000 while only 30.3% of homes in the county are valued between \$150,000 and \$300,000.

**Figure 3.28: Warren County Home Values**

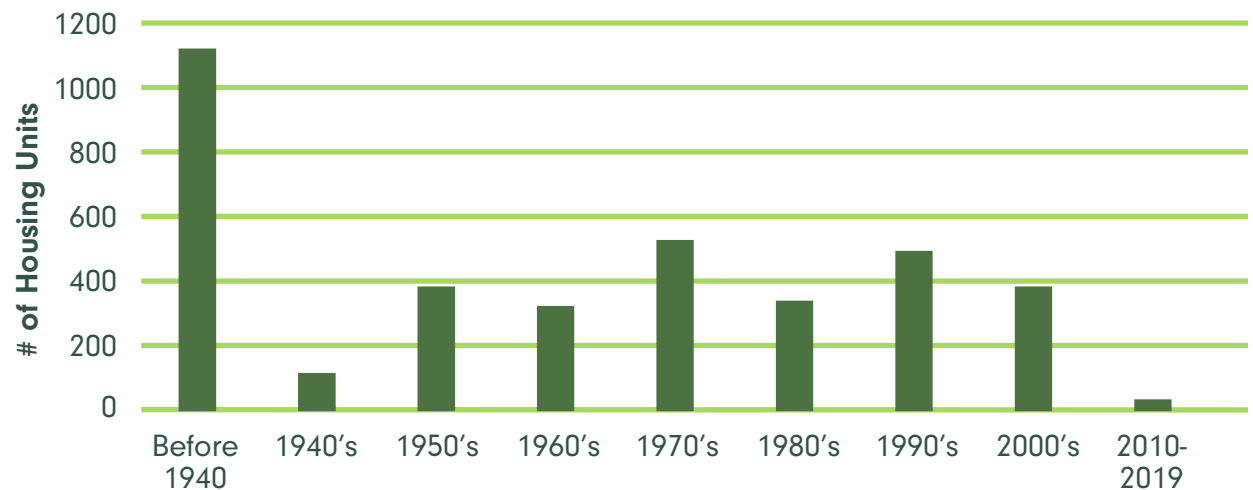


Source: US Census Bureau

## Age of Housing Stock

Warren County's housing stock is aging. A large portion of Warren County's housing stock was built prior to 1940 (30%) while only 11.6% was built after 2000. Because of the lack of homes built over the last decade, Warren County will need to ensure that the county's housing stock can meet the modern demands of younger generations as these generations increasingly become the primary share of homeowners in the county.

**Figure 3.29: Warren County Homes Built by Decade**



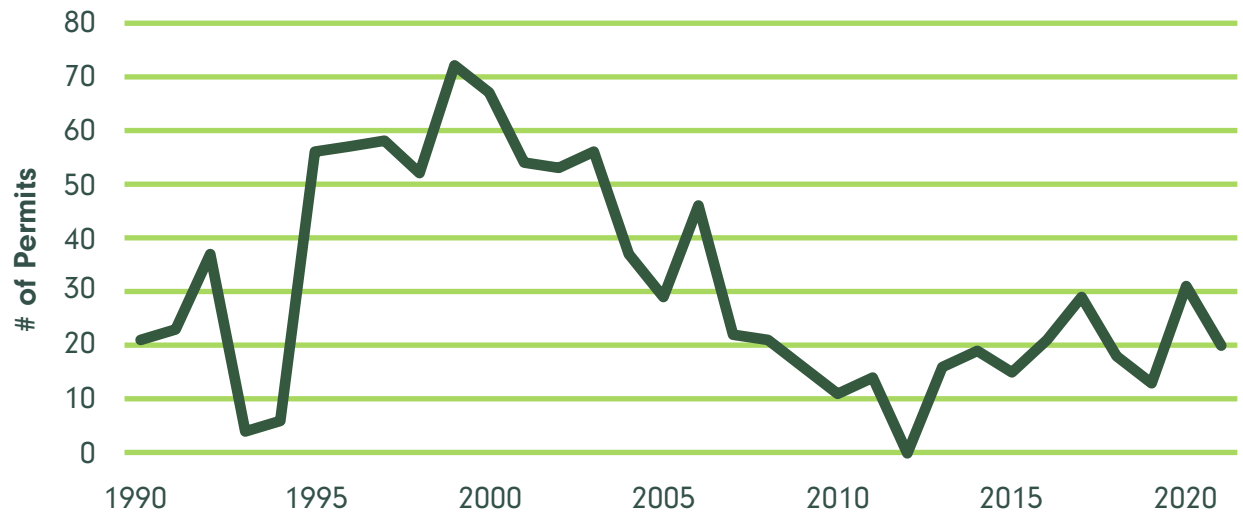
Source: US Census Bureau

# HOUSING

## Residential Building Permits

Warren County’s residential building permit data showcases that the number of annual building permits fell from 1999 to 2012. In fact, zero permits were filed in 2012. However, there appears to be momentum once again building in Warren County from a new housing construction perspective. Since 2012, annual building permits have rebounded. In 2020, 31 new homes were authorized by building permits, the highest number of permits in Warren County since 2006. Nonetheless, the number of housing starts is not on pace with previous decades.

Figure 3.30: Warren County Residential Building Permits



Source: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; Warren County Planning and Zoning

## Blight Elimination

Across Warren County’s incorporated and unincorporated towns, there are many blighted properties in disrepair. Given the poor state of these properties, they pose many health and safety concerns for neighboring residents. They often serve as a deterrent to future investment in neighboring properties. To mitigate these issues, the Warren County Commissioners adopted an unsafe building ordinance that sets standards for safety and allows the county to enforce those standards with

negligent property owners. Unfortunately, these enforcement standards are only as effective as the property owner’s ability to pay for repairs or demolishes. Often times, without assistance from the county, there is a financial burden that cannot be overcome, and properties remain in poor condition.

# CHAPTER 4

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

## Introduction

Warren County's Comprehensive Plan was built from the bottom-up and rooted in community input. From the beginning of the planning process, there were numerous opportunities for Warren County residents to participate in the county's comprehensive plan update. From in-person community workshops to online surveys, each step in the public input process offered a unique opportunity for community leaders, community stakeholders, and county residents to provide feedback regarding their desired future for Warren County.



Youth workshop at Seeger Memorial Jr./Sr. High School



Public workshop at Seeger Memorial Jr./Sr. High School

## Public Participation Process & Results

Warren County residents could participate in several types of engagement activities:

- **3** public workshops
- **5** stakeholder workshops
- A youth workshop
- An online survey
- A public presentation

In total, **over 600** Warren County residents contributed to the community's first comprehensive plan update in over 40 years.

- **52** Public Workshop Participants
- **57** Stakeholder Group Participants
- **55** Youth Workshop Participants
- **448** Survey Participants
- **37** Public Presentation Participants



Steering Committee discussing an initial draft of the Future Land Use Map

## Steering Committee

The Warren County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was formed to lead the planning process. The steering committee was comprised of community leaders representing a wide variety of Warren County organizations. The steering committee members were responsible for building the public participation process, forming plan priorities based upon feedback from the over 500 public engagement participants, providing direction for the goals and objectives of the plan and reviewing drafts of the planning documents. The steering committee met four times during the planning process.

### Meetings:

1. January 17th, 2022
2. March 14th, 2022
3. April 4th, 2022
4. June 9th, 2022

### Participants:

- Martin Blessing, Warren County Area Plan Commission
- Michele Stucky, Warren County Community Foundation
- Ethan Foxworthy, Warren County Council
- Dan Duchemin, MSD Warren County School Board
- John Comer, Warren County Council
- Ben Dispennett, Warren County LEDO
- Clay Andrews, Warren County Commissioner

## Public Workshops

The public workshops were the general public's opportunity to contribute in-person to the comprehensive plan. At each public workshop, residents were encouraged participate in the dialogue by providing their thoughts regarding the key assets in Warren County that need protected and the key opportunities for improvement in the future.

To ensure that as many residents as possible were able to attend, each public workshop was held in a different part of the county. This also presented a great opportunity to discuss issues and opportunities relating to the specific area of the county where the meeting was being held. As a result, the resulting goals and objectives are truly inclusive of the entire county.

## Results

### Assets to Protect

1. High-quality school system
2. Beautiful natural resources
3. Unique rural community feel

### Opportunities to Improve:

1. Expand housing Stock
2. Increase high speed internet availability
3. Improve infrastructure
4. Support local shops and restaurants
5. Expand emergency services

### Promotion - Facebook Page

To spread awareness about the latest comprehensive planning information, a Facebook Page called 'Warren County, IN Comprehensive Plan' was created by Warren County LEDO. The Facebook page was utilized to help the Steering Committee spread the word about the latest opportunities for the public to participate in the planning process including workshop times and locations and the link to participate in the online survey. In total, over 200 community members subscribed to the Facebook page.



Comprehensive Plan Facebook Page was utilized to keep the public informed



Residents gathered at State Line City's Town Hall for a public workshop on February 10th, 2022.



A public workshop was held at the Community Center in Pine Village on February 15th, 2022.

# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

## Stakeholder Workshops

To allow for specialized conversations around priorities of the 2021 Warren County Strategic Plan, the steering committee hosted five stakeholder group workshops. At these workshops, 15-30 community members participated in conversations about specific topics and attendees were invited to attend based upon his or her role and expertise within the community. Conversation at stakeholder group workshops were very targeted and aimed at brainstorming barriers and potential solutions to specific issues within the community. These direct discussions certainly shaped the goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan.



Economic development stakeholder workshop at AHW in Williamsport.



Education stakeholder workshop at the Williamsport Learning Center.

## Stakeholder Group Workshop Topics

1. County Leaders
2. Housing
3. Agriculture
4. Education
5. Economic Development

## Results

1. County Leadership Stakeholder Group
  - Expand housing options
  - Eliminate blight
  - Improve infrastructure
2. Housing Stakeholder Group
  - Expand infrastructure for housing
  - Diversify housing stock
  - Develop housing near infrastructure
3. Agriculture Stakeholder Group
  - Expand access to broadband
  - Improve roadways, bridges, and drainage
  - Plan locations for housing development
4. Education Stakeholder Group
  - Increase childcare options
  - Attract and retain teaching talent
  - Increase affordable housing options
5. Economic Development Stakeholder Group
  - Attract and retain workforce
  - Continued support from government
  - Improve local quality of life



Agriculture stakeholder workshop at the Warren County Purdue Extension office.

## Youth Workshops

Throughout the planning process, the importance of attracting and retaining youth was stressed across the county. Numerous ideas were proposed to keep Warren County's kids from leaving the county when they graduate from high school. While numerous ideas were developed, there was one issue that emerged – Warren County's youth hadn't contributed to the conversation. In fact, only a handful of public workshop participants were under the age of 20 and only 1 public survey respondent was under the age of 18.

To ensure that the voice of Warren County youth was heard, the steering committee organized two youth workshops at Seeger Memorial Jr./Sr. High School. The first

workshop was for officers of various Seeger student organizations and the second workshop was a combination of economics and government classes. In total, 55 students participated and contributed to the formation of the Warren County comprehensive plan.

Student feedback ultimately aligned closely with feedback from the general public. They prioritized broadband, jobs, things to do locally. The lack of these amenities was a significant concern to students, with a majority indicating they did not foresee returning to Warren County after completing vocational or higher education degrees.



High school students discuss what they like most about living in Warren County.



High school students shared what they would like to improve about Warren County.

## Results

### Assets to Protect

- Outdoor recreational assets
- Rural lifestyle
- Tight-knit community

### Opportunities to Improve:

- Additional restaurants
- More things to do on the weekends
- A gathering space for kids
- Access to high-speed internet
- Entry-level jobs for high school students

## Ideas for Weekend Activities

- Coffee Shop
- Trampoline Park
- Drive-in movie theater
- Bowling alley
- Recreation center

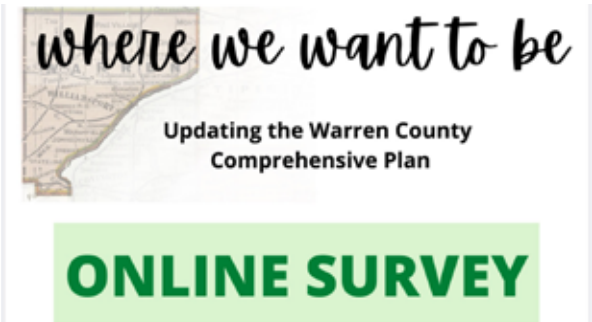
## Future Plans

- Roughly 70% of participants plan to attend college after high school
- Roughly 80% do not plan to return to Warren County beyond college/trade school

## Online Public Survey

With the understanding that personal schedules, work schedules, and health concerns due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic would prevent many residents from attending public workshops, the steering committee developed an online survey for any resident who wanted to voice their opinion about the future of Warren County. A link to the survey was shared on numerous outlets including the Comprehensive Plan Facebook page, the county website, and the local newspaper.

The survey was available to the Warren County community between February 14th and March 10th, 2022, and asked a number of questions ranging from how residents view the current state of the community, specific needs that Warren County should address, and their vision for the community's future. In total, over 440 individuals participated in the survey.



The online survey was promoted on the Warren County Comprehensive Plan Facebook page.

# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

## Survey Results

1. Vision for Warren County
  - Warren County should work to avoid population loss over the next 20 years
  - Increasing local employment opportunities should be a priority for Warren County
  - Attracting and retaining youth is crucial for the future of Warren County
  - Warren County needs more opportunities to shop local
2. Housing
  - 84% believe there are many neighborhoods with blighted properties in need of renovation or demolition
  - 73% agree that the county should provide incentives for new housing.
  - 65% think there is a shortage of available houses in Warren County
3. Land Use
  - Warren County residents are unsure about the effectiveness of existing zoning ordinances
4. Economic Development
  - 71% want to work in Warren County, but only 22% feel there are appealing job opportunities in the county.
  - Only 15% believe there are adequate childcare options in Warren County.
5. Public Infrastructure
  - 93% believe expanded access to broadband should be a top priority
  - Over 55% agree that utilities should be expanded to encourage housing development.
  - 59% think county roads should be improved
6. Natural Resources
  - 63% think that Warren County's natural resources and outdoor recreational amenities are outstanding.
  - 81% believe there should be additional opportunities to interact with Warren County public waterways
7. Quality of Place
  - 95% believe Warren County needs increased retail and dining options
  - Only 18% think there are plenty of things to do on the weekends in Warren County
8. Top 3 Investments:
  - Broadband
  - Roads
  - Workforce Development and Education

## Public Presentation

A public presentation was held on July 18th, 2022 at the Ura Seeger Memorial Auditorium to allow county residents to review a draft of the Comprehensive Plan. At the presentation, HWC Engineering, the county's planning consultant, shared an overview of the key priorities, goals, and action items that resulted from months of public participation and plan preparation. After the presentation, attendees had the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft.



Public presentation at Ura Seeger Memorial Auditorium



# CHAPTER 5

## LAND USE

The land use chapter of this comprehensive plan has been developed with the intent of allocating land use to support the key priorities of this plan, including:

- 1 Since Warren County businesses need more workers to stay competitive, land must be set aside for new housing development.
- 2 In order to retain existing businesses and attract new ones, Warren County needs to allocate land for employer sites where there is the proper mix of transportation access and supporting infrastructure.
- 3 As agriculture is a key industry in the county, agriculture uses should remain the dominant land use in large parts of the county.
- 4 Because Warren County has important natural resources that are a key part of its rural lifestyle, the community should protect these areas for all to enjoy.
- 5 Since protecting the rural character of the county is important, this should factor into all land use decisions.

Ultimately, the goal of the land use chapter is to ensure that new development is targeted and strategic. The following goals and objectives relating to land use identify specific steps that should be taken to support moderate development in priority areas of the county while protecting Warren County's numerous local assets that give the county its rural character.

# KEY OBSERVATIONS AND PUBLIC INPUT

## Align Development with Utilities

- Housing, commercial, and industrial development is wanted and needed in Warren County. To be fiscally responsible, development should be directed to locations where there are existing and planned infrastructure.

## Protect Natural Assets

- Warren County's diverse topography creates numerous unique natural assets that must be protected for future generations.

## Agriculture Pivotal to Economy

- Agriculture is a major part of Warren County's economy with farmland accounting for 82% of the county's total land area



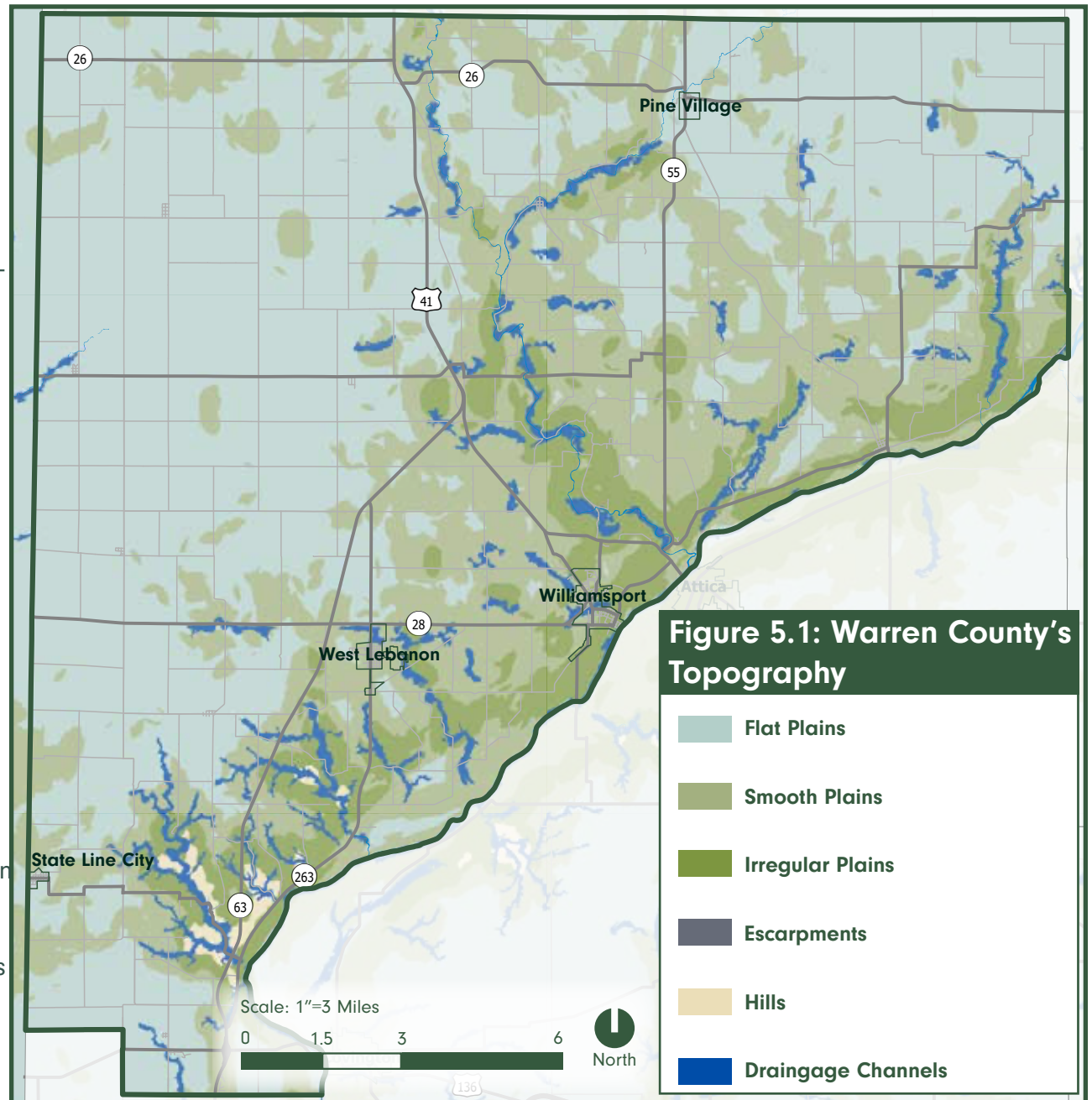
# BUILDING THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

## Introduction

One of the fundamental components of a comprehensive plan is a future land use map that identifies priority land use categories in the county. The goal is to identify areas of the community best suited for needed development. Warren County's future land use is influenced by several factors including topography, prime farmland, roadway surface, available infrastructure and hydrological features. Maps were developed, overlaid, and compared for each of these considerations. The following sections showcase the key takeaways related to the existing conditions that formed the future land use map.

