CITY OF COLUMBIA CITY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

PEOPLE. PLACES. THINGS.

LEVEL UP.

ADOPTED AUGUST 25, 2015

Bones
THEATRE

CITY HALL

ASGROW

Flowers
Sunflowers
Zinnias
Cukes
Cabbage

FedEx
ups

Greetings,

As Mayor of the City of Columbia City, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the many key players that made this project possible. Without the continued support and efforts of community leaders, residents, and businesses, we would not have been able to successfully envision and prepare for Columbia City's bright future. Your involvement in the many meetings and events held throughout this process was crucial in developing the ambitious vision and strategies set forth for our community. In addition, I would like to thank the American Structurepoint staff for their role in guiding us through the planning process and assisting us in outlining our desired vision.

As a growing community, it is increasingly important to define and continually update our goals for moving forward. I believe that this Comprehensive Plan has successfully provided us with the tools to do this. This plan has been strategic in helping us identify opportunities for continuing, expanding, and capitalizing on our economic and community development efforts throughout the city. More importantly, the plan is a vital component in "leveling up" the quality of life for all current and future Columbia City residents.

Once again, thank you to all that worked so hard throughout this process. I look forward to working with you in the near future as we begin implementing our vision and making our goals our reality.

Sincerely,

Mayor Ryan Daniel

The City of Columbia City Comprehensive Plan 2015 Update would not have been possible without the continuous input, feedback and support of the project's leadership members, committees and staff. We would like to thank everyone for their time and creativity in creating this plan to help Columbia City create a bigger, better, and stronger future for its residents, businesses and visitors. We would also like to send a special thank you to all the community members that participated in our public input events for this plan.

Mayor
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William Simpson
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Nicole Penrod
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INTRODUCTION.

SUMMARY. PURPOSE. PROCESS. VISION. GOALS. ICONS. STRATEGIES.

Whitley County Courthouse

Columbia City is a moderately sized rural Indiana community in northeast Indiana, west of Fort Wayne. It serves as the county seat of Whitley County. Columbia City has experienced consistently gradual growth over the years and continues to grow today. The city has maintained a relatively stable economy and has become a quality place for individuals to find a job, buy a home, and raise a family.

In 2003, Columbia City created an updated city comprehensive plan. This plan identified goals and recommendations to achieve their determined vision. The plan served as a guiding outline for policy and leadership decisions. However, as Columbia City continues to grow and mature, it continues to compete with changing trends within the social and built environment. Methods of attracting new residents and businesses to the community have changed over time. The currently underutilized downtown square of Columbia City has become a new center of attention for development and programming opportunities. This plan is designed to help revitalize the downtown and strengthen the community as a whole in order to continue to become a desirable place for people and businesses of all ages.

In 2014, Columbia City decided to pursue a comprehensive plan update to identify a unified and updated community vision. After leadership discussions, public input feedback, and steering committee meetings, the community expressed that their ultimate "vision" for their community was not to set a new specific vision, but rather to enhance, grow, excel, better, and level up the distinct physical and social environment that already exists today. Simply put, the vision of this hard working community is to become the best it can possibly be for the people, places, and things within Columbia City.

To do this, the community identified action words that make up the Columbia City we see today and created goal statements for each action. From here, existing conditions of the community are identified. Next, the plan identifies strategy recommendations for each goal in order to level up that action. Each strategy is further detailed to include specific action steps, responsible parties, maps, and case study examples. This plan serves as a document to guide the city towards achieving its desired goals. The ultimate goal is that once Columbia City begins achieving some of the strategies listed in this document, it will begin to establish a sense of identity that is needed in order to pursue any significant community changes.

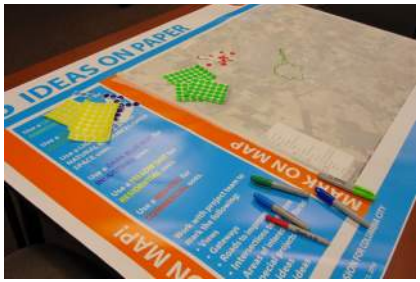
PURPOSE.

The Columbia City Comprehensive Plan 2015 Update is a long-term strategic guide to help the community manage and facilitate stable growth to achieve the desired community goals as described in this document. The plan is designed to showcase the existing conditions of the community, determine the desired future goals and objectives, and illustrate appropriate strategies to help achieve the overall vision. The plan is intended to be a living document that is utilized by public and private entities as they make decisions about the future. To ensure the document is respected and effective, the plan should be annually reevaluated, updated, and adjusted to represent current challenges and successes as they arrive. As growth and changes continue to occur, this comprehensive plan will provide a guiding framework for the leaders and residents of Columbia City to reference for years to come. Implementation of this plan will help the community establish a sense of place, pride, and success.

" For the future, I see Columbia City remaining a slightly moderate sized city that thrives on community identity and pride. It complements well with the agricultural community of Whitley County and provides a place for up and coming individuals, couples, and families to begin their lives successfully and happily."

- Anonymous Online Survey Response

City of Columbia City Hall



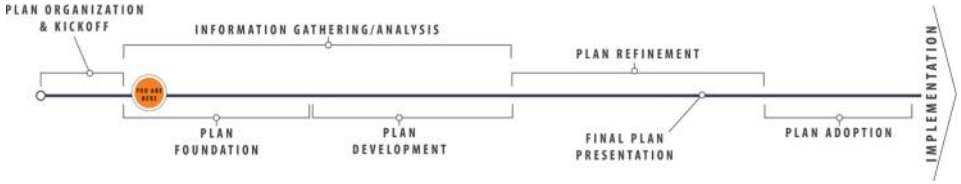
Public Input Open House Images

The process to develop the Columbia City Comprehensive Plan Update began with in-depth research to understand the current state of the city's existing conditions, including land use, transportation, demographics, and economy.

In order to gather detailed information regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the community, we asked the elected officials, leaders, and community members who live, work, and play in Columbia City for their help. Focus Group meetings were held with leaders in specific focus areas of the community. At these meetings, we were able to gather in-depth data, thoughts and concerns from individuals from each area of expertise. Next, we held two visioning workshops that were open to the public. The goal at these events was to gain information regarding the dreams, fears, and visions for the future of Columbia City. A similar online survey exercise was distributed for people who did not attend the in-person events. Overall, input was gathered from nearly 200 people within the community from the public input efforts. By understanding the current conditions and strengths and weaknesses of the community, we could then start to analyze and organize appropriate goals and strategies.

A project website was used throughout the process to educated the public about the project, post updated drafts and handouts, post links to various community surveys, and provide dates for upcoming meetings. This tool was a big help in making this project as community friendly and engaging as possible. You can visit the website at www.columbiacitycompplan.com.

The project steering committee met regularly to guide the planning process. Updates and drafts were viewed by the committee to help make appropriate edits and changes. Once completed, the final version of this comprehensive plan update was recommended for approval by the Columbia City Plan Commission and adopted by the Columbia City Council on August 25th, 2015.



GOALS.

The purpose of planning is to encourage positive action. Columbia City already has a large inventory of community assets to encourage action. However, the purpose of this plan is to "Level Up" those assets. In order to do this, goal statements were created for each action word. These goal statements provide a vision for the desired future of each goal. The goal action words were then placed into three separate categories, People, Places, and Things. This is the overall structure of this document.

PEOPLE.	PLAY	Ensure year-round authentic recreation and leisure experiences for all members of the community through active, passive and social spaces throughout the community.
	LEARN	Enhance education opportunities for K-12 and adult learners to reflect local, regional, and national trends in the workforce. Create an environment for all students to continue to learn in traditional and non-traditional settings and environments.
	SUPPORT	Provide resources, and opportunities to provide support for underprivileged and disadvantaged members of the community as well as opportunities to volunteer and serve.
	ACT	Ensure that leadership of the community is prepared to plan, strategize and incrementally and effectively implement the Columbia City vision through appropriate policy and action.
PLACES.	LIVE	Promote safe, quality neighborhoods with varying styles, densities, products and price points for all stages of life.
	EXPERIENCE	Create and nurture a genuine identity for Columbia City that attracts visitors and potential long-term members to the community.
	MOVE	Increase connectivity for vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrians across the community. Enhance connections to major destinations for improved safety, function, and efficiency especially for the purpose of safety, experience, independence and economic development.
	GROW	Ensure the strategic and intentional growth of residential, commercial, and industrial areas for the most benefit, for the most people, in the most ways.
THINGS.	WORK	Support and encourage a diverse local economy that provides opportunities for financially satisfying and intellectually stimulating employment.
	SERVE	Ensure environmentally friendly, sustainable, and efficient infrastructure systems and high-quality emergency response services to support the current community and future growth.
	PRESERVE	Ensure protection of the natural and built environment to keep and maintain features that are unique to Columbia City.
	SHARE	Promote the communication and dialogue between governmental and non-governmental groups internally and externally to support successful community development, governmental proceedings, marketing and communications and collaboration towards community vision.

ICONS.

On the Strategy pages of this document, each strategy is labeled using the following icon symbols. These icons are meant to quickly and easily give readers a snapshot of the priority, cost, time frame, and type of project the strategy relates to. This makes it easier to understand what to expect for each recommendation.

PRIORITY	High Priority Project	Mid Priority Project	Low Priority Project
COST	Low Cost Project	Mid Cost Project	High Cost Project
TIME	Short Range Project	Mid Range Project	Long Range Project
TYPE	Physical Project	Program Project	Policy Project

PEOPLE.

PLAY.	1a	Explore the possibility of creating a downtown test kitchen / start-up restaurant incubator.	pg. 34
	1b	Pursue popular regional and local restaurants and shops to locate in Columbia City.	pg. 36
	1c	Encourage the use of food trucks as dining options.	pg. 38
	1d	Explore locations for new soccer fields, clubs, and leagues.	pg. 40
	1e	Encourage the use of the Blue River as a form of recreation.	pg. 42
	1f	Explore the possibility of creating a community aquatics center.	pg. 44
LEARN.	2a	Consider relocation of a new facility for the Columbia City High School.	pg. 46
	2b	Explore the possibility of a specialized downtown higher education satellite campus.	pg. 48
	2c	Promote various types of higher education tracks to the community.	pg. 50
	2d	Explore the possibility of a commuter shuttle to nearby higher education locations.	pg. 52
	2e	Explore a location for a home-schooling collaborative learning center.	pg. 54
SUPPORT.	3a	Create a Keep Columbia City Beautiful Program.	pg. 56
	3b	Create a community garden.	pg. 58
	3c	Educate dispatch of available support services to inform callers in need of help.	pg. 60
	3d	Encourage continued collaboration and communication between local food pantries.	pg. 62
ACT.	4a	Create a Downtown Strategic Investment Plan to identify specific strategies to revitalize the downtown.	pg. 64
	4b	Follow the Critical Path Strategies identified in this plan as first priorities.	pg. 66
	4c	Maintain and Update the Columbia City Comprehensive Plan website.	pg. 68

PLACES.

pg. 86	Pursue mixed-use housing development opportunities in Downtown Columbia City.	5a	LIVE.
pg. 88	Establish a Neighborhood Improvement Grant Program.	5b	
pg. 90	Increase and encourage quality owner-occupied housing.	5c	
pg. 92	Ensure the creation of diverse housing products and densities within neighborhoods.	5d	
pg. 94	Create a city-wide Public Art Master Plan.	6a	EXPERIENCE.
pg. 96	Create a Gateway and Wayfinding Signage Master Plan.	6b	
pg. 98	Create a Downtown Parking Study to find appropriate solution for current and anticipated parking needs.	6c	
pg. 100	Create a Downtown Streetscape Plan.	6d	
pg. 102	Review and modify downtown design policies and guidelines to establish a visual standard.	6e	
pg. 104	Expand and strengthen existing festivals and events.	6f	
pg. 106	Integrate new Transportation Plan recommendations with Capital Improvement Plan.	7a	MOVE.
pg. 108	Explore, identify, and fill sidewalk gaps within existing residential neighborhoods.	7b	
pg. 110	Create a Downtown Link to the Blue River Trail.	7c	
pg. 112	Create a trail extension south along State Road 9 to the current middle school and potential future high school location.	7d	
pg. 114	Extend Blue River Trail west across State Road 9 to connect to Devol Field and further west along Business 30.	7e	
pg. 116	Use the new Future Land Use Map as a guideline for new development within Columbia City.	8a	GROW.
pg. 118	Strategically annex new land outside of current corporate boundaries in areas for planned growth.	8b	
pg. 120	Focus infill and revitalization development in areas that are currently underutilized and unsafe.	8c	
pg. 122	Extend Columbia City's Jurisdictional Boundary.	8d	

THINGS.

WORK.	9a	Explore potential sites for new industrial parks.	pg. 136
	9b	Expand the EDC Outpost Program for start-up businesses.	pg. 138
	9c	Create a CEO Student Program for successful and ambitious students.	pg. 140
	9d	Attract and integrate professional service offices into the Downtown.	pg. 142
	9e	Continue to have a strong relationship with the IEDC, Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership, and other regional organizations.	pg. 144
	9f	Explore possibilities to promote agribusiness within Columbia City.	pg. 146
SERVE.	10a	Explore and promote use of wind and solar energy as alternative energy infrastructure.	pg. 148
	10b	Expand city utilities to potential development sites.	pg. 150
	10c	Coordinate with private utility companies to expand city utility services throughout the corporate boundaries.	pg. 152
	10d	Add additional emergency response facilities, resources, and staff as needed to maintain high levels of service for growing population.	pg. 154
PRESERVE.	11a	Review and update inventory of existing Columbia City structures that have local, historical value.	pg. 156
	11b	Explore possibility of restoring historic brick road of Chauncey Street.	pg. 158
	11c	Utilize floodplains as natural amenities and use for park and recreation activities.	pg. 160
SHARE.	12a	Define the brand of Columbia City related to marketing, communications, graphic design, and environmental design.	pg. 162
	12b	Create a Columbia City / Whitley County Tourism Department.	pg. 164
	12c	Upgrade the city's website, social media pages, community events calendar, and other online, digital communications media.	pg. 166

CRITICAL PATH STRATEGIES.

Critical Path Strategies have been selected from the list of all strategies as the highest priorities. These critical path strategies have been selected using professional staff recommendations and public input from residents of Columbia City. These strategies are considered "low-hanging fruits" and should be viewed as obtainable and realistic goals. Once accomplished, these strategies open doors to make other strategies listed throughout the plan possible.

GOAL	NUMBER	STRATEGY	PRIORITY	COST	TIME	TYPE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PAGE
Play	1b	Pursue popular regional and local restaurants and shops to locate in Columbia City.					Chamber of Commerce	34
Learn	2a	Consider relocation of a new facility for the current Columbia City High School.					School District	46
Support	3a	Create a Keep Columbia City Beautiful Program.					Parks Department	56
Act	4a	Create a Downtown Strategic Investment Plan to identify specific strategies to revitalize the downtown.					Community Development Department	64
Live	5a	Pursue mixed-use housing development opportunities in Downtown Columbia City.					Community Development Department	86
Experience	6b	Create a Gateway and Wayfinding Signage Master Plan.					Community Development Department	96
Move	7b	Explore, Identify and fill sidewalk gaps within existing residential neighborhoods.					Streets Department	108
Move	7e	Extend Blue River Trail west across State Road 9 to connect to Devol Field and further west along Business 30.					Parks Department	114
Grow	8a	Use the new Future Land Use Map as a guideline for new development in Columbia City.					Community Development Department	116
Work	9a	Explore potential sites for new industrial parks.					Whitley County EDC	136
Work	9b	Expand the EDC Outpost Program for start-up businesses.					Whitley County EDC	138
Serve	10b	Expand city utilities to potential development sites.					City Utility Departments	150
Share	12a	Define the brand of Columbia City related to marketing, communications, graphic design, and environmental design.					Mayors Office	162
Share	12b	Upgrade the city's website, social media pages, community events calendar, and other online, digital communications media					IT Department	166

RESOURCES INDEX.

There are many resources and responsible parties identified within this plan. Each strategy lists resources and organizations that are most directly connected to strategy's topic and goal. In order to implement the strategies listed within this document, the listed resources or responsible parties must be committed and dedicated to the overall vision of this plan. By dividing the responsibility of these strategies among multiple organizations, the city of Columbia City will work together to help level up the community.

Mayor's Office	City Council	Plan Commission	Parks Department	Streets Department	Community Development Department	Police/ Communications Department	Fire Department	IT Department
ACT 4B	LIVE 5A	ACT 4A	**PLAY 1D**	**EXPERIENCE 6C**	**ACT 4A**	**SUPPORT 3C**	**SERVE 10D**	**ACT 4C**
SHARE 12A	LIVE 5D	LIVE 5A	**PLAY 1E**	**MOVE 7A**	**LIVE 5A**	**SERVE 10D**		**SHARE 12A**
ACT 4C	EXPERIENCE 6E	LIVE 5D	**PLAY 1F**	**MOVE 7B**	**LIVE 5C**	EXPERIENCE 6C		**SHARE 12C**
WORK 9C	MOVE 7A	GROW 8B	**SUPPORT 3A**	**PRESERVE 11B**	**LIVE 5D**			
WORK 9E	GROW 8A	GROW 8D	**SUPPORT 3B**	EXPERIENCE 6D	**EXPERIENCE 6E**			
SERVE 10C	GROW 8B		**EXPERIENCE 6F**	MOVE 7D	**GROW 8A**			
	GROW 8D		**MOVE 7D**	MOVE 7E	**GROW 8B**			
	SERVE 10C		**MOVE 7E**		**GROW 8C**			
	SHARE 12B		LIVE 5B		**GROW 8D**			
			EXPERIENCE 6A		**SERVE 10A**			
			EXPERIENCE 6F		PLAY 1A			
			MOVE 7A		PLAY 1C			
			MOVE 7B		PLAY 1F			
			PRESERVE 11C		LEARN 2B			
					EXPERIENCE 6A			
					EXPERIENCE 6B			
					EXPERIENCE 6C			
					EXPERIENCE 6D			
					MOVE 7B			
					WORK 9A			
					WORK 9D			
					WORK 9F			
					SERVE 10B			

The strategies that are listed in **BOLD** represent strategies that require that resource to be a **PRIMARY** responsible party. This means that any strategy in bold should be that organization's first priority and requires the most commitment.

Strategies that are not listed in bold are considered supporting strategies. These strategies require support from the dedicated organizations but do not require them to be the lead responsible parties.

Utilities Departments	Whitley County Economic Development Corporation	Main Street Association	Chamber of Commerce	School District	Job Training Companies/ Organizations	Higher Education Organizations	Recreation Organizations	Non-For-Profit Organizations
SERVE 10A	**PLAY 1A**	**EXPERIENCE 6A**	**PLAY 1A**	**LEARN 2A**	**LEARN 2C**	**LEARN 2B**	**PLAY 1D**	**SUPPORT 3D**
SERVE 10B	**WORK 9A**	**EXPERIENCE 6D**	**WORK 9D**	**WORK 9C**	LEARN 2B	**LEARN 2D**	PLAY 1F	**EXPERIENCE 6F**
SERVE 10C	**WORK 9B**	EXPERIENCE 6B	PLAY 1C	LEARN 2C		LEARN 2C	EXPERIENCE 6F	SUPPORT 3B
WORK 9A	**WORK 1E**	EXPERIENCE 6C	WORK 9B	LEARN 2E		WORK 9C	PRESERVE 11A	SUPPORT 3C
	WORK 1F		SHARE 4B					LIVE 5B
	PLAY 1B							LIVE 5C
	PLAY 1C							EXPERIENCE 6A
	LEARN 2B							GROW 8C
	LEARN 2C							GROW 9C
	LEARN 2D							WORK 9F
	ACT 4A							PRESERVE 11A
	LIVE 5C							
	LIVE 5D							
	EXPERIENCE 6B							
	EXPERIENCE 6F							
	MOVE 7C							
	GROW 8A							
	GROW 8C							
	WORK 9C							
	WORK 9D							
	SERVE 2B							

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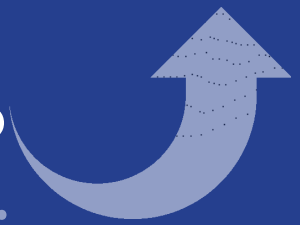
PEOPLE.

PLAY. LEARN. SUPPORT. ACT.



PEOPLE.

SUMMARY.

The People section of the Plan consists of goals related to the happiness, education, character, and leadership of the residents that live within Columbia City. These goals include Play, Learn, Support, and Act. These goals play an important role in establishing a happy, compassionate, welcoming, understanding, and forward thinking community. Existing conditions were gathered for each goal in this section. The existing conditions illustrate the current state of these initiatives and help justify the strategies identified within this section. The strategies and actions steps listed are designed to give residents of the community the opportunity to level up their happiness, education and leadership to overall better the community.

GOALS AND TOPICS.

	PLAY	LEARN	SUPPORT	ACT
GOAL	**Ensure year-round authentic recreation and leisure experiences for all members of the community through active, passive and social spaces throughout the community.**	**Enhance education opportunities for K-12 and adult learners to reflect local, regional and national trends in the workforce. Create an environment for all students to continue to learn in traditional and non-traditional settings and environments.**	**Provide resources and opportunities to provide support for underprivileged and disadvantaged members of the community as well as opportunities to volunteer and serve.**	**Ensure that leadership of the community is prepared to plan, strategize and incrementally and effectively implement the Columbia City vision of this plan through appropriate policy and action.**
TOPICS	• Community Facilities • Sports • Clubs • Shopping • Eating • Entertainment	• Schools • Higher Education • School Districts • Education Demographics • School Programs	• Non-for-profits • Support Organizations • Volunteer Programs • People with financial, physical, or emotional challenges.	• Previous planning efforts • Committees and Boards • Standards and Policies

PLAY.

Shopping. Eating. Entertainment.

The livelihood of a community is partially dependent on the amount of entertainment opportunities that are present. A community that values quality shopping and dining creates attractions that become fun destinations for visitors and residents.

In Columbia City, a large amount of the retail and dining options are chains and franchises. These chains and franchises serve their purpose to the residents of the community, however, they are not unique attractions to visitors. Because of this, no unique dining or shopping identity is created within the community.

Currently, the main retail and shopping areas within Columbia City can be found along the US 30 and SR 9 corridors. A small amount of retail can also be found in the downtown area. However, there is not currently enough in this area to create a shopping district environment. Similarly, a large amount of dining options in Columbia City can be found in the US 30 corridor area. Most of these dining options are chain restaurants. Columbia City also has a handful of well known and established local dining options scattered throughout the city and the central downtown area. All of these dining and shopping areas are illustrated on the Play Map on the following page.

In addition to dining and shopping within Columbia City, entertainment opportunities for visitors and residents to play include parks and recreation facilities and community facilities such as:

- Morsches Park
- Blue River Trail
- Splash Pad
- Skate Park
- Public Library
- 4H Fairgrounds
- YMCA
- Bones Theatre
- Devol Field
- Skating Rink
- Bowling Alley

Brewha

Peabody Public Library

Splash Pad

Playground

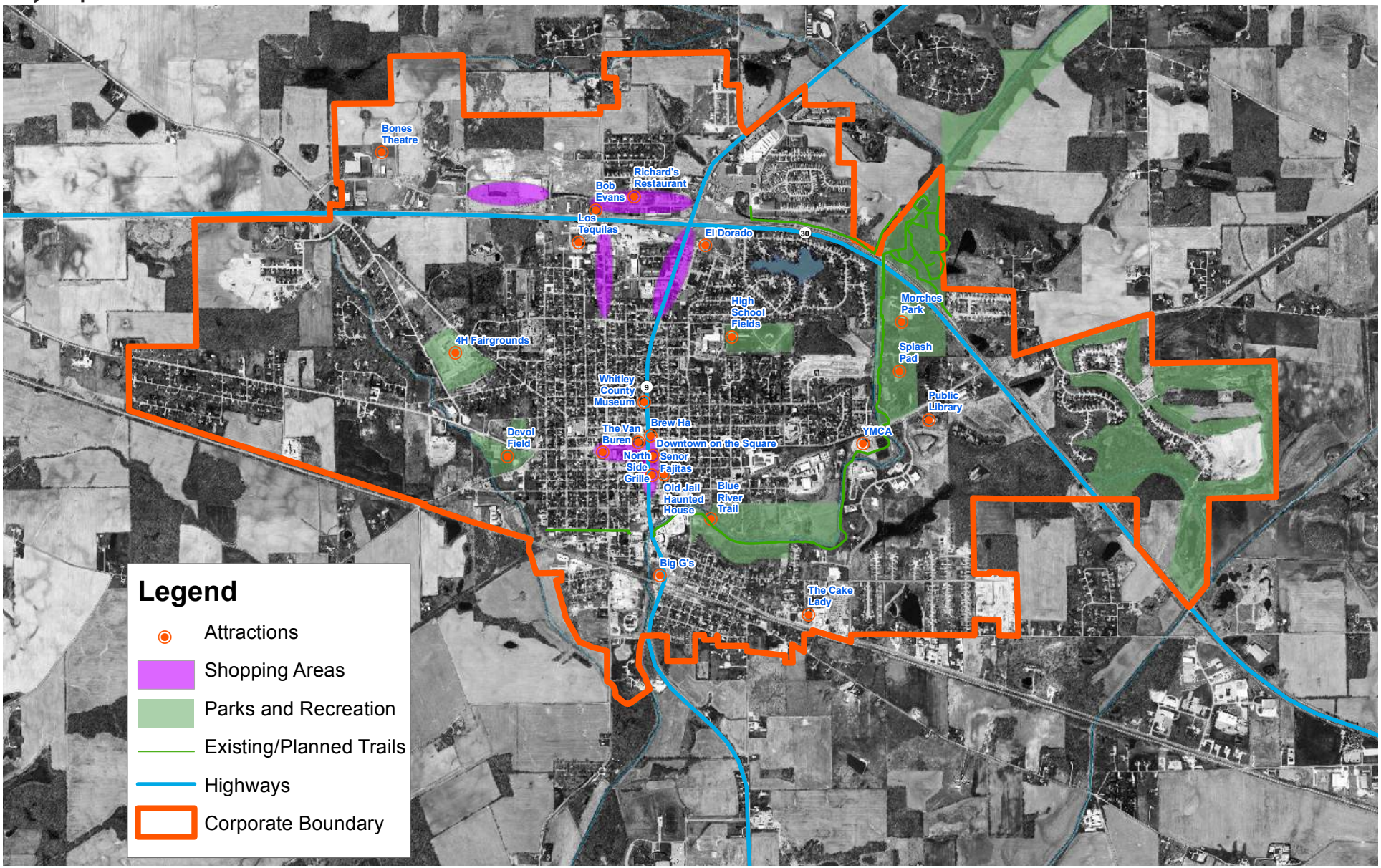
Blue River Trail

Morsches Park

Bones Theatre

Skate Park

Play Map


Bones Theatre
Bob Evans
Richard's Restaurant
Los Tequilas
El Dorado
30
High School Fields
Morches Park
Splash Pad
4H Fairgrounds
Whitley County Museum
9
Public Library
Devol Field
The Van Buren
Brew Ha
Downtown on the Square
YMCA
North Side Grille
Senor Fajitas
Old Jail Haunted House
Blue River Trail
Big G's
The Cake Lady
Legend
Attractions
Shopping Areas
Parks and Recreation
Existing/Planned Trails
Highways
Corporate Boundary

LEARN.

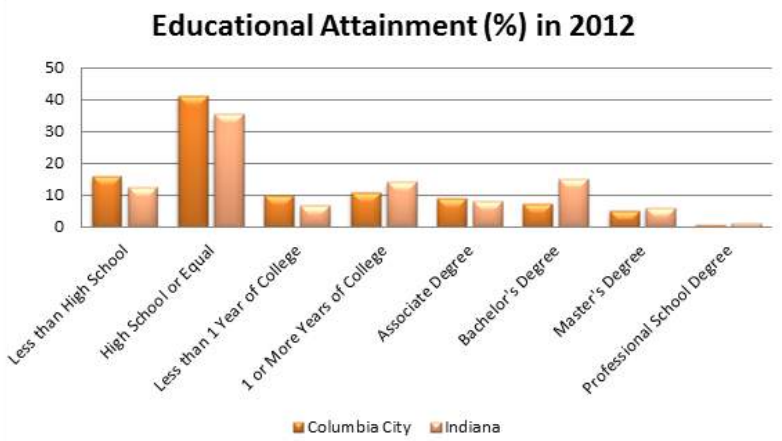
Schools. Education. Programs.

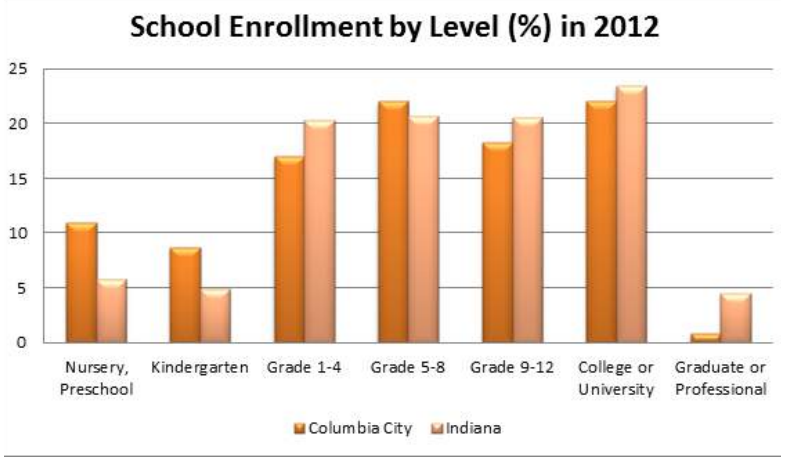
Quality education is an important part of a successful community. Education prepares the youth of the community to become future working and contributing members of the society. Families and individuals are attracted to communities that value education. Education is an investment for the future. Because of this, it is important for a community to educate and support students as much as possible to ensure both their individual success and the community's success in years to come.

Columbia City offers multiple education opportunities. The Indian Springs Middle School is just south of Columbia City off of State Road 9. This facility opened its doors in 1996 as a result of the consolidation of five Whitley County Schools. Today, the school houses approximately 900 students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade. Currently, the Columbia City High School is located within the Columbia City limits on North Whitley Street. The High School has nearly 1,200 students enrolled. Erected in 1956, the building is outdated and in poor condition. The community has expressed their desire for a new facility. A new location and a new facility for the Columbia City High School is currently being discussed and planned.

Eagle Tech Academy is the newest school in Whitley County. In 2012 it opened its doors to 110 Freshman students and has expanded annually to full capacity of 400 students between 9th-12th grade. As part of the nonprofit New Tech Network organization, Eagle Tech is focused on technology and project-based learning. Here, students are taught to work together on group projects and class subjects that empowers trust, respect, and responsibility. Students are still required to learn the same content required by the state, however, Eagle Tech uses a project based learning model that is relevant to real world situations.

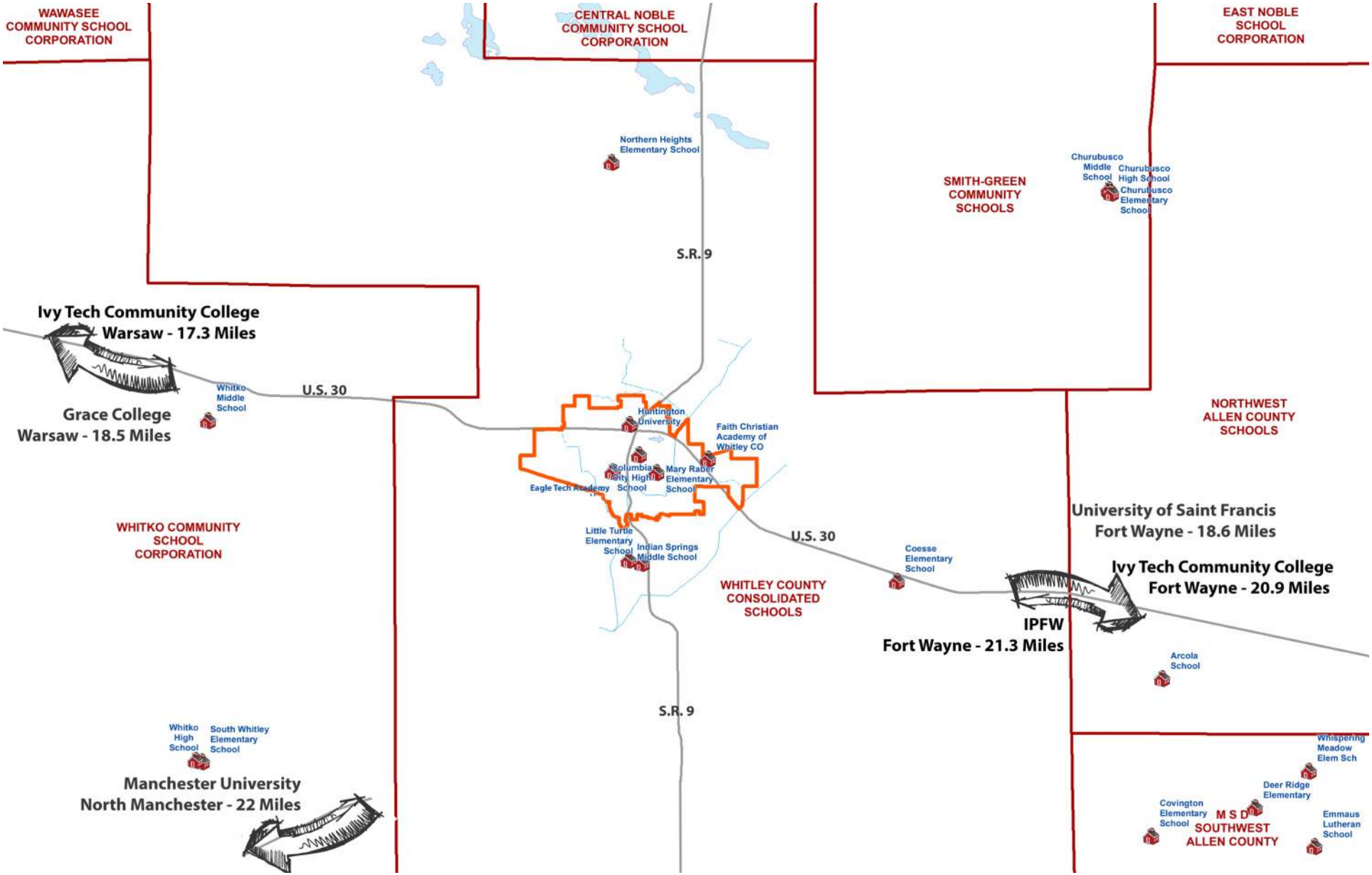
Huntington University at Columbia City is the home of Huntington University's EXCEL Program. Classes for Ivy Tech are also offered at this location. In addition, Columbia City is within 20-25 miles away from other higher education campus', such as Ivy Tech Warsaw, Ivy Tech Fort Wayne, Indiana Purdue Fort Wayne, Manchester University, St. Francis University, and Grace College.





7 Colleges/Universities with over **2,000** students within **60** miles of Columbia City.

School Locations and Districts



SUPPORT.

Non-For-Profits. Volunteers. Community.

Support organizations help communities build relationships and strengthen bonds. These non-for-profit and faith based organizations offer community members a place to be involved and help someone in need. In addition, these organizations offer a place to turn to for those in need. Columbia City and Whitley County have a number of organizations of all kinds that are dedicated to helping those in need. To help build a stronger relationship between members within the community, these organizations should be supported by the City of Columbia City to help them grow and thrive. To do this, Columbia City must promote, educate, and encourage the community to appropriately utilize the available resources. Columbia City must also offer new charity and volunteer opportunities to interested community members to help strengthen the city's pride and appearance.

There are many churches and religious facilities in Columbia City. Many of these faith based facilities also offer support programs. Some of the existing support organizations within Columbia City include:

- Whitley County Community Foundation
- Habitat for Humanity
- United Way
- Humane Society
- Salvation Army
- Forte Residential, Inc.
- Whitley County Domestic Violence Task Force
- Lighthouse Interfaith Mission
- Somebody Cares, Inc.
- Whitley County Food Stamp Office
- Federal WIC Assistance Program
- Whitley County Council on Aging

Word Clouds are generated by inserting text from multiple sources. The resulting Work Cloud represents the words that are used most frequently. The more frequent the word is used, the larger it appears in the Word Cloud graphic. The Word Cloud seen below illustrates the words most frequently used in the mission statements of local church groups and non-for-profits within Columbia City.

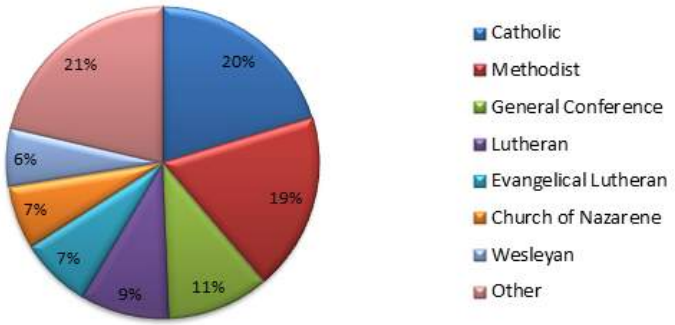
15.3% Persons 65 years and over.

674 Veterans

14.4% Columbia City persons below poverty level

Indiana persons below poverty level. **15.4%**

Whitley County Adherents Source: Jones, Dale 2002 Congregations and Memberships 2000



Support Locations Map

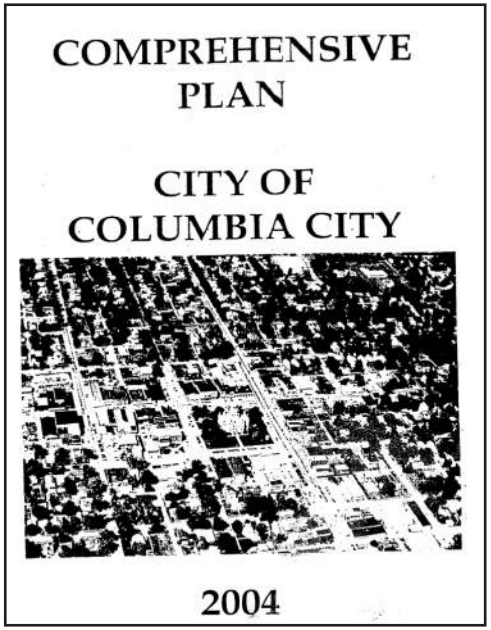
ACT.

Past Plans. Policies. Leadership.

Action is the result of planning. All plans are meant to encourage action in the most appropriate and strategic ways possible. Because of this, municipalities complete planning projects to help them identify a desired vision for their community. Once the vision is created, action steps to achieve the vision can be put into place.

