

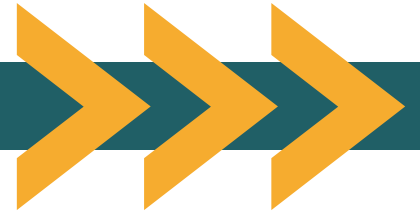
The background of the entire page is a photograph of the Clay County Courthouse in Indiana. The building is a grand, multi-story structure with classical architectural features, including a prominent portico with columns and a large dome on the left side. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal filter. A bright yellow rectangular border is positioned around the top text.

CLAY COUNTY, INDIANA

COMMUNITY PLAN
JANUARY 2025



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



LILLY ENDOWMENT, INC.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COUNTY-WIDE COMMUNITY PLAN



The Clay County Community Plan serves as a strategic roadmap to guide the county toward a thriving and sustainable future.

Rooted in extensive community engagement and regional collaboration, the plan identifies key priorities and actionable strategies across four central pillars: infrastructure, economic development, health and wellness, and community identity. These focus areas aim to address current challenges while leveraging opportunities to enhance the quality of life for all residents.

The plan's vision portrays Clay County as a destination recognized for its rich history, thriving economy, and strong sense of community. Guided by this vision, the mission emphasizes fostering collaboration to enrich lives by promoting sustainable growth, honoring the county's heritage, and improving access to essential services like housing, healthcare, education, and recreation.

Clay County faces significant challenges, including population decline, limited healthcare access, shortages in child care, and aging infrastructure. However, the community also has opportunities to capitalize on regional economic growth, expand recreational and tourism options, develop its workforce, and establish a distinct community brand. These challenges and opportunities inform the plan's strategic priorities and serve as a foundation for targeted interventions.

The four strategic pillars form the backbone of the plan. **Infrastructure improvements** focus on expanding transportation options, upgrading utilities, increasing broadband access, and enhancing housing opportunities to meet evolving community needs. **Economic development initiatives** aim to stimulate business growth, create jobs, and strengthen regional partnerships, fostering a resilient and sustainable local economy. **Health, wellness, and recreation efforts** prioritize expanding access to healthcare, promoting active lifestyles, and enhancing recreational spaces, ensuring the physical and mental well-being of residents. Meanwhile, the **community identity and engagement pillar** emphasizes cultivating pride, belonging, and cultural promotion through branding, local events, and strengthened social connections.

Public input was integral to shaping the plan. **Over 500 survey responses and multiple public engagement sessions revealed top priorities**, including addressing infrastructure and housing concerns, improving road conditions, expanding public amenities, and creating job opportunities. This feedback underscored the community's desire for actionable strategies that reflect its values and aspirations.



The plan also aligns with state and regional initiatives like READI, leveraging partnerships to secure funding for shovel-ready projects that can drive economic growth and community development. By addressing challenges head-on and maximizing its strengths, Clay County is positioned to foster a resilient, vibrant community with opportunities for all.



Designed as a living document, the plan incorporates specific actions, timelines, and partnerships to guide implementation. Its framework emphasizes collaboration among stakeholders and the use of performance metrics to monitor progress. Ultimately, this comprehensive approach provides the tools and direction needed to realize Clay County's vision for a brighter, more prosperous future.

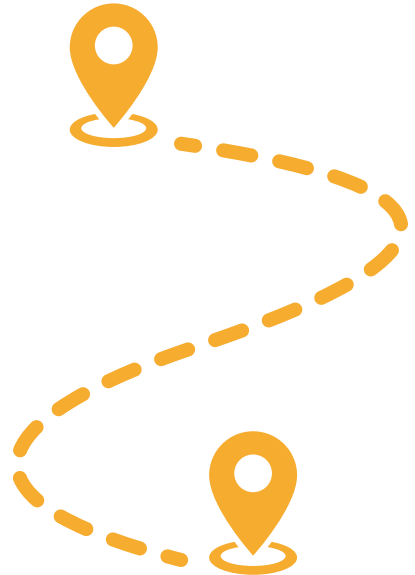


PURPOSE

COMMUNITY PLAN PURPOSE

The purpose of this county-wide community plan is to create a clear, actionable roadmap for building a thriving, sustainable, and inclusive future for all residents.

By identifying and prioritizing key areas like infrastructure, economic development, health and wellness, recreation, and community identity, we aim to enhance the quality of life, support local businesses, and attract new opportunities. This plan reflects our shared vision for a vibrant, resilient community, driven by collaboration and committed to making Clay County an exceptional place to live, work, and grow.



»»» VISION

Clay County will be a destination known for its rich history, strong infrastructure, thriving local economy, and robust sense of community – where positive growth and progress are embraced and celebrated by all.

»»» MISSION

To enrich the lives of Clay County residents by fostering a collaborative, inclusive community that honors our history, promotes sustainable growth, and enhances access to quality housing, healthcare, education, and recreation.

MESSAGE TO THE COMMUNITY

TO THE CLAY COUNTY COMMUNITY –

It is with great excitement that we introduce the Clay County Community Plan, a collaborative and forward-thinking roadmap designed to guide the growth and development of our county. This plan is the result of extensive community engagement, regional collaboration, and thoughtful planning to ensure that Clay County continues to be a place where residents thrive, businesses grow, and opportunities abound.

Our goal is to build a stronger, more vibrant Clay County

by addressing key priorities such as infrastructure improvements, economic development, housing accessibility, health and wellness, and community identity. The plan is rooted in the voices of our residents—through surveys, public meetings, and stakeholder discussions, we identified the needs and aspirations that shape our community's future.

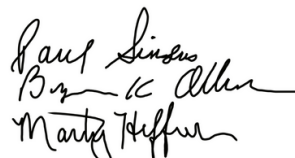
The Clay County Chamber of Commerce is proud to lead the implementation of this plan, working in close partnership with local

government, businesses, nonprofits, and community organizations. However, true success will come from the collective commitment of our entire community. This is more than a document—it is a call to action for all of us to take part in shaping the future of Clay County.

We invite you to review the plan, engage in its initiatives, and join us in bringing its vision to life. Whether you are a long-time resident, a new business owner, or an organization looking to make an impact, there are opportunities for you to contribute. Together, we can create a Clay County that honors its heritage while embracing growth, innovation, and sustainability.

Thank you for your support, your passion, and your commitment to our community. We look forward to working alongside you to make Clay County an even better place to live, work, and grow.


Sincerely,



Clay County Commissioners

Clay County Chamber of Commerce

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT



This community plan is designed to be a practical guide and reference for residents, community leaders, businesses, and policymakers as community stakeholders work together to shape the future of Clay County. Here's how to make the most of it:

»»» UNDERSTAND OUR VISION AND GOALS

Start by reading the vision, goals, and priorities to understand the big picture and guiding values that shape this plan. This will give you a sense of the direction our community is headed and how different areas—like economic development, health, infrastructure, and education—are woven together to create a stronger county.

»»» IDENTIFY FOCUS AREAS AND KEY INITIATIVES

Each section is dedicated to a core area of community development, highlighting specific strategies, initiatives, and recommended actions. Use these as a foundation to guide local projects, inform decision-making, and align with broader county goals. This plan reflects our shared vision for a vibrant, resilient community, driven by collaboration and committed to making Clay County an exceptional place to live, work, and grow.

»»» ENGAGE AND COLLABORATE

This document encourages all stakeholders to actively participate. Community organizations, local businesses, schools, and individual residents can reference this plan to find opportunities for involvement, potential partnerships, and areas where their contributions can make an impact.

