Inidian
Aurora
City of

Comprehensive Plan Update 2015
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Acknowledgments

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RESOLUTION NO. 001
A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF AURORA, INDIANA, APPROVING THE 2015 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE FOR THE CITY OF AURORA

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission of the City of Aurora, Indiana is empowered to prepare, approve and certify a Comprehensive Plan for its area of jurisdiction by the provisions of Indiana Code, Section 36-7-4-500 et. seq. entitled "500 Series – Comprehensive Plan"; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission of the City of Aurora and the legislative body in preparing and considering land use proposals, are tasked under I.C. 36-7-4-603 to pay reasonable regard to: (1) the comprehensive plan; (2) current conditions and the character of current structures and uses in each district; (3) the most desirable use for which the land in each district is adopted; (4) the conservation of property values throughout the jurisdiction; and (5) responsible development and growth; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has reviewed the “City of Aurora, Indiana Comprehensive Plan”, dated May 2015 which is the official policy that establishes development goals and objectives to guide future growth within and around the City of Aurora;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the “City of Aurora, Indiana Comprehensive Plan”, which is attached to and made a part of this Resolution, is hereby approved as a general policy statement for future land use development in the area considered and is submitted to the City of Aurora, Indiana City Council for their consideration and action.

Passed by the Area Plan Commission for the City of Aurora, Indiana, this 15th day of June, 2015.

Mike Crider, President
Planning Commission of Aurora, Indiana

ATTEST:

Ben Turner
Planning Commission Secretary
CITY OF AURORA
DEARBORN COUNTY, INDIANA

RESOLUTION 2015-007

LOCAL RESOLUTION APPROVING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

WHEREAS, the City of Aurora had identified adequate reason to analyze a Comprehensive Planning Study of the city, and

WHEREAS, the City of Aurora has hired HWC Engineering, Inc. to define and describe the issues, advise us of our options, and make recommendations to address this issue in the near future, and

WHEREAS, the City of Aurora has received federal Community Development Block Grant dollars from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs to fund this study and has contributed $4,500.00 as local match for this project, and

WHEREAS, the City of Aurora has reviewed the process and completed study thoroughly and is satisfied with the services performed, information contained therein, and methodology applied;

WHEREAS, the City of Aurora has received three copies of this document for our records and will keep them on file in the city offices for future reference, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF AURORA CITY COUNCIL AS FOLLOWS:

that the final document is hereby approved, contingent upon comments and approval received from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs. The City of Aurora will fully consider all comments and feedback received from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs and will direct its consultant to provide amended copies of this plan reflecting all said comments. This Resolution shall become effective upon passage and upon compliance with the procedures required by law.

ALL OF WHICH IS RESOLVED by the City of Aurora City Council of Dearborn County, Indiana on this the 6th day of July, 2015.

CITY OF AURORA CITY COUNCIL
DEARBORN COUNTY, INDIANA
Donnie Hastings Jr., Mayor

Ben Turner, Council Member
Mike Crider, Council Member
John Borgman, Council Member
Kevin Gerke, Council Member
Melvin Kremer Jr., Council Member

ATTEST:

Randolph Turner
Clerk Treasurer
Chapter One

Vision & Plan Summary
Chapter One  Vision & Plan Summary
A VISION FOR AURORA’S FUTURE

The vision for Aurora’s Comprehensive Plan Update is simple: Aurora has a lot of potential and hidden jewels. In the process of developing this plan, a few themes consistently came to the surface; people love the historic charm and small town mindset of Aurora, but felt there were several issues which need to be addressed to make it even better.

Many communities have an identity issue, they are made up of a conglomerate of recent development and transient residents and have no inherent identity. That is not the case in Aurora. Aurora is not just surrounded by history, this community helped write it. Aurora was settled before Indiana became a territory and the same charm and advantages which originally encouraged your ancestors to settle in this valley along the Ohio River so long ago are still present today. Aurora is a small community with historic charm, river views, and beautiful surroundings but many people are currently passing by the charm by. The people passing by create frustrating traffic issues on Aurora’s main roadways on a daily basis, but they also represent a great opportunity to help promote the great things Aurora has to offer.

The community needs to get the word out and scream it from the hilltops that Aurora is a great place to live, work, and visit, because it is! If you don’t believe it and boast about it nobody else will either.

This plan focuses on easily achievable goals which can be built upon to enact great changes within the community; it will not be a short or painless process but well worth the efforts as you once again begin to see new businesses opening, new families moving to town, and more visitors frequenting local businesses. There are many small projects which will help clean up your image and make a good first impression and be your first steps towards bigger and better things.

While many of the action steps in the plan have been broken down into easily achievable pieces the underlying ideas and vision are monumental. This plan is founded on a grand vision that, when achieved, will set the stage for many generations of future prosperity for your community. Completing the ideas outlined on the following pages will ultimately be a game changer for your community. The primary vision, the Big 5 Ideas for this plan, are summarized below:

Aurora’s Big 5 Ideas:
- Downtown Revitalization
- Neighborhood Revitalization
- Tourism/Outdoor Recreation
- Ohio Riverfront Development
- Quality of Life & Community Connections

Each of these topics is discussed in more detail in various places throughout the comprehensive plan but together they outline a unique vision which centers on reinvesting in your existing assets in order to appeal to future citizens who may be looking for a place to move or start a business.

Future development and growth must not be ignored, but considered when the time is right and the present quality of life goals have been achieved for your community. The majority of this plan emphasizes on those investments which you can make to improve the quality of life for current residents and businesses alike.
MOVING THE PLAN FORWARD

In Aurora, there is no shortage of desire to improve the city. Local leaders and citizens have expressed again and again that they would like to see the quality of life for local residents improved and many steps have already been taken in that direction.

Despite the desire and good intentions among citizens toward improving the city, apathy is a lingering problem. Many residents are overwhelmed, don't know where to start, and don't believe things are changing for the better. Like many communities, it also appears that a relatively small group tackles most of the work when it comes to organizing events, running committees and in general volunteering. There is a need for more people to raise their volunteering hand.

There are a few key factors that need to be in place in order to facilitate meaningful community development.

- Local leaders (including volunteers) ready to work
- Plans for addressing priority areas such as downtown
- Residents who believe in the community’s potential
- Broad community involvement and acceptance of the need for revitalization and reinvestment
- Funding sources to move work forward.

Aurora has local leaders ready to work and a whole host of residents and stakeholders who believe in the community’s potential. Through this plan, they are also starting the process with which to address priority areas throughout the city.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Aurora is continually changing and evolving in response to many internal and external pressures. Some of these changes are positive and some are negative. As Aurora is part of the Cincinnati metropolitan area, home to a growing population of almost 2.2 million people, shifting patterns of where people live, work, and find entertainment and recreation will continue to have influence on Aurora’s destiny. This comprehensive plan is the tool you can use to guide important future decisions, ensuring that your future destiny meets the needs, wants, and desires of the community.

In Indiana, comprehensive planning is permitted by the 500 series of Title 36-7-4 of the Indiana Code. This law empowers towns, cities and counties to adopt plans. Any plan adopted in Indiana must contain at a minimum the following three components:

- A statement of objectives for the future development of the jurisdiction
- A statement of policy for the land use development of the jurisdiction
- A statement of policy for the development of public ways, public places, public lands, public structures and public utilities.

While these are the minimums, comprehensive plans may also include additional elements such as; parks and recreation, natural resource protection, flood control, transportation, and utilities and infrastructure. The time frame of the comprehensive plan is intentionally long term (up to 20 years) so it survives the ever-changing landscape of the economy, politics, and natural disasters.
The planning process during this time frame must be continual, you will need to evaluate and revise this plan in response to continually changing conditions. This plan is the next evolution of community planning in Aurora which began more than 50 years ago and was most recently revised in 2000.

One important factor to remember is that this plan is not intended to provide detailed guidance on specific development standards or the design of a certain amenity, those details are best left to individual planning efforts. Rather, this comprehensive plan should be viewed as a guide for a larger future vision for Aurora, a guide which needs to be come an integral part of the daily decision making process.

Funding can be a challenge, but the Appendix provides ideas for funding, mostly from governmental grants. Increasing the assessed valuation of local property is another way to provide additional funding, but other projects may have to be done first in order to achieve that goal.

A primary message to residents should be about the need for public investment. Aurora is full of character and charm. This is one of the instantly recognizable assets of Aurora to outside visitors. To preserve that character, public investment – in streets, trails, downtown and neighborhoods – is needed. Public investment also increases the opportunities for private investment. To pave the way for that investment, there needs to be community support.

While many members of the public helped form this plan through the survey, meetings and committees, it is not enough that people understand an issue or show up at meetings about it; they have to have a passion to see something done to fix the problem. Following are some tips for continuing to build community support:

- Enlist well-respected community members as spokespeople and have your biggest advocates recruit others to support the project.
- Give residents access to events to talk about what excites them about the project. Enthusiasm begets enthusiasm.
- Let residents take control of parts of the project. Getting people intimately involved is the best way to keep them engaged.
- Engage people early and often.
- Be transparent about progress, setbacks and positive results.
- Have direct conversations with critics to understand and address their concerns; then, recruit them to work on the project in that specific area.
- Frame the project in clear language that conveys the purpose and elicits broad-based support.
- Emphasize common ground and shared community values.
- Don’t make any claims that people find ridiculous or unrealistic.
- Ask people to do something specific for the project rather than just telling them about it.
- Don’t try to get everyone on board at the same time – take it one group/person at a time.
- As support grows, illustrate the growth at every event. It increases the sense of inevitability and people want to be part of the majority/winning side.
- Celebrate accomplishments quickly and publicly.
- Maintain contact with supporters and thank them for their support.
- Follow up to see if there have been any changes, questions, or concerns.
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Preparation for this plan began with a review of the Comprehensive Plan from 2000. Formation of this comprehensive plan was driven by a public feedback process which was overseen by a steering committee of 21 members. The steering committee members and many citizens helped to identify areas in the city that need attention and parts of the city that offer opportunities for growth. Some areas made both lists. Further community outreach included:

**Project Website**
A website – http://www.cityofauroracompplan.org – was used as a portal for communication during the plan’s development. All of the minutes from the various meetings as well as other plan documents were posted on the website. The website also allowed for questions or comments about the plan.

**Public Survey**
A public survey was conducted to ask residents and those with connections to Aurora their opinion on a broad range of topics. The online survey received more than 300 responses and helped guide the vision for the plan.

**Steering Committee Meetings**
The steering committee consisted of 21 individuals who volunteered their time to help to set priorities and outline the goals and objectives for the future of Aurora. The steering committee met four times and served as the sounding board for the ideas presented in the comprehensive plan.

**Key Stakeholder Input**
Key stakeholders were interviewed and provided valuable input on issues such as economic development, downtown, housing, recreation and utilities which are reflected in the plan. Following is a partial list of the many organizations which contributed ideas and guidance through the stakeholder input process:

- Dearborn County Highway Department
- Aurora Police Department
- Aurora Fire Department
- Southeast Indiana Visitors Bureau
- Dearborn County Economic Development
- Aurora Lion’s Club
- Aurora Main Street
- St Mary’s School
- Various Small Business Owners

**Public Meetings**
A public workshop was held early in the process to gather additional ideas and input for the issues facing Aurora and the opportunities Aurora can capitalize on. A series of three additional public meetings were held during the adoption process to present information and receive comments on a final draft of the plan.
PLAN SUMMARY

Following is a brief summary of the chapters in the plan which lay out what the Aurora community must do to transform the community’s vision into a tangible process. Several of the chapters in this comprehensive plan conclude with a series of goals. The implementation chapter at the end of the document provides a summary table of the goals along with concrete steps that can be undertaken to meet those goals as well as responsible parties.

Community Character

The Community Character chapter highlights the unique qualities of Aurora. Community resources, cultural resources, and a demographic snapshot of the community are also included.

Land Use

The Land Use chapter discusses current land use patterns for the City and how future land use decisions can assist in shaping the fabric and look of the community.

Economic Development

The Economic Development chapter discusses economic development opportunities within Aurora and where realistic actions can be taken to create an improved economic climate for Aurora.

Housing and Neighborhoods

The Housing and Neighborhoods chapter discusses the current housing situation in Aurora, including the type of homes available in Aurora, new home building permits, foreclosures, number of renters, and demographics. The chapter also highlights the current market overview in Dearborn County.

Natural Resources and Recreation

This chapter features a discussion of the available natural resources in and around Aurora including topography, geology/soils, ecology/agriculture, water features, drainage/flooding, air quality, brownfields, open space and recreation. Ways in which to protect, expand, and capitalize on these resources are presented.

Transportation

The Transportation chapter highlights the existing transportation resources in and around Aurora and how land use policies should guide future transportation development. Key opportunities such as trails, sidewalks, and gateways are also discussed.

Infrastructure and Utilities

This chapter focuses on the existing conditions of Aurora’s infrastructure and utilities and the need to continually plan for upgrading and maintaining the networks in place. Any growth in the community will require growth and updating of infrastructure and utilities.

Critical Sub Areas

The Critical Sub Areas chapter highlights 3 areas the which warranted further study and will require focused efforts over the next several years. Those areas include Downtown, Riverfront and Tourism.
A FINAL WORD FOR PLAN COMMISSIONERS, CITY OFFICIALS, & OTHER DECISION MAKERS

With proper use, a comprehensive plan will make your life easier. Many hours were donated by residents and local leaders to craft the vision goals of this plan, they represent the best ideas to help you realize a widely supported and common vision for the future of the community. Community leaders must use this plan to form the basis for public discourse and to help guide the intended outcomes of their future decisions.

You should use this plan to benchmark your progress towards a common vision for the future prosperity of your community. It should guide your thoughts and actions and hold you accountable to the desired outcomes which were contributed by so many thoughtful residents. Circumstances will change, Aurora will change, and this plan should be modified to adapt accordingly. This plan represents a beginning rather than an end, a beginning of a productive and proactive process of continual growth and improvement for Aurora.
Chapter Two Implementation Plan
IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

The residents of Aurora, especially its elected and appointed officials, hold the success of the comprehensive plan in their hands. While the residents of Aurora have their own responsibility in determining the future of the community, it is elected and appointed officials who make the daily decisions that will determine the future of the community.

This section lays out and summarizes the goals and strategies needed to make the plan work. The goals and strategies are supported and explained upon in the following chapters. A lot of time and community resources went into the completion of this plan and will take even more resources for it to succeed. Local government officials, especially including the Area Plan Advisory Commission, will need to take ownership of implementing the plan. This plan is their guidebook and manual upon which decisions will be based. Understanding the plan’s goals and reasoning by the community at large helps these leaders make informed decisions.

Training for Public Officials

It is critical that elected and appointed officials get the training that they need in order to undertake planning and zoning matters in the most informed manner possible.

Laws and ordinances from the Federal level, State level and local level are often complicated. Though Indiana does not currently require commission members to receive training, it is always a good idea.

The following suggestions can assist the city in obtaining some training for public officials.

- Membership in the American Planning Association (APA). The APA hosts an annual national conference including sessions for citizen planners as well as publishes a magazine, newsletters, books and reports. For more information, visit www.planning.org.

- Utilize the Indiana Citizen Planner’s Guide from the Indiana Chapter of the American Planning Association. The guide is free and available on-line at www.indianaplanning.org. The guide contains several chapters that can be useful for elected officials, plan commission members, board of zoning appeals members, neighborhood organizations, and citizen committees and contains information specific to Indiana.
Helping People Understand the Plan

To obtain the most out of planning, some effort is needed in educating stakeholders about the basic goals and tools available. Most residents do not understand planning and zoning because it is not something that they deal with on a day-to-day basis.

After final adoption, the city should make the plan available online and in local libraries. The city should also consider providing information sessions for anyone interested in how to read and use the plan.

Plan commission and board of zoning appeal hearings can also be educational opportunities. Many people who attend these meetings have never attended before and don’t know what to expect. Letters and notifications should be written so they are easy to understand. A brief summary of what will happen at the meeting prior to the start can assist those in attendance follow and know what is going on.

The commission and board can also remove much of the mystery that surrounds their decisions by including what laws and ordinance criteria they must consider in their decision. The background information can be included on the back of the agenda, at the entrance of the meeting, or posted online.

Funding Sources

A list of potential funding sources for the implementation items is included in the Appendix.

Next Steps

This plan contains years worth of ideas and suggestions for projects. It can be overwhelming to think about addressing all of the recommendations.

However, it is possible to look ahead to the near future and take the steps needed to implement the comprehensive plan. The following chart summarizes the goals and strategies identified in each of the chapters. Each goal and strategy is grouped under a chapter name and provides priority levels and responsible parties for carrying out the goal. It is intended that the plan commission and staff use this chart on an annual basis to benchmark their progress for implementing this plan.
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<th>Action Item</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Goal: Make land use and zoning decisions which encourage infill development and reinvestment in existing neighborhoods throughout the city.</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>° Create and prioritize an inventory of potential infill or redevelopment sites, and identify targeted uses for each.</td>
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<td>° Promote infill sites to developers.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>° Look for housing and commercial opportunities by investing in existing building stock and encouraging higher density development patterns on previously platted land within the historic downtown core.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>° Clearly define the constraints and opportunities associated with development within flood zones by developing educational and promotional materials which illustrate what is possible and where.</td>
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<td>Land Use</td>
<td><strong>Goal: Balance Aurora’s long term residential development interests and its scenic beauty by proactively engaging in ridgetop development activities.</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>° For both City and fringe development, require developers to upgrade connector roads concurrent with residential development</td>
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<td>° Actively work with Dearborn County to ensure development near the city’s border is completed in a manner which will not impede the future growth needs/potential of Aurora.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>° Determine appropriate development standards for multi-family housing on ridgetops. This should include setbacks, density requirements, and roadway service standards.</td>
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### AURORA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN - IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

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<td>Short Term</td>
<td>Mid Range</td>
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<td>Land Use</td>
<td><strong>Goal: Encourage infill development downtown and within other existing parts of the Aurora community.</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>◦ Look for opportunities to develop or redevelop underutilized buildings downtown and along the US 50 corridor before allowing new facilities to be constructed.</td>
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<td>◦ Build interest in commercial development which repurposes vacant commercial properties by developing and marketing an inventory of available downtown commercial space. Make this list readily available and use it as a lead in to conversations with prospective business owners.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>◦ Focus on improving the visual quality and character of existing development along the corridor.</td>
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<td>◦ Develop plans to make investments in sidewalk and trail development projects which will help connect existing neighborhoods and parks west of US 50 to the downtown core and the Ohio River.</td>
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<td><strong>Goal: Ensure future land uses in recently added sections of the community do not become a burden on city resources.</strong></td>
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<td>◦ Develop a carefully planned and detailed description of the development locations within newly added portions of the community. In the plans, clearly outline the desired development types, desired land uses, desired densities, required utility and service connections, and forecast timeline for future development.</td>
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<td>◦ Make sure future development in newly added areas of the community meet the long term development needs of the city and are development in a manner consistent with desired local development quality standards.</td>
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<td>◦ Develop areas first where required utility services such as water and sanitary sewer are already readily available. Consider placing a moratorium on development in other areas until these most readily available areas are nearing build out.</td>
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## Economic Development

**Goal: Identify your unique assets and develop strategies to help employ them for greater economic gain through increased tourism activity.**

- Conduct a retreat with trusted stakeholders and local business owners to identify your key local resources.
- Use the results of the retreat to develop a detailed economic development strategy specific to Aurora.
- Work with your network of local, regional, and state economic development resources to help revise the first draft of your economic development strategy and identify additional available economic development resources.
- Develop the riverfront as a key community attraction. Complete the strategies outlined in the Critical Sub Area section of the plan.
- Develop your tourism potential and opportunities. Work to implement the strategies defined in the Critical Sub Area section of the plan.

**Goal: Focus your short term economic development energy on small business support and retention.**

- Work with local banks to develop and promote a small business micro-loan program.
- Investigate the development of the recent trend in crowd funding to help support business expansion and growth.
- Explore your potential for development of a craft business incubator. Look to industry experts and other communities for examples of how this has been accomplished in other areas. Dovetail this initiative with other cultural assets such as your Ohio river heritage to help develop an interesting and compelling story which will captivate visitors.
## Category

### Economic Development

#### Goal: Maximize the potential marketability of key existing commercial and industrial spaces.

- Reduce and eliminate first floor residential uses in what should be prime commercial spaces by implementing the land use recommendations on that topic.
- Work with Dearborn County and the landowners of the existing Aurora Industrial Park to improve the appearance and visibility of this key economic asset.
- Find a way to work with and/or develop a local building trades program. Work with groups such as workforce development agencies and higher education establishments to develop a program which will provide credentials and increase employment potential of participating students.

#### Goal: Support the downtown revitalization strategies by working to complete the implementation measures outlined in the Critical Sub Areas section of the plan.

#### Goal: Develop a strategic marketing campaign and develop a support network which can provide mutually beneficial support for your marketing goals.