Columbia City has a history of being a moderately progressive and forward thinking community when it comes to planning. The last Comprehensive Plan update was completed in 2004. Since then, the city has achieved some of the goals identified by following the recommendations listed within the plan. Aside from this, few planning efforts have been made within the community. The Columbia City LEVEL UP Comprehensive Plan will help Columbia City update the vision, goals, and recommendations for the community to better fit today's needs.

More recently, Whitley County also updated their county-wide comprehensive plan in 2011. The plan identified specific goals and recommendations for the entire county, with some applicable to Columbia City. When creating the LEVEL UP Comprehensive Plan for Columbia City, the Whitley County Comprehensive Plan was taken into consideration to make sure that the goals and recommendations aligned with the goals and recommendations of the county.



City of Columbia City Comprehensive Plan 2004

Whitley County Comprehensive Plan 2011

PLANNING PRINCIPLES.

The planning principles are action statements that support the mission statements declared for each goal. These statements are meant to be broad ideas of how the goals can be achieved. With these statements, more detailed strategies and ideas can be formed. The planning principles are a stepping stone between understanding the community goals and identifying ways to achieve them.

PLAY.

- Encourage an active and playful community for people of all ages and abilities.
- Offer fun and unique opportunities and attractions to attract visitors.
- Activate the downtown through the use of recreational dining and shopping opportunities.
- Support and expand existing parks and park attractions.
- Pursue economic development opportunities that enhance playfulness of Columbia City.

LEARN.

- Maintain a high level of service for all community learning facilities through continuous monitoring and evaluation.
- Prepare the students of today for the work force needs of the future.
- Encourage an enhanced school district as a way to promote growth within the community.
- Offer the best transportation, tools, and resource opportunities for students to provide the best possible education.
- Support and invest in students to help motivate and encourage good performance.
- Educate the community of the need and benefits of different higher education alternatives.

SUPPORT.

- Provide support opportunities for all residents of Columbia City in need of financial, physical, or emotional support.
- Provide volunteer service activities to actively involve residents to transform the community.
- Educate the community of the support organizations that are available and willing to help.
- Encourage better communication between organizations to make sure every individual is getting the appropriate amount of support that they need.

ACT.

- Establish a schedule and process to review the progress of this plan annually and update every five years or as substantial changes occur.
- Educate the public and public officials of the strategies proposed in this plan.
- Review ordinances for nuances to ensure support of this plan's vision and strategies.
- Pursue other planning project recommendations to gain a better understanding of the community and its future opportunities.

1a

PLAY
LEARN
SUPPORT
ACT

Explore the possibility of creating a downtown test kitchen / start-up restaurant incubator.

Related Goals:

LEARN

WORK

Summary

Downtown Columbia City is in need of local activity to activate the downtown. In addition, the city has identified a desire for a larger variety of local dining options. Downtown Columbia City offers a unique opportunity and location to achieve both of these goals. A catalyst project in Downtown Columbia City, such as a test kitchen would spark local interest and investment in the culinary business, while also attracting residents and visitors to continuously return to the downtown kitchen to try new foods from new chefs.

Starting a new restaurant is a risky business venture. Many new restaurant owners struggle to keep the business alive as their food fights to make a name for itself within the community. To help offset these typical start-up costs and challenges, a downtown test kitchen would encourage and support local culinary entrepreneurs looking to make the leap to start their own restaurant. The downtown test kitchen would serve as a stepping stone for new businesses to showcase their food and talent while they find the funds and location for a permanent establishment.

The test kitchen could be rented out hourly or operate on a rotating month to month schedule. Either way, the kitchen could be self sufficient by renting out the space to users at a much lower rate than it would cost to lease a building or space for their restaurant.

Case Study

Indy's Kitchen is a culinary incubator in Indianapolis, Indiana. Linda Gilkerson, owner of this test kitchen and a local business professional with a lifelong passion for cooking always dreamed of starting her own bakery. However, she could not find an affordable kitchen to rent in Indianapolis. Finally, she decided to start a new kitchen. A kitchen that could be used by people just like her. Indy's Kitchen became a place that anyone could rent by hour for storage space and/or equipment. Indy's Kitchen has been the stepping stone for bottling and packaging food companies, catering companies, food trucks, bakeries, and other start up restaurants. Some well known alumni in Indianapolis that started their business at Indy's Test Kitchen includes Natural Born Juicers, Shoefly Public House, and Urban Pastries. Currently, it is home to over 50 companies.

Figure 1a: Linda Gilkerson at Indy's Kitchen

PLAY: Ensure year-round authentic recreation and leisure experiences for all members of the community through active, passive and social spaces throughout the community.

Action Steps

1. Appoint staff, department, committee, or board to oversee the program.
2. Explore available locations in the downtown area that would be an appropriate space.
3. Work with local higher education universities to explore a culinary education program.
4. Explore funding options and sponsorships to start program and buy resources.

Resources

- Whitley County Economic Development Corporation
- Community Development Department
- Local Higher Education Universities

Figure 1b: Kitchen with dining space near prep area.

Figure 1c: Test kitchen teaching classes in professional kitchen.

Figure 1d: Cooking classes in test kitchen.

1b PLAY LEARN SUPPORT ACT

Pursue popular regional and local restaurants and shops to locate in Columbia City.

Related Goals:

EXPERIENCE

GROW

WORK

Summary

Other surrounding communities have local dining and shopping attractions that are well known throughout the area. Larger nearby cities such as Fort Wayne have popular local restaurants and stores that are continuously growing. These restaurants and shops might be looking to add new locations and branch out into neighboring communities. Since Columbia City is nearby, has a moderate sized population and has expressed an interest in more local dining and shopping options, Columbia City could be a desired location for one of these companies to open an additional location.

To attract popular local and regional businesses, Columbia City must provide appealing infrastructure and incentives. By providing an appealing location, business owners can feel comfortable moving forward with researching the local market and possibility of locating within Columbia City.

Case Study

Fort Wayne, Indiana is home to many popular locally owned restaurants and shops. Being a much larger metropolitan city compared to Columbia City, Fort Wayne is able to provide a much larger variety of dining and shopping options. Because of this, people from throughout northeast Indiana travel to Fort Wayne to play and explore these options. Some of these attractions have grown out of their original locations and opened multiple restaurants throughout the area. For example, Don Hall's is a locally owned restaurant company that began a drive-in restaurant south of Fort Wayne in 1946. Today, Don Hall's owns over ten different restaurants and a catering company. A local company such as this could be interested in opening a location in nearby Columbia City's downtown area. Just ask!

Figure 1e: Don Hall's Old Gas House restaurant in Fort Wayne

PLAY: Ensure year-round authentic recreation and leisure experiences for all members of the community through active, passive and social spaces throughout the community.

Action Steps

1. Appoint department, staff, committee, or action team to oversee development of this strategy.
2. Identify specific types of desired businesses.
3. Identify specific location opportunities.
4. Develop marketing strategy and communications plan.
5. Reach out to desired businesses to develop relationships.
6. Develop incentive program to open location within Columbia City.

Resources

- Chamber of Commerce
- Whitley County Economic Development Corporation

Figure 1f: Women shopping in a downtown district.

Figure 1g: Interior of a startup winery.

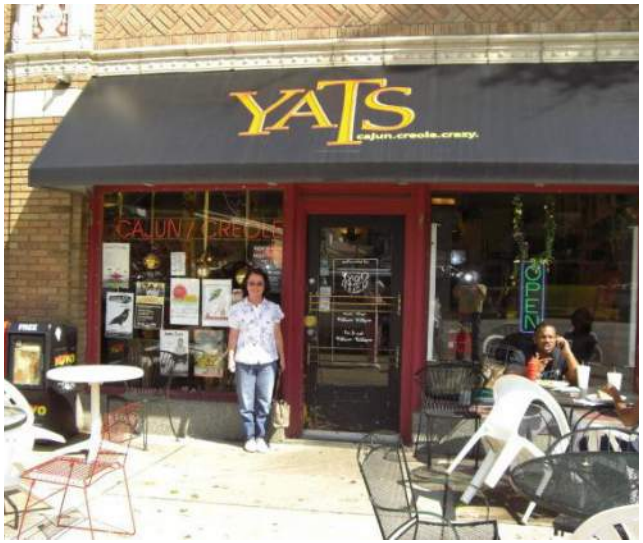


Figure 1h: A unique local restaurant in Indianapolis, Indiana.

1c

PLAY
LEARN
SUPPORT
ACT

Encourage the use of Food Trucks as dining options.

Related Goals:

EXPERIENCE

WORK

Summary

Food trucks are a unique dining alternative to regular sit down restaurants. Food trucks can travel to various locations and events to serve a special festival or they can be used for traditional dining. They also provide a less risky opportunity for start-up businesses to begin their culinary ventures.

Food trucks provide a unique alternative for families. They encourage people to grab something to eat on the go and get back to enjoying other things. Because of this, food trucks are great to use at community social gatherings and festivals. They can travel to new places to reach a new audience and provide diversity from the established, permanent restaurants in a community.

In 2014, an amendment was passed to the city ordinance that placed guidelines and regulations to allow food trucks in Columbia City. This amendment requires food truck vendors to obtain an annual permit through the city. This permit is a way for the city to regulate and record who and what is being sold within the community. This ordinance is a step towards a more safe and professional way to utilize food trucks as dining options. Without negatively affecting existing brick and mortar restaurants.

Case Study

Indianapolis, Indiana welcomes and encourages food truck businesses. Food trucks can be found across the city for everyday lunch or special events. The city even hosts special food truck events such as Food Truck Friday and First Friday Fest. Food Truck Friday is a downtown event that welcomes any participating food truck to find a spot and sell lunch. First Friday Fest is a festival with music and games every first Friday of the month that is focused around food truck dining with something for everyone! Both of these events provide a great opportunity for the food truck businesses to make money and encourage people to participate in community focused activities.

Figure 1i: Food Truck Festival on Georgia Street in Indianapolis, Indiana

Action Steps

1. Continue to encourage food trucks at local events and festivals.
2. Pursue new local food trucks throughout the region to be vendors within Columbia City and visit for special events or on a regular schedule.
3. Explore location opportunities for a food truck festival or parking lot.
4. Provide complementary spaces for people to eat outside, such as parks, benches, tables, green space, etc.

Resources

- Community Development Department
- Whitley County Economic Development Corporation
- Chamber of Commerce

Figure 1j: Pedestrians visiting a food truck.

Figure 1k: A specialty food truck.

Figure 1l: A food truck parked with outdoor seating.

1d

PLAY
LEARN
SUPPORT
ACT

Explore locations for new soccer fields, clubs, and leagues.

Related Goals:

PLAY

EXPERIENCE

Summary

The youth in Columbia City has expressed a desire for community soccer fields within the city parks and recreation network. Currently, the city has community sport fields and facilities for baseball, softball, and tennis. These fields can be found in Devol Field and Morsches Park. The High School also has football and soccer fields for their school athletic teams. Currently, there are not any permanent community soccer fields within Columbia City parks network. The local YMCA of Whitley County has its own soccer fields. However, these are owned by the YMCA and used YMCA classes and leagues. Because of this, families and kids travel to other nearby communities to join competitive community based soccer programs and leagues. The addition of soccer fields within the city limits would create a new activity for the youth of Columbia City and encourage further use of the parks network and encourage visitors and invite outside visitors to Columbia City.

Case Study

Greenwood, Indiana Parks & Recreation Department offers a wide range of children's sports and activities. The city has a sports field park dedicated for soccer. The city offers Spring and Fall youth soccer leagues for multiple age groups. In addition, the city also offers summer soccer camps to teach and practice soccer skills. The city soccer fields offer a space for these activities to the community without interference with school sports teams or private businesses.

Figure 1m: Greenwood Youth Soccer League Game

PLAY: Ensure year-round authentic recreation and leisure experiences for all members of the community through active, passive and social spaces throughout the community.

Action Steps

1. Align strategy with community 5-Year Park and Recreation Master Plan.
1. Identify a location for new soccer fields in Columbia City.
2. Provide appropriate park amenities.
3. Create city organized leagues for soccer teams.
4. Encourage and support local soccer teams.

Resources

- Parks Department
- YMCA
- Other Recreation Organizations

Figure 1n: Children playing soccer.

Figure 1o: A community athletics soccer field.

Figure 1p: A teenage league soccer game.

1e

PLAY
LEARN
SUPPORT
ACT

Encourage the use of the Blue River as a form of recreation.

Related Goals:

MOVE

Summary

The Blue River is a natural asset to Columbia City's community. The river provides a natural attraction for park and recreation activities along it, such as, Morsches Park and the Blue River Trail. However, the river itself also provides a unique opportunity for recreation activities. Although the river may not be large enough for other boating activities, the Blue River could serve as a trail for kayaking. Kayaking could become a new activity that the city parks and recreation department could begin to promote as a local attraction and healthy lifestyle enhancement.

Columbia City already has existing sporting good department stores such as Dunham's. Most of these stores already sell the equipment needed for these activities. However, as the popularity of the activity increases and accessibility of the river is enhanced, more local sporting good stores, service providers/outfitters may be supported.

Case Study

Downtown South Bend, Indiana has a parks and recreation attraction unlike any other in the state of Indiana. The East Race Waterway is a 1,900 feet long man made waterway that was created as a tourist attraction to downtown South Bend. The waterway offers white water rafting to adventure seeking individuals. The East Race Waterway was built in 1984 and since then has been used by approximately 270,000 people. The city's parks and recreation department oversees the waterway's hours and fees. Since its creation, it has sparked new economic developments, parks, and public amenities along the waterway.

Figure 1q: Downtown South Bend East Race Waterway rafting.

PLAY: Ensure year-round authentic recreation and leisure experiences for all members of the community through active, passive and social spaces throughout the community.

Action Steps

1. Clear the Blue River of any debris or overgrowth that might block activity.
2. Create clean and easily accessible access points into the Blue River.
3. Create wayfinding and directional signage at access points and along the river.
4. Implement the access points and river trail heads as part of the city's parks department.
5. Explore opportunities for kayak rentals as part of the parks department or partnerships with local outfitters.

Resources

- Parks Department
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources
- Local Sporting Good Stores / Outfitters

Figure 1r: Individuals kayaking down a river.

Figure 1s: A river access point and boat launch.

Figure 1t: A river bank boat launch area.

1f

PLAY
LEARN
SUPPORT
ACT

Explore the possibility of creating a community aquatics center.

Related Goals:

EXPERIENCE

Summary

In recent years, Columbia City has been exploring the possibility of an outdoor community aquatics center. This aquatics center would provide a space for both competitive and recreational swimmers. The center would expand and enhance the city's overall parks and recreation network.

The community aquatics center creates an opportunity to attract new visitors and businesses to the community. It will become a local attraction for residents of Columbia City and also a destination for people of Whitley County and other surrounding areas to visit.

Careful consideration should be used when selecting a site for the aquatics center. It is important to locate the center in an area that is visible to traffic, offers opportunities for growth and development around it, and becomes a destination that brings activity to other nearby amenities and attractions. The creation of a large scale parks and recreation facility such as this should be used as a community development tool to help foster growth and activity within the community.

Case Study

The city of Greenwood, Indiana opened a new, large aquatics center Memorial Day of 2015. This aquatic center is the largest in the state of Indiana, south of Indianapolis. It offers water slides, tube slides, lazy river, lap pool, diving boards, children's area, splash area, sand play area, water aerobics, concessions, shelters, swim lessons, and party rentals. The aquatics center will offer day and season passes at an affordable rate. This is the latest addition to the city's already abundant park offerings. It's goal is to spark further park and recreation developments in the future in Greenwood.

Figure 1u: City of Greenwood, Indiana Aquatics Center

PLAY: Ensure year-round authentic recreation and leisure experiences for all members of the community through active, passive and social spaces throughout the community.

Action Steps

1. Explore possible locations for a new aquatics center. (Proximity to amenities, parks, downtown, trails, etc.)
2. Find and pursue potential sponsors and other funding sources.
3. Develop programming materials and strategies for the center.
4. Advertise the aquatics center as an economic development attraction to spark new development.

Resources

- Parks Department
- Community Development Department

Figure 1v: Children at an aquatic facility.

Figure 1w: Columbia City Burnworth Pool

Figure 1x: Youth swimming at a community pool.

2a

PLAY
LEARN
SUPPORT
ACT

Consider relocation of a new facility for the current Columbia City High School.

Related Goals:

LIVE

GROW

WORK

Summary

The current Columbia City High School is in poor condition and out of date. The building has negatively affected the reputation of the school system. To promote positive growth within the community, the Whitley County Consolidated School District and the City of Columbia City should consider the possibility of a new high school facility. Aside from internal collaboration, the school district and city also need the support of the community. The creation of a new high school would benefit the current students in Columbia City High School and become a more appealing option for interested families that are considering making Columbia City their home.

The existing Indian Springs Middle School is located just south of Columbia City's corporate boundaries on State Road 9. The school is surrounded by developable land. This location is a prime opportunity for the relocation of a new high school. If placed in this location, the Whitley County Consolidated School District would have a centralized location for the 6-12 grade school students. The surrounding land has potential to become prime real estate for families and businesses interested in living and working close to the schools. If the school decides to relocated, Columbia City should focus annexation efforts in this area to capture revenue from the future potential new housing and business developments.

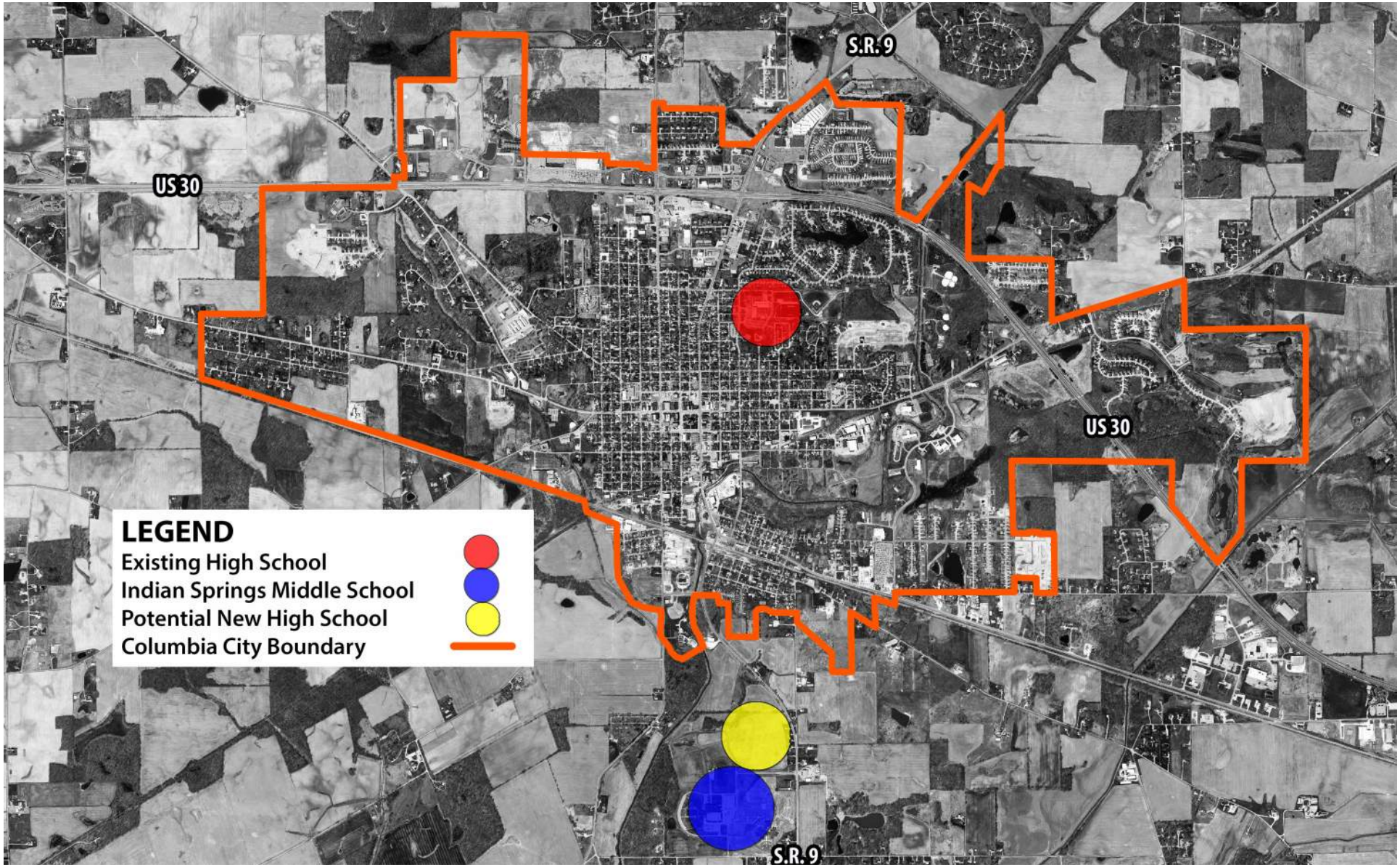
Action Steps

1. Explore appropriate locations for new a high school facility near Indian Springs.
2. Explore funding opportunities to purchase land and construct new high school.
3. Annex land surrounding Indian Springs and potential new high school as part of Columbia City.
4. Zone new land surrounding Indian Springs and potential new high school to encourage and allow various housing opportunities.

Resources

- School District

LEARN: Enhance education opportunities for K-12 and adult learners to reflect local, regional and national trends in the workforce. Create an environment for all students to continue to learn in traditional and non-traditional settings and environments.



2b

PLAY
LEARN
SUPPORT
ACT

Explore the possibility of a specialized downtown higher education satellite campus.

Related Goals:

EXPERIENCE

WORK

Summary

Universities are known for their active and lively environments. Universities create a constant and consistent flow of students and faculty within an area. Because of this, university towns rely on economic development opportunities that cater to students and the student demographic. In cities such as Columbia City, the presence of smaller university satellite campus or program can create a large impact for the local economy. This would be a large catalyst project in downtown Columbia City to help spark interest and redevelopment in this area.

Downtown Columbia City provides an opportunity for such a campus. Columbia City is surrounded by large universities in neighboring communities. There are over 7 universities with over 2,000 students within 60 miles of Columbia City. In addition, Columbia City is looking to revitalize the downtown area. The placement of a specific university program within the downtown would be a huge step towards establishing a base identity that the city could then build from. If created, this program could be a catalyst for new economic development opportunities, new educational partnership opportunities, and new housing opportunities.

Case Study

Frankfort, Indiana recently opened an Ivy Tech Center in their downtown area. This center is focused on building local workforce development. This progressive project in downtown Frankfort was made possibly by a collaboration between the mayor, the community and Ivy Tech. The main goal of the partnership is to open doors to local workforce opportunities. In addition to making a dramatic impact on the city's educated workforce for the industrial park and other employers, this project is also intended to help revitalize the downtown. The influx of students of all ages within the downtown campus area will create a population to support future economic development projects.

Figure 1y: Kaspar Hall Ivy Tech Community College located near Downtown Frankfort, Indiana.

LEARN: Enhance education opportunities for K-12 and adult learners to reflect local, regional and national trends in the workforce. Create an environment for all students to continue to learn in traditional and non-traditional settings and environments.

Action Steps

1. Identify specific location in downtown Columbia City for a potential satellite campus.
2. Explore programs and classes that would be beneficial to the Columbia City community.
3. Study demographics, statistics, and overall need to justify placement of a satellite campus within Columbia City.
4. Create a marketing and communications strategy to pursue universities.
5. Develop special incentives to attract potentially interested universities.

Resources

- Local Higher Education Universities
- Whitley County Economic Development Corporation
- Community Development Department
- Whitley County Redevelopment Commission
- Columbia City Redevelopment Commission

2c

PLAY
LEARN
SUPPORT
ACT

Promote various types of higher education tracks to the community.

Related Goals:

WORK

Summary

In today's society, students are taught at a young age to attend a 4 year university immediately out of high school if they want to succeed. Many students follow this path without consideration for other education alternatives. Because of this, the workforce of today is experiencing a surplus of open job positions that require an associates degree or a technical school certification. It is important to educate students of the opportunities and benefits of alternative educational paths.

There are many local employment opportunities within Whitley County and the State of Indiana that do not require a 4 year university degree. These jobs can offer employment to students already living in Whitley County who are looking for alternative education tracks and looking to stay in the community.

Case Study

80/20 is a local advanced manufacturing company located in Columbia City. This company is dedicated to hiring local employees and providing training and educational opportunities for its workers. According to an interview with the Whitley County Economic Development Corporation, CEO and Founder, Don Wood, stated that 90% of the workers at 80/20 are from the Whitley County area and the other 10% are from other parts of Indiana. He also stated that "there's been a rebirth, a revitalization of community college education in this area. We have 20 Ivy Tech grads working for us now."

80/20 and similar companies in this industry continue to grow and thrive in the north east Indiana region. Because of this, a large pool of good-paying skilled labor positions are continuously becoming available to the people that call this region home. These positions do not always require a 4-year college degree, and many of these companies provide its own training and training incentives for continued education.

Figure 1z: 80/20 Company Model

LEARN: Enhance education opportunities for K-12 and adult learners to reflect local, regional and national trends in the workforce. Create an environment for all students to continue to learn in traditional and non-traditional settings and environments.

PEOPLE.
LEARN.

Action Steps

1. Explore training options that are available with local businesses and universities.
2. Promote and encourage internships, and apprenticeships.
3. Reach out to students' parents to educate them of different education options.
4. Identify and share available local employment opportunities and the required or provided training options.
5. Evaluate ways to better communicate career options and related educational strategies to students.

Resources

- Local job training businesses/organizations
- School District
- Whitley County Economic Development Corporation
- Local Higher Education Universities
- Whitley County Community Foundation

Figure 2a: Cosmetology students.

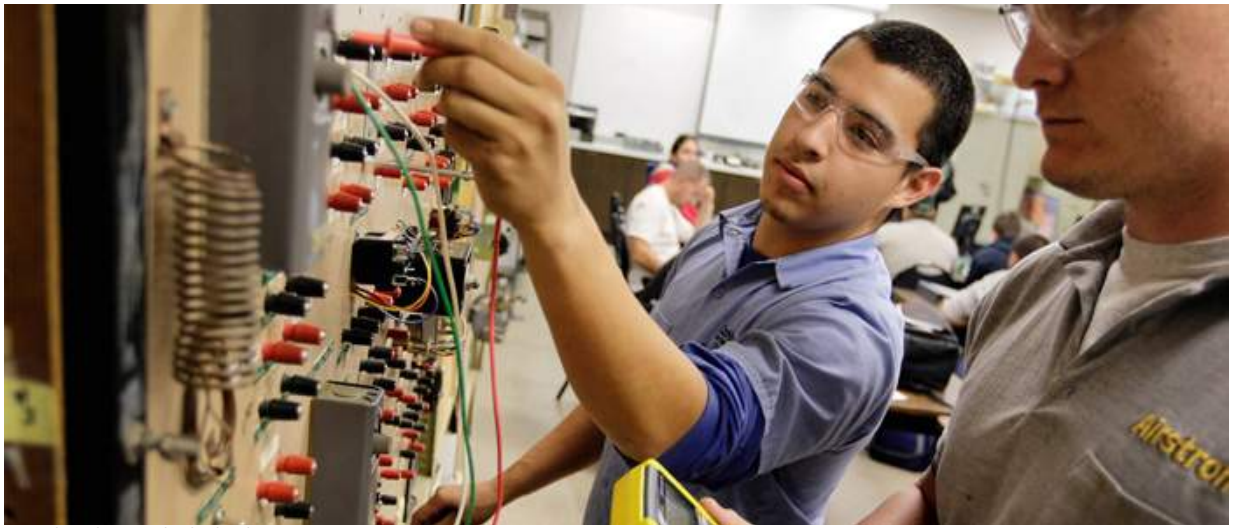


Figure 2b: Mechanics trade school student.

2d PLAY LEARN SUPPORT ACT

Explore possibility of a commuter shuttle to nearby higher education locations.

Related Goals:

MOVE

Summary

Columbia City is in close proximity to multiple higher education facilities in both Fort Wayne and Warsaw. Because of this, it is unlikely that Ivy Tech or another university will establish a large campus in the short term within Columbia City. However, It is a great opportunity for residents of Columbia City to live within 20 miles of multiple higher education opportunities. Full or part time students can live in Columbia City and commute to their classes. This creates an opportunity for students who enjoy living in Columbia City or are tied down to Columbia City for family or work purposes. No matter the situation, Columbia City is a centralized location for residents to be within half an hours distance to multiple higher education possibilities.

Two major factors to consider when commuting are time and cost. For some, it is too expensive to commute back and forth to classes. Other people might want to become college students but do not have a mode of transportation to get there. For others, the time commitment to driving to class is too time consuming. An express commuter shuttle specifically meant to transport students from Columbia City to campus could be a solution for all of these people. It could provide students with a wifi hotspot so that they can be productive while traveling. An express commuter shuttle would have an established pick up location within Columbia City that would take students directly to campus at a low cost.

Case Study

Similar to this commuter education shuttle idea, Indy Express Bus is a commuter shuttle bus that travels from Fishers to Downtown Indianapolis. This shuttle runs every weekday and is used by people commuting to work, school, or any other reason. The shuttle has only 3 pick up locations to allow quick travel back and forth without many stops. It provides an alternative transportation option that allows riders to relax, sleep, or get on their mobile wifi network to work. The cost of this shuttle service is very low and is sponsored by local organizations and partners along with state and federal grant money. Although many people living and working in the Fishers and downtown Indianapolis area own personal cars, the shuttle has managed to financially sustain itself.

Figure 2c: Indy Express Bus at local stop.

LEARN: Enhance education opportunities for K-12 and adult learners to reflect local, regional and national trends in the workforce. Create an environment for all students to continue to learn in traditional and non-traditional settings and environments.

Action Steps

1. Explore funding opportunities for a express shuttle to college campus' such as Ivy Tech and IPFW.
2. Explore possible partnerships with the universities and other local organizations.
3. Determine appropriate pick-up and drop-off locations.
4. Advertise and encourage shuttle service to the community and current Columbia City students.

Resources

- Local Higher Education Universities
- Whitley County Economic Development Corporation

Figure 2d: Ivy Tech campus in Warsaw, Indiana.

Figure 1e: IPFW gateway sign.

Figure 2f: Ivy Tech lobby.

2e

PLAY
LEARN
SUPPORT
ACT

Explore a location for a home-schooling collaborative learning center.

Related Goals:

SHARE

SUPPORT

Summary

In today's society, more and more families are choosing to home school. This has become a national trend, especially in rural communities. Because of this, more and more families that choose home schooling are relying on technology as a tool for teaching and learning. However, in a rural community such as Columbia City, technology and other resources may not always be easily accessible. Home schooling students should also be provided with the best educational tools and resources available. Home schooled students are still part of the youth community and will someday be contributing members and workers. It is important to offer the best educational tools and resources to help support a promising future.

It is important for home schooling students to have their own work space. In addition, home schooling students lose the opportunity to work in collaborative group environments when taught from home. The Peabody Public Library, located in Columbia City, is a great education and technology resource. It has wifi access, computer lab, and open available space to lease. Creation of a home schooling collaborative learning center would provide students and parent educators a facility to share resources, and ideas to provide the best education possible.

Case Study

Fort Wayne, Indiana offers an Educational Opportunity Center for people within the Fort Wayne Community. This non-profit agency offers educational services such as advising, mentoring, reading and writing classes, computer classes, and college preparation courses. This center also provides home schooling families within the Fort Wayne Area Home School Organization with their own space with books, classes, and computers. The Fort Wayne Area Home School space is available Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm.

Figure 2g: The Educational Opportunity Center in Fort Wayne, Indiana offers classes and home schooling space.

LEARN: Enhance education opportunities for K-12 and adult learners to reflect local, regional and national trends in the workforce. Create an environment for all students to continue to learn in traditional and non-traditional settings and environments.

PEOPLE.
LEARN.

Action Steps

1. Explore possible locations for learning center.
2. Explore private and public funding opportunities.
3. Advertise center to local home schooling community.
4. Request help and support of local home schooling educators and students.
5. Appoint board/committee to oversee the program.

Resources

- Indiana Home-school Support and Resource Directory
- Indiana Foundation for Home Schooling

Figure 2h: Mother helping home-schooled student

Figure 2i: Homeschool students collaborating in a learning center

3a

PLAY
LEARN
SUPPORT
ACT

Create a Keep Columbia City Beautiful Program.

Related Goals:

EXPERIENCE

Summary

Community pride can be seen in the appearance and cleanliness of the neighborhoods. It is important to offer hard working citizens that are passionate about their home the opportunity to make a positive impact on the community. Local organizations that are dedicated to bettering the community are a great place to form relationships, promote teamwork, and establish pride in the community. Establishing a Keep Columbia City Beautiful program would benefit both the city's natural and built environment and the people who live, work and play here. By creating vibrant public spaces and an overall more visually appealing community, Columbia City would gain more attention from potential residents and business owners. The visual value of the community would be strengthened and the sense of pride in the community would grow. A community volunteer organization such as Keep Columbia City Beautiful would be a great step towards transforming neighborhoods and encouraging positive action within the community. This program could be utilized as part of the City Parks Department, part of the Main Street Association, or as a separate organization.

Case Study

"Our mission is to engage diverse communities to create vibrant public places, helping people and nature thrive." This is the mission statement for Keep Indianapolis Beautiful, a local non-for-profit organization located in Indianapolis, Indiana. Today, the organization supports an average of 500 community improvement projects a year with over 30,000 volunteers. Volunteers in this organization help restore neighborhoods by cleaning up litter, planting trees and plants, building playgrounds and parks, and many other projects. The organization is committed to building a better community through teamwork, responsibility, and excellence. Overall, the organization has been a huge success over the years because of their creative combination of combining teamwork with community based projects. This combination helps build relationships and establish a sense of pride for the community and its built environment.

Figure 2j: Keep Indianapolis Beautiful Headquarters in Indianapolis Indiana

SUPPORT: Provide resources and opportunities to provide support for underprivileged and disadvantaged members of the community as well as opportunities to volunteer and serve.

Action Steps

1. Identify specific projects and areas within Columbia City that could benefit from projects related to Keep Columbia City Beautiful.
2. Advertise and market the brand and mission of Keep Columbia City Beautiful to encourage local volunteers to get involved.
3. Explore funding opportunities to help support and grow Keep Columbia City Beautiful.
4. Reach out to local businesses to help sponsor and fund specific projects.
5. Keep detailed records of all completed projects, membership, funding, etc. to track the impact of this community organization.
6. Recognize volunteers who have made a positive impact.

Resources

- Parks Department
- Master Gardeners
- Non-for-profits

Figure 2k: Volunteers for Keep Indianapolis Beautiful.

Figure 2l: Volunteers planting trees.

Figure 2m: A neighborhood trash cleanup event.

3b

PLAY
LEARN
SUPPORT
ACT

Create a community garden.

Related Goals:

EXPERIENCE

Summary

A community garden is a great way to create social interaction and pride within a neighborhood. The Columbia City Farmers Market is already a popular event amongst the community. The creation of a community garden, or multiple gardens, would offer an opportunity for members interested in the farmers market to participate in another way. A community garden is a great way to encourage members of the community of all ages to get involved and meet their neighbors. It provides a relaxing and fun recreational activity that can be shared with members with the same interests. Active members of the community garden could use their products as food for their families or products for the farmers market.

A centralized community garden would become a new park and recreation attraction within Columbia City. The garden would also offer ambitious members that are passionate about gardening the opportunity to create their own organization to grow and enhance the program. Over time, a community garden could become two, or three, community gardens. The potential of how much this program would grow would depend on the amount of involvement and interest the community takes in it once it is established.

Case Study

Unity Gardens is a community garden organization in South Bend, Indiana. This non-profit organization was originally founded as part of the Severn River Association and began as a single community garden organization that grew with community involvement and interest. In 2003, Unity Gardens received funding from foundation grants, corporate and individual donations, and local government support to become its own organization. It has become an organization dedicated to building community partnerships through the creation of greening projects and environmental enhancements. The organization grants awards of up to $1,000 twice a year to applying schools, churches, or neighborhoods looking to create a community based garden or project. To date, the Unity Gardens has awarded a total of $150,000 to more than 150 organization in the Anne Arundel County area.

Figure 2n: Unity Gardens Owners in South Bend, Indiana

SUPPORT: Provide resources and opportunities to provide support for underprivileged and disadvantaged members of the community as well as opportunities to volunteer and serve.

Action Steps

1. Explore location opportunities for a community garden.
2. Encourage community involvement in the community garden.
3. Utilize the community garden as part of the farmers market to help grow interest and investment of the farmers market.
4. Appoint staff or committee members to manage community garden.
5. Explore funding opportunities for more community based garden and place making projects.

Resources

- Parks Department
- Columbia City Farmers Market
- Non-for-profits

Figure 2o: Family working together in a community garden.

Figure 2p: Man watering plants in a community garden.

Figure 2q: An urban garden in Portland, Oregon

3C
PLAY
LEARN
SUPPORT
ACT

Educate dispatch of available support services to inform callers in need of help.

Related Goals:

SHARE

Summary

With so many support programs and organizations within the area, it is hard to direct people in the appropriate direction. In Columbia City, the resources available to people in need may not be advertised or easily known. Because of this, 911 dispatch plays an important role in directing callers in need to the best organization that could help them. Dispatch operators should be fully aware of all support resources within Columbia City and Whitley County in order to make sure citizens are comfortable and trusting to call for help when unaware of where else to go.

List of Organizations

Columbia City and Whitley County provides a large amount of support resources for people with all kinds of needs. Many organizations are church groups, non-profits, or even government programs. Some of these resources include:

- Community Foundation
- Habitat for Humanity
- Humane Society
- Huntington Whitley County Group Home
- Lighthouse Interfaith Mission
- Salvation Army
- United Way
- Whitley County Domestic Violence Task Force
- Whitley County Victims Assistance
- WIC Federal Assistance Program

SUPPORT: Provide resources and opportunities to provide support for underprivileged and disadvantaged members of the community as well as opportunities to volunteer and serve.

PEOPLE.
SUPPORT.

Action Steps

1. Gather educational materials from all support organizations within Whitley County.
2. Keep current files for all support education materials on hand at the library and other community centers.
3. Hold educational workshops to inform dispatch, police officers, and all other organizations of the available support organization resources within the community.
4. Create marketing materials to encourage people in need to call Columbia City Police Department for any help.
5. Utilize the existing marketing materials, such as the City Scene, for information of support opportunities.

Resources

- Police Department
- Fire Department
- Local Non-for-Profit Organizations
- Peabody Public Library

Figure 2r: Dispatcher in an emergency communications center

Figure 2s: Representatives of the Whitley County Domestic Violence Task Force.

Figure 2t: Teamwork

3d PLAY LEARN **SUPPORT** ACT

Encourage continuous communication and collaboration between local food pantries.

