

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What will Evansville and Vanderburgh County look like in 20 years? Will the metropolitan area have the same characteristics as it does today or will significant changes occur? If the area is noticeably different, how will our community and its land use pattern change? The answers to these questions will evolve over time. However, the actions or inaction of the community to plan for its future and embrace strategies for plan implementation will certainly impact the future conditions. Land use changes will continue to occur in the future, and with the expected impact of the proposed Interstate 69 project, these changes could involve major new developments. While it is uncertain what the future holds, this Plan attempts to prepare the community to fully benefit from these changes.

The 2004-2025 Comprehensive Plan for Evansville and Vanderburgh County is the guide for land use decisions and the framework for the ongoing land use planning process. The intent is to guide growth in a manner that supports and reinforces the community qualities important to City and County residents. These qualities include employment and housing opportunities, safety and security, quality schools, neighborhoods with a strong sense of community, and a healthy environment. All these amenities create and enrich our quality of life.

A VISION FOR THE COMMUNITY

This Plan presents a general vision of Evansville's future. As part of the planning process, a citizen Vision Committee was established to provide general input on Plan development. Among their many valuable suggestions for the Plan, the Committee developed the following Vision Statement:

“We envision Evansville and Vanderburgh County as a prominent regional center that offers prosperity, growth, and a quality place to live, learn, work, invest and visit.”

This Vision Statement is supported by designating appropriate areas for the development of specific land uses, and incorporating a series of action plans. The action plans focus on improving the quality of life through the establishment of statements that embody the community's long-range goals, objectives and policies concerning growth and the strategies to implement those statements. Citizen involvement in formulating these land use policies is essential for the Plan to be an accurate expression of the community's vision and desires for the future.

PLAN CHANGES

The 2004 Plan update does not make dramatic changes to the scope and content of the 1996 Comprehensive Plan. Some of the changes that have been made include the designation of future land use identifying new areas for residential, commercial and industrial development; additions to the Plan goals, objectives and policies; the addition of information concerning the proposed I-69 project and a planning strategy to address the anticipated growth that could result from this new highway; revisions to the Plan text; adding more graphics; updating all information in the Plan including the presentation of the 2000 Census data; the designation of new areas in need of parks; and the addition of a chart to help identify the agency or agencies responsible for policies to be pursued in the next five years.

MAJOR ACTION PLAN POLICY THEMES

It is critically important for the community to promote and attract economic development. Job retention and the creation of diverse new employment should continue to be the focus of economic development efforts. The Plan identifies a need for more professional and higher paying jobs and suggests intensifying recruitment efforts for these types of employers. Specific proposals are:

- a) I-69 - plan for anticipated growth from construction of this Interstate highway through our region in Year 2015;
- b) Technology Park – received State designation for downtown location and now continued progress to the development stage is needed; and
- c) Research and Development Park - investigate building partnerships with local universities, hospitals and the private sector to establish a major R&D center.

The past decline of the Central Business District (CBD), the Urban Core and older commercial and industrial centers has created a need for revitalization of these areas. The Plan calls for coordinated revitalization of both the CBD and surrounding neighborhoods to provide additional higher density housing and a population large enough to support downtown retail uses. Focus areas for targeted enhancement activities are also identified.

To address the movement of development into outlying areas not designated for future growth, the Plan stresses contiguous development which minimizes the loss of agricultural land, creates more efficient use of infrastructure, and increases the stability of certain uses in the City. The Plan strongly recommends infill development and discourages the rezoning of new land when significant vacant areas are available with the correct zoning.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PLAN

POPULATION

Significant Facts from 2000 Census:

- County population grew by over 4 percent since 1990;
- City decreased by 3.7 percent;
- the unincorporated County gained 11,587 people; and
- more in-migration than out occurred during the 1990s.

2025 County Population

- projections presented range from 175,726 to 184,215;
- projections reflect slow to moderate growth; and
- 2025 population expected in the higher end of the projected range.

2025 Township Projections by Area Plan Commission:

- highest growth in unincorporated Center Township; and
- unincorporated Perry and Knight Townships and Scott Township are also expected to grow moderately high; and
- rate of decline will slow in Pigeon Township.