- Continue to find ways to maintain and build your relationship with key regional economic development resources including the Dearborn County Economic Development, Rising Sun, Lawrenceburg, and OKI.
- Organize periodic round table conversations with key economic development entities to discuss regional issues and opportunities.
- Work to procure professional services for the development and maintenance of an up to date marketing campaign. Maximize the use of modern media communication methods to elevate the images and reputation of Aurora.
- Develop a strategic press release campaign which utilizes local, regional, and statewide media outlets to promote changes which are occurring within Aurora. Take a 'no news is too small' approach to help create visibility for positive changes within the community.
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<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Development</strong></td>
<td><strong>Goal: Create reliable sources of capital to help complete capital investments which will further Aurora’s economic development goals</strong></td>
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<td>- Work to establish a TIF for the use of capital expenditures related to downtown revitalization, neighborhood revitalization, and riverfront redevelopment.</td>
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<td>- Work with the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs, the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority, OKI, and Indiana finance Authority to help identify potential sources of investment capital for Aurora’s economic development goals.</td>
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<td><strong>Housing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Goal: Implement stronger and more consistent code enforcement process.</strong></td>
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<td>- Finalize the agreement between the City of Aurora and Dearborn County Planning and Zoning to allow for a full time person to assist Aurora with code enforcement related issues,</td>
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<td>- Investigate an aggressive ticketing strategy as an alternative, and less costly option, to taking code violations to court.</td>
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<td>- Reduce the amount of time which property owners are able to remain in non-compliance. Set stricter timelines for completion of improvements and make sure to take corrective action the day following deadline expiration.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Develop a task force to complete periodic inspections on substandard housing. Couple this initiative with a possible rental occupant hotline which can be used to report major issues.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Keep a record of landlord and property owner complaints and use the record to identify frequent and habitual offenders. Follow-up with frequent offenders on a regular basis and encourage better property management.</td>
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</table>
## AURORA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN - IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Action Item</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Goal: Encourage redevelopment and reinvestment in existing neighborhoods and housing.</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Work with and/or establish a non-profit housing group whose primary goal is to promote reinvestment and housing opportunities through the purchase, stabilization, development and resale of quality housing.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Promote regular neighborhood clean-up/service days with junk pick up to make it easy to get rid of large items.</td>
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</table>
| | - Resurrect community night out in order to build neighborhood watch program  
  - Ask specific residents to lead effort for each neighborhood  
  - Coordinate with Aurora police to organize program | | |
| | - Develop a program for the city purchase of dilapidated and foreclosed properties. Use the properties to establish a land bank program for future housing developments. | | |
| | - Demolish and redevelop properties which are beyond repair and vacant lots  
  - bundle and re-sell these properties with deed restrictions which apply strict conditions on property maintenance requirements. | | |
<p>| | - Purchase and re-sell salvageable properties as-is with incentives for fix-up and rehabilitation and or restrictive covenants which specify required repairs and property conditions. | | |
| <strong>Goal: Preserve historical character by making historic preservation a priority among homeowners.</strong> | | | |
| - Provide a technical assistance resource for homeowners regarding historical standards and regulations, including education on their importance and how to apply the standards and regulations. | | |
| - Develop materials to educate residents and visitors on the importance of historic property standards. Make sure that standards and educational materials are readily available online and in various public locations throughout the city. | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td><strong>Goal: Improve the quality of low income and rental housing in the community.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Enact a moratorium on new subsidized housing until new housing regulations and code enforcement process can be initiated.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Develop a consistent and ongoing blight elimination program, which provides resources for demolition of unsafe buildings.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Work to encourage the development of residential properties in a manner which will attract a more balanced demographic to the community. Focus efforts on amenities which will attract middle income families and seniors.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Goal: Reduce and eventually eliminate first floor residential uses in downtown commercial buildings.</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Revise current B-2 zoning regulations to place clear restrictions on first floor residential uses within the historic downtown business area. Include provisions in the revised ordinance which limits grandfathering of non-conforming uses (such as first floor residential) to 90 days or less.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Modify the boundary current boundary of B2 zoning area downtown to facilitate the elimination of undesirable uses in the business district but which also realistically allows for some residential uses in fringe commercial areas, where appropriate.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Develop specific downtown residential zoning standards which exclude first floor residential uses within a specific downtown boundary and which clearly define the types and characteristics of residential and non-business uses.</td>
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<td>Category</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Goal: Ensure the future viability of Aurora’s existing parks and recreational opportunities; provide for future needs through continued planning efforts.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural Resources and Recreation</td>
<td>◦ Enhance existing parks through maintenance that has been deferred.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>◦ Improve and diversify local recreational programming.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>◦ Expand existing or add new festivals to reach a wider audience.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>◦ Identify a location for a downtown riverfront park or plaza space that can serve as a permanent festival location. Develop a music or concert series in the park or on the riverfront.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>◦ Complete a comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan using IDNR planning guidelines for park and recreational facilities. Update the parks plan on a regular basis to maintain IDNR funding eligibility for improvements.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Goal: Capitalize on water oriented recreational opportunities and other opportunities along the Ohio River and major tributaries such as Hogan Creek.</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>◦ Promote existing and develop new water access sites for kayaking, canoeing, paddle boats, and other boating activities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>◦ Develop a public boat dock along the riverfront, ideally be north of Lesko park. Ensure the location of the dock provides ample room for temporary mooring of watercraft and vehicle access to the river and parking.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>◦ Develop easy pedestrian access from boat docks and marinas into the downtown.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>◦ Support continued efforts at developing a new community water amenity within Aurora. Explore options for locating a small splash pad near the river and promote the findings of the recently completed aquatics center study conducted by an Indiana University graduate class.</td>
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<td>Category</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural Resources and Recreation</td>
<td><strong>Goal: Expand the existing multi-use trail network.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>° Construct trail connection from Lesko Park to bridge on George Street.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>° Collaborate with Rising Sun in the development and expansion of a trail connecting the two cities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>° Investigate options for constructing a trail connecting the city’s parks and community center to the local trail network. This should include a route under the US 50 bridge at Hogan Creek.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>° Take advantage of the natural topography surrounding Aurora to develop and promote the community as a hiking destination. Tie this effort with other economic development and tourism goals established in other plan sections.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>° Partner with the community center and healthcare providers in town, to have wellness trails’ designated throughout the downtown with varying degrees of exertion. Quantify exertion levels to identify fitness goals and incentivize local participation by awarding points for completing trails using high and/or low tech mechanisms for reporting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td><strong>Goal: Make efforts to reduce peak travel time traffic congestion and improve access to key employment and shopping destinations along US 50.</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>° Discuss US 50 congestion concerns with the local INDOT district and work with them to identify short term and long term solutions to help alleviate traffic congestion during peak commute times.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>° Seek to build a local coalition of communities along the US 50 corridor who experience similar congestion issues. Use this group as a platform for identifying key issues and developing a proposal for fixing the problem which can gain broad support from communities involved in the coalition.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>° Monitor the impacts of SR 56 traffic bypassing the 2nd Street commercial corridor. If conditions warrant, consider options for re-routing select vehicle traffic through downtown.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>° Address people bypassing downtown and business corridor on US 50 by creating a wayfinding package to draw people in.</td>
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</table>
**Transportation**

**Goal:** Enhance community walkability and make critical pedestrian connections between existing neighborhoods and downtown Aurora and the riverfront.

- Improve local access to the larger trail system by developing a prioritized sidewalk repair and replacement program. Focus initial efforts on repair of sidewalks in the core downtown area and in key residential areas.
- Develop a sidewalk repair fund which will help offset the cost of removal and replacement of neighborhood sidewalks for property owners willing to pay the costs for raw materials to complete repairs.
- Begin overcoming the community separation issues by installing crosswalks and other pedestrian safety improvements at the US 50 intersections. Begin with an initial project at US 50 and Sunnyside.
- Develop plans to provide better off-street US 50 pedestrian crossings. Examine the potential to use existing waterways and above or below grade crossing measures to improve pedestrian and bicycle crossing access and safety.
- Explore opportunities to develop a measured fitness trail loop downtown. This can be accomplished for very little cost by using existing sidewalks and trails and simply developing signage and information which provides distances traveled and other health related information.
- Support the development of an expanded bicycle and pedestrian access via off-street and on street trail infrastructure improvements.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<th>Priority</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td><strong>Goal: Make upgrades to local roadways, streetscapes, sidewalks, lighting, signage, and pavement.</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Continue to find a means for funding the 2nd Street Streetscape project. Work with the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs to identify locations which would be eligible for federal funding and develop a long range plan for completing non-eligible projects through local funding sources such as TIF revenue.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Provide a more appealing entry experience into Aurora by completing gateway improvements and enhancements at key community entry and exit locations. Create better nodes and gateways on Importing Street.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Coordinate planning and construction of future utility improvements with a sidewalk and roadway repair program to help reduce overall project costs and business disruption.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Make repairs to local roadways and sidewalks. Couple the repairs with practical stormwater conveyance upgrades. Develop an inventory of all needed repairs and updates throughout the community and identify a practical approach to make community resources available for repairs which would see the most critical project completed within a few years.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Infrastructure and Utilities</td>
<td><strong>Goal: Develop a new utility master plan to guide water and sanitary sewer system growth and investment.</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Pursue OCRA Planning Grant to fund the new master plan.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Use planning process to identify growth/expansion plans for the water utility</td>
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</table>
## Infrastructure and Utilities

**Goal:** Continue to complete sanitary sewer improvements specified in the City’s IDEM Agreed Order.
- Implement Phase 2 CSO project.
- Implement Phase 3 CSO projects.
- Pursue opportunities to combine downtown CSO projects with ongoing downtown streetscape and enhancement projects.

**Goal:** Coordinate utility improvement work with desired streetscape and roadway enhancement projects.
- Combine projects to achieve efficiency and capitalizes on economies of scale.
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Chapter Three

Community Character
Chapter Three Community Character
The City of Aurora is located in southeastern Indiana’s Dearborn County. The majority of the city is located in Center Township. This city of less than 4,000 people is situated on the Ohio River, a forty-five minute drive from downtown Cincinnati, only five minutes from Lawrenceburg, Indiana and just across the river from Kentucky.

Aurora also lies within the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Combined Statistical Area (OKI), which will be referred to throughout this document. The OKI region includes the following counties: Brown, Butler, Clermont, Clinton, Hamilton, and Warren Counties in Ohio; Boone, Bracken, Campbell, Gallatin, Grant, Kenton and Pendleton counties in Kentucky; and Dearborn, Franklin, and Ohio counties in Indiana. The largest and most influential city in this region is Cincinnati, Ohio which is a major destination for people living in Aurora because of its recreational, entertainment, and employment opportunities.

**HISTORY**

Originally settled as early as 1796, Aurora was platted in 1819, by Jesse Holman, president of the Aurora Association for Internal Improvements, which purchased the land on which Aurora lies. The original plat contained 206 lots and six public squares. Very little was developed until the town was incorporated as a city in 1845.

By 1859 the railroad serviced Aurora and with the river on the east and the railroad on the west, the two transit modes continued to support the town’s economic growth during the 19th century.

From the beginning, Aurora had a diverse faith background. Initial lots were set aside for a Baptist Church, Methodist Episcopal Church and Presbyterian Church. As the population grew, so did the churches and the steeples quickly became the most recognizable landmarks of Aurora.

Late in the 19th century, the ‘Red’ bridge was built over Hogan Creek, creating an additional transportation link and furthering the development of Aurora. The construction of U.S. 50 was a milestone in Aurora’s development and connected the city with Lawrenceburg, Cincinnati, and the rest of Indiana. In addition to the influence of the highway, the city continued to receive traffic from riverboats.

The decline of river and railroad traffic coupled with the development of the interstate system has led to recently declining growth in Aurora, though the physical reminders of its past have largely been preserved.
EXHIBIT A: CORPORATE LIMITS MAP
CHARACTER

Though the bustle of Aurora as an industrial hub influenced by the river and railroads has gone, Aurora still maintains its historic charm and reminds visitors of an earlier time.

Aurora’s past plays a vital role in its current character. Downtown Aurora is a Registered National Historic District and the historical mansions of Hillforest and Veraestau provide a glimpse into Aurora’s majestic past. Hillforest is a National Historic Landmark and Veraestau country estate is registered to the National Register of Historic Places. Veraestau also serves as the southeast field office for Indiana Landmarks. Many homes throughout the area provide a rich palette of architectural styles including Queen Anne, Italianate, Georgian Revival, Greek Revival, and Romanesque Revival. The six historic steeples that make up the city’s skyline are instantly recognizable as you approach the city by road or water.

Though Aurora possesses a strong link to the past, the city has a lot of potential for its future. For a small city, Aurora boasts of a medical center, two banks, a library, downtown grocery store, numerous specialty retail stores downtown, a brewery, two museums and several restaurants. Three interstates pass near Aurora, including I-275, which is only six miles northeast along US 50. Riverboat casinos are a major recent influence, with facilities located in Lawrenceburg and Rising Sun on either side of Aurora.

The city is also home to seven beautiful parks including Aurora City Park, Waterways Park, Largent Field, Mary Stratton Park, Lesko Park and Ron Nocks Memorial Park. The park system includes 6,000 linear feet of waterfront, 77 acres of green space, a swimming pool, baseball diamonds, softball diamonds, soccer fields, boat ramps, playground areas, a civic center, trails and many shelters. Additional details on the city’s parks can be found in the Natural Resources chapter.
CULTURAL RESOURCES/ATTTRACTIONS

One of Indiana’s oldest continuous festivals, going on 107 years, is the Aurora Farmers Fair. The Farmers Fair is a four day event held in the fall and sponsored by the Aurora Lions Club. Another popular festival in the city is the Aurora Firecracker Craft Show and Festival held around the fourth of July. Main Street Aurora sponsors events such as the Senior Dances on Main and Historic Walking & Window Tours. A multitude of church and community festivals are also held during the summer months in surrounding communities.

Museums within the city include the City of Spires Historical Museum and Foundation and the Hillforest Historical House Museum. The Southeastern Indiana Art Guild is located in Aurora and along with the Dearborn Highland Arts Council located in Lawrenceburg, promote the arts in and around Aurora.

The area has plenty to offer for those interested in outdoor activities. The Aurora Little League, South-Eastern Indiana Soccer Association for Youth, South Dearborn Babe Ruth baseball league, Boy Scouts of America, Girls Scouts of America, 4-H, and the YMCA offer youth programs. Dearborn Country Club, Dearborn Trails, Perfect North Slopes and more than six local golf courses all offer opportunities for adults seeking outdoor recreation. In addition to these organized activities visitors to the community can benefit from the great access to the Ohio River and other local waterways for water recreation activities including boating, kayaking, canoeing, and fishing.

Within Aurora, Great Crescent Brewery offers beer tasting and nightlife options in the forms of music, poetry and comedy.
Hollywood Casino in Lawrenceburg and Rising Star Casino in Rising Sun offer entertainment options nearby to the city. For more natural recreational opportunities, Perfect North Slopes offers winter skiing and Oxbow Wetland near Lawrenceburg offers walking trails and educational programs. Versailles State Park and Clifty Falls State Park are within 45 minutes of Aurora. A little further to the west and one can find additional attractions in and around Cincinnati.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Regional Attractions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hollywood Casino</td>
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<td>Rising Star Casino</td>
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<td>Perfect North Slopes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oxbow Wetland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Versailles State Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clifty Falls State Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kings Island and Soak City Waterpark</td>
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<td>Museum Center</td>
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<td>Paul Brown Stadium</td>
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<td>Great American Ballpark</td>
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<td>Turfway Park</td>
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<td>Cincinnati Zoo and Botanic Garden</td>
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Source: Google Map Directions

**COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

Aurora is part of the South Dearborn School Corporation which serves students in preschool through twelfth grade. Two elementary schools, one middle school and one high school are located in Aurora. Additionally, St. John Lutheran School serves students in pre-k through eighth grade and St. Mary’s Catholic School serves students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Though no higher education institutions are available in Aurora, classes are available in Lawrenceburg, Versailles, Northern Kentucky and Cincinnati.

Aurora’s healthcare services are mainly provided through the Dearborn County Hospital in nearby Lawrenceburg.

**Churches**

Aurora currently has more than twenty churches serving a breadth of denominations.

**Public Institutions (Fire Station, Police, City Hall, Schools, Post Office)**

Aurora also has a strong representation of public safety agencies, including the Aurora Fire Department, Aurora Police Department, Dearborn County Sheriff’s Department and the Aurora Emergency Rescue.

The Aurora Police Department has tried to set up neighborhood watch programs in the past, but hasn’t been able to connect with willing organizers. A partnership such as the neighborhood watch could go a long way in creating a unified community.

**Other Organizations**

There are several local fraternal and service organizations in Aurora as well including groups such as the Lions Club, American Legion, Fraternal Order of Eagles, Loyal Order of the Moose, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Main Street Aurora.
## DEMOGRAPHIC REPORT SNAPSHOT

**AURORA, INDIANA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AURORA</th>
<th>OKI REGION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>34.6%</strong> POPULATION WITH A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA</td>
<td><strong>31.4%</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>$40,509</strong> MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME</td>
<td><strong>$54,779</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>13%</strong> UNEMPLOYMENT RATE</td>
<td><strong>9.3%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>$115,000</strong> MEDIAN HOME VALUE</td>
<td><strong>$155,700</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>19%</strong> POVERTY RATE</td>
<td><strong>25.6%</strong></td>
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</table>

For the full demographic report, please see the appendix of the Aurora Comprehensive Plan update.
Chapter Four
Land Use
Chapter Four  Land Use

VISION

Aurora will implement land use practices that support downtown and core redevelopment and promote quality of life in the city. To do this, Aurora should focus on connecting its key assets to allow visitors and residents easy access to the best live, work, and play amenities it has to offer. To help protect Aurora’s visual character future development on surrounding ridgetops will also be carefully managed to ensure it can be properly served by supporting infrastructure.
INTRODUCTION

Land use discussions often revolve around planning for growth and expansion, but how does the discussion shift if short-term growth isn’t anticipated or a community is land-locked? In Aurora’s case the conversation turns to the ways in which to best encourage and accomplish reinvestment within the current boundaries of the community and revitalizing its historic urban core. For Aurora this means taking steps to develop a pedestrian connected community which has broad appeal and can help support the in-fill development potential inherent within its compact current development patterns.

Aurora’s population has been gradually decreasing since the 1970’s and while population projections are not available for the city, there are currently no strong indicators to suggest a reversal of this trend. However, Dearborn County as a whole is projected to maintain a steady increase of population from 51,297 in 2015 to 56,032 in 2050.

While Aurora’s city limit has expanded in area over the last 30 years, it’s population has actually decreased. See images to the right. When the city limits expand, infrastructure and services must expand with it. When the population doesn’t expand with the city limits, the residents of the city bear a heavier financial burden. This has not been the case yet in Aurora since most of the recent expansion areas are rural in nature and had already had some level of city services.

Aurora needs to ensure that these new areas do not become a burden on city resources by carefully planning and controlling their future uses. Further expansion of utilities and expansion of city limits without associated population growth will only further burden the city population and constrain already limited city resources.
FACTORS SHAPING CURRENT LAND USE

Aurora’s current land use pattern has been largely guided by the topography of the area as well as access to transportation, whether it be rail, river, or roadway. As you can see from the Current Zoning Map on the next page, the city maintains a very compact central core with fingers of development radiating from the center out along ridges or bottom lands. There are very few locations where traditional suburban style subdivisions have developed.

While there isn’t a lot of new development, what development there is has been moving out from the city center along SR 148, SR 56 and SR 350 due to the topographical advantages and perceived socioeconomic factors of areas on the outskirts of the city. The river and topography in and around downtown Aurora are two of the biggest factors influencing development potential in and around Aurora. The topography of the region provide for a beautiful backdrop for the community but because the severity of the slope also severely limits new development potential to just a few limited areas. In addition, the areas where topography would allow for development mostly lie in the lowlands near the Ohio River. While development of this land is possible, if any portion of it is within the flood zones, funding, financing, and insuring projects becomes much more challenging. Below is a brief summary of the major challenges you can expect for any development being considered in and around Aurora:

Topographical Challenges

- Steep slopes limit development potential
- Development in steeper areas may require additional engineering and construction requirements raising the costs of building.
- Even with engineered improvements there is always a risk of slope failure due to unforeseen circumstances, potentially raising the costs of insurance.

Flood Zone Challenges

- New regulations for development within the floodway present some challenges for development, especially within the historic downtown core, but do not completely eliminate development from the areas. Challenges include:
  - Increased cost of development to keep critical portions of the building out of the floodplain
  - Increased costs associated with insurance requirements.
  - Reduced marketability and difficulty obtaining financing.

One other major factor which will continue to have influence over the shape of Aurora into the future is the presence of US 50. The benefits of this roadway for the city cannot be understated but it has also had a major influence on how people navigate around the community, effectively dividing the city into two disconnected parts. The presence of this major influencer will continue to shape land use decisions into the future as the city seek ways to provide greater pedestrian connectivity between its neighborhoods and its core downtown area and riverfront.
EXHIBIT B: EXISTING ZONING MAP

Legend
- Corporate Limits
- City Park
- Zoning District (2006)
  - A - Agricultural
  - B1 - Neighborhood Business
  - B2 - Community Business
  - B3 - Community Business & Retail
  - M - General Manufacturing
  - R1 - One Family Residence
  - R2 - One and Two Family Residence
  - R3 - Multi Family Residence
- *Assumed District in Current Corporate Limits

Graphic Scale (Feet)
Development Suitability

The Development Suitability map on the following page shows those areas which have the highest potential for future development based on topographical features and flood potential. On this map you can see that the areas which would be considered to be most suitable for development, indicated in light green, are somewhat limited and not located in areas which may be desirable by the city. This map should not be interpreted to indicate that there are not other areas which can be developed, just that as you begin to look at developing in other areas, the costs of development will begin to increase comparatively.

Due to the constraints of surrounding topography, it will be an on-going challenge to find suitable land nearest to the city’s core for any future new development. Most suitable development areas within the city are already developed. New available areas tend to be clustered along the tops of the steep ridges surrounding the city.

Future Land Use

Since there aren’t any immediate development pressures on Aurora, the city has the chance to make objective decisions to such questions as “What neighborhoods do we want to restore?” and “How can we direct commercial development to bolster the downtown?” This also provides an important opportunity for the city to begin to look inward and find ways to reinvest in existing neighborhoods. Making a willful and concerted effort at revitalizing your existing assets will help increase property values across the community and will also set the stage for you to successfully market yourself to recruit future development opportunities to the community.

Revitalization Focused Strategy

Future land use needs in Aurora have focused on reorganization and redevelopment of existing portions of the city as opposed to containing or directing physical expansion of the city. Encouraging development in the historic core can be accomplished by creating opportunities through a combination of public investment and careful planning to set the stage for private investment. Public investment in trails, parks, and streets can provide the connectivity that residents desire while also paying dividends through increasing quality of life, visual appeal and property values.

The city should adopt a land use policy which is supportive of reinvestment in the portions of the community which are already built out. This policy should address neighborhood revitalization/reinvestment and on making critical infrastructure improvements for existing facilities. Specific quality of life issues such as the physical appearance of portions of the city and connecting vital community resources through pedestrian networks should also be integral to future land use planning.

So what does the a revitalization focused land use strategy look like? The following maps and text will help paint the picture. For starters, the maps on the following pages depict the recommended future land use scenario for Aurora from a community-wide perspective and from a core downtown.
EXHIBIT C: DEVELOPMENT SUITABILITY MAP
It is important to remember that each of these maps should be considered to have a long-range outlook, attempting to define how land in and around the city should be used considered for use over the next 15-20 years. Since there is no way to predict the future it is important that future land uses become a common discussion at Advisory Plan commission meetings and become an integral factor in how zoning and ordinance decisions are made. It is also important that these maps are revisited on a regular basis and updated as the needs of the community change. The text on the following pages provides more description of recommended future land use strategies for specific land use categories.

