



HWC
ENGINEERING

ADOPTED: APRIL 27, 2026

RIPLEY COUNTY, INDIANA
RESOLUTION NO. 2026- 05

**A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF RIPLEY COUNTY, INDIANA, APPROVING AND
ADOPTING THE 2026 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

WHEREAS, The Ripley County Area County Plan Commission, in accordance with Indiana Code § 36-7-4-500 et seq., has held a public hearing on April 7, 2026, for the proposed 2026 update to Ripley County's Comprehensive Plan.

WHEREAS, The Ripley County Plan Commission certified its recommendation that the Commissioners of Ripley County, Indiana ("County," respectively) approve and adopt the updated Comprehensive Plan.

WHEREAS, The Commissioners of Ripley County find that the proposed update provides for the continued responsible growth and development of the County.

PASSED, ORDAINED, AND ADOPTED on this 27th day of Apr. 2026, by the County Commissioners of Ripley County, Indiana by a vote of 3 in favor and 0 opposed.

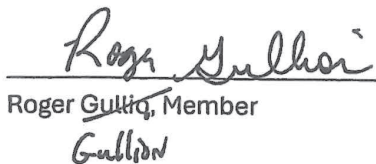
THE 2026 COMMISSIONERS OF RIPLEY COUNTY, INDIANA



Mark Horstman, President



Jeff Volz, Member



Roger Gullion, Member

Gullion

ATTEST:



Amy Copeland, Auditor

RESOLUTION NO. 2026 - 7

TOWN COUNCIL OF OSGOOD, INDIANA

**A Resolution Approving and Adopting the Ripley County Comprehensive Plan
for the Town of Osgood, Indiana**

WHEREAS, the Town of Osgood recognizes the importance of planning for future development and investment in Osgood and surrounding areas; and,

WHEREAS, the Town of Osgood and Ripley County retained the services of HWC Engineering to facilitate and develop a Comprehensive Plan for Ripley County, including the Town of Osgood in accordance with Indiana Code §36-7-4-500 et. seq.; and,

WHEREAS, the Town of Osgood solicited input from the community and other stakeholders to inform the vision, goals, and action items included in the plan; and,

WHEREAS, the Ripley County Area Plan Commission held on April 7, 2026 a legally advertised public hearing to consider adoption of the Comprehensive Plan and voted to send a unanimous favorable recommendation to the Town Council; and,

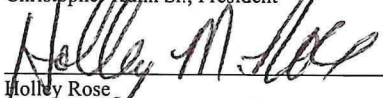
WHEREAS, the Town Council found that the Comprehensive Plan attached hereto and incorporated herein as Exhibit A meets the requirements of Indiana Code §36-7-4-500 et. seq., and this Comprehensive Plan is approved for the promotion of public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, or the general welfare and for the sake of efficiency and economy in the process of development.

BE IT RESOLVED, the Town Council of Osgood, Indiana, having reviewed and considered the Comprehensive Plan, and having heard public comment on April 7, 2026 at the Area Plan Commission, now hereby approves and adopts the Ripley County Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Osgood, Indiana.

This Resolution shall be in full force and effect from and upon its adoption and recordation in accordance with the law. All prior adopted resolutions and exhibits or parts thereof in conflict herewith are superseded by this Resolution.

RESOLVED this ^{16th} ~~19th~~ day of ~~May~~ ^{June} 2026, by the Town Council of the Town of Osgood, Indiana,
by a vote of 2 yeas and 0 nays.

Christopher Kulin Sr., President



Holly Rose



William (Bill) Roberts

ATTEST:



Tammy Wilhoit, Clerk-Treasurer

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Ripley County Comprehensive Plan would not have been possible without the tremendous input, feedback, and expertise of the Steering Committee, county leadership, and staff. We would also like to give a special thanks to the many residents and business owners who generously devoted their time and ideas in support of a brighter future for Ripley County and its communities.

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Roger Gullion
Mark Horstman
Jeff Volz

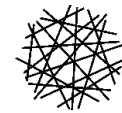
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Jeff French
Dave Osborne
Dustin Payne
Doug Rump
Mark Salyers
Doug Smith
Jim Waldo
Micah Webster
Steve Youngman

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Steve Youngman

PREPARED BY:



HWC
ENGINEERING

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01

ABOUT THE PLAN



CHAPTER 1

PLAN INTRODUCTION



PLAN OVERVIEW

Ripley County's last comprehensive plan was adopted in 2002. Building on the progress of the last two decades, Ripley County partnered with HWC Engineering to update the comprehensive plan, which outlines a shared vision for the future.

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is a long-range guidance document that serves as a roadmap for future growth and development. It establishes a shared vision for the next 10–20 years and outlines goals, objectives, and strategies to guide decisions on land use, housing, transportation, economic development, parks and recreation, infrastructure, and community services. Developed with input from residents, stakeholders, and local leaders, the 2026 Ripley County Comprehensive Plan helps ensure that growth is well-coordinated, sustainable, and aligned with the community's values and priorities.

According to Indiana Code § 36-7-4-502, comprehensive plans must, at minimum, contain a statement of objectives for future development, a statement of policy for land use development, and a statement of policy for the development of public ways, public places, public lands, public structures, and public utilities. While it is not a regulatory document, the comprehensive plan serves as the foundation for future zoning updates, capital improvement planning, and other implementation tools that shape the physical character of the community.

The vision and recommendations outlined in the plan should be implemented through intentional community action. While the Ripley County Area Planning Commission and County Commissioners play a significant role in implementation, this plan is for everyone. Residents, business owners, and other community partners can all help implement the vision, goals, and recommendations in their own way.



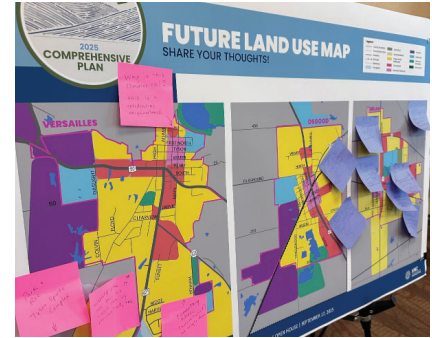
SCOPE OF THE PLAN

The Ripley County Area Planning Commission (APC) is the governing body responsible for land use planning and zoning in both the unincorporated areas of the county and the participating municipalities within the county. The APC oversees planning and zoning in six towns throughout Ripley County including Versailles, Sunman, Osgood, Milan, Holton, and Napoleon. Because of this, the 2026 Ripley County Comprehensive Plan provides future land use recommendations for each of the six participating communities.

It is important to note that three of the six participating towns have established additional guidance through their own comprehensive planning processes.

- Town of Sunman – Adopted in August 2023, the Sunman Comprehensive Plan describes land use, policy, and programmatic recommendations for the incorporated areas of the Town of Sunman.
- Town of Versailles – The town was awarded a planning grant through the Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) in 2025. This grant allowed the town to facilitate their first ever comprehensive planning process. It is anticipated that the final plan will be adopted in May 2026.
- Town of Osgood – As a part of the countywide planning process, Osgood participated in a town-specific planning process that resulted in a subarea plan for the community. This subarea plan is found in Chapter 9.

These documents provide supplemental guidance that should be referenced by town and county leaders when making decisions related to future growth and development. While the incorporated areas are considered for future land use planning and coordination, this plan does not offer specific recommendations for each town beyond the future land use plan.



PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

Ripley County's last comprehensive plan was adopted in 2002. Since then, the county has experienced steady population growth, from roughly 27,000 residents in 2002 to just over 31,000 in 2023. At the same time, the county has felt the ripple effect of change at the regional, state, and national level. From enduring and overcoming national challenges, such as the 2008 recession and the COVID-19 pandemic, to embracing regionalism in partnership with the Southeast Indiana Regional Planning Commission (SIRPC), Ripley County has paved the way for a bright future.

As the county continues to grow, it faces challenges related to housing supply, infrastructure maintenance, and access to workforce training and employment opportunities. Many employers report difficulty finding qualified workers, and young residents often leave the county in search of education and career opportunities.

To support continued growth and outstanding quality of life, Ripley County partnered with HWC Engineering to prepare an updated comprehensive plan. This plan evaluates current conditions, outlines a shared vision for the future, and provides actionable goals and recommendations that will guide decision-making and investment over the next 10+ years.

Why Plan?

It is important to maintain an updated comprehensive plan for a variety of reasons including but not limited to:

Planning builds consensus around the vision and goals.

Much can change over the course of 20 years. Priorities change, residents and businesses come and go, and market trends shift based on the economy. All these changes can impact the long-term vision and goals for a community. Facilitating a robust public engagement process is critical to aligning expectations and priorities for the future.

Planning provides access to funding.

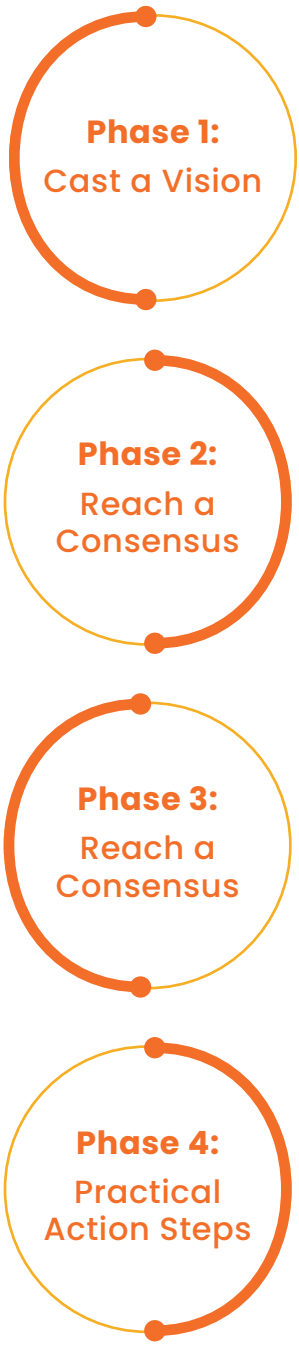
Many state, federal, and non-profit grant opportunities and other funding programs require communities to have an updated plan that showcases the collaboration and forethought related to that specific funding opportunity.

Planning sets the stage for zoning.

Cities, towns, and counties must have an approved comprehensive plan by the local plan commission to implement zoning ordinances. Ripley County's existing comprehensive plan and zoning ordinances are both fairly dated. By identifying the long-term vision for the future, this comprehensive plan will set the stage for a larger zoning ordinance update in the future.

PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

The planning process began in March 2025 and concluded in April 2026, spanning 13 months of collaboration and community input. The early stages focused on robust public engagement, including three public workshops, an online community survey, and stakeholder focus group meetings. This input informed data collection and the development of an Existing Conditions Report. Throughout the process, the project steering committee met five times to review progress and ensure the plan reflected the community's vision and priorities. In early 2026, a public draft of the plan was released for community review and feedback. Following a public presentation to local leaders, the 2026 Ripley County Comprehensive Plan was officially adopted on April 27, 2026.



Phase 1: Cast a Vision

March 2025 – May 2025

The initial phase of the planning process began with a coordination meeting between HWC Engineering and Ripley County as well as a Steering Committee kickoff meeting. The purpose of these meetings was to introduce the planning process, outline the public participation strategy, and provide an opportunity to identify key planning issues and opportunities.

Phase 2: Reach a Consensus

June 2025 – July 2025

The second phase of the planning process focused on gathering community input. The public engagement strategy included the creation of a project website for sharing draft documents and collecting input, two in-person workshops, an online public survey, and five focus group meetings. These input opportunities led to over 180 people participating in the planning process.

Phase 3: Reach a Consensus

August 2025 – November 2025

Phase Three of the planning process focused on setting achievable goals. Using input collected during earlier phases, the project team drafted recommendations for the future of Ripley County. Draft materials were shared with the community at the Big Ideas Open House. Feedback from this event guided the preparation of the draft plan.

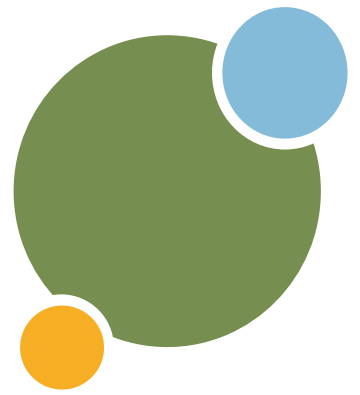
Phase 4: Practical Action Steps

December 2025 – April 2026

In the final phase, the project team worked to define action steps and finalize the plan for adoption. The plan went through multiple rounds of review and revision during this phase. A public draft was released and presented to the Ripley County Area Plan Commission for a favorable recommendation. Upon receiving this recommendation, the plan was formally adopted by the County Commissioners on April 27, 2026.

CORE THEMES

There are four core themes identified within the 2026 Ripley County Comprehensive Plan that serve as an organizational structure for the goals and objectives. The themes focus on promoting responsible growth, enhancing countywide services, fostering economic opportunities, and investing in quality of life. A brief overview of each theme and the supporting goals are outlined below.



THEME ONE

Promote Responsible Growth

Growth looks different in every community. For Ripley County, responsible growth means directing development to existing towns and areas with infrastructure while also preserving the rural character that many residents value. Responsible growth also considers the economic vitality of Ripley County and places emphasis on growing the tax base. New housing, commercial, and industrial development will complement historic town centers, support walkable neighborhoods, and provide convenient access to goods and services. Through thoughtful planning, updated zoning, and community-focused placemaking, Ripley County will promote responsible growth that continues to build places for families and businesses to thrive.

Supporting goals include:

Land Use

Concentrate development activity and reinvestment in areas where adequate infrastructure is available or easily extended.

Community Character

Enhance the visual quality and character of Ripley County communities and major thoroughfares.

THEME TWO

Enhance Countywide Services

Ripley County envisions a network of safe and reliable infrastructure and public services. This theme explores how Ripley County can proactively plan for expansion, upgrades, and maintenance of transportation and utility infrastructure. These services are critical for supporting future development and directly impact quality of life for residents. The county is committed to working with state agencies, regional partners, and local providers to maintain an adequate level of services.

Supporting goals include:

Multimodal Transportation

Provide a transportation network that offers a high level of mobility, connectivity, and safety for all users.

Utility Infrastructure

Ensure adequate utility services are provided through coordinated efforts between the county, towns, and local providers.

Public Safety

Ensure that public safety providers are well-equipped to meet the county's emergency response needs.

THEME THREE

Foster Economic Opportunities

Like other rural counties across the state, Ripley County has struggled to fill existing industrial parks and continues to experience a high turnover rate in small businesses in town centers. These challenges are influenced by accessibility, demographics, and market trends. To overcome these challenges, Ripley County is focused on building capacity to further develop its existing assets, leveraging economic development tools and partnerships, and expanding the housing stock to support population growth. This approach is further supported by investing in quality of life, which is covered in the fourth theme.

Supporting goals include:

Economic Development

Support the attraction of people and businesses by strengthening the county's economic base.

Workforce Development

Grow the county's workforce to better support existing and future businesses.

THEME FOUR

Invest in Quality of Life

Twenty years ago, economic growth was centered around business attraction and retention, but more recently there has been a gradual shift away from this business-centric mindset. Today, communities are placing a stronger emphasis on making their community a nice place to live with amenities, programming, and infrastructure that strengthens the quality of life and sense of place. Ripley County is striving to enhance arts and culture, expand parks and recreation opportunities, improve access to childcare and social service, and promote wellness to better support existing and future residents. In doing so, these quality of life initiatives will support the county's efforts to attract and retain residents and businesses.

Supporting goals include:

Arts and Culture

Develop Ripley County as a destination for homegrown arts and culture by showcasing the work of local artists, from musicians to muralists.

Parks and Recreation

Enhance parks and recreation opportunities within Ripley County.

Childcare and Social Services

Invest in youth and at-risk populations by improving the quality and quantity of childcare and support services.

Health and Wellness

Support healthy, active lifestyles by expanding opportunities to make healthy choices.

VISION STATEMENT

The vision is a future-focused statement which expresses the community's expectations and aspirations. The vision is the community's guiding star, while the comprehensive plan is its detailed roadmap. Ripley County's vision statement was crafted with the help of the Steering Committee, and informed by public feedback.

The vision statement is outlined below:

Rooted in tradition, committed to the future.

Ripley County is dedicated to preserving its small-town charm, scenic landscapes, and agricultural heritage while encouraging responsible growth. We will revitalize our towns through strategic infrastructure improvements, expand educational and workforce opportunities, and promote residential, commercial, and industrial development with respect to our environment and community character. By engaging the public and leveraging partnerships, we will build a place where residents of all ages thrive, and businesses flourish.

PLAN ORGANIZATION

The 2026 Ripley County Comprehensive Plan is organized by seven key chapters starting with the plan introduction and ending with implementation. A summary of each chapter is outlined for reference.

01 Plan Introduction

This chapter introduces the plan by describing what a comprehensive plan is and the state code requirements. Other topics covered include the scope of the plan, the planning process overview, and how to use this plan.

02 Existing Conditions

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of Ripley County's existing conditions, including its history, demographics, educational attainment, income, and key economic indicators. It also offers an overview of current land use patterns, transportation systems, community facilities, quality of life, and parks and recreation resources.

03 Public Participation

This chapter highlights the public participation process that played a central role in shaping the direction of the plan. It provides an overview of the outreach efforts and captures key themes, insights, and takeaways from focus group discussions, public workshops, the community survey, and Steering Committee meetings, ensuring that the voices and priorities of residents are reflected in the plan's recommendations.

04-07 Plan Themes

Each of these three chapters focuses on a given theme. Chapters begin with an introductory narrative explaining what the theme is, why it's important, how it was identified, and key input received. Each chapter then outlines an overarching goal along with a list of supporting objectives and action items.

Promote Responsible Growth

Chapter Four includes two primary topics: future land use and community character.

Enhance Countywide Services

Chapter Five includes three primary topics including transportation, utility infrastructure, and public safety.

Foster Economic Opportunities

Chapter Six explores topics related to economic development and workforce and talent attraction.

Invest in Quality of Life

Chapter Seven outlines topics that are directly related to quality of life, including arts and culture, parks and recreation, childcare and social services, and health and wellness.

08 Implementation

The final chapter is designed to aid in plan implementation. This chapter includes an implementation matrix with priority levels, responsible parties, and potential funding sources for each strategy and action item. Next steps are also provided, including key considerations for plan evaluation and updates.



02

WHERE ARE WE NOW?



CHAPTER 2

EXISTING CONDITIONS



EXISTING CONDITIONS

Since the 2002 Ripley County Comprehensive Plan was adopted, the county's population has increased by nearly 10%, welcoming over 2,000 new residents. Although population growth has slowed in the last decade, understanding demographic and economic trends is an essential part of the planning process.

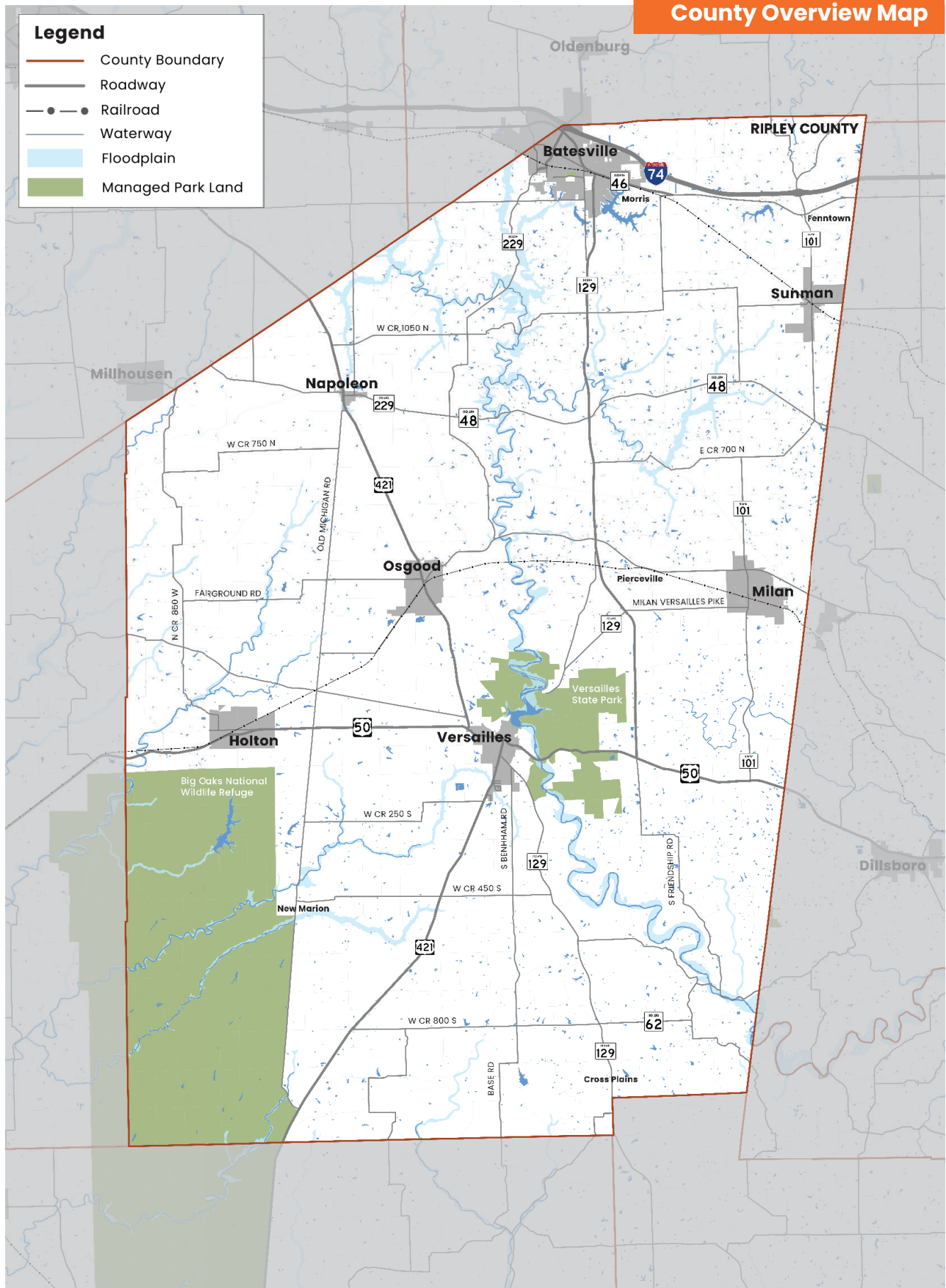
PROVIDING CONTEXT

Formed in 1816, Ripley County is located in the southeastern corner of Indiana. The county seat is the Town of Versailles. Other communities in Ripley County include the City of Batesville, and the towns of Holton, Milan, Napoleon, Osgood, and Sunman. Ripley County is bordered by Decatur and Franklin Counties to the north, Dearborn and Ohio Counties to the east, Jefferson and Switzerland Counties to the south, and Jennings County to the west.

County Overview Map

Legend

- County Boundary
- Roadway
- Railroad
- Waterway
- Floodplain
- Managed Park Land



DEMOGRAPHICS

Population Change

Since the previous plan was adopted in 2002, the county's population has increased by nearly 10%. More recently, population growth has slowed. From 2010 to 2023, the county's population increased from 28,818 to 29,039, which represents a change of less than one percent. Population change in Ripley County is comparable to neighboring counties, such as Dearborn County (+1.3%) and Jennings County (-3.2%). Within Ripley County, the communities of Versailles (+3.4%) and Napoleon (+0.9%) saw growth, while Holton (-13.1%), Milan (-4.0%), Osgood (-2.3%), and Sunman (-12.9%) experienced population decline. For rural communities, population stagnation (and shrinkage) is a national trend. This trend is influenced by a combination of factors, including economic opportunities in urban areas, a decline in agriculture and manufacturing jobs, and aging of the rural population.

Age Structure

Ripley County's population is aging. From 2010 to 2023, the median age in the County increased by 5.4%, from 38.8 to 40.9 years. This is consistent with change in neighboring counties, including Dearborn County (41.8 years, +5.6%) and Jennings County (40.1 years, +6.6%). Within Ripley County, the Town of Milan saw the greatest increase in median age during this period (45 years, +36.0%), while the Town of Napoleon saw the greatest decrease (34 years, -32.9%). Data indicates that Milan's population is declining naturally with the number of deaths exceeding the number of births. Conversely, Napoleon is starting to attract a younger demographic. It is important to note that, with small communities like Milan and Napoleon, these changes fall within the margin of error and may not accurately represent local trends. It is necessary to work with town staff and community members to confirm the changes they are seeing.

The two largest age groups in Ripley County include teens (10-19 years old) and older adults (50-59 years old). Each of these groups makes up approximately 14.2% of the population. This age structure impacts preferences for education, housing types, jobs, and amenities. Based on the County's age distribution, there may be a need to focus on workforce development (including college and career readiness) and strategies to promote aging in place.



POPULATION (2023)
29,039



MEDIAN AGE (2023)
40.9 YEARS



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD
INCOME (2023)
\$71,084



ATTAIN A BACHELOR'S
DEGREE (2023)
19.4%

Racial and Ethnic Breakdown

Ripley County’s population is racially homogeneous. In 2023, approximately 95.3% of residents identified as white. Biracial individuals (i.e., those identifying as two or more races), made up the second largest racial demographic at just 2.6% of residents. Although the County’s population has become slightly more diverse over the last thirteen years, this change is negligible. This aligns with expectations for a steady population.

Educational Attainment

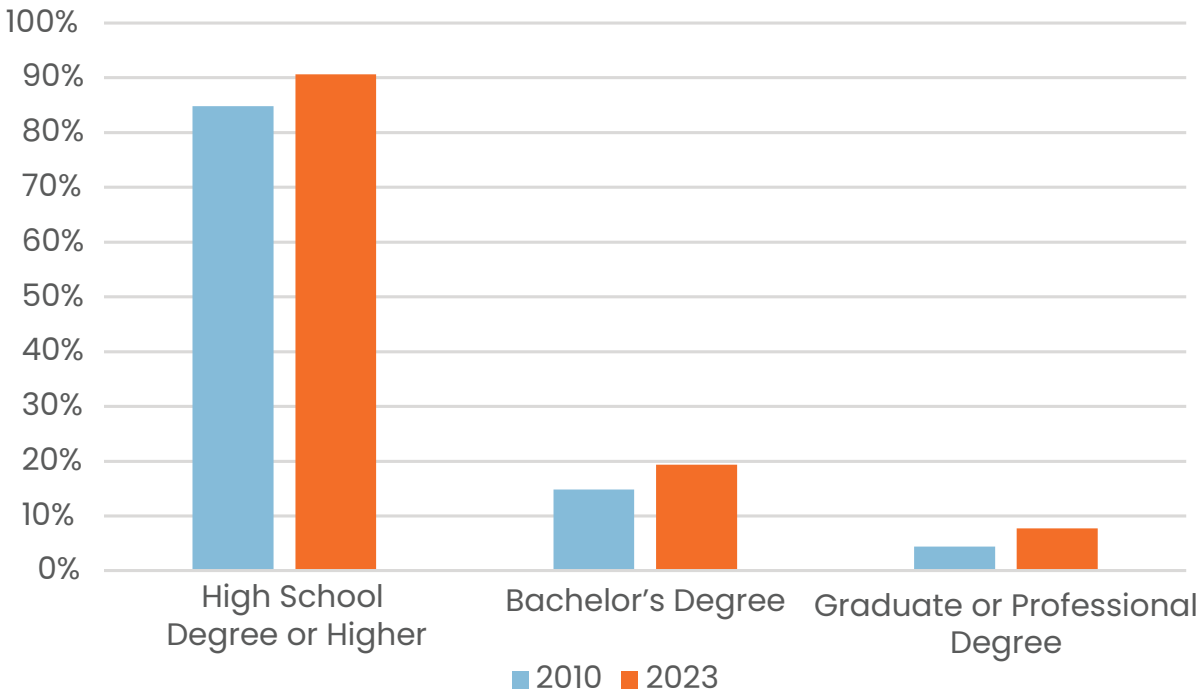
Educational attainment in Ripley County is on the rise. In 2023, approximately 90.6% of residents over the age of 25 had a high school degree or higher, compared to 84.8% in 2010. A growing number of residents are obtaining higher education degrees with several earning at least a bachelor’s degree (19.4%) or a graduate degree (7.7%). As Ripley County looks to the future, there are continued opportunities for improvement.

Compared to the State of Indiana, Ripley County falls behind in terms of educational attainment. At the state level, 28.8% of residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher, at the national level that number is 35.0%. To enhance quality of life and pave the way for economic growth, Ripley County should strive to provide its residents with quality educational opportunities, resources, and support.

