

---

# LaGrange County, Indiana Comprehensive Plan

December 6, 2010



Prepared by

**MCBRIDE DALE CLARION**

and

**Teree Bergman, FAICP**

---

# LaGrange County Comprehensive Plan

## *Table of Contents*

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Planning Foundation .....</b>	<b>4</b>
LaGrange County Guiding Principles .....	4
Economic Development .....	5
Infrastructure/Public Services.....	6
Preservation of Resources .....	7
Quality of Life .....	8
Growth and Community Character .....	9
<b>Land Use Plan .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Rural Activities .....	14
Towns .....	16
Hamlets.....	17
Lakeside.....	19
State Road 9.....	21
Scenic Areas.....	23

---

## Introduction

LaGrange County is a community with a unique heritage and filled with a wealth of resources. It is both this heritage and the vast resources that have led many a community member to consider the future of the county and where residents and business owners *want* to be in the future. Over the past decade, the county has embarked on a series of planning exercises ranging from business surveys to the recent “Planning for the Future” series that have helped establish where the community stands today and where particular improvements are desired. From these efforts, the citizens of the county identified that there is indeed a concern for how land in the county is and will be developed in the future. There is a desire to see well-planned and organized development.

In order to address these concerns, the county embarked upon an effort to develop this plan for future land development while simultaneously establishing the legal rules for future development through the full rewrite of the county’s zoning and subdivision ordinances. Because of the county’s previous efforts, a base of information and community input already existed to help guide the plan. However, additional input was gathered through a series of public meetings, community group interviews, and charrettes held across the county that allowed community members to literally “draw” a future land use map for the county.



This plan is composed of two major elements: the Planning Foundation and the Land Use Plan. The Planning Foundation, as described in the following section, provides the vision of the county’s future through a series of goals and strategies. The Land Use Plan outlines how that vision relates to the future development of land within the county and will relate directly to the revised zoning and subdivision ordinances. In addition to this plan, there is a wealth of background information available that supports these recommendations, including the charrette drawings, land demand and capacity analysis, existing land use maps, and reports from the various planning efforts that are incorporated here by reference and are available for review at the LaGrange County Plan Commission offices.

---

## Planning Foundation

The foundation to any community plan is the guiding principles that serve to establish the overall theme and direction of the plan. These principles then lead to the goals of the community, which establish where the community wants to be in the 20-year planning horizon. Based on input from the community throughout this planning process and previous planning efforts, the goals related to future growth fall under the following broad categories:

- Economic Development
- Infrastructure and Public Services
- Preservation of Resources
- Quality of Life
- Growth and Community Character

While all of these categories relate to overall community growth, not all aspects will be addressed through the land use plan. For this reason, strategies for achieving these goals are developed that will give the county some guidance in how to achieve the goals within the short-term (0-5 year) timeframe and the long-term (0-20 year) timeframe.

### **LaGrange County Guiding Principles**

1. Employment and economic development are vital to the prosperity of LaGrange County and are what many consider to be the primary issue that the county, as a whole needs to address.
2. The community must find and develop ways of maintaining its population through the creation of a variety of housing and educational options that afford citizens the opportunity to live and work in LaGrange County their entire lives.
3. In order to grow as a community, the community must take full advantage of all of the assets, of which there are many. The community is abundant in historic resources, quality neighborhoods, an attractive natural environment with excellent recreation potential, a thriving agricultural industry, numerous loyal and healthy businesses, and dedicated citizenship.
4. Creating a physical setting for prosperity is critical. A community plan that identifies desirable future land use patterns, land use intensities, and quality and character of development is needed. LaGrange County desires growth and the protection of property rights, but it will not sacrifice the quality of development to attain short-lived successes.
5. Agriculture is an industry in LaGrange County, not vacant land. It will require continued investment and community support in order to succeed in the future.
6. LaGrange County is a wellspring of cottage industries that are considered both as businesses and as a unique characteristic of the county. The community treasures these cottage industries but not when they are at the expense of planning and resource protection.

- 
7. Water resources and water quality are an integral part of growth in LaGrange County both on how new development affects the water resources but also how resources such as the lakes create a character of its own and affect development trends within the county.
  8. The Amish culture and environment based tourism offers an opportunity to the community that must be better promoted and developed as a component of economic development and community growth.
  9. Elected and appointed officials of the county and local governments must be held accountable for their actions as they represent the voice of the community.
  10. LaGrange County desires a balance of growth and development that values residents, businesses, and land throughout the community.
  11. All growth must be done in a planned manner that considers infrastructure, public facilities, and the environment.
  12. The long-term strategy for community change must be a mix of short term, visible, and attainable improvements, and long-term systemic changes to the community's institutions and attitudes.
  13. There is no single action or program that will result in growth and vitality. It will take a concerted and coordinated effort by many parties over time to affect change

## **Economic Development**

**Goal:** LaGrange County will take a more active role in economic development in order to create a more diverse local economy that focuses on both existing and new businesses.