**Residential Development**

As you can see in Exhibit D, the current highest development potential is south of the city in the hills, where housing developments are beginning to occur. This is also where one of Aurora’s biggest challenges is since the hills, woods and streams are what make this area so unique. As development continues to occur in this area, you will need to find a way to balance the demand for residential lots while also finding ways to preserve the unique visual qualities which help make your region so attractive and appealing.

It would be a shame to allow the very factor which makes development in that region of your community so attractive actually cause its own decline. Even though this land currently sits outside of city limits, Aurora does have some influence, and a vested interest, in how it develops since the city provides utility services to this area. Aurora needs to continue to be proactive in influencing development patterns in this area which will allow for residential development in while also seeking to balance the visual quality and future development potential of the lands immediately adjacent to the city’s boundary.

**Industrial and Commercial Development**

Most readily available and developable industrial land in Aurora is located southwest of the city in the Aurora Industrial Park. This park currently has sites available for development but the park is outside of current city limits which means that while new facilities in this location can provide job benefits, the city misses out on potential tax revenue from new businesses.

To improve on this situation the city should look for opportunities to develop new job generating facilities within the current city limits. One of the greatest areas of potential are the former industrial sites within the community, including the former Aurora Casket Company site on Conwell Street. As Aurora looks to encourage new industrial development in the future it should consider sites such as these which can provide multiple benefits including the repurposing of abandoned buildings, additional tax benefits for the city, and the full utilization of existing utility infrastructure.

**Downtown Revitalization**

The map on the following page shows the future Land Use map enlarged to show the downtown. The importance of Aurora’s historic commercial core to the future of the community cannot be understated and the city needs to carefully weigh how land use decisions impact the ability to accomplish its long term revitalization goals. Land use factors to carefully consider downtown include the boundaries between critical uses such as business and commercial, the availability, demand, and need for additional commercial land, and how all of these elements ties together through a more integrally accessible pedestrian infrastructure. Additional details on specific downtown revitalization strategies can be found in the Critical Sub Area section of this plan.
EXHIBIT D: FUTURE LAND USE MAP

Legend
- Corporate Limits
- City Park
- Land Use
  - A - Agricultural
  - B1 - Neighborhood Business
  - B2 - Community Business
  - B3 - Community Business & Retail
  - C - Conservation Area
  - FLTG - Future Long Term Growth
  - M - General Manufacturing
  - R1 - One Family Residence
  - R2 - One and Two Family Residence
  - R3 - Multi Family Residence

Graphic Scale (Feet)

See Enlargement
EXHIBIT E: FUTURE LAND USE MAP ENLARGEMENT

Legend
- Corporate Limits
- City Park
- Land Use:
  - A - Agricultural
  - B1 - Neighborhood Business
  - B2 - Community Business
  - B3 - Community Business & Retail
  - C - Conservation Area
  - FLTG - Future Long Term Growth
  - M - General Manufacturing
  - R1 - One Family Residence
  - R2 - One and Two Family Residence
  - R3 - Multi Family Residence

Graphic Scale (Feet)
LAND USE GOALS/STRATEGIES

Goal 1: Make land use and zoning decisions which encourage infill development and reinvestment in existing neighborhoods throughout the city.

Strategies
- Create and prioritize an inventory of potential infill or redevelopment sites, and identify targeted uses for each.
- Promote infill sites to developers.
- Look for housing and commercial opportunities by investing in existing building stock and encouraging higher density development patterns on previously platted land within the historic downtown core.
- Clearly define the constraints and opportunities associated with development within flood zones by developing educational and promotional materials which illustrate what is possible and where.

Goal 2: Balance Aurora’s long term residential development interests and its scenic beauty by proactively engaging in ridgetop development activities:

Strategies
- For both City and fringe development, require developers to upgrade connector roads concurrent with residential development.
- Actively work with Dearborn County to ensure development near the city’s border is completed in a manner which will not impede the future growth needs/potential of Aurora.
- Determine appropriate development standards for multi-family housing on ridgetops. This should include setbacks, density requirements, and roadway service standards.
Goal 3: Encourage infill development downtown and within other existing parts of the Aurora community.

Strategies
- Look for opportunities to develop or redevelop underutilized buildings downtown and along the US 50 corridor before allowing new facilities to be constructed.
- Build interest in commercial development which repurposes vacant commercial properties by developing and marketing an inventory of available downtown commercial space. Make this list readily available and use it as a lead in to conversations with prospective business owners.
- Focus on improving the visual quality and character of existing development along the corridor.
- Develop plans to make investments in sidewalk and trail development projects which will help connect existing neighborhoods and parks west of US 50 to the downtown core and the Ohio River.

Goal 4: Ensure future land uses in recently added sections of the community do not become a burden on city resources.

Strategies
- Develop a carefully planned and detailed description of the development locations within newly added portions of the community. In the plans, clearly outline the desired development types, desired land uses, desired densities, required utility and service connections, and forecast timeline for future development.
- Make sure future development in newly added areas of the community meet the long term development needs of the city and are development in a manner consistent with desired local development quality standards.
- Develop areas first where required utility services such as water and sanitary sewer are already readily available. Consider placing a moratorium on development in other areas until these most readily available areas are nearing build out.
Chapter Five

Economic Development
Chapter Five **Economic Development**

**VISION**

Along with focusing on attraction of a major employer Aurora should begin to take steps toward sustaining and improving a robust small business environment and developing its great tourism potential. By focusing on its best qualities, such as a historic and walkable downtown, riverfront access, abundant recreational amenities, and local businesses, Aurora can position itself as a unique place people want to visit, live, and work.
Your success in providing services such as quality roadways, reliable utility services, and recreational amenities are now considered the bare minimum for maintaining a status quo economic position in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Providing basic infrastructure needs and land alone is no longer an acceptable model for attracting and retaining the businesses and jobs which are so critical to the ultimate success of Aurora.

In fact, the most successful communities are proving that to be competitive you need to implement an economic development strategy which differentiates you from your peers, one which emphasizes your natural advantages and key assets. This has led many communities to seek ways to attract and retain quality businesses beyond what was traditionally required. Increased competition means that a community such as Aurora must find ways to make itself stand out from the crowd.

The most successful communities have quickly understood that they must first develop themselves as a place where people want to live. To do this, you need to focus on those factors which will ultimately make Aurora the type of place the best and brightest workforce thinks of when they choose where they want to live.

FACTS SHAPING AURORA’S ECONOMY

The first step in developing a robust and successful economic development strategy is to gain an understanding of the current factors shaping your ability to compete in the marketplace. These factors can help highlight strengths and weaknesses in your community and can point to unknown issues and opportunities you can leverage to help your economic development efforts. Below is a summary of some of the most important factors shaping Aurora’s current economic conditions:

Population
- Overall Aurora’s population has seen a gradual decline since 1940. More recently this trend is reinforced by the fact that student enrollment within the South Dearborn Community Schools has seen a decline of approximately 7% between 2009 and 2014.
- Declining population and reduced school enrollment places extra pressure on an already burdened tax system which is relied upon to support critical city services such as roadway and utility infrastructure.
- Overall Aurora is an aging community, which largely matches the national trend as the ‘Baby Boomer’ generation reaches retirement age. This trend points to an expected increase in the need for amenities and businesses which will help meet the needs of older residents including health care, long term care, and transportation services.
Income and Employment

- Aurora’s median household income is lower than the county (-16%) and state (-30%) averages. Lower income residents will have less disposable income which means reduced tax revenue and more difficulty in spending at a level required to support local businesses.

- Aurora’s workforce participation is also lower than state and national averages. Current estimates indicate that Aurora has an unemployment rate, which looks at those searching for work but can’t find it, of 8.8%. In addition to those searching for work, more than 32% of working age residents are not currently working or seeking employment.

- Looking at the places where people are currently employed in Aurora can give an indication about the types of jobs that may be supported in the future. Having a high concentration of jobs in a sector may indicate a specific skill set or certain infrastructure which makes your community appealing to these businesses. Currently Aurora’s top 3 industry sectors are:
  - Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Food Service
  - Retail Trade
  - Professional, Scientific, Health Care

- Aurora also has a significant number of residents who commute elsewhere for employment. This is not surprising given the city’s location near Cincinnati and this trend is also experienced county-wide.
  - The average travel time to work for residents is 26 minutes, which can have a significant impact on perceived quality of life. This is in line with the national average of just over 25 minutes (U.S. Census Bureau), but far higher that what people expect in a small community.

- Nearly 45% of Aurora’s working population is currently working outside of Dearborn County (3%) and Indiana (42%).

Property Values and Available Properties

- Lower median property values
  - Total Gross Assessed values in Dearborn County were $3,793,429,533, which represents a 4.9% decline from 2012
    - Residential property represented the largest percentage of this decline with an average of nearly 9%
    - Agricultural and Business land showed an increase of nearly 3%

Table 2: Top 10 County Employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hollywood Casino</td>
<td>Lawrenceburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora Casket Company</td>
<td>Aurora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dearborn County Hospital</td>
<td>Lawrenceburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunman-Dearborn Schools</td>
<td>Sunman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wal-Mart Supercenter</td>
<td>Aurora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-Dearborn Schools</td>
<td>Aurora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dearborn County</td>
<td>Lawrenceburg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anchor Glass</td>
<td>Greendale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGP Ingredients</td>
<td>Lawrenceburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrenceburg Community Schools</td>
<td>Lawrenceburg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dearborn County Economic Development
KEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Aurora’s greatest long term economic development potential lies in the following key opportunity areas:

1. Developing your live, work, play potential.
2. Focusing on tourism and outdoor recreation.
3. Supporting and cultivating the small business environment.
4. Focusing on downtown redevelopment.
5. Marketing existing commercial & industrial buildings.
6. Marketing and cooperative relationships

The following text provides a framework for some of the issues and opportunities for Aurora in each of these opportunity areas.

**Live, Work, & Play Potential**

With a large percentage of the population commuting away from Aurora for employment it places the community squarely in the category of a ‘bedroom community’. This label has received negative connotations in the past but more recently communities have realized if they learn to embrace this status and build the infrastructure to make their communities an attractive live, work and play location that there can be significant economic returns. Adopting an economic development strategy that caters to attracting residents will require a greater emphasis on improving the quality of life amenities that modern families and individuals seek and it also means that you will have an opportunity to build and support a more robust small/local business environment.

**Workforce Development**

One potential economic development opportunity is also intimately tied to your need for residential and building revitalization. Finding a way to work with and/or develop a local building trades program could create an opportunity to help train currently unemployed or underemployed residents in skilled trades while also helping to provide lower cost repairs to local buildings. Developing a program which focuses on existing building renovation can utilize local buildings to train its students in their particular trades. Coupling this program with a building material donation program, coordinated through a local non-profit organization, could help reduce costs of repairs for local building owners making repair and rehab easier to achieve. Partnering with higher education and workforce development programs can help offset some of the burden associated with getting program like this started.

Customized banners in downtown Aurora help create an identifiable district.
Source: HWC
Tourism and Outdoor Recreation

Aurora has many opportunities to use tourism as a possible economic development driver for the community. For starters, the location of the community along three major highway corridors creates an average daily traffic volume of nearly 30,000 through the city. This is an opportunity to attract the attention of many out of town travelers, especially along the most heavily traveled US 50 corridor. Even if you were only able to encourage 5% of these travelers to stop in Aurora it would mean nearly 1,500 additional people visiting your local shops and restaurants.

- One major opportunity for Aurora is the historic character and charm of the community which is enhanced by the beauty of the surrounding hillsides and of the Ohio River. Your unique cultural and natural qualities, coupled with the daily traffic volumes and your location near two major casinos and the I-74 and I-275 corridors equates to a real opportunity to turn Aurora into a major tourist destination. You already have a significant number of tours which visit the community and with the right investments in infrastructure and marketing, could turn Aurora into one of the best tourism destinations in southeastern Indiana and possibly within the OKI region.

- More detail about Aurora’s tourism opportunities is provided in the Critical Sub Area section of the plan but below is a brief list of some of the resources you have at your disposal to build upon and enhance your additional economic benefit from this opportunity:
  - City of Spires
  - Hillforest Museum
  - Harris Cabin (built in 1822)
  - Downtown Historic District
  - Ohio Riverfront
  - Architecture
  - American Discovery Trail

- In addition to Aurora’s unique cultural resources your riverfront and other outdoor recreational opportunities can provide an additional economic development opportunity that very few other communities possess. This can become a real differentiator for Aurora. By making critical connection between the Ohio River, Lesko Park, and the Historic Downtown can provide a catalyst which helps enhance your community’s appeal to visitors and residents. In addition, by placing renewed emphasis on accommodating recreational boating traffic and boat industry businesses the city can potentially tap into an estimated $121 Billion annual industry. (National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA)
Maintaining a Small Business Focus

Focusing your short term economic development energy on small business support and recruitment can provide high returns on your initial investment. Your top priority should be to make sure that your current businesses don’t close their doors. Work with local business owners to identify what they need to help make their business more successful. By aligning their needs with available resources you may identify key support areas which may make a significant impact on the success of your existing businesses. Securing the future of your existing small businesses will create a positive environment from which you can then begin to build support for recruitment and development of additional small businesses. The following small business development strategies should be considered to help get your efforts started:

- Work with local banks to develop and promote a small business micro-loan program. The terms of the program can be structured in many different ways but it should be focused on providing small loans to business owners to help provide a reliable source for emergency operating capital and business growth needs.

- Investigate the development of the recent trend in crowd funding to help support business expansion and growth. Many businesses are beginning to embrace this model to help raise funds to implement strategic business plans and to provide an additional resource for capital needs beyond the traditional bank loan system. One big advantage to this model is that much of the capital investment comes from local sources, giving residents a vested interest in seeing the business succeed and creating more accountability for the business owner.

- Explore ways to develop a craft business incubator. Craft industries such as micro-breweries, wineries, artisans, etc. are a rapidly growing percentage of the economy and can help contribute significantly to the local economy. One statistic indicated that the craft beer industry alone is nearly $100 billion annually (Brewhub.com). Aurora can tap the expertise of its local craft industry businesses such as the Great Crescent Brewery to help develop a strategy to encourage the growth of these types of businesses to add more diversity and economic benefit to Aurora’s local economy.

Great Crescent Brewing Company in downtown Aurora.
Source: Indianaontap.com
Downtown Redevelopment

Aurora’s historic downtown core has been the hub of community activity since the early beginnings of the community. In recent decades this area has seen significant decline which was indicated as early as the 1967 Comprehensive Master Plan completed by Ladislas Segoe & Associates. Recent investments and renewed interest from the community have once again made downtown Aurora a focal point for future improvements. Given its location within the community, and its proximity to many of Aurora’s key assets such as the Ohio river, major roadways, and cultural assets this area (and its revitalization) will be a critical component to the future success of Aurora’s economy. Downtown, and its revitalization, are discussed in more detail in the Critical Sub Area section of this plan.

TAX INCREMENT FINANCING

Since the adoption of an Indiana constitutional amendment making property tax caps permanent many communities have faced significant challenges in providing the capital required to make the capital investments in public infrastructure to create a robust economic development engine. To help alleviate some of this burden many communities have begun implementing special tax increment financing (TIF) districts. While TIF districts are not without controversy they have proven to be very effective tools to help communities make critical community development investments. Below are some of the advantages of TIF experienced in communities similar to Aurora:

- **Converse, Indiana** – With a population of roughly 1,200, community leaders invested about $25,000 in legal and financial advice to set up a downtown TIF District.
  - Today, the district has approximately $600,000 to invest in their downtown. They addressed their drainage issues for their largest company, installed period streetlights and decorated and upgraded sidewalks.

- **Portland, Indiana** – In 2006, the city was notified that a Wal-Mart supercenter would be built along S.R. 67 on the north side of the city. To capitalize on future potential, Portland created a TIF district to include this area and much of downtown.
  - With TIF funds, Portland improved Industrial Drive and established a Downtown Façade Funding Program in which approximately $200,000 in investment was put towards improving the central business district.

Neff’s Shoes in downtown Aurora.
Source: HWC

Source: HWC
Existing Commercial & Industrial Buildings

Due to the location of the community and available resources, Aurora's ability to attract and retain a large employer will be limited over the short term. This does not mean that the community should give up on attracting this type of business to the community as there are still many things you offer which a certain type of large employer would find very attractive. The city should continue to find ways to market and recruit large employers.

Due to land availability, which is discussed in the land use chapter, the best opportunities for large commercial and industrial development will likely be through the redevelopment of currently unused or underutilized existing spaces. Following is a brief description of some of the best examples in Aurora for taking advantage of key existing commercial and industrial spaces.

- Work with Dearborn County and the landowners of the existing Aurora Industrial Park to improve the appearance and visibility of this key economic asset. Since the industrial park currently lies outside of the city’s corporate boundary there would be no direct tax benefits but working to fill this property to its capacity will help bring additional jobs to the community which will have benefits.

- Utilize the Former Aurora Casket Company facility and surrounding areas. A reuse/repurpose study should be conducted on this facility and the surrounding area to determine its future development potential. All options should be explored beginning with selective demolition and reuse of viable existing buildings to a complete removal and redevelopment of the site.

- Consider establishing an incentivized economic development area around this facility and employ Tax Increment Financing (TIF) strategies to capture future value of this property.

- Find a use for the former Applewood Restaurant building. Work with the building owners to ensure that this currently vacant building stays in good repair. Finding a viable tenant for this key property can be an important factor in helping to turn this former community hotspot into an ideal attraction for visitors and a regional draw which will help encourage redevelopment of vacant nearby parcels.

- Vacant property on the corner of US 50 and George Street/Second Street: This property is the ideal location for a new Aurora welcome center and tourist convenience center. With the right vision redevelopment in this location can become an important community focal point and help spur additional downtown revitalization!

To improve marketability and value of existing commercial buildings Aurora needs to put significant effort towards cleaning up the appearance of its existing first floor commercial space in the historic downtown. These spaces are vitally important to the overall economic viability of downtown and their appearance has significant impact on the appeal of this area to shoppers, visitors, and ultimately business owners and prospects.

- Step one should be to reduce and eventually eliminate first floor residential in spaces which should serve a retail or commercial function. Even a dressed up vacant commercial space is better than a first floor residential use in what should be a commercial building.

- The next step should be the completion of a commercial building and retail space inventory. Identify all potential commercial/retail space within the downtown and determine a commercial utilization rate of your current building stock. This will help determine areas where investment is needed and to help promote available assets to prospective businesses.
Marketing and Cooperative Relationships

One key to any successful economic development initiative is letting people know the availability of your product. Any initiative you undertake must be supplemented and enhanced with a robust marketing effort. Marketing your community to prospective businesses and visitors will be an important step in helping Aurora realize its full potential. In today’s fast paced world maintaining a strong ‘brand image’ for the community will be critical. To do this you must make sure your message is tailored specifically to your target audiences and is consistent. One way to ensure this occurs is to hire professionals who specialize in community branding to help you create and maintain a positive and aggressive image campaigning for Aurora.

In a small community with limited resources developing and maintaining a marketing campaign can be a burden which is beyond available resources. This is where continuing to build strong partnerships with like-minded partners will be of vital importance to your success. Maintaining and strengthening partnerships with groups such as Dearborn County Economic Development will continue to be crucial. In addition, new partnerships with group and organizations such as Work One, higher educational institutions, and small business development centers can expand the scope and effectiveness of your efforts and help provide support in areas of specific need.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS & STRATEGIES

Goal 1: Identify your unique assets and develop strategies to help employ them for greater economic gain through increased tourism activity.

**Strategies**
- Conduct a retreat with trusted stakeholders and local business owners to identify your key local resources.
- Use the results of the retreat to develop a detailed economic development strategy specific to Aurora.
- Work with your network of local, regional, and state economic development resources to help revise the first draft of your economic development strategy and identify additional available economic development resources.
- Develop the riverfront as a key community attraction. Complete the strategies outlined in the Critical Sub Area section of the plan.
- Develop your tourism potential and opportunities. Work to implement the strategies defined in the Critical Sub Area section of the plan.

Goal 2: Focus your short term economic development energy on small business support and retention.

**Strategies**
- Work with local banks to develop and promote a small business micro-loan program.
- Investigate the development of the recent trend in crowd funding to help support business expansion and growth.
- Explore your potential for development of a craft business incubator. Look to industry experts and other communities for examples of how this has been accomplished in other areas. Dovetail this initiative with other cultural assets such as your Ohio river heritage to help develop an interesting and compelling story which will captivate visitors.

Goal 3: Maximize the potential marketability of key existing commercial and industrial spaces.

**Strategies**
- Reduce and eliminate first floor residential uses in what should be prime commercial spaces by implementing the land use recommendations on that topic.
- Work with Dearborn County and the landowners of the existing Aurora Industrial Park to improve the appearance and visibility of this key economic asset.
- Find a way to work with and/or develop a local building trades program. Work with groups such as workforce development agencies and higher education establishments to develop a program which will provide credentials and increase employment potential of participating students.
Goal 4: Support the downtown revitalization strategies by working to complete the implementation measures outlined in the Critical Sub Areas section of the plan.

Goal 5: Develop a strategic marketing campaign and develop a support network which can provide mutually beneficial support for your marketing goals.

Strategies
- Continue to find ways to maintain and build your relationship with key regional economic development resources including the Dearborn County Economic Development, Rising Sun, Lawrenceburg, and OKI.
- Organize periodic round table conversations with key economic development entities to discuss regional issues and opportunities.
- Work to procure professional services for the development and maintenance of an up to date marketing campaign. Maximize the use of modern media communication methods to elevate the images and reputation of Aurora.
- Develop a strategic press release campaign which utilizes local, regional, and statewide media outlets to promote changes which are occurring within Aurora. Take a ‘no news is too small’ approach to help create visibility for positive changes within the community.

Goal 6: Create reliable sources of capital to help complete capital investments which will further Aurora’s economic development goals.