Income

Residents of Ripley County are bringing home more money today than they were thirteen years ago, and with a growth rate that is comparable to surrounding counties and the State. In 2023, the median household income in Ripley County was \$71,084, which is 47.8% higher than 2010. Growth is on par with neighboring Dearborn (45.6%) and Jennings (56.5%) Counties, as well as Indiana as a whole (51.3%).

Educational Attainment in Ripley County



Source: 2010 Decennial Census
2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

ECONOMIC BASE

Labor Force

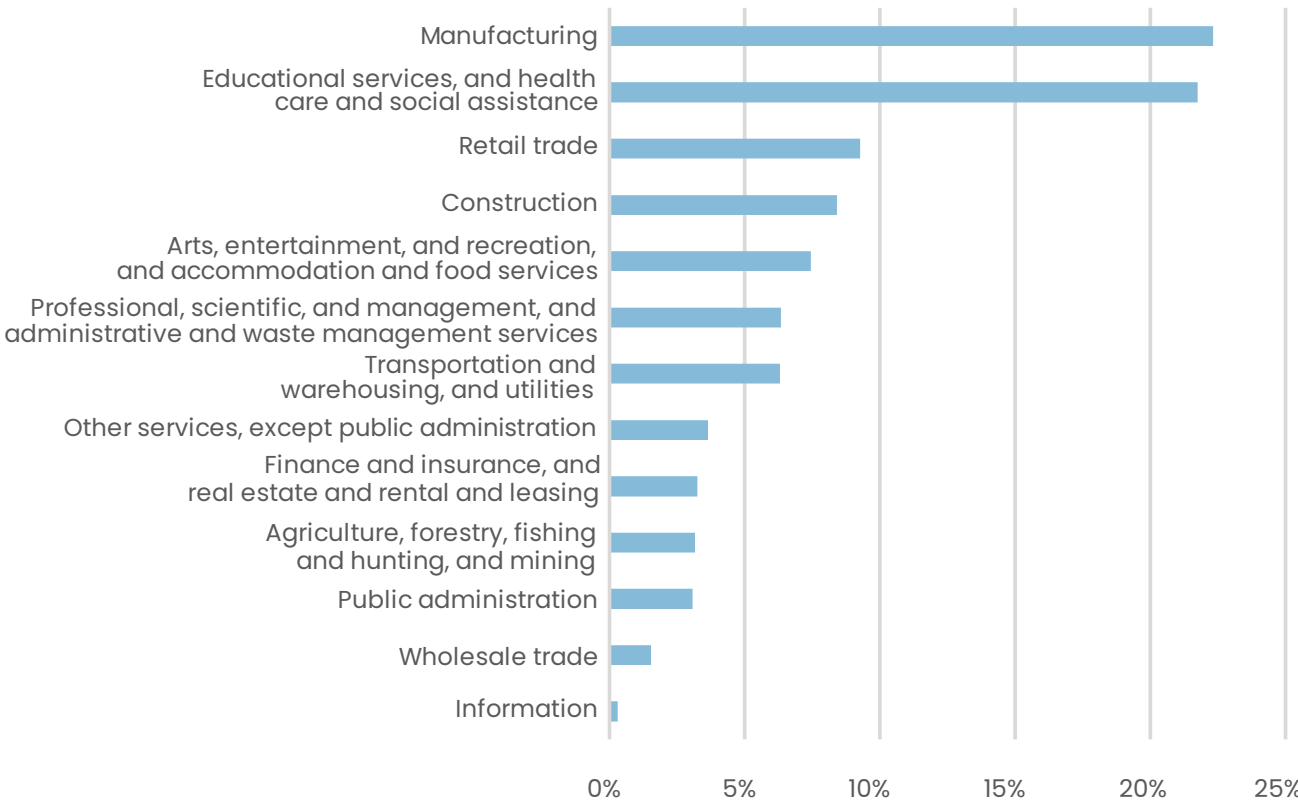
Ripley County’s labor force is shrinking. In 2023, there were 23,139 residents over the age of 16. Of these individuals, 65.5% were participating in the labor force. In comparison, approximately 68.7% of residents participated in the labor force in 2010. Although the labor force participation rate is still marginally higher than Indiana’s rate of 64.0%, this represents a decline in participation at the county level. In terms of unemployment, Ripley County has a relatively low unemployment rate at 2.1%, compared to 5.4% in 2010.

Industries and Occupations

Although the leading industry in Ripley County is manufacturing, this industry has diminished over the past thirteen years. In 2023, manufacturing employed approximately 22.3% of Ripley County residents, compared to 26.9% in 2010. Meanwhile, other industries have grown significantly. The education, healthcare, and social services industries employed 21.8% of workers, compared to 17.0% in 2010. Other growing industries include construction; arts, entertainment, and recreation; and professional, scientific, and management services.

Regarding occupations, the majority (30.5%) of workers are employed in management, business, science, or arts occupations. These occupations grew by approximately 39.8% from 2010 to 2023. At the same time, sales and office jobs declined by 16.8%.

Industry Breakdown in Ripley County



Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Major Employers

The top five major employers in Ripley County include Hillenbrand, Margaret Mary Health, Batesville Tool & Die, Global Atlantic, and the Occasions Group. Each of these firms employs over 200 workers with Hillenbrand and Margaret Mary Health employing over 1,000 workers each. These firms represent a variety of industries, from manufacturing to healthcare. Honda Manufacturing of Indiana, although located in neighboring Decatur County, is also a major employer providing jobs to many Ripley County residents.

Regional Trends

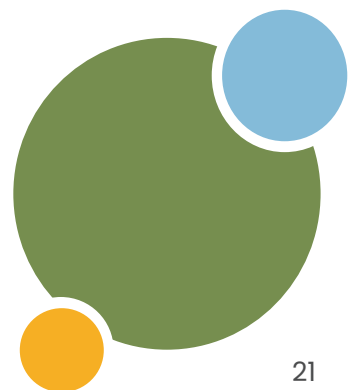
The Southeast Indiana Regional Wage and Benefits Survey periodically collects, analyzes, and visualizes information from companies based in the following counties:

- Dearborn County, Indiana
- Franklin County, Indiana
- Ohio County, Indiana
- Ripley County, Indiana
- Hamilton County, Ohio
- Boone County, Kentucky

Overall, 39 companies participated in the survey, 10 of which were from Ripley County.

The following are key findings from the Southeastern Indiana Regional Wage and Benefits Survey about regional employment:

- Employers have mixed feelings about their satisfaction with the availability of workers, as well as the quality, stability, and productivity of their workforce. This suggests that there are opportunities to strengthen the workforce across Southeast Indiana.
- Over the past year, over 80% of companies surveyed noted that their employment counts remained stable or increased. Nonetheless, most employers faced recruitment challenges, including lack of experience, work ethic, and maintenance / skills.
- Remote work is still relatively uncommon. Approximately 88.5% of area employers said they have 25% or fewer employees working remotely. Young professionals are increasingly seeking hybrid or remote positions. If these positions are unavailable, they may take their skills elsewhere.
- Approximately 77% of respondents reported that no childcare benefits were offered at their company. Employers suggested that childcare access is not a significant barrier to workforce participation in the region, but lack of childcare may still be a hindrance to equal participation and upward mobility.



EXISTING LAND USE

Agricultural

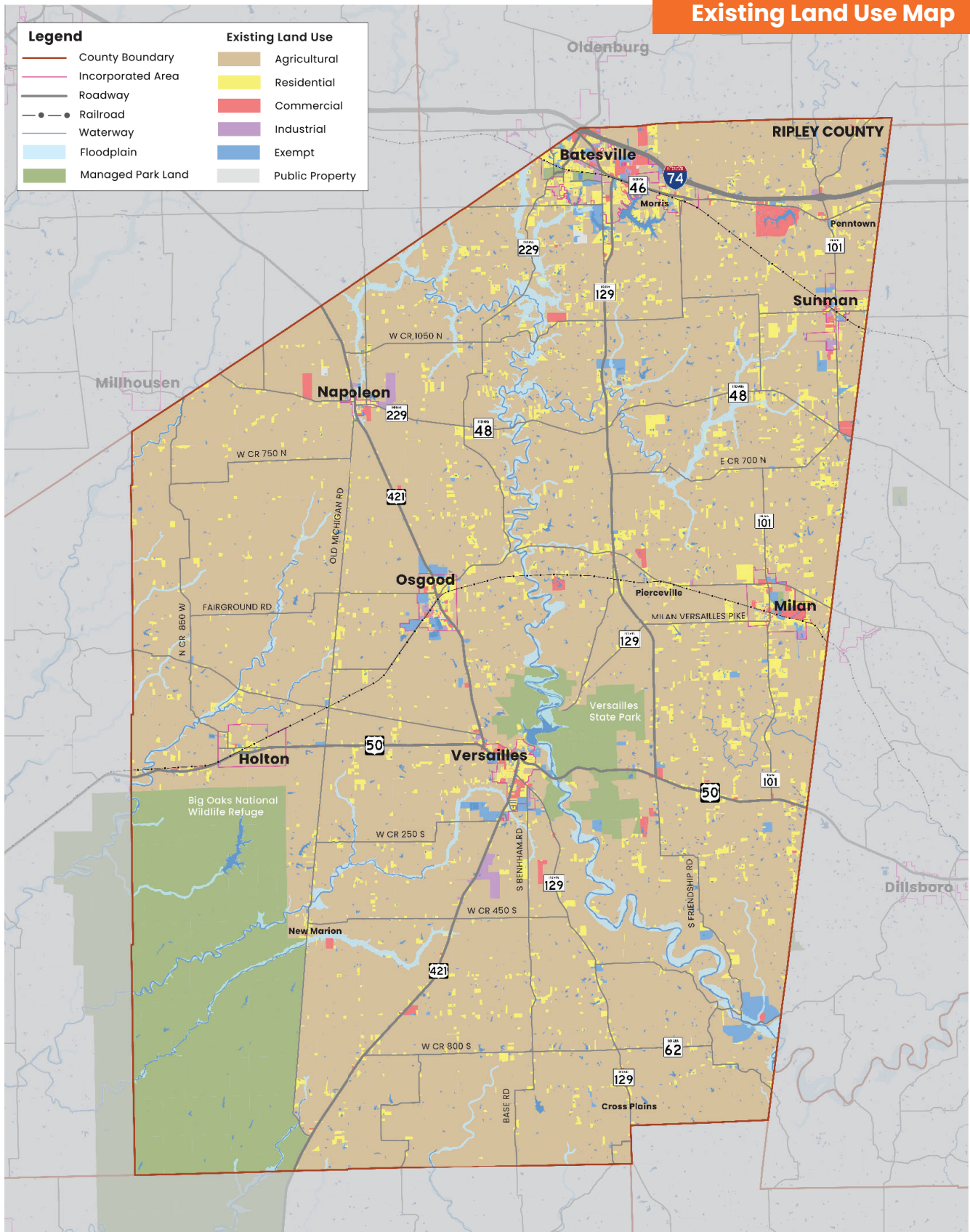
Agriculture is the largest land use by acreage in Ripley County. According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, there are approximately 175,750 acres of farmland across the county divided into 835 farms with an average of 210 acres per farm. The top crops grown in the county include soybeans (71,494 acres) and corn (48,660 acres). The top livestock produced are hogs (24,464 animals) and cattle (8,289 animals).

Commercial

Commercial uses in Ripley County are concentrated around Batesville, throughout the county's small towns, and along key transportation corridors. Businesses range from independently owned, mom-and-pop shops to national chains. Most of Ripley County's downtown commercial centers have a handful of vacant storefronts, which could accommodate growth. Key commercial areas are described below:

- Batesville: Downtown Batesville is home to local bars and restaurants, as well as the iconic Schmidt Bakery. Chain establishments, including fast food restaurants, groceries, hotels, auto parts suppliers, farm supply stores, and pharmacies are concentrated around the Interstate 74 interchange.
- Versailles: Independent restaurants and retail stores in Versailles are mostly located in the Town Square. The town only has a handful of chain establishments, which are primarily found along US Highway 421. Personal and professional services are also concentrated along this corridor, from hair salons to tax preparation services.
- Osgood: Most businesses in Osgood are located off US Highway 421 (Buckeye Street). Businesses include a grocery store, dollar store, restaurants, banks, gas stations, theater, tattoo parlor, and home goods store.
- Napoleon: Businesses in Napoleon are concentrated along US Highway 421 (Madison Street). These businesses include restaurants, liquor stores, a dollar store, a bank, and a gas station.
- Milan: Most businesses in Milan can be found along State Road 101. Establishments include a grocery store, dollar store, hardware store, auto supply store, liquor store, restaurants, salons, banks, and gas stations.
- Sunman: Most businesses in Sunman are along Meridian Street. Small businesses, including a tavern, hair salon, and antique store, are concentrated in the town's historic commercial district at the intersection of Meridian Street and Washington Street. Larger businesses, including a printing company and greenhouse, are found on the far northside of town.

Existing Land Use Map



The map above provides an approximation of the existing land uses in Ripley County. The map is based on property class codes assigned to each parcel when assessing taxes. The 'Exempt' category accounts for all tax-exempt uses, including government buildings, schools, and churches.



Residential

In Ripley County, 68.9% of households are family-based, and 28.9% of homes have children. Although family-based households are more common in Ripley County, fewer homes have children than is typical across the State of Indiana. The county's housing stock is predominantly owner-occupied (77.8%), and homeownership rates have increased by 5.4% since 2010. Ripley County primarily offers single-family homes, although there are some apartments within incorporated areas. Ripley County has a typical vacancy rate at 8.4%, compared to 9.2% for the state. Most housing is concentrated in Batesville or in small towns. Although there are some homes and homesteads along highways and county roads, these occur at very low density.

Home values are on par with the state. The median home value for Ripley County, based on assessed value reported to the U.S. Census Bureau, was \$205,300 in 2023. By comparison, Indiana's median home value was \$201,600 in 2023. According to the Indiana Association of Realtors, which leverages sales data from licensed realtors, the median sale price for homes in Ripley County was \$226,200 in 2026, compared to \$250,000 for the state.

Housing is fairly affordable compared to income earned. The Indiana Association of Realtors reports that, in January 2026, the typical homeowner in Ripley County spent 26% of their income on their housing payment. By comparison, the typical homeowner in Indiana spent 32.9% of their income on housing. Homeowners that spend more than 30% on housing, including mortgage, property taxes, and insurance, are considered "cost-burdened," leaving less for necessities like food and healthcare.

While home values are comparable, rental rates in Ripley County remain much lower than the state. In 2023, Ripley County's median gross rent was \$799 per month compared to \$1,020 per month for Indiana. These values may indicate that cost of living is an asset for Ripley County; however, rental rates may also reflect the condition and age of rental units. There is an opportunity to promote the county's affordability to prospective renters, while supporting the development of high-quality rental options.

Industrial

Most industrial sites in Ripley County are in Batesville or on the periphery of small towns. Along Pearl Street, Batesville is home to the assembly plant for the Batesville Casket Company, as well as Baxter's manufacturing facility and warehouse. Other industrial sites include the Elgin Fastener Group / Ohio Rod Products plant in Versailles, Concepts Industrial Asset Disposal Inc. in Sunman, Pike Lumber in Milan, and Alternative Plastics, Case Makes, and another plant for the Elgin Fastener Group in Osgood. The Ripley County Economic Development Corporation is actively working to attract employers to the county's three industrial parks: the Batesville Industrial Park, Osgood Industrial Park, and Versailles Industrial Park. Each of these sites is shovel ready with utility access.

Mineral

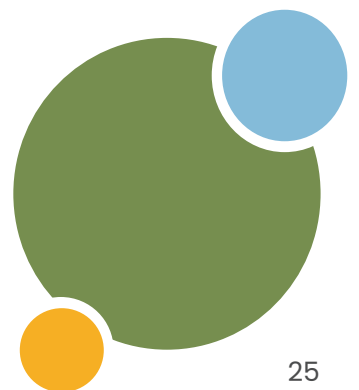
Southern Indiana is known for its rich mineral resources and Ripley County is no exception. Heidelberg Materials owns and operates a large quarry south of Versailles, and New Point Stone Company has a quarry in Napoleon.

Institutional

Institutional uses are found almost exclusively within Ripley County's established communities. Uses with a smaller footprint and less traffic, like government offices, museums, libraries, and post offices, are often located in the heart of these communities, while larger uses, like schools, are located on the periphery. Ripley County is home to one higher education institution, the Ivy Tech in Batesville, and one career center, the Southeastern Career Center in Versailles. Police and fire stations are located within incorporated areas to enable shorter response times within these population clusters.

Parks and Recreation

The two largest parks and recreation sites in Ripley County are Versailles State Park near the Town of Versailles and the Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge in the southwestern corner of the county. There are also small municipal parks in Batesville, Versailles, Sunman, Osgood, and Milan, in addition to the Ripley County Fairgrounds in Osgood.



TRANSPORTATION NETWORK



Ripley County has an advantageous location between three major metro areas: Indianapolis, Cincinnati, and Louisville. The county and its communities are connected to these metro areas by major thoroughfares, including Interstate 74, US Highway 421, US Highway 50, and several state roads. The county is working to improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. In addition to trails at Versailles State Park, Osgood has developed its own trail system with plans to connect to Versailles State Park. The American Discovery Trail also runs through Ripley County, offering a long-distance hiking and backpacking option.

Completed in 2004, Ripley County has a thoroughfare plan map that identifies proposed right-of-way within the county. Although this provides direction for infrastructure projects, it is not a substitute for a formal thoroughfare plan, which is a guiding document that outlines the county's vision for the transportation network. Thoroughfare plans identify priority projects to enhance safety, efficiency, and connectivity. As Ripley County looks to the future, it may be helpful to develop a formal thoroughfare plan to ensure that roadways are well-maintained, and to coordinate with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) for highway improvements.

In the meantime, the county can use the 2004 Thoroughfare Plan Map and INDOT's Functional Classification Map to guide investment in the transportation network and determine which roadways are eligible for federal funding.

Functional classification is a system that groups streets and highways into classes based on the type of service they provide, defining their role in the transportation network and influencing design standards and federal funding eligibility. All classified roadways (not including the 'Local' classification) are eligible for federal funding.

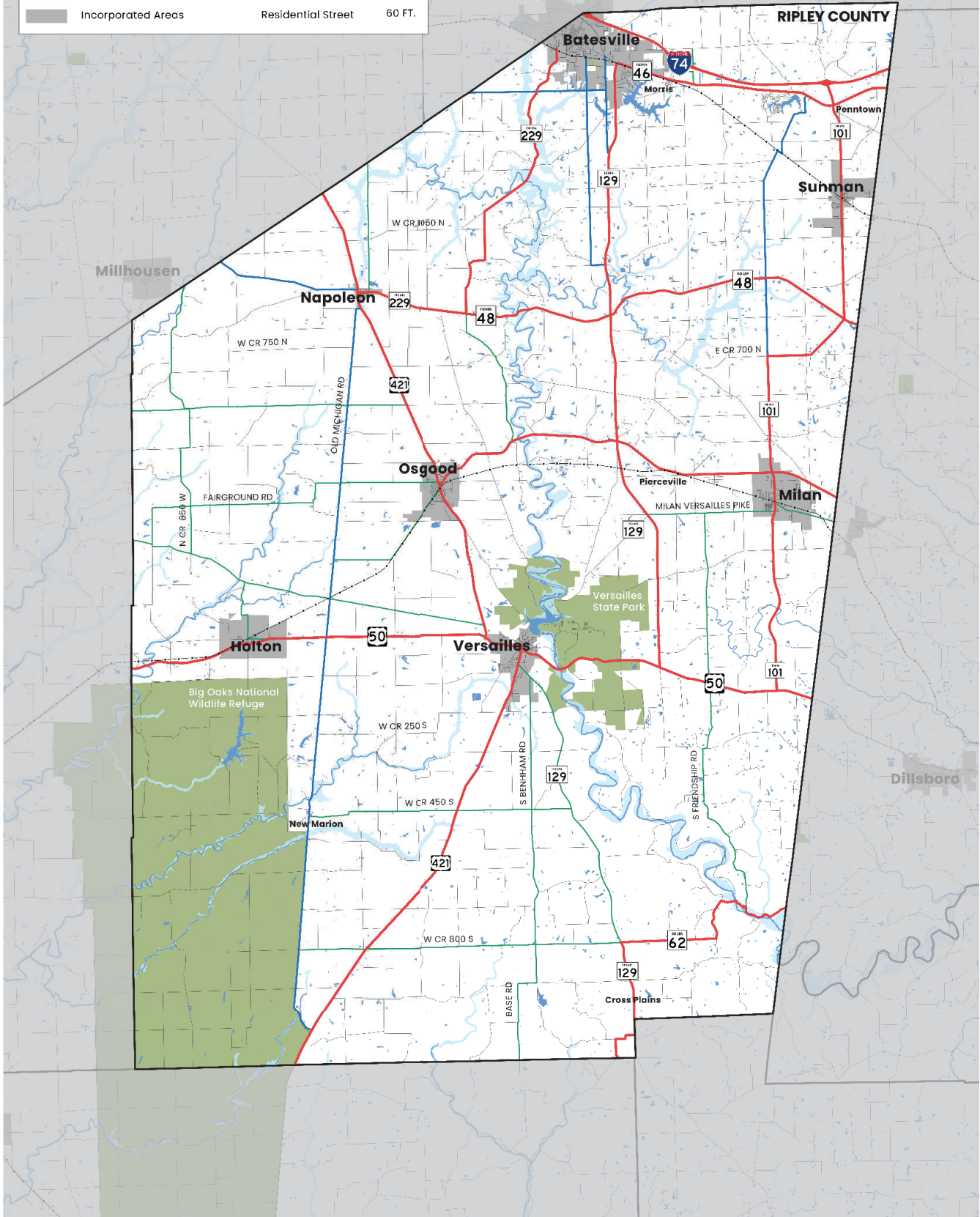


Functional classification follows a hierarchy made up of the following classes, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration:

- **Interstates:** Interstates are the highest form of Arterial roadways and were designed and constructed with mobility and long-distance travel in mind. Since their inception in the 1950s, the Interstate System has provided a superior network of limited access, divided highways offering high levels of mobility while linking the major urban areas of the United States.
- **Other Freeways and Expressways:** Freeways and expressways look very similar to Interstates. These roads have travel lanes usually separated by some type of physical barrier, and their access and egress points are limited to on- and off-ramp locations or a very limited number of at-grade intersections. Like Interstates, these roads are designed and constructed to maximize their mobility function.
- **Other Principal Arterials:** These roadways serve major centers of metropolitan areas, provide a high degree of mobility, and can also provide mobility through rural areas. Unlike their access-controlled counterparts, abutting land uses can be served directly.
- **Minor Arterials:** Minor Arterials provide service for trips of moderate length, serve geographic areas that are smaller than their higher Arterial counterparts, and offer connectivity to the higher Arterial system.
- **Major and Minor Collectors:** Collectors serve a critical role in the roadway network by gathering traffic from Local Roads and funneling them to the Arterial network. The distinctions between Major and Minor Collectors are often subtle. Major Collector routes are longer in length, have lower connecting driveway densities, have higher speed limits, are spaced at greater intervals, have higher annual average traffic volumes, and may have more travel lanes than their Minor Collector counterparts.
- **Local Roads:** Locally classified roadways account for the largest percentage of all roadways in terms of mileage. They are not intended for use in long-distance travel, except at the origin or destination end of the trip, due to their provision of direct access to abutting land. They are often designed to discourage through traffic.

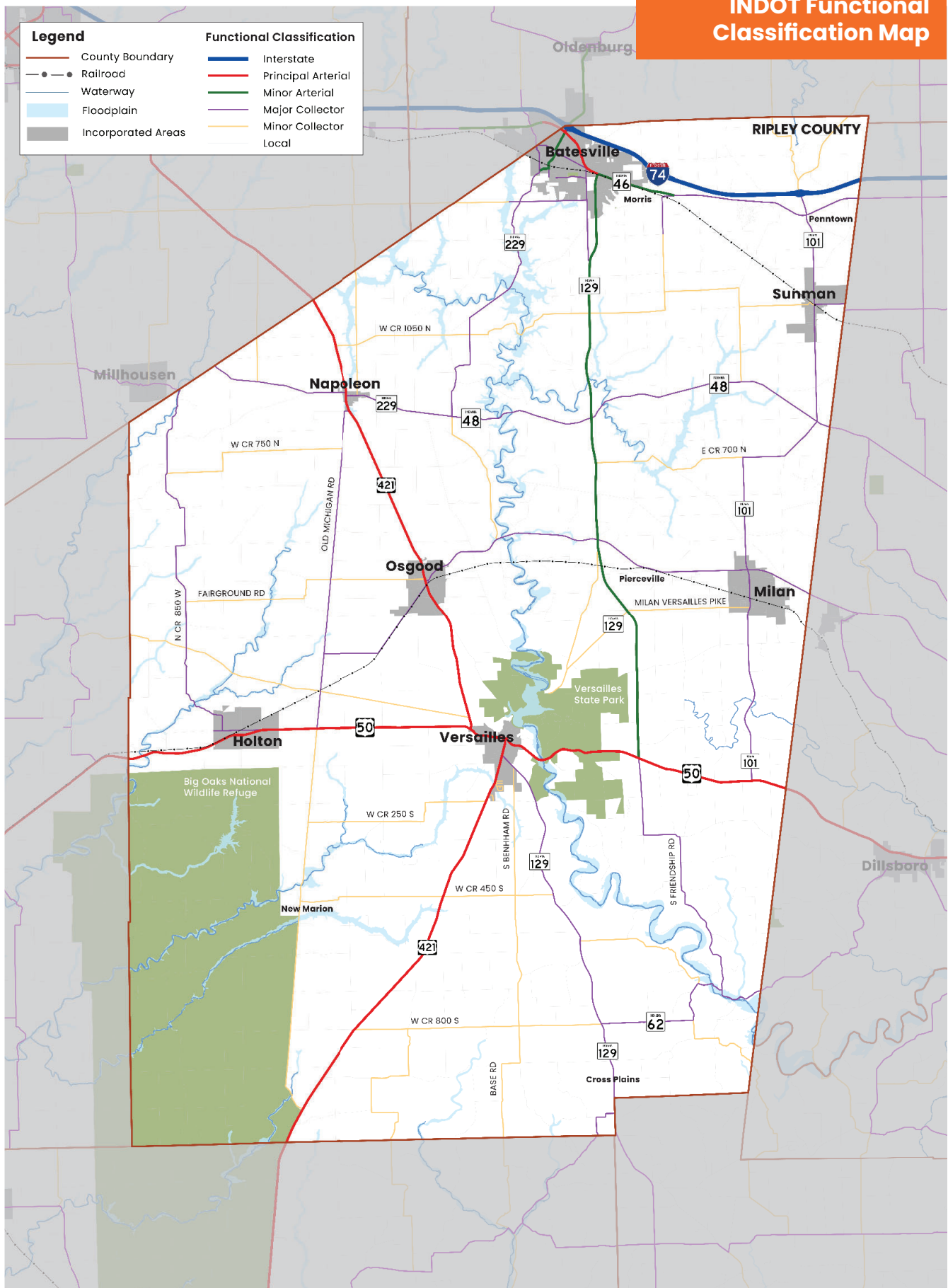
2004 Thoroughfare Plan Map

Legend	
	County Boundary
	Railroad
	Waterway
	Floodplain
	Incorporated Areas
Proposed Right-of-Way	
	Arterial Route (including Highways) 100 FT.
	Secondary Route 80 FT.
	Feeder Street 70 FT.
	Residential Street 60 FT.



INDOT Functional Classification Map

Legend		Functional Classification	
	County Boundary		Interstate
	Railroad		Principal Arterial
	Waterway		Minor Arterial
	Floodplain		Major Collector
	Incorporated Areas		Minor Collector
			Local



FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Jurisdictions

Ripley County government is responsible for the provision of public infrastructure and services within the unincorporated area of the county. The Ripley County Board of Commissioners serve as the executive body for the county with a wide range of administrative authorities. The County Council supports the Commissioners through its financial powers, which enables the Council to set tax rates and adopt an annual budget, among other responsibilities. Ripley County is also served by an Area Plan Commission, which carries out land use planning for the unincorporated county and the incorporated communities of Osgood, Versailles, Napoleon, Sunman, Holton, and Milan.

