

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A. FOUNDATION

Greene County is located in southwestern Indiana. It is bordered by eight Indiana counties, including Daviess, Knox, Sullivan, Clay, Owen, Monroe, Lawrence and Martin. The county is the fourth largest county in Indiana in terms of area, behind only Allen County, LaPorte County and Jasper County. There are seven incorporated communities in Greene County, including Linton, Bloomfield, Jasonville, Worthington, Lyons, Switz City and Newberry. Bloomfield is the county seat of the county. Figure 1 shows the location of Greene County and the county's incorporated communities.

Greene County's population was 32,692 persons in 2007 according to U.S. Census estimates. This is a decrease from the 33,360 persons estimated for 2006 and the 33,157 persons estimated for the year 2000. Linton is the largest of the seven incorporated communities in Greene County and had an estimated population of 5,672 persons in 2007 (5,774 persons in 2000). Bloomfield and Jasonville are the next largest of the seven incorporated communities. Both communities are less than half the population of Linton, with Bloomfield having a 2007 population of 2,486 (2,542 persons in 2000) and Jasonville having a 2007 population of 2,448 (2,490 persons in 2000). Census estimates from 2007 for the other communities include Worthington with 1,452 persons (1,481 persons in 2000), Lyons with 736 persons (748 persons in 2000), Switz City with 304 persons (311 persons in 2000), and Newberry with 202 persons (206 persons in 2000). Figure 2 shows major points of interest in Greene County, including parks and recreational areas, schools, churches and cemeteries. (Schools, churches and recreational facilities are identified later in the document.)

1. PURPOSE

The Greene County Comprehensive Plan directs the future physical development of the community by serving as the key policy guide for public and private decision makers. It addresses the use of land to accommodate future activities, the phasing of infrastructure (roads and utilities) to support development, the provision of community facilities to meet the needs of residents, and the preservation of natural and man-made amenities to protect the heritage of the community. Ultimately, the comprehensive plan reflects the values of the community in balancing the competition for land to sustain the economic vitality and the quality of life of the community. It is the collective vision for the future of Greene County.

According to the Indiana Code (IC 36-7-4-501), the purpose of the comprehensive plan is to provide for "the promotion of public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, or the general welfare and for the sake of efficiency and economy in the process of development." Finally, it is required for the adoption of a variety of land use controls (zoning, subdivision, planned unit development, site plan review and thoroughfare regulations) for achieving the community's future vision, and provides a long-range framework for developing capital improvement programs.

Greene County has never had a comprehensive plan or any type of land use control such as a zoning ordinance or subdivision control ordinance. Further, Greene County has never issued local building permits. Indiana Code Requires that a comprehensive plan be completed before a community can create zoning or subdivision control ordinances. The adoption of this comprehensive plan will allow Greene County to create and adopt, if so desired, zoning and subdivision control ordinances that are consistent with the plan.

2. ORGANIZATION

The comprehensive plan is being prepared by Bernardin, Lochmueller and Associates, Inc. under contract to Greene County through an Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) I-69 Community Planning Program grant. The purpose of the INDOT grant is to assist the community in responding to the economic development and growth opportunities of I-69 while protecting natural resources. On behalf of Greene County government, the Greene County Economic Development Corporation, in consultation with local elected officials, created the