Related Goals:

SHARE

Summary

Hunger is a continuously growing problem within the United States. In Whitley County, this is also true. In 2011, more than 2,700 households received food stamps in Whitley County (Stats Indiana, 2012). This equates to nearly $350,000 per month of federal dollars being distributed to assist families in need within Whitley County (Stats Indiana, 2012). In Columbia City, 8.4% lived below the poverty line in 2012 (US Census Bureau 2012). Of this 8.4% there were 245 children and 135 senior citizens.

Multiple food pantries throughout the county help citizens of Columbia City fight hunger. Many of these food pantries are run by faith based organizations. These organizations each have their own unique mission and members. Because of this, there is currently little communication and unification efforts when it comes to food pantries and programs. To ensure proper use of the system, to serve as many people in need as possible, and to beat hunger in Whitley County as a community, it is necessary that these local organizations regularly communicate with one another. It is important to monitor the usage of these resources in order to help avoid loss or abuse of the system. Something as simple as creating some form of online website could be used as a communication tool between these different organizations. A system needs to be used to help open communication and monitor usage in order to ensure these support resources are used to their full potential.

List of Local Organizations and Food Pantries:

- Big Lake Church Food Pantry
- Churubusco United Methodist Church Food Pantry
- Columbia City United Methodist Church Food Pantry
- Community Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Indiana
- Community of Hope Church Food Pantry
- Council on Aging
- Grace Lutheran Church Food Pantry
- South Whitley Area Food Bank
- Victory Christian Fellowship Food Pantry

SUPPORT: Provide resources and opportunities to provide support for underprivileged and disadvantaged members of the community as well as opportunities to volunteer and serve.

Action Steps

1. Encourage local food pantries to regularly communicate to issue specific tasks and goals to fight hunger.
2. Explore possibility of a consolidated food pantry.
3. Keep detailed record of food pantry users, contributors, and volunteers.
4. Explore community wide events and programs.
5. Enhance and increase volunteering population and participation.

Resources

- Whitley County Community Foundation
- Local Food Pantries and non-for-profits
- Serve Indiana
- United Way of Whitley County

Figure 2u: Volunteers assisting a food bank customer.

Figure 2v: A stocked food bank.

Figure 2w: Sorting canned foods

4a

PLAY
LEARN
SUPPORT
ACT

Create a Downtown Strategic Investment Plan to identify specific strategies to revitalize the downtown.

Related Goals:

LIVE

EXPERIENCE

MOVE

WORK

PRESERVE

Summary

Successful downtown revitalization requires forward thinking investment and creativity. Because of this, strategic planning should be done to determine the best plan of attack.

Currently, downtown Columbia City is nearly a blank slate for possibilities of reinvestment. Many buildings in the downtown area are vacant, underutilized, or in need of repairs. These characteristics are perfect opportunities to bring in fresh new ideas and uses in order to activate the area. The downtown investment strategy plan would help identify the specific areas in need of reinvestment and ideas for what investments and uses should be placed there. Once this is complete, the plan can highlight key action steps that need to be made to make the plans a reality. Overall, a Downtown Strategic Investment Plan is the first step towards effectively and intelligently making positive changes in downtown Columbia City.

Case Study

In 2014, Wabash, Indiana was designated as one of Indiana's "Stellar Communities". With grant money from multiple organizations participating in the Stellar Communities program, Wabash was awarded the funds to complete some of the local community development projects identified in their Strategic Investment Plan. The strategic investment plan is a key component of the Stellar Communities program. Once selected as a finalist, all applying communities must submit a strategic investment plan as part of their application. This plan helps illustrate clear and specific goals and objectives for projects that will benefit the community. The plans identifies detailed descriptions, responsible parties, project cost estimates, and time lines and phases. These plans help establish an overall vision for the near future of a community and illustrates a plan of action for the projects declared.

Figure 2x: Downtown Wabash, Indiana Facades

ACT: Ensure that leadership of the community is prepared to plan, strategize and incrementally and effectively implement the Columbia City vision of this plan through appropriate policy and action.

Action Steps

1. Hire a consultant to develop a Downtown Strategic Investment Plan for Columbia City.
2. Identify specific goals, ideas, and projects for Columbia City.
3. Identify necessary feasibility studies, economic impact studies, and project cost details as part of the strategic plan.
4. List specific action steps to implement projects.
5. Identify and pursue funding sources to advance phases of projects.
6. Utilize funding to implement and complete projects.
7. Update plan as projects are completed.

Resources

- Private Consultant
- Community Development Department
- Whitley County Economic Development Corporation
- Columbia City Main Street Association
- Columbia City Redevelopment Commission

Figure 2y: A series of storefronts in Downtown Columbia City.

Figure 2z: The Whitley County Courthouse.

Figure 3a: Historic downtown building facades.

4b PLAY LEARN SUPPORT ACT

Follow the Critical Path Strategies identified in this plan as first priorities.

Related Goals:

PLAY

LEARN

SUPPORT

LIVE

EXPERIENCE

MOVE

GROW

WORK

SHARE

SERVE

PRESERVE

Summary

Critical Path Strategies are created to identify the first priorities on which the City should be focusing their current efforts and money on. These are essentially the "low-hanging fruits" of the strategies listed in this document. In some cases, these strategies have already been discussed and planned for during this process. Completion of critical path strategies will have a positive social and economic impact on the community and set the stage for pursuing other identified goals and strategies.

Action Steps

1. Appoint specific task forces/action teams for strategies.
2. Follow action steps of critical path strategies identified in this plan. (See Page 19)
3. Regularly update the project website of progress.
4. Once complete, identify next strategy priorities to pursue.

Resources

- Appointed task forces/action teams
- Resources identified in strategies identified as critical path strategies
- Mayor's Office

(See Page 17)

Level Up.

CRITICAL PATH STRATEGIES

GOAL	STRATEGY
Play.	1b
Learn.	2a
Support.	3c
Act.	4a
Live.	1a
Experience.	2b
Move.	3e
Grow.	4a
Work.	1a, 1b
Serve.	2b
Share.	4a, 4b

4C
PLAY
LEARN
SUPPORT
ACT

Maintain and Update the Columbia City Comprehensive Plan website.

Related Goals:

SHARE

Summary

Self evaluation and providing status updates to the public are the best ways to ensure that this plan is utilized to its full potential. An online website for the Columbia City Comprehensive Plan has already been created and used as part of the planning process for this plan. The website has been linked to the city's current website. This comprehensive plan website should be maintained and updated to provide a media outlet to inform the public of the city's ongoing progress.

The Mayor's Office and Columbia City already distribute updates to the community on the city website through "The Mayors Corner" , the "Mayor's Memo" and "City Scene". These news outlets help inform and update the public of current news and events taking place in Columbia City. Similarly, the comprehensive plan website should be dedicated to informing the public of the city's completed, current, and future plans for the strategies identified in this plan.

Case Study

Noblesville, Indiana recently adopted their 2013 PLANoblesville Comprehensive Plan Update. The city's website provides a link on their home page directly to the projects website. Here, the final document is viewable for the public. The site also provides a FAQ page, a contact us page, and a section for recent news and updates regarding the plan. Overall, the city provides an informative and updated resource for the public to ensure the success and progress of the PlaNoblesville document.

Figure 3b: Plan Noblesville Comprehensive Plan Logo

ACT: Ensure that leadership of the community is prepared to plan, strategize and incrementally and effectively implement the Columbia City vision of this plan through appropriate policy and action.

Action Steps

1. Appoint specific task forces/action teams for strategies listed in this plan.
2. Annually gather status updates for current and future strategies, from responsible parties.
3. Update the Columbia City Comprehensive Plan website of current, future, and completed strategies.
4. Create goals and timelines for strategies.
5. Allow on-going public input and comments to be heard.

Resources

- Communications Department
- Appointed Task Forces/Action Teams
- Mayor's Office

Figure 3c: Pages from the Columbia City Comprehensive Plan Level Up Project Website.

LEAVE PAGE BLANK

PLACES.

LIVE. EXPERIENCE. MOVE. GROW.

PLACES.

SUMMARY.

The Places section of the Plan contains goals for Columbia City that are related to physical projects, locations, festivals and culture within the community. These goals include Live, Experience, Move, and Grow. They are all important to consider in order to establish a specific identity and sense of place within the community. Existing conditions were gathered and analyzed to establish appropriate strategies related to these goals. This section will discuss the findings of Columbia City's existing conditions, the analysis results of these findings, and the strategies and action steps needed in order to level up the Live, Experience, Move, and Grow goals of the community.

GOALS AND TOPICS.

	LIVE.	EXPERIENCE.	MOVE.	GROW.
GOALS.	**Promote safe, quality neighborhoods with varying styles, densities, products and price points for all stages of life.**	**Create and nurture a genuine identity for Columbia City that attracts visitors and potential long-term members of the community.**	**Increase connectivity for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians across the community. Enhance connections to major destinations for improved safety, function, efficiency, experience, and economic development.**	**Ensure the strategic and intentional growth of residential, commercial and industrial areas for the most benefit, for the most people, in the most ways.**
TOPICS.	• Population Density • Proximity • Housing Demographics • Property Values • Crime Rates • Downtown Living	• Festivals • Events • Gateways and Wayfinding • Public Art • Design Standards • Parking	• Transportation • Circulation • Trails/Sidewalks • Walkscores • Bike Lanes • Rail • Traffic/Accident	• Land Use • Zoning • TIF Boundaries • Annexation • Population

LIVE.

Demographics. Housing. Density.

In order to establish appropriate strategies to promote safe, quality neighborhoods with varying styles, densities and price points as stated in the Live goal statement, we must first take a look at the existing demographic information regarding the people that live in Columbia City. A demographic overview establishes a firm understanding of the current state of the people that live within Columbia City. By understanding the current state, we can then begin to establish a strategy towards achieving the future vision.

Columbia City is a predominantly white, small town community. The median age of a resident of Columbia City is 10% lower than the state average of 40.1 years old. This illustrates that Columbia City is a slightly more young community than the state average and home to many young families and individuals. Median home values have continued to rise throughout the years. In Columbia City nearly 28% of residents rent. The average household size in Columbia City is 2.3 persons per house. However, only 61.1% of these households are family households. The relationship between the results of the average household size and the percentage of family households suggests that a large number of residents are living under the same room as roommates or unmarried couples.

The overall population density of Columbia City is considered low at 1,696 people per square mile. The population density map on the following page illustrates the population densities of the city in more detail by block group. Columbia City needs to focus on improving the overall population density of the entire city and also within the downtown core.

48.8% MALE, FEMALE **51.2%**

95.4% WHITE/CAUCASIAN

COLUMBIA CITY MEDIAN AGE **36.1**

40.1 INDIANA MEDIAN AGE

$113,750
2013 MEDIAN HOUSE VALUE

$641
2012 MEDIAN RENT

$857
2012 MEDIAN REAL ESTATE PROPERTY TAX

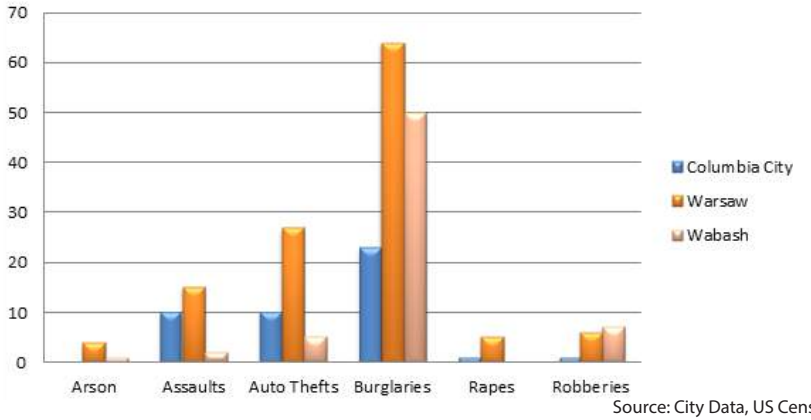
10 NEW SINGLE FAMILY HOMES IN 2012
AVERAGE COST $193,700

2.3 AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE

FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS **61.1%**

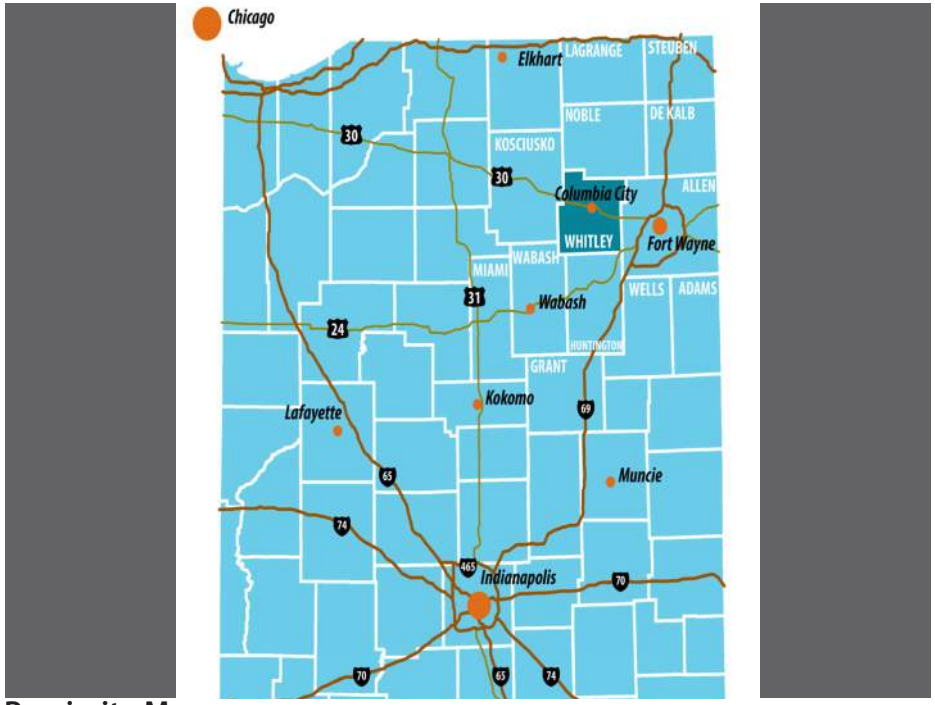
1,696 PEOPLE/SQ. MILE

2012 Crime Rates

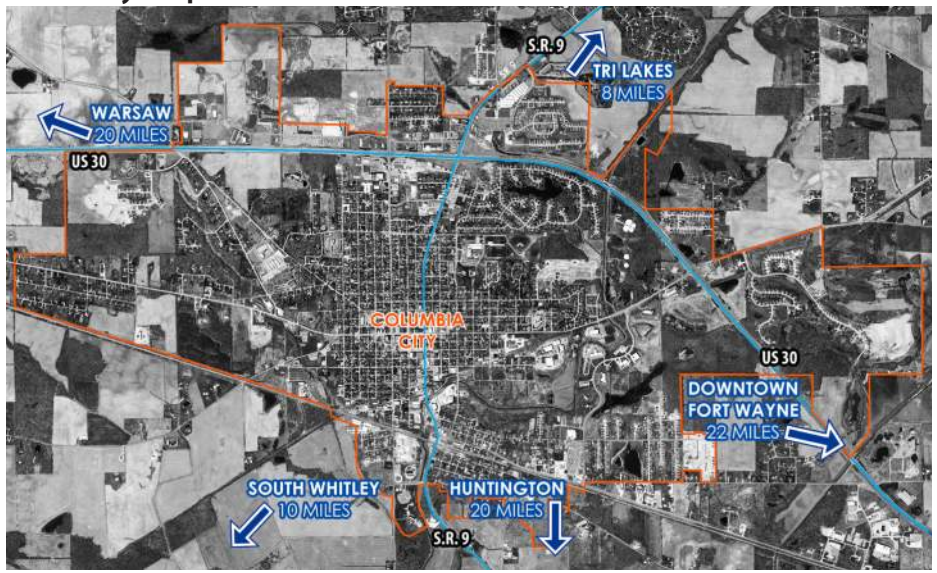


Source: City Data, US Census

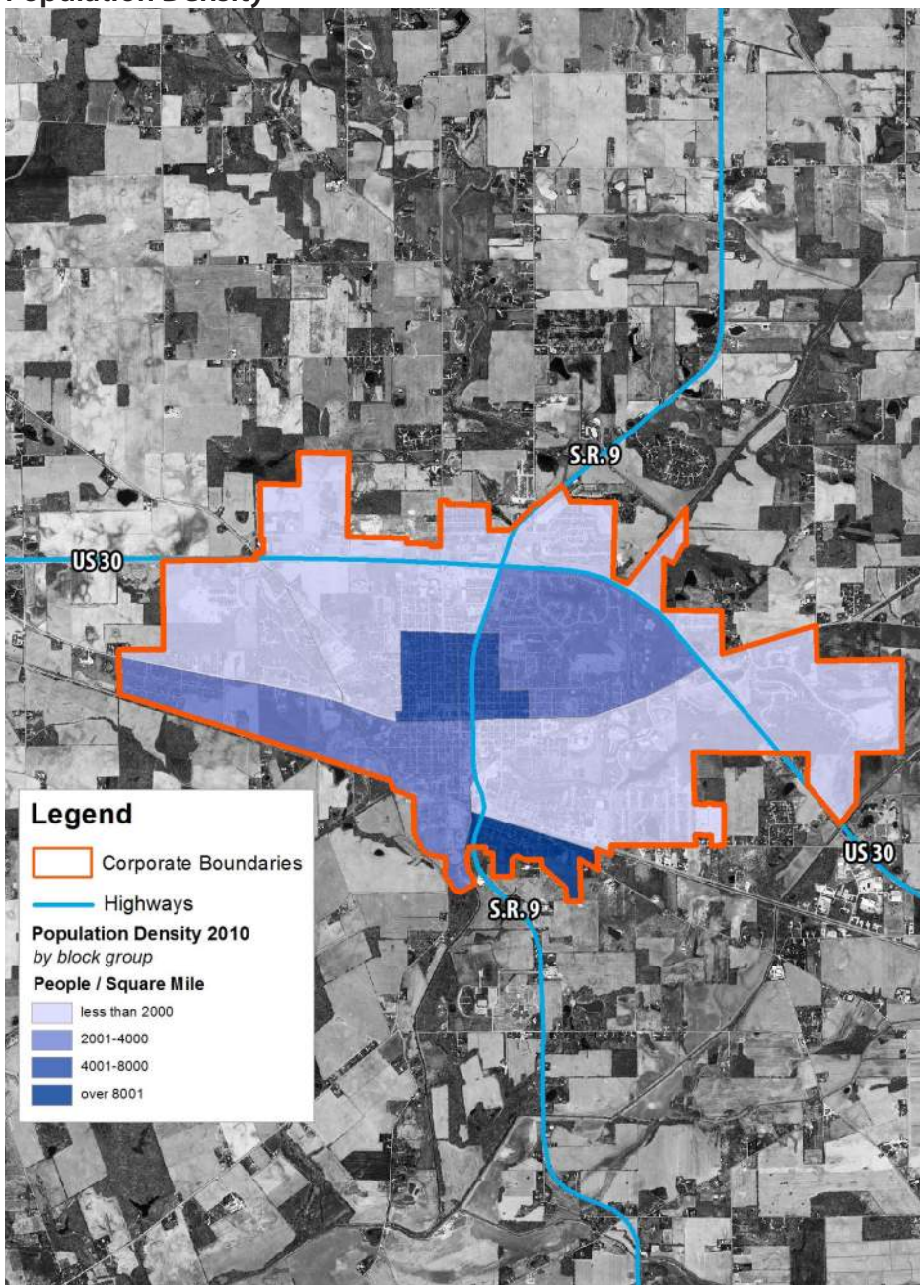
Regional Map



Proximity Map



Population Density



EXPERIENCE.

Festivals. Events. Culture. Identity.

The experience residents and visitors have in Columbia City is important in order to retain and attract new members to the community. The best way to enhance an experience of a place is through culture and the arts. There are a handful of existing festivals, markets, events, and other community attractions that unite residents and establish a sense of place and pride. The existing inventory of these events include:

- **Christmas Parade**
- **Columbia City Library Events**
- **County Autumn Art / Fall Festival**
- **Farmers Market**
- **Haunted Jail Halloween Attraction**
- **Old Settlers Days Festival**
- **Summer Concert Series**
- **Taste of the Town**
- **The Annual Mihsihkinaahkwa Pow Wow Festival**
- **Whitley County 4-H Fair and Fairgrounds**

The visual experience of a place is also important. The visual experience begins to create an identity and sense of place. This identity can be created through the use of public art, gateways, wayfinding systems, architecture, public open spaces, and overall aesthetics.

The last component of a visitors experience is parking. Parking is a constant concern when experiencing a place. Downtown Columbia City has enough parking to serve the community. However, the parking regulations downtown do not encourage activity. Most parking downtown is a two-hour limit. This does not encourage visitors to conduct business for longer than two hours, experience the shopping, eating, and event activities at their own leisure.

Old Settlers Days

Art Festival

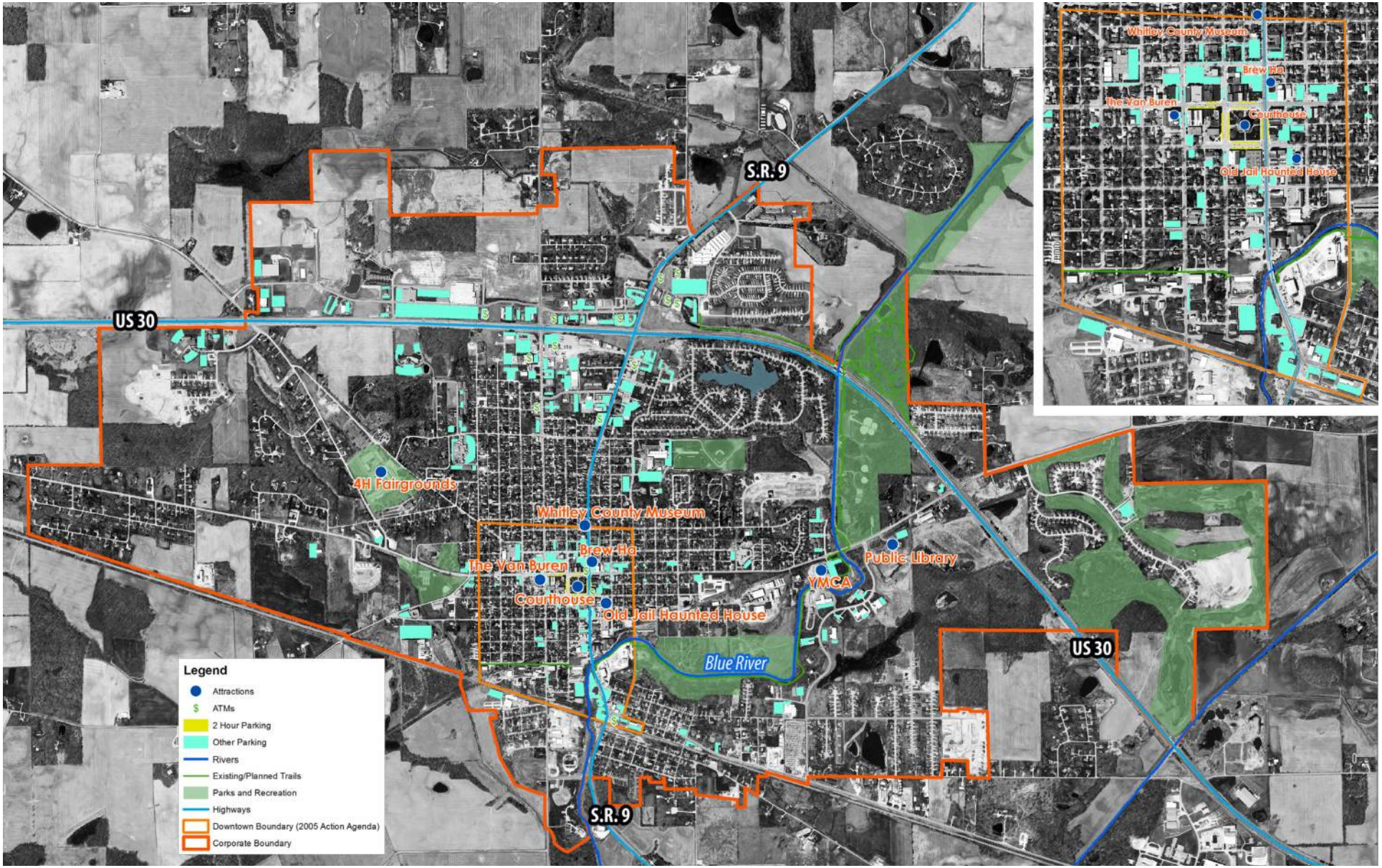
City Square

Farmers Market

4H Fairgrounds

Downtown Parking

Existing Experience Attractions



Downtown

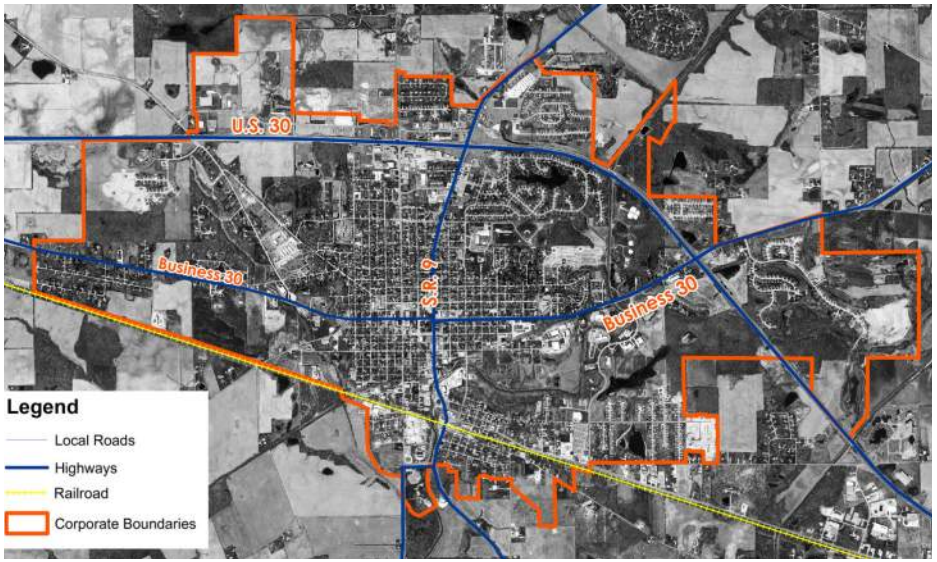
MOVE.

Roads. Trails. Rail.

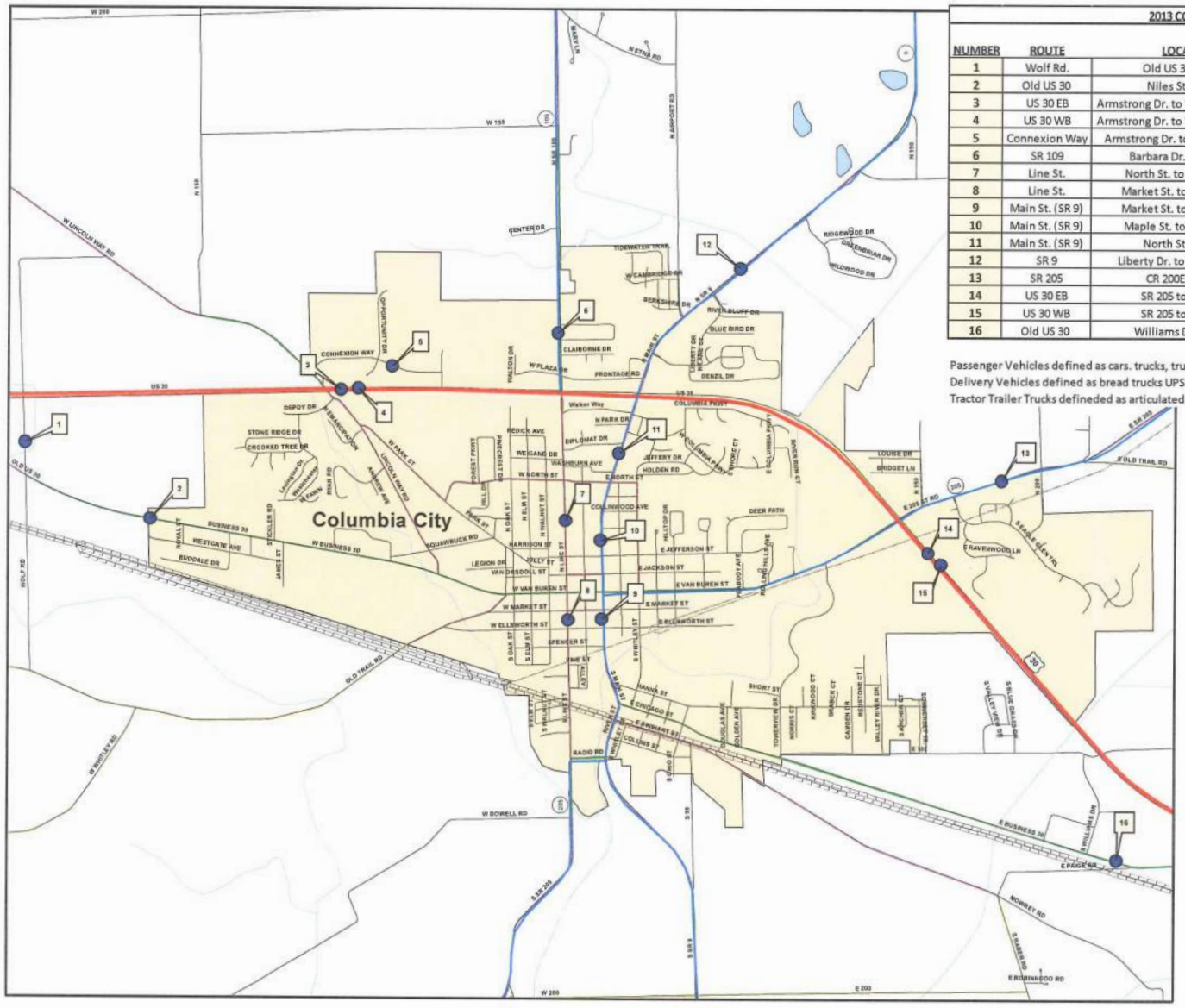
Columbia City has well rounded inventory of all things transportation related. It has major highways, local roads, a trail system, sidewalks, active rail line, and a river. These were all studied in order to create strategies designed to improve the goals related to MOVE.

Columbia City is located off of US Highway 30 and State Road 9. These two highways are the main east/west and north/south corridors to the neighboring communities. A large amount of commercial development has occurred north of the city north and south of US 30. US 30 is a very busy corridor and consequently creates very busy intersections with other roads causing many congestion and accident related issues. Business 30 or Van Buren Street is another major east/west corridor. This corridor passes through downtown Columbia City and extends to both the east and west municipal boundaries. SR 9 is a major north/south corridor that passes through downtown and connects to US 30 on the north side of town and the school campus just south of the City boundary.

Vehicular Circulation and Rail



Vehicular Traffic Count Map



2013 COLUMBIA CITY TRAFFIC COUNT DATA

NUMBER	ROUTE	LOCATION	AADT	Passenger Vehicles	Delivery Vehicles	Tractor Trailer Trucks
1	Wolf Rd.	Old US 30 to US 30	347	322	25	4
2	Old US 30	Niles St. to US 30	1406	1307	99	17
3	US 30 EB	Armstrong Dr. to W. Lincolnway Rd.	9462	6535	2927	2298
4	US 30 WB	Armstrong Dr. to W. Lincolnway Rd.	9373	6356	3017	2439
5	Connexion Way	Armstrong Dr. to Opportunity Dr.	2024	1911	113	20
6	SR 109	Barbara Dr. to Linda Ln.	5466	5057	409	118
7	Line St.	North St. to Jefferson St.	4994	4433	561	64
8	Line St.	Market St. to Ellsworth St.	5107	4789	318	62
9	Main St. (SR 9)	Market St. to Ellsworth St.	8719	7466	1253	378
10	Main St. (SR 9)	Maple St. to Jefferson St.	9190	8078	1112	468
11	Main St. (SR 9)	North St. to US 30	9652	8389	1263	585
12	SR 9	Liberty Dr. to Wildwood Dr.	6399	5767	632	205
13	SR 205	CR 200E to US 30	4093	3664	429	167
14	US 30 EB	SR 205 to CR 200W	10836	7423	3413	2383
15	US 30 WB	SR 205 to CR 200W	10735	7712	3023	2411
16	Old US 30	Williams Dr. to US 30	3071	2111	960	123

Passenger Vehicles defined as cars. trucks, trucks with trailers According to FHWA Class
Delivery Vehicles defined as bread trucks UPS vans, According to FHWA Class
Tractor Trailer Trucks defineded as articulated tractor trailers trucks According to FHWA Class

Map produced by Region III-A 2013

Walk Score

The purpose of a Walk Score is to promote walkable neighborhoods. The score is on a scale of 0-100 and can be applied to any address. The scores are ranked and defined as followed:

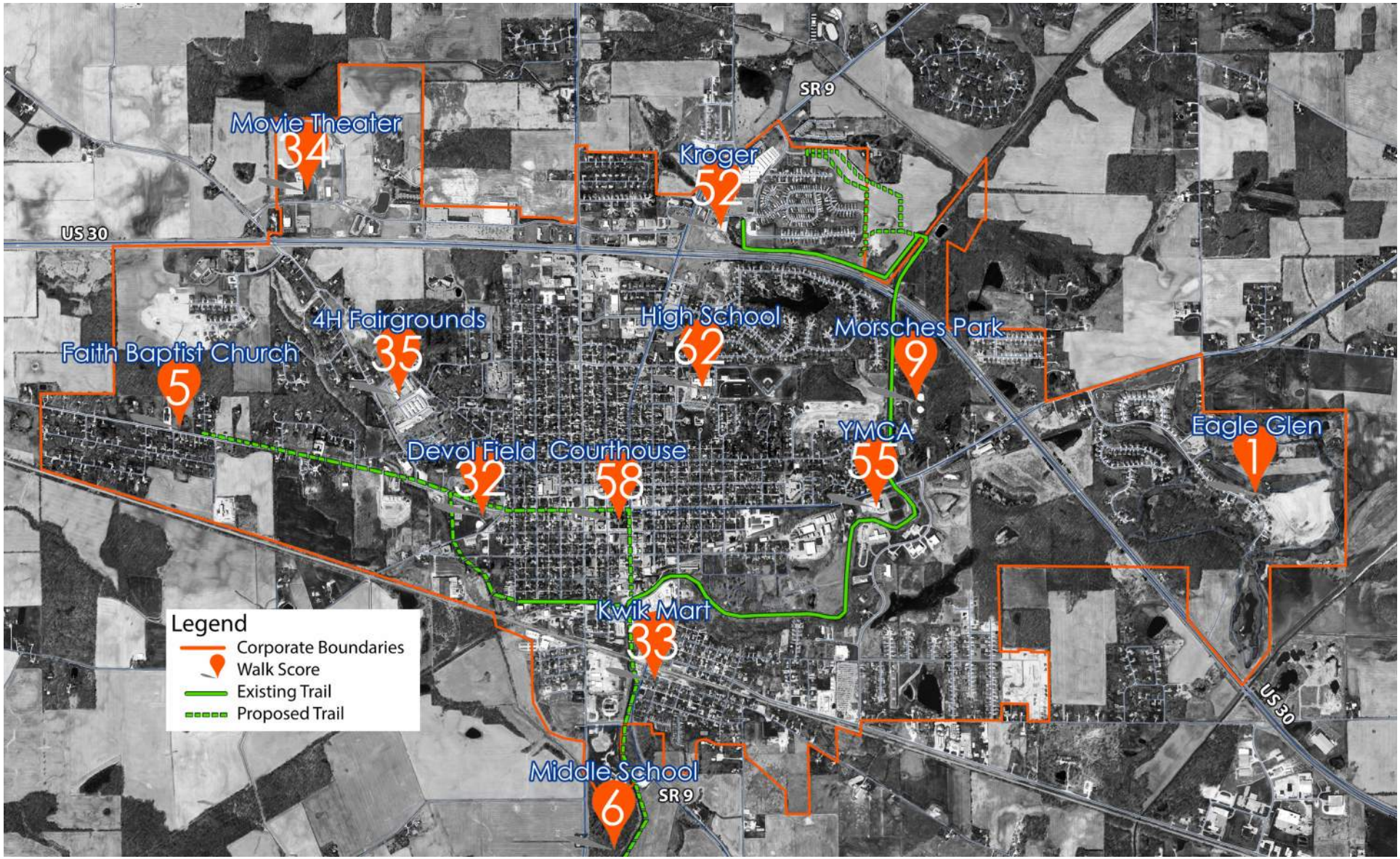
- **90-100 : Walkers Paradise** - Daily errands do not require a car.
- **70-89 : Very Walkable** - Most errands can be accomplished on foot.
- **50-69 : Somewhat Walkable** - Some errands can be accomplished on foot.
- **25-49 : Car-Dependent** - Most errands require a car.
- **0-24 : Car-Dependent** - Almost all errands require a car.

Walkability is important for multiple reasons. Strong walkability improves connectivity to the people and places people use and love within a community. It also encourages and establishes a healthier community with less environmental impact. Strong walkability has financial value and savings by lessening reliance on automobile transportation. Nationally, on average, one point of Walk Score is estimated to be worth $3k in home value.

Walk Scores are determined by a number of factors. Maximum points are awarded to locations with nearby amenities within a 5 minute walk or .25 mile distance. These amenities include grocery stores, parks, restaurants, transit locations, farmers markets, businesses, hospitals, and recreation opportunities. Less points are awarded to locations with amenities that are more distant than .25 miles. In addition to amenity proximity, a Walk Score will also measure pedestrian friendliness by analyzing population density, connectivity paths, block length, and intersection quality.