County Departments

The following departments serve Ripley County's residents:

- **Assessor:** The County Assessor identifies, lists, and calculates the assessed values of all real and personal property in Ripley County.
- **Auditor:** The County Auditor is the chief accountant and fiscal officer for the county government. The Auditor is responsible for documenting the financial activity in the county's various funds and reporting this activity yearly in the state's Gateway System. With the County Treasurer, the Auditor keeps accurate accounts for each item of appropriation made by the county council, issues warrants, and certifies claims. The Auditor is part of the property tax process which includes being responsible for the preparation, preservation, alteration, and maintenance of the tax duplicate. The Auditor also performs the duties of clerk at meetings for both the County Commissioners and County Council.
- **Clerk:** The County Clerk maintains public records for the county, such as vital records and court records. The Clerk also manages local election operations, including voter registration, ballot printing and distributing, poll worker training, and tabulating results.

- **Commissioners:** The Ripley County Board of Commissioners provides executive oversight for the county and is responsible for county property, auditing and authorizing claims against the county, receiving bids and authorizing contracts, and supervising county departments, including the operations of first responders, such as the EMS, EMA, and 911 Dispatch. Commissioners also exercise many of the county's legislative powers through the review, adoption, and revision of county ordinances.
- **Coroner:** The County Coroner is responsible for identifying the deceased, determining the cause of death, and determining the matter of death.
- **Council:** The financial powers of Ripley County are delegated to the County Council. The functions of the Council include, but are not limited to, setting tax rates, making appropriations to support county services, and adopting an annual budget.
- **Health:** The Ripley County Health Department promotes individual and environmental health, prevents the spread of contagious diseases, prepares for public health emergencies, and preserves vital records.
- **Highway:** The Highway Department handles the maintenance and repair of highways, bridges, and culverts. In addition to supervising maintenance and repair, the Highway Department fixes load limits, and files monthly and annual reports with the Board of Commissioners.
- **Parks and Recreation:** Ripley County Parks manages the Ripley County Fairgrounds. Barns, buildings, shelters, campsites, and a mobile staging unit are available to rent.
- **Recorder:** The County Recorder's function is to maintain permanent public records which detail transactions involving real estate, personal property, mortgages, liens, leases, subdivision plats, military discharges, and personal bonds. Documents are recorded either for giving legal public notice of their existence or for safekeeping and future reference.
- **Surveyor:** The County Surveyor references and records all section corners throughout the county. Additionally, the office is responsible for maintaining Ripley County's GIS.
- **Technology:** The Ripley County Technology Department is responsible for maintaining, troubleshooting, and repairing computer systems, networks, printers, technical hardware/applications, phone, and communication systems used by the Ripley County government offices.
- **Treasurer:** The County Treasurer is responsible for collecting, retaining custody of, and disbursing county funds, including taxes and other revenue. The Treasurer also manages the county's financial records, ensuring accurate accounting of income and expenditures.
- **Veterans Services:** The Veterans Services Office exists to connect veterans with the resources and opportunities available through the county's public and private partners

Ripley County residents are also served by the following agencies which are not part of the county government:

- **Soil and Water Conservation**
District: The Ripley County Soil and Water Conservation District protects and improves natural resources, specifically soil and water, within their local jurisdiction. The Conservation District offers technical, educational, and financial assistance to promote sustainable land management practices.
- **Purdue Extension:** The Purdue Extension provides scientific research-based information and education to improve the lives of residents across Ripley County. The Purdue Extension focuses on Agriculture and Natural Resources, Human and Health Sciences, Economic and Community Development, and 4-H Youth.
- **Tourism Bureau:** The Ripley County Tourism Bureau connects visitors to attractions, events, lodging and camping areas, restaurants, art, and shopping throughout the county by maintaining a website, keeping an updated calendar, and publishing visitor guides and brochures. These guides can be found online or in-person at hotels, attractions, and rest areas around the county.

Utilities

Ripley County's municipalities own some, but not all, of their utilities. Other utilities are owned by utility cooperatives and private firms. The following list breaks down utility ownership by the service offered.

- **Electrical** – Decatur County REMC, Duke Energy, Southeastern Indiana REMC
- **Gas** – City of Batesville, Southeastern Indiana Natural Gas, Texas Eastern, Town of Osgood
- **Sewer** – City of Batesville, Friendship Regional Sewer District, Town of Holton, Town of Milan, Town of Napoleon, Town of Osgood, Town of Sunman, Town of Versailles
- **Trash** – Best Way Disposal, Rumpke, Town of Milan, Town of Versailles
- **Water** – Cannan Utilities Corporation, City of Batesville, Holton Community Water Corporation, Hoosier Hills Water, Napoleon Community Rural Water Corporation, Town of Milan, Town of Osgood, Town of Sunman, Town of Versailles
- **Broadband** – AirWave Networks, AT&T, Comcast, Decatur County REMC, Frontier, Great Plains Communications, SEI Communications, Space Exploration Technologies, Southeastern Indiana REMC, Verizon, Viasat

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Ripley County has strong economic development partners operating at the local, county, and regional level. From chambers of commerce to regional partnerships, these partner organizations seek to develop a diverse, resilient economy in Ripley County. Partner organizations embrace traditional business attraction, expansion, and retention efforts, while acknowledging the importance of fostering quality of life and developing a competitive, skilled workforce. The following partner organizations actively support economic and community development in Ripley County:

Ripley County Economic Development Corporation

The Ripley County Economic Development Corporation (RCEDC) provides economic development activities that promote new business growth, thus offering diverse employment opportunities. At the same time, the RCEDC facilitates business expansion and retention programs that enhance the growth and success of the existing business community. In addition to these efforts, staff may provide other core services, including marketing, public relations, and support for entrepreneurship.

Ripley County Chamber of Commerce

Established in 1992, the Ripley County Chamber of Commerce is a nonprofit membership organization with a mission to attract, develop, and retain business. Diverse chamber members participate in networking programs and events throughout the year to grow their businesses. Through business advocacy, the Chamber of Commerce is committed to advancing the community's overall quality of life.

Ripley County Community Foundation

The Ripley County Community Foundation was established in 1997 by local citizens with a vision to leave a lasting legacy for future generations. Through their dedication and generous donations, the Community Foundation serves a vital role in creating and maintaining Ripley County's vibrant communities. The work of the Community Foundation revolves around four service areas: Arts & Culture, Education & Workforce Development, Health & Well-Being, and Environment & Natural Resources. Within each of these service areas, the Community Foundation provides funding and support for impactful projects, programs, and events.

Ripley County Redevelopment Commission

The Ripley County Redevelopment Commission (RCRC) revitalizes communities across Ripley County by tackling blight, promoting economic growth, and improving infrastructure. The RCRC can leverage tools like Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to fund projects such as land acquisition, site prep, and new development, all to boost tax bases, create jobs, and enhance quality of life. The RCRC owns and manages the business parks in Versailles and Osgood.

Southeastern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

The Southeastern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (SIRPC) was formed to promote communication and coordination between member governments to better address regional issues in community development, economic development, transportation, and housing. The SIRPC serves nine counties, including Ripley, Dearborn, Decatur, Franklin, Jefferson, Jennings, Ohio, Shelby, and Switzerland Counties. The SIRPC connects community leaders to critical resources, enabling them to improve public infrastructure and facilities, reduce blight, and foster resiliency.

Southeast Indiana Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (SEI READI)

In 2021, former Governor Eric J. Holcomb launched READI, investing millions of dollars in the growth and prosperity of Indiana's communities. To participate, counties formed regional partnerships to identify and implement transformative projects. The Southeast Indiana READI region, which includes Ripley, Union, Franklin, Dearborn, Ohio, and Switzerland Counties, participated in both rounds of the initiative. READI projects in Ripley County have included the Versailles Pocket Park, a sewer extension in Sunman, and the installation of new streetlights in Milan. As part of READI 2.0, Southeast Indiana received a \$100,000 Arts and Culture Planning Grant. The planning process, which kicked off in May 2025, will evaluate assets and identify opportunities for future arts and culture projects in the region.

LOCAL CAPACITY AND RESOURCES

QUALITY OF LIFE

Community Organizations

Ripley County is home to several community organizations, each of which are connected to a local cause. These organizations enhance quality of life by pursuing transformative projects and programs, and by providing an opportunity for residents to give back to their community through service.

Community organizations represent diverse interests. Common organizations in Ripley County include sororities, fraternities, civic groups, downtown revitalization committees, museums, foundations, non-profit organizations, and faith-based organizations.

Education Facilities

Ripley County is served by five school districts: Batesville Community School Corporation, Jac-Cen-Del Community School Corporation, Milan Community School Corporation, South Ripley Community School Corporation, and Sunman-Dearborn Community Schools. Combined, these school districts serve approximately 19,836 students. Ripley County is also home to the Southeastern Career Center, which provides career and technical education to 11 school districts across the region. Approximately 910 students are enrolled in one of the career center’s 15 programs, from manufacturing to veterinary medicine.

2026 Total Enrollment in Ripley County School Corporations	
School	Total Enrollment
Batesville Community School Corporation	2,210 students
Jac-Cen-Del Community School Corporation	740 students
Milan Community School Corporation	1,098 students
South Ripley Community School Corporation	1,070 students
Sunman-Dearborn Community Schools	3,659 students

Source: Indiana Department of Education

Daycare Facilities

Early Learning Indiana estimates that there are 26 childcare programs serving Ripley County. These programs have the capacity to serve 468 children, or about 28.8% of those needing care. When facilities are at capacity, parents must rely on family members and neighbors, or stay at home to care for their children. Some of these facilities, along with their estimated capacity, are listed below. These lists are maintained by the Family and Social Services Administration.

Library Facilities

Ripley County is home to three public libraries: the Batesville Memorial Public Library, the Osgood Public Library, and the Tyson Library in Versailles. Each library offers a wide range of materials for patrons, including books, audiobooks, DVDs, CDs, magazines, and mobile hotspots. In addition to providing materials for research, education, and entertainment, each library provides free access to computers, meeting rooms, and study spaces. The Tyson Library also features a Library of Things, which allows patrons to borrow household gadgets, baking pans, outdoor gear, and activity kits. Librarians facilitate programs throughout the week tailored to different ages, from story times to adult craft nights.

Arts and Culture Amenities

Indiana's READI 2.0 Arts Initiative encouraged regions across the state to leverage arts and culture assets with the hope of improving quality of life and growing the population. As a member of the Southeast Indiana region, Ripley County helped inventory local arts and culture amenities. Using this inventory, the county worked with regional partners to identify priority arts and culture projects.

Arts and culture amenities in Ripley County range from folk artists to live music venues. A full inventory of amenities is available in the Appendix.

Community Events/Festivals

Throughout the year, Ripley County's communities celebrate arts, culture, and the changing of the seasons with vibrant events and festivals. From a wine festival to the 4-H Fair, Ripley County has something to offer to all ages. Popular events and festivals are listed below:

- Batesville Area Arts Council (BAAC) Community Art Show
- Batesville Classic Car Show
- Batesville Kiwanis Downtown Carnival
- Bricktoberfest
- Ertel Cellars Winery's Music in the Vineyards Festival
- Friendship Annual Christmas Walk
- Friendship Flea Markets
- Kiwanis Apple Festival
- Hassmer Fest
- Legionfest
- Lohrum Christmas in the Park
- National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association (NMLRA) National Spring Shoot
- Ripley County 4-H Fair
- Ripley County Film Fest
- Versailles Pumpkin Show



NATURAL FEATURES

Environmental Conditions

Southeast Indiana is known for its diverse landscapes, from hilly forests to river valleys. This ecoregion, which spans from southeast Indiana to southwest Ohio, is known as the Pre-Wisconsinan Drift Plains. The area was previously glaciated, but escaped glaciation during the most recent Wisconsinan glacial period. The climate is on the borderline between a humid subtropical climate and a humid continental climate. Precipitation peaks in May and dips slightly from September to February. Untilled land is mostly covered in beech forest with some oak-sugar maple forest and elm-ash swamp forest on wetter sites. The entire ecoregion is heavily utilized for agriculture, including the production of soybeans, corn, and livestock.

The Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge preserves 50,000 acres of natural area in Ripley, Jefferson, and Jennings Counties. The refuge was formed in 2000 following a 1989 order to gradually close the Jefferson Proving Ground, a munitions testing facility. Public use of the refuge is limited due to past use of the property. All visitors must view a safety video and sign an Acknowledgement of Danger form prior to entry. The refuge is known for its stunning woodlands and wetlands, which support abundant wildlife, including over 200 species of birds and 46 species of mammals.

Ripley County features several natural water bodies and watersheds. The most notable lakes include the 230-acre Versailles Lake, the 180-acre Bischoff Reservoir, the 150-acre Old Timber Lake, and the 50-acre Tall Oaks Lake. Laughrey Creek is the county's most prominent waterway. This 88.6-mile-long stream, a tributary of the Ohio River, flows through Ripley, Dearborn, and Ohio Counties. The stream is navigable by canoe and fishing is a popular pastime. According to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, Ripley County falls within the Laughrey Creek Watershed and the Southern Whitewater River Watershed, making it crucial to conserve water, minimize pollution, and promote sustainable land management. The region is protected by the Southeastern Indiana Environmental Foundation, a nonprofit group dedicated to preserving, improving, and restoring the region's watersheds through impactful projects and community outreach.

PARKS AND RECREATION



Ripley County is home to charming parks and recreation amenities. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) manages Versailles State Park, the Ripley County Parks Department manages the fairgrounds, and municipalities maintain local parks and trails. Ripley County does not have a parks and recreation master plan, and the City of Batesville is the only municipality within the county with such a plan. The towns of Versailles and Osgood recently collaborated to develop a bicycle and pedestrian master plan to guide the development of trails and connecting the two communities.

Versailles State Park

Located in the rolling hills of Ripley County, Versailles State Park is Indiana's second largest state park. In addition to the park's natural beauty and ample recreation opportunities, the area has a deep history rooted in both the Civil War and the Civilian Conservation Corps. Popular activities include picnicking, boating, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, swimming, and learning about the park's natural environment and rich history through interpretive naturalist programming. The park features a campground with electric, equestrian, group, and youth camping areas to accommodate overnight stays.

Ripley County Fairgrounds

The Ripley County Fairgrounds, located in Osgood, are home to the Ripley County 4-H Fair and other community events, such as the F.A.R.M. Club Show and the Chamber Night Fireworks. The fairgrounds feature event buildings, shelters, livestock barns, a horse arena, a grandstand, and campground with a dump station. These facilities are all available to rent.

Batesville City Parks

Batesville owns and operates several city parks: Liberty Park, Veteran's Park, Weberding Park, Brum Woods, the Memorial Pool, and Freedom Park. These parks offer robust amenities, including accessible playground equipment, athletic fields, sports courts, a public pool, wooded trails, shelters, picnic tables, and a dog park. In addition to these parks, Batesville offers public access to the city's reservoirs, which are stocked with fish by the IDNR.

Holton Town Park

Holton Community Park is a central hub for the town. The park features a playground, basketball court, picnic tables, and shelters among a grove of trees.

Milan Town Park

The Town of Milan manages the Daren Baker Memorial Park, a community park on Milan Pond. The park features three playgrounds, a walking path, shelters, baseball diamonds, and athletic fields.



Napoleon Town Park

Napoleon has a small park nestled behind the town's community center. This park features a playground, swing set, basketball courts, picnic tables, a shelter, and a field for play or to facilitate community events.

Osgood Town Parks

Osgood has a blossoming park system, which includes the Osgood Corner Park and the Osgood Trails. The Osgood Corner Park, located at the heart of the community where Buckeye Street crosses the railroad, is a small plaza with public art, seating, native plants, and a small water feature. Osgood Trails are trails in a well-manicured park setting on the south side of Osgood. These trails are made up of four loops; however, more trails are planned, which will connect the town to Versailles State Park.

Sunman Town Park

The Town of Sunman manages the Sunman Community Park, which features a playground, baseball diamonds, and a shelter. Volunteers help maintain and beautify the park through landscaping and clean-up efforts.

Versailles Town Parks

The Town of Versailles is home to a growing park system, and the Versailles Pocket Park is the most recent addition to this system. Built in 2023, the small park replaced two blighted properties with an outdoor community space.

The park features an entertainment pavilion, splash pad, benches, picnic tables, public art, and landscaping. Other parks in town include Pangburn Park, which offers a playground and baseball diamond, and the Tyson Memorial Sports Complex. The sports complex encourages active lifestyles with its recreation-focused amenities, including a playground, paved walking trail, baseball diamonds, and athletic fields. The Ripley County Recreational League and Ripley County Youth Soccer Club practice and compete at the sports complex.

American Legion Parks

American Legion posts throughout Ripley County operate their own parks. These parks primarily serve as gathering spaces for members but attract visitors for seasonal events. North of Osgood, American Legion Post 267 manages C.E. Reinking Memorial Park, a wooded property along U.S. 421 with a play area, picnic tables, shelters, and a community building. In Milan, the grounds of American Legion Post 235 serve as a community park with playgrounds and picnic areas nestled under mature trees. East of Versailles, American Legion Post 173 maintains Legion Park, a scenic retreat along the wooded slopes of Laughery Creek. The park features a playground, shelter, and community building fit with a kitchen and restrooms.





03

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



CHAPTER 3

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION



ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The 2026 Ripley County Comprehensive Plan was shaped by the voices of the community. Throughout the process, more than 180 participants shared their perspectives through online and in-person engagement opportunities.

A COMMUNITY-LED PLAN

Throughout the planning process, the project team engaged residents, business owners, elected officials, county and town staff, and local organizations through a mix of online and in-person opportunities. More than 180 participants shared their unique perspectives through focus groups, a public workshop, and a community-wide survey. To keep the plan aligned with community priorities, a seventeen-member steering committee met five times with the consulting team, guiding the process and ensuring the plan reflected Ripley County's vision for the future. The following sections provide a summary of the people and tools used to collect community input.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee consisted of seventeen Ripley County residents and leaders. Each member was selected for their active involvement in county affairs and unique community perspectives. Meeting five times throughout the planning process, the Steering Committee played a crucial role in shaping the direction of the comprehensive plan by offering thoughtful feedback and insight at every stage.

The following individuals were invited to participate on the Steering Committee:

- Tad Brinson, APC Director
- Andrew Decker, Co. Council
- John Ertel, Citizen Member
- Jeff French, APC Member and Co. Surveyor
- Wayne Jenner, Citizen Member
- Mike Hughes, Business Owner
- Barry Lauber, RCRC
- Chris Linville, Citizen/Farmer
- Gary Norman, RCED
- Dave Osborne, APC Vice-President
- Jeff Volz, Co. Commissioner
- Olivia Welch, Citizen Member
- Deb Shumate, Citizen Member
- Shane Tompkins, Citizen Member
- Steve Youngman, APC President



Committee Meeting #1

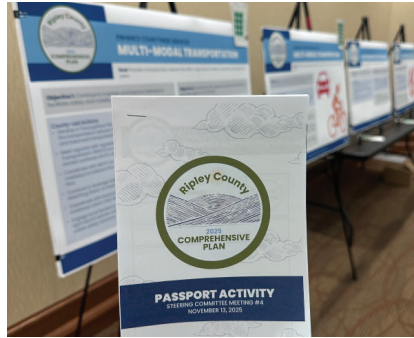
The first meeting, held on May 14, 2025, introduced the scope and purpose of the plan. The consulting team shared county demographic data with members and collected feedback to ensure the information accurately reflected local conditions. The following are key takeaways:

- There was discussion around the scope of the plan and how the Area Plan Commission will use this guidance document to make planning decisions. The committee expressed the importance of having future land use guidance for Versailles, Sunman, Osgood, Milan, Holton, and Napoleon.
- The committee helped the project team identify key assets and challenges. Members expressed the value in Ripley County's sense of place, people, schools, family-owned businesses, outdoor recreation, agriculture, and proximity to major metros.

Committee Meeting #2

On July 30, 2025, the committee reconvened to review the public input collected to date, which included the two community workshops, an online survey, and five focus group meetings. Using public input, the project team drafted the vision statement, goals, and supporting objectives. The committee reviewed the draft materials and provided critical feedback to the project team. The following statements are key takeaways from the discussion:

- The committee responded well to the draft vision statement but felt it may be difficult to live by and implement in the long-term. There was discussion around finding a balance between industry and preservation.
- The project team presented four draft themes. The committee liked the organization of the themes and highlighted areas where additional information or detail could be beneficial.



Committee Meeting #3

The third meeting, held September 4, 2025, focused on reviewing the updated vision, goals, and objectives, as well as the preliminary future land use map. Committee members offered valuable feedback, refining the goals and ensuring the map accurately reflected community priorities. The following are key takeaways:

- Members emphasized stronger support for growing industry and agriculture, inclusion of walking and biking infrastructure with the new trail, and a more active approach to arts and culture by “developing” or “strengthening” it rather than just “embracing” it.
- Members highlighted the need for detailed information on utilities (sewer, water, electric, gas) to guide growth, support grant opportunities, and assess development capacity.
- Updates to the future land use map were suggested to accurately reflect industrial, commercial, agricultural, rural residential, and single-family areas. Key priorities included identifying shovel-ready industrial sites, supporting growth along major corridors, and incorporating access-management strategies to maintain traffic flow and accommodate new development.

Committee Meeting #4

At the fourth meeting, held November 19, 2025, the Steering Committee reviewed recommendations with an added level of detail. Through an interactive passport activity, Committee members visited stations around the room and completed a packet to indicate their thoughts on the goals, objectives, and action items presented. Recommendations were revised based on feedback received.

Committee Meeting #5

The final Steering Committee meeting was held on January 27, 2026. The project team provided an overview of the draft plan and Steering Committee members shared their feedback. Revisions were made based on this guidance and the plan entered the formal adoption process. This process involved a public presentation and hearing in front of the Area Plan Commission, followed by adoption of the plan by the County Commissioners.

FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS | JULY 2025

On July 10, 2025, the project team facilitated five in-person discussions with stakeholders that lived in, worked in, or were otherwise invested in the future of Ripley County. Focus group meetings covered a variety of topics and utilized local expertise to identify existing assets, ongoing challenges, barriers to success, and exciting opportunities for the county and its incorporated communities. Over 40 people were invited to participate in the focus group meetings. The five focus group meetings provided an opportunity to dive deeper into the following topics:

- City and Town Representatives
- Industry and Businesses
- Infrastructure and Public Safety
- Quality of Life
- Young Professionals

The following themes emerged from focus group discussions:



Workforce & Talent Development

There is a widespread shortage of skilled labor, impacting industries, small businesses, and emergency services. Initiatives are underway to build talent pipelines through schools and the Southeastern Career Center, but these programs need continued support from the county, Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Corporation, and other community organizations.



Infrastructure and Housing

Communities are focused on improving water, sewer, transportation, and broadband to support growth. While basic utilities are in place in many areas, key challenges remain, including aging housing stock, housing affordability, and limited incentives for development. New subdivisions and infill housing are priorities, but infrastructure costs are a major barrier.



Quality of Life Disparities

Quality of life varies greatly across towns. Batesville offers strong amenities, while others struggle with limited recreation, childcare, healthcare, and gathering spaces. There is demand for a community center and more activities for families and young people. Shopping and dining options are limited or poorly marketed, especially for younger demographics. Meeting participants expressed interest in trail connectivity and access to healthy food.



Economic Development

Industrial development is constrained by a lack of turnkey buildings and workforce availability. Business parks sit underused, and while utility capacity is sufficient, the location creates accessibility challenges. Companies would rather be closer to the interstate. Small businesses face issues with staffing, training, marketing, capital, and succession planning. There is some support from the Indianapolis Small Business Development Center (ISBDC) and the Ripley County Chamber of Commerce, but capacity is limited. Training is needed to educate small business owners on how to create a sustainable business model and manage finances.



Public Safety

The public safety tax is sustaining the emergency service providers for now, but resources and capacity are minimal. The number of runs is increasing, which is outpacing the number of certified staff members. For services to improve and grow with the county, the entities need additional personnel. The barriers to securing additional personnel are related to the lack of certified people within or near the county and the county's ability to approve additional staff. From an efficiency standpoint, the Sheriff's department and the local police departments could explore ways of coordinating to expand resources and capacity.



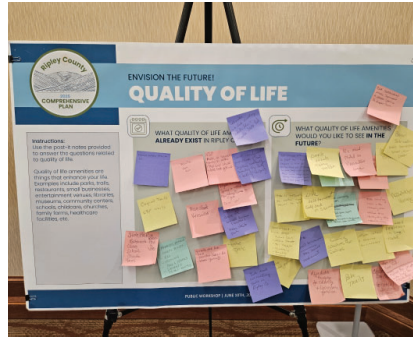
Zoning and Development Standards

Participants also expressed concerns related to the quality and style of rental housing being approved and constructed. The community is supportive of rental housing but feels the quality needs to be addressed. The primary tool for improving the quality of development is to update the county's zoning ordinance.



Governance, Collaboration, and Resistance to Change

Cross-community collaboration has improved since COVID-19, but some tensions remain. There is some strife between towns and the Area Plan Commission, which could benefit from improved transparency and communication. Towns are open to working together, but local pride, control, and a resistance to change are recurring obstacles to broader reforms—particularly around public safety and school district consolidation.



PUBLIC WORKSHOPS | JUNE 2025

The project team hosted two public workshops at the Ripley County Annex on June 10, 2025, to gather insight from community members. In all, 33 community members attended the workshops to learn more about the planning process and to share their thoughts with the project team.

Attendees generally reaffirmed the relevance of many themes from the 2002 Comprehensive Plan, emphasizing the need to manage growth by directing development near existing towns while specifying the types of development desired. Economic development remains a priority, with calls to attract and retain young residents, support small businesses, and recognize the link between housing availability and economic vitality. Participants stressed the importance of preserving agricultural land while allowing balanced residential, commercial, and industrial development, favoring single-family and mixed residential uses near Versailles, Osgood, Milan, and Delaware.

COMMUNITY INPUT SURVEY | JULY 2025

From June 10 to July 23, 2025, 140 participants shared their feedback on the public input survey. The online survey gathered insight into existing conditions, while exploring opportunities to enhance the county and its communities.

The survey results indicate that a significant majority of respondents reside and work within Ripley County, with many being long-term residents over the age of 46. Respondents expressed strong appreciation for the county's small-town character, sense of community, public safety, affordability, and proximity to larger metropolitan areas, as well as natural amenities such as Versailles State Park. Areas of concern included roadway conditions, limited pedestrian infrastructure, a lack of shopping, dining, and recreational opportunities for youth and families, as well as concerns regarding employment availability, housing options, and county leadership. Respondents also emphasized the importance of preserving Ripley County's rural character, supporting local businesses, and revitalizing small towns such as Versailles and Osgood.



BIG IDEAS OPEN HOUSE | SEPTEMBER 2025

The Big Ideas Open House occurred on September 17th, 2025, and collected feedback from 26 participants. This was an informal event, allowing residents to drop by and submit feedback on the draft goals and objectives, future land use map, and four core themes.

Community feedback emphasized the need for the comprehensive plan to be specific, actionable, and tailored to local priorities, with measurable goals and clear implementation strategies, including leadership and funding responsibilities. Residents called for greater public input and collaboration with towns, while opinions on zoning regarding alternative energy and Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) were divided. Key priorities included increasing housing and childcare options to support the workforce, recreational trails, and supporting local agriculture.

ONLINE WORKSHOP | SEPTEMBER 2025

The online workshop, available from September 18 to October 3, 2025, provided an opportunity for community members who could not attend the Big Ideas Open House in September to share their input. A total of 51 respondents participated, rating their satisfaction with each topic and its associated goals and objectives. Satisfaction levels ranged from 63% to 83%, with housing receiving the lowest rating and parks and recreation the highest. Overall, respondents expressed general support for the draft goals and objectives, emphasizing the need to strengthen the language, prioritize development in areas with existing utilities, and expand housing options—particularly to support young families.



Key Findings



WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT RIPLEY COUNTY?

SMALL-TOWN CHARACTER

SENSE OF COMMUNITY

SAFETY AND LOW CRIME

PROXIMITY TO METRO AREAS

NATURAL BEAUTY

VERSAILLES STATE PARK



WHAT ARE RIPLEY COUNTY'S GREATEST CHALLENGES?

HOUSING OPTIONS

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

BIKE & PED INFRASTRUCTURE

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

SHOPPING AND DINING

FUNDING



WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR RIPLEY COUNTY?

SMALL-TOWN CHARM

RURAL HERITAGE

FAMILY-FRIENDLY

THOUGHTFUL DEVELOPMENT

RETAIN GRADUATES

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT





CHAPTER 4

THEME ONE:

PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE GROWTH



THEME ONE

PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE GROWTH

Responsible growth is sustainable growth. By embracing responsible growth, Ripley County can help build places where families and businesses thrive, in communities with rich history and culture.

Theme One explores responsible growth and development in Ripley County. Responsible growth is sustainable growth. The addition of new residents, and the resulting development and redevelopment of property, should benefit the community now and for generations to come. Benefits of population growth may include industrial diversification, expansion of job opportunities, addition of skilled workers, small business growth, blight mitigation, and public investment made possible through greater tax revenue. Responsible growth captures these benefits while minimizing the negative effects of growth, such as the development of prime agricultural land, destruction and degradation of natural areas, sprawl, and unsustainable expansion of infrastructure.