**Goal:** Promotion of new businesses and industries throughout LaGrange County without detracting from the local cottage industries, tourism industry, and downtown districts, as all are an essential part of the local and regional economy.

**Goal:** LaGrange County will move toward hosting a diverse economy with a strong job base.

### **Strategies:**

- ✓ Be proactive in developing industrial and commerce parks, in accordance with the land use plan, that are subdivided, served by adequate infrastructure, and are "ready to go" for any prospective business.
- ✓ Develop a visitation program for existing businesses to develop a list of needs that will help local companies retain and expand the existing job base.
- ✓ Dedicate funding to marketing the community to prospective businesses that highlights the advantages of operating a business in LaGrange County, available

---

buildings and sites, and other valuable information that creates interest in the county on behalf of companies.

- ✓ Identify a person or a group that will be officially in charge of all economic development efforts. This might include identifying a current county employee whose main job responsibility is economic development, formalizing some functions of the Chamber of Commerce, or creating an Economic Development Corporation (EDC).
- ✓ Economic development strategies should include providing educational brochures and workshops to help local residents with starting small businesses.
- ✓ Be flexible with incentives with better incentives going to those businesses that will create diversity, create a significant number of jobs, or will be an investment in LaGrange County's future. Consider creating a sliding scale for various incentives that gives the most benefit to those businesses that will contribute the most to the county.

## **Infrastructure/Public Services**

- Goal:** LaGrange County will be accountable for all actions and decisions made on behalf of its citizenry.
- Goal:** Community leadership will be strong and will be infused with new ideas through the continued involvement of many residents and business owners.
- Goal:** The county and town governments will work hand in hand to pool resources and accomplish tasks in an efficient manner that is most beneficial to the entire community.
- Goal:** The enforcement of all regulations will be a priority for the community without creating excessive hardships on property owners by longer waiting times or extensive application requirements.
- Goal:** The provision of high quality infrastructure will support and influence growth in areas most suitable for development without sacrificing the safety of all residents.

### **Strategies:**

- ✓ LaGrange County should continue to find multiple avenues for distributing information and notices regarding government activities. Unlike many other communities, many residents of LaGrange County do not have access to computers and rely heavily on written materials. Consider identifying key places throughout the community where information can be displayed and distributed (schools, banks, grocery stores, public facilities, etc.).

- 
- ✓ Develop leadership through continued training of elected and appointed officials to ensure that all officials are being thorough in their decision making and are providing all residents with due process and the ability to “speak up” at meetings.
  - ✓ Create a government roundtable that will include representatives of all formal jurisdictions as well as representatives of other community interests to keep all groups informed of various actions or recommendations that are being considered by each group individually.
  - ✓ LaGrange County needs to evaluate and outline current enforcement of all types of regulations (zoning, waste removal systems, and building) to determine who is responsible for enforcement, gaps in enforcement, and necessary improvements.
  - ✓ Develop new and simpler methods of enforcing regulations including the possibility of a “ticketing” method where violators are issued tickets much like they would be with a speeding ticket
  - ✓ Develop ways to enforce regulations through inspections based on the resources that are available including manpower and financing.
  - ✓ Sanitary sewer systems are a necessary service for high-density development such as those areas around the towns and lakes. It is especially necessary in northern Indiana due to soil types and the potential for hazardous contamination of the groundwater. LaGrange County needs to prioritize what areas of the county are in needs of sanitary sewer and evaluate the best methods of providing that service especially along State Road 9 and in Howe where growth is desired but is essentially hindered without the service.
  - ✓ Develop a long-term transportation plan that addresses safety, traffic flow, public transit, buggy lanes, and infrastructure needs as they relate to all modes of transit. This transportation plan should evaluate a range of projects from the yearly need for pavement maintenance to the long-term possibility of a new interchange on the Toll Road or a State Road 9 bypass that will allow for smoother truck traffic as an alternative to passing through the Town of LaGrange.
  - ✓ Create a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) that will assess all proposed infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, etc.) projects over the next 5 to 10 years and prioritizes these projects to ensure that funding is being spent in the most cost-efficient method.

## **Preservation of Resources**

**Goal:** LaGrange County will be an area of scenic and rural character with pockets of planned and organized development.

**Goal:** New development will be built in a manner that maintains the integrity of the natural environment.

---

**Goal:** Water and water quality are valuable resources to the county both as a source of recreation and lifestyle but also as a life necessity.

