



Our Choices for a Stronger Delaware-Muncie

Comprehensive Plan for the
Delaware-Muncie Region

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Prepared for
Delaware-Muncie
Metropolitan Planning
Commission



Prepared by
czbLLC and Ingalls
Planning & Design



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Introduction

TogetherDM is the joint comprehensive plan for Delaware County and the City of Muncie.

As our community's long-range plan, it sets the general direction for policymaking and investment by our County and City governments, their public sector partners, and a wide range of other organizations that seek to shape the future at the local and regional levels.

The last county-city comprehensive plan, adopted in 2000, was influenced by issues that loomed large at the end of the 20th century—from deindustrialization to suburban sprawl. Over the ensuing two decades, some longstanding trends have continued, some have changed, and new trends have emerged. All contribute to defining what's important to our region and what we will work towards over the next several years.



Plan Summary

How has Delaware-Muncie changed since 2000?



Population losses have continued at the regional and local levels alongside rapid growth in nearby metropolitan counties.



Jobs losses have continued, and a reliance on commuting—to fill local jobs and for local households to find jobs—has grown.



The overall population of young adults has grown while the number of college-educated young adults has dropped.



Attitudes have shifted about what it will take to become more vibrant and competitive as a region of diverse communities—and the role that our assets will play in making this happen.

The TogetherDM Vision

Through a steering committee of stakeholders, public surveys, open house events, and small group conversations, the TogetherDM planning process identified a vision for Delaware-Muncie's future based on a shared understanding of our region's utmost priorities, the values that will shape our decisions, and the direction we will pursue to achieve our goals.

Our Priorities



Improve Quality of Place



Strengthen Housing Conditions and Options



Expand Opportunities for Upward Mobility

Our Core Values

We are committed to **being..**

entrepreneurial

gritty

more inclusive

more bold

more thoughtful

Our Direction

Get the Basics Right to build a foundation for a strong region with strong communities, and put Delaware-Muncie on track to go **Beyond Basics**



Our Vision for 2040

Decisions reflect our **core values** and a commitment to **get the basics right**

Quality of place has improved in our urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Housing conditions and options have strengthened throughout the region.

Opportunities for upward mobility have expanded for our region's working class households.

How to Use this Plan

The four parts of this plan provide a detailed overview of our region's priorities, our decision-making framework, our general direction, and the outcomes we seek.

It includes Strategic Investment Plans for the City of Muncie and Delaware County to guide implementation efforts.

Achieving TogetherDM's vision will require an all-hands-on-deck effort by the community, with the public, private, and non-profit sectors pulling in the same direction as they choose where and how to invest their energy and resources.

Members of the **TogetherDM Coalition** agree to coordinate their efforts and use this plan to guide their work.

The 2020 Census marked the fifth straight time that Delaware County’s population declined from the previous census. For Muncie, it marked the lowest official count of city residents since 1950.

Amidst this prolonged period of little to no growth and loss of population, Delaware County and the City of Muncie have collaborated on long-range planning, establishing an enduring and positive relationship formalized by the creation of the Delaware-Muncie Metropolitan Plan Commission in 1965. Seldom,

though, has this partnership planned in the context of historic population loss, or formally taken into consideration the potential for further decline.

This was very much the case in the late 1990s, when the last comprehensive plan was developed. Although the recent loss of Ball Corporation’s headquarters was acknowledged by the plan, as were recent downsizings and closings by other major employers, the forecast for the future called for modest growth. Population projections used by that plan—provided by a national economic analyst—anticipated 134,000 residents in the county by 2020, up from the 120,000 counted in the 1990 Census.

The actual 2020 Census total was 111,900 – or 22,000 fewer residents than predicted in the late 1990s. The count was smaller, even, than the projection for the year 2040 used by the region’s current long-range transportation plan—a plan that assumes modest population loss over the next few decades.

The bottom line is this: for 50 years, Delaware County as a whole has lost an average of ten families a month while, statewide, Indiana has grown by almost 30 every day. Yet this pattern has not been fully reflected either in how the community plans or how it conducts its business.

Planning to grow is a natural course for any American community to take. It is rooted in optimism and a sense of possibility. Even if a community hasn’t been growing, a plan to grow suggests an effort to turn things around and become a place that will attract more businesses and people.

Of course, more people means more housing and more roads. More schools and fire stations. More miles of pipe. More parks. More businesses. Growing pains stress existing systems and, to account for that, planning has to address future demand. For the first 75 years of the 20th century, the U.S. grew dramatically, with the Midwestern states of Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana often leading the way.

Growth, therefore, was also how many communities grew accustomed to paying for the construction and maintenance of basic infrastructure. More people and businesses, along with rising property values and incomes, lighten the average lift for everyone else. You build today with the expectation that some share of costs will be shifted to those who haven’t moved to your community yet. Under this reasoning, the future population’s share of any ultimate repayment challenge can be pre-figured into today’s math.

For example, a city of 30,000 households today might think it is going to become a city of 40,000 households. It borrows \$10 million on the bond market for new roads today. It presumes it can afford to do so. Today’s 30,000 households would each pay \$20 annually to retire that debt, but only \$15 if the community grows to 40,000. It goes forward and borrows \$10 million and constructs roads and bridges. But what if 30,000 households doesn’t grow to 40,000 but falls instead to 25,000? Now the annual payment on the bond isn’t \$20 per year per household, but \$24. And what if annual incomes for the remaining 25,000 households doesn’t rise—as expected—from \$30,000 to \$35,000, but falls from \$30,000 to

\$25,000? Now the \$24 annual payment is more painful, and so to manage municipal budgets, existing roads as well as the new roads that were purchased are maintained with a little less vigor and a little less frequently. In hindsight, this is what most Midwestern and Rust Belt cities should have been planning for when instead they were planning for more growth that never happened. For Delaware County and the City of Muncie, the failure of growth to materialize—combined with a slowness to adjust to this reality and adapt accordingly—has accelerated the decline of basic infrastructure and diminished the region’s ability to retain what it has. Costs that were shifted to an imagined—and larger—Delaware County in decades past have been coming due. And the community has often responded to these proverbial bills by making the minimum payment, as if it still expected someone else to cover the rest.

While a timeline of the 20 years since the adoption of the last comprehensive plan might highlight key economic events—businesses closing, businesses opening, global or technological forces influencing everything from agriculture to retail to education and healthcare—the most noticeable story of the past two decades may be the steady accumulation of deferred investments in roads, homes, parks, and even in the capacity of governments and institutions to proactively respond to community needs.

Recognition of this destructive cycle—of disinvestment in the community begetting lower levels of investment and declining conditions—has been growing for over a decade.

Indeed, the 2010 Muncie Action Plan was spurred by an awareness that reversing this cycle would require proactive and coordinated work by all sectors of the community. That effort, and others like it, have planted a flag around protecting and preserving the region’s considerable assets and raising the community’s standards and expectations—to make Delaware-Muncie a better place for those who call it home and for those who might choose to call it home.



TogetherDM—the new comprehensive plan for Delaware County and the City of Muncie—represents both a reinforcement of this emerging sense of ownership and proactive investment, as well as an effort to integrate it with day-to-day decision making and long-range planning. It is a plan that is realistic about what it will take to put the region on a more sustainable and competitive course, but one that also taps into a history of creativity and grit.

TogetherDM builds on Delaware-Muncie’s collaborative approach to planning and focuses that spirit towards a set of clear priorities and a clear direction forward so that public, private, and non-profit stakeholders can make decisions that are consistent, complementary, and that aim to realize a common vision.

How has Delaware-Muncie changed since 2000?

Continued population loss at the regional and local levels alongside rapid growth in nearby metropolitan counties

Delaware County’s population has fallen by 6% since 2000, continuing a trend of population loss extending back five decades. And it isn’t alone. All but one of the counties adjacent to Delaware County is now smaller than in 2000, and two counties declined by more than 10%.

A very different pattern can be found in either direction on I-69, where counties around Indianapolis and Fort Wayne have grown. Hamilton County, in particular, has grown by 85% since 2000—reflecting migration trends across the country from rural and smaller urban centers to larger metropolitan counties.

Within Delaware County, most parts of Muncie have lost population since 2000, as have most rural areas—though not as steeply as parts of the city. Growth in the county has been concentrated in newer neighborhoods in Yorktown and healthy, amenity-rich neighborhoods in northwest Muncie.

Declines in jobs and economic output, and a growing reliance on commuting

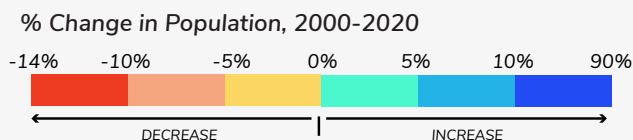
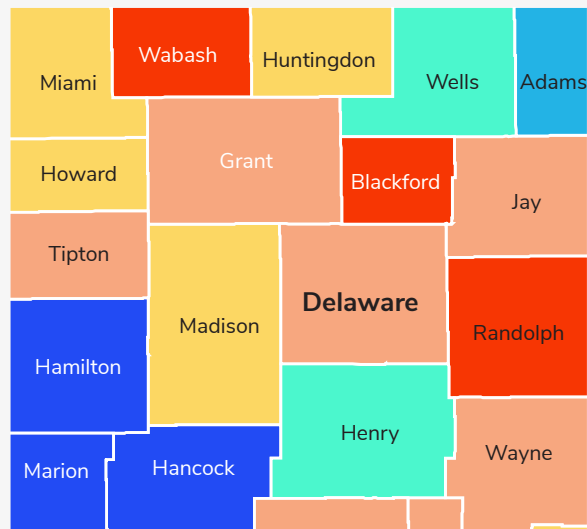
The total number of jobs in Delaware County declined by 13% between 2002 and 2018. These losses were heavily concentrated within the City of Muncie, where the number of jobs fell by 21% and the city went from hosting 80% of all jobs in the county to 72%.

A steep decline in manufacturing employment (down 49%, or just over 4,000 positions) was notable, but the education and healthcare sectors, which now account for one-third of all jobs in the county, also shed positions. **The total economic output (or GDP) also declined by 12% when adjusted for inflation.**

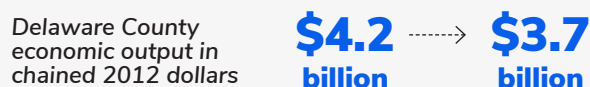
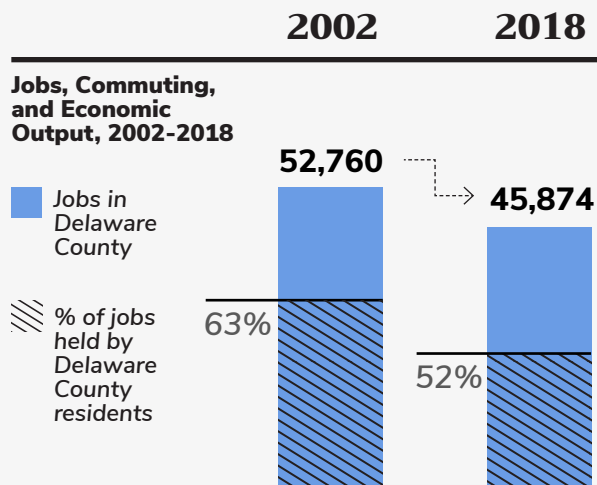
Over this same period, the places where people live and work changed significantly. Delaware County jobs held by Delaware County residents fell from 63% to 52%. The share of Delaware County residents who commuted to other counties rose from 34% in 2002 to 47% in 2018. Overall, this points to a growing reliance on commuters by employers in Delaware County—especially for high-skill positions—while more and more Delaware County job-seekers are looking farther afield.

The potential impact of “virtual commuting” on the region’s businesses and job seekers in the wake of COVID 19 remains to be seen.

Regional Population Change Patterns Since 2000 by County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Source: czb/IPD analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data; Bureau of Economic Analysis economic output data

An eroding tax base

Together, population and job losses have softened the demand for space in Delaware County and made it more difficult to raise revenue to pay for community needs—a problem compounded by restrictive state policies. Between 2011 and 2019, for example, the aggregate assessed value of property in Delaware County rose by nearly \$200 million in current dollars, from \$5.8 billion to \$6.0 billion. **When adjusted for inflation, however, aggregate assessed value actually eroded by \$600 million.**

Success in retaining and attracting young adults, though keeping college graduates remains a challenge

Despite broader population losses, noteworthy gains have been made in the number of young adults. The cohort that passed from the 25-34 age range in 2009 to the 34-44 range by 2019 (or people born between 1975 and 1984) grew by almost 5% countywide at a time when many rural and small urban areas have been losing that age group.

However, members of that cohort with a four-year college degree or more declined by 6% compared to a 9% increase among those without a college degree—revealing a clear divide along the lines of education and earning-potential. This suggests that as college-educated young adults gain experience, form families, and seek opportunities for dual-income, mid-career households, they are susceptible to leaving Delaware County for places like Hamilton County with access to a denser job market and metropolitan amenities.

Growing awareness that quality of life and quality of place have a big impact on economic competitiveness

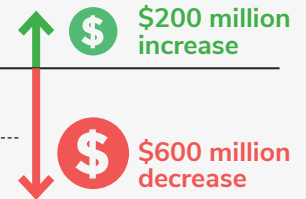
In 2000, treating investments in quality of life as an investment in economic development was still a novel idea in many places, including Delaware County. It was widely believed that having the right industrial and commercial space, as well as a large enough package of economic development incentives, was key to creating jobs and community vitality.

The TogetherDM process has revealed an evolution in the community's thinking. Housing conditions and the availability of appealing types of housing have been discussed as central factors when it comes to attracting or retaining businesses and the skilled workers they need. The same applies to the quality of the built and natural environments—from the quality of Main Streets, to the caliber of local parks and trails, to the character of rural environments.

Investments in the character of Walnut Street and downtown buildings in Muncie—which now set a high bar for the community—reflect this evolution.

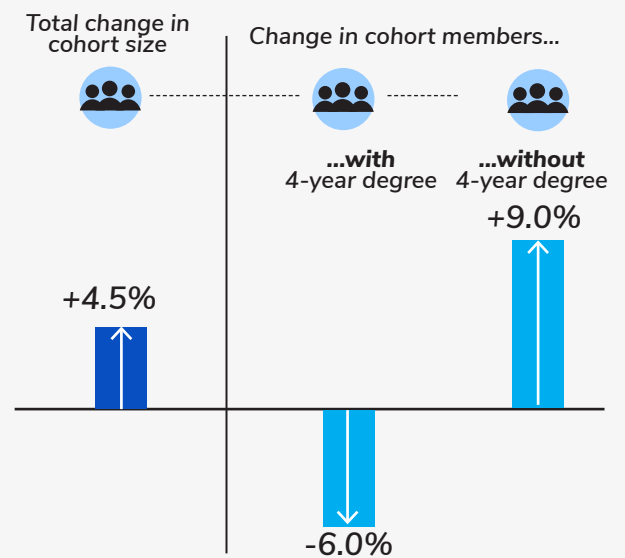
2011-2019

Aggregate assessed value of property in Delaware County



When adjusted for inflation

Change in Size of Young Adult Cohort (Born 1975-1984) in Delaware County Since 2009



Source: czb/IPD analysis of U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year estimates



Delaware-Muncie: A Region Rich with Assets

The growing awareness that quality of life and quality of place are essential to compete for households and businesses has coincided with a deeper appreciation for the assets that provide a strong foundation for quality of life. Some have been assets for a century or more. Others have been reconstituted as assets from what used to be considered liabilities. Still others have been newly recognized as assets after years of disinvestment.





Steps Toward a Vision for Delaware-Muncie

Developed over three phases during 2021, TogetherDM has been guided throughout by input from a steering committee and the broader public to ensure that it reflects local values and community-wide priorities.



Steering Committee

A 17-member **steering committee of local stakeholders** worked closely with project consultants throughout the process. Input from this committee was supplemented by interactions with City and County staff, discussions with community organizations, and feedback from elected and appointed public officials.



Kitchen Table Conversations

Steering committee members hosted three rounds of **Kitchen Table Conversations**—small, facilitated discussions with groups of neighbors, friends, and colleagues—to aid the identification of important issues and how the community makes decisions. Over 150 members of the community participated in these deep discussions.



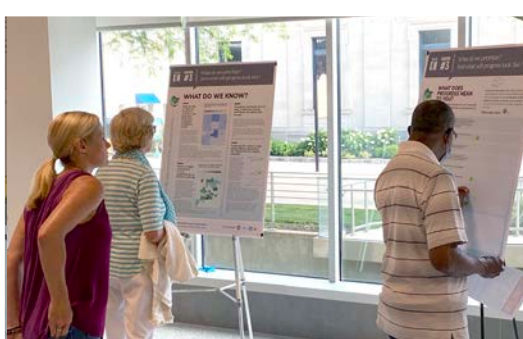
Online Surveys

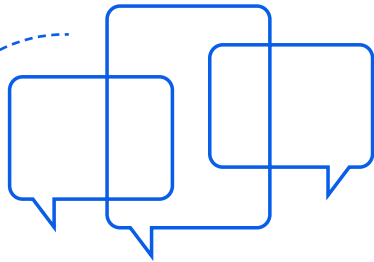
Over 600 completed responses were provided by Delaware County residents during two month-long online surveys. Survey responses were especially critical in the process of confirming Delaware-Muncie's priorities and community direction.



Open Houses

In-person, interactive **open houses were held in June and October** to provide information on the planning process, educate the public on important trends, and solicit feedback on preferred outcomes and strategies. Online versions of both open houses were made available to broaden participation.





Community voices from throughout the TogetherDM process identified the components of our vision for the future: our utmost priorities, what we value, and the course we want our community to take.



Our Priorities



**Improve
Quality of
Place**



**Strengthen
Housing Conditions
and Options**



**Expand
Opportunities for
Upward Mobility**

Our Core Values

We are committed to being...



Our Direction

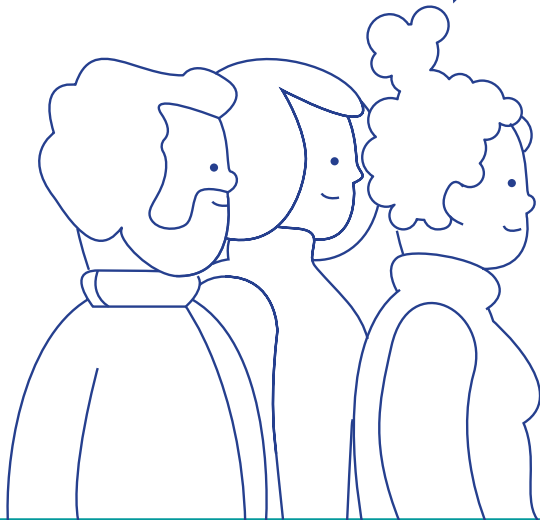


What does our region want to be?
What is our vision for the future?

Delaware-Muncie in 2040 is a place where...

Our decisions consistently reflect our core values.

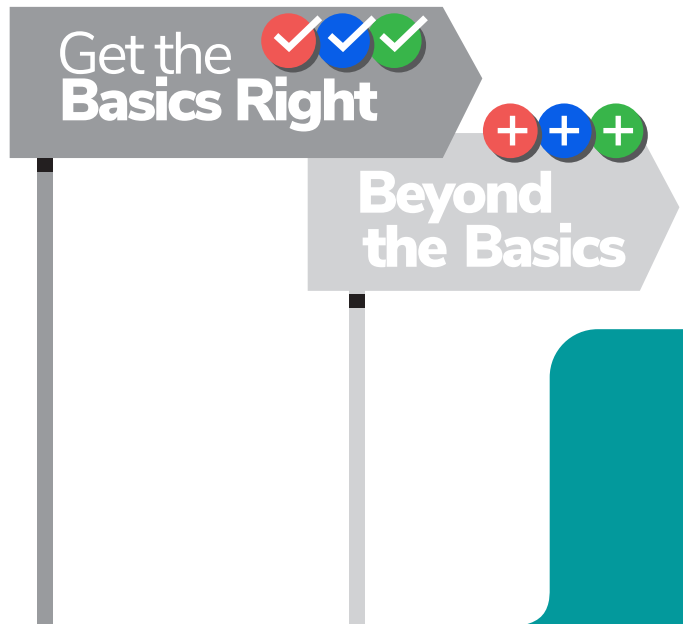
We are **entrepreneurial**
We are **gritty**
We are **inclusive**
We are **bold**
We are **thoughtful**



We get the basics right.

Key elements of community infrastructure and life—from fixing potholes, to keeping our homes and parks in good shape, to making sure our 3rd graders read at a 3rd grade level—are well-tended.

This has allowed us to move **beyond the basics** and excel in ways that make Delaware-Muncie more competitive than ever.



Quality of place has improved.

Our urban, suburban, and rural communities have a sense of place that expresses pride, confidence, and high standards.

Housing conditions and options have strengthened.

Existing housing has received strong levels of reinvestment and households of all types have appealing options to choose from.

Opportunities for upward mobility have expanded.

The socioeconomic ladder has more rungs and gives working class families a better chance to move ahead and stay ahead.



Our community is stronger, more sustainable, and more resilient.

By getting the basics right and making progress on our priority issues, we are able to face other social, economic, and environmental challenges from a position of strength and can pursue opportunities on a number of fronts:

Our tax base is growing, which allows us to invest what we need to invest in education, infrastructure, and other primary needs.

Pressure to develop rural land has decreased because Muncie and our incorporated towns are communities of choice, which has made sustainable development practices more feasible.

We compete successfully with Indianapolis and other parts of the state for households and businesses that seek thriving communities.



What is a comprehensive plan, and how should TogetherDM be used?

As with any comprehensive plan, TogetherDM's primary function is to serve as the basis for enacting or updating zoning regulations and other policies that shape where and how development happens. This includes general guidance on investments in public infrastructure and facilities.

More broadly, comprehensive plans have an opportunity to provide county and local governments with strategic direction on any number of issues that are deemed important. The TogetherDM process embraced this wider scope and includes many features of a strategic plan, such as priorities and a framework for making decisions.

TogetherDM is not, however, a law and nothing about it is legally binding. Implementation of the plan occurs when its vision for the future is faithfully translated into ordinances, budgets, and the decisions made by elected and appointed bodies that wield policy-making and fiscal powers.

If community leaders are truly willing to make decisions consistent with TogetherDM, it will be reflected in the following:

Capital Improvement Plans (CIPs)

CIPs involve the annual allocation of resources to pay for improvements to public facilities, equipment, and infrastructure. The comprehensive plan should provide significant direction for CIPs.

Land Use and Design Regulations

The comprehensive plan is the legal basis for the zoning code, which determines land use, density, and other characteristics of the built environment. After the plan is adopted, the code should be updated to reflect the plan.

Housing and Neighborhood Policy

Goals related to housing can be realized through the zoning code, as well as the allocation of resources to encourage specific types of investments in new or existing housing.

Economic Development Policy

Actions to promote economic activity of specific types and in specific places—to create jobs, build the tax base, or provide desired services—can be molded to reflect goals, trends, and conditions described in the plan.

Transportation and Infrastructure

The comprehensive plan should influence how federal, state, and local transportation and infrastructure dollars are allocated to improve conditions, boost capacity, or change how infrastructure is used.

Parks and Recreation

The CIPs, general fund, and zoning code can all be used to support investment to or expansion of parks and recreational facilities to meet quality of life goals expressed by the plan.

Small Area Plans

The comprehensive plan cannot provide detailed direction for what should happen on every block. But subsequent plans or updated plans for specific neighborhoods, corridors, and communities can be developed to apply the overall goals of the comprehensive plan at a more granular level.





Rather than the passage of one or two ordinances or the completion of a list of specific projects, implementation of TogetherDM will require a long-term commitment to a process by which the values, principles, and priorities embedded in the plan are considered and discussed whenever decisions are made. The plan will remain relevant to the extent that it influences the choices made on a routine basis by County and City staff, elected and appointed officials, and partners from the public, private, and non-profit sectors who share a commitment to TogetherDM's vision.



To guide the application of TogetherDM as an indispensable decision-making guide in Delaware-Muncie, this document is organized into four parts that individually and collectively contribute to TogetherDM's vision.

PART 1

Priorities, Trends, and Prospects

The priorities expressed by the community during the TogetherDM planning process, what is known about those priority issues, and what is foreseeable if recent trends are maintained are the core of Part 1. This component of TogetherDM provides focus and ensures that the plan is grounded to what is actually known and knowable about key issues.

PART 2

Decision-Making Framework

Delaware-Muncie's core values, and the planning principles that flow from those values, are the foundation of TogetherDM's role as a decision-making guide. Part 2 provides an overview of these values and principles, what they mean, and a primer on how to apply them on a regular basis—while acknowledging that their meaning and how to interpret them should always be subject to debate and conversation.

PART 3

Direction and Outcomes

The TogetherDM planning process gave voice to a clear call for “course corrections” so that different outcomes can be achieved on priority issues. The new course—“Get the Basics Right”—might sound simple but it is rooted in the recognition that core elements of community health, including road conditions, have been neglected. Part 3 describes this direction for Delaware-Muncie, the general outcomes sought by this direction, and how it translates to different place types within the region.

PART 4

Strategic Investment Plans

Part 4 provides blueprints for implementing TogetherDM in the City of Muncie and Delaware County. For the City, Part 4 addresses implementation steps for Downtown, City Neighborhoods, and Parks and Connecting Corridors. For Delaware County, implementation guidance is provided for Rural Land, Main Streets and Corridors, and County and Town Neighborhoods.

PART 1

Priorities, Trends, and Prospects

Three priority issues, or Big Things, emerged during the TogetherDM planning process.

Each priority is broad in scope, touches numerous other issues directly or indirectly, and has a central role in determining our region's vitality, our quality of life, and the ability of our communities to compete for households and businesses.

Analysis of our priorities revealed where we are starting our work from, why these priorities matter, and what is likely to happen if our region remains on its present course.



**Improve
Quality
of Place**



**Strengthen
Housing
Conditions
and Options**



**Expand
Opportunities
for Upward
Mobility**

WHERE WE ARE

A majority of our **roads and streets** are in need of major rehabilitation or complete reconstruction.

Most of our **corridors and gateways** (urban, suburban, and rural) fail to express a strong sense of place or pride.

Our investments in **public spaces** have been low for decades—and it shows.

One in four **residential properties** shows signs of disinvestment.

An even larger share of our **homes are vulnerable to decline** over the next decade.

Appealing housing options—existing or new—are limited and make it hard to compete for households and the businesses that need those households.

Poverty rates are above average and poverty is highly concentrated in a few places.

Poverty is especially 'sticky' in Delaware County, with **limited opportunities for those in poverty** to climb the socioeconomic ladder.

School performance measures and **labor force participation rates** threaten to widen existing economic gaps.

DEFINING OUR PRIORITIES

TogetherDM's three priorities represent areas in need of focused attention and resources. But how have Delaware-Muncie residents and other stakeholders defined these priorities? And what do we know about existing conditions and specific problems that people want to address?

WHERE WE'RE HEADED IF WE DO NOTHING DIFFERENTLY

Infrastructure and public spaces remain sub-par and reflect poorly on the region's willingness to invest in its own future.

Continued underinvestment in existing housing and limited development of new housing guarantees a housing stock that lacks appeal and marketability.

Continued segregation of low-income families into areas of high poverty and declining school performance will only reinforce longstanding patterns of inequity.



Improve Quality of Place

What does this priority mean?

'Quality of place' has a broad definition and will mean one thing in downtown Muncie and another thing on a county road near Eaton. But it all boils down to how people experience a place, whether they live there or are passing through. Does it feel safe, inviting, and well-kempt? Does it express pride and confidence? Is there a sense of local character that shines through?

A widespread sense that quality of place needs work throughout Delaware County, and that pride of place and ownership is unacceptably low, was a clear message delivered throughout the TogetherDM process. Everything from the presence of litter, to road conditions, to the upkeep of private and public properties send a message that the community has low standards and doesn't care.

There are exceptions to this impression, of course, but prevailing conditions raise an important question: If the community doesn't seem interested in—or capable of—investing in itself, why should anybody else, including potential businesses and residents?

