

**LAGRANGE
COUNTY
TOGETHER**

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR OUR COMMUNITIES
**OUR VOICE.
OUR VISION.
OUR FUTURE!**

SPECIAL VOLUME: ZONING ORDINANCE ASSESSMENT

Technical Analysis Memo | Comprehensive Plan
for the Communities of LaGrange County

DRAFT | DECEMBER 2021



SPECIAL VOLUME

ZONING ORDINANCE ASSESSMENT

TECHNICAL ANALYSIS MEMO | COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
FOR THE COMMUNITIES OF LAGRANGE COUNTY

DECEMBER 2021

The following report provides an initial assessment of the LaGrange County Zoning Ordinance. This report is intended as an introduction for updating the zoning ordinance to provide direction on major themes identified through the LaGrange County Together process. A more robust and detailed evaluation should be pursued prior to any amendments being proposed for the ordinance. The findings in this report were identified through stakeholder interviews and public engagement events conducted in September 2021. For questions on this report, please contact the project manager for LaGrange County Together, Logan Stang, planner with planning NEXT, at logan@planning-next.com.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. OVERVIEW

1.1.1. Assessment Introduction

The communities of LaGrange County are currently pursuing a comprehensive plan process known as LaGrange County Together. One key outcome of this process will be a policy direction for the future growth and development of the county based on input from community members and stakeholders. Early in the process, it was identified that implementation of future land use policies will require a comprehensive update to the zoning ordinance. Rewriting a zoning ordinance is a significant undertaking for any community requiring substantial resources to implement.

To assist with a future update, the LaGrange County Together process included an initial assessment of the ordinance to initiate the conversation with the communities. The findings in this report provide a foundation for ongoing discussions regarding the zoning ordinance which can inform a future comprehensive update. This report is not intended to identify specific revisions for the zoning ordinance but share themes that have emerged through public engagement.

1.2. EXISTING ORDINANCE

1.2.1. History and Purpose

The current LaGrange County Zoning Ordinance became effective on November 17, 2005 and was amended on May 21, 2018. It provides the provisions and regulations for land development across the county and its communities. It was adopted and amended under the authority of the State of Indiana Code, Title 36, and its stated purpose includes:

1. *Securing adequate light, air, convenience of access, and safety from fire, flood, and other danger;*
2. *Lessening or avoiding congestion in public ways;*
3. *Promoting the public health, safety, comfort, morals, convenience, and general welfare;*
4. *Implementing the Comprehensive Plan; and*
5. *Otherwise accomplishing the purposes of IC 36-7-4.¹*

1.2.2. Jurisdiction

The Zoning Ordinance applies to structures, land, water, and other environmental features throughout LaGrange County. This includes the following incorporated communities and unincorporated areas:

- Town of LaGrange
- Town of Shipshewana
- Town of Topeka

¹ LaGrange County Zoning Ordinance, p. 1

- Unincorporated communities (Howe, Mongo, South Milford, Stroh, and Wolcottville)
- Unincorporated LaGrange County

1.2.3. Document Structure

The LaGrange County Zoning Ordinance is organized by nine articles, each with a specific purpose and intent for guiding development. A brief description of each ordinance article is provided below:

1. **General Provisions** – Introduces the ordinance, including the authority, purpose, and jurisdiction.
2. **Zone Districts** – Describes of each of the six zoning district classifications and 15 specific zoning districts established within the county.
3. **Use Regulations** – Lists the permitted and conditional uses in each of the zoning districts along with and use specific regulations.
4. **Dimensional Standards** – Describes the set of guidelines for measurements such as setbacks, building dimension and intensity standards.
5. **Development and Design Standards** – Explains the standards for various development and design components, including parking, landscaping, signage, and floodplain regulations.
6. **Nonconforming Uses** – Defines the policies for addressing legally existing uses that do not conform with the permitted uses of the ordinance.
7. **Administration** – Explains the role and authority of the various administrative bodies with respect to topics such as amendments to the code, variances, conditional uses, and Planned Unit Developments (PUDs).
8. **Enforcement** – Describes the enforcement authority of the ordinance and provides a fee schedule for violations.
9. **Definitions and Rules of Interpretation** – Provides guidelines for interpreting the document and a list of definitions of terms used within the document.

2. INITIAL ASSESSMENT

The following section highlights the major themes relating to the zoning ordinance that provides a foundation for any future evaluations and amendments. These were identified through feedback shared during the more than two dozen stakeholder interviews with residents, local business owners, and elected officials along with comments shared during the six open house events. County staff was also interviewed to understand potential challenges with administering regulations in the zoning ordinance.

2.1. MAKE THE ZONING ORDINANCE EASIER TO USE

Many members of the community shared concerns that the current zoning ordinance is not user-friendly. Local businesses and property owners expressed that the regulations are either complex, inconsistent, or are not clearly defined making the process challenging. Similarly, County staff are limited in their ability to address certain concerns during the review process based on the current regulations of the ordinance. Outlined in this section are the recommendations identified through the assessment for making the ordinance easier to use, which includes the following:

- 2.1.1. Use Clear Language and Definitions
- 2.1.2. Incorporate Additional Tables, Graphics, and Illustrations
- 2.1.3. Improve the Document Format
- 2.1.4. Streamline the Review Process

2.1.1. Use Clear Language and Definitions

CLEAR LANGUAGE

Zoning regulations are easier to read, understand, and administer when they are written in plain and precise language. Standards or procedures that are unclear can lead to different interpretations of the regulations and create uncertainty for development applicants, boards and commissions, the general public, and county staff. There are many methods for improving regulations to ensure that the intent and purpose is clear to all audiences reading the zoning ordinance. This can include eliminating general or aspirational language, providing numerical ranges for regulations as applicable, and offering examples of how the regulation is applied in the ordinance. These methods ensure that regulations are clear to all audiences and consistently applied to each project across the county.

