



# MONTGOMERY C O U N T Y

## Economic Development Vision Plan



August 2017

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# Acknowledgments

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# Executive Summary

## Section 1



Montgomery County is an area that has the assets to deliver long term economic development sustainability. To achieve this long-term success will not be easy and is not without challenges, however. Based on market information gathered from a variety of sources there is ongoing economic development interest in certain areas in the county. Without a plan that guides that development interest in the right direction, and then connects that interest with the appropriate strategic investment in assets and infrastructure, it is unlikely that the county will be able to realize its long-term economic development potential. It is for that reason that county leadership made the decision to engage in this planning effort to develop the economic development vision for the county for today and into the future. This study sought the input of stakeholders from throughout the county.

While the entire county was reviewed as part of this study, there were a few areas that were identified that have the greatest short-term and mid-term development potential. These “Development Focus Areas” are discussed in greater detail in Section 6 of this document and are shown on page four of this document.

Also identified as part of this effort are the overarching economic development goals for Montgomery County. These goals form the basis of much of the analysis provided by this planning document and represent the key areas that community stakeholders have identified as areas of economic development focus for the county. These goals are include:

1. Develop an attractive place where people want to live, work, play, and learn. Montgomery County should be a place where people can raise a family while maintaining the small-town feel that currently exists within the fabric of our community.
2. Attract and value education at all levels, while still promoting progressive minded thinking.
3. Create a place with higher paying job opportunities so generation after generation will want to call this county home.
4. Preserve and protect farmland of all sizes by encouraging and promoting the continued development of an agriculture based business economy, while also promoting agricultural leadership within the county.
5. Continue to promote the county as a tourist destination with great natural resource attractions. Expand activities for all ages centered around open space parks, water sports, and trails.

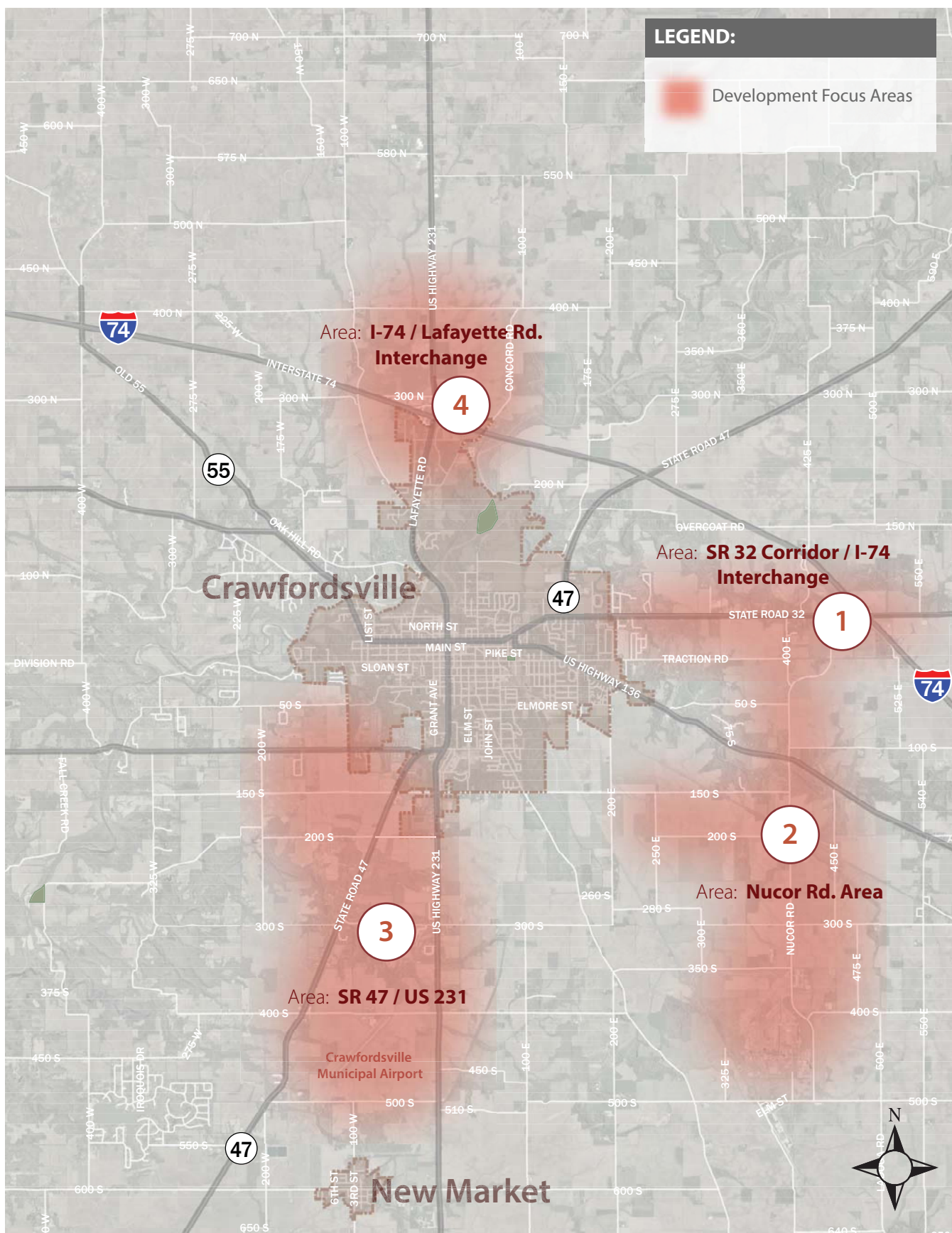


Any plan is only as good as the effort to see it implemented. Delivering the best product for Montgomery County in the most timely and efficient manner will require more than just a vision. Successful development of any given area will require a strategic partnership between the county, city and/or private sector partners. While there is potential for development in the focus areas identified by this analysis, it will take more than simply relying on market conditions to deliver the vision identified by this plan. A commitment from the county to do what is necessary to see future plans implemented will bear great reward in helping secure private investment and economic development. Some key strategies have been identified to assist in delivering the vision of the plan. A list of these strategies is included on page five of this document.

Montgomery County has strong economic development potential if strengths and assets are activated to seize on current and future opportunities. Areas around existing Interstate 74 interchanges are a tremendous opportunity for Montgomery County. However, many sites have risks that may artificially limit the interest of potential developers. These risks include undefined land use potential, competitive alternatives at other locations along Interstate 74 outside of Montgomery County, less than optimal demographic profiles and a lack of shovel ready development opportunities in key areas. If steps are taken to mitigate these risk factors, the possibility of a lasting momentum can be obtained for sustainable economic success that capitalizes on local and regional assets, the availability of attractive real development opportunities, a strong geographic position in the region and the willingness of local leaders to create strong development partnerships.

*This plan is a roadmap to guide community leaders to make choices, now and in the future, that promote long-term economic success for Montgomery County.*

## Development Focus Areas:



# Key Strategies:

## **DEVELOP SR 32/ I-74 STRATEGIC PLAN**

The SR32/Interstate 74 interchange is largely undeveloped and needs a deeper level of strategic thinking to ensure that the highest and best development of the county can be achieved. Additional planning is needed for this interchange, including creating a coordinated land use plan, identifying key infrastructure improvements, establishing expectations for design standards and developing an economic impact summary for potential development.

## **ACHIEVE DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT WITHIN KEY DEVELOPMENT AREAS**

A significant portion of Montgomery County does not have planning and zoning, including the SR 32/ Interstate 74 interchange. While this may or may not be an issue for much of the county, in the areas where it is desired to promote economic development activity this is a real constraint to potential site selection decisions. While this single factor does not prevent development from occurring in these areas, it is a significant limiting factor to securing private capital investment at the interchange.

## **REVIEW OF INTERNAL PROCESS TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

With the work that is ongoing to create a unified economic development office between the city of Crawfordsville and Montgomery County, a local single point of contact that can coordinate local data collection and resources is being developed. It is also important that the tools are in place that facilitate quick response to potential opportunities.

## **IMPLEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS TOWARD SR 32/I-74 INTERCHANGE**

Basic infrastructure investment is critical if a community is to be able to capitalize on economic development areas. Time has become a critical factor in site selection processes. Many companies will no longer wait for months for a community to prepare a site for development. They seek sites that are truly shovel ready, with master infrastructure already in place.

## **DEVELOP A MARKETING AND BRANDING PLAN FOR THE COUNTY**

At the heart of economic development is telling a good story. In order to compete from an economic development perspective, it is critical that areas develop, hone and sell our stories if we wish to compete regionally and globally. Establishing the tools to create, package and sell that message will be important for the county to achieve its long-term vision.

## **SUPPORT RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVATION**

Long-term economic success for Montgomery County will require not just maintaining the current population base, but growing it at a reasonable rate to support growth in the workforce base and to add additional disposable income to support local businesses. To support this growth, it will be necessary to encourage a more diverse range of housing opportunities, including more affordable and higher quality rental options and mid to upper end housing choices.

## **CONTINUE AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COUNTY**

Agribusiness remains a key economic sector nationally, it is an even larger part of the current and future economy of Montgomery County. With its current operations and heritage in agribusiness, Montgomery County could be a leader in advancing this mission in the state of Indiana.

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# Background & Economic Development Principles



## BACKGROUND

Montgomery County is situated in the heart of a strong regional geographic area. The county is located between the urban centers of Lafayette and Indianapolis (See Exhibit A). The county is approximately 505 square miles and is located adjacent to some of the fastest growing areas in the state, including: Zionsville, Whitestown and Lebanon. These areas are not only experiencing residential growth, but a significant expansion of their non-residential base as well.

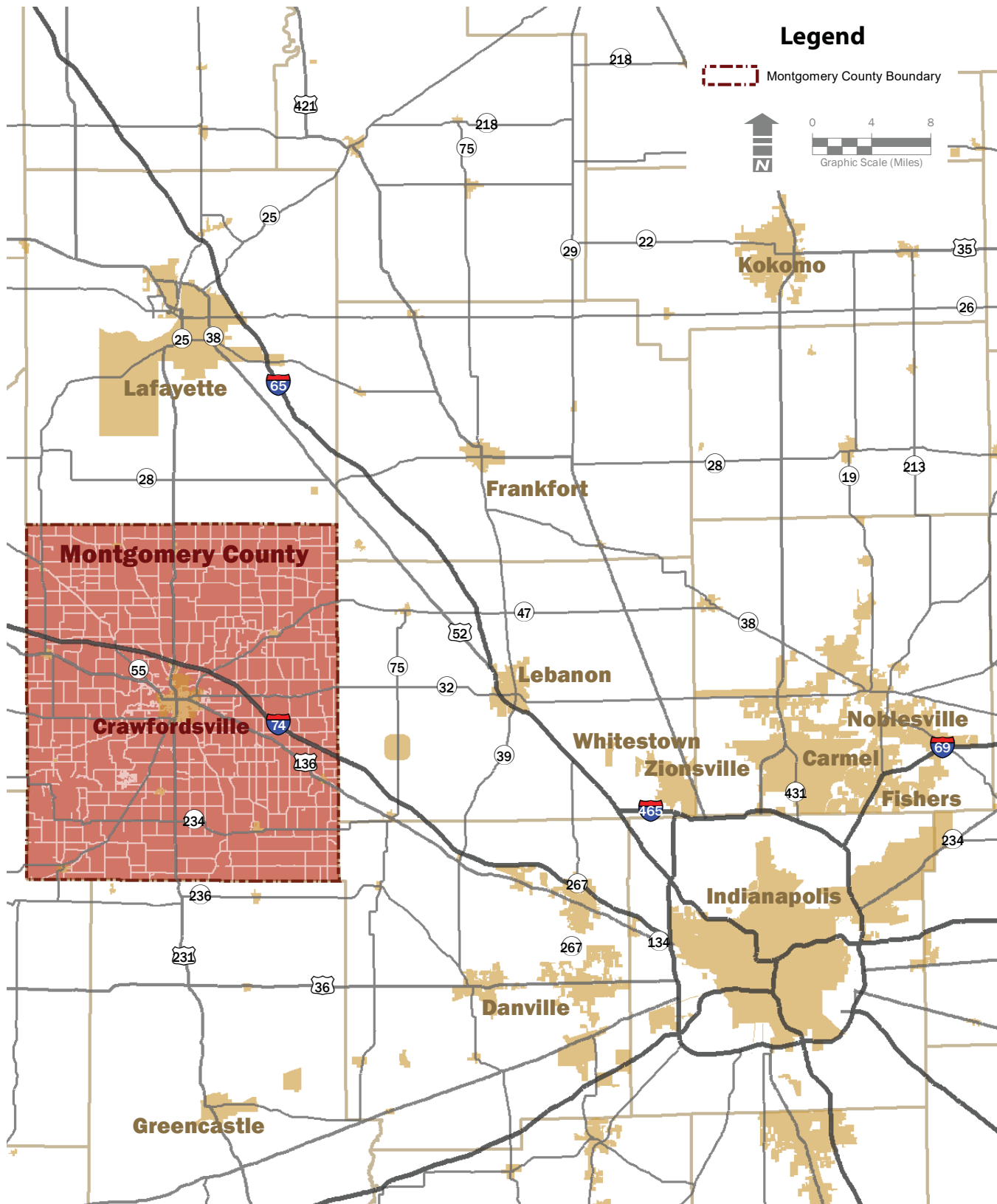
## PLANNING PROCESS

This planning process is focused on developing an economic development strategy for Montgomery County, Indiana (See Exhibit B). The study area includes the entire county; however, a more detailed focus is given to four Development Focus Areas that have been identified by this analysis and are more defined in Section 6 of this plan. All the Development Focus Areas center around the city of Crawfordsville and Interstate 74.

To develop a background for this plan, existing primary planning documents for both Montgomery County and the city of Crawfordsville were reviewed. These documents included:

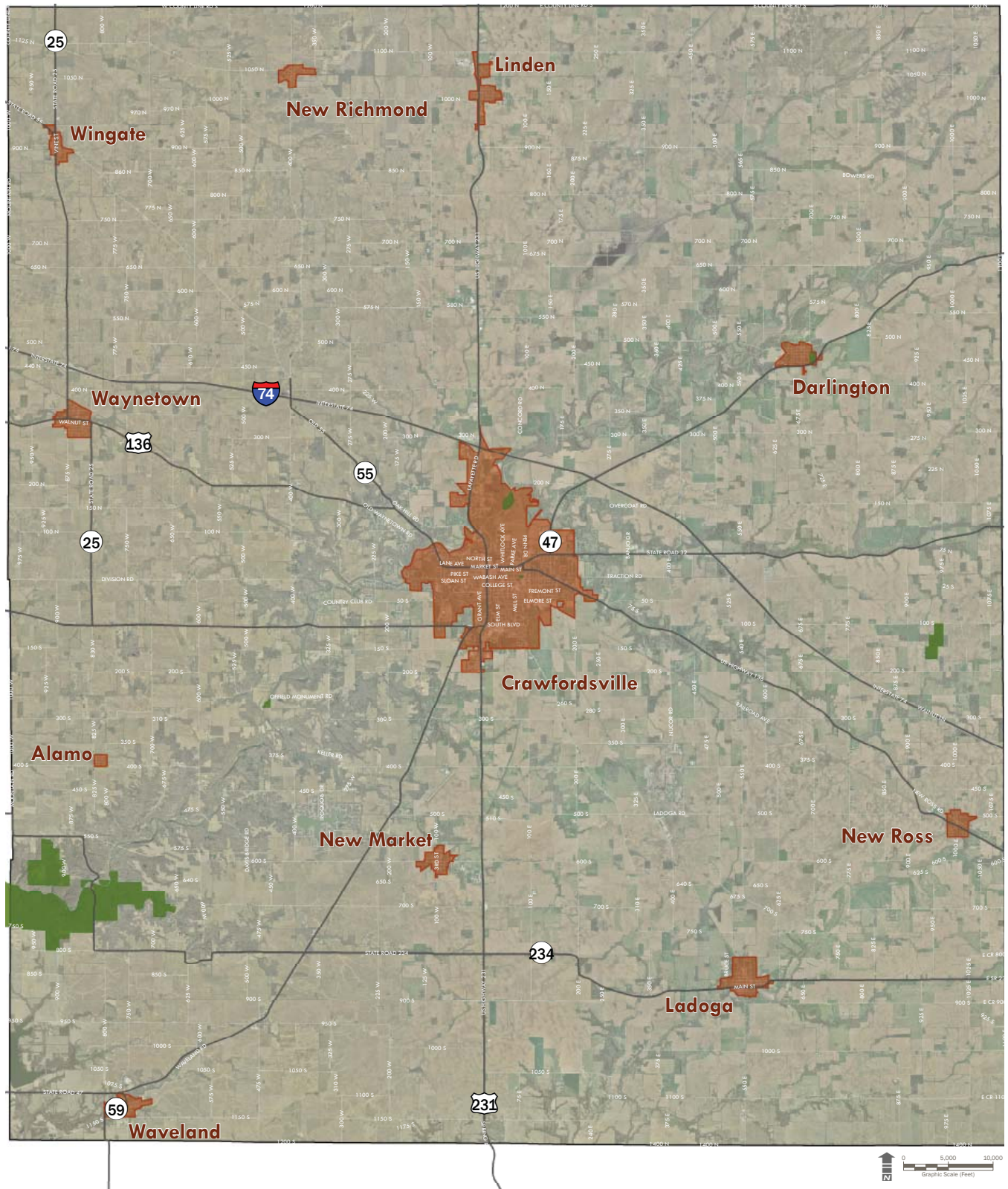
- Montgomery County/Crawfordsville Economic Development Plan - 2012
- City of Crawfordsville Comprehensive Plan 2025

## EXHIBIT A: CONTEXT MAP





## EXHIBIT B: MONTGOMERY COUNTY MAP



This plan seeks to establish the **economic development vision** for Montgomery County. This plan also includes **economic development objectives, identification of key opportunities and constraints, and key strategies** within the study area. This process establishes an approach to economic development in Montgomery County that is driven by market realities and the vision of the community. It includes a review of the feasibility of development/redevelopment of the area and identifies key infrastructure needed to service the economic development area. In addition, broad site due diligence is included to help identify general site development constraints due to existing conditions, including a review of previously identified wetlands, drainage, topography, documented environmental considerations, transportation access, land use, and commonly identified floodplains.