»»» TRACK PROGRESS AND MEASURE SUCCESS

The Executive Steering Committee including the Clay County Chamber of Commerce and Clay County Commissioners will play an integral role in carrying out this plan. Together, they will oversee the implementation of the outlined metrics and goals and identifying community partners, ensuring regular monitoring of progress. These stakeholders will periodically review the benchmarks to assess achievements and make any necessary adjustments to ensure continued alignment with the plan's key objectives.

»»» ADAPT FOR FUTURE NEEDS

The document serves as a living framework, designed to adapt to the evolving needs of the community. Readers are encouraged to revisit and revise it periodically to ensure its relevance and responsiveness to emerging opportunities and challenges.

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

WELCOME TO CLAY COUNTY, INDIANA –

A place where **community values and natural beauty come together to create a welcoming environment for all**. Here, you'll find a landscape of rolling hills, fertile farmlands, along with a community that takes pride in its heritage. With a thriving local economy, an excellent school system, and a commitment to preserving our natural beauty, Clay County is the perfect blend of tradition and progress. As we look ahead, our plan for Clay County focuses on sustainable growth, enhancing local services, and preserving the unique charm that makes our county special. Whether you're a long-term resident or a visitor, Clay County offers a place to feel at home while we work together to create a future full of opportunity.

In small rural communities like Clay County, the significance of having a comprehensive, county-wide community plan cannot be overstated.

A well-crafted community plan serves as a roadmap for sustainable development, guiding local leaders and residents in making informed decisions that align with shared goals. It provides a unified vision for the

future, ensuring that limited resources are strategically allocated to address the unique needs and challenges of the community. By fostering collaboration and inclusivity, a county-wide plan supports the collective input of residents, businesses, and local organizations, creating a sense of shared responsibility and ownership in shaping the community's destiny. In the absence of such a plan, small rural communities risk facing disjointed development, missed opportunities for improvement, and difficulties in adapting to changing circumstances.



Our plan for Clay County focuses on sustainable growth, enhancing local services, and preserving the unique charm that makes our county special.

As regionalism continues to gain momentum across Indiana, particularly in West Central Indiana, having shovel-ready projects in place enhances the community's competitiveness for securing additional, unique regional funding opportunities—both state and federal—such as Regional Cities, READI 1.0, and READI 2.0. Recognizing regionalism as a pathway to collective growth positions the community for success. Without proper planning, these valuable opportunities are challenging to pursue.



COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Established in 1825, Clay County is located in the west central part of the state. According to the most recent census data, the county has a population of approximately 26,000 residents with much of the population residing in the City of Brazil (31.0%). Clay County is part of the five-county West Central Indiana region, which also includes Parke, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo Counties, with a combined population of 185,271. It is home to several rural towns and unincorporated communities, offering a unique set of benefits that appeal to a variety of people from close-knit relationships, rich local history, low cost of living, low crime rates, to a high quality of life.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the demographic composition of Clay County is as follows: 96.7% of residents identify as White alone, 1.0% as Black or African American alone, 0.4% as American Indian or Alaska Native alone, and 0.3% as Asian alone (Table 1).

Table 1

Clay County Population Demographics	
White Alone	96.7%
Black or African American Alone	1.0%
American Indiana or Alaska Native Alone	0.4%
Asian Alone	0.3%

Source: StatsIndiana (2024)

In recent years, Clay County has experienced a gradual population decline, reflective of broader trends in rural areas across the United States (Table 2). This decline is attributed to factors such as economic challenges, younger residents relocating to urban centers for better opportunities, and an aging population. Despite these challenges, Clay County continues to be characterized by its strong sense of community and rural charm. Notably, the median age in Clay County is 42.1 years, indicating an aging population with significant groups in the 25-44 years (24.60%) and 55-64 years (13.80%) age range (Figure 1).



DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

Figure 1

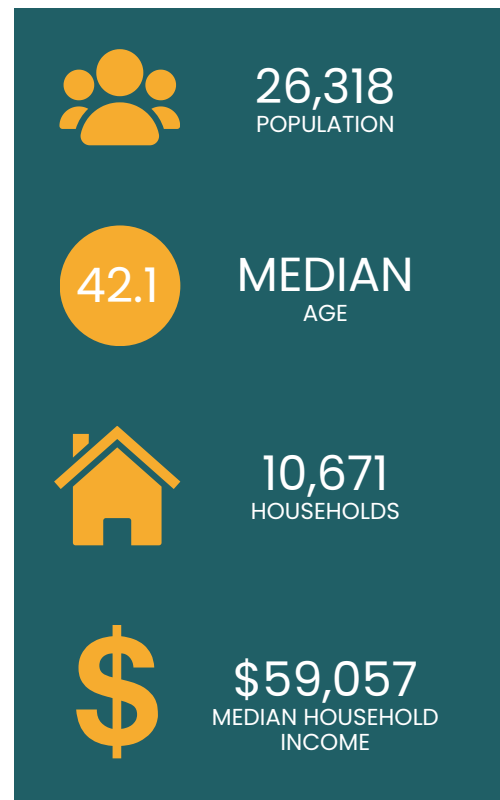


Table 2

Population Projections, 2025–2050				
	2025	2030	2040	2050
Total Population	26,533	26,257	25,071	23,538
Preschool (0 to 4)	5.5%	5.5%	5.4%	5.3%
School Age (5 to 17)	18.8%	18.6%	17.6%	17.5%
College Age (18 to 24)	5.5%	4.9%	5.3%	4.8%
Young Adult (25 to 44)	24.6%	24.5%	23.6%	23%
Older Adult (45 to 64)	25.3%	24.2%	25.1%	26.1%
Seniors (65 and older)	20.3%	22.3%	23.1%	23.4%

Source: StatsIndiana (2024)



ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

Economically, 2024 Esri data shows that Clay County boasts a **median household income of \$70,849**, which is below Indiana's median household income of \$66,768. The per capita income in the county is \$44,425. Despite these figures, 7.4% of families live below the poverty level, reflecting ongoing economic challenges. According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) Living Wage Calculator, the living wage for a family with two working adults and one child is \$18.62 per hour, with a required annual income of \$68,412 after taxes for full-time work (2,080 hours per year). Both figures exceed the current average income levels in Clay County, Indiana.

The Economic Development Profile for Clay County, Indiana (Figures 2 and 3), highlights the county's workforce composition and commuting patterns. Manufacturing leads the labor force at 24%, followed by health care (16.3%) and educational services (9.3%).

Employment is split between white-collar (46%), blue-collar (36%), and service occupations (18%). Of the 9,276 employees working across 798 businesses, the majority (83%) drive alone to work, while a small fraction carpool (10.8%), walk (0.9%), or use public transportation (0.2%). Commute times are predominantly in the 30-34 minute range (15.7%), with shorter commutes of 10-14 minutes (11.1%) and longer ones of 45-59 minutes (9.7%) also notable.

Figure 2

Top Industries in Clay County:

1. **Manufacturing - 24%**
2. **Health Care - 16.3%**
3. **Educational Services - 9.3%**
4. **Retail Trade - 8.7%**
5. **Construction - 7.0%**

Source: This infographic contains data provided by Esri (2024), Esri-Data Axle (2024, ACS (2018-2022), Esri-U.S. BLS (2024, AGS (2024)

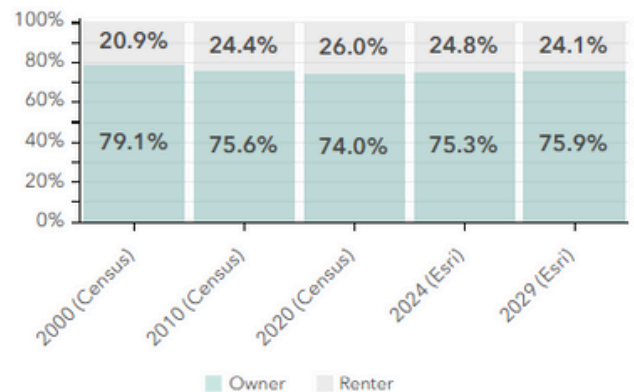
HOUSING

Real estate values in Clay County indicate a **median home price of \$155,500, with specific median prices varying by the number of bedrooms, ranging from \$98.5K for a one-bedroom to \$251.4K for homes with five or more bedrooms.** This indicates that housing in Clay County is far more affordable than other Indiana communities as the average home price in Indiana is \$244,778, almost the price of Clay County's larger 5+ bedroom homes.