Updating the zoning ordinance should include an evaluation of all standards and procedures for any vague or general language that creates confusion around the regulation. County staff should be consulted on misinterpretations and conflicts with the existing ordinance to understand recurring points of conflict. Where appropriate, the ordinance should be modified with clear, precise, and measurable standards that support the county's vision.

ZONING DEFINITIONS

Definitions in the zoning ordinance are located within Article 9: Definitions and Rules of Interpretation. There are more than 150 distinct definitions located in this section with several including subsets of definitions for specific terms. For example, the definition for yard includes an overall definition and four subsets that describe the differences between front, rear, required, and side. However, some definitions

are integrated into other portions of the zoning ordinance such as terms specific to stormwater management. The organization and formatting makes understanding definitions a challenge. Some definitions are clear and concise providing enough detail to identify the unique features of the term while others are lengthy and include vague or general language. The organization of this section makes interpreting definitions more challenging when reading the ordinance.

An update to the zoning ordinance should include an evaluation of the terms and definitions included in Article 9. Where appropriate, the definitions should be rewritten to ensure they are clear and concise for interpreting and administering regulations of the ordinance. New terms should also be introduced based on current practices and unique characteristics of the county’s zoning districts, land uses, and development patterns.

2.1.2. Incorporate Additional Tables, Graphics, and Illustrations

TABLES

Summary tables can present information in a concise and organized format, eliminating the need for long descriptions. The current ordinance uses tables throughout the articles to display uses, dimensional standards, and other similar regulations. However, several of these tables could be consolidated and improved through formatting changes to make them easier to read and interpret. Updating the zoning ordinance should include an assessment of existing tables to identify opportunities to combine similar information and reduce the overall number of tables. Additional regulations should be identified for using summary tables over existing descriptions where appropriate to further improve the user-friendliness of the ordinance.

Figure 2.1: Example sign table from the Clark County, Indiana Unified Development Ordinance (UDO)

PERMANENT SIGNS: C, AG, AE, R1, R2, R3, and R4	
Permitted Types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monument • Wall
Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monument: Maximum of thirty-two (32) sq ft per side • Wall: Maximum of one (1) sq ft per parcel
Quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monument: Maximum of two (2) signs per vehicular entrance to a subdivision or residential complex • Wall: Maximum of one (1) sign per parcel
Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum of four (4) feet
Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not located within the sight triangle • Minimum of ten (10) feet from any property line or the edge of roadway pavement, whichever is less. If property is adjacent to an INDOT right-of-way, placement must comply with all applicable INDOT regulations. • Monument: Only located at vehicular entrance to subdivision or residential complex. Must be located in a dedicated easement or common area dedicated to homeowners association. • Wall: Must be placed on primary structure
Additional Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EVMS or EVMS components are not permitted • Monument: Must include a minimum of at least one (1) foot of supporting base • Wall: No illumination • Wall: No ILP is required

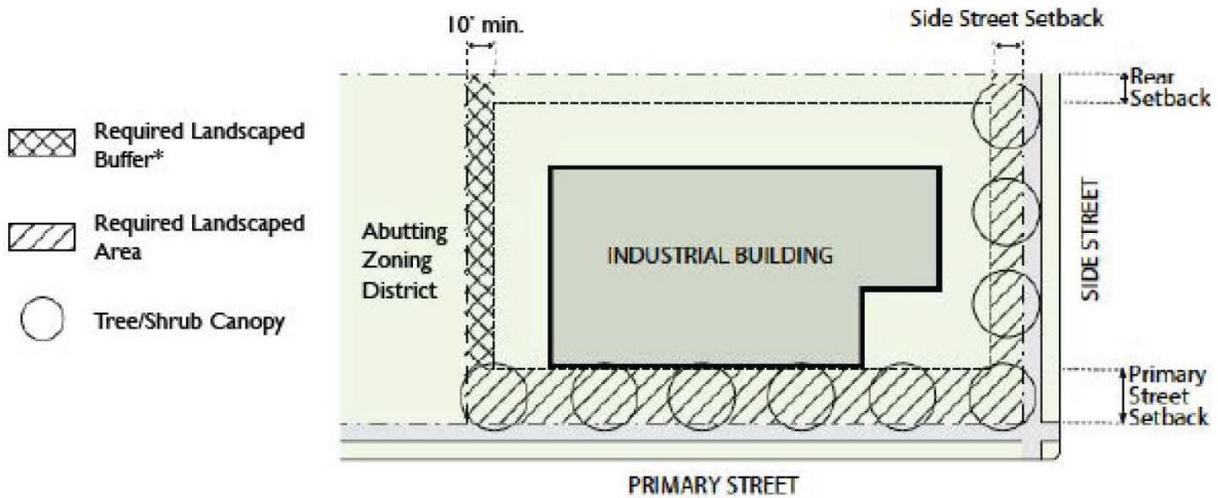
GRAPHICS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

The current zoning ordinance relies primarily on text to convey procedures or specific regulations. This creates the opportunity to misinterpret regulations and simplify concepts for all audiences. Increasing the number and type of illustrations will ensure that regulations are well defined and user friendly. The zoning ordinance should be updated to utilize more graphics and illustrations when defining regulations.

This could include procedures, development standards, landscape or buffer screening, and other similar regulations. Supporting photographs, figures, and flow charts can also be used to enhance the formatting for the ordinance.