Figure 1: Greene County Location Map

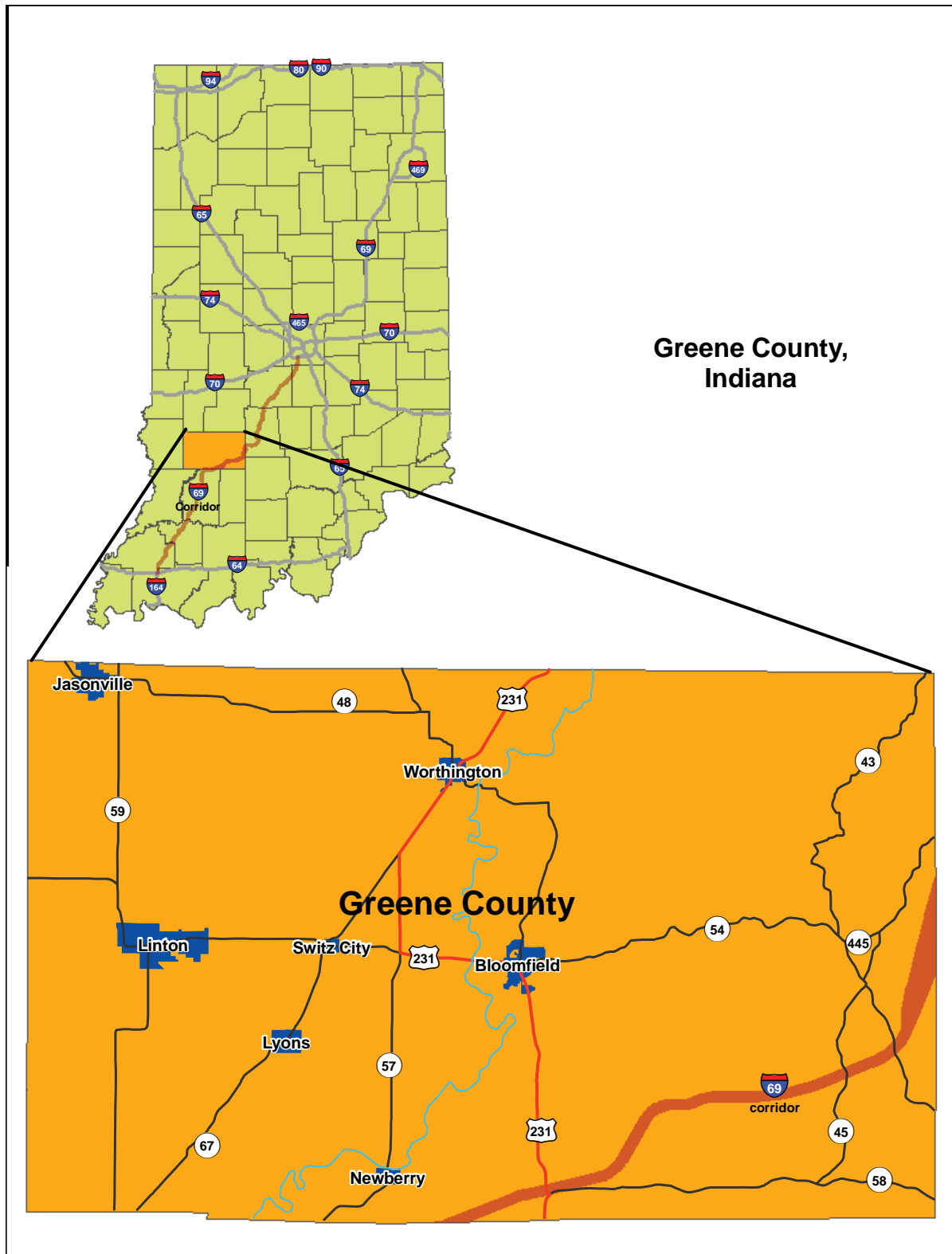
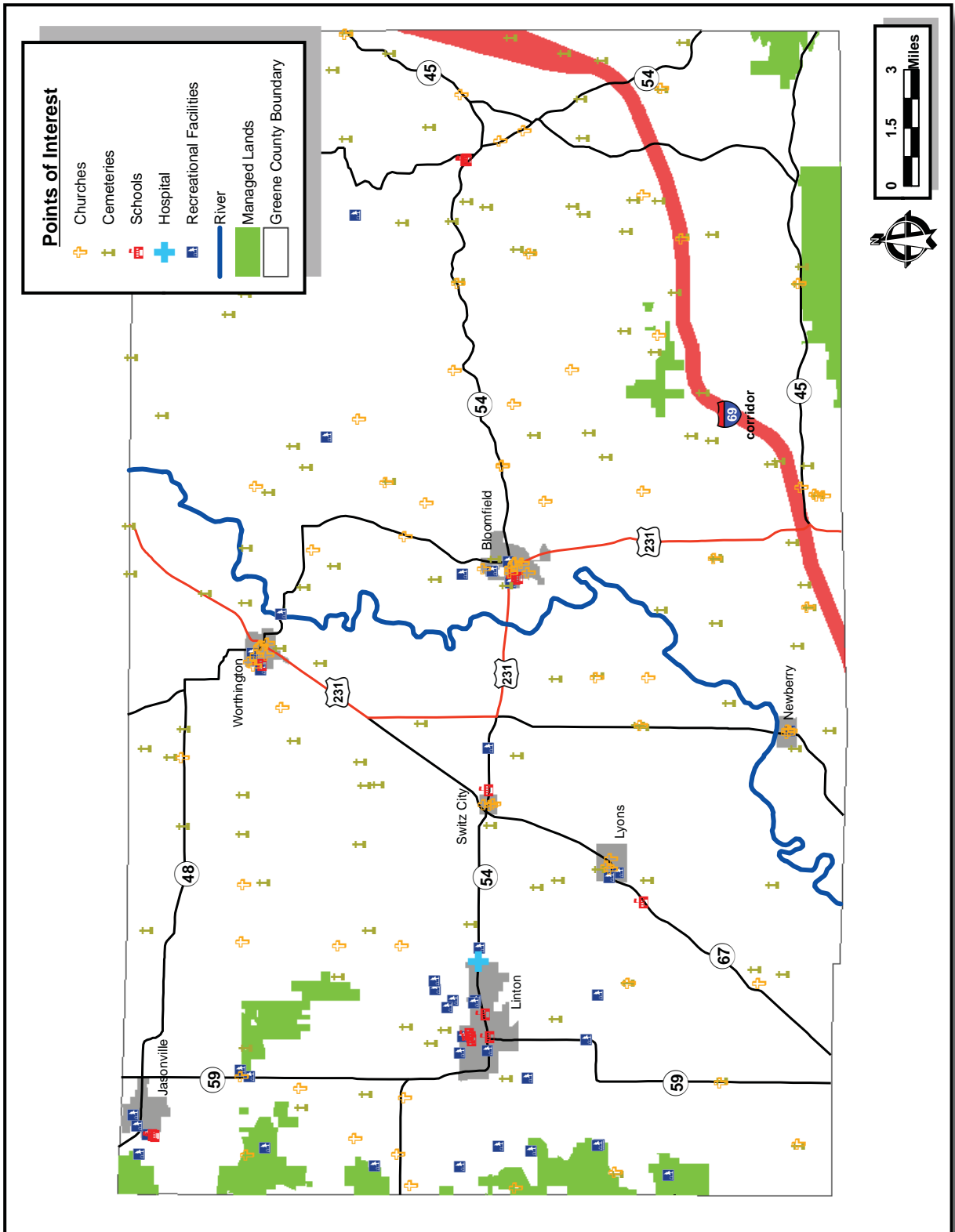