**Strategies:**

- ✓ Planned growth has been a mainstay issue in all of LaGrange County's planning efforts. Preservation of the rural and natural character of the county can be done with solid land use regulations that provide flexibility in design (conservation subdivisions, maximum densities, etc.) and enforcement of regulations. The current land use regulations make very little distinction between rural and urban areas beyond the provision of sewer. To make a proactive move toward the preservation of resources, the county will have to make changes in the method they regulate land uses and provide infrastructure.
- ✓ New regulations on water wells or stormwater management may take many years to implement. Short term strategies for preserving water quality that work could include supporting educational programs that teach property owners and farmers about the "best practices" available that are cost efficient and beneficial to the entire community.
- ✓ Develop a countywide drainage strategy that could include a range of improvements including new infrastructure, special runoff regulations for particular uses, and educational programs for developers, farmers, and private property owners.

## **Quality of Life**

**Goal:** LaGrange County businesses will provide a wider variety of services for local residents and businesses.

**Goal:** Activities, events, and gathering places will be identified and developed to provide a wide range of activities for all citizens and especially the youth.

**Goal:** There will be a community wide system of parks and open space that provides a broad mixture of activities.

**Goal:** The community will capitalize on its cultural resources and its natural features to improve community livability through the promotion of both as a source of community pride and as a vital part of the tourism industry.

**Goal:** The diverse populations of LaGrange County will be better educated through the development of new educational opportunities and the enhancement of existing educational programs.

**Strategies:**

- 
- ✓ LaGrange County must promote itself to encourage a strong year-round population of tourists, employees, and residents to meet the market requirements of many service industry businesses.
  - ✓ The facilitation and education of groups/individuals so that they will be able to start and/or grow small businesses. The county should continue to specifically solicit input and assistance from the youth on all projects. This may include surveying the youth when developing future parks and recreation plans to address their specific needs and any suggestions for future improvements (e.g. a new skate park).
  - ✓ Support groups that provide activities and gathering places for the youth (e.g. Boys and Girls club, 4-H, schools, churches, etc.)
  - ✓ The LaGrange County Department of Parks and Recreation has established a good parks system and is continuously working toward improving that system through developing long-term plans through the LaGrange County Parks Master Plan. The county should continue to support the recommendations of the plan in order to allow for future improvements and expansions of the parks system.
  - ✓ Continue to promote the natural and scenic elements of LaGrange County as a solid source of tourism and activity with respect to the fact that the tourism will have a direct affect on all those who live in LaGrange County and especially near those places that serve as a cultural and natural resource (lakes, Pigeon River Nature Preserve, Amish farmlands, Shipshewana).
  - ✓ Ensure that education and workforce development opportunities cover a broad range of training and technologies to create a flexible workforce.
  - ✓ Educational opportunities should be provided for all ages from pre-school students to the elderly.
  - ✓ The county and towns should collaborate with the schools to improve educational attainment and demonstrate what students achieve in the community with higher education, i.e. graduation rates and college attendance.

## **Growth and Community Character**

**Goal:** Adequate land will be available to accommodate future residential, business, industrial, and recreational development.

**Goal:** The Towns of Shipshewana, Topeka, LaGrange, and Wolcottville will continue to be areas of quality neighborhoods, business centers, parks, and institutions. LaGrange County will be an area of scenic beauty, small villages, hamlets, and quality rural areas.

---

**Goal:** Urban growth will occur in and around existing urban areas, where it is efficient to provide services. Urban “sprawl” will be minimized. The distinction between “town and country” will be clear.

**Goal:** The bar for development quality will be raised while still being reasonable.

**Goal:** LaGrange County will have a variety of housing opportunities both in housing types and housing values as a result of stable and viable residential neighborhoods.



**Strategies:**

- ✓ Reasonable development standards will be improved and enhanced in order to raise the overall quality of development in the county.
- ✓ Recognize that every improvement to the county’s infrastructure improvement can and will affect the direction and type of growth that will be generated in the future. The provision of sewer and water will typically create areas of higher density along with all of the impacts of higher density uses.
- ✓ Ensure that there is an adequate amount of land planned for all types of residential, commercial, and industrial to accommodate projected growth plus additional land to accommodate market changes and choices for the location of new subdivisions, commercial uses, and industrial parks.
- ✓ Encourage the siting of dense development in and around the towns and hamlets to promote a separation between urban and rural areas.
- ✓ LaGrange County should recognize the importance of affordable housing by providing for all types of housing including apartment buildings and low-cost housing options. . This strategy may include subsidizing infrastructure improvements to provide for a quality housing stock at lower costs.

- 
- ✓ Promote the creation of mixed use developments (multi-family, single-family, and commercial all in the same development) through special planned development districts that provide flexibility and incentives when developers are willing to create a unique development that meets the goals and objectives of this plan and the vision of the community as established in other planning efforts.

---

## Land Use Plan

The core element of the LaGrange County Comprehensive Plan is planning for future land development in the form of a land use plan. A land use plan is a tool that communities use to help make future decisions on issues such as where a proposed rezoning of land is appropriate, where infrastructure improvements are necessary, and important resources that should be protected.