WALK SCORE LOCATIONS AND SOME NEARBY AMENITIES	
High School - 62 Pizza King .1 miles Dairy Queen .1 miles Peoples Federal Savings Bank .2 miles Whitley County Museum .3 miles Main Wear .4 miles Brewha .4 miles Aldi .5 miles	**Morsches Park - 9** Mary Raber Elementary School .5 miles Brewha .9 miles Whitley County Museum .9 miles Kroger 1 mile
YMCA - 55 Morsches Park .3 miles Mary Raber Elementary School .3 miles Morsches Builders Mart .4 miles Brewha .8 miles Columbia City Farmers Market .8 miles Whitley County Museum .8 miles	**Courthouse - 58** The Nook .08 miles Downtown on the Square .2 miles Brewha .2 miles Columbia City Farmers Market .2 miles Star Financial Bank .2 miles Devol Field .3 miles Columbia City High School .5 miles
Devol Field - 32 The Nook .3 miles Whitley County Museum .4 miles Brewha .5 miles Columbia City Farmers Market .5 miles Star Financial Bank .5 miles Columbia City High School .6 miles	**Movie Theater - 34** CrossRoads Bank .3 miles Dunkin' Donuts .3 miles Papa John's Pizza .5 miles Walmart .6 miles
4H Fair Grounds - 35 Devol Fields .4 miles Los Tequilas .6 miles Dunkin Donuts .6 miles Aldi .6 miles Hardees .6 miles Columbia City High School .8 miles	**Kroger - 52** McDonalds .1 miles Subway .2 miles Pizza Hut .2 miles Aldi .6 miles Columbia City High School .6 miles Morsches Park .8 miles
Eagle Glen Golf Course - 1 Faith Christian Academy .8 miles	**Kwik Mart - 33** Subway .03 miles Duff's Bar - .06 miles Columbia City Farmers Market .5 miles Morsches Builders Mart .5 miles Brewha .6 miles
Middle School - 6 Little Turtle Elementary School - .3 miles Subway - 1.1 miles Columbia City Farmers Market - 1.6 miles Whitley County Museum - 1.7 miles	**Faith Baptist Church - 5** Devol Field - .6 miles CrossRoads Bank - .8 miles Dunkin' Donuts - .8 miles Bones Theater - .9 miles

Trails and Walk Score

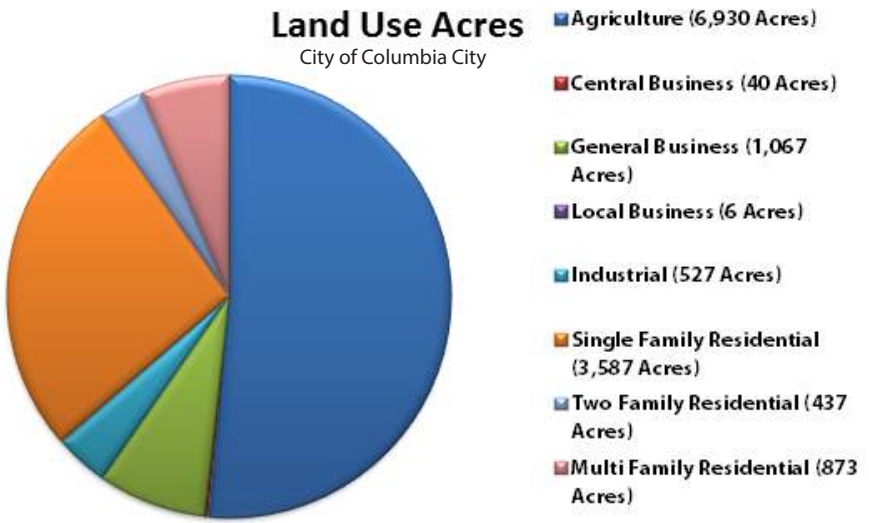


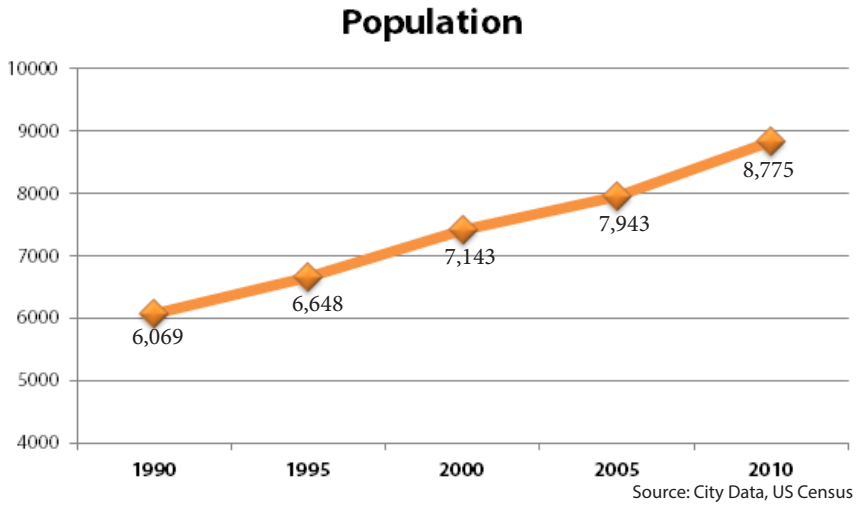
GROW.

Zoning. Land Use. Population.

Columbia City covers an area of 5.21 square miles. According to the US Census data, in 2000, the population was 7,413 people. In 2012 the population rose 24.8% to 8,831 people and continues to climb. Existing zoning consists of agriculture, central business, general business, local business, light industry, heavy industry, single-family residential, two-family residential, and multi-family residential. The existing zoning, previous planning efforts and current land use map were all analyzed and compared in order to create an updated future land use map for this plan.

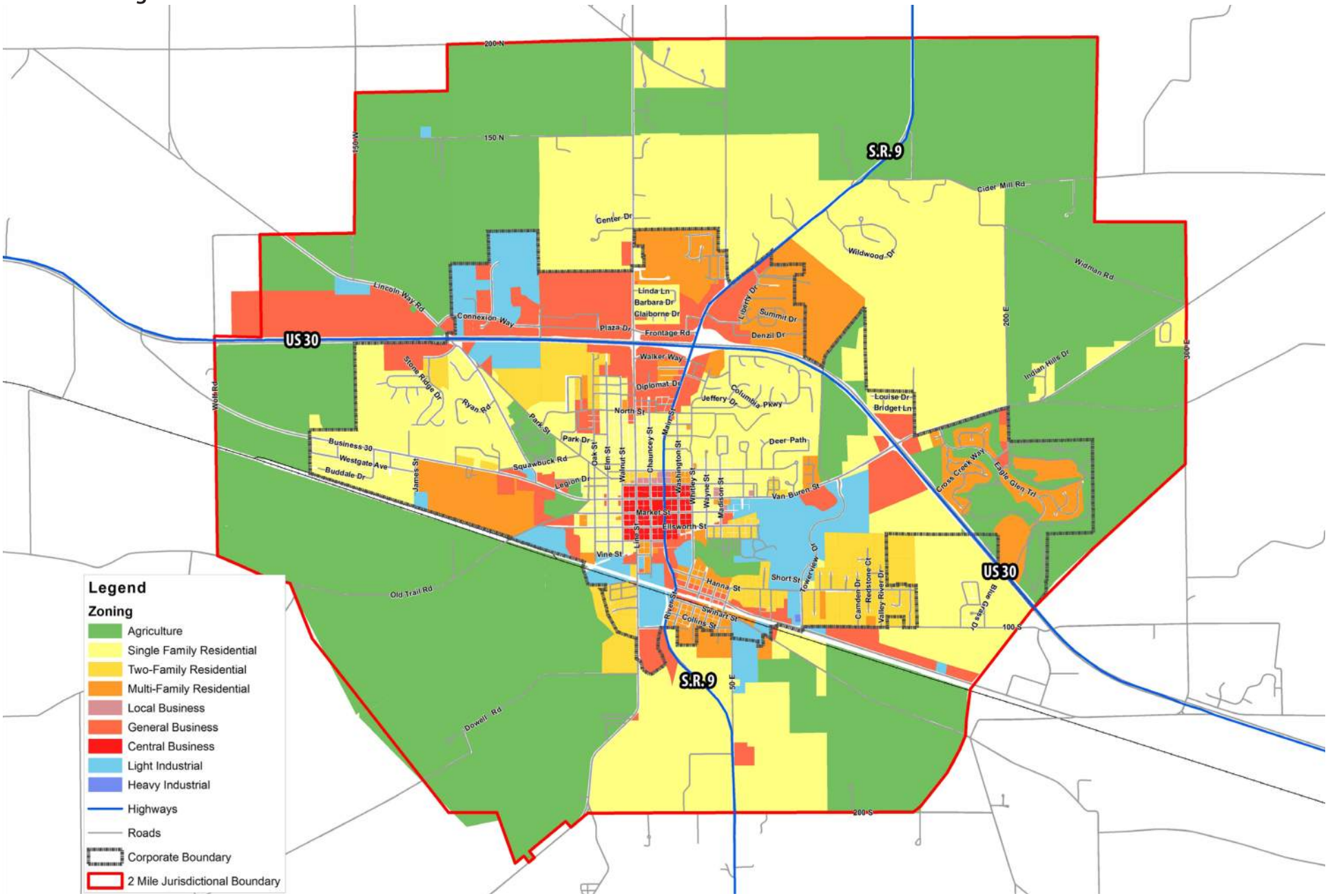
Zoning in Columbia City is typical for most mid-sized Indiana municipalities. The center town square area of downtown Columbia City is zoned for central business. Other retail areas along US 30 and other areas are zoned as commercial business. Park and open space is zoned the same as agriculture. The majority of agriculture zoned land surrounds the borders of Columbia City. Pockets of single family, two family, and multi family residential zoning is clustered throughout the city.





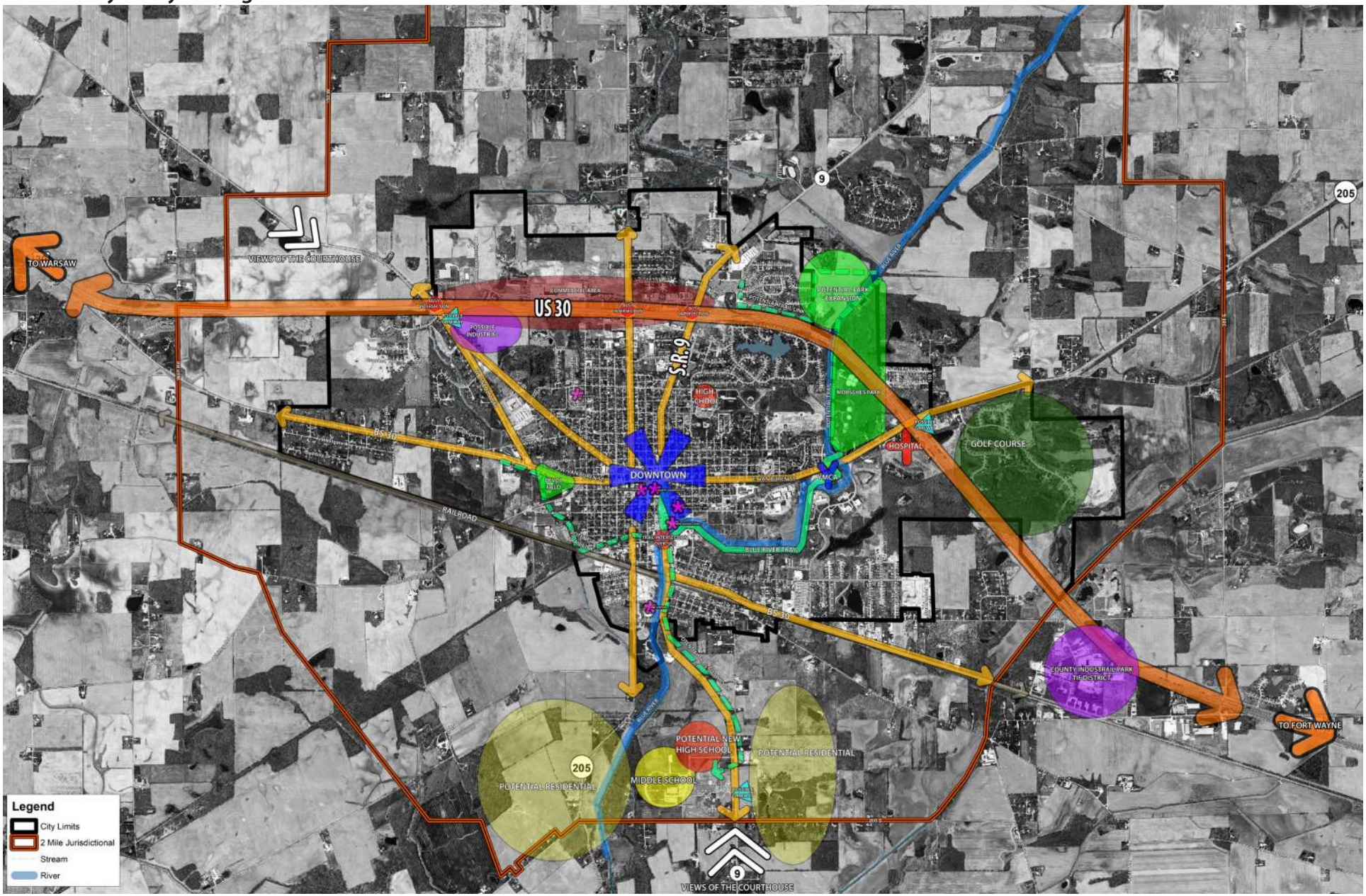
Source: City Data, US Census

Current Zoning



ANALYSIS.

Community Analysis Diagram



PLANNING PRINCIPLES.

The planning principles are action statements that support the mission statements declared for each goal. These statements are meant to be broad ideas of how the goals can be achieved. With these statements, more detailed strategies and ideas can be formed. The planning principles are a stepping stone between understanding the community goals and identifying ways to achieve them.

LIVE.

- Increase diversity throughout Columbia City's housing stock.
- Enhance the current neighborhoods through community action and local funding.
- Create housing options that are appropriate and compatible with the established character of the surrounding community.
- Integrate building standards and guidelines to ensure safe neighborhoods and developments in line with health and safety.

EXPERIENCE.

- Create a sense of identity unique to Columbia City.
- Highlight key attractions in Columbia City through Gateways and Wayfinding Signage.
- Continue to celebrate and grow local culture through festivals, events, and public art.
- Provide cultural attractions to attract visitors to the Columbia City community.
- Encourage creativity within the built environment to create a sense of place and branding.

MOVE.

- Enhance and maintain an efficient transportation system using a hierarchy of vehicular facilities and intersections.
- Enhance and maintain an efficient alternative transportation system utilizing a hierarchy of pedestrian and bicycle facilities and networks.
- Coordinate a safe and integrated system of vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle networks.
- Coordinate transportation network with appropriate land use development strategies.
- Engage community in Capital Improvement Planning to identify specific projects, funding sources, and timelines.
- Enhance utilization of rail network to support local economy.

GROW.

- Create appropriate land uses to meet low and high density uses and low and high intensity uses while providing quality places to live, work and play.
- Establish a land use pattern that supports the stability of existing residential neighborhoods.
- Support commercial, office, and industrial land uses to provide a diverse tax base.
- Promote revitalization and infill within current downtown boundaries and urbanized areas.
- Coordinate future land uses with changes in transportation as suggested in this plan.

5a

LIVE
EXPERIENCE
MOVE
GROW

Pursue mixed-use housing development opportunities in Downtown Columbia City.

Related Goals:

PLAY

GROW

EXPERIENCE

Summary

Downtown mixed-use housing developments are essential in creating an active, livable, creative, and exciting downtown environment. Providing mixed-use housing options would activate the downtown. When residents live, work, and play in the same area, other opportunities can be supported to serve these residents. Downtown Columbia City already has an appealing town square with good infrastructure that provides potential for attracting local business and apartment developments or redevelopment. Mixed-use development can be brand new developments, or infill and rehabilitation developments of existing infrastructure.

The first step towards achieving a mixed-use environment in the downtown core of Columbia City is to update the zoning classification and standards to allow such development. Currently, downtown Columbia City is zoned as Central Business District. The permitted uses of this district are the same as the General Business District, which allows single-family and two-family residential units. The zoning ordinance should be updated to describe the downtown as mixed-use. The mixed-use standards should then be created to allow multi-family residential. This would encourage and allow apartment style units in the downtown area.

Once more people begin to live and work downtown, more local businesses and restaurants will then want to also locate downtown. This will spark activity in the downtown area and will, eventually, become an attraction for both visitors and the residents who live there.

Case Study

Wabash, Indiana was designated one of Indiana's Stellar Communities of 2014. In their plans for transforming the city, Wabash focused heavily on transforming their downtown by pursuing downtown rehabilitation projects for downtown housing. The soon-to-be Rock City Lofts consists of 40 apartment units located on the second and third floors of a historic downtown building. Proposed as a downtown historic revitalization project focused on seniors of varying income levels, the development qualified for multiple tax credit opportunities through Indiana's Rental Housing Tax Credit (RHTC) program. This project is expected to set the tone, jump start, and solidify the apartment housing market in downtown Wabash and attract future downtown developments.

Figure 3d: Rendering of Rock City Lofts in Wabash, Indiana

Action Steps

1. Rezone downtown Columbia City as "Mixed-Use" and create mixed-use zoning standards in the Zoning Ordinance to allow multi-family dwelling units within the Central Business District.
2. Explore residential rehabilitation and infill possibilities of existing infrastructure with private developers.
3. Identify other possible locations within the downtown area for new residential development.
4. Explore possible federal and state tax credits to help implement and fund these projects.

Resources

- Community Development Department
- Whitley County Economic Development Corporation
- Whitley County Redevelopment Commission
- Columbia City Redevelopment Commission
- Plan Commission
- City Council
- Private Developers

Figure 3e: Man bicycling in mixed-use neighborhood.

Figure 3f: Historic buildings rehabilitated into retail and apartments.

Figure 3g: A historic preservation and infill mixed-use project in Cleveland, Ohio

5b Establish a Neighborhood Improvement Grant Program.

LIVE
EXPERIENCE
MOVE
GROW

Related Goals:

SUPPORT

EXPERIENCE

Summary

Neighborhood improvement programs encourage residents to make a positive impact within their neighborhoods by using grant money awarded by the city to accomplish their goals. The purpose of these programs is to help fund capital projects related to a neighborhood's specific needs that would not typically be funded by traditional city programs. Neighborhood grant programs can also be used to help fund special programming or event services meant to strengthen the community. Grants can be categorized for different types of projects depending on funding sources.

Because they are designed to be granted to the public, neighborhood grant programs require simple and clear guidelines for users to understand. Overall, the program should identify and include these parts:

- Funding Objectives and Uses
- Project Priorities
- Eligibility Requirements
- Types and Amounts of Grants Available
- The Application Review Process
- Project Review Criteria

To ensure quality and efficiency of the program and its applicants, staff or a program committee should be appointed to oversee the program. This appointed party would be responsible of all application review, funding opportunities, funding distribution, and project review.

Case Study

Bloomington, Indiana created a successful Neighborhood Improvement Grant Program in 1998 that continues to grow and thrive today. The program requires applying neighborhood associations and members to match 10% of the grant money awarded by the city for a project. The program's participating neighborhood members have accomplished many projects that have had a positive and lasting mark on the community. Some of the projects achieved through this program include many improvements seen today at Prospect Hill. Prospect Hill Neighborhood Association has received grants from the program to restore brick sidewalks, install unique neighborhood street signs, build a neighborhood shelter, paint murals and install other public art installations. The City of Bloomington's website provides many resources and information regarding their Neighborhood Improvement Grant Program and its success stories.

Figure 3h: Mural within Prospect Hill neighborhood in Bloomington, Indiana

Action Steps

1. Determine appropriate funding sources and allocate funds for pilot program (start small).
2. Appoint staff or committee to oversee the program.
3. Develop specific program guidelines for grant applications, project priorities, project eligibility requirements, and review requirements.
4. Select winning project applications to begin implementation.
5. Annually review and modify the program's requirements and funding information as needed.
6. Celebrate successful completed neighborhood improvement projects to market the program and its benefits.

Resources

- Neighborhood Grant Committee or Staff (To be determined)
- Community Development Department
- Parks Department
- Philanthropic Organizations (Funders)
- Local Businesses (Funders)
- Neighborhood Leaders
- Neighborhood Committees
- Whitley County Community Foundation

Figure 3i: Children planting flowers

Figure 3j: Community members working in a neighborhood garden

Figure 3k: Neighborhood residents planting street trees

5c

LIVE
EXPERIENCE
MOVE
GROW

Increase and encourage quality owner-occupied housing.

Related Goals:

N/A

Summary

It is important to encourage owner-occupied housing within a community because it strengthens the community's neighborhoods both economically and socially. Economically, home owners are more likely to invest their time and money into their homes and keep them in good condition. Socially, home owners are more committed to a neighborhood and a community due to the financial commitment to the property. Increasing owner-occupied housing reduces the amount of poor quality rental homes with distant or inactive landlords.

There are many ways to encourage owner-occupied housing within a community. Currently, Columbia City has an established Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Program. This program is designed to give financial support to low-income homeowners for much-needed home improvement projects that they would otherwise not be able to afford. This serves as an incentive for current renters within the community to decide to invest in a home knowing financial support is potentially available through owner-occupied assistance or the development of a First Time Home Buyers Down Payment Assistance Program. The First Time Home Buyers Down Payment Assistance Program is another tool available that uses public money from the city to help new home buyers with the down payment of their first house. Both of these programs encourage people to make the step in purchasing their first home and investment within the community by providing a little extra financial security and support.

Case Study

The city of Gary, Indiana has faced many housing, neighborhood and community development challenges over the years. One strategy the city uses to help revive the local economy and housing conditions is by encouraging owner-occupied housing. The City of Gary needs people to take ownership and pride in their homes and financial investments. The city offers many financial assistance programs to encourage this. For example, Gary, Indiana offers a Housing Repair Program, Senior Repair Program, Emergency Repair Program, Lead Based Paint Program, and even a First Time Home Buyers Down Payment Assistance Program. The goal of these programs is to spark interest and provide support in owning and maintaining a quality home conditions. By doing this with multiple home owners, the quality and safety of the neighborhoods begin to stabilize.

Figure 3l: Urban Street in Gary, Indiana

Action Steps

1. Explore the possibility of creating a First Time Home Buyers Down Payment Assistance Program.
2. Partner with Keep Columbia City Beautiful to concentrate and/or balance assistance throughout the community
3. Continue to fund the Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Program.
4. Continue to educate and promote the Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Program to the public.
5. Keep detailed records of the locations of program's projects and repairs.
6. Explore additional funding opportunities to grow the program and serve more home owners.
7. Review previous awarded program projects to ensure the funds were appropriately spent.

Resources

- Community Development Department
- Columbia City Housing Authority
- Whitley County Economic Development Corporation

Figure 3m: Man repairing a home.

Figure 3n: Example of a properly maintained residence.

Figure 3o: Before and after images of a front doorstep maintenance project

5d

LIVE
EXPERIENCE
MOVE
GROW

Ensure the creation of diverse housing densities and products within neighborhoods.

Related Goals:

N/A

Summary

Neighborhoods must be diverse in order to have a sustainable and diverse community. Providing options to allow residents to remain in the same neighborhood as their needs change at different stages in their life creates a sense of sustainability. Today, our society is seeing a growing demand for diverse housing options due to economic and demographic changes.

Currently, many new housing developments consist of a homogeneous housing stock. These single family homes are designed to cater to a specific type of person and family. However, individuals are all different and require different demands. As families grow or shrink and the years come and go, people find themselves searching for different housing options to fit their lifestyle. Providing neighborhoods with these different housing products would allow residents to establish a lifelong home within a neighborhood without ever needing to move away from the community in search of something different.

Housing diversity can come in many shapes and sizes. Economically, housing options can be offered as rent or own and can offer various price points. Housing options can also differ in the type and density. Apartments, condominiums, duplexes, townhouses, and single family homes should all be considered as different housing options for different users. Single family homes can also provide accessory dwelling units, which are separate dwelling units located on the same property as the main dwelling unit.

Case Study

Planned Unit Developments are a development tool that allow personalized standards to be created in lieu of the zoning ordinance standards set forth by the city. Typically, this allows developers pursuing a Planned Unit Development to provide multiple types of housing stock, design standards, and densities within the same neighborhood. Many planned unit developments consist of an area with single family housing, an area with multi-family units, an area for duplexes or townhouses, and a designated area for open space.

To ensure the quality and desired intent of any proposed planned unit development within a community, most municipalities have adopted a subdivision control ordinance that specifies all minimum and maximum development requirements for planned unit developments. The Town of Avon, Indiana has a subdivision control ordinance that sets standards depending on the subdivision types and intensities. This serves as a guideline for any new developer when creating a proposed planned unit development.

Figure 3p: Rendering of an example planned unit development

Action Steps

1. Modify current zoning ordinance to define and allow Planned Unit Developments.
2. Create a city Subdivision Control Ordinance that states minimum and maximum development standards that any proposed planned unit development must meet.
3. Establish policy guidelines and steps for acquiring a planned unit development zoning change with the city.
4. Educate local municipal boards, committees, staff members, and residents of the intent and benefits of creating planned unit developments.
5. Encourage new developments to become Planned Unit Developments to allow personalized standards and encourage mixed densities and mixed types of housing.

Resources

- Community Development Department
- Plan Commission
- City Council

Figure 3q: A series of single family homes along a neighborhood street

Figure 3r: Attached town homes in a diverse planned unit development

Figure 3s: Apartments in Westfield, Indiana

6a

LIVE
EXPERIENCE
MOVE
GROW

Create a city-wide Public Art Master Plan.

Related Goals:

PLAY

Summary

Public art plays a large role in how people experience a place. Public art can be a beautiful piece of artwork that becomes a special landmark. Public art can also be a functional piece such as a bike rack or bench that creates a sense of identity for a community. Like any kind of art, public art is a special thing that can be seen in countless shapes, sizes and forms. Public art should represent the culture of a community. Public art can be used as an economic development strategy to attract new visitors and businesses. It can also create a sense of pride in the residents of the community.

A public art master plan is an important tool used to identify appropriate mediums, locations, policies, standards and funding options related to public art within a community. A quality public art master plan will establish policies and guidelines for implementing a successful art program. A public art master plan would be the first step required in Columbia City to strategically strengthen the culture and experience.

Case Study

The Fishers Community Art Master Plan was created in 2014. It was awarded the Outstanding Plan of the Year award by the Indiana Chapter of the American Planning Association in 2014. This public art plan was instrumental in boosting the community's recent art efforts. To complete the plan, Fishers partnered with local artists and art organizations. The Fishers Public Art Master Plan:

- Defines what public art should look like in Fishers
- Provides an inventory of existing public art
- Explores possible funding opportunities for new projects
- Establishes specific policies and guidelines for selecting and prioritizing public art projects
- Defines possible locations for public art within the community
- Overall, encourages and celebrates creativity within the community

Figure 3t: Fishers Community Art Master Plan Cover Logo

Action Steps

1. Find funds to create a Public Art Master Plan for Columbia City.
2. Explore grant opportunities with National Endowment for the Arts.
3. Complete a Public Art Master Plan including but not limited to: creating a steering committee, identifying desired locations and creating policies for public art within the plan.
4. Adopt the plan by city council.
5. Implement the plan through various public art projects and priorities identified in the plan.

Resources

- Main Street Association
- Private Consultant
- Community Development Department
- Parks Department
- Local Artists, Art Businesses and Art Organizations

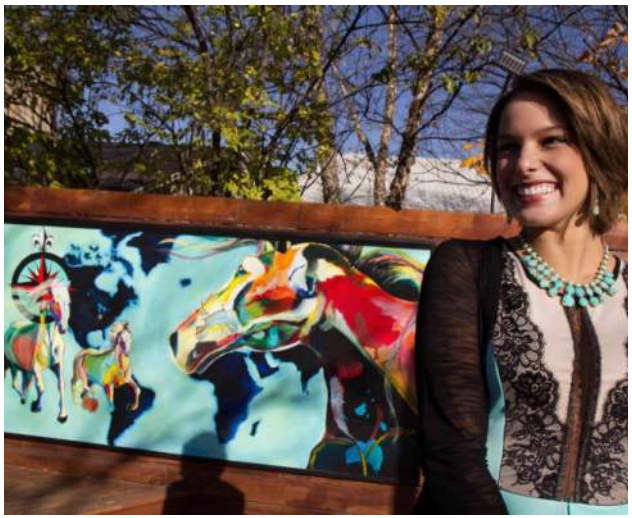


Figure 3u: A public mural in Fishers, Indiana

Figure 3v: Unique bike racks in Columbus, Indiana

Figure 3w: Interactive public art in a Fishers pocket park

6b Create a Gateway and Wayfinding Signage Master Plan.

LIVE
EXPERIENCE
MOVE
GROW

Related Goals:

ACT

Summary

Gateways and Wayfinding Signage are an important feature for establishing a community's identity and sense of place. Gateways and Wayfinding are tools to celebrate and highlight the community and its attractions. They provide visitors with a snapshot of the community and make suggestions of where to visit. A well designed gateway and wayfinding system can set the stage for developing a community's branding and identity.

Planning for gateways and wayfinding signage is the first step required to implement a successful network. In most cases, the cost for unique gateways and wayfinding signage is not cheap and needs to be designed, placed, and installed correctly the first time. Details of the design, locations, funding, and destinations are all factors that should be further studied and discussed in order to create a quality gateway and wayfinding master plan for the community. The Public Art Master Plan may start the discussion of these elements or could potentially be incorporated into a more robust Public Art Master Plan.

Case Study

Front Door Fort Wayne is a Gateway and Wayfinding Master Plan for Fort Wayne, Indiana that identifies the importance of gateways and gateway corridors. The plan makes policy recommendations for various gateway locations and illustrates these recommendations through mapping and rendering images. The purpose of the plan is to identify key corridors throughout the city that should be highlighted to reflect the community. The plan also provides budget and time line estimates to help guide implementation of the projects.

Figure 3x: Fort Wayne's Front Door Master Plan Cover Logo

EXPERIENCE: Create and nurture a genuine identity for Columbia City that attracts visitors and potential long-term members of the community.

Action Steps

1. Find funding to create a Gateway and Wayfinding Signage Master Plan.
2. Establish a Gateway and Wayfinding Signage Master Plan steering committee to oversee project.
3. Complete Master Plan including but not limited to: identify desired locations, designs, and destinations for appropriate gateways and wayfinding signage throughout Columbia City.
4. Implement beginning phases of recommendation results.

Resources

- Main Street Association
- Private Consultant
- Community Development Department
- Whitley County Economic Development Corporation
- Columbia City Main Street Association
- Project Steering Committee (To be determined)

Figure 3y: Gateway feature in Noblesville, Indiana

Figure 3z: Downtown Fort Wayne wayfinding sign.

Figure 4a: Downtown wayfinding sign in Indianapolis.

6C

LIVE
EXPERIENCE
MOVE
GROW

Create a Downtown Parking Study to find an appropriate solution for current and anticipated parking needs.

Related Goals:

ACT

MOVE

Summary

In any community, downtown parking is always a challenge that must be strategically solved. A successful parking network should be diverse to serve the different needs of users. This is because a successful downtown should serve a variety of different purposes for people. A downtown environment should be a location that encourages people to live, work and play. However, with these different activities comes different needs for parking. While some may need a place to park throughout the day while at work, others may want to just park for an hour to do some quick shopping. The location and policies for parking should vary to provide for different activities.

Downtown Columbia City does not currently have an efficient parking policy. Nearly all downtown parking currently has 2-hour parking limits. This does not encourage people to park their cars for a night out and would cause problems if new activities and uses, such as businesses and apartments, were brought to the downtown area. A parking study would be important in order to forecast any future parking problems before they arise and to provide for current and proposed uses.

Case Study

Columbus, Indiana completed a downtown parking study in 2013. The study identified the amount of public and private parking needed to serve the current and projected downtown uses. The study also made recommendations to overall better serve residents and visitors. The study recommended specific zones for different types of parking throughout the downtown. Zones are designated by allowed length of time and are meant to serve different users. The core center parking zone is meant for short term downtown visitors experiencing local shops or restaurants. The study also made suggestions for where permitted parking and private residential parking or employee parking should be located.

Figure 4b: Image from Columbus, Indiana parking study

Action Steps

1. Complete a downtown parking study to identify potential problem areas and solution recommendations.
2. Establish rules and policies for downtown parking.
3. Effectively enforce downtown parking regulations.
4. Explore the possibility of a downtown parking garage structure to serve any large scale future downtown developments.

Resources

- Private Consultant
- Community Development Department
- Streets Department
- Police Department

Figure 4c: Parking garage in Columbus, Indiana

Figure 4d: Credit card parking meters

Figure 4e: Landscaped on-street parking

6d LIVE EXPERIENCE MOVE GROW

Create a Downtown Streetscape Plan.

Related Goals:

ACT

Summary

An enhanced streetscape can be used to help make downtown Columbia City more attractive. Streetscapes are important in creating a sense of place, comfort and safety within a downtown environment. Streetscapes can include medians and other traffic calming features, pedestrian amenities such as benches and garbage cans, streetlights, landscaping, sidewalks, pavers, banners, wayfinding signage, parking, and more. Overall, a streetscape design helps create a downtown identity that improves the overall appearance as well as function.

Streetscapes are also important in establishing a sense of safety. A well designed streetscape will pay close attention to traffic calming devices, parking needs, barriers and buffers between the street and sidewalks, and ramps and crosswalks for people of all ages and abilities. The National Complete Streets Coalition is a national movement towards creating safe, livable, and attractive streetscapes for all transportation users, including bicyclists, pedestrians, and automobile drivers.

Case Study

Speedway, Indiana transformed their downtown area with the help of a Downtown Streetscape Plan as part of their overall City Redevelopment Plan. This streetscape plan identified appropriate designs to beautify the sidewalks and streets surrounding the old and proposed downtown developments. A uniform design for streetscapes create a sense of place and identity within a community. It becomes something that is recognized by residents and visitors traveling through the community. This was then followed up by created a form based code, special zoning district and design standards to create the overall streetscape plan vision.

Figure 4f: Rendering of Speedway, Indiana Mainstreet streetscape

Action Steps

1. Explore possibility of creating a Complete Streets policy for all new roads and road improvements.
2. Explore funding options for downtown streetscape planning and design.
3. Prioritize downtown streetscape plan phasing.

Resources

- Private Consultant
- Columbia City Main Street Association
- Streets Department
- Community Development Department

Figure 4g: Example of a streetscape improvement with sidewalk benches and landscaping

Figure 4h: Streetscape project in Pittsfield, Massachusetts

Figure 4i: Pedestrian buffer streetscape improvement

6e

LIVE
EXPERIENCE
MOVE
GROW

Review and modify downtown design policies and guidelines to establish a visual standard.

Related Goals:

N/A

Summary

The visual appearance of a downtown is an important factor of the overall experience. Because of this, extra attention to detail should be enforced to fulfill its maximum potential. Design policies regarding building materials, colors, landscaping, size, height, streetscape, awnings, signage, and facades should all be considered for any new or modified developments. As more developments in downtown Columbia City begin to meet newly created design standards, the overall visual appearance will begin to transform the city.

Design policies could be created in multiple ways. New design details could be amended into the existing city zoning ordinance or a new overlay district with separate standards could be created. An overlay would be a new ordinance with separate standards placed upon an existing area. In many communities, overlays are a great way to maintain the existing policies while further developing more standards to meet a more specific vision for a particular area.

This plan recommends that downtown Columbia City be rezoned to mixed-use. This would allow residential and commercial uses within downtown buildings. Because of this, new design guidelines and policies should be established to better serve both residents and users of the downtown.

Case Study

Fishers, Indiana recently adopted a district overlay code specific for their downtown Nickel Plate District. This code consists of more detailed design standards not seen in the city zoning ordinance. The Nickel Plate District Code establishes guidelines and policies for building materials, building form, site landscaping, lighting and signage. The intent of this code is to create a unified visual design of their downtown that further develops over time.

Figure 4j: Rendering of Downtown Fishers, Indiana vision.

Action Steps

1. Explore types and determine preferred type of zoning regulation tool (downtown overlay district with separate design standards and guidelines or, amend current base zoning ordinance (mixed use zone) to include design standards specific to the downtown.)
2. Enforce new downtown design standards to all new and modifying developments in the downtown area by establishing a special development review process and utilizing code enforcement.
3. Explore the possibility of creating a downtown facade program to help current business owners restore their building facades in accordance with the new design standards.

Resources

- Community Development Department
- Redevelopment Commission
- City Council

Figure 4j: Downtown Valparaiso, Indiana streetscape

Figure 4k: Downtown Shelbyville, Indiana

Figure 4l: A planned mixed-use development for Fishers' Nickel Plate District

6f

LIVE
EXPERIENCE
MOVE
GROW

Expand and strengthen existing festivals and events.

Related Goals:

PLAY

Summary

Festivals are an opportunity for a community to gather and celebrate together. Columbia City already has an inventory of existing events and festivals that take place on an annual basis. Many of these festivals are community traditions that draw in large crowds. These festivals also become a destination for visitors from other communities. The festivals spark activity and boost the local economy.

There are many organizations, workers, volunteers, and businesses that make these events possible. It is important that Columbia City continues to support, encourage, and strengthen these events. These events create a good foundation for Columbia City to strategically achieve the vision and goals identified in this plan. For example, every year the old jail just outside of downtown Columbia City draws in large crowds as a haunted house attraction. This is a unique asset that many downtown communities do not have. Like any holiday festival or event, Halloween is a major money making holiday. People spend money on costumes, candy, haunted attractions, and the overall experience. Various businesses throughout Columbia City could take advantage of the large crowds attending the haunted jail by offering other forms of Halloween themed goods or services. Overtime, the event would continue to grow and more developments would appear to support this tourist attraction.

Case Study

Santa Claus, Indiana is the poster child for festival marketing in a city. The entire economic, tourism, and marketing focus of Santa Claus is centered around Christmas. Because of this, Santa Claus has created a strong tourism focused economy that is unique to the city. The city has a long list of family fun activities, hotels, shopping, and places to eat. In addition, the city also has large city-wide, family-friendly events year round to spark tourism. Santa Claus has become a unique festival focused community for both its residents and visitors by declaring itself America's Christmas Hometown.

Figure 4m: Santa Claus, Indiana gateway sign

EXPERIENCE: Create and nurture a genuine identity for Columbia City that attracts visitors and potential long-term members of the community.

PLACES.
EXPERIENCE.

Action Steps

1. Conduct an Economic Impact Study for large events in Columbia City, such as Old Settlers Days and the Haunted Jail Halloween Attraction.
2. Continue to grow and strengthen local organizations festivals and events.
3. Continue to grow and promote the community Farmers Market.
4. Effectively promote city organized events through various forms of media.
5. Create new city hosted festivals and events to create new traditions like neighborhood block parties or street festivals.

Resources

- Parks Department
- Local Organizations
- Local Businesses
- Non-for-Profits

Figure 4n: Settlers Days in downtown Columbia City

Figure 4o: Columbia City Farmers Market.

Figure 4p: Columbia City's Old Haunted Jail.

7a

LIVE
EXPERIENCE
MOVE
GROW

Integrate new Transportation Plan recommendations with the Capital Improvement Plan.

Related Goals:

ACT

Summary

The new future Transportation Plan Map illustrated within this plan identifies future project areas for roads, trails, and intersections. The map highlights areas for potential new trails. These extensions of the existing trail network are placed in strategic locations to serve the most people and create the most benefit for the community.

The streets in Columbia City are given a 1 to 5 surface rating to identify their condition. The Future Transportation Map highlights the lowest scoring 1 (Failed) and 2(Poor) streets to identify potential future road projects and focus areas.

