



LaGrange

COUNTY IN.



CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY: RURAL ROOTS, STELLAR SPIRIT

STELLAR PATHWAYS 2024 STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN



STELLAR PATHWAYS
A REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 4**
 - General Information 6
 - Strategic Investment Plan Executive Summary 8
 - Connect LaGrange County - A Stellar Team 14
- 2. CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY CONTEXT & VISION20**
 - Current State of the Region 22
 - Current Momentum in the Region 38
 - Capacity of Connect LaGrange County 52
- 3. DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY PROJECTS 66**
 - Connect LaGrange County Community Engagement Strategy 68
 - Project & Program Identification 98
- 4. PROJECT FULFILLMENT & STRATEGIES162**
 - Implementation164
 - Sustainability170
 - Key Acknowledgments 178
- APPENDIX 180**
 - Appendix A: Demographic Summary of the Region 182
 - Appendix B: Community Engagement Results200
 - Appendix C: Comprehensive Construction Descriptions 216
 - Appendix D: Comprehensive Program Descriptions 252
 - Appendix E: Maps262
 - Appendix F: Feasibility Matrix270
 - Appendix G: Media and Publicity Related to the Stellar Pathways Process 274





CHAPTER 1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- General Information
- Strategic Investment Plan Executive Summary
- Connect LaGrange County - A Stellar Team

1

What is Stellar Pathways?

The Stellar Pathways program is a multi-agency, multi-million-dollar investment initiative led by the Office of Community and Rural Affairs. The program works with communities within a county boundary on a shared vision for community and economic development, promotes local and regional partnerships, and assists in implementing sustainable solutions to challenges facing Indiana's rural communities. The Stellar Pathways program will provide resources for transformative quality of place projects as well as community and regional improvements by fostering enhanced regional planning, a collaborative approach, and resource-rich partnerships.

The Connect LaGrange County Region is thrilled to be named a 2024 Stellar Pathways Finalist. Our County, the towns of LaGrange, Shipshewana, and Topeka, and LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC) have come together to create this Strategic Investment Plan, driven by a shared vision and the support of our residents. Through this plan, we have identified several key projects and programs that will address the needs of our communities and enhance the quality of life for current and future residents of LaGrange County. The strength of our team comes from the deep existing collaboration between our municipalities and organizations, each contributing uniquely to help advance our goals for community development and economic growth.

GENERAL INFORMATION

A Strategic Investment Plan is an economic development tool used to identify economic, business, and developmental programs and projects that may qualify for targeted funding to accomplish key regional goals. This Strategic Investment Plan will not only serve as an outline for community priorities in terms of quality of life improvements but will also serve as a selling piece for investors and grant administrators. This plan will demonstrate the opportunities for investment within communities, engage community members in project and program development, and feature the region's supporting benefits, assets, and resources.

Four regions were selected as 2024 Stellar Pathways Finalists. As one of the four finalist regions, Connect LaGrange County plans to utilize this LaGrange County Strategic Investment Plan as our final submission to the 2024 Stellar Pathways program; aiming to be awarded designation and secure invaluable funding for the projects and programs outlined in this document.



The Stellar Pathways program will designate two regions as Stellar Pathways designees following the submission of each community's respective strategic investment plan. The designation will include access to up to half of the set-aside state funds to complete key projects over the four-year designation period.

Over the past several months, Connect LaGrange County has worked closely with our communities to collaborate, identify, and develop projects that will enhance the quality of life for our residents. Because these initiatives are designed to benefit the people who live here, involving them in the process of identifying priorities was absolutely essential. Their input has been key to creating a Strategic Investment Plan that is backed by strong public support.