Ripley County can promote responsible growth by implementing projects, programs, and policies related to land use and community character. Outlined in further detail in this chapter, these initiatives are designed to concentrate growth and development within Ripley County's existing cities and towns. Cities and towns are primed to receive growth and can harness it to fund improvements to public utilities, roadways, parks, and trails, among other amenities. By embracing responsible growth, Ripley County can help build places where families and businesses thrive, in communities with rich history and culture.

Sections within this chapter are organized by goals, objectives, and action items, reflecting a hierarchy from broad to specific. Action items are divided into two categories: county-led and community-led. This distinction emphasizes the role that all stakeholders, not just county staff and leadership, play in implementing the comprehensive plan. County-led actions are likely to be championed by county government and/or countywide organizations, while community-led actions will be championed by local government and/or local organizations.

NAVIGATING THE PLAN

YOU ARE HERE



THEME ONE: **PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE GROWTH**

LAND USE

COMMUNITY CHARACTER



THEME TWO: **ENHANCE COUNTYWIDE SERVICES**

MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

PUBLIC SAFETY



THEME THREE: **FOSTER ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



THEME FOUR: **INVEST IN QUALITY OF LIFE**

ARTS AND CULTURE

PARKS AND RECREATION

CHILDCARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

HEALTH AND WELLNESS



THEME ONE
PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE GROWTH

LAND USE

LAND USE GOAL

Concentrate development activity and reinvestment in areas where adequate infrastructure is available or easily extended.

Rural sprawl refers to the low-density, scattered development of residential and commercial areas outside of cities and towns. Most people in rural areas are familiar with sprawl and may live or work in an area characterized by sprawl. Common examples of rural sprawl include a subdivision built half-a-mile outside of town, or a rural highway dotted with driveways for homes and businesses. This type of growth can have negative environmental consequences, such as habitat degradation, and economic consequences, such as loss of prime farmland and increased infrastructure demands. Rural sprawl also diminishes quality of life. Without a car, traveling within a sprawling community can be a challenge, since roadways often lack sidewalks. Consequently, residents may feel disconnected and isolated from one another.

Ripley County and its communities can phase out sprawl by encouraging development within town limits or on adjacent parcels in accordance with the Future Land Use Plan presented in this chapter. Likely, these areas are already served by essential infrastructure and, if not, would require minimal extensions. As the entity responsible for development review and regulation, Ripley County should proactively ensure that ordinances properly reflect community values and standard development practices.

Objective 1: Utilize the Future Land Use Plan to guide growth and development within the county and its incorporated communities.

County-Led Action Items

A	Focus residential development in and around existing cities and towns.
B	Prioritize first-floor commercial activity in downtown buildings to maintain a vibrant, walkable town center.
C	Protect the right to farm in Ripley County by requiring setbacks and buffers for new development adjacent to agricultural land.
D	Encourage future industrial development to locate within an existing business park or near the Interstate.
E	Protect environmentally sensitive areas, such as forests, wetlands, prairies, and waterways, by adopting conservation setback and buffering requirements.
F	Continue to restrict development within the floodplain to maximize environmental benefits and minimize loss of life and property.

Objective 2: Ensure Ripley County has the appropriate zoning tools and development review process in place.

County-Led Action Items

A	Update Ripley County's zoning ordinance to align with the recommendations of the Ripley County Comprehensive Plan.
B	Revise the development review process to be more transparent, predictable, and accessible to residents and developers
C	Ensure town representatives have an opportunity to provide input before a development within town limits is approved by the Area Plan Commission or Board of Zoning Appeals.
D	Host an annual workshop to educate the County Commissioners, Area Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, and town representatives on how best to use the Ripley County Comprehensive Plan in their official roles.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Future Land Use Plan, which includes a map and set of classifications, ensures that the built and natural environments are developed and/or preserved in alignment with the community's vision for the future. When creating Ripley County's future land use map, the project team referenced existing land use patterns, current zoning maps, prime farmland, soil typologies, floodplains, and feedback from community stakeholders. Throughout much of the unincorporated county, the existing land use was upheld as the desired future land use; although, in cities and towns, changes in land use are anticipated. To meet the evolving needs of residents and business owners, agricultural land on the fringes of town may be developed, or vacant and underutilized properties may be redeveloped.

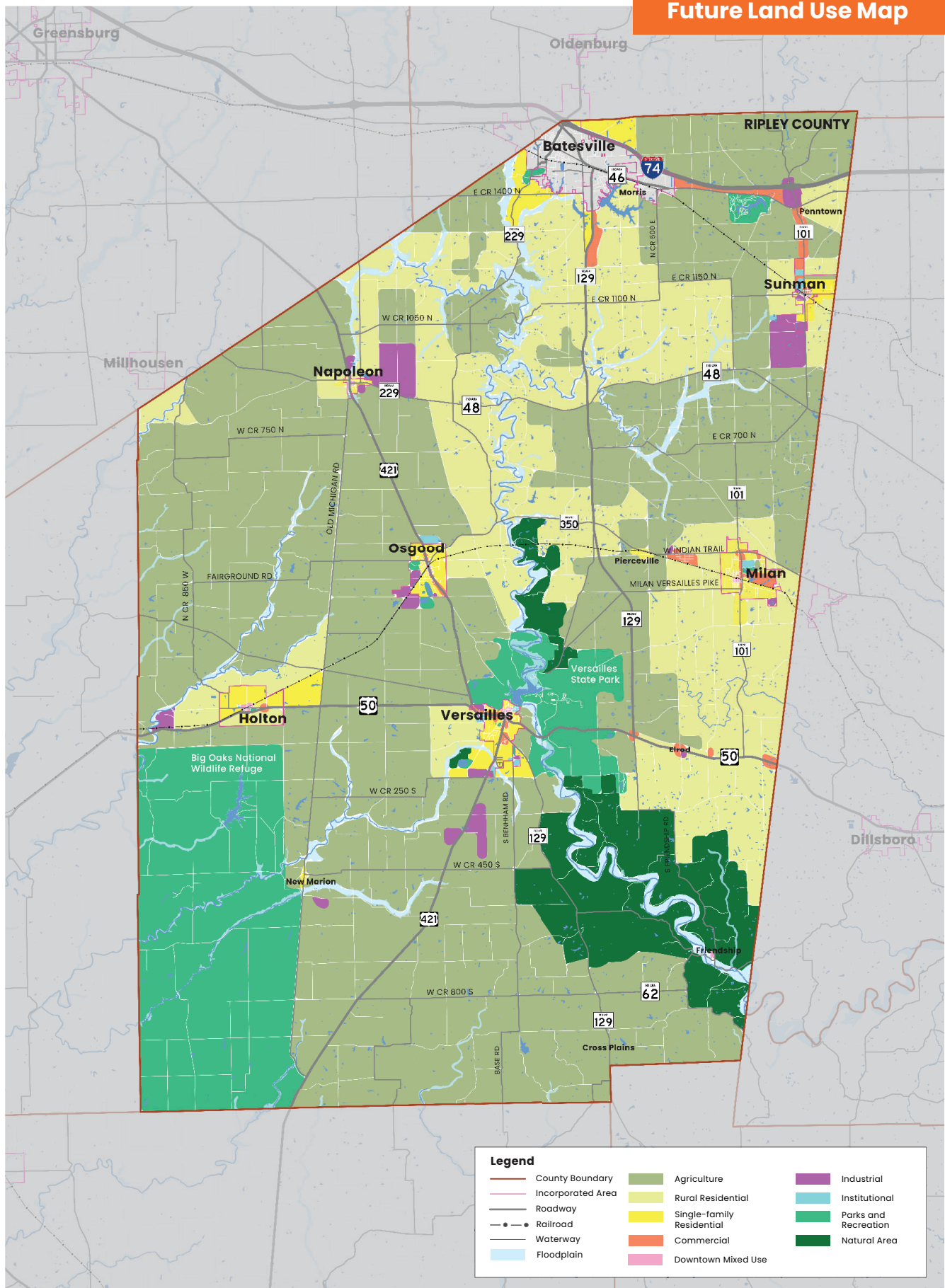
The future land use map provides a framework for future development but is not a zoning map. Although land use and zoning are closely related, they serve separate functions. The future land use map is a guide that describes the desired use of an area (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial). This description, known as a future land use classification, outlines high-level recommendations for the intensity and character of proposed development. Zoning, on the other hand, regulates how different uses can be developed on a site according to standards related to lot size, minimum setbacks, maximum building heights, landscaping, and other requirements.

The future land use map is intentionally broad, providing a general overview of desired uses, and is not based on specific property lines. This allows for flexibility and interpretation on a project-by-project basis, while still establishing a foundation for decision-making.

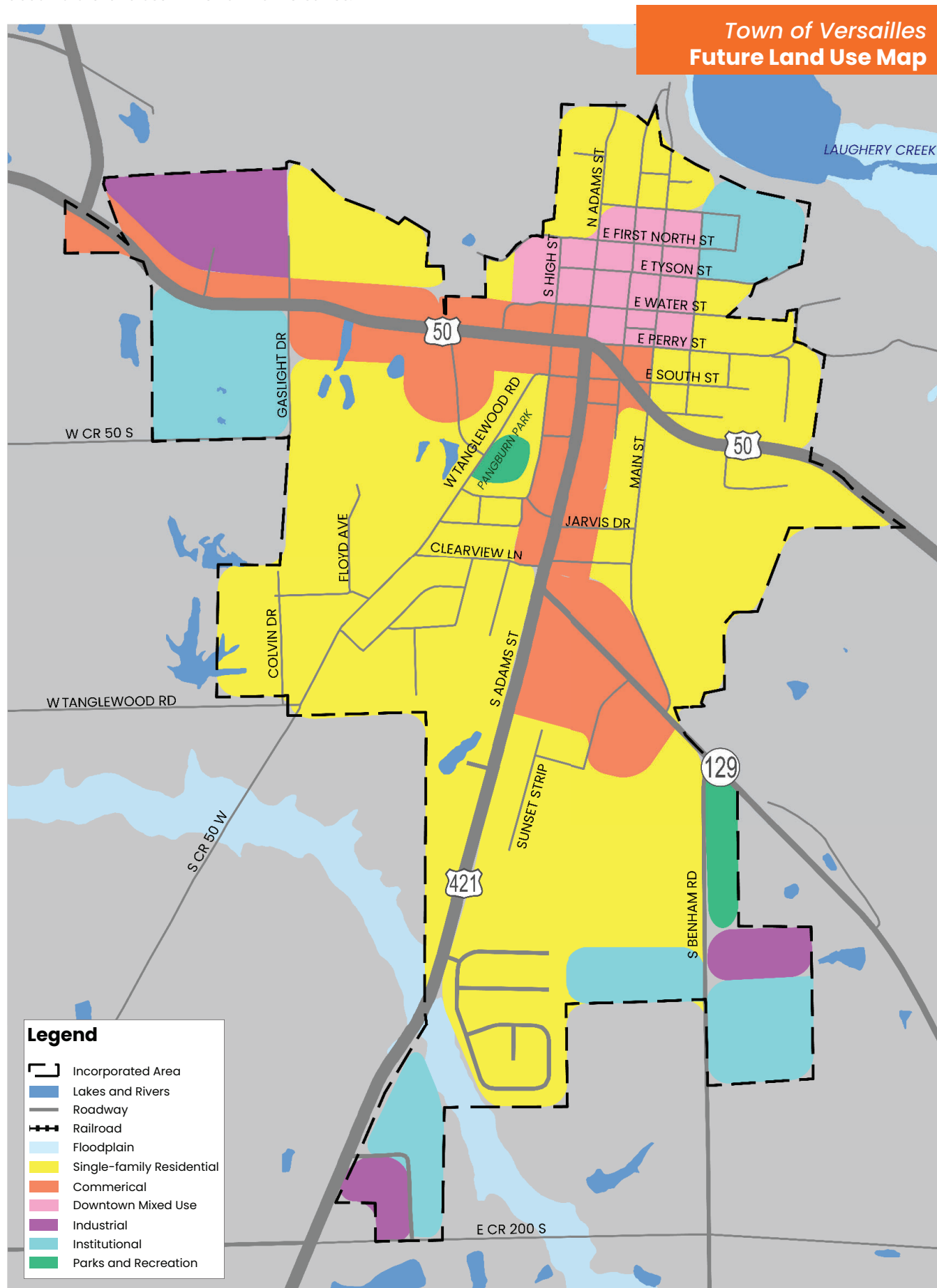
By remaining flexible, the future land use map can accommodate unique or compelling circumstances and creative approaches to development, so long as adequate utilities, transportation infrastructure, and municipal services are in place.

Over time, recommendations from the Future Land Use Plan may be implemented through amendments to the county's zoning map and ordinances. Ripley County should review and update its zoning map and ordinances periodically to ensure that these regulatory documents align with the vision and goals established in this comprehensive plan.

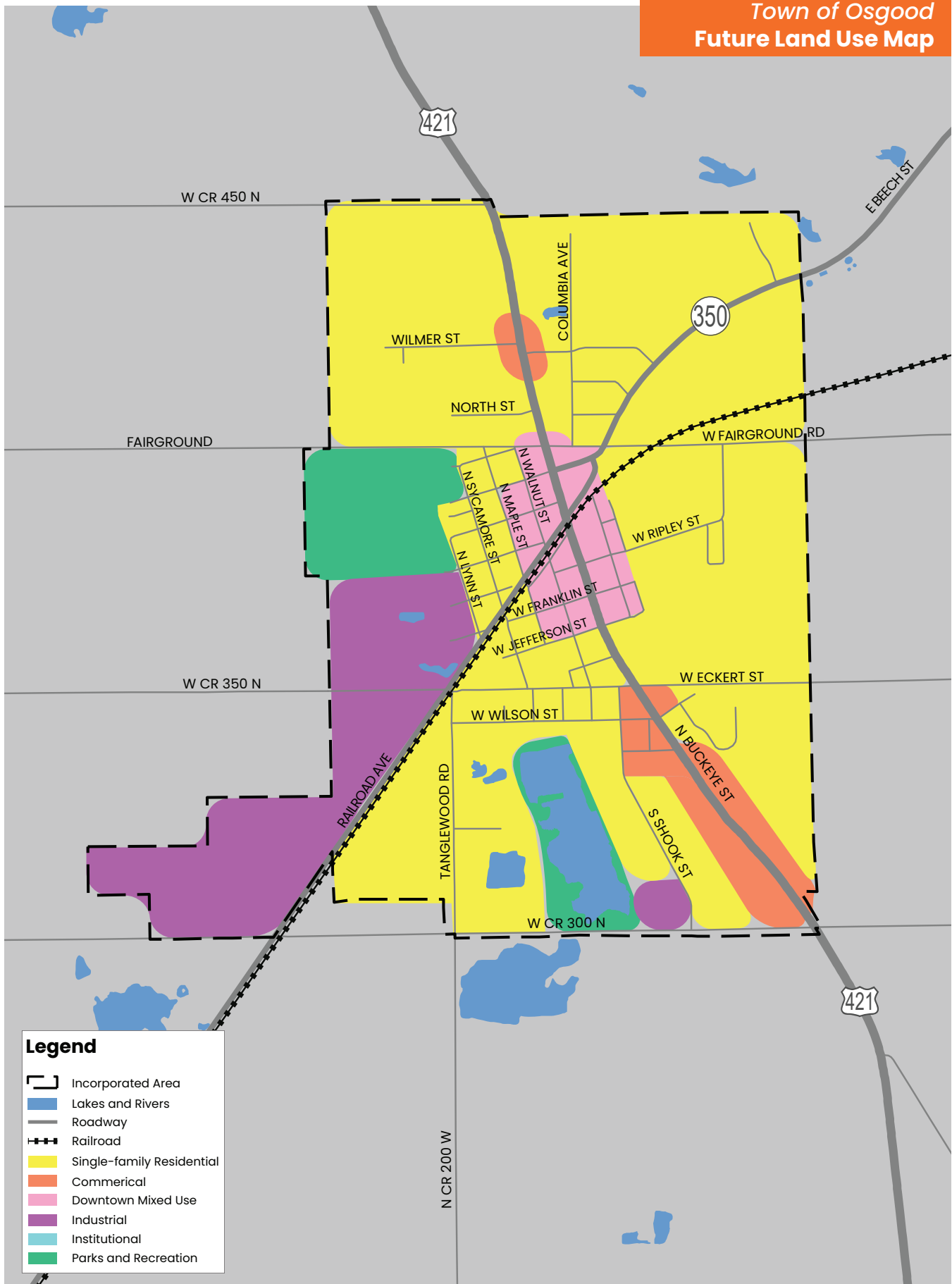
Future Land Use Map



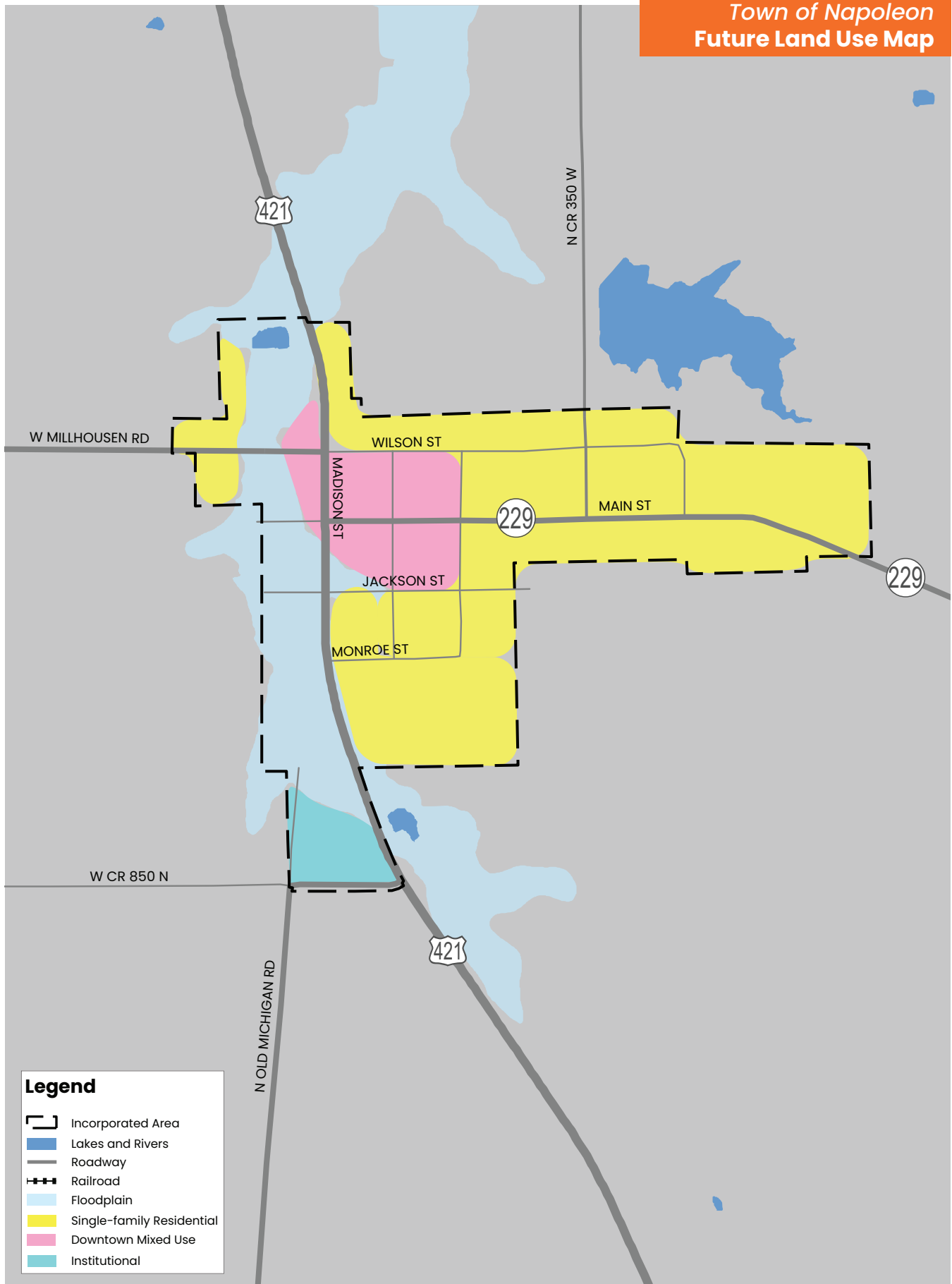
*Refer to the Versailles Comprehensive Plan for more details about future land use in the Town of Versailles.



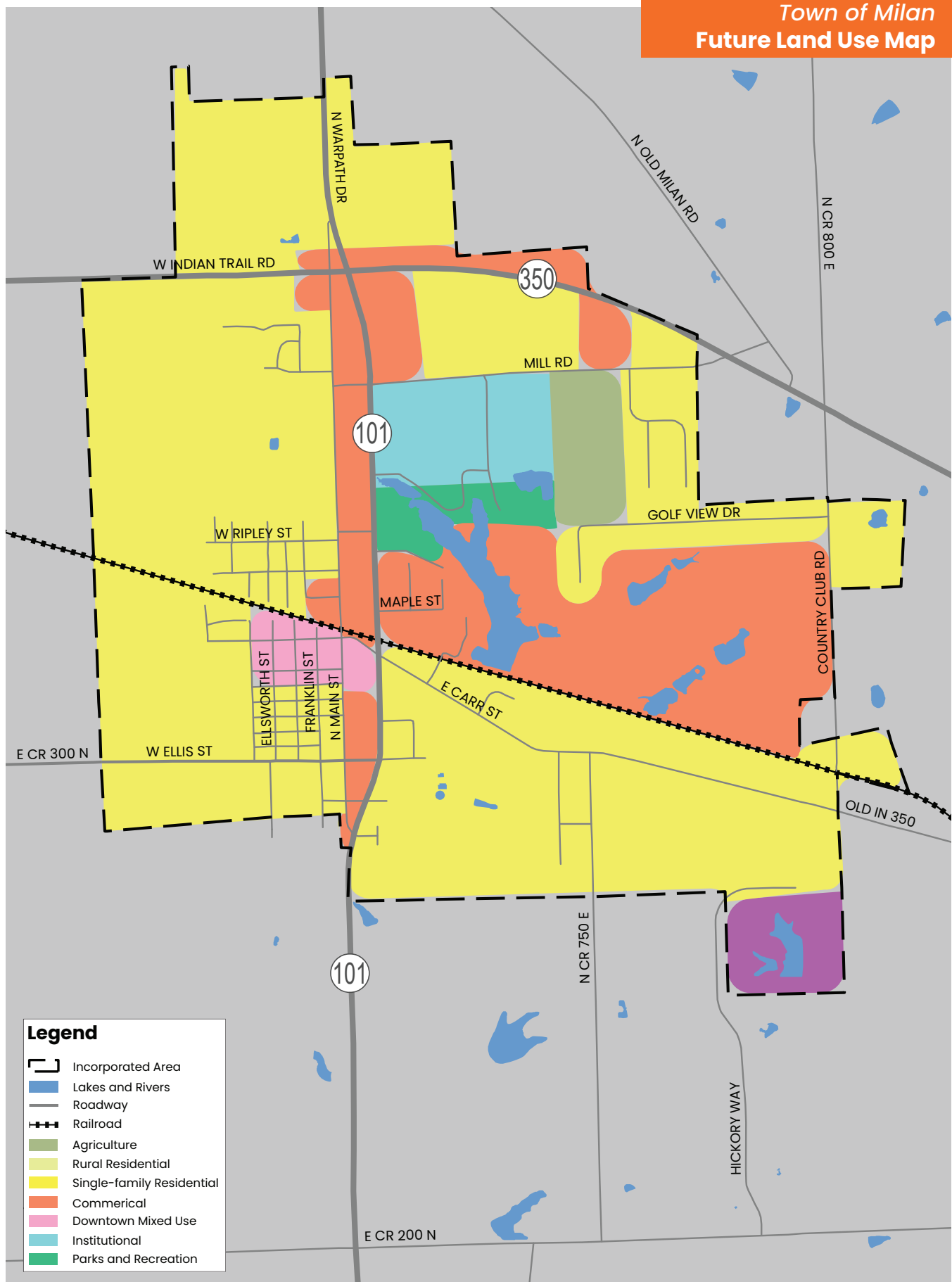
Town of Osgood Future Land Use Map



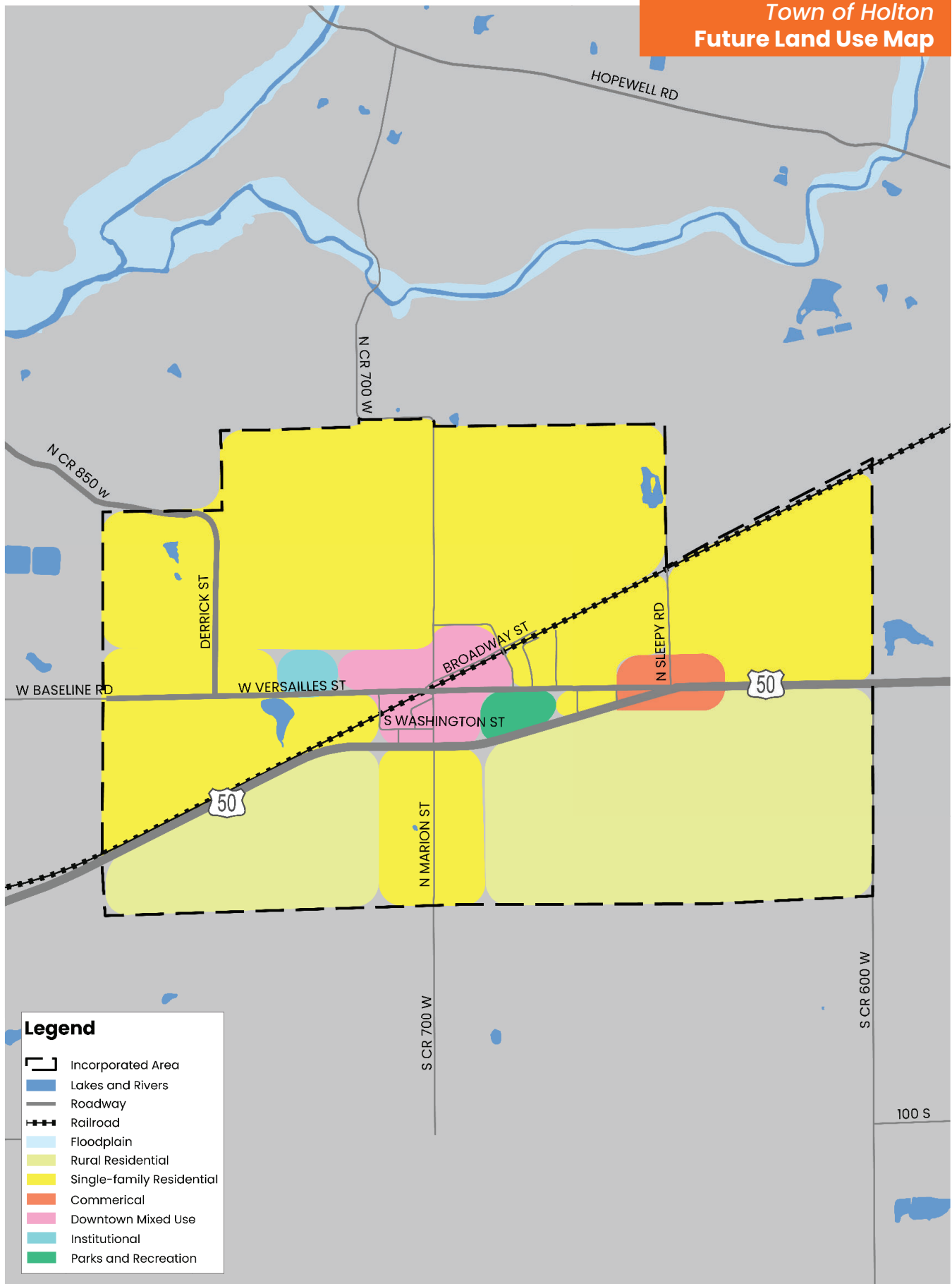
Town of Napoleon Future Land Use Map



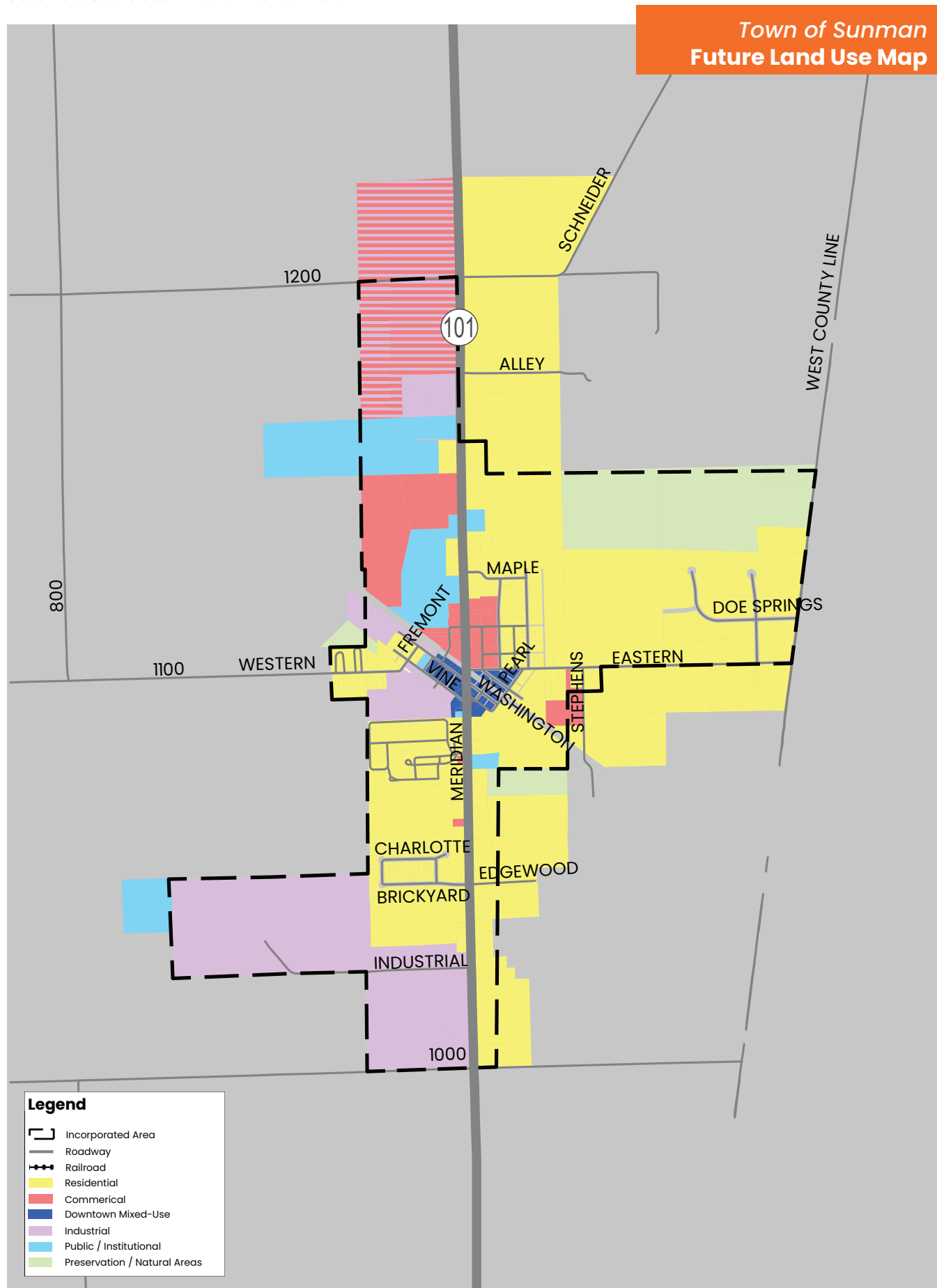
Town of Milan Future Land Use Map



Town of Holton Future Land Use Map



*Refer to the Sunman Comprehensive Plan for more details about future land use in the Town of Sunman.