Figure 2.2: Example landscaping graphic from Missoula County, Montana.

FIG. 4 Landscaping Location, Industrial Districts



2.1.3. Improve the Document Format

The current zoning ordinance exists as a distinct document which is available for download on the county’s website. Compared to online hosting services, this allows for a high level of flexibility with formatting the overall document, specific articles, and graphics or illustrations. The current formatting is inconsistent from each article with tables, headings, and section breaks varying. This makes the ordinance difficult to read and interpret as regulation formatting may change depending on the section of the ordinance. Similarly, the existing ordinance has portions of the header or footer removed due to formatting errors when the document was published. Collectively, these reduce the overall user-

Figure 2.3: Example formatting from Bloomington, Indiana Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

friendliness of the document and can make locating or reviewing regulations a challenge for the general public, board and commissions, and county staff.

A future update to the zoning ordinance should include a more efficient format that is both visually appealing and easy to review. Articles and section numbering should be logical, eliminating a need for larger sections or specific sub-sections that may be redundant with other provisions. Applying best practices for page layouts will ensure that articles are clearly defined, sections are organized and easy to locate, and graphics, tables, or illustrations are consistent regardless of article. The table of contents and any cross-references in the ordinance could be streamlined to improve accessibility of all zoning regulations. For online access, the format should allow for the separation of ordinance articles so that independent sections can be identified and downloaded for use by the public.

2.1.4. Streamline the Review Process

Review procedures and decision making bodies are outlined in Article 7: Administration. The introduction to this section includes a summary table of the various processes, decision making bodies, and authority of each body specific to the process. Input shared from stakeholders and the general public has revealed that the review procedures outlined in this section are not clear. This is primarily noted because of two reasons: the first, that certain steps in the process may not be defined for all audiences. The second, is that there is no clear graphic or flow chart depicting all the steps required in pursuing certain review procedures. This also relates to the application requirements necessary for county staff to conduct a complete review of an application. The review process is an essential part of the zoning ordinance, ensuring this section is concise, clear, and streamlined will benefit all community stakeholders, residents, and elected officials.

There are several methods to assist with streamlining review procedures which are outlined below.

ESTABLISH STANDARD PROCEDURES

Several zoning review processes will include similar elements such as application requirements, public hearing notices, or other similar regulations. These are the foundation for most if not all of the processes but are currently separated into several sections. Modern best practices establish a set of standard procedures, such as the general applications requirements, that apply to all development applications. This approach consolidates these regulations into a single section within the ordinance, reducing unnecessary regulations that may be redundant or inconsistent. This section would also clarify the minimum requirements for a complete development application, identifying the materials county staff require to conduct their review.

2. DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROCEDURES.

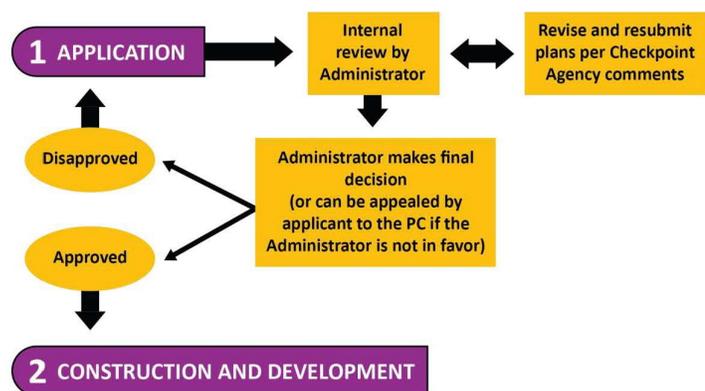


Figure 2.4: Example flow chart from the Clark County, Indiana Unified Development Ordinance (UDO)

REVISE SPECIFIC APPROVAL AND PERMITTING PROCEDURES

Reviewing all procedures and previous applications will help reveal any specific revisions that may be necessary to expedite or simplify processes. This should include a holistic review of both administrative and public procedures to identify opportunities for making the process more efficient. For administrative review, efforts could include refining existing steps for achieving a final decision by clarifying submissions requirements or expanding the purview of staff reviews. Introducing new processes could also serve to expedite minor applications that have become more common in recent years but don't currently have an option outside of lengthy public review processes. For public processes, regulations should be clarified or consolidated where appropriate based on insight from both zoning administrators and development applicants.

USE A PROCEDURES MANUAL

Many communities use a Procedures Manual to assist in the efficient administration of the zoning ordinance. This involves consolidating application requirements, information pertaining to fees, schedules or timelines for review processes, and staff or administrative reviews into a single document. This can be referenced by applicants, residents, and county staff in a separate document from the zoning ordinance. Since many of these requirements are subject to change over time, the procedures manual offers a method for simplifying the ordinance and allowing for timely updates to certain requirements. This also avoids the need for updating the zoning ordinance for minor amendments to an application requirement, fee, or other similar item.

Figure 2.5: Example application checklist from Mobile, Alabama.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST
(ZON, PUD, PLA)

- Seven (7) copies of completed application
- Legal description of site in question (from deed or survey, not a tax assessment description)
- Parcel number of site in question
- Detailed description of proposal
- Plan consistency analysis
- Seven (7) copies of site plan showing all information listed on the application (drawn to scale)
- Digital copy of site plan (dxf or dwg - Autocad 2007 compatible)
- All trees 24" and larger shown on plan
- Address labels for property owners within 300 ft.; address label for applicant; and, if applicant and owner differ, address label for owner
- First-class postage fee for each property owner, applicant and/or owner. (please do not submit addressed envelopes or postage stamps)
- Notification fee (\$1.00) per mailing label
- One photocopy of address labels
- Signature of property owner or letter authorizing applicant to submit application

ALL OF THE ABOVE DOCUMENTS MUST BE SUBMITTED FOR AN APPLICATION TO BE PROCESSED. INCOMPLETE OR INACCURATE INFORMATION WILL DELAY THE PROCESSING OF YOUR REQUEST.