The Future Transportation Map illustrates the areas of Columbia City that currently have no existing sidewalks. These areas should become first priority in filling the sidewalk system and increasing overall connectivity within the pedestrian system.

The map also illustrates the problem intersections with the highest amounts of accidents and congestion. In the street network, these intersections are located along US 30. US 30 is a heavily traveled road and creates hazardous intersections with all other major collector and minor arterial streets.

Action Steps

1. Identify priority projects illustrated in the transportation plan map.
2. Integrate identified priorities into Capital Improvement Plan.
3. Carefully consider new growth and development as it relates to the transportation plan map.

Resources

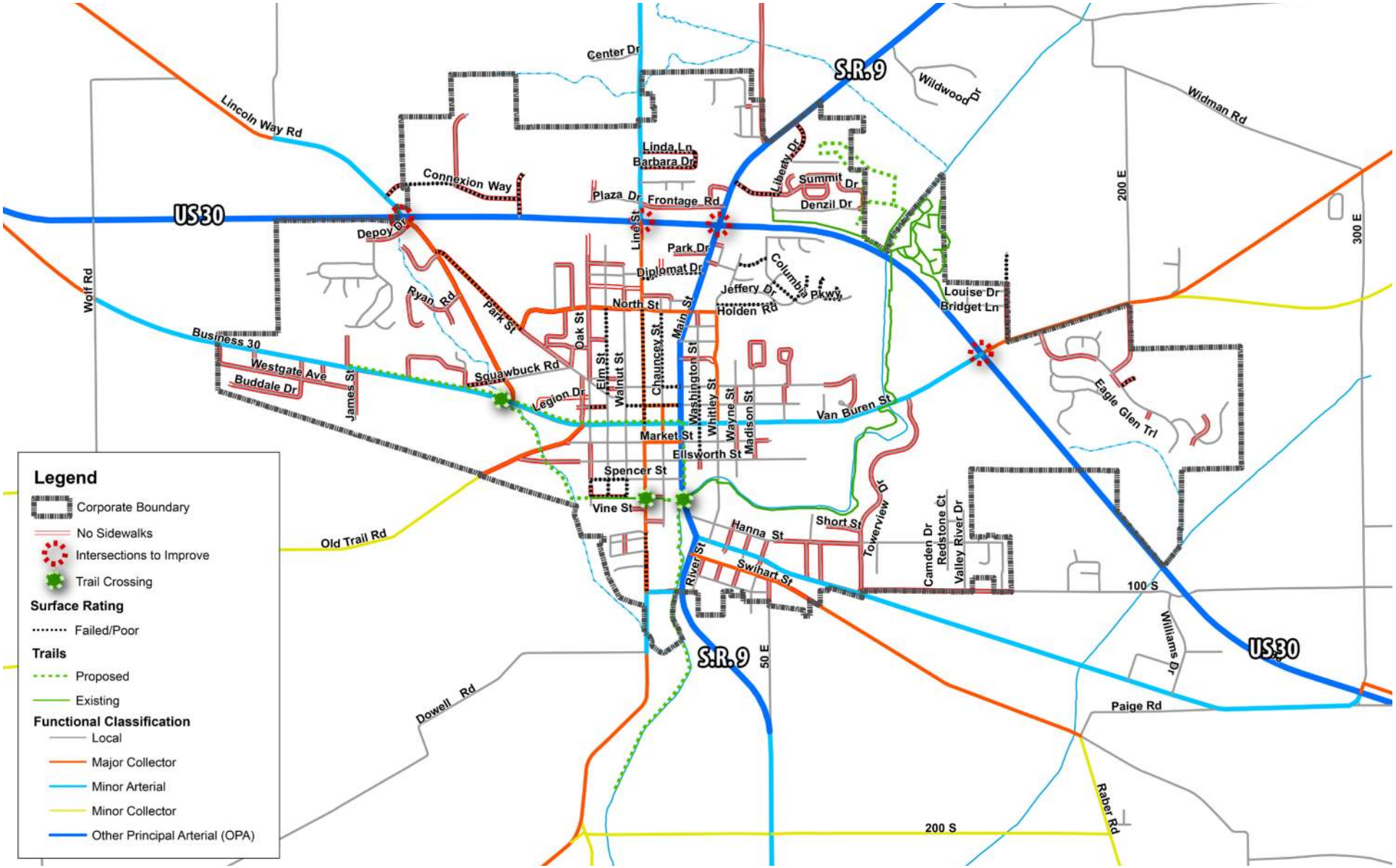
- Street Department
- Storm water Management
- Parks Department
- City Council

Rating System

Surface Rating	Visible Distress
5 EXCELLENT	None
4 GOOD	No longitudinal cracks except reflection of paving joints. Occasional transverse cracks, widely spaced (10' to 40' or greater). All cracks sealed or tight (open less than 1/4"). Very slight no raveling, surface shows some traffic wear. No patching or very few patches in excellent condition.
3 Fair	First sign of longitudinal cracks near pavement edge. Block cracking up to 50% of surface. extensive to severs flushing or polishing. some patching or edge wedging in good condition. Slight rutting or distortion (1/2" deep or less). Patching in fair condition.
2 Poor	Closely spaced longitudinal and transverse cracks often showing raveling and crack erosion. Severe block cracking. Some alligator cracking (less than 25% of surface). Patches in fair to poor condition. Moderate rutting or distortion (1" or 2" deep). Occasional Potholes.
1 Failed	Severe distress with extensive loss of surface integrity.

MOVE: Increase connectivity for vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrians across the community. Enhance connections to major destinations for improved safety, function, efficiency, experience, and economic development.

Transportation Plan Map



7b

LIVE
EXPERIENCE
MOVE
GROW

Explore, identify, and fill sidewalk gaps within existing residential neighborhoods.

Related Goals:

N/A

Summary

A connected sidewalk network is an essential part of achieving an overall connected community. Sidewalks are a main way to encourage residents to become less car dependent and increase walkability in a neighborhood. Sidewalks are a great way to connect neighborhoods to local amenities and larger local trail networks. Currently, Columbia City has multiple sections of the city without sidewalks. These areas are illustrated on the Future Transportation Plan Map in this document.

In order to better the overall pedestrian network, Columbia City must focus their efforts on both trail development and sidewalk development. To do this, the city must identify priorities for the sidewalk network. Some areas of sidewalk have a gap that needs to be filled, while other areas have no sidewalks at all. Identifying and prioritizing these specific areas are the first step towards improving pedestrian connectivity.

One way to fill gaps and expand the existing sidewalk network is to require sidewalks as a design standard in future developments. Many communities require sidewalks for certain uses and locations of new developments. This betters the development and the community as a whole. It also puts less financial burden on the city to construct sidewalks.

Case Study

Fishers, Indiana recently created a bicycle and pedestrian master plan. This plan described the future vision and goals for all forms of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure systems, including sidewalks. As a beginning step in the process, the City mapped all existing sidewalks and trails. By doing this, they could identify areas in need. After they identified the gaps in their existing sidewalk network, the plan could begin to identify policies and priorities to fix the problem. Today, Fishers continues to strengthen their overall pedestrian and bicycle network by continuing to expand their sidewalk, trails, and bike lane networks.

Figure 4q: Presentation of the Fishers Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan

MOVE: Increase connectivity for vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrians across the community. Enhance connections to major destinations for improved safety, function, efficiency, experience, and economic development.

Action Steps

1. Study current gaps and areas without sidewalks illustrated on the Future Transportation Plan Map within this document.
2. Prioritize gaps and new sections of sidewalks needed.
3. Integrate plans for new sidewalks into Capital Improvement Plan.
4. Explore grant funding opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian related projects (Safe Routes to School, Health Department)
5. Explore the possibility of requiring sidewalks in the zoning ordinance standards
6. Rewrite specific zoning district ordinances or as part of general unified development ordinance
7. Review sidewalk components of projects as part of plan review or other zoning review.

Resources

- Streets Department
- Community Development Department
- Parks Department
- State Health Department

Figure 4r: Children walking to school

Figure 4s: Narrow sidewalks causing pedestrians to walk in street

Figure 4t: Woman walking dogs along a city sidewalk.

7c

LIVE
EXPERIENCE
MOVE
GROW

Create a Downtown Link of the Blue River Trail.

Related Goals:

PLAY

Summary

A downtown link within a trail system is an important part in establishing an active downtown and a walkable community. A downtown link can be a large multi-use path through the downtown or it can be as simple as an alternative signed route for users of another connected trail system. In Columbia City, the Blue River Trail runs south of the downtown area. Plans to extend the Blue River Trail west of downtown to Devol Field Park are also identified within this document. However, a downtown link connecting the downtown to the Blue River Trail is another important strategy to be considered in order to achieve the overall community goals and an active downtown.

In today's society, more and more people want to live in areas with strong connectivity and walkability. These areas help create a healthy lifestyle and a higher quality of life. Many small town communities such as Columbia City are recognizing this desire and creating their own unique trail systems to better their communities. Creating connections between downtown environments and these trail systems are a useful strategy to overall enhance the connectivity throughout the community and begin to create a sense of place.

Case Study

In recent years, the Indianapolis Cultural Trail has gained national recognition. The trail is a sophisticated, multi-use walking and biking trail that extends throughout the downtown area. It has become one of Indianapolis' key community attractions for many downtown local businesses and housing developments. By creating this trail within the downtown fabric of the city, users of the trail activate the downtown area by shopping, exploring, or even just by exercising on the trail. The trail gives people a reason to get out and into the city. It also offers an alternate mode of transportation for people wanting to enter or travel through the city for any event, activity, or work. The Cultural Trail continues to be an asset to the community and continues to be promoted by the City and by private developments along the routes.

Figure 4u: Family enjoys a walk down the Cultural Trail in Indianapolis, Indiana

MOVE: Increase connectivity for vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrians across the community. Enhance connections to major destinations for improved safety, function, efficiency, experience, and economic development.

Action Steps

1. Explore the possibility of creating a multi-use trail in place of the signed route for the downtown link.
2. Determined location for Downtown Link Route.
3. Sign the route for the downtown link through the use of wayfinding signage, markings, etc.
4. Activate the prime real estate suitable for shopping and dining along the downtown route.
5. Explore the possibility of creating a multi-use trail in place of the signed route for the downtown link.

Resources

- Community Development Department
- Streets Department
- Parks Department

Figure 4v: Boston's Freedom Trail

Figure 4w: Kalamazoo River Valley Trailway wayfinding sign

Figure 4x: Urban trailway and wayfinding signage

7d

LIVE
EXPERIENCE
MOVE
GROW

Create a trail extension south along State Road 9 to the current middle school and potential future high school location.

Related Goals:

PLAY

LEARN

Summary

As identified by the community and illustrated in this document, the current Columbia City High School is in desperate need of a newer, updated building. One option to build a new school at a new location. The current Indian Springs Middle School is located just south of Columbia City's corporate boundaries off of State Road 9. If a new high school was built in this area, Columbia City would have a campus for two major schools within the school district. The surrounding area would become an attractive location for new housing developments. The current Blue River Trail runs along the Blue River up to State Road 9. The multi-use trail should be extended further south either along the Blue River or along State Road 9 to the potential high school location. This would create a pedestrian and bicycle connection between the school, the residential neighborhoods, and the parks and destinations located along the existing trail.

Because this would create a direct link to the school system, the trail extension would be a great candidate for a Safe Routes to School grant. These awards are given to communities looking to create safe and efficient alternative transportation connections between homes and schools. This project would become a great and healthy asset for the children, faculty, and staff of Columbia City to commute to and from school and work.

Case Study

Winamac, Indiana is located in north west Indiana in Pulaski County. The Panhandle Pathway Trail extends south from Winamac to the west boundary of Logansport, Indiana. The Panhandle Pathway Trail is the longest and most significant trail network within Pulaski County. In 2012 Winamac was awarded a $250,000 Safe Routes to School grant to extend the north end of the Panhandle Trail a quarter of a mile down the road to end at the Pulaski County High School. This additional trail segment now connects the largest trail network in the county to the high school's front door.

Figure 4y: Map of the Panhandle Pathway connection to the high school

MOVE: Increase connectivity for vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrians across the community. Enhance connections to major destinations for improved safety, function, efficiency, experience, and economic development.

Action Steps

1. Extend west end of the Blue River Trail across State Road 9. (See MOVE 3E).
2. Master Plan route(s) options for trail connections.
3. Explore existing right-of-way and possible land acquisition for new trail extension south to the schools for the preferred location.
4. Explore funding opportunities for new trail segment including Safe Routes to School.
5. Integrate new trail segment into the Capital Improvements Plan.

Resources

- Parks Department
- Street Department
- Schools

Figure 4z: Safe Routes to School logo.

Figure 5a: Active citizens using a trail network

Figure 5b: Children biking to school.

7e

LIVE
EXPERIENCE
MOVE
GROW

Extend Blue River Trail west across State Road 9 to connect to Devol Field and along Business 30.

Related Goals:

PLAY

Summary

The Blue River Trail is a popular and successful trail network within Columbia City. The trail connects Morsches Park to residential neighborhoods and other local destinations. Currently, the trail stops at State Road 9. The trail is planned to cross State Road 9 and extend further west, connecting to Devol Field, Business 30, and surrounding residential neighborhoods. Doing so would create a trail system that runs from the west to east boundaries of Columbia City. This would strengthen the city's overall connectivity, promote alternative transportation and healthy lifestyles, and promote the parks system and other destinations along the trail.

Currently, a portion of the trail extension is already built. The trail is built along Vine Street. The gaps of this trail still need to be completed and the trail should be extended further west along Business 30 and into the residential neighborhoods.

Case Study

West Lafayette has created a trail system with great connectivity to local park, sports fields, and residential neighborhoods. Because of the student population from the University of Purdue, West Lafayette has a large amount of recreational fields and sport centers. Connecting their 4 miles of Cattail Trails to all of these sports centers and destinations was identified as a priority in West Lafayette. In addition, they wanted the trails to extend further out of the Purdue area and into local neighborhoods. This would connect students and residents of West Lafayette to local amenities and sports centers.

Figure 5c: Cattail Trails in West Lafayette, Indiana

MOVE: Increase connectivity for vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrians across the community. Enhance connections to major destinations for improved safety, function, efficiency, experience, and economic development.

Action Steps

1. Create safe trail crossing for existing Blue River Trail across State Road 9.
2. Finish constructing trail gap.
3. Extend trail to Devol Fields
4. Extend trail west on Business 30 to residential neighborhoods
5. Determine location for west end trail head and construct west end trail head.

Resources

- Parks Department
- Streets Department

Figure 5d: Man cycling on a multi-use trail

Figure 5e: Traffic warning sign notifying motorists of trail crossing

Figure 5f: Trail crosswalk

8a

LIVE
EXPERIENCE
MOVE
GROW

Use the new Future Land Use Map as a guideline for new development within Columbia City.

Related Goals:

LIVE

MOVE

WORK

PLAY

SERVE

PRESERVE

Summary

The Future Land Use Map serves as a guideline for future development. Unlike the rules and regulations of following a zoning map, a future land use map is more of a planning tool to identify the desired areas for certain uses.

The future land use map in this plan consists of changes that were made to the current Columbia City future land use map as part of this planning process. The changes were made to illustrate project ideas and initiatives identified within this comprehensive plan update. All areas with modified land use designations are shown on the map with the black outline. The text describes the previous land use assigned from the previous map, the color designates the proposed future land use district.

A new mixed-use land use designation was added to this map to highlight the downtown area. Assigning the downtown area as mixed-use aligns with other downtown planning strategies described in this plan.

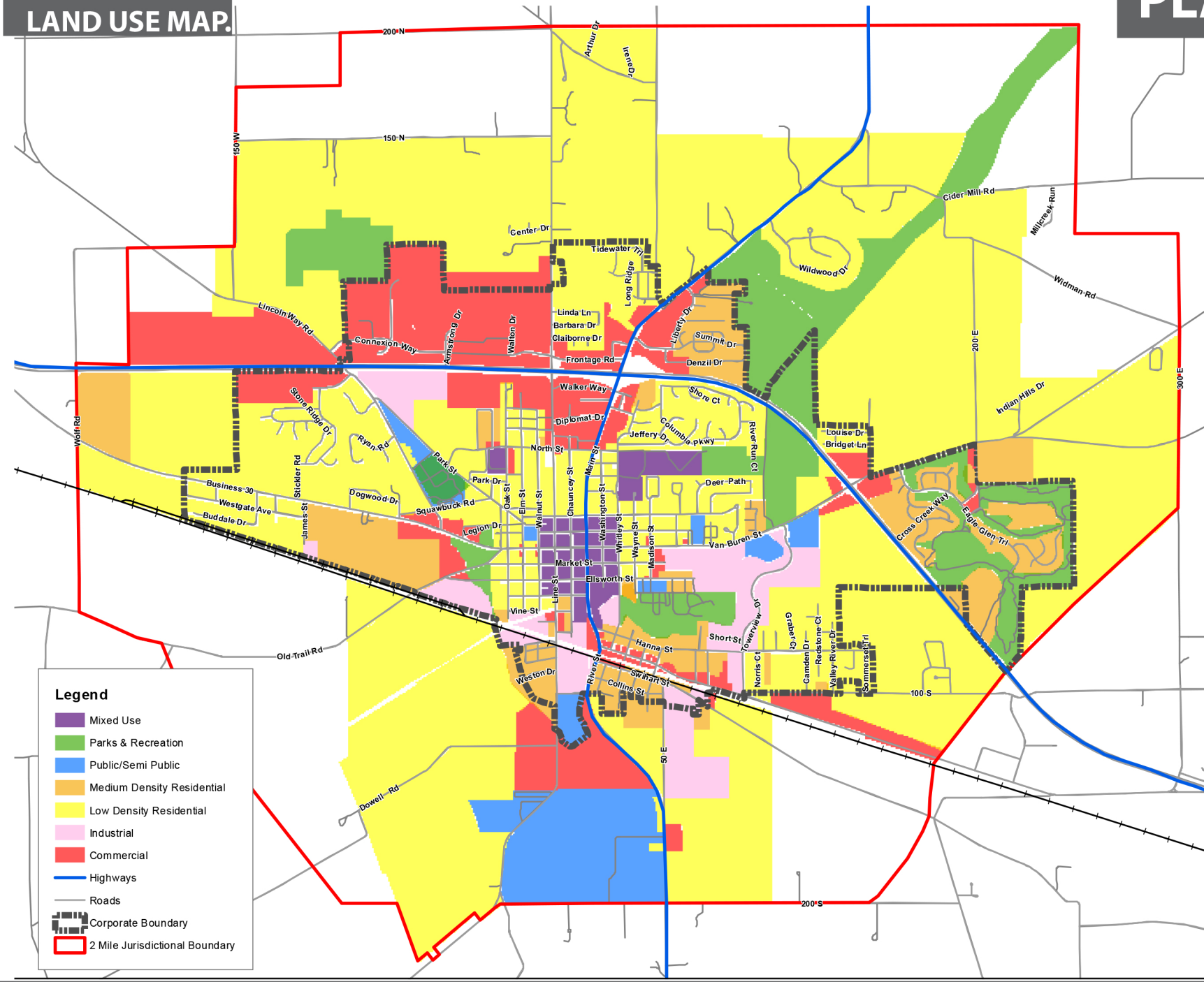
Action Steps

1. Amend current zoning map to align with the desired uses illustrated in the future land use map.
2. Carefully consider the future land use map in all new development opportunities.
3. Continue to update the future land use map in the future as new plans, projects and studies are developed.

Resources

- Community Development Department
- Whitley County Economic Development Corporation
- Columbia City Redevelopment Commission
- City Council

FUTURE LAND USE MAP.



8b LIVE EXPERIENCE MOVE GROW

Strategically annex new land outside of current corporate boundaries in areas for planned growth.

Related Goals:

ACT

LIVE

WORK

Summary

Annexation is an important tool for a city's physical growth. Annexation incorporates new land into the city's corporate boundaries. However, adding new land requires more resources from the city. Because of this, land should be strategically annexed in areas that are anticipating planned growth.

In Columbia City, there are two areas expected to grow in future years. Focus Area #1 is the commercial district of retail shops and industrial along US30. Growth of this area is expected to continue. Columbia City should focus annexation west and northwest of their current western boundary along US30. This would allow new commercial developments along this corridor to be incorporated in city limits and increase the overall tax base. Focus Area #2 with planned growth relies on the potential relocation of the high school. If the high school relocates south of the city near the existing middle school campus, Columbia City should focus annexation efforts here to extend to the schools campus and capture the school district and potential new residential developments within city limits.

Action Steps

1. Explore annexation strategies for Focus Areas #1 and #2.
2. Explore infrastructure and service costs for potential annexation areas.
3. Conduct public outreach, education, and an open annexation study with coordination and cooperation with County Planning and Building Department and property owners.
4. Review and modify if necessary policies and procedures for annexation of desired parcels.
5. Implement preferred annexation.

Resources

- Land Owners
- Community Development Department
- County Planning and Building Department
- City and County Plan Commissions
- City and County Councils

Future Annexation Areas

8C

LIVE
EXPERIENCE
MOVE
GROW

Focus infill and revitalization development in areas that are currently underutilized and unsafe.

Related Goals:

N/A

Summary

Like many small rural towns in Indiana, there are areas of Columbia City that need redevelopment. Redevelopment should be focused in areas that bring little to no economic or social benefit to the city. These areas should also be focused around buildings that are in bad condition and unsafe. Currently, a large amount of these sites are clustered throughout the downtown area. Some of the homes and building infrastructure located in or around downtown Columbia City are either vacant or in poor condition. The areas around downtown should be the first priority in order to help revitalize the downtown.

Many communities have created a blight elimination program dedicated to the demolition of old and unsafe homes and buildings. The purpose of this program is to eliminate unsafe and unattractive buildings from the community's neighborhoods. In many cases, these demolished lots are turned into side yards, pocket parks, or community gardens. These lots can also be sold and redeveloped for new and better homes.

Case Study

Peru, Indiana recently created a city-wide blight elimination program. This program was partially funded by the Hardest Hit Fund. Peru also partnered with Miami County, Habitat for Humanity, and other local organizations to establish this program. The program identifies homes with safety issues and that will also help improve the surrounding areas as the dilapidates housing is removed. These lots are then utilized for future development.

Figure 5g: Gateway sign entering Peru, Indiana

Action Steps

1. Explore ways to maximize demolition funding and strategically utilize demotion activities of current program.
2. Explore funding opportunities for a Blight Elimination Program.
3. Identify specific target areas for blight elimination and redevelopment.
4. Create a phased program and implement first phase of Blight Elimination Program.

Resources

- Community Development Department
- County Building Department
- Whitley County Economic Development Corporation
- Habitat for Humanity
- Other Local Partners

Figure 5h: Unsafe and neglected home

Figure 5i: Unsafe home being demolished

Figure 5j: Pocket Park on the site of a previously vacant lot.

8d LIVE EXPERIENCE MOVE GROW

Extend Extra-Territorial Jurisdictional Boundary of Columbia City.

Related Goals:

ACT

Summary

The extra-territorial jurisdictional boundary is the boundary outside of a corporate boundaries that the municipality has planning jurisdiction over. In the Indiana State Statute IC 36-7-4-205, municipalities are allowed to take in contiguous unincorporated areas outside of their annexed municipal limits as extended Territorial Authority via their Comprehensive Plan. The purpose for this jurisdictional boundary is to allow for planning of future growth and development the municipality may experience.

In Columbia City, the south east corner of the city's jurisdictional boundary does not extend any distance beyond the city's corporate boundary. This restricts Columbia City from any planning jurisdiction outside of their existing city boundary at this location. Columbia City should extend their jurisdictional boundary so that no portion of the corporate boundary is shared with the jurisdictional boundary. Furthermore, the jurisdictional boundary should be overall modified and extended to the full 2 mile limit to maximize the full planning and zoning control granted to Columbia City.

Case Study

The Town of Culver, Indiana, in Marshall County does not have jurisdiction boundaries that extend to the allowed 2 mile boundary. The Town ran into some problems when they discovered that parts of their zoning map were not following parcel lines and were splitting parcels. This caused some parcels to be partially zoned by the Town, and partially not. The Towns solution was to not consider any parcel with less than 50% within the current boundary. Ultimately, this limited Culver's growth and control.

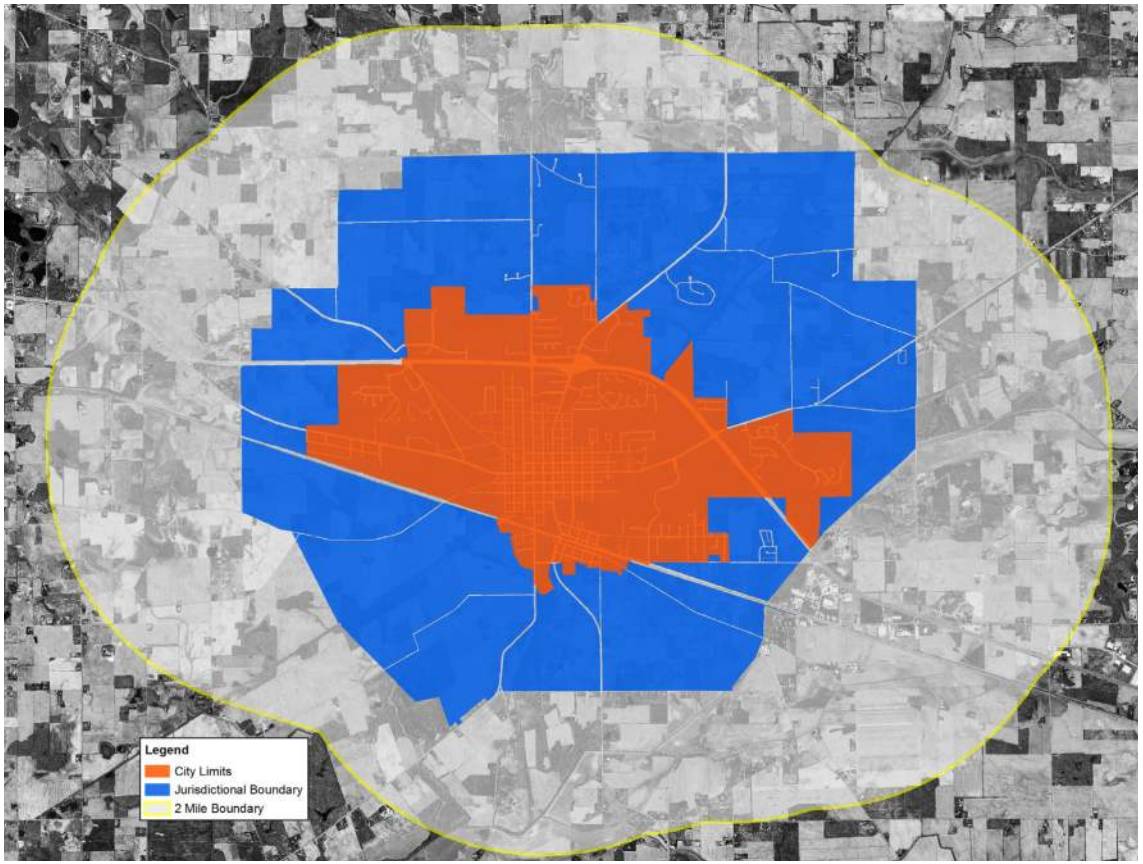
Figure 5k: Map of Culver Indiana showing jurisdictional boundary

Action Steps

1. Engage Whitely County Plan Commission and County Commissioners.
2. Identify specific desired boundaries of a new jurisdiction boundary for Columbia City up to two-miles.
3. Pursue changes to the current jurisdiction boundary through local policies and procedures.
4. Appropriately plan for new area added to the jurisdictional boundary as necessary.

Resources

- Community Development Department
- Plan Commission
- County Plan Commission
- City Council



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THINGS.

WORK. SHARE. SERVE. PROTECT.

THINGS.

SUMMARY.

The Things section of the Plan contains goals for Columbia City that are related to the industries, utilities, technology, media, and historic natural and built environments that make the community what it is today. These goals include Work, Serve, Preserve, and Share. These goals are important to consider in order to establish a sustainable and lasting community. These goals also instill safety and strength within the community. Existing conditions for these topics were gathered in order to establish appropriate strategies. The strategies identified in this section are meant to level up the existing conditions of these goals in Columbia City.

GOALS AND TOPICS.

	WORK	SERVE	PRESERVE	SHARE
GOAL	**Support and encourage a diverse local economy that provides opportunities for financially satisfying and intellectually satisfying employment.**	**Ensure environmentally friendly, sustainable, and efficient infrastructure systems and high-quality emergency response services to support the current community and future growth.**	**Ensure protection of the natural and built environment to keep and maintain features that are unique to Columbia City.**	**Promote the communication and dialogue between governmental and non-governmental groups internally and externally to support successful community development, government proceedings, marketing and communications and collaboration towards community vision.**
TOPICS	• Employment Data • Economic Development • Industries • Employers	• Police • Fire • Hospitals • Utilities	• Flood Plains • Parks/Open Space • Historic Districts • Lakes, Ponds, Rivers	• Branding • Tourism • Websites • Marketing and Advertising

WORK.

Industries. Employers. Economic Development.

Columbia City and Whitley County have a history of providing manufacturing jobs and products. According to census data, 18% of industries in Columbia City are related to transportation equipment and metal and metal products. In addition, 21% of Columbia City occupations are related to metal and plastic workers, assemblers and fabricators, and other production occupations.

Columbia City has two established TIF districts. TIF stands for Tax Increment Financing. It is an economic development tool that is used as a subsidy for redevelopment. One of the TIF Districts covers most of downtown and extends south to the Blue River. The second TIF district connects to the other district and extends further west and south. These TIF districts are designed to be tools for future economic development within these areas.

$37,720 Columbia City Median Household Income in 2012

$46,974 Indiana Median Household Income in 2012

63.1 % of workers working in the county

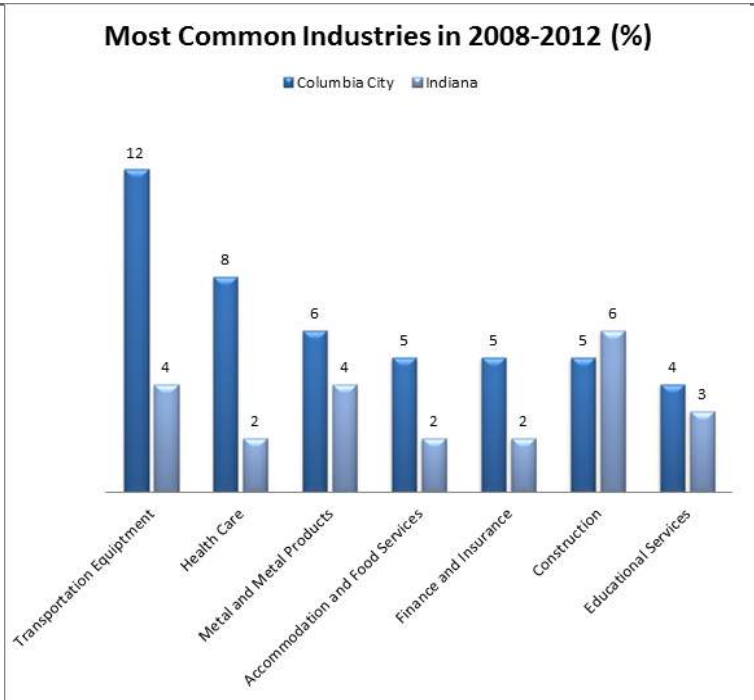
workers who live and work in the city **42.5%**

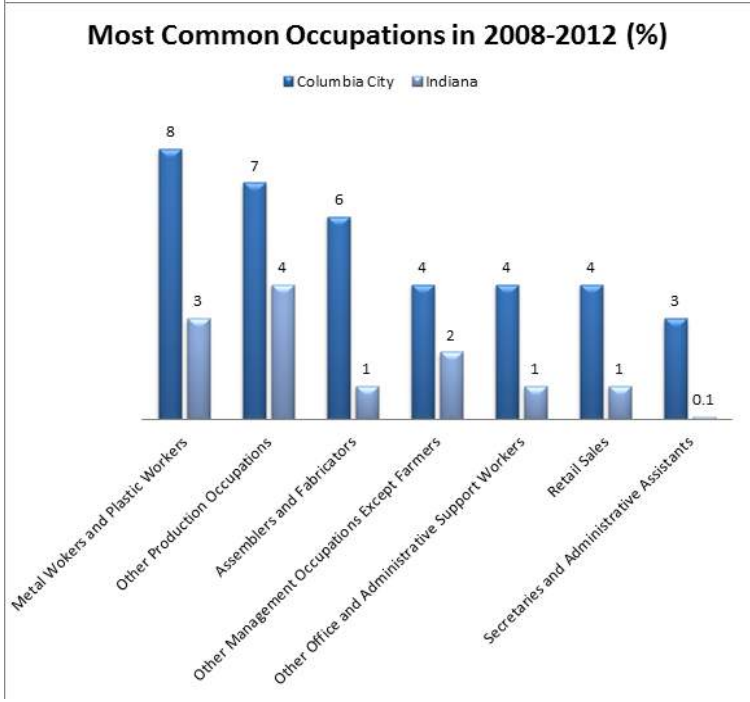
2.1% of people work from home

Daytime population change due to commuting **1,530**

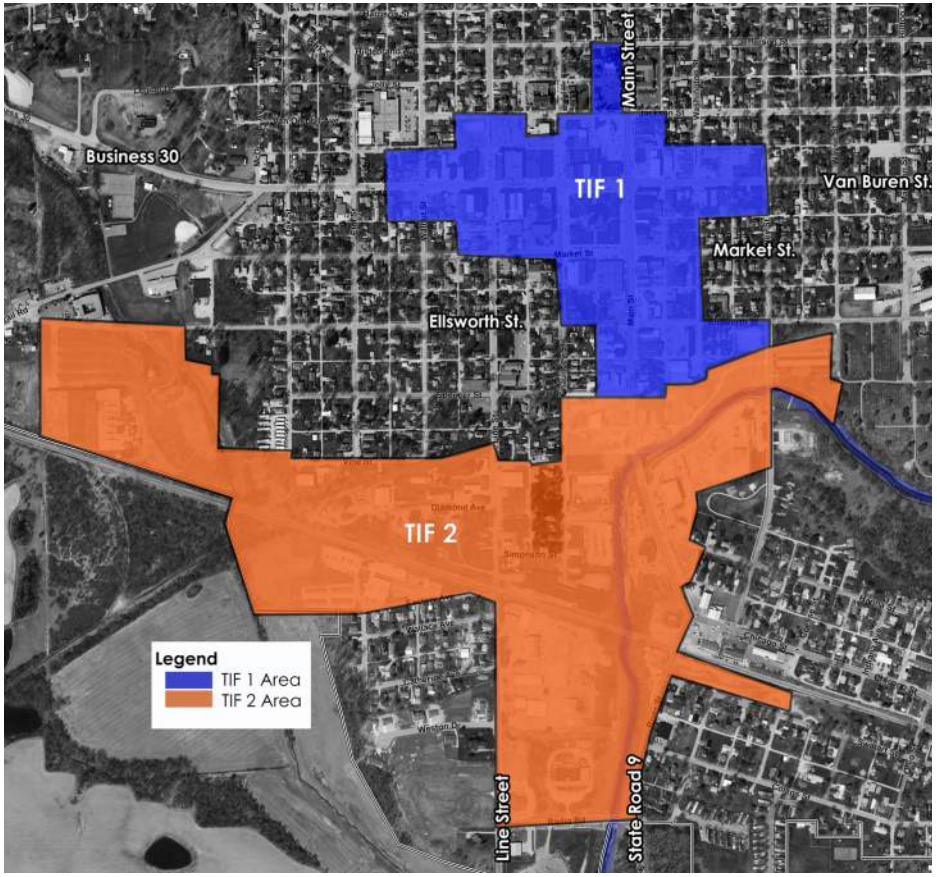
4.9% Columbia City Unemployment Rate in June 2014

6.1% Indiana Unemployment Rate in June 2014

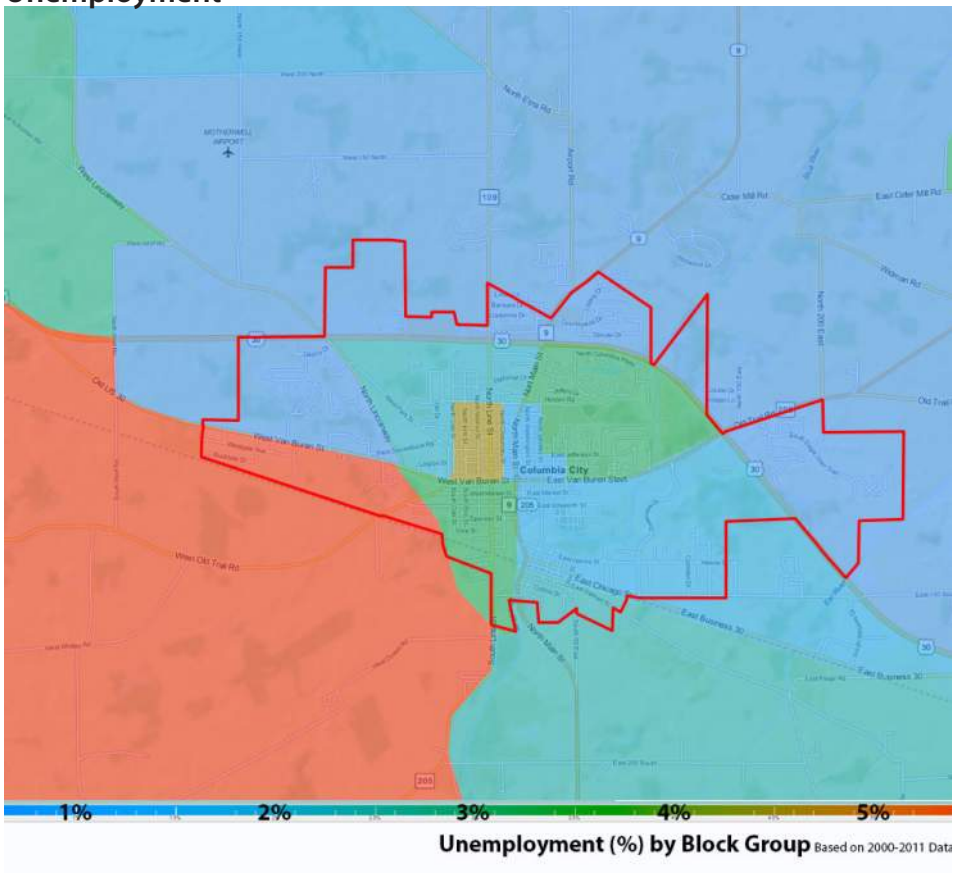




TIF Boundaries



Unemployment



SERVE.

Police. Fire. Utilities.