This project was funded by a \$40,000 Planning Grant from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA). Planning Grants are funded with Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) dollars from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The goal of the program is to encourage communities to plan for long-term community/economic development.

To complete this process, the consultant, HWC Engineering, worked with a steering committee of community stakeholders to develop a strategy for economic development success. The steering committee met in a series of meetings to discuss topics related to the following:

- Outline the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) facing the county
- Establish the critical economic development goals for the county
- Identify key issues facing the area
- Outline key strategies to assist in implementing the vision of the plan

These discussions were supported by research and analysis performed by HWC. To better understand the existing market conditions and future development opportunities that may exist within each study area, key stakeholders were interviewed outside of the steering committee process itself. The result of this analysis is a plan that addresses several topics related to development opportunities and offers a road map of steps to deliver the successful implementation of the plan.



## Planning Factors

Economic development planning incorporates significant consideration for land use, infrastructure, quality of life, and design issues to secure the financial health of a community. These plans encourage diverse job growth, diverse land use mixes and strong growth in the community tax base. To help ensure success, there are four planning factors that should guide plan development.

**There must be a strong willingness to move forward with action items** that provide easier implementation and greater accountability for the county.

**Good plans are not just one person's opinion in a vacuum,** but rather the reflection of the will of a broad representation of impacted stakeholders.

**Communities that fail to plan, actually plan to fail.** Good strategic community planning is critical if scarce resources are to be maximized in the most productive and efficient way.

**Planning just for the sake of planning is a mistake.** Therefore, having a solid plan for implementation is often more important than the plan itself.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Economic development means different things to different people. Traditionally, economic development has focused on the building of wealth in a community. Creating high wage jobs, building infrastructure to support assessed valuation growth and (therefore tax base) and finding ways to provide support and incentive to local business within the community to contribute to this growth.

More recently, economic development is beginning to focus on the development of quality of place to support traditional economic development efforts. When the state of Indiana shifted away from a traditional property tax structure to a more income/sales tax based structure, it became increasingly more important where someone chooses to live and shop rather than where they work. While building quality places has always been an important factor in economic development, the need to attract and retain a talented workforce for your community and region has never been more important than now.

## MARKETING AND BRANDING

Ultimately, economic development is the binder in which the various facets of a community are brought together and organized in order to articulate a community's unique story. A community must implement a well-organized marketing strategy that tells their story to grow their local economy. The most effective marketing strategy for economic development is a well designed website. This has consistently been reported by both economic developers and site selectors. Face-to-face marketing strategies also received high marks, but for most site selectors, the website is the first point of contact during the site selection decision making process, rather than personal interaction with staff.

## PROMOTING TOURISM

To grow and support the local economy, especially retail establishments, it is critically important to infuse as much disposable income into the community as possible. One source of this income can come from local residents and growing the wage levels and residential population within the community. This strategy, while important for developing a sustainable local economy, also requires an increase in costs to local services to support this growth. One strategy that does not require a comparable increase in cost, however, is growing the tourism activity for Montgomery County. This is not an option for all counties, but Montgomery County has an abundance of tourism assets within and near the county that it can promote to increase visitor traffic within the community. Montgomery County can serve as a launching point for both Shades State park and Turkey Run State Park. Continued promotion of other assets such as Sugar Creek, multiple golf courses and outstanding community parks and attraction will continue to make Montgomery County a destination for tourism dollars.

## QUALITY OF PLACE

Communities that are experiencing strong economic development success are already implementing strategies to enhance their attractiveness for livability. Numerous metrics are used to gauge relative quality of place, but generally they include such things as:

- Quality K-12 education systems
- Higher education opportunities
- Diverse healthcare options
- Diverse neighborhoods
- Strong public safety factors
- Sufficient density to support certain local services
- Specific amenities such as individual sports facilities, trails, public gathering spaces, and recreation areas
- Local and regional shopping and restaurants
- Community activities and culture
- Community heritage

People are choosing to move to cities and towns that offer amenities associated with a high quality of life, where one can live safely and work profitably, with multiple opportunities to entertain themselves during leisure time. Aspects of a desirable community include good schools, nice neighborhoods, and quality design. Other attractive aspects include restaurants, retail, cultural amenities (such as the arts or history) and natural features (such as lakes, rivers, forests, or rolling topography) that enrich one's life. Businesses and industries are moving to communities that offer these elements because this is where they find their next generation of talented employees. On the other hand, talented employees are moving to communities with an abundance of amenities that fit their individual lifestyles and then searching for a job that is right for them. This is different than the pattern of previous decades where employees found a job and relocated to that place. Communities with a high quality of life are experiencing an economic renaissance more rapidly than other communities across the country.

This study area is impacted by both local and regional efforts to enhance the overall quality of life of the region. Locally, the amenities of the city of Crawfordsville will, in large part, influence the overall quality of place of the entire county. There are significant efforts to enhance the quality of place in Crawfordsville and this bodes well for Montgomery County.

## SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Small businesses play a leading role in local economic development across the nation. According to the United States Small Business Administration:

- The 28 million small businesses in America account for 54 percent of all U.S. sales
- Small businesses provide 55 percent of all jobs and 66 percent of all net new jobs since the 1970s
- Small businesses represent 99.7 percent of all employer firms
- Since 1995, small businesses have generated 64 percent of new job growth in the United States

Small businesses are also critically important to connecting to millennials, young professionals and the entrepreneurial / creative class of entrepreneurs that tend to be involved in small businesses. As evidenced by the statistics above, much of local economic growth is connected to the success of small businesses. Most importantly, small business owners tend to live in the community in which they work, support the local tax base, are good corporate citizens and volunteers within the community.

One of the most important considerations regarding small businesses is that they do not always stay small. Small businesses that grow into large businesses often remain in the community in which the business was first established and grow deep roots there. Especially in rural areas like Montgomery County, these types of businesses not only serve the day to day needs of the community, but also represent a good portion of business leadership in the area. While good economic development focuses on an aggressive approach to attracting and retaining a diverse business base in the area, it is unlikely that the county can remain economically sustainable without a strategy to encourage the creation of, and support the growth of, small businesses within the county.

## INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

Infrastructure is a critical component of successful economic development within a community. Increasingly companies are looking for the sites that are most immediately available for construction. The best case is to have truly shovel ready sites with infrastructure in place that only require permit approval to begin development. The next best scenario, if infrastructure cannot already be in place, is to ensure that capacity exists for future development and a plan is in place to bring infrastructure to the property within a short time span. Developers will be looking for guarantees on the timeline by which infrastructure can be made available and it is essential that Montgomery County be in a position to deliver on its promises. In some ways infrastructure is a distinct advantage for Montgomery County as recent improvements have provided significant capacity for water and wastewater to serve future uses.

## NEW BUSINESS ATTRACTION

Economic development is driven by the amount of attention a community receives from outside businesses that attract new jobs and new investment into the community. To address this critical component, it is important to understand the factors that often influence site selection decisions for potential businesses.

**Economic development is a competitive process.** Every community must understand that it is competing with other communities, locally and nationally, to sell itself in site selection decisions. Many business location decisions are driven by site selectors, developers and real estate brokers assisting businesses in their decision-making process. This process used to be a process of selection, but has become more of a process of elimination. Often candidate locations are weighed against one another and, one by one, locations are removed from the list because of a failure to reach an assessment metric in the decision process. In some cases, these metrics are physical such as interstate or utility access. In other cases, these metrics are tied to less physical factors such as a community's responsiveness to requests for information or coordinated local leadership.

Inside Indiana Business recently noted a survey conducted by Area Development Magazine of site selection consultants across the country. According to the survey, the top 10 ranked criteria for business and industry location decisions are:

1. Labor costs
2. Highway accessibility
3. Availability of skilled labor
4. Availability of advanced information and communication services
5. Construction costs
6. Energy availability and costs
7. Corporate tax rates
8. Crime rate
9. Available buildings and shovel ready sites
10. Tax exemptions/incentives

Two of the top three criteria are focused on the availability and cost of the community's workforce. This reinforces the need for communities to focus on improving their quality of life to support the attraction and retention of a quality workforce in the community, not just infrastructure and site availability.

Real estate brokers that specialize in retail and restaurant development were interviewed as part of this plan and indicated the selection criteria differ significantly from industrial site selectors. They focus on things such as:

- Population within the trade area
- Traffic counts
- Disposable income
- Site visibility and access
- Access to parking
- Competitor's locations
- Future demographic projections
- Building site size and orientation
- Proximity to other franchises
- Availability of signage

Each potential retail use also has specific metrics for each selection criteria. For example, Darden Inc., the parent company for restaurant chains Olive Garden and Longhorn Steakhouse, state on their franchising website that Olive Garden requires 100,000 people within their trade area and Longhorn seeks the same population base with a 30,000 average daily traffic count near their facility. Bob Evans notes on their franchising website that they only require 35,000 people in their trade area, but high rise signage with a reader board is required. Restaurants and retail chains have complex requirements that are highly varied. Significant research is done before restaurants and retail establishments make a decision to locate in a community.

**Money, while not the only factor, plays a major role in decision-making.** As point one above demonstrates, many factors go into a site-selection decision. Still, in the end, the unavoidable requirements of business dictate that locating in a particular community must make good, solid economic sense. No matter how alluring your community is, if your tax structure, incentive programs and development costs don't match a business' projected pattern of financial resources, or if locating to your area will impose excessive extra expenses, then site selectors have no choice but to look elsewhere.

**Prompt responsiveness may be a vital component of a location decision.** Communities must be prepared to act quickly and within the time-frame specified by the business. Usually, these dates are not suggestions; they are deadlines that must be met. This includes information requests, on-site visits, procedural approvals and every other aspect that helps a business make quick location decisions. Time is money, and often a prompt response equals success.

**Companies are risk averse.** Site selectors choose locations that present minimum risk to their clients. In the minds of many business leaders, the least amount of risk translates directly into the greatest chance for success. Be aware of the risks your community may pose to an incoming business, and remove or mitigate as many as you possibly can.

**Attracting businesses to your community is definitely a competition.** Sitting back and waiting for this to happen is typically not the correct approach and usually does not lead to successful economic development. Rather, as in most competitions, the people who do the best job of executing the fundamentals often score the most wins.

## EXISTING BUSINESS RETENTION / EXPANSION

While new business attraction often gets the attention in economic development, much more bang for the buck comes when existing businesses choose to grow and expand within the community. Statistics show that up to 70 percent of job growth in a community comes from existing businesses, not new businesses. By helping local businesses grow and expand, these businesses grow deeper roots in the community. This not only helps expand and stabilize the local economy, but also helps foster a sense of community stewardship in the businesses themselves. This will encourage these businesses to invest in the community outside of their current building, increasing the overall quality of life of the community. Communities that understand the important need to “grow their own and keep them at home”, and therefore put in place strong programs to engage and support these businesses, are the ones that will achieve long-term economic stability.

## WORKFORCE ATTRACTION & DEVELOPMENT

Workforce development has always been a critical component of community economic development, but in today’s economic climate, having access to an adequate pool of appropriate skilled workers is not just important for supporting current business operations, but it is also essential to new business attraction efforts. Workforce development has come to describe the relatively wide range of activities, policies and programs, and is used locally and regionally to create, sustain, and retain a viable workforce. It is essential to have in place the right relationships with higher education institutions and vocational services in order to offer training and continuing education that will be critical for the community’s long-term economic success. Equally important is ensuring that local K-12 educational institutions are promoting preparation to college bound students, (especially in enhanced science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)), and vocational training opportunities, co-ops, apprenticeships, and internships to those that may not choose the path of a four-year college.

It is not just enough to educate and train your current workforce. For long-term sustainability, it is critical that the size of the overall local and regional workforce must grow as well. This means that new residents must be attracted to the area. In order to do this, Montgomery County must grow the amenities that are attractive to the type of workforce desired and then provide the types of housing product and options that new residents seek. Focusing on quality of life initiatives, communicating the existing qualities of the area and providing the regulatory environment attractive to new residential developers will all play a key role in growing the areas population.



## KEYS TO SUCCESS

Economic development is a competitive process. Factors such as regional amenities and trade areas certainly impact a community's ability to be successful, but there are fundamental local criteria that must be in place for any community to experience successful economic growth in a very competitive economic development environment. Among these are:



### **Strategic investment is essential to long-term sustainability**

Being ready for development opportunities is a critical part of being successful. While site selection decisions used to be made over several months, they are now made in a few weeks. This means that communities that have not invested in critical infrastructure to open sites for development or are not prepared to do so as part of a public/private partnership, are often left without sites to market and lose the deals before they are ever really considered.



### **Plan for the future, but be flexible**

It is important to have a plan and a guide for what you want as a community. However, a plan is only as good as the best available information at the time the plan is written. Opportunities for development often occur in the middle of a plan's implementation. In some cases, these opportunities, while good and worth pursuing, were never anticipated by the original plan. This is especially true for Montgomery County given the large area of study and the geographic diversity of potential development areas. Flexibility is essential to ensuring that good decisions are made throughout the life of the plan. This flexibility must be tempered, however, by establishing the correct vision and strategies to provide a decision-making framework that can evaluate future opportunities and ensure the best decisions are made. Establishing the criteria to make the best decisions will ensure consistency in the implementation of the plan, maintain the spirit of the plan as future decisions are made, and allow the required flexibility to deliver the best long-term development within the community.



### **Decisions must be made for the short-term and the long-term**

Short-term success is key to successful plan implementation, but truly sustainable economic success is a long-term proposition often taking years to see the complete implementation of strategies identified in the plan. Communities are hungry for development to occur and when good opportunities are presented, communities should aggressively pursue them. Sometimes, however, early opportunities may not be in the best long-term interest of the community. In these cases, it is critical for communities to say no. This is very difficult to do as nobody wants to walk away from a potential deal, but sometimes saying no to a project is the best decision.





### **Be clear, concise, and consistent in decision making**

People involved in site selection decisions are looking to mitigate risk. These decisions used to be based on where a client had the greatest opportunity to succeed. Today, with new financing constraints and market competitiveness, decisions are being made to locate where businesses have the least opportunity to fail. With that in mind, it is critical that communities are responsive to requests for information, clear in their expectations and desires, concise in outlining timeliness and development standards, and consistent in the application of standards from one project to another.

This will create trust and confidence in potential development partners that their investment will be protected, as well as mitigate some of the risk inherent to private capital investment decisions.



### **Local collaboration amongst leadership is essential**

Another part of mitigating risk is trusting the people with whom you do business. Being able to demonstrate that local entities work together and are interested in common outcomes is one of the first things that site selectors look for in communities. Being in a position to commit to things such as infrastructure construction and incentives, and then being able to deliver on that commitment, will help secure the current deal. It will also set the tone in the broader development community that it is safe to do business with the community in the future.

Much of economic development success is about building momentum and sustaining that momentum into the future. Building a reputation as a trusted and reliable partner will set Montgomery County apart from its competition, thus making the county competitive in securing economic development projects.



### **Permitting Process**

The local permitting process needs to have strict requirements so the county can control any given development that wants to come into the county. However, at the same time, the local permitting process also needs to be a clear and easy process for developers. A clear and easy permitting process gives developers a motive for wanting to do business within the county.

## ECONOMIC TOOLS

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Economic development is sometimes referred to as: **Building the tools that identify and capitalize on the assets and processes available to the community to promote economic success.** This “toolbox” also develops a shared understanding of the most efficient ways to engage these assets, and the proper circumstances and methods to use them. Montgomery County has many opportunities to build this toolbox and to position itself for long-term economic success. Among these opportunities are:

### Higher Education

The county is fortunate to be represented by a higher education institution like Wabash College. This college provides opportunities not just to educate the community’s population, but also to partner in creative ways to support business training, lifelong learning and talent attraction within the community. There are also opportunities to collaborate with regional campuses at Purdue University and Ivy Tech Community College.

### Messaging

At the heart of economic development is telling a good story. Hoosiers are traditionally not very good at telling our stories, as our desire for being humble tends to get in the way of celebrating personal success. From an economic development perspective, in order to compete with other counties, it is critical that areas develop, hone and sell their stories if they wish to compete regionally and globally. Montgomery County is a proud and successful community with a strong heritage of being a family friendly oriented community. In addition, there are true local business successes and a desire to create a progressive and vibrant future for the community. Establishing the tools to create, package and sell that message will be important for Montgomery County to achieve its long-term vision.