## Topographical Map

Warren County's topography, the arrangement of the natural and artificial physical features of the area, varies widely across the county. The western and northeastern portions of the county are widely comprised of flat plains which are conducive for crop production. The southern portion of the county along the Wabash River, and the central portion of the county along Big Pine Creek, feature deep ravines and irregular topography which are not conducive for crop production. Instead, these areas offer beautiful landscapes for parks and single-family homes.

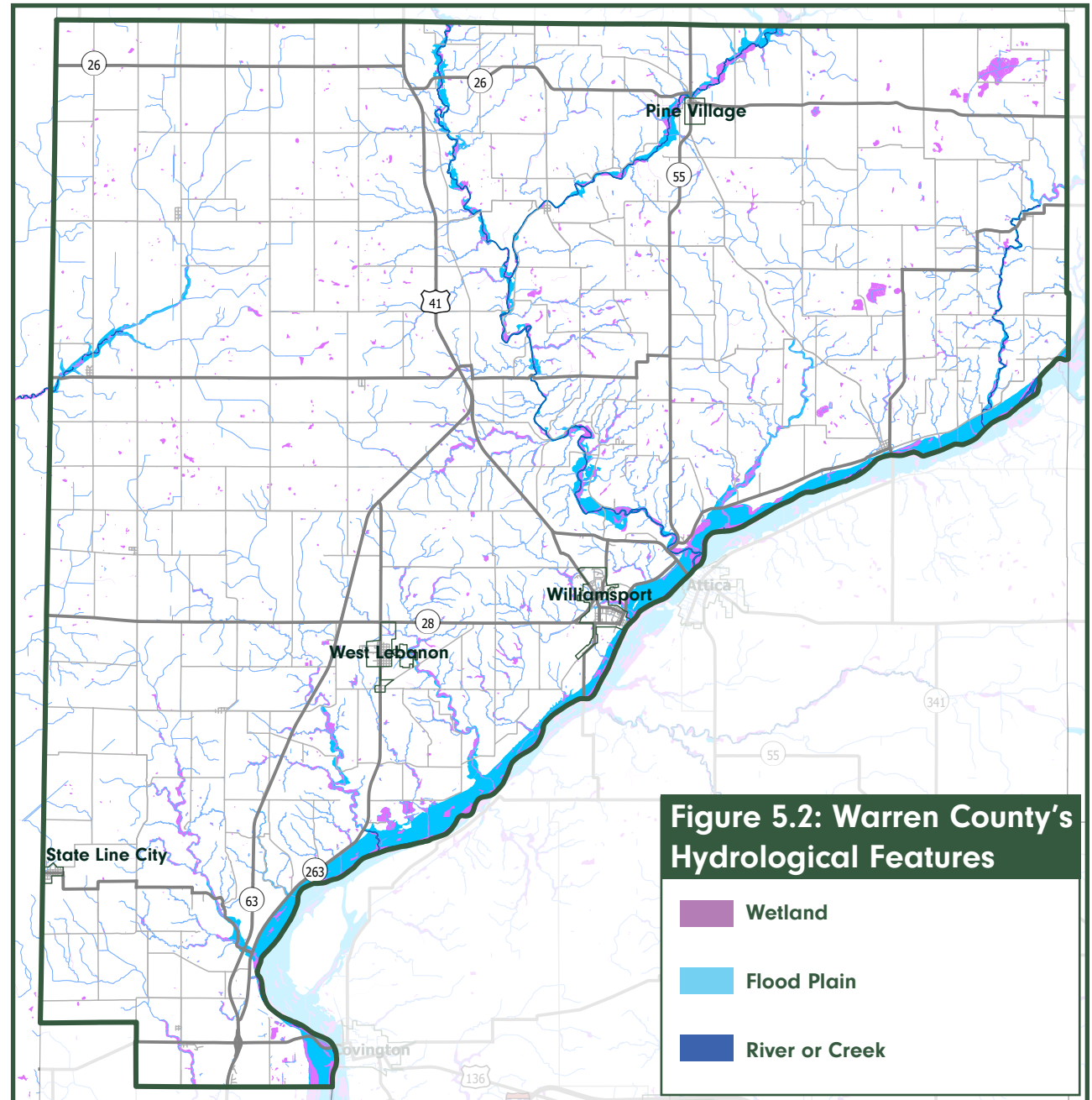


# BUILDING THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

## Hydrological Features Map

Warren County is home to numerous hydrological features. The Wabash River and its floodplains are located along the southern border of the county. Several tributaries, including Big Pine Creek, Kickapoo Creek, Redwood Creek, Opossum Run, Mud Pine Creek and Little Pine Creek, feed into the Wabash River. Each of these rivers and creeks and their respective flood plains impacts Warren County's topography and future land use potential. Wetlands are also a critical consideration for the county. These areas perform vital ecological functions. The county contains multiple presumed wetlands and small streams. The county's wetlands are largely concentrated around the county's rivers, streams, and creeks. Protecting Warren County's hydrological features will be a primary objective of future land use.

Scale: 1"=3 Miles

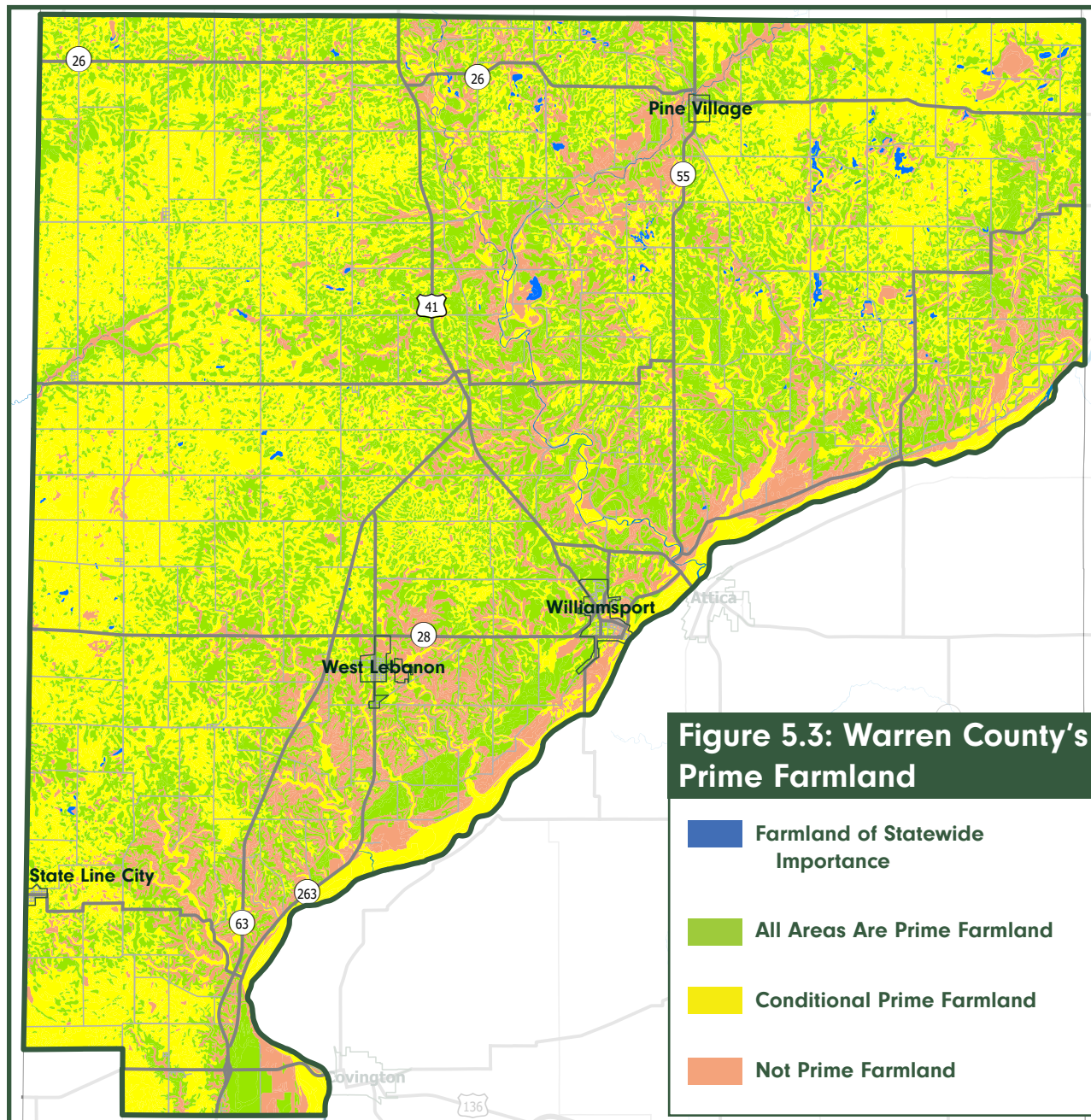


**Figure 5.2: Warren County's Hydrological Features**

- Wetland
- Flood Plain
- River or Creek

## Prime Farmland Map

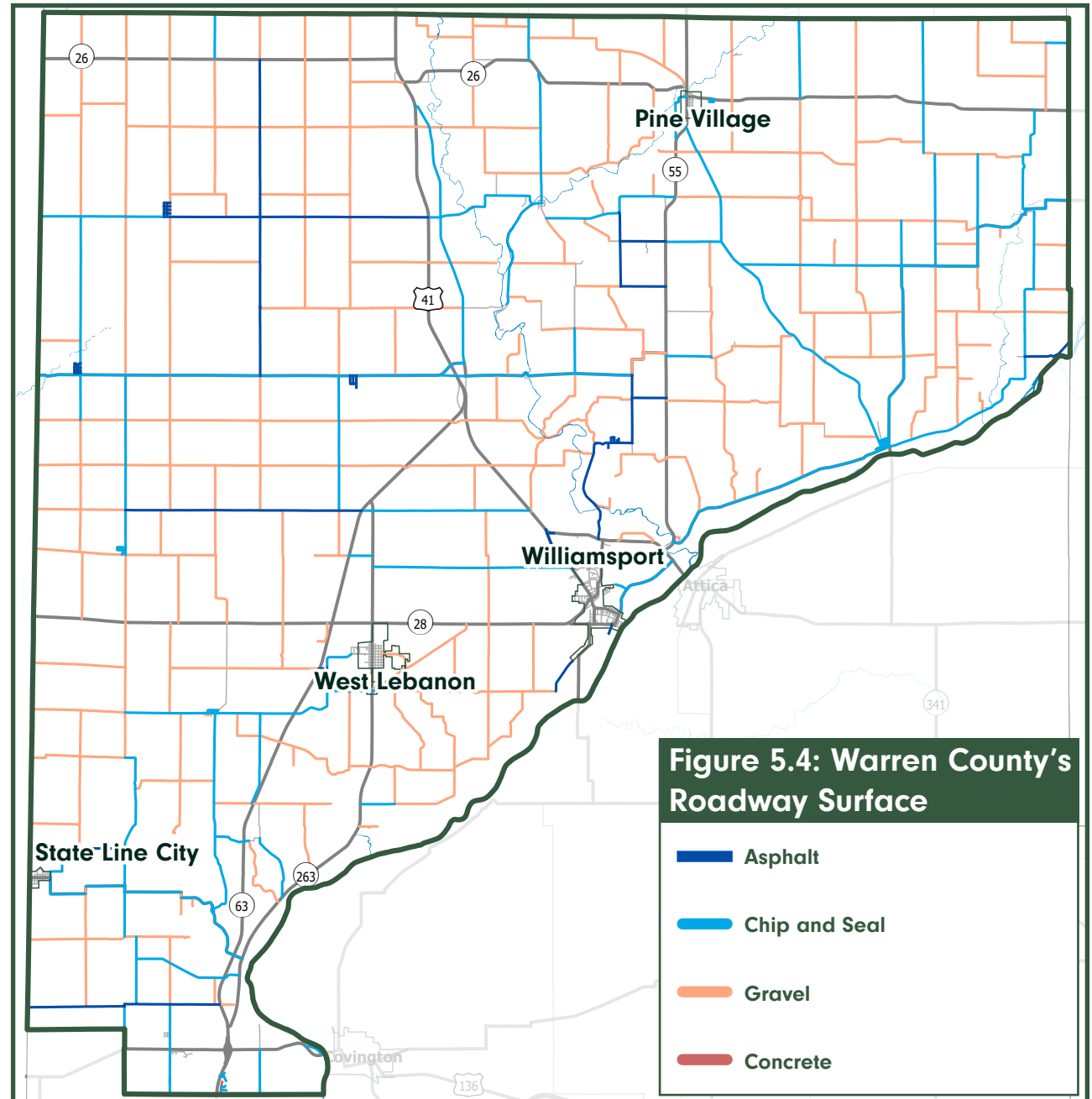
Warren County is home to some of the best farmland in the state. In fact, 82% of Warren County's land is used for agricultural uses which equates to over 187,000 acres of farmland. The following map showcases the reason why - a vast majority of Warren County's land features soil that is suitable as farmland. Warren County's prime farmland is concentrated in the western and northeastern portions of the county.



# BUILDING THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

## Road Surfacing Map

The surfacing of Warren County's roadways plays a pivotal role in determining future land use of the county. A majority (60%) of Warren County's roadways are gravel. Many land uses, like industrial and commercial uses, need paved roadways to transport goods; therefore, these land uses will be focused in areas of the county with paved roadways. Other uses, such as agricultural and estate residential, do not require paved roadways and can be located throughout the county. It is important to note that local realtors observed during the public engagement process home seekers frequently request residential property located on paved roads, indicating that future residential development is more likely to occur along paved roadways.



Scale: 1"=3 Miles



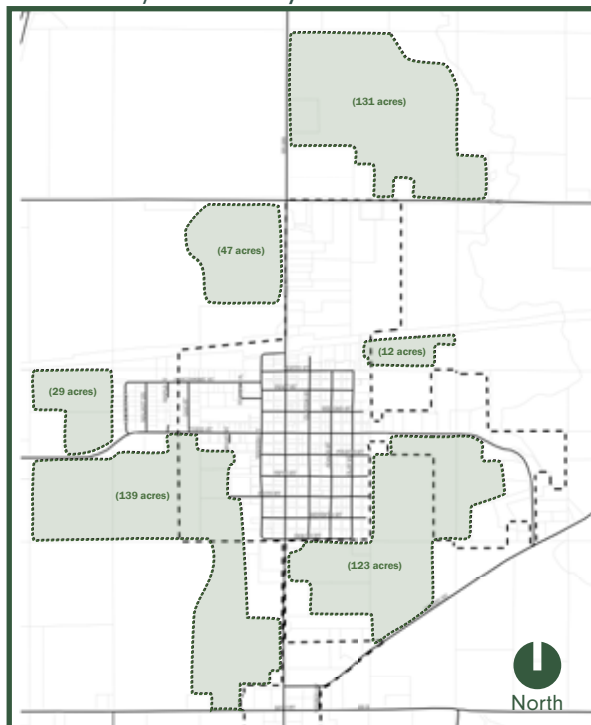
## Developable Land with Public Water and Sewer Maps

The availability of public water and sanitary sewer impacts future land use patterns in Warren County. Several land uses including industrial, commercial, and denser forms of residential require the availability of public water and sanitary sewer infrastructure. Currently, only three of the county's towns are serviced by public water and/or sanitary sewer:

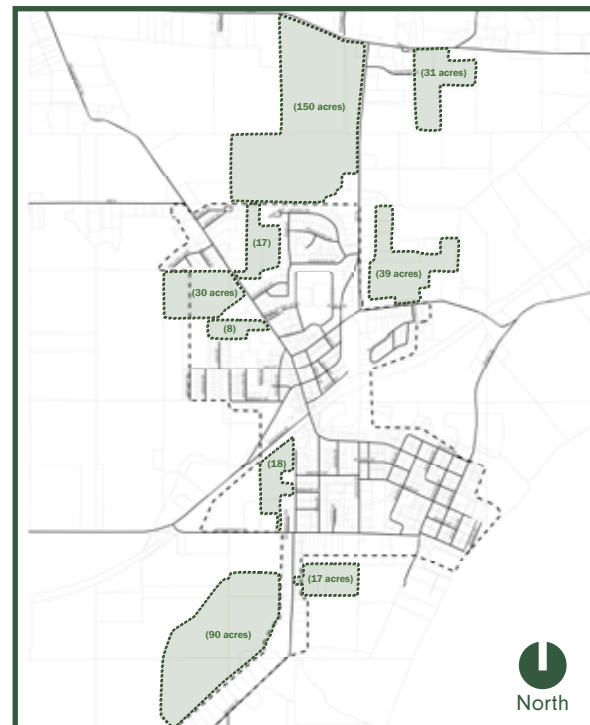
- Williamsport: water and sanitary sewer service
- West Lebanon: water and sanitary sewer service
- Pine Village: sanitary sewer only

water and sanitary sewer service, without having to complete major extensions. These represent the most cost effective and fiscally responsible development sites in the county. These maps are provided below.

