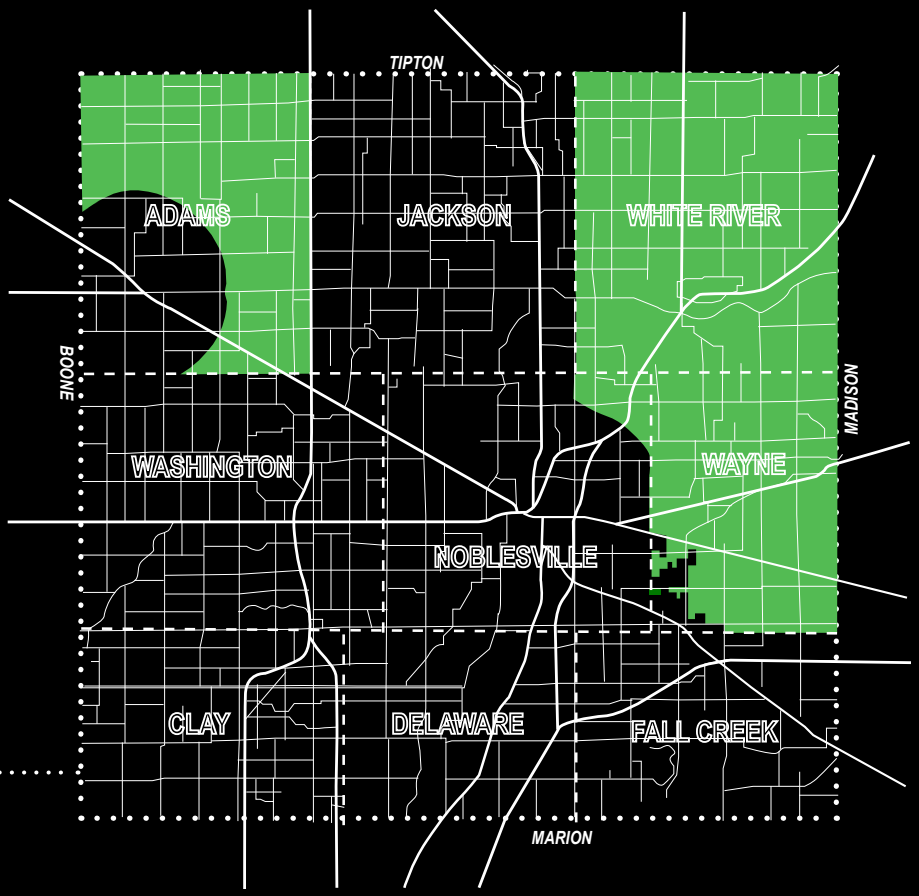
HAMILTON COUNTY, INDIANA
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

prepared for the Hamilton County Plan Commission Jurisdictional Area

June 2006



HAMILTON COUNTY
JURISDICTIONAL AREAS

Diagram

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June 2006

PREFACE

Hamilton County began the process to update its 1990 **Comprehensive Plan** in 2004. As one of the ten most rapidly growing counties in the country, Hamilton County is experiencing change at an ever-increasing rate. In order to address the inevitable impacts that accompany that growth in the most economical way, the Hamilton County Plan Commission must be proactive with its land use policies. Ideally, this Comprehensive Plan Update will positively affect the growth and development of the Hamilton County Plan Commission Jurisdiction (henceforth known as the PCJ) in a way that reflects the values and ideals of its citizenry. It is intended to serve as a resource and guide to those involved with the planning, design, and development of properties in the PCJ. It is also intended to promote a healthy environment and sound economy, two interdependent goals, through planned growth and development of lands within the PCJ. This vision is intended to help to build vibrant, vital communities for current and future residents to live, work, play, and learn.

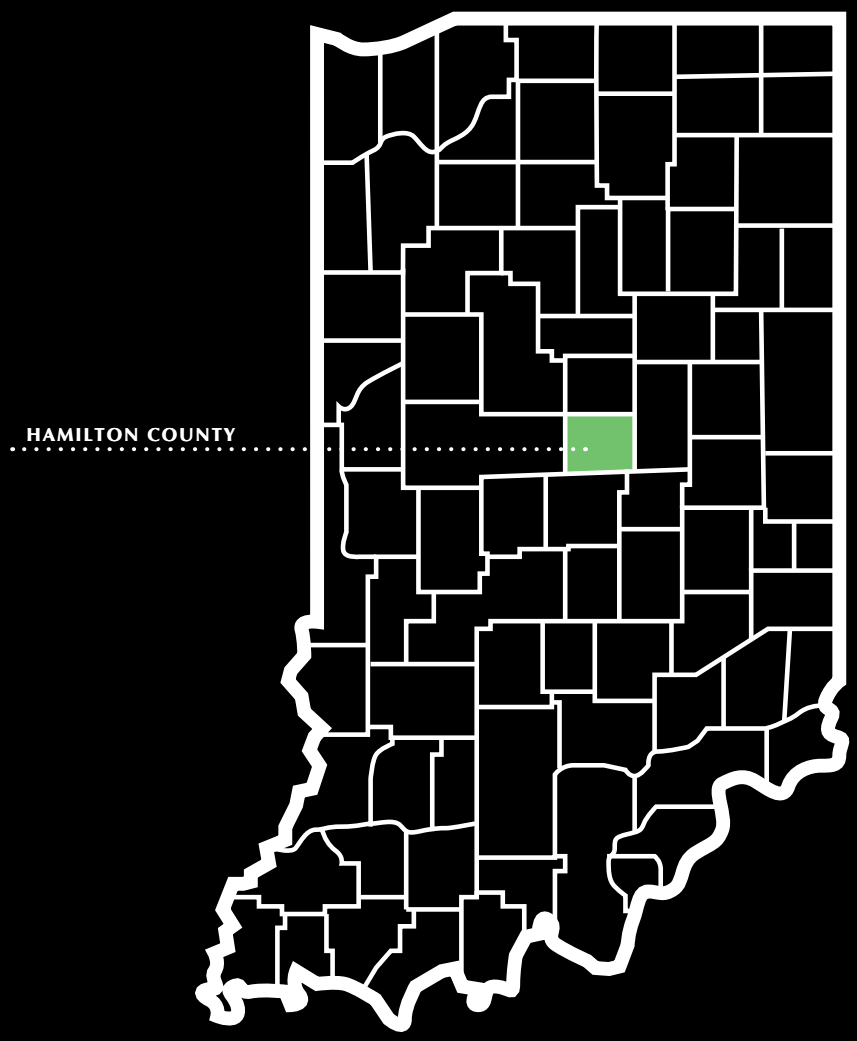
The current Comprehensive Plan, prepared for the Hamilton County Plan Commission was completed by MSE Landscape Architecture in February, 1990.