What do we know?

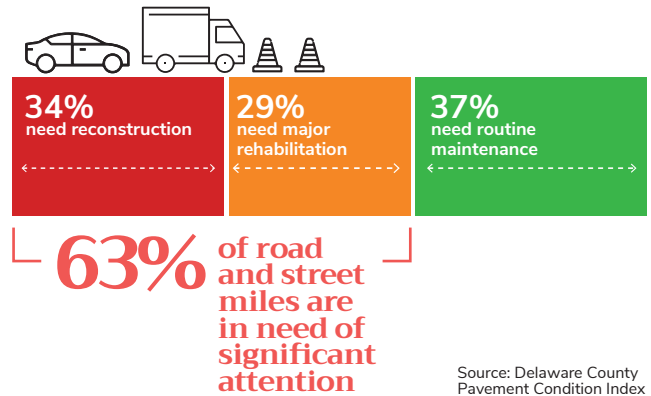
Road and street conditions reflect long-term underinvestment

In 2020, the county did an assessment of roadway pavement conditions using the Pavement Condition Index (PCI). It found that approximately 34% of the county's streets and roadways need reconstruction and 29% need major rehabilitation.

This was a slight improvement from a 2016 assessment that found 37% in need of reconstruction and 27% in need of rehabilitation.

Nevertheless, more than 60% of road and street miles are in need of significant attention and send a general message of disrepair and disinvestment.

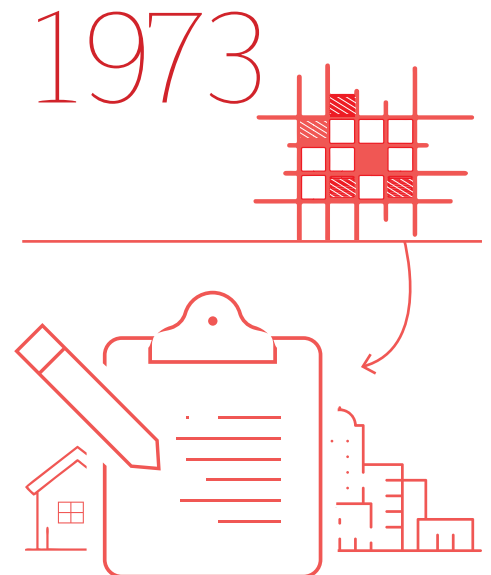
Streets and roadways in Delaware County, 2020



Existing zoning code is in need of modernization; stronger enforcement also needed

The current zoning code for the City of Muncie and unincorporated Delaware County was originally developed in 1973. While it has received periodic updates, it is largely outdated, promotes inefficient forms of development, and does not do enough to distinguish between rural, suburban, and urban contexts.

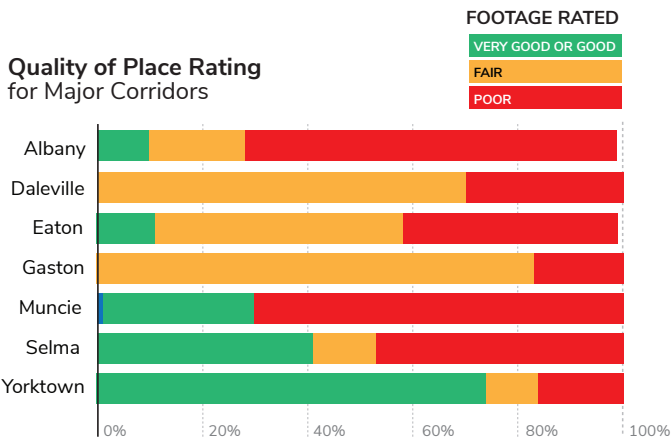
Updates to the current code are also undermined by inconsistent enforcement of standards and requirements—something that would have to change for a modernized code to have an impact.



Major corridors and gateways in Delaware County signal uneven, and often low, standards

Primary corridors have an outsized influence on how people perceive the community. The location of buildings and parking, the presence of street trees, and overall levels of maintenance shape these perceptions.

A TogetherDM assessment of Delaware County's major corridors and gateways, which considered a range of factors and the overall context of these corridors, found that most of the footage along corridors in Muncie and Albany rate low for quality of place. Yorktown is currently the only place where corridor quality is generally good, though still in need of improvement.



Source: IPD analysis of corridor quality based on quality of place characteristics

Rural character is in transition

While agricultural output in Delaware County grew significantly faster than inflation between 2002 and 2017, the number of acres being farmed actually fell by 22,000 (or 12%), an area larger than the City of Muncie. Meanwhile, roughly 1,100 acres in unincorporated parts of Delaware County have been developed for residential uses since 2000—at a time when the population of the county was falling. All of this suggests that the character and use of rural land in the county is not as static as it might appear, and that the evolution of rural Delaware County requires thoughtful attention.



Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

Vacant land and open space present opportunities

In recent years, thousands of rural acres have fallen out of agricultural use. In Muncie, meanwhile, over 100 acres have become vacant since 2011 due to home demolitions. Those vacant lands, combined with the thousands of acres that have been vacant or unused for longer periods (such as forested areas, wetlands, and fallow industrial sites) have potential to contribute to:



Quality of life, if used to augment park and recreation systems



Future agricultural uses, if allowed to regenerate



Preservation of rural character, or improvement of neighborhood character



Green energy production, with installation of solar arrays



Stormwater management, if left undeveloped or if modified to absorb more runoff



Market stabilization, if left undeveloped but well-maintained

Spending on parks is rising but still very low

Muncie's park system suffers from decades of underinvestment, and annual operating funding for parks is consistently much lower than cities of similar size. In 2021, \$24 per capita was allocated by the City of Muncie to pay for parks, compared to the \$88 per capita median for cities in the U.S. with between 50,000 and 99,000 residents.

Consequently, many parks lack common amenities, are outdated, not well maintained, are underutilized by residents, and add minimal value to nearby properties.

\$88

Median per capita spending on park operations by U.S. cities in Muncie's size class

\$24

Per capita spending on park operations in Muncie, 2021



Source: Ingalls Planning & Design analysis of current parks spending in Muncie compared to median figures from the National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) 2020 Agency Performance Review



Strengthen Housing Conditions and Options

What does this priority mean?

Weaknesses in the local housing market have produced two problems that are widely noticeable and related:

One is the physical decline of existing homes as owners hold back on major upgrades and defer basic maintenance because they don't think they'll see a return on their investment or they can't afford to do so.

The other is the housing market's inability to produce new housing products because prevailing home prices and rents are well below what it actually costs to build new, high-quality housing.

The consequence of both problems is a housing stock that is increasingly unappealing to households that can choose where to live. And if the housing stock isn't appealing to skilled workers and their families, housing becomes a key limiting factor for economic development.

What do we know?

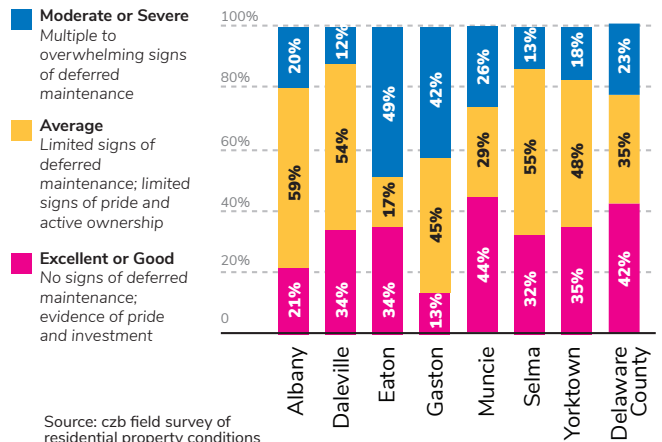
More than half of residential properties show visible signs of disinvestment or are vulnerable to decline

A 2021 survey of residential property conditions in Muncie, the incorporated towns, and unincorporated neighborhoods of Delaware County found that 42% exhibited pride of ownership and healthy maintenance routines (rated good or excellent).

That means that 58% did not. Overall, 23% of rated properties showed signs of deferred maintenance (rated as moderately or severely distressed) and 35% were found to be in average condition and potentially vulnerable to decline.

These conditions vary considerably from place to place and neighborhood to neighborhood. However, properties in excellent or good condition did not make up a majority of homes in any of the county's incorporated communities.

Field Survey Scores of Property Conditions Across Delaware County



Source: czb field survey of residential property conditions

Unhealthy vacancy rates reflect a market that is generally soft

Several measurements indicate that, as a whole, Delaware County's housing market is soft, with supply exceeding demand. In particular, vacancy rates that are well above 5% (a level considered healthy) reflect a housing surplus. So, too, do rising levels of housing units that are chronically vacant and potentially abandoned. On both of these measures, rates in the county and city are well above healthy levels and have been rising.

Many vacant properties are, in reality, not desirable or marketable to households that have options. To a prospective homebuyer or renter, persistently high vacancy rates will be experienced—counterintuitively—as a shortage of appealing options.

Market softness is further reflected in stagnant home values. Between 2000 and 2019, the **median value of owner-occupied homes in Delaware County eroded by 17%** when adjusted for inflation.

Housing Vacancy Rates, 2009-2019

	2009	→	2019
Delaware County			
% of housing units vacant	12.0%	→	12.7%
City of Muncie			
% of housing units vacant	14.2%	→	15.8%
% of housing units chronically vacant (not on market and not seasonal)	4.2%	→	7.5%
	4.7%	→	9.0%

Source: czb/IPD analysis of housing vacancy data from American Community Survey 2009 and 2019 5-year estimates

Levels of demand for housing vary significantly within the county, but the strongest and weakest markets tend to be concentrated

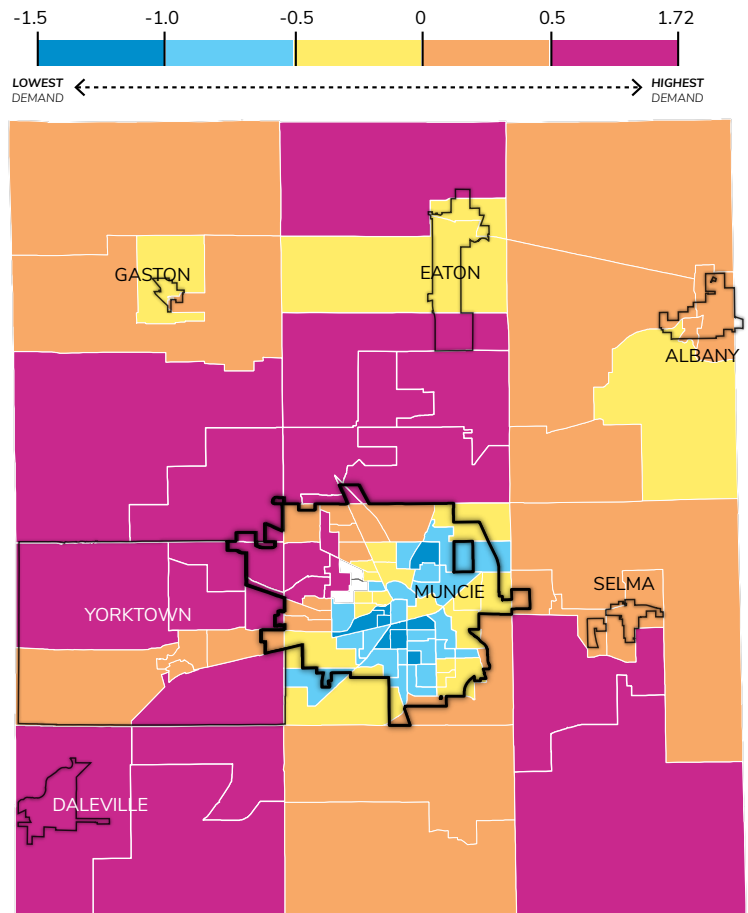
An exercise to map housing market strength in 2021—based on sale prices, rent levels, owner-occupancy rates, vacancy rates, and household incomes—found that housing conditions in Delaware County correlate very closely to levels of market demand. The stronger the market, the higher the concentration of excellent or good properties.

Areas with the strongest demand in Delaware County were concentrated in northwestern Muncie around Ball State and in a broad arc around the city from Daleville to Yorktown to the unincorporated neighborhoods just north of city. The areas of lowest demand in the county, meanwhile, were concentrated to the south and northeast of downtown Muncie.

This housing geography matters because private investment has happened most readily, and will continue to occur, where demand is strongest. And it will not happen—without public intervention—in areas of low demand that are most in need of investment.

Source: czb analysis of factors that influence housing market demand

Housing Market Types, by Census Block Group

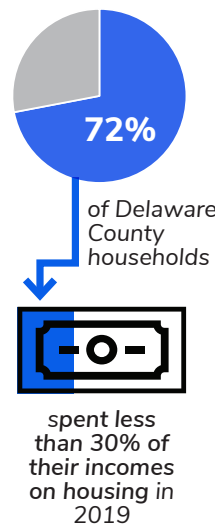


Millions of dollars could be spent on housing in Delaware County but are currently spent on other things

Housing is affordable if a household is spending less than 30% of its monthly income on rent or a mortgage payment—this is a rule of thumb used by banks and government programs. 28% of households in Delaware County, almost all with low incomes, spend more than this and are considered “cost-burdened.”

But 72% of households spend less—sometimes far less—than 30% of income on housing. For most of these households, that means local housing is very affordable—which is good. But this is due, in part, to stagnant home values and rents, and a hesitancy by some owners to reinvest in their homes. Altogether, **households in Delaware County have the ability to spend nearly \$400 million more on housing each year than they currently spend**, based on a comparison of actual rent and mortgage costs to the total income of all households in the county (\$2.8 billion).

Under stronger market conditions, a large portion of those resources would be flowing into maintenance and capital upgrades to support a healthier housing stock.



Cost gaps limit the construction of new housing

Even though many households in Delaware County have the capacity to spend more on housing than they currently do, what people expect to pay is shaped by prevailing prices and rents. And those prevailing prices and rents are far below what it actually costs to build something new—roughly \$250,000 to build a new housing unit of good quality (which translates to rent requirements of \$1,300 or more for a rental unit).

The gap between what new housing costs and what people expect to pay for housing in Delaware County is a critical factor that restricts the development of new types of housing that may be needed to keep or attract households that want something new.



Expand Opportunities for Upward Mobility

What does this priority mean?

As in most communities with a similar economic background, decades of deindustrialization have made it harder for individuals with low or outdated skillsets to climb the economic ladder in Muncie and Delaware County. This is reflected in high concentrations of poverty that are difficult to escape from.

This priority ties into a number of spheres, such as the quality of educational and training infrastructure, access to work opportunities to build skills and experience, and improvements to household stability. But it also ties into the location and quality of affordable housing and the degree to which community decision-making is intentional about creating a sense of agency and ownership in areas of high economic need.

What do we know?

Poverty rates in Delaware County and Muncie are higher than average

The household poverty rate in Delaware County (22% in 2019) is 1.6x higher than the state or national averages. When the influence of college students is largely removed by looking only at family poverty rates, Delaware County is still 1.5x the state average.

Within Delaware County, poverty is most pronounced within Muncie, where the family rate is 22%. In some areas of Muncie's south side, however, family rates exceed 40%. For households living in those areas, incomes are often too low to afford existing housing, which is already the least expensive in the county. That means that moving elsewhere is seldom an option, especially when affordable housing dollars have rarely been used to develop accessible options in neighborhoods with lower poverty rates.

Poverty Rates, 2019
All Households Family Households

	All Households	Family Households
City of Muncie	31.0%	21.9%
Delaware County	21.9%	13.6%
State	13.4%	9.3%

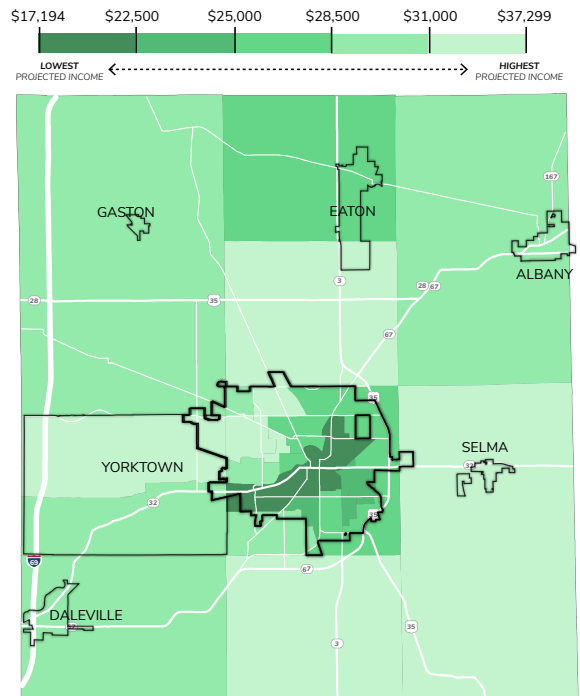
Source: American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates

Opportunities to climb out of poverty, even from one generation to the next, are limited in Delaware County

Research into the factors that shape economic mobility by Raj Chetty (creator of the "Opportunity Atlas") reveals that children born to low-income families in Delaware County can expect to make \$26,000 per year as adults—the second lowest income expectation among counties in Indiana.

Within the City of Muncie, income expectations are even lower in some neighborhoods, with children born into poverty north of Heekin Park likely to earn only \$17,000 as adults. At the same time, a child born into poverty in neighborhoods around Ball State fare better and can expect to earn upwards of \$37,000 as adults. A key takeaway from this research is that growing up in highly concentrated poverty is a major factor that limits upward economic mobility as a child grows into adulthood.

Projected Household Income at Age 35 for People Raised by Low-Income Parents, by Census Tract



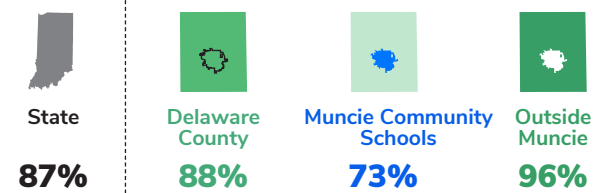
Source: The Opportunity Atlas (opportunityatlas.org)

School performance gaps mirror patterns of poverty and economic opportunity

The most recent data available from Indiana's IREAD-3 test, which measures whether 3rd graders are reading at a 3rd grade level, shows a clear pattern. On average, passage rates in Delaware County are very close to the state average. But within the county, there is a nearly 20 percentage point gap between performance in Muncie and performance in other districts.



IREAD-3 Pass Rates for 3rd Graders



Source: Analysis of scores reported by the Indiana Department of Education

Labor force participation lags, as do certain categories of educational attainment

Labor force participation rates in Delaware County and Muncie are below the state and national averages and have been for over a decade. But labor force participation rates, as well as wages, vary considerably based on how much education and training an individual has. More education and training correlate with much higher levels of labor force participation and earnings.

While the region mirrors the rest of the U.S. and Indiana in terms of the share of adults without a high school diploma or GED, it has a relatively high share of adults who only have a high school diploma and a relatively low share of adults who have a bachelor's degree. These differences help to explain, in part, why the median household income in Delaware County was only 77% of the statewide median in 2019—despite having shares of adults with advanced degrees and associate degrees that are very close to state and national averages.

Labor Force Participation, Ages 20-64



Highest Level of Educational Attainment for Persons 25 and Older, 2019*

	U.S.	Indiana	County	Muncie	Median Earnings by Level of Education in Delaware County, 2019
No diploma	12%	11%	10%	12%	\$18,668
High School diploma or equivalency	27%	33%	35%	35%	\$27,702
Some college	20%	20%	21%	21%	\$34,818
Associate degree	9%	9%	10%	9%	
Bachelor's degree	20%	17%	13%	13%	\$41,798
Graduate or advanced degree	12%	10%	10%	11%	\$57,825

Source: American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates

*Postsecondary technical certificates are not specifically tracked by the American Community Survey. Research completed by the Indiana Data Hub, in partnership with the Indiana Office of Career Connections and Talent, suggests that approximately 4% of adults have such non-degree postsecondary credentials.

Cradle to Career model has emerged to proactively address factors behind upward mobility

Recognition that education has a considerable influence on the upward mobility of adults, and that preparation early in childhood influences later success, has led to the **adoption of the Cradle to Career model** in Muncie. To date, this has included the development of partnerships to support kindergarten readiness, third grade reading comprehension, middle school math skills, timely graduation from high school, access to postsecondary training, and career placement.



Delaware-Muncie's Prospects

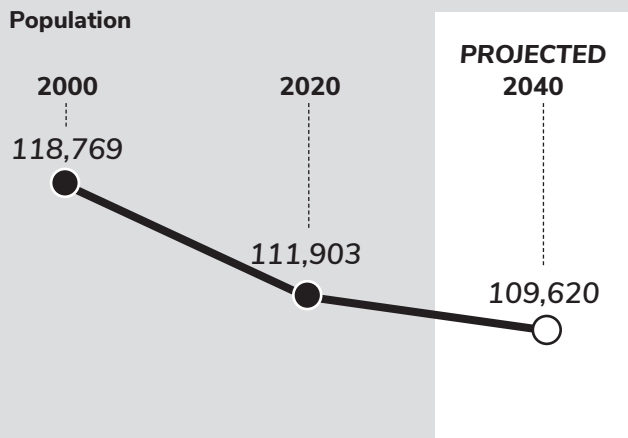
Identification of recent trends and existing conditions with regard to population and economic change (as covered in the Introduction) and Delaware-Muncie's three priorities (as covered on the previous pages) aids in the process of understanding problems that need to be addressed and what it might mean to address them. Some of these conditions and trends can be extrapolated forward to see what might happen if change continues on its current course and nothing is done differently.

Probabilities for 2021-onward based on present course

Delaware County's population will continue to get smaller

The last set of population projections prepared by the Indiana Business Research Center (released in 2018) estimated that Delaware County will have 109,620 residents in 2040—a total that would be slightly smaller than the 111,903 count from the 2020 Census.

If this modest decline occurs, and if patterns of growth and decline within the county follow recent trends, some additional growth to the north, west, and southwest of Muncie can be expected—as can continued losses in most city neighborhoods.



What don't we know?

Projections are educated guesses, and the projections used to inform the last comprehensive plan ended up being too optimistic by over 20,000. If birth rates fall faster than expected, or if the gravitation of households and jobs to major metropolitan areas accelerates, the population might decline faster than projected. If a post-COVID economy favors remote working in less congested areas, or if climate change leads to population shifts away from coastal areas, smaller losses (or even growth) might be possible.

Quality of place will improve in some places but diminish in most

Efforts in recent years to invest in high-quality public spaces—such as downtown on Walnut Street, or the Cardinal Greenway—represent real progress. And slight improvements in road and street conditions since 2016 are also a positive sign. But if recent investment levels in roads and streets are maintained through this decade, very little will have changed and disrepair will still be the prevailing experience.

If disrepair of roads and streets remains common for years to come, the negative investment signals sent by those conditions are likely to erode gains in quality of place. Areas with high standards and investment will be hard to sustain over time if there are declining standards and stagnating property values elsewhere.

Road and Street Conditions in Delaware County	2021	PROJECTED 2030
Need Preventive Maintenance	37%	39%
Need Major Rehabilitation	29%	34%
Need Reconstruction	34%	27%

What don't we know?

A major federal commitment to infrastructure investment could lead to a sustained period of higher investment and improvements to quality of place, especially if those resources support the types of infrastructure that improve the pedestrian experience. It could also reinforce current problematic tendencies by local governments to invest far too little of their own money into high-quality public infrastructure, which might lead to future cycles of disinvestment.

Projecting future trends to inform decision-making is useful to a point. The unforeseen is guaranteed to happen, which is why it will be critical to monitor trends and use TogetherDM as a framework for making good decisions that align with durable values, planning principles, and community priorities.

Housing conditions will decline and good options will become more limited

The combination of current residential property conditions, current housing market conditions, and projected declines in population all suggest that housing conditions will get worse by 2030. Even if the existing pace of demolition in the City of Muncie is maintained year-after-year, a portion of currently stable properties in the county's lowest demand markets can be expected to slip into distress every year. This is especially true for single-family homes that transition from owner-occupancy to absentee ownership, which are projected to grow from 27% of single-family homes in 2021 to 32% by 2030.

Individual households will experience these declines as diminishing options as it becomes harder to find a good home in a good neighborhood.

Residential Property Conditions in Delaware County	2021	PROJECTED 2030
Excellent or Good	42%	38%
Average	35%	34%
Moderate or Severe Distress	23%	28%

What don't we know?

Faster declines in household sizes, even amidst population decline, could boost demand and lead to a slower decline in housing conditions. A temporary uptick in infrastructure spending over the next few years might also send positive investment signals that promote more reinvestment by homeowners. On the other hand, more rapid decline is possible if enough places pass a tipping point beyond which disinvestment by homeowners accelerates.

Existing opportunity gaps remain in place, or widen

The distribution of poverty, housing opportunities, school quality, and other factors that shape economic mobility in Delaware County did not solidify in their current configuration overnight. They were decades in the making and are reinforced on a daily basis. Based on the region's present course, existing equity gaps are likely to persist well into the future.

Since 2000, despite an uptick in poverty countywide, Muncie's poverty rate for individuals has consistently remained between 1.4 to 1.5 times higher than the county's poverty rate.

City to County Poverty Ratio

	2000	2019	PROJECTED 2040
Muncie's poverty rate is			
	1.5X	1.4X	1.4X
higher than the county's.			

What don't we know?

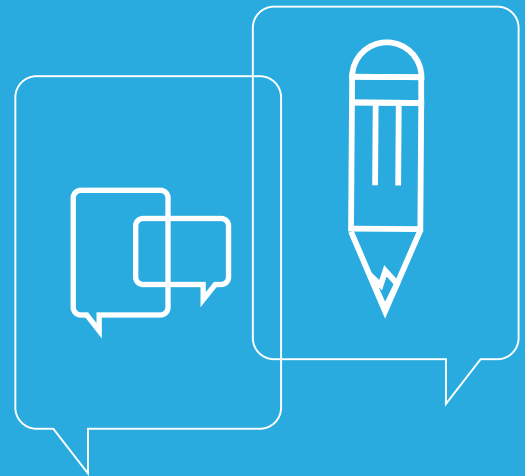
Changes in the federal government's approach to poverty are in flux in 2021 and 2022 due to efforts to lead the economy through the pandemic, and the expansion of child tax credits could lead to substantial (and maybe permanent) declines in child poverty. At the same time, more federal resources for affordable housing—if spent in ways that reflect historical practice—could lead to even greater concentrations of low-income households in struggling neighborhoods.

PART 2

Decision-Making Framework

Part of the bedrock of TogetherDM is a decision-making framework based on core values enunciated by the community and the planning principles that derive from those values.

Interpreting these values and principles as a community, and applying them to a broad range of short-term and long-term decisions, will be an ongoing task and a key part of the implementation process. As decisions and their consequences accumulate and compound year by year, they will determine how close the region gets to realizing the TogetherDM vision.





Our Core Values

Our Planning Principles

LEGACY

entrepreneurial

gritty

ASPIRATIONAL

more inclusive

more bold

more thoughtful

Informed
Delaware-
Muncie

Educate and inform
Always consider
opportunity costs

Self-Reliant
Delaware-
Muncie

First dollars in are local
Craft local solutions

Inclusive
Delaware-
Muncie

Include diverse
voices and distribute
opportunities
equitably

**Beautiful
and
Sustainable**
Delaware-
Muncie

Prioritize the beauty
and sustainability of
our built and natural
environments

What are our core values and
planning principles?

What do they really mean?

And how do we use them to make
consistently good decisions?

What are our core values? And what do they mean?

Our core values are deeply-held, widely-shared beliefs that serve as building blocks for our vision of the future. They reflect what we are willing to defend and fight for as well as what we aspire to be. We're at our best when we act in ways that are consistent with these values.

The values listed and defined here are based on work by the TogetherDM steering committee and conversations they held in the community. Two of them represent long-standing, or "legacy," values that have served the community well for generations and should be embraced into the future. The other three represent values that are more aspirational in nature—they have become more prominent in the community recently, but there is recognition that commitment and practice will be needed for Delaware-Muncie to consistently operate by them.