### Review of Internal Process

Just as important to securing an economic development opportunity for your community is closing the deal. In order to do this, communities need to have the resources and procedures to respond quickly and accurately to prospects. Having a single point of contact locally to act on requests, prepare economic development data to respond quickly and responsibly to incentive requests, and establish the internal mechanisms to provide clear, concise and consistent messaging will help drive decision processes and help deliver economic development success.

### Stakeholder Collaboration

Maintaining strong local coordination is critical to closing economic development deals. Strong communication, coordination and connection between Montgomery County, the city of Crawfordsville, local schools, colleges and other local organizations will help the community respond effectively to potential development deals and allow for leveraging resources and assets that create the most competitive position for the county.

## Public/Private Partnerships

Rarely does successful economic development occur where there is not a combination of both public and private investment. This type of public/private partnership can take many forms, but is ultimately an effort of successfully implementing a common vision in a more efficient and cost-effective manner than may exist without such coordination. This is done while at the same time attempting, as best as possible, to limit the risk to each party.

These partnerships may result in, among other things, the construction of needed infrastructure, vertical construction of buildings for sale or lease, development of public amenities such as parks and open spaces, or in some cases, cross marketing and competitive incentivization of targeted business types. Whatever approach is chosen, such partnerships are key to separating winning and losing communities, especially when it comes to development and redevelopment within the community core.

## Incentives

Willingness to offer local incentives to a project is essential if you want to make the short list in a site selection process. Potential tools include, but are not limited to:

- Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- Tax abatement
- Utility credits
- Offer of free or discounted ground to developers

These tools may or may not be required to secure a particular deal, but the upfront acknowledgment that such things can be negotiated is a critical check box on most site selector's initial due diligence sheets. Montgomery County should develop an internal understanding of the types of criteria they are looking for in a project, including such items as:

- Job numbers
- Wage levels
- Amount of investment
- Business types

The county should make sure that local economic partners understand those expectations. The offer of local incentives is also a prerequisite to the state of Indiana offering incentives toward a project. Not every deal will require incentivization, and those that do will most likely require unique packages that may not be the same as previous deals. Flexibility, a strong understanding of the details of a specific site selection project, and a willingness to be strategically creative will usually result in a deal that is mutually beneficial.

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# Existing Conditions

## Section 3

One of the first steps of getting where you want to go is knowing where you start. Understanding your existing conditions also allows you to set the benchmarks to measure future success. Healthy communities share certain benchmarks that can be used to gauge their vibrancy.

The Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) has been providing services to small cities and rural areas for decades. The Community Vitality Indicators (CVIs), adopted by OCRA, are a great tool to quantify the economic health of rural communities, and are a good reference for determining current conditions. The OCRA Community Vitality Indicators include the following:

**Population Growth:** Population growth is the change in the population, resulting from a surplus (or deficit) of births over deaths and the balance of migrants entering and leaving a geographic area.

**Per Capita Personal Income:** This is the mean income received in the past 12 months computed for every man, woman, and child in a geographic area. It is derived by dividing the total income of all people at least 15 years old in a geographic area by the total population in that area.

**Assessed Value (AV):** The total dollar value assigned to all real property, improvements, and personal property subject to taxation.

**Educational Attainment Rate:** This measures changes in the educational status of each community by age and by level of education completed.

**Public School Enrollment:** This is the total number of children (K-12) enrolled in public schools in a geographic area as a percentage of the population under 18 years of age.

**Public High School Graduation Rate:** This is the percentage of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma.

While these are not the only indicators of a community's health, economic development success, or future potential, they are however a reasonable starting place for a community in self assessing its current position. What follows in this section is a snapshot of the demographic profile, and environment development constraints for Montgomery County.

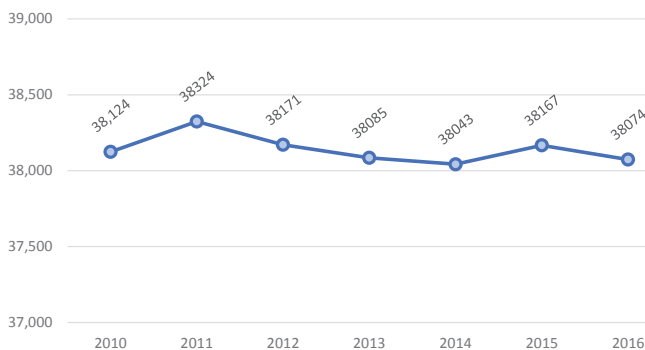
## Population

A community's economy prospers or falters due to the diverse group of people who choose to live and make that community their home. The choice to live in that community may be due to birth, or it may be a strategic choice to move for work or family reasons. No matter the choice as to why people live in a community, the leadership must continually monitor the fluctuation in community demographics as this serves as an important measure of that community's overall health and happiness.

The total population of Montgomery County has, for the most part, remained flat since 2005 when the county hit its peak population of 38,105. For the last 15 plus years, Montgomery County Population growth has closely mirrored the population growth in Crawfordsville. There has been little to no population growth in the county outside of Crawfordsville. Before the recession, growth was more evenly split, with about half the growth in the county and half the growth in the city. While the county population has been fairly static, population projections show a slight increase, with an average of 1 percent growth over the next 13 years, for a total population of 38,420 in 2030.

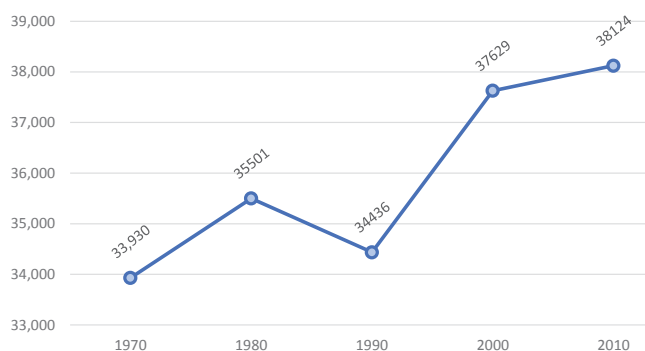
While the county population trend is static, the county is situated along a major interstate and between two of the fastest growing counties in the state, Boone and Tippecanoe. Economic development opportunities have a strong potential to draw from the growing populations in these adjacent communities. The time for Montgomery County to make strategic economic investments has never been better.

**Montgomery County Total Population  
2010-2016**



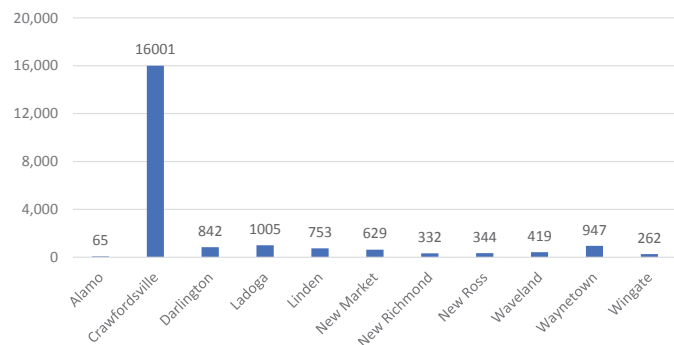
Source: U.S. Census Population Estimates Program

**Montgomery County Total Population  
1970-2010**



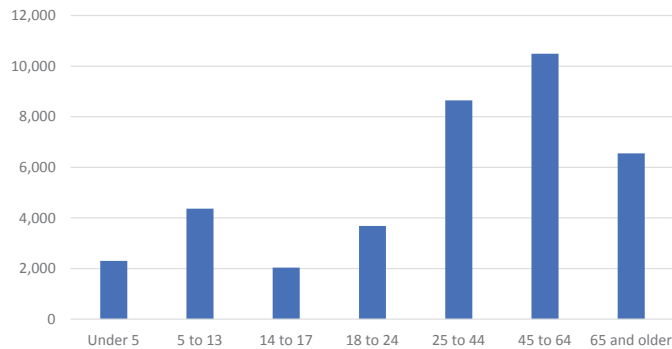
Source: U.S. Decennial Census

**2016 Population of Cities and Towns in  
Montgomery County**



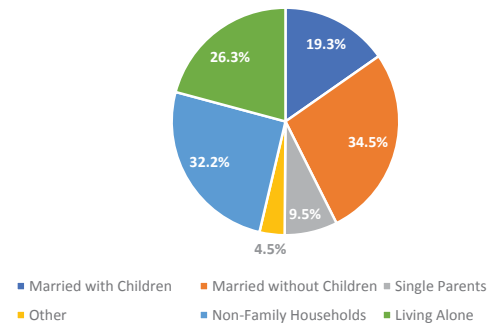
Source: [www.stats.indiana.edu](http://www.stats.indiana.edu)

### Age Distribution, 2016



Source: U.S. Census Population Estimates Program

### Household Types, 2015



Source: US Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates

Population by age shows that older adults (ages 45-64) make up the largest group in the overall population, closely followed by young adults (ages 25-44). A close tie for third place is for school age (5-17) and seniors (65+). The two smallest groups are preschool (ages 0-4) and college age (18-24).

The majority of the county is comprised of either married couples without children or non-family households at 52 percent. Families with children comprise approximately 23 percent of households in the county.

The median age in 2015 was 40.4 years, as compared to 37.5 years for the state of Indiana. Overall, both the state and the county have been trending older, with an increase in the median age every year since 2009.

The division between men and women in Montgomery County is fairly even throughout the population. There are slightly more men than women overall. Most age groups are almost exactly 50/50. The population pyramids show that Montgomery County is close to average in comparison to the state of Indiana in the distribution of gender/age throughout the population. The county has a slightly larger percentage of elderly population in both the men and women (ages 65 and older).

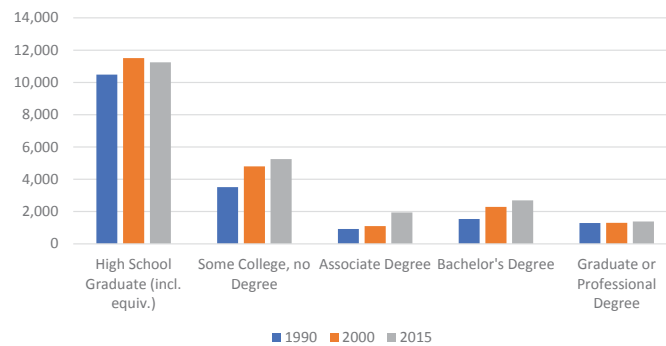
## Education

A community's economy is also driven by the level of education in the workforce surrounding the community. The level of education often provides useful insight into the skill levels in which that community can offer, and serves as a key indicator on future economic direction.

Montgomery County has seen a steady decrease in their enrollment to public schools since 2009, according to the US Census Bureau & American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates (ACS). According to the ACS, the 2015 school year was the lowest recorded attendance since 2009, with 9,117 students enrolled in school. That number includes 4,553 students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 8 and 1,938 students enrolled in grades 9 to 12. The peak enrollment between 2009 and 2015 was in 2010, with a total estimated enrollment of 9,570. The drop in enrollment is likely tied to the fact that the population growth has been static, while the population has been getting older.

While local school enrollment may be down, attainment of college degrees is on the rise. Since 1990, the number of residents in Montgomery County with college experience has increased. Numbers have risen for all categories, including those with college experience, an associates degree, a bachelors degree or a graduate/professional degree. According to the Indiana Department of Education, nearly 84% of high school graduates in Montgomery County intend to continue on to higher education opportunities, including four-year, two-year and vocational/technical institutions.

### Educational Attainment



Source: [www.stats.indiana.edu](http://www.stats.indiana.edu)



## Industry, Labor Force and Income

Manufacturing makes up the largest employment industry in Montgomery County. Retail trade is the second largest followed by educational services.

A majority of the business establishments in the county are small, having fewer than 10 employees, while only 2 percent of the business establishments have over 100 employees.

The annual unemployment rate for Montgomery County has been reduced from 4.0 percent in 2015 to 3.9 percent in 2016, see Table 3.1 This rate is slightly less for the county than for the state of Indiana, at 4.4 percent for 2016.

As shown in Table 3.1 the per capita income for Montgomery County is around \$3,848 less than that of Indiana, the median household income is almost equal to the state with a difference of about \$1,000. However, the county has a lower poverty rate (12.3 percent) than that of Indiana (14.4 percent).

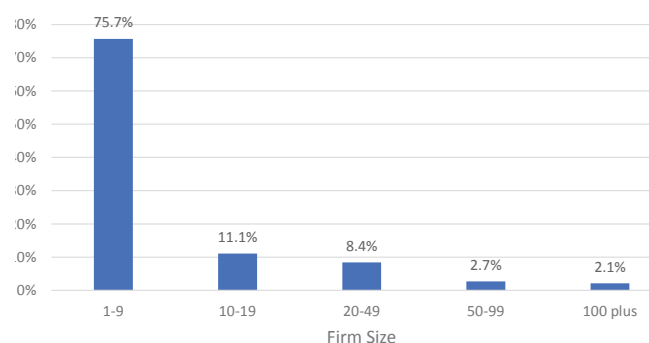
In summary, it is important for Montgomery County to grow the community population in order to enhance the workforce base within the county.

### Top 8 Industries by Employment



Source: US Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates

### Firm Size in Montgomery County, 2015



Source: US Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates

**Table 3.1: Labor Force and Income Highlight**

	County	Indiana
Total Resident Labor Force	19,063	3,326,893
Employed	18,326	3,179,806
Unemployed	737	147,087
Annual Unemployment Rate, 2016	3.9%	4.4%
Per Capita Personal Income (Annual) in 2015	\$38,092	\$41,940
Median Household Income in 2015	\$49,425	\$50,510
Poverty Rate in 2015	12.3%	14.4%

Source: [www.ruralindianastats.com](http://www.ruralindianastats.com)

## Commuting and Labor Force

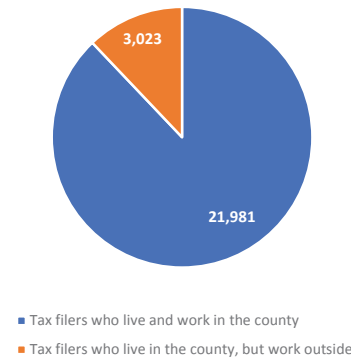
Throughout the state, most workers commute to their job on a weekly basis. Some commute within their home county or outside the county they call home. No matter the direction in which they travel, commuting patterns greatly impact the available work force in a community. The implied resident workforce represents workers who reside within the county no matter where they work. In Montgomery County, the implied resident workforce in 2015 was 25,004.

The implied workforce differs from the implied resident workforce in that it represents the total number of people who work in Montgomery County. For 2015, the implied workforce in Montgomery County was 25,065. Most of the implied workforce lives and works inside the county. Only 12 percent of the implied workforce commutes into the county from another county. The remaining 88 percent live and work in Montgomery County.

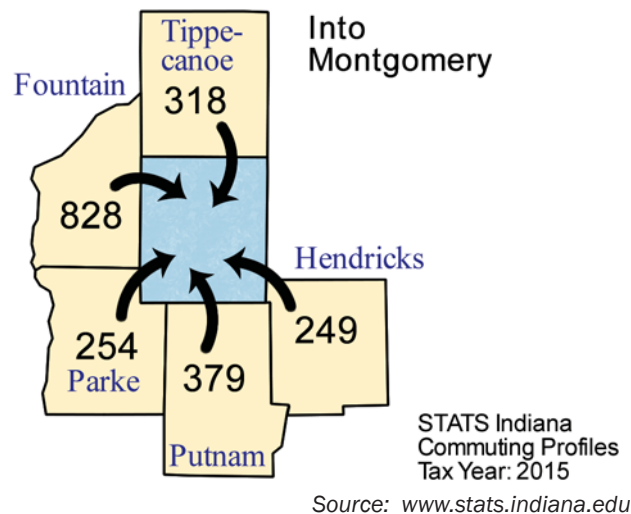
A majority of the workers who commute into the county each day are residents of Fountain County. Putnam County and Tippecanoe County are among the other counties that make up 50 percent of the workers who live outside but work in Montgomery County. Workers who leave Montgomery County every day to work in other counties are mainly going to Tippecanoe County and Marion County, with Boone County coming in third for this ranking.

The number of commuters leaving the county each day is nearly the same as the number of commuters coming into the county, with the vast majority of the Montgomery County workforce living and working in the county.

