

VINCENNES DOWNTOWN

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN UPDATE



*THE HISTORIC RIVER CITY LOCATED IN
THE CROSSROADS OF AMERICA*



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The City of Vincennes extends its sincere appreciation to the members of the Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee, whose thoughtful discussions, local knowledge and willingness to challenge ideas helped shape the recommendations contained in this report. Their diverse perspectives—from business and economic development to historic preservation, tourism, education, and local government—ensured that the planning process remained grounded in both community values and practical implementation.

We also thank the Downtown Vincennes Association, Knox County Chamber of Commerce, Knox County Area Plan Commission, Vincennes Redevelopment Commission, Vincennes University, George Rogers Clark National Historical Park, local business and property owners, community organizations, and residents who shared their time, expertise, and vision throughout this process.

Finally, we recognize the many individuals who have worked to strengthen downtown Vincennes over the past decade. Their leadership and investment built upon the foundation established by the 2016 Downtown Revitalization Plan and made this update possible.

Downtown revitalization is not accomplished by a single organization or one major project. It is the result of sustained partnerships, shared leadership, and hundreds of thoughtful decisions made over time. We hope this plan serves as the next chapter in that continuing effort.

**Building the Next 300 Years—
Together.**

Steering Committee

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Cheryl Hacker	City of Vincennes
Janice Barniak	Vincennes Knox County Visitor & Tourism Bureau
Martin Christiansen	GRC National Park
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Jamie Neal	Knox County Chamber of Commerce
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CHAPTER 1:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of the Update

BUILDING THE NEXT 300 YEARS

Downtowns do not decline overnight, and they are not rebuilt overnight. They are strengthened one decision, one investment and one partnership at a time.

That is why this 2026 Downtown Revitalization Plan Update is both timely and important. Since the City's Downtown Revitalization Plan was adopted in 2016, Vincennes has demonstrated that thoughtful investment can produce meaningful change.

Yet the economic environment facing communities today is very different from a decade ago. Rising construction costs, changing retail patterns, higher borrowing costs, population decline and increased competition for public funding require a different approach to downtown revitalization—one grounded in resilience, collaboration and steady progress.

The purpose of this update is not to replace the 2016 plan, but to build upon it. It recognizes what has been accomplished, evaluates how conditions have changed, and presents a practical framework for strengthening downtown over the coming decade. Rather than pursuing one transformational project, this plan recommends building momentum through a series of achievable investments that reinforce one another over time.

What the 2016 Plan Accomplished:

- The 2016 Downtown Revitalization Plan changed the conversation about the city's core. It demonstrated that historic buildings could once again become economic assets, not liabilities. The Pantheon Theatre was transformed into a business incubator, River View Vincennes added new housing along the riverfront, downtown façades were restored, new businesses invested in Main Street, and downtown programming expanded significantly. The Downtown Vincennes Association also emerged as a stronger advocate for downtown businesses, events and revitalization.
- Perhaps most importantly, the 2016 plan restored confidence that downtown Vincennes could once again become a center of commerce, culture, and community life.
- That success provides the foundation for this update.

What has Changed SINCE 2016

Although downtown has made measurable progress, the environment surrounding revitalization has changed dramatically.

Construction costs have increased substantially, making rehabilitation of historic buildings more difficult. Higher interest rates have complicated redevelopment financing. Retail has continued shifting toward experience-based businesses that compete less with online shopping. Population decline continues to reduce the size of the local market, while uncertainty surrounding federal and state funding has made long-term planning more challenging.

These conditions do not diminish downtown's potential—they simply require a different strategy.

Ten years ago, Vincennes asked an important question: Can downtown come back? Today the question is different: How do we sustain revitalization under more difficult economic conditions?

This plan answers that question.



What the Data Show Now

While the challenges are real, the data also point toward significant opportunities.

1

DEMAND ALREADY EXISTS

The most important conclusion of this report is also one of its simplest: **Downtown Vincennes does not lack demand—it under-captures the demand that already exists.**

Employment downtown has grown significantly since 2016. Tourism continues to generate substantial visitor spending. Downtown events attract thousands of people throughout the year. A younger and higher-earning workforce is emerging.

The opportunity is not to create activity from scratch.

The opportunity is to convert workers, visitors, and event attendees into longer stays, greater spending, repeat visits and ultimately downtown residents.

2

HOUSING IS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Downtown vitality depends on people living downtown—not simply working or visiting there.

Although Knox County has experienced long-term population decline, the local housing market has tightened as occupancy has increased and home values have risen. These trends suggest growing demand for housing while also highlighting the limited supply of market-responsive units.

Adding upper-floor housing, encouraging adaptive reuse and expanding downtown residential opportunities will strengthen local businesses by creating a larger, year-round customer base.

Housing is not separate from downtown revitalization. It is one of its primary drivers.

3

DOWNTOWN FUNCTIONS AS AN ECOSYSTEM

Downtown success is shaped by the interaction of housing, businesses, tourism, arts and culture, public spaces, transportation and historic preservation. No single project will revitalize downtown by itself. Likewise, no single challenge explains downtown's struggles.

Progress occurs when these systems begin reinforcing one another:

- Workers become customers.
- Visitors become repeat visitors.
- Entrepreneurs become property owners.
- Historic buildings become new housing.

Momentum builds.

4

SMALL WINS CREATE MOMENTUM

Many downtown plans rely on a single catalytic project to transform an entire district. This plan recommends a different approach.

In today's uncertain economy, incremental investments often produce greater long-term success than high-risk projects requiring ideal market conditions.

Visible improvements - activating storefronts, encouraging pop-up businesses, improving public spaces, and supporting entrepreneurs demonstrate progress, reduce perceived risk and encourage additional private investment.

Success builds confidence. Confidence encourages the next investment. Momentum becomes the strategy.

5

PARTNERSHIPS BUILD CAPACITY

Downtown revitalization is not the responsibility of one organization. The City of Vincennes, Downtown Vincennes Association, Chamber of Commerce, Redevelopment Commission, Area Plan Commission, Vincennes University, cultural organizations, property owners, businesses, and residents all have important roles to play.

The strongest downtowns are not those with the largest budgets. They are the communities that consistently work together.





Recommended Approach

The steering committee concluded that Vincennes should focus on one overarching objective: Build a downtown that people choose to stay in - not just pass through.

That means creating reasons for residents to live downtown, visitors to spend more time exploring Main Street, entrepreneurs to invest in new businesses and property owners to reinvest in historic buildings.

To accomplish this, the plan recommends a phased strategy.

Short-Term (1–2 Years)

Build visible momentum through storefront activation, pop-up programming, downtown wayfinding improvements, a downtown zoning overlay, a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA), and a Patronicity crowdfunding campaign.

Long-Term (5+ Years)

Build upon these successes with catalytic projects that strengthen downtown's role as the economic, cultural, and civic heart of the community.

Medium-Term (2–5 Years)

(2–5 Years): Convert early momentum into lasting investment through upper-floor housing, adaptive reuse, historic preservation initiatives and preparations for Vincennes's 300th anniversary.

SUMMARY AND CALL TO ACTION

Nearly three hundred years ago, Vincennes became Indiana's first city. Every generation since has inherited the responsibility of deciding what downtown should become. Some generations built. Others preserved. Each left something behind for the next.

This generation has the opportunity to do the same.

The goal of this plan is not simply to make downtown bigger. The goal is to make downtown stronger – businesses, neighborhoods, partnerships and confidence.

The recommendations contained in this report recognize that great downtowns are not created through one ribbon-cutting or one major redevelopment project. They are built through hundreds of thoughtful decisions made consistently over time. Each success makes the next investment easier.

As Vincennes approaches its 300th anniversary in 2032, this plan provides more than a list of projects. It provides a framework for building momentum. It provides a strategy for strengthening confidence.

Most importantly, it provides a roadmap for ensuring that downtown Vincennes remains the economic, cultural, and civic heart of the community for generations to come.

Because great downtowns are not built all at once.



**GREAT DOWNTOWNS ARE NOT BUILT ALL
AT ONCE...THEY ARE BUILT EVERY DAY.**

FRAMEWORKS

FOR DOWNTOWN VINCENNES

REVITALIZATION PLAN

CURRENT CONDITIONS

- Long-term population decline
- Rising construction and rehabilitation costs
- Flat business growth despite increased downtown employment
- Tourism generates activity but not enough downtown spending
- Limited housing supply

THREE STRATEGIC LEVERS



1

Housing (upper-floor housing, adaptive reuse, mixed-use)



2

Small Business (entrepreneurship, pop-ups, business support)

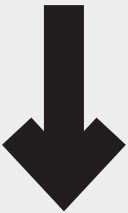


3

Activation (events, arts, tourism, public spaces)

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- MORE DOWNTOWN RESIDENTS
- MORE FOOT TRAFFIC
- LONGER VISITOR STAYS
- STRONGER LOCAL BUSINESSES
- INCREASED PRIVATE INVESTMENT



LONG-TERM RESULT

A STRONGER, MORE RESILIENT DOWNTOWN THAT SERVES AS THE ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, AND CIVIC HEART OF VINCENNES AS THE COMMUNITY APPROACHES ITS 300TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2032.

KEY INSIGHT

Downtown does not lack demand - it under-captures the demand that already exists. Workers, visitors, students, and residents are already downtown. The challenge is converting that activity into longer stays, more spending, more housing, and greater private investment.



CHAPTER 2:

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Scope of the 2026 REVITALIZATION PLAN UPDATE

Ten years ago, Vincennes' city leaders were alarmed when a historic Main Street building was allowed to deteriorate to such a state that it couldn't be saved. The building owners couldn't afford to restore or raze it, so the city had to pay for demolition.

That event triggered The City of Vincennes 2016 Downtown Revitalization Plan—a year-long planning process involving hundreds of local residents as well as civil engineers, architects, landscape architects and economic development professionals. The community's efforts to shape their future continued with Vincennes's proposal for a Stellar Communities grant, which was visionary but did not get funded.

Now, in 2026, local leaders were ready to assess their progress and set-backs over the past decade.

Because of changing priorities and conditions, the city did not require engineers or a landscape architect for the update. Instead, the work focused on updating the 2016 plan in the areas of economic development and potential reuse of downtown buildings.

The 2026 scope of work included:

- Formation of a Steering Committee
- Review of previous reports (Such as the 2021 Knox County Housing Study, 2023 Vincennes/Knox County Tourism and Travel Industry report and 2025 Indiana First Region Arts & Culture Strategic Plan)
- Evaluation of existing conditions including demographic and economic profiles
- Recommendations & Implementation Plan.

Vincennes's downtown, particularly Main Street, is the oldest in the State of Indiana and remains the city's crown jewel and commercial core. Preserving its historic features while modernizing its economic function remains a key city priority. The goal of this planning process is to build upon the progress made since 2016, increasing the city's capacity to grow and prosper as it heads towards its 300th birthday in 2032.

Background and History OF THE 2016 DOWNTOWN PLAN

Although The City of Vincennes 2016 Downtown Revitalization Plan was triggered by the loss of a historic building, that planning process corresponded with signs of growth along Main Street, including Pioneer Oil's multi-million dollar restoration of another historic building into their company headquarters.

Additionally, INVin – as the city's Main Street redevelopment group was called before becoming the Downtown Vincennes Association – acquired two historic but decaying theaters in the hope of converting them into downtown economic anchors.