Figure 2: Points of Interest



Greene County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee to guide the consultant in preparation of the plan. It will be reviewed and adopted by the Greene County Advisory Plan Commission (to be created) and the Greene County Board of Commissioners after several public forums and a formal public hearing.

3. PLANNING PROCESS

This first comprehensive plan will be prepared through an interactive process with community leaders and citizens over an eight-month period. The process involves four major steps:

- 1) developing a profile of where the community has been and where it may be going if existing trends and development policies continue,
- 2) preparing a vision of where the community desires to be in the future,
- 3) evaluating alternative future development patterns and supporting infrastructure to achieve the future vision, and
- 4) documenting the desired land use pattern and associated infrastructure.

The Greene County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee will meet every other month to develop this first comprehensive plan. Broader community input will be achieved through interviews with community leaders, a public opinion survey, two public forums at major project milestones and a formal public hearing.

4. PLANNING PERIOD

The comprehensive plan will use the year 2030 as the horizon year for development of the community. Thus, population and economic forecasts have been prepared for the year 2030 to guide the determination of future land use needs. The desired future land use pattern addresses the preferred location for satisfying these land use needs. Because conditions and development assumptions change over time, forecasts for the immediate future are always more accurate than the distant future. Accordingly, it is desirable to review the underlying assumptions and to make mid-course adjustments as needed to achieve the future as envisioned by the comprehensive plan through a review every five years and an update every ten years.

5. PLANNING AREA

The Greene County Comprehensive Plan encompasses all of Greene County, with the exception of the incorporated communities of Linton, Bloomfield, Jasonville, Worthington, Lyons, Switz City and Newberry. Linton is the only community in Greene County that has completed any planning. The city completed a comprehensive plan in 2006. Under the same I-69 Community Planning Program grant, the Town of Bloomfield is also working on a comprehensive plan at the same time as the county is working on its plan. Likewise, under the grant, Greene County is preparing an I-69 Corridor Plan whose economic development recommendations will be incorporated into the Greene County Comprehensive Plan.

B. USE

The comprehensive plan is a framework and guide for land use regulations, development actions and decisions, and public expenditures on infrastructure to support land use activities. Prior to approval of requests for changes in land use (i.e., rezoning proposals and future land use map amendments, if a zoning ordinance is adopted) by the Plan Commission, the proposed changes are to be considered and evaluated in relation to the comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan also serves as a guide for subdivision regulations, zoning ordinances and capital improvement programs. Finally, the comprehensive plan provides guidance on a variety of public programs ranging from economic development to environmental protection and historic preservation.

1. REVIEW OF LAND USE CHANGE PROPOSALS (IF ZONING ADOPTED)

The comprehensive plan must be considered by the Plan Commission in recommendations on rezonings (amendments to the zoning district map, if a zoning ordinance is adopted) or future land use map amendments. In the case of rezoning applications, consideration should be given to the future land use map as well as applicable development review guidelines of the comprehensive plan. The rezoning proposal should be consistent with the future land use designation on the future land use map and should comply with applicable development review guidelines.

a. Consistency with Future Land Use Map (Test 1)

If the proposed land use change is of a comparable or lesser intensity land use than the future land use designation, the proposed land use change may be considered consistent with the future land use designation. For example, a land use change to offices or apartments would be generally consistent with the future land use designation for commercial use because offices and apartments are generally permitted uses in commercial zoning districts.