Strategies
- Work to establish a TIF for the use of capital expenditures related to downtown revitalization, neighborhood revitalization, and riverfront redevelopment.
- Work with the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs, the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority, OKI, and Indiana finance Authority to help identify potential sources of investment capital for Aurora’s economic development goals.
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Chapter Six  

**Housing**

**VISION**

Aurora’s neighborhoods include riverfront properties, hillside views, historic homes and walkable streets. Aurora will take actions to improve the rental housing stock and prioritize neighborhood revitalization zones. Revitalization of these prioritized zones will create attractive safe neighborhoods which exhibit the charm associated with the community’s historic riverfront and hillside housing.
The housing picture in Aurora is one of potential. Many historic and beautiful homes have been neglected over the years, leading to the need for revitalization efforts in key neighborhoods. Many homeowners have moved to the outskirts of the downtown, leaving a large percentage of homes and structures as rentals within the downtown core. Improving the housing stock and encouraging home ownership will play a large role as the city continues to work towards revitalizing the downtown.

Aurora has about 3,791 people living in about 1,620 single family homes, duplexes, apartments, condominiums, townhouses and mobile homes.

An overview of local housing can be found in the table below, which compares Aurora and the OH-KY-IN (OKI) region on key housing indicators. Data was not available to compare Aurora in 2005 or the OKI region in 2000, so the timeline for comparing change is slightly different between the two.

Across the board, the table shows that every other housing characteristic has declined with the decline in population. Compared to the OKI region, there is a much higher percentage of the local available housing that is occupied, but a much higher percentage of those units are renter occupied at 44.1% compared to 33.5% for the OKI region.

The city’s housing market hasn’t been able to rebound from the effects of a declining population and the recession. Local sales are anemic and while Dearborn County has seen a steady increase of building permits since 2011, there have been no building permits issued for Aurora since 2004. There are other constraints as well; the city’s housing stock is relatively old which can equate to high maintenance costs and there is a shortage of middle and upper income homes, which makes it difficult to attract new residents.

On the positive side, the high percentage of occupied housing could indicate potential for new development. Also, the statistics can’t capture all aspects of Aurora’s housing situation. The City has a wonderful collection of historic homes, many of which are well maintained. As mentioned throughout this document, the historical past and character of Aurora is an asset which can help lay a foundation for a stronger housing future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Aurora and OKI Region housing data</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristic</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Current Population</td>
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<td>Vacant Housing Units</td>
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<tr>
<td>Median Home Value</td>
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<td>Median Year Built</td>
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</table>

Source: U.S. Census bureau, American community Survey

*When adjusted for inflation using the Bureau of Labor Statistics inflation calculator
FACTS SHAPING AURORA’S HOUSING

The most recent data available for Aurora and the OKI region is from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2008-2012 American Community Survey (ACS), which reveals the following trends:

- Between 2000 and 2012, the median value of Aurora homes decreased by 1.2%, which is less than the 9.2% decrease the OKI region experienced during 2005-2012. Dearborn County experienced a 0.5% in median home value during the same period.

- Nearly three fourths (73.7%) of Aurora’s owner-occupied housing stock is valued up to $149,999. High end homes (costing $150,000 and above) make up about half of both the county and the OKI region compared to around one fourth (26.3%) in Aurora.

- Aurora has a higher percentage of homes built before 1939 (at 40.3%) compared to the county at 17% and the OKI region at 18.7%. Older homes can be technically obsolete (1 car garage, 1 bathroom, limited electrical capacity) which make them harder to sell.

- There is a higher percentage of people renting their homes in Aurora (at 44%) than the county (22.9%) and the region (at 33.5%). While Table 1 shows a decrease in this statistic, it can be attributed to a decrease in population. Compared to 2000, the percentage of people renting in Aurora is fairly consistent.

- The majority of homeowners are in the 35-54 age range and 65-74 age range. This is consistent to 2000, with one exception. There has been a loss of homeowners in the 55-64 age range compared to 2000 proportional with the drop in population.

- 42% of renter households and 21.8% of homeowners pay 35% or more of their household income on housing, which meets the federal definition of ‘unaffordable.” That percentage is considered unaffordable because it doesn’t allow low-income workers to save enough money for other expenses or emergencies.

- The 2013 fair market rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment in Dearborn County is $740, which is the same as the OKI Region. Government agencies do not estimate the rate at the city level.

- According to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, at that FMR, someone earning the minimum hourly wage ($7.25) would have to work 79 hours per week to have an income high enough to afford this rent. Of course, most people can not work that many hours, so they live in unaffordable homes.
DEARBORN COUNTY MARKET OVERVIEW – JANUARY 2015

The Indiana Association of Realtors provides monthly housing market updates for Indiana counties, but not cities, including comparison of data for January 2014 and January 2015 and the year-to-date change. Their data for Dearborn County shows:

- There were 52 new listings in January 2015.
- There were 883 listings in the time between February and January 2015 compared to 860 listings in the same time period in 2014.
- The median homes sales price is up 4.4% over the last 3 months compared to a year ago.
- It takes about 9 to 10 months on average for a home to sell, according to the association’s months’ supply of inventory data.

CURRENT MARKET SNAPSHOT

To get a better idea of housing in Aurora, the Current Market Snapshot table to the right shows all homes listed for sale on the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) in March 2015. Table 3 shows there were 124 properties for sale, with most being single family homes or residential lots/land.

Table 4 shows apartments/multiple family homes, single family homes and lots for sale in March 2015. The majority of single family homes were priced between $100,000 to over $200,000. Though these are only the listed prices, a majority are higher than the median sales price for Dearborn County over the last year, which was $140,000. The listing price is also much higher than the median home value of $115,000. Both can be a good sign for housing values around Aurora.

FORECLOSURES

Foreclosures have been steady in Aurora compared to the spike that was felt in many communities across the country the last several years. Currently there are only 6 properties listed as bank owned. So far in 2015, only one bank owned property has been sold. In 2014 there were 12 bank owned properties that were sold, 11 in 2013, 14 in 2012, and 12 in 2011.
LOCAL HOUSING ORGANIZATIONS

Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDO’s) assist communities with housing development. Dearborn County is currently served by the Lifetime Housing Group Inc and Heart House Inc, which cover Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, and Switzerland counties. Southern Indiana Housing and Community Development also provides services to the above counties as well as Bartholomew, Decatur, Jackson, Jennings, Lawrence, Rush, Scott, Washington counties.

SUBSIDIZED HOUSING

Alternative housing is available for low-income, disabled and elderly Aurora residents primarily in the form of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) low-income housing, public housing offered by housing authorities along with non-profit organizations that help with low-income housing needs. Southeastern Indiana Economic Opportunity Corporation administers Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program for Franklin, Ripley, Dearborn, Ohio and Switzerland counties.

Table 5 shows the subsidized low-income apartment options available for an Aurora resident, as well as a brief description of the complex. It shows a total of 53 subsidized units. While data is only available for traditional apartments as indicated in the table, there are a substantial number of 2-8 person housing conversions of historic homes and properties within downtown Aurora which are not accounted for in any formal manner. Nearby Lawrenceburg also has many other low-income options, including additional apartments.

Table 5: Aurora Affordable Multi-Family Housing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>River Park</td>
<td>439 Park Avenue</td>
<td>22 one and two bedroom units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harbor View Apartments</td>
<td>110 Exporting Street</td>
<td>31 one bedroom units</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rentals are also plentiful throughout Aurora. Many building owners in downtown turn to renting first floor retail space when it can’t be filled by businesses. Source: HWC

Empty homes can be found throughout Aurora. Source: HWC
CONDITION OF HOUSING

Around Aurora, a comment and complaint heard over and over is the condition of the housing and housing is consistently identified as one of Aurora’s largest hurdles. Examples of some of the often heard comments are:

- There are too many abandoned properties
- Trash and junk litter some yards
- Houses are not maintained - often these are rentals
- It’s too difficult to maintain houses due to historic standards
- Landlords aren’t held accountable.
- Too much subsidized housing.

Many of the statements above lead to other issues in the community. The perception that it is too difficult to get approval for maintenance on a home leads to neglect of the home completely.

Unkempt yards with trash and litter combined with poor maintenance cause other property owners to not invest in their property as value drops. Housing on first floor retail space in downtown leads to congregating crowds on public sidewalks and pushing out would be visitors to an area. Substance abuse plagues Aurora, as it does many communities. Concentrated zones of neglect and poor maintenance can exacerbate the abuse.

Unfortunately problems have been developing over a long time and it will take small steps to clean things up. Just as small steps led to the current housing situation, small steps can reverse it.

Exhibit F shows neighborhoods where efforts should be focused. The two highest priority areas are in the downtown (1). In these area, housing should be restricted from first floor retail space in the downtown business district starting with 2nd street. Housing improvements along Main Street leading to Hillforest is a concurrent priority. Focus on housing along the riverfront should be the next priority (2) followed by the west end of downtown (3,4). Once goals have been achieved within the core of the community, focus can move outwards towards areas 5 and 6.

A SOLUTION TO THE CODE ENFORCEMENT DILEMMA

As discussed in this chapter, Aurora has struggled with maintaining consistent and effective code enforcement policies. Aurora is not alone as most communities within the State of Indiana will agree that code enforcement is one of their most difficult challenges due to lack of available resources for visual inspection and necessary legal action. Recently, Aurora has taken steps to help improve its code enforcement capabilities with the goal of helping to improve the health, safety and welfare of residents. A recent cooperative agreement has been drafted between the City of Aurora and Dearborn County to arrange for additional support for the City. This planning and zoning agreement, when completed, will allow Aurora to have a full time position available for the following tasks: among others:

- Code Enforcement
- Zoning
- Subdivision Control Ordinances
- Historic Building Inspection
- Survey

This agreement will help create both Aurora and Dearborn County Planning & Zoning departments operate more efficiently and will additional resources to the City of Aurora to help confront some of its biggest and most visible challenges.
EXHIBIT F: NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION MAP

Order of Magnitude for Redevelopment

1. Focus on opening up first floor retail. Start with Second Street, then Main Street.
2. Focus on improving housing stock along Main Street and around Hillforest.
3. Focus on housing between Hillforest and riverfront.
4. Focus on providing quality multi-family opportunities.
5. Focus on improving housing stock.
6. Future neighborhood revitalization.
HOUSING GOALS/OBJECTIVES:

Goal 1: Implement stronger and more consistent code enforcement process.

Strategies
- Finalize the agreement between the City of Aurora and Dearborn County Planning and Zoning to allow for a full time person to assist Aurora with code enforcement related issues,
- Investigate an aggressive ticketing strategy as an alternative, and less costly option, to taking code violations to court.
- Reduce the amount of time which property owners are able to remain in non-compliance. Set stricter timelines for completion of improvements and make sure to take corrective action the day following deadline expiration.
- Develop a task force to complete periodic inspections on substandard housing. Couple this initiative with a possible rental occupant hotline which can be used to report major issues.
- Keep a record of landlord and property owner complaints and use the record to identify frequent and habitual offenders. Follow-up with frequent offenders on a regular basis and encourage better property management.

Goal 2: Encourage redevelopment and reinvestment in existing neighborhoods and housing.

Strategies
- Work with and/or establish a non-profit housing group whose primary goal is to promote reinvestment and housing opportunities through the purchase, stabilization, development and resale of quality housing.
- Promote regular neighborhood clean-up/service days with junk pick up to make it easy to get rid of large items.
- Resurrect community night out in order to build neighborhood watch program
  - Ask specific residents to lead effort for each neighborhood
  - Coordinate with Aurora police to organize program
- Develop a program for the city purchase of dilapidated and foreclosed properties. Use the properties to establish a land bank program for future housing developments.
- Demolish and redevelop properties which are beyond repair and vacant lots – bundle and re-sell these properties with deed restrictions which apply strict conditions on property maintenance requirements.
- Purchase and re-sell salvageable properties as-is with incentives for fix-up and rehabilitation and or restrictive covenants which specify required repairs and property conditions.
Goal 3: Preserve historical character by making historic preservation a priority among homeowners.

Strategies
- Provide a technical assistance resource for homeowners regarding historical standards and regulations, including education on their importance and how to apply the standards and regulations.
- Develop materials to educate residents and visitors on the importance of historic property standards. Make sure that standards and educational materials are readily available online and in various public locations throughout the city.

Goal 4: Improve the quality of low income and rental housing in the community.

Strategies
- Enact a moratorium on new subsidized housing until new housing regulations and code enforcement process can be initiated.
- Develop a consistent and ongoing blight elimination program, which provides resources for demolition of unsafe buildings.
- Work to encourage the development of residential properties in a manner which will attract a more balanced demographic to the community. Focus efforts on amenities which will attract middle income families and seniors.

Goal 5: Reduce and eventually eliminate first floor residential uses in downtown commercial buildings:

Strategies
- Revise current B-2 zoning regulations to place clear restrictions on first floor residential uses within the historic downtown business area. Include provisions in the revised ordinance which limits grandfathering of non-conforming uses (such as first floor residential) to 90 days or less.
- Modify the boundary current boundary of B2 zoning area downtown to facilitate the elimination of undesirable uses in the business district but which also realistically allows for some residential uses in fringe commercial areas, where appropriate.
- Develop specific downtown residential zoning standards which exclude first floor residential uses within a specific downtown boundary and which clearly define the types and characteristics of residential and non-business uses.
The City’s riverfront, historic properties, trail network, and existing parks are the foundation of Aurora’s strong quality of life. Investing in natural and recreational resources will help open up new local job opportunities and enhance local quality of life.
AURORA’S NATURAL RESOURCES AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

The information contained within this chapter was gleaned from several sources, including the most recent soil survey of Dearborn County, Dearborn County geographic information system (GIS), and the Indiana Map online GIS data viewer published by the Indiana Geographic Information Council and available online at www.indianamap.org. Information regarding the recreation opportunities in and around Aurora was pulled from the City’s website, as well as many county-wide organizations and tourism promotion organizations.

Topography

- Aurora has rich topography and plenty of hills surrounding the city, some towering to 400’ above the Ohio River. The area is in the Southern Hills and Lowlands Physiography and lies in the Bluegrass Natural Region.
- While there are plenty of hills, bottomlands can be found along the creeks, especially along North and South Hogan Creek to the west.
- The hilly terrain in and around Aurora limits the feasibility of new construction and development in portions of the city not already developed.
- The hilly terrain also is one of the most often mentioned assets of the city. Downtown is built on a hill and historic sites such as Veraestau owe much of their appeal to their viewsheds over the Ohio River.

Geology and Soils

- Along with topography, the natural characteristics of the region’s soil conditions and underlying geology impact the feasibility and costs associated with developing a site.
- Most of the developed portions of the city have low shrink-swell characteristics.
- Beyond the downtown area, most of the soils in and around Aurora are silt loam, silty clay loam, and silty clay, which limit the development potential due to shrink-swell potential and indication of steep slopes. Flooding and the shallow depth to the saturated zone is also an issue in the bottomlands.
- Development on poor soil types or steep slopes is still possible, but comes with a high cost premium compared to more suitable sites.
- The development suitability map on page 36 identifies the areas surrounding Aurora where the slope and soil conditions are most suitable for the development of commercial buildings (in green.)

Ecology and Agriculture

- Due to the hilly terrain, most of the land surrounding Aurora is largely forested with small pockets of farmland and open pastures.
- Crops are mainly corn and soybean with some winter wheat and sorghum. Most of the cultivated land appears to be between North Hogan Creek and South Hogan Creek west of the City.
- The wooded hills are consistently mentioned as a major asset for the community. Heavy timber covers the hills south of downtown and along the ridges radiating out from the city.
- Streams are also a critical component of the local ecology. Nearly 2/3 of the regions’ 104 state listed animal species depend on aquatic habitat for survival.
Drainage, Flooding, and Water Quality

- The Ohio River is the most prominent water body in the region and has obviously been vital to the development of Aurora.

- North Hogan and South Hogan Creeks are both prominent creeks in the area.

- Aurora's drinking water comes from three drilled wells in the Ohio Valley Aquifer, which means Aurora has a vested interest in protecting the water supply from poor stormwater management practices and uncontrolled environmental contaminants.

- In addition to the riparian habitat found in the river and streams, wetlands can play an important role in the overall water quality of a region and help to mitigate flooding.

- As seen in Exhibit G, wetlands in and around Aurora appear to be concentrated along North Hogan Creek. A large wetland can also be found near Waterways Park and Waterways Marina.

- The proximity of the Ohio River and creeks to Aurora, along with their associated floodplains, poses significant but not insurmountable challenges to future development, including downtown.

- Areas that are flood prone and have suffered a history of flooding make ideal locations for recreational and natural amenities. Lesko Park and Aurora City Park serve as wonderful resources in an area that is otherwise unattractive to development.

Air Quality

- Five of the top ten emission sources for the Central Southeast Indiana reporting area for IDEM are located in Dearborn County.

- Aurora is part of an expanding metropolitan area, and a significant portion of Dearborn County commutes to nearby Cincinnati, a significant contributor to air pollution.

- However, one of the larger contributor to air quality issues, the AEP Tanner Creek Generating Station in Lawrenceburg, will be retired by the middle of 2015. This will likely improve air quality in the short term for the area.

- Due to national regulations and controls, air quality has steadily improved in the area and region since the 1980’s.

- Although population has been on the increase in the region over time, the Central Southeast Indiana monitored air quality and emission values have been trending downward and are expected to continue to improve in the future.

Brownfields and Superfund Sites

- Identified brownfields are only a small percentage of the potential hazardous buildings and properties which could be located within a community. These properties pose significant health risks to local residents due to the presence of harmful chemicals and compounds which can threaten water quality and can create a barrier to redevelopment due to costs associated with remediation.

- According to local GIS information, some brownfields within Aurora include:
  - Alton Box Factory: George Street near US 50
  - Aurora Former MGP: SW of Main and Importing
  - Welch Oil Site: Dixon St.

- The same GIS data sources used to identify brownfields revealed no current Superfund Sites, but identified 2 industrial waste sites:
  - Aurora Casket Company; 202 Conwell St.
  - Stedman Machine Company; Franklin and Indiana Ave.
EXHIBIT G: AURORA FLOODPLAINS AND WETLANDS

Legend
- Corporate Limits
- HUC 14 Watershed (USGS)
- Stream or Creek
- Floodplain (based on FEMA FIRM 041614)
- Floodway Areas in Zone AE
- Special Flood Hazard Areas
- Other Flood Areas
- Wetland Type
  - Freshwater Emergent
  - Freshwater Forested/Shrub
  - Freshwater Pond
  - Lake
  - Riverine

Graphic Scale (Feet) 1,500 3,000
Open Space and Recreation

Quality open spaces and recreational facilities are a key asset to Aurora and consistently mentioned as one of the best features about the community. Exhibit H: Recreational Resources highlights these assets on the next page.

Quality parks and open spaces help provide much needed outlets for residents of all ages to socialize, be physically active, and connect with nature. Policy supporting the preservation and expansion of existing parks and recreation land can help the city to attract new housing development and boost its population of young professionals and senior citizens.

Aurora can utilize development of new recreational facilities such as parks and trails to make critical connections between key community features, which can help bolster other economic development initiatives.

Trails

Trails have been consistently listed as a positive attribute for the community and additional trails and connections are strongly desired.

The Dearborn Trail starts in Lesko park, but lacks clear definition through downtown as it continues onto Lawrenceburg and Greendale. The Dearborn County trail is also part of the American Discovery Trail, which is the only non-motorized coast to coast recreational trail in the United States.

Efforts are underway to extend the Dearborn Trail from Lesko Park west to Rising Sun. This critical rail connection will further link the communities along the Ohio River and build on the already successful section of the trail that runs from Greendale to Aurora. Adding length to a trail makes the trail more attractive to those who wish to cycle for a few hours and further set up Aurora to be an attractive stop along the trail.

Waterways Park also has a small walking trail through the park.

Future trail connections to Rising Sun and smaller pedestrian networks and trails connecting community resources will go a long way in improving quality of life. The ability for a resident to safely and easily access the key areas of a community through the use of trails and pathways should not be overlooked.

In addition to bike and pedestrian trails, water trails such as kayaking/canoeing on the Ohio River and tributaries is an additional opportunity and a way to further promote the natural assets of the community.

See Exhibit J: Transportation Opportunities Map in Chapter 8 for trail and pedestrian network opportunities.

Local Parks

Aurora has many local parks offering sports fields, playgrounds, picnic shelters, and water access. City Parks include

- Aurora City Park
- Waterways Marina and Waterways Park
- Lesko Memorial Park
- Mary Stratton Park
- Largent Field
- Ron Nocks Memorial Park
- Aurora Sports Complex

In addition to the parks, Aurora has a community center that is a huge asset to the community. The community center is a positive influence for those who are using it and provides a gymnasium, fitness areas, and computer access.
EXHIBIT H: RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

Legend
- Dearborn County Boundary
- Corporate Limits
- City Park
- Existing Trail
- Public Marina

Graphic Scale (Feet)
The city also has an outdoor pool, the Aurora Public Pool, in Aurora City Park. Recently, a graduate class of Indiana University’s Schools of Public and Environmental Affairs completed a study of the existing pool and a feasibility study for the construction of an indoor pool that could be attached to the community center. Pools and water related features such as splash pads can be a major quality of life amenity and are often a focal point for community activities. The city should continue to look at ways to upgrade their existing pool to be a more attractive amenity to the community as well as further review the feasibility of constructing the indoor pool as an attachment to the community center.

However, there are barriers to use of the parks and community center. Better access to all sites via pedestrian networks, including safe access across US 50 should be a high priority. Encouraging involvement in the parks through programming and involvement at the community center through grants or sponsorships could help reduce crime by keeping impressionable youth engaged in a positive manner.

**Nearby Regional Parks**

Large park systems are plentiful around Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky, but even close to home there are significant natural and recreational areas. These include

- Oxbow Wetland Area between Lawrenceburg and Greendale
- Versailles State Park

**CONCLUSIONS:**

- Natural resources are a huge asset when considering future development and should be viewed as an opportunity to help improve the quality of life for residents.
- Utilizing prominent natural features such as the Ohio River and Auroras parks can help attract visitors to the community.
- Turn to natural resources as an untapped source of economic vitality and renewal.
  - Water sports such as boating, canoeing, kayaking
  - Fishing
  - Scenic beauty of the Ohio River and other local waterways
- Connect parks and community center for greater access from all parts of the city
  - US 50 bisects the city and creates a physical barrier between downtown and some of the city’s greatest resources – its parks. An east-west trail under US 50 can break down that barrier.
  - Encourages visitors to explore other parts of the community.
- Aurora can capitalize on its outdoor recreation opportunities and cultural tourism potential.
GOALS/OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Ensure the future viability of Aurora’s existing parks and recreational opportunities; provide for future needs through continued planning efforts.