The 2016 plan was successful in showing Main Street's revitalization potential. The Pantheon Theatre is now a business development and incubator space helping launch new entrepreneurs through programming, education and access to space and resources.

Across Main Street, the long-shuttered Moon Theatre reopened as Old Chicago Pizza & Taproom. Along the Wabash River, 44 new housing units opened at River View Vincennes, the site of the old grain towers. Nine downtown building facades were renovated on Main Street.



The city also started running a free trolley system linking key points such as Vincennes University, Good Samaritan Hospital and the edge of downtown.

However, the last decade also revealed vulnerabilities with the downtown economy and the need for continued vigilance and energy. The Old Chicago restaurant closed and sat empty for a year before attracting the interest of a new restaurant owner. A lot of turnover continues in the small businesses and Main Street has vacant storefronts. Although construction of new housing units is underway, about the same number of people live downtown now as they did 10 years ago. There's also about the same number of businesses.

“

***THE 2016 PLAN
WAS SUCCESSFUL
IN SHOWING
MAIN STREET'S
REVITALIZATION
POTENTIAL.***

”

The State of Downtown

REVITALIZATION EFFORTS IN 2026

National economic trends come and go, but 2026 has provided some particularly vigorous challenges to the two main goals of this plan – recruit new businesses and provide more housing. Those challenges (and a few opportunities) include:

The Cost Squeeze on Rehabilitation

The single most acute headwind is construction and renovation costs. Building materials costs have risen by 40% since December 2020, according to the National Association of Home Builders. On top of that, the average yearly price for steel rose 11.9% by end of 2025 while skilled labor costs rose 5.7%. There are estimates that current tariff rates will result in a roughly 9% increase to construction costs relative to 2024.

These increases are particularly painful to Vincennes because rehabilitating older buildings is already more expensive than new construction — you can’t just swap out historic masonry or timber framing for cheaper alternatives.

Federal Funding Instability

Revitalization in small Indiana towns has historically depended heavily on CDBG (Community Development Block Grants) and related HUD programs. While the FY2026 Trump administration budget proposal to eliminate CDBG did not happen - the uncertainty itself is damaging. Developers can’t commit to multi-year revitalization projects when federal funding is in question.



The Commercial Real Estate Financing “Maturity Wall”

Many commercial properties in small downtowns are facing re-financing challenges. Property owners who bought or refinanced during the pandemic-era, low-rate environment now face much higher carrying costs. For a small-town landlord with a historic commercial building, this can make the math on renovation impossible without a subsidy or partner. Investors are citing elevated interest rates, economic uncertainty and local regulatory burdens as major headwinds, and many are choosing to hold rather than invest further.

Retail and Office Transformation

E-commerce has permanently restructured downtown retail. Successful small downtowns in 2026 are not trying to compete with Amazon — they're leaning into experience; offering food and beverage, services and creative economy uses that can't be replicated online.

The key is tapping into a town's unique identity and assets to create community experiences and positive shared memories. A historic downtown is actually a competitive advantage, not a liability, if the economics of restoration can be made to work.

Population Loss and Migration Opportunities

The Midwest has emerged as a 2025 relocation hotspot, with high housing prices elsewhere in the country rekindling interest in Indiana. However, migration is concentrating not in small towns but in larger metros like Indianapolis, which have strong outdoor recreation, arts identity, or proximity to a university.

Vincennes offers a scaled version of those amenities - a beautiful river, one of only three Indiana communities with a national park, the oldest public institution of higher learning in the state and a downtown that includes structures tied to the French colonial, Revolutionary War and early American territorial periods.

So, the problem isn't the assets. It's that those assets haven't been connected to a housing and economic development strategy that would make a remote worker, a retiree or a young family say, "I could live here."

The lack of new housing construction — just 360 units in over two decades — signals that the market alone will not solve this. The historic building stock downtown is simultaneously the city's greatest revitalization asset and its biggest challenge, given the elevated rehab costs discussed earlier.

Vincennes's key question is, "How do we build the conditions — housing quality, downtown vitality, amenities — that would make existing residents stay, and would make Vincennes attractive to people who want a historically rich, affordable small-city life?"

This planning document provides short-, mid- and long-term projects designed to answer that question. It starts with projects the city can launch this summer and stretches beyond 2032, when the city will celebrate its 300th birthday.



Planning Process and STEERING COMMITTEE

The plan started in fall 2025 and continued through the next summer. The process included research on demographic trends, traffic and economic conditions as well as site visits and interviews.

At its heart was the steering committee, which included a few veterans from the 2016 plan as well as representatives from Vincennes University, Vincennes Redevelopment Commission, Knox County IN Economic Development Corp., Historic Review Board and the George Rogers Clark National Park.

At its first meeting in November the group reviewed the 2016 plan, discussed what's worked well and what hasn't since then and set their priority projects for the future. Those discussions guided the rest of this report and its recommendations.

At the January 2026 meeting the steering committee reviewed local trends in demographics, housing and the downtown economy. They also discussed a "Downtown Revitalization Approach," developing a realistic, sustainable approach to revitalize the central business district.

At the March 2026 meeting the group met with Bridget Anderson, vice president at Patronicity and Nick Kappas, a Bloomington-based housing developer at Phoenix Property Group LLC.

Anderson talked about Patronicity, which combines crowdfunding with matching grants to help communities develop projects. The organization, which successfully completed previous projects in Vincennes, would like to work with the city again, perhaps on outdoor projects related to the upcoming 300th birthday.

Kappas shared observations about redevelopment conditions in Vincennes including:

- Some downtown buildings may not be feasible to restore due to their condition or cost, and redevelopment incentives may be necessary to make projects viable.
- Strategic infill development can help catalyze reinvestment in surrounding properties by signaling momentum.



Observations

- Some downtown buildings may not be feasible to restore due to their condition or cost, and redevelopment incentives may be necessary to make projects viable.
- Strategic infill development can help catalyze reinvestment in surrounding properties by signaling momentum.

CHAPTER 3:

EVALUATION OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

This chapter assesses the current conditions shaping Vincennes and establishes a clear baseline for action. It examines key factors including the local economy, zoning, housing market and traffic - to identify where conditions support revitalization and where they present barriers.

The purpose is not just to present data, but to highlight the issues and opportunities that matter most for revitalization. These findings set the stage for the practical recommendations that follow.

Study Area

This planning process focused on the downtown core; the 100-500 blocks of Main Street. The central business district and its economic effects encompasses a much larger area, but this corridor houses the city's architectural and cultural crown jewels and is most in need of protection and revitalization.

Demographic Profile

A downtown study for a smaller city usually includes three geographic areas:

- The market shed/labor shed: Knox County and some immediate counties.
- The city: Vincennes.
- The downtown focus area: Main Street from 1st to SR 41 (and a few surrounding blocks).

Within those geographic areas, it's important to note demographic trends, which indicate changes in local housing, retail and services. For example, an aging population plus shrinking household sizes often shift demand toward smaller, accessible housing and healthcare services.

County-Wide Changes Since 2016

Recent demographic indicators, shown in the table below, reveal meaningful shifts in Knox County since 2016. Median household income has increased, home values have risen sharply (greater than the national average), and educational attainment has improved.

At the same time, the county's population has declined, and the total number of housing units has remained essentially unchanged. However, both owner-occupied and renter-occupied units increased, suggesting higher utilization of the existing housing stock and a tightening local housing market.

Knox County Demographic Indicators	2016	2023	CHANGE
Population	37,956	36,108	-4.9%
Median Age	38.1	39.1	~
Median Household Income	\$44,624	\$58,863	+31.9%
Educational Attainment (Percent High School or Higher)	88.5%	90.1%	+1.6%
Educational Attainment (Percent Bachelor's or higher)	15.2%	17.8%	+2.6%
Housing Units	16,969	16,965	-0.02%
Owner Occupied Housing	9,666	9,955	+2.9%
Renter Occupied Housing	4,989	5,155	+3.3%
Median Home Value	\$85,100	\$123,500	+45.1%
With Health Insurance	33,056	32,975	-0.2%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2012-2016 5-Year Estimates; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2019-2023 5-Year Estimates



The county’s population, which was 43,415 in 1950, has been slipping for decades and is projected to continue to drop in the foreseeable future, as shown in the table.

Population Projections	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Population Projections	36,248	36,171	35,407	34,514	33,573
Change Since 2020		-77	-841	-1,734	-2,675
Percent Change Since 2020		-0.2%	-2.3%	-4.8%	-7.4%

Source: Indiana Business Research Center.
Note: 2020 data are U.S. Census Bureau population estimates (Vintage 2022).

Countywide, recent population changes illustrate another trend. From 2023-24, more people died within the county than were born (natural increase was -111) and more people moved out than moved in (domestic migration was -165), according to U.S. Census Bureau figures available through the website County Highlights: Hoosiers by the Numbers. The only positive number was international migration, which was 122 people.

Of the current county residents, it is interesting to note that the two largest segments by age are older adults and younger adults, which are split evenly, as shown in the following table.

Population Estimates by Age in 2024	#	%
Preschool (0 to 4)	1,937	5.4%
School Age (5 to 17)	5,679	15.8%
College Age (18 to 24)	4,235	11.8%
Young Adult (25 to 44)	8,546	23.8%
Older Adult (45 to 64)	8,486	23.7%
Older (65 plus)	6,989	19.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Knox County reflects other national movements in its composition of households. For example, there are considerably more single parents and married couples without children than there are couples with children, as shown in the table.

Households in 2024	#	%
Total Households	15,169	100.0%
Family Households	9,170	60.5%
Married with Children	2,518	16.6%
Married without Children	4,528	29.9%
Single Parents	1,348	8.9%
Other	776	5.1%
Non-family Households	5,999	39.5%
Living Alone	4,993	32.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5 Year Estimate

Key Takeaways

- 1

Knox County is becoming economically stronger on paper, but not yet attractive enough to retain or attract residents.
- 2

Population decline is structural, not temporary. This is not a short-term dip - it's a long-term demographic trajectory that requires intentional intervention.
- 3

The “average” Knox County home has changed over time, following national trends. For example, there’s been a rise of single-person households, which reflects both later marriage and an aging population (older adults living alone).

Land Use and ZONING OVERVIEW

Zoning is one of those tools that quietly determines whether your revitalization plan actually happens - or gets stalled out by friction. For a place like downtown Vincennes, it can either remove barriers and enable reinvestment, or lock in underperformance.



In small cities, the biggest issue is often zoning that technically allows downtown uses but discourages mixed-use in practice. Issues included:

1

RESTRICTIVE

Are uses too restricted (e.g., limiting residential, entertainment)?

2

PERMISSIVE

Or too permissive (allowing auto-oriented or industrial uses downtown)?

3

RESIDENTIAL

Are upper-floor residential uses allowed by right?

Across the country, communities like Vincennes are seeing downtown reinvestment - not because of large public spending, but because they've updated their zoning to match how development actually happens today. This is an opportunity to do the same here, in a targeted and controlled way.

Planning and zoning for Vincennes is overseen by the Knox County Area Plan Commission. In the future that this report envisions, the city may want to explore creating a separate city planning/zoning department. However, there is no immediate reason to rush this process. What should come first is working alongside the Area Plan Commission to push for control, speed, and downtown-focused rules.

In an interview, Colt Michaels, executive director of the Area Plan Commission, offered these insights about downtown revitalization:



Key Takeaways

1

C-2 zoning permits appropriate downtown uses but new multifamily units are constrained by density requirements.