Hamilton County, one of the fastest growing counties in the United States, has grown to 231,760 persons, a 113% increase over the 1990 population of 108,936. Most of this new growth is being annexed into local communities as shown in the 1990 and 2004 illustrations of municipal boundaries. Noblesville, Fall Creek, Delaware, and Clay Townships have absorbed most of this growth into the communities of Carmel, Fishers and Noblesville. Adams, White River, Wayne, and Jackson Townships have remained primarily rural. With this growth, however, Hamilton County's rural nature is giving way to a suburbanizing environment.

This Comprehensive Plan Update is grounded in an ecologically-based planning approach and incorporates the opinions and desires of current residents through an on-going public participatory process. The plan includes land use maps and policy statements regarding land use, development practices, and transportation. This Comprehensive Plan Update has been undertaken by the Hamilton County Plan Commission, Hamilton County Planning staff, and planning consultants Conservation Design Forum and Land Strategies.

DIAGRAM

FACING PAGE, *State of Indiana County Boundaries*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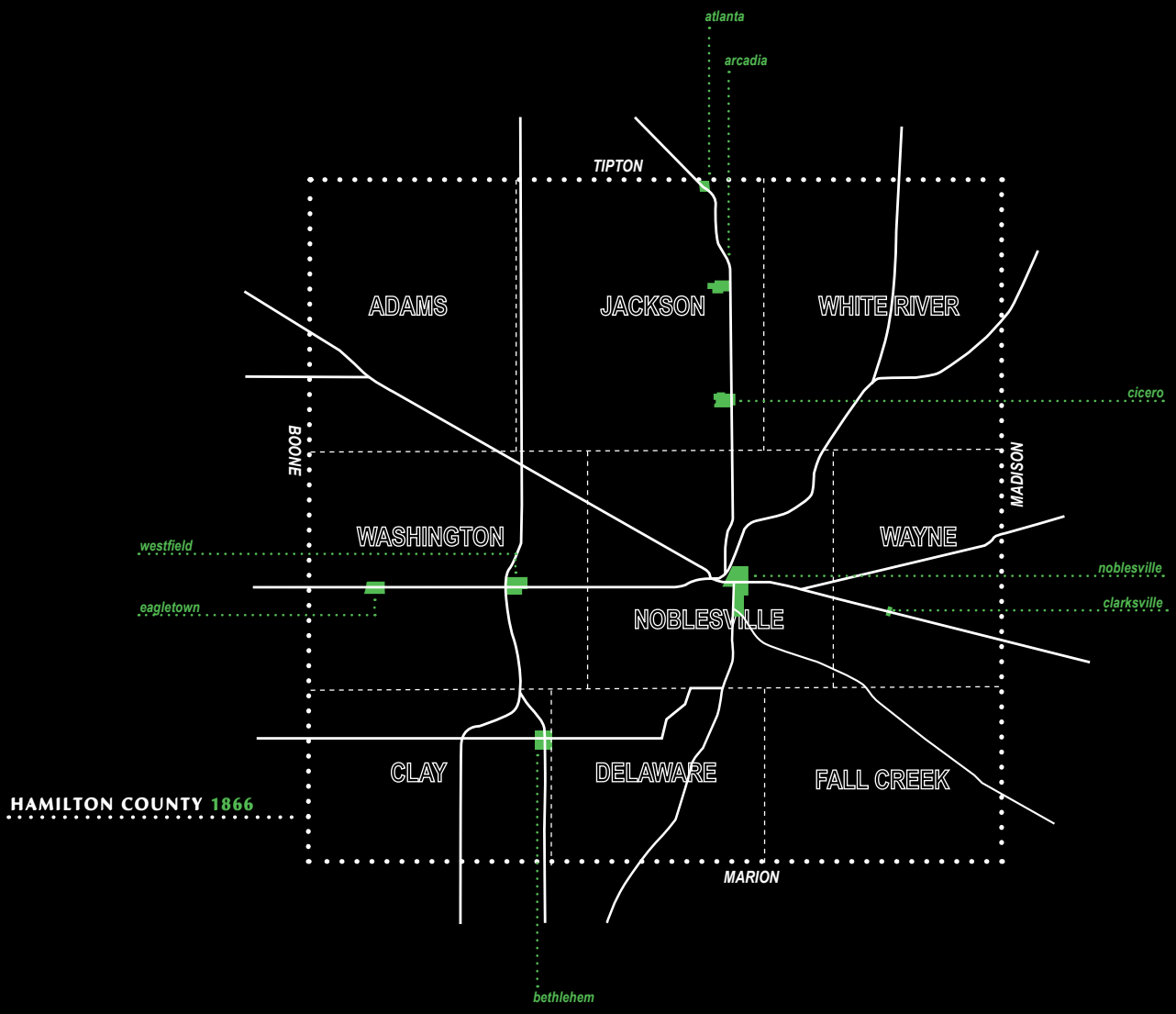
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FALL CREEK
HAMILTON COUNTY 1866
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Diagram

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Background

The planning process for the Hamilton County Plan Commission Comprehensive Plan Update consisted of the following general components:

- Data Collection and Assessment
- Public Input
- Draft Comprehensive Plan Update
- Review
- Final Comprehensive Plan Update

This document relies on existing information and maps collected by Hamilton County and other consultants, with updated information for municipal boundaries and land use changes since the 1990 Comprehensive Plan was adopted.