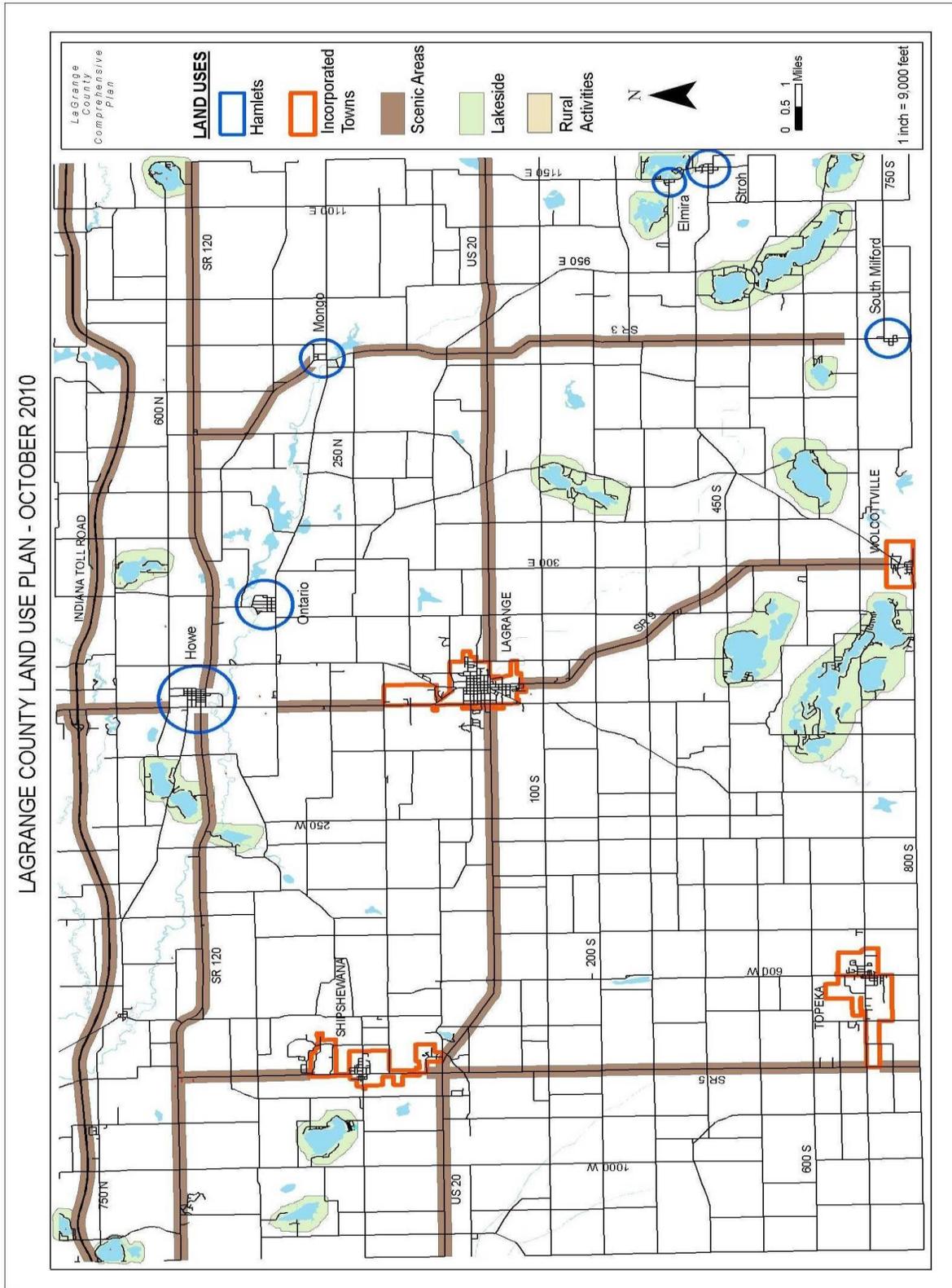
The main tool to regulate the actual use of land is zoning, which is administered by the county. Zoning details how each property can legally be used and any relevant development requirements (parking, setbacks, height, and density). Zoning is specific to every single property within LaGrange County. In order to serve more as a tool for guidance and to allow for some flexibility in decision-making due to special circumstances, this land use plan takes a more general approach to outlining where appropriate land uses should be located by establishing decision making criteria for various land use based character areas.