2

Parking requirements discourage small-scale, incremental investment.

- Main Street is zoned C-2 Central Business District, a designation intended for central business and commercial activity.
- The C-2 district allows 2 accessory dwelling units per building. Any higher (multi-family) density would be considered a conditional use and not “by right” use. When someone wants to build housing downtown but must apply for a conditional use, it triggers a higher threshold of review, which in turn can discourage development.
- New, multifamily housing would require 1.5 parking spaces for 1-bedroom units, and 2 spaces for each additional bedroom. These requirements would pose a high financial burden for developers who would have to tuck the parking inside their planned structure, look to demolish an adjacent building to create the parking or attempt to assemble nearby, cleared parcels.
- Looking ahead, a worthwhile project to encourage downtown development might be creation of a special “zoning overlay” district, which would address density and parking requirements now impeding new growth. Also looking ahead, the Second Street corridor offers many possibilities for new housing and other uses and has the additional benefit of being a direct link to Vincennes University.



Transportation AND PARKING

Transportation issues in many downtowns are usually centered around traffic, parking and connections to other amenities and areas. The friction points often involve parking perception, walkability gaps and how easy it is to get in/out without killing the downtown experience.

Traffic Counts

The Indiana Department of Transportation regularly runs traffic counts along key roads. The system is called Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT), which is the average number of vehicles passing a specific point on a road over a full calendar year, calculated by dividing the total yearly traffic count by 365 days. For example:



1,083 vehicles a day traveled Main Street between 1st Street and 6th Street in 2016.

7,383 vehicles a day traveled Sixth Street (Bus 41) as it crossed Main Street in 2025. That's up from the 7,195 count in 2022.

Parking downtown was not identified as a priority issue during this planning process except during the holiday season and special events. If people park once, walk comfortably and visit multiple places, then downtown “works.” If not, businesses struggle, even if there is “enough parking” on key



streets. Along Vincennes’s Main Street, parking supply appears adequate overall for now, but utilization is uneven and perceived shortages exist in high-demand locations and times.

Beside parking, another consideration is linkage. How well is downtown connected to Vincennes University, the riverfront and major employers? If anchors aren’t connected, then downtown feels isolated. Wayfinding signage around downtown includes key destinations. The free trolley is also an excellent connector, linking dense residential areas to major employers and commercial areas. However, it does not go down Main Street.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Downtown Vincennes is not constrained by traffic or overall parking supply, but by gaps in connectivity, uneven parking utilization and a limited “park once” experience.
- Strengthening walkability and improving connections between downtown and key destinations—rather than expanding parking or roadway capacity—will be critical to supporting revitalization.
- Traffic is not a barrier to downtown activity. In fact, volumes are low enough to support a more pedestrian-oriented environment. Downtown performance hinges on walkability and connectivity between businesses, not just parking availability.

Plans to address the key opportunities and challenges identified in this section can be found in the Recommendations & Implementation Plan.

CHAPTER 4:

THE DOWNTOWN ECONOMY

Overview

Downtown Vincennes functions as a critical economic engine for the city and Knox County. It concentrates jobs, commerce, civic institutions and cultural assets in a compact, walkable area.

As the historic and symbolic heart of the community, downtown supports local businesses, attracts visitors, anchors public investment and reinforces Vincennes’ identity as a regional center.

2026 Downtown Economy

The following indicators provide a snapshot of recent trends and current economic conditions in downtown Vincennes. These metrics offer insight into both the progress made since the 2016 revitalization study and the gaps that continue to limit downtown’s full potential.

Downtown:

A census of downtown business found that it:

- Employs about 639 people.
- Hosts about 54 businesses.
- Houses about 30 people.

Number of Downtown Businesses	2016	2025
	55	54

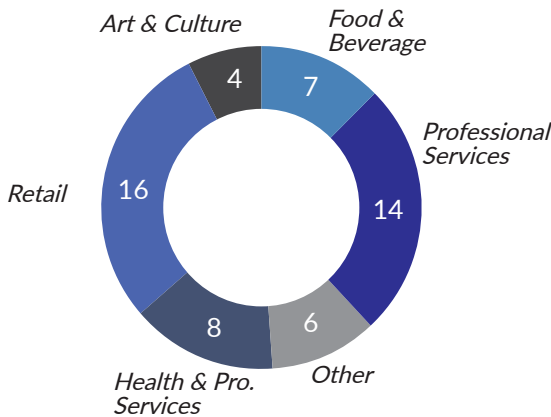
Source: Knox County Chamber of Commerce

Business Mix by Sector

Business Sector	2016 TOTAL	2016 %	2025 TOTAL	2025 %
Professional Services	14	25%	12	22%
Retail	16	29%	13	24%
Food & Beverage	7	12%	9	16%
Health & Personal Services	8	14%	10	18%
Art & Culture	4	7%	4	7%
Other Services	6	10%	6	11%
Total	55		54	

Source: Knox County Chamber of Commerce

2016 Number of Downtown Businesses by Category

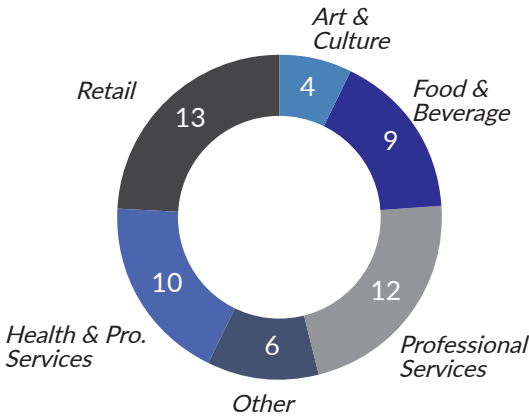


Total Downtown Employment

2016	2023
476	639

Source: U.S. Census OnTheMap Application, LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES), 2016 and 2023

2025 Number of Downtown Businesses by Category



Downtown Storefront Vacancy Rate (%)

2016	2023
17.9%	16.4%
(78 Storefronts, 14 Vacant)	(73 Storefronts, 12 Vacant)

Source: Knox County Chamber of Commerce

About the Data:

The data comes from several sources, ranging from the U.S. Census Bureau to the Knox County Chamber of Commerce. It is important to note that the information is mostly limited to the 100-500 blocks of Main Street. Of course, the central business district’s economic impact encompasses a much larger area. Some indicators have data available for years other than 2016 and 2025; these exceptions are noted.

As noted in the table above, downtown employment grew notably between 2016 and 2023, with the total number of workers increasing by more than 25%. The age distribution shifted slightly toward younger workers, while the share of workers aged 55 and older declined. Educational attainment among downtown workers decreased modestly over this period, but the earnings improved significantly. Overall, the data suggests a growing and increasingly higher-earning workforce in the downtown corridor.

Downtown Corridor Worker Demographic Indicators

	2016	2023	CHANGE
Total Workers	476	639	+25.5%
Age 29 or Younger	18.3%	21%	
Age 30 to 54	53.8%	55.7%	
Age 55 or Older	27.9%	23.3%	
Educational Attainment (% High School or Higher)	74%	66.8%	-7.2%
Educational Attainment (% Bachelor's or Higher)	18.1%	15.8%	-2.3%
Earnings (\$1,250 per month or less)	23.5%	16.3%	-7.2%
Earnings (\$1,251 to \$3,333 per month)	33.4%	26%	-7.4%
Earnings (More than \$3,333 per month)	43.1%	57.7%	+14.6%

Source: U.S. Census OnTheMap Application, LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES), 2016 and 2023



Commuting Patterns of Downtown Workers/Mean Travel Time to Work

2016	2025
19 min.	20 min.

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. FRED. Series: Mean Commuting Time for Workers (5 – year estimate) in Knox County, IN

Downtown Inflow/Outflow Patterns

2016	33 people live downtown and 0 of those people work downtown; 476 people work downtown and 0 of those people live downtown.
2023	30 people live downtown and 0 of those people work downtown; 639 people work downtown and 0 of those people live downtown.

Source: U.S. Census OnTheMap Application, LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES), 2016 and 2023

Key Takeaways

- Downtown employment is growing significantly with a 25% increase in workers from 2016–2023. Becoming a stronger employment center is a critical foundation for revitalization.
- Although employment is growing, the business count is flat, indicating that growth is being driven by expansion within existing businesses, not new business formation.
- The workforce is trending younger. A younger workforce typically supports retail and dining and is more likely to value walkability and urban amenities.
- More people are working downtown but not necessarily living downtown or staying after hours. The next step is to convert workers into downtown residents or regular customers.



Tourism AND TRAVEL

Tourism represents a significant and stable economic driver in Vincennes, generating substantial spending, employment and tax revenue. However, much of this activity is dispersed or captured outside the downtown core.

Strengthening connections between downtown and key attractions, expanding dining and retail options and improving the overall visitor experience will be critical to capturing a greater share of tourism-related spending and translating visitation into sustained economic vitality.



A 2023 study of the economic impact of the Vincennes/Knox County tourism and travel industry prepared by Certec Inc. found:

Tourism and travel made a total contribution to Vincennes/Knox County's economy of \$154.6 million, compared to \$114.5

million in 2018.

That amount is a 35% increase between 2018 and 2023. However, after adjusting for inflation, it is only a 1% increase, meaning tourism is stable and growing, but not booming.

Visitors spend most on food & beverage (35%) and shopping (26%). These markets are exactly the uses downtown should dominate.

Pass-through travelers accounted for 43% of all visitor days, followed by 26% attraction visitors.

Key Takeaways

- Vincennes attracts a meaningful and growing number of visitors who are already spending money in the local economy - but downtown is not fully capturing that spending or converting visitation into sustained activity.
- Strengthening connections between downtown and key attractions, expanding dining and retail options and improving the overall visitor experience will be critical to capturing a greater share of tourism-related spending and translating visitation into sustained economic vitality.



Arts AND CULTURE

The *2025 Indiana First Region Arts & Culture Plan* highlights a significant gap between demand for cultural experiences and the availability of facilities, programming and coordinated investment.

The Indiana First Region is comprised of Knox, Pike, Spencer, Perry and Harrison counties. While the region benefits from strong heritage assets and successful events, the lack of accessible venues, underuse of existing assets and substantial outflow of arts-related spending limit the economic and community impact of these resources.

The plan found:

There is significant unmet demand for arts and culture. Residents explicitly want concerts, festivals, art spaces and events.

The region is losing a massive amount of spending. About 81% of arts/entertainment spending leaves the region.

There is a clear lack of facilities and spaces. Gaps include community theater space, art studios and classrooms, multi-purpose event venues and public art installations.

Downtown activation is a central goal of the plan. The strategy explicitly calls for public art, murals, sculptures and activation of public spaces.



Key Takeaways

- Vincennes and the surrounding region have demand, visitors, and cultural assets - but lack the spaces, programming and coordination needed to capture spending and translate interest into sustained downtown activity.
- Strengthening downtown Vincennes through targeted arts and culture investments offers a clear opportunity to enhance quality of life, retain residents and capture local and visitor spending.

Downtown BUSINESS INVENTORY

The City of Vincennes has 1,250 business establishments, according to the Indiana Department of Workforce Development's Hoosiers By The Numbers website ([Establishment Search Results: Business Lookup Tool](#)). These include everything from large manufacturers to one-employee beauty parlors.