Table 3 reveals a consistent trend in housing occupancy and home values. Owner-occupied units dominate the housing landscape, maintaining a steady rate of approximately 75% from 2010 through 2029, while renter-occupied units remain around 24-26%. Median home values in Clay County are significantly lower than Indiana's statewide average but are projected to rise steadily. In 2022, the median home value was \$130,000 compared to Indiana's \$183,600, and by 2029, it is expected to increase to \$212,230, still below Indiana's projected \$279,545 (Table 4). This highlights Clay County's affordability relative to the broader state.

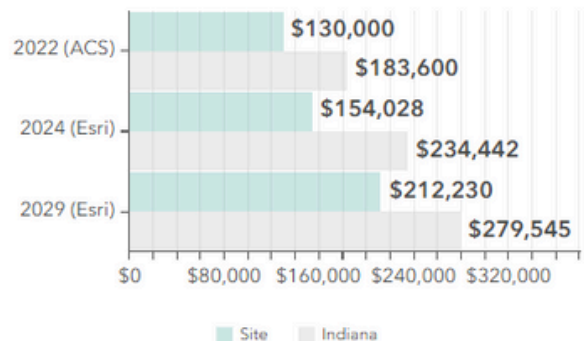
Housing units in Clay County have seen modest growth, with a compound annual growth rate of 0.24% from 2000 to 2020. Total housing units increased from 11,703 in 2000 to 11,758 by 2029, indicating slow but steady growth in the county's housing capacity.

Table 3
Owner vs Renter Occupied Units



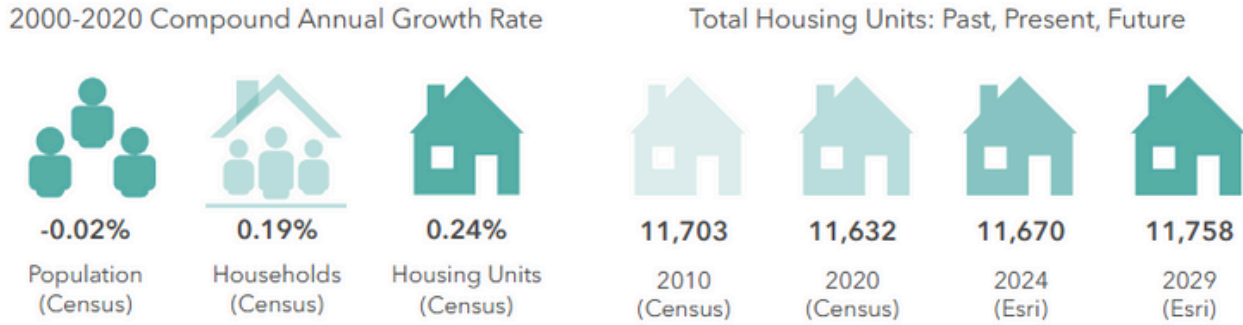
Source: This infographic contains data provided by Esri (2024), Esri-Data Axle (2024, ACS (2018-2022), Esri-U.S. BLS (2024, AGS (2024)

Table 4
Median Home Value



Source: This infographic contains data provided by Esri (2024), Esri-Data Axle (2024, ACS (2018-2022), Esri-U.S. BLS (2024, AGS (2024)

Figure 3




Source: This infographic contains data provided by Esri (2024), Esri-Data Axle (2024, ACS (2018-2022), Esri-U.S. BLS (2024, AGS (2024)




HOUSING INITIATIVE

Homes for the Future

In Clay County, one promising example of housing innovation is the “Homes for the Future” program, which has already seen success with local builders participating. This initiative offers a pathway forward for future housing options within the county by leveraging collaborative partnerships. By prioritizing unique local opportunities and working alongside Thrive West Central, we can help connect builders with resources and incentives that support sustainable development. Educating local and regional builders about such programs is crucial to building a strong, connected housing network that not only addresses the county’s current needs but also lays the foundation for future growth. Highlighting this ongoing collaboration demonstrates the importance of regional connectivity and the potential for expanded housing solutions that benefit both Clay County and the surrounding area.

- 
The Emmert Group: This Clay County project will produce 13 homes with 2 to 3 bedrooms and an attached garage in The Reserve Subdivision. This subdivision is identified as a “patio home community,” and features monthly maintenance fees to cover lawn care and snow removal. It caters to those who are downsizing or the

younger generation who don’t want the hassles that come with exterior maintenance. This project was awarded \$245,000 and will develop age-friendly homes selling at approximately \$260,000. This is a 3.38-million-dollar investment in Clay County.

- 
A & J Developers: The Clay Court development, located in Staunton (Clay County) will offer ten spacious half-acre homesites with local town utilities in this quiet, semi-rural setting. These new homes feature 1,300 to 1,500 square feet open concepts, total electric, and will include three bedrooms, two bathrooms, and an attached two-car garage. Homes are priced in the \$225,000 to \$275,000 range. The award of \$197,000 will be invested in this \$2,500,000 development.

This initiative offers a pathway forward for future housing options within the county by leveraging collaborative partnerships.



HEALTH RANKINGS

In 2023, health rankings placed Clay County **55th out of 92 counties in Indiana**, showing improvement from 60th in 2022, 56th in 2021, and 68th in 2020. Key health metrics reveal that 15% of the population reports poor or fair health, with an average of 3.5 poor physical health days and 4.7 poor mental health days within a 30-day period. The county's life expectancy, at 75.6 years, is slightly below the state average of 76.5 years.

Clay County faces significant challenges in health care access, with high patient-to-provider ratios: 2,390:1 for primary care physicians, 4,400:1 for dentists, and 2,200:1 for mental health providers. These ratios are notably higher than Indiana's state averages, particularly for mental health providers, where the state average is 530:1.



Primary Care Physicians
2,390:1



Dental Care
4,400:1



Mental Health Providers
2,200:1



EDUCATION

Clay County, Indiana's school system is consolidated as Clay Community Schools, including two high schools, two middle schools, and seven elementary schools.

● HIGH SCHOOLS

Northview High School
Clay City High School

● MIDDLE SCHOOLS

North Clay Middle School
Clay City Junior High

● ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

East Side Elementary
Forest Park Elementary
Jackson Township Elementary
Meridian Elementary
Staunton Elementary
Van Buren Elementary
Clay City Elementary

● PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Cornerstone Christian Academy

It is essential that Clay County's school district and community work together to maintain high-quality education and services while adapting to the changing needs of a growing student population. Clay County may capitalize on the transfer of students from surrounding counties to their schools in a few ways, particularly by leveraging the influx of students for both financial and academic growth. Here are several ways in which Clay County might benefit:

➤➤➤ **Increased Funding** - In Indiana, public school funding is often based on student enrollment numbers. As students from the surrounding counties transfer to Clay County schools, the

district may receive more funding from the state. This is due to the state's funding formula, which allocates money based on Average Daily Membership (ADM)—the number of students attending a school. More students in Clay County could result in more state funding, which can be reinvested into educational programs, infrastructure, and staff.