Land use plans are individual to every community depending on their needs and development trends. Some communities use basic land use categories such as single-family residential, two-family residential, retail commercial, industrial parks, and recreation. However, these types of categories often overlook the characteristics of surrounding development and leave little room for interpretation and flexibility. Other communities look at individual areas of their jurisdiction (e.g. Central LaGrange County) and provide for a mixture of land uses and other regulations based on the needs of those specific areas. For LaGrange County, a mixture of these two concepts is appropriate, because many people identify with areas based on similar characteristics such as lakes, Shipshewana, State Road 9, etc. Each of these geographic areas has similar land use characteristics that relate specifically to that area, referred to as Character Areas for the purposes of this plan. In LaGrange, the following six unique Character Areas have been identified through public input and land use planning charrettes:

- Rural Activities
- Towns
- Hamlets
- Lakeside
- State Road 9
- Scenic Areas

As residents, developers, and businesses approach the county for infrastructure improvements and rezonings, for example, the county should refer to the Future Land Use Map to find the general location of the subject site to determine what Character Area it lies within and what development criteria need to be evaluated as part of the approval process. The LaGrange County Future Land Use Map is intended to be general in nature; future land use boundaries are not site-specific, and the map is ***not intended to be the zoning map*** for the county.

Land Use Plan Map



---

## **Rural Activities**

Agricultural uses and rural areas comprise the largest land area of LaGrange County and contribute to the attractive rural character that almost all residents have praised as an important part of the community. While most citizens enjoy the rural character of the county, many do not realize some of the land use issues that have caused both development pressures and tensions within these areas. During the comprehensive planning process, the following issues were routinely brought forth with regard to the agricultural community:

- There is a need to balance the rights of property/farm owners to subdivide/sell their properties to individuals or developers with the need to preserve prime farmland for the agricultural industry.
- Many farmers and members of the Amish community are supplementing their farming income with a job in a local business or home business, which is changing the landscape of the local farming economy. The county is seeing a decrease in the size of farms and an increase in more diverse farming activities such as the labor-intensive raising of vegetables or flowers. This is not necessarily seen as a problem, but it has led to some land use conflicts such as large home businesses in an otherwise rural area and more neighbor conflicts due to smaller lot sizes.
- There are a growing number of home-based/farm-based businesses that are being built on farms that provide jobs to the property owner and sometimes jobs for neighbors or family members. Many of these businesses are cottage industries that create a tourism draw to the community while others focus on providing special services that are unique to the Amish community (e.g. buggy repair). Most residents do not have a problem with these businesses when they are small in size, but they grow concerned when they expand to such a size that they place an undue strain on existing infrastructure, or require special assistance from the county. It is at the larger scale that some desire to see these businesses relocate to industrial parks or commercial areas.
- Neighbor tensions are increasing with regard to livestock farms, including the growing number of large livestock operations that do not necessarily meet the state definition of a confined feeding lot. As residential uses are developed in rural areas, they are occurring closer to these farming operations that has created more complaints on noise and odors regardless of if the farm was established prior to adjacent development.
- Water quality is of distinct importance within the county because of the sandy soils and large number of lakes. Abandoned and poorly installed groundwater wells, placement of waste removal systems, improper manure management, or uncontrolled stormwater runoff can create safety hazards for the entire community and especially those that require wells for their potable water.



---

### ***Development Criteria for Rural Activity Areas***

1. The primary land uses for Rural Activity Areas should be single family residential, agriculture, open spaces, and small home-based or farm-based businesses.
2. The maximum density for residential uses should be 1 unit per acre with emphasis on developing conservation subdivisions and quality design that minimizes curb cuts along roadways. The county should allow for homes to be clustered onto smaller lots of a ½ acre or more where adequate provisions can be made for the safe on-site provision of water wells, waste removal systems, or other wastewater treatment systems. The lots may be further reduced to ¼ of an acre if off-site water and waste removal can be provided through easements or other joint ventures. This will allow for families to cluster multiple homes together and for farmers/property owners to subdivide small road frontage lots off of a property while protecting land that can remain in agricultural protection. This follows the existing development trends that are occurring in the agricultural areas where most new development is located along the road frontage and not in a conventional subdivision.
3. Home-based and farm-based businesses that manufacture, build, or sell agricultural implements, agricultural products, or services required by the Amish or general farming community should be permitted regardless of size. Allow for businesses that manufacture, build, or sell products unrelated to agriculture to occur provided it is within an enclosed building and the building does not exceed a 10,000 square foot footprint (the area of land occupied by a building) and a maximum of two stories for a total of 20,000 square feet of floor area.
4. Encourage commercial uses, which are not associated with homes or farms, to locate on paved roadways.
5. Industrial uses that are not associated with a home or farm should be only be permitted where similar uses are clustered together in a rural industrial area that has adequate provisions of water, sewer, and roadways.
6. The county should consider roadway visibility and safety issues when addressing the location of businesses and driveways.