The city as a whole, and not just Main Street, has about 150 retail businesses, ranging from the 400-employee Walmart Supercenter to the one-person Ellsy's Attic clothing store. It also has about 75 food service and beverage establishments. Before it closed in 2025, the Old Chicago Pizza + Taproom had 80 workers, making it one of the biggest restaurant employers in the city.

Zooming in, downtown Main Street has about 54 businesses and 639 employees. The Downtown Vincennes Association (DVA) tracks the use of every storefront along Main Street, which includes long-time anchors such as Pearl & Chrome shop, Pea-Fections restaurant and Vincennes Beauty College.



Most of the businesses are small, with few employees. There is also a fairly constant churn of business moving out and moving in. Interviews with business owners revealed that many had run their small shops in other parts of the city and then found available space downtown.

As of the last DVA inventory, there were 9 vacant storefronts along the Main Street study area, including a few beauties, such as the former First National Bank/Jewel Craft Jewelers building at 217-219 Main Street.

Downtown STAKEHOLDERS

The success of Vincennes's downtown revitalization depends on sustained collaboration among a diverse group of public, private and institutional partners.

Many of the strategies outlined in this plan are inherently interconnected. Expanding downtown housing, for example, requires coordination between regulatory agencies, property owners and development partners. Strengthening arts and cultural activity depends on collaboration between organizations such as the Northwest Territory Art Guild, the Historical and Antiquarian Society and regional tourism entities.

Improving the downtown experience - from public spaces to safety and maintenance - relies on the combined efforts of parks & recreation, law enforcement, and local government. At the same time, institutions such as Vincennes University, Ivy Tech and the Knox County Public Library play a critical role in driving activity, supporting workforce development and connecting residents and visitors to downtown.

The stakeholders identified in this plan each bring unique responsibilities, resources and perspectives that are essential to implementation. However, successful revitalization will require these partners to operate not as independent actors, but as a coordinated network. A lead entity - such as the Mayor's Office or DVA - should take responsibility for convening stakeholders on a regular basis, tracking progress and ensuring accountability.

The following table identifies some of the key stakeholders and the roles they can play in revitalization efforts.

STAKEHOLDER	PRIMARY ROLE	KEY RESPONSIBILITIES
Mayor's Office	Leadership & Coordination	Set priorities, align departments, champion downtown initiatives, secure funding
Redevelopment Commission	Project Implementation	Lead catalytic projects, manage TIF/financial tools, support site redevelopment
Knox County Area Plan Commission	Regulatory Oversight	Update zoning, implement downtown overlay, streamline approvals
Chamber of Commerce	Business Support	Support existing businesses, recruit new businesses, provide outreach and advocacy
Downtown Vincennes Association	Activation & Promotion	Organize events, support merchants, enhance downtown identity and programming
Convention & Visitors Bureau / Tourism Office	Visitor Attraction	Market downtown, connect tourism assets, increase visitor spending
Vincennes University / Ivy Tech	Institutional Anchor	Drive foot traffic, support workforce development, partner on programming and events
Parks & Recreation	Public Space Management	Maintain and activate parks, trails, and public gathering spaces
Police	Safety & Experience	Ensure a safe, welcoming downtown environment
Historical & Antiquarian Society / George Rogers Clark NHP	Heritage & Tourism	Preserve assets, support heritage tourism, connect history to downtown experience
Northwest Territory Art Guild	Arts Activation	Provide programming, exhibitions, and support for local artists
Knox County Public Library	Community Anchor	Host events, provide programming, support community engagement
Urban Enterprise Zone	Economic Incentives	Provide financial incentives for investment and redevelopment
United Way	Community Support	Align revitalization with community needs, support inclusive initiatives

Downtown EVENTS

The Downtown Vincennes Association (DVA), organizes events, initiatives and advocacy to boost the economic vitality and cultural richness of downtown Vincennes.

As shown in the table below, downtown events draw in tens of thousands of visitors yearly.

Vincennes 2026 Events

MONTH	DATE	EVENT	NEW EVENT?	AVERAGE ATTENDANCE
February	12	Last Minute Love Stop	yes	N/A
April	3	First Friday Art Walk	no	N/A
April	18	Vincennes Historical Half Marathon	no	300
May	1	First Friday Art Walk	no	N/A
May	3	Planting of Downtown Flowers	no	N/A
May	23,24	Spirit of Vincennes Rendezvous - 250th Celebration	no	20,000
June	5	First Friday Art Walk	no	N/A
June	26	Summer on Main - 250th Celebration	no	2,000
July	3	First Friday Art Walk	no	N/A
July	4	4th of July Parade - 250th Celebration	no	N/A
August	7	First Friday Art Walk	no	N/A
August	7,8	Watermelon Festival	no	4,000

MONTH	DATE	EVENT	NEW EVENT?	AVERAGE ATTENDANCE
September	4	First Friday Art Walk	no	N/A
September	25, 26	Vincennes Homecoming	no	7,000
October	2	First Friday Art Walk	no	N/A
November	6	First Friday Art Walk	no	N/A
November	6,7	Christmas Open Houses	no	N/A
November	28	Small Business Saturday	no	N/A
December	4	Christmas Tree Lighting & Stroll	no	2,000
December	4	Parade of Lights	no	2,000
December	4, 5	First City Christkindlmarkt & Festival	no	22,000

What the Data Supports

Downtown economy data indicates that Vincennes has a functioning and improving downtown, but one that is not yet capturing the full value of its activity.

Employment has increased and the workforce is trending younger and higher earning, yet business growth has remained flat and storefront vacancy persists. Most importantly, downtown has a very limited residential base and functions primarily as a daytime employment center rather than a place of sustained activity.

These conditions point to a clear opportunity: downtown does not need to create demand - it needs to better capture and extend the demand that already exists. Workers, visitors and event attendees are present, but are not consistently staying, spending or returning. This gap suggests that revitalization efforts should focus on converting daytime activity into longer stays and repeat use.



**Demand is
Downtown**



Data & Strategy

The data support a strategy centered on a few key moves: increasing downtown housing, particularly smaller and market-responsive units; expanding food, retail and service offerings that align with a younger and higher-earning workforce; and improving the overall experience through walkability, connectivity, and a “park once” environment.

In addition, strengthening the link between downtown and tourism, arts and cultural assets will be critical to capturing visitor spending

and reinforcing downtown as the community’s primary destination.

Finally, the data reinforce that progress will depend on coordination. Downtown performance is shaped by multiple systems - housing, business development, events, infrastructure and public investment - and no single intervention will be sufficient. The most effective strategies will be those that align these elements to build a more active, resilient, and economically productive downtown.

CHAPTER 5:

HOUSING PROFILE

Overview

Housing trends in Vincennes point to a tightening market characterized by rising home values, increasing occupancy and a shift toward rental housing.

Population decline presents a long-term challenge, while a growing and younger downtown workforce creates a near-term opportunity. These dynamics highlight the need to focus on housing diversity, particularly in and around downtown, to support revitalization and attract and retain residents.



Understanding the Local Housing Market

A clear understanding of the local housing market is foundational to successful downtown revitalization. Housing is not simply a parallel concern to economic development; it is one of the primary drivers of downtown vitality.

The types, prices, locations and availability of housing directly shape who uses downtown, when they use it and how frequently they return.

For communities such as Vincennes, where downtown storefront vacancy and limited activity remain challenges, aligning revitalization strategies with realistic housing market conditions is essential to creating sustained, not episodic, downtown life. These indicators connect directly to storefront demand, redevelopment feasibility and who can live downtown.



Changes SINCE 2016

NUMBER OF WORKERS IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA HAS GROWN WORKFORCE TRENDING YOUNGER AND HIGHER EARNING



Housing costs in Knox County have risen quickly, and local home values have increased at a pace that exceeds general housing inflation. At the same time, the number of occupied housing units has grown even though the total housing stock has remained essentially unchanged.

This combination suggests a tightening market and potential pressure on the availability and affordability of housing.

These housing trends are occurring alongside a gradual decline in Knox County's population. A shrinking population can affect workforce availability, long-term housing demand and the sustainability of community services.



DOWNTOWN PROFILE

However, the downtown corridor shows a different trajectory. As shown in the section on Demographic Profile, the number of workers in the downtown area has grown, and the workforce is trending

younger and higher-earning than in 2016. This shift presents an opportunity for Vincennes to strengthen its employment base and build on activity already occurring downtown.

Housing costs have risen, and local home values have increased at a pace that exceeds general housing inflation. However, median prices are well below the state average.

At the same time, the number of occupied housing units has grown even though the total housing stock has remained essentially unchanged.

This combination suggests a tightening market and potential pressure on the availability and affordability of housing.

OCCUPIED UNITS	VINCENNES (2016)	VINCENNES (2023)
Owner-Occupied	52.9%	48.2%
Renter-Occupied	47.1%	51.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2012-2016 5-Year Estimates; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2019-2023 5-Year Estimates

2016 to 2023 Change

VINCENNES OWNER OCCUPIED
HOUSING

-8.9%

NATIONAL OWNER OCCUPIED
HOUSING

-2.2%

In general, homeownership shows a more stable relationship to the community than renting. As shown in the following table, Vincennes has seen an 8.9% decrease in its owner-occupied share between 2016 and 2023. Nationally, homeownership has also declined, though at a slower pace. The United States saw a 2.2% decrease between 2016 and 2023, according to the American Community Survey.



LOCAL HOME PRICES HAVE CONTINUED TO RISE

Like most of the country, local home prices have continued to rise. The following table shows a 32.5% increase in median local home values. However, the median value is still considerably lower than Indiana’s median value of \$201,600, according to the U.S. Census’ American Community Survey.



27.1% OF RENTERS SPEND MORE THAN 35% OF
THEIR INCOME ON HOUSING

Median Home Value

VINCENNES (2016)	VINCENNES (2023)
\$74,500	\$98,700

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2012-2016 5-Year Estimates; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2019-2023 5-Year Estimates

The affordability of local housing has also shifted since the 2016 downtown plan. The percentage of people spending more than 35% of their income on housing has dropped. This is important because the federal government defines housing as “unaffordable” if the occupant spends more than 30% of their income on it.

Note, however, that the percentage is still very high for renters. In 2023, 27.1% of renters in Vincennes spent more than 35% of their income on housing, which is more than three times the rate for homeowners.



Homeowners Spending More than 35% of their Income on Housing

VINCENNES (2016)	VINCENNES (2023)
15.0%	8.37%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2012-2016 5-Year Estimates; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2019-2023 5-Year Estimates

Renters Spending More than 35% of their Income on Housing

VINCENNES (2016)	VINCENNES (2023)
39.9%	27.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2012-2016 5-Year Estimates; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2019-2023 5-Year Estimates

Key Takeaways

- The housing market is tightening despite no growth in supply, resulting in Vincennes experiencing a more competitive and constrained housing market, even without population growth.
- Rising home values signal both opportunity and pressure. Housing remains relatively affordable compared to the state, but rapid price increases may begin to limit access, especially for lower-income households.
- The market is shifting toward renting. This change aligns with younger workforce trends and smaller households.
- Affordability remains a concern—especially for renters. Renter cost burden remains a significant issue, pointing to a need for more rental supply and a range of price points.
- Housing is directly tied to downtown vitality. Downtown revitalization depends on adding residents, not just improving businesses or infrastructure.

In summary, Vincennes’ housing challenge is not simply about supply, but about aligning housing types, locations and affordability with a changing market—particularly to support a growing downtown workforce and create sustained activity.