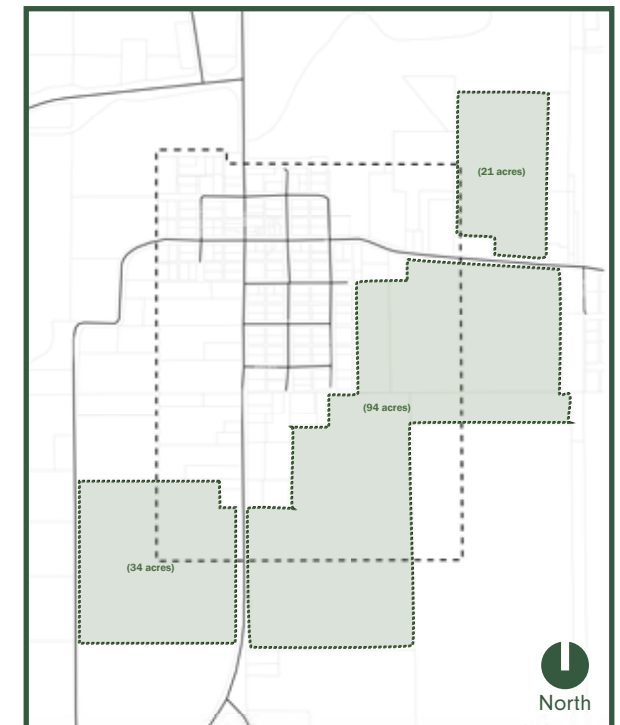
An assessment was completed to understand which undeveloped properties around the towns could be served with



**Figure 5.5: West Lebanon Developable Land**



**Figure 5.6: Williamsport Developable Land**



**Figure 5.7: Pine Village Developable Land**

# BUILDING THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

## Future Land Use Map and Policy

In addition to the previously discussed maps, the steering committee also utilized public input sessions to prioritize future land uses. During public input sessions, residents expressed widespread support for:

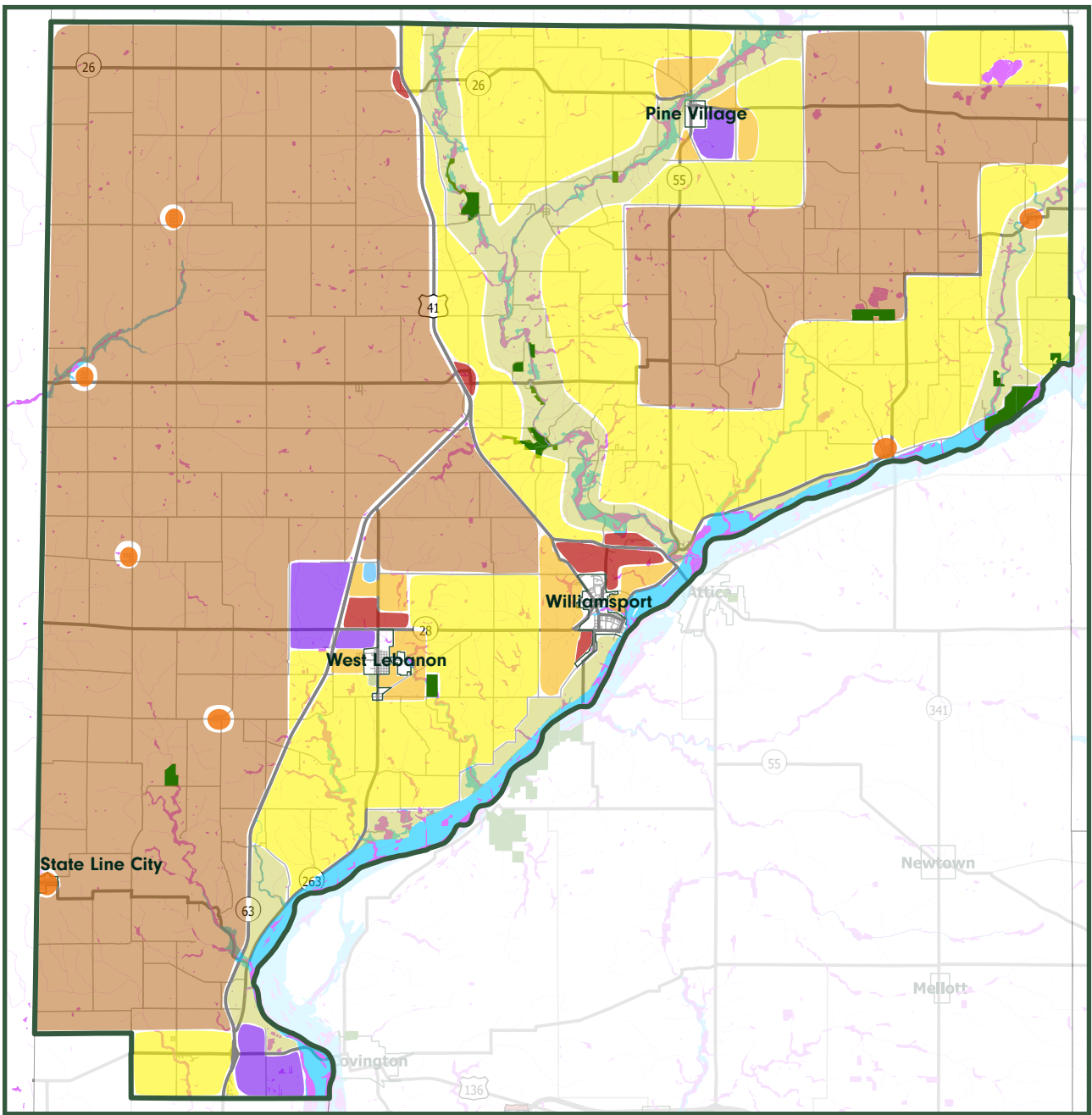
- Prioritizing agricultural uses in the western and northeastern portions of the county
- Residential development to occur near the existing towns to leverage existing infrastructure
- Protecting floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, and the riparian corridors associated with the Wabash River.

After carefully considering each map and public priority, the steering committee developed a map to guide future land use policy. This map, included as Figure 5.8, identifies a future land use classification for each area of the county. See pages 58 and 59 for descriptions of each of the land use classifications.

It is important to note this map does not constitute a change in existing zoning. Instead, this map serves as a guidance document that should be used by the Area Plan Commission and County Commissioners when land use changes are proposed. Existing land uses can and should remain as established by the current zoning map. However, when changes are proposed to zoning, officials should review the Future Land Use Map to determine compatibility with the county's goals for future land use patterns.

It is also noted that the future land use map does not cover areas within the county's four incorporated towns. For the purposes of planning policy, this plan considers the existing zoning map to also represent the desired future land use map in these towns, subject to the final decision-making authority of the town councils. It is recommended that each town should undertake drafting its own Comprehensive Plan to establish land use and development policies within each community, including development of individual future land use maps for each of the towns.

**Figure 5.8: Warren County's Future Land Use**



# FUTURE LAND USE CLASSIFICATION

## DESCRIPTIONS

### Introduction

The following future land use classification descriptions are intended to supplement and further clarify the various districts recommended in the future land use map.

### Agriculture

#### General Agriculture

This district is intended for general agricultural purposes. Farming is the dominant land use and infrastructure is limited. The intent is to preserve this area, which includes the county's highest quality farmland, for agricultural uses. Since the goal is to preserve farmland in this district and since infrastructure is not available, the subdivision of land for non-farm residential uses should be discouraged. New residential uses should be directly related to agriculture. Wind and solar development are acceptable in this district. Limited scale agricultural industry, such as grain elevators or co-op facilities, is acceptable within this district, if it is generally an enclosed operation that does not generate excessive noise or odor. Commercial uses should be discouraged in the General Agriculture district, and instead should be directed to the Commercial district or Rural Mixed-Use district, as appropriate.

#### Intensive Agriculture

The Intensive Agriculture designation is intended for agricultural operations such as confined animal feeding operations (CAFO's), similar livestock production operations, meat processing facilities or larger scale agriculture related industries. Intensive Agriculture areas should be buffered from residential uses by transitional areas of less intensive agricultural areas/uses. Residential uses – other than those directly related to farming operations – should be prohibited within or near the Intensive Agriculture areas. It is intended that the Intensive Agriculture district would be a "special exception" land use within the larger Agriculture designation. Wind and solar energy developments are also acceptable within this district.

Intensive Agriculture is not specifically identified on the Future Land Use map. Instead, it is intended that decisions about allowing Intensive Agriculture uses to be made on an individual basis. For an area within the county to be considered for an Intensive Agriculture designation, the area should have several characteristics:

- Within an existing 'general agriculture' designation
- Existing agricultural operations with intensive activities
- Adequate buffer from residences and towns
- Prevailing wind direction and impacts
- Setbacks from main highways

- Location should have supporting infrastructure for the intensity of use.

#### Rural Estate

This designation is intended to provide for a variety of less intensive agricultural uses, while accommodating low-density single-family residences and subdivisions. Areas covered by this district consist of lands with irregular topography which are not as well suited for general agricultural production. This district is generally intended as a buffer between general agricultural areas and residential districts in and around the towns.

### Residential

#### Suburban Residential

This land use is intended for single-family and multi-family residential housing in close proximity to existing towns. Development will consist of both rural housing as well as residential subdivisions. Developments should be connected to water and sewer utilities whenever feasible. Two-family residences are appropriate throughout this district, while higher density housing should be located closer to town limits where it can be served by existing sidewalk networks and be located near town services. Subdivisions within this district should follow town standards including providing sidewalks, streetlights, and similar amenities.

#### Rural Mixed-Use

Development within this classification is intended to encourage a mix of residential and appropriate business uses within, and adjacent to, the county's unincorporated towns. The primary land use within these districts should be residential, including both single-family and two-family housing. Small scale commercial uses are also appropriate in and adjacent to the unincorporated towns, including convenience stores and fully enclosed small businesses. Larger scale housing and commercial uses should be directed within the towns where infrastructure and services are available.

## Institutional

### Institutional

Institutional uses include schools, government buildings and related development. These are generally most appropriate in or adjacent to the towns so they can be served by existing infrastructure and services.

## Commercial

### Commercial

This land use is intended to provide for rural, highway-oriented commercial development and retail amenities. Uses would include shopping centers, individual retail establishments, convenience stores, restaurants, and related uses. Commercial development should be primarily focused along major highways and intersections, and adjacent to, or within, existing towns. Limiting commercial development from being widely distributed across the county prevents unnecessary sprawl.

## Industrial

### Light Industrial

The purpose of this category is to accommodate for a full range of traditional light or industrial uses including manufacturing, processing, and distribution operations within an enclosed space. These uses would not normally create a nuisance beyond its property.

### Heavy Industrial

Heavy industrial uses include manufacturing, processing or distribution facilities that:

- May produce smoke, odor or noise
- Operations are not fully enclosed or include outside storage, or
- Include common industrial hazards.

## Conservation

### Conservation - Riparian

This district is intended to support conservation of key riparian stream corridors, while also allowing limited residential development in these districts. The key conservation goals are to prohibit development in the floodplain, leave steep slopes undisturbed, strongly discourage tree clearing and to protect wetlands in these areas. Additionally, the intent is to discourage development adjacent to Managed Lands along the corridor. Protecting important viewsheds should also be a priority.

Residential development may be consid-

ered where development does not impact floodplains, steep slopes, tree canopy, wetlands or viewsheds. Non-residential developments can also be considered with appropriate development plan. Any proposed development within the riparian conservation district should have a lot size that is conducive to proper septic system installation to ensure rivers and streams remain free from contamination.

### Conservation - Floodplains

The existing zoning ordinance has established this district intended to manage development in floodplains and floodways. Within this district, development in floodways should be prohibited in accordance with current ordinances. Development in floodplains should be discouraged. Where permitted, it should follow state and local requirements.

### Conservation - Managed Lands

This district is for designated nature preserves, public parks and other managed lands containing significant woodlands, steep slopes, riparian areas, floodplains/wetlands and other important natural features. To protect these environmental assets, all types of development other than recreation-oriented developments should be limited. Additionally, development adjacent to these properties should be suitably buffered from Managed Lands.

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Direct housing development to areas already serviced with water and sewer infrastructure in and around West Lebanon and Williamsport.

Public water and sanitary sewer access is often a top priority for residential developers. Currently, only two Warren County towns have water and sanitary sewer infrastructure - Williamsport and West Lebanon. The most cost-effective strategy for Warren County to support future residential development is to direct development to occur in and around these two towns, ensuring that existing infrastructure is fully utilized prior to extending infrastructure to additional portions of the county. This is the highest priority since there are 1,030 acres available for development without extending any utilities.

### Objectives:

- Encourage 1, 2 and multi-family housing in and around these towns.
- Revise the zoning ordinance to reduce the maximum number of units allowed for multi-family residential development within the county.

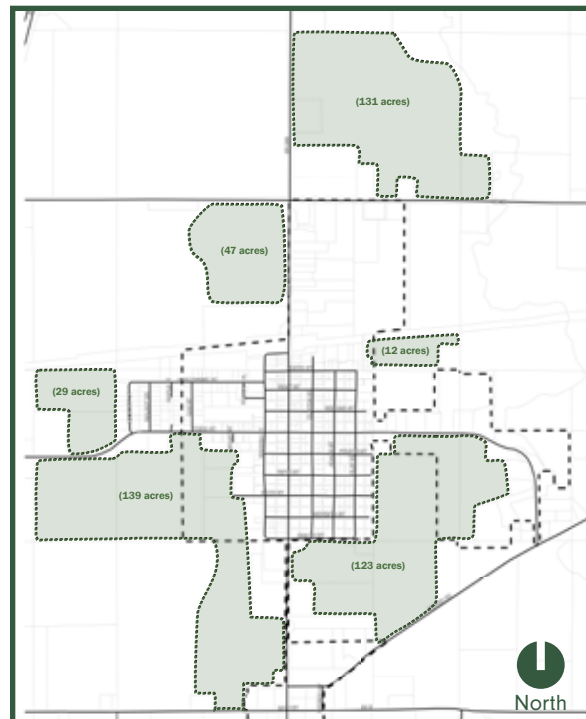


Figure 5.9: West Lebanon

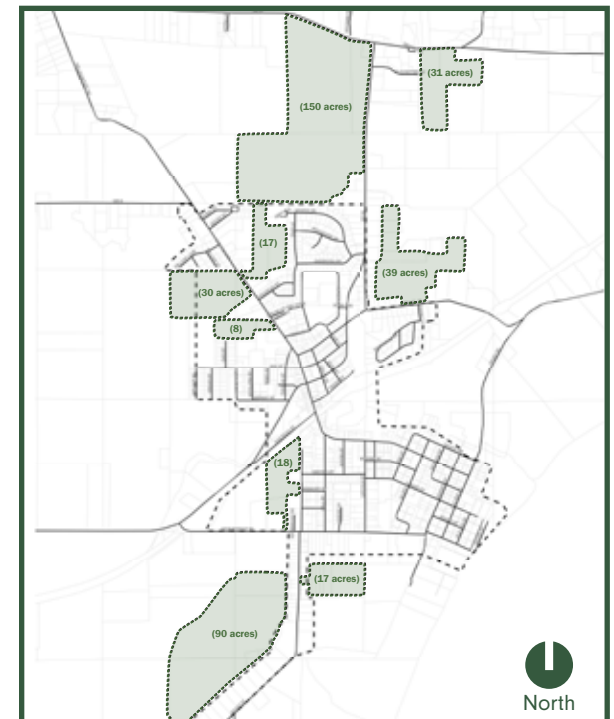


Figure 5.10: Williamsport

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Support infill and redevelopment within existing towns and unincorporated communities.

Due to the massive expense associated with extending water and sanitary sewer infrastructure, communities must seek creative alternatives to develop additional housing with infrastructure access. One such strategy is to infill existing buildable lots within towns or redevelop blighted properties by tearing down existing structures and building new housing developments. By eliminating blight and creating new housing options, Warren County can improve the overall quality and

assessed valuation of existing neighborhoods. Encouraging infill and redevelopment of housing in existing towns is the most cost-effective way for the county to increase its housing stock while leveraging existing utility infrastructure capacity.

### Objectives:

- Develop incentive program to encourage infill and redevelopment (see Chapter 5 – Housing for recommendations).
- Amend zoning ordinance to incorporate context sensitive design requirements for infill and redevelopment.

## GOAL: Rebuild Warren County's downtown districts to meet the goal of providing needed local goods and services.

Existing downtown districts within Warren County's towns were once thriving districts where residents came to buy goods and services. Now, like in countless rural communities across the country, these commercial districts have significant vacancy, and many buildings are blighted and in need of repair.

A goal of this plan is to rebuild these commercial districts so that residents can obtain basic goods and services in Warren County without having to travel outside the

county. To be effective, downtown commercial districts need a critical mass of business located within the district.

To support the goal of sustaining commercial districts and the availability of local goods and services, it is recommended that commercial development be directed to locate within downtown areas and other established town commercial districts whenever feasible. Commercial development outside of the towns should primarily be highway-oriented development of a scale

not suitable within the downtowns.

### Objectives:

- Whenever feasible, direct new commercial development to occur within existing core commercial districts of the towns.
- Support highway oriented commercial development outside the towns when the scale of development would not be appropriate within the towns.

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Direct housing expansion to areas where utility improvements are planned around Pine Village and West Lebanon.

Warren County has identified areas in and around Pine Village and West Lebanon as priorities for future utility infrastructure extensions. Pine Village, Warren County's closest town to West Lafayette, has an opportunity to attract Tippecanoe County residents that are seeking a rural residential lifestyle within commuting distance to Lafayette, West Lafayette and Purdue University. To be successful in attracting development, public water service will need to be developed in and around Pine Village.

Seeger Memorial Jr./Sr. High School is located just north of West Lebanon. By extending public utilities to the campus, Warren County could also open up significant land for commercial and industrial development and provides a key opportunity to expand housing development near the school for families and teaching professionals.

To reach their full potential as residential destinations, both towns need further utility improvements. Future housing developments should be encouraged in these strategic areas to further justify future utility expansions.

### Objectives:

- Encourage housing, commercial, and Industrial uses along the SR 263 corridor between West Lebanon and Seeger Memorial Jr./Sr. High School.
- Encourage housing in Pine Village in areas with existing sanitary sewer service and future water (when available).

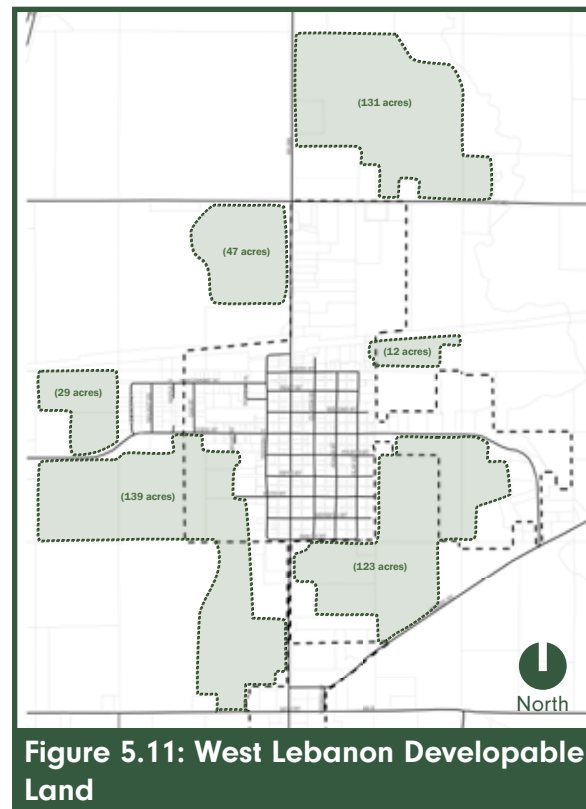


Figure 5.11: West Lebanon Developable Land

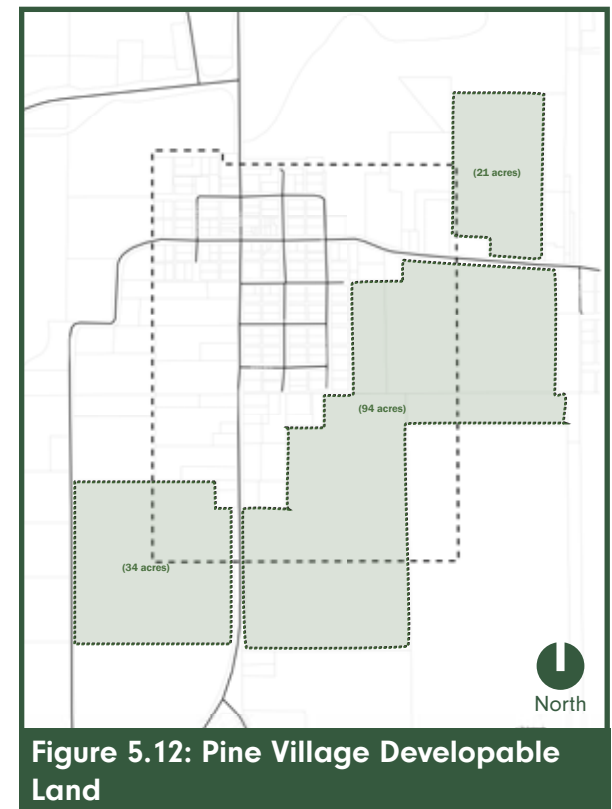


Figure 5.12: Pine Village Developable Land

## **GOAL: Support rural residential development in appropriate areas of the county.**

Rural portions of Warren County continue to be popular destinations for new one-off single-family residences. Understandably so – residents want the beauty and serenity associated with living on their own large piece of Warren County property. One-off housing, if not managed properly with sufficient zoning requirements, can lead to sprawl, gradually eating up prime farmland and conservation areas. To ensure that sprawl does not occur, Warren County should strategically plan and prioritize specific areas for residential development in rural areas of the county.