AREAS OF INTEREST A STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLANS ADDRESSES:

- Transportation
- Health
- Housing
- Agriculture
- Tourism
- Infrastructure

Types of Projects Supported by a Strategic Investment Plan

Green Space and Aesthetics	Job Creation	Public Safety
Quality of Life Improvements	Youth Engagement	Other Social, Economic, & Sustainability Opportunities
Infrastructure Improvements	Retaining and Attracting New Residents and Visitors	Historic Preservation & Renovation



STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction:

The Connect LaGrange County Strategic Investment Plan is a comprehensive, forward-thinking initiative aimed at improving the quality of life, economic development, and community health across LaGrange County and its communities, including LaGrange, Shipshewana, Howe, Topeka, Mongo, and South Milford. Through a collaborative regional effort, we are focused on revitalizing our downtown areas, bolstering our housing market, and enhancing public amenities such as parks, trails, and community centers. Additionally, the plan prioritizes improving access to healthy living resources and fostering talent attraction by positioning the county as a destination for young professionals, families, and businesses.

Background:

Connect LaGrange County is taking a proactive approach to tackle key challenges and leverage opportunities through the Stellar Pathways Designation. Our region has been facing slower population growth since 2010, limited options for both affordable and market-rate housing, a shortage of childcare facilities, and an aging workforce and population. Additional issues include vacant storefronts in our downtown areas, older infrastructure, and historic buildings in need of revitalization, alongside a general shortage of amenities. This combination results in fewer recreational and cultural options, making it challenging to attract families, younger workers, and fresh talent.

With the support of the Stellar Pathways Designation, Connect LaGrange County has a unique opportunity to address these challenges directly. Our efforts will center on creating more affordable and accessible housing, initiating impactful quality-of-place projects, expanding childcare options, and promoting health and wellness initiatives. These efforts aim to foster a vibrant, welcoming community that appeals to and retains younger, skilled talent—an essential shift to balance our aging population and workforce trends.

Leadership and Steering Team:

Our 26-member steering and development team is guided by Emilee Buller, VP of Community Development & Engagement at the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation. This team includes a diverse mix of representatives from crucial sectors in LaGrange County, such as local government, non-profits, healthcare and mental health services, educational leaders (including the superintendents of all three county school districts), area businesses, unincorporated communities, and the Amish community. This wide range of expertise and viewpoints ensures our team engages with every part of the county, allowing us to create and carry out projects that align with the needs and goals of all our residents.

With the Stellar Pathways designation, we'll be able to access essential funding to carry out transformative projects, bringing lasting benefits to current and future LaGrange County residents. Our plan not only builds on our county's existing strengths but also enhances economic growth across all areas. With the commitment of our dedicated steering team and Emilee Buller's leadership throughout the full implementation period, this initiative is well-positioned to bring enduring prosperity and sustainability to LaGrange County.

Connect LaGrange County Primary Goals:

Through the implementation of this Strategic Investment Plan, our team aims to achieve the following goals based on our mission to improve quality of life, bolster economic development, and create new investment in our communities and county.

1

Over 37% of LaGrange County is over forty-five and we recognize the critical necessity to attract young talent to our region. Executing transformative quality of place projects to enhance recreational and cultural offerings and encourage a healthy ecosystem for entrepreneurship and career development is our chosen method to do that.

2

Our 2019 housing study revealed a total annual market potential for absorption of 725 dwelling units across our three municipalities, and 1,185 households expressing interest in moving within/ into our region. The public engagement process also confirmed the desire and need for additional housing, especially affordable housing. By increasing the number of available units, we aim to attract and retain a population that contributes to the region's vitality.

3

Our team seeks to enhance overall quality of life and place by investing in community amenities. This includes improving infrastructure, promoting outdoor recreation opportunities, supporting local economy, and promoting belonging and community pride. There was overwhelming support in our public engagement for improving and adding assets and amenities in the communities such as multi-use trails, streetscape improvements, park improvements, and new public gathering & event spaces.

4

Our plan is to improve community health through implementation of projects and programs focused on access to and resources for healthy living. For many residents, access to healthy food, recreational opportunities, and fitness facilities is a major challenge. Feedback from the Community Connections Survey noted that physical fitness resources were a top priority for health and wellness.

5

LaGrange County aims to improve the offering of community facilities and quality childcare. Stakeholder and public engagement efforts showed that childcare facilities were lacking, and needed to attract families and younger workforce. Access to physical fitness facilities such as a community center is seen as extremely important to improving community health.