2.2. UPDATE DISTRICTS AND USES

The zoning districts and allowable uses are core elements of the zoning ordinance and support the character of the county. It is important that these regulations remain up-to-date, are clearly defined, and align with the future vision for LaGrange County. Outlined in this section are the recommendations identified through the assessment for modernizing the districts and uses, which includes:

- 2.2.1. Adapt and Modernize Zoning Districts
- 2.2.2. Update Use Types and Definitions
- 2.2.3. Improve District and Use Table Formatting

2.2.1. Adapt and Modernize Zoning Districts

Zoning districts and allowable or permitted uses are the core elements for a zoning ordinance. They guide and establish the general development character across the county and its communities and will directly shape the built environment aligned with the LaGrange County Together Comprehensive Plan. Ensuring these districts remain valid and modern with best practices is critical to future development applications. The existing ordinance has 15 unique zoning districts which are organized into six broad categories:

- Agricultural (A-1)
- Residential (S-1, U-1, L-1)
- Business (B-1, B-2, B-3, B-4)
- Industrial (I-1, I-2, I-3)
- Overlay (O-1, O-2, WECS)
- Planned Unit Developments (PUD)

Each unique zoning district has a purpose within LaGrange County along with associated uses, dimensional requirements, and other similar regulations. A comprehensive evaluation of these districts will identify opportunities to improve existing regulations or align policies with the future vision for the county. A future update should assess what is

working within each zoning district and any discrepancies in the regulations or future direction for the county’s development character. The district purpose and intent should reflect this vision while preserving existing character in each of the communities.

Appropriate updates should simplify the zoning

Figure 2.6: Example zoning district table from Bloomington, Indiana.

Table 02-1: Summary Table of Zoning Districts

Prior District Name	District Name
Residential	
RE - Residential Estate	R1 - Residential Large Lot [New]
RS - Residential Single-Family	R2 - Residential Medium Lot
RC - Residential Core	R3 - Residential Small Lot
---	R4 - Residential Urban [New]
RM - Residential Multifamily	RM - Residential Multifamily
RH - Residential High-Density Multifamily	RH - Residential High-Density Multifamily
MH - Manufactured/Mobile Home Park	RMH - Manufactured/Mobile Home Park
Mixed-Use	
---	MS - Mixed-Use Student Housing
CL - Commercial Limited	MN - Mixed-Use Neighborhood-Scale
CG - Commercial General	MM - Mixed-Use Medium-Scale
CA - Commercial Arterial	MC - Mixed-Use Corridor

districts and align any underutilized districts to support future development in the county. For example, the I-3 Rural Industrial District was intended to assist rural industries with growth and expansion in traditionally agricultural parts of the county but the district is not currently in use. Stakeholders and county staff should review this district to better understand how this district does or does not support rural industry growth. A similar assessment of the ordinances unique overlay and PUD districts should identify methods in which these districts can further enhance the county’s built environment. Many stakeholders interviewed shared their interest in understanding and potential pursuing PUD zoning, which has seen recent practice in neighboring counties such as Elkhart County.

2.2.2. Update Use Types and Definitions

The types of uses established in the existing zoning ordinance and their corresponding definitions overlap in some cases and cause inconsistencies. These discrepancies lead to challenges for administering and interpreting the types of allowable uses. There is also an opportunity to modernize the types of uses with current trends and best practices, the ordinance does include some of these uses such as “Agribusiness”. This makes the ordinance difficult to review and determine the appropriate types of uses permitted in each of the zoning districts. An update should seek to promote structural changes to use types to provide more clarity and certainty within the ordinance.

Two methods can be leveraged to update the use types with best management practices. First, the ordinance should incorporate a consistent use classification structure that organizes all uses into three distinct categories:

- **Use Classification (currently “Use Category”)** – the broad, general classification for the use type such as agricultural, residential, business, and industrial.
- **Use Categories (not currently used)** – major groups of uses that are based on common or similar characteristics such as “Neighborhood Business” and “Regional Business” within the business classification.
- **Specific Uses (currently in use)** – the list of specific uses that are defined in the zoning ordinance for each district such as 1-family dwelling, agribusiness, farmers market, etc.

Many communities use this approach to the use structure due to its flexibility in organizing that vast list of uses. It also improves the user-friendliness for locating various categories of uses and identifying any additional requirements necessary.

Figure 2.7: Example use groups from Clark County, Ohio.

Agricultural & Related Uses: These are primarily uses of or related to agriculture, as defined in this Code.

Residential Uses: These are uses primarily involving housing of various types and densities and associated uses typically found or provided in relation thereto.

Accessory Uses & Structures: These structures and uses are permitted subordinate and secondary in support of, or in relation to, a principal permitted or conditional use or structure.

The second method is to update the specific uses outlined in the ordinance by providing more detail, clarity, and modernizing the definitions and requirements. This would remove any potentially outdated uses from the ordinance and update, as appropriate, or add uses that are still relevant to the county. Regional examples and modern practices would be applied to ensure that any updated or new uses align with appropriate definitions or additional regulations. For example, many stakeholders shared the opportunity to align Kennel regulations with USDA national regulations. These should be explored with the ordinance update to understand how state and federal guidelines can be applied in the county.