The Public Input component consisted of a series of public information workshops, a Paper (written) Survey, and a Visual Preference Survey. While the public information workshops uncovered a diversity of information and opinion, many comments can be distilled into two general observations:

See Appendices for survey and visual preference survey results

1. Many citizens who participated in the surveys and workshops like Hamilton County as it is and they want to preserve its rural character.

2. Many citizens who participated in the surveys and workshops are opposed to land use or development controls that limit the potential to develop (primarily) agricultural land in the future.

These two general statements exhibit an apparent conflict between the desire to maintain the status quo and the desire to be able to change land use at any time, thereby negating the status quo. Given the context of the rapid rate of development and population expansion underway in this area, it is clear that a comprehensive planning and land use development strategy that satisfies everyone will not be simple to achieve. The challenge is to develop a land use strategy that achieves the best possible social and economic conditions now and into the future without relying on burdensome or unreasonable land use control policies for land owners and developers. The Comprehensive Plan Update effort is oriented towards providing a clear set of options for the Plan Commission and the public to review and understand, and ultimately to inform the elected officials of Hamilton County with appropriate information with which they can enact the best possible land use policy.

This document represents the Final Comprehensive Plan Update. Based upon the Plan Commission review and feedback, this plan has been finalized and submitted to the County for adoption.

Diagram

FACING PAGE, *Hamilton County, 1990*


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WASHINGTON
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NOBLESVILLE
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FALL CREEK
HAMILTON COUNTY 1990
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carmel

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement summarizes the inspiration for the plan and reflects the direction given by the participants in the comprehensive planning process, Hamilton County's leadership, and ecological land planning and transportation principles.

Mission Statement

• The citizens and elected officials of Hamilton County put forth this Comprehensive Plan so that it may guide future land use and development decisions within the Plan Commission's jurisdiction and influence.

• This plan is based upon a common vision for residents living in the jurisdiction of the Hamilton County Plan Commission that strikes a healthy balance between ecology, community, culture, and economy.

• Rapid growth and development must be moderated with sound, long-range planning for natural resources, transportation, homes, businesses, and other community infrastructure.

• The citizens of this area of Hamilton County and their elected officials are committed to carry through with the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan.

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Diagram

FACING PAGE, *Hamilton County, 2005*


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NOBLESVILLE
CLAY
DELAWARE
FALL CREEK
HAMILTON COUNTY 2005
MARION
fishers
carmel

First Principles, Strategies, and Policies

Five First Principles describe the future vision for the PCJ and serve as the foundation upon which the rest of the plan is built. The first principles are as follows:

I. Protect and Steward the Hamilton County Plan Commission Jurisdiction's Environment and Natural Resources

II. Preserve and Enhance the Rural Character of the Hamilton County Plan Commission Jurisdiction

III. Promote Economic Growth and a Stable Tax Base for the Hamilton County Plan Commission Jurisdiction

IV. Build Livable Communities for the Hamilton County Plan Commission Jurisdiction

V. Serve Hamilton County Plan Commission Jurisdiction Residents and Businesses with Efficient Transportation Systems

In order to further articulate this vision, a number of Policies and Strategies have been identified for each of the five First Principles. These are both general and specific recommendations for achieving the First Principles. Some of the strategies may be more appropriate for municipal and village development, however, county development can follow these strategies as well.

I. Protect and Steward the Hamilton County Plan Commission Jurisdiction's Environment and Natural Resources

1. The health and vigor of the natural environment is one of the key indicators of the vitality of a community.

2. Codes and ordinances that protect natural resources should be enacted or strengthened.

3. All important natural resources should be identified and protected. Natural landscapes should serve as one of the defining aesthetic characteristics of the community.

   a. Native and natural landscapes, especially remnant systems, should be identified, preserved and protected.

   b. The diversity of plants, animals, and other organisms native to this area should be nurtured and increased as an element of healthy ecosystems.

   c. Naturalized or native landscape systems should be deployed in all areas of passive open space where specific land uses and programs allow. Mown turf should not be considered the default landscape for all places not paved or built upon.

4. An overall network of ecological landscapes, or green infrastructure, should serve as the basis for land planning and development. All residents should have convenient access to high quality natural areas.

5. Sustainable land use and land management practices should be promoted to restore and maintain the health and beauty of natural systems.

6. Employ conservation design and development (i.e., ecologically-based design, low impact development, sustainable design) practices for new construction and redevelopment of existing properties. These techniques can provide quality housing and economic development while supporting the ecological goals of the communities within the corridor.

7. Pavement / impervious area should be minimized while maintaining the functional aspects of roads, parking facilities, and building rooftops. Road widths should be kept to the minimum lane numbers and widths to accommodate anticipated traffic volumes with the least amount of pavement to install and maintain. Mixed use development can create the opportunity for the sharing of parking spaces to minimize the cost and upkeep of car parking lots.

8. Air quality is critical to community health, and measures should be taken to ensure clean air throughout the region.

Water Resources

1. Rivers, streams, lakes, and other water resources will be preserved and protected.

2. Enact codes and ordinances for new development and retrofitting existing development to slow, cleanse, and infiltrate rainwater to restore a groundwater-dominated hydrology.