Communication Plan:

Our communication plan for the Stellar Pathways Process is crafted to ensure openness, robust community involvement, and engagement at every step. From the beginning, we emphasized outreach and educational sessions with stakeholders, civic leaders, partner organizations, and residents. These sessions served as both an introduction to the Stellar Process, including its objectives and timelines, and as a platform for gathering

valuable feedback. By prioritizing transparency, active engagement, and collaboration, we ensure that community members, stakeholders, and key figures are well-informed, involved, and empowered throughout the Stellar Pathways journey. Through open dialogue, continuous feedback, and the use of varied communication channels, we strive to build trust, unity, and momentum as we work together toward our community's shared goals for future growth and prosperity.

Public & Stakeholder Engagement:

The Connect LaGrange County team has done everything they can to engage the public in shaping this Strategic Investment Plan. With potential Stellar Pathways funding available for enhancing quality of life across LaGrange County, we've prioritized connecting with residents, gathering their input, and involving the community in defining our goals, ideas, and projects. To ensure every voice is heard, we've implemented multiple engagement methods, including public surveys, stakeholder meetings, open houses across five communities, pop-up events, and a wide variety of media outreach. Our aim has been to reach every part of the county, keeping everyone informed and involved throughout the process.

Public Survey:

The Connect LaGrange County Community Connection Survey was a key tool in gathering valuable feedback from residents across the county. With 1,060 total responses, the survey was a resounding success, providing both online and offline options to ensure all residents, including those in Amish communities without internet access, had the chance to participate.

Stakeholder Engagement Meetings:

Approximately 30 attendees joined the main stakeholder engagement meeting, including community leaders, non-profit heads, business owners, school superintendents, and engaged residents. The focus of the meeting was to gather insights on the four primary goals of our plan: Housing, Talent Attraction, Health & Wellness, and Community Amenities.

Pop-Up Engagement Events:

Connect LaGrange County organized ten pop-up engagement events, offering residents convenient opportunities to share feedback at local events and high-traffic locations. By meeting residents where they naturally gather, we aimed to increase participation without disrupting their routines—helping to overcome common barriers to public engagement like time and accessibility.

PUBLIC SURVEY PRIORITIES



Quality Housing, Types of Housing, & New Housing Development



Downtown Area Improvements: History, Business, & Aesthetics



Parks & Recreation Improvements, Multi-Use Trails, & Public Event Space



Community Events, Fitness Facility, & Career Development Programs

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PRIORITIES



Affordable/Mixed Income Housing for Younger People & Housing Diversity



Talent Attraction; Mentor Programs, Job Development, & Education



Improving Health by Local/Healthy Food Options, Youth Recreation, & Adult Fitness



Community Amenities; Community Center, Parks & Recreation Options

Proposed Projects:

Throughout the public and stakeholder engagement process, many project ideas were discussed. Our team worked to align the project need, goals, ideas, funding eligibility, local resources, and engagement results to develop and prioritize projects for inclusion within the Strategic Investment Plan. Below are the proposed projects with a brief description:

Stellar Project Name	Brief Description	Proposed Funding Agency	Estimated Cost
LaGrange Town Park Improvements	The project includes playground and basketball court improvements, new pickleball courts, bicycle/skate pump track, walking trail, and sidewalks.	DNR	\$ 1,000,000.00
LaGrange Detroit St Streetscape Improvements	Streetscape improvements on Detroit St from US 20 north to Michigan Street include sidewalk, curb ramp, and cross walk upgrades, trees and/or planters, lighting, and other amenities.	OCRA	\$ 1,630,000.00
LaGrange Downtown Historic District	The proposed historic district in the downtown area from Spring St to Michigan St, and Sherman St to Poplar St will protect historical value and provide eligibility for potential grant funding. value.	DNR-DHPA	\$ 10,000.00
LaGrange Downtown Façade Improvements	Façade improvements downtown LaGrange would be a partnership program that would help business owners upgrade masonry, window, doors, canopies and awnings, entrances, painting, and other façade improvements.	OCRA	\$ 400,000.00
Topeka Hawpatch Trail Connector	This proposed trail project would connect downtown Topeka with West Lake Park, residential and industrial areas on the southwest side of town, and the planned Hawpatch Trail.	INDOT	\$ 1,520,000.00
Topeka Downtown Event Space	A portion of the existing parking lot adjacent to the post office would be transformed into downtown event and gathering space for food trucks, farmers market, music/performance, and outdoor seating.	OCRA	\$ 810,000.00
Topeka East Park Improvements	Park improvements at East Park include basketball, tennis court upgrades, new pickleball courts, a splash pad, pavilion and walking trail.	DNR	\$ 1,000,000.00
Topeka Downtown Master Plan	The plan will include analysis, public engagement, and recommendations for downtown land use, function, infrastructure, historic preservation, amenities, policies, and other topics related to downtown.	OCRA	\$ 50,000.00
Shipshewana Town Park Improvements	Park improvements at Town Park include new pickleball courts, a splash pad, outdoor performance stage, pavilion, and walking trail.	OCRA	\$ 1,000,000.00
LaGrange County Sidewalk & Park Improvements	This project includes park improvements and new sidewalks in the unincorporated areas of Howe, Mongo, and South Milford. Park improvements include ballfield upgrades, new pickleball courts, playground improvements, and a new restroom.	OCRA	\$ 1,620,000.00
LaGrange County Courthouse Electrical Upgrades	This project will renovate the electrical systems at the County Courthouse including new breakers, panels, wiring, receptacles, switches, smoke detectors, etc.	DNR-DHPA	\$ 365,000.00
LaGrange County Down Payment Assistance	This program will partner with IHEDA and local lenders to provide down payment assistance for purchasing a home in LaGrange County.	IHCDA	\$ 500,000.00
LaGrange Tradition Kitchen	The project upgrades the Senior Center's kitchen to a commercial kitchen for programming for elderly members of LaGrange County to connect with younger generations and pass on recipes, teach skills like canning, and cook with local foods.	OCRA, IDOH, ISDA	\$ 275,000.00
Cold Storage & Farms to Food Bank	This project includes developing cold storage to support a farm to food bank program that will take surplus produce to food banks to help those in need and reduce preventable produce waste.	ISDA, IDOH	\$ 200,000.00

Marketing the Stellar Designation:

The LaGrange County Strategic Investment Plan focuses on a unified approach to elevate quality of life, drive economic growth, and attract new investments across our communities. With the Stellar Pathways designation, we have a distinct opportunity to promote LaGrange, Shipshewana, Howe, Topeka, Mongo, South Milford, and the entire county as dynamic places to live, work, and build businesses. Shipshewana already draws a large number of visitors, known for its popular flea markets, events, and shops. Our goal, however, is to expand that tourism reach to showcase the unique assets throughout LaGrange County’s other communities.

Through the proposed Stellar Projects, we’ll be able to make our county more appealing to new residents and businesses by enhancing overall quality of life, adding valuable amenities, and upgrading countywide infrastructure. Programs like a Façade Improvement Program and streetscape enhancements will also create incentives to attract new businesses into our vacant downtown buildings.

By investing across the county we can position the entire region as a vibrant, interconnected community with excellent quality of life, career possibilities, and livability. This designation provides a pathway for long-term, sustainable growth that benefits all our towns, offering current and future residents a more prosperous community and giving businesses a robust environment in which they can thrive.

Measuring Success:

Ensuring Stellar Pathways projects positively impact LaGrange County communities is key to effective implementation. Measurable data will be critical to showcase, support, and share the benefits of these projects, opening doors for further development and quality of life improvements in the county. Connect LaGrange County is dedicated to tracking progress through various metrics to gauge each project’s influence and then using these insights for future planning, grant applications, public funding pursuits, and economic growth investments in the communities. The five core success metrics include community support and engagement, population growth, new business openings, student retention rates, and tourism tracking.