Our Core Values

LEGACY VALUES

We are committed to **remaining...**

an **entrepreneurial** community

- We have a long tradition of being an enterprising place with enterprising people, from the farmers and manufacturers of the 19th century through those who created new businesses from scratch after layoffs and plant closings in more recent decades.
- The decisions we make should continue to reflect that we are willing to seize opportunities and try new approaches to familiar issues.
- While we will always look to other communities to learn what worked for them and what may be helpful to us, we will not shy away from being creative in our own right.

a **gritty** community

- We are used to working hard to meet our obligations. We take pride in taking on a challenge, working together, and being patient and disciplined to see something through to the end.
- The decisions we make should continue to reflect our commitment to being resourceful and resolute when solving a problem, and that a sense of ownership for what our community becomes is tied to the level of effort we ask from everyone.

ASPIRATIONAL VALUES

We are committed to **becoming...**

a **more inclusive** community

- Like most communities, we can do better when it comes to being more fully inclusive. Every resident in our community has a contribution to make.
- The decisions we make going forward should include as many voices and perspectives as possible to ensure that we truly benefit from all of our community's strengths, and that opportunities and a sense of civic ownership are broadly shared.

a **more bold** community

- Despite a tradition of entrepreneurship and creativity, we recognize that our community has often fallen short when it comes to making big decisions and taking bold risks. Too often, we put things off even when we know that the burden of action is only being delayed.
- The decisions we make going forward should reflect a recognition of the cost-shifting we have been prone to do when we've kicked the can down the road—and to avoid such cost-shifting.

a **more thoughtful** community

- We recognize that we often neglect to think something through strategically—connecting one action or investment to other actions or investments for greater impact, or properly accounting for long-term needs and costs. This has resulted in "one-off" efforts that fail to build momentum where we need it most.
- The decisions we make going forward should reflect meaningful and deliberate connections between activities or investments that seek related outcomes.

Our planning principles are rules that govern what we do and help us translate our values into actions. TogetherDM's planning principles can be organized into four categories of principles to invoke as decisions are made.



Our Planning Principles

Informed Delaware- Muncie

EDUCATE AND INFORM

Explain and discuss budgets and decision-making with the public rather than assuming that a mountain of data counts as transparency.

With each decision, build the civic muscle for weighing costs and benefits on the way to generating broad buy-in.

ALWAYS CONSIDER OPPORTUNITY COSTS

What do we agree to forego in order to pursue this goal/action with sufficient energy and resources?

What is the cost of NOT taking this action?

Self-Reliant Delaware- Muncie

FIRST DOLLARS IN ARE LOCAL

To take responsibility for our priorities and have control over outcomes, make sure that the first dollars on any project or initiative are local commitments—preferably public.

CRAFT LOCAL SOLUTIONS

In taking this action, are we reflexively applying a 'best practice' from somewhere else in order to control risk and distance ourselves from responsibility? Or are we crafting a local solution to a well-defined problem that may or may not be informed by the experience of other communities?

Inclusive Delaware- Muncie

INCLUDE MORE VOICES AND DISTRIBUTE OPPORTUNITIES EQUITABLY

Have we actively enlarged the range of voices that are meaningfully informing the decision at hand in order to share ownership of decisions and the opportunities they create? Are we broadly sharing risks and rewards as a community?

Beautiful and Sustainable Delaware- Muncie

PRIORITIZE THE BEAUTY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS

Never sell the community short by setting a low bar—this is a beautiful place and we need to be stewards of that beauty because doing so will build value and create a place where people want to be.

Always consider the sustainability of decisions on two fronts: the environmental impacts of the choices we make and their long-term fiscal impacts. To what extent will a decision aid in making our region more ecologically resilient and our communities more adaptive to change?



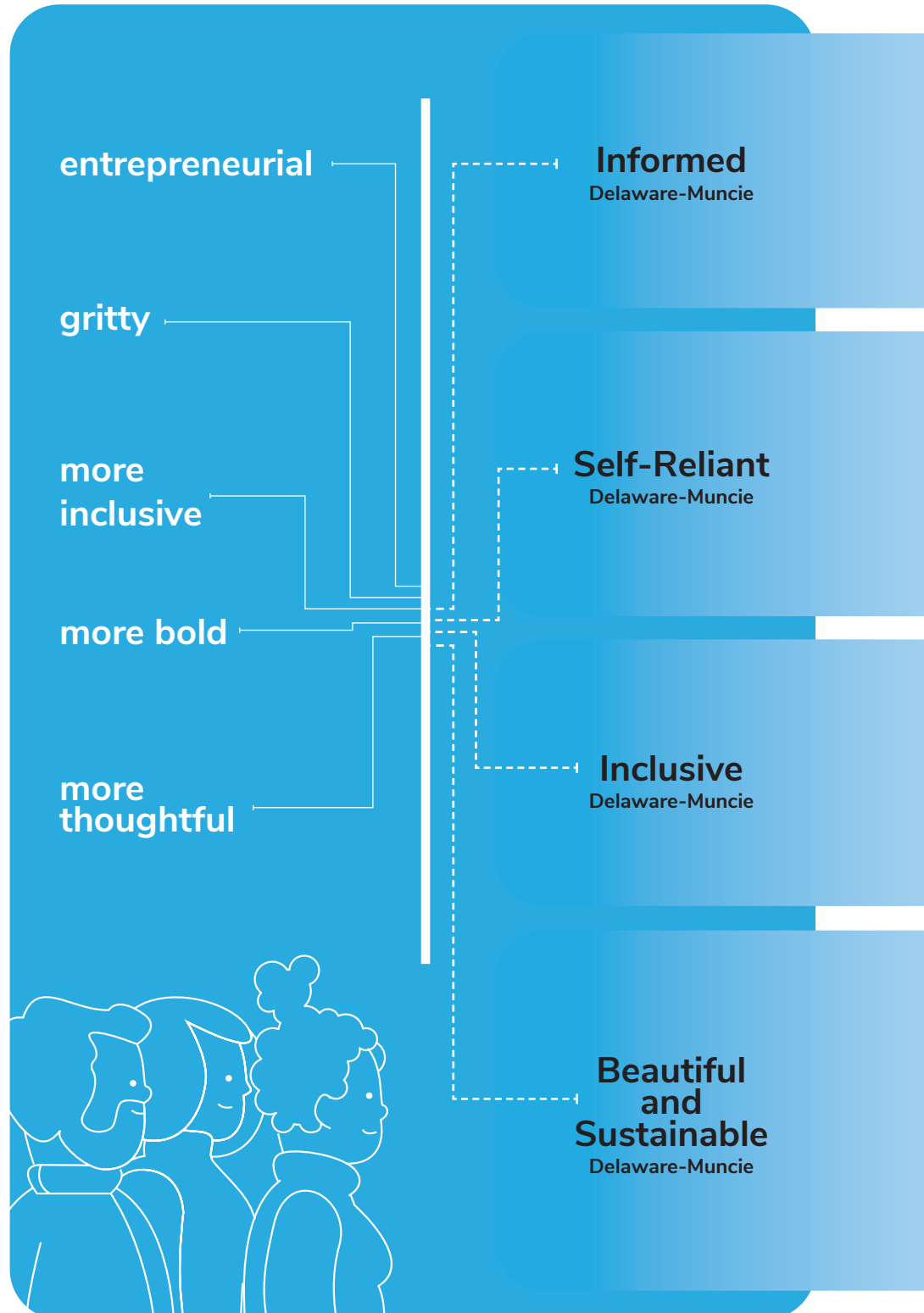
Our values are our starting point and shape our planning principles



Planning principles are rules that govern what we do and help us translate our values into action

IN PRACTICE How will this work as a decision-making framework?

Whether a decision aligns with these values and planning principles or not will not always be straightforward. A decision-making framework such as this requires a willingness by the community to openly interpret and discuss what the values and principles mean and how they should be applied. At a basic level, though, there are some simple rules to apply that will serve the community well and lead to consistent decision-making.





DO



DON'T

What the community does and doesn't do

✓ Make an effort to help the public understand where money comes from, where it goes, and what it does for them.

✓ Build the community's capacity to weigh options, make deliberate choices, and take ownership of those choices.

✓ Have local "skin in the game" on any project that is important to the community.

✓ Learn from what other communities have done on and apply those lessons to solving real local problems with tailored local solutions.

✓ Treat every project or civic discussion as an opportunity to widen the circle of participation and include more voices.

✓ Take full advantage of the diverse perspective, experiences, and expertise in the community to improve the decisions that get made.

✓ Set consistently high standards for how the community looks and functions, because it enhances the value of every other investment being made.

✓ Account for the long-term financial and environmental footprint of each decision.

✓ Protect our natural and environmental assets as a down-payment on long-term livability and vitality.

✗ Assume that making data available counts as informing people or imparting an understanding of key issues.

✗ Expect the community to support bold decisions if the costs and benefits have not been thoughtfully explained and debated.

✗ Rely on Washington or Indianapolis to make local priorities a reality with minimal local effort or leadership.

✗ Reflexively look to other places to see who has done something first.

✗ Copy what other communities are doing to avoid risk or work.

✗ Use tokenism as a substitute for meaningful inclusion of new voices.

✗ Retreat to closed decision-making by the usual suspects when public conversations get complicated and require extra effort.

✗ Squander opportunities to expect more and to set higher standards.

✗ Settle for less and expect an investment to create lasting value for the community.

✗ Make improvements that the community is not willing to maintain at a high level.

✗ Be careless about natural and environmental assets that are the envy of other communities.

How will these values and principles be tested?



Are we willing to pay for what we say are priorities?

If there is no appetite to put serious local resources into something that we say is a priority, it really isn't a priority.

For example, as efforts begin to catch up on years of deferred maintenance in local roads and streets, will additional local resources be raised and allocated to accelerate the work—adhering to our principle of self-reliance and our value for grit? If the answer is "no," the condition of roads and streets—and, by extension, quality of place—is not a priority.



Will we stand by our values as individuals, as well as collectively?

If our stated values are truly meaningful, they shouldn't just be values that we use to make decisions with public resources. They should influence our actions and expectations as citizens of Delaware-Muncie.

If we say...

...we are **entrepreneurial and bold**, will we stand by and support calculated risk-taking by our community? Or will we fire the first arrows when something doesn't turn out as expected?

...being **thoughtful and informed** is important to us, will we take time to understand what is happening and engage in a meaningful dialogue with our neighbors? Or will we shoot from the hip with wild guesses and incendiary language on social media?

...we want our community to be **beautiful**, to be desirable in a way that creates value, do we join with neighbors to plant flowers and support higher standards for our community? Or do we accept low standards?

...**inclusiveness** is something we value and need to work harder on, do we reach out and connect with people or groups we aren't familiar with? Do we widen our sense of community? Or do we retreat behind long-established lines?

PART 3

Direction and Outcomes

“Get the Basics Right” was a clear message delivered by our communities during the TogetherDM planning process.

It was a message grounded in the recognition that Delaware-Muncie has considerable catching up to do on each of its priorities—and that a focus on fundamentals is a prerequisite to catching up and, ultimately, getting ahead.

Specific and measurable outcomes will help to define what real progress looks like and what will be needed to take incremental steps in the right direction. What progress looks like, however, will mean different things in different types of places, from Walnut Street in downtown Muncie, to West Elm Street in Gaston, to Delaware County’s 150,000+ acres of productive farmland.



Direction

Outcomes

Priorities



Improve Quality of Place



Strengthen Housing Conditions and Options



Expand Opportunities for Upward Mobility

Get the Basics Right



Measurable Outcomes to Seek



Application of Priorities, Direction, and Outcomes to Distinct Places

MUNCIE

DELAWARE COUNTY

Downtown Muncie

City Neighborhoods

Parks and Connective Corridors

Rural Land

Main Streets and Corridors

County and Town Neighborhoods



Get the Basics Right

A Focus on Fundamentals to Advance Our Priorities

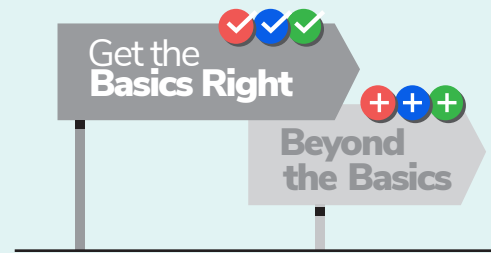
Progress on Delaware-Muncie's priorities has to begin somewhere. Throughout the TogetherDM planning process it was clear that a focus on getting the basics right represented both a course correction from longstanding practices and a tangible starting point for the community.

More than anything else, **TogetherDM's direction is about making incremental and visible progress. Every pothole that gets filled, every house that gets a new coat of paint, and every child empowered by literacy is a step forward that builds the community's confidence to do more and expect more.**

The "Get the Basics Right" direction is responsive to existing conditions and trends for the region, which, as noted in Part 1, are either unacceptably low or heading in the wrong direction.

"Get the Basics Right" is also consistent with TogetherDM's decision-making framework of core values and planning principles. This direction will call on the region's legacy of grit and entrepreneurship to find creative solutions and commit the energy needed to make progress year-after-year. It will also call on the region to be more inclusive, more bold, and more thoughtful about what it does and how it does it.

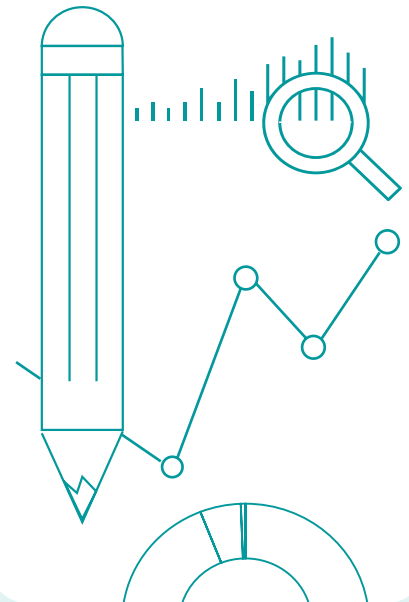
A "Get the Basics Right" course of action for Delaware-Muncie finds simple expression in TogetherDM's vision for the region's priorities. It is reflected in measurable outcomes that will indicate that progress is being made and that the community is putting itself in a position to go "Beyond Basics."



Our Vision

Outcomes to Seek for Our Priorities

Informed by Our Vision and Direction



Broad Outcomes

Signs that our priorities are being advanced and are boosting our ability to invest Beyond Basics



Improve Quality of Place

Strengthen Housing Conditions and Options

Expand Opportunities for Upward Mobility

Our urban, suburban, and rural communities have a sense of place that expresses pride, confidence, and high standards. **Quality of place has improved.**

Existing housing has received strong levels of reinvestment and households of all types have appealing options to choose from. **Housing conditions and options have strengthened.**

The socioeconomic ladder has more rungs and gives working class families a better chance to move ahead and stay ahead. **Opportunities for upward mobility have expanded.**

Our roads and streets are in consistently good condition.

Road and street mileage in need of major rehabilitation falls from 63% to below 50%.

Sense of place along our corridors is getting better.

Corridors and gateways rated “Good” or “Fair” for sense of place rises from 43% to at least 60%.

New development is held to higher standards that promote quality of place.

Land development regulations and design standards have been modernized and are consistently enforced.

Our parks and recreational assets are receiving strong levels of investment and make us proud.

Spending on City of Muncie park operations and maintenance has risen from \$24 per capita to more than \$50 per capita and rising.

A growing share of residential properties are well-maintained and receiving timely investment.

Properties in excellent or good condition rises from 42% toward 50%.

Homeownership rates have stabilized and are beginning to rise.

Owner-occupancy rate for single-family homes stabilizes at 73% and moves toward 75%.

New housing development is occurring in a manner that advances our priorities.

The recent pace of 95 new housing units per year, county-wide, has been maintained. But new housing now does more to strengthen existing neighborhoods, support existing infrastructure, bolster quality of place, and provide access to diverse housing options.

A growing share of low-cost rental units are in areas with low poverty rates and good access to employment and services.

The share of low-cost rental units in areas of above-average economic opportunity has risen from 19% to nearly 25%.

School performance gaps within the county are narrowing.

3rd grade reading scores remain at or above the state average countywide, and the 22-point performance gap between Muncie and suburban/rural schools has diminished to 10-points or less.

The share of adults with post-secondary education is rising.

The share of adults with an associate degree or more has risen from 33.5% to above 40%; the share of adults with four years of college has gone from being 7-points lower than the state average to less than 4-points lower.

Total assessed value of real estate in Delaware County keeps pace with inflation

----- BASELINE -----

\$6.0 billion in 2019-20

Per-capita income is rising and fewer households are earning less than \$25,000

----- BASELINE -----

29.8% of households in 2019

Share of adults with an associate degree or higher rises and gap between U.S. and Delaware County rate narrows

----- BASELINE 2019 -----

U.S. **40.7%** Delaware County **33.5%**

Putting Delaware-Muncie on a course to Get the Basics Right and achieve measurable and meaningful progress on its priorities will require more than a change to specific policies or the implementation of a few new programs. This new course will require that the community gravitate away from the longstanding practices that have not served it well—that it change what it invests in, how it invests, and how much it invests.

Otherwise, the outcomes sought cannot be met and the foreseeable trendlines described in Part 1 are unlikely to be altered.

Longstanding practices

Underinvestment in basic infrastructure

Dwindling capacity to invest, and scattering of capacity and resources that do exist



Quality of Place outcomes **cannot be met**



Practices that align with TogetherDM

Proactive levels of investment in basic infrastructure

Cultivating capacity to invest, and focusing capacity and resources to make an impact



Quality of Place outcomes **become possible**

Not consistently expecting or requiring high quality from private investment

Accepting and reinforcing high concentrations of poverty

 Housing Conditions/Options outcomes **cannot be met**

 Upward Mobility outcomes **cannot be met**



Expecting and requiring high quality from private investment

Active efforts to deconcentrate poverty

 Housing Conditions/Options outcomes **become possible**

 Upward Mobility outcomes **become possible**

How do we translate TogetherDM’s vision to our distinct communities?

Delaware County is a diverse place with many different types of urban, suburban, and rural communities. A one-size-fits-all plan would not be responsive to these differences and would achieve very little.

At the same time, the county’s diverse communities share many of the same challenges, opportunities, and resources—this was a clear message of the TogetherDM planning process. While sense of place, quality of housing, and economic opportunity mean something different from one part of the county to another – they are important issues in every community and contribute to Delaware County’s collective health.

To translate TogetherDM’s vision to the different community contexts found throughout the county, six place types—three in the City of Muncie and three in the remainder of Delaware County—have been identified that will give structure to the development and implementation of locally responsive strategies.



Rural
Land



Main Streets
and Corridors



County
and Town
Neighborhoods



Muncie

In general, how do TogetherDM's priorities apply here?

Downtown Muncie

Downtown Muncie and the adjacent riverfront is the region's core—with a dense and growing concentration of businesses, services, regional assets, and recreational opportunities.

Enhancements to Walnut Street's infrastructure and investments in properties along that corridor have made a big difference over the past decade and show how downtown can become an ever-stronger contributor to quality of life and vitality in Muncie—without trying (in vain) to make downtown what it was in the mid 20th century.



Improve Quality of Place

Downtown Muncie's sense of place has improved over the past decade thanks to greater attention to detail in public spaces and efforts to preserve and reuse older buildings with architectural character. Much more work is needed, though, to make the downtown experience more consistent and to reinforce demand for commercial and residential space.



Strengthen Housing Condition and Options

Downtown's housing inventory has grown in recent years, with market-rate housing in new or redeveloped buildings joining a downtown residential scene that was long dominated by subsidized affordable housing. This emergence of downtown as a more balanced neighborhood with unique living options is key asset to nurture.



Expand Opportunities for Upward Mobility

Downtown is a highly accessible location with a range of entry-level to advanced employment opportunities. Maintaining and growing this level of diversity and accessibility is important. And so is ensuring that affordable residential opportunities continue to exist as downtown becomes a true neighborhood.

What will “getting the basics right” mean here?



Walnut Street's current success is a demonstration of getting the basics right in downtown Muncie. It represents highly focused investment on a few blocks to create something truly memorable. Remaining focused, instead of scattering investments, will be key, and creating a strong Walnut Street / Main Street axis to connect community assets will help to build critical mass.

City Neighborhoods

Muncie's neighborhoods range from quaint historic districts abutting downtown, to blocks of factory workers' cottages, to leafy curving boulevards. Conditions also range, however, from very healthy neighborhoods to those experiencing prolonged disinvestment.

Progress has been made over the past decade to organize neighborhoods and empower resident leaders through the work of MAP and other groups—a big and 'basic' step in the right direction.

Neighborhood quality of place is shaped by the condition of public infrastructure, from streets, to trees, to lighting, to parks. But it's also shaped by the upkeep of private property and how residents take their shared spaces. Is there litter? Is there a sense of collective pride? Does local character shine through?

Housing is the primary land use in Muncie's neighborhoods, so the condition of existing residential properties has an outsized impact on neighborhood health. Condition also influences the range of appealing options in a neighborhood. As conditions decline, the sense of having "good options" also declines.

Highly concentrated poverty at the neighborhood level has been found to be one of the most important limiting factors on upward economic mobility for low-income families. Disrupting these concentrations and providing more people with access to healthy neighborhood environments is critical, as is the use of educational institutions and partnerships to prepare children for success.

A focus on the fundamentals of neighborhood health—and how they manifest at the block level—is a basic and necessary step for Muncie's neighborhoods. That means:

- Resident leadership capacity grows
- Physical conditions improve
- Neighborhood image improves
- Markets improve (stronger demand, stronger supply)

Parks & Connective Corridors

Muncie has an impressive collection of large parks and smaller neighborhood parks. While long-term underinvestment has limited their potential to contribute to quality of life in Muncie, recent upticks in spending and the emergence of recreational trails indicate recognition that parks and trails are basic infrastructure.

The corridors in Muncie that connect parks and neighborhoods to each other and to downtown have often been overlooked as contributors to quality of life, but that, too, is changing.

Parkland is an obvious contributor to quality of place. But not all parks are quality spaces, especially if they feel unkempt, unsafe, or outdated.

Muncie's major corridors, long ago configured to prioritize cars, also have a big impact on how people experience the city. But most city corridors today exhibit very little sense of place or local pride.

The condition of parks and major streets influences how confident homeowners are about their neighborhoods and the degree to which reinvesting in their house makes sense. It also influences how interested prospective buyers are when they compare their options in Delaware County or the wider region.

In the past, parks have been sources of employment and skill development—putting people to work on improvements, maintenance, and programming. That could be the case again with a holistic approach to park investments.

Making a flashy park investment that deteriorates rapidly due to a lack of ongoing upkeep is a mistake that Muncie needs to avoid. Bringing annual spending on parks closer to par with peer cities is a 'basic' step that will help to sustain bigger investments in the future.

For Muncie's corridors, raising and enforcing standards will lead to a needed shift, over time, toward more appealing corridors and gateways.

Delaware County

In general, how do TogetherDM's priorities apply here?

Rural Land

Delaware County has a deep agricultural heritage and the vast majority of acreage outside of incorporated communities is still cultivated and still reflects this legacy of farming and rural life.

While farm output has been growing since 2000, the number of acres being farmed has actually dropped. Due to slow growth in the county, pressure to develop this land is limited and interest is growing in alternative uses, such as solar or wind electricity production.



Improve Quality of Place

Quality of place in rural communities—especially farming communities—is mostly shaped by experiences along country roads and highways. Detractors often include blighted or collapsing structures, development or signage that is insensitive to context, or dilapidated public infrastructure.



Strengthen Housing Condition and Options

The condition of housing in rural Delaware County is important for the agricultural workforce that lives outside of established neighborhoods and for people who prefer rural housing options. The condition of existing housing influences quality of life and quality of place, while the design and location of new housing on greenfield land has to be carefully considered for its long-term impact on infrastructure and land use.



Expand Opportunities for Upward Mobility

The agricultural economy in Delaware County has long been a source of upward economic mobility. While trends in farming have been towards larger farms growing major commodities with fewer and fewer workers, the potential for smaller farms with a more local and regional focus—that tie into local food industries—remains.

What will “getting the basics right” mean here?



Maintaining and enhancing the viability of farming as an economic activity is what getting the basics right means for rural Delaware County. Supplemental sources of income (such as energy production), new or improved connections to local or regional markets and processors, and reliable public infrastructure are all ways (among others) to promote the long-term viability of the farming economy.

Main Streets and Corridors

The small central business districts—or “Main Streets”—that serve Delaware County’s incorporated towns have long been important hubs of community life. Changes to the scale of retailing and services have dramatically changed how these districts are used and the demand for space, and most have experienced periods of decline.

The quality of these Main Streets, and how they connect to County and Town Neighborhoods, will play a big role in the future competitiveness of Delaware County and the strength of the communities they serve.

Delaware County’s Main Streets are, in many ways, the faces of its incorporated towns. The impression it gives to residents and visitors—tired and neglected, or vibrant, carefully maintained, and walkable—have an impact on levels of investment elsewhere and the degree to which businesses and people want to locate to or remain in the towns.

The condition of housing along or adjacent to Main Street corridors contributes to the “Quality of Place” impression that the Main Street gives off. The condition and types of housing near a Main Street also have an impact on the viability of businesses by providing nearby sources of disposable incomes to support neighborhood services.

Main Streets have historically served as incubators for small businesses and as sources of part-time employment to supplement family incomes. Having high quality commercial space and supportive services for small business development—including connections to the local agricultural economy—has the potential to nurture small, locally-owned businesses that are uniquely tied to their communities.

The basics for a healthier Main Street to emerge include infrastructure that makes a street feel safe and enjoyable to walk, design standards that support walkability, attention to a clear identity or brand, and the cultivation of cooperative relationships between building owners, businesses, and the markets they aim to serve.

County and Town Neighborhoods

While generally lower in density than neighborhoods in the City of Muncie, the residential areas in Delaware County’s incorporated towns and unincorporated communities share many of the same issues as urban neighborhoods. The condition of streets, the presence of blighted properties, and the quality of nearby amenities all have an influence on whether a block is healthy and in demand or declining.

Many county and town neighborhoods are older, and disinvestment (in private and public property) is a growing and more visible concern than it was a few decades ago.

Depending on the level of infrastructure that exists, quality of place in county and town neighborhoods is shaped by the condition of streets, trees, lighting, sidewalks, and any nearby public amenities. These factors, combined with the condition of private properties, shape whether these neighborhoods offer a strong or weak sense of place.

The condition of existing residential properties has a significant impact on the quality of place in county and town neighborhoods, and it shapes the degree to which current residents or potential buyers perceive the availability of good options. In areas that have experienced very little new development, or that have few apartments, options for different life stages may be very limited.

Distance from certain types of services and economic centers can make poverty an even more isolating experience in county and town neighborhoods than in more urban neighborhoods. If conditions in a rural neighborhood decline and lead to falling prices and rents that establish a pocket of concentrated poverty, the prospects for revitalization become slim.

As in city neighborhoods, a focus on the fundamentals of neighborhood health is a basic step towards achieving county and town neighborhoods where conditions are stable or improving, neighbors are engaged, and market conditions support reinvestment.

Future Land Use Map (FLUM)

TogetherDM’s three priorities—and how they are expressed across the place types in Muncie and Delaware County—are all directly or indirectly connected to how we use, or allow others to use, the land. More specifically, they inform how our urban and rural landscapes should be developed.



One of the primary functions of this comprehensive plan is to provide guidance for future growth and development and to assist the community in articulating its vision for land use. It serves as the foundation for the zoning ordinance and other land development regulations, which are the primary tools available to local governing bodies to help implement the comprehensive plan.

Unlike a zoning map, the Future Land Use Map does not include parcels, nor does it illustrate clear regulatory boundaries. This is intentional. This map functions as a generalized vision of the community’s land use over the next two decades. Future land use requirements should be implemented by way of an update to the City of Muncie’s and Delaware County’s Zoning Ordinances given that the land use map itself offers no regulatory authority.