3. Rainwater must be considered a valuable resource rather than a waste product, and measures for its proper handling should be implemented throughout all land use areas. Slow, cleanse, and infiltrate rainwater to restore a groundwater-dominated hydrology.

a. Water from all surfaces must be considered. Employ materials for the built environment that mimic natural drainage systems. Porous paving systems, rainwater harvesting, green or vegetated roof surfaces, bioswales, and rain gardens are all specific techniques or materials that support sustainable rainwater treatment.

b. Prohibit the discharge of stormwater into low-flow streams and high quality streams, lakes, and wetlands by retaining as much stormwater as possible on site and within the absorption capacity of the natural landscape.

c. Minimize impervious cover and stormwater runoff by reducing street width, street length, driveways, and parking facilities and by using compact and contiguous development where possible. Encourage permeable paving techniques (pavers, permeable asphalt) for low traffic areas and parking lots, shared parking strategies, reduced parking requirements, and green roofs. Pavement should be minimized while maintaining the functional aspects of roads and parking facilities. Road widths should be kept to the minimum lane numbers and widths to accommodate anticipated traffic volumes with the least amount of pavement to install and maintain. Mixed use development can create the opportunity for the sharing of parking spaces to minimize the cost and upkeep of car parking lots.

d. The key idea to understand about parking and transportation standards is that they be adequate and appropriate for the intended use, not designed according to one-size-fits-all standards. Use-oriented standards (i.e., parking ratios, street width, travel lanes, etc.) can be developed for particular applications in relation to current community codes and standards. See Appropriate Transportation Systems for additional recommendations. Roadway surfaces should be designed to drain properly without creating stormwater impacts downstream. Roadside swales and alternative curb and gutter designs can be effectively utilized depending upon the adjacent land use, intensity of use, driveway spacing, and other factors. The important design characteristic is to insure that rainwater is diverted into appropriate treatment devices such as bioswales and rain gardens.

e. Establish design standards for and install natural drainage and stormwater treatment features (constructed wetlands, rain gardens, and naturally vegetated filter strips and drainage swales) and/or use existing natural features and hydrology of the landscape (drainage swales and areas of deep-rooted native vegetation) instead of sewers and gutters to filter and absorb stormwater into the ground before it leaves the development site.

f. If all stormwater can not be absorbed by the landscape, detain stormwater with naturalized wet or dry detention basin designs, which replicate a natural wetland or pond system and thereby cleanse runoff and provide natural habitat.

g. Establish stormwater impact fees on developers based on the release of stormwater (e.g., $1200 to $2400 per acre-foot per year) for hydraulically connected impervious surfaces. Provide design standards and recommendations for hydraulically disconnecting impervious surfaces.

h. Disconnect downspouts and collect stormwater in rain barrels and cisterns (possibly to be reused for irrigation purposes) and rain gardens. These features should be sufficiently sized to accommodate up to a 0.75 inch rain event.

i. Design stormwater infiltration and treatment so that there is no increase in runoff volume for all events up to the 2-year storm event.

4. Prevent damaging modifications and impacts to rivers, streams, lakes, and other water resources.

a. Create natural buffer zones and setbacks, through zoning ordinances, overlay districts, or other enforceable means, that protect natural vegetation and prohibit building and modifications within 100 feet or more of water resources and 100 year floodplains. Allowable uses within floodplains shall be limited to agriculture, public and private parks, passive recreation, fencing parallel to water flow, pervious parking lots subject to flooding depths no greater than 6 inches, and yard areas.

b. Prohibit channelization (straightening for faster water flow), filling, impoundment, and draining of streams and wetlands. Wetlands found within a development site must remain in or be restored to a natural state. Acquire ownership or conservation easements of water resources and buffer areas and preserve them as greenways and as part of the natural community infrastructure.

c. Preserve existing natural drainage features and minimize modification of the landscape, especially natural topography, natural stream channels, wetlands, and floodplains.

d. Codes and ordinances that protect water resources should be enacted or strengthened.

5. Restore, manage, and maintain water resources in an environmentally sound manner.

a. Stabilize failing and eroding stream banks and lakeshores using environmentally sensitive techniques such as natural vegetation plantings and other bioengineering techniques rather than hard-edged structures such as retaining walls, concrete, or rocks.

b. Preserve and restore native riparian vegetation along the edges of water resources.

c. Establish management plans, authorities, and revenue sources (e.g., Special Service Area) to fund management of stormwater management structures and open space.

Sustainable Sites and Natural Landscapes

1. Native and natural landscapes, especially remnant systems, will be identified, preserved and protected.

2. Naturalized or native landscape systems should be deployed in all areas of passive open space where specific land uses and programs allow. Mown turf should not be considered the "default landscape" for all places not paved or built upon.

3. Adopt and amend local policies and ordinances to support and encourage sustainable site design, protection of native vegetation, and natural landscaping on private and public property where specific land uses and programs allow. These practices help conserve water and protect water quality.

a. Revise and adopt zoning and subdivision codes to require sustainable site designs and natural landscaping, especially in drainage swales, around

detention basins, and along the edges of streams, lakes, and wetlands.

b. Streamline the permitting process and reduce development fees for green site designs.

c. Encourage site managers and maintenance departments to use sustainable natural landscaping and landscape management techniques, which minimize the need for irrigation water, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides.

4. Use natural landscaping as a functional and structural environmental management technique.

a. Use native plants (with zero tolerance for invasive or exotic plants) to stabilize streambanks, pond edges, and lakeshores as a more effective and environmentally sound measure than hard-edged measures such as retaining walls or rip-rap.

b. Retrofit existing detention basins and design new basins with infiltration techniques and as naturally vegetated wetland/prairie systems to enhance water quality, provide habitat, and improve community aesthetics.

c. Allow and use natural site features and landscapes to help manage stormwater on site, reducing the need for expensive curb-and-gutter and sewer infrastructure.

d. Use naturally landscaped rain gardens to collect and filter stormwater runoff.