Sustainability:

Our commitment to the long-term success and vitality of our team and the resulting projects from this process is built on intentional planning, proactive communication, and consistent collaboration. To ensure that our partnerships flourish now and in the years to come, we’ve developed a multi-layered approach, focused on key strategies: establishing clear communication channels, effective planning and goal setting, fostering adaptability, and upholding a forward-thinking vision for sustainability. Our sustainability plan is a collaborative, data-driven initiative,

supported by the region’s municipalities and key community stakeholders. Funded through a variety of sources, this plan is implemented in close partnership with municipalities and organizations, ensuring that our projects and programs meet immediate objectives while also generating lasting benefits for the community. The commitment of our team members and financial support will be crucial in sustaining and expanding projects for long-term prosperity and resilience across the Connect LaGrange County Region.



CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY - A STELLAR TEAM

Our team is strengthened by the existing collaborative efforts of our municipalities and organizations, each playing a unique and complementary role in advancing our shared goals for community development and economic vitality. Examples of these partnerships and joint efforts include our county's comprehensive plan, the corresponding steering committees, and plan implementation. In addition to this effort, the team has been very actively involved in a collaborative approach to the housing shortage and the development of plans for new housing within their municipalities.

LaGrange Town Manager Mark Eagleson and his town council, Shipshewana Town Manager Terry Martin and his town council, and Topeka Town Manager Stewart Bender and his town council form the backbone of our local governance collaboration. Their monthly breakfast meetings serve as a platform for exchanging project updates, discussing town-specific happenings, and aligning efforts toward common objectives. Their active participation on the board of LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC) ensures seamless coordination and strategic alignment with our organization's initiatives and vice versa.

Additionally, County Commissioner Terry Martin and his co-commissioners bring a wealth of experience in policymaking and resource allocation, providing invaluable support and guidance for county-wide initiatives. Their willingness to be involved and solve problems with the community is a major catalyst in our county's overall success. Their involvement in decision-making processes ensures that our projects are well aligned with broader county development strategies. The Commissioner's were instrumental in the procurement of match funds from the County for this process, and have been key to the development and implementation of our County's Comprehensive Plan.

At the helm of our stellar team Emilee Buller (formerly Bonifay) is also the director of our county's comprehensive plan which adds a strategic dimension to our collaborative efforts. The comprehensive plan serves as a roadmap for sustainable growth and development, with Emilee's expertise driving the implementation and integration for each of our initiatives.



CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY LEADERSHIP

Emilee Buller (formerly Bonifay)-
Regional Project Manager, Lead Applicant & Primary Contact
LCEDC – VP of Community Development & Engagement

- ebuller@lagrangecountyedc.com | 260-499-4994
- 513 W. Central Ave. LaGrange, IN 46761

Sherri Johnston from LCEDC, with Buller's help, spearheads strategic planning and partnership coordination at every turn, working daily to orchestrate meetings and connect the foremost contributors. Our partnerships extend beyond government entities to include key community stakeholders and organizations. The LaGrange County Community Foundation, LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce, LaGrange County Convention and Visitors Bureau, and Main Street LaGrange play instrumental roles in amplifying our impact and expanding our reach.

Through collaborative initiatives such as the co-location of the Chamber of Commerce with LCEDC, joint grant programs, and shared event hosting, we maximize resources and leverage expertise to drive positive outcomes. Emilee's active involvement in Main Street LaGrange, Shipshewana, Topeka and Wolcottville community development meetings, and her role as a Chamber Ambassador underscores our commitment to supporting local businesses and fostering a thriving economic ecosystem. Sherri's monthly meetings with leaders from each of our partner organizations have been influential in both the formation of this team and the execution of many existing and complementary projects in the county. LCEDC's collaborative event coordination with partner organizations and municipalities further strengthens our network and enhances our ability to help implement impactful projects.

Our collaborative partnerships are characterized by co-operation, alignment, and a shared commitment to community prosperity. Together, we are steering meaningful change and laying the foundation for a vibrant future.

CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY LEADERSHIP

Sherri Johnston - Secondary Contact
LCEDC - President/CEO

- sjohnston@lagrangecountyedc.com | 260-499-4994
- 513 W. Central Ave. LaGrange, IN 46761

Terry Martin - President, LaGrange County Commissioners

- tmartin@lagrangecounty.org | 260-499-1814
- 114 W Michigan St. LaGrange, IN 46761

Christine Yoder - President, Shipshewana Town Council

- cyoder@shipshewana.gov | 260-768-4743
- 345 North Morton Street (PO Box 486) Shipshewana, IN 46565

Ray Hoover - President, LaGrange Town Council

- councilward3@lagrangein.org | 260-463-3179
- 1201 N. Townline Rd. LaGrange, IN 46761

Adam Lambright - President, Topeka Town Council

- alambright@topeka-in.gov | 260-593-2300
- 124 E. Lake Street (P.O. Box 127) Topeka, IN 46571



LaGrange County Together and Connect LaGrange County

LaGrange County Together, our County's community-driven effort for a comprehensive plan encompassing the towns of LaGrange, Shipshewana, Topeka, Wolcottville, and all unincorporated areas, was adopted in 2022. The plan's implementation phase began in January 2024, led by the LaGrange County Plan Commission, LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC), and the LaGrange County Community Foundation. Grounded in thorough research and data, this plan is built on a clear understanding of the county today and the values and priorities of community members who truly know and shape LaGrange County's future. In September 2024, LCEDC and the county committed to creating and funding a dedicated role to manage both the comprehensive plan and the Stellar Pathways initiatives. Emilee Buller was appointed to this position, further driving the plan's goals forward. Below, we have included several points from our comprehensive plan that Stellar will either directly or indirectly impact.

- **Land Use and Development 12 - Connect Local Farmers to Agricultural Organizations:** This point in our comprehensive plan focuses on connecting farmers with local and State resources, with specific agencies mentioned: Indiana Farm Bureau, Indiana State Dept. of Ag (ISDA), and Purdue extension. In conjunction with Stellar we are working on the establishment of a revolving loan fund through ISDA; this would be a complimentary effort.
- **Land Use and Development 13 – Launch a Program to Support Farming Expenses:** Again, complimentary to our Stellar efforts we are actively working on implementing an additional revolving loan fund for our farmers. Currently, Farmers State Bank has one but the programming through ISDA would cover different potential funding.
- **Land Use and Development 16 – Continue Supporting the 2021 Housing Strategy:** In 2021 LaGrange County established a housing strategy with the help of the Housing Resource Hub. With this designation we are hoping to implement a Down Payment assistance program as we have a 150+ home development being built in Topeka, and another development in the works in Shipshewana. Additionally, the Town of LaGrange has taken ownership of the entire Northeast Corner of the State Road 9 and US Route 20 intersection with plans to remove the blighted buildings and put in a mixed-use building with retail on the ground floor and apartments above. This project would potentially include up to 80 apartments perfect for young professionals and families.

- **Local Economy 5 and 6 – Launch a Small Business Development Program Continued Development & Expansion of the County's "Maker" Economy:** These two points in our comprehensive plan specifically site stimulating small businesses through shared spaces for several things including 'food truck zones,' and in Topeka one of our proposed projects will be an outdoor gathering space with designated food truck parking and space to hold farmers/craft markets. Also, improving spaces in our downtowns to make them more attractive and being able to provide programming for building owners to improve historic buildings can assist in attracting new businesses/makers to hold space in our downtowns to bring their wares to market.
- **Local Economy 7 – Support the Creation of a Downtown Plan for LaGrange:** The Town of LaGrange has approved matching dollars for projects in downtown that would do several things, including listing corridors on the National Register of Historic Places to allow accessibility to grants and tax credits, streetscape improvements, a façade improvements program, new gateway signage etc., all things that have been discussed as a part of plans for the town in recent years. Additionally, Topeka is aiming to allocate a portion of funds to a downtown plan.
- **Local Economy 9 – Support Pop-Up or Temporary Markets in Vacant Areas:** The proposed project to transform the site of the condemned tattoo shop in downtown LaGrange into a vibrant alleyway activation space is an ideal fit. Across downtown areas in LaGrange, Shipshewana, Howe, and Mongo, we also have several buildings where local artisans and businesses can showcase and sell their items alongside existing businesses—a model that has already proven effective. With vacant storefronts in nearly every town, we aim to use these funds to revitalize our communities, creating opportunities for new businesses to fill these spaces. In Topeka, the planned community gathering space will be perfect for weekend and evening markets, while new pavilions in local parks could also host these events and further support local commerce and community interaction.
- **Local Economy 11- Develop a Tourism Strategy:** While our CVB does a fantastic job with this piece and does have a plan in place, the majority of their plans in the past have been focused on Shipshewana as that is our tourist hub. The resulting partnership with IDDC as a part of this designation for our region would be impactful for marketing the entire county to visitors. To complement our Stellar Pathways pursuit and in conjunction with the comprehensive plan, our CVB and LCEDC have collaborated this year with a consultant to establish a nationally recognized scenic byway through the county as well as an Agricultural Heritage trail to drive traffic further into the county.