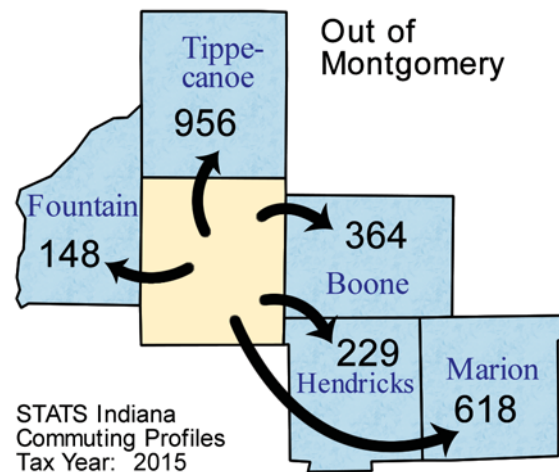
**Implied Resident Workforce, 2015**



Source: [www.stats.indiana.edu](http://www.stats.indiana.edu)



Source: [www.stats.indiana.edu](http://www.stats.indiana.edu)



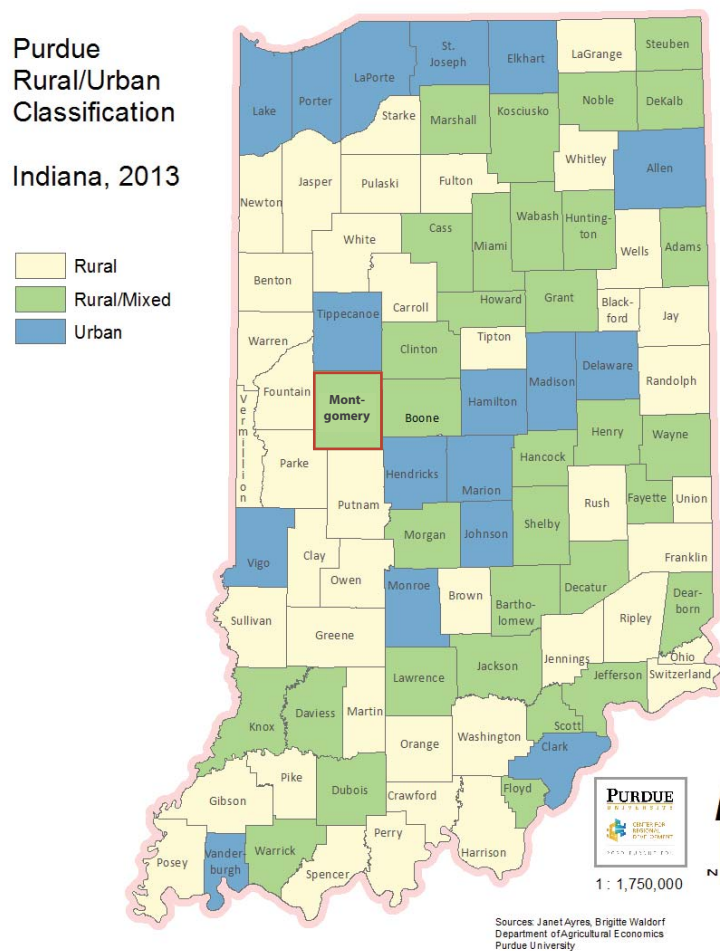
Source: [www.stats.indiana.edu](http://www.stats.indiana.edu)

## Community Vitality Indicators - County Comparisons

The socio-economic data presented thus far is useful in understanding a snapshot of Montgomery County. However, to better understand the county's position within the region and the state it is helpful to understand how it compares to adjacent counties.

In 2013, a team of researchers and practitioners from Purdue University developed a cutting-edge typology that defined the socio-economic status of Indiana counties. Three core elements form the classification system: (1) population size; (2) population density; and (3) size of the largest city or town in the county. The researchers and practitioners also considered the “identity” that people had of their county. The classification breaks down the following:

### Socio-economic Classification



Source: [www.ruralindianastats.com](http://www.ruralindianastats.com)

<b>Urban</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Population: Over 100,000</li> <li>Density (people per square mile): Over 200</li> <li>Population of largest city: Over 30,000</li> <li>Identity: Urban</li> </ul>
<b>Rural/Mixed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Population: 40,000 – 100,000</li> <li>Density (people per square mile): 100 – 200</li> <li>Population of largest city: 10,000 – 30,000</li> <li>Identity: Rural with larger town(s)</li> </ul>
<b>Rural</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Population: Less than 40,000</li> <li>Density (people per square mile): Less than 100</li> <li>Population of largest city: Less than 10,000</li> <li>Identity: Rural</li> </ul>

Source: [www.ruralindianastats.com](http://www.ruralindianastats.com)

Table 3.2 illustrates how Montgomery County has ranked statewide and among other adjacent rural/mixed counties in 2011 and 2015.

Table 3.3 illustrates how Montgomery County compares to its adjacent neighbor counties, broken into rural, rural mixed, and urban classifications. Although Montgomery County is below several of its neighbors in several categories, it is very likely gaining some of the benefits from adjacent counties performing well. Smart economic development decisions can help strengthen some of the indicators in which Montgomery County trails others and increase its standing within the state.

**Table 3.2: Community Vitality Indicators Statewide Counties Comparison**

	2011		2015	
<b>State Ranking</b>	17 of 92		17 of 92	
<b>Population Estimates</b>	38,321	Rank 40	38,227	Rank 39
<b>Public School Enrollment as Pct. Of Population Under 18 Years of Age</b>	68.8%	Rank 44	68.9%	Rank 44
<b>Public High School Graduation Rate</b>	92.9%	Rank 11	97.8%	Rank 2
<b>Pct. Population with Associates Degree or Higher</b>	23.9%	Rank 40	23.6%	Rank 45
<b>Gross Assessed Value Per Capita</b>	\$77,716	Rank 20	\$84,663	Rank 22
<b>Per Capita Personal Income</b>	\$34,477	Rank 40	\$38,092	Rank 45
<b>Ranking by Geographic Classification - Rural/Mixed Counties</b>	8 of 30 - Rural Mixed		11 of 30 - Rural Mixed	

Source: [www.ruralindianastats.com](http://www.ruralindianastats.com)

**Table 3.3: Community Vitality Indicators Comparison - Rural/Urban/Mixed Adjacent Counties - 2015**

	Population Estimates	Public School Enrollment as Pct. Of Population Under 18 Years of Age	Public High School Graduation Rate	Pct. Population with Associates Degree or Higher	Gross Assessed Value Per Capita	Per Capita Personal Income
Montgomery	38,277	68.90%	97.80%	23.60%	\$84,663	\$38,092
Clinton	32,609	74.40%	91.80%	22.20%	\$72,640	\$34,675
Boone	63,344	68.95%	97.30%	50.70%	\$121,088	\$62,603
Tippecanoe	185,826	58.60%	92.70%	43.20%	\$65,410	\$34,725
Putnam	37,585	80.30%	92.00%	23.60%	\$68,777	\$33,264
Parke	16,901	62.00%	85.60%	22.40%	\$67,170	\$31,434
Fountain	16,591	77.40%	94.80%	21.00%	\$75,892	\$34,857
Hendricks	158,192	70.60%	97.10%	42.30%	\$88,417	\$43,345

## DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

Montgomery County's demographic profile presents itself as a mixed bag when compared to the areas that OCRA uses to evaluate the relative health of a rural/mixed community. These indicators have a direct impact on overall population and workforce availability. Current income levels and educational attainment levels, as well as an overall flat population growth number, also speak to the current workforce status of the county and must be taken into consideration when considering the types of businesses and jobs that the county wants to attract in the future.

It is evident that long-term economic sustainability will require some appropriate level of business and population growth moving forward. While the population base has remained relatively flat over the past 20 years, there are positive assets like the quality of schools and regional accessibility that provide a foundation to support future residential growth. Given the county's historic ability to support the vast majority of local workforce with local jobs also bodes well for the continuing ability to grow not only the local workforce, but the business base for them to serve.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

As defined in Section 2, the study area includes all of the nearly 505 square miles of Montgomery County. This section will review the physical development conditions that exist within the study area including hydrology, topography and soils conditions. Because of the large size of the study area, there have been four (4) focus areas created that tend to have common development potential or development characteristics. It is likely that these areas will experience development interest on similar timelines and will be similarly impacted by the constraints identified within this plan. It is also likely that each of the geographies within each of the areas will require similar strategies to overcome the identified constraints.

### Hydrological Concerns

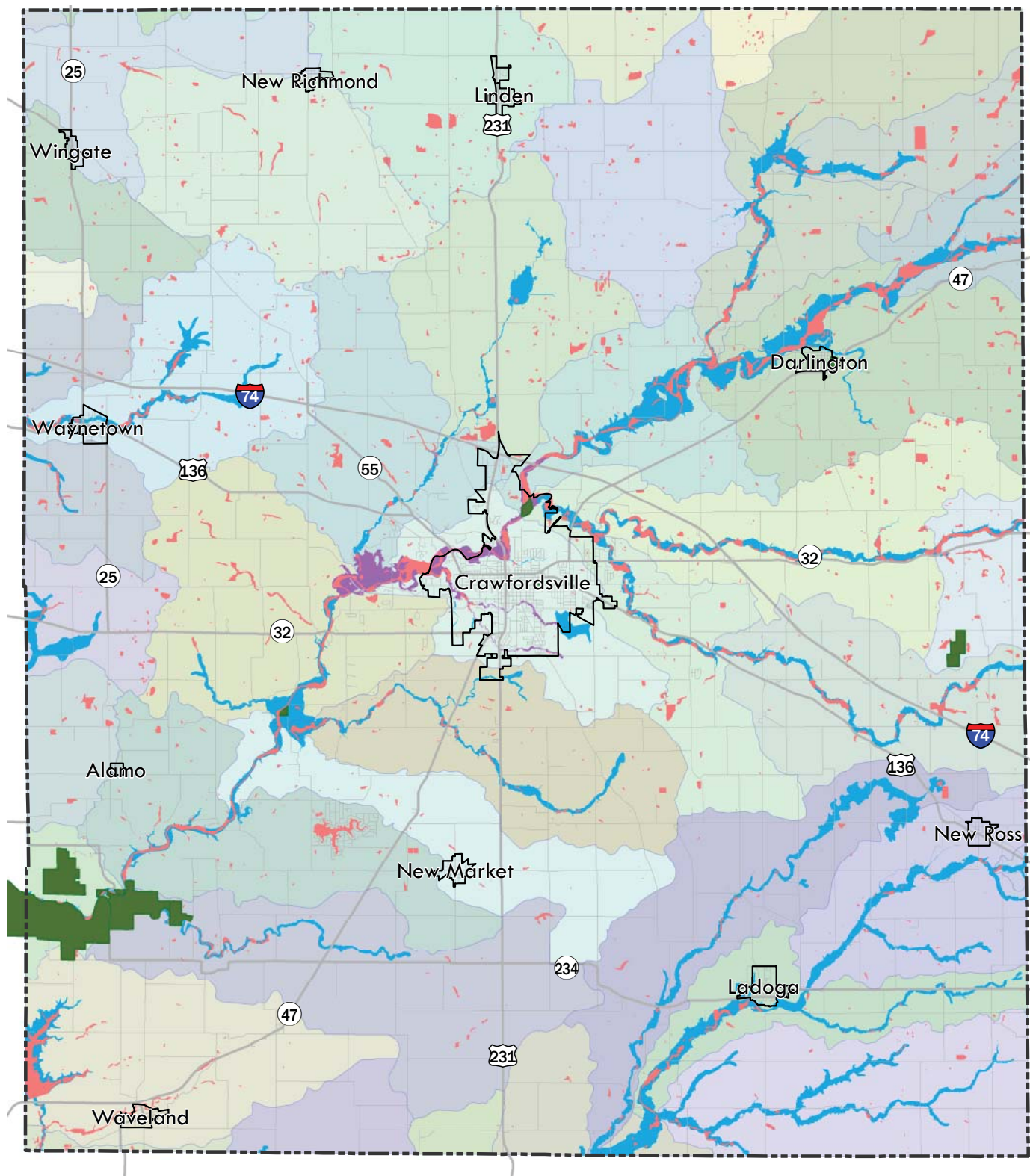
Exhibit C highlights several significant hydrological concerns which impact the development potential for portions of the study area, including all land adjacent to Sugar Creek and its subsequent flood zone (cutting diagonally from northeast to southwest across the county). Sugar Creek was studied as a potential Indiana Natural, Scenic and Recreational River, but has not been designated to date. However, even though Sugar Creek has not been designated, it remains unique as it has experienced very little development impact, resulting in clear streams and water. Considering that streams impacted by development are often sediment laden, this is a resource and amenity that must be protected. That protection must be included in any development plans.

Wetland are also a critical consideration. Not only do wetlands perform vital ecological functions, they can limit development potential due to additional considerations that must be made in regards to building foundations, floor elevations and site access. Additionally, the county contains multiple presumed wetlands and small streams/creeks which could impact potential development. The highest concentration of hydrological features is around the boundaries of Crawfordsville and the southeast corner of the county. While these wetlands have not been officially delineated by this study, there is evidence on USGS/IDEM mapping that provides strong indication of wetlands as generally depicted in Exhibit C. Soils in wetlands tend to be hydric and poorly drained, which can cause high water tables and further strains on development.

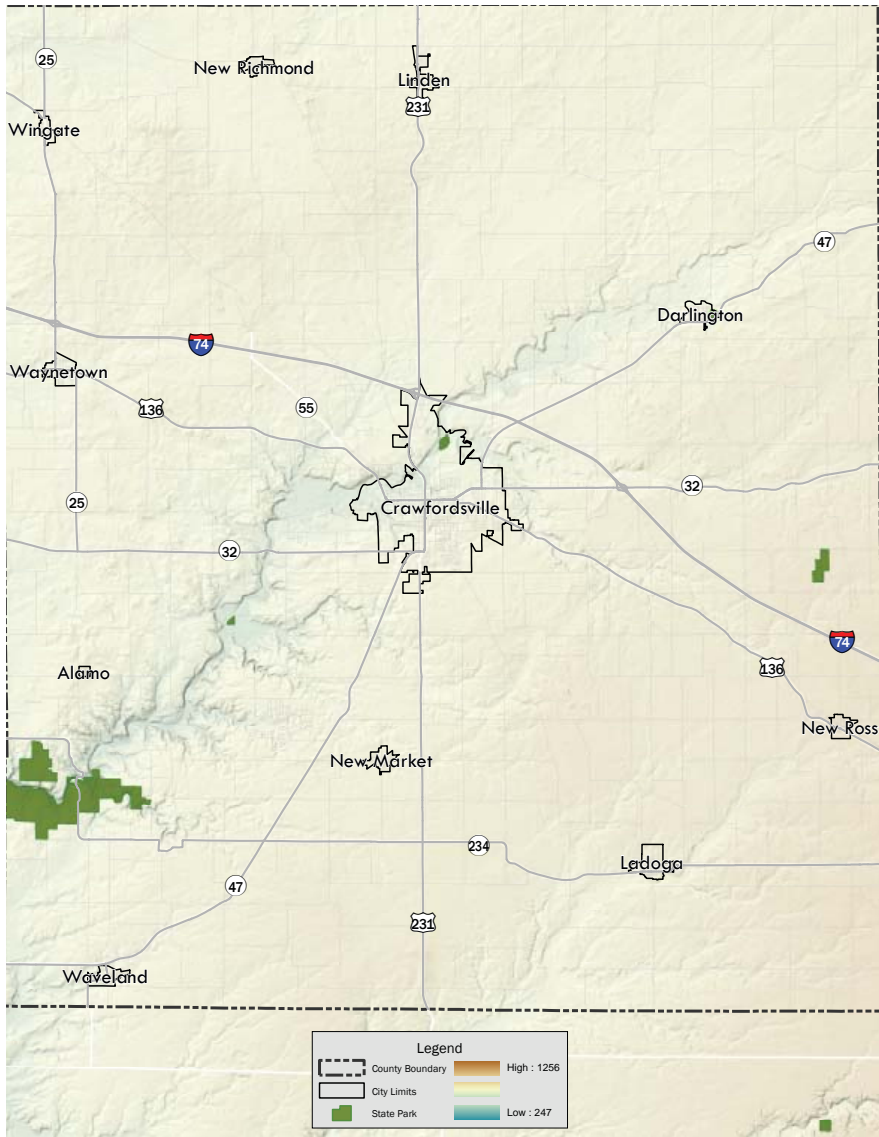
Source: [www.ruralindianastats.com](http://www.ruralindianastats.com)



## EXHIBIT C: EXISTING HYDROLOGY



## EXHIBIT D: EXISTING TOPOGRAPHY



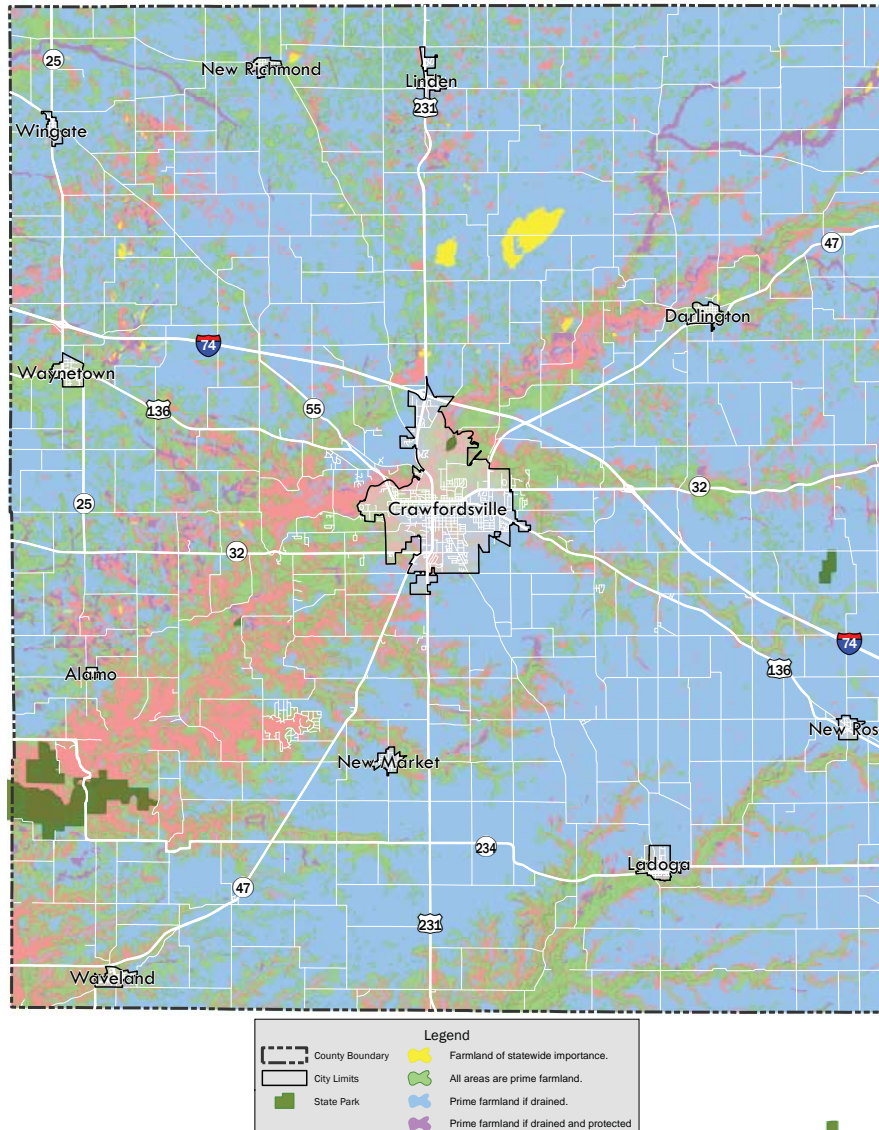
### Topography Concerns

Exhibit D identifies the locations of the most significant topographical challenges in the study area. The areas indicated on the map by dark gray indicate a higher concentration of steep slopes and greater grade change. Slopes tend to correlate with the location of flood zones and wetland areas, as shown in Exhibit D.

