

# Plan-it Allen!

## A Plan for Land & Living in Allen County/Fort Wayne

Want to know what Allen County/Fort Wayne will be like in the future? Well, it's up to us to decide. Tomorrow is ours to shape. And Plan-it Allen! is our citizen-powered initiative for developing the roadmap to take us there.

So, how do you create a new comprehensive land use and development plan? First, we gathered your dreams and ideas, thousands of them, in dozens of community meetings. Next, we examined Allen County/Fort Wayne from every possible angle to establish our factual profile: an objective snapshot of existing conditions, trends and comparisons.

Taken together, this information forms the foundation for our first-ever, joint plan for land and living in Allen County/Fort Wayne. Moving forward, this storehouse of data will be blended and distilled into a vision for growth and development and a guide for community decision making – the core elements of our new plan.

Now to the results of phase two. There's a lot to be learned by looking at how we stack up in comparison with other communities. How current trends might affect us in the future. What the statistics are telling us about where we've been and how we're doing right now. That's exactly what ten Plan-it Allen! research teams have been doing over the past eight months. Here's what they found.

## Facts, Trends & Comparisons : A Snapshot of Allen County/Fort Wayne

### Demographics

#### Slowing Growth Rate

Based on two projection methods by the Indiana University Business Research Center, Allen County's population for the next 21 years will increase by 15.8 (Cohort) and 18.2 (Holts) percent reflecting a slower growth rate than the 12.7 percent population increase over the past 13 years.

#### Age Distribution

Like the rest of the country and for the first time in history, the population in 2025 will have roughly equal numbers of people in every age group.

#### Aging Population

The number of older Allen County residents age 65+ has increased 45.5 percent since 1970.

#### Median Income Change

When adjusted to 2004 dollars, Allen County saw virtually no increase in median household income from 1989 to 1999.

#### Foreign Born Population

Fort Wayne had the second largest percent increase in the foreign born population when compared to peer communities.

# Economics

## Changing Economic Base

The economic base of the City of Fort Wayne and Allen County are changing in response to major global and national economic, technology, business strategy, and demographic forces. Much of the change occurring in the area's economic base is driven by external events and factors. Adapting to these changes should be a major priority of the new Allen County/Fort Wayne Comprehensive Plan.

## Continued Restructuring of the Area's Manufacturing Sector

The continued restructuring of the area's manufacturing sector remains the number one economic transition issue for the City, County, and larger surrounding regional economy. This reinforces the need for greater economic diversification efforts in the future. It also suggests that new types of strategies will be needed to respond effectively to this restructuring process.

## Our Economic Future

Overall, Fort Wayne and Allen County have been holding their own in terms of economic development. While there are losses to both the City and County economic base, these losses do not appear to be as severe as those seen in many other major older industrial centers. Two of the three comparison areas in this report (Grand Rapids, MI and Des Moines, IA), from a metro area perspective, may be better positioned for future economic growth. One indication of this is that total jobs grew by 26% in the Des Moines area and 21.7% in the Grand Rapids area during the 1991-2003 period. Total jobs in the Fort Wayne metro area grew by 12.2% during the same time period. The real question is: how well can the Allen County/Fort Wayne area and the other geographic areas grow or tread water as globalization pressures (offshore outsourcing), increased corporate merger and acquisition activity, and other external events take their toll on communities nationwide?

# Residential Land Use

## Land Use Patterns/Characteristics

- Land uses within Allen County and the City of Fort Wayne have become more spatially segregated.
- Next to agriculture (65.3 percent), single-family residential (14.7 percent) occupies the second largest amount of the total land area in the County.
- Agricultural land with "prime" characteristics covers over 93.6 percent of the undeveloped land area in the County.

## Land Consumption/Density

- Population density, according to the U.S. Census, has declined from ten to less than five persons per acre as development has located outward from the City of Fort Wayne's core.
- Over the past 16 years, the amount of land within the City of Fort Wayne was developed or consumed (62.7 percent increase in developed land area) at over twice the population growth rate (27.5 percent).
- The amount of land consumed per household in the City of Fort Wayne (including recently annexed land) has increased by 27.3 percent since 1987.
- Per household land consumption is nearly three times more in the area outside the City of Fort Wayne than within the City.