- **Natural Environment 6 – Support Continued Trail Development Across the County:** In Topeka we are planning to put in a trail that runs from East Park to West Park. Upon completion of the planned Hawpatch trail, this Stellar funded trail through Topeka will connect to the Hawpatch on one side of the community and allow for additional expansion from the other side of town, and provide a safe mechanism for residents to get from point A to point B with less time on roads that do not currently have bike lanes. This is important to note as around half of our population in the county is Amish, and bicycles are a primary mode of transportation.
- **Natural Environment 10 – Collaborate With Regional and State Park Organizations to Assist With Maintenance and Upgrading Park Amenities:** We have several parks projects in our plan that would otherwise not be realistic for our county and towns in this short of a timeline. Many of our towns have funded small park improvements via local fundraising in recent years, but these grassroots efforts take several years to fund.
- **Roadways and Infrastructure 3 – Improve Pedestrian Safety and Streetscape on Detroit Street (SR-9) in LaGrange:** As mentioned in our EC7 notes above – we are working on a potential streetscaping project in downtown LaGrange that will include marked/signed crosswalks, lighting, curb extensions, permanent planters or street trees etc. to assist with both accessibility and safety in downtown LaGrange, as well as the downtown beautification that so many of our residents are craving based on the Community Connections survey result.
- **Roadways and Infrastructure 5 – Better Manage Truck and Peak Hour Traffic in Topeka:** Topeka would like to do a downtown planning study with a portion of our Stellar funding OR as a complementary project, and addressing these concerns could be a portion of that planning process.
- **Quality of Life 6 – Pursue a Countywide Historic Inventory:** This is already in progress as a complementary effort to this process to assist us in procuring support through DNR for our historic downtown.
- **Quality of Life 7 – Support National Register of Historic Places Designation:** Approximately \$10,000 in Stellar grant funding from the IDNR is proposed to be used to get the historic corridors in downtown LaGrange listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This process will allow us to pursue additional projects in our downtown in the future.





LaGrange
COUNTY IN.



CHAPTER 2

CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY CONTEXT & VISION

2

- Current State of the Region
- Current Momentum in the Region
- Capacity of Connect LaGrange County



LaGrange County's Mission Statement is "To establish and nurture a local government that is open and accessible, actively seeks citizen involvement, is fiscally accountable, efficient yet courteous, provides for planned growth and sustainable economic development of the county, while preserving our unique character and cultures and without regard to personal or special interests"

In order to understand where LaGrange County needs to go, we also must have an intimate understanding of the factors at play and the current context of our communities. Identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges that are going to affect the growth of each community is important in order to establish goals and priorities that are backed by necessity and reinforced by a robust understanding of these community factors.