The Development Focus Areas, defined in this study, tend to benefit mostly when focused around flat or gentle rolling topography. This topographic condition tends to support future development opportunities better than areas centered around steep grades. Steep slopes can limit development opportunities by making development more expensive due to site access and building foundation considerations.



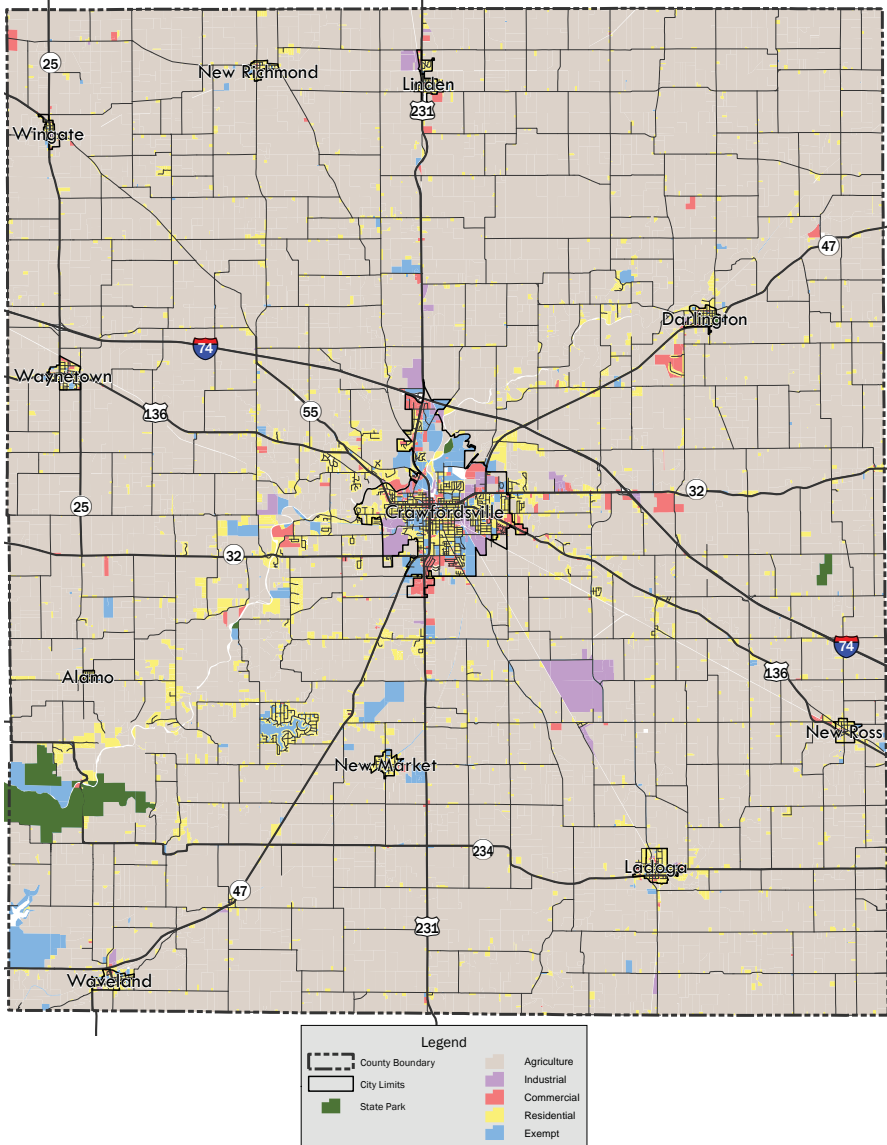
## EXHIBIT E: EXISTING FARMLAND POTENTIAL



### Prime Farmland

Exhibit E indicates the general classification of the study areas as it relates to prime farmland. Much of the soil in the study area is classified as prime farmland, or has the potential to be prime farmland if drained well. Those soils that are classified as not prime farmland are mostly located in wetland areas, streams, and creeks. Large pockets of prime farmland should be protected where viable, especially on the outer boundaries of the study areas.

## EXHIBIT F: EXISTING LAND USE (by property class)



### Existing Land Use

Exhibit F illustrates the existing land uses for the study area based on property class designations. This is not zoning, but shows how properties are currently classified for taxation purposes. Following are the descriptions for existing land uses designated within the study area on the following map.

#### Land Use Descriptions:

**Agricultural:** Farming and related uses including livestock, crops and timber.

**Industrial:** Includes all industrial uses, including industrial office, warehousing, landfills, light manufacturing and heavy manufacturing.

**Commercial:** All commercial uses including office, retail, grocery, dining, lodging, and similar uses.

**Residential:** Includes all residential types, including single family, multi-family, mobile home and properties that are vacant, but classified as residential.

**Exempt:** Areas exempt from taxation. These include a wide variety of uses, including governmental and institutional properties such as schools and churches.

# Issues & Identification

## Section 4



Throughout this planning effort, several key issues have been identified during discussions with stakeholders, steering committee members, and analysis of the existing conditions. These issues and opportunities are front and center to improving the economic development climate for Montgomery County. Solutions to these issues and constraints will provide the county with new opportunities and give them a much stronger economic development position in the short-term and long-term future.

### **SUMMARY OF INPUT PROCESS**

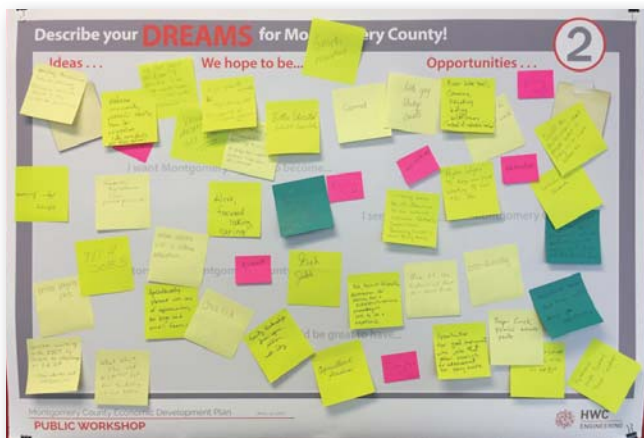
HWC Engineering conducted a public input session on April 12, 2017 at the North Montgomery High School. There was an exceptional turnout of over forty persons and a lot of useful information was gathered from the public who attended the meeting. This information was documented and a summary of the results is highlighted throughout the next few pages.



## ONE WORD VISION / DREAMS INPUT RESULTS



Filled out vision board from the public meeting



Filled out dreams board from the public meeting

The following is a summary of the words that were used by stakeholders to describe their vision for the future of Montgomery County:

**Progressive**

**Inviting**

**Innovative**

**Inspiring**

**Vibrant**

**Healthy**

**Safe**

**Attractive**

**Friendly**

**Diverse**



Attendees at the public meeting providing feedback



Attendees at the public meeting providing feedback

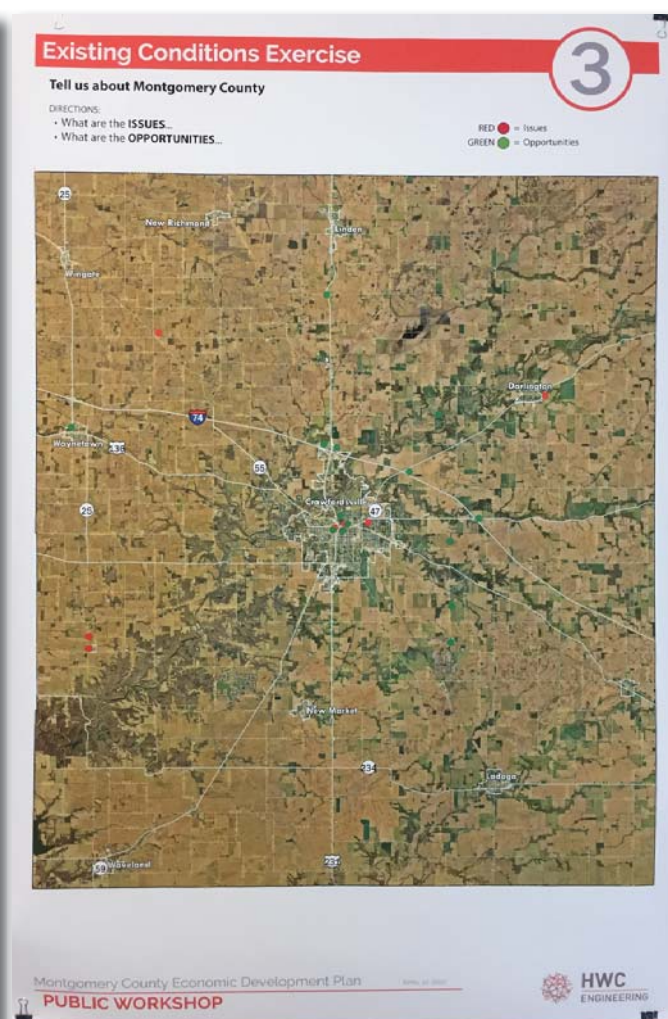
## ISSUES / OPPORTUNITIES INPUT RESULTS SUMMARY

### OPPORTUNITIES:

- Attract home rehabilitation
- Attract more bachelor's and master's degree jobs
- Connect nature trails, expand out of city to surrounding towns
- Rails to Trails - Abandoned railroad on 47N to Darlington
- Need more public parking in Crawfordsville
- Maintain land ownership & control of Sugar Creek
- Maintain **Sugar Creek**<sup>x8</sup>, Pine Hills, Shades (keep high quality natural areas)

### ISSUES:

- **Low paying jobs**<sup>x5</sup>
- Poor wages at local industry.
- Poverty and **run down homes**<sup>x4</sup>.
- Poor internet service
- Truck route through city
- Lack of retail stores
- Lack of dialog between opposing factions and workforce development
- Crime, illegal activity



Filled out issues and opportunities boards from the public meeting



## LIKES AND DISLIKES INPUT RESULTS SUMMARY

### LIKE:

- **Schools**<sup>x3</sup> & Superintendents
- **Sugar Creek** and natural amenities
- **Hometown feel**, "small town"
- Rural feel
- Lower cost of living
- As it exists today, no need for change
- Preserve historical sites and buildings
- Wabash College
- People, Midwest values
- Excellent law enforcement (police & fire)
- Good place to raise a family
- Amazing library

### DISLIKE:

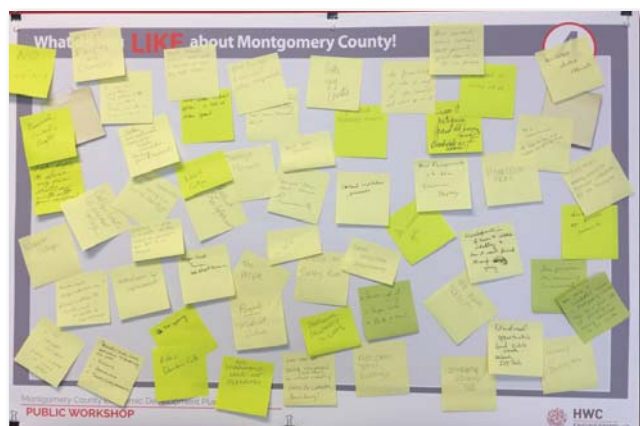
- **Crime & drug** problem that hurts workforce
- Lack of young people wanting to live here
- Unused, vacant buildings in commercial park
- Lack of public parking downtown
- Lack of consistent plan for growth
- Most of the industry leaders live in other communities outside Montgomery County
- **I-74/US231** needs to be more welcoming, informative, and friendly
- The number of school districts
- Lack of **retail/restaurants** & type of development



Locations of 'Likes' and 'Dislikes' about Montgomery County



'Dislikes' about Montgomery County



'Likes' about Montgomery County

## ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFICATION

### Access to Interstate 74

One of the greatest assets that a community can have to help support economic development is an interchange on a state or federal highway. Montgomery County, unlike most communities, is fortunate to have three major interchanges. The interchange at US 231 and I-74 has experienced some favorable economic development due to the existing utility infrastructure in the area. The interchange at SR 25 near Waynetown does have access to the north to Lafayette, but US 231 appears to be the preferred connection point to I-74 today. Given this, and fact that utilities are in place at the US 231 interchange, it seems like the US 231 interchange is the more likely short-term alternative. This does not mean that the SR 25 interchange is not a viable alternative in the long-run, however. The interchange at SR 32 and I-74 is in a good location based on its relative proximity to Indianapolis and accessibility from Boone County. The lack of utility access at the interchange has resulted in a failure to activate the interchange beyond the fuel facility and scrap yard currently located at the interchange. Overall, these interchanges represent perhaps the greatest underutilized asset and greatest economic development opportunity for the county.

### Need for Thoroughfare Improvements

Great access exists to Interstate 74 at the three interchanges mentioned above. It is important, however, that these areas are served with adequate infrastructure to support future development opportunities. In some areas this means utility improvements. In the case of the US 231 and State Road 32 interchanges, it means key road improvements to serve projects near the existing development areas (both commercial and industrial). Infrastructure improvements will open up several other properties for development and will serve the county's short-term and long-term economic development efforts.

### Lack of High Speed Internet and Broadband

In today's economic climate, access to high speed internet is as critical to business attraction efforts as is the availability of sewer and water infrastructure. Montgomery County has opportunities to expand these services through partnerships with internet utility providers and regional energy providers. Creating a dark fiber backbone within the area gives this county the unique opportunity to use broadband connectivity as a strategic advantage and differentiator within the region.

## Agricultural Heritage

Without a doubt, Montgomery County has a heritage as an agricultural based community. Long-term data analysis shows that the county plays a big role in the agricultural strength of the state. While this plan envisions opportunities for future development of some existing agricultural ground, it is important to note that this future development will occur over an extended period of time. Even as future development begins to occur, the vast majority of the study area will remain undeveloped and continue to be utilized for agricultural use.

One strategy the county can utilize for future economic development within the region is the creation of agribusiness facilities. Agribusiness generally include a range of activities and disciplines that make up food production. Uses may include agricultural chemicals, breeding, crop production, research, distribution, farm machinery, processing, and seed supply, as well as marketing and retail sales. These agribusiness facilities should capitalize on the agricultural heritage of the county, while also utilizing the current facilities already located in the county and provide value added agribusiness opportunities. Tourism to these agribusiness facilities can serve as a generator for a sustainable economic future.

## Access to Rail Service

The heart of the study area is currently served by rail service. Several of the existing industrial uses in the area take advantage of this rail access and additional property can be served with future rail access. This is especially true at the I-74 and US 231 interchange as well as along the Nucor Road corridor. While not every site selection project requires rail access, the combination of rail and interstate access will create an opportunity to compete for projects with only a select few other areas.

## Wabash College

Having Wabash College in the community is a significant asset that, if leveraged properly, can be a tremendous component of overall economic development efforts. Whether it is leveraging educational resources to support workforce development and continuing education opportunities for local businesses, or partnering on such efforts as Certified Technology Parks, a strong engagement with the college will help support long-term economic development success.

## Nature Amenities

Montgomery County is fortunate to have significant natural resource and tourism amenities such as Shades State Park and the Sugar Creek Watershed. These assets not only impact the local quality of place but also provide a strong foundation to support tourism activities within the county. Finding ways to not just promote these assets but also to further engage them as recreational destinations will be an important part of future economic development strategy.



## Geography within the Region

Montgomery County's geographic position is a blessing and a curse. Geographic proximity to growing areas like Tippecanoe and Boone counties provides opportunities to share in the regional economic development energy that exists. It also presents competitive challenges as site selection opportunities shop alternatives within the region. It will be important to leverage this geographical positioning to help support new and existing business growth within the county.

## Lack of Countywide Zoning

A lack of countywide planning and zoning is a deterrent to economic development efforts and the job growth and private capital investment that comes with it. This is especially true for areas outside of the planning and zoning jurisdiction of the city of Crawfordsville. While the lack of countywide planning and zoning does not, on its own, render economic development efforts hopeless, it does represent an added level of risk to site selection decisions and will limit the opportunities that choose to pursue sites within the county.