# **Commercial and Industrial Land Use**

## **Population Growth / Land Consumption**

- Surrounding counties toward the north and west of Allen County (Whitley, Noble, DeKalb) show steady population growth and solid commuter ties to Allen County.
- Allen County is projected to grow to approximately 410,349 persons by 2025.
- Per household land consumption is nearly 3 times more in the area outside the City of Fort Wayne than within the City.

## **Population Density**

- At densities representing the Post-1950 area (2.77 persons/acre), the amount of land necessary to support future population projections is equal to 10% of the remaining developable land.
- Population density has declined in the City of Fort Wayne by 21 percent since 1987.

# **Housing**

## **Increase in Number of Non-Family Households**

From 1970 to 2000, the number of non-family (no spouse or dependent children living with householder) households in the County increased by 26,206 and represented 33% of all households compared to 19% in 1970. The growth of non-family households accounts for 61% of the total increase of households during this 30-year period. Non-family households will continue to grow faster than family households so long as life expectancy is high, and housing remains affordable to individuals in their early twenties.

## **Homeownership Rates**

Homeownership rates vary dramatically within the County, from below 50 percent in parts of the central city to 90 percent in the post-1950 areas and rural areas. There has been a trend of declining homeownership rates within the 1950 Fort Wayne boundary while homeownership is stable or on the rise in the rest of the county. The area affected by declining ownership is similar to the area experiencing increased vacancy and declining home values.

## **More Houses than Households**

Between 1990 and 2000, the number of new building permits for housing in Allen County exceeded the number of new households by 35 percent. In other words, for every additional household, builders produced 1.35 new housing units. Under healthy growth conditions, more homes are built than households are created to live in them. If the surplus in housing becomes too severe however, it produces two conflicting effects; it facilitates the “up-and-out” homebuyer preference; improved home quality located farther from the center of the City, and at the same time it contributes to rising vacancy rates, increased abandonment and declining home values.

## **Increase in Female Headed Households**

Between 1990 and 2000, both the County and the City experienced a significant increase (nearly 37 percent) in female headed households with child(ren)/no spouse. In Allen County, there were 2,794 more single moms by 2000; 81 percent of them lived in the City of Fort Wayne. Between 1970 and 2000, the number of households headed by single moms in Allen County has increase from 3,641 to 10,036. There should be no question but that this represents a significant and growing component of the local housing market.

# **Environmental Stewardship**

## **Riparian and Other Corridors**

Most of the forested river corridors in Allen County have been diminished or removed entirely to facilitate agriculture, development and drainage. Continuous, mature, vegetated riparian zones, ideally encompassing both active and historic floodplain areas as well as adjacent uplands, contribute significantly to stream stability and health through shading, sediment and nutrient filtering, bank stabilization, and attenuation of storm flows and flooding. Riparian zones also lend themselves to recreational uses. Inherent conflicts often exist between these objectives and the desire to develop riparian corridors for agriculture, or urban uses.

- The Greenway along the three principal rivers represents an example of how riparian zones may be defined and protected with resulting benefits for human and ecological communities.
- Rail and utility corridors represent other corridors with the potential to contribute both human and ecological values when protected. Protection of linear corridors is generally more effective in an ecological sense than preservation of many small, isolated areas in a fragmented pattern because they allow plants to colonize more readily and animals to move freely among a diversity of habitat types within a single protected zone.

## **Nature Preserves**

Only about 0.2 percent of the County's total land area is currently set aside in the form of designated nature preserves. There are 13 designated preserves in the County, most of which are accessible to the public. They contain high quality communities and rare habitats that have or are disappearing throughout the County and the state.

## **Stream Modifications**

Many of the County's streams have been channelized or otherwise modified to improve drainage. Channelization, removal of streamside vegetation, maintenance dredging, and debris removal to facilitate drainage tend to have adverse impacts on natural stream stability and ecological health. Balancing inherently conflicting drainage and ecological objectives represents a significant surface water management challenge faced by both the City of Fort Wayne and the County.

# **Community Identity**

## **The Three Rivers**

The three rivers running through Fort Wayne/Allen County were consistently noted as the community's primary character-defining feature and the one item that ties the city and county together.

## **The Fort Wayne Parks System**

The Fort Wayne parks system and the patterns made by the agricultural use of land in the county – with plowed fields, hedgerows, pastures and wooded plots – were emphasized as important character-defining features and positive elements determining community identity.

## **Landmarks**

Landmarks range from buildings and structures with architectural importance – the Performing Arts Center by Louis Kahn – to restaurants and diners like Cindy's Diner in Fort Wayne.