5. Encourage builders, developer, and homeowners in the community to use the following green site selection and preparation strategies in development projects.

a. Select sites that maximize access to public transportation, schools, employers, parks, libraries, shopping areas, and community services, that use existing infrastructure, and that reuse existing built sites and structures.

b. Use natural site features (landforms, vegetation, sun angles), building orientation, and landscaping to provide shade during summer, maximize solar heating during the winter, and use natural daylighting for light needs.

c. Protect sensitive landscape elements including stream corridors, wetlands, shorelines and floodplains; aquifer recharge areas; steep slopes; wildlife habitat, prairies, trees, woodlands, and other natural vegetation; and historic, archaeological, and cultural features. Techniques include conservation easements (protective measures attached to a land deed or title), regulation, overlays, and buffer zones. Significant trees include those with 3" or greater diameter at 4′ above grade except those determined to be nuisance species and where it is agreed that the density of trees is greater than desirable for proper forest management. Protected areas should be specifically shown on construction plans. When calculating developable land area, remove perimeter street ROW and non-buildable and unsuitable land, including FEMA floodplains, wetlands and their required buffer, required buffer areas for streams and lakes, land of >12% slope, lands with threatened or endangered species, and protected archeological sites.

d. Minimize clearing, grading, and other site disturbances, especially in environmentally sensitive areas, and control erosion and sedimentation during site preparation and construction using techniques such as temporary and permanent seeding, mulching, earth dikes, silt fencing, sediment traps, and sediment basins.

e. Use cluster or conservation development techniques for multiple building sites in order to reduce the amount of land consumed for development. Locate new buildings close to the existing developed areas to minimize sprawl.

Green Infrastructure

1. Implement a green infrastructure planning and policy initiative. An overall network of public and private natural areas, parks, waterways, and other community open space should serve as the basis for land planning and development and provides multiple benefits including: recreation, habitat for a diverse array of beneficial plants, insects, birds, and animals, ecological enhancement, excellent water quality, and increased value of homes and businesses within the community where such an element is located.

a. The essential idea to understand about open space preservation is the importance of interconnected networks of open space on a greater-than-community scale, between and throughout the larger region, rather than isolated areas of open space within each subdivision development, which tends to disperse residents and decrease the sense of community. Communities should pay particular attention to ensuring that development is compact and incorporates appropriate transportation networks and a mix of uses, which will help build a sense of neighborhood and enhance social interaction. Open space protected through minimum percentage requirements, while accomplishing overall community objectives of open space protection, should be able to be moved around and transferred to areas of open space that better serve the larger green infrastructure plan and system. Mechanisms such as transferable development rights and impact fees can be used to achieve overall open space and green infrastructure goals. In short, don't sacrifice creating a great community for open space preservation.

b. Actively involve local officials, staff, and the public in the green infrastructure visioning and planning process.

c. Prioritize green infrastructure protection as a primary public and private investment as well as incorporating green infrastructure into community plans, policies, and ordinances.

d. Identify green spaces, sensitive landscape elements, natural areas, waterways, wetlands, and other landscape elements important to the community. These features may be incorporated into a natural areas overlay district that establishes allowable uses and standards for these areas.

e. Establish by purchase and/or regulatory requirement a set of protective buffers around each of the features mentioned above wide enough to provide adequate protection (100 feet for water features and natural areas).

f. When new development is proposed, first study the green infrastructure needs and sensitive features of the area. Once the green infrastructure has been identified and set aside, construct developments on remaining land for minimal interference.

2. Manage and restore natural areas and processes. Areas designated as natural areas should be entirely composed of native landscapes; areas designated as open space should be naturally landscaped or restored to the greatest extent possible while retaining space for other designated uses. Green spaces should be linked, networked, and incorporated into a regional green infrastructure, trail, and natural area plan.

a. Restore underutilized land as habitat. For example, stormwater detention basins retrofitted with native wetland and prairie plants can provide the multiple benefits of flood control, improved water quality, and wildlife habitat.

b. Restore natural hydrology so that ponds, wetlands, streams, and rivers disrupted by agriculture or urban development are restored to normal functioning. Specific activities include: removing, blocking, or placing control valves on drain tiles, drainage ditches, and water-level control structures (weirs and

low-head dams); reducing the flow of stormwater to stream systems; and promoting stormwater infiltration into the soil where it can help recharge wetlands and groundwater- fed stream systems.

c. Establish structures to manage public open space and natural areas and require management for private open space and natural areas through special service areas and/or homeowners associations.

3. Protect and connect valuable natural areas.

a. Identify and prioritize important community landscape elements, gaps in the natural area network, remnant natural systems, and unprotected high quality natural areas for protection. Use community goals, state recommendations, and region-wide greenways and trails programs as guidance for prioritization.

b. Preserve the highest priority areas as green space using available resources and techniques.

i. Create a program to encourage voluntary property donations or dedications for green space by landowners.

ii. Provide tax benefits to landowners willing to forego the right to develop some or all of their property.

iii. Purchase the right to develop some or all of a property from willing sellers (a purchase of development rights program).

iv. Purchase property from landowners to be preserved as green space.

v. Establish conservation easements with landowners willing to restrict their land from being used for specific activities.

vi. Trade publicly owned land that is no longer needed for its original purpose for land that is valuable as wildlife habitat, greenways, or open space.

c. Promote conservation development or 'open space' design, which conserves terrestrial and aquatic habitats on private land without public expense.

i. Allow conservation and cluster development designs within community standards, either as a separate ordinance or allowable under PUD classification.

ii. Allow flexible development designs (e.g., setbacks, road widths, lot sizes and shapes, lot density) for developers using conservation designs.

iii. Reduce building setbacks to minimize driveway length or use pervious paving materials.

iv. Establish management plans, authorities, and revenue sources (e.g., Special Service Area) to fund management of open space.

d. Avoid large lot zoning (five acres and greater) as an open space preservation tool, as this typically results in sprawling development and does not maximize open space preservation benefits, especially if the majority of the five-acre lot is converted to turf grass.