---

## **Towns**

There are four Character Areas that comprise the largest concentration of land uses outside of the Rural Activity areas. These include the incorporated towns, and surrounding areas, of Shipshewana, LaGrange, Topeka, and Wolcottville. It is felt that these towns offer the best services with regards to public safety and infrastructure. Most community members feel that the towns should be the focus of most of the new residential (small-lot), commercial, and industrial growth. Other issues and concerns for the Towns included:

- The downtown districts of each town are considered by many to be a vital part of the community's character and most residents would like to see them preserved and revitalized. An important part of this task will be defining the purpose and unique quality of each individual district.



### ***Development Criteria for Towns***

1. The Town Councils for Shipshewana and Topeka have both adopted detailed comprehensive plans for their respective jurisdictions and some of the surrounding unincorporated areas. The county should refer to each of these plans as the overall guiding document for future growth around these communities.
2. Encourage commercial and office uses to locate in and around the downtown districts to promote revitalization and maintain a community where people can walk from their homes to most uses.
3. Encourage commercial and office uses, not associated with a downtown district, to locate on paved roads.

- 
4. Encourage development and redevelopment within the downtown districts, however, buildings should be designed to blend into the character of surrounding structures with little to no setbacks from the sidewalk, similar building heights, and the use of similar building materials or materials that appear to be similar in nature.
  5. Group industrial uses, within the Towns, into industrial or commerce parks where necessary public services and infrastructure can be provided. Strongly encourage the development of interior roadways designed as part of an industrial park instead of creating multiple curb cuts on major roads throughout the community.
  6. Allow for multi-family uses in the Towns where they will have good access to infrastructure and especially roadways that can accommodate increased traffic. Multifamily housing provides opportunities for affordable housing and senior housing in LaGrange County and are most appropriate where there is adequate infrastructure. The maximum density of multi-family residential uses should be 16 units per acre.
  7. Single-family residential uses should be the predominant residential use in the Town areas. Development or redevelopment of residential uses within the central urban core of the towns should be permitted at densities as high as 8 units per acre. However, any new development or redevelopment of residential uses within a well-defined neighborhood should have similar setbacks and densities as the surrounding homes to provide consistent character. New single-family residential uses along the fringes of the Town areas should be permitted at a density not to exceed 3 units per acre unless the design of the development will create additional greenspace or parks for the community in which case the county should provide density incentives that will allow up to 4 units per acre.
  8. Encourage site parks, recreational and institutional uses such as community parks, schools, libraries, and public offices to locate in and around the Town areas to provide access to the highest concentration of residents. The Towns are already major destinations for such services and should continue to do so with the possibility of extending some of the services to other areas of the community.

### **Hamlets**

Due to the large number of lakes and historic transportation paths, there are several areas/communities within LaGrange County that are not quite the size of a Town but do serve as a small community for many county residents. Many of these hamlets do not have the services that a town such as Shipshewana or LaGrange might provide, but they often have a core residential area and many have small commercial or industrial areas. The communities of Howe, Ontario, Mongo, Elmira, Stroh, and South Milford all serve as Hamlets or small communities within LaGrange County.

- The feasibility study for sanitary sewer service in Howe needs to be completed to determine future land use growth and especially residential growth.

- 
- These areas were identified as good locations for future residential growth for to small lot subdivisions versus rural character development. The major issue with residential development in these areas is the availability of sanitary sewer service. At this time, Ontario and Mongo are the only Hamlets that are not served by sewer while the remaining Hamlets have service but with a set capacity that can only accommodate a set increase in demand.



- Several of the Hamlets have commercial uses, which should be continued as they provide necessary services to these communities.
- Industrial uses were identified as an appropriate use of land around South Milford.

### ***Development Criteria for Hamlets***

1. Single-family residential uses should be the predominant residential use in the Hamlet areas. Development of residential uses should be permitted at densities not to exceed 7 ½ units per acre where adequate sanitary sewer services are available. Housing units that have no access to sanitary sewer services should be restricted to one unit per acre to allow for on-site waste removal systems. The lot sizes of homes without sewer service may be reduced if they meet the development criteria required for Rural Activity areas.
2. Allow for multifamily uses to locate on paved roadways with a density not to exceed 8 units per acre when sanitary sewer is provided.
3. Site parks, recreational uses and public services in and around the Hamlet areas to provide access to many residents who do not have easy access to the Towns.

- 
4. Encourage commercial and office uses to locate in and around the central core of the Hamlets to create central gathering places and maintain a community where people can walk from their homes to most uses.
  5. Encourage industrial uses to locate in South Milford, which is the Hamlet that can provide the most services and the best infrastructure for such uses. Where possible, industrial uses should be located in an industrial park, but where this is not feasible, access to and from the use should be made from secondary roads to maintain the traffic flow on major highways.
  6. When a sanitary sewer system is established in Howe, the Character Area that includes Howe and the surrounding area should be considered a town as part of this Comprehensive Plan, regardless of its incorporation status. With sanitary sewer, Howe is a more ideal location for those uses encouraged in town areas and therefore should be subjected to the development guidelines of the Town Character Areas.