The locations of land uses are based on an analysis of existing conditions and future needs, and the priorities developed throughout the comprehensive planning process. **The following guiding principles should be incorporated into a new city and county zoning map and associated ordinances to ensure proper alignment with TogetherDM:**

City of Muncie and Other Incorporated Areas



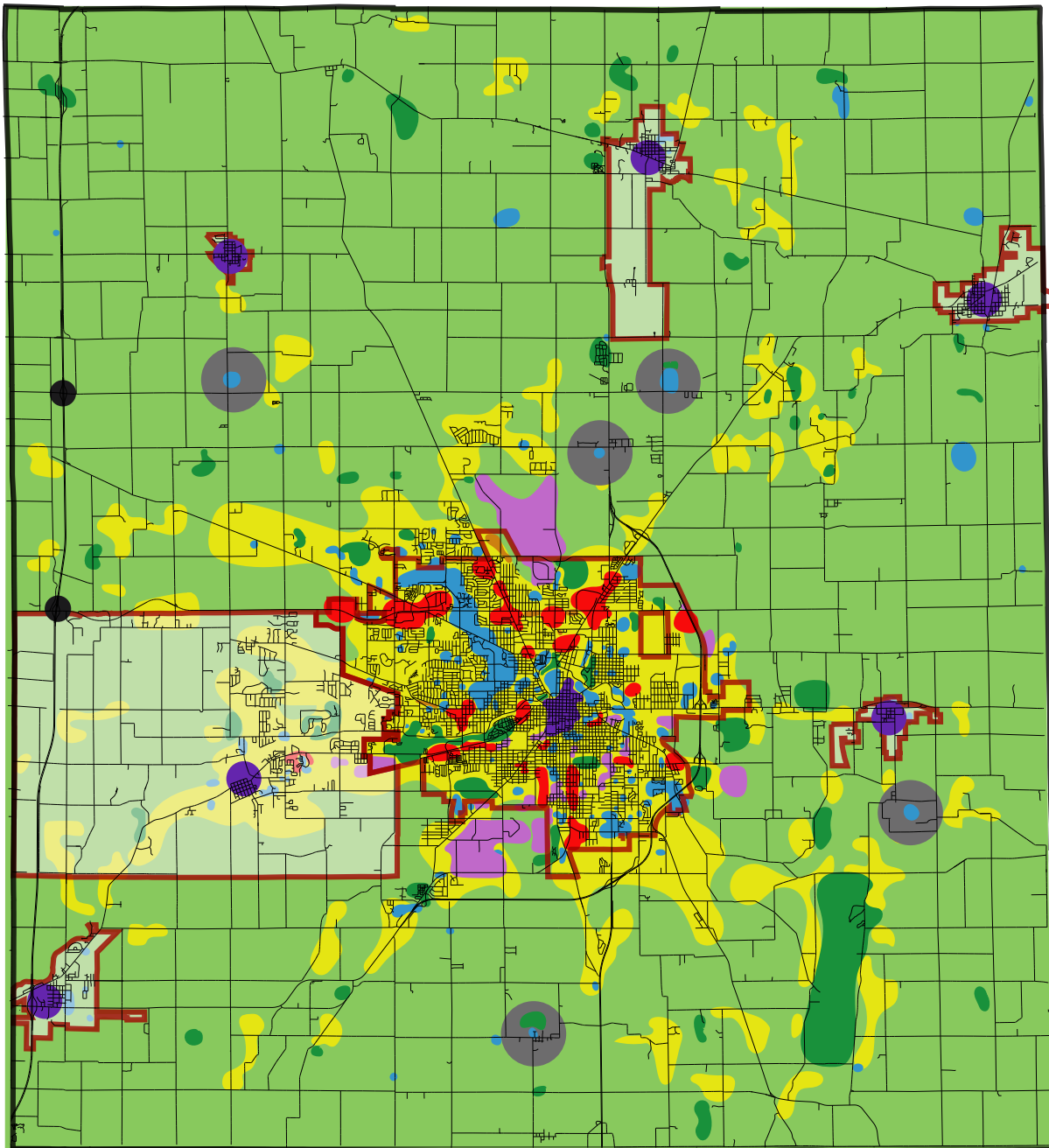
- Reduce the allowance of commercial corridor sprawl and focus the major commercial shopping areas into nodes to lay the foundation for mixed-use, higher density, walkable centers in the future.
- Permit neighborhood commercial development opportunities to punctuate residential neighborhoods—cafes, convenient commercial, grocers, etc.
- In residential neighborhoods where market strength is weak or declining and new development is unlikely, consider creative ways to reimagine the use of residential lots where housing has been demolished as park land and/or green infrastructure for storm water capture.

Unincorporated Delaware County



- Limit haphazard subdivision development while exploring village-style mixed-use development opportunities centered around schools where infrastructure already exists.
- Ensure that land use regulations protect the county’s agricultural and natural resources.
- Coordinate with the incorporated city and towns to direct future growth into their jurisdictional boundaries.

Delaware County - Muncie Future Land Use Map (FLUM)



Future Land Use Map Designations

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>Center City - Town Center</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Business District • Civic Core • Entertainment • Mixed Uses | <p>Commercial Nodes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial Uses • Vertical Residential Uses • * McGalliard Road only - Big Box Retail | <p>Warehouse - Industrial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warehouse • Light Industrial | <p>Residential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix of Residential Uses |
| <p>Village Mixed Use
Opportunity Areas for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convenient Commercial • Residential • School | <p>Corridor Mixed Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horizontal/Vertical Mixed Use (Commercial and Residential) to Connect Commercial Nodes | <p>Institutional Uses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University-Higher Education or Training • Schools • Religious Centers • Community Centers • Libraries | <p>Parks-Green Space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks, Cemeteries, Golf Courses, Playgrounds |
| | | | <p>Agriculture-Fallow Land</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farming, Forest, Pasture, Open Space |
| | | | <p>Transportation Centers</p> |

PART 4

Strategic Investment Plans

TogetherDM's two Strategic Investment Plans provide implementation guidance by applying TogetherDM's vision—the combination of its decision-making framework, priorities, and direction—to local contexts within the City of Muncie and Delaware County. They bring focused attention to initiatives and policies that can be expected to contribute to Delaware-Muncie's vision of the future.

As with any strategic investment or community action plan, it must be recognized that no single project or list of projects represents a guaranteed solution to a community's challenges. What is most important is the process by which stakeholders work together to focus their energies and resources, experiment together, assess progress together, and regularly update the strategic investment plans to reflect new opportunities and evolving conditions.

Both Strategic Investment Plans are organized according to the place types outlined in Part 3, with the content for each place type following the same structure.

MUNCIE

DELAWARE COUNTY

Downtown

City Neighborhoods

Parks and Connective Corridors

Rural Land

Main Streets and Corridors

County and Town Neighborhoods



The general aim of the proposed course of action for each place type

Connection to TogetherDM

How does this goal connect to TogetherDM's priorities, or "Big Things?"

How does this goal help to "get the basics right?"

What are some specific outcomes this goal will seek?



STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

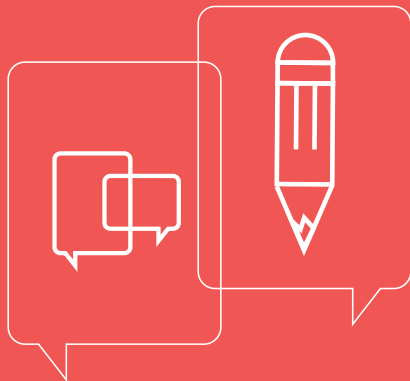
Context that should influence what happens where



Action Outline

What? Why? Who? How?

Principles for Strategic Investment



Core Values

Planning Principles

TogetherDM's decision-making framework—comprised of core values and planning principles—should help to guide the implementation of TogetherDM. This is especially true with regard to “how” implementation happens.

For example: Is the process behind a given activity as inclusive as possible? Does it take calculated risks? Is the public broadly informed about costs and benefits? Are local resources “first in” to demonstrate self-reliance? These and other questions reflect the manner in which consistency with TogetherDM's vision should be discussed and confirmed on a routine basis.

In addition to TogetherDM's core values and planning principles, additional principles for strategic investment are provided for application to these Strategic Investment Plans.

Unlike the planning principles from the decision-making framework which reflect Delaware-Muncie's core values, **these investment principles reflect Delaware-Muncie's soft market condition and the limiting effect this has on the region's implementation capacity. When these conditions exist, special care must be taken to ensure that every dollar and every ounce of energy invested is likely to make a meaningful difference.**

Strategic Investment Principles

Focused

Spreading scarce resources and attention over too wide an area, or across too many activities, severely limits impact. Whenever possible, resources should be concentrated.

Visible

An important complementary rule to focused investment is that of putting resources where impact will be visible and apparent to the community. Visibility ensures that positive signals are broadcast widely enough to build confidence and stimulate additional investment.

Asset-based

Focusing investments around assets is one way of getting visibility and generating returns at a higher rate—and at a faster pace—than focusing resources around liabilities. It also forces critical consideration of opportunity costs: in a community rich with assets, which ones offer the most return from focused investment?

Coordinated

When resources and capacity are both limited and likely to exist across a number of different entities, careful coordination ensures that energies and dollars are not being wasted on one-off projects with little hope for traction or sustainability.

Patient

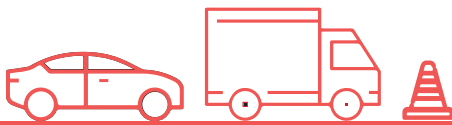
Conditions highlighted by TogetherDM—from roads in disrepair, to blighted houses, to concentrated poverty—don't happen overnight. Progress on these conditions will take time—more time than a few election cycles or grant cycles. The need for patience makes it ever more important that focused resources achieve some positive short-term outcomes in order to maintain long-term interest and momentum.

Common Activities or Requirements

The actions identified for each place type in these Strategic Investment Plans are tailored to translate TogetherDM's vision to the local contexts found throughout Muncie and Delaware County.

While many actions will pertain only to specific place types, there are some that pertain, in some way, to multiple or all place types. These common activities or requirements represent steps that will call for a high level of support and coordination across the community. And they represent important foundational steps that will contribute to the success of other activities. These include:

Investments in Roads and Streets



Better road and street conditions are needed everywhere in Delaware County and the City of Muncie. Current conditions reflect very limited levels of local investment in basic infrastructure over the past few decades. A community-wide commitment to improving road and street conditions—and putting more local dollars on the table to make the most of state and federal resources—will be needed for progress on this issue to occur anywhere in the county.

Plans to accelerate investments in roads and streets must also consider opportunities to decommission or downgrade some infrastructure, where appropriate, to reduce long-term maintenance costs.

Modernization of Development Regulations



Zoning ordinances in Delaware County are outdated. At their core, they reflect practices from the mid-20th century that often fail to deliver what communities are seeking today in terms of quality of place. Updates and patches have improved regulations in recent years, but a revamp is needed to ensure that development regulations and design standards fully reflect TogetherDM's vision.

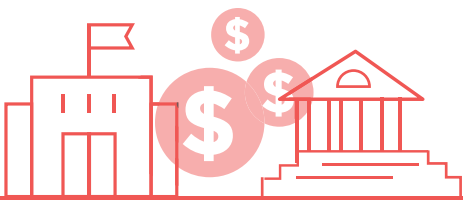
Upgrades to Planning, Enforcement, and Coordination Capacity



Modernization of development regulations will need to be followed-up by adequate resources to communicate and enforce those regulations.

More resources are also needed for planning in general, which is exceptionally under-resourced for a community of Delaware-Muncie's size. Implementation of TogetherDM will require a high level of coordination across a range of departments and municipal boundaries, as well as the retention of advanced technical and management skills.

Public and Private Investments



Successful implementation will require investments from a range of sources. And while federal and state funding could be important pieces of the puzzle, it is imperative that local resources play the leading role.

That means a greater commitment of local public resources will be needed—potentially through a higher county income tax, which is currently below the Indiana average. Philanthropy will also be critical. And individual property owners will play a decisive role if they feel confident about the community’s direction and invest accordingly.

Partnerships to Boost Education and Upward Mobility



While place-based initiatives can play a role in expanding economic opportunity and reducing concentrated poverty, improving levels of educational attainment will require long-term efforts by a web of partners working community-wide.

Cradle to Career Muncie represents the type of collective impact effort that will be needed to make and sustain this plan’s upward mobility goals, and is the type of partnership needed to advance much of TogetherDM’s vision.

A TogetherDM Coalition



To truly succeed, implementation of TogetherDM will need to be the work of a broad-based coalition of public, non-profit, and private entities all pulling in the same direction and supporting one another. More than anything, this is the “secret sauce” of communities that have successfully changed course over the past 50 years.

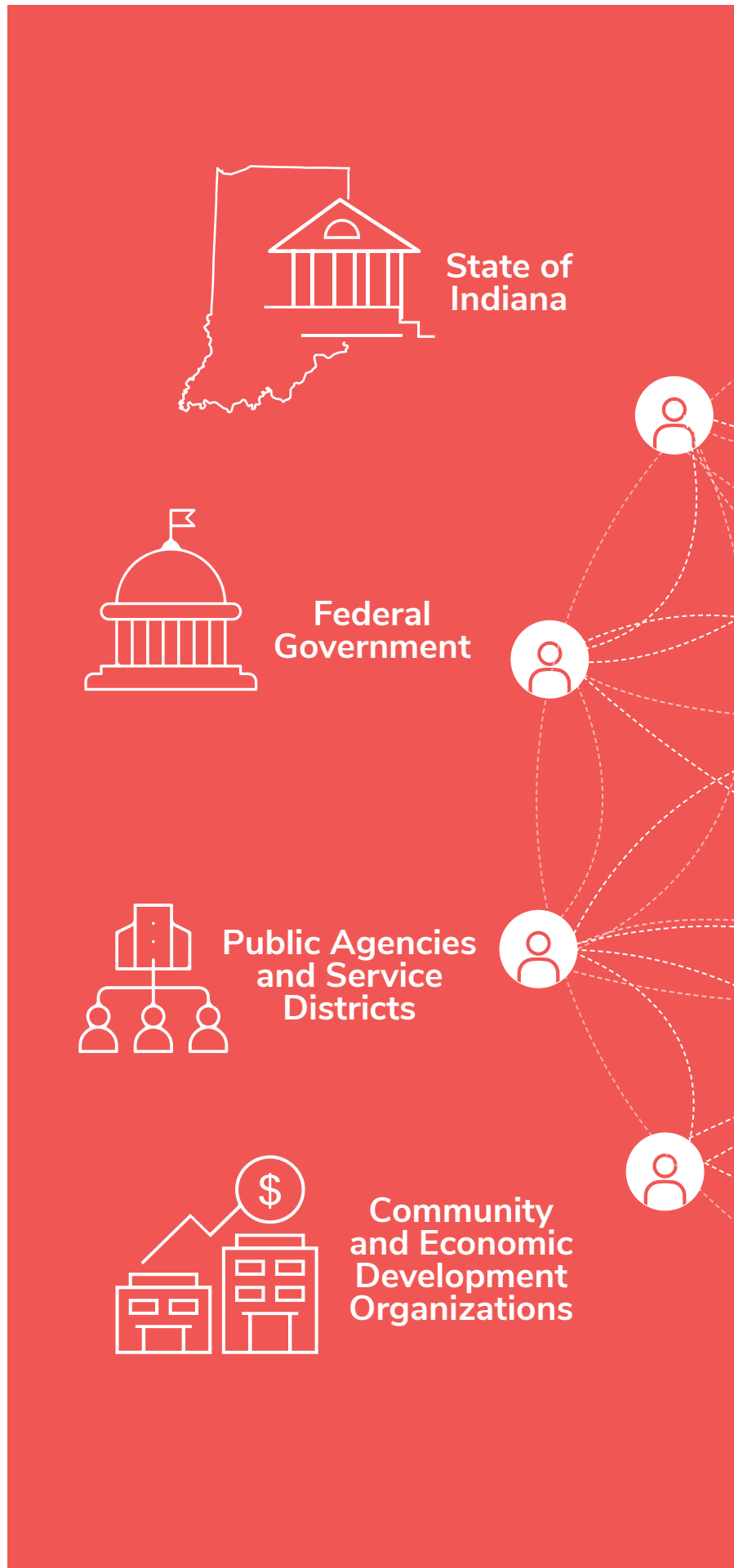
The work of the Muncie Action Plan (MAP) and other collaborative processes shows how well this model can work in Muncie and Delaware County, and scaling it up will be the key to realizing the outcomes laid out by this plan.

The coalition that will implement TogetherDM must be broad because a wide range of entities—large and small—working together have the potential to advance the region’s priority issues. A larger number of committed entities with their own combination of resources, skills, and authorities will mean faster progress and better results.

On one level, successful participation in this coalition will require commitments to align internal actions with TogetherDM’s decision-making framework. If an entity is taking an action that influences Quality of Place, for example, it should do so in a way that advances TogetherDM.

On another level, successful participation in this coalition will require high levels of coordination between partners—higher levels than have typically been practiced in Delaware-Muncie. This will make coordination of the overall coalition—to convene partners, keep track of who’s doing what, and to regularly assess and update action plans—a critical task.

Given their successful recent history of coordinating initiatives in different parts of the community, the Muncie Action Plan and the Delaware-Muncie Metropolitan Plan Commission are well-positioned to serve as overall coalition coordinators



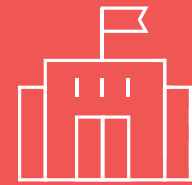
County and Local Governments



Businesses



Educational Institutions



Neighborhood Organizations



Philanthropies and Service Organizations



Health and Human Service Agencies



The Muncie Action Plan (MAP) Model

The Muncie Action Plan (MAP) has been cited as a model and a primary partner—along with the Delaware-Muncie Metropolitan Plan Commission—for implementation of TogetherDM and the Muncie Strategic Investment Plan. For over 10 years, MAP has been assisting in various ways to improve the Muncie community.

As context for blending previous MAP activities into the TogetherDM initiative, a summary of these activities is provided below. MAP has also provided annual reports to the community, which can continue as annual reporting on TogetherDM.

The Task Force initiatives that have organized MAP’s work all have direct ties to TogetherDM’s three Big Things and the three place types in the Muncie Strategic Investment Plan.



TASK FORCE 1
Linking Learning,
Health and Prosperity

This initiative seeks to strengthen the local economy by creating more employment opportunities and innovative collaboration efforts; developing a comprehensive, career oriented, life-long educational system; and promoting a community-based approach to health and wellness.



TASK FORCE 2
Fostering
Collaboration

This initiative addresses efforts to work together and to promote inclusion, engagement, and participation. The focus is on growing strong neighborhoods and providing resources to neighborhood associations.



TASK FORCE 3
Strengthening Pride
and Image

This initiative deals with finding creative solutions to unify the community’s identity, celebrate Muncie’s assets, increase awareness and participation in community events, and generate positive attitudes, excitement and optimism in Muncie’s future.



TASK FORCE 4
Creating Attractive
and Desirable Places

This initiative seeks to better manage the physical environment of the city in order to guide future land development, improve accessibility, and create a place that people can be proud of – a place in which people want to live, work, play, and visit.



TASK FORCE 5
Managing Community
Resources

This initiative addresses the protection of valuable natural and cultural resources, improvement of the community’s essential facilities and infrastructure, and promotion of environmentally sustainable practices.

Together DM Comprehensive Plan



Quality of Place



Housing Conditions & Options



Opportunities for Upward Mobility

Muncie Strategic Plan



Parks & Connective Corridors

City Neighborhoods

Downtown

Prioritized Checklist for 2022-2023

The Strategic Investment Plans for Muncie and Delaware County provide action outlines to guide the implementation process—the first 24 months of which will be crucial period to build a solid foundation for future work. While all of the activities identified on the action outlines are consistent with the aims of TogetherDM, the following represent a “must-do” list of essential tasks that will keep implementation on track.

Overall—City and County

TogetherDM Coalition Formed

A wide range of implementation partners coalesce as a well-organized and coordinated coalition.

Who: DMMPC and MAP

When: By third quarter, 2022

Development and Zoning Regulations Updated

Policies that regulate development and land uses in the City of Muncie and unincorporated areas of the county are updated to align with TogetherDM.

Who: DMMPC

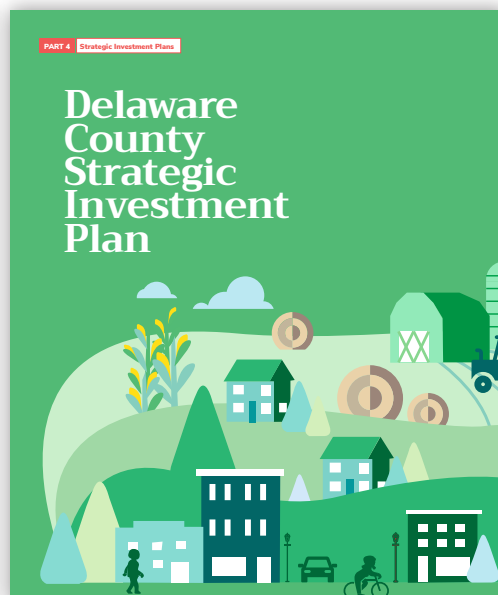
When: By end of 2023

Revenues for Infrastructure and Planning Identified

A revenue source(s) is identified to support accelerated investments in roads and streets throughout the county, and to support greater capacity for community planning and project management related to TogetherDM. by the end of 2022

Who: Delaware County, City of Muncie, and DMMPC

When: By end of 2022



Muncie

Street Paving and Streetscape Investment Plan Updated

Street paving and streetscape investment planning is updated to reflect TogetherDM's Quality of Place outcomes and is informed by a citywide street typology.

Who: City of Muncie Engineering Department and DMMPC

When: By end of 2022

Healthy Blocks Partnership Formed

A Healthy Blocks Partnership to implement TogetherDM's recommended approach to neighborhood action is formed as a subset of the TogetherDM Coalition.

Who: TogetherDM Coalition, MAP, DMMPC, and Muncie Land Bank

When: By second quarter of 2023

Downtown Infill Promotion Group Formed

A specialized downtown infill promotion group is formed as a subset of the TogetherDM Coalition. The group is charged with assembling the financial and regulatory tools needed to ensure high-quality infill and redevelopment in strategic downtown locations.

Who: TogetherDM Coalition, Muncie Downtown Development Partnership, and private development stakeholders

When: By second quarter of 2023

Public/Private Investment Model for Parks Identified

An investment model that supplements City spending on parks with private sector support (known as "Friends of Parks" in some places and as parks conservancies in others) is identified and embraced in order to accelerate reinvestment in Muncie's parks and recreation system.

Who: City of Muncie Parks Department and TogetherDM Coalition's philanthropic and corporate members

When: By end of 2023

Delaware County

Capital Improvement Plan for County Road Projects Developed

A plan that outlines where road improvement dollars will be invested over the coming two years is developed and updated annually to provide predictability with regard to when and where improvements will occur.

Who: Delaware County Engineering Department and DMMPC

When: By end of 2022

Funding to Accelerate Blight Remediation is Identified

Recent upticks in resource allocation to address blighted properties in unincorporated parts of Delaware County are maintained and added to support a higher pace of demolitions and/or mediated rehabs.

Who: Delaware County, DMMPC, and TogetherDM Coalition

When: By end of 2023

Support for Collaborative Parks and Recreation Planning Grows

A countywide approach to planning for the future of parks and recreation assets—and investing where gaps and needs are identified—attains broad support. A Delaware-Muncie Parks and Recreation Plan supported by jurisdictions across the county becomes a feasible next step.

Who: DMMPC and TogetherDM Coalition

When: By end of 2023

Muncie Strategic Investment Plan



Downtown

pg 62

City Neighborhoods

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Parks and Connective Corridors

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This TogetherDM Strategic Investment Plan for the City of Muncie builds on the strong track record of citywide strategic planning that began with the Muncie Action Plan (MAP) in 2009-10 and has continued through subsequent MAP updates. It reflects MAP’s focus on collaborations across sectors—public and private—as the key to forward movement on critical issues and to building a community-wide sense of ownership over the work and the results.

Three place types are used by this plan to organize actions that align with TogetherDM’s priorities and direction, and each place type identifies an overarching goal that relates to existing conditions and their influence on strategy.

The Action Outlines identified in this plan represent the most malleable part of this document and should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis by the TogetherDM Coalition to ensure that they reflect current opportunities, the community’s capacity to implement, and progress made.

Downtown Muncie



Make Walnut Street Exceptional & Connect Downtown to Community Assets

Continue to make downtown Muncie the great place it can be by heightening (not relaxing) the focus on Walnut Street and making deliberate connections to adjacent assets.



Historically, Downtown Muncie was the indisputable civic, social, and economic core of the city. It occupied a special place in the hearts of area residents and was larger than life for those who had only limited opportunities to take advantage of its shopping and entertainment offerings. After decades of disinvestment, Downtown has been making a comeback as the center of the community – literally and symbolically. While McGalliard Road and Bethel Avenue continue to see the lion’s share of economic investment, these areas can’t and don’t capture the imagination of the community’s residents.

Downtown’s ongoing rebirth has been intentional and is the direct result of partnerships among the City, private enterprises, and nonprofit organizations. The launch of the Muncie Downtown Development Partnership in 1983 was instrumental to realizing the successes to date. Walnut Street is a special place and the vibrancy of the restaurants attest to the payoffs associated with streetscape improvements, the 75 days of programmed events between May and December, and many other economic initiatives that have been necessary to turn the area around.

But Downtown is not finished. There is still a lot of work that must be done to ensure that Downtown realizes its full potential. This work will require a more proactive approach by City Hall as an equal partner with the Muncie Downtown Development Partnership, a continued focus on making Walnut Street one of Indiana’s best streets, and thoughtfully connecting Downtown’s renewed energy to nearby community assets.



Downtown Muncie



Make Walnut Street Exceptional & Connect Downtown to Community Assets

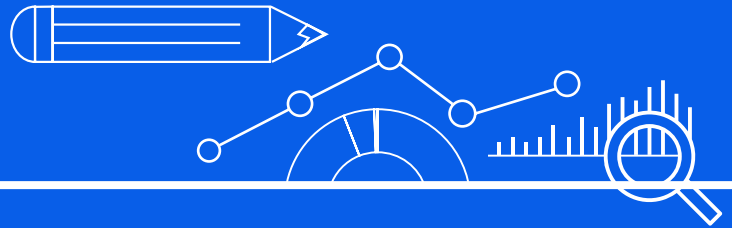
Continue to make downtown Muncie the great place it can be by heightening (not relaxing) the focus on Walnut Street and making deliberate connections to adjacent assets.



How does this approach connect to the Big Things?

Downtown is not done. The successes of the past ten years cannot be taken for granted and require additional and frequent infusions of local energy and funding. The special character that has been cultivated on Walnut Street should set the precedent for future variations along Main Street west to the White River Canal District and east to the Madjax Makerforce space, ultimately **Strengthening the Quality of Places**. Residential development in and near Downtown will **Improve Housing Conditions and Options** and new businesses and opportunities focused along Walnut and Main Streets will **Expand Opportunities for Upward Mobility** by providing job opportunities that don't yet exist in Muncie.





How does it serve ‘getting the basics right?’

Downtown is the core of the community and its success is critical to the viability of the City’s neighborhoods, those nearby in particular. While many buildings have been lost to demolition and it will take time to see infill buildings replace them where a parking lot is now situated, Walnut Street and Main Street are the two foundational streets that should be the focus for incentives for new infill buildings. Creating the sense of completion along these heavily trafficked streets and connecting to valuable community assets is essentially **‘getting the basics right’** for Downtown.

What are some specific outcomes this approach will aim for?