Strategies
- Enhance existing parks through maintenance that has been deferred.
- Improve and diversify local recreational programming.
- Expand existing or add new festivals to reach a wider audience.
- Identify a location for a downtown riverfront park or plaza space that can serve as a permanent festival location. Develop a music or concert series in the park or on the riverfront.
- Complete a comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan using IDNR planning guidelines for park and recreational facilities. Update the parks plan on a regular basis to maintain IDNR funding eligibility for improvements.

Goal 2: Capitalize on water oriented recreational opportunities and other opportunities along the Ohio River and major tributaries such as Hogan Creek.

Strategies
- Promote existing and develop new water access sites for kayaking, canoeing, paddle boats, and other boating activities.
- Develop a public boat dock along the riverfront, ideally be north of Lesko park. Ensure the location of the dock provides ample room for temporary mooring of watercraft and vehicle access to the river and parking.
- Develop easy pedestrian access from boat docks and marinas into the downtown.
- Support continued efforts at developing a new community water amenity within Aurora. Explore options for locating a small splash pad near the river and promote the findings of the recently completed aquatics center study conducted by an Indiana University graduate class.
Goal 3: Expand the existing multi-use trail network.

*Strategies*

- Construct trail connection from Lesko Park to bridge on George Street.
- Collaborate with Rising Sun in the development and expansion of a trail connecting the two cities.
- Investigate options for constructing a trail connecting the city’s parks and community center to the local trail network. This should include a route under the US 50 bridge at Hogan Creek.
- Take advantage of the natural topography surrounding Aurora to develop and promote the community as a hiking destination. Tie this effort with other economic development and tourism goals established in other plan sections.
- Partner with the community center and healthcare providers in town, to have wellness trails” designated throughout the downtown with varying degrees of exertion. Quantify exertion levels to identify fitness goals and incentivize local participation by awarding points for completing trails using high and/or low tech mechanisms for reporting.
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Chapter Eight  Transportation

VISION

Aurora relies on its connection to the OKI region and Greater Cincinnati market to provide job opportunities for many of its residents. Consequently, the city must continue to work with INDOT and others to ensure traffic access between Aurora and I-275 is safe and convenient for local commuters.
INTRODUCTION

There are issues facing Aurora’s transportation infrastructure, including distance from interstates, morning and afternoon commute times, and difficulty turning against oncoming traffic into the city. Some issues Aurora can improve upon on their own and some are regional issues in which Aurora’s participation is needed as a stakeholder.

For example, while there is little Aurora can do on its own about congestion on US 50 as it runs from US 350 through Lawrenceburg, it’s participation in regional councils and planning studies ensures its voice and interests are represented in solutions to the congestion. Conversely, improving local pedestrian networks and streets in a manner which promotes greater connectivity between neighborhoods and key community destinations is a task which is fully within the city’s control. The following chapter highlights the city’s transportation needs and recommended future improvements.

MAJOR ROADWAYS

Functional Classifications:

- The functional classification map shown in Exhibit I on the following page displays the major roadways in Aurora. INDOT maintains the classifications of major roadways and provides a ranking of the roadway based on its intended level of service. Roadways labeled as “collector” or “arterial” are part of the state functional classification system and are eligible for state and federal highway funds for improvements. All other roads are considered local roadways and are maintained by local municipalities.

- Traffic volume information has been sourced from INDOT Average Daily Traffic and Commercial Vehicles Interactive Map available at https://entapps.indot.in.gov/TrafficCounts/

Interstate Access

- See Exhibit J on page 82 for the regional transportation map which highlights Aurora’s location in proximity to the major interstate corridors in the area.

- Aurora is only six miles from the I-275 loop which encircles Cincinnati and to several major interstate corridors: including I-71, I-74 and I-75.

- However, even though Aurora’s proximity to I-275 is relatively close, the US 50 connection to I-275 is congested, which does not give Aurora a competitive edge and contributes negatively to quality of life in the city.

- Interstate 74 runs about north of Aurora, about a 30 minute drive, and is accessible via SR 48/SR 148 or SR 350/SR 101/SR 129 through Milan.
Chapter 8  Transportation

Major Highways

- US 50 is the main route through the city, passing along the western edge of downtown and continuing directly through Lawrenceburg to Cincinnati. It is also an Indiana Historic Pathway.
- Congestion is a major concern along US 50, especially in the late afternoon and early evening when traffic volumes are more concentrated due to the work commute.
- US 50 has also effectively bisected the City of Aurora into two halves due to a lack of pedestrian connectivity across the corridor. This makes getting from residential neighborhoods to other community locations such as downtown and the Ohio River nearly impossible without getting into a car and driving.
- State Road 56 connects Rising Sun and Aurora and is part of the Ohio River Scenic Byway.
- In addition to SR 56, SR 148 and SR 350 also cross through the City. SR 350 enters Aurora from the west and connects to US 50 while SR 148 enters Aurora from the north and intersects with US 50.

Local Roads

- Local roads appear to be in decent structural condition but many are on steep slopes and need significant resurfacing and stormwater improvements.
- Most roads downtown and along major roadways have curb and gutter, but many are in need of maintenance. Local roads in hillside residential areas mostly lack curb and gutter and stormwater is conveyed through open graded drainage swales, many of which maintain their historic stone lining.
- 2nd Street, George Street, Conwell Street, and Main Street are all main local thoroughfares which should be initial targets for roadway improvements streetscape improvements.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION/TRANSIT

- Catch-a-Ride out of Dillsboro provides on demand transportation service to residents in Dearborn, Ohio, Ripley, Decatur, Switzerland, and Jefferson counties.
- Taxi service in Lawrenceburg also extends to Aurora.

AIR AND RAIL

Air

- The closest major airport is Cincinnati/ Northern Kentucky International Airport, which services the Cincinnati Metro area. The airport is a 30-45 minute drive away in northern Kentucky via US 50 and Interstate 275.
- Cincinnati Municipal airport is over an hour away on the east side of Cincinnati.
- Butler County Regional airport is also over an hour away north of Cincinnati.
Rail Access
- CSX operates a freight rail line along US 50.
- Freight lines service Aurora at the Consolidated Grain and Barge Co. at 210 George Street.

RIVER/STREAM ACCESS
River and stream access plays a critical role in the development of goals and objectives outlined in other chapters, especially the critical sub areas of riverfront and tourism. Aurora has many points of access to local streams and the Ohio River.
- Aurora Landing
- Aurora Marina and Campground
- Hogan Creek Canoe Ramp
- Holiday Hills Resort and Marina
- Lighthouse Point Yacht Club
- Sunset Bay Marina
- Waterway Marina

KEY OPPORTUNITIES
The exhibits on the following pages identify some key improvements that Aurora can make to its transportation system in the coming years. Many of these changes are related to improving the pedestrian connectivity of residents to key community assets. Below is a more detailed description of Aurora's key transportation recommendations.

Trails
- Trail should eventually become the primary means of connecting key community assets with existing neighborhoods. They should be considered to serve a function similar to major roadways in that they funnel higher volumes of bicycle and pedestrian traffic to the local sidewalk network.
- Trail development in Aurora should focus on facilitating primary access for connecting key community assets as outlined in the Natural Resources chapter.

Sidewalks
- While residents can walk to most areas in the downtown core, deteriorating or non-existent sidewalks, railroad crossings, and busy highways make it difficult to access other parts of the city including schools, parks, and the community center.
- The city should complete an inventory of existing sidewalks including current condition and make prioritized plans to improve and add sidewalk connections as resources become available.

The trail along Lesko Park is a great asset and provides an intimate connection with the Ohio River. Source: HWC
EXHIBIT K: TRANSPORTATION OPPORTUNITIES MAP

Legend
- Corporate Limits
- City Park
- Existing Trail
- Address Congestion (US 50/Green Boulevard)
- Short Term Upgrade/Rehab (Market Street)
- Future Bypass
- Future Trail to Rising Sun
- New Gateway
- Potential Long Term Upgrade (Dutch Hollow Road)
EXHIBIT L: TRANSPORTATION OPPORTUNITIES ENLARGEMENT MAP
**Water Access**

- Capitalizing on the access to the Ohio River and its tributaries for boating and recreational kayaking/canoeing use has been identified as a high priority by planning participants and is a critical component in the overall success of Aurora’s economic development plans. See the CSA Chapter and Natural Resources and Recreation chapter for further discussion on how the Ohio River can be transformed into an important community attraction.

**Gateways**

- First impressions are sometimes the only impressions we are able to leave and the importance of how a visitor remembers their first impression of Aurora cannot be understated. Every effort should be made to improve and enhance the appearance of the major gateways leading to and from the community.

- Gateway improvement focus should be on the most visible locations along major corridors such as from Lawrenceburg, from Rising Sun, from Milan and from the Ohio River. Improvements should not be limited to only landscaping but should also focus on the visual quality of the area including condition of buildings, billboard presence, utility lines, and other potentially distracting visual clutter.

- Recent improvements to SR 56 between 2nd Street and Importing Street are a nice example of improving the corridor. However, now that the visual appeal of this area is addressed you must begin to find ways to draw people in downtown.

- More direct signage and way finding that helps to direct people off of the main corridors and into Aurora is needed along with beautification improvements. These improvements are often referred to as environmental graphics and can range in sophistication from simple custom road signs to an elaborate and unified interpretive campaign. Aurora should be focused on developing a wayfinding package which will tell people the best of what your community has to show and which way to go to see it.
TRANSPORTATION GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Make efforts to reduce peak travel time traffic congestion and improve access to key employment and shopping destinations along US 50.

Strategies

- Discuss US 50 congestion concerns with the local INDOT district and work with them to identify short term and long term solutions to help alleviate traffic congestion during peak commute times.
- Seek to build a local coalition of communities along the US 50 corridor who experience similar congestion issues. Use this group as a platform for identifying key issues and developing a proposal for fixing the problem which can gain broad support from communities involved in the coalition.
- Monitor the impacts of SR 56 traffic bypassing the 2nd Street commercial corridor. If conditions warrant, consider options for re-routing select vehicle traffic through downtown.
- Address people bypassing downtown and business corridor on US 50 by creating a wayfinding package to draw people in.

Goal 2: Enhance community walkability and make critical pedestrian connections between existing neighborhoods and downtown Aurora and the riverfront.

Strategies

- Improve local access to the larger trail system by developing a prioritized sidewalk repair and replacement program. Focus initial efforts on repair of sidewalks in the core downtown area and in key residential areas.
- Develop a sidewalk repair fund which will help offset the cost of removal and replacement of neighborhood sidewalks for property owners willing to pay the costs for raw materials to complete repairs.
- Begin overcoming the community separation issues by installing crosswalks and other pedestrian safety improvements at the US 50 intersections. Begin with an initial project at US 50 and Sunnyside.
- Develop plans to provide better off-street US 50 pedestrian crossings. Examine the potential to use existing waterways and above or below grade crossing measures to improve pedestrian and bicycle crossing access and safety.
- Explore opportunities to develop a measured fitness trail loop downtown. This can be accomplished for very little cost by using existing sidewalks and trails and simply developing signage and information which provides distances traveled and other health related information.
- Support the development of an expanded bicycle and pedestrian access via off-street and on street trail infrastructure improvements.
Goal 3: Make upgrades to local roadways, streetscapes, sidewalks, lighting, signage, and pavement.

Strategies

º Continue to find a means for funding the 2nd Street Streetscape project. Work with the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs to identify locations which would be eligible for federal funding and develop a long range plan for completing non-eligible projects through local funding sources such as TIF revenue.

º Provide a more appealing entry experience into Aurora by completing gateway improvements and enhancements at key community entry and exit locations. Create better nodes and gateways on Importing Street.

º Coordinate planning and construction of future utility improvements with a sidewalk and roadway repair program to help reduce overall project costs and business disruption.

º Make repairs to local roadways and sidewalks. Couple the repairs with practical stormwater conveyance upgrades. Develop an inventory of all needed repairs and updates throughout the community and identify a practical approach to make community resources available for repairs which would see the most critical project completed within a few years.
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Chapter Nine Infrastructure & Utilities

OVERVIEW

Aurora is well situated to accommodate expected development within the service territories of its utilities due to ample water supply and wastewater treatment plant capacity. The city has proactively maintained and upgraded its utility system based on a 1998 master plan. The city is now at a point to implement a new utility development plan for the next 15 years as most recommendations from the 1998 plan have been implemented.
INTRODUCTION

One of the most dominant factors influencing Aurora is its topography along the Ohio River. Large elevation changes mean the water system is divided into a series of different pressure zones, each with its own water storage tank, booster station and piping network. For sanitary sewer, the community has 23 different sanitary sewer lift stations – each with its own collection system. The result is a fairly complicated utility system for a community of Aurora's size.

The city has proactively maintained and upgraded their water and sewer systems, following a 1998 master plan. Today, most of the improvements anticipated in that plan have been implemented. Conditions have also changed considerably since the old plan. Expansion of the water system means it is larger than it was in 1998. Sewer is also much changed from 1998 with an Agreed Order from IDEM dictating much of the investment into the sewer utility in recent years. A new plan to guide utility development is needed for the next 15-20 years.

A summary of each system, along with recommendations follows:

WATER

Existing System Summary:

- The City of Aurora's Water Utility serves 2,477 customers in the City of Aurora and in unincorporated areas surrounding the City. A map of the City’s service territory is included as Exhibit M.
- Water is supplied from the city's wellfield just north of the downtown between the Ohio River and US 50. A total of three wells provide between 650 and 800 gallons per minute (gpm) each. Treatment is limited to injection of chlorine and fluoride. Current water usage is approximately 940,000 gallons per day (gpd). The wells have the potential to pump in excess of 1.6 million gpd, meaning there is capacity for growth in water demand.
- The city’s distribution system serves 12.2 square miles of territory with 400,000 feet of distribution piping. Piping ranges from 1 to 12 inches in diameter. Because the ground elevation above sea level ranges from 500 feet to around 800 feet, the system is divided into a series of pressure zones. Each zone has a network of pipes, a booster pump station and a storage tank. The actual water pressure varies across each zone, with lower elevations having system pressures up to 135psi, and hilltop locations having pressures between 40-65 psi.
- The city operates six water storage tanks. The tanks range from 150,000 gallons to 500,000 gallons, and include both ground level tanks and elevated tanks.
Water System Issues and Opportunities:

- The water utility was first established in 1903, and many of the city’s water lines are still original. This makes them over 110 years old. While many of the oldest lines are still in relatively good condition, the city needs to make plans for their eventual replacement. The city should seek opportunities to replace water mains cost effectively concurrent with other street or sanitary sewer projects along the same streets.

- Water mains installed in the city in the 1950’s have had more leakage issues than other lines installed. The City needs to replace lines from this era whenever funding is available.

- The water main connecting the wells to downtown is undersized and many ruptures have occurred on the line. Because of the location of this line in the system, taking this line out of service for repairs results in significant portions of the water system being shut down. Options need to be considered for upgrading this to a larger main and for keeping the water system operational when this is out of service.

- The SR 148 booster station dates back to 1964, and warrants replacement. The utility is currently reviewing options to replace the booster station.

- Each month, the utility sends out 400 to 500 water shut-off notices due to overdue utility bills. This results in 100-200 shut-offs per month. Historically, many of the shut-off notices are for rental properties. The utility should consider updating policies regarding water service to rentals to reduce the effort required to collect utility bills.

- Water treatment plant upgrades have been recommended by the utility’s engineering consultant in order to bring the facility into compliance with recommended standards. Improvements would include a backup generator and construction of facilities to separate lab, chlorine and fluoride rooms. It is estimated that this project will cost $350,000.

- The city’s last water system master plan was completed in April 1999. A review of this document reveals that most of the recommendations of that plan have been implemented. It is recommended that the utility develop a new master plan to guide future investment in the water utility.

- The utility’s service territory includes significant area south of Aurora that has potential for development. In addition, the utility has been approached by smaller adjacent water utilities regarding potential take-over of their system. Any expansion should be carefully reviewed during the recommended master plan for the water utility.

- The utility service areas map on the next page shows the extent of the current service areas for both the water and sanitary sewer services. As depicted in the map, Aurora provides utility services well beyond the current corporate boundaries of the city and to many neighboring communities.
EXHIBIT M: AURORA UTILITY SERVICE AREAS MAP

Legend
- County Boundary
- Aurora Corporate Limits
- Aurora City Sewer Service Area
- Aurora City Water Service Area

- Mount Sinai
- Wilmington
- Buffalo
- Hartford
- Dearborn
- OHIO

Legend
- County Boundary
- Aurora Corporate Limits
- Aurora City Sewer Service Area
- Aurora City Water Service Area

Graphic Scale (Miles)
WASTEWATER

Existing System Summary

- The City of Aurora’s wastewater utility provides collection of sanitary sewer flows, and conveys the flows to a regional treatment facility. The utility operates both a gravity sanitary sewer collection system, and a network of 23 sanitary pumping stations and 48,000 feet of force main.

- The majority of the utility consists of separated sanitary sewers. However, some combined sewers still exist in the system.

- Most flows in the community are routed to a regional pumping station at the site of a former treatment facility located northeast of the downtown on Utah Street. From here flows are conveyed to the South Dearborn Regional Sewer District’s (SDRSD) Treatment Facility in Lawrenceburg. In addition, two other pumping stations on north US 50 convey flows directly to the SDRSD treatment facility.

- The city is under an Agreed Order from IDEM to reduce combined sewer overflows and sanitary sewer overflows in the system. The first phase of these improvements was completed in 2007, and has resulted in the elimination of the city’s four sanitary sewer overflows, and has reduced combined sewer overflows to only 2 locations. A second project is currently underway that will invest $4.5m in upgrades to the utility including upsizing the force main conveying flows to the SDRSD treatment facility and to replace CSO’s on 4th and 5th Streets. Existing pipelines from the 1970’s are being replaced and the force main is being moved from the middle of US 50 to under the Dearborn Trail. A third phase is currently being planned that will replace CSO’s on 2nd and 3rd Streets.

- The SDRSD treatment facility is rated for 6.0 mgd, with 2.0 allocated to each owner (Aurora, Greendale and Lawrenceburg). By contract, each owner has allocated 0.56 mgd to a local distillery. In total, the plant sees 3.6 mgd, of which 0.5 mgd is from Aurora. This is well within the hydraulic capacity of the plant. Because of the distillery, the plant is more organically loaded than it is hydraulically. Still, there is excess capacity available for growth.

Wastewater System Issues and Opportunities:

- The city’s last wastewater system master plan was completed in April 1999. A review of this document reveals that most of the recommendations of that plan have been implemented. It is recommended that the utility develop a new master plan to guide future investment in the utility.

- The city needs to complete the remaining phases of their Agreed Order with IDEM.

- It has been proposed that a Solar Sludge Drying Project be constructed at the SDRSD treatment facility. This project is estimated to cost $3.8 to $4.6 million. Aurora would be responsible for paying for 1/3 of the cost of this upgrade.

GAS UTILITY

Natural gas service in Aurora is provided by Aurora’s Gas Utility. There is currently natural gas available throughout the corporate limits of the City.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Telecommunication services are currently provided by multiple providers.

ELECTRIC

Electric service is provided to Aurora by Duke Energy.
GOALS & IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Goal 1: Develop a new utility master plan to guide water and sanitary sewer system growth and investment.

Strategies
- Pursue OCRA Planning Grant to fund the new master plan.
- Use planning process to identify growth/expansion plans for the water utility.

Goal 2: Continue to complete sanitary sewer improvements specified in the City’s IDEM Agreed Order.

Strategies
- Implement Phase 2 CSO project.
- Implement Phase 3 CSO projects.
- Pursue opportunities to combine downtown CSO projects with ongoing downtown streetscape and enhancement projects.

Goal 3: Coordinate utility improvement work with desired streetscape and roadway enhancement projects.

Strategies
- Combine projects to achieve efficiency and capitalizes on economies of scale.
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Chapter Ten

Critical Sub Areas
Chapter Ten  Critical Sub Area

VISION

These areas represent significant opportunities for Aurora’s success well into the future. Since the typical timeframe for a comprehensive plan is much longer it was decided that direction was needed in these key areas over the next few years because they are so critical to Aurora’s long-term prosperity.
INTRODUCTION

As the Comprehensive Plan was developed a number of key areas were identified which needed further study. In general, the comprehensive plan is designed to unfold over 20 years, but it was clear that direction was needed in these key areas over the next few years because they are so critical to Aurora’s long-term success.

Many important areas were discussed with the public, stakeholders, and city staff during the course of this plan. Ultimately it was decided that the following three areas were the most important to Aurora and warranted development of additional details as the city’s Critical Sub Areas (CSAs):

- Downtown Revitalization
- Tourism Potential
- Ohio River and Community Connectivity.

These areas represent significant opportunities for Aurora well into the future. They are independently important but interrelated topics. For example, tourism in and of itself can have great benefit but its success will help draw additional people, and outside money into the community, which will be critical to help support the downtown businesses. Successful completion of these three initiatives is critical to the long term revitalization of the heart of your community. These things will not happen overnight but with intentional and focused investment you quickly can make great progress towards your ultimate goal – a community renaissance.

The Critical Sub Areas map on the following page illustrates some of the greatest opportunities you have to help truly transform your community. It also illustrates the compact nature and close proximity each of these CSAs have to one another and the importance of taking a truly comprehensive approach to strategically planning future implementation of these ideas.
EXHIBIT N: DOWNTOWN CSA MAP

Legend
- Gateway Parcel
  - Parking
  - Plaza
  - Kiosk
  - Restroom
- Riverfront Park
- Development Opportunity
- Lesko Park (Existing)

Primary Streetscape Improvements
- Primary Improvement Corridor & Views
- Secondary Improvement Corridor & Views

Existing Trail
- Proposed Trail
- Corporate Limits

Hillforest Victorian House Museum

Directional Arrow

Graphic Scale (feet)
CSA 1 - DOWNTOWN

INTENT

Downtown Aurora represents the heart of the community both figuratively and literally. Downtown is where Aurora began nearly two centuries ago along the banks of the Ohio River and is still the location with the highest concentration of residential and commercial building. Nearly everybody who contributed ideas to this comprehensive plan spoke of the wonderful buildings, walkable streets, and opportunities in Aurora’s downtown. Walking around now it becomes obvious that the Historic Downtown Core has seen better days but everybody involved with this plan believes that there is still great hope to begin a downtown revitalization which will ultimately trigger a community renaissance.