# Utilities

## Availability of Utilities and New Development

In Allen County, the availability of utilities, primarily sanitary sewer service, has been and continues to be the key driver to the new land development aspect of land use planning.

## Coordination and Regionalization of Utility Goals

The successful pursuit of the following utility goals will greatly depend on improved coordination and a regionalization of interests:

- Improving regional water quality through the reduction or elimination of failed septic systems, combined sewer overflows (CSOs) and sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs).
- Continued availability of new sanitary sewer capacity for land development.

## Regional Water Quality

No significant amount of federal grant money is expected to assist with the current regional water quality concerns, as has occurred in the past. Local sources will be the primary, perhaps sole, provider of funding to address current regional water quality concerns.

## Well Head Protection and Land Development

Systems supplied by groundwater wells (all except the City of Fort Wayne and the City of New Haven) have Well Head Protection areas surrounding the groundwater wells that have recently been and will continue to be key drivers of land development in those protection areas. The City of Fort Wayne participates in St. Joseph River watershed initiatives to protect the river water supply for Fort Wayne and New Haven.

## Stormwater Coordination

Stormwater and its drainage patterns do not recognize political boundaries and require a coordinated effort.

# Transportation

## Current Transportation System Challenges

- Narrow rights-of-way.
- Insufficient number of bridges.
- Radial system with majority of traffic traveling through central business district.
- Hazardous diagonal intersections.
- Lack of north-south continuity on major arterials.
- Large number of heavy trucks.
- Serving new housing development southwest and north of Fort Wayne.
- Serving new industrial parks in northwest, the City of New Haven and around the Fort Wayne International Airport.
- Serving commercial and retail development along I-69.
- Serving large medical facilities at I-69/US 24 and I-69/Dupont Road interchanges.

## Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are not readily accessible and are in inadequate supply. While maintenance and upgrades are needed, the Greenway creates an excellent “spine” for expansions.

## Capacity and Congestion

Streets and highways located to the southeast of the central city and I-469 have excess capacity based on current and projected traffic volumes and travel will likely become less oriented to the central urban core as major suburban activity centers continue to be developed. Travel patterns will become less dependent on the radial highway system and suburban-to-suburban activity will likely increase. Due to moderate traffic demands, Fort Wayne and Allen County do not experience long daily periods of severe traffic congestion that many larger urban areas do.

# Cultural Facilities

## Cultural Facilities

The Allen County Public Library (ACPL) is a countywide system with taxing authority. The system is composed of a main library in downtown Fort Wayne and 13 branch libraries located in Fort Wayne neighborhoods and in several Allen County communities.

## Historic and Cultural Resources

Fort Wayne has 63 individual properties or districts that are designated as Local Historic Districts. Fort Wayne also has 41 properties or districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places within its boundaries. There are eight additional properties or districts listed on the National Register in Allen County, making a total of 49 countywide. Even though these districts cannot provide complete protection, making information readily available about their location and significance is an important step toward preservation.

## Parks and Recreation

According to an analysis of projected park needs in Allen County, about 1,223 acres of parkland will be needed by 2025. Sixty-six percent of that need is for block parks and special recreation areas.

## Schools

New enrollment in county school districts is primarily affected by in-migration from Fort Wayne Community Schools. Because of Fort Wayne's diminishing growth in school age population, this will affect future enrollment in county schools.

## Public Safety

Two new City of Fort Wayne fire stations are scheduled to be operational by January 1, 2006 to serve the Aboite annexation area. One is Station 18 at Scott and Covington Roads and the other is Station 19 at Liberty Mills and Homestead Road. Along with Station 17, these two new stations will serve the entire Aboite annexation area.

It's our tomorrow. ~~Plan-it~~ **Allen!** today.

**Be a Part of Plan-it Allen! Be a Part of Plan-it Allen! Be a Part of Plan-it Allen!**

- Come to all the Plan-it Allen! public events and contribute your ideas.
- Invite a Plan-it Allen speaker to your group or organization. Call Jane Yoh at 427-2175.
- Learn more about Plan-it Allen! on the Web: [www.PlanYourCommunity.org](http://www.PlanYourCommunity.org).
- Join the discussion at the Community Issues Forum online.
- Send Plan-it Allen! an e-mail: [Plan-it-Allen@PlanYourCommunity.org](mailto:Plan-it-Allen@PlanYourCommunity.org).