The Serve goal relates to the emergency response teams, hospitals, and utilities that help make Columbia City survive on a day to day basis. These services are extremely important in order to maintain a healthy, safe, and self-sufficient community. Columbia City's main hospital, Parkview, was relocated to the intersection of State Road 205 and US 30. Parkview Whitley Hospital also provides an After Hours walk-in medical care clinic. This clinic is located on the north side of Columbia City, at US 30 and Lincoln Highway. This 24 hour medical care organization is the largest in the county and provides a wide range of medical services to the communities of Whitley County and beyond.

There are two fire stations located within Columbia City. The City of Columbia City fire station is located in downtown Columbia City near town hall. The second fire station is home to the Columbia Township Fire Department. This station is located on the south side of Columbia City, off of State Road 9. The Columbia City Fire Department also has a non-tax funded fire museum that houses antique trucks and old relics from the early years of the city's fire department.

Columbia City provides dependable, reliable municipal utilities to residential and commercial areas throughout the city. The Columbia City electric department serves approximately 5000 customers within its service territory. This territory can be seen in yellow on the map on the following page. However, as you can see, the city's electric department does not control all service territory within the city's corporate limits. REMC electric company provides electric service to all other users within Columbia City that are not served by the city. The Columbia City electric utility covers the majority of the developed area of Columbia City and extends north towards Tri-Lakes. A large majority of homes served by the Columbia City electric company are not within the city's corporate limits.

The city also provides water and sewer utilities to city residents. These utilities are expanded as new development occurs. The Water Pollution Control Facility is responsible for stringently treating waste water from homes and businesses before being discharged back to the river. The city also has an established Rain Barrel Program to help responsibly manage storm water within the community.

Fire

Police

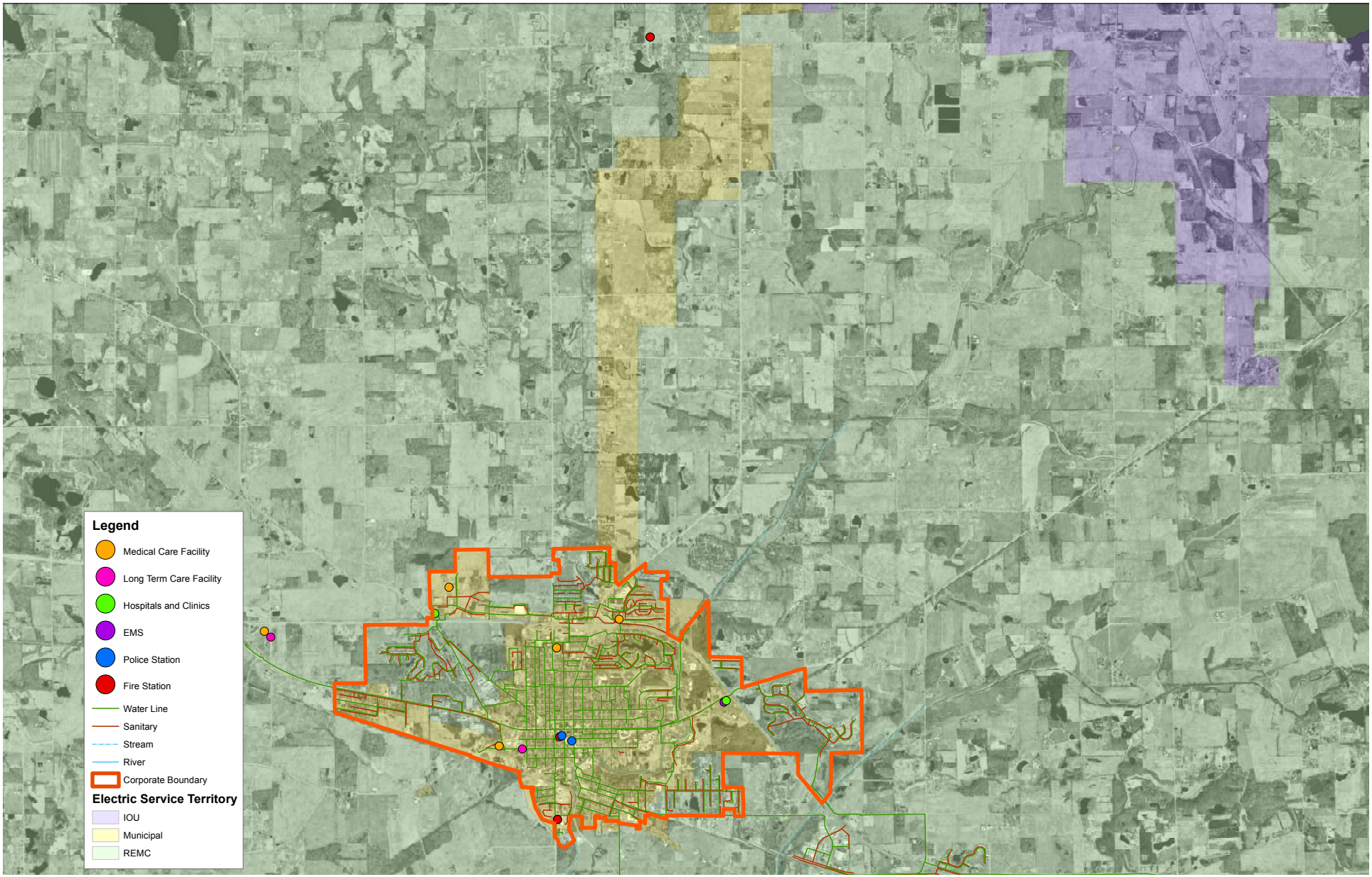
Electric

Sewer

Hospitals

Storm Water

Utilities and Emergency Response Location Map



PRESERVE.

Historic Districts. Flood Plains. Open Space.

Columbia City has environmental and physical features that are important to preserve. The Blue River creates floodplains that travel through the city limits. Over the years, Morsches Park and the Blue River Trail have developed along the river and the floodplains. This creates open space that is important to be preserved and used for parks and recreation purposes. In other areas covered by floodplains, environmental effects of any new developments should be taken into consideration.

Columbia City was founded in 1839, became a city in 1888, and has an extensive historic built environment. In 1987, downtown Columbia City was placed on the National Register of Historic Districts. Some buildings, such as the Clugston Hotel or Hooper House are over 120 years old. North of downtown there is a historic brick street called Chauncey Street. Some of the oldest and most historic homes in Columbia City are located on this street. The County Courthouse located in the heart of the downtown square is a symbol to the history of the city and the county.

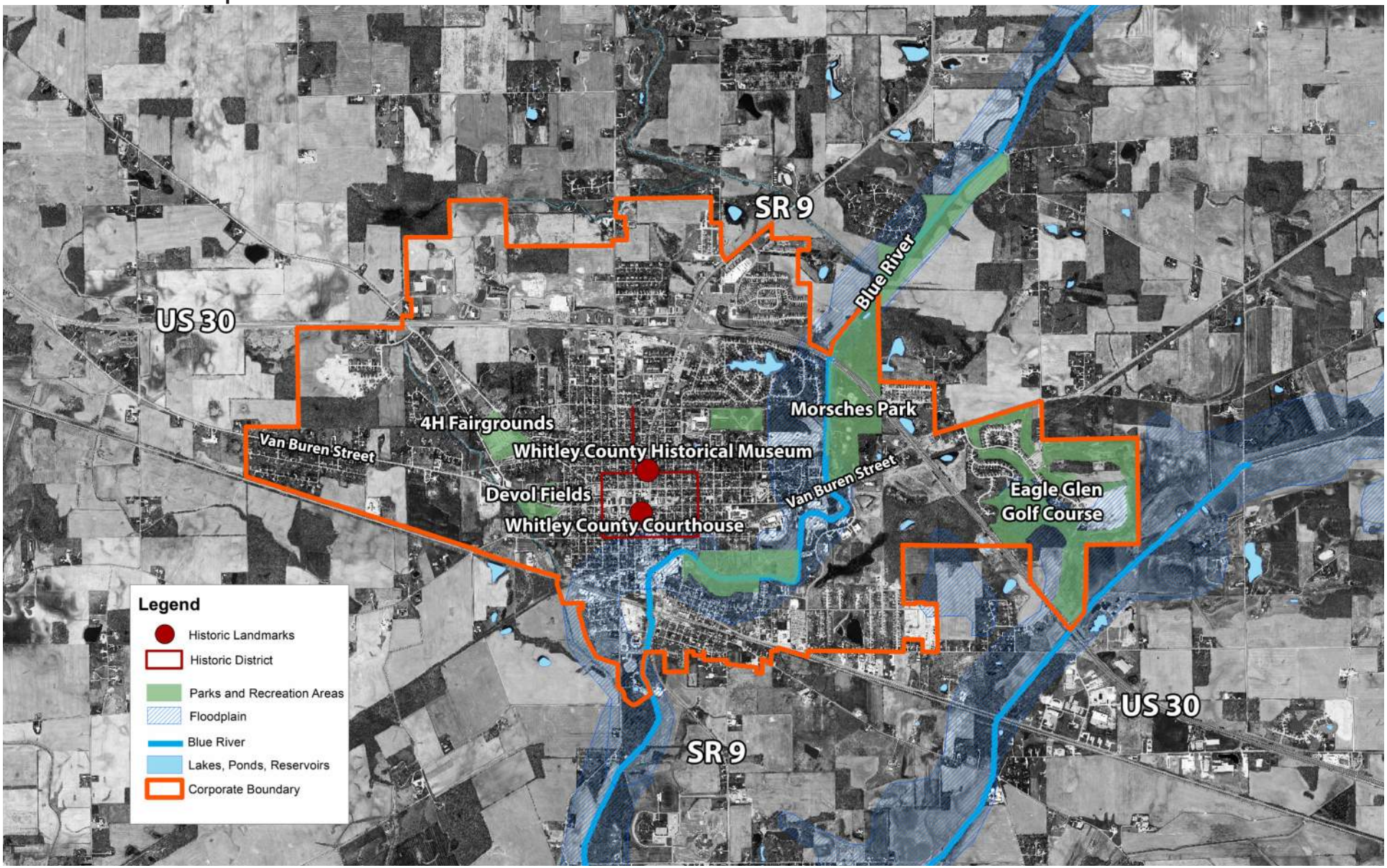
The Whitley County Historical Museum in Columbia City is the former home of Thomas Riley Marshall. Marshall was an Indiana Governor and the 28th Vice President of the United States under Woodrow Wilson. This site has now been transformed into a historical museum whose mission is to instill in people an appreciation of the persons and events which have molded the Whitley County community.

Natural Preservation

Cultural Preservation

Historic Preservation

Preservation Areas Map



SHARE.

Branding. Marketing. Tourism.

It is important for communities to stay relevant and competitive in today's changing society. Recent social trends have put a much higher stress on the importance of technology and appearance. The working generations of today are moving to places based on where they want to live and not where they need to be. Because of this, new industries and jobs are also locating to the communities with a strong sense of place and identity. Columbia City currently lacks a strong branding identity. There are many activities, locations, and characteristics of the community that members of the community take pride in. These unique characteristics and pride must be illustrated to help market and brand the community.

Establishing strong communication between residents, government departments, business owners, events, and festivals is also an important way to unite the community and establish a sense of unity. The use of social and digital media is quickly becoming the easiest and most effective method of connecting people and ideas. Columbia City currently has a city website that offers multiple venues of digital communication, including: meetings and event calendar, city scene news article, and the mayors corner. The city also provides links on the website to their facebook and twitter pages. Furthermore, the city also has their own "My Columbia City" App available in the Apple App Store and Google Play App Store. This app offers an easy way to stay connected to the current happenings in the city. It also serves as a tool to report infrastructure issues, find contact information and local weather. With all of these digital media resources provided by the city of Columbia City, it is clear that the city understands the importance of technology in order to remain current and communicate with residents.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES.

The planning principles are action statements that support the mission statements declared for each goal. These statements are meant to be broad ideas of how the goals can be achieved. With these statements, more detailed strategies and ideas can be formed. The planning principles are a stepping stone between understanding the community goals and identifying ways to achieve them.

WORK.

- Attract new, high quality business and development opportunities and support.
- Encourage continued success and growth of existing business base.
- Support and collaborate with Whitley County Economic Development Corporation.
- Utilize programs and incentives established by the Whitley County Economic Development Corporation.
- Encourage continued use of existing incentive policies.
- Coordinate with education and workforce organizations to support and ensure appropriately skilled, local workforce.

SERVE.

- Support and enhance local emergency response services to promote safety.
- Promote and encourage a healthy lifestyle and community.
- Maintain a high level of service for all infrastructure and community facilities through continuous monitoring and evaluation.
- Encourage individual use of storm-water management tools.
- Explore and encourage use of solar and wind energy sources.

PRESERVE.

- Protect and restore natural floodplains and other ecologically sensitive areas to use for park and recreation activities.
- Reserve open space for future development of parks and recreation amenities.
- Celebrate and protect historic buildings and characteristics of downtown Columbia City.

SHARE.

- Create a unique sense of identity for Columbia City
- Create a consolidated outreach and marketing program for quality of life components (tourism, recreation, community branding).
- Define a specific brand for Columbia City.
- Promote local attractions and unique characteristics of Columbia City to attract visitors.
- Utilize social media and other digital communications to connect residents to government news, programs, and events.

9a Explore potential sites for new industrial parks.

WORK
SERVE
PRESERVE
SHARE

Related Goals:

GROW

SERVE

Summary

A strong community benefits from a strong tax base. A sustainable community requires a wide variety of land uses, such as, residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Zoning is used to appropriately locate potential areas for these uses.

As Columbia City continues to grow in land size and population, it is important to pursue additional economic development opportunities and industrial land use developments within the city as well. These potential new industrial sites must be located in areas that minimize conflicts with future plans for surrounding land uses. Careful consideration should be used when deciding a location to develop a new industrial park. Overall, additional industrial uses in Columbia City would increase the tax base, the number of jobs, and the overall economy.

Case Study

The City of Scottsburg, Indiana is a small community in Scott County in Southern Indiana. The city has recently extended city utilities and high-speed fiber optics to many open land development sites within the city limits. These sites have been declared Shovel Ready by State of Indiana Shovel Ready Program for new development. The city hopes to expand their industrial market and appeal to new industrial developments looking to locate in the area. The development of industrial parks has potential to grow and bring more residents as more jobs become available and opportunities are supported.

Figure 51: Shovel Ready Site in Scottsburg, Indiana

WORK: Support and encourage a diverse local economy that provides opportunities for financially satisfying and intellectually satisfying employment.

Action Steps

1. Explore available properties suitable for industrial uses.
2. Update any zoning regulations to allow industrial uses in desired areas.
3. Create a plan with cost estimates and phasing plan for city utilities and services.
4. Define types of funding and economic development tools that might be available to implement infrastructure.
5. Expand city utilities to potential sites to attract businesses.

Resources

- Community Development Department
- County Economic Development Corporation

Figure 5m: Industrial Park

Figure 5n: Office building in a commerce park (Light Industrial)

Figure 5o: A large-scale manufacturing facility (heavy industrial)

9b WORK SERVE PRESERVE SHARE

Expand the Whitley County Economic Development Corporation Outpost Program for start-up businesses.

Related Goals:

SHARE

Summary

The Whitley County Economic Development Corporation launched a co-working facility in downtown Columbia City called "The Outpost". This facility was meant to be a flexible shared space for members-only entrepreneurs needing a work space. Currently, The Outpost is used to help support new community entrepreneurs by providing them a space to work and build their business. However, it is currently a small work space and lacks a creative environment. To attract more young professionals and business owners to use the space, Columbia City and the Whitley County Economic Development Corporation should collaborate together to explore the possibilities of expanding and upgrading the existing space and program. A new space could potentially offer more tools and resources for meetings and presentations, more comfortable seating areas and work stations, and more amenities such as coffee and snacks. If successful, The Outpost is a great way to bring more activity to the downtown area and build upon the entrepreneurial spirit of Columbia City.

Case Study

Many communities today are creating shared community spaces to foster creativity and collaboration for young entrepreneurs. Many of these spaces are part of an overall community economic development initiative to help grow and attract up and coming businesses within the community. Many Indiana cities have participated in this national trend by implementing this economic development idea. Launch Fishers has become a catalyst for marketing the community towards young professionals and entrepreneurs in Fishers, Indiana. Another similar shared workspace is Matchbox in Lafayette, Indiana (See Photo Below). Typically, these workspaces provide wireless internet access, meeting rooms, presentation and meeting tools and resources, a relaxed atmosphere, and even a coffee shop or bar. Overall, these spaces provide a shared space for young professionals in the community to work and interact with one another with a low monthly or annual membership cost.

Figure 5p: Matchbox co-working space in Lafayette, Indiana

WORK: Support and encourage a diverse local economy that provides opportunities for financially satisfying and intellectually satisfying employment.

Action Steps

1. Explore expansion plans for a larger Whitley County EDC Outpost.
2. Explore funding options to implement program.
3. Communicate and showcase the program to gain community buy in and involvement.
4. Use EDC Outpost as a method to attract new entrepreneurs to the community.

- Marketing materials
- Website promotion
- Youth engagement

Resources

- Whitley County Economic Development Corporation
- Chamber of Commerce

Figure 5q: Launch Fishers Business incubator space in Fishers, Indiana

Figure 5r: Current Columbia City's Outpost.

Figure 5s: A business meeting in a business incubator space

WORK
SERVE
PRESERVE
SHARE

Create a CEO Student Program for successful and ambitious students.

Related Goals:

LEARN

Summary

Creating a CEO Student Program is a great way to involve and integrate successful students of Columbia City directly into the career building and entrepreneur workforce of the community. This program would prepare the youth to be responsible, enterprising individuals, entrepreneurial thinkers that could potentially make a large impact on the future of their hometown local economy. By immersing students into the workforce environment, they gain a better real world understanding for risk, reward, and possibilities.

The program is set up like a class. Students who request to be in the program and are accepted attend the class for two hours a day, five days a week. Each day, the class meets in a local business. The business locations change throughout the year. The facilitator of the program teaches the students real world business experience and uses the "classroom" businesses as a model. The program is overall a community wide effort. Local business partners donate funds to help fund the resources and costs. Community CEO mentors help the CEO students with questions and advice on a one to one basis.

Case Study

Effingham County, Illinois created a student CEO class to help educate students about how to successfully start and run a business, using local businesses as real world examples. The Effingham County CEO program is currently in its 7th year with the class of 2015. The program has gained a lot of local support and attention throughout the years. Many local businesses have joined the cause and have donated funds to the program or requested to be mentors or classroom hosts for the program. In total, the successful Effingham County CEO program has graduated 161 students since it was created, had 12 CEO board members, and 95 total CEO investors.

EFFINGHAM COUNTY CEO

Figure 5t: Effingham County CEO Program Logo

Action Steps

1. Engage and invite local businesses interested in becoming investors and participants (classroom hosts/ business hosts) into the program to gain funds to start the program.
2. Hire a program facilitator to run and teach the program.
3. Establish a CEO Board to oversee the mission and responsibilities of the program.
4. Recruit talented students within Columbia City to become part of the program.
5. Continuously search for new investors, classrooms, and students to make this program an annual success.

Resources

- School District
- Mayors Office
- Chamber of Commerce
- Whitley County Economic Development Corporation
- Whitley County Community Foundation

Figure 5u: Young entrepreneur

Figure 5v: Business plan graphic

Figure 5w: High School Graduation

9d WORK SERVE PRESERVE SHARE

Attract and integrate professional service offices into the Downtown.

Related Goals:

N/A

Summary

In addition to mixed retail and residential uses in the downtown, it is important to integrate professional services and land uses into the downtown area as well. Professional services draw in a different type of user than a retail service does. Because of this, including professional offices in the downtown will enhance the overall diversity of land uses and users of the downtown to support a continuous flow of activity within the area. Since ground-level, street frontage should be reserved for high activity uses, such as retail and dining, professional offices are a great option for second floor space within downtown infrastructure.

Case Study

Bloomington, Indiana has transformed its downtown by relocating many offices to the second and third stories of existing downtown buildings. In place of their old, first floor locations, many local shops and cafes have entered the space. Because of this, downtown Bloomington has become a destination for local shopping and dining. In addition, many office workers still work and attract customers into the area.

Figure 5x: County Courthouse in downtown Bloomington, Indiana

Action Steps

1. Establish a program to renovate upper floors including incentive tools and understanding spaces and property owners.
2. Work with Chamber of Commerce and Whitley County EDC to support new and existing downtown office businesses.
3. Utilize second and third floors of downtown buildings for office spaces. Leave first floor space for retail and dining options.
4. Explore possibilities of relocating existing professional offices to the second stories of downtown buildings.
5. Advertise and market space on second and third floors in downtown buildings as potential office spaces.
6. Coordinate with parking study to determine parking needs.

Resources

- Community Development Department
- Chamber of Commerce
- Whitley County Economic Development Corporation

Figure 5y: A downtown Eye Doctor's Office

Figure 5z: A downtown professional office building

Figure 6a: A downtown attorney's office

WORK
SERVE
PRESERVE
SHARE

Continue to have a strong relationship with the IEDC, Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership, and other regional organizations.

Related Goals:

ACT

Summary

The success of economic development within Columbia City and Whitley County relies heavily on the goals, initiatives, and support of larger economic development regional organizations and surrounding community efforts, such as the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership and the state-wide Indiana Economic Development Corporation. It is important to maintain a strong relationship with these other municipalities and organizations to encourage strong communication and support. It is also important to align local economic development initiatives with regional initiatives to ensure strong and effective strategies and partners.

List of Organizations

- Whitley County Economic Development Authority
- Columbia City Redevelopment Commission
- Indiana Economic Development Corporation
- Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership
- Local Universities

Action Steps

1. Regularly communicate with regional organizations to discuss news, changing plans, goals, and initiatives.
2. Attend regional events and conferences to learn about new developments occurring in neighboring areas.
3. Stay up to date with the latest trends and goals of regional, state, and national economic development efforts.
4. Be an advocate and communicator of things happening in Columbia City.

Resources

- Mayors Office
- Whitley County Economic Development Corporation
- Regional Economic Development Organizations

Figure 6b: The Whitley County Economic Development Corporation logo

Figure 6c: The Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership

Figure 6d: The Indiana Economic Development Corporation

WORK
SERVE
PRESERVE
SHARE

Explore possibilities to promote agribusiness within Columbia City.

Related Goals:

PRESERVE

Summary

Agribusiness is defined as agriculture conducted on commercial principles using advanced technology. Agribusiness can take many shapes and forms. For example, agribusiness could include hydroponics, aquaponics, shared kitchens and gardens, locally grown produce grocery stores, farmers markets, food hubs and more. Many agribusiness companies use locally grown resources to help feed and support the local community. Other large scale agribusinesses can be national suppliers of food and produce.

Columbia City is a rural, agricultural community. However, there currently are no large scale food manufacturers located within Whitley County. This creates a unique opportunity for Whitley County and Columbia City to promote agribusiness at a local scale to boost the local economy and identity. The success of Columbia City's existing Farmers Market is a snapshot that illustrates the agricultural skills and resources available throughout the community that would help make this kind of business a success.

Case Study

All Things Food is a full service organic grocery store co-op that uses products from local suppliers. The grocery co-op is located in Bryan, Ohio. The co-op partners with these local producers to help provide organic, healthy, affordable, and accessible grocery foods easy for local consumers. This Ohio food co-op has recently partnered with Auburn, Indiana to help bring locally produced goods and foods in the Auburn area.

Figure 6e: Logo for All Things Food Co-Op in Bryan, Ohio

WORK: Support and encourage a diverse local economy that provides opportunities for financially satisfying and intellectually satisfying employment.

Action Steps

1. Explore possibilities of creating a local food hub.
2. Explore possibilities of using downtown infrastructure for hydroponic or aquaponics farming.
3. Explore possibilities of a mobile food truck test kitchen.
4. Explore the possibility of creating a community shared kitchen.
5. Explore possibility of expanding the new Ivy Tech Food Science Program within Columbia City.

Resources

- Whitley County Economic Development Corporation
- Columbia City Farmers Market

Figure 6f: An organic produce market.

Figure 6g: A hydroponics farm

Figure 6h: A busy food hub market

10a

WORK
SERVE
PRESERVE
SHARE

Explore and promote use of wind and solar energy as alternative energy infrastructure.

Related Goals:

PRESERVE

Summary

The use of wind and solar energy is growing increasingly popular throughout the state. These forms of alternative energy help protect the environment and save money. Solar and wind energy can be harvested for individual users as well as for large scale community users. Both options should be explored within Columbia City.

In order to be allowed within Columbia City, the individual household use of solar and wind energy should have clear and precise standards and regulations in the city ordinance. These standards should regulate size, placement, noise, and any other regulations that would have a direct impact on the users, neighbors, and community.

Since the City of Columbia City already provides its own electric utility services to its residents, the city should explore new methods of harvesting wind and solar energy as part of their available resources.

Case Study

Union City, Indiana is a small city of nearly 4,000 people in Eastern Indiana. This old rust-belt community installed two Nordic Wind power turbines as part of a progressive effort to revitalize the city. These 1 megawatt wind turbine structures produce enough electricity to serve 400-900 homes each. Although the city receives payment from the electricity sold, the wind turbines are actually owned by a private energy company, Performance Services. Performance Services uses federal tax subsidies to help maintain and finance the structures. After five years of ownership, Performance Services plans to flip ownership over to the city of Union City for a fee.

Figure 6i: Wind Turbine in Union City, Indiana

SERVE: Ensure environmentally friendly, sustainable, and efficient infrastructure systems and high-quality emergency response services to support the current community and future growth.

Action Steps

1. Provide programs and education about individual alternative energy opportunities and benefits.
2. Establish new regulations and policies for incorporating alternative energy within the community.
3. Modify existing city ordinance to allow individual use of wind and solar energy as a form of alternative energy.
4. Explore locations within Columbia City to create city-run alternative energy infrastructure.
5. Explore funding sources, grants, and tax credits to create alternative energy infrastructure.

Resources

- Community Development Department
- City Utilities Departments

Figure 6j: Solar panels on a residential rooftop.

Figure 6k: Green homes emblem

Figure 6l: A small wind turbine on a residential rooftop.

10b WORK SERVE PRESERVE SHARE

Expand city utilities to potential development sites.

Related Goals:

LIVE

WORK

GROW

Summary

In order to attract new businesses and industries into a community you must provide incentives and a reason why your site is better then the competition. Columbia City is currently looking for potential new development and industrial sites as the city continues to grow. Providing development locations with utility services already connected to the site is a great way for a community to be proactive in pursuing new development investments.

The major utilities needed to prepare a site for future development includes electricity, water, sewer, and fiber-optics. By providing any or all of these utilities to a site, developers are more likely to select a site based on its easily available and ready resources.

Case Study

Wabash, Indiana has recently extended city utilities, such as electricity, water, sewer, and other city services to new development sites in a designated industrial park in order to attract new users to the area. The Economic Development Group of Wabash County has listed these properties as Shovel Ready. This appeals to developers looking for an easier location ready for construction and establish their business.

Figure 6m: Wabash County Economic Development Group L

SERVE: Ensure environmentally friendly, sustainable, and efficient infrastructure systems and high-quality emergency response services to support the current community and future growth.

Action Steps

1. Explore and Identify desired potential development sites.
2. Explore funding and feasibility of extending utilities to sites.
3. Appropriately extend utilities to desired sites.
4. Pursue Shovel Ready Designation once sites are prepared.
5. Market development sites for desired uses and potential developers.

Resources

- City Utility Departments
- Community Development Department
- Whitley County Economic Development Corporation

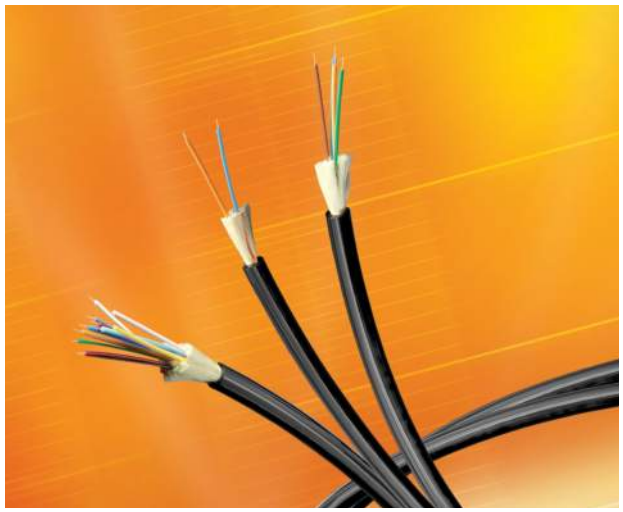


Figure 6n: Fiber cables.

Figure 6o: High voltage power infrastructure

Figure 6p: Sewer pipes

10c

WORK
SERVE
PRESERVE
SHARE

Coordinate with private utility companies to expand city utility services throughout the corporate boundaries.

Related Goals:

ACT

GROW

Summary

Since its creation, the Columbia City owned electric utility has always stretched beyond the corporate boundaries. The electric utilities extend north of Columbia City, into the Tri-Lakes area. In addition, portions of the developments within the Columbia City corporate boundaries are not served by the city utilities. Instead, private utilities, such as REMC, have extended their services into Columbia City to reach these developments. To create a unified city-run utility system, Columbia City needs to continue to coordinate with REMC to strategically annex utility serviced areas within the city limits.

SERVE: Ensure environmentally friendly, sustainable, and efficient infrastructure systems and high-quality emergency response services to support the current community and future growth.

Action Steps

1. Focus growth of additional city-owned utilities in areas that are incorporated within city boundaries.
2. Continue communication efforts with private utility companies to establish and maintain a strong relationship.
3. Explore opportunities and deals to exchange territory of electric utilities to gain control of utilities within the corporate boundaries.
4. Work with IMPA to help strategize long term electric system sustainability.

Resources

- Mayors Office
- City Council
- City Utility Departments
- Local Private Utility Companies

Figure 6q: Electric pole

Figure 6r: Rutherford Electric Membership Corporation logo

Figure 6s: Electrical wiring

10d

WORK
SERVE
PRESERVE
SHARE

Add additional emergency response facilities, resources and staff as needed to maintain high levels of service for growing population.

Related Goals:

ACT

WORK

GROW

Summary

Columbia City has experienced consistent growth throughout the years. Because of this, the demand and need for city services continues to increase. As new developments and growth continues throughout the city, it is important to plan for the growth of the city services and emergency response teams as well. As new equipment, staff, and other resources are added to the City's police and fire teams, new space will be needed. Columbia City should consider and search for future opportunities to grow and expand city services, as needed.

Current Columbia City Population Estimate:

- 8,808 People

Current Columbia City Police Department:

- 19 Full-Time Officers
- 2 Volunteer Reserve Officers

Current Columbia City Fire Department:

- 8 Full-Time Firemen
- 30 Volunteer Firemen
- 2- Class A Engines
- 1- 75' Aerial
- 1- Gas Rig
- 1- Hose Truck
- 1- Command Vehicle
- 2- Thermal Imagers

SERVE: Ensure environmentally friendly, sustainable, and efficient infrastructure systems and high-quality emergency response services to support the current community and future growth.

Action Steps

1. Study current emergency response statistics to measure current performance.
2. Study population growth trends and need for additional emergency response resources to accommodate.
3. Explore potential locations for additional emergency response team space if needed.
4. Provide annual reports to help plan and prepare for future emergency response resources anticipated to be needed.

Resources

- Police Department
- Fire Department

Figure 6t: The Columbia City Fire Station

Figure 6u: Fire truck and emergency response vehicles

Figure 6v: Columbia City police cruiser

11a

WORK
SERVE
PRESERVE
SHARE

Review and update inventory of existing Columbia City structures that have local, historic value.

Related Goals:

LIVE

WORK

PLAY

EXPERIENCE

Summary

The Whitley County Interim Report identifies historical sites and structures located throughout Whitley County. The most recent version of this report was published in 2002 and provides a lot of historical information of structures located within Columbia City.

This document should be viewed as a working document and should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. New listings should be added and removed from the inventory as changes occur within the community. Columbia City should take an active part in recording their significant history and historic preservation efforts to ensure that the community's history and culture remains both respected and celebrated for years to come.

List of Federal, State and Local Historic Preservation Organizations:

- National Park Service
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- American Association for State and Local History
- Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology
- Indiana Department of Commerce
- Indiana Historic Bureau
- Indiana State Library
- Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana
- Indiana Alliance of Historic District Commissions
- Indiana Historical Society
- Whitley County Historical Society

Action Steps

1. Review and update current Columbia City listings within the Whitley County Interim Report.
2. Identify any new local historical sites to be listed.
3. Explore various types of historic preservation methods for historical structures, including rehabilitation and restoration.
4. Engage the public in historic preservation related projects to gain support, interest, and pride in preserving the history of Columbia City.

Resources

- Community Development Department
- State and Local Historic Preservation Organizations

Figure 6w: Historic structures in downtown Columbia City.

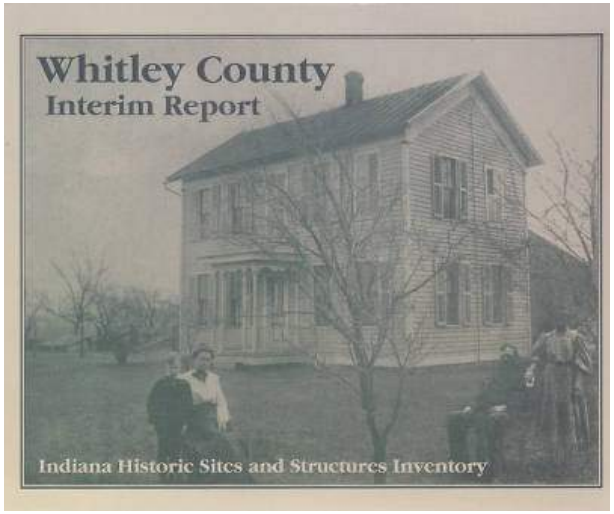


Figure 6x: Whitley County Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

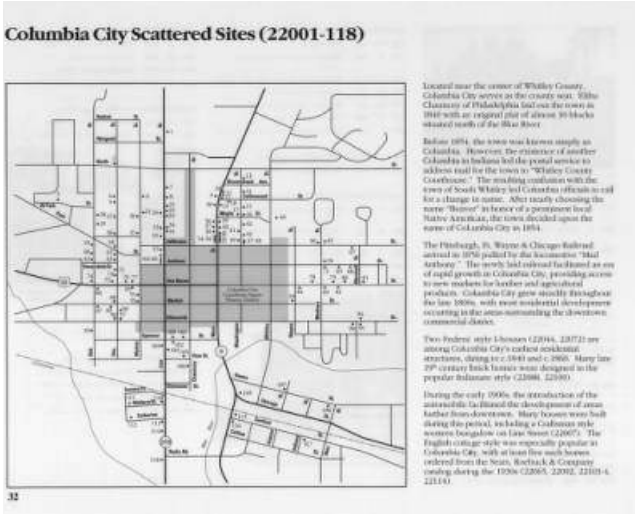


Figure 6y: Historic sites in Columbia City

11b

WORK
SERVE
PRESERVE
SHARE

Explore possibility of restoring historic brick road of North Chauncey Street.

Related Goals:

MOVE

EXPERIENCE

Summary

North Chauncey Street provides a sense of history and character in the downtown Columbia City area. Over the years, the condition of the historic brick road has been diminishing. Today, North Chauncey Street is in poor condition. With its close proximity to the historic downtown and with historic homes along its sides, the road is an important piece in the community's historic preservation. In fact, the street lies within the boundaries of the historic district designation from the National Register of Historic Places. Restoring this road would be a great step towards preserving an important piece of the community's history, increasing home and property values, and creating new opportunities for new development and connections to the future changes in downtown Columbia City. An expensive infrastructure project such as this requires an overall vision, public input, and studies.

Case Study

The brick-paved Main Street in Zionsville, Indiana is as old as the town's history itself. The road has become an icon of the community's history. The dark bricks in the center of the road symbolize the old rail line that once ran through downtown. Today, this street is lined with many local shops, offices, and restaurants. The street is also used for many community festivals and city events. Preservation of the brick road in Zionsville has created a unique sense of place and pride within the community, as well as a greater appreciation of the history that has made the community what it is today.

Figure 6z: Downtown Zionsville brick road.

PRESERVE: Ensure environmentally friendly, sustainable, and efficient infrastructure systems and high-quality emergency response services to support the current community and future growth.

Action Steps

1. Study options to restore Chauncey Street.
- Engage public to gather pubic input on desired results.
- Get professional input / buy-in to help choose appropriate option and fully understand project costs, impacts and feasibility.
2. Explore overall cost of restoring North Chauncey Street.
3. Explore new development options and other benefits of restoring North Chauncey Street.
4. Explore possible historic grants and other funding options.

Resources

- Street Department
- Community Development Department
- State and Local Preservation Organizations

Figure 7a: A brick-paved street in good condition

Figure 7b: Street view down North Chauncey Street

Figure 7c: Showing worn down condition of brick streets over time

11c

WORK
SERVE
PRESERVE
SHARE

Utilize floodplains as natural amenities and use for parks and recreation activities.

Related Goals:

PLAY

Summary

Floodplains are challenging areas to consider when creating new development. It is best to recommend low-impact uses to ensure safety for the community and sustainability for the environment. Because of this, parks are a great land use to be placed in floodplain areas. Columbia City has already created a large parks and trail system that runs along the Blue River and within existing flood plain boundaries. This river provides the city with great land area that cuts through the city boundaries. Columbia City should continue to grow and expand these parks and trails along the Blue River to create a well-connected and extensive network that connects various areas of the city and also honors the natural environment along the riverbanks. New growth areas should grow around the fabric of the natural features, without destroying them, to take advantage of the benefits that preservation can bring to a community.

Case Study

Similarly to Columbia City, Peru, Indiana has a river that flows through the city and near the downtown. Peru has created the River Walk Trail and the River Walkway Park along side these banks of the Wabash River. These park and recreation facilities have become a main focus for future planning and development plans within Peru while reducing potential flood impacts on higher intensity uses such as residential and commercial properties.

Figure 7d: River Walkway Park in Peru, Indiana

PRESERVE: Ensure environmentally friendly, sustainable, and efficient infrastructure systems and high-quality emergency response services to support the current community and future growth.

Action Steps

1. Utilize floodplain areas as park development and continue to expand the Blue River Trail and Morsches Park along the Blue River and its floodplain areas.
2. Follow future land use map to plan for future land use developments.
3. Explore development opportunities surrounding the floodplain and park areas near the Blue River.

Resources

- Parks Department
- Community Development Department
- State and Local Preservation Organizations
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources

Figure 7e: A scenic park bridge.

Figure 7f: A Riverside Park.

Figure 7g: The Wabash River.

12a

WORK
SERVE
PRESERVE
SHARE

Define the brand of Columbia City related to marketing, communications, graphic design, and environmental design.