### **Objectives:**

- Encourage clustering of rural residential development.
- Update standards for lot size to accommodate septic systems while minimizing sprawl.
- Prioritize housing development in and around towns over general rural residential housing.

## **GOAL: Protect natural assets and conservation areas from adverse development.**

Warren County's natural assets, like the Wabash River and Big Pine Creek, are at the core of why residents and visitors choose Warren County over neighboring communities. Inappropriate development near these natural resources could have negative impacts on their viability. Land use policy should strive to protect these areas for future generations.

### **Objectives:**

- Amend zoning ordinance to establish a conservation corridor along Big Pine Creek, Mud Pine Creek and Little Pine Creek. See the Conservation-Riparian land use description on page 59 or a description of recommendations for this district.

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

**GOAL: Establish multiple zoning districts for agricultural uses to reflect different types of modern agriculture.**

Today's agricultural industry in Warren County is diverse. While some production types, like row crop production, can occur adjacent to towns and residential developments with little public disagreement, other production types, like confined animal feeding operations, cannot. To encourage various agricultural production types to be developed in appropriate areas of the county, multiple agricultural zoning districts should be developed.

## Objectives:

- Amend the zoning ordinance to establish multiple agricultural districts. Detailed descriptions can be found on pages 58 and 59.
  - "General Agriculture" should be a district intended for a broad range of agricultural uses. Residential uses should be limited in this area and development patterns should promote the preservation of large areas of continuous farmland.
  - "Intensive Agriculture" should be a district intended for agriculture related industries and confined animal feeding operations. For this district, it is recommended that residential uses be permitted by special exception and be limited to farm residences.
  - "Rural Estate" should be a district intended for a mix of low intensity agricultural operations, while also allowing for residential development.

# GOAL: Encourage new employer sites to be located in the areas outlined in the Economic Development chapter.

Three sites in Warren County have been identified as priority areas for economic development. More details about each of these sites can be found in the Economic Development chapter of this plan. These three areas are designated as 'Industrial' on the Future Land Use map.

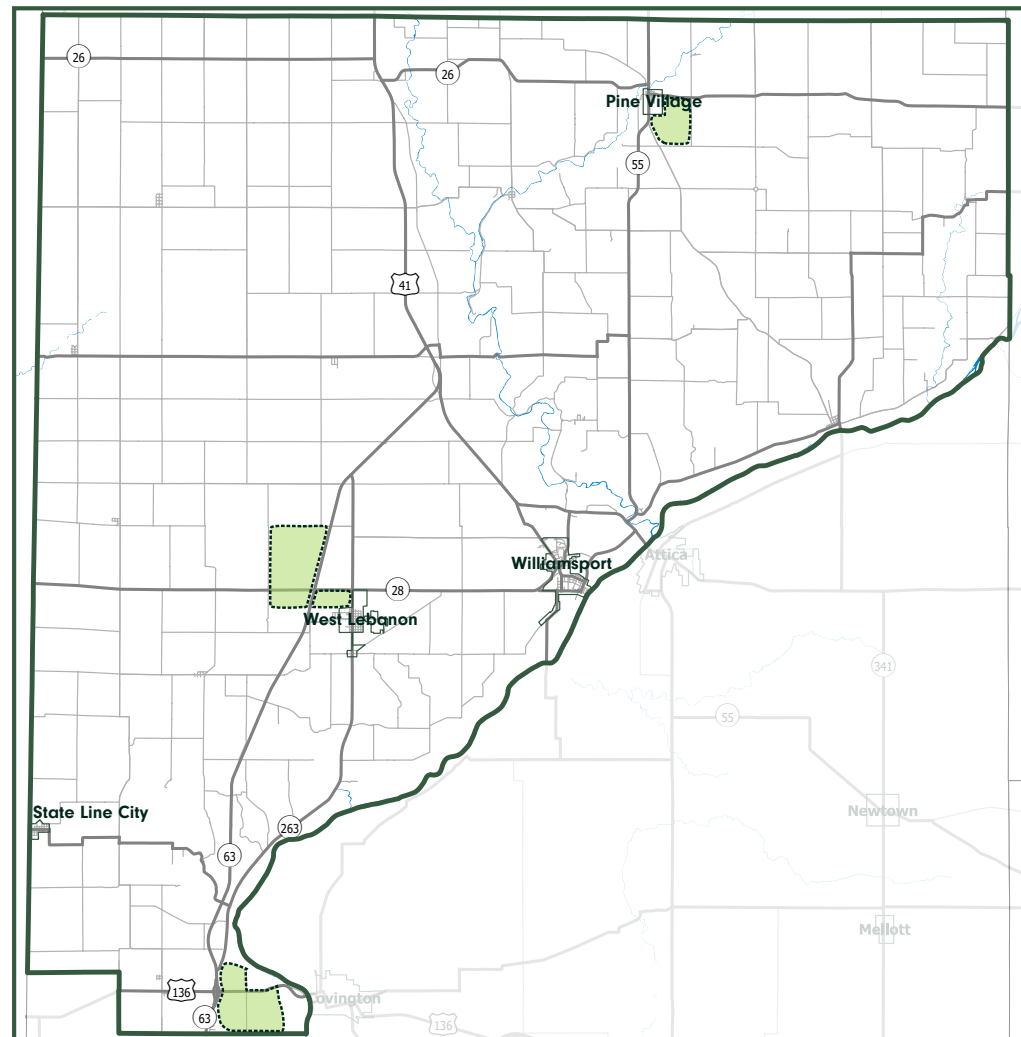
## Objectives:

- Encourage new employers to locate in key economic development sites:
  - Bowman Business Park
  - SR-28 and SR-263 Intersection
  - SR- 63 and US-136 Intersection

**Figure 5.13: Warren County's Economic Development Sites Overview**



Scale: 1"=4.5 Miles



# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Evaluate renewable energy proposals on a case-by-case basis.

Worldwide, energy production is shifting away from coal-fired energy production towards renewable energy sources, like wind and solar. Renewable energy developments are explored by rural counties because of the financial benefits they can provide to local property owners and to the local tax base. The topography and average wind speeds found in Warren County are attractive for renewable energy developments and could provide economic development opportunities for the county.

Public opinion on this issue is mixed. In the 2022 County Comprehensive Plan survey, a majority of survey respondents (72%) understand the reasons why these shifts are occurring, and a majority feel solar (60%) and wind (52%) present an opportunity for landowners and the county. Similarly, public presentation of the draft plan and input period saw a similar split. Some individuals spoke up against wind projects during the public presentation and stated that they felt that wind projects are an industrial type use to be in areas designated for industrial uses. Other county residents provided their support for renewable projects in the coun-

ty and for the landowners' right to use their property for such projects.

Since the Jordan Creek Wind Farm was developed, Warren County has acted to greatly increase development setbacks for wind projects to ensure future projects are much further from residences. As public opinion on wind projects is mixed, it is recommended that Warren County continue to make individual decisions on renewable energy proposals on a case-by-case basis. Each proposal should be reviewed against county standards, giving full consideration to public input, environmental impacts and infrastructure impacts.

For land use purposes, it is also recommended that renewable energy projects be considered an Intensive Agricultural use. This designation is intended to require setbacks from residential areas, as the county has established in their updated development standards.

Accordingly, any renewable energy project should continue to require a special excep-

tion or rezoning to be approved. A special exception or rezoning requires a public hearing, ensuring that property owners in the impacted areas are notified of the petition and have an opportunity to be heard. This plan does not designate a specific area for Intensive Agricultural uses. Instead, Agricultural Districts may be used for Intensive Agriculture only with a special exception or rezoning.

### Objectives:

- Direct Renewable energy development to areas within Agricultural districts that are approved for Intensive Agriculture uses.
- Continue to require a public hearing for all renewable energy projects.
- Discourage renewable energy development in the Rural Estate district, as well as other commercial, residential, industrial and conservation districts.

# GOAL: Increase education about county planning and zoning

Every Warren County resident is impacted by county planning and zoning ordinances, but during the public engagement process, it became clear that residents are unaware of the existing rules and their effectiveness. In fact, over 30% of survey respondents answered 'I don't know' on each of the survey questions that related to zoning. One contributing factor to this lack of knowledge could be that Warren County's zoning requirements are not readily available for public consumption on the Warren County website. Steps should be taken to bolster the zoning content on the county's website to ensure residents can easily educate themselves about the county's zoning requirements.

## Objectives:

- Post county zoning and subdivision control ordinances to county website. Include brief explanations for each ordinance document. Current zoning and subdivision control ordinances should be re-formatted into an electronic format this is more user-friendly and searchable.
- Post required permits to county website.
- Have a link to the updated Comprehensive Plan on the county's website. Include a brief explanation as to why the document is important.
- Investigate more user-friendly online GIS map alternatives. To prevent confusion from the general public, consider changing the link to the online GIS map from "Warren County GIS" to "Warren County Zoning Map."
- Create and publish graphic flow charts on the county website to illustrate the steps in common processes (building permits, rezones, variance applications, etc).
- Create a zoning Frequently Asked Questions sheet and publish on the county website. Examples of common questions:
  - What projects need a building permit?
  - What uses are allowed on my property?
  - What is a setback?
  - What is an easement?
  - What is right-of-way?
  - How do I find my property lines?
  - What does a survey show?
  - Is my property in a floodplain?
- Create a 'Land Use Matrix' that shows the zoning classifications and the permitted uses in each zoning district and publish on the county's website.
- Avoid planning acronyms on the county website. For example, change BZA to Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA).
- Create checklists of needed information/materials for permitting applications to help applicants and reviewers to understand what materials are needed.
- On special ordinances, like the solar ordinance, consider including a short executive summary that highlights the pertinent information included.

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Update Warren County development ordinances.

Warren County's ordinances are dated. The county's subdivision control ordinance was adopted in 1980 and the zoning ordinance was adopted in the late 1960's or early 1970's. The zoning ordinance was last updated in 1998.

The scope of this comprehensive plan update did not include a detailed evaluation of the ordinances, but a cursory review has identified a number of concerns that should be evaluated by the community. These are listed below.

Ultimately, it is recommended that the county replace their development ordinances with a new, modern Unified Development Ordinance.

### Objectives:

- Prepare a new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

During the comprehensive plan, the following concerns were noted with the existing development ordinances:

- Allowable uses in the document reflect overly specific descriptions, many of which are now outdated. It is recommended that the allowable uses be updated with modern language applicable to current developments.
- Residential districts allow multi-family developments up to 32 units throughout large areas of the towns and surrounding areas. The steering committee was concerned that this number was too high and should be reduced depending on the location.
- This comprehensive plan has recommended new land use classifications. These would need amended into the ordinance to be enforced.
- It is recommended that lot sizes be re-evaluated based on current development practices and based on the size needed for on-site septic systems.
- It is recommended that buffer yards be established to better separate differing uses.
- Requirements for Infill and redevelopment projects should be incorporated.

- Update Industrial zoning districts to distinguish between light and heavy Industrial based on Intensity of use rather than specific products manufactured.
- Requirements for downtown districts, including setbacks and parking, should be reviewed and updated.

### Unified Development Ordinance

In recent years, a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) was increased in popularity. A UDO combines multiple county regulations – including zoning and subdivision control ordinances, design guidelines, and water management standards – to become the primary source of land use regulation for a governmental entity. A UDO is drafted based on guidance from the community's Comprehensive Plan and may help local governments respond better to the way development occurs while helping to avoid overlapping regulations.



# CHAPTER 6

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

During the Economic Development stakeholder group workshop, one thing became abundantly clear – Warren County’s employers need additional workers. Currently, Warren County’s unemployment levels are at historic lows, yet employers have numerous open positions which they are struggling to fill. Employers are attempting to attract additional workers to the community, but a lack of housing stock in Warren County is a major barrier to recruitment efforts. Before additional jobs can be pursued, Warren County must ensure that the current job offering can be sustained by investing in additional housing stock and quality of life improvements which incentivize workers to relocate to Warren County.

When asked about available jobs in Warren County, residents expressed the need for more appealing job opportunities. Survey results show that a small percentage (22%) of Warren County residents believe there are appealing job opportunities in the county. This attitude likely contributes to the fact that 40% of the county’s workforce travels outside the county each day for work. These out-commuters are likely to spend their dollars at out-of-county

shops and restaurants, contributing to Warren County’s large leakage of retail dollars. Future economic development in Warren County should prioritize the recruitment of job opportunities that give Warren County residents the option to stay in the county for work and spend their dollars locally.

For future economic growth, Warren County must maintain and promote a supply of sites available for economic development. Fortunately, the county has numerous economic development assets that can be leveraged for future job creation. In many cases, these assets need additional investment to be fully leveraged in the county’s economic development strategy.

The goal of the economic development chapter is to ensure that Warren County’s economy can operate at full capacity by identifying the key steps that will allow Warren County to increase its availability of workforce and the attractiveness of its economic development sites and corridors.

# KEY OBSERVATIONS AND PUBLIC INPUT

## Workforce Attraction

- The need for workers was the number one priority discussed during the economic development stakeholder meeting.

## Attract New Jobs

- Only 22% of survey participants feel there are appealing job opportunities in the county.

## Support Local Businesses

- Warren County residents only spend 14% of their retail dollars in the county.

## Expand Childcare Offering

- Only 15% of survey respondents believe there are adequate childcare options in Warren County.

## Reduce Out-Commuting

- 40% of Warren County's residents commute outside the county for jobs.

## Economic Development

- Warren County does not have any employer sites on the market that have both water and sanitary sewer available.



# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

**GOAL: Invest in Quality of Place initiatives to support workforce retention and attraction, and to retain youth in the community.**

Warren County employers were clear – the county needs additional workers to meet the needs of its current and future employers. Creating quality places with opportunities to experience unique cultural and entertainment options is central to retaining and recruiting workforce within Warren County. Across the county, public opinion echoed the need to expand entertainment, dining, and shopping options while still maintaining the rural character of the county. By investing in quality of place initiatives that follow a rural lifestyle such as parks, trails, community festivals, and gathering spaces, Warren County can strengthen its ability to attract and retain residents.

## Objectives:

- See recommendations in Quality of Place chapter.



# GOAL: Establish a series of shovel ready sites available for economic development. (continued)

## PRIORITY SITE: SR-28 and SR-263 Intersection

Located just north of West Lebanon and extending along SR-263 from SR-28 to Seeger Memorial High School, this site would include a mix of commercial, industrial and housing development. It would have SR-63 frontage and opportunities for a railroad siding. Notably, this corridor is just 12 miles from the I-74/SR-63 interchange, which is the closest interchange access point for the county.

Additionally, properties in this corridor can be serviced by water and sanitary sewer from West Lebanon and is located within an existing Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) District. Currently, portions of the site are zoned as commercial or agricultural.

This site is particularly attractive for investment because it would serve multiple community goals, in addition to economic development. First, extending sewer and water service to this site would result in public utility service for Seeger Memorial High School. The school corporation has previously investigated extending public utilities to the site because of the condition and capacity of existing on-site systems. Second, investment in this site would provide utilities for housing development in a prime location near the schools

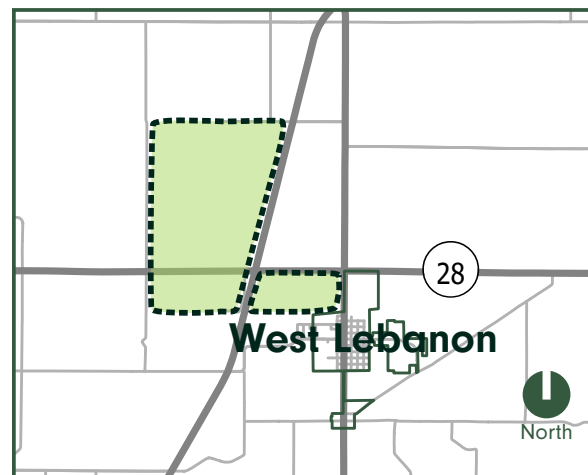


Figure 6.2: SR-28 and SR-263 Intersection Site

## Objectives:

- Establish site control through purchase, option to purchase, sales contract or related marketing agreement
- Update previous water and sanitary sewer planning for the area to serve the school and adjacent development properties. This should be completed in conjunction with the Metropolitan School District of Warren County.
- Review funding alternatives for the project.
- Evaluate alternatives for a rail siding to serve properties at this site.
- Submit application for the Indiana Site Certified program to demonstrate the site is shovel ready for development
- Maintain communication with natural gas providers and continually evaluate options for providing natural gas service to these sites.

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Establish a series of shovel ready sites available for economic development. (continued)

### PRIORITY SITE: Bowman Business Park - Pine Village

The Bowman Business Park is a 30-acre site (expandable to 80 acres) located just east of Pine Village and is just 20 minutes from Purdue University. This site is currently undeveloped, but it is serviced by NIPSCO natural gas, electric, and underground fiber optics and is zoned light industrial. Public water service is not available at the site or in adjacent Pine Village.

It is important to note that this is the only site in the county listed on Warren County LEDO's website as available for employer site development.

While this site has been marketed as an employer site, there was discussions among the public and community leaders that the site would be attractive for housing development. While no formal proposals have been made, it is recommended that Warren County be flexible in allowing either housing or employer sites at this location.

### Objectives:

- Partner with Pine Village to develop a master plan for providing public water supply to the town and this site.
- Continue to market the site for development, with the understanding that short-term development would need to be served by a well, until a public water supply is available.
- Evaluate forming a TIF District to capture future revenue
- Submit application for the Indiana Site Certified program to demonstrate the site is shovel ready for development
- Evaluate alternatives for use of the site for housing development.