Walnut Street and Main Street are the locations for new infill projects Downtown

Community assets such as the White River/ TuheyPark, the MadjaxMakerforce/Masonic Temple block, Canan Park/Courtyard Marriott and the Muncie Fieldhouse are enhanced and seamlessly connected by Walnut and Main Streets

New residents move into Downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods, and the ¾ mile between each of these community assets is comfortably walkable



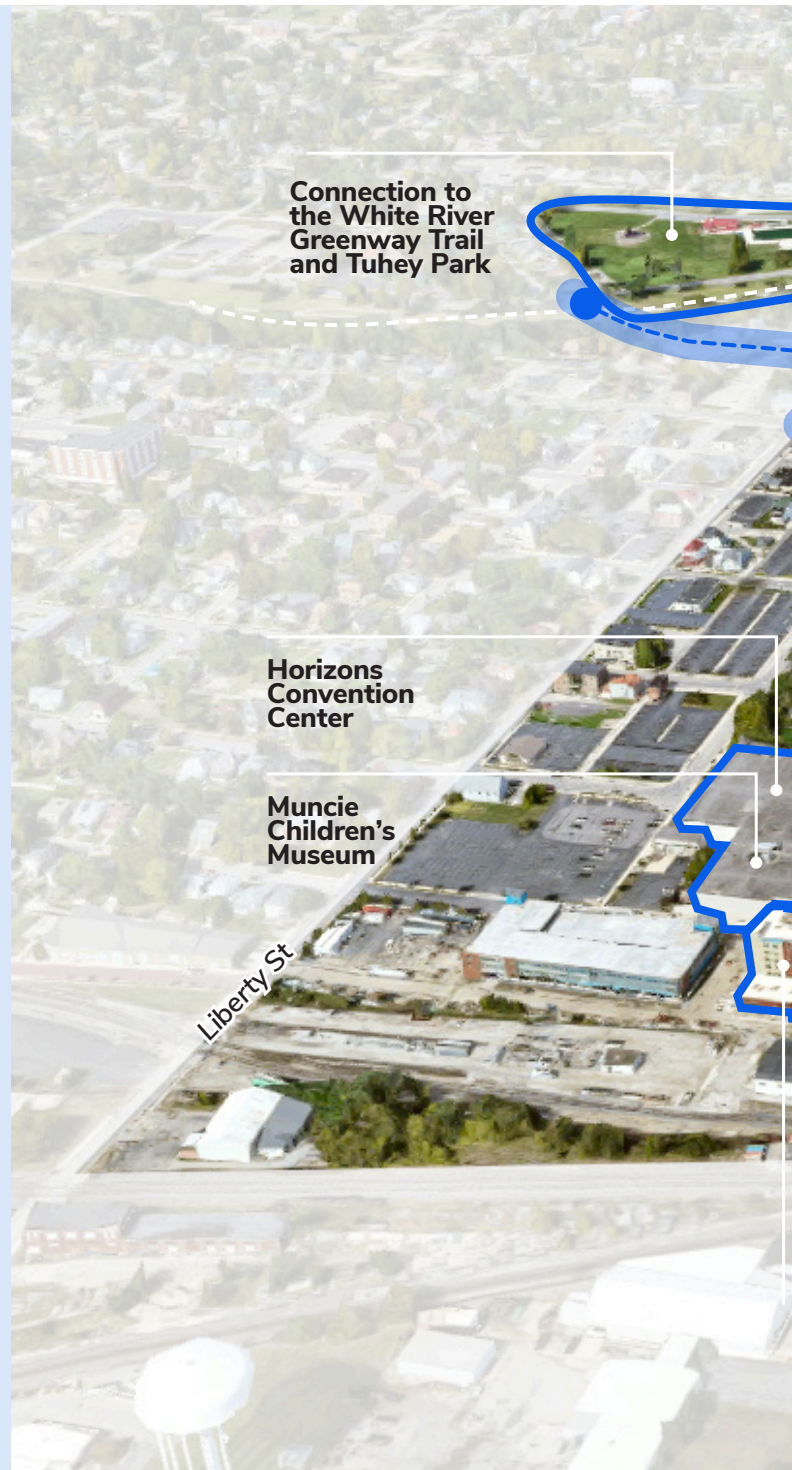
Downtown Muncie

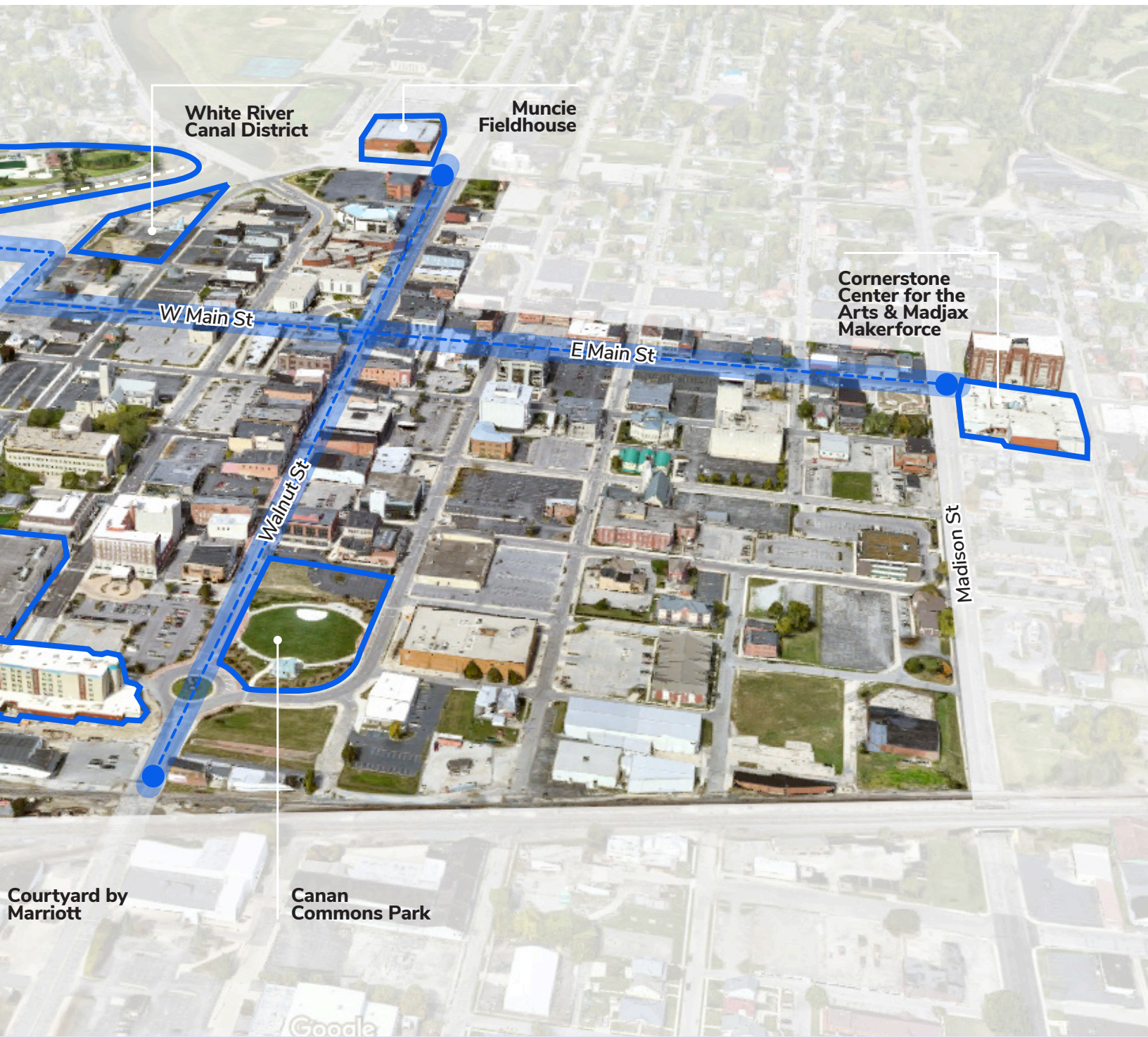


STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #1 Focus public and private investments along Walnut Street and Main Street

Today’s Downtown Muncie is generally associated with the stretch of Walnut Street between Charles Street and Main Street. These three blocks are special in terms of architecture, entertainment opportunities, and streetscape finishes. But they end abruptly. Muncie can and must support a larger, more sustained area of vitality—one that connects this core area to other community assets.

These efforts to expand and connect must be concentrated, however, and cannot be spread across the historic downtown footprint—an area of 100 acres that is simply too large for present or anticipated levels of demand. Instead, much can be achieved by focusing investment energy along two key cross streets: Walnut Street and Main Street. These corridors are identifiable by most residents as ‘Downtown’ and should be reinforced as such. Without strategic infill development along these streets, Downtown won’t have the appearance, scale, or critical mass necessary to become the economic engine that it needs to be for the City of Muncie.





Downtown Muncie



STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #2

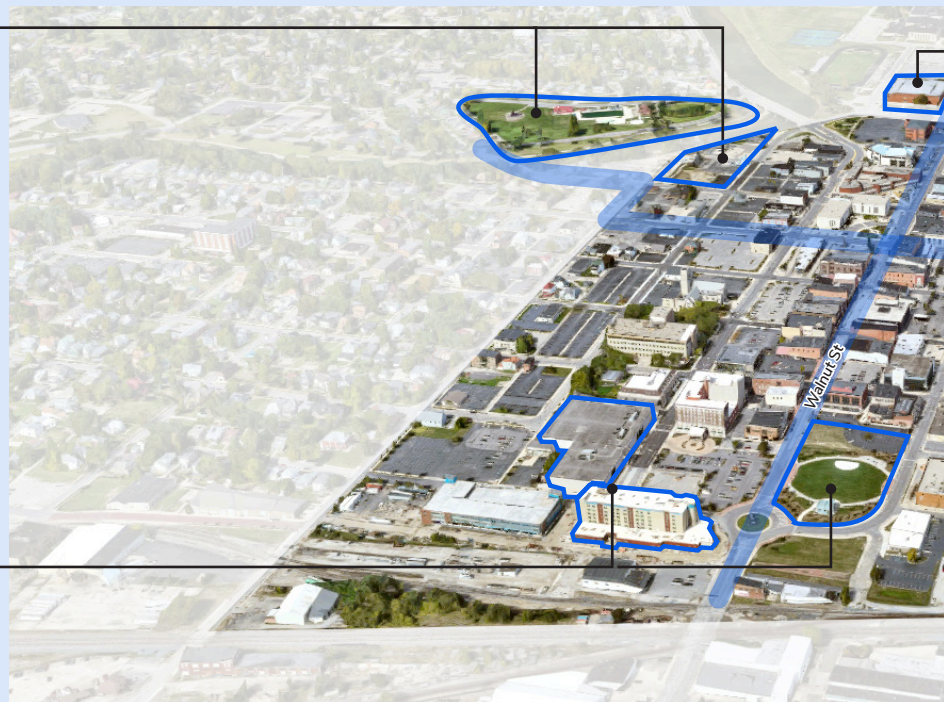
Capitalize on the community assets that frame the Downtown area

The City of Muncie has many community assets in and around Downtown, but they feel disconnected. Most of these assets tend to be located along Main and Walnut Streets, providing additional rationale to direct all efforts—resources, funding, and political support—to making these streets great.

Specifically, there are **four clusters of community assets** strategically positioned just over a half-mile apart, from east to west and north to south, that should serve as connected anchor points for Downtown Muncie.

Western Anchor

On the western edge of Downtown and just across the White River is Tuhey Park and the trail system along the river. Before you cross the river is the White River Canal District—a redevelopment project that will include new residential and commercial uses. Presently, the riverfront feels distant and inaccessible from Downtown. While TogetherDM strongly recommends infill efforts remain focused along Walnut and Main Streets, there may be opportunities for the City and private investors to begin re-imagining blocks adjacent to the old courthouse square that was located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Main Street and Walnut Street. With strategic infill in this area along Main and Washington Streets, between Walnut and Liberty Streets, the river and the emerging Canal District could become a very accessible local asset for all Downtown residents and visitors.



Southern Anchor

Shoring up the south end of Walnut Street is the **Courtyard by Marriott, Horizon Convention Center** and **Canan Commons Park**. All of these community assets are in very good condition and reflect the benefit of their young age and/or maintenance investments.





Northern Anchor

At the north end of Downtown is the **Muncie Fieldhouse**, a beautiful gymnasium built in 1928 for the Muncie Central High School Bearcats that has fallen into disrepair over the last decade. This building provides an iconic focal point as visitors enter the Downtown from the north and should be rehabilitated to its former glory.



Eastern Anchor

On the east side of Downtown, at the intersection of Madison and Jackson Streets, is the aptly named

Madjax Makerforce facility that provides space for budding entrepreneurs to rent as they launch their businesses. Across the street is the **Masonic Temple building** that houses the **Cornerstone Center for the Arts** offices.

This magnificent building is currently underutilized and should be restored for residential use and/or consideration for Ball State University student apartments for those wanting to live in an edgy Downtown location.



Downtown Muncie



STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #3

Support additional—and concentrated—residential development

Retail and services follow households. If underutilized second and third floors of many of the buildings along Main and Walnut Streets are rehabilitated to provide living space, the built-in clientele for downtown businesses will grow and make it an even more compelling place for non-residents to visit. Whether for young residents needing an apartment, or empty-nesters needing step-down housing and less space to maintain, or new student housing for Ball State University, downtown should be a compelling residential option.

Within the general Downtown area, there are approximately 1,100 (1.5% of Muncie’s total population) at the present time. While the population for similar sized cities in America varies considerably, a city of Muncie’s size should have about 5% (3,400 people) of the city’s population downtown to achieve a self-sustaining sense of viability. Based on data analysis from the Muncie Downtown Development Partnership, Downtown currently has a 98% residential occupancy rate—an indication of the demand to live in Downtown as well as the limited supply.

While there may be a temptation to develop downtown’s numerous parking lots with new infill buildings, this should not be the focus. The sea of parking, specifically on the east side of downtown, is vast and scattered, and there are limited opportunities to create a cohesive neighborhood environment in the near-term. Instead, the City and its partners should incentivize new residential development (through adaptive reuse of existing building or new infill) solely along Main and Walnut Streets to create a critical mass of residential energy.

**Downtown Muncie
Desired Population Growth**



The City and its partners should plan to add approximately 50 new residents to the Downtown for the first decade and then increase this annual goal to 100 new residents



STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #4

Strengthen connections to adjacent neighborhoods

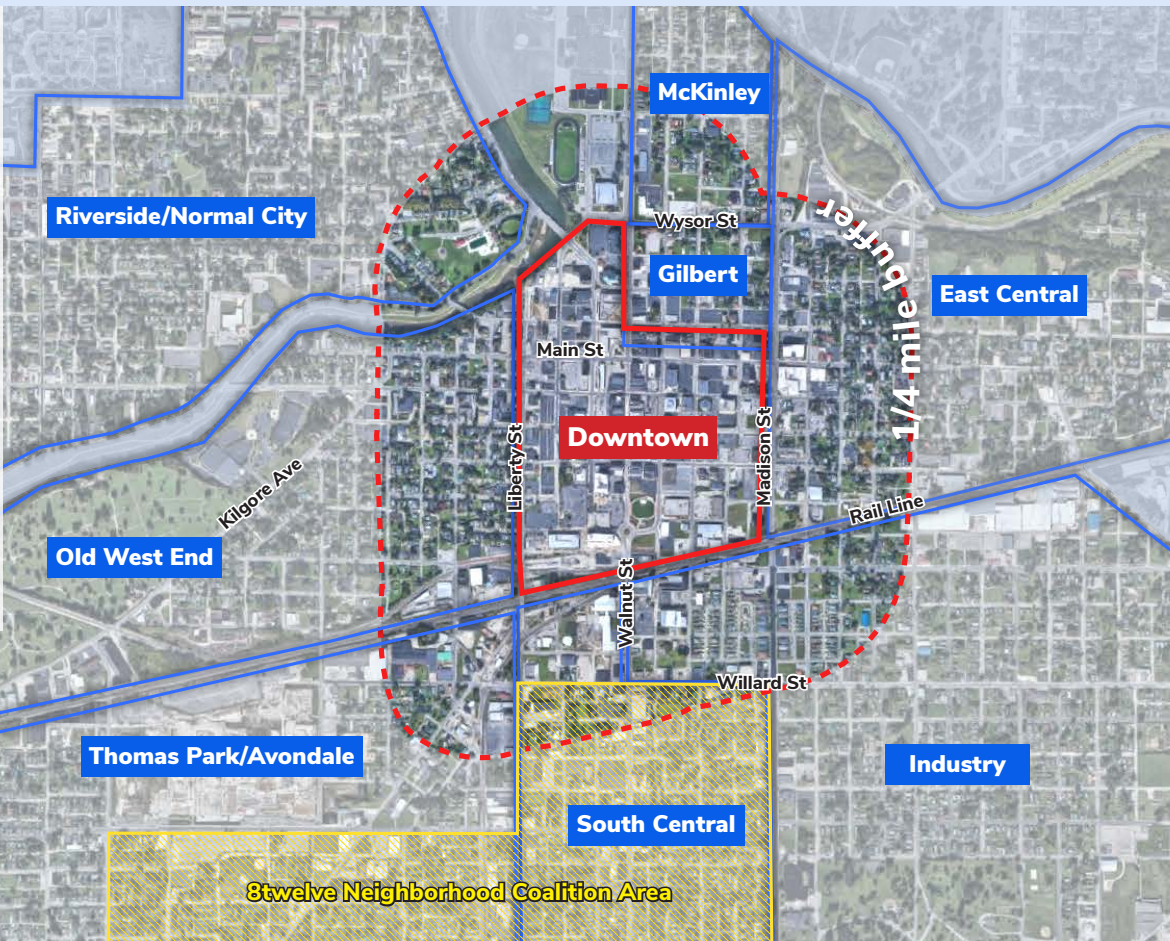
Downtown is a neighborhood and competes with every other neighborhood for residents, new development, and recognition. This competition need not come at the expense of others if proximity to a strong downtown becomes an important selling point for neighborhoods across the city.

This is especially true for the eight neighborhoods that are next to downtown.

These eight neighborhoods, which declined during the late 20th century, should benefit from their proximity to downtown’s many employment, service, and entertainment offerings. Just as importantly, downtown should benefit from a surrounding residential base that feels connected to downtown and spends money there.

Riverside/Normal City	4,405 residents
Old West End	1,416 residents
McKinley	484 residents
Gilbert	217 residents
East Central	1,014 residents
Thomas Park/Avondale	4,026 residents
South Central	1,066 residents
Industry	1,842 residents

A focus on Quality of Place in the downtown area should include attention to the transitions between downtown and these neighborhoods, and ensure that they feel as integrated as possible.



Downtown Muncie



Make Walnut Street Exceptional & Connect Downtown to Community Assets

Action Outline

WHAT

Focus infill efforts along Walnut Street and Main Street to create visible connections to community assets – infill the ‘cross’ - See Considerations 1 & 2

Provide residential development incentives within the Downtown neighborhood - See Consideration 3

Ensure quality streetscape maintenance and improvements along Walnut Street and expand some of those improvements to Main Street - See Considerations 1 & 2

Make certain that adjacent neighborhoods feel well connected to Downtown - See Consideration 4

Update zoning code and design standards for the Downtown neighborhood

WHY	WHO	HOW
The Downtown neighborhood is quite large and will take decades to infill but the main corridors should be the focus of all infill efforts over the next 10 years	Muncie Downtown Development Partnership, City of Muncie, Ball Brothers Foundation,, and DMMPC	Strict delineation of special incentives – grants, TIF, free architectural design, tax abatements, etc. – to infill the ‘cross’ corridors
Existing and future commercial development – retail, restaurants, entertainment – is strengthened by its proximity to nearby customers	Ball Brothers Foundation, Next Muncie, City of Muncie, and public/private/nonprofit partnerships	Significant residential infill in the Downtown neighborhood will require financial incentives until the private market can justify the risk on its own
Walnut Street feels special and wonderful as a result of recent streetscape improvements; similar improvements along Main Street would reinforce Walnut Street and create new build opportunities	Muncie Downtown Development Partnership, City of Muncie Public Works, possible Business Improvement District (BID)	Supplement County and State resources with local resources as needed
It is necessary that intentional work is done to build the social and physical connections necessary between – expand the presence of Downtown	Muncie Downtown Development Partnership, City of Muncie, DMMPC, and neighborhood organizations	Coordinate with the City of Muncie to prioritize high quality corridor transitions between Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods for pedestrians; coordinate with any work by the Healthy Blocks Partnership (see City Neighborhoods)
The zoning code is the primary tool the city can use to ensure future development patterns are aligned with the comprehensive plan	DMMPC	Commit existing staff and budget for professional services provided by planning / code consultant

City Neighborhoods



Nurture Healthy Blocks for Healthy Neighborhoods

Cultivate partnerships around comprehensive, block-level strategies that utilize a wide range of tools to cover the fundamentals of neighborhood health.



Notable strides have been made since 2010 to lay a groundwork for healthier neighborhoods in Muncie. There are more neighborhood associations with more volunteers, hundreds of blighted properties have been removed or renovated, and a wider range of partners—such as those in the 8twelve Coalition—are working to combine resources for greater impact.

But progress has often felt frustratingly slow or fleeting. And the number and scale of issues to address—such as the 6,100 properties that showed signs of deferred maintenance in the TogetherDM condition survey—remain daunting.

In light of the strides made and the challenges that persist, this plan's goal for Muncie's neighborhoods is **the achievement of healthier neighborhoods one block at a time**. Whole-block strategies, supported by the right partners and resources, have the potential to stimulate revitalization in a way that is tangible, builds confidence, spreads a sense of collective ownership, and inspires action on successive blocks.

City Neighborhoods



Nurture Healthy Blocks for Healthy Neighborhoods

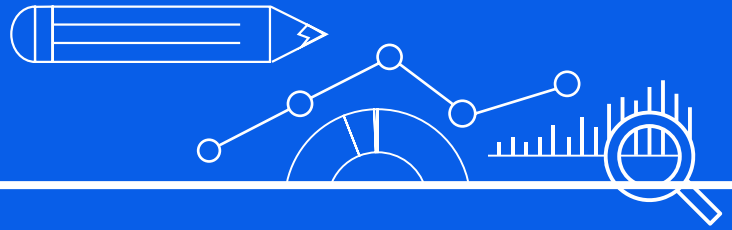
Cultivate partnerships around comprehensive, block-level strategies that utilize a wide range of tools to cover the fundamentals of neighborhood health.



How does this approach connect to the Big Things?

Housing represents the largest land use in most neighborhoods. Consequently, any effort to **Improve Housing Conditions and Options** will impact neighborhood health and quality of life. Stronger housing conditions, along with improvements to the public spaces that shape our experience of neighborhoods—from streets, to trees, to parks—will also serve to **Strengthen Quality of Place**. And when affordable housing options are distributed more evenly across neighborhoods that provide stable environments for low-income families—with access to well-resourced early learning programs—they become part of a toolkit to **Expand Opportunities for Upward Mobility**.





How does it serve ‘getting the basics right?’

Neighborhood well-being boils down to **four basic factors to get right that reinforce one another**: the health of the housing market (how strong is demand and how marketable is the supply), the capacity of residents to manage neighborhood affairs and advocate for their interests, the condition of public and private property, and the image projected by the neighborhood. This approach strives to nurture these factors at the fundamental unit of neighborhood action: the block.

What are some specific outcomes this approach will aim for?

Whenever a block receives focused attention, the following outcomes should be sought from a comprehensive block-level strategy:

- The market improves
- Physical conditions improve
- Resident engagement and leadership capacity improve
- Image improves

City Neighborhoods



STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #1

Aim for healthy neighborhood outcomes

Four related outcomes will serve as the best indications of progress towards achieving healthy blocks and healthy neighborhoods. If a market is stabilizing or improving, if conditions are getting better, if resident leadership capacity is growing, and if image and perceptions are becoming more positive, neighborhood health is moving in the right direction.

While a range of additional social, economic, and environmental outcomes are likely to be important to many stakeholders, a consistent focus on these four will put neighborhoods and the City of Muncie in a position to achieve a wider range of outcomes.



Proposed Outcome

Market improves

Conditions improve

Resident engagement and leadership capacity improve

Image improves

Why?

Home prices that appreciate at the rate of inflation or higher will indicate enhanced neighborhood desirability and will encourage reinvestment by owners

An increase in the proportion of properties that are well-maintained and a decrease in the proportion of properties in trouble will improve confidence and reinforce demand

A sense of ownership and agency makes residents more likely to manage issues effectively at the neighborhood level

A good or improving image builds neighborhood self-confidence and makes it more competitive in the regional market

Measurement(s)

- Trend in median home value
- Trend in average sale prices
- Trend in median gross rent

- Trend in share of properties in excellent or good condition
- Trend in share of properties that show visible signs of deferred maintenance
- Condition of major streets and public amenities

- Presence of active neighborhood assn. or informal clubs
- Stable or rising rate of owner-occupancy

- Internal and external impressions of the neighborhood are favorable or improving



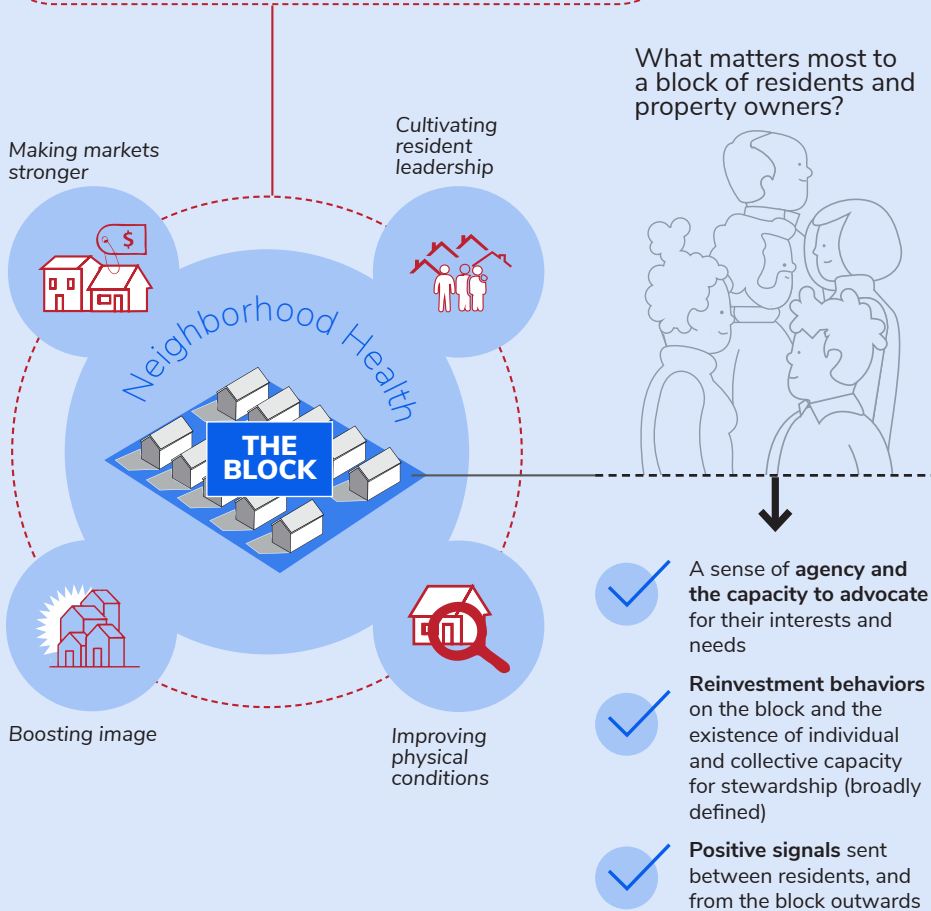
STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #2

Develop whole-block strategies with diverse partnerships

The development of block-level strategies will help Muncie avoid two related strategic mistakes: (1) completing one-off projects that fail to address other issues that undermine the health of a block and (2) scattering resources too widely to have a sustained impact. The block as a geographic unit is small enough that coordinated interventions by a wide range of stakeholders can make a profound difference if they address interconnected issues and cultivate a lasting sense of resident ownership for the block’s long-term health.

Simple, small-scale strategies at the block level—with residents and property owners at the center of the action—will help promote confidence and healthy behaviors...

and should leverage resources and expertise, as needed, from a range of potential partners.