Related Goals:

EXPERIENCE

Summary

A strong community brand helps create a strong community identity. Something as simple as a logo or city colors can begin to help establish an overall design scheme for a community. Once these designs are created, they can be incorporated in various environmental design features throughout the city, including street signs, wayfinding signs, gateways, and many more. The city brand can also be used for media and communications purposes such as websites, letterheads, newsletters, and more. Establishing this sense of branding and identity of the city creates an opportunity for the city to have a recognizable and consistent graphic design appearance. Furthermore, it allows others within the community to branch off of the design in their own ways to take further pride and action in creating a sense of branding and identity within the community.

Columbia City has already begun to develop a new city logo. This logo will set the stage for further branding and graphic design creation within the city. The logo design should be used and considered in future design strategies.

Case Study

Fishers, Indiana incorporates their city colors and logo in a lot of recent planning and community development projects. The logo, colors, and overall design can be seen in the designs of new city wayfinding signage, city and district gateways, city website, city marketing materials, and more. Fishers fully utilizes the power of branding as one of many tools to help them create a sense of places and identity in an area that works hard to steer away from becoming a beige suburban community.

Figure 7h: Fishers, Indiana Flag

SHARE: Promote the communication and dialogue between governmental and non-governmental groups internally and externally to support successful community development, government proceedings, marketing and communications and collaboration towards community vision.

Action Steps

1. Identify a desired logo for the city.
2. Develop and update marketing materials with new logo and unified design.
3. Include overall design scheme, colors, and logo of city into new designs for wayfinding, gateways, public art, and other environmental design features.
4. Include new city branding and design features into updated city website and social media pages.

Resources

- Mayors Office
- IT Department
- Consultant

Figure 7i: Wayfinding sign displaying a community's brand

Figure 7j: Cedar Park, Texas gateway feature with the community's logo and color scheme.

Figure 7k: Street signs with logo.

12b WORK SERVE PRESERVE **SHARE**

Create a Columbia City / Whitley County Tourism Department.

Related Goals:

PLAY

LIVE

EXPERIENCE

Summary

Currently, Columbia City and Whitley County do not have an internal city or county Tourism Department or organization. Most of the responsibilities and objectives of a typical tourism department are overseen by the Whitley County Chamber of Commerce. In order to level up the tourism efforts in Columbia City, it is important to explore the possibilities and opportunities of creating a separate tourism organization or department.

The purpose of a community tourism department is to attract new visitors to the community by showcasing the existing attractions within the community. In addition, a tourism department can be used to monitor and analyze economic impact trends as they relate to tourism events and attractions.

Columbia City should consider creating its own Tourism Department, or a joint effort with Whitley County, in order to level up tourism efforts within the community. With so many projects and ideas in this planning document, it is important to have a department to help showcase the accomplishments and activities to help appeal to citizens living outside of Columbia City and unaware of the recent community development momentum.

Case Study

Similar to Whitley County, Miami County, Indiana is another rural county with Peru as the county seat and larger community. Miami County has a tourism organization dedicated to showcasing the community's attractions, lodging, dining, shopping, parks and recreation, and community events. This organization is used by residents and visitors of Miami County to help inform and showcase current attractions and events within the area. This website and organization serves as a headquarters for anything related to tourism within the county and its municipalities.

Figure 71: Miami County, Indiana Tourism Department Logo

SHARE: Promote the communication and dialogue between governmental and non-governmental groups internally and externally to support successful community development, government proceedings, marketing and communications and collaboration towards community vision.

Action Steps

1. Explore Tourism partnership opportunities with Whitley County.
2. Explore funding possibilities.
3. Explore overall benefits and responsibilities of proposed tourism department.
4. Explore additional developments and attractions in Columbia City to be used for tourism purposes.
5. Engage state tourism agency/department for guidance, support, and additional outreach and marketing materials.

Resources

- Whitley County Chamber of Commerce
- Whitley County
- Columbia City
- City Council

Figure 7m: Columbia City splash pad park.

Figure 7n: Whitley County courthouse.

Figure 7o: Columbia City's Blue River Trail

12c

WORK
SERVE
PRESERVE
SHARE

Upgrade the city website, social media pages, community events calendar, and other online, digital communications media.

Related Goals:

ACT

EXPERIENCE

Summary

In today's society, digital media has become the main source of news for many online users. Now more than ever, websites play an important role in informing and identifying a community. Without a strong online presence, a community does not appear up-to-date or technologically advanced. Furthermore, a website must provide more than just the tools needed to inform users. A website should provide an overall design that helps illustrate the character and identity of the community. This city homepage is the gateway that all residents and visitors see when viewing the city website.

Currently, Columbia City has a city website that provides community news, department information, contact information, history, and many other tools helpful to educate users. The organization and overall design could be improved to make the website more easily navigable and more visually appealing. The website should use other design related strategy recommendations in this plan to help create an overall branding and identity. The website should be utilized more as a portal for illustrating the people, attractions, character, and great spaces withing the community.

All governmental meeting minutes, ordinances, codes, plans, contact information, etc. should be updated to ensure the information provided is up to date.

Case Study

Noblesville, Indiana has a great city website. The website provides up to date information for all documents and ordinances related to city departments. It provides an interactive events calendar, an action center to report problems, and information and images of life in Noblesville. Furthermore, the website is appealing and fits in with the overall branding and graphic design theme of the community. They are also very involved in social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, and regularly post the most up-to-date community news and events.

Figure 7p: Noblesville, Indiana website

SHARE: Promote the communication and dialogue between governmental and non-governmental groups internally and externally to support successful community development, government proceedings, marketing and communications and collaboration towards community vision.

Action Steps

1. Make sure all current ordinances, meeting minutes, codes, plans, and contact information is up-to-date on the website for all governmental departments.
2. Develop an interactive community calendar.
3. Pursue other strategies identified in this plan related to graphic design and branding.
4. Modify and upgrade city website to fit overall branding design.
5. Continue to maintain and update all city social media pages and apps.
6. Provide links to all other community organizations - Chamber, EDC, Community Foundation, Mainstreet, Etc.

Resources

- IT Department
- Consultant

Figure 7q: Calendar icon.

Figure 7r: City of Columbia City website homepage

Figure 7s: Social media icons.

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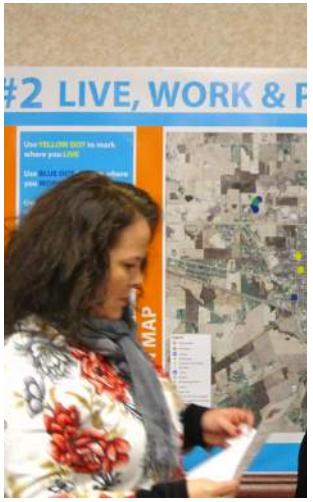
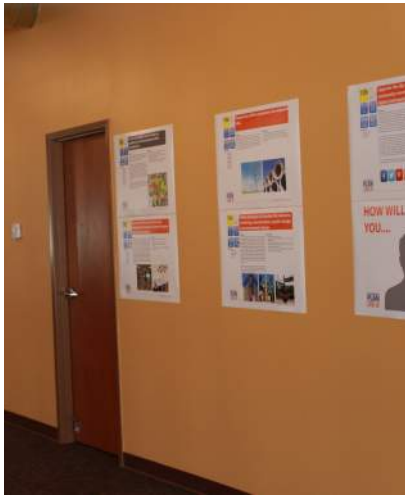
APPENDIX

PUBLIC INPUT RESULTS. PICTURE SOURCES.

PUBLIC INPUT.

The Columbia City Level Up Comprehensive Plan 2015 used multiple methods of community input in order to create a document that accurately and effectively recommended a unified vision, goals, and strategies that met the needs of the community. The process included multiple steering committee meetings with a committee of local community leaders, multiple public open house events to gain the knowledge and ideas of the community members that live, work, and play within Columbia City. Lastly, multiple online surveys were used to reach out to community members that were unable to attend the open house date sand times. The local newspaper and social media, such as Facebook, was a huge help in advertising the project's public meetings and surveys. Overall there was a large amount of data and input gathered from multiple perspectives of the community. Results from these meetings and surveys are within this section of the Appendix.





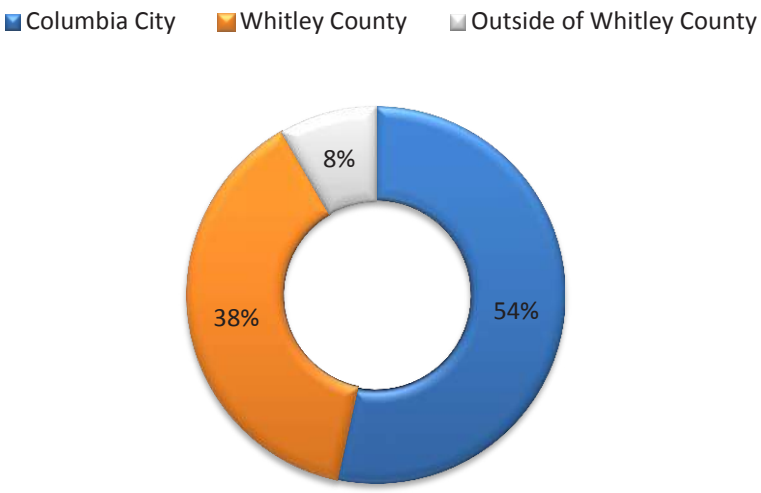
C. Visioning Workshops and Community Survey Summary

As part of a multi-phase community outreach effort, American Structurepoint hosted two public open house sessions in Columbia City on December 11th, 2014. In total, around 50 people attended to voice their likes, dislikes, hopes and dreams of their community. In addition, an online survey was available from December 11th – January 12th on the project website for those who could not attend. This online survey gathered an additional 106 responses. In total, over 150 residents, workers, and visitors of Columbia City expressed their opinions to help guide us into the next steps of this Comprehensive Planning process.

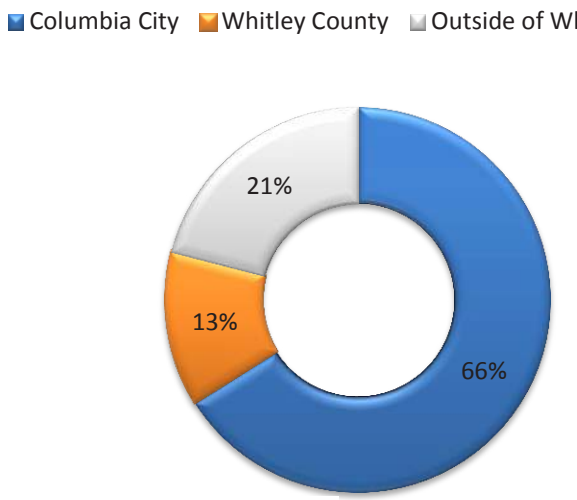
Further survey results, open house boards, and other community outreach resources are all listed on the project website:

www.columbiacitycompplan.com

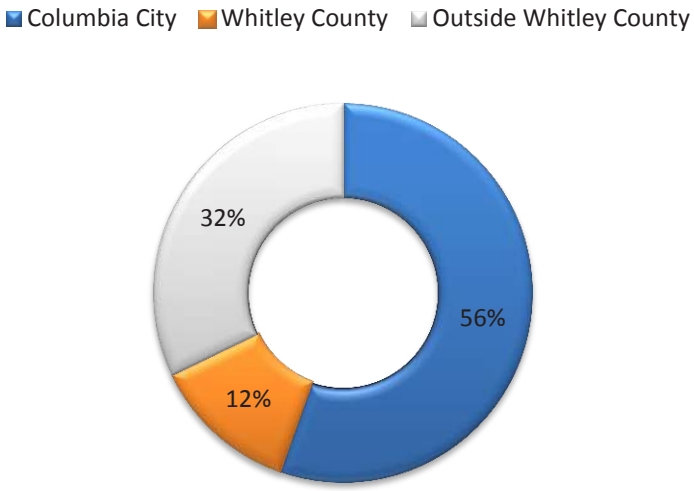
Where Do You **Live**?



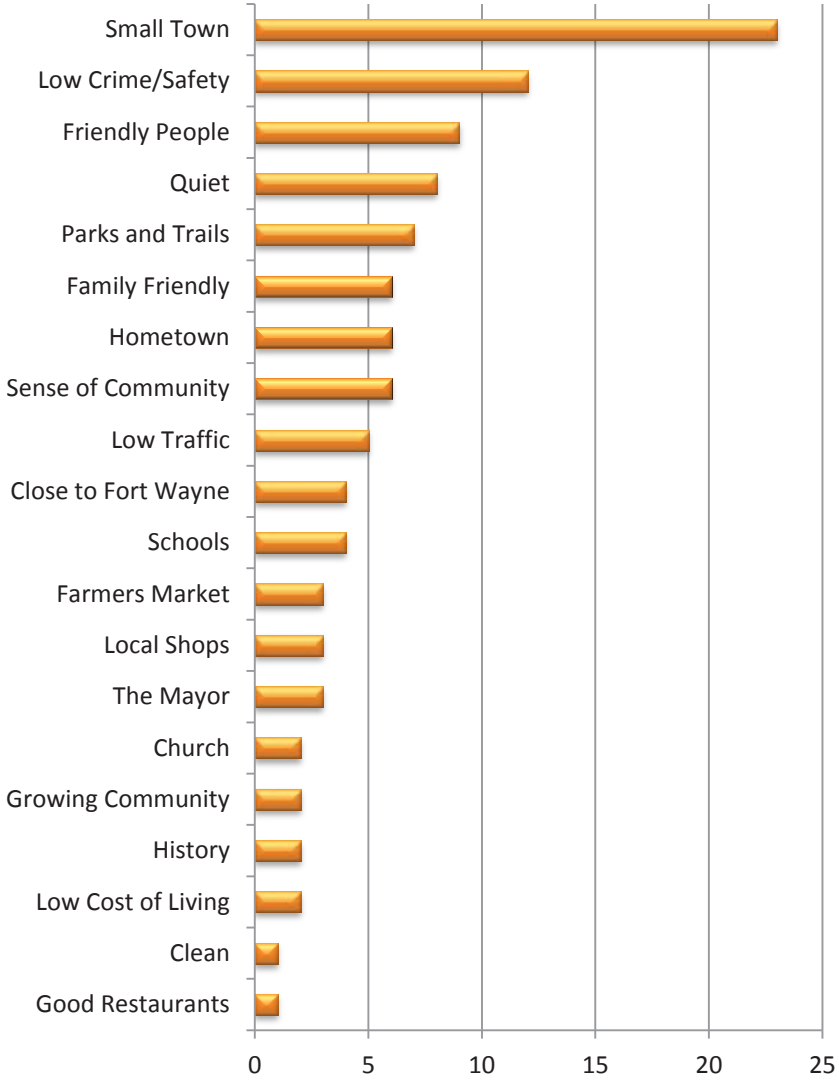
Where Do You **Work?**



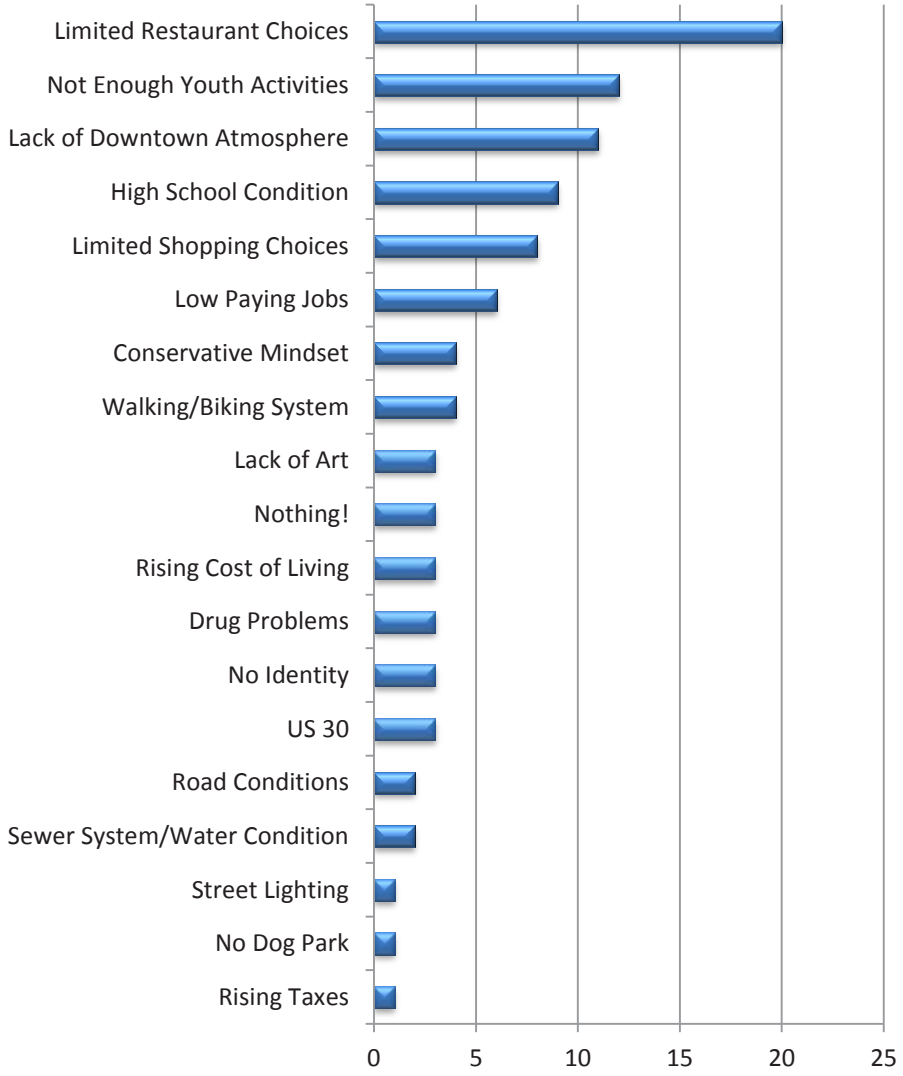
Where Do You **Play?**



What Do You **Like?**



What Do You **Dislike?**

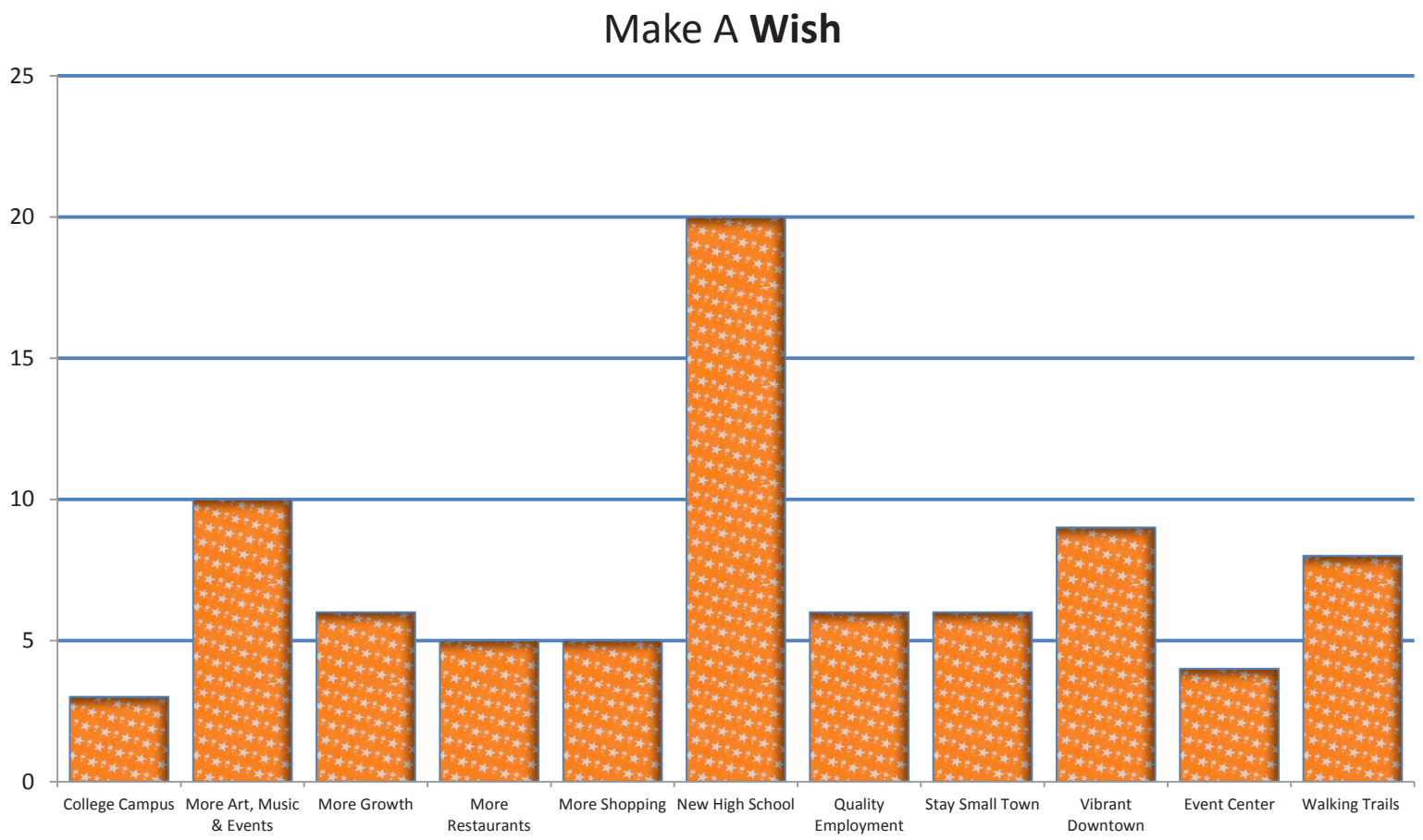


What is your **Favorite Thing** about Columbia City?

- Sense of Community
- Friendly People
- Small Town Feel
- Safe Community
- Farmers Market
- Family Friendly

feel
schools
beautiful
friendliness
downtown
safe
people
town
good
small
great
community
place
friendly
live
family
parks
Farmers
market
restaurants
school
police
Park
Market
atmosphere
Morsches
wonderful
Nice
Small
Great
YMCA
events
festivals
trail
support
library
parade
Parks
4-H
brag
nice
need
churches
businesses
trails
teachers
quality
Parade
farmers
Fair
mayor
Christmas
Center
Square
local
Low
just
system
work
raise
House
Jobs
Warsaw
4H
Eagle
Whitley
Hospital
Tech
Safety
Community
Good
Also
enough
really
clean
look
haunted
high
river
jail
square
still
Fair
much
new
Downtown
neighbors
marathon
Theater
big
love
Trail
know
lakes
Blue
business
tell
bring
People
activities
year
life
Tech
Safety
Hospital
Whitley
minutes
tight
Eagle
smaller
cities
living
folks
faith
church
Trail
Downtown
See
City
location
many
square
Christmas
Also
Parks
enough
really
still
Fair
Center
much
churches
clean
look
need
nice
brag
4-H
Low
just
system
House
Jobs
work
raise
high
river
Square
jail
Market
haunted
atmosphere
new
Park
police
school
Warsaw
4H
trails
businesses
teachers
quality
Parade
Small
events
farmers
Great
Tech
year
parade
activities
Hospital
Eagle
Whitley
minutes
tight
Blue
business
tell
bring
People
Fair
mayor
Downtown
neighbors
marathon
Theater
big
love
Trail
know
lakes
kids
cities
living
folks
faith
church
Trail
Downtown
due

Make **One Wish** for Columbia City.



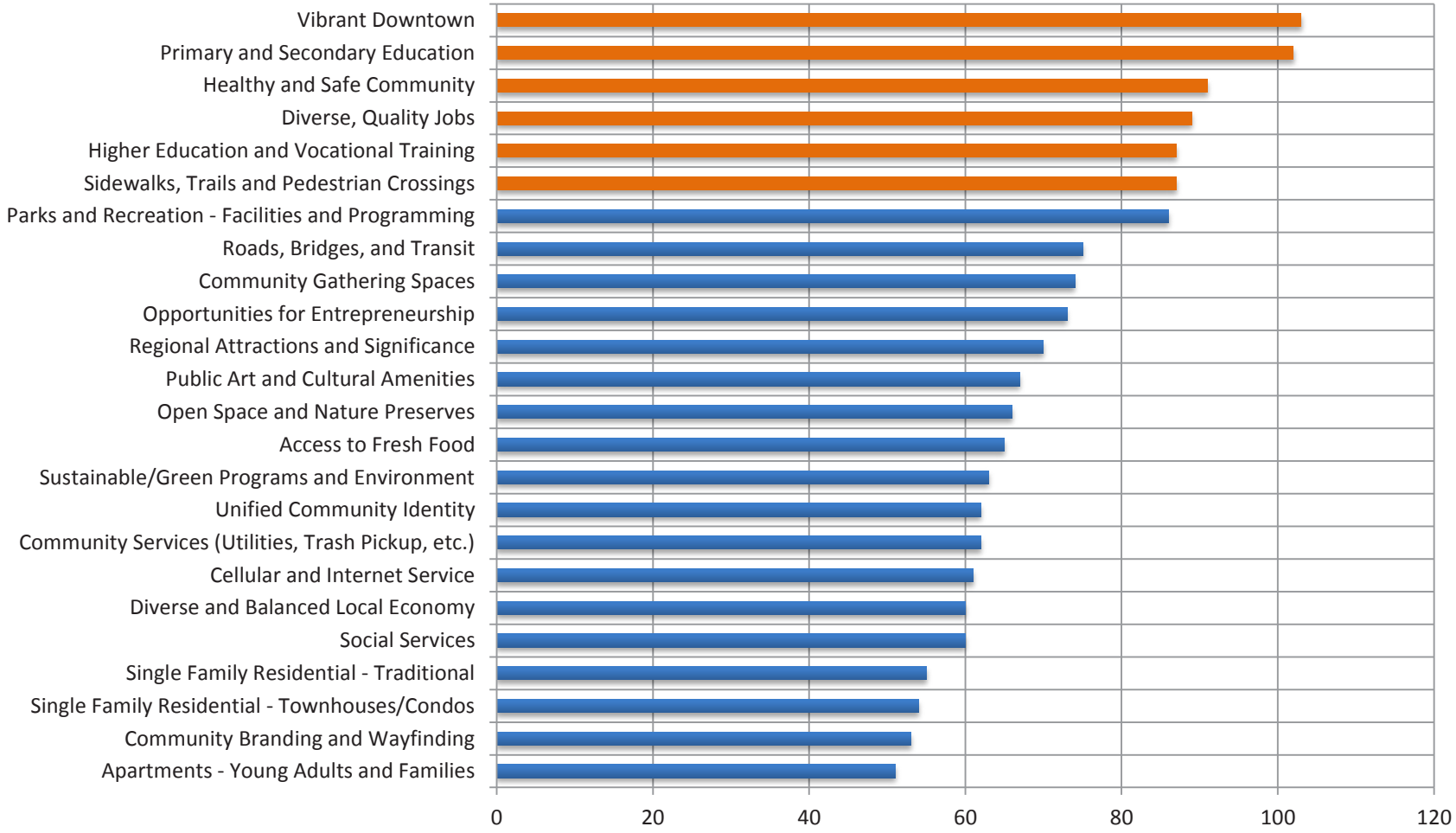
If you had to pick your **Top 6**

Priorities for Columbia City,

what would they be? (Online Results)

Online Answer Options	1	2	3	4	5	6	Totals
Sidewalks, Trails and Pedestrian Crossings	27	5	17	8	9	5	71
Roads, Bridges, and Transit	17	12	16	9	7	6	67
Community Gathering Spaces	9	22	12	10	7	5	65
Parks and Recreation - Facilities and Programming	12	28	15	7	5	8	75
Community Services (Utilities, Trash Pickup, etc.)	13	15	13	9	3	5	58
Primary and Secondary Education	47	15	6	3	8	4	83
Higher Education and Vocational Training	23	17	14	3	8	5	70
Healthy and Safe Community	38	12	8	6	8	6	78
Unified Community Identity	10	7	14	11	8	4	54
Vibrant Downtown	22	22	15	9	7	6	81
Social Services	6	13	14	12	3	5	53
Single Family Residential - Traditional	7	10	14	10	8	4	53
Single Family Residential - Townhouses/Condos	4	7	17	9	8	7	52
Apartments - Young Adults and Families	5	9	14	6	11	4	49
Opportunities for Entrepreneurship	20	17	6	6	9	6	64
Divers and Balanced Local Economy	8	12	15	6	7	2	50
Community Branding and Wayfinding	3	11	17	7	5	4	47
Public Art and Cultural Amenities	6	14	9	11	6	8	54
Regional Attractions and Significance	11	14	12	12	6	7	62
Diverse, Quality Jobs	29	17	10	8	8	6	78
Cellular and Internet Service	18	18	5	6	6	3	56
Access to Fresh Food	21	13	9	7	8	4	62
Sustainable/Green Programs and Environment	13	9	12	9	9	6	58
Open Space and Nature Preserves	16	15	6	8	6	10	61
	Most Votes					Least Votes	6 Top Ranked

If you had to pick your **Top 6 Priorities** for Columbia City, what would they be? (Open House and Top 6 Online Results)



Describe your **Vision** for Columbia City in

20 Years.

community
ColumbiaCity
people
place
see
town
change
downtown
SmallTown
CC
growth
new
want
businesses
families
years
live
family
jobs
city
young
grow
shop
keep
still
high
good
need
hope
housing
bring
support
old
now
also
buildings
great
business
thriving
local
economy
quality
vision
work
continue
Hopefully
potential
coming
Maybe
space
times
maintaining
Growing
raise
safe
well
Warsaw
restaurants
school
growing
shops
come
citizens
strong
without
manufacturing
opportunities
like
one
Still
vibrant
small
already
values
feeling
not-for-profit
destination
culture
modern
works
lead
built
events
places
areas
paying
maintenance
residence
move
living
industry
operate
area
cultural
improvement
pride
options
something
needs
Wayne
together
Continued
apartments
today
dev
right
outdated
High
education
rent
hand
lots
draw
taking
minded
roads
housing
keep away
time
things
thrives
plenty
attractions
going
system
marry
close
identity
ones
match
lead
built
works
program
feel
events
destination
not-for-profit
industry
feeling
living
already
values
move
residence
maintenance
visit
small
places
areas
paying
operate
Warsaw
restaurants
manufacturing
strong
without
well
safe
school
growing
Still
sure
hard
opportunities
shops
work
area
needs
cultural
vision
quality
marry
close
system
going
attractions
identity
ones
match
built
lead

Describe your **Vision** for Columbia City in **20 Years.**

A COMMUNITY FOR OUR YOUTH

- "A community with a strong education program. A city where the community comes together. A city that has a downtown that thrives. A city that does not automatically go to Fort Wayne on the weekends. A city that accepts others and works together."

A COMMUNITY OF CHANGE AND GROWTH

- "Continued growth and improvements. I envision buildings coming down and new ideas going up."

A COMMUNITY OF CULTURE

- "A vibrant downtown with good paying jobs... A reason to live here or come here to dine and be entertained. Festivals to showcase our culture and talent. And a quality parks system."

A COMMUNITY THAT STAYS TRUE TO ITSELF

- "I see it growing and I'm not sure if that is a good thing. I was raised here in a time when you could say you knew everybody. I realize times change and towns must grow or die. I just don't want to lose that small town feeling."

A COMMUNITY TO VISIT

- "A place where residents of Columbia City can shop and eat and celebrate to sustain local businesses and new events and to be encouraged with the city's new energy and vibrance. Where residents are excited to live in a communiy where people come from other places to visit."

A COMMUNITY FOR FAMILIES

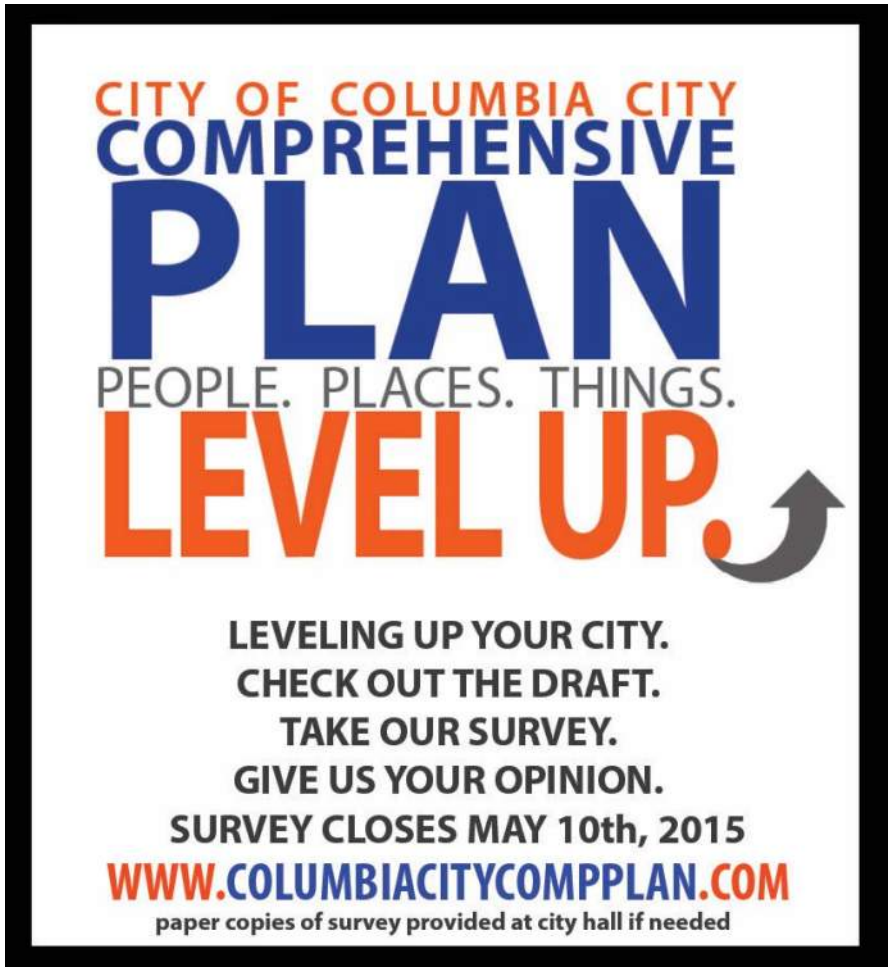
- "I see Columbia City remaining a slightly moderate sized city that thrives on community identity and pride. It complements well with the agricultural community of Whitley County and provides a place for up and coming individuals, couples, and families to begin their lives successfully and happily."

Draft Document Public Input Survey Results

As part of a multi-phase community outreach effort, American Structurepoint provided an online public survey to help measure community support, ideas, and concerns about the draft status Columbia City Comprehensive Plan Document. The city Facebook page was highly effective in directing residents to the project website where the draft document and survey link were posted. The survey asked the public if they liked or disliked the strategies identified for each goal within the document. In addition, the survey then asked participants if they had any further ideas or questions of strategies that could be used to help level up the community's goal statements. After being open for nearly 3 weeks, the online survey closed on May 10th, 2015. In total, 164 survey participants of Columbia submitted their responses to help guide us into the final phase of this Comprehensive Planning process. The public comments, concerns, and new ideas will be integrated into the draft in order to create the most effective and accepted community document as possible.

Survey results, project handouts, and other community outreach resources are all listed on the project website:

www.columbiacitycompplan.com



Overall Survey Results

164!

Total Online Surveys Submitted

Where did you hear about this Survey?

75% Facebook

7% Word of Mouth

6% Town and Project Website

6% Newspaper

6% Email

Overall Percentage of people who "agree" or "strongly agree" that the draft strategies help level up the goal statements:

PLAY – 94.51%

LEARN – 87.59%

SUPPORT – 91.04%

ACT – 89.78%

LIVE – 93.9%

EXPERIENCE – 95.2%

MOVE – 96.72%

GROW – 86.67%

WORK – 92.5%

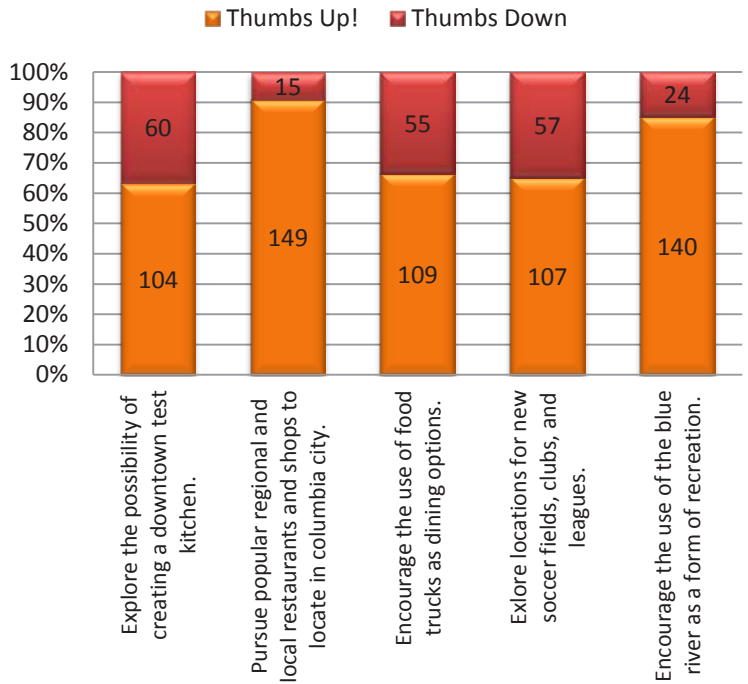
SERVE – 89.08%

PRESERVE – 91.53%

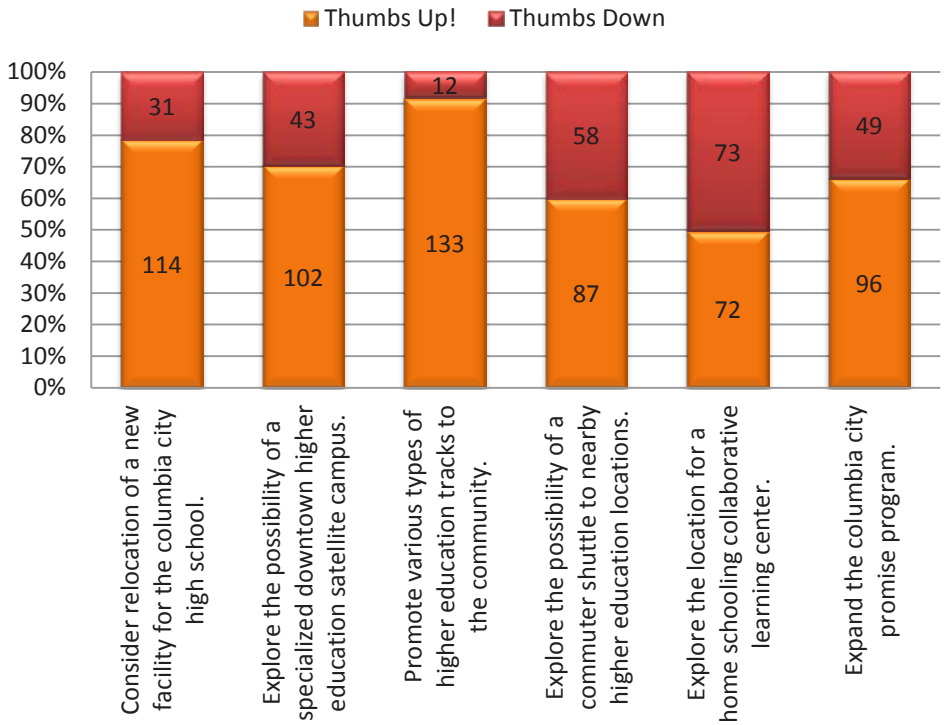
SHARE – 85.47%

Every section of goal strategies received higher than 85% overall public agreement.