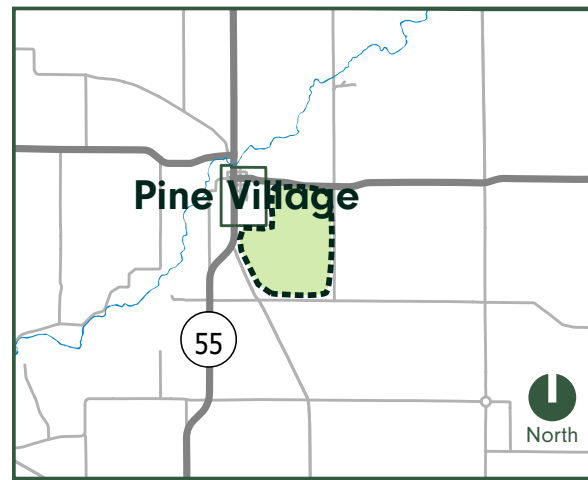


Figure 6.3: Bowman Business Park Site

# GOAL: Establish a series of shovel ready sites available for economic development. (continued)

## PRIORITY SITE: SR- 63 and US-136 Intersection

Located roughly two miles north of Interstate 74 along four-lane SR-63, this location provides up to 500 acres for future economic development. Unfortunately, this location is not serviced by public water and sewer infrastructure. Currently, one of Warren County’s largest employers, Flex-n-Gate, is located within the corridor and operates on their own private water and sanitary sewer system.

While this has opportunity for development, it would likely need to be a larger development to justify the significant cost to provide water and sanitary sewer to the site. The site might be attractive to a high-volume water user because of its proximity to aquifers near the Wabash River. Such a user may be willing to develop its own utilities to serve the area. Alternatively, options could be explored to extend utilities from the City of Covington. It is recommended that Warren County explore both options to be ready for potential development.

## Objectives:

- Investigate options for providing water and sanitary sewer service to the site, including options for a new water/sewer provider or through a partnership with the City of Covington.

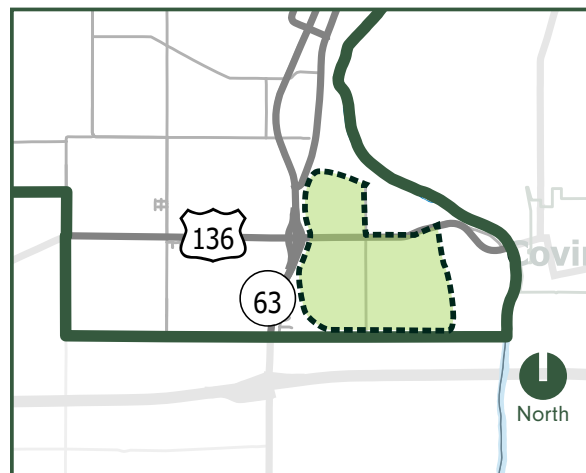


Figure 6.4: SR-63 and US-136 Intersection Site

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Increase staffing for small business development and promotion.

Currently, Warren County residents are traveling outside of the county to spend 85% of their retail dollars. Since most residents work outside of Warren County, many are shopping where they work instead of shopping within the county. Where residents shop also depends on where they live in the community. As a result, retail spending is spread between Attica, Covington, Lafayette, West Lafayette, Danville (Illinois) or Hoopeston (Illinois).

Because of the geographic distribution of its population, Warren County is unlikely to sustain the large retail shops that can be found in some of the surrounding communities. However, the county should strive to offer a full array of essential goods and services locally. This should include businesses such as grocery stores, banks, healthcare providers, pharmacies, dentists, hardware stores, and restaurants. Without convenient access to essential goods and services, county residents might choose to re-locate outside of the county to locations where accessing essential goods is less burdensome.

To ensure that the county can expand its offering of basic goods and services, and that the county's small business community is sufficiently supported, additional local staffing dedicated to small business development and promotion is required. In many communities, a local Chamber of Commerce is responsible for servicing small businesses, but Warren County's Chamber of Commerce ceased to exist several years ago. Re-forming a county chamber should be investigated.

### Objectives:

- Add staffing to promote small businesses development.
  - This can be through re-establishing a stand-alone Warren County Chamber of Commerce organization, or by adding a small business development staff position to the Warren County LEDO.
  - Consider adding tourism development as a role of this organization/staff position
  - Consider making this position responsible for a local Main Street organization. The Indiana Main Street Program helps communities revitalize the economy and appearance of downtown commercial districts. A Chamber of Commerce or other small business organization can fulfill the roles of a Main Street organization.
- Establish programming to support existing small businesses and to attract new businesses.

## Chamber of Commerce and LEDOs

On the surface, a local of Chamber of Commerce and Warren County LEDO share similar priorities – both are focused on the development of businesses in the county. These two organizations, however, serve differing stakeholders. A Chamber of Commerce is responsible for furthering the interests of small businesses while Warren County LEDO is responsible for new business attraction and retention of the county’s major employers.

In some communities, like Lafayette for example, these two groups are housed under the same organization. Greater Lafayette Commerce serves both small businesses and major employers. While these functions could be combined, Warren County LEDO, does not currently focus on the promotion of small businesses. Small business development could be added to the organizational focus of Warren County LEDO, but this would require additional staffing.

## POTENTIAL SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAMMING:

### ‘Shop local’ campaign for local shops and restaurants

With larger retail markets outside the county within driving distance, residents often bypass local options to shop elsewhere. In fact, Warren County residents spend 86% of their retail dollars outside of the county. A ‘shop local’ campaign is often a great way to encourage local residents to visit local shops instead of spending their dollars elsewhere. Often times, communities designate a specific day or weekend for their ‘shop local’ campaign and encourage local businesses to offer deals for participating consumers. Shop local campaigns often promote participating businesses and deals across social media and traditional media platforms to garner as much support for the campaign as possible. As a part of the campaign, marketing efforts can be made to increase the awareness of the large portion of retail dollars that are being spent outside of Warren County. ‘Shop local’ campaigns can greatly boost income for local businesses and often create long-standing relationships between local businesses and customers. By promoting local businesses through a ‘shop local’ campaign, Warren County can provide its small businesses with the local support that they need to thrive in the county.

### Objectives:

- Draft and publish a directory of local shopping and dining options
- Identify a time period (month/week/weekend) to host a ‘shop local’ event
- Engage with local businesses to incentivize involvement in the event
- Consider strategic incentives for local restaurants or retail options
  - Partner with newly formed Chamber of Commerce to encourage the development of a social media presence for local businesses to promote their goods and services to local shoppers.

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

**GOAL: Start a local tourism organization/department to market the benefits of living in and visiting Warren County.**

Warren County has several tourism destinations to market to visitors. The natural setting of Warren County includes a wide array of natural landscapes for visitors from across the region, state, and nation to enjoy. Features including the Williamsport Falls, the Wabash River, Big Pine Creek (an Indiana DNR scenic canoe trail), associated riparian corridors, sandstone bluffs, woodlands and grasslands, and the twelve nature preserves managed by NICHES Land Trust are all destinations worth marketing to visitors.

Recently, the Warren County Community Foundation published a series of marketing videos to attract visitors and potential residents to explore, grow, play, live, and work in Warren County, but this campaign is only the beginning of potential tourism marketing activities. Warren County should consider forming a tourism organization, or adding tourism responsibilities to an existing organization, with paid staff dedicated to the cause.

Most tourism departments are funded through an innkeeper's tax - a tax on the rental of rooms and accommodations within the county for periods of less than 30 days. Since Warren County does not have significant overnight accommodations, this is not a practical funding strategy. As a result, it is recommended that this position initially be part-time with a limited budget or combined with a small business development position.

## Objectives:

- Create a tourism organization or add tourism responsibilities to an existing organization
- Develop marketing materials for Warren County tourism destinations
- Market county tourism destinations in tourism resources across the state
- Evaluate alternatives for combining this position with a small business development role.
- Pursue regional partnerships/staffing to promote tourism.

# **GOAL: Expand the availability of affordable and licensed childcare in Warren County.**

Access to childcare is an issue for Warren County families. In fact, only 15% of survey respondents believe there are adequate childcare options in Warren County. According to The Child Care Resource Network, Warren County only has one existing quality early childhood program in the county with a current childcare capacity of 56 children and over 250 Warren County children need childcare but cannot access it.

As a result, a vast majority of childcare services are being provided by unlicensed, in-home providers and extended family members. Many barriers exist for families to access licensed providers including availability, cost, and transportation. Additionally, the cash-only nature of payment for unlicensed, in-home childcare means that many families are unable to utilize tax-advantaged childcare savings plans often offered as a benefit by employers. Warren County must expand its offering of licensed childcare services to ensure that local families are not being forced to choose between childcare and a caregiver exiting Warren County's already slim workforce to care for children.

## **Objectives:**

- Recruit partner organization(s) to serve as the lead in providing childcare services in the community. Potential partners could include:
  - MSD of Warren County
  - Boys and Girls Club
  - A local church
  - A local organization currently affiliated with local camps (Example: Hanging Rock Christian Camp)
- Support childcare providers by partnering on construction grant opportunities (through the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs' Community Development Block Grant Program) and training opportunities for current and future providers.
- Partner with The Child Care Resource Network to increase quality childcare capacity by 40+ children through Greater Lafayette Commerce READI program.

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Explore future renewable energy developments

Renewable energy developments are explored by rural counties because of the financial benefits they can provide to local property owners and to the local tax base. The county's Jordan Creek Wind Farm is slated to provide at least an additional \$8 million in economic development payments to Warren County from 2021-2024. The topography and average wind speeds found in Warren County are attractive for renewable energy developments and could provide additional economic development opportunities for the county.

As discussed in the Land Use Chapter, public opinion relating to renewable energy development in Warren County is mixed. As a result, it is recommended that Warren County continue to make individual decisions on renewable energy proposals on a case-by-case basis. Each proposal should be reviewed against county standards, giving full consideration to public input, environmental impacts and infrastructure impacts.

### Objectives:

- Explore future renewable energy developments where they meet the land use recommendations of this plan.

## GOAL: Diversify Warren County's job opportunities.

Over 70% of survey participants want to work in Warren County, but only 22% feel there are appealing job opportunities in the county. Residents not feeling as though local job opportunities are appealing could contribute to the fact that 40% of Warren County workers commute outside of the county for work. As a result, it is important to recruit job opportunities that are more attractive to local residents.

One plausible explanation for this local sentiment is that Warren County's resi-

dents have a high level of educational attainment. The percentage of Warren County adults with a college degree has grown from 20.4% in 2011 to 29.9% in 2019 enabling the county to exceed all other counties in the region, except Tippecanoe County, in the same category. If Warren County residents do not feel that Warren County has appealing job opportunities, this could be attributed to the fact that the county does not have a strong offering of job opportunities that require a college degree.

In Warren County's economic development strategy, the recruitment of college-degree requiring job opportunities should be a priority.

### Objectives:

- Recruit additional jobs that require advanced degrees, training, and/or certificates
- Increase awareness of existing desirable jobs in the county



# CHAPTER 7

## HOUSING

Warren County employers need additional workers, but prospective new workers often cannot find houses in Warren County. The public engagement process highlighted the strong demand for houses in the county. A majority of survey respondents (65%) believe the county is currently experiencing a shortage of available houses. Public workshop participants across the county shared stories about prospective Warren County residents opting to live in a neighboring county due to a lack of housing options in the county.

Housing data supports the stories expressed by residents. Over the last twenty years, only 12% of Warren County's housing stock was built. This is just over half of the number of homes built in the preceding 20 years (1980-2000).

Without available houses, Warren County cannot attract additional workers to fill the numerous open positions of Warren County employers. Additionally, a shortage of available homes prevents MSD of Warren County from attracting the next generation of teaching talent to the community. The county's housing supply must be expanded to ensure Warren County's economy reaches its full potential.

The goal of the housing chapter is to provide key steps that will eliminate current barriers to housing development and enable Warren County to grow its housing supply.

# KEY OBSERVATIONS AND PUBLIC INPUT

## Additional Workforce Needed

- Warren County's December 2021 unemployment rate (1.0%) was the lowest unemployment rate ever recorded in the county. The current rate (2.1% in February 2022) remains at lows not seen since 1998.

## New Houses Needed

- Only 12% of Warren County houses were built from 2000-2022, compared to 22% from 1980-2000.

## Develop Houses Around Infrastructure

- There are 1,030 acres available for development without extending any utilities.

## Eliminate Blight

- 84% of survey participants believe Warren County has many neighborhoods with blighted properties in need of renovation or demolition.

## Multi-Family Housing Shortage

- Only 3% of Warren County's homes are multi-family houses.



# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Expand single-family, owner-occupied housing stock

Single-family homes dominate Warren County's housing market. In fact, 97% of the county's housing stock is single-family homes and 84% of those homes are owner-occupied. Due to high demand, there is a shortage of single-family, owner-occupied homes of all price points in Warren County. During public participation conversations, local realtors and residents expressed the need for additional starter homes, high-end homes, and every price point in between. To ensure the county can attract additional workers and families to Warren County, single-family housing stock must be expanded.

It is important to note that there have been several new single-family homes built across the county in recent years. These are usually built as independent parcels and not part of a larger subdivision. While these meet the needs for an individual family, developing independent single-family homes in this manner does not meet the larger need for starter homes and other workforce housing that families are looking for.

### Objectives:

- Develop incentive package to encourage housing development on sites that are already served with water and sanitary sewer, including unfinished subdivisions and infill/redevelopment properties.
- Evaluate feasibility of developing county-owned properties for housing. Alternatives, such as swapping county-owned property for property more feasible for housing development, should also be evaluated.
- Evaluate strategic extension of utilities to Seeger Memorial Jr./Sr. High School and encourage housing between West Lebanon and Pine Village. (See Chapter 6 - Infrastructure)
- Evaluate strategic development of public water service for Pine Village to encourage housing (See Chapter 6 - Infrastructure)
- Evaluate use of the Bowman property for housing development.

### Example Housing Incentives

Incentives are sometimes necessary for communities to encourage housing developers to invest in rural areas of the state. Although demand is strong in Warren County, it might take convincing to encourage a developer to choose Warren County over a more urban or suburban alternative where housing markets are also strong. These incentives are meant to lower the cost of doing business and make it as easy as possible for a developer to invest in the county. These incentives can vary widely – from waiving permit fees to investing in sidewalks and infrastructure – but are all aimed at streamlining the process for a prospective developer.

#### Potential Housing Incentive Strategies:

- Waive building permit fees
- Grant program for utility connections
- Acquire potential infill/redevelopment sites and aggregate for a developer
- Matching grant program for sidewalks and supportive infrastructure
- Invest in water and sanitary sewer infrastructure to create buildable lots for a developer

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Increase the supply of rental housing stock.

While owner-occupied homes dominate Warren County's housing market, not all county residents can afford to purchase a home nor do all residents want to own a home. Unfortunately, there is also a shortage of rental housing in Warren County with only 16% of housing units being rentals and only 3% being multi-family housing.

There are reasons rental housing should be provided as part of a complete housing portfolio. During public engagement, we heard from the school corporation that it is harder to recruit teachers from outside the county because there are so few rental units available in Warren County. Many

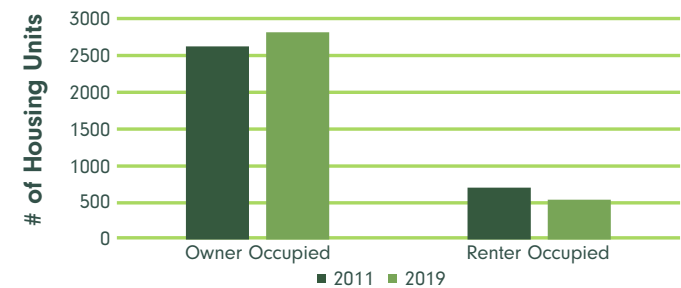
also expressed that retirees and empty nest families were looking for a lower maintenance downsizing rental option.

Adding rental housing does not mean Warren County should try to attract large apartment complexes. One recent trend in rental housing has been renewed emphasis on "missing middle" housing. Missing middle homes include duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes and other smaller scale multi-family attached housing products. These housing types are especially attractive in Warren County because they can help meet the need for affordability, yet the scale is appropriate in a smaller, rural town.

### Objectives:

- Develop incentives to promote the development of quality rental housing products within existing towns.
- Develop incentives to promote the development of senior housing and other low maintenance housing units

Figure 7.1: Occupancy Status - 2011 vs 2019



## GOAL: Continue and strengthen the county's blight elimination programs

Around the county, there are numerous blighted properties in need of repair or demolition. Residents are taking note – 84% of survey participants believe Warren County has many neighborhoods with blighted properties in need of renovation or demolition. In an attempt to eliminate blight in the community, Warren County adopted an Unsafe Building Ordinance (UBO). Unfortunately, Warren County residents are

unaware of the UBO's effectiveness. In fact, a portion of survey respondents (32%) were unaware that the county has a UBO and nearly a majority (48%) were unsure if the UBO is being adequately enforced. Blight elimination efforts in Warren County should be strengthened and should include public outreach efforts to raise awareness of the UBO, aiming to increase its effectiveness.

### Objectives:

- Increase enforcement of the Unsafe Building Ordinance (UBO)
- Develop an educational/outreach campaign about the Unsafe Building Ordinance to increase awareness and understanding of the ordinance amongst the general public
- Allocate county funds for blight elimination
- Develop voluntary community/neighborhood cleanup day programs
- Explore alternative methods to administer UBO in a more efficient manner



# CHAPTER 8

# INFRASTRUCTURE

Future development in Warren County is limited by the availability of infrastructure. Two of Warren County's highest priorities – additional housing to increase the availability of workforce and economic development to create more appealing job opportunities, both require available sites with access to water and sanitary sewer infrastructure. Currently, access to public water and sanitary sewer infrastructure is limited. Public water infrastructure is available only in West Lebanon and Williamsport and sanitary sewer infrastructure is limited to Pine Village, West Lebanon, and Williamsport. To ensure that the county's offering of infrastructure meets the current and future needs of residents and businesses, infrastructure expansions and upgrades are required.

As a rural community with limited resources and a sparse population, developing and maintaining infrastructure throughout the county is a challenging task for local decisionmakers. Warren County must be strategic and invest in infrastructure that enables multiple priorities to be accomplished simultaneously. The goal of the infrastructure chapter is to ensure that the biggest infrastructure priorities for the county are identified. The following goals and objectives identify the specific steps that Warren County should take to improve its infrastructure.