CHAPTER 6:

HISTORIC PRESERVATION: KEY TO THE ANSWER?

Overview

Long before our country declared its independence in 1776, Vincennes was making its own history. Founded in 1732, Vincennes stood as the capital of the Indiana Territory, making it the oldest European settlement in Indiana (<https://www.vincennes.org/city>). The Vincennes Historic District (VHD), placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, recognized the significance of the city's architecture representing period styles from the Federal period through the mid-century modern commercial architectural style.



Historic Buildings & Board

The Vincennes community took a significant step in recognizing the architectural importance of its historic buildings through the adoption of a local historic district in November 1984. The **Historic Review Board**, made up of seven mayor appointed members, was established in 1984 to administer the guidelines. The stated purpose of the board was to preserve and protect the historical significance of the Vincennes Local Historic District.



Key Takeaways

The local protection of Vincennes' historic buildings and character has been ongoing for over forty years. The first edition of the *Preservation Guidelines for the Vincennes Historic District (Guidelines)* was first issued on July 19, 1999. The document is a well thought out, well-considered guidebook to help property owners within the VHD navigate 'thoughtful care' of their historic property. The time is ripe for an evaluation of the local historic district - of the successes which have occurred including the places where the guidelines could have been better implemented; the appropriateness of the local district boundaries; and the effectiveness of the current district guidelines, as a start.

In the *Preservation Guidelines for the Vincennes Historic District: Introduction* it states that the district is divided into five different areas: The Riverfront area, Old French Town, the Courthouse area, the Downtown Commercial area, and Residential area. These areas are delineated in the National Register of Historic Places nomination and can easily be a starting point in identifying areas within the local historic district. The titles give pretty good clues to each area's identity. Each of these areas has been influenced by physical improvements, changes in housing needs and desires, fluidity of commercial businesses, and changing trends in downtown living, working and recreating. These factors are drivers for reevaluation of local historic district guidelines and boundary improvements. As such, rethinking what areas need protection and what level of protection (or regulation) is needed, desired, or warranted based on historical, archaeological, or architectural significance is recommended.



Through natural and physical limits, and ‘boots on the ground’ visual observation, two areas or ‘districts’ were identified in addition to the original five. Also proposed are potential adjustments to the existing area boundaries.

Factors influencing these recommendations included:

- Architectural Styles
- Local history
- Density
- Natural boundaries
- Physical boundaries
- Level of alteration or demolition resulting in loss of character
- Condition
- Potential threat to significance
- Potential for development or redevelopment

These factors begin to define the direction of the design guidelines. Districts encompassing primarily commercial buildings and uses certainly necessitate a different set of guidelines than perhaps a residential district. An area with many high style, architecturally significant houses versus an area with small cottages in the local vernacular style may warrant a very different approach to the guidelines. Context plays a significant role. An example might include large areas of vacant land surrounding buildings or areas that define historical events or cultural or ethnic identities. Each of these requires careful consideration, community buy-in, and most likely a varied approach to design guidelines. Identification of what the community objectives are for an area and how the historical significance of an area or its buildings can be preserved while allowing for changing societal needs should also be considerations. One thing that can't be forgotten is living communities (not historic sites or museums, as examples), have been evolving throughout their history. The guidelines should provide a mechanism to protect those elements that define history, that root our sense of place and protect its context for those in the future, while allowing forward progress and change.



Key Takeaways

The National Trust for Historic Preservation identified ten compelling benefits of local historic district designation in an article published in December of 2015 titled, “10 Benefits of Establishing a Local Historic District,” by Julia Rocchi.

<https://savingplaces.org/stories/10-on-tuesday-10-benefits-of-establishing-a-local-historic-district>

- 1 Local districts protect the investments of owners and residents of historic properties.
- 2 Properties within local historic districts appreciate at rates greater than the local market overall as well as faster than similar, non-designated neighborhoods.
- 3 Local districts encourage better quality design.
- 4 Local districts help the environment.
- 5 Local districts are energy-efficient.
- 6 Historic districts are a vehicle for education.
- 7 Historic districts can positively impact the local economy through tourism.
- 8 Protecting local historic districts can enhance business recruitment potential.
- 9 Local districts provide social and psychological benefits.
- 10 Local districts give communities a voice in their future.



These benefits are no less today. In addition, local designation is an opportunity for:

- Promotion of community history
- Heritage tourism
- An accelerator for investment and reinvestment
- Discouraging demolition or loss of historic features or character
- Community pride and commitment

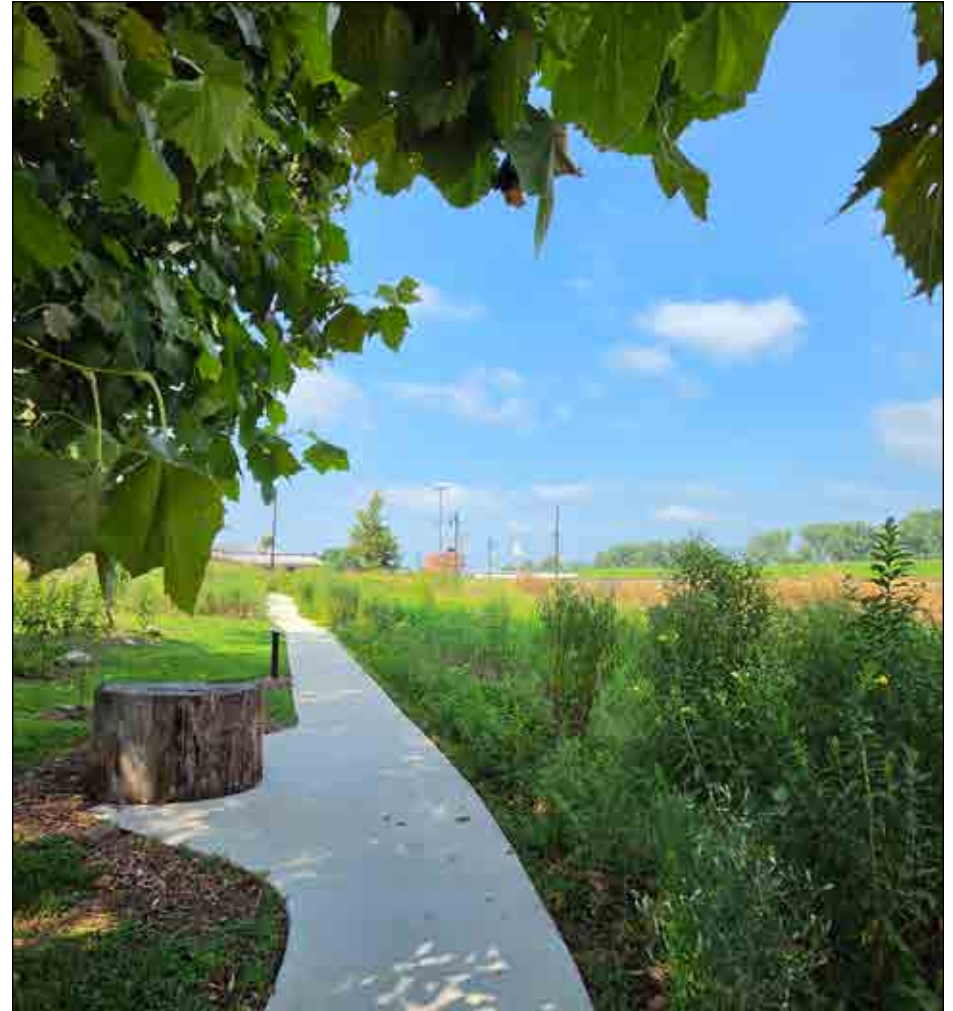
Local district designation isn't always an easy road, however. The local community effort to make designation a reality is now forty years in the past. As new building owners come in and community and government leadership changes hands, the dedication and commitment of those who came before is often lost. The reasons behind the design guidelines are often misunderstood or begin to lack relevance.

Revisiting the local historic district designation can be a healthy and much needed process. Keep in mind, however, the same struggles the original supporters experienced may rise up only to be dealt with again. It will be beneficial to have strong historic district advocates not just locally, but beyond. Once again, the support of Indiana Landmarks, an original strong proponent, may help in building a community preservation coalition.

How might there be a new historic preservation vision?

Determine first if there is an appetite for change and agreement that change may be necessary. Initial conversations as part of this study suggest that yes, it may be key. Combined with an updated look at zoning may provide the impetus for investment and renewed activation of the downtown.

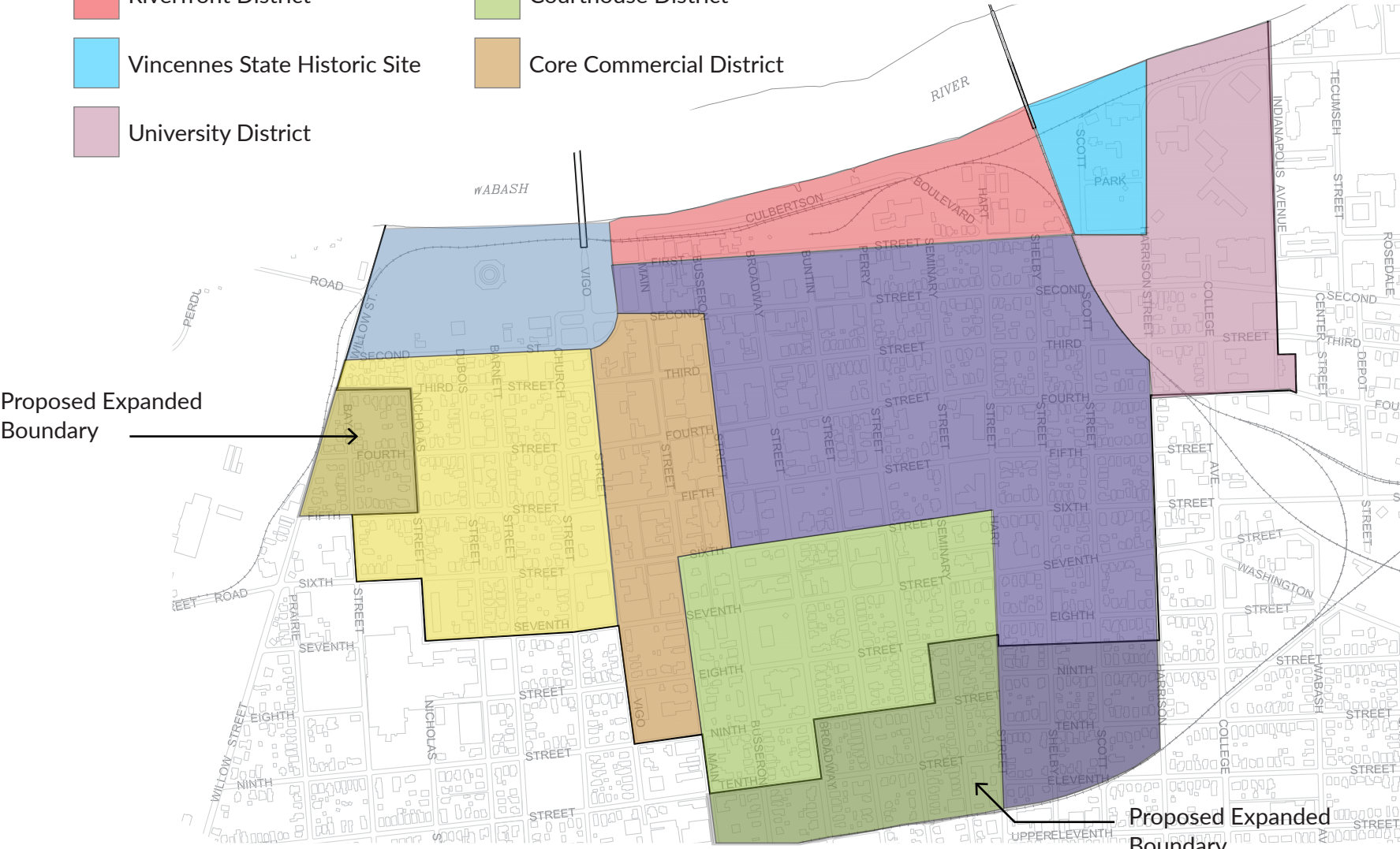
The following outline of a new interpretation of the historic areas is intended to be a guide for discussion and a potential direction. Currently the National Register of Historic Places map is slightly larger than the current local historic district boundaries with the exception of the area near the university. Other boundary considerations might include areas that already have regulatory oversight, or if there has been substantial new development suggesting a lesser degree of preservation oversight, or perhaps a new community focus for enhancing land use in a particular direction. Other factors may be identified through further study and as part of an evaluation process.