The intent of this Critical Sub Area (CSA) is to help identify the first steps which Aurora can take to begin to long but fruitful process of reinvesting in its historic downtown core. This CSA outlines some of the issues surrounding the current conditions downtown and helps define small incremental steps the community can take to begin its downtown revitalization.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following bullet points briefly outline some of the most important factors to consider as you begin your downtown revitalization efforts.

- The extent of the floodplain in Aurora can be a major hurdle to downtown redevelopment. After recent flood insurance map revisions, as much as 50% of the historic downtown core now sits within the floodplain. In addition, recent Federal Emergency Management Administration rules regarding development within the floodplain have made it much more difficult to rehabilitate or redevelop flood prone locations in Downtown Aurora and many projects will not be eligible for federal funding of any kind, which is commonly used to kick start downtown revitalization efforts.

- Aurora’s historic district standards are commonly cited as a major hurdle to rehabilitating downtown building within the historic district. Regardless of their intent and content, if people are unclear about what can be done under the historic development standards, or if the process is perceived as overburdening, they will become a hindrance to your downtown revitalization efforts.

  ° Maintaining Aurora’s historic charm is critically important to the long term success of your community revitalization efforts but historic development standards lose their value if they are perceived to be a hurdle. Regardless of their original intent they may actually do more harm than good if they, rightly or wrongly, encourage a do nothing attitude which leads to disrepair and building decline.

  ° Historic buildings lose their charm and appeal when they are crumbling and in decay. The city must take steps to work to
find and promote ways which the spirit of the historic development standards are met with readily available and modestly priced modern materials.

- Many people, both residents and visitors, commonly cite the charm and appeal of Aurora’s historic downtown core. Even with the high accolades bestowed upon downtown something isn’t encouraging or beckoning people to walk into the shops. Many local business owners have discussed how their business could not be supported off of local sales alone, even if the demographic information indicates otherwise.
  - The reality of today’s retail business environment is that many small businesses must find alternative ways to supplement their sales, such as online sales. However, without local residents to frequent these establishments they will eventually close up shop, at least physically.
  - The city needs to work with local business owners and other regional resources to identify ways to keep local businesses downtown and to encourage new businesses to view Aurora’s downtown as ‘the place’ to set up shop.

- Downtown is suffering from what many local stakeholders defined as a ‘Front Porch’ problem, meaning that first floor building space has been overrun with multi-family rental housing. These first floor rentals are likely a building owner response to reduced retail and commercial demand for downtown space but having housing on the first floor downtown creates problems.
  - What should be a vibrant and welcoming commercial zone quickly deteriorates into a congregation location for many residents, creating an unwelcoming and potentially intimidating environment for potential customers.
  - Using what should be first floor commercial space for residential uses also pushes people out of Aurora’s traditional neighborhoods and away from key neighborhood resources such as parks. This reduced demand creates a tenant vacuum in your neighborhoods which will further encourage building deterioration and neighborhood decline.

- Aurora has many community organizations which have a vested interest in seeing downtown succeed. Many of these organizations, such as the Aurora Lions Club and Aurora Main Street, already assume great responsibility for many of the downtown activities and initiatives the community enjoys.
  - The city needs to continue to work very closely with these organizations to continue existing initiatives and to help identify new ways to draw attention and visitors downtown.
  - It will also be important to continue to expand your relationship with other organizations that can help you achieve your downtown vision. Many groups out there are willing and able to contribute to the success of the community if you can work with them to identify the right opportunities.
NEXT STEPS

- Validate what opportunities exist in the historic downtown core. Conduct an asset inventory or community inventory to help identify your key assets and areas where you may fall short.
  - This can be set up as a workshop with businesses and other local leaders to generate ideas.
  - Setting up the exercise in a retreat style setting, away from hustle and bustle of daily life, can rally help the ideas flow at the retreat.
  - Make sure you carve out some time with this group to discuss and identify potential funding sources for each of the project ideas which come up. (Public, private, local, etc.)
  - Don't forget to develop a robust list of potential volunteers to help implement plans and don't hesitate to ask them directly for their help.
- You should use the results of the asset inventory retreat to complete a detailed downtown redevelopment master plan.
  - The downtown plan should be part vision and part strategic plan, don't hesitate to dream but be sure you relate your dreams back to very specific step you can take to begin realizing them.
  - Be sure the plan paints a clear and complete picture of what you want Aurora to look like in the future, strong imagery can go a long way toward communicating your ideas to the community and receiving important support.
  - A downtown plan can be funded through the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA), who also helped fund the completion of this comprehensive plan. Once your downtown plan is completed you will be more competitive for additional funding to help construct parts of your vision.
  - Most importantly, be sure you use the plan to help clearly outline a plan to advertise and sell the vision to Aurora's residents, their support and feedback will be invaluable when plan implementation gets started.
- Footsteps downtown lead to increase business. You need to find ways to encourage people to walk around in a safe, convenient, and comfortable environment.
  - Conduct a walking inventory of your downtown to help assess areas which need improvement. Use this information to help develop a clear vision for improvements you can make to improve the functional and visual characteristics of the downtown pedestrian environment.
  - It is tough for businesses alone to generate the footsteps needed to support sales. Aurora needs to find a way to incorporate other points of interest downtown and connect these directly with the tourism potential of the community described in the CSA Chapter of this plan.

There are over 60 window murals on buildings throughout downtown. Source: HWC
• Find ways to make Aurora a visually appealing and welcoming place for residents and visitors. This can obviously be accomplished through major capital improvements but paying attention to the small details downtown can go a long way towards cleaning up the image of the community – providing the face lift you need to make people long to come back. For example you can start by focusing on the following things:

° Clean up the appearance of first floor windows, they don't necessarily have to be filled with shops to be attractive. Simply clearing clutter and cleaning the glass can go a long way towards creating a more welcoming environment.
° Utilize vacant storefronts to advertise attractions/art/etc. This has been attempted in the past and should receive renewed energy to make it successful. Reach out to owners of buildings with visible storefronts to find ways to create visually attractive displays advertising other downtown attractions.
° Work with shop owners to make sure they keep regular hours. There are not many things which will discourage visitors from returning than finding shops they want to visit not opened during what would normally be considered regular business hours.

- You can begin this by organizing an initiative to select a specific day of the month for all shop owners to stay open a bit longer and advertise it in the region.
- Work with Dearborn County tourism to have businesses open during arrival of tours
- Have local business days (similar to first First Friday's) where businesses agree to remain open for extended hours and have activities to attract customers
- Promote, Promote, Promote! Embrace your unique culture and advertise it to everybody, residents and visitors alike.
° Be sure to prioritize your investment and start with those areas which will have the biggest impact, including the following areas:
  - As you cross George Street bridge onto Main Street
  - 2nd Street
  - 3rd Street
° Keep in mind, to change people’s perception of your downtown “if it’s visible it needs to be visibly inviting”!

• Work to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, first floor residential uses in the historic downtown commercial core. Begin your efforts in the most visible commercial locations, such as along 2nd Street and work street by street until you achieve your ultimate goal.

° Work with the City Attorney and the Board of Zoning Appeals to change permitted uses in the downtown district through revised zoning ordinances.
• Work with building owners to find alternative tenants. Non-profit and community organizations may not be the highest and best use for downtown commercial space but they can be a good short term solution as your downtown slowly attracts additional retail and commercial tenants.

- Look into subsidized rental rates for new businesses. Many communities have examples of programs which provide rental assistance to new businesses which gradually phase out over a period of four to five years as the business becomes more viable over a period of time.

- The small initial investment in a program like this can be worth the investment with immediate returns realized through improved storefront appeal.

- You can couple the program with related services, such as small business counseling, to help improve the long term viability of your downtown business district.

• Incorporate comfortable and appealing pedestrian and bicycle amenities (signage, bicycle racks, wayfinding, benches, trees, etc.) to encourage regional trail users to stop and come into downtown. Find ways to get them off of the trail and into your downtown, even if it means routing a portion of the trail through your downtown.

- Make sure shops and services are meeting visitor expectations
  - Conduct secret shopper activities to gauge external view of service/experience in Downtown Aurora.

- Clearly define the intent and opportunities surrounding your current historic development standards.
  - Review your standards to make sure they are not prohibitively expensive or cumbersome for current and prospective building owners. Compare them to other community’s successful standards to see where you are at on the spectrum.
  - Work with commercial realtors to develop additional information (brochures, website, etc.) they can provide to prospective clients which clearly explains the historic standards and how they are applied.

• Work to develop a façade improvement program. Start with a focused area in a very visible location such as along 2nd Street.
  - Work with Main Street Aurora to develop a program to define funding sources and program requirements.
  - Additional funding for a larger project can be obtained through OCRA but you must have a completed downtown plan as a prerequisite for funding eligibility.

• The development of your Ohio Riverfront is a key to the long term success of your downtown revitalization efforts. In a large way downtown redevelopment and riverfront development have intertwined destinies – one cannot easily happen without the other. See the Ohio Riverfront CSA in this chapter for further information.
CSA 2 - TOURISM POTENTIAL

INTENT

Aurora has a lot of untapped potential to become a regional tourism draw. Many people mentioned with despair all of the traffic and vehicles which pass through downtown Aurora along US 56 on their way to and from Rising Sun. Your location between two major casinos, and more importantly the traffic these regional attractions naturally generate, can eventually become one of your greatest assets if you take the right steps to capture the potential. The key is to find ways to encourage just a portion of these people to stop and spend a little time in your community. Once they do, assuming you take steps to impress them, they will come back and will bring their friends and family.

The intent of the Tourism CSA is to outline the steps you can take to begin to transform your community into a larger tourism attraction. This CSA helps define small incremental steps you can take to begin to realize the benefits that increased tourism can bring to your community.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following bullet points briefly outline some of the most important factors to consider as you begin your efforts to begin increasing your tourism draw.

- Marketing takes money. The good news is Visit Southeast Indiana, the Dearborn County Convention and Visitors Bureau, can help but they need to know what your story is. This organization already does a lot to direct people to your community but they can be even more effective if you take some time to self-evaluate on your greatest assets and weave them into a compelling story about who you are.

- Aurora has a huge advantage over other communities in the fact that lots of people are already going through the city on their way to other places. The trick is to find a way to capture their interest and encourage them to stop or to come back to explore what you have to offer. Below is a very brief list of some of the advantages you already possess which provide a good start towards becoming a great tourist community:
  - You have many places with a unique local flavor which has been developed over the many years of your community’s history.
  - Many visitors are already brought in by motor coach with regularly scheduled tours.
  - These tours are typically coordinated with Main Street Aurora and take in sights and attractions such as the Hillforest Mansion and Veraestau Historic Site.
  - While your downtown shopping will likely not become a major trip generator for people you already possess the framework to transform it into an important trip activity, increasing the diversity of your appeal.

Streetscape furnishings such as this clock add charm and appeal to the downtown area. Source: HWC
You can tap into the larger OKI and Cincinnati Metro regional markets, show them your character and charm and you will be visited.

The real attraction for people will be Aurora; you’re a great community with a lot to offer. You just need to find creative and compelling ways to the story of who you are and what you have to offer.

Aurora’s downtown is already almost entirely walkable, which many communities fight to achieve. The problem is that when people arrive they do not know what to walk to. The diversity and abundance of your historic buildings, coupled with the downtown and the Ohio River means that you need to do extra work to help point people to the key places to visit in Aurora, lest they get confused and frustrated. This should include providing such basic amenities as:

- Well marked available public parking.
- Visitor convenience facilities including dining, restrooms, and attraction information.
- Businesses which hold regular business hours.

You have a compelling story you just need to find creative and interesting ways for people to relate to who you are as a community.

Find your story and tell it! Begin with the heritage and history you possess to help find a unique and authentic interpretation of Aurora, begin by looking at the following key pieces of your local history:

- Early brewing history
- Ohio River town – historic river town
- Furniture making heritage
- Active feed mill and store
- Recreational tourism – tap into your very visible and interesting natural resource
- Cultural tourism – play up and highlight your history
- Architectural interest – you already have the buildings now find a way to showcase them
Chapter 10  Critical Sub Area

NEXT STEPS

- Conduct an inventory of your best assets and weave them together to tell a compelling story about Aurora – who you are and what you offer.
  ° Start this by touring other communities first then coming back home to look at your community. This should be an organized group consisting of local stakeholders and volunteers.
  ° After the tour conduct a focus group meeting to identify and prioritize your resources - focus on service and quality and answer the following questions:
    - What things are/can be destinations?
    - What things are only locally important?
    - What can easily become part of a tour/itinerary?
  ° Once your story is understood by you, find interesting ways to relate the story (very visibly) to visitors.
  ° You also need to find ways to manage visitors’ expectations before you market – do your homework first and find ways to build anticipation for people coming to Aurora.

- Develop detailed and phased plans to improve welcome and tourist convenience facilities downtown.
  ° These facilities should be very near the Ohio River near the end of your 2nd Street commercial core.
  ° Identify available and underutilized land downtown for these facilities and conduct an evaluation of each locations issues and opportunities.

- Develop a detailed long term improvement master plan and prioritize implementation with other planned capital projects such as utility, streetscape, and riverfront improvements. The plans should detail the provision of the following amenities at a minimum:
  - Public car parking and permanent bus parking facilities.
  - Wayfinding signage and environmental graphics including interpretive panels, street signs, business signs, etc.
  - Available, convenient, and comfortable restrooms
  - Small rest areas, preferably along the Ohio River, and eventually connecting directly to Lesko Park and the Dearborn Trail.

- Develop a detailed and specific wayfinding and environmental graphics plan for the larger Historic Commercial and Residential Districts.
  ° This should focus on fun and creative ways to direct people to your best attractions.
  ° You need to have a balance between directional and informational signage. One important function of the wayfinding in Aurora should be to let people know what you have and how to get to it.
• Work with state and regional tourism experts to develop a formal plan which identifies the steps required to transform Aurora into a major regional tourist attraction.
  ° Focus on day-trip possibilities with nearby casinos. You should target the casino demographic and work with the casinos to develop stay and play incentives.
  ° Lodging is available in Rising Sun and Lawrenceburg, you should focus on building infrastructure to accommodate large groups for an entire day
  ° One goal should be to develop enough diversity and interest to keep people an entire day from breakfast through dinner, including evening entertainment.
  ° Keep your approach nostalgic; build the story of your character through the context of your interesting history.
  ° Tie your efforts in with your riverfront redevelopment initiatives outlined in the Ohio Riverfront CSA in this chapter.

• Take a ‘planned assault’ marketing approach – tell your story – make your marketing releases regular and compelling.
  ° Develop a schedule for regular PR/Press releases advertising any improvements or changes you are completing – no matter how small.
  ° Pump up the value of the community, if you don’t brag on yourself, nobody else will brag on you either.
  ° Focus on local, regional, and special interest publications. Some regional examples include:
    - American Road Magazine
    - Cincy Sheek Magazine
    - Indiana Landmarks publications
    - Visit Southeast Indiana publications
    - Canoe, kayak, recreational boating, and outdoor adventure magazines.

The Aurora Farm and Garden store is a unique business most communities no longer have.
Source: HWC

The George Street bridge is an iconic structure and an important piece of Aurora’s history and development.
Source: HWC
Chapter 10  Critical Sub Area

CSA 3 - RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

INTENT

As this comprehensive plan was developed people repeatedly mentioned how the Ohio River was a great resource but was underutilized. Many stories were shared of the time spent boating on the river, watching the races during the former regatta, watching fireworks over the water, and casually strolling along the trail in Lesko Park. Every time one of these stories was shared it was usually followed with a qualifier like ‘but we don’t do that here anymore’ with a forlorn face.

Listening to these stories it quickly becomes apparent that the people in Aurora have an ingrained love for this natural resource. When the topic of the river is brought up you can see the faces of Aurora’s locals light up as they recall the fond memories of their experiences along the river. It also became apparent that now is the time for the community to re-embrace their former love and once again turn to the river as an important community asset.

If the expressions on the faces of residents are any indicator of the draw and excitement people feel surrounding the Ohio River think about what the response will be from new visitors who are experiencing this great body of water for the first time. Aurora has a real asset in the Ohio River. An asset which, if properly embraced and developed, can become a focal point for your downtown revitalization efforts, and an important catalyst from which to launch your new tourism and economic development strategies.

While many other communities have found a home along the river it is also true that most of these communities lack the natural beauty and intact historic charm which Aurora possesses. This places your community uniquely in the category of being best equipped to use the river as a central feature vital to the heart of your community.

Many ideas were shared about how Aurora can take advantage of the river to help launch its renewal efforts but one of the best ideas actually came from a previous comprehensive plan which was completed in 1967. In this plan it was proposed to develop a key feature along the river around which the community could fundamentally and completely transform and redevelop. While the measures outlined in that plan were drastic and likely not feasible today, the essence of those recommendations, using the river to develop a central visionary plan for transforming the community, are more valid today than they were nearly 50 years ago.

Barge watching on the Ohio River.
Source: HWC
ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES
The following brief ideas are intended to get you started along the way toward developing a current vision for the use of the valuable riverfront space the Aurora community is blessed with.

- One of the key features of a renewed Aurora riverfront should be the development of a key public space near the end of the 2nd Street commercial corridor. This should be a multi-use facility which can accommodate the Farmer’s Fair and other community events.
- Utilizing vacant and underutilized property for this space can help alleviate an eyesore and improve the visual appeal of the downtown for people traveling along SR 56 and across the George Street Bridge.
- New public spaces should also include provisions for visitors and tourists to the community, these should include public convenience facilities such as restrooms and parking, a trailhead to connect to the Dearborn trail corridor and Lesko Park, and attractive wayfinding amenities to direct people to other Aurora attractions.
- Other features should be considered which will provide year-round appeal for various activities. Incorporating a small splash pad, shaded seating, and public gathering spaces will help ensure that this investment becomes a well used destination which generates some of the footsteps needed to enhance the local business opportunities downtown.
- Provisions should also be made for a public river landing and public boat docks. These need to be planned for a location that is visible but away from the main features and attractions. The idea is to provide a place for boaters to stop and visit the attractions and businesses which will be placed front and center in the community.
- It is important to not just focus on activities that occur at the riverfront but also on enhancing the views of the river/water from within the community. Keep in mind that a large part of the river’s appeal is its natural beauty and that it can be viewed from many points within the community. The more successfully you can capture the various views of the river throughout the community the more appeal it will have for residents and visitors.
- Don’t ignore the backwaters/lagoons – they have natural beauty too and can provide a critical link which enables easy access for other activities such as kayaking, canoeing, and bicycling.
- An finally, remember that there is plenty of ‘waterfront’ space in Aurora to enhance the community’s appeal and attract attention – the most important factor is how you choose to display it.
CASE STUDY EXAMPLES

So, how should Aurora begin the ambitious endeavor of revitalizing its relationship with the Ohio River? One of the best ways to begin a project is to research other communities which have completed similar projects and learn from their experience. Following are two case study examples of communities in Indiana, located along the Ohio River, which have undertaken efforts to leverage this valuable natural resource into a valuable community amenity from which to launch a renaissance of their downtown commercial districts. While each of these communities utilized the same resource, their approaches were not the same and each leveraged their own local character and assets to develop a uniquely individual approach. Review these examples and find ways from which you can build a long term vision for Aurora’s unique assets.

Newburgh Riverfront:

In 2010, Newburgh Indiana finished 3 miles of their new Riverfront Trail along the Ohio River and passing through their downtown. Efforts to build the trail began in 2004, and after partnering with the Army Corps of Engineers and Warrick County, the trail became a reality.

Before the trail was complete, work was also completed on a much smaller walking path along the Ohio in a previously underutilized weedy path. The meandering trail and landscaping was then incorporated into the Rivertown Trail.

In addition to draw of the Rivertown Trail, Newburgh is a National Main Street Community and is constantly championed by Historic Newburgh, Inc. (HNI). Even though many historic properties have been lost to fires over the years, HNI has helped Newburgh capitalize on its historic charm and river location in several ways:

- Hosting and Partnering with businesses for events such as: Wine, Art and Jazz Festival; Farmers Market; Fireworks; Ghost Walks; Christmas Celebration; and wedding promotions.
- Hosting a comprehensive website which serves as a one stop shop for visitors to Newburgh. Website includes Newburgh History, Resources for Business Development, Interactive Map of Places to Shop and Dine, Virtual Brochure Rack, and Downloadable and Printable Visitors Guide and Map as well as easily accessible information on how to get involved.
- Set up an easily accessible and easy to find visitors center where day visitors can find maps, brochures, self-guided walking tour information and restrooms as well as a gift shop.
Mount Vernon Riverfront:
In 2013 Mount Vernon completed development of a new riverfront park, Riverbend Park, complete with a splash pad and an amphitheater which can host the Evansville Philharmonic, along with movie nights and concerts by local artists. A three story $18 million mixed use development, The Landing, was completed immediately behind the park in 2014, providing forty six senior housing apartments and six condominiums on the upper floors and nearly 8,000 square feet of commercial/retail space on the bottom floors.

- The original site was an abandoned industrial site along the river. Before any development could begin, silos coated with asbestos on the site had to be removed.
- The two projects were years in the making but will boost downtown Mount Vernon, which has seen its population decline in the last several years. In combination with the new developments, the Mount Vernon Common Council has taken up consideration of an ordinance aimed at giving the city more authority to remove vacant and dilapidated structures.
- In February 2014, Mount Vernon was also awarded a grant from INDOT to complete the Riverfront Trail, which will connect the new Riverbend Park through the heart of the community to Brittlebank Park on the other side of downtown.
NEXT STEPS

- Establish an online one-stop shop where potential visitors can find information about the community such as parking and restrooms, business resources, virtual brochures for the area, and an online map of destinations within the community. Highlight the ability to be right next to the Ohio River. This can be a component of the existing City website or a new website with its own domain name. The development of this resource goes hand in hand with the tourism CSA and the Downtown CSA.

- Take small steps along the riverfront such as defined 'picture spots' and viewing benches, small pocket parks, and beautification landscaping everywhere possible along the river.

- Concurrent with small steps, complete a detailed master plan of the riverfront. Master plan should include proposed park spaces, amenities, parking, trails, restrooms, and desired developments along the riverfront. Identify any remediation or preparation work that will need to be done prior to any development.

- As part of developing the master plan, engage with property owners, along the river, business owners, and potential developers for parcels in the riverfront to get their buy-in and ideas.

- Start researching funding opportunities such as State grants and private fundraising.
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Demographic profiles help to provide a snapshot of a community which is useful for making informed decisions and crafting policies catered to that community. As Aurora determines what direction the community will go, its elected officials, community leaders and informed citizens may find the included data helpful.