# KEY OBSERVATIONS AND PUBLIC INPUT

## Expand Utilities for Housing

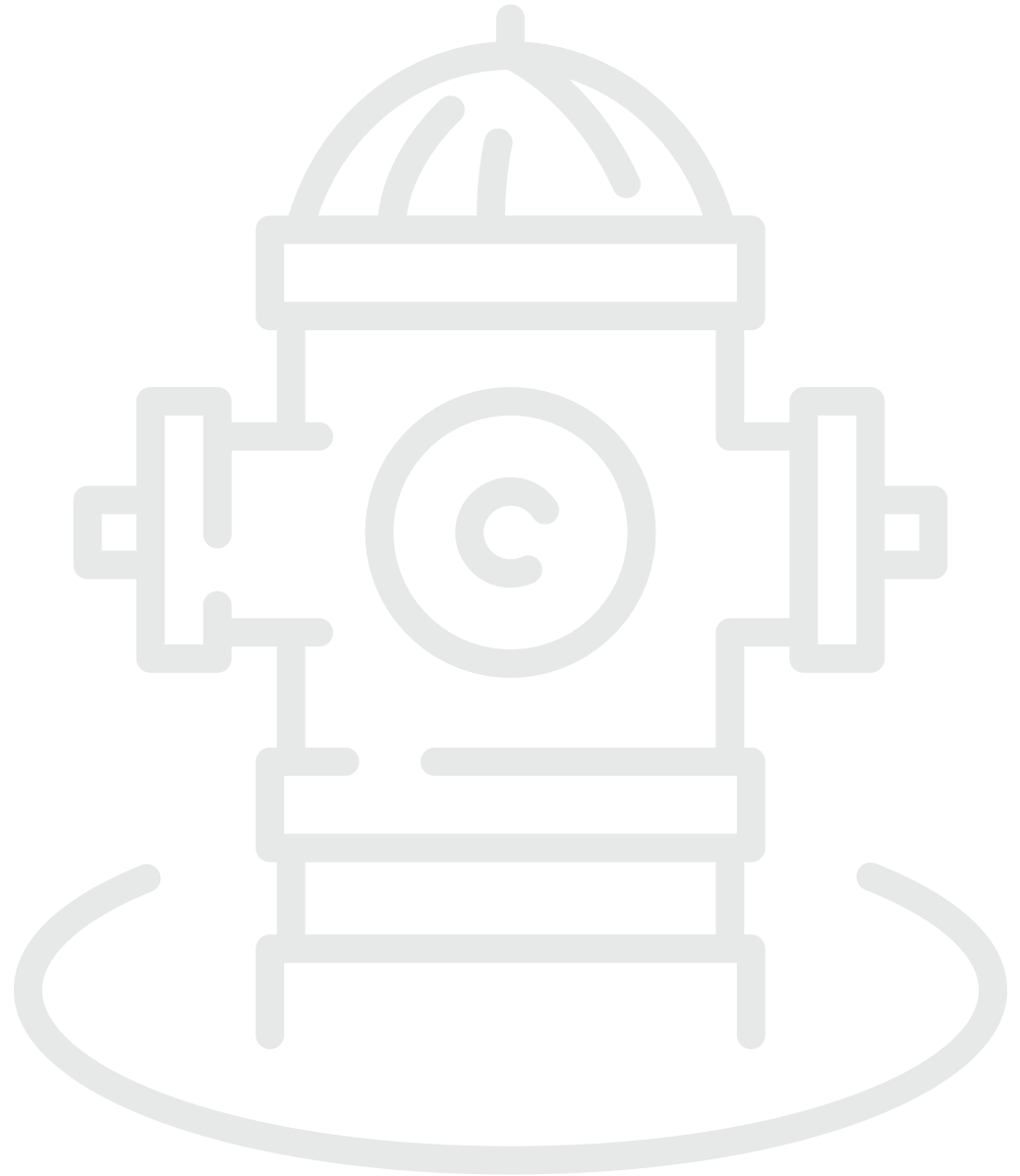
- Over 55% of survey respondents agree that utilities should be expanded to encourage housing development.

## Economic Development Sites Need Utilities

- Warren County does not have any employer sites on the market that have both water and sanitary sewer available.

## Evaluate Extending Water to Pine Village

- Pine Village has been identified as a priority area for future development but does not have public water infrastructure.



# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## **GOAL: Evaluate public water supply for Pine Village and surrounding areas.**

Due to its proximity to Tippecanoe County and Purdue University, the SR 28 Corridor between Tippecanoe County and Pine Village has significant opportunity for future Development. It has the potential to attract new housing in and around Pine Village and the new Pine Village Elementary School. It also has the opportunity to attract employers at the Bowman Business Park.

However, the town is serviced by existing sanitary sewer infrastructure, but not water infrastructure. Without water infrastructure, it will be challenging to attract residential development and will also limit the efficiency of employer site development at the Bowman Property.

Public opinion on the need for water in Pine Village has been mixed. Many expressed concern that the cost would be too high, citing the high cost of sanitary sewer. Others noted that without water investment, Warren County may not be able to attract jobs and needed housing development.

Since a study has not been completed, the cost of adding water and the resulting utility rates are unknown. It is recommended that a water system study be completed so that construction costs and utility rates can be estimated. This would provide the community the answers it needs on whether to invest in this project. With cost information known, it would also give the community the opportunity to pursue various grant funding to make the project even more affordable.

Grants are available to help fund this study through the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA). Planning Grants would fund 90% of the plan cost.

### **Objectives:**

- Apply for an OCRA Planning Grant to fund a feasibility study for a public water system for the greater Pine Village area.

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Extend water and sanitary sewer service from West Lebanon to Seeger Memorial Jr./Sr. High School and SR-263.

Seeger Memorial Jr./Sr. High School, located north of West Lebanon on SR-263, is currently on its own individual water well and is provided wastewater treatment through a small package treatment plant. According to a West Lebanon master utility study completed in February 2022, Seeger's current well and package treatment plant is at maximum capacity and in need of upgrades. West Lebanon's utility infrastructure is only roughly 1 mile from the site and could be extended to Seeger Memorial.

Not only would this extension alleviate Seeger Memorial's service issues, but it would also support housing and employer site development. As discussed in the Economic Development Chapter, the north SR-263 corridor is a priority economic development opportunity but is not currently serviced by public water and sanitary sewer infrastructure. Extending utility infrastructure along the corridor would support future economic development at the interchange by creating a more shovel-ready site for future employers.

### Objectives:

- Complete Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) to extend water and sewer service from West Lebanon to Seeger Memorial Jr./Sr. High School and SR-63 to provide service to the school, adjacent sites for housing development, and adjacent sites for economic development.
- Leverage completed PER to pursue grant funding to offset project costs.

## GOAL: Evaluate options for expanding existing capacity and extending service areas for natural gas service in the county.

CenterPoint Energy provides natural gas service to portions of the county, mainly in and around the Town of Williamsport. While there is service in West Lebanon and Pine Village, the low pressures are not conducive to industrial uses. The county has engaged in conversations with CenterPoint

in an attempt to expand service and increase pressures; however, the utility provider has determined that it is not feasible. While natural gas service expansion does not appear feasible at this time, the county should re-evaluate regularly to determine future feasibility.

### Objectives:

- Complete a yearly evaluation to determine if there are opportunities to improve gas service availability and/or capacity in or around Warren County.



# CHAPTER 9

# GOVERNMENT SERVICES

From fire protection to promotion of community events, Warren County residents rely on county, township, and town governments for a wide variety of services. Due to the county's limited financial resources, county governments rely on a small number of paid staff and a large number of volunteers to provide governmental services to residents. Across the county, Warren County residents step up to voluntarily serve in local government roles.

Volunteers also provide a large portion of emergency services in Warren County. While the county is serviced by paid law enforcement officers through the Warren County's Sheriff's Department and the Town of Williamsport's Police Department, the county's fire service is provided solely by volunteers through three volunteer fire departments.

Providing adequate government services is crucial to the long-term viability of Warren County. As current volunteers reach an age where volunteering is no longer feasible, now is the time to begin raising up Warren County's next generation of leaders.

The goal of the government services chapter is to identify key areas in which government services can and should be improved in Warren County. The following goals and objectives outline specific steps that can be taken to improve government services and the recruitment of public servants.

# KEY OBSERVATIONS AND PUBLIC INPUT

## Improve Emergency Services

- Limited capacity of Warren County's 3 volunteer fire departments and lack of public water access causes ISO ratings to be low and residents to pay higher insurance premiums.

## Develop Tomorrow's Leaders

- Warren County's volunteers wear numerous hats within the community. Surfacing additional volunteers will increase local government capacity.

## Communicate Effectively

- Effective social media accounts and organizational websites are key to ensuring residents are informed about important community activities.



# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Review emergency services as needed in response to new development

Currently, a small number of first responders are tasked with covering Warren County's large footprint and residents that reside in all corners of the county. Currently, most paid emergency service staff are stationed in the county seat - Williamsport - which is not centrally located in the county. If future development occurs in Pine Village and the northeastern portion of the county as an-

anticipated, the county will need to reassess emergency service provision to ensure that new development can be quickly serviced by first responders. Now is the time to develop plans for future emergency services.

### Objectives:

- Review law enforcement services in towns
- Review fire and EMS service

## GOAL: Develop a leadership and volunteer development program.

Warren County's local government organizations are largely led by volunteers. Unfortunately, current volunteers will not be able to serve indefinitely, and it is crucial that the next generation of leaders be identified, recruited, and developed. First, Warren County must identify its next generation of leaders by educating the general public about the importance of serving local governments and the opportunities that are available to them. Next, current volunteers

must pass along the institutional knowledge that leaders have built from years of public service to ensure that current progress is continued. Without the next generation of leaders stepping up and continuing the work of current leaders, Warren County's local governments will not be sustainable.

### Objectives:

- Start a Warren County youth council
- Add a non-voting youth member to county and town boards
- Start a Warren County rising professionals leadership group
- Celebrate the hard work of volunteers by starting an annual volunteerism award

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Improve communication between local government entities and with the general public.

In rural communities across the country, local media outlets are dwindling. Warren County is no exception. The Williamsport Review Republican publishes a weekly newspaper, meaning that local governments and organizations have little opportunity to disseminate information to county residents. As a result, residents are counting on Warren County governments to find alternative ways to communicate information in a timely manner. Many communities are opting to add paid staff responsible for county communications. To ensure Warren County residents are well-informed and able to participate in local government processes, the county should set expectations for the level of communications it wants to provide, and then consider adding communication staff to be responsible for executing that plan.

### Objectives:

- Develop a written communication plan, outlining community expectations for communication between local government entities and expectations for keeping residents informed of local events and opportunities to participate in local government.
- Develop a part-time staff position responsible for developing and implementing the communications plan.
- Establish a roundtable of county-wide elected officials and volunteers to encourage the sharing of best practices. This could initially start as an annual event and could become more frequent, if necessary.



Warren County courthouse



# CHAPTER 10

## BROADBAND

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the many reasons why broadband is often considered an essential utility, alongside water, sanitary, sewer, and electricity. Nearly all aspects of life now require internet access with adequate speeds: purchasing essential goods online, participating in online video calls with co-workers, playing video games, completing homework, e-learning days for school, paying online bills, and the list goes on and on.

For many Warren County residents, finding adequate, affordable high-speed internet is a real struggle. In fact, approximately 10% of county residents do not have access to any broadband and 70% of those in the county with access to broadband services do not have service that meets the federal broadband minimum standard of 25 mbps download speed and 3 mbps upload speed. Although 25/3 is the Federal minimum standard speed, this speed is truly too slow for many essential daily internet uses. As a result, future broadband speed goals should be in excess of 100 mbps download speed and 20 mbps upload speed.

For Warren County to attract and retain talent, broadband access must be improved. Fortunately, the county is taking action on this priority. In February 2022, the Warren County Broadband Taskforce advised county officials to pursue proposals for a large-scale broadband project in the county that would invest in broadband services of 100 mbps download speed and 20 mbps upload speed. Warren County LEDO is currently pursuing such proposals from internet providers. To make the project feasible for internet providers, the Warren County Council has approved a county investment of up to \$5 million. The goal of the broadband chapter is to identify the necessary actions to improve broadband access throughout the county.

# KEY OBSERVATIONS AND PUBLIC INPUT

## Service Needs Improvement

- Almost 70% of Warren County broadband services fall below the federal broadband speed standard

## Broadband is a Unanimous Priority

- 93% of survey respondents believe expanded access to broadband should be a top priority
- Broadband was the top investment priority for survey participants.



# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Implement county-wide broadband solution

Fiber to the home is the most effective way to deliver high-speed internet to residents and businesses across the county. Unfortunately, fiber comes with a high price tag. Due to Warren County's lack of population density in much of the county, county-wide fiber deployment has been viewed as cost-prohibitive for private internet providers. As a result, alternative broadband deployment methods must be used to get higher quality service to Warren County residents.

Warren County is attempting to lower the cost barrier for providers to implement a county-wide broadband solution. Warren County LEDO is currently pursuing proposals from internet providers to expand high-speed broadband access throughout the county. To make the project feasible for internet providers, the Warren County Council has approved a county investment of up to \$5 million.

### Objectives:

- Issue Request for Proposals for broadband providers.
- Enter into an agreement with a broadband provider to implement a county-wide solution.





# CHAPTER 11

# TRANSPORTATION

Warren County's roadways are utilized daily by residents traveling to and from work and school, by farmers traversing from one field to another with large equipment, and by local businesses shipping goods to and from their businesses. Ensuring that the county's roadways and bridges meet the demands of residents, farmers, and businesses is key to ensuring that Warren County can maintain and grow its population and local economy.

Warren County's size and limited budget creates difficulty making every needed transportation investment across the county. With 60% of its roadways being gravel, the county must make strategic decisions to improve the county's overall transportation system. The goal of the transportation chapter is to outline the key transportation goals and objectives that will enable Warren County to improve its most important transportation corridors to keep its residents and businesses moving forward.

# KEY OBSERVATIONS AND PUBLIC INPUT

## Improve County Roadways

- Only 37% of survey respondents believe Warren County roads are in good condition.

## Residents Support Roadway

### Investment

- Roadways were the second highest investment priority for survey participants.



# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Improve State Line Road between State Line City and SR 28.

State Line Road between State Line City and SR 28 is a key corridor for farmers and residents. Unfortunately, the road is in disrepair. Jurisdictional hurdles exist for repairing the road. Vermillion County, Warren County's neighbor in Illinois, is responsible for repairing the the road. Unfortunately, the road is less of a priority for Vermillion County because Vermillion County's residents and businesses do not rely on the road as heavily as Warren County residents and businesses. An ADM grain facility in State Line City generates semi traffic and further compounds the road condition issues. Previously, Warren County leaders have engaged in conversations with Vermillion County counterparts in an effort to find a solution to the jurisdictional challenges. Thus far, those conversations have not generated any substantial solutions. The county should continue those conversation and attempt to remedy State Line Road's maintenance issues.

### Objectives:

- Pursue a partnership with Vermillion County, Illinois to improve State Line Road between State Line City and SR 28.
- Evaluate upgrades to CR 875/900 W as an alternative to State Line Road since it is eligible for federal highway funding.

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

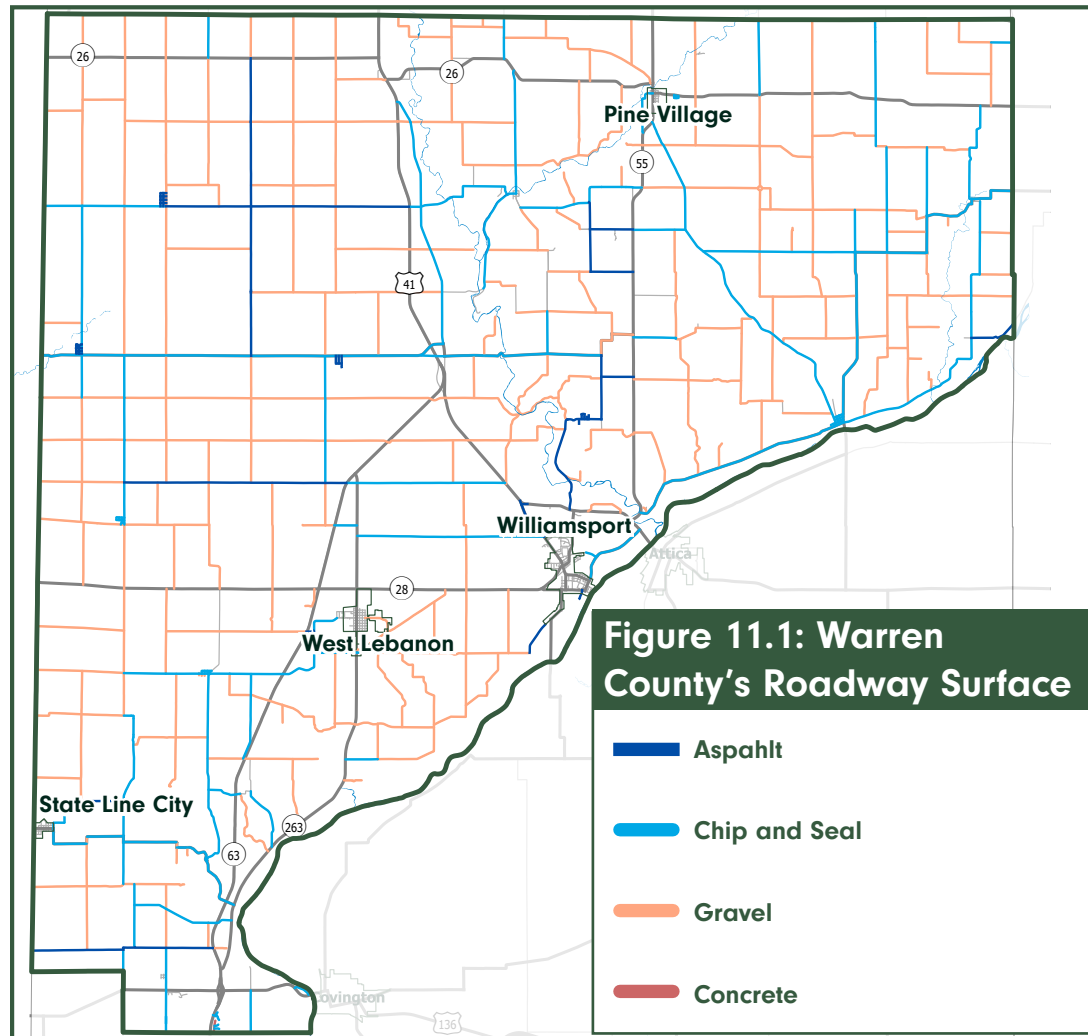
**GOAL:** Continue to improve the condition of county roads.

A common demand from Warren County residents and businesses alike is to be located on a paved road, but 60% of the county's roadways are gravel. Warren County cannot afford to pave all its roadways. Instead, the county should continue to think creatively to find cost-effective solutions to improve county roadways to ensure that roadways remain in a condition that is satisfactory to local residents and businesses.