The following page is merely a 'fresh look' at area designations, boundary delineation and possible key components of a 'honed-in approach' to area guidelines that address potential needs and preservation challenges and opportunities. Further study and public input will be important components for taking the next steps.

Vincennes Proposed Local Historic Districts and Expanded Boundaries

- George Rogers Clark National Historical Park
- Mixed Use District
- Old French Town District
- Riverfront District
- Courthouse District
- Vincennes State Historic Site
- Core Commercial District
- University District



Vincennes - District Boundaries

George Rogers Clark NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

The George Rogers Clark National Historic Park (National Park) is under the direction of the National Park Service. The National Park in Vincennes recognizes George Rogers Clark's military contributions towards the cessation of British control over the United States' movement towards the Trans-Appalachian frontier. With the oversight of the National Park Service over the Memorial and grounds, consideration should be given for removal of the National Park from the local district boundaries and instead maintain the continued synergistic relationship between the City of Vincennes and the National Park Service.



Vincennes State

HISTORIC SITES

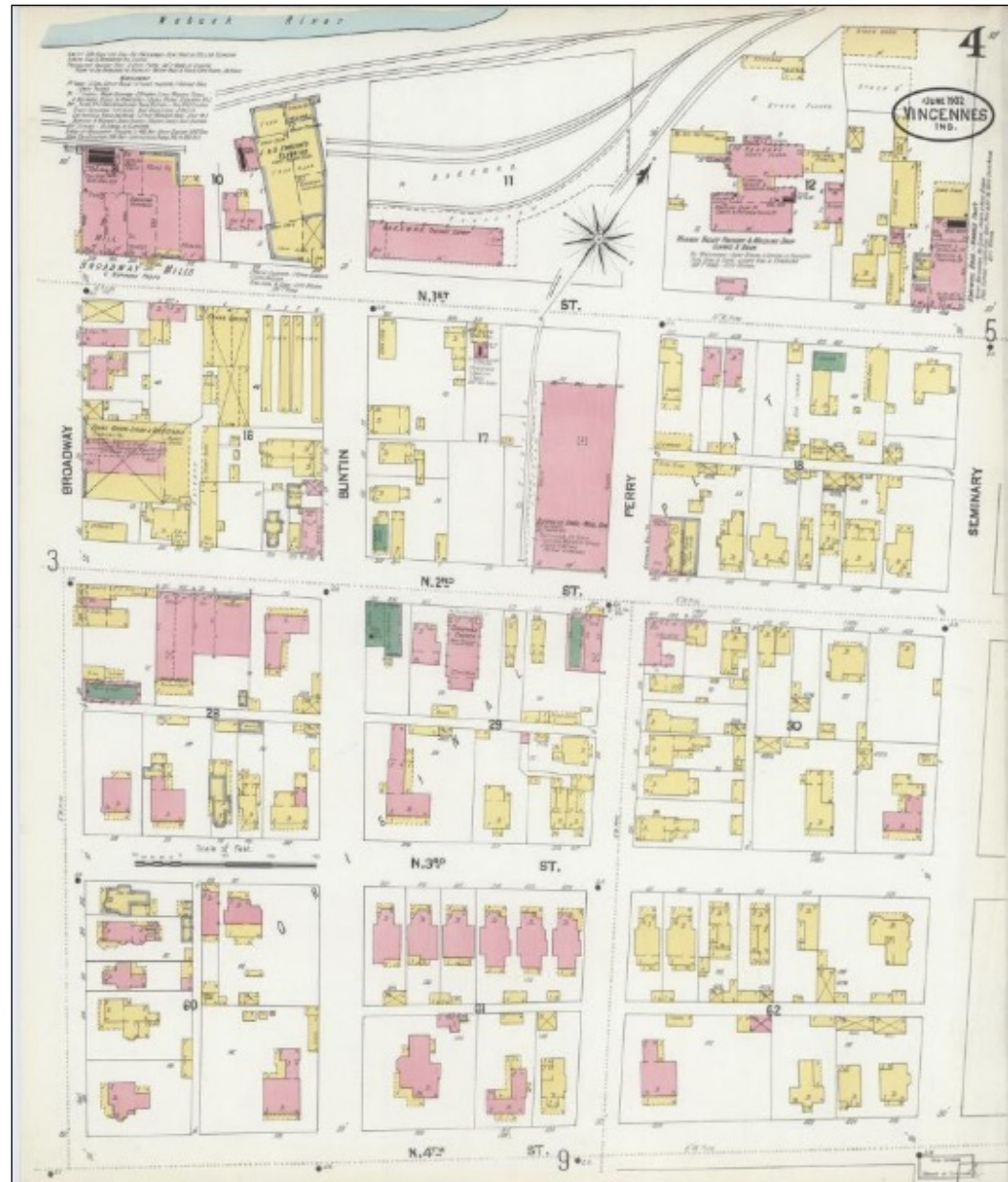
The Vincennes State Historic Sites includes multiple sites and buildings in downtown Vincennes and falls under the direction of Indiana State Museums and Historic Sites. The sites are located on Harrison Street near the Wabash River and Vincennes University. The property includes the William Henry Harrison Mansion (Grouseland), the Territorial Capitol building, the Old French House, the Jefferson Academy, the Thompson House and the Elihu Stout Print Shop. With the oversight of Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites over this significant collection of buildings and grounds, consideration should be given for removal of this area from inclusion within the local district boundaries and instead continue the collaborative relationship between the City of Vincennes and the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites.



Riverfront AREA

The Riverfront area is naturally defined by the Wabash River on the west, the railroad tracks near Scott Street to the north, Vigo Street to the south and First Street to the East (south east). Historically the river front was the prime location for industrial, warehouses and agricultural activity with its obvious proximity to water and the railroad. Early Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps show uses including the Baltimore and Ohio Southwestern Railroad Depot, J & S Emison's Elevator, Broadway Mills, Vincennes Paper Company, Terre Haute Brewery, Indiana Board and Filler Company (manufacturer of Straw Board and Egg Cases), Vincennes Foundry and Machine Company, and buggy storage to name a few.

Some of these historic structures remain and should be protected and preserved including the Vincennes Foundry and Machine Company, the site identified as Fort Knox, and the Medical Center of Vincennes Pediatrics as examples. The new Riverview Apartment development has brought housing to the area. Various newer medical facilities including the Samaritan Center have brought stability to the area but also impose the negative implications of large expenses of surface parking.

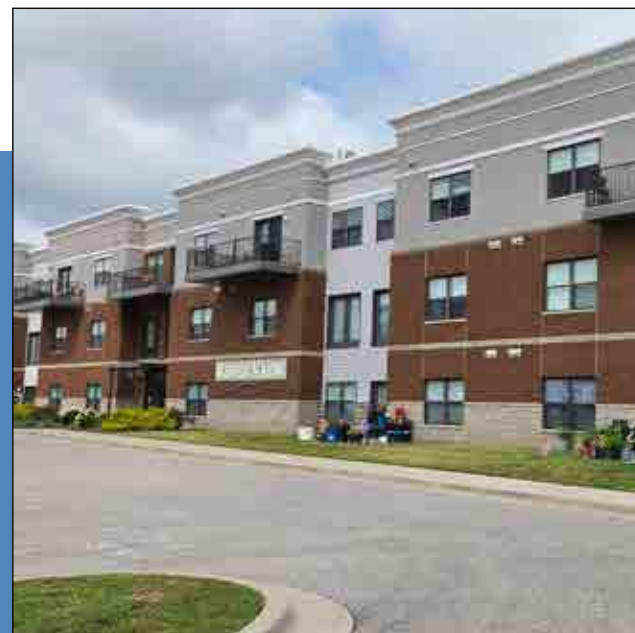
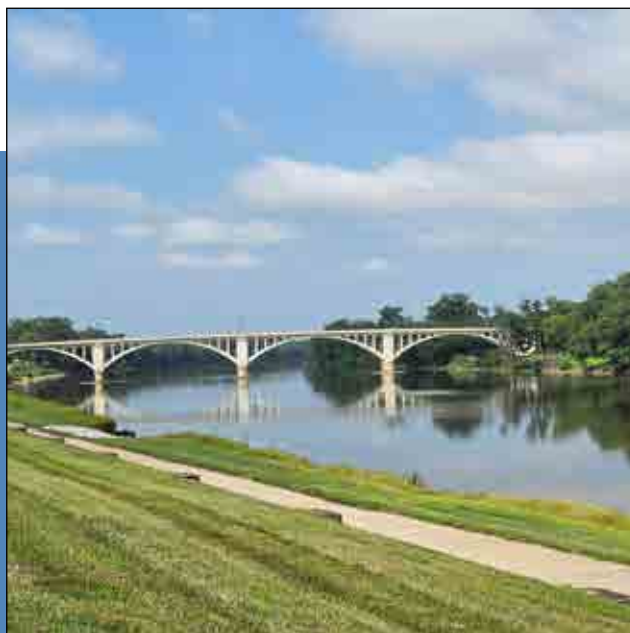


Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1902, Vincennes, Knox County, Indiana.
Library of Congress.

The design and historic guidelines for the Riverfront area should focus on appropriate new development, development of enhanced public spaces and pedestrian friendly environments, buffer zones for surface parking, and retention and rehabilitation of the remaining historic buildings and sites. Building scale, massing, use of materials, innovative design solutions, public art, and further streetscape amenities should be strongly encouraged with the intent being a unifying approach. Demolition of historic buildings should be discouraged to maintain what historic integrity remains, however, a lesser degree of applying strict preservation principles may be appropriate.

The riverfront is no less important and has seen the recent loss of the historic but compromised grain elevators and replacement with

the Riverview Apartments providing 44 new housing units to serve the downtown and university area. The addition of the riverwalk serves as a pedestrian amenity along the river between the George Rogers Clark National Park and the University. Inclusion of this area as part of an historic district may be less important as many of the historic buildings have been lost over the years but instead be included as its own overlay design district with careful consideration to zoning and development and encouraging public access and recreation space. Design guidelines should focus on density, scale, views and proximity to the Wabash River, and use of materials. The Riverfront area offers an opportunity for public art and innovative building design with connectivity and public access highly encouraged.