➤➤➤ **Diversification of Student Body** - With students transferring from neighboring counties, Clay County schools benefit from a more diverse student population. This can bring various perspectives and learning styles, fostering a richer educational experience. It can also promote a sense of community through cross-county collaboration, particularly in extracurricular activities like sports, music, and clubs.

➤➤➤ **Expanded Resources and Programs** - The influx of students can provide an opportunity for Clay County schools to expand their educational resources and programs. For example, the district could introduce new classes, clubs, or after-school programs if there's a significant growth in enrollment. More students might also justify hiring additional staff, such as teachers, counselors, and support personnel, to better meet the needs of a growing student body.

➤➤➤ **Boost to Local Economy** - More students transferring to Clay County schools will also have an economic impact on the local community. Families who move to the area spend money on housing, food, transportation, and other local services, which can boost the local economy. This can also lead to an increase in local property tax revenue, which, in turn, supports schools and other public services.



CHILD CARE

In Clay County, there are ten licensed child care providers with a total capacity to serve 455 children. However, with approximately 1,338 children under the age of six who may need care, the county's current child care system can only accommodate 34% of the demand. Additionally, only about 20% of these providers are considered high-quality, and just 16.7% of the available child care slots meet high-quality standards. Families in Clay County face an average weekly cost of \$127.47 for full-time child care, which amounts to 7.5% of the county's median household income.

In late 2024, Indiana State University, in collaboration with Ivy Tech Community College - Terre Haute, announced the completion of the **Grow Up IN West Central Indiana regional child care strategic plan**. Under the umbrella of the West Central Indiana Partnership, the strategic plan aims to enhance early childhood education and expand access to quality child care across the West Central Indiana Region.

This initiative represents a powerful example of collaboration among businesses, government entities, and community stakeholders to directly tackle the child care challenges faced in the region.

➤➤➤ **Capacity and Demand** - Clay County, like many areas in West Central Indiana, faces a significant gap between the demand for child care services and the available capacity. There are 1,338 children in Clay County under the age of 6 who need care, while the total licensed capacity in the county is just 406 spots. This indicates a shortfall in available child care spaces, which poses challenges for meeting the needs of local families.

➤➤➤ **High-Quality Child Care** - Regarding the quality of child care services, Clay County has 30% of its child care programs meeting high-quality standards, and 36.2% of its capacity is provided by high-quality providers. While this is a notable portion, it also highlights that a substantial portion of care providers in the county may not meet the higher standards expected by families.

➤➤➤ **Affordability** - The average weekly cost of child care in Clay County is \$126.02, which translates to an annual cost that represents 7.4% of a typical family's income. While this is slightly more affordable than other regions, it is still above the recommended threshold of 7% of household income for child care, indicating that affordability remains a significant challenge for many families.

➤➤➤ **Early Learning Access** - In the Early Learning Access Index, Clay County's overall early learning access score is lower than desired, with the capacity index rated at 47.21 and the quality index at 37.58. The county's affordability index is relatively higher at 79.82, reflecting a degree of affordability in comparison to other areas. However, the overall quality and availability of early childhood care still require attention and improvement.

By supporting the implementation of the regional child care strategic plan, Clay County can better equip its workforce for future growth and resilience. Ensuring access to quality child care infrastructure will allow local businesses to attract and retain employees, especially those with young children. As businesses consider expansion or relocation to the area, the availability of dependable child care options will increasingly be a critical factor in their decision-making process.

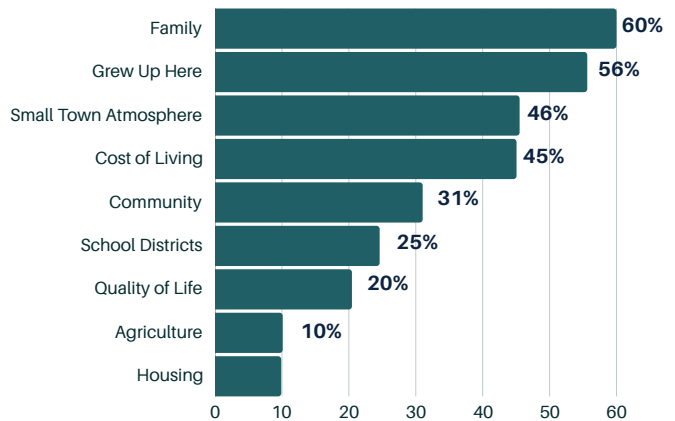
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

To understand the community's needs and desires, an intensive public engagement process was conducted in partnership with planning consultants. The process began with a dynamic, county-wide survey that was dispersed via newspaper, social media, e-mail communications to residents, local businesses, and stakeholders. **The survey received 545 total responses** (95% confidence level), revealing key insights about the community's demographics, satisfaction levels, and priorities. In addition to the survey, four public engagement sessions were held in Brazil, Clay City, and Center Point to gather qualitative data from community members.

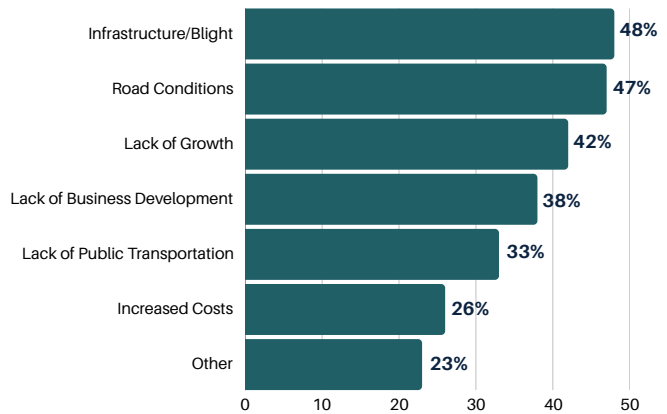


Over 50% of Clay County Residents have lived in Clay County for over 20 years.

Why do you choose to live and/or work in Clay County? (%)



What is your biggest concern about Clay County (%)



How satisfied are you with the following categories?

Healthcare



31.94% Satisfied
25.69% Neutral
31.48% Dissatisfied

Activities for Families



21.31% Satisfied
34.66% Neutral
33.36% Dissatisfied

Activities for Youth



20.99% Satisfied
32.31% Neutral
33.25% Dissatisfied

Internet Connectivity



33.72% Satisfied
27.67% Dissatisfied
14.65% Very Dissatisfied

Road Maintenance



22.74% Satisfied
36.89% Dissatisfied
22.27% Very Dissatisfied

PUBLIC FEEDBACK



SURVEY RESPONSES

545



PUBLIC SESSIONS

5



ATTENDEES

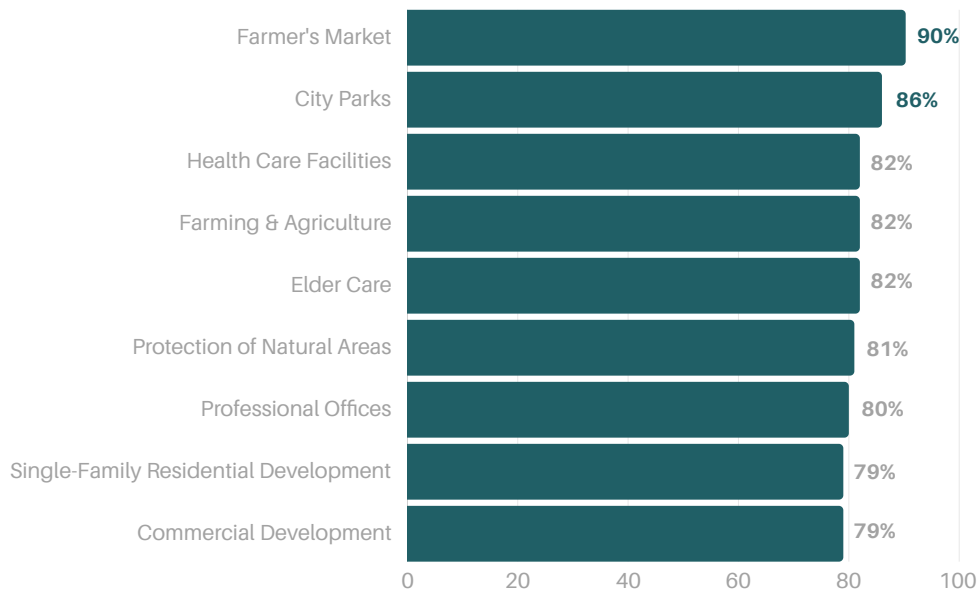
66



TARGET AUDIENCE

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Participants encourage the following opportunities in Clay County





KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

The demographic and community insights for Clay County highlight key characteristics, concerns, and priorities among residents. Most respondents (72%) live in the 47834 zip code, with 24% having lived in the county for over 50 years. Employment data shows that 58% work within Clay County, while others commute to nearby counties like Vigo and Putnam. Family connections (60%), growing up in the area (56%), and the small-town atmosphere (46%) are the main reasons residents choose to live in Clay County.

While 46% of respondents are satisfied and 26% very satisfied with living in the county, areas like road maintenance and housing received lower satisfaction ratings. Community services such as fire protection (70%) and police protection (64%) are well-regarded, but there is less satisfaction with child care, public transportation, and code compliance. Residents strongly support single-family residential development (79%), affordable housing (77%), and commercial development (78%), along with public amenities like parks and hiking/bike paths. Top concerns include infrastructure and blight (48%), road conditions (47%), and lack of growth (42%), alongside issues with public transportation, job opportunities, and housing.

Priorities for improvement focus on better accessibility in housing, infrastructure, health care, and mental health resources, as well as fostering economic and business development and creating more career opportunities.



COMMUNITY SWOT ANALYSIS

This Community SWOT Analysis provides a comprehensive look at the core strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats impacting the county. By understanding these critical areas, the county can capitalize on its successes, address existing gaps, and plan for a resilient future that benefits all residents. This analysis provides valuable insights to guide informed decision-making, ensuring alignment with the community's values and long-term goals. It serves as a foundational tool for strategic planning, supporting the intentional, inclusive, and sustainable growth of the community.

STRENGTHS

- **Community Spirit and Collaboration**
- **Schools and Education**
- **Parks and Recreation**
- **Safety**

WEAKNESSES

- **Infrastructure and Transportation**
- **Physical and Mental Health**
- **Housing**
- **Economic Development**

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Economic and Business Growth**
- **Youth Engagement and Retention**
- **Park and Recreation Expansion**
- **Community Engagement and Culture**

THREATS

- **Resistance to Change**
- **Economic Stagnation**
- **Healthcare Challenges**
- **Infrastructure Decay**

COMMUNITY PLAN PILLARS



COMMUNITY PILLARS AND STRATEGIES

To create a thriving community, it is essential to identify key pillars that reflect our shared values, needs, and aspirations. These priorities serve as foundational elements that guide our collective efforts and strategic initiatives. This section outlines the core pillars of the community plan, each representing critical areas of focus that will drive our vision forward.

For each strategic pillar, specific strategies and actionable steps have been outlined to promote growth, inclusivity, and resilience within the community. By aligning efforts with these pillars, the aim is to create a cohesive and sustainable framework that empowers residents, improves quality of life, and addresses both present challenges and future opportunities. Through collaboration and engagement, all stakeholders and community members were invited to contribute to the process, ensuring that the strategies reflect diverse perspectives and are responsive to the evolving needs of the community.

Based on input from the community, Clay County identified the following priority areas for this initial plan:



INFRASTRUCTURE



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND RECREATION



COMMUNITY IDENTITY



COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND ENGAGEMENT

»»» INTRODUCTION

The **Community Identity and Engagement** pillar focuses on cultivating a strong sense of belonging and pride among residents while actively involving them in the decision-making processes that shape the community. This pillar emphasizes efforts to define the community's unique identity, promote local culture, and encourage civic engagement—critical components in building a cohesive, vibrant, and inclusive environment. By engaging residents in meaningful ways, this pillar strengthens social connections and supports long-term community development.

This is an essential pillar as it creates or enhances:

Sense of Belonging: A strong community identity fosters pride and connection among residents, encouraging a collective responsibility for the community's well-being.

Civic Engagement: Actively engaging residents in planning and decision-making processes empowers them, leading to more responsive governance and increased public trust.

Cultural Promotion: Celebrating local culture and history enhances our community's uniqueness, attracting visitors and potential residents while preserving our heritage.

Collaboration: Building partnerships among community organizations, businesses, and residents strengthens our collective efforts, enhancing the impact of initiatives and resources.

Outlined in this pillar are targeted strategies and actions aimed at enhancing community identity and engagement, ensuring that every resident feels valued and connected to our shared vision for the future.

»»» STRATEGIES

Strategy 1: Build a Distinct Community Brand for Clay County

- **Action 1.1:** Engage the local business community and residents to gain input regarding Clay County's brand development.
- **Action 1.2:** Design a logo and develop a comprehensive brand guide to tell the county's unique story and position it as a destination for economic growth and innovation.



- **Action 1.3:** Launch a user-friendly county website to serve as a central information hub for residents and visitors on county projects, events, opportunities and services.
- **Action 1.4:** Create and manage social media channels (e.g., Facebook and Instagram) to actively promote the community brand and share updates.

Strategy 2: Promote Local Events and Festivals

- **Action 2.1:** Establish a centralized, easy-to-navigate community calendar to highlight upcoming events and festivals, ensuring wide visibility.
- **Action 2.2:** Collaborate with local, regional and state tourism bureaus to increase the community's visibility and expand awareness of local events, programs and festivals.
- **Action 2.3:** Organize local events that highlight the local arts and cultural aspects of the community (e.g. arts and crafts fairs, performances, etc.), providing tourists with authentic experiences.

Strategy 3: Implement a Countywide Marketing and Communication Strategy

- **Action 3.1:** Develop a targeted marketing campaign to increase awareness and support for the county's mission and vision.
- **Action 3.2:** Design a cohesive communication plan that reaches key audiences effectively through various channels.

Strategy 4: Enhance County Gateways to Create a Positive, First Impression

- **Action 4.1:** Design and install gateway features including signage, landscaping, lighting, and streetscaping elements at key points of entry to the County, such as I-70, SR 59, US 40, SR 46, and SR 42.

- **Action 4.2:** Celebrate and incorporate local heritage in the design of signage to create a sense of place and pride for residents and visitors.
- **Action 4.3:** Update existing gateway features /signage to be consistent with new gateway design standards.
- **Action 4.4** Install wayfinding signage consistent with appearance of gateway features to direct visitors to key destinations throughout the community

Strategy 5: Improve Streetscape and Commercial Districts

- **Action 5.1:** Pinpoint key corridors and commercial areas within the county that would benefit from streetscape improvements.
- **Action 5.2:** Develop and adopt downtown design guidelines to ensure vibrant, attractive spaces in commercial districts.
- **Action 5.3:** Support and grow Main Street programs to foster thriving local business districts.
- **Action 5.4:** Install streetscape enhancements such as lighting, landscaping, and signage to enhance the overall aesthetic and functionality of these areas.

Strategy 6: Establish a Welcome Center for Residents and Visitors

- **Action 6.1:** Develop both an in-person Welcome Center and an online version (via the county website) where residents and visitors can access valuable information about Clay County, its events, attractions, and services.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

»»» INTRODUCTION

Economic development serves as a cornerstone of the community's strategic plan, underscoring a commitment to nurturing a robust and sustainable economy that benefits all residents. This pillar includes various initiatives aimed at driving growth, creating job opportunities, and improving the overall quality of life within the community.