If the proposed land use change is of a significantly different intensity than the future land use designation, the proposal may not comply with the future land use designation. In such cases, the applicant may seek an amendment to the future land use designation using the development review guidelines to support the future land use map amendment.

b. Consistency with Development Review Guidelines (Test 2)

If the proposal is consistent with the future land use designation, but does not comply with all applicable development review guidelines, the rezoning applicant should identify mitigative actions to bring the development proposal into compliance with the development review guidelines. For a zoning district map amendment or future land use map amendment to be consistent with the comprehensive plan, it should normally be consistent with applicable development review guidelines.

c. Exceptions to General Consistency Tests

Lack of consistency with the future land use designation or violation of any applicable guideline will typically constitute sufficient reason to find the proposed land use change to be inconsistent with the comprehensive plan. However, there may be exceptions to this rule including:

- 1) If the proposed land use is not consistent with the future land use designation, consistency with all applicable development review guidelines may be sufficient to demonstrate consistency with the comprehensive plan.
- 2) If the proposed land use is in violation of a guideline, it may be considered consistent with the comprehensive plan when
 - a. The overall intent of the comprehensive plan is followed.
 - b. The proposal does not substantially violate the applicable guideline or the adverse impact of the proposal on the community is minimal or nonexistent.
 - c. All feasible and practical methods have been exhausted for bringing the proposal into consistency with the applicable guideline.

2. FOUNDATION FOR LAND USE CONTROLS

Adoption of the comprehensive plan is a prerequisite to the adoption of land use controls such as a zoning ordinance, planned unit development ordinance, condominium control ordinance, subdivision control ordinance and thoroughfare ordinance by the local legislative bodies.

A zoning ordinance identifies permitted land uses and development standards relating to the intensity of the use. Development standards encompass such features as minimum lot size, housing unit density, lot coverage, floor area to lot area ratios, yard requirements, height restrictions, off-street parking space requirements, signing limitations and landscaping requirements. Neither Greene County, nor any of its incorporated communities have ever adopted a zoning ordinance.

A planned unit development ordinance is usually a special zoning district designation that permits the mixture of uses (which normally fall in multiple zoning district designations) and deviation from usual development standards. The planned unit development ordinance is usually a special district which is part of the zoning ordinance. There are no planned unit development ordinances in Greene County.

A condominium control ordinance may be used to control the development of condominium type projects. It often defines the arrangement of horizontal and vertical property rights in such developments. There are no condominium control ordinances in Greene County. This type of ordinance is not to be needed in Greene County in the immediate future.

A subdivision control ordinance establishes rules under which property owners may divide tracts of land. Exceptions from the rules are often established for land trades, the division of tracts for agricultural purposes and the division of tracts where public infrastructure improvements are not needed. Subdivision regulations generally cover the design of physical improvements to land such as roads, sanitary sewers, waterlines and drainage facilities. They are intended to protect the property owner from inadequate services essential to the use of the property and to protect the community from excessive maintenance costs associated with improperly constructed facilities. There are no subdivision control ordinances in Greene County.

The transportation element of the comprehensive plan may be adopted as a thoroughfare plan. The thoroughfare plan is crucial to the preservation of right-of-way and the designation of consistent design standards for arterials when subdivisions are created or land is developed abutting arterials. Linton is the only community in Greene County that has ever adopted a comprehensive plan. The transportation element of their plan may be adopted as a thoroughfare plan, if they desire.

3. BASIS FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

The comprehensive plan may also serve as the framework for local capital improvement programs. The future land use pattern must be associated with infrastructure improvements to sustain development. Thus, the comprehensive plan provides guidance on the long-term location and phasing of roadway, sanitary sewer, waterline and drainage improvements to support development. Annual or short-range capital improvement programs usually draw projects from the long-range capital improvement program defined by the comprehensive plan.

4. OTHER USES

The comprehensive plan has numerous other uses governing public and private decisions concerning physical improvements to the community. Of greatest significance, it guides private land owners. If land owners want to use their land in a new way, they need to identify the current zoning district designation (if any) for their property and determine if the new use is permitted. If the proposed use is not permitted by the current zoning

designation of the property, the comprehensive plan will be considered in determining the appropriateness of the proposed change in zoning to permit the new use.

Finally, the comprehensive plan is a resource and foundation for funding and grants from Federal, State and private resources because the comprehensive plan documents needs relative to community infrastructure, community facilities (including park and recreation facilities), economic development, historic preservation and natural environment protection.