FUTURE LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS



AGRICULTURE

This designation encompasses small- and large-scale farming operations and agricultural support facilities that form the backbone of Ripley County's rural economy. Common uses include row crop production, livestock operations, dairy farms, timber production, and specialty agricultural activities. Agricultural lands may contain farmsteads with barns, silos, equipment storage buildings, and farm residences. This classification focuses on the continued use of existing agricultural land; therefore, large parcels should be kept intact, and new residential construction should be associated with agricultural activity. Unless it is located near an established community, development might not be serviced by municipal water and sewer utilities.

Primary Uses:

- Agricultural activities, including crop and livestock production, dairy farms, timber production, and specialty agricultural activities
- Agritourism, including farm stores, farm-to-table restaurants, pick-your-own operations, guided tours, educational programs, festivals, and farm stays
- Value-added agriculture, including on-site processing and packaging of raw agricultural commodities into farm fresh products

Secondary Uses:

- Single-family residential (detached units)
- Parks and recreation facilities
- Natural areas, such as woodlands, wetlands, prairies, and waterways



RURAL RESIDENTIAL

The Rural Residential classification provides low-density housing in a rural setting. These areas blend residential living with the rural character of Ripley County, allowing residents to maintain small-scale agricultural activities, hobby farms, or enjoy spacious properties with scenic landscapes. Development in these areas respects existing topography, tree cover, and drainage patterns. Homes are typically single-family detached structures with adequate setbacks and spacing to maintain privacy and rural aesthetics. These areas might be serviced by some, but not all utilities. Rural Residential development is often characterized by larger lot sizes, due in part to land requirements for on-site septic systems. These areas are intended to serve as a transition between agricultural and other uses.

Primary Uses:

- Single-family residential (detached units)
- Low-intensity agricultural activities

Secondary Uses:

- Neighborhood scale commercial in areas served by utilities along higher classification roadways and key intersections
- Parks and recreation facilities
- Natural areas, such as woodlands, wetlands, prairies, and waterways



SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

The Single-Family Residential classification, typically found within or adjacent to incorporated communities, provides for traditional, single-family neighborhoods. Housing types are usually limited to attached or detached single-family homes on small- to medium-sized lots. Neighborhoods are served by public utilities and services and often include sidewalks and shared green spaces. The density and type of development may change depending on the surrounding context. These neighborhoods support Ripley County's growing population while maintaining small town character.

Primary Uses:

- Single-family residential (attached and detached units)
- Missing middle housing, including duplexes and townhomes

Secondary Uses:

- Multi-family residential, including apartments, condominiums, and senior living facilities
- Neighborhood-scale commercial in areas served by utilities along higher classification roadways and key intersections
- Institutional uses, including civic, religious, and educational facilities
- Parks and recreation facilities



COMMERCIAL

This classification accommodates a range of commercial activities, including retail stores, restaurants, personal and professional services, and offices. Commercial development should align with community character and surrounding context. Scale may vary and should be based on the intended customer base, allowing for regional commercial centers on highway corridors and neighborhood commercial nodes serving local needs. Future commercial development and redevelopment should be concentrated in historic downtowns, existing shopping centers, and along key corridors and intersections. Future commercial development should be served by water and sewer utilities.

Primary Uses:

- Commercial uses, including retail stores, restaurants, personal and professional services, offices, hospitality, and automotive businesses

Secondary Uses:

- Single-family residential (attached and detached units)
- Institutional uses, including civic, religious, and educational facilities
- Parks and recreation facilities



DOWNTOWN MIXED-USE

Downtown Mixed-Use areas preserve and enhance Ripley County's historic commercial districts, the heart of communities like Versailles and Osgood. These areas encourage a blend of commercial, residential, and institutional uses, and feature walkable, compact development patterns. Downtown buildings preserve different architectural styles and typically feature a vertical mix of uses. The ground floor is traditionally reserved for commercial use, supporting street-level vibrancy, while upper-floors are intended for residential or office space. Adaptive reuse and infill development, especially when designed to complement established community character, is encouraged.

Primary Uses:

- Commercial uses, including retail stores, restaurants, personal and professional services, offices, and hospitality
- Multi-family residential, including duplexes, townhomes, apartments, condominiums, and senior living facilities
- Institutional uses, including civic, religious, and educational facilities

Secondary Uses:

- Parks and recreation facilities



INDUSTRIAL

The Industrial classification includes areas designated for manufacturing, processing, warehousing, and distribution activities. Within this classification, there are two distinct types of industrial use: light industrial and heavy industrial. Light industrial uses are most common, producing few external effects, such as disruptive sounds, smells, and vibrations. Light industrial uses should be concentrated in business parks, whenever possible, or in a designated industrial area on the edge of town. Heavy industrial uses, by contrast, employ capital and energy-intensive machinery to produce large and complex products. Heavy industrial uses should be limited in the county and located away from residential neighborhoods and sensitive environmental areas. These uses should be limited to areas with access to major transportation corridors where increased traffic will not impact existing neighborhoods.

Primary Uses:

- Manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution
- Research and development in a campus setting
- Extraction and processing of natural resources, such as minerals and timber

Secondary Uses:

- Supporting commercial uses, such as restaurants, gas stations, convenience stores, and professional services



INSTITUTIONAL

Institutional areas are designated for major community facilities and public services, such as schools, hospitals, religious institutions, and government buildings. These uses are tax exempt and provide critical services to the community. Institutional uses should be located adjacent to developed areas for the convenience of residents, accessible by multiple forms of transportation, and served by utilities.

Primary Uses:

- Institutional uses, including civic, religious, and educational facilities

Secondary Uses:

- Parks and recreation facilities



PARKS AND RECREATION

The Parks and Recreation classification includes public lands dedicated to recreational activities, preservation of natural areas, and protection of wildlife. This classification includes municipal parks, state managed recreational land, and federally managed land. Facilities may range from neighborhood playgrounds and athletic fields to regional recreation destinations, such as Versailles State Park and the Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge.

Primary Uses:

- Publicly owned parks and recreational facilities
- Privately owned parks and recreational facilities

Secondary Uses:

- Natural areas, such as woodlands, wetlands, prairies, and waterways



NATURAL AREAS

Natural areas include environmentally sensitive lands protected for conservation purposes, including woodlands, wetlands, prairies, water bodies, and floodplains. These areas often encompass privately owned property with significant natural value. Limited residential development may be considered; however, it is important to prevent development in hazardous areas and to minimize the disruption of vital ecological functions. These areas are better suited for active and passive recreation, trail systems, and open space. Conservation protects air and water quality, water storage, wildlife habitat, and viewsheds.

Primary Uses:

- Active and passive recreation facilities, including trail development
- Wildlife and nature preserves

Secondary Uses:

- Limited residential development that prioritizes conservation practices

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THEME ONE
PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE GROWTH

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

COMMUNITY CHARACTER GOAL

Enhance the visual quality and character of Ripley County communities and major thoroughfares.

Community character, the distinct identity of a place, is influenced by the appearance of the public and private realm. Looking first at the public realm, cities and towns in Ripley County can leverage funding opportunities to enhance the look, feel, and accessibility of public spaces. Potential projects in Ripley County may include revitalizing downtown streetscapes with lighting, street furniture, and public art, or expanding the sidewalk and trail network to help pedestrians and bicyclists safely access popular destinations.

In the private realm, property maintenance has the greatest impact on community character. When a property owner neglects to mow their lawn, or remove trash from their yard, it negatively impacts the visual quality of the neighborhood and damages the residents' sense of pride. Ethical code enforcement plays an important role by transparently outlining the rules property owners must follow and issuing violations. Community cleanup events, facilitated by local government and community organizations, can also encourage property maintenance.

Objective 1: Cultivate a sense of community pride and accountability to ensure properties are well-maintained.

County-Led Action Items

A	Educate community members about the importance of local ordinances in maintaining an attractive, inviting community, and the consequences of violating them.
B	Strengthen local ordinances to enable effective code enforcement while prioritizing transparency by providing clear directions, deadlines, and penalties for violations.

Community-Led Action Items

C	Host annual community cleanup events at the town level.
D	Establish Yard of the Month programs to recognize residents' hard work and dedication and to inspire others.

Objective 2: Encourage towns to pursue placemaking and beautification efforts.

County-Led Action Items

A	Invite local leaders and representatives of community organizations to attend an annual grant writing workshop.
B	Collaboratively assemble an inventory of funding opportunities to support placemaking and beautification efforts across the county.
C	Offer training opportunities for local staff, appointed boards, and elected officials to learn more about downtown revitalization.

Community-Led Action Items

D	Explore incentives, such as façade improvement programs, to renovate and preserve downtown buildings.
E	Invest in downtown infrastructure and streetscapes to support infill and redevelopment opportunities.
F	Enhance existing community gathering spaces and explore opportunities to create new ones, including plazas, community centers, senior centers, and gymnasiums, to support high quality of life for residents.
G	Activate community gathering spaces by expanding programming, offering festivals and events throughout the year.



05



CHAPTER 5

THEME TWO:

ENHANCE COUNTYWIDE SERVICES



THEME TWO

ENHANCE COUNTYWIDE SERVICES

Theme Two emphasizes the need to plan proactively for the expansion, upgrade, and maintenance of infrastructure and services.

Ripley County residents and business owners rely on transportation and utility networks for their daily lives and routine operations, from their morning commute to keeping the lights on overhead. In the event of the unexpected, community members rely on emergency services to safeguard lives and property. As Ripley County and its communities look to capture growth, roadways and utilities will require continued investment, and public safety providers will need more personnel and equipment to provide essential services. Theme Two emphasizes the need to plan proactively for the expansion, upgrade, and maintenance of infrastructure and services. This theme is consistent with public input survey results, in which over 60% of participants stressed the need to prioritize transportation and utility improvements.

Sections within this chapter are organized by goals, objectives, and action items, reflecting a hierarchy from broad to specific. Action items are divided into two categories: county-led and community-led. This distinction emphasizes the role that all stakeholders, not just county staff and leadership, play in implementing the comprehensive plan. County-led actions are likely to be championed by county government and/or countywide organizations, while community-led actions will be championed by local government and/or local organizations.

NAVIGATING THE PLAN



THEME ONE: **PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE GROWTH**

LAND USE

COMMUNITY CHARACTER



THEME TWO: **ENHANCE COUNTYWIDE SERVICES**

MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

PUBLIC SAFETY



THEME THREE: **FOSTER ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



THEME FOUR: **INVEST IN QUALITY OF LIFE**

ARTS AND CULTURE

PARKS AND RECREATION

CHILDCARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

YOU ARE HERE





THEME TWO
ENHANCE COUNTYWIDE SERVICES

MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION GOAL

Provide a transportation network that offers a high level of mobility, connectivity, and safety for all users.

When asked what they would change in Ripley County, survey respondents commented on poor road conditions and the lack of pedestrian infrastructure. Most residents drive (or are passengers) in a personal vehicle every day; consequently, maintaining roadways is necessary to ensure mobility, connectivity, and safety for all users. However, without proper planning, roadway maintenance can be overwhelming for county staff and leadership. Thoroughfare planning, a transportation planning tool which provides guidance on the configuration of the transportation system, can help streamline the maintenance process.

Thoroughfare planning begins by assessing existing roadway conditions and gathering community feedback, which is used to prioritize needed improvements to the transportation network. Although thoroughfare plans are an investment, they can help communities save money in the long run by maximizing the impact of public dollars. Communities with an updated thoroughfare plan are also eligible for a broader range of funding opportunities, helping kickstart desired projects. Modern thoroughfare plans look beyond county roads and consider the need for regional connectivity. Through collaboration with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), Ripley County can ensure safe and convenient travel throughout the county and beyond.

Although Ripley County residents primarily rely on vehicles to get around, there is growing interest in walking and biking to desired destinations. Pedestrian and bicyclist facilities, including sidewalks, trails, and curb ramps, provide important recreational opportunities, keeping residents active and discouraging sedentary lifestyles. At the same time, the pedestrian and bicyclist network helps connect individuals of all ages to essential facilities, including work, school, groceries, and pharmacies. This is particularly important for residents who are unable to drive due to age or ability and those without access to a personal vehicle. Pedestrian and bicyclist infrastructure can also boost tourism, appealing to outdoor recreation enthusiasts who want to see the county's scenic landscapes from the seat of a bicycle or explore Ripley County's charming towns by foot.

Objective 1: Continue to maintain and improve roadways to facilitate safety and mobility.

County-Led Action Items

A	Develop a thoroughfare plan to outline a shared vision for the future of the transportation network in Ripley County, ensuring a safe, efficient, and balanced transportation system.
B	Meet regularly with representatives from the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) to ensure that local needs are met on state-owned roadways and to discuss upcoming projects.
C	Coordinate with INDOT on access management along state-owned roadways to balance the needs of new development with efficient traffic flow.
D	Continue to leverage state funds, such as the Community Crossings Matching Grant, to improve local roads and bridges.
E	Coordinate with local school districts to identify intersections and/or roadways that may be challenging and/or hazardous for school buses.
F	Engage local farmers to identify intersections and/or roadways where agricultural vehicle conflicts are more likely to occur and design viable safety solutions.

Objective 2: Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions and INDOT to promote regional connectivity.

County-Led Action Items

A	Highlight the importance of regional connectivity within the Thoroughfare Plan and identify any outstanding barriers to connectivity.
B	Arrange an annual meeting between the Ripley County Highway Department, representatives of adjacent jurisdictions, and representatives from INDOT's Seymour District to share project updates and discuss opportunities to enhance regional connectivity.

Objective 3: Encourage trail connectivity between communities and recreational, historic, and scenic points of interest.

County-Led Action Items

A	Develop an active transportation plan to identify priority bicycle and pedestrian projects, programs, and policies to connect Ripley County communities.
B	Work with The Town of Versailles and Town of Osgood to determine the county's role in implementing the proposed routes identified in the Versailles and Osgood Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.

Community-Led Action Items

C	Create a taskforce that champions trail connectivity in Ripley County by pursuing funding opportunities, monitoring progress, and bringing people and resources together.
D	Leverage local, state, and federal funding opportunities to implement projects outlined in the Versailles and Osgood Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, including a proposed connector trail between Versailles State Park and the Town of Osgood.
E	Incorporate shared amenities in the design of the Versailles-Osgood trail, such as public art, restrooms, drinking fountains, picnic shelters, and lighting, as funding permits.

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THEME TWO
ENHANCE COUNTYWIDE SERVICES

UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE GOAL

Ensure adequate utility services are provided through coordinated efforts between the county, towns, and local providers.

Utility access plays a pivotal role in Ripley County's ability to accommodate growth and development. Although most utility providers have the capacity to serve new, small-scale residential subdivisions, serving larger subdivisions, commercial development, or industrial development would require costly infrastructure upgrades.

Ripley County can support utility access by coordinating with utility providers to identify anticipated growth areas, and by working with regional organizations, like the Southeastern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (SIRPC), to ensure access to broadband. As climate changes and extreme weather events bring heavier precipitation, stormwater control becomes a major concern for rural areas. To prevent flooding, runoff, and erosion, Ripley County can incorporate best practices in stormwater control within development ordinances, assess drainage at the county level, and prioritize needed improvements. Likewise, cities and towns can plan for and perform their own utility upgrades, including enhancements to stormwater infrastructure.

Objective 1: Provide reliable access to broadband and wireless communication.	
County-Led Action Items	
A	Utilize the 2022 Regional Digital Inclusion Report to make informed decisions regarding broadband in Ripley County.
B	Work with SIRPC to identify the county's role in addressing digital inequities.
C	Leverage federal, state, and local broadband funding programs to eliminate broadband and wireless service gaps.
Objective 2: Provide affordable electric, natural gas, water, and sewer access to existing and future development.	
County-Led Action Items	
A	Connect with utility providers to ensure that growth areas are adequately served by utility infrastructure.
B	Coordinate with utility providers on the issue of affordability, exploring opportunities to reduce the cost burden of utility connection.
Community-Led Action Items	
C	Perform maintenance and system upgrades to ensure that municipal utilities operate efficiently and effectively, providing reliable service to existing customers and sufficient capacity for new customers.
Objective 3: Ensure appropriate stormwater controls are in place to prevent flooding, runoff, and erosion.	
County-Led Action Items	
A	Update local ordinances to reflect best practices in stormwater control for new development and redevelopment.
B	Conduct a county-wide drainage assessment to inventory existing infrastructure, identify deficiencies, and prioritize future improvements.
C	Empower community members to safeguard water quality, reduce stormwater runoff, and minimize erosion on their own property through education and hands-on projects.
Community-Led Action Items	
D	Leverage federal, state, and local funding programs to invest in stormwater infrastructure and improve community drainage.
E	Explore opportunities to incorporate green infrastructure, such as permeable pavement and rain gardens, in public and private development.



THEME TWO ENHANCE COUNTYWIDE SERVICES

PUBLIC SAFETY

PUBLIC SAFETY GOAL

Ensure that public safety providers are well-equipped to meet the county's emergency response needs.

While transportation and utilities cater to everyday needs, public safety providers are critical in the event of an emergency. The Ripley County Sheriff's Office, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), 911 Communications Center, and Emergency Management Agency (EMA), along with volunteer fire rescues and local police departments, play a critical role in safeguarding lives and property. Although considered a treasured community asset, public safety providers have struggled in recent years with staff shortage and aging equipment. Although the adoption of a Local Option Income Tax (LOIT) in 2023 provided supplemental funding for emergency services, providers continue to raise concerns about recruitment, retention, and capital expenditures.

With growth on the horizon, Ripley County has an opportunity to strengthen the capacity of emergency services now to maintain a consistent level of service later. This can be accomplished through annual evaluations of staff and equipment needs and through the exploration of funding opportunities. In addition to the LOIT, Ripley County may bolster emergency services through grants, community fundraising, or restructuring of the county budget. Strategic coordination between the county and its municipalities may also increase efficiency. For example, if the Ripley County Sheriff's Office and local police departments share personnel and equipment, the county can eliminate redundancies and expand the capacity of participating organizations.

At the local level, cities and towns should also evaluate staff and equipment needs, ensuring that gaps are identified and filled. A common challenge, expressed by public safety providers in Ripley County, is the lack of qualified applicants for rural positions. With limited funding and few quality of life amenities, communities struggle to compete with nearby metropolitan areas for skilled personnel. To remedy this issue, communities should consider workforce development and talent attraction strategies to improve the supply of qualified applicants. Strategies may include administering training programs to equip current residents with desired skills, launching an incentives package to attract experienced professionals, and promoting available positions across multiple platforms. Whichever approach communities take, it is important to prioritize public safety, and to consider the capacity of emergency services when making development decisions.

Objective 1: Continue to assess the needs of emergency services and law enforcement across the county as growth and development occurs.

County-Led Action Items

A	Evaluate staff and equipment needs for the Ripley County Sheriff's Office and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) annually.
B	Identify future funding opportunities in addition to the existing public safety Local Option Income Tax (LOIT).
C	Explore opportunities for collaboration between the Ripley County Sheriff's Office and local police departments to maximize efficiencies and overcome challenges associated with limited capacity.

Community-Led Action Items

D	Evaluate staff and equipment needs for local police and fire departments annually.
E	Identify viable strategies to attract qualified personnel to rural emergency services and law enforcement, from financial incentives to talent pipelines.



06



CHAPTER 6

THEME THREE:

FOSTER ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES



THEME THREE

FOSTER ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Despite proximity to major metro areas, not all residents can commute to a job in the city. For Ripley County to thrive, it is critical to support a diverse array of employment opportunities closer to home.

Theme Three focuses on fostering economic opportunities in Ripley County. Although Ripley County is advantageously positioned between three major metro areas and many residents commute outside of the county for work, developing a sustainable local economy is vital to the county's success. Not all residents are able to commute to a job in the city, so it is critical to support a diverse array of employment opportunities closer to home. Furthermore, taxes and fees collected on industrial and commercial businesses enable investment in local transportation networks, utility infrastructure, emergency services, parks and recreation, and other community amenities.

Sections within this chapter are organized by goals, objectives, and action items, reflecting a hierarchy from broad to specific. Action items are divided into two categories: county-led and community-led. This distinction emphasizes the role that all stakeholders, not just county staff and leadership, play in implementing the comprehensive plan. County-led actions are likely to be championed by county government and/or countywide organizations, while community-led actions will be championed by local government and/or local organizations.

NAVIGATING THE PLAN



THEME ONE: **PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE GROWTH**

LAND USE

COMMUNITY CHARACTER



THEME TWO: **ENHANCE COUNTYWIDE SERVICES**

MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

PUBLIC SAFETY



THEME THREE: **FOSTER ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



THEME FOUR: **INVEST IN QUALITY OF LIFE**

ARTS AND CULTURE

PARKS AND RECREATION

CHILDCARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

YOU ARE HERE





THEME THREE FOSTER ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL

Support the attraction of people and businesses by strengthening the county's economic base.

Economic development is a catalyzing force. The success of one business, like a coffee shop, can attract other businesses, from boutiques to bookstores. The same happens with large employers. Known as clustering, interconnected companies, institutions, and organizations in the same or related sectors often congregate to maximize efficiency. Examples in the Hoosier state include the orthopedic industry cluster in Warsaw and the RV manufacturing cluster in Elkhart.

Ripley County can support thriving businesses by adopting a proactive approach to business attraction, retention, and expansion. Rather than waiting for requests for information from prospective employers, there is an opportunity to identify target industries and reach out to leading businesses to promote the county and available sites. Likewise, the county can take steps to encourage entrepreneurship by offering education, training, and resources for small business management. Both may be accomplished through strategic partnerships with the Ripley County Economic Development Corporation (RCEDC) and Ripley County Chamber of Commerce.

The attraction, retention, and expansion of businesses across Ripley County will propel population growth. Existing residents, including high school graduates, may be enticed to stay in the community if they have access to greater job opportunities. Likewise, new residents may be attracted to Ripley County by job prospects. Population growth is also supported by the development of quality-of-life amenities, a direct result of greater tax revenue and a stronger economic base. Residents benefit from increased investment in public infrastructure, facilities, and services. At the same time, residents can patronize the new businesses in their community, benefiting from access to local stores and restaurants, as well as personal and professional services.

Objective 1: Identify target industries with high growth potential to create new, sustainable employment opportunities.

County-Led Action Items

A	Conduct a market study to identify target industries with the potential to thrive in Ripley County.
B	Maintain an inventory of available sites for industrial development.
C	Promote tourism as a viable industry by marketing arts, cultural, and recreational assets in Ripley County communities.

Objective 2: Support the growth and creation of small business.

County-Led Action Items

A	Support the growing role of the Ripley County Chamber of Commerce in county-wide economic development.
B	Empower business owners with the education, training, and resources needed to operate a successful small business.
C	Launch an entrepreneurship program for high school students interested in starting their own business after graduation.
D	Equip established business owners with guidance and resources for succession planning, ensuring a smooth transition of leadership and ownership when the current owner departs.
E	Explore opportunities to create co-working spaces, pop-up shops, and other entrepreneurial spaces in Ripley County through public-private partnership.

Objective 3: Leverage economic development tools to promote business attraction and retention.

County-Led Action Items

A	Develop a strategic plan for Ripley County's business parks which identifies a distinct brand, target industries, and business attraction strategies.
B	Conduct utility assessments for Ripley County's business parks to ensure adequate infrastructure exists to accommodate future industrial development.
C	Evaluate the use of existing TIF districts and the feasibility of creating new TIFs to stimulate economic growth and development.

Objective 4: Promote agriculture as an integral part of the county's economy.	
County-Led Action Items	
A	Launch an economically sustainable agriculture program, which provides hands-on workshops and resources, to encourage farmers to pursue value-added agriculture, agribusiness, and agritourism.
B	Equip farmers with resources for succession planning, ensuring that agricultural production continues for future generations.
C	Recognize timber production as a long-term form of agriculture and engage local producers when making decisions about land preservation and management.
Community-Led Action Items	
D	Promote agriculture as a viable career path by connecting students with extracurricular activities, scholarships, and higher education programs.

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THEME THREE
FOSTER ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GOAL

Grow the county's workforce to better support existing and future businesses.

Economic development goes hand-in-hand with workforce development and talent attraction. Successful businesses rely on hardworking, skilled employees. During the public engagement process, the project team learned that, due to Ripley County's small, rural population, potential employers often overlook the county and existing employers struggle to recruit qualified staff. As Ripley County seeks to develop a sustainable economy, there is an opportunity to strengthen the local workforce.

In partnership with school corporations, the Southeastern Career Center, and economic development organizations, Ripley County should align workforce training with employer needs. Progress is being made, demonstrated by hands-on coursework at the Southeastern Career Center, but the opportunity remains to do more through internships, adult education, and curriculum focused on life skills. These initiatives support business capacity while uplifting residents. Workforce training plays a pivotal role in helping residents escape the cycle of poverty, giving them the skills needed to pursue stable, well-paying positions.

In addition to developing a skilled workforce, Ripley County should consider the need for quality housing options, catering to all ages and incomes. Housing is vital for workforce attraction and retention. Employees benefit from a short commute to work, employers benefit from a more robust local workforce, and the county expands its tax base.