- City of Muncie**
 Mayor’s Office
 City Council
 Community Development
 Police
 Public Works/Streets
 Building Commissioner
 Parks

- Other Public Agencies and Boards**
 Muncie Redevelopment Commission
 Muncie Community Schools
 Delaware-Muncie Metropolitan Plan Commission
 Muncie Arts and Culture Council
 Muncie Sanitary District
 Muncie Land Bank
 Delaware County Commissioners and Council
 County Auditor and County Treasurer

- Private and Non-Governmental Entities**
 Private builders and developers
 Realtors
 Regional lenders
 Muncie Action Plan
 MAP’s Neighborhood Leadership Council
 Neighborhood Associations
 8twelve Coalition
 BSU Building Better Neighborhoods Program
 BSU College of Architecture and Planning
 Pathstone Indiana
 Habitat for Humanity
 EcoRehab of Muncie
 Ball Brothers Foundation
 Community Foundation of Muncie & Delaware County

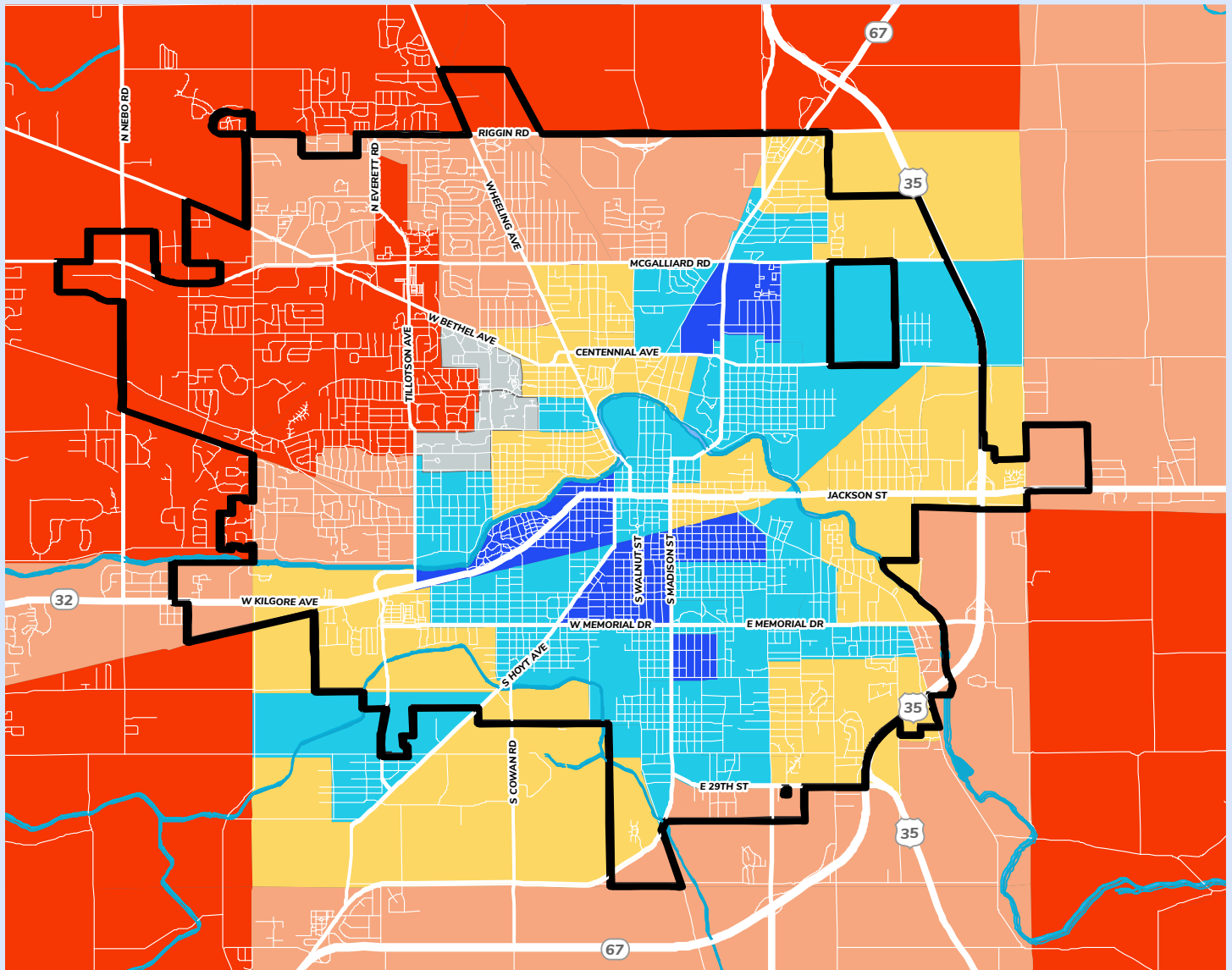
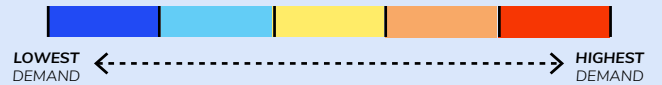
City Neighborhoods



STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #3 Use market conditions to craft realistic strategies

Market conditions should always inform the development of neighborhood strategies. Where demand is stronger, the private sector can be counted on to be a significant source of any investment equation. Where demand is lower, public investment must play an outsized role to stabilize and strengthen the market so that private investment can play a bigger role. If this distinction is not accounted for, public interventions will almost always be too little to have a lasting impact.

**Housing Market Demand Typology
in the City of Muncie**



Using Market Conditions to Inform Strategy

MARKET TYPE	HIGHEST DEMAND	HIGHER DEMAND	AVERAGE DEMAND	LOWER DEMAND	LOWEST DEMAND
Strategic Aims	Protect and maintain existing strength; do not allow to slip	Prevent decline on vulnerable blocks, where one or two properties pose a threat to stability and confidence	Prevent decline on vulnerable blocks, where one or two properties pose a threat to stability and confidence	Revitalize in a targeted manner, especially near community assets	Cultivate stability; reestablish a sense of agency and pride
Intervention Types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic code enforcement and compliance assistance • Acquire and mediate disposition of vulnerable properties on stable blocks or near key assets; invest in repairs that will improve marketability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic code enforcement and compliance assistance • Resident leadership cultivation and engagement • Home reinvestment and homeownership programs • Acquire and mediate disposition of vulnerable properties on stable blocks or near key assets; invest in repairs that will improve marketability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic code enforcement and compliance assistance • Resident leadership cultivation and engagement • Home reinvestment and homeownership programs • Acquire and mediate disposition of vulnerable properties on stable blocks or near key assets; invest in repairs that will improve marketability • Targeted acquisition and demolition of unsalvageable homes; mothball properties with strategic value but unlikely to find a strong buyer • Acquire vacant land to clean, green, and hold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic code enforcement and compliance assistance • Resident leadership cultivation and engagement • Home reinvestment and homeownership programs • Resident leadership cultivation and engagement • Targeted acquisition and demolition of unsalvageable homes; mothball properties with strategic value but unlikely to find a strong buyer • Acquire vacant land to clean, green, and hold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic code enforcement and compliance assistance • Targeted demolition of unsalvageable homes • Resident leadership cultivation and engagement • Targeted acquisition and demolition of unsalvageable homes; mothball properties with strategic value but unlikely to find a strong buyer • Acquire vacant land to clean, green, and hold

City Neighborhoods




STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #4

Make the most of limited resources by investing the right way in the right locations


Limited resources will mean, of course, that only so many blocks can be the subject of focused attention at any given time. Selecting blocks that are good candidates for certain types of strategies will increase the odds of success on those blocks and the probability that those successes will serve as models—and inspiration for—other blocks in the city.

Importantly, a focus on specific blocks for specific strategies is not the same thing as withdrawing services and resources from other blocks. It is recognition that making a difference requires focus, and that each block that becomes healthy from focused attention will contribute to the City of Muncie's fiscal capacity to provide high-quality services citywide.


Strategic Guidance for Focused Work in Muncie Neighborhoods

-  **Reinvestment Areas, Type A**


These are blocks that are largely stable with modest levels of deferred maintenance. Strategic investments have a high probability of making these blocks stronger and spurring reinvestment by neighbors. Small investments of the right type have the potential to yield short-term success and prevent problems from worsening and getting more expensive to solve over time.

 **Reinvestment Areas, Type B**

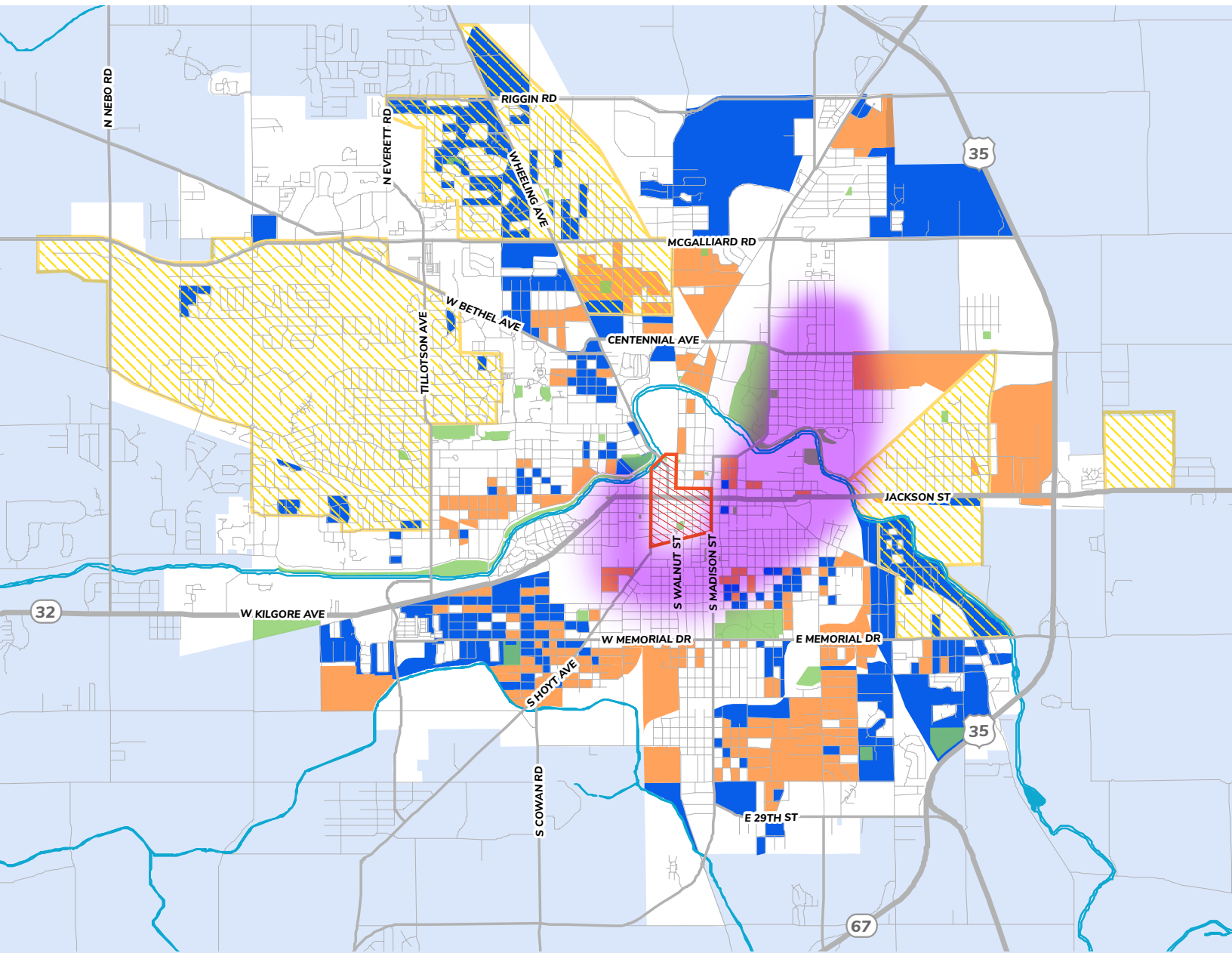
These are blocks that have higher levels of deferred maintenance than Type A Reinvestment Areas, but these blocks still retain a number of healthy properties. Larger investments are needed here to bolster confidence and manage the encroachment of blight, but there are identifiable strengths to build from.





 **Core Stabilization and Revitalization Areas**

The Reinvestment Areas (both types) are stable enough to support the whole-block revitalization approach a single block at a time. In the Core Stabilization and Revitalization Areas, however, weaker demand and more distressed housing conditions require work on a larger scale. Any intervention here should be prepared (1) to focus on several blocks at a time to make any improvements sustainable and (2) for the work to rely more heavily on public dollars due to low levels of private demand.

 **Inclusion Areas**

Inclusion Areas are blocks where markets are relatively strong and there are below-average concentrations of lower income households. Investing affordable housing resources in these areas—preferably in mixed-income developments—will create accessible housing in areas of greater economic opportunity and avoid reinforcing high concentrations of poverty elsewhere.



-  Reinvestment Areas, Type A
-  Downtown Muncie
-  Core Stabilization and Revitalization Areas
-  Reinvestment Areas, Type B
-  Parks
-
-  Inclusion Areas

Note: Areas that are highlighted on this map, as well as areas not highlighted, would benefit from interventions that are appropriate for the market types outlined under Strategic Consideration #3.

City Neighborhoods



Nurture Healthy Blocks for Healthy Neighborhoods

Action Outline

WHAT

Establish a “Healthy Blocks Partnership” to identify opportunities for concerted interventions, develop block-level strategies with residents, and coordinate a wide range of tools to advance block-level health - See Considerations 2-4

Expand neighborhood coordination capacity to make a “Healthy Blocks Partnership” feasible and sustainable; designate a full-time coordinator - See Consideration 2

Create matching grant programs to promote home improvements and neighborhood beautification, especially in Reinvestment Areas - See Consideration 4

Create capital fund to support strategic acquisition of troubled properties in areas targeted by healthy blocks approach; use funds for rehab or demolition as appropriate - See Considerations 3 & 4

Coordinate affordable housing investment plans to ensure that investments promote access to economic opportunity and do not reinforce concentrated poverty - See Consideration 4

Coordinate literacy volunteers at the neighborhood level to help build early childhood reading skills

WHY	WHO	HOW
Capacity and resources to nurture neighborhood health exist in Muncie but are often too scattered to have a sustainable impact. High levels of coordination and flexibility are needed for focused investments to produce desired outcomes.	Muncie Action Plan as the convener and coordinator of a partnership that includes contributors from across the 'ecosystem' of neighborhood actors in Muncie—public, private, and non-profit	Commit existing staff time and resources from Partnership members, along with additive capacity and resources outlined in this Strategic Investment Plan
The levels of coordination and planning that are required for a “Healthy Blocks Partnership” to work will exceed existing levels of capacity that partners can be expected to contribute.	House added coordination capacity within the Muncie Action Plan organization	Source funds for coordination capacity from public, private, and philanthropic entities that will contribute to the “Healthy Blocks Partnership”
The promotion of active and collaborative reinvestment in homes and in neighborhood curb appeal will improve housing conditions and advance all four outcomes of neighborhood health.	Matching grant programs overseen by neighborhood coordinator at Muncie Action Plan; funds raised from private and philanthropic sources.	Use matching grant programs to stimulate collaborative investments by residents on targeted blocks; distribute grants without income restrictions
On many of Muncie’s most vulnerable blocks, one or two properties can influence the block’s direction. When opportunities arise to improve a property and ensure stable ownership, resources and capacity should be available to make that happen.	Muncie Land Bank as the primary coordinator of acquisition/disposition of troubled properties within the Healthy Blocks Partnership; strong relationship needed with Delaware County and its tax sale process	Raise funds from public, private and philanthropic sources to enable opportunistic acquisitions; once acquired make improvements necessary to attract a good buyer with a plan that supports healthy neighborhood outcomes
The placement of new affordable housing and mixed-income housing can play a role in deconcentrating poverty in Muncie and providing greater access to economic opportunity	City of Muncie Department of Community Development	As part of future updates to the City’s Consolidated Plan for HUD, work with affordable housing developers on a thoughtful distribution strategy for new or rehabilitated affordable housing.
Developing good reading skills early in life improves a child’s prospects in school and beyond. A literacy tutoring program that connects volunteers to children in their neighborhood or elementary district has the potential to improve literacy while boosting community engagement on a critically important subject.	BY5, Ball State School of Education, and Muncie Community Schools	Design a custom program for Muncie that models similar successful efforts in other states, including Virginia’s Book Buddies program

Parks and Connective Corridors



GOAL

Connect High Quality Public Spaces

Increase investments in Muncie's parks and improve the quality of place along corridors that connect parks to each other and to city neighborhoods.



Muncie is a city with outstanding public spaces. Scenic parks laid out in the early 20th century, trails along the White River, one of Indiana’s most picturesque university campuses, the bustle of Walnut Street downtown—all of these and more represent a legacy of building a high-quality public realm that should be maintained and continued.

A recent focus on boosting investment in Muncie’s park system is an important pivot away from underinvestment and neglect of recent decades. Sustained work will be needed to catch-up on the maintenance of publicly-owned spaces and to raise standards for private property along important corridors. Such work is not superficial or superfluous. It will make Muncie a place where people and businesses choose to be, thus driving reinvestment in neighborhoods and corridors and building a stronger tax base to support vital services and infrastructure.

This plan’s goal for Muncie’s Parks and Connective Corridors is a **recommitment to Muncie’s legacy of high-quality public spaces**, and the connection of those spaces by streets that exemplify community pride.

Parks and Connective Corridors



Connect High Quality Public Spaces

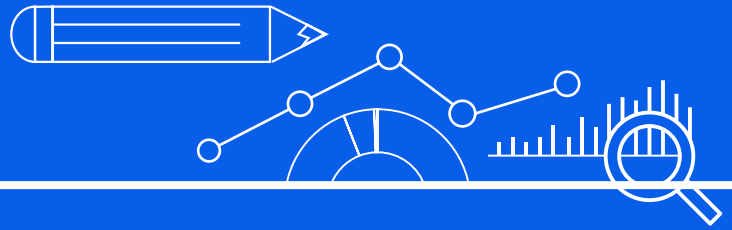
Increase investments in Muncie's parks and improve the quality of place along corridors that connect parks to each other and to city neighborhoods.



How does this approach connect to the Big Things?

Whether it's a beautiful park or a great street, quality public spaces improve the city experience and **Strengthen Quality of Place**. These spaces add value to neighborhoods and should be considered as a component in investment strategy. This added value can boost confidence in homeowners and investors and help to **Improve Housing Conditions and Options** and **Expand Opportunities for Upward Mobility** by helping to build wealth for city households.





How does it serve ‘getting the basics right?’

When we think of public space in a city we think of things like parks and trails, plazas, streets, and even our public buildings like city hall and the public library. These are all part of the public realm. The public realm and the quality of it directly impacts the experience people have whether it be as a city resident or a visitor. Providing and maintaining a quality public realm is fundamental to city life and ‘getting the basics right.’

What are some specific outcomes this approach will aim for?

- City parks are well maintained and include the required amenities to serve both passive and active recreational needs of residents

- People have a park within a 10-minute walk or bike ride of their home and/or workplace

- City corridors are inviting, walkable, bikeable and transit friendly and development has predictable urban form that seamlessly integrates the public and private realms





Parks and Connective Corridors



STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #1 Use a street typology to shape zoning changes and streetscape investments

All streets are important but not all are equal. Some are designed primarily for moving automobiles. These auto-centric roadways or ‘thoroughfares’ often include high volumes of vehicular traffic at high speeds and are not ideal for walking and biking. It doesn’t mean that walking and biking should not be accommodated, but that the primary focus is getting automobiles from point A to B. On the flip side, some roadways or streets are designed primarily for pedestrians. These “pedestrian priority” streets tend to be compact and fronted by mixed-use buildings with retail storefronts on the first floors and other uses above. Typically, automobiles are accommodated but pedestrian traffic is the focus and the development along these streets rely on foot traffic.

These two roadways, as with other roadway types, should be based on context, and the fit and finish are different from one another. Each roadway type has a relationship to transportation mode, land use and other development regulations, and streetscape design. Considering the relationship between these components helps to strengthen Quality of Place.

Street Type	Regional Thoroughfare	Urban Thoroughfare
<p>General Description</p>	<p>The Regional thoroughfares are high intensity commercial corridors that serve the regional community. They tend to be major commuter routes that travel across the entire city and provide access to regional destinations and shopping areas. It is not uncommon for these roadways to include several travel lanes and large intersections.</p> <p>Example: McGalliard Rd</p>	<p>The Urban Thoroughfare provides access and connects districts and neighborhoods in the City. They are often one-way and include on-street parking and a mix of land uses. They are multi-modal streets that accommodate pedestrians, bicycles, and transit users.</p> <p>Example: Jackson St</p>
<p>Adjacent Development</p> 	<p>Large setback Front yard parking – 1 row max Drive-through facilities</p>	<p>Shallow setback No front yard parking On-street parking Parking garage access Drive-through facilities</p>
<p>Pedestrian Facilities</p> 	<p>Multi-use Trail Sidewalk – Standard Crosswalk – High visibility</p>	<p>Sidewalk – Standard Sidewalk – Wide Crosswalk – Standard Crosswalk – High visibility Pedestrian level lighting</p>
<p>Bicycle Facilities</p> 	<p>Multi-use Trail Cycle track Bike Lanes</p>	<p>Cycle track Bike Lanes</p>
<p>Streetscape Components</p> 	<p>Street trees Tree lawns / buffer Bike racks Benches and trash</p>	<p>Street trees Tree lawns / buffer Bike racks Benches and trash receptacles Wayfinding signs</p>

Downtown Pedestrian Focus	Downtown Connector	Neighborhood Commercial	Neighborhood Residential
<p>The Downtown Pedestrian Focused Streets are the premier “A” streets in downtown. They are generally smaller in scale than the Urban Thoroughfare, and serve residents, visitors, and workers. They include traditional multi-story urban buildings and support high levels of walking with on-street parking to serve local retailers storefronts and restaurants. Parking entrances, utilities, and other facilities that do not support the pedestrian retail nature of the street should not front the street.</p> <p>Example: Walnut St</p>	<p>Downtown Connectors are “B” level district streets that often connect Urban thoroughfares and Downtown Pedestrian Focused Streets. They are pedestrian and bike friendly and have a mix of uses that front the street. In addition to on-street parking, the Downtowns Connectors should be two-way and can provide access to surface and garage parking, which is undesirable on the Downtown Pedestrian Focused Streets.</p> <p>Example: Adams St</p>	<p>Neighborhood Commercial Streets are typically located in the heart of a residential part of the city. Characterized by dense single floor commercial and retail use, they are often concentrated in an area only a few blocks long. On-street parking and transit stops are often included.</p> <p>Example: W University Ave</p>	<p>Neighborhood Residential Streets provide immediate access to Muncie’s residential fabric. They are used primarily for local trips and are characterized by lower vehicle volumes and speeds.</p> <p>Example: Gilbert St</p>
<p>Shallow setback No front yard parking On-street parking</p>	<p>Shallow setback No front yard parking On-street parking Parking garage access</p>	<p>Shallow setback No front yard parking On-street parking Parking garage access</p>	<p>Shallow setback On-street parking</p>
<p>Sidewalk – Wide Crosswalk - Standard Crosswalk – High visibility Pedestrian level lighting</p>	<p>Sidewalk – Standard Sidewalk – Wide Crosswalk - Standard Crosswalk – High visibility Pedestrian level lighting</p>	<p>Sidewalk – Standard Sidewalk – Wide Crosswalk - Standard Crosswalk – High visibility Pedestrian level lighting</p>	<p>Sidewalk – Standard Crosswalk - Standard Pedestrian level lighting</p>
<p>Bike Lanes Sharrows (shared use lanes)</p>	<p>Bike Lanes Sharrows (shared use lanes) Bike Boulevards</p>	<p>Bike Lanes Sharrows (shared use lanes) Bike Boulevards</p>	<p>Sharrows (shared use lanes) Bike Boulevards</p>
<p>Curb extensions Street trees Bike racks Benches and trash Wayfinding signs</p>	<p>Curb extensions Street trees Bike racks Benches and trash Wayfinding signs</p>	<p>Sharrows (shared use lanes) Bike Boulevards</p>	<p>Street trees Tree lawns / buffer Wayfinding signs</p>

Parks and Connective Corridors



STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #2

Apply the street typology to downtown with a focus on building a critical mass of great streets

Great cities have great streets and healthy downtowns. Walnut Street is currently a great street between Howard Street and Main Street. It's not the abundance of brick pavers or the decorative lighting that makes it great. It's the combination of streetscape components working in concert with a consistent street wall of storefronts, historic buildings, and pedestrian oriented land uses. The street invites people to stroll and linger, which plays into downtown's role as both the social and economic hub of the city.

Great streets seamlessly integrate the public and private realms to create a vibrancy that only urban streets can offer. However, once you get away from the four-block stretch on Walnut Street the vibrancy falls off quickly. Outside this stretch, downtown lacks the critical mass where commercial / retail, cultural, and civic activities are concentrated. This concentration facilitates economic and cultural exchange and without it downtown feels desolate and isolated. Focusing economic development and public realm improvements on a concentrated area will help build the critical mass needed to integrate the great segment of Walnut Street into a larger cohesive and connected downtown. Build it from the inside out.





STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #3

Maximize the benefit from the resources spent on street improvements by considering more than pavement condition

With the completion of the pavement condition assessment and the continued evaluation of the city's roadway network, the city has a grading system that allows streets in the greatest need of resurfacing to be selected for repair. The city is using the 'worst first' approach for road resurfacing and rehabilitation. However, there's more to consider than pavement condition when selecting which streets to complete first, and broadening those considerations will help to ensure that every dollar spent on streets represents a wider investment in Quality of Place and community vitality.

In addition to pavement condition, consider the following factors when selecting streets:



Community Assets

Considers streets adjacent to community assets, or that connect to community assets (e.g. parks, trailheads, etc.)



Gateways

Considers highly visible corridors since they play an important role in how residents and visitors experience the City of Muncie, which is a factor when considering opening a business, accepting a job or buying a home. sidewalks don't exist, street trees, upgrade lighting, etc.)



Investment Areas

Considers streets that are in areas where improvements would add to other public or private investments being made or considered.



Higher Standards

Considers streets where opportunities exist to improve more than just the street surface (e.g. sidewalks where sidewalks don't exist, street trees, upgrade lighting, etc.)

Considering these things, along with pavement condition, will improve streets and maximize the return on public street investments.

Parks and Connective Corridors



Connect High Quality Public Spaces

Action Outline

WHAT

Update the parks and recreation master plan every 5 years

Increase the Park Operating Fund every year

Develop a street repaving and reconstruction plan and update it annually - See Consideration 3

Include streetscape improvements (e.g. trees, pedestrian scaled lighting, sidewalks, furnishings, high visibility crosswalks, etc.) in street projects - See Consideration 1

Develop and implement a tree-planting strategy for commercial corridors - See Consideration 1

Establish a “Muncie Conservation Corps” to provide experience and training to youth and young adults while improving the urban landscape

As part of a citywide zoning code update, permit mixed-use development and design standards along corridors- See Consideration 1

WHY	WHO	HOW
To help city staff and officials identify future park improvements and potential future park locations	Parks Department, and city council; professional services provided by landscape architecture / planning consultant	Commit existing staff and budget for professional services provided by landscape architecture / planning consultant
To adequately develop and maintain a parks system for a city with a population of 60,000	Parks Department, city council and 'Friends of Muncie Parks' or other privately funded park conservancy	Combine enhanced public sector commitment with private fundraising capacity; \$88 is the median per capita spending for similar size cities
To move more streets into preventative maintenance status and to improve the aesthetic and functional quality of streets	City Public Works Department, City Council, Delaware County Engineering Department, and INDOT	Commit existing staff and budget to meet street repaving / reconstruction goals
Adding streetscape improvements to street repaving /reconstruction projects provides economies of scale that would not exist if those same improvements were made as a separate project	City Public Works Department, Delaware-Muncie Metropolitan Planning Organization, Delaware County Engineering Department, and INDOT	Supplement County and State resources with local resources as needed
Street trees alone can significantly improve the look and feel of a corridor	City Public Works Department, City Council, Delaware County Engineering Department, INDOT, and Urban Forestry Board	Commit existing staff and budget to expand the city's street tree planting program
A well-organized local version of the iconic CCC has the potential to result in real improvements to parks and public space while also helping Muncie residents climb the economic ladder and feel a greater sense of ownership over conditions in the community	A public-private partnership overseen by the Muncie Parks and Recreation Board and advised by Ivy Tech	Create an annual pool of jobs to support park improvements and city beautification activities with sufficient supervision and training to build good work habits and connect people to future employment opportunities
Great corridors require the integration of the public and the private realms and the only way to ensure good private side development is to require it	Delaware-Muncie Metropolitan Plan Commission	Commit existing staff and budget for professional services provided by planning / code consultant

Delaware County Strategic Investment Plan



Rural Land

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Main Streets and Corridors

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County and Town Neighborhoods

pg 122



This Strategic Investment Plan for Delaware County is a blueprint for implementing TogetherDM in the unincorporated portions of the county. It is also a guide that can be used by the incorporated towns of Albany, Daleville, Eaton, Gaston, Selma, and Yorktown to align their planning with the county's comprehensive plan.