II. Preserve and Enhance the Rural Character of the Hamilton County Plan Commission Jurisdiction

1. The rural, open nature of many areas of Hamilton County is considered an important characteristic and indicator of visual and historic quality that shall be maintained. Significant viewsheds and vistas throughout the County, especially as perceived from roads and other public spaces, will be identified and protected.

2. The character and quality of the small villages set into the context of an agricultural landscape is a defining quality of the County. Agricultural land uses and open space will be conserved and deployed to reinforce rural character.

3. New development shall be done in such a way as to compliment and preserve rural visual quality.

4. Develop community design guidelines, codes, and ordinances to protect and enhance character, aesthetics, historic features, and architectural harmony.

a. Adopt policies and ordinances regarding signage and billboard design such as location, size, height, material, and character, to maintain consistency, to provide an aesthetic streetscape, and to limit the scale and frequency of advertisements.

b. Review development proposals to insure compatibility with design guidelines.

c. Adopt policies and ordinances to locate and design telecommunication facilities such as cellular towers, satellite dishes, and television antennas to be as unobtrusive as possible.

d. Work with electric, cable, and telephone utility providers to bury or relocate utility wires from public view.

e. Consider guidelines that will reinforce the rural character through the planning and development of new or expanded homes, neighborhoods, and villages.

f. A Rustic Roads program should be considered that will preserve rural roadway sight lines, cross sections, topography, and landscape.

g. Road widths shall be kept to rural road two-lane cross sections with additional left and right turning lanes to accommodate increased traffic volumes as necessary before four or six lane expansion is considered.

h. Rural roads will be maintained with roadside drainage swales and ditches. Curb, gutter, and storm sewer construction shall be avoided in the rural landscape.

i. The Hamilton County Thoroughfare Plan will be updated to account for and designate Rustic Roads and the maintenance of Rural Road standards.

j. Access control guidelines should be considered for designated Rustic Roads and all other roads identified in the Hamilton County Thoroughfare Plan.

k. Land use conflicts should be minimized or eliminated. For example, residential uses should not be placed in close proximity to major arterial roadways or highways. If rear yards from homes are not planned adjacent to primary roadways (double frontage lots), then the expense of landscape buffers and walls can be avoided altogether.

5. Protect natural landscape elements, topography, and views and vistas, especially as perceived from roads and other public spaces.

a. Protect elements such as green space, neighborhood trees (especially stately or specimen trees), scenic and rustic roads, farmsteads, and forested areas, which provide a distinct and unique community sense of place.

b. Protect sight lines, viewsheds, vistas, scenic views, and scenic corridors through ordinances and special designation.

6. Provide excellence in development design.

a. Locate parking areas and garages behind rather than in front of homes and businesses.

b. Distinct edges to towns, villages, and settlements will be established and respected. Use markers or other visual cues that are appropriate for the scale, context, and visual quality of the County to signal transitions between towns and neighborhoods and to provide town and neighborhood identity.

c. Use natural elements such as colorful plantings, trees, stones, and water features or fountains as aesthetic elements in public spaces. Consider interactive water features that encourage touching or soaking one's feet.

d. Create quiet residential lanes with narrower streets to slow traffic and enhance community atmosphere. Encourage front porches to enhance residential areas. For heavier traffic areas, design or retrofit roadways for a boulevard or parkway appearance with landscaped medians, street tree plantings, bike lanes, and sidewalks.

e. Historic and otherwise significant cultural resources including buildings, agricultural structures, roadways and bridges, built landscapes, and other elements will be identified and protected.

f. Consider applying for designation of buildings or districts in the National Register of Historic Places or as a local historic district certified by the National Park Service. If preservation is impossible, consider relocating historic structures to more appropriate sites.

g. Establish and publicize incentives to encourage preservation of historic resources which may include state and federal tax credits, easements, local tax incentives, loans, and grants.

7. Encourage builders and developers to consider the context in which they build.

a. Work with business owners, especially franchises, to develop acceptable building facades and signage consistent with the established character of a community rather than using visually unappealing generic designs.

b. Ensure that redevelopment in existing neighborhoods is consistent with their scale and character and enhances their visual appeal. Focus on elements such as architectural style, building materials, ornamentation, window placement, and scale.

c. Land use conflicts should be minimized or eliminated. For example, residential uses should not be placed in close proximity to major arterial roadways or highways. If rear yards from homes are not planned adjacent to primary roadways (double frontage lots), then the expense of landscape buffers and walls can be avoided altogether.

III. Promote Economic Growth and a Stable Tax Base for the Hamilton County Plan Commission Jurisdiction

1. A diverse array of new and redeveloped homes and businesses will be encouraged that will strengthen the County's tax base. This development shall occur consistent with Hamilton County planning and development guidelines.

2. New and expanded businesses that provide employment opportunities for residents will be encouraged. A higher ratio of people both living and working in Hamilton County is preferred. Locally owned businesses will be encouraged.

3. A balance of residential, business, agriculture, and recreation land uses is desired, and supports a healthy economy.

4. Adherence to all of the Comprehensive Plan First Principles is critical to the achievement and maintenance of those special qualities and characteristics that have drawn many people to Hamilton County already.