## Objectives:

- Maintain a current PASER rating study for roads
- Utilize current PASER rating study to prioritize needed road improvements
- Prioritize roadways for paving, widening, and the creation of bike/pedestrian paths (example - CR 125 S from Williamsport to Seeger)

Scale: 1"=4.5 Miles



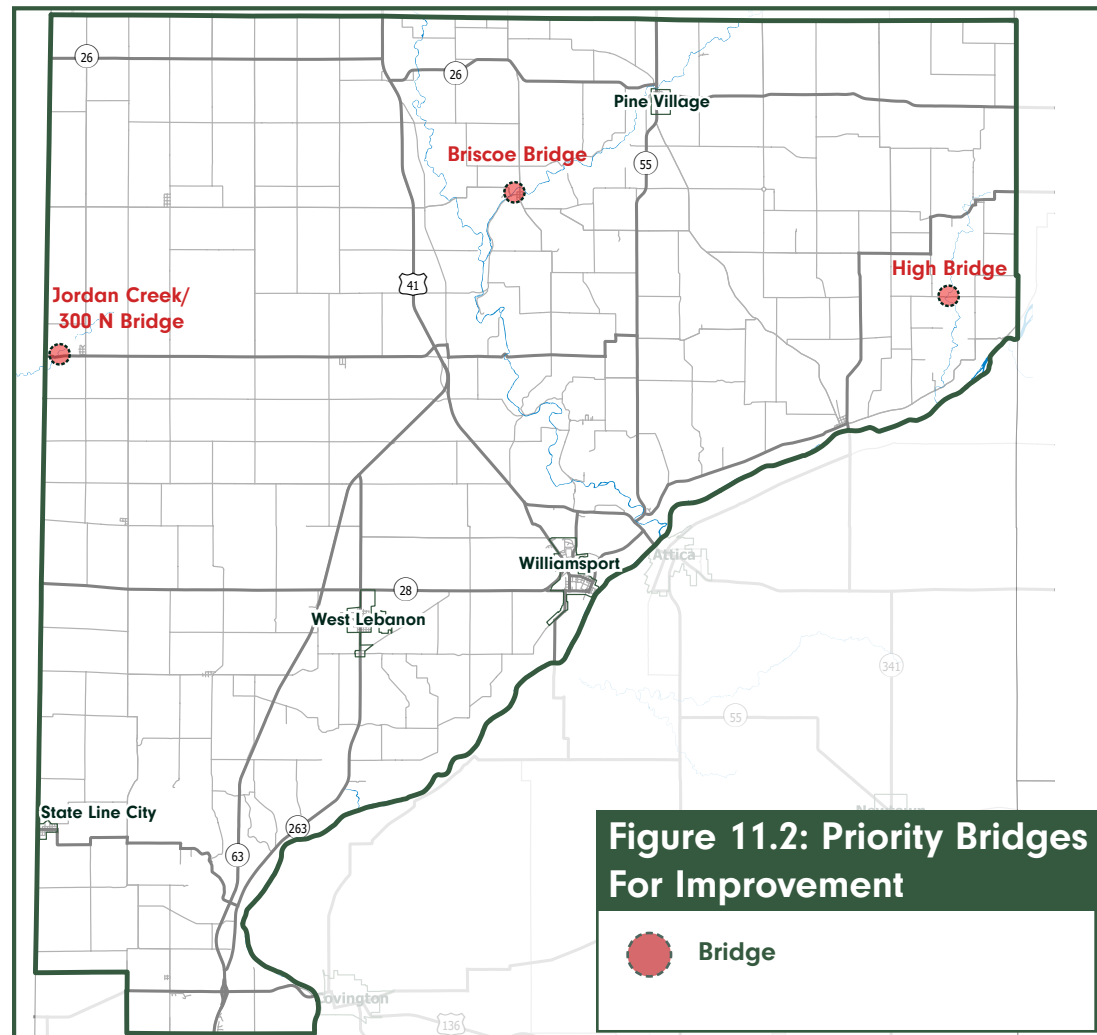
# GOAL: Maintain county bridge inventory and prioritize the implementation of needed improvements.

Bridges are a critical component of Warren County's transportation system. For the safety of all residents, farmers, logistics operators, and visitors, bridges must be properly maintained and needed improvements must be prioritized.

## Objectives:

- Improve or replace CR 300 N bridge
- Improve or replace High Bridge
- Improve or replace Briscoe Bridge

Scale: 1"=4.5 Miles



# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## **GOAL: Develop and implement a plan to improve county-wide drainage needs.**

Increasingly in recent years, Warren County farmers are installing additional on-farm drainage to ensure that farm fields are draining properly for crop production. As a result of farm-level improved drainage, more water than ever is being re-located to county drains. As this practice continues to expand, Warren County will need to ensure that county drains have sufficient capacity.

### **Objectives:**

- Complete a county-wide drainage assessment to identify and prioritize needs for drainage improvements.

## **GOAL: Partner with INDOT on key improvement projects.**

The Indiana Department of Transportation is a key partner to ensure that state roadways are in prime condition in Warren County. INDOT provides numerous grant opportunities, such as the 'Community Crossings Matching Grant' program (CCMG) that enables local government to receive substantial grant funding for local road improvement projects. The county should continue to partner with INDOT on future road projects.

### **Objectives:**

- Implement SR 26 improvement project.
- Maintain CCMG eligibility

# CHAPTER 12

## NATURAL RESOURCES, PARKS, & RECREATIONAL FEATURES

During the public engagement process, it was evident that Warren County's beautiful landscape was a top reason why residents live in Warren County. Residents constantly cite their love for fishing in the county's numerous streams, kayaking and canoeing down Big Pine Creek and the Wabash River, and hiking through protected natural areas as their favorite aspects of living in Warren County.

Not only are residents in love with Warren County's beauty, but so are visitors from across the country. An impressive number of visitors are taking note of Warren County for one of its most popular destinations – The Williamsport Falls. As the tallest freestanding falls in the State of Indiana, the destination reached 'viral' status on TikTok, the popular social media platform, during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic when a visitor got 1 million views on a post featuring the falls. The post instantly drew hundreds of visitors to Williamsport daily with license plates from eleven states and over sixty Indiana counties documented in the months following the viral post.

Warren County's viral moment showcases what residents have known for a long time – Warren County is one of Indiana's hidden gems for outdoor recreation. As individuals continue to seek alternatives to an urban lifestyle, Warren County has potential to be a residential destination for lovers of nature and a rural lifestyle.

By continuing to strengthen its offering of outdoor recreational assets, Warren County can leverage this potential to drive new residents to the county and bolster its availability of workforce for local and regional employers. The goal of the natural resources, parks and recreational services chapter is to provide key goals and objectives for the county to protect and strengthen its offering of parks, trails, and outdoor activities throughout the county.

# KEY OBSERVATIONS AND PUBLIC INPUT

## Protect Natural Resources

- 63% of survey respondents think that Warren County's natural resources and outdoor recreational amenities are outstanding. Protecting these natural resources for future generations is crucial.

## Create Additional Outdoor Activities

- 81% of survey takers believe there should be additional opportunities to interact with Warren County public waterways.

## Update Current Plans

- An update of the county parks master plan is needed to ensure that Warren County can qualify for important state funding.



# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## **GOAL: Establish protections for prime natural resources.**

Warren County's natural assets, like the Wabash River and Big Pine Creek, are at the core of why residents and visitors choose Warren County over neighboring communities. Inappropriate development near these natural resources could have negative impacts on their viability. Land use policy should strive to protect these areas for future generations.

### **Objectives:**

- Amend zoning ordinance to establish a conservation corridor along Big Pine Creek, Mud Pine Creek and Little Pine Creek. See the Conservation-Riparian land use description on page 59 for a description of recommendations for this district.

## **GOAL: Encourage open and responsible use of the county's natural resources.**

Warren County has a plethora of natural resources, many of which are under private ownership. Due to instances of irresponsible uses, some privately-owned natural resources have been closed to the public. To ensure that Warren County residents and visitors can enjoy the natural resources that they love, efforts should be made to open all natural resources for public use while adopting practices to ensure they are cared for by visitors.

### **Objectives:**

- Promote responsible use of the county's natural resources, including following "Leave No Trace" principles.
- Encourage the county's natural resources to be open and available for use by the general public.

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Promote the use of public waterways in Warren County.

Residents and visitors enjoy kayaking, canoeing, and boating down Warren County's numerous rivers, creeks, and streams, but there are unfortunately a limited number of public boat and kayak launch access sites in the county. The only public access site to the Wabash River in Warren County is the boat ramp in Old Town Williamsport. Currently, plans are being developed for a canoe and kayak

launch and at Cicott Park in Independence. Warren County residents also have nearby access to the Wabash River in neighboring counties - Granville Bridge in Tippecanoe County and Ouabache Park in Fountain County. Additional public access points should be created to ensure the public can enjoy Warren County's numerous public waterways.

### Objectives:

- Develop additional public access points along the Wabash River and along Big Pine Creek.

## GOAL: Expand and incentivize business offerings to support natural recreational activities

Many outdoor activities, like kayaking, require expensive equipment. Currently, residents and visitors must purchase their own equipment from a retailer outside of Warren County, or borrow equipment from a friend, due to a lack of equipment retailers in the county. By expanding the offering of businesses that offer the sale of equipment in support of outdoor recreational activities, Warren County can

ensure that all residents and visitors can enjoy Warren County's natural resources while spurring additional economic activity in the county. Warren County should identify and recruit businesses that support natural resource activities.

### Objectives:

- Identify business activities that are needed to support natural recreational activities.
- Actively recruit and incentivize identified business types.

## **GOAL: Maintain a current Parks and Recreation Master Plan for Warren County and incorporated communities.**

An updated five-year parks and recreation master plan is required to qualify for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). Unfortunately, Warren County's parks and recreation master plan has not been updated within the allotted time, causing the county to be ineligible for IDNR funding. To ensure that Warren County can qualify for future grant

funds, the county's parks and recreation master plan must be updated and should be regularly updated in the future. Funding for the LWCF has increased considerably in recent years, making this a very attractive program for improving Warren County's parks and recreation facilities and further solidifying the importance of updating the county's five-year master plan.

### **Objectives:**

- Update and maintain a current Warren County Five-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan per Indiana Department of Natural Resources Standards.
- Establish parks boards in each of the towns.
- Develop and maintain a current a Five-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan for each town in the county.

## **GOAL: Develop additional multi-use trails beyond those in the Wabash River Greenway Trails plan.**

A vast majority (80%) of Warren County residents agree - trails are an important component of the county's outdoor recreational offering. Warren County has numerous hiking trails, or trails without a hard surface in natural settings such as woods or nature preserves, such as the trails in Falls Branch Park, Weiler-Leopold Nature Preserve, Gladys and Al Wright Rock Creek Nature Preserve, Crow's Grove, and the Laura Hare Forest Prairie

Border. With that being said, Warren County does not have many multi-use trails, trails with hard surfaces that can be used by runners, walkers, and bikers to reach destinations. Additional trails within Warren County, beyond those identified in the Wabash River Greenway Trails plan, should be developed to allow for increased opportunities for residents and visitors to interact with Warren County's natural resources and parks.

### **Objectives:**

- Develop and adopt a county-wide trails master plan. This could be created as part of a five-year parks and recreation master plan update.
- Develop additional multi-use trails in various parts of the county
- Evaluate development of a trail on the former rail corridor in the western part of the county.

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Implement the Warren County projects identified in the Wabash River Greenway Trails plan

The Wabash River Greenway is being planned along a 90-mile, five county section of the Wabash River corridor and includes Warren County. Once complete, the Wabash River Greenway will create a regional outdoor recreational destination that encourages economic development, improves water quality, celebrates local history and culture, and fosters active living and healthy habits.

To bring the Wabash River Greenway to life, the Wabash Heartland Innovation Network, North Central Health Services, and the Wabash River Enhancement Corporation funded a master plan future greenway projects. The master plan featured numerous proposed trails and projects to enhance access to the Wabash River from Cass County to Fountain County. The plan proposed three Warren County trails. Warren County should invest in building these trails.

### Objectives:

- Build the three Warren County trails featured in the master plan:
  - Trail from the Williamsport Falls to the River Road
  - Trail from River Road to the Wabash River
  - Trail in Cicott Park

Figure 12.1: Trail to Cicott Park



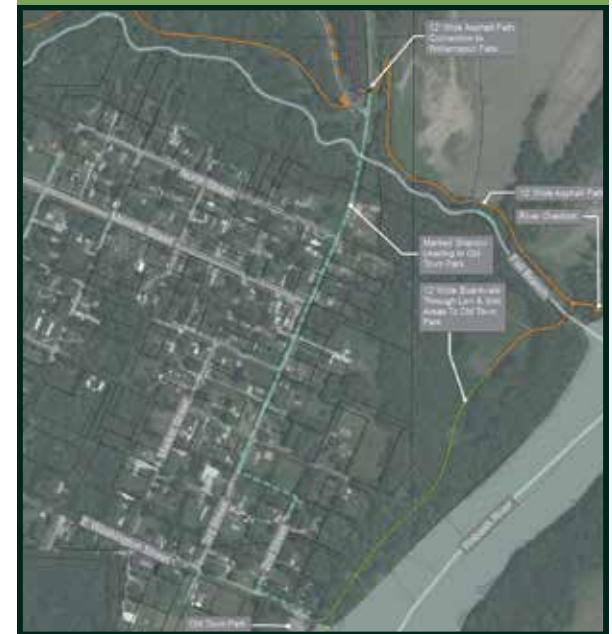
Source: Wabash River Greenway Trail Plan

Figure 12.2: Trail from the Williamsport Falls to River Road



Source: Wabash River Greenway Trail Plan

Figure 12.3: Trail from River Road to the Wabash River



Source: Wabash River Greenway Trail Plan

# CHAPTER 13

## QUALITY OF PLACE

A sense of community is at the core of why individuals choose to live in the places in which they reside. During the public engagement process, current residents' affection for the Warren County community was evident. Simply put – Warren County residents are proud to call Warren County home. As a result, the county has a great sense of community to continue to build upon and strengthen through quality of place investments.

Creating quality places is central to many of the guiding principles of this comprehensive plan – quality places create a high standard of living for residents and allow a community to attract and retain residents. Warren County needs additional workers and workers are drawn to locations with a strong sense of community. Through festivals, community events, and local spaces for residents and visitors to gather, Warren County can create unique experiences that form a strong quality of life and tie residents to the county for the long-term.

Improving quality of place does not mean creating a wish list of amenities that larger communities have that Warren County would like to add. Warren County's quality of place is largely defined by its rural and small-town lifestyle. Accordingly, quality of place investments in Warren County should be targeted around building community through festivals, events, public spaces and businesses that enable the routines and rituals of community life. Quality of place must also incorporate the community's pride in the natural environment. This can be supported by expanding access to places to hike, hunt, fish, kayak, bird watch and generally be outside in nature.

Strategies for improving natural areas that support Warren County's quality of place were outlined in the previous chapter. In this chapter, strategies for building community and related goals are outlined.

**DRAFT FOR APC REVIEW 08/01/22**

# KEY OBSERVATIONS AND PUBLIC INPUT

## Increase Weekend Activities

- 78% of survey participants feel there aren't enough things to do in Warren County on the weekends.

## Support and Grow Community Events

- 92% of survey respondents believe Warren County should support and grow festivals and events that build community pride.

## Create Community Spaces

- Additional community spaces in downtowns, like a farmers' market or community kitchen, would create opportunities for residents to support small businesses and further strengthen the county's offering of community events.



# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Support and promote community festivals, events, and activities.

Community festivals, events and activities bring community members together and establish a strong sense of community pride and belonging. They can also introduce new people to the area. Warren County is home to numerous long-standing community festivals:

- The Illiana Steam and Power Show celebrates the early history of rural life
- West Lebanon Patriot Day is an annual tradition that includes a parade, competitions and live music.
- Pine Village Vintage Football honors the 100+ year history of football in Pine Village
- The Williamsport Fire Department Motorama features a car show, local foods, and live entertainment.

Hosting community festivals and events can be challenging in a community with limited volunteers and resources. Bad weather or unforeseen events can deplete the resources of a small organization and threaten future events. To address this concern and encourage the expansion of events, it is recommended that the county find ways to support local organizations by providing loans to help stage events.

### Objectives:

- Start a forgivable loan program for groups that organize community festivals and events to provide up-front capital needed to stage events.
- Investigate the creation of a county-wide event/festival to promote the county's natural recreational areas and waterways
- Encourage the development of recurring programming and events in downtown areas.
- Support the expansion of cultural activities (music and arts), including programming for the new theater at Seeger Memorial Jr./Sr. High School.
- Form a county-wide arts council to investigate, plan, and promote local events and cultural activities.



A pocket park in Pine Village proudly promoting Pine Village Vintage Football

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## GOAL: Support downtown revitalization In Warren County's towns.

Warren County's downtowns were once thriving districts full of business and social activity. Now, like in countless rural communities across the country, these commercial districts have significant vacancy, many buildings are blighted and in need of repair, and fewer residents actively congregate in downtowns due to a lack of amenities.

The economic development chapter of this plan focused on the importance of re-building downtown districts so that residents can obtain basic goods and services in Warren County without having to travel outside the county. This chapter's downtown focus will center around the importance of re-building downtowns as quality spaces for members and visitors of the community gather with one another. To be effective, downtown districts need improvements.

To support the goal of creating quality places in Warren County downtowns, it is recommended that downtowns receive investments in improving the conditions of

downtowns through enhanced sidewalks, curb ramps, streetlights, and community gathering spaces. Warren County should make it a priority to make downtowns a place where residents want to spend their time.



Downtown Williamsport

### Objectives:

- Develop new or improve existing public spaces in each town.
- Support the development of new events, activities, and programming in the downtown districts.
- Add staffing to promote small business and downtown development.
- Encourage reinvestment in the downtown districts through Infrastructure Improvements (sidewalks, streetlights, curb ramps, benches and related features).
- Incentivize Infill and redevelopment within downtown districts.
- Incentivize renovation of existing downtown buildings.
- Start an Indiana Main Street program(s) to support downtown reinvestment.

## **GOAL: Create a food/ag related community gathering space.**

The Warren County fair is an annual activity that truly brings together the entire county. During fair week each summer, residents and visitors gather at the county fairgrounds to celebrate agriculture and enjoy great food and great company. Unfortunately, when fair week is over, residents don't have another setting that unites the public quite like the fair.

Public engagement participants expressed the need for a shared community space to serve multiple purposes – provide a space for food-related businesses to use shared equipment until they can grow and justify purchasing their own equipment, expand the offering of food items to the public for purchase, and most importantly, provide a venue for the public to gather with one another.

As the county seat and the county's largest town, Williamsport makes the most sense as the setting for a county-wide community gathering space. With that being said, each town should strive to have a space to host events and activities. From farmers

markets to outdoor adult proms, each town should offer a space where community members to gather and celebrate their community. It is important to note – these spaces do not need to be extravagant nor expensive. Instead, these spaces just need to designate a spot for community members to gather.

### **Objectives:**

- Identify a community group or local business to champion the development of the event space
- Identify a location for the community gathering space
  - Potential location: Warren County fairgrounds
- Investigate the following potential activities for the community gathering space:
  - Community farmers' market
  - Community kitchen
  - Food truck court
  - Shared indoor/outdoor dining patio
  - Small business incubator

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## **GOAL: Investigate the need for additional community centers in towns without existing community centers.**

Community centers are some of the most vital buildings in Warren County. These buildings in State Line City and Pine Village provide space for community members to have meetings, host graduation parties, and encourage community collaboration and interaction. Additional locations for community centers, such as West Lebanon

and Williamsport, should be investigated. Additionally, existing community centers should be upgraded to ensure they are serving community members with required amenities.