2.2.3. Improve District and Use Table Formatting

In the existing ordinance, use tables are defined in Article 3: Use Regulations. Each zoning classification (agricultural, residential, business, etc.) has a separate table for the specific zoning districts that identifies the types of uses and additional regulations. This leads to six individual tables creating redundancy in how uses and regulations are listed in the ordinance. Best practices strive to reduce potential inconsistencies by providing one comprehensive summary table of all the zoning districts and specific uses. This formatting allows users to quickly compare how a certain use is treated in different districts. It also makes future amendments easier to pursue since all identified uses are located in one place within the ordinance. A summary table for the county would enhance the user-friendliness, improving the clarity of use regulations.

Figure 2.8: Example use table from the Missoula County, Montana zoning code update.

F) Key to Use Table.

1. Permitted use. Uses identified with a "■" are permitted by right in the subject district and must comply with all applicable design and development standards subject to a Zoning Compliance Permit.
2. Special exceptions. Uses identified with a "□" may be permitted in the subject district if reviewed and approved in accordance with the special exception review procedures found in Chapter 11 of these regulations and must comply with all applicable design and development standards subject to a Zoning Compliance Permit.
3. Prohibited uses. Uses identified with a "-" are expressly prohibited in the subject district.

G) Table of Uses.

LAND USE/ ACTIVITY	Table 6 Table of Principal Uses by Zoning District													
	OPEN LAND AND AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS				RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS					MIXED-USE DISTRICTS			INDUSTRY & MANUFACTURING	
	RO	AG-R	AG-W	AG-RR	RRS	R	RM	NR	LM*	NC	CC	CEC	ICL**	ICH**
Administrative facility	■	■	■	■	■	□	■	■	□	■	■	■	■	-
Agriculture, high-intensity	□	■	■	□	□	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	□	■
Agriculture, low-intensity	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

*Commercial uses in this district must be accessory to a residential use.

**Commercial uses in these districts must be accessory to an approved primary use.

2.3. ENCOURAGE QUALITY DEVELOPMENT GROWTH

The zoning ordinance directly regulates the character and quality of development across the county. As the core components are reviewed and updated, revisions should be explored for supporting the future direction of development growth across the county. This includes many regulations currently outlined in Article 5: Development and Design Standards and aligning with the overarching vision of LaGrange County Together. Outlined in this section are the recommendations identified through the assessment for encouraging quality development growth, which includes:

- 2.3.1. Support Appropriate Rural Community Growth
- 2.3.2. Collaborate with Rural Industry Expansion
- 2.3.3. Assist LaGrange County Together Recommendations

2.3.1. Support Appropriate Rural Community Growth

Several rural areas in the county have seen significant investment and growth over the past few years. These are predominantly located in some of the unincorporated communities along the outer edges of smaller crossroads and the lakes. Through the process, stakeholders have expressed concerns regarding limitations placed by the zoning ordinance and development interest in these communities. These relate to site design requirements such as setbacks, building distance, accessory dwellings, lot configuration, and many other similar provisions. Many of these communities continue to show interest in growing however it is important to balance this growth with the existing character of the county. Regulations in the ordinance should be reviewed through the updated process to encourage the appropriate development and continued growth of these communities. Property owners, stakeholders, recent applicants, county staff, and other similar groups should be interviewed to understand the challenges with existing regulations and implications for amending or updating these provisions.

2.3.2. Collaborate with Rural Industry Expansion

The county has a growing local economy with many businesses being located in rural areas. Many of these are surrounded by residential uses, being served by county roads for access, deliveries, and shipping. Engagement revealed growing concerns from both private business owners and residents of the community with regard to expanding rural industries. Business owners face challenges with the zoning ordinance and review procedures which potentially limit their ability to grow their business. This includes concerns regarding building size, setback or separation, parking requirements, and other similar regulations. On the other hand, residents are concerned with safety and access along the county roads that service these industries. The majority of these roads are two lanes which are not designed to handle commercial deliveries and do not have the proper width for bicycle or pedestrian travel. A future update should work closely with rural industry owners and residents to understand the balance between expanding businesses and preserving community character. Amendments should be proposed for regulations in the zoning ordinance based on these discussions and reviewed periodically by key stakeholders to ensure they achieve the intended outcomes.

2.3.3. Assist LaGrange County Together Recommendations

The county is currently pursuing a comprehensive plan, LaGrange County Together, for all the incorporated communities and unincorporated areas. The process is analyzing several important topics, one of them being land use and development, and will result in a list of projects, policies, and programs

to pursue over the next several years. The zoning ordinance is one tool that will assist with the implementation of many projects, policies, and programs within the comprehensive plan. Updating the ordinance and conducting periodic reviews ensures that the built environment is aligned with the vision for the county. An initial update provides the foundation for supporting the future land use and character direction while annual or biannual reviews ensure regulations are permitting the appropriate types of development. A future update should evaluate the recommendation identified in LaGrange County Together to provide the policy direction for physical development.

3. APPENDIX

The following pages list all comments received during the first round of engagement that pertain to the zoning ordinance. Several stakeholders interviewed shared specific revisions or amendments to sections of the zoning ordinance which have been included at the end of the memo. Most of the comments were submitted and documented directly by community members and may be presented without edits to spelling, punctuation, grammar, or content.

Listen, Learn, and Launch Activities

Stakeholder Interviews and Comments

ACTIVITY A: THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE OF MY COMMUNITY...