EMPLOYMENT

The employment projection for the County in the Year 2030 is 151,250 employees (21,219 more than in 2000). This employment increase creates a bright County economic outlook.

LAND USE DESIGNATION

The goals, objectives and policies, along with other factors (e.g. floodplains, proposed I-69 and other road improvements, etc.) were considered in the designation of future land use in the Plan. Areas were generally designated for future development that already had or are planned to have sewer and water service in the future. Where growth is desired outside of the area planned for utility service, appropriate areas contiguous to this future service area were also designated for development. A new land use designation for mixed uses was also added in the Plan.

Residential

- 2025 County Housing Projections range from: 4,833 to 8,718 units gained
- Estimates of New Residential Land Required: up to 7.4 additional square miles

Due to the fact the median age of the population will continue to increase over the planning period, the type of housing is expected to change from single family homes on larger lots to a more dense mix of smaller single family, attached and multi-family housing. The largest areas for new future residential use designated in the Plan are along the proposed Eickhoff-Koresssel road project in western Vanderburgh County

and in the northeastern part of the County. The Plan calls for protecting the residential character of neighborhoods from intrusion by incompatible uses.

Commercial

Although partially designated in the Plan as mixed use, the largest area expected to develop primarily for commercial development is the eastside area bounded by Morgan Avenue, I-164, Lloyd Expressway and the Burkhardt Road corridor. This area could also include some additional multi-family use. The proposed commercial along I-164 at the Boonville-New Harmony Road and Green River Road interchanges were expanded and new future commercial was added at the SR 57 and Millersburg Road interchanges for highway commercial establishments in anticipation of I-69.

Industrial

The Plan projects the long-planned U.S. 41 North corridor between I-64 and Baseline Road as the primary area for industrial growth. A new secondary corridor for industrial development has been added along/between SR 57 and I-164 extending south from the northern County Line to nearly Boonville-New Harmony Road. Another smaller area designated for future industrial is the southeast quadrant of the I-164 and Lynch Road interchange.

To prepare for the industrial development anticipated from I-69, the Plan suggests that Vanderburgh County officials should coordinate with Warrick and Gibson Counties on a regional strategy for economic development and growth, apply for INDOT grant funds for local planning in the proposed I-69 corridor, and prepare new or updated County plans.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Road access and availability of water and sewer service are factors that can limit growth. Planning for the necessary infrastructure to serve and encourage development must occur in the areas where growth is desired. The Plan presents both committed (short-term) and recommended (long-range) road improvement projects proposed by the Evansville Urban Transportation Study. The proposed I-69 project is one of the many projects listed. This highway will eventually be an international trade route linking Canada and Mexico, and is expected to be the most significant project to occur in the Evansville area over the next 20 years.

The Plan contains maps showing the future water and sewer service areas. Some of the areas recommended for extensions of sewer service are: the unserved areas in the City and in unincorporated Center and Perry Townships; the Lynch Road extension corridor east of I-164; the S.R. 65 corridor in German Township; and the S.R. 57/I-164 corridor north of Baseline Road to the County line. The Plan also calls for the infrastructure necessary to serve new development to be in place prior to project completion.

CONCLUSION

The Comprehensive Plan is not intended to be a rigid framework for the future. It is meant to be a dynamic and flexible process for the coordination and guidance of physical development. The Plan should be used by individuals in both the public and private sectors as a guide for decisions concerning land use and other community resources.

The most critical step in the planning process is plan implementation or converting the Plan to action. This involves routinely referring to the Plan for guidance in community development decisions and taking actions that are consistent with the Plan. Land development regulations, such as the Zoning and Subdivision Codes, are tools used in Plan implementation. There are also many other strategies suggested to help implement the Plan. To facilitate implementation, a list of these strategies to be pursued within the first five years of this 20-year Plan has been added that identifies the specific agencies or groups responsible for taking action on each strategy. Through diligent adherence to well thought out and coordinated policies that are supported by the public, the community can successfully achieve the desired goals. Ultimately, a Comprehensive Plan is only as good as its implementation.