5. The bucolic nature of the area can support eco-tourism activities that could be incorporated into economically beneficial activities such as organic farming, bed-and-breakfast lodging, fall color tours, etc. Promote business activities that reinforce land use and community character goals.

6. Agricultural land preservation techniques should be employed to protect prime farmland and rural character and to promote sustainable farming practices.

7. Promote infill development and redevelopment in order to utilize existing infrastructure, utilities, and transportation networks.

8. Provide financial incentives and support.

   a. Establish tax increment financing (TIF) districts to renovate declining areas or redevelop blighted areas. TIF districts capture, for a time, all of the increased tax revenue that results if the redevelopment stimulates private investment. As private investments add to the tax base within the redevelopment area, the increased tax revenues are placed in a special fund that can only be used for improvements in that area.

   b. Use the US Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant program to provide long term, fixed-rate financing to new or expanding businesses that create jobs and employment opportunities for low-income individuals. Below market-rate loans are available for business expansion and start-ups that exhibit solid commitments to create or retain permanent jobs, demonstrate financial feasibility, and benefit low income and moderate-income residents.

   c. Use a variety of local, state, and federal tax credits to induce economic development, job creation, and capital investment. Tax credits can provide the financing for development as an equity incentive vehicle and in some cases a debt enhancement tool.

9. Support the local economy and locally-owned businesses.

   a. Investigate economically beneficial eco-tourism activities such as organic farming, bed-and-breakfast lodging, and fall color tours, etc., and protect resources that support these activities such as prime agricultural land and rural character.

   b. Promote locally-owned large and small businesses, including organic farms, markets, and restaurants, which keep capital within the community and tend to be more loyal and better neighbors to the community.

   c. Improve the local transit infrastructure. Linking local employers to public transportation networks eases commutes for workers and improves overall productivity.

IV. Build Livable Communities for the Hamilton County Plan Commission Jurisdiction

1. Quality housing choices are important to serve a growing, diverse population.

2. New homes should be planned in a way that supports the other First Principles.

3. New homes should be convenient to schools, parks, and shops and density should be clustered around mixed-use village or town centers.

4. New homes on (relatively) smaller lots should be planned in neighborhoods or clusters to create a sense of community and quality of life. New homes on larger acreages should be built in a way that supports the overall rural character of the area.

5. All residents shall have access to a variety of types and densities of quality housing choices that serve a growing, diverse population.

a. Additional housing types include auxiliary living units, either attached or detached, that provide an economical way for seniors, college-age children, and those with disabilities to stay with family.

b. Allow live-work housing, which accommodates some neighborhood-compatible home-based business.

6. All residents shall have convenient access to necessary and desirable community services. These include schools, recreation, health care, libraries, police and fire protection, and other services.

7. Community facilities will be anticipated and developed in concert with new neighborhoods and village centers to reinforce other First Principles. New facilities will be constructed according to sustainable building practices to serve residents in the long-term.

8. Design a mix of uses into new and existing developments with convenient access to schools, shops, services, and recreation, and with appropriate transportation alternatives.

a. Retrofit single-use developments (primarily residential and commercial) into mixed-use communities by integrating increased residential density with commercial and retail uses such as markets, offices, schools, and parks. Areas that are job-heavy and housing-light, or vice versa, are good opportunities for mixed-use development.

b. Provide developers with examples of mixed-use developments at scales appropriate for the community or County and provide incentives such as density bonuses, increased residential zoning, and infrastructure improvements to encourage housing construction near commercial districts.

9. Revise existing zoning and development codes or develop a parallel code to allow developers more flexible, integrative designs.

a. Consider adopting a mixed-use overlay zoning district to allow for higher density mixed uses. Successful combinations include limited commercial development in residential zones, multifamily residential development in commercial zones, and limited retail (such as a corner market) in industrial zones. Locate community centers such as county offices, the library, the post office, and other similar services in or near the town center.

b. Allow for mixed uses within buildings, such as residential units above street-level retail units, to provide a regular customer base, place more 'watchful eyes' on the street, and extend business hours into the evening.

c. Allow flexible zoning districts where building use can vary between commercial, residential, and business uses according to market demand. Allow owners and occupants flexibility to determine

appropriate uses for their buildings. Also allow flexible zoning for transition areas between residential and commercial districts that can incorporate both uses.

d. Update zoning to encourage mixed-use shopping districts rather than strip-mall developments in fringe areas. These developments compete with and often drain town centers and do not provide the same aesthetic and economic benefits.

10. Create coalitions and partnerships with local civic organizations and merchant associations to help implement community enhancements.

11. Create active, inviting, and comfortable public spaces and destinations that entice people to stop, explore, and take care of daily activities. The unique feel and appearance of a community is essential to its success.

a. Provide lighting at the pedestrian level (9 to 12 feet) to create safe, inviting walkways. Light poles with attached banner brackets provide space for advertising special community events.

b. Provide signs that identify neighborhoods, districts, and communities with "Welcome to ..." or other identifiers.

c. Vacant lots, large parking lots, and blank wall space tend to deter pedestrians from exploring further, while windows, murals, ivy, and other interesting features create attractive and secure walking environments.

d. Incorporate existing natural, historic, and cultural features into public spaces.

12. Land use and community planning should take the long view in assessing impacts of decisions.

13. Community facilities, homes, businesses, and transportation choices should be anticipated and developed in concert with new neighborhoods and oriented to a focal point or identifying element such as a village green, corner store, school, community center, or a town center providing convenient access to schools, shops, services, and recreation. Neighborhood-scale shops, services, cafés and other commercial uses should be planned within neighborhoods to provide these features within walking or biking proximity to the greatest number of residents.

14. All residents shall have convenient access to necessary and desirable community services. These include schools, recreation, health care, libraries, police and fire protection, and other services.