## **Lakeside**

Beyond the agricultural areas of the county, the most recognizable Character Areas in LaGrange County are the lakes. The largest of the lake systems are located in southeast LaGrange County but there are other, smaller lakes located throughout the community. Of all of the areas discussed during the planning process, both the lakes and the State Road 9 Corridor were identified as the two areas that need the most attention with regard to land use. Issues that were raised with regard to Lakeside development include:

- There is mixed feeling among county residents with regard to development around the lakes. Some residents would like to see the lakes preserved as they stand today with some redevelopment of existing residential uses, while other residents see the lakes as an appropriate area for residential growth areas due to the existence of a sanitary sewer system.
- A major issue that many residents of the Lakeside areas have brought forward is the development of surrounding agricultural properties into residential uses. This is sometimes referred to as the tiering process of development where the first tier of homes are literally on the lakeshore, the second tier of development is directly behind the lakeshore homes, and so forth.
- Another major issues among residents of the Lakeside areas is the use of public access points or the redevelopment of a previous residential site as a location to build a large dock for private residents along outer “tiers” of development.



- 
- Most of the lakes are under the control of the state with regard to changes in water levels, channeling, and use of the water. The county has control only over how land around the lakes can be used, which is what is being addressed in this Land Use Plan.
  - The sanitary sewer system that serves many of the lake areas is seen by many as both a blessing and a curse. The system provides a service that is necessary for public health and has contributed to an improved water quality. However, the system has been criticized in that it provides a service that allows for more development where it is not necessarily desired. Additionally, the treatment plant near South Milford has been criticized due to a lack of landscaping, the prevalence of foul odors in the summer, and the general appearance of the plant.

This plan recognizes that there are different opinions regarding development around the lakes. However, the lakes are a special feature of the county and may attract future, which in turn may make the lakeside areas less valuable in the long run. Accordingly, a balance needs to be struck between preserving the value of the lakes, while allowing future development in a responsible manner.”

### ***Development Criteria for Lakeside Areas***

1. Single-family residential uses should be the predominant use in the Lakeside areas. Development of residential uses should be permitted at densities not to exceed 2 units per acre where adequate sanitary sewer services are available. Housing units that have no access to sanitary sewer services should be restricted to one unit per acre to allow for on-site waste disposal systems. The lot sizes of homes without sewer service may be reduced if they meet the development criteria required for Rural Activity areas.
2. Rezoning of agricultural land to residential uses should only be done when any new residential uses will be served by the sanitary sewer services.
3. Site parks, recreational uses and public services in and around the Lakeside areas to provide additional activities to residents and visitors while creating a coordinated park system throughout the county.
4. Encourage those commercial uses that are associated with lake activities to locate on paved roadways.
5. Properties should not be used for the development of garages, boat docks, or other accessory uses unless they are constructed on a property where a residential or commercial use already exists.



- 
6. Channeling may only occur with the approval of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.
  7. Developers should design new subdivisions to accommodate excess stormwater runoff on the property instead of allowing runoff to flow directly into the lake system.

### **State Road 9**

State Road 9 is seen by many residents to be a major future economic development corridor. State Road 9 provides direct access to the Toll Road and Sturgis, Michigan along with access to most of the county's major highways. The county is currently in the process of creating a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district along the entire corridor to provide development incentives as well as evaluating the best method of providing sanitary sewer service for the corridor and Howe, currently not served by sewers. While most agree that State Road 9 should be the focus of economic development, there are some minor differences in how the corridor should be developed. The following are some comments and issues raised throughout the planning process.

- All participants identified this area as a primary site for non-residential or mixed-use developments. Various recommendations for this area, between LaGrange and I-80, included:
  - All industrial uses;
  - All commercial uses;
  - A mixture of commercial and industrial uses;
  - Commercial uses along State Road 9 with industrial uses located behind the commercial uses; and
  - Commercial uses along State Road 9, industrial uses behind the commercial uses, and multifamily uses behind the industrial uses to act as a buffer.
- This is an 8-mile long corridor that will most likely see a mixture of development and a detailed corridor plan needs to be developed that looks at all aspects of future growth including the expansion of sewers and roadway improvements.
- Encouraging too much commercial along this corridor could have a detrimental affect on downtown LaGrange unless commercial uses are focused at certain areas and are targeted to serve offices and industrial uses.
- Access needs to be carefully planned along with land uses to prevent numerous curb cuts that will slow traffic or cause major point of traffic congestion. Also, increased development along this corridor, especially industrial, will only exacerbate the problem of semi-trailer turning movements from State Road 9 to U.S. 20. The upgrading of existing roads or the creation of a bypass will have to be considered.