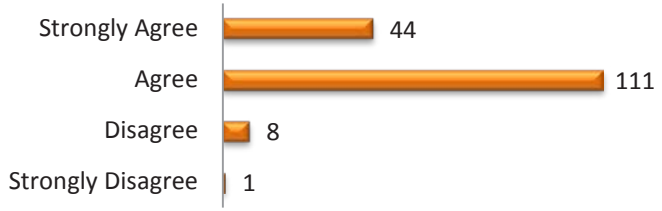
PLAY



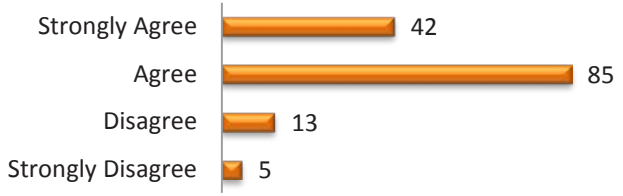
LEARN



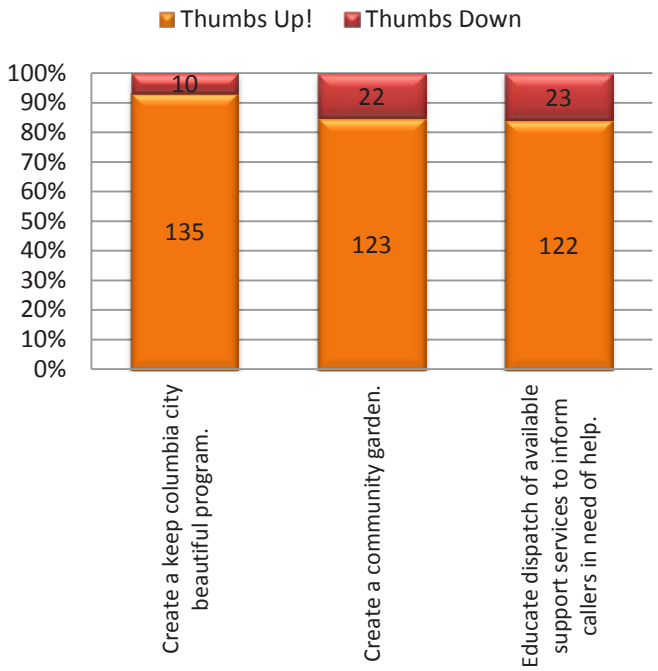
These Strategies Level Up the Goal for PLAY



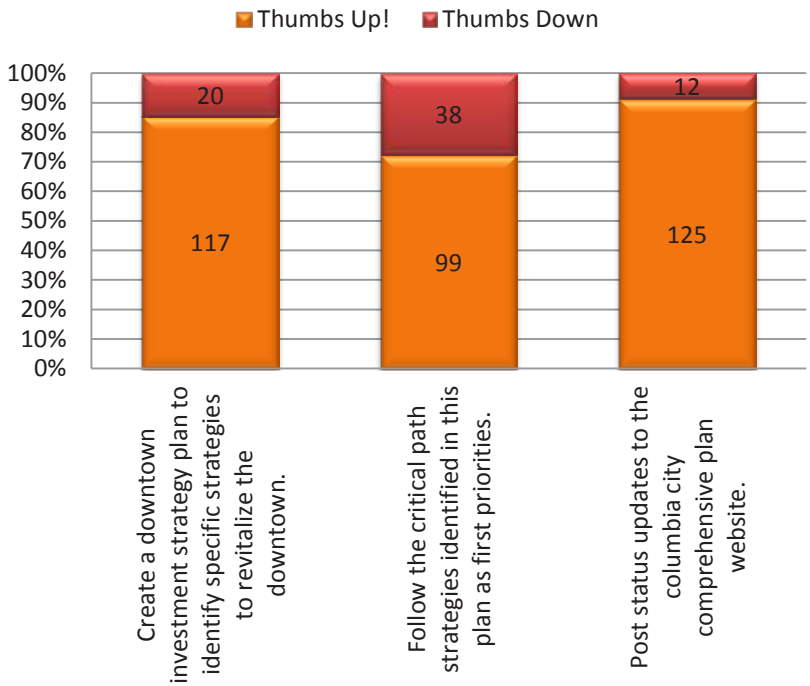
These Strategies Level Up the Goal for LEARN



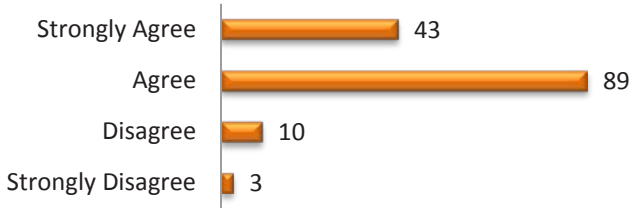
SUPPORT



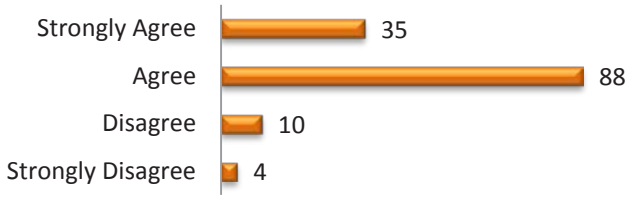
ACT



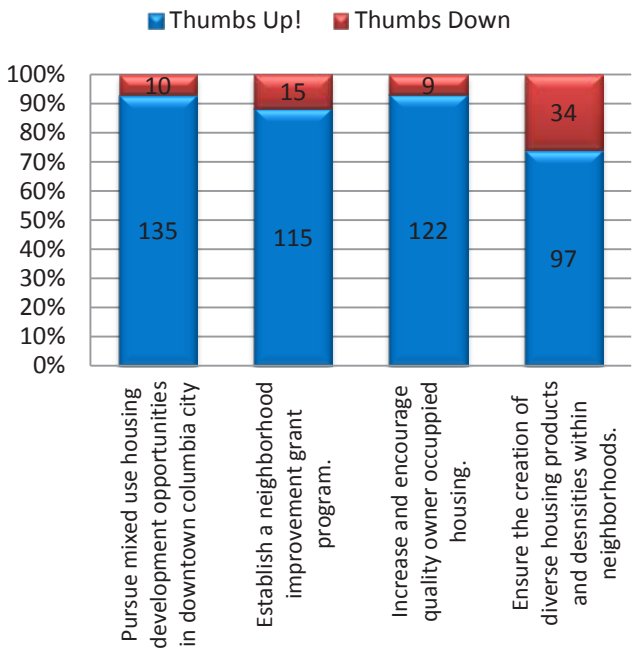
These Strategies Level Up the Goal for SUPPORT



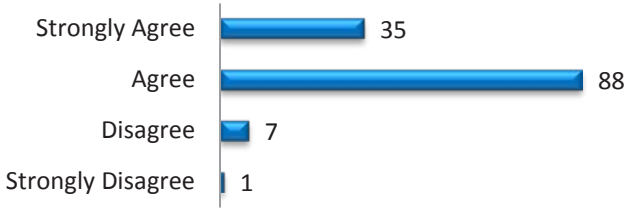
These Strategies Level Up the Goal for ACT



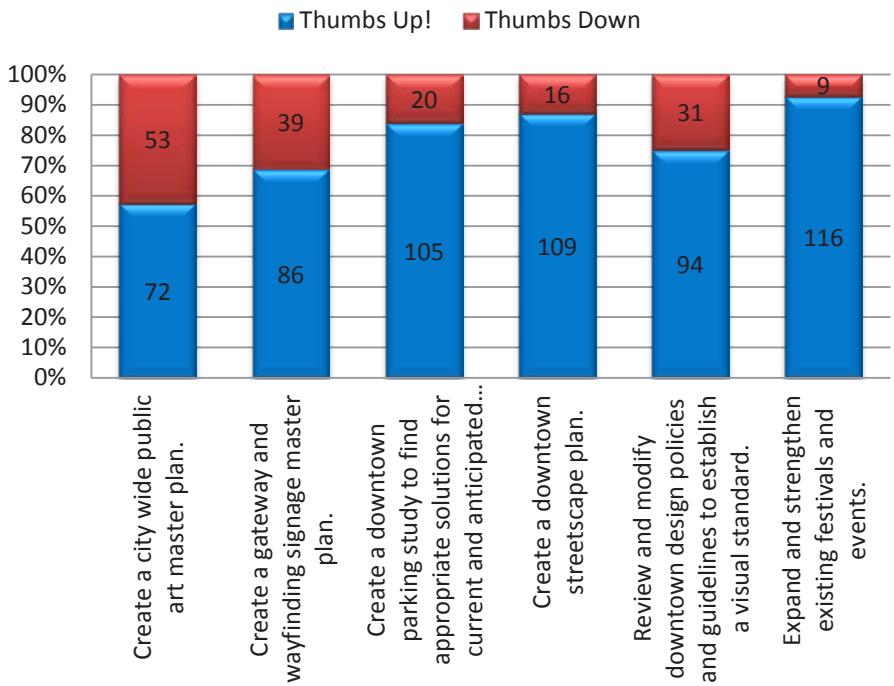
LIVE



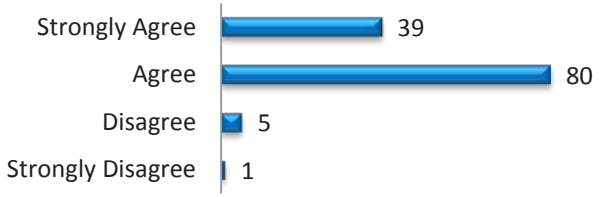
These Strategies Level Up the Goal for LIVE



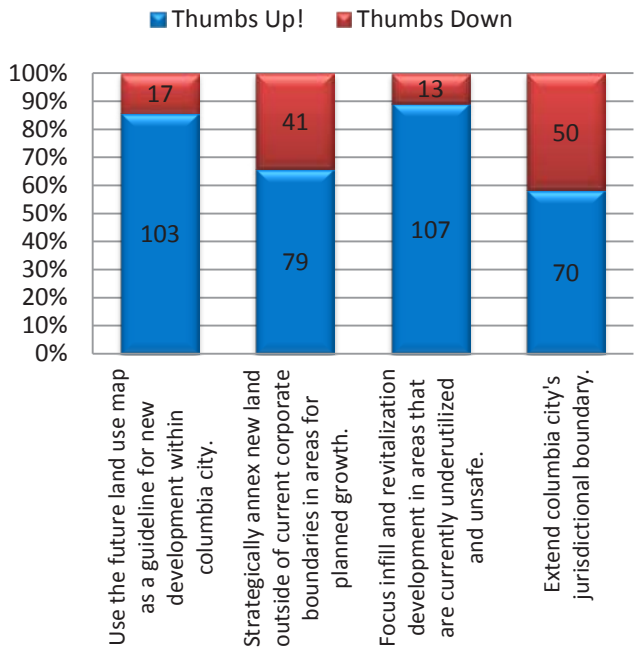
EXPERIENCE



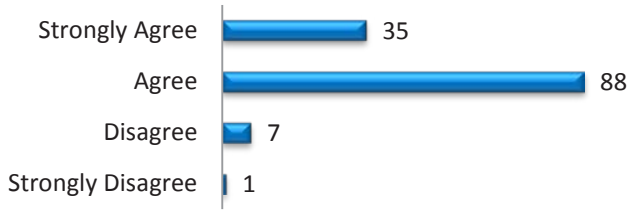
These Strategies Level Up the Goal for EXPERIENCE



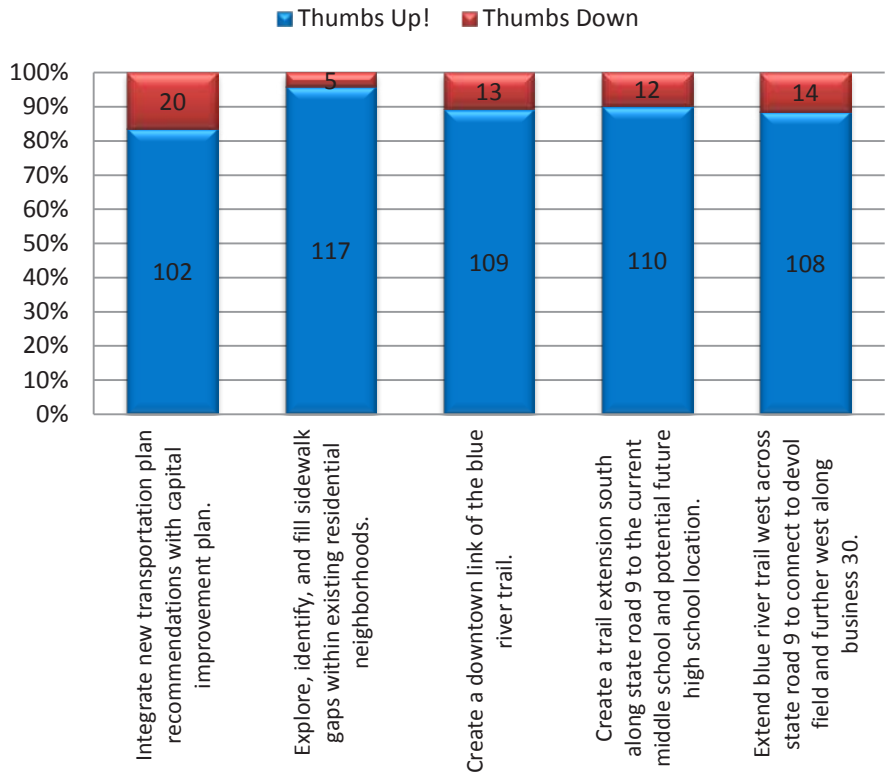
GROW



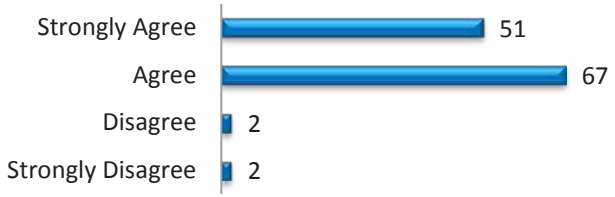
These Strategies Level Up the Goal for GROW



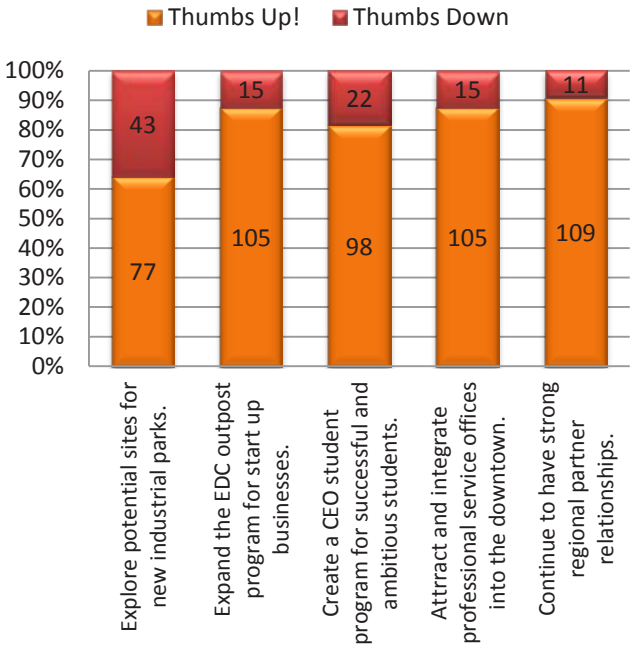
MOVE



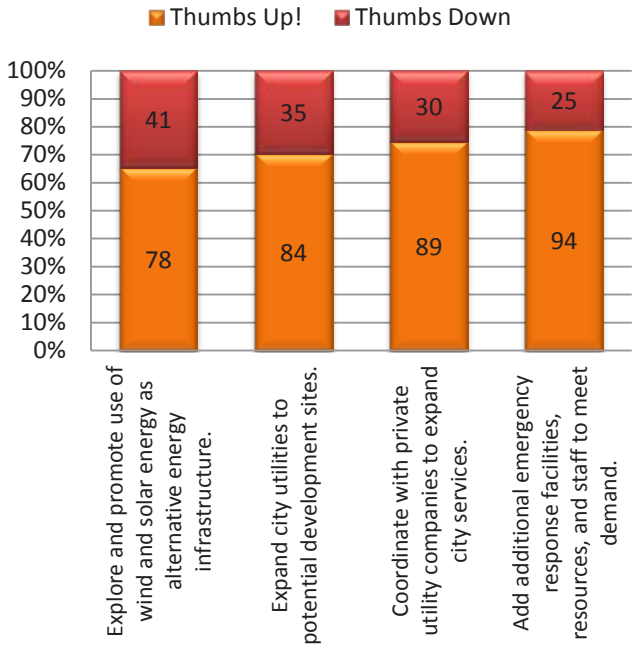
These Strategies Level Up the Goal for MOVE



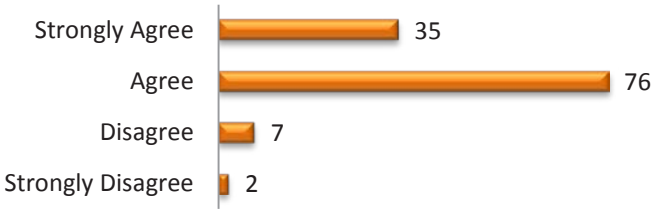
WORK



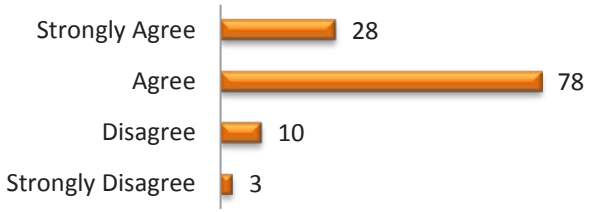
SERVE



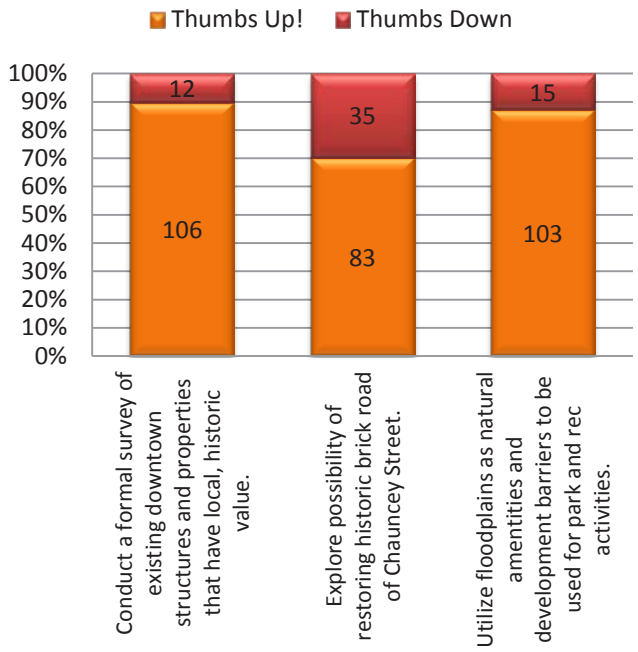
These Strategies Level Up the Goal for WORK



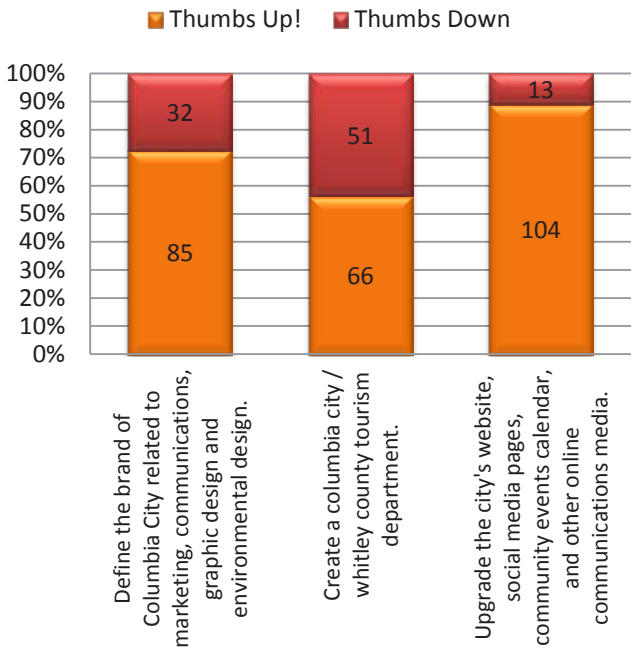
These Strategies Level Up the Goal for SERVE



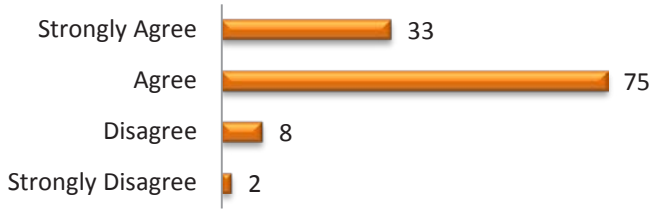
PRESERVE



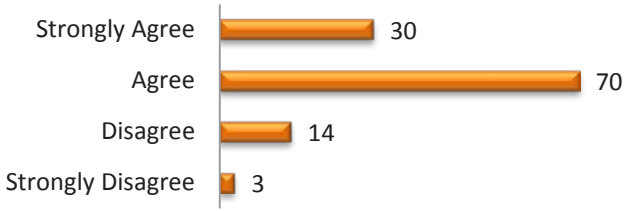
SHARE



These Strategies Level Up the Goal for PRESERVE



These Strategies Level Up the Goal for SHARE



TOP SCORING STRATEGIES

Strategy	Strategy Goal	85% or more Thumbs Up!
Explore, identify and fill sidewalk gaps within existing residential neighborhoods.	MOVE	95.9%
Increase and encourage quality owner-occupied housing.	LIVE	93.13%
Create a Keep Columbia City Beautiful Program.	SUPPORT	93.1%
Expand and strengthen existing festivals and events.	EXPERIENCE	92.8%
Promote various types of higher education tracks to the community.	LEARN	91.72%
Post project status updates to the Columbia City Comprehensive Plan website.	ACT	91.24%
Pursue popular regional and local shops and restaurants to locate in Columbia City.	WORK	90.85%
Continue to have a strong relationship with the IEDC and Northeast Regional Partnership.	WORK	90.83%
Create a trail extension south along State Road 9 to the current middle school and potential future high school location.	MOVE	90.16%
Conduct a formal survey of existing downtown structures and properties that have local, historical significance.	PRESERVE	89.83%
Create a Downtown Link of the Blue River Trail.	MOVE	89.34%
Focus infill and revitalization development in areas that are currently underutilized and unsafe.	GROW	89.17%
Upgrade the city's website, social media pages, community events calendar and other online, digital communications media.	SHARE	88.89%
Establish a Neighborhood Improvement Grant Program.	LIVE	88.55%
Extend the Blue River Trail west across State Road 9 to connect to Devol Field and further west along Business 30.	MOVE	88.52%
Attract and integrate professional service offices into the downtown.	WORK	87.5%
Expand the EDC Outpost Program for start-up businesses.	WORK	87.5%
Utilize floodplains as natural amenities and development barriers to be used for park and recreation activities.	PRESERVE	87.29%
Create a Downtown Streetscape Plan.	EXPERIENCE	87.2%
Use the Future Land Use Map as a guideline for new development placement within Columbia City.	GROW	85.83%
Create a Downtown Investment Strategy Plan to identify specific strategies to revitalize downtown.	ACT	85.4%
Encourage the use of the Blue River as a form of recreation.	PLAY	85.37%

Open Response Comments

PLAY

Positive

- "I always thought we should get an Applebees restaurant, but now I am not so sure because I prefer the local restaurants like Downtown on the Square and Northside Grill."
- "I really liked the idea of the downtown test kitchen, it would also be fun to use for cooking classes, Lord knows I could use them."
- "No questions! These are great thoughts!!!"

Negative

- "The Blue River is disgusting. I actually laughed out loud at the suggestion of using it for recreation."
- "While soccer is a well appreciated sport, it does tend to involve a lot of contact. My concern would be the "at your own risk" not holding up in a situation regarding liability."
- "While I support the idea of using the Blue River as recreation, I have concerns about the potential for annual cleanup costs given the increased traffic and required maintenance."

Suggestions

- "Have the food trucks park outside the library in the winter or another place where we can dine indoors. In the summer, they can be parked at the park or another space with outdoor seating. These parking strategies would increase exposure at our best places. In general, put more park benches downtown so that people can get their yo2go or their Nook coney dog and have a seat outside."
- "In general, treat the Blue River as a river and not a drainage ditch. All the trees have been cut from the banks, which is not natural.
- "Expanded baseball / softball fields."
- "A friend in Denver took us to his favorite gym. It had everything you could ever want in a gym, similar to our YMCA. But ANYONE could use the facility. You could pay by day or a package… I wish we had a facility that did not require memberships."

LEARN

Positive

- "In regards to the commuter shuttle 2D, I was a student at a college in Fort Wayne, I drove every day, 5 days a week, was in class for 8 hours, and then returned home. It was very draining on my resources, even with a full time job to help support it. I feel it would be worthwhile and could potentially support itself if it were to be utilized by the students in question."
- "I have a lot of questions about the Promise Program. I am in favor of it if it must be used for education only and if there is a way for students to feel that they've earned it through hard work vs. feeling of entitlement to it."
- "I agree that prioritizing the high school is a must. It is a detriment to not only our students learning, but to the teachers that have to make the best of it."

Negative

- "The commuter shuttle I struggled with as Columbia City is very close to Fort Wayne and I don't think that it is necessary to have a shuttle."
- "Unfortunately, the more education we have, the further we travel for work outside of the county."
- "A homeschool collaborative learning center sounds an awful lot like a school. If people that homeschooled want to pay for something like that they that's great, but I don't see why it should be a tax payer issue."
- "We are surrounded by higher learning facilities and I don't think a satellite campus is going to boost much of anything."

Suggestions

- "Collaborate with the Peabody Public Library on a collaborative learning center. Why duplicate services?"
- "Need to keep the high school in town in a centralized location! Heart of our town!"
- "When relocating the high school consider keeping it walking distance to downtown. The kids need to be able to walk to school and have after school jobs."
- "Would like to see improvements to Mary Raber and have more affordable preschool and childcare options."

SUPPORT

Positive

- "Giving Gardens of Indiana would love to be expanded upon and used as a community garden."
- "I agree on education of dispatch as well as the community about the nonprofit support groups that are available is critical."

Negative

- "I feel like this benefits the community more than the individuals. How are we connecting to help them? A garden and pretty city are nice, but they hardly help the poor."
- "Can't we do more to promote jobs for people with disadvantages/disabilities?"

Suggestions

- "We have 2-1-1 and can encourage its use."
- "Education assistance, child care assistance, job training, etc. would likely make more of a difference."
- "I think some of the main things needed to make SUPPORT strategies successful would be constant updates on progress (facebook, newspapers, etc.) educating the community, and partnering local organizations."
- "We have a lot of good churches and organizations that are doing a lot for the community. Is there a way for those groups to come together and consolidate expenses and volunteer hours?"

LIVE

Positive

- "These are all great ideas!"
- "Better apartment options are a great addition to the community."

Negative

- "The case studies mentioned refer to low income housing. I do not think our community needs any more low income housing. Low income housing brings people to the community that make bad choices. We already have too many of these people. We need to find a way to support those who make good choices who may also have a low income or financial needs."

Suggestions

- "There needs to be enforced regulations on the condition of houses."
- "Create areas/housing for young professionals/young families."
- Tear down some of the abandoned eye sores and offer assistance to those not able to properly maintain their homes."
- "A program could be created to allow a housing discount for low income citizens who have never been arrested or who have had clean records for a period of time. Instead of enabling bad choices by offering low income housing, reward good behavior."
- "Don't be afraid of residential reinvestment opportunities downtown. Look at the apartments in downtown Fort Wayne."

EXPERIENCE

Positive

- "I agree that the current entrances to the city are not attractive. Lets make them so."
- "So far, the city has done a great job in this aspect."
- "Passages would like to be involved in the art areas as well as anywhere else we can help in this section."

Negative

- "Is parking really a problem or just a perceived problem?"
- "Please. No more signs."
- "I see the vision of the future for our little city, but I don't want it to become a big city like Fishers and Carmel. I am afraid that by implementing some of these far reaching policies and plans we will lose the small downtown atmosphere we love."

Suggestions

- "Rethink the festivals that are in place now. Old settlers is so set in the way it operates that there is nothing new to expect every year."
- "I think we should have a scavenger hunt/passport game where people receive stamps for visiting local businesses and festivals. Prizes could be awarded or a lottery given for people who complete the game."
- "We should plan to have festivals and events most weekends of the summer months."

MOVE

Positive

- "Yes. I especially like a trail extension to the current middle school and potential future high school location."
- "Trails are the way to go. It will get our population moving, get them outdoors, and keep them safe by keeping some of that pedestrian and bike traffic off busy roads."
- "Definitely add to the Blue River Trail!"
- "I can't support this enough. We've got so many walkers who almost get hit on our streets, not to mention bicyclists and skateboarders getting into the streets. I'd like to see our city as a place where I can safely walk anywhere in the city, without fear of getting hit."
- "I love the idea of having the sidewalks improved. It is frustrating when there are places that the sidewalks aren't connected or are in poor condition."

Negative

- "Traffic is not very good to extend the trail to the middle school. Sounds like it would create safety concerns and cost a lot."

Suggestions

- "We would like to see a trail along the 4H fairgrounds on Lincoln Way. Lots of foot traffic, busy road."
- "I would recommend signs along the trails. Such as mile markers, wayfinding, directional signage, etc."
- "I would like to see further discussions on major trail connections to existing neighboring county trails."

GROW

Positive

- "I'm glad to see the annexation focus moving west vs. north."
- "Anything we can do to make our community more attractive to those who live outside of it is a plus!"

Negative

- "If people wanted to live in the city's jurisdiction they would have chosen to do so. Don not make them by annexing just for tax dollars."

Suggestions

- "We need to make what we have more attractive before adding more area."
- "Annex housing development south of Indian Springs with trails to connect to river, schools, downtown."
- "Obtain at least 80 to 90% capacity before looking at annexing and extending the reach of city."
- "In areas where boundaries are causing dysfunction between the city and county in terms of services offered and ability to enable repairs, make them more uniform and enable common repair and upgrade schedules."

WORK

Positive

- "We have done well with Economic Development but need to continue."
- "Each of these items is critically important."

Negative

- "We have strong services downtown already. I don't believe that is what will draw people to the heart of Columbia City."

Suggestions

- "Make sure Whitley County has a voice at the regional level."
- "In my opinion, we really need to focus on getting good retail downtown, instead of more offices. Retail will bring more jobs downtown and people downtown to spend money."

SERVE

Positive

- "There will be opposition to wind energy, but I believe it is important."
- "Generally speaking, these plans could all be a net benefit to the community."

Negative

- "We do not need more police officers for this small town."
- "We have already addressed the idea of wind power here and pretty much no one was in favor of that."

Suggestions

- "Look for ways to encourage utility companies to expand outside of the city limits."
- "We need more ambulances. Too many times there are none in the county and other districts have to take over. Sad if you are the one needing an ambulance and they are not readily available."
- "Work on police attitude and perception within our community."

PRESERVE

Positive

- "I remember the last work on Chauncey… it took such a long time but was a great neighborhood endeavor."
- "Historic preservation is very exciting!"
- "Wherever Passages and Whitley Crossings can assist in this area, we would love to do so!"

Negative

- "We already know this information. Don't needlessly spend money."

Suggestions

- "I would love to additionally see the portion of Jefferson St. in front of the Historical Museum restored to brick."
- "At this point, Morsches Park is the only area in need of environmental protection. With all the money put into this park it should be saved and preserved at all cost."

SHARE

Positive

- "The city currently doesn't have enough to offer currently to support a lot of tourism. That said, if this plan sees enough positive growth, I could see it being used."
- "Who would maintain a tourism department? I couldn't see spending city funds on that when they could be used to fund other things. However, if inexpensive, I feel it would be a neat way to promote the city."
- "A comprehensive community events calendar would be great!"

Negative

- "The Chamber of Commerce should be the ONLY tourism department for this very small city."

Suggestions

- "We moved here from another town. I have never been able to put my thumb on what exactly Columbia City is- other than a commuter town for Fort Wayne workers. It needs an identity, a positive identity!"
- "I think there should be on website, such as whitleycountyind.com, that is nothing more than a page for links to the city, county, and pages for other towns that also has a page for links to local businesses and information. We need something that is simple and easy to understand and similar to use.
- "I think a lot of these topics could piggy back with the EDC and Chamber. Instead of recreating the wheel, work with what we have in place."
- "The mayor is doing a great job of helping citizens to feel they can talk with him personally. He is active on facebook and speaks via newsletters. Other important officials could do the same. It is easy to find out who is who, but not who does what and how friendly they are. People don't know who to talk to when they have a concern, so they either grumble amongst themselves or complain to the mayor"

PICTURE SOURCES

This document uses a large amount of graphic images to illustrate ideas, examples, and styles of certain strategy recommendations. To do this, images were uses from multiple internet sources.

Figure 1a: *http://www.vebidoo.com/linda+gilkerson*
Figure 1b: *http://www.sitkaandspruce.com/*
Figure 1c: http://blogs.houstonpress.com/eating/2012/01/the_burger_guys_open_downtown.php
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Figure 1w: Columbia City Owned
Figure 1x: Stock Photo
Figure 1y: http://www.clintoncountydailynews.com/frankfort-ivy-tech-davidson-campus-ribbon-cutting-held/
Figure 1z: http://173.161.45.154/8020inc.html

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Figure 2b: http://www.fatcadjobs.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Trade-School-Career.jpg
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Figure 2d: http://www.kosciuskoedc.com/images/images/015.jpg
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Figure 2y: Columbia City Owned
Figure 2z: Columbia City Owned

Figure 3a: Columbia City Owned
Figure 3b: http://www.cityofnoblesville.org/
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Figure 3d: American Structurepoint Owned
Figure 3e: http://i0.wp.com/comebackcityus.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/hampden-retail.jpg?fit=1000%2C1000
Figure 3f: http://www.resilientregion.org/cms/img/RemodeledMixedUseDevelopmentBrainerdCrowWingCounty,jpg.jpg
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Figure 3k: http://blackrockgardenclub.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/06/ti4.jpg
Figure 3l: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Neighborhoods_in_Gary,_Indiana
Figure 3m: http://www.wireoneiowa.com/residential-electrical-service-des-moines/
Figure 3n: Rendering Created by American Structurepoint
Figure 3o: https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/236x/5b/dc/8c/5bdc8c9769aec2da5363a34f8eb6ef4b.jpg
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Figure 3z: http://indiana.typepad.com/photos/uncategorized/2008/05/14/downtown_experience_sign_may_2008.jpg

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Figure 4b: http://www.columbus.in.gov/redevelopment/downtown-columbus-parking-study/
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Figure 4f: Created by American Structurepoint
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Figure 4y: Owned
Figure 4z: http://healthyorange.com/sites/default/files/saferoutes(1).jpg

APPENDIX.

Figure 5a: http://www.ozarkgreenways.org/images/photos/TrailShots/KidsandParentsWardBranch04.JPG
Figure 5b: http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/program-tools/success-stories/billings-montana-go-play-billings-montana
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Figure 6i: http://www.wind-works.org/cms/index.php?id=398&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=1882&cHash=6ea25036a464ca4363892ccbb09468d1
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Figure 6l: Stock Photo
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Figure 6p: Stock Photo
Figure 6q: Stock Photo
Figure 6r: http://www.remc.com/assets/img/remc-logo-vertical.jpg
Figure 6s: Stock Photo
Figure 6t: http://www.indianafiretrucks.com/pages/whitley/columbia_city.html
Figure 6u: http://blog.chron.com/legalnews/files/2014/12/Home-Injuries.jpg
Figure 6v: http://www.columbiacitypolice.us/
Figure 6w: Columbia City Owned
Figure 6x: http://www.amazon.com/Whitley-Interim-Historic-Structures-Inventory/dp/B002F92LNS
Figure 6y:Columbia City Owned
Figure 6z: http://www.zionsville-in.gov/

Figure 7a: http://landmarkhunter.com/108963-beech-street-brick-street/
Figure 7b: http://www.google.com/maps
Figure 7c: https://shoestringweekends.files.wordpress.com/2014/12/img_0844.jpg
Figure 7d: American Structurepoint Owned
Figure 7e: Stock Photo
Figure 7f: http://www.jvlriversidepark.com/media/PhotoGal/Scenic%20river%20along%20Riverside%20Park.jpg
Figure 7g: http://blog.nature.org/science/2014/06/02/can-floodplain-forest-restoration-reduce-the-gulfs-dead-zone/
Figure 7h: http://www.fishers.in.us/index.aspx?NID=116
Figure 7i: http://www.derckandedson.com/chambersburg/wp-content/gallery/wayfinding/6.jpg
Figure 7j: http://secplanning.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Built-sign-daytime.jpg
Figure 7k: http://www.addressesofdistinction.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/street_sign_logo1.jpg
Figure 7l: http://enjoymiamicounty.org/
Figure 7m: Columbia City Owned
Figure 7n: http://www.columbiacity.net/pictures/gallery%20photos/Courthouse.JPG
Figure 7o: http://www.columbiacityparks.us/pictures/Blue%20River.png
Figure 7p: http://www.cityofnoblesville.org/
Figure 7q: https://02f0a56ef46d93f03c90-22ac5f107621879d5667e0d7ed595bdb.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/607/photos/18396/calen20130228-21600-v64e89-0_original.png
Figure 7r: http://www.columbiacity.net/
Figure 7s: Stock Photo

HOW WILL YOU LEVEL UP?

CITY OF COLUMBIA CITY

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

PEOPLE. PLACES. THINGS.

LEVEL UP.

AMERICAN STRUCTUREPOINT