Core Commercial DISTRICT

This area is the heartbeat of Vincennes. Proposed boundaries include from First Street as its western boundary to Busseron Street on the north, along Seventh Street to the east, and Vigo Street to the south. This area encompasses one of the best collections of commercial architectural styles in Indiana and includes buildings from Vincennes' earliest history through the grand styles of the Italianate period, through changes to design indicative of the turn-of-the-century, mid-century modern design of the 50's and 60's, and what might be called resurgence commercial design which was also a simplistic interpretation of historical architectural styles.



Design Guidelines are challenging for an area with this much significance and variety of architectural styles and periods. The City of Indianapolis historic district guidelines for the Monument Circle District may serve as a good example and approach (Monument Circle Historic District Preservation Plan, City of Indianapolis, 2013) and may be fitting to the Vincennes Core Commercial District as well.



The intent of the guidelines is to help property owners choose an appropriate approach to rehabilitating the existing historic buildings no matter the period or style, or when designing new work that fits within the context of the immediate action or the district as a whole.

They are meant to provide for a range of alternative approaches that may differ from building to building and from property to property, but which are nevertheless compatible with the character of the district.

The architectural inventory section of the downtown revitalization plan, 2016, may serve as a good resource for identifying the building's history and significant exterior features that convey this character where the guidelines don't restrict creativity, but rather offer appropriate approaches for rehabilitation yet guard against unsympathetic actions.

Consider the following criteria to serve as the primary objectives guiding the decisions of the review board when renovation, alterations, additions, signage, demolition, new construction or land use changes are proposed. When determining the appropriateness of an action, consider the following principles:

Does the Action...

1

PROTECT AND PRESERVE CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES OF ARCHITECTURALLY OR HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPES WHICH REPRESENT THE DISTRICT'S ERAS OF SIGNIFICANCE?

2

CONTRIBUTE TO THE CONTEXT IN WHICH WORK IS PROPOSED?

3

PROMOTE THE USE OF HIGH-QUALITY DESIGN USING DURABLE MATERIALS?

4

ENHANCE AND IMPROVE THE DESIGN QUALITY AND CHARACTER OF THE STREETSAPES?

5

REMAIN SENSITIVE TO THE ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC CONTEXT WHEN INTRODUCING ALTERNATIVE OR SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS OR ENERGY CONSERVING SOLUTIONS?

6

ENHANCE AND BALANCE THE PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICULAR ACTIVITIES IN THE PUBLIC SPACES?

7

REMAIN SENSITIVE TO THE ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC CONTEXT WHEN IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY?



The “tried and true” Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (Standards) can then augment the district objective by providing the additional guidance to building owners, building managers, preservation consultants, architects, contractors, and project reviewers prior to work proceeding. These Standards have served as the basis of Design Guidelines across the country for historic district commissions, review boards, and other local agencies charged with the protection of historic resources. As is often said, “why reinvent the wheel.”

Courthouse

DISTRICT

The area surrounding the Knox County Courthouse is one of high style and represents the prestige of those who established the area for their homes and businesses near the courthouse. The courthouse serves not only as an identifier for the district, but also identifies the seat of county government being housed in the stately Second Empire/Romanesque style building constructed in 1876. The structure firmly grounds the district with prominence set by its corner towers and finely detailed, skyward reaching clock tower. Suggested district boundaries run from Hart Street to the railroad tracks on the east to Main Street on the south and 7th Street on the west.



The area, particularly on the fringes, is dotted with mixed commercial, but is primarily residential in character. Religious structures and other public facilities are interspersed throughout.



The district's concentration of architecturally significant buildings may justify a more rigorous application of the design guidelines. Character-defining features—such as bay windows, deep cornices, towers, window patterns, wood siding, decorative brackets, stone, brick, massing, scale, and setbacks—should be carefully considered and protected. The guidelines should also address broader elements of community character, including tree cover, building relationships to streets and sidewalks, development patterns, alleys, and outbuildings.



Old Frenchtown

DISTRICT

The National Register nomination defines Old Frenchtown as the area bounded by the Wabash River, Broadway, 8th Street, and Willow Street, including St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church at the heart of the early French settlement. Suggested boundaries would exclude areas included in the Core Commercial District and George Rogers Clark National Historical Park. Although generational change has made much of the area's French influence less visible, several notable 19th-century and later period-style buildings remain. The area's early history, the prominence of the basilica, and its proximity to downtown and George Rogers Clark National Historical Park make careful rehabilitation especially important.



Mixed-Use DISTRICT

The mixed-use area is large and encompasses a variety of building styles, development patterns, building conditions, alterations, uses and underutilized or vacant land available for development. The area is inclusive of the balance of the National Register District including from First Street to Harrison Street, south to the alley between 8th and 9th Streets, west to Hart Street, north to 6th Street, over to the east boundary of the core commercial district at Busseron and back to 1st Street.

Context in the mixed-use area is harder to define, and surface parking often disrupts the streetscape. The guidelines should protect remaining historic buildings and character while encouraging compatible infill as downtown development continues. Rather than accepting any investment, the city should guide projects that support commercial, multi-family, low-density residential, mixed-use, and institutional redevelopment. This area may warrant more flexible guidelines, using terms such as “recommended,” “encouraged,” or “generally not appropriate” to allow case-by-case interpretation. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation should remain the foundation, while also allowing appropriate new materials, contemporary compatible design, and greater flexibility.



ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS FOR CONSIDERATION

HOW DO YOU FACILITATE THE HISTORIC DISTRICT'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE REVITALIZATION EFFORTS DOWNTOWN?

CONSIDER:



- A mix of housing options – single-family, duplexes, fourplexes, multi-family, and mixed use commercial/residential.



- Amenities for families – pocket parks, playgrounds, connecting trails, safe crossings, enhanced lighting.



- Market the area with identifying imagery and wayfinding signage.



- Use of current technology with QR codes and phone apps encourages youth and tourist engagement.



- Options for necessary local retail and services.



- Enticing nightlife options.



HISTORIC DISTRICTS CAN STRENGTHEN A COMMUNITY WHEN THEY BUILD ON EXISTING ASSETS. IN VINCENNES, FESTIVALS, ART, HOUSING, AND HISTORY ALREADY SUPPORT DOWNTOWN ENGAGEMENT AND CAN HELP CREATE A MORE ACTIVE, VIBRANT CORE.



CHAPTER 7:

RECOMMENDATIONS: A RESILIENT PATH FORWARD

Overview

This chapter outlines a practical path forward for downtown Vincennes. In a smaller market with economic uncertainty, revitalization is less about finding the perfect moment for a single transformative project and more about building steady momentum over time.

Rather than relying on high-risk investments or ideal conditions, this plan emphasizes a series of targeted, achievable actions - small bets that can be tested, refined and scaled as success is demonstrated.

That makes the plan more realistic - but not easier. This approach requires local leaders to stay engaged, make difficult choices, and follow through over time. The challenge is not designing the strategy—it is sustaining the effort.

Progress will come from consistently improving how downtown functions day to day—making it more useful, more active, and more supportive of residents, businesses, and visitors.

Throughout this planning process the steering committee envisioned a vibrant, walkable and economically resilient downtown Vincennes that honors its historic character while attracting residents, visitors, entrepreneurs and investment.

The committee set revitalization goals to:

- Strengthen local businesses and entrepreneurship.
- Increase foot traffic and downtown residency.
- Preserve and reuse historic assets.
- Improve quality of life and public spaces.
- Position downtown as a regional destination.

The steering committee also recognized downtown has many existing strengths to build on and revitalization should amplify these factors, not replace them:

- Historic architecture & identity (Indiana's oldest city).
- Cultural anchors (George Rogers Clark National Historical Park, museums, events).
- Compact, walkable core.
- Community pride & heritage tourism potential.
- Proximity to Wabash River and regional road access.

Ultimately, the recommendations that follow are designed to build on downtown Vincennes' existing strengths through steady, coordinated, and achievable actions that create long-term resilience rather than short-term transformation.

Challenges to Downtown Revitalization

As detailed in earlier chapters, there are national forces of change working against the local economies of Vincennes and many small rural cities. These include:



POPULATION DECLINE & DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

Many small communities face slow or negative population growth. Attracting remote workers, university graduates and retirees can help stabilize the market.



CHANGING WORK PATTERNS

Remote and hybrid work have reduced daily foot traffic, creating opportunities to repurpose buildings for coworking or housing.



RETAIL & BUSINESS TURNOVER

Downtown retail must compete with online and big-box options. Emphasizing experience, local character and shared retail spaces helps retain vitality.



INFRASTRUCTURE & INVESTMENT CHALLENGES

Aging infrastructure and building conditions require both public and private investment, often supported through grants and incentives

To be effective and sustainable, any revitalization plan must squarely face – and work within – these challenges.

Approach to Downtown Revitalization

In a shrinking market with economic uncertainty, it might be a mistake to swing for a big “transformational” project that requires perfect timing, high debt or heroic occupancy assumptions. Instead, the plan should focus on smart, repeatable progress. Or, to use three different words: practical, incremental, achievable.

With this formula in mind, the high-probability play is to:

- Increase downtown’s everyday usefulness.
- Reduce risk for entrepreneurs and property owners.
- Build a repeatable system for incremental reinvestment.



Transferring these plays into action requires guiding principles:

01

START WITH DEMAND YOU ALREADY HAVE, THEN GROW IT.

Design for residents, workers, students and nearby visitors first (not big-tourism projections).

02

PRIORITIZE “LOW-COST, HIGH-VISIBILITY, FAST FEEDBACK” MOVES.

Treat downtown like a portfolio: test, measure, iterate.

03

FOCUS ON THREE LEVERS THAT CONSISTENTLY WORK IN SLOW-GROWTH TOWNS.

- Activation (events/programming that create foot traffic habits).
- Small business pipeline (pop-ups can lead to permanent leases).
- Housing downtown (upper floors and infill to create daily demand).

04

FIX FRICTION BEFORE BUILDING NEW STUFF.

Wayfinding, lighting, cleanliness, storefront presentation, and clear parking signage often outperform expensive capital projects in the short run.

Projects

This plan is designed to be launched immediately. In fact, the last meeting of the planning process was dedicated to assigning action teams. The work is phased into three parts:



Short-Term Projects (1-2 YEARS)

PATRONICITY CAMPAIGN #1

Patronicity Project: A Patronicity crowdfunding campaign can help fund smaller downtown improvement and placemaking projects while building community buy-in and leveraging matching grants and outside funding.

WINDOW ACTIVATION

Activating vacant storefront windows with displays, art, lighting or temporary installations helps reduce the visual impact of vacancy, improve the pedestrian experience, and reinforce the perception of an active and cared-for downtown environment.

POP-UP EVENTS

Small-scale pop-up events create immediate activity, draw visitors downtown, support local businesses and test ideas for programming and public space activation with relatively low cost and risk.

DESIGNATED OUTDOOR REFRESHMENT AREA (DORA) DESIGNATION

Establishing a DORA can help increase downtown activity by encouraging visitors to spend more time walking between businesses, events and public spaces, while supporting restaurants, bars, festivals, and overall street-level vibrancy.

DOWNTOWN ZONING OVERLAY

A downtown zoning overlay can remove regulatory barriers to reinvestment by supporting mixed-use development, upper-story housing, adaptive reuse, and flexible parking standards that better align with downtown conditions and revitalization goals.