Recognizing the essential role a strong economy plays in realizing the community's vision, economic development is identified as crucial for several key reasons:

Job Creation: A strong economy generates employment opportunities, helping residents achieve financial stability and contributing to community prosperity.

Business Growth: Supporting local businesses and attracting new enterprises fosters innovation and competitiveness, making our community an attractive place for investment.

Quality of Life: Economic vitality enhances public services, infrastructure, and recreational opportunities, enriching the lives of our residents.

Resilience: A diverse economy is more resilient to market fluctuations, ensuring long-term sustainability and adaptability in the face of change.

Outlined in this section are targeted strategies and actions aimed at fostering job creation, supporting local businesses, enhancing economic resilience, and improving the overall quality of life throughout the community.

»»» STRATEGIES

Strategy 1: Identify and Secure Dedicated Funding Sources for the County

- **Action 1.1:** Establish a County Innkeepers Tax to generate revenue from local lodging, supporting county-wide projects and services.
- **Action 1.2:** Form an Economic Development Corporation (EDC) to drive growth in targeted sectors, assist businesses and communities, and lead business attraction, expansion, and retention efforts.



- **Action 1.3:** Create an Economic Development Strategic Plan that outlines how to effectively utilize Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Economic Development Tax Credits, Innkeepers Tax, and business expansion incentives, while leveraging the county's geographic advantages in the region.
- **Action 1.4:** Establish a Food and Beverage Tax, allocating the generated funds to essential projects such as road infrastructure improvements, public amenities, and enhancing quality of life.

Strategy 2: Strengthen Capacity Building by Establishing a Full-Time Chamber of Commerce

- **Action 2.1:** Secure funding and resources to create a full-time Chamber of Commerce to support local businesses, provide networking opportunities, and attract new enterprises.
- **Action 2.2:** Develop initiatives through the Chamber to promote business retention, expansion, and leadership within the county.

Strategy 3: Expand Workforce Development Opportunities

- **Action 3.1:** Collaborate with WorkOne to offer workforce development programs that connect residents with job training, career counseling, and employment opportunities
- **Action 3.2:** Partner with Clay Community Schools and other regional school corporations to expand vocational and trade programs, creating a county-wide career center that gives students access to additional career pathways and hands-on experience.

Strategy 4: Support Regional Childcare Initiatives through the 'Grow Up in West Central Indiana' Plan

- **Action 4.1:** Work with regional partners to advocate for and implement the 'Grow Up in West Central Indiana' Regional Childcare Strategic Plan, ensuring access to affordable childcare that supports working families and local employers.
- **Action 4.2:** Explore funding opportunities to build or expand childcare facilities in the county.

Strategy 5: Promote the Development and Growth around the I-70 and SR-59 Interchange

- **Action 5.1:** Inventory and market available commercial properties based on their unique characteristics and appeal to target industries.
- **Action 5.2:** Establish incentives, such as tax abatements, industrial revenue bonds, impact fees or Payment in Lieu of a Tax (PILOT) to spur development of the area surrounding the interchange.
- **Action 5.3:** Design a gateway entrance at the I-70 corridor to welcome visitors and businesses, enhancing the county's visibility and appeal.
- **Action 5.4:** Implement wayfinding signage and beautification efforts along the I-70 gateway, creating an inviting first impression for those entering the county.
- **Action 5.5:** Consider the development and implementation of land use planning and zoning controls to protect residential and agricultural areas from potentially negative impacts of incompatible uses.



INCENTIVES

The County and local communities can utilize a range of incentive programs to support the achievement of its community goals. These programs can attract new developments, enhance existing ones, and encourage local business owners to remain in the area, thus fostering a thriving local economy. By offering targeted incentives, the community can create a conducive environment for business growth, increase investment, and ensure long-term economic prosperity. While this list of possible incentive programs is not exhaustive, it is representative of the range of options that are available to help the community achieve its objectives.

By offering targeted incentives, the community can create a conducive environment for business growth, increase investment, and ensure long-term economic prosperity.



Façade Improvement Grants

Façade improvement grant programs are a financial initiative offered by municipalities or local development organizations to help property owners or businesses enhance the exterior appearance of their buildings. The primary goal of these programs is to revitalize downtown areas by providing funding or matching grants for projects that improve the visual appeal, functionality, and overall character of storefronts and building façades.

These grants typically cover a variety of improvements, such as repairing or restoring architectural features, upgrading signage, adding landscaping, repainting, or enhancing lighting. By focusing on the aesthetic aspects of a community's buildings, the program aims to create an inviting atmosphere that attracts customers, tourists, and new businesses. Additionally, improving the façades of buildings enhances the overall appeal of a downtown area, which can help foster pride among residents and encourage local economic growth.

Ultimately, façade improvement programs are not only a tool for beautification but also a catalyst for broader economic revitalization, benefiting both local businesses and the community as a whole.

Impact Fees

Impact fees are imposed on new development to offset the capital costs of maintaining, constructing, or expanding infrastructure, such as roads, parks, and sewers, that are necessary to support new growth. These fees provide additional funding for capital improvements without imposing new taxes on the county's existing residents. This approach is particularly beneficial in growing communities, where infrastructure demand increases as development progresses.

Under Indiana State Law, communities can enforce impact fees on developers during the development approval process by adopting an Impact Fee Ordinance. Such an ordinance must include a schedule specifying the fees that may be imposed for each type of infrastructure, as well as a formula explaining how these fees are determined. The county should consider the

implementation of an impact fee ordinance, allocating revenues towards parks and recreation amenities and public infrastructure, thereby placing the burden of these improvements on new development.

made to offset that negative impact by allowing the community to be compensated for at least a portion of the revenue that would otherwise be collected in the form of property tax.

Tax Abatement

Tax abatement is a tool used by municipalities to attract private investment and job creation by exempting taxes on all or a portion of the increased assessed value resulting from new investment. Real property, personal property, or vacant buildings, located outside of a TIF district, can be eligible for tax deductions or abatements for a period of 1 to 10 years. Unlike TIF, tax abatement is granted on a sliding scale so at least some level of new assessed value is added to the tax role as soon as the second year of the abatement period. Tax abatement is based on an applicant's ability to achieve development goals such as jobs and new investment. Tax abatement is one of the most commonly used local financial incentives in Indiana.

Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)

Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) is a tool similar to tax abatements. The community can use PILOTs to reduce the property tax burden of a desired business for a predetermined period. In this instance, a local taxing body and a property owner will agree to the annual payment of a set fee in place of the property taxes. Payments are typically made in the form of a fixed sum, but they may also be paid as a percentage of the income generated by a property. In addition, PILOT can also be a means of reducing the fiscal impact on the community, of a nonprofit, institutional use or other non-taxpaying entity locating to a key site. While such uses can be desirable as activity generators, they can also negatively impact municipal services. Provisions can be



INFRASTRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION

Infrastructure serves as a critical pillar in the community's strategic plan, acting as the foundation that supports economic growth, connectivity, and an improved quality of life. This pillar includes essential systems and services, such as transportation, utilities, public facilities, and digital connectivity. All of these elements are vital in fostering a thriving, resilient community. Through strategic investment and improvement of infrastructure, the community can ensure sustainable development and enhance the well-being of its residents.

This pillar plays a pivotal role in improving overall:

Connectivity: Well-developed infrastructure enhances mobility and access, allowing residents to efficiently reach jobs, services, and recreational opportunities.

Economic Vitality: Reliable infrastructure attracts businesses and investors, facilitating commerce and boosting local economies.