ID	Source	I'm OPTIMISTIC about...	I'm CONCERNED about...	Additional Comments
3	Howe		Zoning. Have many small country businesses that grow affecting the quality of life for neighbors, increasing large trucks on small country roads.	
15	Wolcottville	I am seeing young / middle-age adults taking a real interest in the community, volunteering and getting involved.	Some of our "Civil Servants" act as though they own our county and seem to want to make things difficult because they can.	
16	Wolcottville	I love living in a farm community.	LaGrange requires soil borings (at a cost of thousands) for any building, pole barn in a L-1 zoning. This makes NO sense. How did this get adopted.	
16	Wolcottville	Our county has a wonderful "small town" feel. Let's stay small.	Plan and building departments operate like a large bureaucracy. So many hoops / obstacles to pull a permit to do anything on your property.	
22	Topeka	There are a lot of good people with traditional values.	There is no open dialogue about proposed plans. Town meetings do not discuss until it has been decided.	I feel that ideas will be selected to meet the agenda of the few who make decisions.
25	Topeka		Lack of communication - providing the why on the "No's." How government works, the process of things, how city and county government works. Government transparency.	

ACTIVITY A: THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE OF MY COMMUNITY...

ID	Source	I'm OPTIMISTIC about...	I'm CONCERNED about...	Additional Comments
26	Shipshewana		It seems we have a lack of communication.	<p>I'd like to see you change your rules to USDA regulations on number of females before you have to get a permit. Thanks A Dog Breeder. And about the commercial septic I would think a conventional septic would be sufficient if you have less than 20 females! We would like to see 11 inside/outside runs that isn't dry picking is when it would be required to go with a commercial septic tank. What we're thinking is, if you don't have dry picking on inside/outside runs, you would at the most use 10 gal of water per dog or 20 gallons of water per inside/outside run per day. That would be 300 gal. of water per day, with ten runs. What we would like to see is if you use over 300 gallons of water per day would be a good place for a commercial septic tank. We also would like to require dog kennels to have a privacy fence trees shrubs planted in between neighbors where homes are 50 feet from property line and where exercise yard or runs are facing roads. We thinking buildings could be 100' from property in a agricultural district, and the privacy fence or exercise yard could be up to 25' away from property. Signed affidavit from neighboring land owner located 500' should be from facility and not from the property line.</p>
27	Shipshewana			Land use development for home and a business in county 5 on 10 acre track.
27	Shipshewana			LaGrange County use the USDA guidelines for Dog Breeders
27	Shipshewana			On a small 2 acre tract of land have 2 homes and a septic system.
27	Shipshewana			Signed affidavit from neighbor within 500 feet of facility.

ACTIVITY A: THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE OF MY COMMUNITY...

ID	Source	I'm OPTIMISTIC about...	I'm CONCERNED about...	Additional Comments
28	Shipshewana	Most of the small businesses are located at home which gives parents the opportunity to work with their children and teach them business and life skills.	Remark from one of our biggest contractors "I can walk into the office in Noble county, pay \$300 and in 1/2 hour walk out with a permit. In LaGrange County I pay twice that and almost never get a permit on the first try."	
28	Shipshewana	The county is a quiet, peaceful place to live with a low crime rate	Seemingly the people in the office would like to see all businesses moved to industrial parks. If this were the case, the majority of our small businesses would not be in operation.	
33	Shipshewana	Business minded attitude	Housing - average housing is hard to find	It is important that we review ordinance and rules that impact the potential expansion of our local small businesses. We should consider removing unnecessary barriers to business expansion. Other communities would love to capture what our county has achieved through entrepreneurship.
37	Shipshewana			Need to work with business. I had a very bad experience with the variance board. Wanted them to come out before meeting and look at my business and concerns but they won't come out. I have a storage barn business, so is not like a wood shop. I spend \$4,000 to come to the meeting. When I left I felt like pebble thrown in the water. When I was refused everybody in meeting was upset! Help Wanted! (name redacted)
39	Shipshewana		Zoning needs to be enforced by all residents.	
49	Stroh / Mongo		"Good ole boy" approach to BZA issues.	
50	Stroh / Mongo	64 beautiful lakes in area	Lack of willingness of BZA to consider needs of lake owners.	
56	Stroh / Mongo	We have a wide range of other resources as well - lakes, etc. Important they interact well together.	I would not like to see too much more industrial growth - keep the ag ground and open areas.	

ACTIVITY A: THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE OF MY COMMUNITY...

ID	Source	I'm OPTIMISTIC about...	I'm CONCERNED about...	Additional Comments
58	Stroh / Mongo	Pretty good work ethic of the workforce.	Splitting up larger tracts of farmland into housing and smaller farms makes modern farming more difficult.	
60	Stroh / Mongo		Other issues: 1. Density limites for animal operations. 2. No animals in public waterways. 3. New definition for cottage business - this is abused by the amish! Limit total sq. ft, of buildings. 4. New definition for farm based business. 5. Industry only in designated areas. 6. Amish buggy plate prices need increased to cover damage to the roads and lack of gas tax from buying fuel. 7. 3 to 1 rule for lot size - lots can be no longer than 3 times the width. This is heavily abused by the Amish. 8. L1 zoning need restrtion on hard surfance % of total lot = houses are being over-built by lake people. 9. Better roads - our roads are the worst in the	
61	Stroh / Mongo	We are mostly a rural population... good work ethic, problem solvers and doers. We can accomplish much if we all work together... we usually do.	Worried about the influx of solar farms. County is large ag producer, covering farms with solar panels could injure commerce. Need to limit.	Generally, LaGrange County is a good place to live, work, and raise a family.
64	Stroh / Mongo	Continued small business growth.	There are some questionable leadership roles.	I hope the new ordinance will relieve some of the pressure placed on the BZA board members.
65	Stroh / Mongo	Agricultural future	Solar panels - negative impact on other businesses in the county.	