Mid-Term Projects (2-5 YEARS)

COMPLETE HISTORIC PRESERVATION DISTRICT REALIGNMENT
UPPER-FLOOR & BACK-OF-BUILDING ACTIVATION
PATRONICITY CAMPAIGN #2
PREP FOR 300TH BIRTHDAY

Long-Term Projects (5+ YEARS)

RIVERWALK TRAIL OVERLOOK
CELEBRATE 300TH BIRTHDAY



SUMMARY AND CALL TO ACTION

This plan is not ambitious in the traditional sense. It does not depend on a single catalytic project or a surge of outside investment. Instead, it focuses on incremental, achievable steps that can be repeated and scaled.

Where it is ambitious is in what it asks of local leadership. Success will require discipline, coordination, and a sustained willingness to act. The work is not glamorous, and the results will build gradually - but that is what makes them durable.

Following are the “game plans” for the individual components.



**COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION FOR A REPEATABLE
AND SCALABLE STRATEGY**

1. WINDOW ACTIVATION PROGRAM

Purpose

Vacant storefront windows can create the perception of decline even in otherwise active downtowns. A window activation program uses temporary art, lighting, historical displays, student work, retail displays, or business promotions to improve the pedestrian experience and reinforce the appearance of activity.



USEFUL LINKS

- <https://www.mainstreet.org>
- <https://www.miplace.org/programs/michigan-main-street/>



WHY IT MATTERS

- Reduces the visual impact of vacancy
- Improves walkability and downtown appearance
- Creates opportunities for local artists and organizations
- Builds momentum while longer-term redevelopment occurs



FIRST FIVE STEPS

- 1 Inventory vacant storefronts and identify willing property owners.
- 2 Develop simple design standards for displays and lighting.
- 3 Partner with local artists, schools, museums, and businesses.
- 4 Pilot 3–5 storefront installations in a concentrated area.
- 5 Promote the installations through downtown events and social media.



POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- Northwest Territory Art Guild
- Vincennes University
- Property owners
- Historical & Antiquarian Society



SIMILAR SMALL-CITY EXAMPLES

- Lanesboro, Minnesota – Downtown art window installations
- Paducah, Kentucky – Artist-led storefront activation program
- Michigan Main Street communities through the MEDC Match on Main program

2. POP-UP EVENT PROGRAM

Purpose Pop-up events create low-cost, short-duration activity that encourages people to spend time downtown while testing programming ideas before larger investments are made.



USEFUL LINKS

- <https://www.indianamainstreet.org>
- <https://www.downtownfranklintn.com>



WHY IT MATTERS

- Increases foot traffic and visibility
- Supports restaurants and retailers
- Encourages repeat visitation
- Activates underused public spaces



POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- Downtown Vincennes Association
- Chamber of Commerce
- Parks & Recreation
- Tourism / Convention Office
- Local musicians and artists
- Restaurants and retailers



FIRST FIVE STEPS

- 1 Identify underused downtown spaces suitable for events.
- 2 Develop a simple permitting and coordination process.
- 3 Recruit local vendors, musicians, artists, and food providers.
- 4 Launch a recurring pilot event series.
- 5 Measure attendance and business participation.



SIMILAR SMALL-CITY EXAMPLES

- Columbus, Indiana – First Fridays
- Franklin, Tennessee – Main Street pop-up programming
- Warsaw, Indiana – Downtown alley activation events



3. DOWNTOWN ZONING OVERLAY

Purpose

A downtown zoning overlay can remove regulatory barriers that discourage reinvestment and adaptive reuse in historic downtown buildings.

WHY IT MATTERS



- Supports mixed-use development
- Encourages up-per-story housing
- Reduces parking-related barriers
- Aligns regulations with downtown conditions

FIRST FIVE STEPS



- 1 Review existing zoning and parking requirements.
- 2 Identify regulations that conflict with downtown revitalization goals.
- 3 Draft overlay standards focused on flexibility and adaptive reuse.
- 4 Conduct stakeholder and property-owner meetings.
- 5 Adopt overlay through the Area Plan Commission process.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS



- Knox County Area Plan Commission
- Mayor's Office
- Redevelopment Commission
- Property owners
- Downtown Vincennes Association
- Chamber of Commerce

SIMILAR SMALL-CITY EXAMPLES



- Madison, Indiana – Historic downtown overlay standards
- New Albany, Indiana – Downtown mixed-use zoning reforms
- Noblesville, Indiana – Downtown overlay district



USEFUL LINKS

- <https://codelibrary.amlegal.com>
- <https://www.planning.org>



4. DESIGNATED OUTDOOR REFRESHMENT AREA (DORA)

Purpose

A DORA allows patrons to carry alcoholic beverages within a defined downtown area, helping create a more active and social pedestrian environment.

WHY IT MATTERS



- Encourages people to stay downtown longer
- Supports restaurants and bars
- Strengthens events and festivals
- Increases street-level activity

FIRST FIVE STEPS



- 1 Define the proposed DORA boundaries.
- 2 Meet with local businesses and law enforcement.
- 3 Develop operational rules and signage standards.
- 4 Obtain local approvals and state coordination.
- 5 Launch during a major downtown event.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS



City of Vincennes • Police Department •
Downtown Vincennes Association • Restaurants
and bars

SIMILAR SMALL-CITY EXAMPLES



- Lawrenceburg, Indiana
- Jeffersonville, Indiana
- Noblesville, Indiana



USEFUL LINKS



- <https://www.in.gov/atc>
- <https://www.visitjeffersonville.com>

5. PATRONICITY CROWDFUNDING PROJECT



WHY IT MATTERS

- Creates community ownership
- Generates momentum for future projects
- Helps fund small but visible improvements
- Leverages outside matching funds

Purpose

A Patronicity campaign can help fund visible downtown improvement projects while building community buy-in and leveraging matching grants.

FIRST FIVE STEPS

1. Select a highly visible and achievable pilot project.
2. Build a coalition of project supporters and ambassadors.
3. Develop a fundraising target and campaign materials.
4. Launch the campaign with coordinated media outreach.
5. Celebrate project completion publicly.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- Downtown Vincennes Association
- Redevelopment Commission
- Chamber of Commerce
- Community Foundation
- Local businesses and donors

SIMILAR SMALL-CITY EXAMPLES

- Albion, Michigan – Public space improvements
- Owosso, Michigan – Downtown placemaking projects
- Three Rivers, Michigan – Main Street activation projects

USEFUL LINKS

- <https://www.patronicity.com>
- <https://www.miplace.org/programs/patronicity/>

6. RIVERWALK TRAIL OVERLOOK

Purpose

The other previous projects were about building momentum. The Riverwalk Overlook is about capturing momentum - a legacy project for the city's 300th birthday.

The Wabash River is one of Vincennes' defining historic and natural assets, yet downtown visitors have limited opportunities to experience it directly. Construction of a Riverwalk Trail Overlook would create a signature public space overlooking the Wabash River while strengthening the connection between downtown, the riverfront trail, George Rogers Clark National Historical Park, and surrounding attractions. The overlook has long been envisioned for the river, and was first detailed in the city's unsuccessful application for a state Stellar Communities grant.

As Vincennes approaches its 300th anniversary in 2032, the overlook has the potential to become a lasting civic landmark celebrating the city's history and future. The concept was identified during the planning process as a long-term catalytic project that builds upon earlier investments in downtown revitalization and the riverfront trail.

Why It Matters

- Creates a signature destination celebrating Vincennes' 300th birthday.
- Strengthens the connection between downtown and the Wabash River.
- Increases visitor length of stay and enhances the trail experience.
- Supports tourism, downtown businesses, and community events.
- Demonstrates long-term commitment to downtown investment



Future proposal for riverwalk

6. HISTORIC DISTRICT REDEFINITION

Purpose

This chapter evaluates whether Vincennes' local historic district boundaries and preservation guidelines continue to serve the community's current needs. It considers the district's historic significance, changing development patterns, and opportunities for revitalization in order to recommend a clearer, more flexible preservation approach.



WHY IT MATTERS

- Redefinition of the existing single historic district helps align preservation boundaries and guidelines with current conditions.
- Continues to protect significant historic resources.
- Reduces confusion for property owners on what is protected and what “rules” and processes need to be followed.
- Supports thoughtful reinvestment.
- Protects character-defining resources while supporting thoughtful growth.

FIRST FIVE STEPS

1. Determine whether there is community appetite for change.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of the existing local historic district.
3. Compare the National Register boundaries with the current local historic district boundaries.
4. Reassess the district by area, character, and preservation need.
5. Develop a refined framework for area-specific guidelines

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- Indiana Landmarks
- National Alliance of Preservation Commissions
- Other cities with established, strong and viable historic districts
- Other cities and towns that have “what you want”

SIMILAR SMALL-CITY EXAMPLES

- Monument Circle Historic District, Indianapolis, Indiana
- Village of Irvington, New York
- Madison, Indiana

USEFUL LINKS

- <https://www.indianalandmarks.org/>
- <https://www.napcommissions.org/>
- https://gadnr.org/sites/default/files/hpd/pdf/financial_and_technical_assistance/PreparingHistoricDistrictGuidelines.pdf
- https://www.sa.gov/files/assets/main/v/1/ohp/documents/1_usingthehistoricdesignguidelines.pdf
- <https://www.strongtowns.org/>
- <https://www.coldwater.org/DocumentCenter/View/3793/Historic-District-Design-Guidelines>

First Five Steps

1 BUILD A LEADERSHIP COALITION:

Form a Riverwalk Overlook Task Force including the Mayor's Office, Redevelopment Commission, Downtown Vincennes Association, Knox County Chamber, George Rogers Clark National Historical Park, Vincennes University, Community Foundation, and local legislators.

2 COMPLETE A CONCEPT STUDY

Prepare conceptual renderings, a preliminary site plan, cost estimate, and engineering feasibility study that can be shared with elected officials, grant agencies, and potential funders.

3 BUILD STATE SUPPORT

Schedule meetings with the Governor's Office, Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA), Indiana Department of Natural Resources, INDOT, Indiana Destination Development Corporation, and the local legislative delegation. Position the overlook as a statewide investment tied to Indiana's oldest city and the upcoming 300th anniversary.

4 DEVELOP A FUNDING STRATEGY

Rather than seeking one funding source, assemble a capital package that combines state appropriations, federal grants (if available), philanthropic support, local matching funds, tourism funding, and private donations.

5 CREATE PUBLIC MOMENTUM

Launch a public awareness campaign leading to the 300th anniversary. Develop renderings, videos, presentations, and public events that help residents and state leaders visualize the project's regional significance.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- City of Vincennes
- Vincennes Redevelopment Commission
- Downtown Vincennes Association
- Knox County Chamber of Commerce
- George Rogers Clark National Historical Park
- Vincennes University
- Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA)
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources
- Indiana Destination Development Corporation
- Indiana Department of Transportation
- Indiana General Assembly delegation
- Office of the Governor
- Knox County Community Foundation
- Private donors and local industries

SIMILAR PROJECTS

- Big Four Station Park and Riverfront – Jeffersonville, Indiana
- Ohio River Overlook – Madison, Indiana
- Buffalo Trace Park Riverfront improvements – Palmyra, Indiana
- Louisville Waterfront Park Overlooks – Louisville, Kentucky

This project is unlikely to be funded through normal City resources. Success depends on building a broad coalition of local, regional, and state partners around a shared vision for Vincennes' 300th anniversary. The first milestone is not construction - it is securing political commitment and developing a competitive funding package.