## County Airport

The Crawfordsville Municipal Airport is a key asset for the county, and should certainly be utilized to its full potential. Specific businesses rely on reasonable access to airports to support corporate services. It is unlikely that this airport would ever support significant freight traffic, but scheduled improvements to extend the runway and improve services at the airport will allow the facility to support the modern air traffic that corporate users seek. Having access to this facility should support business attraction efforts for types of uses that are desired within the Nucor Road Industrial Area.

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# Vision & Goals

## Section 5

The purpose of this section is to outline Montgomery County's desired future economic development direction. Through extensive stakeholder engagement, including feedback from stakeholder interviews, a public workshop and a countywide survey, there is strong support for Montgomery County to take a **progressive approach to economic development** moving forward. It is important for the vision to be comprehensive, yet specific to the current issues and conditions of Montgomery County. This means that the county needs to be proactive in marketing itself, in supporting existing businesses to expand and grow, in attracting new quality business opportunities and in developing shovel ready development opportunities.

It is also the community's desire to support a **diverse business base that includes primary employment opportunities with good wages and high quality employers**. This means that attraction efforts should focus on those businesses that expand on the strengths of the areas and can capitalize on the areas economic development assets. These include, but are not limited to; advanced/light manufacturing, agribusiness, research and development, food processing and manufacturing and logistics.

The vision also includes ensuring that Montgomery County remains an **attractive place for people to live** by investing in quality of place assets, capitalizing on the area's friendly, safe and welcoming atmosphere and supporting a diverse mix of housing to support appropriately measured growth within the county.

The reality for all communities is that growth, both residential and non-residential, is necessary if communities want a sustainable economic future. As costs for services continue to increase, communities must continue to grow their tax base in order to maintain desirable services within their community. In fact, sometimes sustaining a desirable tax base is not enough, Some cities have to look beyond current levels and expand or enhance those services as needs become more apparent within the community. The way a community grows and expands, however, may differ greatly from community to community. The key is establishing an expectation of growth that is in line with the desires of the community, but respectful to the ever-changing market realities.

Beneficial growth and development will occur in Montgomery County when there are interdependent relationships between the following:

- Market demand and conditions
- Property owner's desires
- Potential buyer/developer desires and abilities
- A community's desires and policies

Based on the data gathered as part of this planning effort, growth within the study areas is desired in the form of retail centers, light industrial parks, technology hubs, research campuses, agricultural services, mixed-density residential or a combination of all these. The county and municipal leadership, along with the community, should begin working together to set the framework for successful attraction of these sectors.

To speed up economic development activities and maximize the potential development capacities in the study areas, it will be critically important to stimulate activity with public investment in infrastructure. These investments should be strategically linked to public/private development partnerships to ensure that the public investment is connected to private capital investment and job creation as well. The right partnerships can help ensure the maximum return on public dollars invested and help create the best alignment of resources to maximize economic development potential.

## GOALS

Based on multiple conversations, goals were developed by the committee members, stakeholder input, and the analysis of base data collected. These objectives form the base from which the remaining plan elements are derived and serve to define the guiding principles and the development of recommended future action items identified later in this planning document. These key goals include:



Develop an attractive place where people want to live, work, play, and learn. Montgomery County should be a place where people can raise a family while maintaining the small-town feel that currently exists within the fabric of our community.



Attract and value education at all levels, while still promoting progressive minded thinking.



Create a place with higher paying job opportunities so generation after generation will want to call this county home.



Preserve and protect farmland of all sizes by encouraging and promoting the continued development of an agriculture based business economy, while also promoting agricultural leadership within the county.



Continue to promote the county as a tourist destination with great natural resource attractions. Expand activities for all ages centered around open space parks, water sports, and trails.

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# Development Focus Areas

# 6

## Section 6



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## DEVELOPMENT FOCUS AREAS

Key economic development opportunities areas exist inside of Montgomery County. Much of the Development Focus Areas (DFA) that are identified by this planning effort are in close proximity to Crawfordsville. This is no surprise given that one of the key criteria for an area to reasonably support economic development is having access to sewer and water facilities. These facilities exist in areas around Crawfordsville as well as along Nucor Road. Another criteria is having good access and visibility to primary thoroughfares such as US 231, SR 32 and I-74. Access to other assets such as the airport, rail service and existing developments were also considered when identifying these primary areas. The proximity of some of these areas to the city of Crawfordsville also highlights the need for the city and Montgomery County to work together to gain and sustain economic development momentum for the county.

It is important to note that the DFA's do not have specific or defined boundaries. They are not intended to identify specific target parcels or conversely to eliminate specific parcels from potential development consideration. The highlighted areas are shown on the overall map to allow for focus to be given to these areas in general as future decisions are made on development decisions, strategic infrastructure investments, potential public private partnerships and other economic development policy decisions. These areas do have immediate economic development potential as well as future economic development opportunity. By leveraging these areas, the county can position itself to achieve the maximum potential growth and economic development success for the county.

The specific DFA's identified as part of this study (see Exhibit G) are as follows:

**Area 1: SR 32/I-74 Interchange** is east of Crawfordsville, along the SR 32 corridor starting at the I-74 interchange

**Area 2: Nucor Road Area** is the industrial park area along Nucor Road and southeast of Crawfordsville

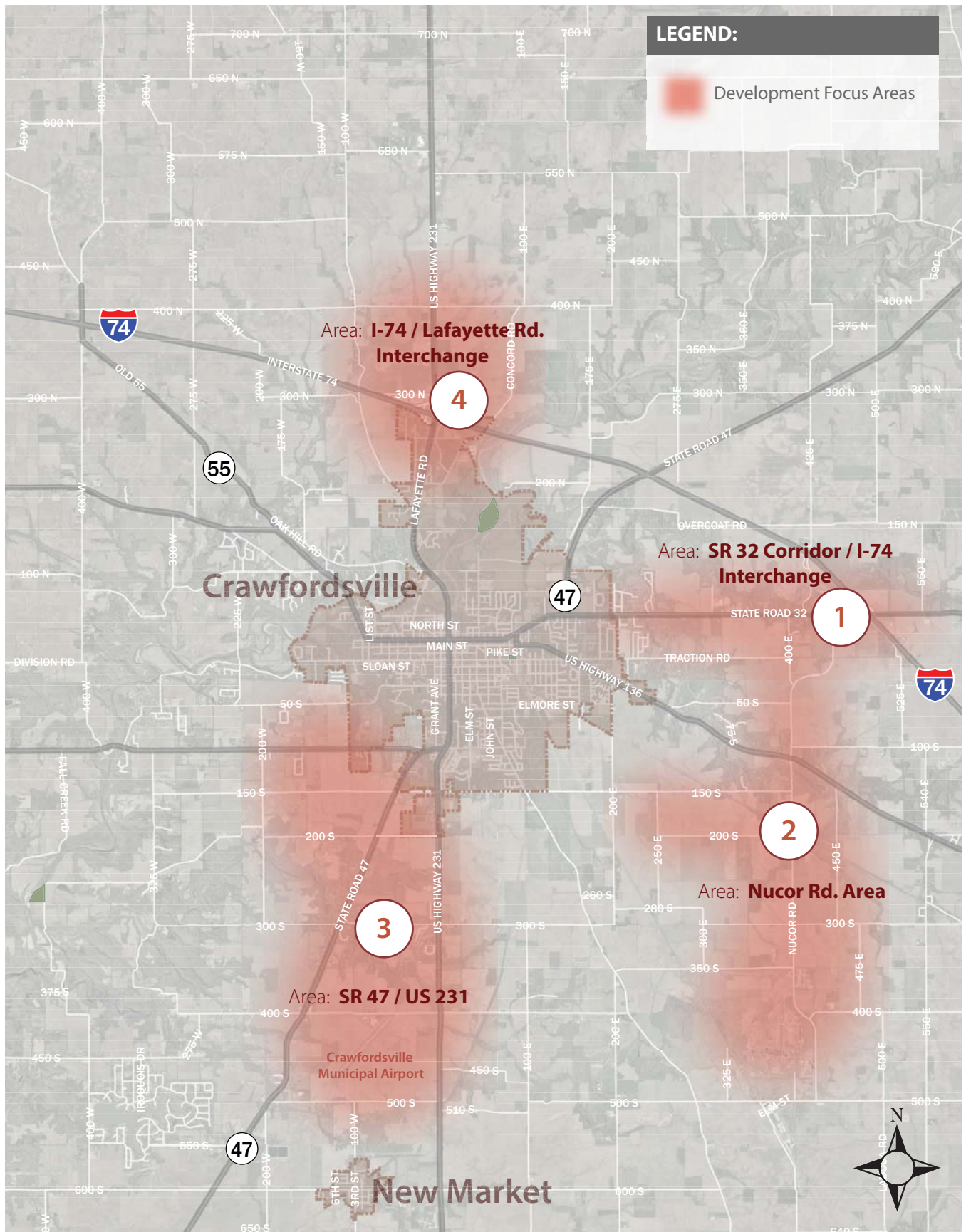
**Area 3: SR 47/US 231** is located southwest of Crawfordsville and has the most potential for residential redevelopment

**Area 4: I-74/Lafayette Road Interchange** is located north of Crawfordsville, along the US 231 corridor starting at the I-74 interchange

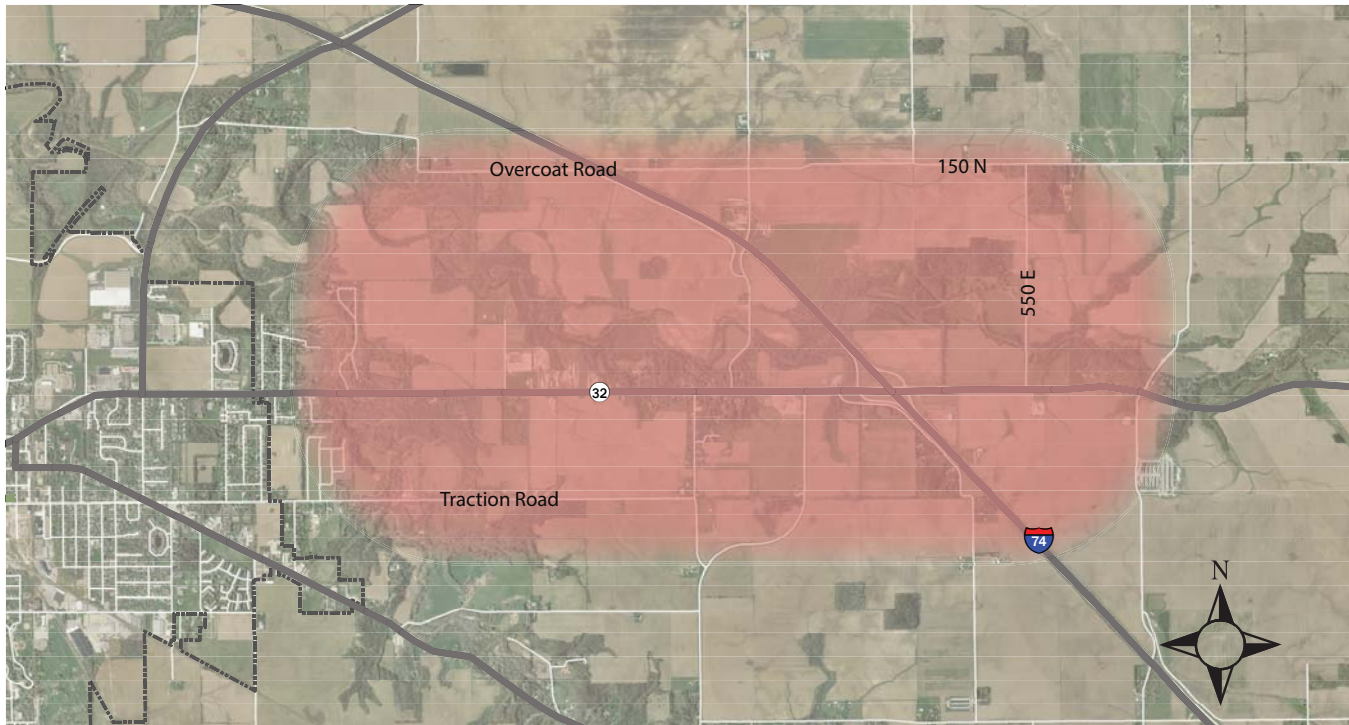
### Other Considerations:

In addition to these short-term/mid-term opportunities, consideration should be given to long-term development opportunities. One area for consideration is the existing SR 55/I-74 interchange. Development in this area may be slower than other interchanges in the county, however, a long-term strategy should be developed for this area. Another area for future consideration is the possible creation of an additional interstate interchange at either SR 47 or CR 300 S. These future development areas, while not identified as short-term opportunities in this plan, do hold long-term economic development potential for Montgomery County. It should be noted that each community in the county, whether noted in these focus areas or not, has economic development opportunities. Whether it is new business attraction or simply retaining existing businesses, each community should work hard to achieve its individual economic development potential.

## EXHIBIT G: DEVELOPMENT FOCUS AREAS - Overall Map



## EXHIBIT H: DEVELOPMENT FOCUS AREA - SR 32 CORRIDOR/I-74 INTERCHANGE



### Development Focus Area 1: SR 32 Corridor/I-74 Interchange

This area includes the properties that are in all four quadrants of the SR 32 interchange as well as the areas both north and south of SR 32 between the city of Crawfordsville and the interchange. The interchange area is primarily agricultural in nature (except for the fuel station and scrap facility at the interchange). As you travel west along SR 32 toward the city of Crawfordsville, the area becomes more residential in nature, but significant development opportunities still exist.

The desired land uses at the interchange include a mix of highway oriented commercial and light industrial. It is unlikely that significant retail development will occur at this interchange given other opportunities that already exist further west within Crawfordsville as well as at the US 231 interchange. That said, there will need to be additional service retail at the interchange to support the anticipated industrial growth in the area. The types of non-retail businesses that should be targeted for this area include light manufacturing, advanced manufacturing, logistics and distribution, research and development and agribusiness opportunities. As this is a key gateway into the county, as well as into the city of Crawfordsville, special attention should be given to the development design and character of the development, especially closest to the interstate and SR 32.

Along the SR 32 corridor, it is anticipated that expanded residential development would be the highest and best use for the majority of the corridor approaching the current city limits of Crawfordsville. These residential uses will likely be single-family detached units but in areas that transition from non-residential to residential uses the anticipated densities of units may increase. This is especially true in the areas closest to the interchange itself.





*Existing conditions along SR 32*



*Existing development along SR 32*



*Existing conditions along SR 32*

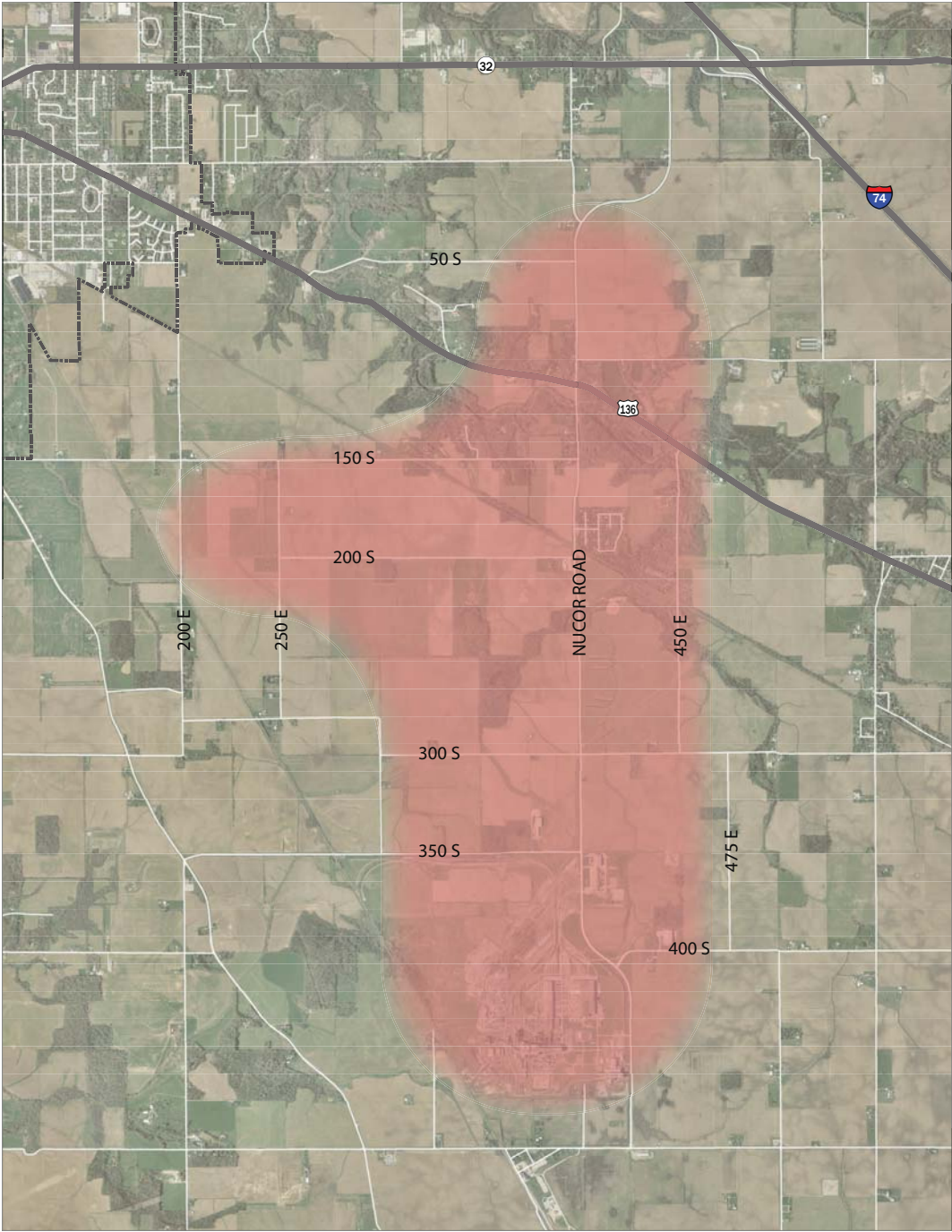
Sewer and water utilities are not currently present for most of the area. There is a planned sewer line expansion from the south along Nucor Road that will bring sewer access near the interchange and westward along the SR 32 corridor. This sewer extension is currently planned only for the west side of the interchange but should be designed to permit easy expansion to the east side of the interchange in the future. Water services should also be extended eastward along SR 32 to provide service to the interchange.