Objective 1: Partner with local schools, the Southeastern Career Center, and economic development organizations to align workforce training with employer needs.

County-Led Action Items

A	Develop a regional internship program to match students with employers, and to provide interns with an opportunity to learn and network through professional development and social events.
B	Expand adult education offerings at the Southeastern Career Center to include high school completion and additional career training.

Community-Led Action Items

C	Incorporate essential life skills within high school curriculum, such as writing checks, balancing a checkbook, and filing taxes.
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Objective 2: Expand and enhance housing options to grow the population.

County-Led Action Items

A	Support the development of workforce housing that is affordable, accessible, and located near employment centers, daily shopping and services, and shared community facilities.
B	Update local ordinances to accommodate missing middle housing—medium-density, alternative housing options that appeal to the needs of young professionals and seniors.
C	Promote the integration of parks, playgrounds, natural areas, trails, and stormwater management facilities within new residential subdivisions by adopting open space requirements as part of the Subdivision Control Code.
D	Explore incentives to attract residential development in Ripley County, such as Housing Tax Increment Financing (HoTIF).
E	Consider developing a Residential Rental Inspection Program (RRIP) to raise the quality of rental housing in Ripley County communities.





CHAPTER 7

THEME FOUR: INVEST IN QUALITY OF LIFE



THEME FOUR

INVEST IN QUALITY OF LIFE

Building on the success of recent projects, Ripley County has an opportunity to further invest in the assets that support healthy, engaged, and resilient communities.

Quality of life is a defining factor in the long-term vitality of Ripley County's communities. In recent years, the county and its towns have made meaningful investments that strengthen community identity, foster social connection, and enhance everyday living. Place-based initiatives, such as the Versailles Pocket Park and Osgood Trails, demonstrate a growing commitment to creating welcoming, well-designed spaces that serve residents of all ages. These efforts reflect an understanding that quality of life is shaped not only by economic opportunity, as emphasized in the last chapter, but by access to amenities, services, and shared community experiences.

Building on this momentum, Ripley County has an opportunity to further invest in the assets that support healthy, engaged, and resilient communities. Expanding access to arts and culture, parks and recreation, childcare and support services, and health and wellness resources will be essential to meet the needs of current residents while attracting new individuals and families. Strategic investments in quality-of-life amenities can strengthen community cohesion, improve physical and mental well-being, and position Ripley County as a place where people choose to live, work, and put down roots for generations to come.

Sections within this chapter are organized by goals, objectives, and action items, reflecting a hierarchy from broad to specific. Action items are divided into two categories: county-led and community-led. This distinction emphasizes the role that all stakeholders, not just county staff and leadership, play in implementing the comprehensive plan. County-led actions are likely to be championed by county government and/or countywide organizations, while community-led actions will be championed by local government and/or local organizations.

NAVIGATING THE PLAN



THEME ONE: **PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE GROWTH**

LAND USE

COMMUNITY CHARACTER



THEME TWO: **ENHANCE COUNTYWIDE SERVICES**

MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

PUBLIC SAFETY



THEME THREE: **FOSTER ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



THEME FOUR: **INVEST IN QUALITY OF LIFE**

ARTS AND CULTURE

PARKS AND RECREATION

CHILDCARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

YOU ARE HERE





THEME FOUR
INVEST IN QUALITY OF LIFE

ARTS AND CULTURE

ARTS AND CULTURE GOAL

Develop Ripley County as a destination for homegrown arts and culture by showcasing the work of local artists, from musicians to muralists.

In 2025, Ripley County participated in a regional arts and culture planning effort facilitated by SEI READI and Sara Peterson Consulting. This effort culminated in the 2025–2035 SEI READI Arts & Culture Plan, which identifies the arts as an essential driver of community identity, economic vitality, and quality of life across southeastern Indiana. By championing this plan, Ripley County and its communities can leverage the benefits of arts and culture to enhance the daily lives of residents and boost tourism, all while supporting regional partnerships.

At the county level, the plan can be advanced by establishing an arts council to coordinate efforts, support local artists, and serve as a connector between communities. A cohesive and memorable county brand can be developed and reinforced through gateway features and wayfinding signage to highlight Ripley County’s cultural assets and invite visitors to explore them. At the community level, implementation will focus on carrying out recommendations of the Arts & Culture Plan. Communities should also continue enhancing gathering spaces with public art and activating these spaces through cultural programming.

Objective 1: Weave local creativity into every Ripley County community.	
County-Led Action Items	
A	Assemble a countywide arts council to advocate for the arts in Ripley County, providing funding for local artists, awarding prizes and grants, and organizing events.
B	Create a memorable county brand that is reinforced through gateway improvements, wayfinding signage, and digital presence.
Community-Led Action Items	
C	Implement recommendations outlined in the 2025-2035 SEI READI Arts & Culture Plan to strengthen Ripley County's identity as an arts and culture destination.
D	Enhance existing and future community gathering spaces, including parks, plazas, community centers, and trails, with public art created by Ripley County artists.
E	Continue to activate community gathering spaces with cultural programming that celebrates local art, music, food, and performance.



THEME FOUR
INVEST IN QUALITY OF LIFE

PARKS AND RECREATION

PARKS AND RECREATION GOAL

Enhance parks and recreation opportunities within Ripley County.

Parks and recreation play a vital role in supporting quality of life in Ripley County. As a rural community in southeastern Indiana, access to safe, well-maintained parks and outdoor spaces is especially important for providing residents with opportunities for physical activity, social connection, and engagement with nature. Ripley County is fortunate to be home to Versailles State Park, the oldest state park in Indiana, which serves as a significant recreational and environmental asset. However, many towns and unincorporated areas across the county lack quality local parks and recreation facilities or rely on facilities that are aging and in need of improvement. Addressing these gaps is essential to ensuring equitable access to recreation for residents of all ages and abilities.

Looking ahead, Ripley County has an opportunity to take a more coordinated and proactive approach to parks and recreation planning. This may include expanding the county's parks system, which is limited to the Ripley County Fairgrounds in Osgood, by acquiring and developing parkland in underserved areas. Alternatively, in established communities, enhancing existing parks with desired amenities, such as an accessible playground or aquatic center, may be the most effective strategy.

Beyond serving residents, recreation provides an opportunity for tourism and economic development. In partnership with the Ripley County Tourism Bureau, the county can promote recreational sites and outdoor activities, while supporting businesses that appeal to visitors. Additionally, by working collaboratively with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Ripley County can advocate for physical improvements and enhanced programming at Versailles State Park, further strengthening the park's role as both a local amenity and a regional destination.

Objective 1: Plan for the maintenance and expansion of park facilities.	
County-Led Action Items	
A	Explore the feasibility of expanding the county parks system through the acquisition, development, and maintenance of new parkland in underserved areas.
Community-Led Action Items	
B	Diversify parks and recreation offerings by investing in amenities that may be missing in Ripley County, such as an accessible playground, aquatic center, nature center, and outdoor exercise equipment.
C	Evaluate the need for municipal parks and recreation departments in communities where they do not already exist to manage town-owned amenities.
Objective 2: Promote Ripley County as a desirable recreation destination.	
County-Led Action Items	
A	Work with Ripley County Tourism Bureau to inventory and promote outdoor recreational sites, activities, and supporting businesses.
B	Collaborate with IDNR to expand programming at Versailles State Park.
C	Advocate for improvements to Versailles State Park to enhance quality of life for county residents, and to attract visitors from the broader region.



THEME FOUR
INVEST IN QUALITY OF LIFE

CHILDCARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

CHILDCARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES GOAL

Invest in youth and at-risk populations by improving the quality and quantity of childcare and support services.

Investing in youth and at-risk populations is essential to Ripley County's long-term economic stability, workforce readiness, and overall quality of life. Access to affordable, reliable, and high-quality childcare is a foundational support for working families, employers, and the broader community, yet many residents face barriers related to the availability and cost of services. Improving childcare access not only supports early childhood development and school readiness but also enables parents and caregivers to fully participate in the workforce. Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated, countywide approach that recognizes childcare as both a family service and a critical piece of community infrastructure.

One strategy involves establishing a countywide childcare taskforce to identify gaps and advance solutions. This taskforce would inventory existing childcare providers, identify potential sites for new or expanded services, and promote available funding and incentive opportunities. By serving as a connector, the taskforce can link employers and residents to existing providers, explore shared or employer-supported childcare models, and increase awareness of available options. Another strategy involves partnering with school corporations to strengthen talent pipelines. By connecting high school students with training programs, internships, and scholarship opportunities, Ripley County can encourage the next generation to pursue fulfilling careers in early childhood education, helping develop the local workforce while addressing childcare needs.

Beyond childcare, supporting youth and at-risk populations requires strong coordination between towns, civic groups, nonprofit organizations, and faith-based partners to ensure residents can access essential support services. Food banks, homeless shelters, rehabilitation and recovery centers, and other social service providers play a critical role in addressing immediate needs while supporting long-term stability and well-being. By improving communication, collaboration, and referral pathways among these organizations, Ripley County can better respond to community needs, reduce service gaps, and ensure that all have access to the resources necessary to thrive.

Objective 1: Eliminate barriers to expanding and accessing childcare in Ripley County.	
County-Led Action Items	
A	Create a countywide taskforce to close the childcare access gap. Activities may include assembling an inventory of available sites, identifying and promoting funding opportunities, and connecting employers and residents with a list of existing childcare providers.
B	Strengthen the talent pipeline for early childhood educators by connecting students to training, internships, and scholarships.
Objective 2: Ensure residents have access to support services that respond to community needs.	
County-Led Action Items	
A	Coordinate with town leaders, civic groups, nonprofit organizations, and faith-based organizations to inventory support services and identify gaps in the distribution and types of services available.
Community-Led Action Items	
B	Assess how well community needs are met by support services, engaging residents of all ages and abilities in the process.
C	Encourage service providers to evaluate their capacity and aid these organizations by sharing fundraising and volunteer opportunities in-person and online.



THEME FOUR
INVEST IN QUALITY OF LIFE

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

HEALTH AND WELLNESS GOAL

Support healthy, active lifestyles by expanding opportunities to make healthy choices.

As a rural community in southeastern Indiana, Ripley County faces unique challenges related to health and wellness, particularly for seniors, low-income households, and residents living in outlying areas. Improving health outcomes requires a multifaceted approach that involves expanding access to healthcare options and health education, as well as creating pathways to healthy lifestyles.

Ripley County can improve healthcare access and health education through focused, intentional action. In partnership with the Ripley County Chamber of Commerce, the county can work with local employers to incorporate telehealth into healthcare benefit packages, reducing transportation and scheduling barriers. Continued support for initiatives such as Catch-A-Ride can further eliminate transportation barriers, especially for seniors and individuals with disabilities. In partnership with Purdue Extension, Ripley County should also consider offering community-based health programs, like Walk with a Doc, to promote physical activity, social connection, and health literacy.

In Ripley County, reducing visits to the hospital or clinic is just as important as improving access, and can only be accomplished by creating pathways to healthy lifestyles. Healthy lifestyles are built on the foundation of a well-balanced, nutritious diet. Many rural residents face limited food choices due to distance, cost, or availability, which can contribute to chronic health conditions over time. Ripley County has an opportunity to strengthen local food systems by incentivizing diversification in agriculture, supporting producers who grow fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods for local consumption. At the municipal level, community gardens can provide fresh food, educational opportunities, and social engagement, while cooperative or community-owned grocery models may help address gaps in underserved areas. Together, investments in healthcare access, health education, and healthy lifestyles can improve quality of life, reduce long-term healthcare costs, and support healthier outcomes for individuals and families across Ripley County.

Objective 1: Improve health outcomes by providing access to affordable healthcare options and comprehensive health education.

County-Led Action Items

A	Encourage employers to offer telehealth services as part of employee healthcare programs as a more convenient alternative to in-person appointments.
B	Support Catch-A-Ride, an on-demand public transportation program that helps seniors and individuals with disabilities access in-person appointments.
C	Partner with local organizations to facilitate community health programs, such as walking socials and Walk with a Doc programs, to encourage active lifestyles and social connection.
D	Evaluate staff and equipment needs for the Ripley County Health Department, enabling the department to promote community health through education, disease prevention and control, and recordkeeping.
E	Encourage regional healthcare providers to expand access to women's health services, physical therapy, addiction treatment and rehabilitation, mental health services, and behavioral therapy, which may otherwise be difficult to access for rural residents.

Objective 2: Explore community-based solutions to improve access to healthy, nutritious food.

County-Led Action Items

A	Explore opportunities to incentivize the diversification of agriculture, awarding farmers who produce specialty crops and other food products, such as eggs, meat, dairy, honey, and maple syrup, for local consumption.
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Community-Led Action Items

B	Reimagine vacant lots in traditional town centers as community gardens to feed local families and promote social connection.
C	Maintain separate farmers markets in existing cities and towns but promote these markets collectively to attract residents and visitors from across the county.
D	Consider opening a cooperative grocery store to provide affordable, locally grown food while recirculating profits within the community.



08



CHAPTER 8 IMPLEMENTATION



IMPLEMENTATION

The following pages summarize the goals, objectives, and county-level action items identified throughout the plan. Action items provide a framework for future projects, programs, and policies, and are designed to be implemented by county leadership, staff, and organizations. Action items should be considered flexible. As funding opportunities, partnerships, and leadership changes, action items may change.

Implementation tables identify action items along with their priority level and implementation partners. Each action item is classified as ongoing, or as a short, mid, or long-term priority. The priority rankings are defined as:

- Short-term (0–3 years)
- Mid-term (3–5 years)
- Long-term (5+ years)

Implementation partners are the individuals or organizations that should be involved in, or could serve as a resource for, implementation. Within the list of implementation partners, the project leader is identified in bold text. This is the entity that will likely champion the implementation of the action item based on established roles and responsibilities.

For a summary of community-level actions, separate implementation tables are provided in the Appendix. Intended to function as a checklist, these tables are simplified and do not include the priority level and implementation partners.

THEME ONE
PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE GROWTH

LAND USE

LAND USE GOAL:

Concentrate development activity and reinvestment in areas where adequate infrastructure is available or easily extended.

Objective 1: Utilize the Future Land Use Plan to guide growth and development within the county and its incorporated communities.

Action Items		Priority	Implementation Partner
A	Focus residential development in and around existing cities and towns.	Ongoing	Area Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Area Planning & Building
B	Prioritize first-floor commercial activity in downtown buildings to maintain a vibrant, walkable town center.	Ongoing	Area Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Area Planning & Building
C	Protect the right to farm in Ripley County by requiring setbacks and buffers for new development adjacent to agricultural land.	Ongoing	Area Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Area Planning & Building
D	Encourage future industrial development to locate within an existing business park or near the Interstate.	Ongoing	Area Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Redevelopment Commission, Area Planning & Building
E	Protect environmentally sensitive areas, such as forests, wetlands, prairies, and waterways, by adopting conservation setback and buffering requirements.	Ongoing	Area Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Area Planning & Building
F	Continue to restrict development within the floodplain to maximize environmental benefits and minimize loss of life and property.	Ongoing	Area Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Area Planning & Building

LAND USE GOAL:

Concentrate development activity and reinvestment in areas where adequate infrastructure is available or easily extended.

Objective 2: Ensure Ripley County has the appropriate zoning tools and development review process in place.

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Update Ripley County's zoning ordinance to align with the recommendations of the Ripley County Comprehensive Plan.	Short-term	Area Plan Commission, Area Planning & Building, County Commissioners
B	Revise the development review process to be more transparent, predictable, and accessible to residents and developers.	Short-term	Area Plan Commission, Area Planning & Building
C	Ensure town representatives have an opportunity to provide input before a development within town limits is approved by the Area Plan Commission or Board of Zoning Appeals.	Short-term	Area Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Town Representatives
D	Host an annual workshop to educate the County Commissioners, Area Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, and town representatives on how best to use the Ripley County Comprehensive Plan in their official roles.	Short-term	Area Planning & Building, County Commissioners, Area Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Town Representatives

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

COMMUNITY CHARACTER GOAL:

Enhance the visual quality and character of Ripley County communities and major thoroughfares.

Objective 1: Cultivate a sense of community pride and accountability to ensure properties are well-maintained.

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Educate community members about the importance of local ordinances in maintaining an attractive, inviting community, and the consequences of violating them.	Short-term	Area Plan Commission, Area Planning & Building, Town Representatives
B	Strengthen local ordinances to enable effective code enforcement while prioritizing transparency by providing clear directions, deadlines, and penalties for violations.	Short-term	Area Plan Commission, Area Planning & Building, County Commissioners

Objective 2: Encourage towns to pursue placemaking and beautification efforts.

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Invite local leaders and representatives of community organizations to attend an annual grant writing workshop.	Short-term	Chamber of Commerce, Town Representatives, Community Organizations
B	Collaboratively assemble an inventory of funding opportunities to support placemaking and beautification efforts across the county.	Short-term	Ripley County Economic Development Corporation (RCEDC), Town Representatives, Community Organizations
C	Offer training opportunities for local staff, appointed boards, and elected officials to learn more about downtown revitalization.	Short-term	RCEDC, Area Plan Commission, Town Representatives

MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION GOAL:

Provide a transportation network that offers a high level of mobility, connectivity, and safety for all users.

Objective 1: Continue to maintain and improve roadways to facilitate safety and mobility.

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Develop a thoroughfare plan to outline a shared vision for the future of the transportation network in Ripley County, ensuring a safe, efficient, and balanced transportation system.	Short-term	County Commissioners, Area Plan Commission, Highway Department
B	Meet regularly with representatives from the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) to ensure that local needs are met on state-owned roadways and to discuss upcoming projects.	Ongoing	Highway Department, INDOT
C	Coordinate with INDOT on access management along state-owned roadways to balance the needs of new development with efficient traffic flow.	Ongoing	Area Plan Commission, Area Planning & Building, Highway Department
D	Continue to leverage state funds, such as the Community Crossings Matching Grant, to improve local roads and bridges.	Ongoing	Highway Department, County Commissioners
E	Coordinate with local school districts to identify intersections and/or roadways that may be challenging and/or hazardous for school buses.	Mid-term	Highway Department, Local School Districts
F	Engage local farmers to identify intersections and/or roadways where agricultural vehicle conflicts are more likely to occur and design viable safety solutions.	Mid-term	Highway Department, Local Farmers

MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION GOAL:

Provide a transportation network that offers a high level of mobility, connectivity, and safety for all users.

Objective 2: Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions and INDOT to promote regional connectivity.

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Highlight the importance of regional connectivity within the Thoroughfare Plan and identify any outstanding barriers to connectivity.	Short-term	Highway Department, Area Plan Commission
B	Arrange an annual meeting between the Ripley County Highway Department, representatives of adjacent jurisdictions, and representatives from INDOT's Seymour District to share project updates and discuss opportunities to enhance regional connectivity.	Mid-term	Highway Department, Neighboring County Representatives, INDOT

Objective 3: Encourage trail connectivity between communities and recreational, historic, and scenic points of interest.

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Develop an active transportation plan to identify priority bicycle and pedestrian projects, programs, and policies to connect Ripley County communities.	Mid-term	County Commissioners, Area Planning & Building, Highway Department
B	Work with The Town of Versailles and Town of Osgood to determine the county's role in implementing the proposed routes identified in the Versailles and Osgood Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.	Short-term	County Commissioners, Town Representatives, Highway Department

THEME TWO
ENHANCE COUNTYWIDE SERVICES

UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE GOAL:

Ensure adequate utility services are provided through coordinated efforts between the county, towns, and local providers.

Objective 1: Provide reliable access to broadband and wireless communication.

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Utilize the 2022 Regional Digital Inclusion Report to make informed decisions regarding broadband in Ripley County.	Mid-term	County Commissioners, Southeast Indiana Regional Planning Commission (SIRPC), Purdue Center for Regional Development
B	Work with SIRPC to identify the county's role in addressing digital inequities.	Short-term	County Commissioners, SIRPC
C	Leverage federal, state, and local broadband funding programs to eliminate broadband and wireless service gaps.	Ongoing	County Commissioners, SIRPC, Providers

Objective 2: Provide affordable electric, natural gas, water, and sewer access to existing and future development.

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Connect with utility providers to ensure that growth areas are adequately served by utility infrastructure.	Short-term	County Commissioners, Utility Providers
B	Coordinate with utility providers on the issue of affordability, exploring opportunities to reduce the cost burden of utility connection.	Ongoing	County Commissioners, Utility Providers

UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE GOAL:

Ensure adequate utility services are provided through coordinated efforts between the county, towns, and local providers.

Objective 3: Ensure appropriate stormwater controls are in place to prevent flooding, runoff, and erosion.

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Update local ordinances to reflect best practices in stormwater control for new development and redevelopment.	Short-term	Area Plan Commission, Area Planning & Building, Ripley County Soil & Water Conservation District (RCSWCD), County Commissioners
B	Conduct a county-wide drainage assessment to inventory existing infrastructure, identify deficiencies, and prioritize future improvements.	Mid-term	RCSWCD, County Commissioners
C	Empower community members to safeguard water quality, reduce stormwater runoff, and minimize erosion on their own property through education and hands-on projects.	Short-term	RCSWCD, County Commissioners

PUBLIC SAFETY

PUBLIC SAFETY GOAL:

Ensure that public safety providers are well-equipped to meet the county's emergency response needs.

Objective 1: Continue to assess the needs of emergency services and law enforcement across the county as growth and development occurs.

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Evaluate staff and equipment needs for the Ripley County Sheriff's Office and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) annually.	Ongoing	Sheriff's Office, EMS
B	Identify future funding opportunities in addition to the existing public safety Local Option Income Tax (LOIT).	Mid-term	County Commissioners, County Council
C	Explore opportunities for collaboration between the Ripley County Sheriff's Office and local police departments to maximize efficiencies and overcome challenges associated with limited capacity.	Mid-term	Sheriff's Office, Local Police Departments

THEME THREE
FOSTER ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL:

Support the attraction of people and businesses by strengthening the county's economic base.

Objective 1: Identify target industries with high growth potential to create new, sustainable employment opportunities.

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Conduct a market study to identify target industries with the potential to thrive in Ripley County.	Long-term	RCEDC, Chamber of Commerce
B	Maintain an inventory of available sites for industrial development.	Short-term	RCEDC, Area Planning & Building
C	Promote tourism as a viable industry by marketing arts, cultural, and recreational assets in Ripley County communities.	Short-term	Tourism Bureau, Chamber of Commerce

Objective 2: Support the growth and creation of small business.

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Support the growing role of the Ripley County Chamber of Commerce in county-wide economic development.	Short-term	County Commissioners, Chamber of Commerce, RCEDC
B	Empower business owners with the education, training, and resources needed to operate a successful small business.	Ongoing	Chamber of Commerce, RCEDC
C	Launch an entrepreneurship program for high school students interested in starting their own business after graduation.	Long-term	RCEDC, Chamber of Commerce
D	Equip established business owners with guidance and resources for succession planning, ensuring a smooth transition of leadership and ownership when the current owner departs.	Short-term	Chamber of Commerce, RCEDC
E	Explore opportunities to create co-working spaces, pop-up shops, and other entrepreneurial spaces in Ripley County through public-private partnership.	Long-term	Chamber of Commerce, Town Representatives, Developers

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL:

Support the attraction of people and businesses by strengthening the county's economic base.

Objective 3: Leverage economic development tools to promote business attraction and retention.

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Develop a strategic plan for Ripley County's business parks which identifies a distinct brand, target industries, and business attraction strategies.	Mid-term	RCEDC, Redevelopment Commission, Town Representatives
B	Conduct utility assessments for Ripley County's business parks to ensure adequate infrastructure exists to accommodate future industrial development.	Short-term	RCEDC, Redevelopment Commission, Providers
C	Evaluate the use of existing TIF districts and the feasibility of creating new TIFs to stimulate economic growth and development.	Mid-term	RCEDC, County Commissioners, Redevelopment Commission

Objective 4: Promote agriculture as an integral part of the county's economy.

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Launch an economically sustainable agriculture program, which provides hands-on workshops and resources, to encourage farmers to pursue value-added agriculture, agribusiness, and agritourism.	Mid-term	Purdue Extension
B	Equip farmers with resources for succession planning, ensuring that agricultural production continues for future generations.	Short-term	Purdue Extension
C	Recognize timber production as a long-term form of agriculture and engage local producers when making decisions about land preservation and management.	Short-term	Area Plan Commission, Area Planning & Building, Purdue Extension

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GOAL: <i>Grow the county’s workforce to better support existing and future businesses.</i>			
Objective 1: Partner with local schools, the Southeastern Career Center, and economic development organizations to align workforce training with employer needs.			
Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Develop a regional internship program to match students with employers, and to provide interns with an opportunity to learn and network through professional development and social events.	Mid-term	RCEDC, Chamber of Commerce, Employers, Local School Districts, Southeastern Career Center
B	Expand adult education offerings at the Southeastern Career Center to include high school completion and additional career training.	Long-term	Southeastern Career Center, Ivy Tech Batesville, Hanover College, IU Columbus, Purdue Polytechnic Columbus

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GOAL:*Grow the county's workforce to better support existing and future businesses.***Objective 2: Expand and enhance housing options to grow the population.**

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Support the development of workforce housing that is affordable, accessible, and located near employment centers, daily shopping and services, and shared community facilities.	Short-term	Area Plan Commission, Area Planning & Building, Developers, Homebuilders
B	Update local ordinances to accommodate missing middle housing—medium-density, alternative housing options that appeal to the needs of young professionals and seniors.	Short-term	County Commissioners, Area Plan Commission, Area Planning & Building
C	Promote the integration of parks, playgrounds, natural areas, trails, and stormwater management facilities within new residential subdivisions by adopting open space requirements as part of the Subdivision Control Code.	Mid-term	Area Plan Commission, Area Planning & Building, County Commissioners
D	Explore incentives to attract residential development in Ripley County, such as Housing Tax Increment Financing (HoTIF).	Mid-term	County Commissioners, Area Plan Commission, Area Planning & Building
E	Consider developing a Residential Rental Inspection Program (RRIP) to raise the quality of rental housing in Ripley County communities.	Long-term	Area Planning & Building, Area Plan Commission, County Commissioners

ARTS AND CULTURE

ARTS AND CULTURE GOAL: <i>Develop Ripley County as a destination for homegrown arts and culture by showcasing the work of local artists, from musicians to muralists.</i>			
Objective 1: Weave local creativity into every Ripley County community.			
Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Assemble a countywide arts council to advocate for the arts in Ripley County, providing funding for local artists, awarding prizes and grants, and organizing events.	Mid-term	Tourism Bureau, County Commissioners, Town Representatives, SIRPC, SEI READI
B	Create a memorable county brand that is reinforced through gateway improvements, wayfinding signage, and digital presence.	Mid-term	Tourism Bureau, County Commissioners, Town Representatives, SIRPC

PARKS AND RECREATION

PARKS AND RECREATION GOAL:

Enhance parks and recreation opportunities within Ripley County.

Objective 1: Plan for the maintenance and expansion of park facilities.

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Explore the feasibility of expanding the county parks system through the acquisition, development, and maintenance of new parkland in underserved areas.	Mid-term	Parks Board, County Commissioners, RCSWCD

Objective 2: Promote Ripley County as a desirable recreation destination.

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Work with Ripley County Tourism Bureau to inventory and promote outdoor recreational sites, activities, and supporting businesses.	Short-term	Tourism Bureau, Parks Board, Town Representatives, RCEDC, Chamber of Commerce
B	Collaborate with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to expand programming at Versailles State Park.	Mid-term	Parks Board, Town Representatives, County Commissioners, IDNR
C	Advocate for improvements to Versailles State Park to enhance quality of life for county residents, and to attract visitors from the broader region.	Mid-term	Parks Board, Town Representatives, County Commissioners, IDNR

CHILDCARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

CHILDCARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES GOAL:

Invest in youth and at-risk populations by improving the quality and quantity of childcare and support services.

Objective 1: Eliminate barriers to expanding and accessing childcare in Ripley County.

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Create a countywide taskforce to close the childcare access gap. Activities may include assembling an inventory of available sites, identifying and promoting funding opportunities, and connecting employers and residents with a list of existing childcare providers.	Mid-term	RCEDC, Chamber of Commerce, County Commissioners
B	Strengthen the talent pipeline for early childhood educators by connecting students to training, internships, and scholarships.	Short-term	RCEDC, Chamber of Commerce, Local School Districts, Southeastern Career Center

Objective 2: Ensure residents have access to support services that respond to community needs.

Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Coordinate with town leaders, civic groups, nonprofit organizations, and faith-based organizations to inventory support services and identify gaps in the distribution and types of services available.	Mid-term	Ripley County Division of Family Resources, Town Representatives, County Commissioners, Community Organizations

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

HEALTH AND WELLNESS GOAL: <i>Support healthy, active lifestyles by expanding opportunities to make healthy choices.</i>			
Objective 1: Improve health outcomes by providing access to affordable healthcare options and comprehensive health education.			
Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Encourage employers to offer telehealth services as part of employee healthcare programs as a more convenient alternative to in-person appointments.	Short-term	RCEDC, Chamber of Commerce
B	Support Catch-A-Ride, an on-demand public transportation program that helps seniors and individuals with disabilities access in-person appointments.	Short-term	County Commissioners, County Council
C	Partner with local organizations to facilitate community health programs, such as walking socials and Walk with a Doc programs, to encourage active lifestyles and social connection.	Short-term	Purdue Extension, Health Department
D	Evaluate staff and equipment needs for the Ripley County Health Department, enabling the department to promote community health through education, disease prevention and control, and recordkeeping.	Short-term	Health Department
E	Encourage regional healthcare providers to expand access to women's health services, physical therapy, addiction treatment and rehabilitation, mental health services, and behavioral therapy, which may otherwise be difficult to access for rural residents.	Long-term	County Commissioners, RCEDC, Chamber of Commerce
Objective 2: Explore community-based solutions to improve access to healthy, nutritious food.			
Action Items		Priority	Responsible Parties
A	Explore opportunities to incentivize the diversification of agriculture, awarding farmers who produce specialty crops and other food products, such as eggs, meat, dairy, honey, and maple syrup, for local consumption.	Mid-term	County Commissioners, Purdue Extension

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09





CHAPTER 9

TOWN OF OSGOOD: SUBAREA PLAN



SUBAREA PLAN

TOWN OF OSGOOD

The Town of Osgood opted in to receive a dedicated, subarea plan. This subarea plan will guide future growth and development until a full comprehensive plan is funded.

Incorporated communities in Ripley County were given the opportunity to develop a dedicated, town-specific chapter in the county's comprehensive plan as a cost-effective alternative to preparing an independent plan. Since Batesville and Sunman already have comprehensive plans and Versailles is developing one, Osgood was the only incorporated community to request a subarea plan.

This chapter presents an assessment of the Town of Osgood in the form of a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. This analysis, along with community input collected through a public workshop and online survey, informed the subarea plan's recommendations. Together, these elements provide a data-informed and community-driven framework to guide future decisions related to growth and development.

PUBLIC INPUT

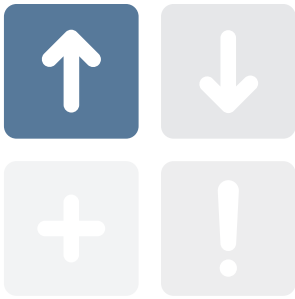
This planning process involved two town-specific engagement opportunities, a public workshop and an online survey. The public workshop was facilitated on November 3, 2025, at Town Hall. Meeting attendees were invited to learn about the planning process and share feedback related to assets and challenges, top priorities for the future, and future land use. About ten people attended the public workshop. In addition to the in-person meeting, an online survey was prepared and distributed. The online survey was available for over a month following the public workshop. Twenty-five people completed the online survey. Engagement was supplemented by the other input opportunities facilitated during the county's comprehensive planning process. Refer to Chapter 3 for a more detailed summary of public engagement.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS

SWOT ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis is used to evaluate a community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to guide community planning, strategic initiatives, and future priorities. Strengths and weaknesses reflect internal conditions the town can influence directly, while opportunities and threats capture external forces that may be leveraged or mitigated. For the Town of Osgood, this framework helps align local assets, such as infrastructure, institutions, and community character, with realistic strategies to address demographic, economic, and fiscal challenges.





STRENGTHS

The following characteristics were identified as core strengths for the community:

- **Strategic Transportation Links:** Osgood is located along US 421 just under 20 miles from Interstate 74. The closest interchange is in the City of Greenburg. The CSX rail line also travels through the Town of Osgood providing freight services. This rail line connects Osgood to other communities such as Seymour, Milan, and eventually, Cincinnati.
- **Strong Educational Institutions:** The Jac-Cen-Del Community School Corporation is respected, with high graduation rates (around 98%), high participation rates in college coursework, and many college course offerings.
- **Affordable Living & Historic Charm:** The town is home to a variety of housing options with 23.8% of the housing stock being made up of multi-family units. The median home value is comparable to surrounding communities at \$226,537. The town also has a historic, walkable commercial core that creates a charming sense of place for residents and visitors.
- **The Reynolds Foundation:** This foundation has played a key role in strengthening Osgood's quality of place by funding community improvement projects, supporting local organizations, and investing in amenities and facilities that enhance downtown vitality, public spaces, and long-term community development.
- **Streetscape Improvements:** Recent streetscape improvements have focused on enhancing safety, walkability, and downtown appeal, including the installation of upgraded street lighting, highly visible pedestrian crosswalks, and the creation of a mini park that adds green space and a community gathering area to the town center.
- **Parks and Recreation:** Osgood's lake and trail amenities provide recreational and quality-of-life benefits, offering residents and visitors access to walking and biking trails, scenic lake views, and outdoor spaces that support fitness, relaxation, and community events.





WEAKNESSES

The following characteristics were identified as weaknesses that could serve as barrier for future growth and investment:

- **Planning for Long-Term Community Sustainability and Accommodating Residents of All Ages:** Loss of residents, particularly young adults, threatens long-term vitality and school enrollment. This “brain drain” reduces the local tax base and shrinks the available labor pool for new businesses. Furthermore, an aging demographic shifts the demand toward specialized healthcare and social services, often straining existing infrastructure that was designed for larger, younger families.
- **Strengthening Local Job Opportunities:** The economy remains heavily dependent on manufacturing, a sector facing gradual decline and automation. Almost a quarter of all residents are employed in manufacturing. This lack of diversification means that a single corporate downsizing event or global supply chain disruption can have an outsized impact on the entire community’s financial health.
- **Supporting Wage Growth:** Median household income continues to lag behind the state average, reflecting a lower-wage job market. This persistent income gap limits the disposable income available to support local small businesses, resulting in a retail environment that struggles to expand beyond discount or essential services.
- **Targeting Reinvestment and Redevelopment Opportunities:** Pockets of blight present challenges for the community, affecting neighborhood aesthetics, property values, and public perception. Areas of visible neglect can act as a catalyst for further disinvestment, signaling to the outside world that the community is in a state of decline.



OPPORTUNITIES

The following characteristics were identified as opportunities that could present clear pathways for future development and revitalization.

- **Expanded Recreation and Tourism:** Develop the planned trail connection to Versailles, Versailles State Park, and other local parks to capitalize on tourism and outdoor recreation. This physical connection can transform the town from a pass-through area into a gateway for regional visitors seeking outdoor experiences. Creating a seamless connection between the Versailles State Park and local businesses allows the community to capture “tourism dollars” that currently bypass the commercial core.
- **Downtown Revitalization:** Use arts and culture grants to enhance public spaces and preserve history. A vibrant cultural scene serves as a catalyst for social engagement and community identity, making the area more attractive to both residents and visitors. By investing in public art and historic preservation, the town can differentiate itself from neighboring municipalities, creating a unique sense of place that drives foot traffic.
- **Positioning as a Bedroom Community:** Market affordable housing and improve broadband to attract remote workers and families from larger regional hubs. In an era of flexible work, the community’s lower cost of living and quiet atmosphere can be a significant draw for professionals priced out of larger cities.
- **Diversified Industrial Foundation:** Osgood has the foundation for an active business park with multiple manufacturers and warehousing companies, supported by rail. While currently under-promoted, the existing industrial infrastructure and rail access provide a competitive edge that many rural communities lack. Rebranding and actively marketing this asset can attract logistics firms and manufacturers looking for ready-to-build sites with established transportation links.
- **Workforce Development and Education Alignment:** Partner with local Jac-Cen-Del Schools, Ivy Tech, and regional employers to expand career pathways, apprenticeships, and skills training. By creating a direct pipeline between the classroom and the local job market, the community can ensure that its youth see a viable future at home.





THREATS

The following characteristics were identified as threats that could pose significant risks to Osgood’s stability and future.

- **Intensifying Rural Decline:** The broader trend of youth outmigration and population aging in rural America continues to challenge growth, especially as Osgood’s population has continuously declined since 2000. While larger urban centers such as Indianapolis offer concentrated job markets and lifestyle amenities, smaller communities like Osgood face a persistent “drain” of their most productive demographic.
- **Competition from Neighboring Communities:** Other towns in the county may be more successful at attracting new residents and investment. If neighboring towns such as Napoleon or Versailles offer more modern housing options or better-maintained public spaces and opportunities, the town risks becoming a “bedroom” for its rivals rather than a primary destination for commerce.
- **Aging Infrastructure and Fiscal Constraints:** A declining and limited local tax base and aging utilities, roads, and public facilities could strain municipal budgets and hinder the town’s ability to maintain services. As water lines, sewers, and pavement reach the end of their functional lifespans, the cost of emergency repairs often eclipses the cost of proactive maintenance. Without a growing population sharing the financial burden, Osgood may be forced to choose between raising taxes or allowing essential infrastructure to further deteriorate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Using the key findings from the existing conditions assessment and public engagement, a vision statement and complementary sets of goals and objectives were developed. The vision statement identifies what the community would like the town to do or become in the future. It is intended to be aspirational and forward-thinking.

Twelve overarching goals were identified to guide local leaders towards Osgood's shared vision for the future. The goal statements identify a desired outcome that is further supported by a series of strategies. Strategies break down the goal into smaller, more manageable parts by identifying an action or stance the community wants to take to achieve the goal. The vision, goals, and strategies form an organizational framework or hierarchy that starts with high-level concepts and becomes more detailed as you work your way through the framework.

VISION STATEMENT

Building on the success of recent community development initiatives, from downtown activation to trail development, Osgood is a Hoosier hometown with an eye for the future. Through strategic infrastructure improvements, quality housing development, and continued investment in quality of life, Osgood seeks to attract new businesses, residents, and talent while maintaining its small-town charm and local heritage.

THEMES

The 2026 Ripley County Comprehensive Plan is structured around four key themes. These themes were reviewed and discussed during the public workshop in Osgood, where community members provided input and feedback. Attendees affirmed that these themes are highly relevant to the Town of Osgood and reflect the community's shared priorities and vision for the future.



Theme One: Promote Responsible Growth



Theme Two: Enhance Countywide Services



Theme Three: Foster Economic Opportunities



Theme Four: Invest in Quality of Life

THEME ONE
PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE GROWTH

LAND USE

LAND USE GOAL

Ensure the town has the tools in place to adequately guide growth and redevelopment in a manner that reflects the vision for the community.

Objective 1: Promote the development of attainable single-family housing.

A	Complete a housing study to evaluate current housing stock, affordability gaps, and population trends to identify demand for single-family homes.
B	Identify vacant or underutilized properties for potential single-family housing development. Explore financial incentives, tax abatements, or expedited permitting to encourage construction of attainable housing.
C	Consider adopting a Subdivision Control Ordinance, designed to regulate subdivision development in Osgood, to ensure new neighborhoods are walkable, well-connected to infrastructure, and reflect established community character.

Objective 2: Evaluate the feasibility of administering planning and zoning at the local level.

A	Complete and adopt a comprehensive plan to serve as a basis for planning and zoning in the Town of Osgood.
B	Work with an attorney to understand the financial impacts of administering planning and zoning, and outline a clear path for securing local control.
C	Work with a planning consultant to create ordinances specific to the Town of Osgood to ensure development aligns with community expectations and is designed with visual quality, safety, and long-term upkeep in mind.

THEME ONE
PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE GROWTH

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

COMMUNITY CHARACTER GOAL

Enhance the town's appearance through beautification and targeted property maintenance efforts.

Objective 1: Advertise and provide residents with a user-friendly property maintenance handbook to encourage upkeep and instill neighborhood pride. This handbook is intended as a voluntary, educational tool to support residents and property owners, and to connect individuals with resources or assistance when available.

A	Develop a comprehensive property maintenance handbook covering landscaping, façade upkeep, signage, and general site care.
B	Distribute the handbook to residents, property owners, and local businesses.
C	Partner with the Osgood Beautification Committee to connect individuals in need with assistance for property maintenance.
D	Launch outreach and education campaigns to raise awareness of proper maintenance practices.
E	Create a basic tool lending library or supply exchange to help residents access paint, lawn tools, or materials needed for property upkeep without high costs.

Objective 2: Partner with the Osgood Beautification Committee and the Ripley County Chamber of Commerce to explore the feasibility of a façade improvement grant.

A	Meet with the Osgood Beautification Committee and Ripley County Chamber of Commerce to outline goals and potential collaboration.
B	Investigate successful façade improvement grant programs in similar towns to identify best practices and funding models.
C	Analyze Osgood's commercial district to determine eligibility, potential impact, and estimated costs for a façade improvement grant program.
D	Create a step-by-step plan for launching the grant program, including application process, funding sources, and outreach to property owners.
E	Encourage the Osgood Beautification Committee to explore the creation of an Indiana Main Street Affiliation to expand access to grant funding.

THEME TWO
ENHANCE COUNTYWIDE SERVICES

MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION GOAL

Enhance and expand the town's transportation network to create safe, accessible connections between major destinations.

Objective 1: Advance the implementation of the Versailles and Osgood Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan.

A	Partner with the county and Town of Versailles to create a taskforce that champions trail connectivity by pursuing funding opportunities, monitoring progress, and bringing people and resources together.
B	Develop a short-, mid-, and long-term implementation schedule that ranks recommended improvements based on safety need, connectivity gaps, cost, and readiness.
C	Incorporate plan recommendations into capital improvement programs, street reconstruction projects, zoning and subdivision standards, and development review processes to ensure bike and pedestrian considerations are addressed in all applicable projects.
D	Identify and pursue a mix of local, state, and federal funding opportunities, including grants, dedicated local revenue, and cost-sharing partnerships.
E	Coordinate with residents, businesses, schools, and regional partners to refine project designs, address local concerns, and build sustained public and political support for implementation.

Objective 2: Plan for the maintenance and expansion of local roadways.

A	Continue leveraging the Community Crossings Matching Grant to improve local roadways.
B	Develop a capital improvement plan to identify and prioritize major transportation improvements, as well as the explore viable funding options.

THEME TWO
ENHANCE COUNTYWIDE SERVICES

UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES GOAL

Ensure the town can provide adequate utility infrastructure and services to current and future residents and businesses.

Objective 1: Leverage utility system evaluations to identify priority needs and pursue outside funding for phased water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure improvements over time.

A	Consider applying for the Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) Utility Study Planning Grant to evaluate the issues and opportunities across drinking, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure.
B	Conduct a town-wide evaluation of each utility system to identify deficiencies and priority improvements.
C	Utilize utility studies to inform project prioritization and secure grant funding from federal or state agencies.

THEME TWO
ENHANCE COUNTYWIDE SERVICES

PUBLIC SAFETY

PUBLIC SAFETY GOAL

Ensure that Osgood’s public safety providers are adequately staffed, equipped, and prepared to meet current and future emergency response needs.

Objective 1: Annually evaluate staffing, equipment, facilities, and training needs for Osgood’s police, fire, and EMS providers to identify gaps and plan for future demand.	
A	Identify and pursue local, county, state, and federal funding opportunities to support public safety operations and capital needs, while coordinating with Ripley County on shared funding mechanisms and grant applications.
B	Explore opportunities for collaboration and mutual aid with Ripley County and neighboring jurisdictions to improve response times, share resources, and maximize operational efficiency.
C	Develop strategies to attract and retain qualified public safety personnel, including competitive compensation, training opportunities, shared staffing arrangements, and partnerships with regional training programs or schools.

THEME THREE
FOSTER ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL

Strengthen the local economy by supporting existing businesses and attracting more commercial activity to Osgood.

Objective 1: Enhance the appeal of Osgood’s commercial district by upgrading infrastructure, offering incentives and support for small businesses, and highlighting recent community investment.

A	Identify gaps in retail, services, and amenities to determine which businesses would thrive in Osgood.
B	Continue to improve streetscapes, lighting, signage, and parking to make the area more attractive to businesses and customers.
C	Explore façade grants, tax incentives, or small business support programs to encourage investment in downtown properties.
D	Promote Osgood to potential business owners, developers, and entrepreneurs through targeted advertising, social media, and networking events

Objective 2: Leverage the Osgood Business Park as an economic asset to attract small-scale industry.

A	Meet with existing businesses to understand the current opportunities and challenges of the business park.
B	Ensure development opportunities are promoted at the local and state level.

THEME THREE
FOSTER ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GOAL

Develop a skilled, local workforce to support existing employers and attract new employers to the Osgood Business Park.

Objective 1: Develop strategies to connect employers with qualified talent by enhancing training opportunities, promoting career pathways, and making Osgood an appealing place to live and work.

A	Collaborate with the Jac-Cen-Del Community School Corporation and Southeastern Career Center to align curricula with the needs of employers. Workforce readiness is essential to support current employers and strengthen Osgood’s ability to recruit new businesses.
B	Create marketing campaigns highlighting jobs, benefits, and lifestyle advantages in Osgood to attract talent from the region.
C	Encourage internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training opportunities with current and future businesses.
D	Invest in workforce housing improvements to make Osgood more attractive to potential employees and their families.

THEME FOUR
INVEST IN QUALITY OF LIFE

ARTS AND CULTURE

ARTS AND CULTURE GOAL

Promote arts and culture in Osgood to strengthen community identity, foster creativity, and support population growth.

Objective 1: Partner to provide creative events, community programming, and public art that celebrates Osgood's heritage.

A	Install murals and other art installations in public spaces to enhance the visual character of Osgood's commercial core.
B	Partner with community organizations, such as the Osgood Lions Club and American Legion, to host arts, music, and cultural events that showcase local talent and attract visitors.
C	Create interpretive signage, exhibits, or walking tours that celebrate Osgood's history and cultural heritage.
D	Evaluate the town's role in implementing recommendations outlined in the 2025-2035 SEI READI Arts & Culture Plan to strengthen Ripley County's identity as an arts and culture destination.

THEME FOUR
INVEST IN QUALITY OF LIFE

PARKS AND RECREATION

PARKS AND RECREATION GOAL

Enhance Osgood’s parks and recreational spaces to provide safe, engaging, and accessible opportunities for residents of all ages.

Objective 1: Improve the quality and variety of recreational opportunities available to residents and visitors.	
A	Evaluate current facilities and gather community input to determine desired playground equipment, amenities, and recreational features.
B	Create a phased plan for adding playgrounds, equipment, and other amenities, including cost estimates and funding strategies.
C	Explore grants, donations, and partnerships with local organizations, such as the Ripley County Community Foundation, the Osgood Lions Club, and the Reynolds Foundation, to support park enhancements.
D	Install new amenities and launch community events or programs to encourage park use and foster community engagement.

THEME FOUR
INVEST IN QUALITY OF LIFE

CHILDCARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES

CHILDCARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES GOAL

Expand access to quality childcare and support services.

Objective 1: Reduce barriers to childcare access and enhance community-based support services.

A	Inventory existing childcare providers and support services in Osgood, identify gaps in capacity, affordability, hours, and coordinate findings with Ripley County and regional partners.
B	Assist current and prospective childcare providers by sharing information on funding opportunities, zoning and licensing requirements, and by promoting training and education pathways for early childhood educators.
C	Reach out to local families to better understand service needs and barriers and improve public awareness of available childcare and support services.

THEME FOUR
INVEST IN QUALITY OF LIFE

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

HEALTH AND WELLNESS GOAL

Promote healthy, active lifestyles in Osgood by expanding access to healthcare, health education, and affordable, nutritious food.

Objective 1: Connect residents with available resources and partner to expand opportunities to improve overall health outcomes.

A	Promote the regional healthcare providers and organizations that offer local health education, screenings, and wellness programs.
B	Partner with schools, civic groups, and organizations such as Purdue Extension to host walking programs, fitness activities, and community wellness events that promote physical activity and social connection.
C	Transform underutilized or vacant lots in select neighborhoods into community gardens to provide fresh, local food for residents while fostering social engagement and neighborhood connection.
D	Coordinate with Ripley County Health Department, healthcare providers, nonprofits, and agricultural partners to expand services, share resources, and pursue funding that supports community-based health and nutrition initiatives.



NEXT STEPS

While this chapter provides a strong foundation for future growth and development, the Town of Osgood should continue to revisit the goals and strategies every five to ten years. At the time this plan was completed, the Town of Osgood was applying for a Planning Grant through the Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) to complete a standalone comprehensive plan. If awarded, it is recommended that the Town of Osgood build upon the ideas collected through this planning process and continue revising the recommendations based on changing priorities, funding opportunities, and public input.

10





CHAPTER 10 APPENDIX

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #1



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Steering Committee Meeting 1 – Sign-in Sheet

Ripley County Comprehensive Plan
May 14th, 2025 at 5:30pm

Name	Present?
Tad Brinson	<i>Tad Brinson</i>
Andrew Decker	<i>Andrew Decker</i>
John Ertel	<i>John Ertel</i>
Jeff French	<i>Jeff French</i>
Mike Hughes	
Wayne Jenner	
Christopher Kuhn	<i>Christopher Kuhn</i>
Barry Lauber	<i>Barry Lauber</i>
Chris Linville	
Gary Norman	<i>Gary Norman</i>
Dave Osborne	<i>Dave Osborne</i>
William Roberts	
Deb Shumate	
<i>Deb</i> Shane Tompkins	<i>Deb Shumate</i>
Jeff Volz	<i>Jeff Volz</i>
Olivia Welch	<i>Olivia Welch</i>
Steve Youngman	



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Steering Committee Meeting #1

Ripley County Comprehensive Plan
May 15th, 2025, at 5:30pm

1. Attendance

HWC Project Team

- Hailey Roark, AICP – Project Manager
- Genevieve Ravenwood – Planner
- Brian Sheehan – Community Liaison

Participants

- Tad Brinson
- Andrew Decker
- John Ertel
- Jeff French
- Christopher Kuhn
- Barry Lauber
- Gary Norman
- Dave Osborne
- Deborah Tompkins
- Jeff Volz
- Olivia Welch

2. Project Overview

- Planning Area
 - There was some confusion amongst the Steering Committee about the planning area. Which communities are included?
 - The plan will focus on the unincorporated county and will include a sub-area plan for Osgood, which provided additional funding for their own chapter.
 - All other towns will be included in general recommendations and on the Future Land Use Map but will not receive a list of specific recommendations.
 - The county plan will reference existing plans such as the Sunman Comprehensive Plan.
 - The Town of Versailles and Milan are trying to secure funding through OCRA to do their own comprehensive plan.
- Community Engagement Plan
 - Will there be a press release about engagement opportunities?
 - The project team can provide materials for a press release, including flyers, social media graphics, dates, meeting locations, and other details.
 - SEI READI is launching its LEI Arts Planning Initiative, a regional effort to boost creative transformation through public art and cultural investment.
 - Ripley County has already gathered a list of outlets through which to share information with community members.
- Other Comments
 - Versailles and Osgood recently adopted a Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan.
 - The project team will reference this plan to make sure that the county comprehensive plan is aligned with recommendations for the bicycle and pedestrian network.

3. Community Snapshot

- Housing



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- Almost all renter-occupied units in the county are located within cities and towns. There are very few rentable properties in unincorporated areas.
- Multi-family properties range in quality. Some have a negative reputation.
- Median home value (assessed) looks about accurate to local mortgage broker. Selling price (appraised value) would be higher.
- Economy
 - Batesville skews cost of living estimates. Although it appears that Ripley County has a strong median household income compared to estimated property values, most higher income households are in Batesville. It's difficult to separate Batesville when doing economic analysis to identify trends elsewhere in the county.
 - It may be helpful to look at commuting trends to see how many residents leave Ripley County for work, versus how many residents stay here for work.
 - Most notable industrial employer in the area is Honda. Although not technically in Ripley County, many county residents are employed there.

4. Vision and Needs Discussion

- Question #1: Assets – What do you love about Ripley County and its communities?
 - Ripley County feels like home.
 - People
 - Schools
 - Southeastern Career Center
 - Family-Owned Businesses
 - Outdoor Recreation
 - Osgood Trails
 - Versailles State Park
 - Town Parks
 - Ripley County Fairgrounds
 - Agriculture and Natural Resources
 - Part of Ripley County's heritage (e.g., swine)
 - Fresh produce
 - Row crops
 - Timber
 - Proximity to Major Metros (Cincinnati, Louisville, Indianapolis)
- Question #2: Challenges – What issues need to be addressed? Where do you want to see change happen in Ripley County?
 - Fear of Change
 - Civic Participation
 - Need the perspective of younger residents
 - Need emerging leaders
 - Housing
 - Challenges with multi-family housing
 - Creates a strain on public parking
 - Leapfrog Subdivisions (i.e., subdivisions out in the unincorporated county that are near a town, but not close enough for town utilities)
 - Business Attraction
 - Unable to Meet Employer Needs
 - Housing – Lack of Availability
 - Workforce – Lack of Human Capital
 - Facilities – Lack of Turn-Key Industrial Buildings



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- Zoning Code
 - Local codes may need an update
 - Need to be guided by future land use vision
- Schools
 - Duplicated services
 - Opportunity for consolidation
- Quality of Life Services
 - Difficult to find healthy food
 - Need more restaurants
 - Need more entertainment
- Question #3: Opportunities – What big ideas, hopes, or dreams do you have for the future of Ripley County?
 - Participation and Engagement
 - Engage younger generations
 - Strengthen local leadership
 - Internship opportunities
 - Coordinated Planning and Zoning
 - Orderly growth
 - Plan for desired future land uses
 - Plan and code updates
 - Planning documents and code should speak to each other
 - Align with state opportunities (e.g., READI)
 - Open the door to funding
 - Collaboration with Community Partners
 - Healthier Lifestyles and Communities
 - Trails/greenways
 - Access to nutritious food
 - Destination Development
 - Leverage arts and culture assets
 - Develop unique attractions
 - Entertainment for all ages, especially teens
 - Childcare
 - More licensed facilities
 - Infrastructure
 - Visioning and master planning
 - Identify priority development areas
 - Support development at I-74 interchange
- Question #4: Barriers – What barriers stand in the way?
 - Fear of Change
 - Not in My Back Yard (How will this impact me?)
 - Changes in property value
 - Changes in taxes
 - More Reactive than Proactive
 - Funding
 - Outdated Comprehensive Plan
 - Social Media
 - Changing Leadership
 - Leads to inconsistency
 - Need to train leaders

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- Volunteerism
 - Always the same people in the room
 - Education and outreach
- Question #5: Priorities – What is the one thing you’d like to see this plan accomplish?
 - Population Growth and Retention
 - Industry and Business Attraction
 - Quality of Life
 - Need more things to do
 - Entertainment options
 - Engage Younger Demographic and Families
 - Consider offering childcare at upcoming public workshops
 - Communication
 - Establish a county-wide social media page and calendar
 - Marketing and tourism should appeal to younger generations

5. Next Steps

- Public Engagement
 - Project Website
 - Online Survey
 - Public Workshops – Week of June 2nd
 - Focus Group Meetings – Week of June 16th
- Steering Committee Meeting #2
 - Week of July 14th



STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #2



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Steering Committee Meeting 2 – Sign-in Sheet

Ripley County Comprehensive Plan
July 30th, 2025 at 5:30pm

Name	Present?
Tad Brinson	✓
Andrew Decker	✓
John Ertel	✓
Jeff French	✓
Mike Hughes	
Wayne Jenner	
Christopher Kuhn	
Barry Lauber	
Chris Linville	
Gary Norman	✓
Dave Osborne	
William Roberts	
Deb Shumate	✓
Shane Tomkins	✓
Jeff Volz	✓
Olivia Welch	✓
Steve Youngman	
Dalton Garn	
Jessica Roeder	✓

Deb



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Steering Committee Meeting #2

Ripley County Comprehensive Plan
July 30th, 2025, at 5:30pm

1. Attendance

HWC Project Team

- Hailey Roark, AICP – Project Manager
- Genevieve Ravenwood, AICP – Planner

Participants

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| • Tad Brinson | • Deb Shumate |
| • Andrew Decker | • Deb Tomkins |
| • John Ertel | • Jeff Volz |
| • Jeff French | • Olivia Welch |
| • Gary Norman | • Jessica Roeder |