Public Health and Safety: Adequate infrastructure ensures access to clean water, waste management, and emergency services, which are fundamental to community well-being.

Sustainability: Investing in modern, resilient infrastructure promotes environmental sustainability and supports long-term community goals.

Outlined in this pillar are targeted strategies and actions aimed at enhancing the community's infrastructure, ensuring that it meets the current and future needs of Clay County while promoting equitable access for all residents.

STRATEGIES

FOCUS: TRANSPORTATION

Strategy 1: Accommodate Multiple Modes of Transportation

- **Action 1.1:** Expand and improve non-motorized transportation options by adding more bike lanes, pedestrian paths, and safe crossings throughout the county.



- **Action 1.2:** Partner with regional transportation systems and neighboring counties to improve public transit options, increasing connectivity for residents who rely on bus, rail, or other services.
- **Action 1.3:** Create an active transportation plan to identify desired routes for greenways, trails, and pedestrian ways throughout the county.
- **Action 1.4:** Pursue grants, such as Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), and Safe Streets for All (SS4A), to fund transportation system improvements and enhance pedestrian safety.
- **Action 1.5:** Launch a public awareness campaign to promote the use of alternative transportation modes (e.g., biking, walking, carpooling) and highlight the environmental and health benefits.

Strategy 2: Improve Sidewalks through County Grant Program

- **Action 2.1:** Develop and implement a county grant program that offers financial assistance to neighborhoods for upgrading and maintaining sidewalks.
- **Action 2.2:** Prioritize sidewalk improvements in areas with high foot traffic, such as schools, parks, and downtown business districts.
- **Action 2.3:** Conduct a county-wide assessment to identify areas where sidewalks are non-existent, non-compliant, or in disrepair, and allocate grant funds accordingly.
- **Action 2.4:** Partner with community groups and local businesses to co-fund sidewalk improvement projects, ensuring long-term sustainability and safety.

FOCUS: HOUSING

Strategy 1: Enhance the Character of Existing Residential Areas

- **Action 1.1:** Conduct a comprehensive housing inventory to assess current housing stock, vacancy rates, and property conditions across the county.
- **Action 1.2:** Identify noncompliant or dilapidated structures, targeting them for rehabilitation, repurposing, or demolition where necessary.
- **Action 1.3:** Work with local government and enforcement agencies to develop incentives or penalties for property owners to bring noncompliant structures up to code, specifically around the commercial properties,
- **Action 1.4:** Consider creating a Residential Improvement Program to help improve housing structures.
- **Action 1.5:** Review existing property maintenance codes within the City of Brazil and procedures to ensure consistent and active code enforcement.

Strategy 2: Continue Partnership with Thrive West Central to Continue the 'Homes for the Future' Initiative in Clay County

- **Action 2.1:** Expand the partnership with Thrive West Central to secure additional funding for the Homes for the Future Initiative, focusing on affordable housing development.
- **Action 2.2:** Identify underutilized or vacant lots where new homes can be built through the initiative, prioritizing areas with the greatest need for housing.
- **Action 2.3:** Expand and Support a homeownership assistance program in partnership with Thrive west Central to help low- and middle-income families purchase newly developed homes.
 - Club 720
 - UWWV Home Down Payment Assistance Program



- **Action 2.4:** Promote the Homes for the Future Initiative through community outreach, engaging residents and developed in creating sustainable housing solutions.

Strategy 3: Promote Mixed-Use Housing Development for ALL Income Levels

- **Action 3.1:** Incentivize developers to include affordable housing units within new developments through tax breaks, grants, or expedited permitting processes.
- **Action 3.2:** Partner with local employers to develop workforce housing initiatives, ensuring that residents of all income levels have access to quality, affordable homes.
- **Action 3.3:** Support public-private partnerships to support mixed-income housing developments, ensuring long-term affordability and diversity in residential options.
 - UWWV Neighbors Helping Neighbors program

FOCUS: UTILITIES

Strategy 1: Improve Access to Water and Sewer Services

- **Action 1.1:** Collaborate with neighboring counties and regional utility providers to expand water and sewer services, particularly in underserved areas.
- **Action 1.2:** Develop a regional water and sewer management plan to relieve the burden on local districts, ensuring that all residents have access to safe and reliable utilities.
- **Action 1.3:** Secure state and federal grants to fund infrastructure projects aimed at upgrading aging water and sewer systems and expanding service coverage.

- **Action 1.4:** Conduct a public outreach campaign to educate residents about the benefits of connecting to public water and sewer services, including cost savings, health benefits, and environmental protection.

Strategy 2: Expand Broadband Access to Unserved and Underserved Areas

- **Action 2.1:** Work with the Indiana Broadband Office to leverage the “Steps to Success” program, aligning local efforts with state and federal initiatives to expand broadband access.
- **Action 2.2:** Develop a county-wide broadband access plan that targets unserved and underserved areas, identifying priority zones for immediate expansion.
- **Action 2.3:** Partner with broadband service providers to accelerate the deployment of high-speed internet infrastructure, ensuring equitable access for all residents.
- **Action 2.4:** Launch digital literacy programs to help residents and businesses take full advantage of expanded broadband services, fostering economic growth and improved access to online resources.



HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND RECREATION

INTRODUCTION

The **Health, Wellness, and Recreation** pillar of the community's strategic plan highlights the importance of nurturing a healthy and active population. This pillar takes a holistic approach, addressing physical health, mental well-being, and recreational opportunities. It acknowledges that overall wellness is essential to the quality of life for all residents, and by investing in these areas, the community can foster an environment that supports both individual and collective well-being. These efforts are designed to ensure that residents have access to resources and activities that promote a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

This pillar is recognized as essential for several key reasons:

Community Health: Promoting health and wellness initiatives can lead to reduced healthcare costs, lower rates of chronic disease, and an overall healthier population.

Quality of Life: Access to recreational spaces and activities enhances life satisfaction, providing residents with opportunities for social interaction, relaxation, and personal growth.

Mental Well-being: Prioritizing mental health through community programs and resources fosters resilience, improves productivity, and enhances overall happiness.

Social Cohesion: Recreation and wellness activities encourage community engagement and strengthen social ties, building a sense of belonging among residents.

Outlined in this section are targeted strategies and actions aimed at enhancing health, wellness, and recreational opportunities in our community, ensuring that all residents have access to the resources they need to thrive.

STRATEGIES

FOCUS: HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Strategy 1: Increase Access to Preventive Health Services

- **Action 1.1:** Partner with local healthcare providers to host regular free or low-cost health screenings (e.g., blood pressure, diabetes, cholesterol) at community centers, schools, and public events.



- **Action 1.2:** Collaborate with pharmacies and clinics to offer mobile vaccination units for flu shots, and other immunizations, especially targeting underserved areas.
- **Action 1.3:** Implement a public awareness campaign promoting preventive care services such as annual physicals, dental checkups, and cancer screenings.
- **Action 1.4:** Work with local government to establish transportation assistance for residents who have difficulty accessing healthcare facilities.

Strategy 2: Promote Healthy Eating and Nutrition Education

- **Action 2.1:** Develop partnerships with local farmers' markets to offer vouchers or subsidies for fresh produce to low-income families and seniors.
- **Action 2.2:** Organize community cooking classes that teach residents how to prepare nutritious meals on a budget, including healthy alternatives to common fast foods.
- **Action 2.3:** Launch a public health campaign promoting balanced diets and portion control, with resources available online and in community centers.

Strategy 3: Expand Physical Activity Opportunities

- **Action 3.1:** Invest in new walking and biking trails, playgrounds, and fitness stations in parks to encourage physical activity for residents of all ages.
- **Action 3.2:** Organize free or low-cost fitness classes in parks or community centers, offering programs such as yoga, Zumba, and strength training.
- **Action 3.3:** Implement workplace wellness programs with local employers that include incentives for physical activity (e.g., pedometer challenges, gym membership discounts).