With the sewer being planned and the ability to get water to the area, it is likely that the west side of the interchange will have the earliest development opportunities. This is especially likely in the southwest quadrant of the interchange. There are attractive development opportunities in the northeast and southeast quadrants as well, but without readily accessible utilities, these are likely mid-term to long-term opportunities.

In order to activate the interchange for development, it will also be necessary to develop some kind of land use management for the area. Options for this are discussed elsewhere in this document but the risk is real that, with the availability of utilities in the area, certain uses might occur that would make it more difficult to secure the types of development that are desired for the interchange.

It will also be important that the property owners around the interchange and along the SR 32 corridor be engaged as partners in the future economic development plans for the area. These partnerships may be loose discussions of common interest, may formalize into development agreements to expand additional infrastructure into the area and jointly market property together or may result in something in between. In any case, having strong relationships with potentially impacted property owners will be very important to support future development activities.

EXHIBIT I: DEVELOPMENT FOCUS AREA - NUCOR ROAD AREA





## Development Focus Area 2: Nucor Road Area

This area is primarily agricultural in nature with the exception of the industrial development around Nucor Steel. Utilities do exist in the southern part of this focus area with sufficient capacity to support continued economic activity. Sewer is in the process of being extended north along Nucor Road to open up the entire area to sewer service.

This focus area is unique for a couple of reasons. First, the area is currently served by the same rail line that services Nucor Steel. This makes the area marketable to end users that require rail access and opens the area up to be competitive given the relatively limited areas in the region that are serviced both by rail and interstate access. The second is that some of the property in this focus area has already gone through Duke Energy's Site Readiness Analysis. While this is not the same as the state of Indiana's Site Certified designation, it is a foundation on which such certification can be achieved. Site Certified areas are actively marketed by the state of Indiana and that would put this site at a competitive advantage over other areas within the region.

The predominate future land use for this area will likely be light manufacturing but the rail service may support heavier industrial uses as well. The lack of planning and zoning in the area is an impediment to being able to manage the future uses in the area. It has also been discussed that, in the future, development in the area may warrant a discussion of improvements to CR 300 to Interstate 74 and the possible request for an additional access point to the interstate at that location. With the current assets in place, this area is ready for short-term development activity and should continue to be marketed as such.



*Existing land use along Nucor Road*



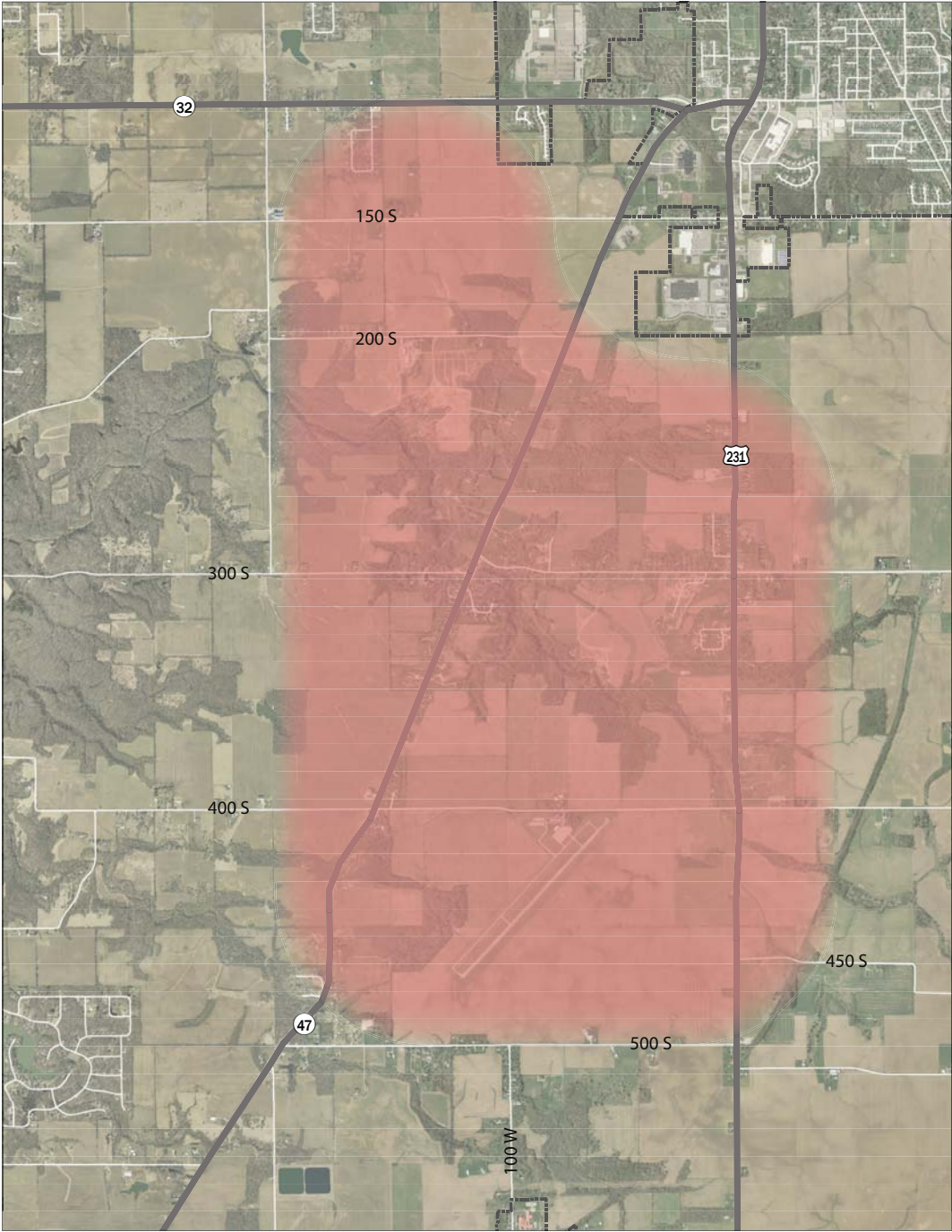
*Existing land use along Nucor Road*



*Existing land use along Nucor Road*



EXHIBIT J: DEVELOPMENT FOCUS AREA - SR 47/US 231



### Development Focus Area 3: SR 47/US 231

Much of this area is currently agricultural, but the areas to the north are a mix of significant commercial and residential development within the city of Crawfordsville. City utilities are available in the area and some are being and have been planned as part of ongoing infrastructure improvements in the area.

Much of this area lies within the 2-mile planning jurisdiction of the city of Crawfordsville. With this in mind, it is likely that future development in this area will require active coordination between the county and the city to ensure the best long-term use of the area can be achieved. The city's master plan currently shows some of this area as a mix of community commercial and residential extending south of the current city limits with residential being the primary land use further from the US 231 corridor. This is consistent with the desired land uses identified by stakeholders as part of this planning process.

Given the relative proximity of this area to amenities such as schools and shopping areas, it seems like a good destination for mixed density residential development. Densities will likely be highest in the area in proximity to the current corporate limits and get lower as you head south and east/west of US 231. This area may also provide the opportunity for unique mixed-use development in the future and such development activity should be encouraged where appropriate.

One project to note on the Exhibit J is the CR 200 S extension project. This project is now complete with the help and partnership between the city of Crawfordsville and Montgomery County. This project will aid in bringing new development potential to the west of the existing commercial/retail center.



*Existing development around SR 47 and US 231*



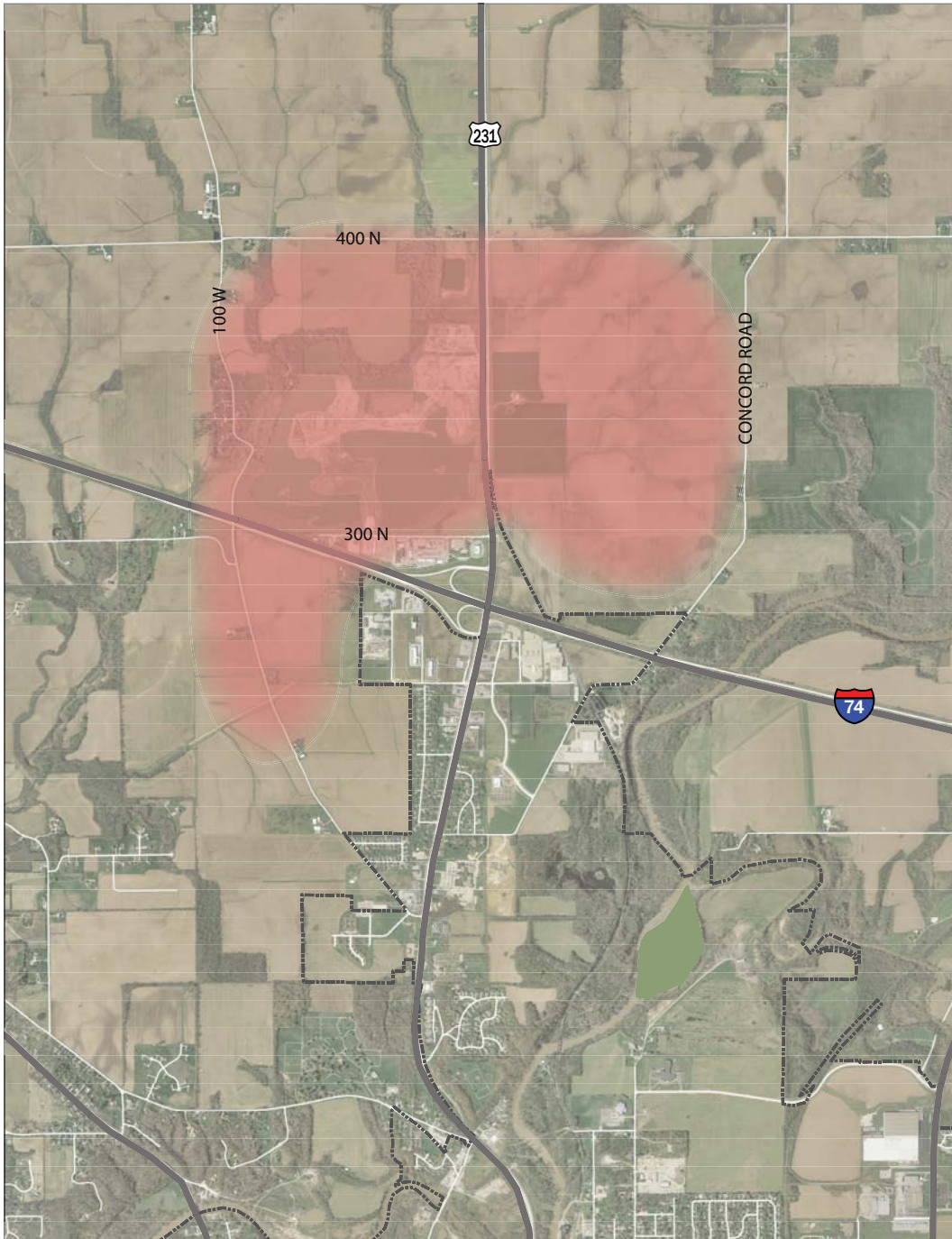
*Existing development around SR 47 and US 231*



*Existing development around SR 47 and US 231*



## EXHIBIT K: DEVELOPMENT FOCUS AREA - I-74/LAFAYETTE ROAD INTERCHANGE



## Development Focus Area 4: I-74/ Lafayette Road Interchange

Like the US 231 area south of town, the majority of this area falls within the 2-mile planning jurisdiction of the city of Crawfordsville. The south side of the interchange is currently a mix of industrial, commercial and residential uses. It is currently home to most of the county's hotels, significant commercial development and the Crawfordsville Commerce Park. While the south side of the interchange has already experienced significant development, there are still areas in both the southeast and southwest quadrants that can support additional development activity. Given the presence of utility access and shovel ready sites on the south side of the interchange, there are immediate development opportunities in this area. The desired future land uses on the south side of the interchange are an expansion of the uses that are currently in place.

It is important to note that this interchange does serve as the northern gateway into Crawfordsville. With this in mind, future development activities should take into account appropriate development standards and character.

The north side of the interchange remains largely undeveloped with the exception of INDOT's facility in the northwest quadrant. Rail facilities exist in the northeast quadrant that provides the opportunity to support future projects that require rail access. This rail access, however, also limits the ability to access the northeast quadrant for thoroughfare access. Large parcel sizes in the northeast quadrant provide an attractive development opportunity. Utilities do exist to the INDOT facility so it is reasonable to believe that the north side of the interchange could develop, especially for large and mid-sized industrial users. Smaller industrial users should be directed to the existing commerce park when possible to take advantage of the existing shovel ready sites.



*Existing development along Lafayette Road*



*Existing development along Lafayette Road*



*Existing development along Lafayette Road*

## Development Focus Area Summary

Overall there are some very attractive development areas in Montgomery County. As mentioned previously, this plan identifies a few areas where focus should be given to support short-term and mid-term development. There are other areas where significant long-term development opportunities exist. While mentioned in this plan, they are not the focus of the analysis. Also not included in the detailed analysis of this plan are the areas within the several communities within the county that have limited access to major commerce thoroughfares. There is economic development potential for these communities, though it is not of the type and scale of those identified by this plan. Nonetheless, each community should continue to support and grow their local economy as they do have a significant impact on the overall well-being of the county. Where appropriate, the county should work with the communities to support their economic development efforts.

There are other considerations that must be taken into account when considering the long-term economic development potential of the county. These include:

- The vast majority of the county will remain largely unchanged for the foreseeable future. Even within the Development Focus Areas, the existing land uses (particularly agricultural land uses) will likely remain for a long time. This is not an indication that activities should necessarily inhibit development in these areas, but the timeline for development of a parcel remains primarily impacted by the reality that development demand is primarily a combination of market conditions and the desires of the underlying property owner.
- Much of the area within the Development Focus Areas additional infrastructure improvements will be required to support future economic development opportunities. This does not mean that immediate development opportunities do not exist in some areas, especially north and south of the city of Crawfordsville along the US 231 corridor. However, to achieve maximum economic development benefits, especially along Nucor Road and SR 32, additional infrastructure improvements will be required.
- The city of Crawfordsville has planning and zoning control of some areas within the Development Focus Areas. For the locations outside of the city's 2-mile planning area, but within the Development Focus Areas identified by this plan, the county should seek to develop some method of land use management. It is likely that this will require coordination between the Montgomery County and the city of Crawfordsville in some of these locations.

# Implementation

## Section 7

### INTRODUCTION

The hardest part of any journey is taking the first step. It is for this reason that successful plans are always developed with an eye toward how the plan is ultimately to be implemented. This study has identified big goals for economic development in Montgomery County, but the ultimate success of the plan will be in developing and delivering the strategies that will translate these goals into reality.

This chapter identifies the strategies and activities that are necessary to activate the implementation of this plan. These strategies include a set of key projects that represent the first priority in creating momentum behind overall plan implementation. These projects are important because they represent early critical path activities that will open the possibility of activation of other strategies, they will help create early economic development energy to support broader development efforts, and they will help secure both public and private support for the overall plan. While none of the projects are simple or easy, some of them do represent “low hanging fruit” that can help create the maximum early return on investment for the implementation of the plan.

Some of the strategies are directly connected to other strategies identified in the plan and others are designed to work independently. Strategies outside of the key projects are also identified and have been grouped according to the general category in which they fall.



## KEY STRATEGIES:

### DEVELOP SR 32/ I-74 STRATEGIC PLAN

One of the primary goals of economic development is to understand your local assets and utilize them in a way that maximizes the opportunities they create. Visibility from, and access to, interstates creates strategic advantages and opportunities for the communities that have this asset. Economic development is a very competitive process, but communities that are fortunate enough to have the ability to activate their access to the interstate, and choose to do so in an appropriate manner, will be able to differentiate themselves from many of the communities with which they compete. In many ways, interstate interchanges are a finite commodity. For this reason, communities that have the opportunity to create a plan of development for an interstate interchange have a tremendous opportunity to create a regional presence for the community.