2. Public Engagement

- Steering Committee Discussion
 - Everyone wants small businesses, but community members don't support them
 - Competition with online retail marketplace (e.g., Amazon)
 - Focus on offering unique services, restaurants, bars, cafes, or experiences that customers can't get online
 - Small businesses are spread out; no density to catalyze growth/expansion
 - Need to create a destination with multiple businesses to patronize
 - Electric isn't affordable; deters new development
 - Local energy providers charge ~ \$20,000 to deliver electricity to new builds
 - Providers have no competition; can charge what they want
 - Electric connection used to be free, now cost prohibitive to developers
 - Are trails worthwhile investment in a rural county?
 - Concern about cost compared to the anticipated number of users, given the county's small, aging population
 - Trails help attract younger generations; pedestrian connectivity is an expected amenity, even in rural areas
 - Trails promote healthy lifestyles for all ages and abilities
 - Balance between preserving rural character and industrial growth (job opportunities)

3. Draft Vision, Goals, and Objectives

- Vision Statement
 - Represents community well, but may be difficult to live by and implement long-term
 - Challenge of county government
 - Add "housing" and "industry" to the vision statement
 - Doesn't seem inviting to industry, or to developers
 - Not just thriving families and businesses, but industry too
 - Ripley County won't grow without housing and industrial development
 - Prioritize housing, manufacturing, and quality of life
 - Find the balance between industry and preservation



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- Mention target growth areas
- Add a statement about education; may help with grant applications
- Opportunity to mention arts and culture, but may also go elsewhere in the plan
- "...minimizes impacts on our natural environment and agricultural heritage with reasonable opportunity for economic diversification."
 - Preserving heritage is fine, but not at the expense of landowners' rights
- Theme #1: Promote Responsible Growth
 - Difficult to get communities to agree; for example, will all communities agree to prohibit residential on the first floor of downtown buildings?
 - Not the best and highest use of a storefront; need for cooperation
 - How would this be enforced?
 - Look at how non-conforming uses are currently handled
 - What do we do when communities want different things?
 - Beautification and placemaking typically handled separately by each community and local organizations
 - Each community has a county-level Plan Commission representative; assumption is that the representative serves as a community liaison
 - In communities outside of Ripley County, Plan Commission members may be required to update the Town Council on development proposals in their community; required before Plan Commission formally discusses proposal
 - May be something to consider in Ripley County; promote communication
- Theme #2: Enhance Countywide Services
 - Ensure access to affordable electric, natural gas, water, and wastewater
 - May need to include broadband
 - Ensure that utilities are sufficient to serve industrial and residential growth
 - Why include transportation? Most roads are managed by INDOT
 - Best practice; promote collaboration between INDOT and the county
 - Only public transportation is Catch-A-Ride
- Theme #3: Foster Economic Opportunities
 - County is losing its Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) programs; funding cut
 - Education and workforce development are very important
 - Need incentives to build more housing; too expensive to build
- Theme #4: Invest in Quality of Life
 - Add arts and culture
 - New childcare providers popping up in Ripley County
 - Continue to provide support through incentives and grants
 - Affordable childcare is key
 - Parents wary of in-home childcare for safety reasons
 - Collaborate with Versailles State Park to expand park programming
 - Promote more active, healthy lifestyles

4. Next Steps

- Big Ideas Open House
 - Early September
- Steering Committee Meeting #3
 - Early September



STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #3



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Steering Committee Meeting 3 - Sign-in Sheet

Ripley County Comprehensive Plan
September 4, 2025 at 5:30pm

Name	Present?
Tad Brinson <i>Tad Brinson</i>	
Andrew Decker	
John Ertel <i>John Ertel</i>	Present
Jeff French <i>Jeff French</i>	
Mike Hughes	
Wayne Jenner	
Christopher Kuhn	
Barry Lauber	
Chris Linville	
Gary Norman <i>Deborah Tompkins</i>	
Dave Osborne <i>DC</i>	
William Roberts	
Deb Shumate <i>Deb Shumate</i>	
Shane Tomkins <i>Shane Tomkins</i>	
Jeff Volz <i>Jeff Volz</i>	
Olivia Welch <i>Olivia Welch</i>	
Steve Youngman	
Dalton Garn	
Jessica Roeder <i>Jessica Roeder</i>	



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Steering Committee Meeting #3

Ripley County Comprehensive Plan
September 4th, 2025, at 5:30pm

1. Attendance

HWC Project Team

- Hailey Roark, AICP – Project Manager
- Genevieve Ravenwood, AICP – Planner
- Colton Johnson, AICP Candidate – Planner

Participants

- Tad Brinson
- John Ertel
- Jeff French
- Dave Osborne
- Deb Shumate
- Deb Tompkins
- Shane Tompkins
- Jeff Volz
- Jessica Roeder

2. Draft Vision, Goals, and Objectives

- Vision Statement
 - Members stressed larger emphasis on growing industry and agriculture in Ripley County.
- Plan Themes
 - Transportation
 - With the new trail planned between Versailles and Osgood, members would like to see inclusion of walking/biking language in the goals and objectives.
 - The project team reassured community members that bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure will be discussed in the plan, and already has its own objective.
 - Arts and Culture
 - The goal for arts and culture should be adjusted, perhaps using the words 'develop' or 'strengthen' instead of 'embrace'.

3. Land Use Planning

- Utilities
 - Ripley County generally does not have septic problems. There are more relaxed regulations.
 - An 'existing conditions' section about the utilities in Ripley County would be very helpful in the plan.
 - Members would like to know the capacity of each town's sewer and water systems (electric and gas might also have insights) to understand how much new growth they can accommodate. How can we get information on this? This may help with OCRA grants.
 - Wind and solar developments are a contentious issue, and it may be useful identifying areas that could be suitable for such development.
 - It would be useful to know where substations are to map potential suitability for solar developments.



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- The unincorporated community of Friendship has sewer and water utilities.
 - Members recognized the importance of sharing these FLU maps with the respective towns in Ripley County.
- Industry
 - The quarry is in the wrong place on the FLU Map.
 - There is a log yard in Milan that needs to be labeled as industrial on the FLU Map.
 - There are shovel-ready industrial sites in Osgood and Versailles that can be labeled.
- Commercial
 - Businesses along I-74 in Batesville often struggle. How can Ripley County attract more businesses despite being smaller and only having one I-74 interchange?
 - There are areas south of Batesville along SR 129 that are developing industry and businesses. Ripley County could do the same with its corridors (101, 129, 421, 50).
- Agriculture and Rural Residential
 - There is general agreement upon the location of agricultural land and rural residential land in the County.
 - Members made edits and corrections to the future land use map draft, while focusing on potential growth areas outside of incorporated towns and cities.
 - Some members identified extensions of rural residential and single-family lands.
 - Lumber yards were agreed to be classified as industrial, rather than agriculture.
- Single-family
 - Some members identified highway corridors that could be suitable for new single-family residential development.
 - Members would like to see access-management strategies within the plan, to limit slowdowns along major corridors (such as 129, 50, 229).

4. Next Steps

- Big Ideas Open House
 - September 17th, 4-6pm
- Steering Committee Meeting #4
 - Early November



STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #4



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Steering Committee Meeting 4 – Sign-in Sheet

Ripley County Comprehensive Plan
November 19, 2025 at 5:30pm

Name	Present?
Tad Brinson	<i>Tad Brinson</i>
Andrew Decker	
John Ertel	<i>John Ertel</i>
Jeff French	<i>Jeff French</i>
Mike Hughes	
Wayne Jenner	<i>Wayne Jenner</i>
Christopher Kuhn	
Barry Lauber	
Chris Linville	
Gary Norman	<i>Gary Norman</i>
Dave Osborne	<i>Dave Osborne</i>
William Roberts	
Deb Shumate	<i>Deb Shumate</i>
Shane Tomkins	<i>Shane Tomkins</i>
Jeff Volz	<i>Jeff Volz</i>
Olivia Welch	<i>Olivia Welch</i>
Steve Youngman	
Dalton Garn	
Jessica Roeder	

Deborah

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Steering Committee Meeting #4

Ripley County Comprehensive Plan
November 19th, 2025, at 5:30pm

1. Attendance

HWC Project Team

- Hailey Roark, AICP – Project Manager
- Genevieve Ravenwood, AICP – Planner
- Colton Johnson, AICP Candidate – Planner

Participants

- Tad Brinson
- John Ertel
- Jeff French
- Wayne Jenner
- Gary Norman
- Dave Osborne
- Deb Shumate
- Deborah Tompkins
- Jeff Volz
- Olivia Welch

2. Passport Activity

Theme 01: Promote Responsible Growth

- Land Use
 - Seals of Approval: 8.5 out of 10
 - Questions and Comments:
 - As long as it makes sense
 - Tighten up multi-family requirements
 - Create new zoning and subdivision ordinance upon completion of comprehensive plan
 - Or at least update existing ordinances
 - Need to revisit setback regulations for I-1 and I-2 districts
 - Plan should offer high-level guidance, not specific updates
 - Objective 1, Action 1: Why a presumable difference between productive or non-productive agriculture and other land?
 - There isn't intended to be a distinction between 'productive' and 'non-productive' agricultural land. The goal of this action is to minimize conflict between farmers and other types of development, such as residential development. This would be accomplished by requiring setbacks or buffers on new development that is 'coming to the problem,' so to say.
 - Objective 1, Action 1: Explain how to minimize conflicts.
 - 'Minimize conflict' language can be scary
 - How do we protect the public, but also protect the right to farm?
 - Change: Reword to "Protect existing farms and other agricultural uses by establishing..."
 - Objective 1, Action 6: Development is already restricted within floodplain.
 - Change: Keep this action as a 'best practice' that the county should continue to follow. Reword: "Continue to restrict development within

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- the floodplain to maximize environmental benefits and minimize loss of life and property.”
 - Objective 2: Most of the bare land that can be developed in this county is agricultural land; however, none of it is productive compared to, say, Rush County.
 - See response for Objective 1, Action 1.
 - Objective 2, Action 3: Town representatives have the opportunity to provide input now, but do not do so.
 - When the project team spoke with town representatives, they expressed concern that they weren’t alerted about proposed development in their community until after it was approved.
- Community Character
 - Seals of Approval: 8 out of 10
 - Questions and Comments:
 - Objective 1: Good in theory, hard in practice.
 - Objective 1: Difficult to enforce them to clean up properties.
 - Objective 1: Pride in ownership hardly exists today. Explain how to make people realize the importance of maintaining an attractive community.

Theme 02: Enhance Countywide Services

- Multi-Modal Transportation
 - Seals of Approval: 9 out of 10
 - Questions and Comments:
 - Good!
 - Safe routes to school and work districts are critical! Noted but emphasize
 - Why isn’t a thoroughfare plan included as part of the comprehensive plan?
 - Not within the scope of the project
 - Thoroughfare plan is needed in Ripley County but, for now, just including the existing thoroughfare map in the comprehensive plan would be a step in the right direction
 - Change: Update the existing thoroughfare map to align with the design of the new comprehensive plan. Include the map within the chapter for Theme 02.
 - Objective 1: This has to happen for all areas to develop
 - Objective 3: I know Osgood/Versailles makes sense but all towns need included somehow
 - Change: Add an action item which recommends the establishment of a countywide active transportation plan.
- Utility Infrastructure and Services
 - Seals of Approval: 8.75 out of 10
 - Questions and Comments:
 - Okay in general but does not mention alternative energy. I thought Indiana had an initiative for nuclear.
 - The county already has a policy on solar energy. Nuclear energy wasn’t mentioned during the engagement process, or in any of our Steering Committee meetings. Adding an action item about alternative energy now would likely stir conflict, and risk derailing the project.



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- Objective 2: Are we going to open up “territories”?
 - Objective 2, Action 1: Add support to expand utilities in identified areas for growth. Update but also extending services.
 - Change: Replace “desired development” with “growth areas.”
 - Objective 2, Actions: There are no regional providers for sewer.
 - Change: Replace “regional” providers with “utility” providers.
- Public Safety
 - Seals of Approval: 8 out of 10
 - Questions and Comments:
 - It seems we’re about as safe as we can be.
 - Expand emergency response – it takes 30 minutes for someone to get to my house. Two instances in the past one and a half years for my son under one at the time. I live three miles south of Versailles.

Theme 03: Foster Economic Opportunities

- Economic Development
 - Seals of Approval: 8.5 out of 10
 - Questions and Comments:
 - How to get public to support when they resist any kind of change
 - Market study is a good idea
 - Objective 2: Idea is good – just not sure who would lead
 - Objective 2: Some of the issues with this is a lot of the small businesses are so busy that it’s hard to get them involved
 - Objective 2: Educate youth on small business and financial literacy
 - Change: Add an action item that addresses youth education and programming to encourage entrepreneurship at a young age. Ripley County Economic Development Corp. is coordinating with regional organizations to launch a program like this.
 - Objective 3, Action 3: Can the idea of shell building. Not worth talking about!
 - Change: Remove this action item from the plan.
 - Objective 4: Promote ag is very much needed!
 - Objective 4: Sounds good, but hard to do when farmers cannot control the price of inputs or crops sold.
 - Objective 4: How? Promoting agricultural growth when any new farm operations are opposed by residents and existing farmers.
 - Objective 4, Action 4: Love connecting with students
- Workforce Development
 - Seals of Approval: 10 out of 10
 - Questions and Comments:
 - I like this.
 - Objective 1, Action 2: Expand adult education – great idea
 - Objective 2: Could be difficult in Osgood and Versailles for varieties of housing. Could just make it easier to build new housing.
 - Objective 2, Action 1: Locals are opposed to affordable housing.
 - Objective 2, Action 2: Middle housing + some higher end housing
 - Objective 2, Action 3: Playgrounds are a biggie for young families
 - Objective 2, Action 5: Yessss to RRIP
 - Objective 2, Action 5: Residential Rental Inspection – great idea



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Theme 04: Invest in Quality of Life

- Arts and Culture
 - Seals of Approval: 9 out of 10
 - Questions and Comments:
 - Plan is good – again it's how well growth happens
 - No issues with this, but funding will be the biggest hurdle
 - Not my idea for planning
 - If Ripley County wants to become a destination, the county needs infrastructure for overnight stays (like inns and hotels)
 - Infrastructure to support tourism, such as lodging and restaurants, will likely be developed within incorporated communities. This may be better addressed in the Versailles Comprehensive Plan.
 - Goal: Not sure I agree with the term “identity” as a regional arts destination?
 - Change: Scale this language back. Remove the word ‘identity.’
 - Objective 1: The objective is fine; this to me says support and promote
- Parks and Recreation
 - Seals of Approval: 10 out of 10
 - Questions and Comments:
 - All of this seems to work fine for me.
 - Will DNR cooperate with county plans?
- Childcare and Support Services
 - Seals of Approval: 9 out of 10
 - Questions and Comments:
 - Need is definitely there.
 - Show communities the difference in poverty levels which affect childcare organizations' ability to locate in each community
 - Objective 1: Ways to support childcare that is thriving and doing a good job. How can we help you expand?
 - Objective 1, Action 1: Special exceptions are in place for a reason!
 - Change: Remove this action item.
 - Objective 1, Action 1: Rather than making childcare facilities a special exception, simply set forth some minimum but reasonable standards in the zoning code. Help eliminate the NIMBY crowd. This is more for the zoning amendments.
- Health and Wellness
 - Seals of Approval: 10 out of 10
 - Questions and Comments:
 - Everything sounds fine. The struggle will be effectively implementing it.
 - Objective 1, Action 4: Staff evaluations are definitely needed!
 - Objective 2, Action 1: Plan is good but the cost involved for community gardens and kids destroying them is concerning

3. Next Steps

- Draft Plan / Steering Committee Meeting #5
 - Week of January 26



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION REPORT



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Public Participation Report

2025 Ripley County Comprehensive Plan
July 24th, 2025

The 2025 Ripley County Comprehensive Plan was built on a foundation of community support and insight. The project team gathered feedback from residents, business owners, elected officials, county staff, town staff, and representatives of community organizations through online and in-person engagement opportunities. In total, over 180 voices were heard through focus group meetings, a public workshop, and a public input survey.

Engagement activities were facilitated by the following project team:

HWC Project Team

- Hailey Roark, AICP – Project Manager
- Genevieve Ravenwood, AICP – Planner
- Brian Sheehan – Community Liaison

1. Focus Groups (8 participants)

On July 10, 2025, the project team facilitated five in-person discussions with stakeholders that lived in, worked in, or were otherwise invested in the future of Ripley County. Focus group meetings covered a variety of topics and utilized local expertise to identify existing assets, ongoing challenges, barriers to success, and exciting opportunities for the county and its incorporated communities. Although only eight community members participated in these discussions, the conversations were still rich with local knowledge.

Meetings covered the following four topics:

- City and Town Representatives
- Infrastructure and Safety
- Quality of Life
- Industry and Business
- Young Professionals

Key Takeaways:

- **Workforce and Talent Development**

A shortage of skilled labor is impacting industries, small businesses, and emergency services. Initiatives are underway to build talent pipelines through schools and the Southeastern Career Center, but these programs need continued support from the county, Chamber of Commerce, and Economic Development Corporation.

- **Infrastructure and Housing**

Communities are focused on improving water, sewer, transportation, and broadband to support growth. While basic utilities are in place in many areas, housing challenges remain, including aging housing stock, housing affordability, and limited incentives for

development. New subdivisions and infill housing are priorities, but infrastructure costs are a major barrier.

- **Quality of Life Disparities**

Quality of life varies greatly across towns. Batesville offers strong amenities, while others struggle with limited recreation, childcare, healthcare, and gathering spaces. There is demand for a community center and more activities for families and young people. Shopping and dining options are limited and may not appeal to a younger demographic. Meeting participants expressed interest in trail connectivity and access to healthy food.

- **Economic Development**

Industrial development is constrained by a lack of turnkey buildings and workforce availability. Business parks sit unused, and while utility capacity is sufficient, the location creates accessibility challenges. Companies would rather be close to the interstate. Small businesses face issues with staffing, training, marketing, capital, and succession planning. There is some support from ISBDC and the Ripley County Chamber of Commerce, but capacity is limited. Training and mentorship on creating a solid business model and managing finances is also needed.

- **Public Safety**

The public safety tax is sustaining the emergency service providers for now, but resources and capacity are minimal. The number of runs is increasing, outpacing the number of certified staff members. For services to improve and grow with the county, emergency services providers need additional personnel. The barriers to securing additional personnel are related to the lack of certified people within or near the county and the county's ability to approve additional staff. From an efficiency standpoint, the Sheriff's department and the local police departments could coordinate to expand resources and capacity.

- **Zoning and Development Standards**

Participants also expressed concerns related to the quality and style of rental housing being approved and constructed. The community is supportive of rental housing but feels the quality needs to be addressed. The primary tool for improving the quality of development is to update the county's zoning ordinance.

- **Governance, Collaboration, and Resistance to Change**

Cross-community collaboration has improved since COVID, but some tensions remain. There is some strife between towns and the Area Plan Commission, which could benefit from improved transparency and communication. Towns are open to working together, but local pride, control, and a resistance to change are recurring obstacles to broader reforms—particularly around public safety and school district consolidation.

2. Public Workshops (33 participants)

The project team hosted two public workshops at the Ripley County Annex on June 10, 2025, to gather insight from community members. In all, 33 community members attended the workshops to learn more about the planning process, and to share their thoughts with the project team. Workshops followed an open house format in which participants were encouraged to complete activities around the room. Each activity was thoughtfully designed to allow participants to identify assets, share challenges, and envision the future of Ripley County.

Key Takeaways:

- **Revisiting the 2002 Comprehensive Plan**
 - **Theme 1 – Manage Growth:** There was mixed consensus about whether this theme was still relevant to Ripley County. Participants agreed that development needs to occur near existing cities and towns but argued that the plan should further specify what types of development are considered desirable.
 - **Theme 2 – Promote Economic Development:** Participants agreed that this theme was still relevant. They stressed the need to attract and retain youth, developing the next generation of skilled workers. At the same time, participants called for support for small businesses and highlighted the important role that housing plays in economic development.
 - **Theme 3 – Enhance Community Character:** Participants agreed that this theme was still relevant. They encouraged code enforcement, while advocating for a balance between individual property rights and the public good.
- **Future Land Use**
 - **Distribution:** Participants identified areas around existing cities and towns as optimal sites for future development. Residential development is preferable around Versailles, Osgood, Milan, and the unincorporated community of Delaware. Commercial development is preferable around Versailles with industrial development around Versailles, Milan, and Interstate 74. Viable agriculture in the county should be preserved, and a balance should be struck between new development and conservation of agricultural land.
 - **Desired Development:** The most desirable type of development in Ripley County is single-family residential (9 votes), followed by mixed residential (7 votes) and neighborhood commercial (7 votes). Agricultural (6 votes) and industrial (6 votes) development were also considered acceptable forms of new development. Rural residential (2 votes), multi-family residential (2 votes), and general commercial (0 votes) were considered least desirable by participants.
- **Agriculture**
 - **Challenges:** Economic Sustainability, Succession Planning, Diversification, Local Access to Fresh Produce
 - **Tools or Resources:** Year-Round Farmers Market, Succession Planning
- **Business and Employment**
 - **Challenges:** Limited Job Opportunities, Limited Entry-Level Jobs or Internships, Low Wages, Workforce, Limited Support for Small Business, Housing Availability
 - **Tools or Resources:** Chamber of Commerce, Advertising Job Opportunities, Job Shadowing, Small Business Incentives
- **Transportation and Infrastructure**
 - **Challenges:** Rural Utility Access, Utility Costs, Lack of Safe Sidewalk or Trail Connections, Car-Dependent
 - **Projects or Policies:** Rural Utility Expansion, Sidewalk or Trail Connections Along Major Thoroughfares, Versailles and Osgood Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan, US-50 Lane Expansion
- **Quality of Life**
 - **Existing Amenities:** Events and Festivals (Music on the Square, Music on the Bricks, Farmers Markets), Outdoor Recreation (Versailles State Park, Versailles Pocket Park, Osgood Trails, Drive-In), Small Businesses, Community Organizations (Schools, Libraries), Historic Main Streets

- **Desired Amenities:** Affordable Housing, Entertainment (Live Performances, Activities for Teens and Young Adults), More Small Businesses, Trail Connections, Healthy Food Options, Childcare, Civic Group Participation

3. Public Input Survey (140 participants)

From June 10 to July 23, 2025, the public input survey collected feedback from 140 participants. The online survey gathered insight into existing conditions, while exploring opportunities to enhance the county and its communities. Combined with feedback collected from the focus groups and public workshop, the public input survey helped inform the project team's recommendations for the comprehensive plan.

Key Findings:

- **Respondent Demographics**
 - Most survey respondents (94%) live in Ripley County, and approximately 19% live in Johnson Township, home of Versailles. Most respondents work in Ripley County (43%), although approximately 24% work outside of the county and 28% are retired. The most common age groups that responded to the survey were adults between the ages of 31 to 45 years old (24%), 46 to 65 years old (46%), and over 65 years (24%). Approximately 78% of respondents have lived in Ripley County for more than 15 years.
- **What do you love about Ripley County?**
 - Respondents admire Ripley County's small-town character, sense of community, safety and low crime, and natural beauty. Residents also appreciate Ripley County's proximity to larger cities (Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Louisville), access to Versailles State Park, low cost of living, and traditional values.
- **What do you wish would change in Ripley County?**
 - Respondents were unsatisfied with road conditions, pedestrian infrastructure, shopping and dining options, and activities for youth and families. Respondents also expressed concern about job opportunities, county leadership and fiscal responsibility, housing options, and property maintenance. Respondents called for increased funding for emergency services, safer roadways, cleaner neighborhoods, and healthier lifestyles.
- **What makes you excited about Ripley County's future?**
 - Respondents were optimistic about preserving rural character and revitalizing Ripley County's small towns. Versailles and Osgood were frequently mentioned as examples of positive change. Respondents were also excited about the emergence of small businesses, noting a growth of local businesses, restaurants, and shops in recent years. Although a fair number of responses were positive, many respondents were uncertain or skeptical about the future of Ripley County, indicating a need to boost local morale.
- **Revisiting the 2002 Comprehensive Plan**
 - **Theme 1 – Manage Growth:** Most respondents (75%) agreed that this theme was still relevant. Comments warned against inhibiting growth, noting that growth is key to the community's survival. Respondents called for maintaining community character while encouraging beautification and property maintenance.
 - **Theme 2 – Promote Economic Development:** Most participants (78%) agreed that this theme was still relevant. Respondents noted that economic development has

been largely unsuccessful in Ripley County, except for Batesville. There isn't much to attract young professionals or entrepreneurs.

- **Theme 3 – Enhance Community Character:** Most participants (88%) agreed that this theme was still relevant. Respondents emphasized the need to preserve the rural environment in Ripley County, and to clean up small towns.

- **Quality of Life**

- Agree or Strongly Agree
 - Ripley County is a great place to raise a family. (84%)
 - Ripley County has great educational opportunities for grades K-12. (74%)
 - Ripley County is a great place for empty nesters and seniors. (68%)
 - Ripley County has sufficient parks and open space for residents and visitors. (65%)
 - Ripley County's overall appearance is satisfactory and leaves a good impression on visitors. (57%)
 - Residents have sufficient access to grocery stores selling nutritious food. (43%)
- Mixed
 - Ripley County has sufficient arts and culture opportunities. (32% agree or strongly agree, 29% neutral, 36% disagree or strongly disagree)
- Disagree or Strongly Disagree
 - Families in Ripley County have sufficient access to childcare. (45%)
 - Residents have sufficient access to quality health care without having to leave the county for services. (42%)

- **Economic Development**

- Agree or Strongly Agree
 - The county should prioritize transportation and utility improvements to attract new businesses and industry. (60%)
- Disagree or Strongly Disagree
 - There are employment opportunities for residents of all skill levels who wish to live and work within the community. (50%)
 - There is a wide range of retail, restaurant, and entertainment options that serve the needs of residents. (50%)

- **Housing**

- Agree or Strongly Agree
 - Rehabilitate existing and vacant housing. (87%)
 - Prioritize preserving prime production agricultural land when building new housing. (77%)
 - Build housing that contributes to walkable neighborhoods. (63%)
 - Provide more housing opportunities inside and immediately surrounding established towns. (61%)
 - Provide more affordable housing (Less than \$300,000 purchase value). (60%)
 - Provide a wide variety of housing types and styles that accommodate all ages and lifestyles. (56%)
 - Provide more rental options. (47%)
 - Promote high architectural standards for new housing. (45%)
- Mixed
 - Provide more upscale housing (More than \$300,000 purchase value). (39% neutral, 41% disagree or strongly disagree)
 - Provide more housing opportunities outside of established towns. (32% agree or strongly agree, 37% neutral, 30% disagree or strongly disagree)

- Disagree or Strongly Disagree
 - Build no new housing. (New housing is not needed in Ripley County.) (69%)
- **Infrastructure and Utilities**
 - Agree or Strongly Agree
 - Electrical service is reliable. (84%)
 - Where they are available, water and sewer services are generally adequate and dependable. (75%)
 - Gas service is reliable. (69%)
 - Railroad crossings are safe and well-marked. (64%)
 - There are affordable high-speed internet options in Ripley County for residents and businesses. (63%)
 - Roads are maintained and generally in good condition. (59%)
 - The stormwater management network is safe and effective in reducing localized flooding during and after storms. (49%)
 - Mixed
 - Alternative energy generation is appropriate for Ripley County. (30% agree or strongly agree, 31% neutral, 28% disagree or strongly disagree)
- **Vision for Ripley County**
 - Respondents emphasized preserving small-town values, rural heritage, family-centered growth, and thoughtful development. The following vision statement was created from community input.
 - **Rooted in tradition, committed to the future.** *Ripley County will preserve its rural character, small-town charm, and natural beauty while planning thoughtfully for future growth. We will revitalize our towns, expand access to trails, parks, and essential services, and promote economic development that respects our identity. Through common-sense leadership and community collaboration, we will build a safe, connected, and thriving place where families can grow, businesses can thrive, and future generations choose to stay.*
- **Is there anything else we should know?**
 - Key themes that emerged from respondent input include...
 - Preserve Small-Town and Rural Character
 - “Let Ripley County be Ripley County.”
 - Cleanliness and Property Maintenance
 - Community-Focused Growth
 - Preference for locally driven, community-supported development.
 - Emphasis on growth from within: retaining young families, supporting local businesses, and listening to residents.
 - Infrastructure, Transportation, and Safety
 - Concerns about road conditions, traffic issues, railroad safety, and delays for infrastructure projects.
 - Requests for more bicycle and pedestrian-friendly development.
 - Jobs and Economic Development
 - Housing Availability and Affordability
 - Local Identity, Culture, and Heritage
 - Pride in the historical and cultural diversity within the county.
 - Leadership and Fiscal Responsibility
 - Calls for strong, independently elected leaders who truly represent the community.
 - Mental Health and Social Well-Being
 - Education, Libraries, and Youth Opportunities

2026 RIPLEY COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
ADOPTED: APRIL 27, 2026