ACTIVITY A: THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE OF MY COMMUNITY...

ID	Source	I'm OPTIMISTIC about...	I'm CONCERNED about...	Additional Comments
68	LaGrange		Seemingly every new business or even existing businesses have to jump through so many hoop to obtain permits, with so many hoops to obtain permits, with so many restraints, instead of looking at the new businesses as great opportunities, that will bring income into the county tax base, in the form of property values, income taxes, personal property taxes employees, sales taxes, their property taxes, and the list goes on and on how a business is a great opportunity instead of a problem that we don't want.	A new zoning ordinance is needed if the zoning boards do not even go by their own rule book, as permitted in A1 zones, all the businesses that permitted yet are restricted by robbie and her interpretation about manufacturing and retail sales, those should all be permitted if the shops and stores are permitted in A1 zones.
69	LaGrange	Not letting Amish businesses get bigger is a big mistake they will not move to the town if that is your plan please change it!	Be more friendly to businesses that are not in town=Amish. I also bought land on town line being a 21 year old and not being able to start my family on that land due to the culture it picked to be a part of it is wrong to discriminate on Amish for driving a horse and buggy or have a horse on his land that's like his car!!!	
71	LaGrange	Robust economy, good paying jobs	Difficult to start home based businesses.	
72	LaGrange	There are a lot of home based businesses	We are going to lose a lot of business if we have to go through such stuff as BZA's etc. Most of the guys are not comfortable going in front of the board so they put up a building for a buggy shed then when it's done they move a business into it.	
74	LaGrange	Of the encouragement of small business	The challenges of the building permit processes + zoning	

ACTIVITY A: THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE OF MY COMMUNITY...

ID	Source	I'm OPTIMISTIC about...	I'm CONCERNED about...	Additional Comments
76	LaGrange		They make you feel like crap when you try to get a variance or anything that has to do w/business in LaGrange co. they always want you to do something major b-4 they will allow you to do anything. I'm tired of it. I wish they'd be black and white there are too many gray areas.	I would like to ask everyone in the county why they don't want business we need industry small business provide jobs for families. Taxes keeps money in the county. I do love LaGrange county, however if it doesn't change I can't see a future in growing my business- Michingan appears to be more attractive to us. Please feel free to call or visit us. Valley Line Wood Product. 260-768-7807.
88	LaGrange	We have clean lakes.	Multitude of home-based businesses opening on small tracts of land - this brings semis down small roads- dangerous!	
89	LaGrange	Strong ag community as an economic driver	Ag land splitting up into mini farms for the Amish	
92	LaGrange	Strong parks and lakes.	Building permits - no clear concise plan.	
93	LaGrange		Our zoning board is not consistent.	
93	LaGrange		If we are concerned about too much land being developed to business. Let them put more sq. ft. per acre.	
114	Online	The strong economy	Very concerned that petitioners can use agricultural zoning to place commercial types of businesses such a winery, that is really more of an event center next to our residential areas like adams lake. Agi needs to be true agi. Zoning Notification of items that affect our many lake need to be emailed to our lake presidents City downtown improvements.	

ACTIVITY A: THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE OF MY COMMUNITY...

ID	Source	I'm OPTIMISTIC about...	I'm CONCERNED about...	Additional Comments
117	Online	<p>People are coming here to live and thrive. They are coming here to raise their families.</p>	<p>County residents who have chosen to live in this county and want to build nice homes on their properties are constantly hit with obstacles. Especially lake residents. Why does the BZA rule so unfairly against lake residents who just want to to build a beautiful life in this county? Why such strict standards for them while run-down almost (or should be) condemned properties in our towns be allowed to create hazards and eye sores for all that want to live in the community? Why not put attention towards this issue instead of those hoping to beautify our surroundings?</p>	
150	Individual	<p>There is so much potential for successful businesses in LaGrange County, its scary</p>	<p>I do not understand forcing somebody to hookup with the sewer, if he has any amount of land. To me, there is no common sense if a guy lives in the county and wants to build any distance away from a body of water but his property line is within 500 feet of a connection, then he has to connect. I thought we live in a free country, now it seems to me that the county even wants to tell us where to take our shit.</p>	<p>To the building inspectors, this happened a while back. Mark S. was out to do a framing inspection and was trying to tell us we have to add x bracing in the trusses and all the bracing was to the truss prints. Next he was fusing about top mount hangers, even got his code book out but missed that the girder trusses has no studs underneath. Lets be realistic and use common sense, just because you can't find anything wrong doesn't say your not doing your job. Somebody else might be doing their job right, lets all work together and make it easy on everyone.</p>

ACTIVITY A: THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE OF MY COMMUNITY...

ID	Source	I'm OPTIMISTIC about...	I'm CONCERNED about...	Additional Comments
150	Individual		<p>Why is there a building department, if I'm thinking right it was established for tax reasons more than anything. Now it seems that they want to make it hard on some people with no reason except to show their power that they really don't have. I am going to tell you the harder you make it the more people are going to do things behind your back. I'm not saying this to offend anyone but to tell you communication is big, if they come to pull a permit, tell them what all the requirements are at once. Not in three or four different shifts.</p>	

Hi friends,

Just a few lines about my experience with the county. I didn't do a whole lot but with what I did I wouldn't say they were hard to work with. I didn't do anything with the permit side but checked in about septic. That there is one thing I think is a little confusing heard a lot of different ^{stories} gotta do this and not this if so and so. I had a soil bore gentlemen out and said anywhere from \$5 to \$20 thousand for a septic to have maybe 10 dogs in a mini barn kennel. So I decided I cannot afford that in not knowing if it will work in my new kennel in a couple years so I decided to hang it up for now. Later found out that some put a septic in for half the price I got. My ? is why can't they be more open with the options instead of wait until we breeders bore it out of them.