Three place types are used by this plan to organize actions that align with TogetherDM's priorities and direction, and each place type identifies an overarching goal that relates to existing conditions and their influence on strategy.

The Action Outlines identified in this plan represent the most malleable part of this document and should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis by the TogetherDM Coalition to ensure that they reflect current opportunities, the community's capacity to implement, and progress made.

Rural Land



GOAL

Balance Development, Land Preservation, and Farming Heritage

Ensure that new development happens sustainably and intentionally, that rural character is preserved and enhanced, and that farming is both viable and vibrant.



Just under 25% of Delaware County’s residents live outside the boundaries of an incorporated jurisdiction. These are areas that have absorbed many of the 4,800 housing units built in the county since 2000 (a period of overall population loss) along with commercial and industrial developments on the fringes of the City of Muncie and incorporated towns.

At the same time, Delaware County has retained a large and robust agricultural sector that has expanded its output on fewer farms while cultivating fewer acres. The region’s farming heritage remains strong and contributes a sense of place that is attractive to rural and urban residents alike.

The relationship between farming and other development in rural Delaware County is generally not marked by conflicts between competing or incompatible land uses—though such conflicts sometimes happen. It is, however, a relationship with ambiguity that has often pushed important questions to the background. How much residential development on rural land is smart for a county that isn’t growing and has shrinking population centers? To what extent should fallow farmland be preserved for future farming or environmental reasons? How does new development alter valued aspects of rural life or scenery? What are the types of development that make sense to support with public resources or policy, and what doesn’t make sense?

This plan’s goal for Rural Land in Delaware County is to achieve a thoughtful balance between the various demands on rural acreage—as well as a balance that acknowledges the interdependence of the county’s rural areas and incorporated communities.

Rural Land



Balance Development, Land Preservation, and Farming Heritage

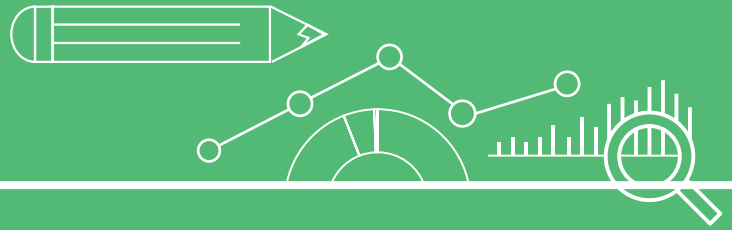
Ensure that new development happens sustainably and intentionally, that rural character is preserved and enhanced, and that farming is both viable and vibrant.



How does this approach connect to the Big Things?

Delaware County is rich in land resources which are the the cultural backbone of the rural economy. These local land resources should be revitalized by local residents for local use. This may take the form of local farming, land conservation, a transformation to green energy production, and/or increased funding for existing and outdated agricultural infrastructure. In all cases, though, recognition of the land as an essential resource is of primary importance. Such efforts will **Expand Opportunities for Upward Mobility** while ensuring the County's rural heritage is respected and preserved thus **Strengthening the Quality of Places**. And by defining limited areas for future residential development, the County can **Improve Housing Conditions and Options** by creating more tightly knit neighborhoods that value and relate to the rural landscape.





How does it serve ‘getting the basics right?’

The County’s population has been declining since 1970 and it’s time to recognize that smaller is not necessarily a bad thing. A good quality of life does not equate to scale but is rather determined by how a community capitalizes upon its local and cultural assets while continually creating new opportunities for residents. Farming, protecting valuable land for future production opportunities, and ongoing innovations within the agricultural economy are all part of **‘getting the basics right’** in rural Delaware County.

What are some specific outcomes this approach will aim for?

- When it happens, greenfield development is focused and not scattered

- The number of smaller-scale, family-owned agricultural ventures grows and they are well-connected to local food

- Green energy production is a viable and regulated way to supplement farm income or promote farmland recuperation

Rural Land



STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #1

Be intentional about where and how development happens to ensure that a variety of impacts are considered

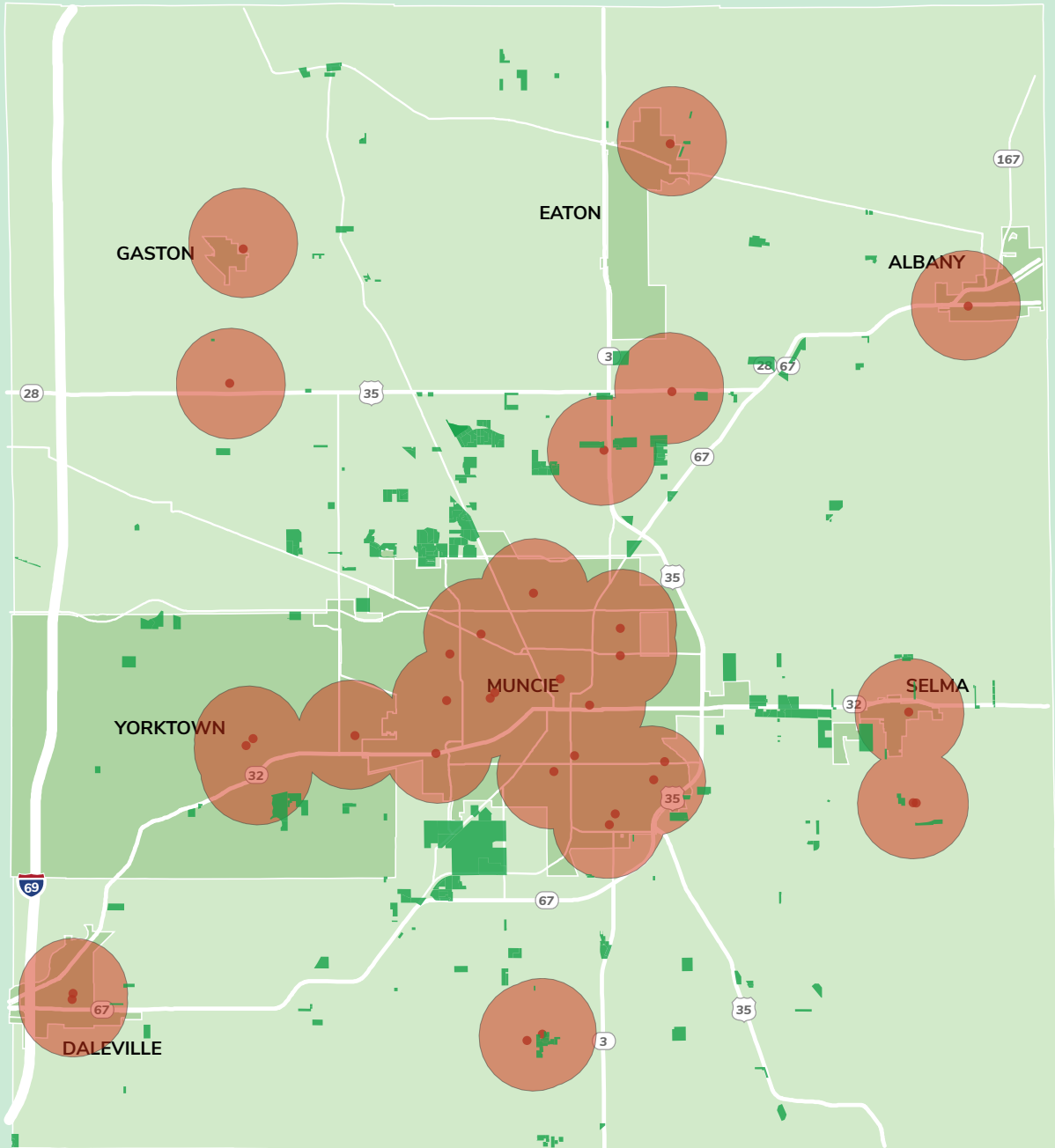
Residential development in unincorporated parts of Delaware County has often occurred in a way that feels unplanned and without long-term consideration of infrastructure capacity and maintenance, or about the broader impact of new development on investment elsewhere in the county. In a faster growing region, this would have resulted in a reckoning long ago to deal with negative consequences related to traffic, water and sewer service, loss of open space, and diminished community character.

The slower pace of growth in Delaware County has delayed such a reckoning by making the impacts of unplanned development feel manageable. But years of underinvestment in infrastructure and the declining condition of some residential properties built in the mid-20th century will require action sooner than later. And it will call for a more intentional approach to development going forward to ensure that future development contributes to solving, rather than compounding, challenges in Delaware County.

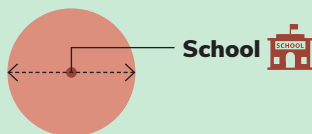
Being intentional about where and how development happens can begin with how the Delaware-Muncie Metropolitan Plan Commission evaluates subdivision proposals—with an eye towards channeling development in the direction of existing infrastructure in order to avoid costly duplication.

Potential subdivision requirements include:

- The proposed subdivision must be located within one mile of a school and be within 1,000' of all adequate utilities and necessary infrastructure or the Applicant agrees to pay for all horizontal infrastructure (e.g., streets, stormwater, water, sewer, dry utilities, etc.) costs.
- Any proposed subdivision between 20 and 50 lots shall dedicate to the County a lot with a minimum of 15,000 square feet to accommodate future restaurant/retail needs and opportunities. In addition, the developer must build a park (no less than a half-acre in size) with a playground and hard court play space.
- If the proposed subdivision is between 50 and 100 lots or if a second subdivision is proposed within 0.50 miles of an existing subdivision and the total number of lots for both subdivisions is between 50 and 100 lots, a minimum of one (1) acre shall be dedicated to the County to address future retail/restaurant needs and opportunities. If the 100 lots are the result of two subdivisions, the developer of the second subdivision shall dedicate enough land, when added to the original subdivision's land dedication, totals at least one (1) acre. In addition, the developer must build a park (no less than one acre in size) with a playground and play fields.
- No Subdivisions shall be approved with more than 100 lots.



Delaware County
Subdivisions and
1-Mile School Radius



 Subdivisions in Delaware County

Rural Land

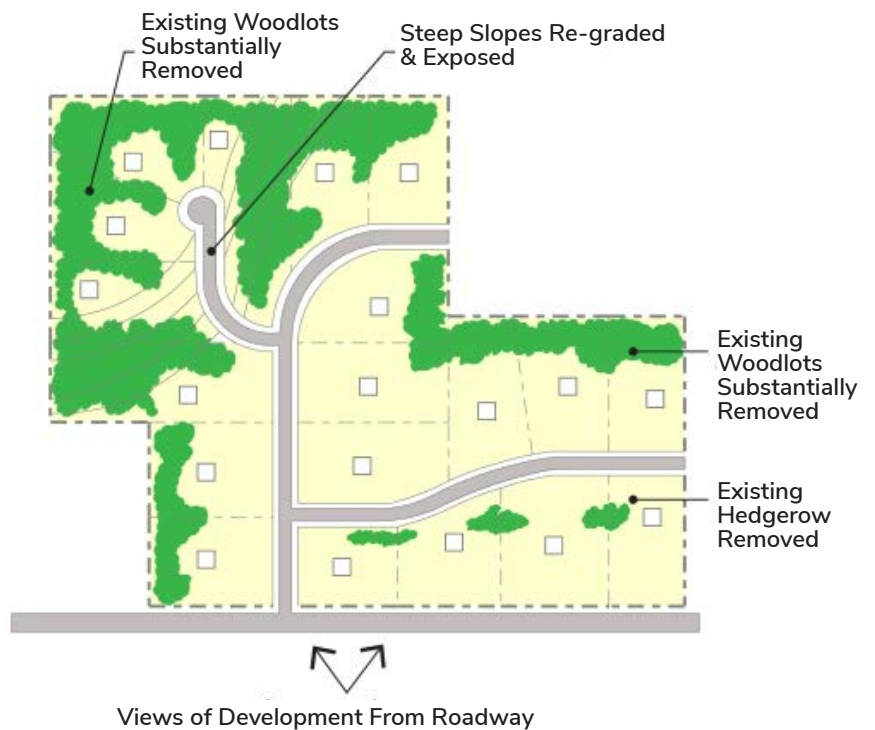
STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #1, CONT'D.

Cluster Subdivision Design

In addition to being more intentional and strategic about where residential subdivisions happen, there is room to require subdivision design that is more efficient and does more to preserve greenspace or farmland. Residential cluster development is such an alternative to typical subdivision design. It's a design strategy that looks to preserve undivided, buildable tracts of land as open space, agriculture, or recreation by grouping residential properties. Ideally 50 to 75 percent of the buildable land is set aside as open space. It can be a helpful tool in preserving rural character, especially when rural vernacular elements such as hedgerows, stonewalls, and open pastures and fields are preserved. It is becoming popular in subdivision development because it helps to preserve open space and rural character while allowing residential growth to occur. It can be appealing to a developer because they often spend less on land and infrastructure and obtain the same number of units and similar sale prices per unit.

Traditional Subdivision

ACRES	100
LOTS	19
DENSITY	1 Dwelling Unit / 5 Acres
AVERAGE LOT SIZE	4 ACRES
COMMON OPEN SPACE	0%

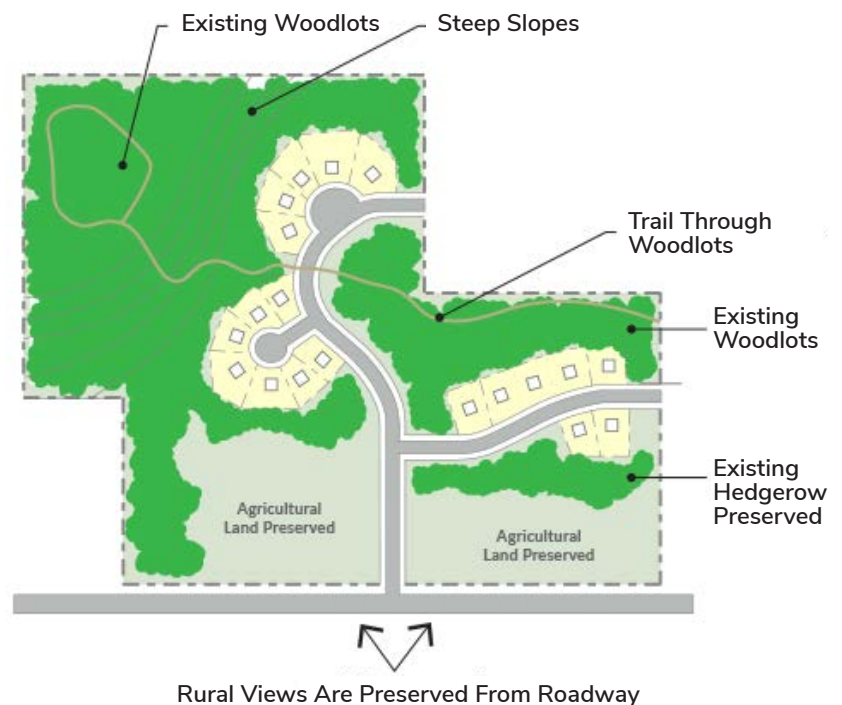


Cluster Subdivision Design Can Help Save Delaware County's Critical Habitat

In addition to better outcomes including better-designed neighborhoods, increased preservation of natural resources, and reduced infrastructure costs, cluster subdivisions also provide additional protections for environmentally sensitive areas. Cluster subdivisions, also commonly referred to as conservation subdivisions, begin with the fundamental premise that nature should be at the center of community design. Important natural features such as wetlands, critical wildlife habitat and/or wildlife corridors, and old-growth meadows and forests become focal points within the development, providing significant environmental and social benefits. Cluster subdivisions are a simple form of modernized subdivision regulations that incorporate these protections into the zoning ordinance while not restricting developers' density rights—lot sizes are permitted to be smaller and are moved around the natural areas to be protected.

Cluster Subdivision

ACRES	100
LOTS	19
DENSITY	1 Dwelling Unit / 5 Acres
AVERAGE LOT SIZE	3/4 ACRES
COMMON OPEN SPACE	75%



Rural Land



STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #2

Incentivize local farming and ensure the farm-to-table economy satisfies the needs of local restaurants, grocers and residents

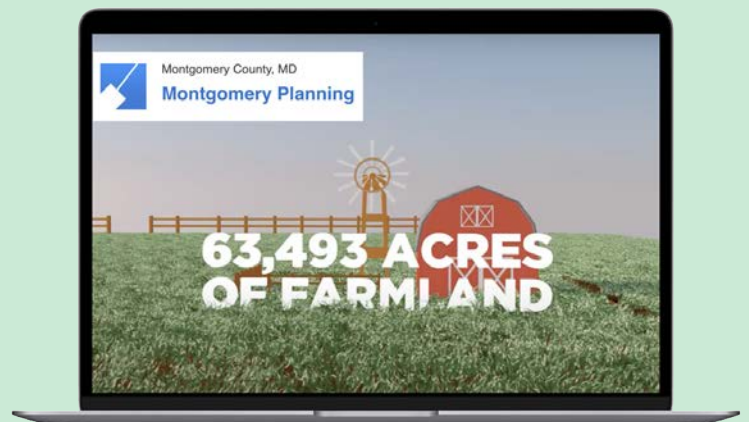
From the Tonne Winery located north of Muncie to Landess and Pinehurst farms in Daleville, Delaware County has quality family farms that provide local food throughout the region. These success stories are celebrated by buyers who are well informed and specifically seek out locally and organically produced food. But there are opportunities to expand the local farming market so that quality food is available for all people in the County, regardless of income.

While there are many different approaches to expanding the local farming industry, a few examples stand out and can serve as prototypes for Delaware County. In general, these countywide organizations help promote local producers and agritourism, provide start-up business assistance for those interested in farming, and connect these businesses to the market.



Montgomery County, Maryland

In 1980, the County Council created the Agricultural Reserve ('Ag Reserve') to ensure land was conserved for future generations of farmers. But conservation was only one component of this endeavor, the other being economic growth within this niche sector. Through creative marketing and partnerships with local restaurants and grocers, the Ag Reserve has become a countywide organization that gives local farmers the critical mass needed to deliver produce at the scale necessary to compete with large corporate farming producers.





Pierce County, Washington

Pierce County's Agricultural Program has taken a slightly different approach to local farming – providing assistance to those who wish to enter the local farming industry. The current focus of the Agriculture Program includes permitting assistance for landowners, updating County policies affecting agriculture, providing support to rural landowners to solve drainage issues, and facilitating greater market access for local farms. They also provide information and resources for Pierce County residents and visitors to connect with local farms.



Rural Land



STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #3

Explore green energy production as a viable land use on agricultural lands in Delaware County

The agricultural economy ebbs and flows depending on weather, world commodity markets, and constantly changing consumer demands. Diversification of the agricultural economy in Delaware County is essential to ensure that the sector not only survives but thrives. Green energy in the form of solar farms offers a relatively easy path to diversify the range of products typically associated with agriculture.



The U.S. Department of Energy has a 'Farmers Guide to Going Solar' and outlines the following benefits associated with going solar:

- Reduced electricity costs
- Diversification of the revenue stream
- Increased ability to install high-value, shade-resistant crops for new markets
- Marketing opportunity to sustainability-minded audience
- Ability to maintain crop production during solar generation
- Allow for nutrient and land recharge of degraded lands (soil recuperation)
- Potential for water use reduction
- Potential to extend growing seasons





Farms Will Harvest Food and the Sun as Massachusetts Pioneers ‘Dual Use’ Solar

In Grafton, MA, cutting-edge technology is making it possible to harvest both the sun’s energy and crops on the same land—‘agrivoltaics’ or ‘dual-use solar.’ While locating solar arrays on agricultural land that is underutilized or in need of soil recharge is the most common approach to enter the solar market, in ‘dual-use solar,’ the solar panels are mounted on racks at least eight feet off the ground, allowing farm machines to operate and plants to grow underneath.

This type of solar panel is not conventional. It is an innovative translucent design that allows the top of the panel to absorb the sun’s energy but also lets some light through to crops below supporting the belief that food and energy security need not be competing objectives.



Rural Land

 **GOAL**

Balance Development, Land Preservation, and Farming Heritage

Action Outline

WHAT

Define preferred boundaries for greenfield development to guide County policymaking - See Consideration 1

Incentivize the start up of small-scale family-owned farms and other agricultural ventures - See Consideration 2

Ensure that food from family owned farms easily finds its way into grocery stores and restaurants throughout Muncie and Delaware County - See Consideration 2

Support and/or incentivize green energy production as a viable method to allow for farmland recuperation and long term preservation - See Consideration 3

Improved collaboration between Delaware County, the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), and the Delaware County Farm Bureau to ensure that existing agricultural infrastructure, which primarily includes access roads and drainage ditches/ponds, is continually maintained and upgraded according to current best management practices

WHY	WHO	HOW
<p>The cost of infrastructure and loss of farmland is too much to justify random housing development without a clear focus on location boundaries</p>	<p>DMMPC</p>	<p>Refine and finalize guidance on subdivision approvals</p>
<p>Local farming has a greater multiplier effect that keeps more money in the local economy than does multi-national ag production corporations</p>	<p>Delaware County, and public/private/nonprofit partnerships</p>	<p>Public, private, and nonprofit organizations should pool resources and create an incentive package specifically designed to preserve small scale ag ventures</p>
<p>Quality food options can be hard to find in many city neighborhoods and small towns, but local markets have the potential to boost the viability of smaller farming operations</p>	<p>Local farmers, local businesses, Purdue Extension</p>	<p>Build capacity at an existing or new organization dedicated to coordinating these efforts</p>
<p>With the likelihood that electric and hydrogen cars will continue to increase market share, corn production for ethanol will likely decline</p>	<p>Delaware County and Ball State University in conjunction with federal and state initiatives</p>	<p>Identify potential land use regulation changes and incentives that will improve financial feasibility for farmland owners</p>
<p>Over 70% of Delaware County's land is tillable and agriculture has a market value of \$100 million making it one of the county's most important economic engines</p>	<p>Delaware County, SWCD, and the Delaware County Farm Bureau</p>	<p>Delaware County should identify a budgeting mechanism to help fund infrastructure upgrades that could be administered or overseen by the county or partner entities such as the SWCD or the Farm Bureau</p>

Main Streets and Corridors



GOAL

Cultivate a Network of Strong Main Streets

Reinforce Delaware County's Main Streets as vital and desirable centers that connect to the wider community along authentic rural and small-town corridors.



Most residents of Delaware County are a short distance from a town center that is now, or has the potential to be, a strong Main Street that serves as a hub for small business activity, contributes to community character and sense of place, and boosts quality of life in a way that makes areas around it more competitive for residential or commercial investment.

Making a small town business district strong and distinctive, or helping it stay that way, is not something that just happens. It takes coordination, resources, and an expectation of consistently high standards. Getting it right is never easy in urban settings, and it's even harder in smaller communities. But getting it right pays off and makes it more likely that other goals can be realized—from boosting investment by homeowners on neighboring streets, to creating great transitions between Main Streets and the rural corridors that feed into them.

This plan's goal for the Main Streets and Corridors of Delaware County is for **Main Street development and revitalization to become a collaborative effort** so that a network of distinctive and vibrant local business districts can become reliable drivers of economic activity and quality of life.



Main Streets and Corridors



Cultivate a Network of Strong Main Streets

Reinforce Delaware County's Main Streets as vital and desirable centers that connect to the wider community along authentic rural and small-town corridors.



How does this approach connect to the Big Things?

Many people choose Delaware County as their home or place of business because of the rural character and small-town feel. Protecting and enhancing this character will ensure that it remains intact for future generations. Focusing attention on the development of attractive and vibrant Town Centers and improving the corridors leading to and through them will not only **Strengthen Quality of Place** but will also help relieve pressure to develop the vernacular landscape outside of towns. Building value in these centers will help create the market needed to **Improve Housing Conditions and Options** and **Expand Opportunities for Upward Mobility** for people throughout Delaware County.





How does it serve ‘getting the basics right?’

Improving the Town Centers and the corridors that lead to and through them is about investing in and improving existing community assets. Maintaining what we have is an important tenet in **‘getting the basics right.’**

What are some specific outcomes this approach will aim for?

The rural character of corridors in the county is strengthened (more corridors have high sense of place within rural context)

Main Street business districts and Town Centers become more vibrant, mixed-use, community hubs with walkable streets, strong identities, and appropriate forms of development and redevelopment

Main Streets and Corridors



STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #1

Identify viable ‘Main Street’ business districts in Delaware County and develop a framework for revitalization

Most towns have a business district that includes a ‘Main Street.’ It might not be called Main Street but it’s the street that functions as the spine of the business district. It includes existing businesses and often has nearby public facilities, such as the town hall, Post Office, school, or a park. If these areas are left to fend for themselves, it’s unlikely they will become or remain vital. Like a city’s downtown, ‘Main Street’ districts are often the community’s economic and cultural activity centers. Focusing time and resources on strengthening these areas will expand opportunities for residents and business owners, grow the tax base, and improve the quality of life in Delaware County.

A coordinated county-wide approach to developing viable Main Street districts will help to direct commercial growth and development to established centers instead of rural corridors. A coordinated initiative will also help each district by distributing human and financial resources appropriately and ensuring that districts complement rather than compete with each other.

Areas on the adjacent map should be viewed as a starting point for a comprehensive assessment of local business districts. Places like Muncie and Yorktown have well-established districts while others such as Daleville and Selma need to be carefully evaluated on whether a Main Street development or revitalization initiative makes sense.