### **Objectives:**

- Explore additional locations for new community centers
- Explore needed upgrades to existing community centers

# CHAPTER 14

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

# FUTURE LAND USE

<b>GOAL: DIRECT HOUSING DEVELOPMENT TO AREAS ALREADY SERVICED WITH WATER AND SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE IN AND AROUND WEST LEBANON AND WILLIAMSPORT.</b>		
Encourage 1, 2 and multi-family housing in and around these towns.	Short-term	APC
Revise the zoning ordinance to reduce the maximum number of units allowed for multi-family residential development within the county.	Immediate	APC
<b>GOAL: SUPPORT INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT WITHIN EXISTING TOWNS AND UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES.</b>		
Develop incentive program to encourage infill and redevelopment (see Chapter 5 – Housing for recommendations).	Short-term	Commissioners/Council
Amend zoning ordinance to incorporate context sensitive design requirements for infill and redevelopment.	Short-term	APC
<b>GOAL: DIRECT HOUSING EXPANSION TO AREAS WHERE UTILITY IMPROVEMENTS ARE PLANNED AROUND PINE VILLAGE AND WEST LEBANON.</b>		
Encourage housing, commercial, and Industrial uses along the SR 263 corridor between West Lebanon and Seegar Memorial Jr./Sr. High School.	Short-term	APC
Encourage housing in Pine Village in areas with existing sanitary sewer service and future water (when available).	Short-term	APC
<b>GOAL: SUPPORT APPROPRIATE AMOUNTS OF RURAL RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN APPROPRIATE AREAS OF THE COUNTY.</b>		
Encourage clustering of rural residential development.	Short-term	APC
Update standards for lot size to accommodate septic systems while minimizing sprawl.	Immediate	APC
Prioritize housing development in and around towns over general rural residential housing.	Short-term	APC
<b>GOAL: PROTECT NATURAL ASSETS AND CONSERVATION AREAS FROM ADVERSE DEVELOPMENT.</b>		
Amend zoning ordinance to establish a conservation corridor along Big Pine Creek, Mud Pine Creek and Little Pine Creek. See the Conservation-Riparian land use description on page 59 for a description of recommendations for this district.	Short-term	APC
<b>GOAL: ESTABLISH MULTIPLE ZONING DISTRICTS FOR AGRICULTURAL USES TO REFLECT DIFFERENT TYPES OF MODERN AGRICULTURE.</b>		
Amend the zoning ordinance to establish multiple agricultural districts.	Short-term	APC
<b>GOAL: ENCOURAGE NEW EMPLOYER SITES TO BE LOCATED IN THE AREAS OUTLINED IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CHAPTER.</b>		
Encourage new employers to locate in key economic development sites	Immediate	APC/LEDO

# FUTURE LAND USE

<b>GOAL: REBUILD WARREN COUNTY'S DOWNTOWN DISTRICTS TO MEET THE GOAL OF PROVIDING NEEDED LOCAL GOODS AND SERVICES.</b>		
Whenever feasible, direct new commercial development to occur within existing core commercial districts of the towns.	Short-term	APC/LEDO
Support highway oriented commercial development outside the towns when the scale of development would not be appropriate within the towns.	Short-term	APC/LEDO
<b>GOAL: EVALUATE RENEWABLE ENERGY PROPOSALS ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS</b>		
Direct Renewable energy development to areas within Agricultural districts that are approved for Intensive Agriculture uses.	Short-term	APC
Continue to require a public hearing for all renewable energy projects.	Short-term	APC
Discourage renewable energy development in the Rural Estate district, as well as other commercial, residential, industrial and conservation districts.	Short-term	APC
<b>GOAL: INCREASE EDUCATION ABOUT COUNTY PLANNING AND ZONING.</b>		
Post required permits to county website.	Immediate	Planning & Zoning
Have a link to the updated Comprehensive Plan on the county's website. Include a brief explanation as to why the document is important.	Immediate	Planning & Zoning
Investigate more user-friendly online GIS map alternatives. To prevent confusion from the general public, consider changing the link to the online GIS map from "Warren County GIS" to "Warren County Zoning Map."	Immediate	Planning & Zoning
Create and publish graphic flow charts on the county website to illustrate the steps in common processes (building permits, rezones, variance applications, etc).	Immediate	Planning & Zoning
Create a zoning Frequently Asked Questions sheet and publish on the county website.	Immediate	Planning & Zoning
Create a 'Land Use Matrix' that shows the zoning classifications and the permitted uses in each zoning district and publish on the county's website.	Immediate	Planning & Zoning
Avoid planning acronyms on the county website. For example, change BZA to Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA).	Immediate	Planning & Zoning
Create checklists of needed information/materials for permitting applications to help applicants and reviewers to understand what materials are needed.	Immediate	Planning & Zoning
On special ordinances, like the solar ordinance, consider including a short executive summary that highlights the pertinent information included.	Immediate	Planning & Zoning
<b>GOAL: UPDATE WARREN COUNTY DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCES.</b>		
Prepare a new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).	Short-term	APC

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**GOAL: INVEST IN QUALITY OF PLACE INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT WORKFORCE RETENTION AND ATTRACTION, AND TO RETAIN YOUTH IN THE COMMUNITY.**

See recommendations in Quality of Place chapter.

**GOAL: ESTABLISH A SERIES OF SHOVEL READY SITES AVAILABLE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.**

**PRIORITY SITE: SR-28 & SR-263 INTERSECTION**

Establish site control through purchase, option to purchase, sales contract or related marketing agreement	Short-term	LEDO
Update previous water and sanitary sewer planning for the area to serve the school and adjacent development properties. This should be completed in conjunction with the Metropolitan School District of Warren County.	Short-term	West Lebanon/ Commissioners
Review funding alternatives for the project.	Short-term	West Lebanon/ Commissioners
Evaluate alternatives for a rail siding to serve properties at this site.	Medium-term	West Lebanon/ Commissioners
Submit application for the Indiana Site Certified program to demonstrate the site is shovel ready for development	Medium-term	West Lebanon/ Commissioners
Maintain communication with natural gas providers and continually evaluate options for providing natural gas service to these sites.	Medium-term	West Lebanon/ Commissioners
<b>PRIORITY SITE: BOWMAN BUSINESS PARK - PINE VILLAGE</b>		
Partner with Pine Village to develop a master plan for providing public water supply to the town and this site.	Immediate	Pine Village/ Commissioners
Continue to market the site for development, with the understanding that short-term development would need to be served by a well, until a public water supply is available.	Short-term	LEDO
Evaluate forming a TIF District to capture future revenue	Medium-term	Council
Submit application for the Indiana Site Certified program to demonstrate the site is shovel ready for development	Short-term	Pine Village/ Commissioners
Evaluate alternatives for use of the site for housing development.	Short-term	Pine Village/ Commissioners
<b>PRIORITY SITE: SR-63 &amp; US-136 INTERSECTION</b>		
Investigate options for providing water and sanitary sewer service to the site, including options for a new water/sewer provider or through a partnership with the City of Covington.	Long-term	Commissioners

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## GOAL: INCREASE STAFFING FOR SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION.

Add staffing to promote small businesses development.	Short-term	LEDO
Consider adding tourism development as a role of this organization/staff position	Medium-term	LEDO
Consider making this position responsible for a local Main Street organization.	Medium-term	LEDO
Establish programming to support existing small businesses and to attract new businesses.	Short-term	LEDO
Launch a small business revolving loan program	Short-term	LEDO

## GOAL: START A LOCAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION/DEPARTMENT TO MARKET THE BENEFITS OF LIVING IN AND VISITING WARREN COUNTY.

Create a tourism organization or add tourism responsibilities to an existing organization	Short-term	LEDO/Commissioners
Develop marketing materials for Warren County tourism destinations	Short-term	Tourism Organization
Market county tourism destinations in tourism resources across the state	Short-term	Tourism Organization
Evaluate alternatives for combining this position with a small business development role.	Medium-term	LEDO/Commissioners
Pursue regional partnerships/staffing to promote tourism.	Short-term	Tourism Organization

## GOAL: EXPAND THE AVAILABILITY OF AFFORDABLE AND LICENSED CHILDCARE IN WARREN COUNTY.

Recruit partner organization(s) to serve as the lead in providing childcare services in the community.	Short-term	LEDO
Support childcare providers by partnering on construction grant opportunities (through the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs' Community Development Block Grant Program) and training opportunities for current and future providers.	Short-term	LEDO
Partner with The Child Care Resource Network to increase quality childcare capacity by 40+ children through Greater Lafayette Commerce READI program.	Short-term	LEDO

## GOAL: EXPLORE FUTURE RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENTS.

Explore future renewable energy developments where they meet the land use recommendations of this plan.	Short-term	LEDO/APC
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## GOAL: DIVERSIFY WARREN COUNTY'S JOB OPPORTUNITIES.

Recruit additional jobs that require advanced degrees, training, and/or certificates	Short-term	LEDO
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# HOUSING

<b>GOAL: EXPAND SINGLE-FAMILY, OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING STOCK.</b>		
<b>Develop incentive package to encourage housing development on sites that are already served with water and sanitary sewer, including unfinished subdivisions and infill/redevelopment properties.</b>	Medium-term	Commissioners/Council
<b>Evaluate feasibility of developing county-owned properties for housing. Alternatives, such as swapping county- owned property for property more feasible for housing development, should also be evaluated.</b>	Medium-term	Commissioners/Council
<b>Evaluate strategic extension of utilities to Seeger Memorial Jr./Sr. High School and encourage housing between West Lebanon and Pine Village. (See Chapter 6 - Infrastructure)</b>	Short-term	Commissioners/West Lebanon
<b>Evaluate strategic development of public water service for Pine Village to encourage housing (See Chapter 6 - Infrastructure)</b>	Short-term	Commissioners/Pine Village
<b>Evaluate use of the Bowman property for housing development.</b>	Short-term	LEDO
<b>GOAL: INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF RENTAL HOUSING STOCK.</b>		
<b>Develop incentives to promote the development of quality rental housing products within existing towns.</b>	Short-term	Commissioners/Council
<b>Develop incentives to promote the development of senior housing and other low maintenance housing units</b>	Medium-term	Commissioners/Council
<b>GOAL: CONTINUE AND STRENGTHEN THE COUNTY'S BLIGHT ELIMINATION PROGRAMS.</b>		
<b>Increase enforcement of the Unsafe Building Ordinance (UBO)</b>	Short-term	Commissioners
<b>Develop an educational/outreach campaign about the Unsafe Building Ordinance to increase awareness of understanding of the ordinance amongst the general public</b>	Short-term	Planning & Zoning
<b>Allocate county funds for blight elimination</b>	Short-term	Council

# INFRASTRUCTURE

## GOAL: EVALUATE PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY FOR PINE VILLAGE AND SURROUNDING AREAS.

Apply for an OCRA Planning Grant to fund a feasibility study for a public water system for the greater Pine Village area.

Immediate

Pine Village

## GOAL: EVALUATE OPTIONS FOR EXPANDING EXISTING CAPACITY AND EXTENDING SERVICE AREAS FOR NATURAL GAS SERVICE IN THE COUNTY.

Complete a yearly evaluation to determine if there are opportunities to improve gas service availability and/or capacity in or around Warren County.

Short-term

LEDO

## GOAL: EXTEND WATER AND SANITARY SEWER SERVICE FROM WEST LEBANON TO SEEGER MEMORIAL JR./SR. HIGH SCHOOL AND TO SR 263 TO SERVE AND SUPPORT SEEGER MEMORIAL, HOUSING DEVELOPMENT, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

Complete Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) to extend water and sewer service from West Lebanon to Seeger Memorial Jr./Sr. High School and SR-63 to provide service to the school, adjacent sites for housing development, and adjacent sites for economic development.

Immediate

Commissioners/West Lebanon

Leverage completed PER to pursue grant funding to offset project costs.

Short-term

Commissioners/West Lebanon

## GOAL: EVALUATE OPTIONS FOR A RAIL SIDING.

# GOVERNMENT SERVICES

## GOAL: REVIEW EMERGENCY SERVICES AS NEEDED IN RESPONSE TO NEW DEVELOPMENT.

Review law enforcement services in towns

Short-term

Commissioners

Review fire and EMS service

Short-term

Commissioners

## GOAL: DEVELOP A LEADERSHIP AND VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.

Start a Warren County youth council

Immediate

Commissioners

Add a non-voting youth member to county and town boards

Immediate

Commissioners

Start a Warren County rising professionals leadership group

Short-term

LEDO

Celebrate the hard work of volunteers by starting an annual volunteerism award

Immediate

LEDO

## GOAL: IMPROVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENTITIES AND WITH THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

Develop a written communication plan, outlining community expectations for communication between local government entities and expectations for keeping residents informed of local events and opportunities to participate in local government.

Short-term

Commissioners

Develop a part-time staff position responsible for developing and implementing the communications plan.

Short-term

Commissioners

Establish a roundtable of county-wide elected officials and volunteers to encourage the sharing of best practices. This could initially start as an annual event and could become more frequent, if necessary.

Short-term

Commissioners

# BROADBAND

GOAL: IMPLEMENT COUNTY-WIDE BROADBAND SOLUTION.		
Issue Request for Proposals for broadband providers.	Immediate	Commissioners
Enter into an agreement with a broadband provider to implement a county-wide solution.	Short-term	Commissioners

# TRANSPORTATION

GOAL: IMPROVE STATE LINE ROAD BETWEEN STATE LINE CITY AND SR 28.		
Pursue a partnership with Vermillion County, Illinois to improve State Line Road between State Line City and SR 28.	Short-term	Commissioners/ Highway Department
Evaluate upgrades to CR 875/900 W as an alternative to State Line Road since it is eligible for federal highway funding.	Medium-term	Commissioners/ Highway Department
GOAL: CONTINUE TO IMPROVE THE CONDITION OF COUNTY ROADS.		
Maintain a current PASER rating study for roads	Immediate	Commissioners/ Highway Department
Utilize current PASER rating study to prioritize needed road improvements.	Short-term	Commissioners/ Highway Department
GOAL: MAINTAIN COUNTY BRIDGE INVENTORY AND PRIORITIZE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS.		
Improve or replace CR 300 N bridge (1/4 mile from state line)	Short-term	Commissioners/ Highway Department
Improve or replace High Bridge	Short-term	Commissioners/ Highway Department
Improve or replace Rainsville Bridge	Short-term	Commissioners/ Highway Department
GOAL: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A PLAN TO IMPROVE COUNTY-WIDE DRAINAGE NEEDS.		
Complete a county-wide drainage assessment to identify and prioritize needs for drainage improvements.	Short-term	Commissioners/Surveyor
GOAL: PARTNER WITH INDOT ON KEY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS.		
Implement SR 26 improvement project.	Short-term	Commissioners/ Highway Department
Maintain CCMG eligibility	Short-term	Commissioners/ Highway Department

# NATURAL RESOURCES

<b>GOAL: ESTABLISH PROTECTIONS FOR PRIME NATURAL RESOURCES.</b>		
Amend zoning ordinance to establish a conservation corridor along Big Pine Creek, Mud Pine Creek and Little Pine Creek.	Short-term	APC
Acquire land and key resources to protect natural resources	Long-term	Commissioners
<b>GOAL: ENCOURAGE OPEN AND RESPONSIBLE USE OF THE COUNTY'S NATURAL RESOURCES.</b>		
Promote responsible use of the county's natural resources, including following "Leave No Trace" principles.	Short-term	County Parks Board
Encourage the county's natural resources to be open and available for use by the general public.	Short-term	Commissioners/County Parks Board
<b>GOAL: PROMOTE THE USE OF PUBLIC WATERWAYS IN WARREN COUNTY.</b>		
Develop additional public access points along the Wabash River and along Big Pine Creek.	Short-term	Commissioners/County Parks Board
<b>GOAL: EXPAND AND INCENTIVIZE BUSINESS OFFERING TO SUPPORT NATURAL RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES.</b>		
Identify business activities that are needed to support natural recreational activities.	Short-term	LEDO/County Parks Board
Actively recruit and incentivize identified business types.	Medium-term	LEDO
<b>GOAL: MAINTAIN A CURRENT PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN FOR WARREN COUNTY AND INCORPORATED COMMUNITIES.</b>		
Update and maintain a current Warren County Five-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan per Indiana Department of Natural Resources Standards.	Immediate	Commissioners/County Parks Board
Establish parks boards in each of the towns.	Medium-term	Towns
Develop and maintain a current a Five- Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan for each town in the county.	Long-term	Towns
<b>GOAL: IMPLEMENT THE WARREN COUNTY PROJECTS IDENTIFIED IN THE WABASH RIVER GREENWAY TRAILS PLAN.</b>		
Build the three Warren County trails featured in the master plan	Short-term	Commissioners/County Parks Board
<b>GOAL: DEVELOP ADDITIONAL MULTI-USE TRAILS BEYOND THOSE IN THE WABASH RIVER GREENWAY TRAILS PLAN.</b>		
Develop and adopt a county-wide trails master plan. This could be created as part of a five-year parks and recreation master plan update.	Medium-term	Commissioners/County Parks Board
Develop additional multi-use trails in various parts of the county	Medium-term	Commissioners/County Parks Board
Evaluate development of a trail on the former rail corridor in the western part of the county.	Long-term	Commissioners/County Parks Board

# QUALITY OF LIFE

<b>GOAL: SUPPORT AND PROMOTE COMMUNITY FESTIVALS, EVENTS, AND ACTIVITIES.</b>		
Start a forgivable loan program for groups that organize community festivals and events to provide up-front capital needed to stage events.	Medium-term	Community Foundation
Investigate the creation of a county-wide event/festival to promote the county's natural recreational areas and waterways	Medium-term	Community Foundation
Encourage the development of recurring programming and events in downtown areas.	Long-term	Community Foundation
Support the expansion of cultural activities (music and arts), including programming for the new theater at Seegar Memorial Jr./Sr. High School.	Short-term	Community Foundation
Form a county-wide arts council to investigate, plan, and promote local events and cultural activities.	Short-term	Community Foundation
Develop year-round events surrounding existing community activities	Short-term	Community Foundation
<b>GOAL: SUPPORT DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION IN WARREN COUNTY'S TOWNS.</b>		
Develop new or improve existing public spaces in each town.	Short-term	RDC/Towns/County
Support the development of new events, activities, and programming in the downtown districts.	Short-term	Towns
Add staffing to promote small business and downtown development.	Short-term	LEDO/County
Encourage reinvestment in the downtown districts through Infrastructure Improvements (sidewalks, streetlights, curb ramps, benches and related features).	Short-term	RDC/Towns
Incentivize Infill and redevelopment within downtown districts.	Short-term	RDC/Towns
Incentivize renovation of existing downtown buildings.	Medium-term	RDC/Towns
Start an Indiana Main Street program(s) to support downtown reinvestment.	Medium-term	LEDO/County
Develop a community revitalization matching grant program	Medium-term	RDC/Towns
Support existing town revitalization community groups	Short-term	RDC/Towns
<b>GOAL: CREATE A FOOD/AG RELATED COMMUNITY GATHERING SPACE.</b>		
Identify a community group or local business to champion the development of the event space	Short-term	Commissioners
Identify a location for the community gathering space	Medium-term	Community Group
Investigate the potential activities for the community gathering space	Medium-term	Community Group
<b>GOAL: INVESTIGATE THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY CENTERS IN TOWNS WITHOUT EXISTING COMMUNITY CENTERS.</b>		
Explore additional locations for new community centers	Medium-term	Commissioners/Towns
Explore needed upgrades to existing community centers	Short-term	Commissioners/Towns