I hope these lines make sense to you and Thank-you for what you all did and want to do for the future.

May God Bless Us All!!

I called Al Garcia and asked what I need to ^{get} a septic permit. He said to bring a site plan and I can have a permit. So I went to Laguna Health Dept. and in about 15 min. I had a permit and I thought that was easy enough.

Al Garcia said it has go to the state and I was thinking he will take care of the rest. About a month later I got some paper from the state saying that they need a site plan from a licened architect. When it all said and done it took about 3 month until it was put in. The county was good to work with I thought.

When I tried to get a permit for my 14 x 24 Dog Kennel on skids, they wanted me to put in a septic, and I was not going to put any running water in it. Then I got a written permit from the Health Dept.

I took that in ^{and} they were not happy about that. Then they told me I have to go and get a manure management plan. That really let me down.

Then they asked me where my map is where my Kennel goes.

I told them I gave you all that information the first time I was in there. They made copies of it. Then they looked for the copies for 10 min and couldn't find them. I then thought that's enuf now, I don't need a permit. I sold the building then they said if you want to go USDA you have to have a septic. Then I called USDA and they said I don't need a septic to go USDA. And they would not take that for an answer.

I got a permit to build a 14x40 dog kennel with 16 runs. The county building department was good to work with for what i needed. But i have to put in a state inspected commercial septic system which i think is totally ridiculous. I think it's ridiculous that I had to pay an architech about the same amount that it costs to put in the septic. I am planning on having around 16 females and I think it would make more sense if I would have to be state inspected if I would have more than 20 females because then I would have to be BOAH approved. I also think it should make a difference if I have my dogs on the floor or on tenderfoot and all the waste would go into the ^{sewer}. From what we experienced we think the issue is in the state and not the county because it's a state law and the county is just doing their job.

I called Robby a number of times with no response on a building project question. Finally somebody else called back then it wasn't really a direct answer.

My thought is if they want breeders to abide by the regulations to be available for questions as soon as possible and with straight forward, honest answers.

On the other hand side Jason Bays was helpful with my CDR permit. I had to get

3-12-21

To Whom It may Concern,

This is a letter in regards to my experience in getting a permit for my dog breeding facility. My first attempt, I wasn't able to get anything accomplished, although the 2nd time I went out, Robbie Miller reviewed my paper work and gave me my permit. I would say if a party or group or individual has his or her paper work in order it is not a hardship to get a permit in La Grange Co.

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I called Robbie The Third week in March. I asked Her what I need To get Permits For a Kennel,

Robbie said To ask Some Breeder's What I need So I called Myron and He sent me a Check List.

Then we had The Covid Shut down. So I Faxed my Site Plan, My ICAW Membership and USDA Application.

Then She Faxed The Site Plan Back and said I dont have The right USDA APP. Paper, So I got The right Paper and Faxed it Back.

I Waited For about a week and Called Robbie To see if everything is ready. Robbie Says Oh you need Waste removal Plan, So I drew another Plan and Faxed it To Robbie. Then I waited For a week or two. I called in and her Secretary said yes everything is ready. I Just need To send a Self addressed envelope with a Stamp. Then Permit is ready.

So The Last week in April I got the Letter From Robbie. The Letter had Addresses From all neighbor's within 500'. I had To get Their Signatures Plus From Our Lender Which is Tri County Land Trust. The Letter had 2 addresses From Tri County. Next I went To Tri County Land Office To get The signature. He crossed The One address out and said it is 10yrs Old and gave Signature ~~to~~

for The new address. I sent Signatures To Robbie.

Later I Called Robbie and They said I have to get Signature For old address Because it was on The Paper. Finally I got all That Done By May 5.

Then I called Robbies office and They said yes Paperwork is here. I can come in and Pull Permits.

About Second Week in May I went To Robbies office To get The Permit. When I Talked To Robbie She said First I have to get OK from Alfredo Garcia at LCHD about My holding Tank for Septic.

So I went To LCHD and Talked To Alfredo. He said I Must Talk To IN State Health Department about Putting in a Sewer.

When I Started I thought I might as well get everything Legally done But If I would have known how much I would have To go Through To get a Permit For a 12x20 Dog Kennel With 4 Females I would have Never Tried.

A \$15,000 Septic For a \$15,000⁰⁰ Kennel Makes NO Sense To Me!

My experience with the County for Commercial breeders permit

1. They do not answer the phone or return messages, yet they want you to make an appointment.
2. They seem to not be completely sure about what their regulations are. (example) I asked what they mean by a septic plan. They said as long as you have a plan. I asked what's allowed and got no clear answer and was told to call Myron. A few weeks later they decided to require a septic on all kennels w/ more than 3 females. Which is a minimum of \$7000 when its all said and done \$3200 just to have an architect draw it up.
3. Most LaGrange County Official seem to not want to help you, but rather want to show their authority and tell you what you have to do. I always thought they are there to serve and regulate in a practical manner for the good of the county

The way things are now, they are the main contributors to having all these illegal kennels. In turn also losing out on possible tax dollars coming back to the county.

I'm not against regulation but it needs to be clear what is required.

Would also be nice if it made sense.

You don't need to use any of this but thanks for letting me vent.

P.S. I'm still planning on following through on a permit when I have everything ready.