There are several things to consider when evaluating these areas, including but not limited to:



Interest by the municipality and community readiness



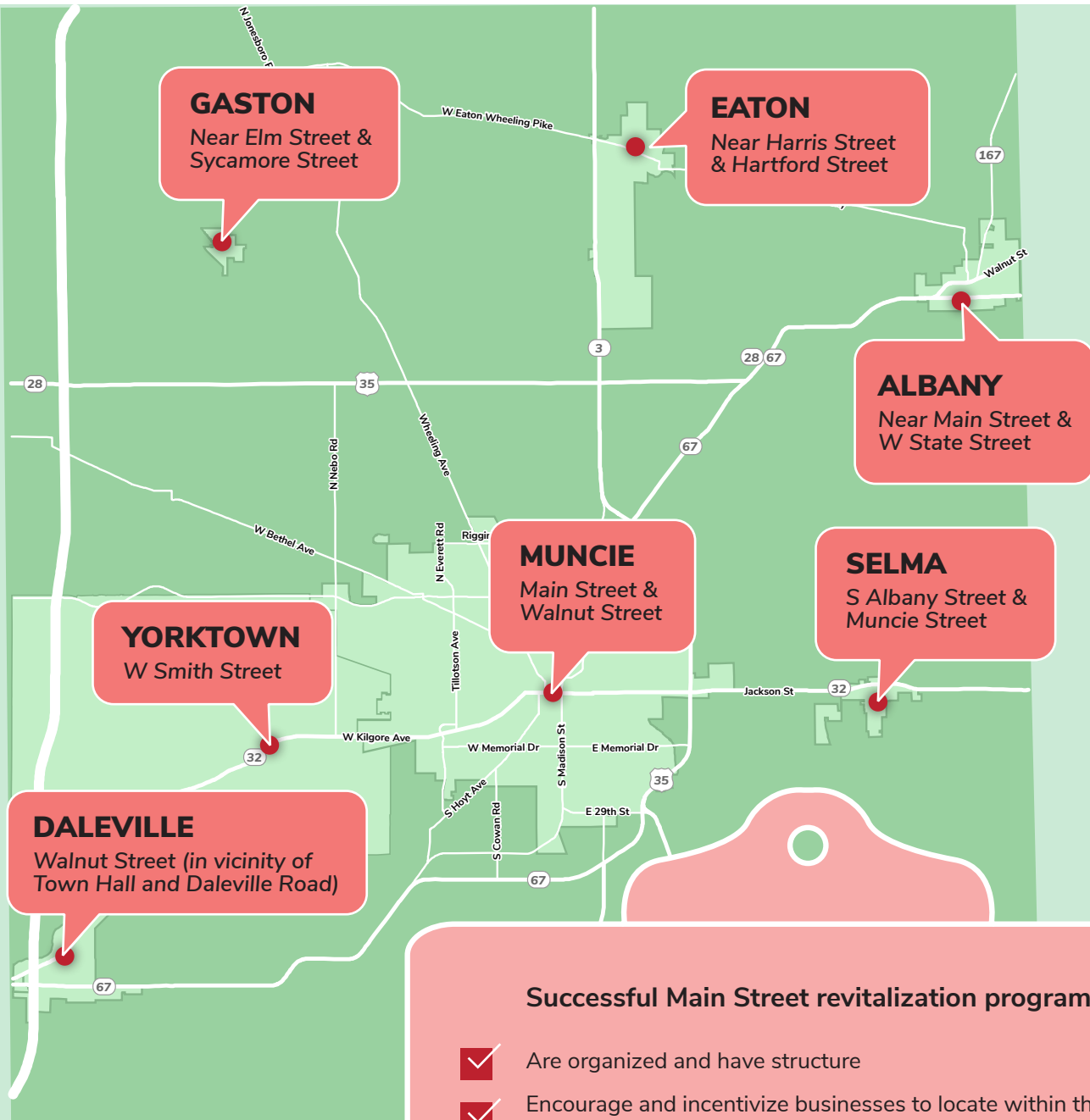
Existing local businesses, building stock, and street network to build around



Daily traffic volumes to support local businesses



Local commitment to creating a dense walkable built environment



Successful Main Street revitalization programs:

- ✓ Are organized and have structure
- ✓ Encourage and incentivize businesses to locate within the Main Street district rather than on rural corridors
- ✓ Implement standards for both public and private realm improvements
- ✓ Give special attention to creating a walkable and bikeable environment
- ✓ Include community events
- ✓ Have dedicated people and /or committees that address economic and business development, promotions, and quality design

Main Streets and Corridors



STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #2

Develop standards to integrate the public and private realms along 'Main Streets'

A consistent building street wall, sidewalks, tree canopies, inviting storefronts, well-maintained buildings and streets, and land uses that stimulate pedestrian traffic all contribute to the vibrancy on a Main Street. Creating a memorable experience has as much to do with how a place feels as it does with how a place looks. One or two of those characteristics mentioned above will not create that experience. It takes most, if not all, of them working together to form an exciting sense of place. It's the integration of the public and private realms. Close attention must be paid to each development project and public improvement so that, over time, more of those characteristics are brought together throughout the Main Street area. It takes focus and steadfast determination, but over time, it leads to a more viable and successful Main Street.



There are numerous public realm and private realm components that must work together to create a memorable Main Street experience. Standards for private realm components should be included in the local land development regulations or zoning code and standards for the public realm components should be included in the local public works / engineering specifications.



Private Realm Components

- ① Main Street buildings (22'-35' high)

- ② Entrances that front the street

- ③ First floor transparency

- ④ Pedestrian oriented first floor uses (e.g. restaurant)

- ⑤ Upper floor residential and office uses

- ⑥ Articulated building facades

- ⑦ Parking at the side or rear of buildings

Public Realm Components

- Ⓐ Street Trees

- Ⓑ Sidewalks (5'-12')

- Ⓒ Bike lanes or sharrows

- Ⓓ Street furniture (e.g. benches)

- Ⓔ Pedestrian level lighting

- Ⓕ On-street parking

Main Streets and Corridors



Cultivate a Network of Strong Main Streets

Action Outline

WHAT

Develop a Countywide Main Street / Town Center program – a model to consider is the National Main Street Center’s Four-Point Approach- See Consideration 1

Update public realm standards for streets and roadways in Town Center / Main Street districts - See Consideration 1 & 2

Develop a roadway / street maintenance, repaving, and reconstruction plan and update it annually - See Consideration 1 & 2

As part of a countywide zoning code update, include design standards and use regulations based on context/transect - See Consideration 1 & 2

WHY

Town Center / Main Street districts are significant economic and cultural resources. However, many small towns struggle to maintain a vibrant business district. This is often due to soft markets and the lack of capacity and resources. A Town Center / Main Street program would help to reimagine districts and provide support and structure for towns looking to revitalize their business core. A countywide program could help all districts and coordinate efforts regarding things like marketing, branding, zoning tools, active transportation, historic preservation, etc.

WHO

Delaware-Muncie Metropolitan Plan Commission to coordinate with towns and local businesses, with potential leadership role for Muncie Downtown Development Partnership as an experienced practitioner of the Main Street Approach

HOW

County and towns to contribute to regional main street manager and/or revitalization initiative

Roadways/streets should be designed and maintained based on context; roads/streets in Town Center / Main Street districts should include pedestrian accommodations and design features such as sidewalks, street trees, crosswalks, and lighting whereas many rural roads don't need those features; some rural roads might not require paving because they are primarily used by farmers

Delaware-Muncie Metropolitan Planning Organization, Town engineering, Delaware County Engineering Department, and INDOT

Supplement State resources with local resources as needed

Land use and design should reflect local context and character along corridors; cluster development and large setbacks in rural areas versus compact walkable/ bikable development and shallower setbacks Town Center / Main Street districts

Delaware-Muncie Metropolitan Plan Commission; coordinate and provide assistance to towns

Commit existing staff and budget for professional services provided by planning / code consultant

County and Town Neighborhoods



GOAL

Reinvest Together for Stronger Rural Communities

Build the collective confidence needed to support strong levels of private reinvestment in the housing stock and to sustain higher levels of community engagement.



Although most of Delaware County beyond Muncie is rural land, most residents beyond Muncie live in neighborhoods—be they residential streets of incorporated towns or homes clustered in small subdivisions. Consequently, the types of issues that often need to be addressed in small city neighborhoods are the same ones found on residential blocks of Albany, Gaston, or County Village and Creekwood Estates.

The infrastructure to deal with many of these issues, however, tends to be limited, especially since the housing stock tends to be newer and the need to address blighted conditions or aging infrastructure has been less pressing than in a place like Muncie. As these communities age and deferred maintenance accumulates, however, the need to be proactive about issues that won't solve themselves—or that can't be reliably solved by private property owners—will become more urgent.

This plan's goal for the County and Town Neighborhoods of Delaware County is to **boost levels of collective action in order to address current or pending challenges** with regard to blight, infrastructure repair, and community competitiveness.

County and Town Neighborhoods



Reinvest Together for Stronger Rural Communities

Build the collective confidence needed to support strong levels of private reinvestment in the housing stock and to sustain higher levels of community engagement.



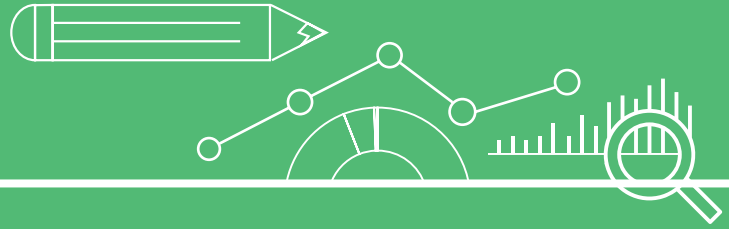
How does this approach connect to the Big Things?

Most Delaware County residents outside the City of Muncie live close to other people—either in a residential area of an incorporated town or in an unincorporated residential community. Conditions in these county and town neighborhoods have a big impact on quality of life in Delaware County. Efforts to **Improve Housing Conditions and Options** in these areas will help to sustain a vital part of the county’s housing stock and ensure that they are desirable to homebuyers well into the future. **Strengthening Quality of Place** through improvements to roads, streets, parks, and other amenities will help to boost the confidence of owners and their neighbors to reinvest in their homes. And maintaining vibrant and healthy county and town neighborhoods will **Expand Opportunities for Upward Mobility** by keeping rural areas competitive for households and businesses, thus avoiding a cycle of decline that could result in concentrated and isolated poverty.





Get the Basics Right



How does it serve ‘getting the basics right?’

Reinvesting in roads, streets, housing, parks—and doing so in a collaborative way that builds confidence and stimulates more investment by private homeowners—is all about tending to the basics and not letting essential community infrastructure (public or private) slide.

What are some specific outcomes this approach will aim for?

More proactive treatment of blighted and abandoned properties that have the potential to influence other properties

Existence of investment and maintenance plans for roads and streets that give residents certainty about public improvements

Upgrade parks that meet contemporary needs and make residential areas more marketable

County and Town Neighborhoods



STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #1

Address blight proactively in highly visible locations

According to TogetherDM's survey of residential conditions in Delaware County in 2021, over 2,000 properties in the county's towns and unincorporated neighborhoods show signs of deferred maintenance and physical decline. Of these, 300 are in severely distressed condition—they represent possible threats to public safety and may dampen the willingness of existing or potential homeowners to invest in these rural and suburban communities.

Currently, very limited resources are allocated every year to remedy blight in Delaware County outside of Muncie. Part of that is because it's been seen as too small of an issue—and often not visible enough—to draw more attention. Managing this issue before it becomes a bigger issue is financially smart for suburban and rural communities. Dedicating more resources to blight mitigation—and directing those resources to visible locations that have the biggest impact on investment attitudes—will be a proactive step in the right direction.

Number and share of residential properties in Delaware County's towns and unincorporated neighborhoods that are visibly in decline





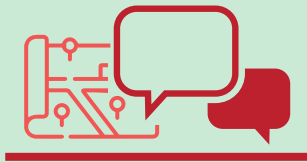
STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #2

Plan street improvements in ways that will boost homeowner confidence

Just as the spread of blighted property conditions year after year are likely to dampen the willingness of homeowners to invest significantly in their properties—and accelerate the spread of blight—the condition of public infrastructure can also influence levels of private investment. As is detailed in Part 2 of TogetherDM, underinvestment over the past few decades has resulted in a large share of roads and streets needing major rehab or reconstruction in Delaware County.

Efforts to invest more in the condition of streets and roads in county and town neighborhoods have the potential to bolster confidence in these communities. But there are ways to approach investment that will pay particular dividends for residential conditions and local tax bases.

In addition to investing more in road and street repair, the county and incorporated towns should strive for the following:



Communicate a plan

A capital improvement plan that identifies when certain roads and streets will receive attention creates a level of predictability that is helpful for private investment. Instead of wondering if a road will get fixed, property owners will know that improvements can be anticipated within a certain timeframe.



Prioritize well-traveled roads and streets

Residential streets and corridors that receive more traffic need to be fixed more often. But keeping them in good shape sends positive signals to a wide audience of drivers and adjacent homeowners.



Coordinate investments

Whenever possible, coordinate street improvements with other public investments to maximize the positive impact on local attitudes. That could mean prioritizing the demolition of a blighted house on a road that's being repaved, or linking road improvements with beautification investments to a park or school.



Raise Standards

When roads or streets get improved in residential neighborhoods, always consider the potential to go above and beyond existing conditions. Can a sidewalk improvement campaign be coordinated? Could lighting be improved?

County and Town Neighborhoods



STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION #3

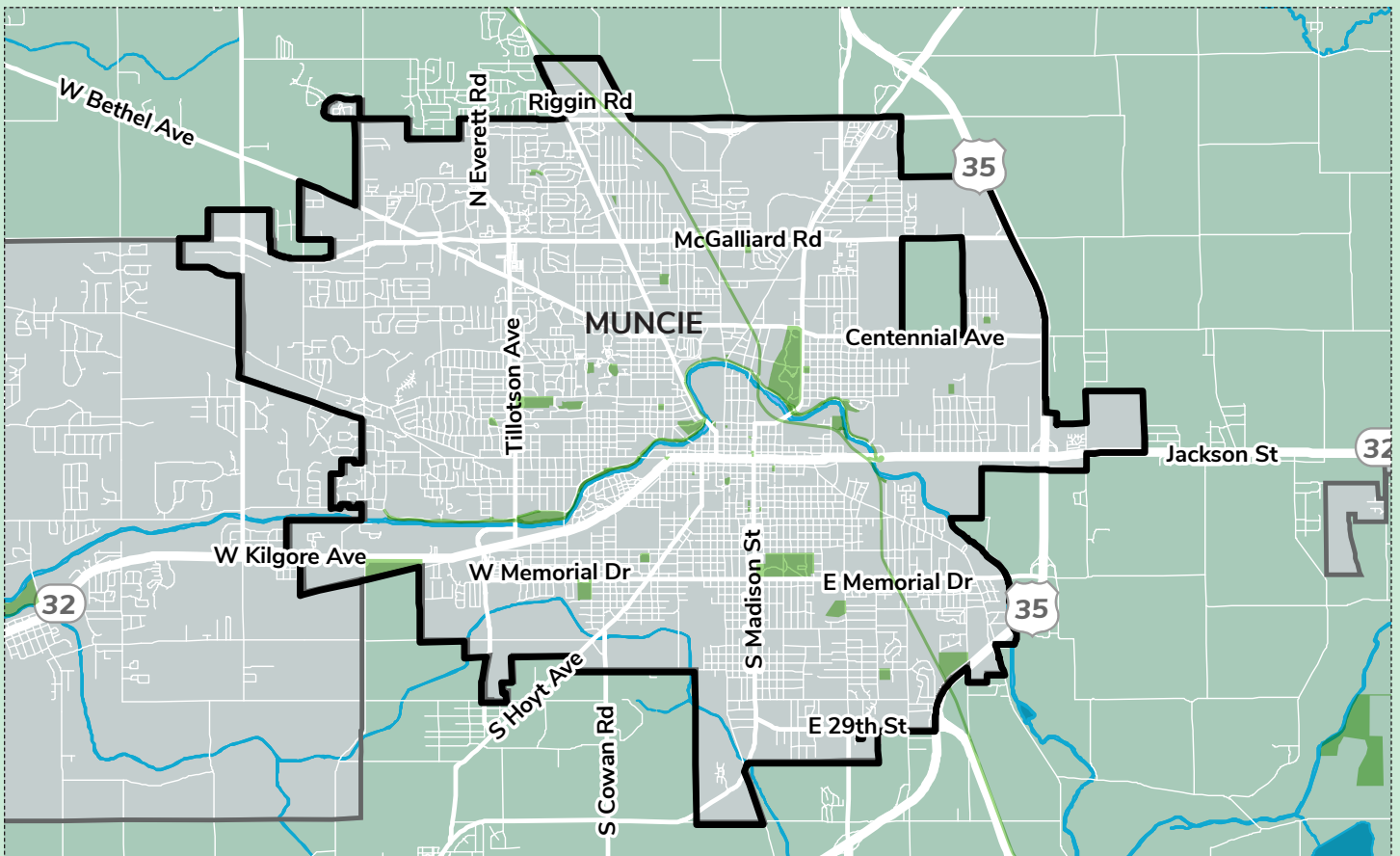
Plan and invest together to have competitive amenities

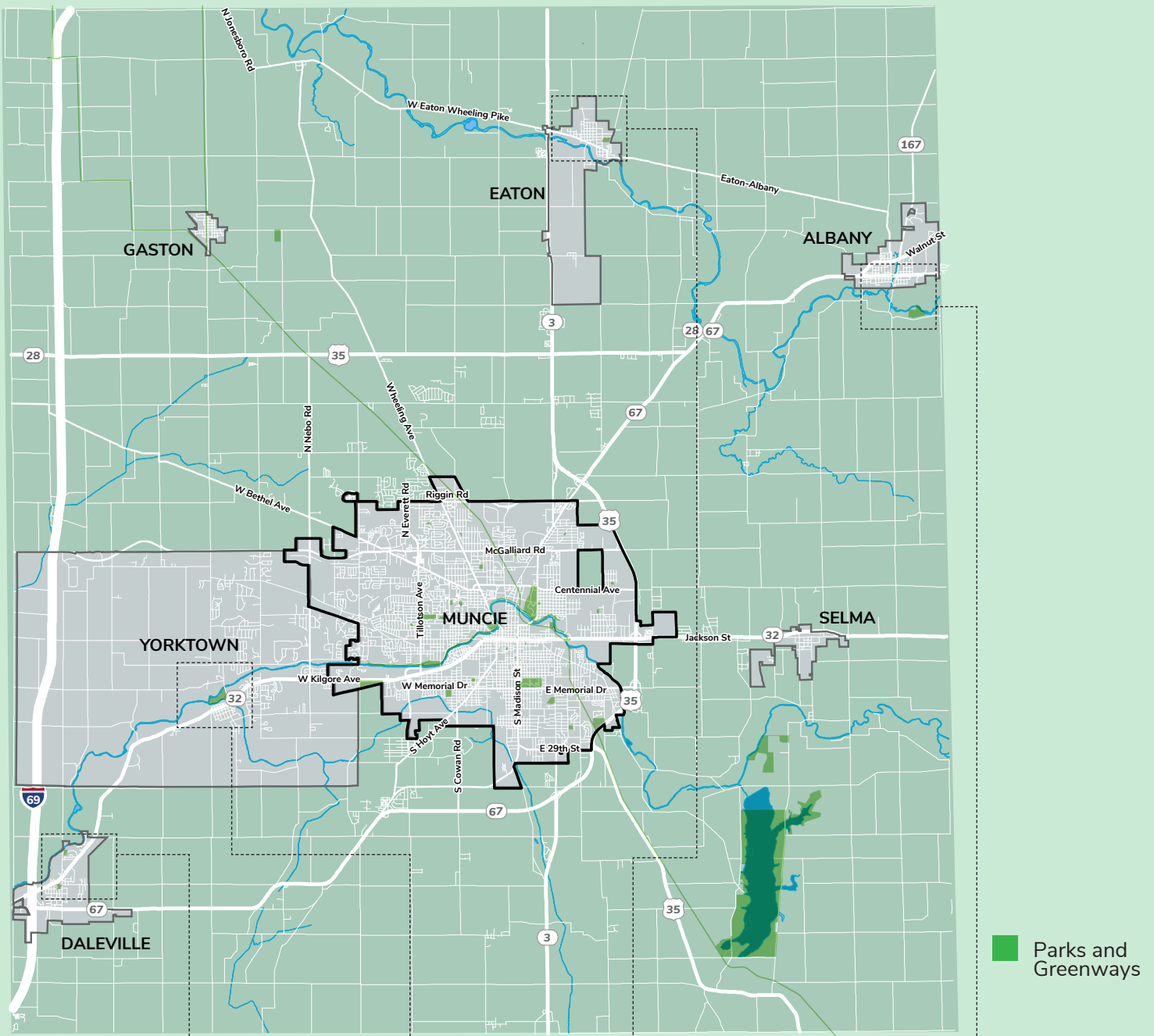
Having a good network of parks, playgrounds, and other recreational spaces (active or passive) is no longer viewed as optional for rural and small town communities that aspire to attract and retain residents who could live almost anywhere. The right amenities help communities compete for residents, they make the quality of life better for existing residents, and they contribute to a quality of place that inspires confidence and raises standards.

Outside of Muncie, the inventory of recreational spaces in Delaware County—publicly or privately maintained—is small, and the budgets for maintaining and improving those spaces is also small. By far the largest recreational amenity in the county is Prairie Creek Reservoir maintained by the City of Muncie.

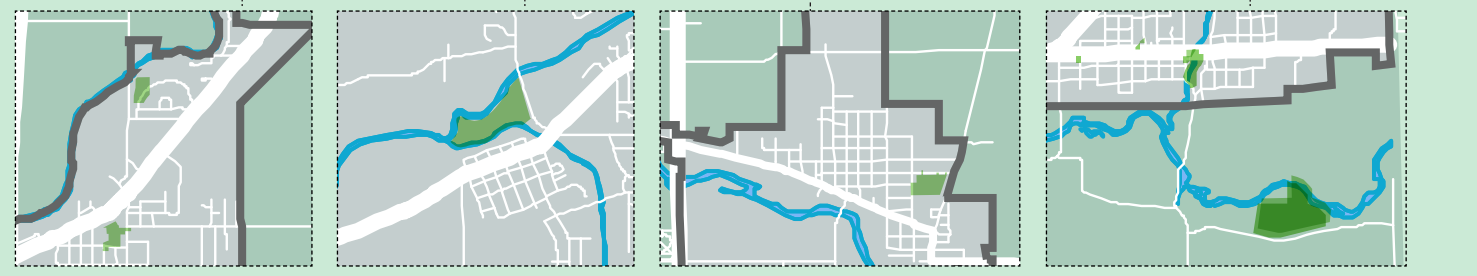
Maintaining these spaces, improving them to reflect modern needs, or adding additional spaces as opportunities arise will be difficult for rural communities and small towns to do on their own, especially in a county that doesn't have any county parks. A collective approach to recreational planning and investment would help to ensure that county and town neighborhoods have the right amenities to compete for residents and investment.

CITY OF MUNCIE





DALEVILLE YORKTOWN EATON ALBANY



County and Town Neighborhoods



Reinvest Together for Stronger Rural Communities

Action Outline

WHAT

Develop a capital improvement plan for road projects in county and town neighborhoods - See Consideration 2

Expand resources and capacity to address blighted and unsafe properties in or near county and town neighborhoods - See Consideration 1

Engage in collaborative parks master planning and investments - See Consideration 3

WHY

WHO

HOW

The condition of roads and streets send signals that influence the willingness of existing homeowners to reinvest in their properties. Having a plan that identifies when improvements provides predictability that conditions will improve.

Delaware County Highway and Engineering Departments, with Delaware-Muncie Metropolitan Plan Commission; Town Highway/Public Works departments

Use Pavement Conditions Index data and other metrics to sequence road and street improvements—with a focus, where possible, on strengthening quality of place in county and town neighborhoods

Severely blighted properties pose a public safety and health risk, but they also dampen nearby property values and can cause neighbors to hesitate about investing in their own properties. Capacity to address these problems has been very limited and needs to be boosted to ensure timely interventions.

Delaware County partnership with Muncie Land Bank; Delaware-Muncie Metropolitan Plan Commission, through its Building and Code Enforcement functions; individual town code enforcement functions

Allocate more resources to the County's Unsafe Building Fund; ensure adequate staff capacity to manage a more active blight abatement program; prioritize properties that are highly visible along major corridor or closest to other residential properties; create formal relationship between County and the Muncie Land Bank to coordinate strategic blight mitigation of tax sale and other properties

Delaware County doesn't manage any parks, but incorporated towns and some unincorporated communities do, and often with very small budgets. Collaboration on a parks master plan for areas outside of Muncie has the potential to bring renewed attention to these important quality of life assets and set a course for collaborate reinvestment in parks to meet contemporary needs. It also has the potential to identify recreation gaps that might be filled by a more active role for Delaware County on parks and recreation.

Delaware-Muncie Metropolitan Plan Commission as plan coordinator with resources provided by county, towns, and other stakeholders

Build a case for a joint approach to parks planning and investments; assemble a coalition of communities that are willing to contribute to a collaborative master planning process that will help to define needed investments at current facilities, identify future needs, and propose implementable steps for local-level and county-level action

Appendix

Acknowledgements

DELAWARE-MUNCIE METROPOLITAN PLAN COMMISSION

Shannon Henry, *President*
Jerry Dishman, *Vice President*
Kathy Carey
J.P. Hall
Teresa Hensley
Jesse Landess
Jud Motsenbocker
Rickie Sipe
Allen Wiseley

Ex-Officio Advisors

Lauren Thieme, *Purdue Extension*
Brian Stephens-Hotopp, *City Engineer*
Tom Borchers, *County Surveyor*

DELAWARE MUNCIE METROPOLITAN PLAN COMMISSION STAFF

Marta Moody, *Executive Director*
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Joe Russell
Frank Scott
Kelly Shrock
Tricia Stanley
Vicki Veach
Heather Williams

CONSULTANTS

czbLLC
Ingalls Planning & Design

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Data Sources, Methods, and Notes

Page 21

The Quality of Place rating for corridors performed during 2021 by Ingalls Planning & Design considered a range of factors that contribute to quality design. It also accounted for the specific context—urban and suburban—of the corridors that were rated, which included:

- Albany: Walnut Street and State Street
- Daleville: Main Street, Walnut/River Road, and Commerce Road
- Eaton: W Indiana Street, S Romy Street, and Meridian Street
- Gaston: Elm Street and Sycamore Street
- Muncie: Walnut Street, Macedonia Avenue, Burlington Drive, Jackson Street, McGalliard Road, Broadway Avenue, Wheeling Avenue, W Bethel Avenue, and Kilgore Avenue
- Selma: Albany Street, Jackson Street, and SR32
- Yorktown: Nebo Road, 55 W Road, SR32, and River Road

Page 22

The field survey of residential conditions overseen by czbLLC during the spring and summer of 2021 rated 33,787 residential properties. All residential types—from single-family through apartment buildings—were included in the survey. In addition to rating all residential properties in the City of Muncie and all of Delaware County’s incorporated towns, properties were also rated in several unincorporated neighborhoods.

The field survey method used a 5-point scale to evaluate the exterior condition and marketability of each property from the public right-of-way. Surveyors looked for evidence of robust maintenance and investment, deferred maintenance, and pride of ownership and assigned each property a score on the five-point scale.

Page 23

The housing market typology for Delaware County was developed to show comparative levels of demand, by Census block group, across the county. The typology was based on the following data for each block group:

- Average sale price for single-family homes, 2016-2020, from Mid-Eastern Indiana Association of Realtors
- Change in average sale price for single-family homes between 2011-15 and 2016-20 from Mid-Eastern Indiana Association of REALTORS
- Owner-occupancy rate for single-family homes based on czbLLC analysis of Delaware County assessment data
- Median gross rent for 2019 from American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
- Median household income for 2019 from American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
- Rate of households receiving SNAP/Public Assistance in 2019 from American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
- Share of housing units categorized as “Vacant, other” in 2019 from American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Each of these seven components were converted to Z scores to highlight each block group’s deviation from the average for all block groups. The resulting typology reflects the average Z score for each block group across all seven (equally weighted) components.

Pages 26-27

Data projections presented on pages 26-27 are based on the following data and/or assumptions:

- The projected 2040 population is from the Indiana Business Research Center's latest county-level population projects, released in 2018.
- The projected road and street conditions for 2030 are based on straight line trends established by the 2016 Pavement Condition Index and the 2020 Pavement Condition Index. This includes the assumption that 15% of roadways that require reconstruction are actually reconstructed by 2030, and that 25% of roadways in the "Preventative Maintenance" category in 2020 slip to "Major Rehabilitation" by 2030.
- The projected residential property conditions for 2030 assumes the following:
 - o 25% of Excellent or Good properties in markets with lower levels of demand slip to Average
 - o 25% of Average properties in markets with lower levels of demand slip to Distressed
 - o Existing demolition pace is maintained for Distressed properties (70 per year)
 - o Existing pace of new construction is maintained and adds to the inventory of Excellent or Good properties (95 per year)
- The projected poverty rate differential for 2040 is based on an assumption that, if nothing is done differently, Muncie's poverty rate will remain between 1.4 and 1.5 times the county average into the future.



Comprehensive Plan for the
Delaware-Muncie Region

2022

Prepared for
Delaware-Muncie
Metropolitan Planning
Commission



Prepared by
czbLLC and Ingalls
Planning & Design