V. Serve Hamilton County Plan Commission Jurisdiction Residents and Businesses with Efficient Transportation Systems

1. Hamilton County should have a transportation system that serves its citizens and uses now and into the future.

2. All residents of the County should have choices and alternatives for getting between home, work, school, shopping, play, and other activities.

3. It is important to minimize traffic congestion now and as the area continues to grow in population.

4. The Hamilton County Alternative Transportation Plan will be amended.

5. Roadway access control that enforces the land use plan should be created and adopted.

6. The feasibility of full utilization of the existing rail line between Noblesville and Downtown Indianapolis for commuter use will be investigated. This investigation will include defining possible station locations along the corridor.

7. Intergovernmental cooperation for transportation planning should be encouraged to address transportation issues that stem from decisions and policies made by other jurisdictions and municipalities.

8. Traffic impact policies for the County will be established, including traffic impact criteria for new development.

9. Land use and transportation planning should be closely coordinated. The majority of new homes and businesses should be concentrated in neighborhood or community "nodes", where the possibility of transportation alternatives could exist. New homes and businesses should be convenient to schools, parks, and shops.

10. Plan and coordinate land use and transportation networks, including roadways, trails, and walkways, to serve both transportation and recreation needs.

a. Neighborhood and community design should be based on an integrated network of roads and other transportation pathways to provide multiple routes for circulation, as opposed to conventional subdivision that relies on one or a few access points to major roads, resulting in concentrations of traffic and congestion. An interconnected network of streets has been shown to provide drivers more travel options, thus reducing roadway congestion on nearby major roadways. Additionally, this type of design is more pedestrian and bicycle friendly as it allows for more direct paths from place to place.

11. Create safe and inviting local travel-ways that cater to a variety of pedestrian travel options.

a. Provide public transit, bicycle lanes, bicycle parking, and ample walkways to make activity centers and destinations easily accessible and to provide a variety of transportation options to residents to reach home, work, school, shopping, play, and other activities. Automobile parking should not inhibit the transit, pedestrian, or bicycle environment. The key to transit use is convenience and accessibility.

b. Roads, walks, and trails should be safe, well-built, and well maintained. All transportation infrastructure should be constructed and maintained with pedestrian-scale use and visibility in mind.

c. Design trails, lanes, and/or sidewalks 4 to 5 feet in width (depending on need) and at least 2 feet from the street as smooth, wide, green, shaded places, buffered from traffic, that terminate at frequent destination points including parks, schools, and community centers. Sidewalks can be sloped to drain to landscaped areas rather than to streets.

d. Bicycle lanes shall be constructed on all appropriate roadways.

e. Install and clearly mark separate cycling lanes on paths and roadways; prohibit adult cyclists and motorized scooters from sidewalks.

f. Utilize alleys to provide additional points of access to properties, house utilities, and parking, and to avoid having driveways dominate sidewalks and streetscapes.

g. Reduce minimum driveway width to 9 feet or less for one lane and 18 feet or less for 2 lane driveways. Allow pervious materials (grass, gravel, vegetated median strips or 'two track' design, and permeable pavers) to be used for driveways. Also allow shared driveways in residential settings.

h. Use attractive fences or native plantings around parking lots to maintain a comfortable pedestrian atmosphere.

i. Provide rest stops and signage along trails and within active areas that indicate directions to retail districts, civic buildings, recreational areas, and open space preserves.

12. Manage automobile traffic to assure the pedestrian a positive, safe, and comfortable experience. All transportation infrastructures should be constructed and maintained with pedestrian-scale use and visibility in mind and sized appropriately for local needs rather than one-size-fits-all. These strategies aid in minimizing impervious surfaces and protecting water resources as well.

a. Sidewalks should be constructed on one or both sides of all roadways contingent upon density, adjacent land uses, potential uses, and safety. Priority should be placed on sidewalks along busier roadways where there are potential pedestrian/ traffic conflicts.

b. Use clearly delineated crosswalks at all street intersections. Changes in pavement color and texture or printed striping should be used.

c. Use traffic calming strategies such as sidewalk extensions, traffic signals, and on-street parking to enhance pedestrian safety and comfort. On-street parking also can increase sales in nearby businesses. Change one-way roads, which increase travel speeds, to two-way roads. Install mini-traffic circles or other obstacles to slow traffic at intersections. Allow parking lanes to be used as travel lanes (queuing streets) during high traffic times.

d. Design roadways appropriately for local needs.

i. Design for speeds of 22 miles per hour for main street commercial areas.

ii. Design lanes and neighborhood streets for low speeds (20 to 25 mph), on-street parking, and pleasant walking environments suitable for socializing and recreation.

iii. Design avenues and boulevards around the periphery of neighborhoods to allow higher speeds (30-35 mph) for timely emergency response and quicker access through and around neighborhoods.

iv. Road width for low density residential areas with less than 500 average daily trips should be 18 to 22 feet, with a right of way width less than 45 feet. Allow utilities to be place under the paved section of the ROW.

e. Design interconnected road systems that lead to multiple destinations rather than cul-de-sacs and looping roads that have unpredictable end points. Grid systems are easier for pedestrians to navigate. Where cul-de-sacs are unavoidable, use minimum radii of less than 35 feet and landscaped islands. Consider "hammerhead" turnarounds as alternatives to cul-de-sacs for end of road applications.

f. Remove one or two lanes from four-lane arterials and use shared center turning lanes.

g. Add landscaped medians to wide streets to slow traffic and create a refuge for pedestrians crossing the streets.

h. Allow vegetated swales to be used within the street ROW in lieu of curb and gutter requirements.

13. Help pedestrians cross streets and intersections.

a. Provide highly visible street crossings at regular intervals along main arteries. Interrupt long blocks with mid-block crossings if needed.

PHOTOGRAPHS

FACING PAGE, *Landscapes, White River Township*