- 
- The creation of a bypass around LaGrange could create additional areas for economic development, which could eliminate transportation problems but could also detract from development along the State Road 9 corridor and in downtown LaGrange. The county needs to decide where to focus its economic development efforts. It would be possible to build a bypass solely to improve traffic flow while prohibiting new industrial and business uses.
  - Depending on how proactive the county is in developing the corridor and how zoning regulations are written, designating a large economic development area could attract much needed and desired uses along with those that are less than desirable (junk yards, large car lots, etc.). Special consideration needs to be given to the community's vision for this corridor beyond just the land uses. It is possible to encourage development while guiding appearances to achieve the maximum benefit for the community.

### ***Development Criteria the State Road 9 Corridor***

1. Encourage single-family residential uses along the corridor provided that they are done in conventional or clustered subdivision style that limits individual access to State Road 9. If sanitary sewer service is available to the residential uses, densities of up to 8 units per acre should be permitted around the fringes of Howe and LaGrange and 3 units per acre in areas of the corridor between these two areas. Restrict residential uses that do not have access to sanitary sewer services to one unit per acre to allow for on-site waste removal systems. The lot sizes of homes without sewer service may be reduced if they meet the development criteria required for Rural Activity areas.
2. Focus residential subdivisions and high-density residential uses around LaGrange and Howe both to preserve much of the corridor for economic development uses and to provide for better services (fire, police protection, roadways, etc.) to the residential uses.
3. Allow for multifamily uses to locate in and around LaGrange and Howe with a maximum density of 16 units per acre.
4. Encourage commercial uses at major intersections along State Road 9 including the intersections of 100 N, 200 N, 300 N, and 400 N. Commercial uses that support industrial users and other businesses along with nearby residents should be strongly encouraged.
5. Commercial uses that have large outdoor inventories should be developed off of the main corridor or well screened to maintain a highly aesthetic corridor.
6. Prohibit commercial uses from locating along any bypass of State Road 9 so as to emphasize commercial development along State Road 9 and to prevent the creation of additional land use and transportation conflicts along the bypass.
7. Plan for industrial uses to locate in well-designed industrial parks or along access roads that parallel State Road 9. This will help maintain good traffic flow by minimizing curb cuts as well as allowing for better buffering of uses.

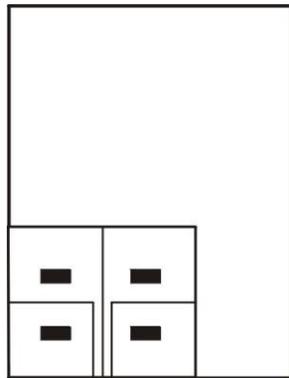
- 
8. Concentrate industrial uses, to the maximum extent feasible, around the outskirts of both LaGrange and Howe as well as along the Toll Road to encourage a concentration of uses that will require fewer extensions of infrastructure such as water and sewer. This also will allow many residents who live in the county but work in various industries to share rides to work without having to drive or ride along the entire corridor.
  9. Emphasize the use of landscaping and decorative fencing along this corridor to “green-up” what the county envisions will be a highly developed corridor. This will also help create buffers between uses of different intensities, and to create a visual screen of major outdoor storage facilities.
  10. The county should work with the State of Indiana on investigating the feasibility of landscaped medians along certain parts of State Road 9.
  11. Develop special sign regulations to create a uniform style and height of signage along the corridor that also create an identifier for the corridor.

### **Scenic Areas**

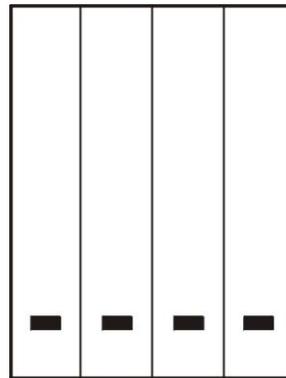
Many residents and visitors alike identify LaGrange County with several scenic corridors or areas including much of the Amish farmlands and the lakes areas. Others clearly identify with many of the scenic corridors that they use to enter the county as a great resource that should be preserved. Other scenic areas include the lakes region and the Pigeon River Nature Preserve. Concerns raised over development in these scenic areas reflect many of the same concerns identified in the Rural Activity areas including property rights and neighbor tensions. Development within the Scenic Areas should be treated more as an overlay to other Character Areas with much of the protection dealing with larger setbacks and the encouragement of clustered housing.

#### ***Development Criteria in the Scenic Areas***

1. Encourage the clustering of housing within the Scenic Areas to prevent the development of “bowling alley” or “strip” residential.



***Encourage***



***Discourage***

- 
2. Encourage the location of commercial uses, not associated with homes or farms, on paved roadways.
  3. Develop overlay zoning districts and special regulations for each of these areas, as future corridor plans are developed to ensure that these important scenic areas are maintained as an integral part of the LaGrange County's character.