- **Action 3.4:** Create a "Move More" campaign to encourage walking, biking, or using active transportation options around town, with designated "active zones" and walking maps.

Strategy 4: Improve Mental Health Awareness and Resources

- **Action 4.1:** Partner with mental health professionals and organizations to offer free workshops and seminars on stress management, mental well-being, and resilience-building
- **Action 4.2:** Implement mental health training for community leaders, teachers, and first responders to increase early identification and support for individuals in need.
- **Action 4.3:** Create community "wellness hubs" where residents can access mental health services, counseling, support groups, and self-care resources in a welcoming environment.

Strategy 5: Strengthen Public Health Infrastructure

- **Action 5.1:** Collaborate with public health agencies to ensure that local policies promote healthier living, such as smoke-free zones, soda tax incentives, and restrictions on fast-food outlets near schools.
- **Action 5.2:** Increase the number of community health workers and outreach programs to bridge gaps in healthcare access, particularly for vulnerable populations.
- **Action 5.3:** Establish a community health task force to oversee wellness initiatives and provide regular progress reports to ensure goals are met.
- **Action 5.4:** Leverage technology, such as apps and telemedicine, to expand access to health and wellness services, making it easier for residents to access care remotely.



Strategy 6: Support Healthy Aging for Seniors

- **Action 6.1:** Partner with home care providers and **senior living** facilities to promote regular health checkups and wellness programs for elderly residents.
- **Action 6.2:** Create a senior wellness outreach team that provides home visits to check on isolated or homebound seniors, offering resources and companionship.

FOCUS: RECREATION

Strategy 1: Establish a County Park Board to Develop a Comprehensive Park Master Plan

- **Action 1.1:** Utilize the County Park Board composed of community leaders, residents, and recreation experts to guide the strategic direction of the county's park system.
- **Action 1.2:** Develop a comprehensive Park Master Plan to assess current facilities, identify gaps, and plan for future enhancements in recreational amenities and services.
- **Action 1.3:** Identify funding opportunities such as grants (e.g. Land Water Conservation Fund, Safe Routes to School, etc.), public-private partnerships (e.g., park-specific levies) to support the implementation of the Park Master Plan.

Strategy 2: Create a County-Wide trail System and Connect to regional trail Networks

- **Action 2.1:** Plan and map out a network of interconnected trail systems (walking, biking, and multi-use trails) within the county to link key communities, parks, and natural areas.

- **Action 2.2:** Integrate greenways (land trails) and blueways (waterways for kayaking, canoeing, and fishing) into the trail system to provide diverse outdoor recreation.
- **Action 2.3:** Collaborate with neighboring counties to connect the county's trail system to regional and state-wide trails, boosting eco-tourism and outdoor recreation.
- **Action 2.4:** Pursue grant funding from state and federal sources, such as the Indiana Trails Program (ITP), to finance the construction and maintenance of the trails.

Strategy 3: Expand and Enhance Community Gathering Spaces

- **Action 3.1:** Revitalize and enhance the Courthouse Square to serve as a vibrant community gathering place by adding features such as seating areas, green spaces, public art, and performance stages.
- **Action 3.2:** Develop and improve local downtown areas by incorporating pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, outdoor dining spaces, and public plazas to encourage community events and engagement.
 - Brazil Band Shell
 - Clay City Park Gazebo
- **Action 3.3:** Introduce public Wi-Fi, enhanced lighting, and safety features to gathering spaces to make them more accessible and attractive for community use.
- **Action 3.4:** Host regular community events, farmers' markets, and festivals in enhanced downtown spaces and the Courthouse Square to activate these areas and foster a stronger sense of community.



Strategy 4: Increase Access to Recreational Programs and Facilities

- **Action 4.1:** Partner with local schools, community organizations, and sports leagues to expand recreational programming for youth, adults, and seniors, including fitness classes team sports, and outdoor education.
- **Action 4.2:** Develop or repurpose underused spaces into multi-functional recreational facilities, such as community centers, playgrounds, and sports fields, to offer a wider variety of activities for all ages.
- **Action 4.3:** Work with local businesses and sponsors to fund recreation programs and facility improvements. Fostering a collaborative approach to enhancing community well-being.
- **Action 4.4:** Ensure accessibility for all residents by incorporating ADA-compliant features in parks, trails, and recreational facilities, making outdoor activities more inclusive.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Clay County Chamber of Commerce will serve as the lead organization driving the implementation of the community plan. Its role will involve acting as a central coordinating body, leveraging its established connections with businesses, residents, and local governments to ensure alignment of efforts and resources. The Chamber will oversee the development and execution of the plan, ensuring accountability through regular updates and progress tracking.



Identifying Community Stakeholders and Partners

A key component of the implementation strategy is identifying and engaging a diverse group of community stakeholders and partners. These stakeholders include local government entities, business leaders, nonprofit organizations, schools, and residents. Establishing a stakeholder advisory group will ensure that the community's diverse needs and perspectives are represented. The Chamber will also collaborate with regional organizations like Thrive West Central to maximize resources and expertise.

Developing Actionable Timelines

The Chamber, in collaboration with stakeholders, will outline specific timelines for each initiative. This includes setting short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals, along with clear benchmarks for measuring progress. Actionable timelines will focus on

priority areas such as infrastructure improvements, housing development, economic and business growth, and public amenities. Regular progress reviews will ensure that initiatives remain on track and adapt to emerging needs.

Encouraging Community Ownership

Community ownership is essential to the success of the plan. The Chamber will implement engagement strategies, including public forums, town halls, and online surveys, to encourage residents to actively participate in shaping and implementing the initiatives. By fostering a sense of shared responsibility, the community will feel invested in the plan's success, which will promote sustainability and resilience.

Communication and Reporting

To maintain transparency and accountability, the Chamber will create a centralized communication platform to share updates, milestones, and successes. Regular progress reports will be distributed to stakeholders and the broader community to build trust and momentum.

This implementation strategy ensures that the Clay County Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with community stakeholders, effectively leads the charge in transforming the community plan into actionable and impactful results.

CONCLUSION

The Clay County Community Plan serves as a bold, comprehensive roadmap for creating a thriving, sustainable, and inclusive future. Rooted in collaboration and guided by community input, the plan addresses the county's challenges while leveraging its unique strengths and opportunities. By prioritizing key areas such as infrastructure, economic development, health and wellness, and community identity, Clay County is positioned to embrace positive growth, improve quality of life, and foster a strong sense of pride and belonging among its residents.

Central to the plan's success is the collective commitment of community stakeholders, led by the Clay County Chamber of Commerce, working in partnership with local governments, businesses, nonprofits, and residents. This shared responsibility not only ensures the effective implementation of strategies but also strengthens the community's resilience and adaptability in the face of change.

The actionable strategies and clear timelines outlined in this living document provide a foundation for measurable progress while remaining flexible to evolving needs. From addressing critical infrastructure and housing needs to fostering economic growth and enhancing public amenities, the plan charts a

path toward a vibrant, welcoming Clay County that values its rich heritage while striving for a prosperous future.

Ultimately, this plan is a testament to the strength and spirit of the Clay County community. By working together, investing in its people, and embracing innovation, Clay County will continue to be a place where families grow, businesses thrive, and residents take pride in calling it home. The journey ahead will require dedication and perseverance, but together, the community can achieve the vision of a brighter, stronger future for all.

By working together, investing in its people, and embracing innovation, Clay County will continue to be a place where families grow, businesses thrive, and residents take pride in calling it home.



APPENDICES



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