This information has been obtained from sources believed reliable. We have not verified it and make no guarantee, warranty or representation about it.
Introduction

This section provides an in-depth look at the City of Aurora’s demographic makeup and reviews topics such as employment, education, age and poverty. Each section is comparative and examines Aurora side-by-side with either the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Combined Statistical Area (OKI) or Dearborn County. The OKI includes the counties of Dearborn, Franklin, and Ohio in Indiana; Boone, Bracken, Campbell, Gallatin, Grant, Kenton, and Pendleton in Kentucky; and Brown, Butler, Clermont, Clinton, Hamilton and Warren in Ohio.

Most of the demographic data available as of January 2015 is based on the most current U.S. Census survey taken in April 2010 and the American Community Survey (ACS) conducted yearly. While the Census Bureau conducts smaller scale surveys between decennial years, the bureau does not analyze the geographic areas with a population of 65,000 or less based on Census Bureau population estimates.

The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing report conducted every year that includes information about a communities’ demographic information such as age, sex, race, income, education, disabilities, commuting and much more. Unlike the Census, it uses estimate and not actual counts.

Population

Aurora’s population was about 3,645 in 1900 and peaked at 4,828 in 1940. It dropped after that and has been fairly steady, with minor ups and down. Figure 1 shows the population change in Aurora between 1900 and 2010. According to the American Community Survey data, the current population of Aurora is 3,791. Population projections are not available for the city, but Dearborn County projections show a steady increase from 51,297 in 2015 to 56,302 in 2050.

![Figure 1: Aurora Population, 1900-2010](image-url)
Median Age

Aurora’s median age is lower than both Indiana and the OKI region. Aurora’s median age is 36.2, the OKI is 37.1 and Dearborn County is 40.1. As shown in Figure 2, all three areas’ median ages have grown over the last 20 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Aurora</th>
<th>Dearborn County</th>
<th>OKI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: US Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates

Population by Age Group

As seen in Figure 3, Aurora has the highest percentage of people aged 65 and over. Figure 4 highlights the population percentages by age group in Aurora compared to the OKI region. Aurora has nearly the same concentration of individuals between the ‘working’ ages of 15 to 65 (66 percent), compared to the OKI region’s 67 percent.

Source: US Census Bureau 2008-2012 ACS 5-Year Estimates
School Enrollment

School enrollment rates are useful indicators of growth within a community. Declining enrollment is troubling, but not alarming. More students may simply be attending charter schools which are not subject to the same reporting requirements as public schools. Figure 5 shows a steady decrease in enrollment since the 2009-2010 school year, as reported by the Indiana Department of Education.

South Dearborn Community School Corporation’s graduation rate is at 87% and has been steadily increasing since 2006-2007.
Educational Attainment

Overall, Aurora has a lower percentage of high school graduates than Indiana and Dearborn County. **Figure 6** shows for high school graduates, Aurora has 34% compared to 31% for the OKI region. Aurora and Dearborn County both lag the OKI region in advanced degrees.

![Educational Attainment Comparison](image)

Source: US Census Bureau 2008-2012 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Poverty Rate Comparisons

To determine the percentage of people living in poverty in the United States, the Census Bureau calculates a series of poverty thresholds each year. A poverty threshold is defined as the minimum income a family would have to earn to meet its basic needs.

Aurora’s rate in this category is less than the county and state. **Figure 7** shows unrelated individuals 15 years and over that are below the poverty rate in Aurora, Dearborn County and the OKI region as a whole.

However, when you look at other categories, Aurora has a higher poverty rate than the county and OKI region. For instance, 25.7% of Aurora residents under 18 years of age are impoverished, compared to 9.3% of Dearborn County and 21.8% of the OKI region minor residents.
The percent of free lunches served is another indicator of economic distress. As shown in Figure 8, the percent of free lunches for South Dearborn Community Schools is lower than Indiana's, at 40.5% compared to Indiana’s 41.4%. Reduced price lunches are also lower at 4.9% compared to Indiana’s 7.9%. There were no equal comparisons for this data to the entire OKI region.

Source: Indiana Department of Education
Income Distribution

The majority of Aurora residents (63 percent) make less than $50,000 annually. This is more than the percentage of Dearborn County and the OKI region residents making under $50,000 per year (42.4 percent and 47.3 percent, respectively).

Figure 9 identifies two key income ranges in which Aurora’s population has a higher or nearly equal concentration of people compared to Dearborn County and Indiana.

However, only 7.4 percent of Aurora residents make over $100,000 per year, compared to 20.2 percent for Dearborn County and 21.7 percent for the OKI region.

Median Household Income

Aurora’s median household income of $40,509 is lower than both Dearborn County at $58,098 and the OKI region at $54,779. Figure 10 highlights Aurora’s median household income.

Between 2000 and 2012, (during the recession), Aurora’s median household income dropped by 7% when adjusted for inflation. The OKI region experienced a loss of 8%, while Dearborn County experienced a much larger loss of 15%.
Employment Distribution

Aurora’s employment rate and distribution are important factors for the city’s potential economic development and expansion.

Figure 11 show’s Aurora’s employment distribution for the population age 16 and older. 59% are employed, 8.8% are unemployed (but seeking work) and 32% are not in the labor force (meaning they are currently neither employed nor seeking work).
Employment by Industry Comparisons

As seen in Figure 12, Aurora has significantly higher percentages of retail trade and arts, entertainment, recreation, and accommodation and food services employment. There are also higher percentages of those working in professional, scientific, management and administrative and waste management services in Aurora than in Dearborn County or the OKI region. However, there are less people in Aurora working in manufacturing and educational services, health care and social assistance.

![Employment by Industry Comparisons](image1)

Source: US Census Bureau 2008-2012 ACS5-Year Estimates

Commuting

Aurora’s commuting patterns can be important in determining the number of workers available for local jobs. About 55% of Aurora’s workers are employed in Dearborn County, while 41.5% work outside the state. The remaining 3% work in Indiana, but outside Dearborn County. On average, employed Aurora residents travel 26 minutes (one way) to get to work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 13. Aurora Commuting Patterns</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mean Travel Time to Work (mins.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Pop. Working in Dearborn County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Pop. Working outside Dearborn County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Pop. Working Outside Indiana</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: US Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimate
Housing

As shown in Figure 14, Aurora has a lower median owner-occupied home value than Dearborn County or Indiana. Between 2000 and 2012, Aurora’s owner-occupied housing value decreased in value by 1.2%, comparable to the OKI region and Dearborn County which both saw an increase.

**Occupied Housing**

As shown in Figure 15, Aurora has a lower percentage of owner occupied housing units, at 55.9% compared to 68.3% and a higher percentage of renter occupied units than the OKI region.

For renter occupied homes, Aurora has a higher percentage, at 44.1%, than the OKI region’s 31.7%.

![Figure 15. Occupied Housing Units](image1)

Source: US Census Bureau 2008-2012 ACS 5-Year Estimates

**Vacant Housing**

In Figure 16, Aurora has the lowest percentage of vacant houses at 6% when compared with Dearborn County (8.5%) and the OKI region (11%) as a whole. In terms of vacancy rates, Aurora’s homeowner vacancy rate is 3.4%, which is a little higher than the OKI region’s rate of 2.3%. Aurora’s rental vacancy rate of 9% is nearly identical to the OKI region’s rate of 10%.

![Figure 16. Percent Vacant Housing](image2)

Source: US Census Bureau 2008-2012 ACS 5-Year Estimates
The first Steering Committee meeting for the Aurora Comprehensive Plan project was held on the evening of October 29, 2014. The purpose of the meeting was to kick off the Comprehensive Plan project and to provide a general overview of the planning purpose, process, and timeline. This meeting also facilitated conversations and exercises aimed at establishing a baseline understanding of the constraints and opportunities which need to be considered during the plan. Below is a summary of the proceedings.

1. General Introductions and Roles

   - Consultant Team Members
     - Cory Daly – HWC Engineering, 317-379-2634, cdaly@hwcengineering.com
     - Cory Whitesell – HWC Engineering, 317-347-3663 x 206, cwhitesell@hwcengineering.com

   - Steering Committee Members
     Each Steering Committee member was asked to introduce him or herself and to provide a brief summary of who they are. Below is a summary of those in attendance:
     - Eric Oatman – Resident, Personal Interest
     - Jeff Stratman – City of Aurora Attorney
     - Larry C. Giffin – Resident, Personal Interest
     - Dan Valas – Great Crescent Brewery
     - Mike Hornbach – Purdue Extension – Dearborn County
     - Randy Turner – City of Aurora Utilities
     - Oren Turner – Dearborn County Economic Development
     - Mary Alice Horton – Aurora Public Library District
     - Judy Cox – Resident
     - Bonnie Morgan – Resident
     - Cynthia Bean – Resident
     - Bethany Ross – Main Street Aurora
     - Nancy Turner – Main Street Aurora/Center Township
     - Seth Elder – Indiana Landmarks
     - Marty Rahe – Property and Business Owner
     - Guinevere Emery – Aurora City Manager
     - Donnie Hastings Jr. – Mayor
     - Benny Turner – Aurora City Council
     - Kerrie Ohlmansiek – Business Owner
2. Demographic Profile
After initial introductions and conversation, the consultant team presented the results of the draft demographic profile prepared for the plan. The committee agreed that the findings of the profile appeared to accurately represent the current conditions in Aurora. However the regions used for comparison were questioned. It was discussed that a more accurate comparative analysis may be obtained by using similarly sized Ohio River towns and by comparing Aurora against the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky metro region, Aurora’s closest metropolitan region. A copy of the draft demographic profile will be made available on the project website at www.cityofauroracompplan.org. Following is a brief summary of the conversation which occurred at the conclusion of the presentation of the demographic profile:

- The location of Aurora makes it more comparable to other regional areas such as OKI (Northern Kentucky & Ohio).
- We need to figure out the draw to help increase population.
- While the 25-34 year old demographic is higher than Indiana State averages this is likely tied to the large proportion of affordable housing in the city.
- Median income and educational attainment in Aurora is low and we have a higher percentage of renters – all negative indicators.
- There appears to be a higher percentage of Section 8 housing in Aurora – as compared to neighboring communities.
- We seem to have demographic opportunities – what’s holding us back?
- We are wedged between Rising Sun and Lawrenceburg – what is the lure to get people to Aurora?
- Kids programs are doing great in Aurora – this speaks to the family friendly nature of the city.
- Aurora needs people who will contribute to the community.
- Demographics downtown are negative – lots of Section 8 housing and absent landlords.
- Perception of Aurora is that it can’t be good – we need to surround the bad with better stuff to help improve the situation.
- New FEMA flood zone maps (released January 2015) are a major point of concern – especially downtown.
- Traffic on U.S. 50 (congestion) is a major problem that impacts quality of life – comparative disadvantage.
- Aurora does not have a place for downsizing families (housing) – needs mid-upper income townhomes.

3. Website
At the conclusion of the icebreaker exercise, the draft project website was revealed. It was explained that a majority of the day-to-day correspondence will be conducted via e-mail and through the website. The website will be the portal
for project related information and project materials will be posted here for public review/information.

4. **Project Schedule**

The draft project schedule was discussed with the Steering Committee. The committee was asked to review the meeting dates and note any major exceptions to the proposed dates. HWC will work with City of Aurora staff to finalize the dates and will circulate the final schedule to the committee.

- Upcoming meeting dates will also be posted on the project website.
- The committee was reminded of the upcoming Public Workshop date on November 13, 2014 in the Purdue Extension meeting room. They were asked to spread the word of the meeting to their contacts and to attend the meeting as a show of support, if possible.

5. **Visioning Exercise**

After discussing the website and project communication the steering committee was asked to participate in a visioning exercise to help identify the constraints and opportunities within the community. For this exercise the committee was asked to locate three specific areas within their community, namely, the area they think is the most unattractive, the area which they think is the most attractive, and the area which has the most future opportunity. After they had completed the exercise the results were shared with the group. Following is a summary of the exercise results:

**Attractive Areas**

- Lesco Park --> On the River
- Downtown - make people drive through downtown
- All city parks and trails
- Historic District - Architecture
- Unique visual appeal of river
- Hillforest/steeple --> unique!
- Downtown
- The Hill/Hills
- Riverfront potential --> water, 6 marinas
- Architecture/waterfront
- Train Depot
- George Street --> Jobs/commerce
- 2nd Street --> Architecture
- Waterfront --> front door
  - marinas/water/river
- Downtown Architecture
- Main --> 3rd - 5th
- Steeple
Unattractive Areas

- George Street --> Industrial
- Lower 2nd --> slum housing
- Main Entry into town
- Un-kept property
- Importing Street --> vacancy
- W. 4th and Lower Conwell --> poorly kept --> worst area
- no downtown activity --> no entertainment
- Lower/1st floor housing US 50 --> east of city --> Walgreens
- Main N/W 50
- Conwell Street --> old housing
- West 5th and 4th Streets
- Corner of 56 --> Abandoned --> poor gateway
- US 50 traffic and congestion
- Vacant properties downtown
- Downtown Gateway George Street

Future Opportunity Areas

- Due to the duration of the meeting, the Steering Committee was asked to hold on to their thoughts on the Areas of the city which present the greatest opportunity. These will be the first topic of discussion at the next Steering Committee meeting in January.

The meeting concluded following the visioning exercises. The next scheduled meeting will be the Public Workshop on November 13, 2014.
The second Steering Committee (SC) meeting for the Aurora Comprehensive Plan project was held on the evening of January 8, 2015. The purpose of the meeting was to further the conversation which began during the first Steering Committee meeting in December. Below is a summary of the proceedings.

1. Completion of Visioning Exercise from SC Meeting #1

   - The second meeting picked up where the first meeting concluded and the group jumped right into the completion of the Attractive, Unattractive, and Opportunity exercise. The group was asked to share and discuss the things/places/ideas which present the greatest future opportunity for Aurora. Below is a summary of the conversation:
     - Proximity to the airport is an advantage - offices/call centers
     - Town home or condos needed
     - "fix 2nd street"
     - 2nd Street / 3rd Street pedestrian corridor
     - Look beyond retail...
       - "how to fill storefronts"
     - More walking options – trails/sidewalks
     - "we are lacking in parking"
     - More good housing downtown
     - "Farmers Fair" - not Aurora's Best, its just a homecoming
       - "lions club prints brochure" - 15,000 flyers
       - not a draw unless you're from Aurora
       - merchants don't benefit from it
     - Walk-able community - need affordable starter homes & senior housing
     - Rural recreation - indoor pool / rec. opportunity at community center
     - Soccer field accesses waterway - kayak / paddleboat rentals (small boats)
     - Connecting community assets
     - Aurora / Rising Sun Trail - Dearborn Trail
     - Connect soccer fields to trail -- under (or over) US 50
       - areas under or over 50 to connect trails/river/park
     - Livable Recreation Community
     - River (and boat docks)
       - Develop Applebee's into family restaurant on river
       - attracts locals, not just river boats
       - make/emphasize river attraction
Kayaking and canoeing
  - outdoor recreation
  - existing canoe ramp at Waterways Park
  - Marina
  - Market this opportunity; signage and branding
people don't know where Aurora is - even in region
  - Tourism Promotion --> Food & Beverage or Inn keeping Tax
  - needs organization
  - Develop niche...?
Debbie Smith - Tourism in Lawrenceburg –
  - resources there, not taking advantage of it
  - City needs to reach out to tourism
"Greatest Little Boating Town in Indiana"
  - connect Marina
  - Water quality (river)
Hard to navigate Aurora
Traffic impedes coming here
  - re-route highway thru downtown; may hurt truck traffic
  - 70's-80's bridge over highway hurt town

2. Demographic Profile
The demographic profile presented at Committee Meeting #1 was updated at the request of the committee to include comparisons to the OKI region and other regional communities. The updated demographic profile was briefly discussed and the committee was asked to review the updates and forward any questions or concerns to HWC electronically.

3. Public Meeting and Survey Results
An overview of the results from both the Public Meeting (held on November 13, 2014) and the completed online survey was presented. Both sets of information were reviewed and compared to look for consistency and common themes. In the case of Aurora there were some very common elements, or opinions, shared among the results. The top four common items of note from both the public survey and the public meeting include:
  - Current appearance of the city, many people agree it could be improved.
  - The quality of housing in Aurora, again many comments noted that it needs to be improved.
  - The potential for downtown, many people love the downtown and would like to see a focus on redevelopment.
  - The riverfront potential, many people noted the huge potential that the river holds for the community.
The public survey results were also discussed in further detail. Here is a brief summary of the conversation surrounding the committee’s review of the public survey results:

- Overall the survey had a good response
- People who own property downtown feel their "hands are tied" in historic district
  - This can be addressed through education and FAQ - handout (have one)
  - Pamphlet on historic standards
- Lots of "residents" living outside of Aurora in County - parks and recreation
  - This creates a drain on local budget/resources
- The city needs newer housing stock with more options - new development
  - No big builders
- 90% of brewery customers are from outside Dearborn county
  - you are in trouble if you rely on locals for business support
- What comes first?
  - shops/ restaurants vs. housing
  - People or businesses?
- Socio-economic issues - limited pride in community & no money to spend
  - Disposable income is limited...
- We need more local support
  - nobody defends Aurora
- Local building/business owners - create champions
- Limited volunteer base - recycled volunteers
- Stop encroachment of low level housing!
- "Opera House" 8 - 10 units
- Foundation $$ for rehabilitation
- Demonstrate quality of life
- Code enforcement
- How to create incentive, investment, and interest?

The meeting concluded following the discussion. The next scheduled meeting will be Steering Committee Meeting #3 on February 12, 2015 @ 7 p.m.
City of Aurora Comprehensive Plan Update
Steering Committee Meeting #3 Agenda
Meeting Date: January 8, 2015

1. Introduction and Roles
   • Consultant Team
     o Cory Daly – HWC Engineering, 317-379-2634, cdaly@hwcengineering.com
     o Cory Whitesell – HWC Engineering, 317-347-3663 x 206, cwhitesell@hwcengineering.com

2. Land Use Discussion
   • Development suitability and land use patterns
   • Focus of the conversation will be outside of the downtown core

3. Project Goals Discussion
   • Draft Project goals were developed from goal setting exercise responses
   • Additional ideas/thoughts have been added to supplement committee ideas

4. Homework
   • Review Draft Plan Document and provide feedback

5. Key Upcoming Dates
   • March 23, 2015 - Draft Plan Distributed for City & Steering Committee Review
   • April 9, 2015 (7 p.m.) - Steering Committee Meeting #4 – Plan Review Comments & Economic Development
Appendix

City of Aurora Comprehensive Plan Update
Steering Committee Meeting #4 Agenda
Meeting Date: April 09, 2015

1. Where Are We?
   - Through review of first ‘rough’ draft of the plan
   - Still a number of items to revise...
   - Final revisions made after May 15th PC/City Council/Public comments

2. Key Upcoming Dates – We need your support!
   - May 1, 2015 – Revised draft plan released for public comment
   - May 15, 2015 – Joint City Council/Plan Commission Public Meeting
   - June 15, 2015 – Plan Commission Adoption Hearing
   - July 6, 2015 – City Council Adoption Hearing

3. Draft Plan Comments
   - Large holes in information?
   - Missing information?
   - Incorrect Goals/Strategies?
   - Other suggestions/recommendations/complaints?

4. Homework
   - Continue Review and provide feedback
   - Advertise/discuss upcoming public meeting dates – We need interest and support!
CITY OF AURORA
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE 2014

Public Meeting #1
November 13, 2014

Introductions
Consulting Team: C2

HWC ENGINEERING

- Cory Daly
- Cory Whitesell

Steering Committee Members:

- Eric Oatman
- Jeff Stratman
- Larry C. Giffin
- Dan Vailas
- Mike Hornbach
- Randy Turner
- Oren Turner
- Mary Alice Horton
- Judy Cox
- Bonnie Morgan
- Cynthia Bean
- Bethany Ross
- Nancy Turner
- Seth Elder
- Marty Rohe
- Guinevere Emery
- Donnie Hastings Jr.
- Benny Turner
- Kerrie Ohlmansiek
- Scott Petty
- Jeff Cotton
- Kevin Gerke
- John Mehrle
Overview

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

- It is the City of Aurora’s guide to the future
  - Considers short range and long range goals
  - Typically developed for a 10 – 20 year timeframe

- It answers two fundamental questions
  - What do we want to CHANGE?
  - What do we want to PROTECT?

- It is a guiding document for decision-makers
  - Not a legally binding document like zoning code.
Why Plan?

Planning allows Aurora to develop and work towards common community goals including:

- Economic Development
- Growth Opportunities and Challenges
- Increased Governmental Efficiency
- Direct Development to Areas with Highest Future Potential
- Ensure Land Use Compatibility
- Stabilize Property Values
- Coordinate Future Capital Expenditures
- Realize the Dreams of the Community

Plan Elements:

- Community Character
- Land Use
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Natural Resources
- Transportation
- Infrastructure & Utilities
- Critical Sub Areas
- Implementation Plan
Planning Process in Aurora

- This is a **COMMUNITY DRIVEN** planning process designed to get resident feedback as much as possible.

- **TRANSPARENCY** is key and all information has been posted in real-time as it is developed.

Participation & Feedback

- The planning process has been developed to collect ideas from residents through the following activities:
  - Steering Committee Workshops
  - Focus Group Workshops
  - Individual Stakeholder Interviews
  - Public Survey
  - Public Meetings
  - Community Website and Press Releases
Project Website:

- A website has been created to share project information:
  - Survey link
  - Meeting Minutes
  - Interim reports
  - Report Drafts

http://cityofauroracompplan.org/
Public Survey:

- Online Survey is available at following link:

  https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Aurora_Indiana_Compl_Plan_Survey

- The Link will also be made available on the project website

What Happens Next?
Appendix

Draft Plan

- Over the next few months all chapters of the plan will be drafted & reviewed by the Steering Committee.

- A full draft of the plan will be made available for public comment and review.

Adoption Process

- After the draft plan has been reviewed and all comments have been addressed the plan will go through the approval and adoption process which includes the following steps:

  ▪ Final Public Hearing for comments.
  ▪ APC reviews and recommends for approval.
  ▪ City Council considers and approves.
Feedback Exercises

☐ Open House Format

☐ Please visit all 3 stations
Feedback Exercises

- Station #1 – Project Vision

- Station #2 – Issues & Opportunities
Feedback Exercises

- Station #3 – Land Use

Questions or Comments?