While not a clean slate, the SR32/Interstate 74 interchange is largely undeveloped and needs a deeper level of strategic thinking to ensure that the highest and best development of the county can be achieved. With this in mind, this plan has established a broad understanding of the opportunities at the interchange. Significant additional planning is needed, however, and this planning should include:

- A coordinated land use plan for the corridor. This evaluation will include recommendations for economic development sites, redevelopment areas, and related development.
- Key infrastructure improvements that will be necessary to activate the identified economic development sites. This will include identifying either full or partial acquisition of properties.
- Defined expectations with regard to design standards, as well as creating an understanding of desired architectural theme and design
- An economic impact summary including an evaluation of the impact on assessed valuation for each of the alternatives. The analysis will include initial impacts and long term development potential.

It is important that the plan be flexible for long-term success. In some cases, opportunities, while good and worth pursuing, were never anticipated by the original plan. This may be especially true for this region given the large area of study and the geographic diversity of potential development areas. Flexibility is essential to ensuring that good decisions are made throughout the life of the plan. This flexibility must be tempered, however, by establishing the correct vision and strategies to provide a decision making framework that can evaluate future opportunities and ensure the best decisions are made.

It is also important that the plan with both short-term and long-term success. Certain areas near the interchange will be ready for development sooner than others. Sometimes, however, early opportunities may not be in the best long-term interest of the county or the region. This is why, in some cases, it is critical for decision makers to say no. This is very difficult to do, as nobody wants to walk away from a potential deal, but sometimes saying no to a project is the best decision. The interchange plan should provide the framework to assist in making those decisions.

## ACHIEVE DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT WITHIN KEY DEVELOPMENT AREAS

A significant portion of Montgomery County does not have planning and zoning, including the SR 32/ Interstate 74 interchange. While this may or may not be an issue for much of the county, in the areas where it is desired to promote economic development activity this is a real constraint to potential site selection decisions. While this single factor does not prevent development from occurring in these areas, it is a significant limiting factor to securing private capital investment at the interchange.

The most critical aspect of planning for successful economic development opportunities is that communities must seek to, as best as possible, control their own destiny. While Crawfordsville has annexed some of the area around approaching the interstate, it is several miles removed from the SR 32/ Interstate 74 interchange. Without some development management tools in place it is unlikely that the interchanges will develop at the speed or in the manner desired by the community or achieve the highest and best utilization of the property around the interchange. Economic development is a highly competitive process that more often than not rewards the more strategically aggressive side. Timing, more than anything other single element often is the factor that separates success from defeat. For this reason it is essential for areas who desire to maximize their economic development opportunities to mitigate the real and perceived risk to development projects.

Based on market information gathered from stakeholders during this planning process, there is current interest in development at locations within the county. Some of the interested parties may not be the best long-term users to support the desired vision of the interchange, which is why developing the expectations and development preferences for the interchange is so important. Market conditions, without the filter of guidelines and direction from an organized plan, can produce development that will artificially constrain additional development and the achievement of the desired vision for the county. Market conditions without land use management of some sort rarely delivers the highest and best development.

There is not necessarily one best way to accomplish this objective. Implementing countywide zoning and planning is one option to secure land use and development management within the focus areas. It is also likely the best mechanism to manage this issue throughout the county. Other options do exist for limited geographic area, including, but not limited to:

- Phasing in zoning at the county-wide level with broad standards but having more detailed standards upfront for the identified focus areas
- Developing an agreement between private property owners within areas that include development agreements and covenants
- Purchasing key properties or purchasing development rights of key properties or limiting utility access to those who do not adhere to development expectations.

Ultimately, the best solution will only be found with extensive discussions with local and county leadership, impacted property owners and economic development stakeholders to ensure that any solution is developed with broad consensus and is respectful of the concerns of all impacted parties and best aligned to provide the maximum economic development benefit to the county.

## REVIEW OF INTERNAL PROCESS TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Accountability and responsiveness are keys to a community's economic development success. Having a local single point of contact that can coordinate local data collection and resources, facilitate communication between prospects and the county and regional economic development agencies and drive required local approval processes is a differentiator between successful and unsuccessful communities. With the work that is ongoing to create a unified economic development office between the city of Crawfordsville and Montgomery County, the area is positioning itself to staff this critical role. Beyond staffing, it is also important that the tools are in place that facilitate quick response to potential opportunities. These tools can include:

- The encouragement of Planned Unit Development processes at key development locations within the community
- Developing fast track approval processes for incentives, permitting and zoning approvals
- Being clear, consistent, and predictable in policy implementation and decision making
- Providing enhanced communication within and outside of the community
- Setting the expectation of the timing and phasing of development in key areas of the community

## IMPLEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS TOWARD SR 32/I-74 INTERCHANGE

Basic infrastructure investment is critical if a community is to be able to capitalize on economic development areas. Time has become a critical factor in site selection processes. Many companies will no longer wait for months for a community to prepare a site for development. They seek sites that are truly shovel ready, with master infrastructure already in place. If your community does not have it, they will move down the road the next viable alternative that does. Pre-planned and pre-developed infrastructure enhances significantly the marketability of a site.

In most cases, careful investment in infrastructure will serve as the catalyst for securing private capital investment. If done right, the return on the community's investment can be significant. Communities must analyze what is necessary to deliver on their vision, assess the costs associated with those needs, prioritize the needed improvements, secure the resources necessary to construct the needed facilities, and strategically move forward with implementation of the plan. If this is accomplished, it greatly enhances the opportunities for successful job growth, expansion of the tax base, and vertical construction within the community. The current sewer expansion plan along Nucor Road is essential to helping promote future economic development opportunities for the county. It is also critical that a plan for the extension of water into the area be included to truly activate economic development opportunities.

## DEVELOP A MARKETING AND BRANDING PLAN FOR THE COUNTY

At the heart of economic development is telling a good story. Hoosiers are traditionally not very good at telling our stories as our penchant for being humble tends to get in the way of celebrating success. In order to compete from an economic development perspective, it is critical that areas develop, hone and sell our stories if we wish to compete regionally and globally. Montgomery County is a proud and successful area with a strong heritage and tremendous assets at its disposal. There are great business success stories, wonderfully diverse communities and strong quality of place assets. Establishing the tools to create, package and sell that message will be important for the county to achieve its long-term vision.

A key part of this messaging is the need to establish a brand for the county. The process to create such a brand should include:

1. Creating a uniform message for audiences within and outside the county
2. Identifying and highlighting what makes the county appealing in a regionally competitive capacity to businesses, investors, families, and individuals
3. Crafting a story that will speak to millennial, young professionals and their families
4. Positioning the county to attract private investment, new residents, and young professionals, and to retain key businesses and creative talent already present in the region
5. Promoting the region as the ideal place to live, work, play and do business
6. Building consensus behind the message among citizens, businesses, and community groups within the county

At the conclusion of this branding effort, it is essential that county parties adopt this brand and incorporate it into collateral materials, including brochures, targeted handouts, trade show exhibits, videos, and websites. It is also important that a marketing outreach program be created to promote the new message of the county. This should be a tiered approach starting first with local realtors and developers and then expanding to regional/state economic development agencies, brokers and developers and other related stakeholders.

## SUPPORT RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVATION

Long-term economic success for Montgomery County will require not just maintaining the current population base, but growing it at a reasonable rate to support growth in the workforce base and to add additional disposable income to support local businesses. To support this growth, it will be necessary to encourage a more diverse range of housing opportunities, including more affordable and higher quality rental options and mid to upper end housing choices.

Montgomery County's population has plateaued since the 2008 recession. Providing the right housing opportunities will be one of the critical elements to address in helping the county address some real challenges like such as the overall age of the housing stock and the lack of newer market rate rental options. There is very little speculative housing development in Montgomery County. It is more common within the county to have a home built on land or remodel an existing home. This is a different growth/development model than exists in adjoining counties like Boone and Hendricks counties. While the circumstances to support growth are certainly different in those areas as a result of their direct connectivity to Indianapolis, the geographic position of Montgomery County, including accessibility to both Indianapolis and Lafayette, would seem to support an opportunity for measured, reasonable growth in the future. It is important to note that not all residential desired growth in Montgomery County will or should occur within the areas outside on the cities and towns of Montgomery County. In fact, much of the growth that needs to occur in the county may in fact occur within the corporate boundaries of municipalities. It will be important that the county coordinate new residential development efforts with communities near potential development areas to ensure the best overall outcome to support countywide population growth.

Moving forward, the county can focus strategies around capitalizing on existing assets such as open spaces, community downtown areas, schools, and other commercial developments to create anchors for future residential development. Strategies can be created to offer incentive programs to developers and potential homeowners as well as implementing policies that will encourage developers to seek opportunities in Montgomery County. Two areas in particular seem to offer short-term opportunities for new residential development. The first is along the SR 32 corridor between Interstate 74 and the city of Crawfordsville where new infrastructure is being planned that would support new development opportunities. The second is along US 231 south of Crawfordsville. New infrastructure investment has been made in this area to support additional development and the existing amenities in the area would seem to support additional residential development in the future.

## CONTINUE AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COUNTY

The last several decades have seen a transformation within the agricultural economy. Changes in technology and the economics of agribusiness, both nationally and globally, have evolved significantly as agribusiness has evolved. Agribusiness remains a key economic sector nationally, it is an even larger part of the current and future economy of Montgomery County. Despite its significance, there is some challenge for those not directly involved in the industry to fully appreciate the important impact of this key business sector on the overall economy. The state of Indiana recently completed the Indiana Strategic Agricultural Plan 2027. Within this plan several opportunities were identified for the state of Indiana's agricultural sector. Among these are focusing expanding research, development and innovation, connecting higher education institutions with agribusiness and research programs, leveraging the relatively strong access to water and reasonable cost utilities, and capitalizing on the state's geographic and logistical accessibility, messaging the value of agribusiness and adding more value to commodities through processing.

The report also identified several constraints on the industry such as the need to maintain and develop public infrastructure, the need to expand and improve capacities in broadband services, the need to identify and expand food and agriculture processing facilities. To achieve the maximum economic benefit from Indiana's agribusiness sector it will be critical to connect a 21st century workforce with the sector to expand agricultural innovation and agricultural investment. It will also be critical to expand infrastructure to support agribusiness, to promote collaboration to strategically grow agriculture, agricultural processing and agri-biosciences, to connect education research facilities with local agricultural operations and to expand entrepreneurial opportunities in agribusiness. With its current operations and heritage in agribusiness, Montgomery County could be a leader in advancing this mission in the state of Indiana.

## AUXILIARY STRATEGIES

Supporting these primary strategies are a series of auxiliary strategies that are intended to help implement the Economic Development Principles that were identified in Section 2 of this plan. These strategies are more detailed action steps that identified as short, mid and long-term activities. There is no specific order in which these steps should be completed, however, some steps may require others to be completed prior to their activation.

Marketing and Branding	Time-Frame
1. Create and promote the vision, identity, character and brand of Montgomery County with a consistent message articulated through strategic and targeted marketing efforts	Short
2. Work with regional and state economic development partners to develop a tiered marketing and outreach program to local, regional and national site selectors, brokers and targeted industries	Short
3. Maintain the most current and relevant data on the county economic development website and link to the master Montgomery County website	Short
4. Continue to maintain an active inventory of available sites on the state of Indiana's Zoom Prospector database	Short
5. Work with all relevant community stakeholders (higher education, hospital, local schools, etc.) to develop the message of the quality of place and competitive advantage of Montgomery County	Mid
6. Leverage testimonials from existing business that share why they chose Montgomery County, their positive experience, how they were assisted in being successful and then promote this on your website and printed materials	Mid

Promoting Tourism	Time Frame
1. Assist the Montgomery County Visitors and Convention Bureau in maintaining their online inventory of tourism assets in Montgomery County and in promoting promote the list	Mid
2. Develop a comprehensive education program for local hospitality providers of the best methods and practices to promote the community to visitors	Mid
3. Work with regional and state tourism officials, travel websites and travel bloggers to communicate tourism opportunities in Montgomery County	Mid
4. Encourage residents to be a "tourist in their own community" and develop local programming to support the effort	Mid



Quality of Place	Time Frame
1. Develop a program to identify key gateways within the County and enhance the attractiveness and entry signage at the locations	Long
2. Investigate new ways to provide expanded and improved pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between key destinations and attractions within the county	Long
3. Coordinate a messaging plan with key stakeholders to tell the success stories of local schools, healthcare providers and recreational attractions	Mid
4. Develop policies and incentives to help attract new and diverse housing options to Montgomery County	Short
5. Continue to work with communities within the county to support redevelopment efforts within downtown areas	Long
6. Investigate new methods and partnerships to expand broadband connectivity and capacity in Montgomery County	Mid

Small Business Development	Time Frame
1. Create a business toolkit that outlines local permit and business regulations and available resources	Mid
2. Develop entrepreneurial programs to support small business development in Montgomery County. This may include, but is not limited to, supportive services and training related to business management and business operations and local collaborative financing for startup and expanding businesses	Long
3. Develop a "Small Business Toolkit" of issues that businesses face, support programs that exist and resources/incentives that are available for them for start-up and growth	Short
4. Work with local banks to develop a low interest loan program to provide startup and working capital for small businesses	Mid

Infrastructure Investment	Time Frame
1. Continue to seek state improvements in major county thoroughfares like SR 32 (from I-74 to I-65) and US 231 (north)	Long
2. Continue to pursue the Memorial Drive extension to support additional economic development opportunities	Short
3. Pursue long-term opportunities to seek additional interchange locations along Interstate 74	Long
4. Investigate the status of previous discussions regarding the development of an additional reservoir in Montgomery County north of Interstate 74	Long

New Business Attraction	Time Frame
1. Identify and prioritize key properties available and desired for development	Short
2. Continue to find and implement long-term master/regional drainage solutions throughout the TIF area and especially around the SR 32 interchange	Mid
3. Seek state and federal funding opportunities to expand and enhance infrastructure within the TIF area and especially at the SR 32 interchange	Long
4. Continue to coordinate and communicate economic development efforts with the city of Crawfordsville and other municipalities within Montgomery County and partner with them, when appropriate, to promote the overall economic health of the region	Short
5. Include local and regional developers in your attraction efforts along with potential employers	Short
6. Take advantage of the regional position of Montgomery County to target suppliers for businesses located in Tippecanoe, Hendricks and Boone counties	Mid
7. Incentives should be tied to the performance guarantees of the prospective business (especially assessed valuation development, employment numbers and wage levels)	Short
8. Resist “low-hanging fruit” if it does not coincide with the economic development plan for the county and be especially vigilant to ensure that the early successes in the area set the proper tone for the entire development	Short
9. Continue to create the means for developers to be successful in Montgomery County through the creative use of incentives and by streamlining/easing the process of permitting and securing development approvals	Short
10. Maintain open communication and coordination with regional/state partnerships for site selection opportunities and coordinated marketing efforts	Short
11. Ensure development at the I-74 interchanges includes uses that will attract customers and visitors not just to the interchanges, but that might be interested in exploring deeper into Crawfordsville	Long
12. Seek approval under the State’s Certified Shovel Ready program for additional ground at the SR 32 interchange and key properties along Nucor Road	Mid
13. Review internal processes to provide “fast track” review processes for permits and applications as well as development plan review and approval	Short
14. Consolidate economic development resources locally to establish a single point of contact for economic development	Short
15. Create a single economic development website portal for Montgomery County/ Crawfordsville	Short
16. Develop appropriate public private partnerships to create economic development opportunities	Mid
17. Focus business attraction efforts on high wage businesses that do not require disproportionate cost to provide local services	Short

New Business Attraction (continued)	Time Frame
18. Work to develop a relationship with Purdue University to support agribusiness opportunities in and around Montgomery County	Mid
19. Develop internal criteria for the standards necessary to utilize tax increment financing, property tax abatement, property acquisition and infrastructure improvements for economic development opportunities throughout Montgomery County	Short
20. Work with SCORE, Purdue's Technical Assistance Program and Ivy Tech to develop local programming to offer worker certification, workforce identification and tailored training programs to help entice local site selection decisions	Mid

Existing Business Retention / Expansion	Time Frame
1. Develop a coordinated entrepreneurial network within the county	Long
2. Engage an annual existing industry visitation program to ensure personal contact with each major local employer on an ongoing basis to better understand their needs, concerns and future planning	Short
3. Implement an annual business survey to assess business concerns and issues	Short
4. Implement a community wide "Shop Montgomery County" program to support local retailers. Conduct an annual business survey of existing businesses to determine the issues and opportunities that they are experiencing or anticipate	Mid
5. Activate an annual manufacturers round-table discussion in Montgomery County to discuss common issues and opportunities for the sector and to gather information on community business needs, address appropriate policy issues at the local level and advocate at the state level	Mid
6. Actively pursue state funding opportunities for existing local business expansion efforts	Long

Workforce Attraction & Development	Time Frame
1. Work with Wabash College, Purdue University and Ivy Tech to develop innovative outreach and programming/educational opportunities to support current and future employer needs in Montgomery County	Mid
2. Work with local businesses to raise awareness of services/funding available from the Indiana Department of Workforce Development and other entities	Short
3. Coordinate local economic development efforts with Workforce One to set workforce area strategies and goals	Mid
4. Inform, educate and train K-12 parents, students and educators on career opportunities that exist in the local industry clusters and the educational requirements and career pathways needed to access them	Mid
5. Offer internships and co-ops year round to connect the marketplace to students	Mid
6. Work with local schools to develop vocational training opportunities for students not seeking to attend four year colleges	Mid
7. Improve STEM educational opportunities to every student at every school	Mid

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