Comprehensive Plan Public Meeting #1
November 13, 2014
Contact Us

HWC Engineering:
Cory Daly
cdaly@hwcengineering.com

HWC Engineering:
Cory Whitesell
cwhitesell@hwcengineering.com

www.CityofAuroraCompPlan.org
## KEY ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES: CITY LIMITS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO.</th>
<th>COMMENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>RIVER ACCESS BETTER THAN LAWRENCEBURG, GREENDALE - NO ACCEM.; HUGE</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>45 MPH SPEED LIMIT IS TOO LOW</td>
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# Key Issues & Opportunities: City Limits

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<tr>
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<td>INFRASTRUCTURE</td>
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# Key Issues & Opportunities: Downtown Limits

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>INFRASTRUCTURE</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>COMMUNITY CHARACTER</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>GENUINE HISTORIC DISTRICT - AUTHENTIC EXISTING BUILDINGS (ALSO A CHALLENGE) NEED INCENTIVES FOR BUILDING OWNERS TO KEEP UP PROPERTY</td>
<td>COMMUNITY CHARACTER</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>11</td>
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**Issues**

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## KEY ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES: DOWNTOWN LIMITS

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<td>FARMER’S FAIR IN THE CORE DOWNTOWN; TASTE OF DEARBORN COUNTY, CRAFT</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>A GOOD TOWN BUT WE CAN MAKE IT BETTER</td>
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<td>HOUSING NEEDS TO IMPROVE, BOTH QUANTITY AND QUALITY. THE CITY CAN’T</td>
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<td>CONTINUE BEING SECTION 8</td>
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<td>AND HELP THE ECONOMY</td>
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<td>GOOD LOW INCOME HOUSING THAT WILL SHUT DOWN CURRENT SLUM LORDS</td>
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<td>THE DREAM IS TO BE ABLE TO LIVE EXCLUSIVELY ON THE FACILITIES AND BUSINESSES DOWNTOWN AND HAVE BUSINESSES THAT ARE INTERESTING ENOUGH TO DRAW PEOPLE FROM OUT OF TOWN</td>
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<td>44</td>
<td>MY DREAM IS TO HAVE RESIDENTS ACTUALLY SUPPORT THE BUSINESS THEY SAY THEY WANT COMMERCIAL USE OF THE RIVER, SR56, ON A LEVEL WORTHY OF THE BEST ASSET WE HAVE</td>
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<td>RETAIL, ENTERTAINMENT, LESS PARKING LOTS IN TOWN - MORE GREENSPACE; LESS VACANT STORE FRONTS; UPDATED STOREFRONTS; PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>(WRITING)</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>(WRITING)</td>
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<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>53</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Consulting Team

- Cory Daly
- Cory Whitesell
Agenda

- Next Steps
- Overview of Plan Development
- Presentation on Major Outcomes
- Answer your Questions
Next Steps

1 - Next Steps

☐ Overall goal tonight is make you comfortable with approving the plan.
1 - Next Steps

- Recommendation for Plan Adoption!

- July 6th City Council Approval
Planning Process in Aurora

☐ This is a **COMMUNITY DRIVEN** planning process designed to get resident feedback as much as possible.

☐ **TRANSPARENCY** is key and all information has been posted in real-time as it is developed.

Participation & Feedback

☐ The planning process has been developed to collect ideas from residents through the following activities:
  - Steering Committee Workshops
  - Focus Group Workshops
  - Individual Stakeholder Interviews
  - Public Survey
  - Public Meetings
  - Community Website and Press Releases
Public Meetings:

- There will have been 4 advertised Public Meetings
  - November 12, 2014 Public Visioning Workshop
  - May 18, 2015 Plan commission/City Council Presentation
  - June 15, 2015 Plan Commission Consideration
  - July 6, 2015 City Council Consideration

Steering Committee Members:

- Eric Oatman
- Jeff Stratman
- Larry C. Giffin
- Dan Valas
- Mike Hornbach
- Randy Turner
- Oren Turner
- Judy Cox
- Bonnie Morgan
- Cynthia Bean
- Bethany Ross
- Nancy Turner
- Seth Elder
- Guinevere Emery
- Donnie Hastings Jr.
- Benny Turner
- Kerrie Ohlmansiek
- Scott Petty
- Jeff Cotton
- Kevin Gerke
- John Mehrle
Public Survey:

- 326 Total Responses
- More than 831 Individual Comments received.

Public Survey: What People LOVE

- People/Community
- Ohio River
- Community Center
- Trails/Greenways
- Downtown
- History & Charm
- Beautiful Buildings
Public Survey: What People Would **FIX**

- Declining Neighborhoods
- Housing Options/Quality Housing
- River Access
- Economic/Employment Opportunities
- Shopping/Dining Options
- Overall Community Appearance

Public Survey: Biggest **OPPORTUNITIES**

- Ohio River
- Downtown
- History/Heritage
- Location & Access
- Trails & Recreation
- Your Potential to Thrive!
Plan Details

Much Work Remains to be Done before We Can Announce Our Total Failure to Make Any Progress.
**synthesize /ˈsinθəˌsɪz/**

*verb*

To combine (a number of things) into a coherent plan

---

**Plan Elements:**

- Implementation Plan
- Community Character
- Land Use
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Natural Resources
- Transportation
- Infrastructure & Utilities
- Critical Sub Areas
General Plan Themes

- **REINVESTMENT** and **REVITALIZATION** focus
- Make **CONNECTIONS** to important community assets
- Build strong **NEIGHBORHOODS**
- Set the stage for **RIVERFRONT** investment
- Manage growth for future **PROSPERITY**

Aurora’s **BIG 5 Ideas**

- Downtown Revitalization
- Neighborhood Revitalization
- Tourism/Outdoor Recreation
- Ohio Riverfront Development
- Quality of Life and Community Connection
Downtown Revitalization

- Encourage commercial uses in First Floor Storefronts.
- Complete a Downtown Revitalization Strategic Plan.
- Enhance Local Business viability by increasing Visitor Footsteps downtown.
Neighborhood Revitalization

- Focus on creating attractive & Safe Neighborhoods which will Encourage New Residents.

- Improve on the History and Charm of your community, which is a major selling point.

- Prioritize revitalization based on Visibility & Need.
Tourism & Outdoor Recreation

- Turn your Congestion Problem into a Tourism Opportunity.

- Aurora has many Natural Advantages – you just need to Turn Them Into Attractions.

- Promote, Advertise, & Market – You have a lot to offer, people just need to be told about it.
Ohio River Development

- The Ohio River should become a key Community Focal Point.

- Public Spaces, Development Potential & Scenic Views.

- This is your Valuable Waterfront Property – be proud of it and Display It!
Quality of Life & Community Connections

- Connect Existing Neighborhoods to Parks, the River and Downtown.

- Sidewalks, Dearborn Trail and Water Trails.

- Focus on Community Gateways — make sure the first impression of Aurora is the best impression!
Future Land Use
- Focus on Infill & Revitalization
- Key Long-Term Growth Areas

Downtown Land Use
- Restructure for Future Revitalization Success
Appendix

7/13/2015

Questions or Comments?

Comprehensive Plan APC Adoption Consideration
June 15, 2015

Contact Us

HWC Engineering:
Cory Daly
cdaly@hwcengineering.com

HWC Engineering:
Cory Whitesell
cwhitesell@hwcengineering.com

www.CityofAuroraCompPlan.org
Public Survey Results Summary
January 8, 2015

Below is a summary of the public survey which was conducted between November 25, 2014 and January 5th, 2015. The survey was developed to help inform the comprehensive planning process and to allow citizens the opportunity to actively participate in helping to shape the future of their community. There were a total of 326 responses received for the survey which represents a nearly 8% response rate based on current city population estimates. There were a total of 15 questions contained in the survey. A summary of the results for each question is contained below. In addition, there were multiple opportunities for survey respondents to provide solicited and unsolicited comments. An overview of those comments is contained further on in this summary.

The results of the survey will be used as a guide for the development of plan recommendations. The results will be shared with City Officials and discussed in detail with Steering Committee Members. The ideas and opinions expressed in the survey responses will be a leading contributor to the overall content and recommendations resulting from the comprehensive planning process and a summary of the results will be made available for public review.

1. **Summary of Individual Survey Question Responses:**

   **Q 1: What is your gender?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   **Q 2: Which category below includes your age?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17 or younger</td>
<td>.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-29</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 or older</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   **answered question** 319  
   **skipped question** 7
### Q3: What is the highest level of education you have completed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not attend school</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st grade</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd grade</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th grade</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th grade</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th grade</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th grade</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated from high school</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year of college</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years of college</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years of college</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated from college</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some graduate school</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed graduate school</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Answered:** 317
**Skipped:** 9

### Q4: What is your approximate average household income?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0-$24,999</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000-$49,999</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-$74,999</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000-$99,999</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000-$124,999</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$125,000-$149,999</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000-$174,999</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$175,000-$199,999</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$200,000 and up</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Answered:** 318
**Skipped:** 8
### Q 5: Which statement below best describes your relationship to Aurora?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time resident of Aurora.</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time resident of Dearborn County, outside the City of Aurora.</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former resident of Aurora or Dearborn County.</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed in Aurora, but live elsewhere.</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular visitor to Aurora.</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have never been to Aurora.</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question: 321

Skipped question: 5

---

### Q 6: Which of the following apply to you? (Please select all that apply.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own a home</td>
<td>86.6%</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lease a home/apartment (long term lease)</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent a home/apartment (monthly basis)</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own rental property</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own land other than my home</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own a commercial building</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own a business</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lease business space</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question: 320

Skipped question: 6
### Q 7: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aurora is a great place to live.</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are plenty of things to do on the weekends in Aurora.</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora needs more service oriented jobs.</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A property owner's rights are more important than maintaining an attractive City.</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora is a great place to raise a family.</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora should invest in new utility infrastructure and services to encourage new development.</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher paying jobs should be emphasized over more ordinary factory jobs.</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora has a need for more upscale housing.</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The existing park facilities meet the community's current needs.</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora needs more educational opportunities after high school.</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The housing quality in Aurora is very high.</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora should emphasize attracting new business to the city even if the changes are not popular.</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic congestion is a problem in Aurora.</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to protect Aurora's natural resources and environment from development impacts.</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| answered question | 296 |
| skipped question  | 30  |

* Rating Scale: 5 = Strongly Agree; 4 = Agree; 3 = Neutral; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree
**Q 8: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is it important to protect the land surrounding Aurora from development?</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not think Aurora needs any more development.</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora's roads are in good condition and easy to navigate.</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora needs more high tech industry jobs.</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora has many neighborhoods which need to be improved.</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need more commercial development in Aurora.</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidewalks and trails are important to the quality of life in Aurora.</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The housing quality in Aurora is very low.</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be willing to participate in an organized neighborhood clean-up day.</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora has a positive small business environment.</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora should focus on expanding future growth opportunities adjacent to current city limits.</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Aurora is a nice place to shop.</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood sidewalks are in good condition.</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need a better selection of restaurants.</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown is currently an attractive part of our community.</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The main gateways into Aurora look run down to visitors.</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local cable, telephone, and internet service options are good.</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locally owned businesses should be encouraged over large corporate businesses.</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would encourage my children or other family members to move to Aurora.</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need more retail development in Aurora.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 274

 skipped question 52

* Rating Scale: 5 = Strongly Agree; 4 = Agree; 3 = Neutral; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree

**Q 9: If you could change a current perception about Aurora what would it be?**

There were 165 individual responses given for Question 9. Individual responses have been reviewed and condensed into the answers contained in the Overview of General Survey Comments section of the summary.

**Q 10: What do you like best about Aurora?**

There were 198 individual responses given for Question 10. Individual responses have been reviewed and condensed into the answers contained in the Overview of General Survey Comments section of the summary.

**Q 11: What do you like least about Aurora?**

There were 200 individual responses given for Question 11. Individual responses have been reviewed and condensed into the answers contained in the Overview of General Survey Comments section of the summary.
Appendix

Q 12: In a few words or sentences please describe what makes Aurora BETTER and/or DIFFERENT from other places?

There were 157 individual responses given for Question 12. Individual responses have been reviewed and condensed into the answers contained in the Overview of General Survey Comments section of the summary.

Q 13: Please rate the following features of Aurora

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Market</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Options</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental Housing</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Options</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Housing</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Childcare</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Climate</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Opportunities</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication / Media</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Pride</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Education</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce Development &amp; Skills Training</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime Prevention</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Safety</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Services</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 241

 skipped question 85

* Rating Scale: 5 = Excellent; 4 = Good; 3 = Average; 2 = Poor; 1 = Very Poor
Q 14: Please rate the following features of Aurora

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Health</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare Options</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Culture</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation and Creativity</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining Options</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping Options</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks &amp; Recreation Facilities</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment Options</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Surroundings</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Living</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteerism</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation Options</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road Conditions</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Life</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Rating Scale: 5 = Excellent; 4 = Good; 3 = Average; 2 = Poor; 1 = Very Poor

Q 15: Please share any other thoughts or comments you have about Aurora:

There were 111 individual responses given for Question 15. Individual responses have been reviewed and condensed into the answers contained in the Overview of General Survey Comments section of the summary.
2. Overview of General Survey Comment Responses

In all there were more than 831 individual comments received among the survey questions. While all of these comments have validity in providing guidance and feedback for the Comprehensive Plan listing each individual comment would be too cumbersome to be of any value to the Steering Committee. That being the case, the consultant team, reviewed each individual comment looking for overall themes. After reviewing each comment specific comments were selected which best represent the overall consensus of all comments received. Below are the selected comments:

Q 9: If you could change a current perception about Aurora what would it be?

- That it is full of old run down rentals and nothing new is allowed
- There is a perception that the people that live in downtown Aurora are uneducated, unemployed and living on government assistance
- There’s nothing to do
- That it is run down and has seen better days
- That it is a dying town
- That all housing in downtown is low income and people don’t care about their property
- That it is full of trash
- That it is a run down river town
- That there are inadequate economic, cultural, and recreational opportunities to retain younger professionals and families. That there is inadequate planning
- That it is a dying small town with no future
- That the schools are mediocre at best and there is zero opportunity for employment
- That there is nothing in Aurora to do or attract people from other cities to shop for
- That it is poor, crime ridden, and has a bad drug problem
- That Aurora is a small town with no great employment opportunities.

Q 10: What do you like best about Aurora?

- The scenery and the people
- Small town with a wonderful river resource that could be used as a draw for visitors/shoppers
- River views, historic niche, rural accessibility, community spirit and the people
- River, bike trail, bike shop, Crescent Brewery, Third and Main, the old buildings
- Size and its bike trail, Lesko Park, and being small community oriented
- Tradition & Aurora Community Center, and walking/biking trail
- Small town friendliness and hospitable people
- Location along Ohio River
- Close knit community and a fairly safe place to raise a family
- Small town where everyone knows everyone
- Farmers Fair and parade
- I like the old buildings and the murals on the buildings
- The setting along the Ohio River and forest backdrop are perfect. The older homes and buildings have wonderful style and great potential
- Small town charm
- Hometown... I love the riverfront and historic area of downtown
- We have almost everything we need right here in downtown Aurora within walking distance: Aurora Public Library, ARCC, doctor/dentist offices, Tandy's IGA & other grocery/drug stores, laundry mat, playground, gas stations, etc. That is nice that we have them within walking distance, especially for people who do not have their own transportation and they have to walk.

Q 11: What do you like least about Aurora?

- The lack of opportunity and quality housing
- Hands are tied when property owners want to make changes for the better
- The town is ran down. The main corridor that people see is trash that could be restored (not just painted buildings). Restoration should include replacing or repairing structural components while replacing/repairing old architectural personality. Also sidewalks: the sidewalks in Aurora (except around the city buildings) haven’t been touched in about 30 years.
- Cannot access river, condemned buildings, no arts center, limited commercial and residential development
- Lack of opportunity for young professionals, both in housing and jobs
- Conwell Street
- Lower Second Street
- Not enough selection of place to eat out
- No shopping or restaurants
- The amount of run-down, dilapidated homes. Household belongings on porches, junk in yards. Landlords should be held better accountable for the maintenance of their buildings/homes and quality of tenants.
- I wish the downtown area was more lively in the evening when people are off work to enjoy it! More family oriented activities for the downtown area would also be nice
- Too few job opportunities. Need more restaurant (not fast food) options
- Not much to do here
- Low quality of housing.
- The options downtown are very limited. Small businesses try to succeed but fail
- SOME residential and commercial property owners do not properly maintain the appearance of their property
Q 12: In a few words or sentences please describe what makes Aurora BETTER and/or DIFFERENT from other places?

- The River - provide River tours/dinner boating, kayaking/canoeing, jet ski rental, coin operated Large Scale RC boat arena on the river. Make the river front a draw for rich boaters with food, fuel, shopping, docks, etc. Rebuild the old railroad bridge pier at mouth of Hogan for people to walk out on and build a nice park around that area, hardscape it with a boating theme so the rising waters don’t affect it. Look at places like Paris and around England where they flood yearly and still maintain the beauty. This darn box is too small, I can’t keep track of what all I have written. I’ve got more ideas than will fit anyway.

- History/Heritage - the old businesses that were in Aurora (retail and factory) could be used as a model to create a themed type of environment around the town. For instance, bring in businesses where people can watch handcrafted solid wood furniture, bricks, metalwork, etc. Bring in a real steam paddlewheel (not a cheap plywood version of one)

- Location - We are close enough to Cincinnati to draw people yet far enough away to stay small town if the town is developed correctly

- Church Spires - The view from the river is great with the hills, woods and church steeples.

- River accessibility and view that is unique to the County. Community center that may have option for enclosed pool attached. Trails, hills, historical flavor, accessibility to 5 different municipalities. Quality of place, parks, community events.

- We are on a major highway, and next to a major river, have a national landmark, have 200 years of history, have great old buildings giving the town character and a great river front although could be improved

- Community spirit, volunteerism, accessible riverfront, historic properties and museums, landscape

- Aurora has a strong level of volunteerism for its organizations. I also feel it is a fairly friendly city

- The quaint and intimate relationship between the historic downtown and the Ohio River. The spirit and pride of the people

- Aurora has the best fair every year and has a beautiful park by the river

- Better because of the hometown feel

- It’s hard to nail down one certain feeling about the city that makes it different from other small towns, but the small town feeling is what makes it so much better than the big city.
• I like that Aurora is close to the river and has 2 nice walking trails. It does have an Old Town charm to it, but I feel this is also holding them back from becoming something much greater.

• What make Aurora different is that they still have a riverfront not blocked by a wall or levee and an awesome stock of beautiful old buildings. What makes it better is the potential is has over some other small towns and the very friendly people.

• Aurora’s setting on the Ohio River and river front parks makes this a different place than other cities along this part of the Ohio River

Q 15: Please share any other thoughts or comments you have about Aurora:

• I think it’s a pretty town and there are a lot of good people, but it needs new industry, job opportunities and better housing options

• Aurora is a beautiful town to live in. Need to take advantage of new business development, new housing options

• It’s a lovely sleepy river town that has great potential. There needs to be more attention to developing and encouraging higher quality living spaces and fewer restrictions, which results in prohibitive costs, for downtown property improvement due to the historical designation

• Aurora needs to develop its core areas and not worry about expanding. Bring some good business opportunities and restaurants and make it more of a tourist attraction. This is a way to compete against the bigger towns and cities nearby. Provide a unique experience that people will travel to enjoy

• Aurora needs its own niche. Something that makes it stand out. It’s in the shadows of all the other local river towns. Definitely need some decent restaurants. Need people to clean up their places and need some decent job opportunities

• We need more places for entertainment and shopping like the town of Madison. Aurora has little to offer out of town folk to do here. If you don’t belong to the local organizations such as the Moose or the Legion there is nothing to do on Friday or Saturday nights. We don’t even have a theater any more or a bowling alley or a pool hall

• Aurora would be a wonderful place if we had some other retailers and restaurants to spend our time and money... otherwise residents have to go elsewhere. Also there are a lot of run down houses and people don’t take care of their homes

• Aurora is a great city and has so much to offer. People love small river towns like ours. To walk down town brings you back to a time when everything was so much different and we need to capitalize on that. I think the comprehensive plan is a good way to start. There are a lot of good things that come out of this if done right. I would love to see a downtown a hustling bustling business spot it used to be

• I have spent my whole life in and around Aurora, and I would like nothing better than to see it thriving once again
• Let Aurora be Aurora (That’s right, we *do* have a tree in the middle of the road)
• Recently moved here a year ago from Ripley County to be closer to my job. Would like to see businesses like a Dollar Tree in the plaza on Wilson Creek and more choices of places to eat out and shop. Florence is close but sometimes people don’t have the time or option to go that far. Bath and Body Works, Rural King, Rue 21, Goody’s...these are all shops that Greensburg, IN has, Madison, IN has a JC Penny, Maurices, Cato’s and Goody’s that seem to do ok in smaller communities. If Aurora had more places to shop and eat maybe it would create more jobs and keep people in this area instead of going to Florence
• Love being on the fringe of a small town with tons of potential for greatness! Hope you can steer us in the right direction! We really need to do more to keep the generations from moving from here. Would rather hear "I am a lifelong resident of Aurora/Dearborn County" than "I used to live there but moved away because of job opportunities/quality of living issues"
• Aurora could be a nice town but the home owners in downtown aurora are a forgotten people. Historical society wants home owners to pay higher cost to maintain the outside of their homes that only have a selling market value of 35,000. Many homes in the town sit empty causes the property value to drop
• I so appreciate the people who are working to maintain and improve my hometown. Although I don’t live there any more I still care about what is happening and going to happen there. I have many family and friends who still live in the area and want our town to be the best it can be. Businesses struggling to stay open and closing is an important issue. As well as allowing rehabilitation of homes and business without regulations that discourage owners from doing so. I support keeping the historical integrity of structure but realize for many that is not feasible
• Aurora needs a face lift, there is nothing that attracts people to come to Aurora. It is looking run down, and half the businesses are closed up. Aurora needs help! It’s a lovely place to live, just seems that it is lost in the current times
• The glass is about 60% full. Some concentrate on the missing 40% and some concentrate on the good 60%. We should create our plans with greatest attention to the 40% missing and our pride for our community on the 60% we have