2024 LAGRANGE COUNTY POPULATION

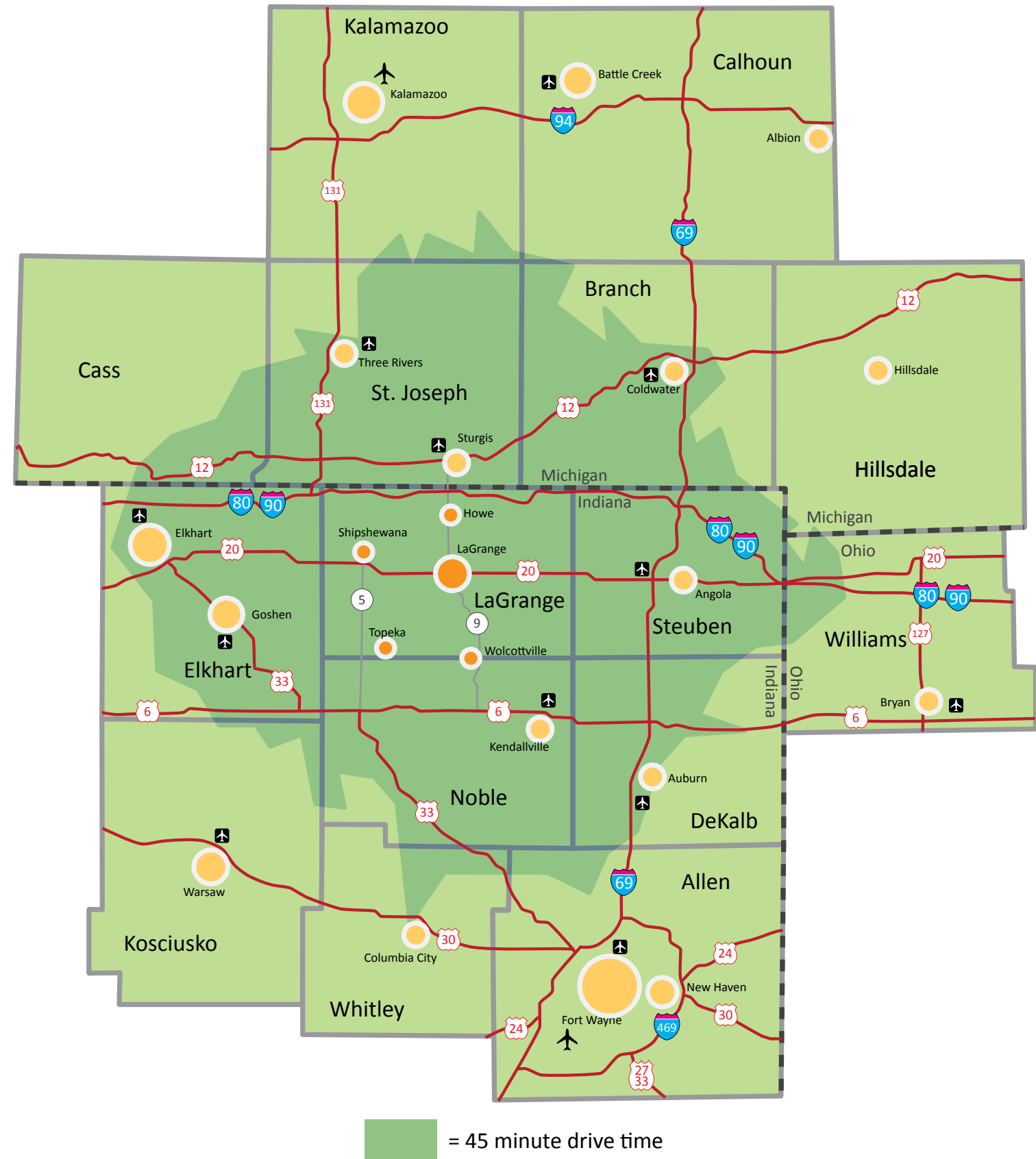
40,966

CURRENT STATE OF THE REGION

County Description

LaGrange County, spanning roughly 380 square miles, is situated in northeastern Indiana, bordering Michigan to the north. It lies about 55 miles east of South Bend, 105 miles west of Toledo, Ohio, and 40 miles north of Fort Wayne. Known for its significant Amish population, LaGrange County partners with nearby Elkhart County to promote the region as Northern Indiana Amish Country. With about half of the population being Amish, LaGrange County is home to the third-largest Amish community in the U.S., connected to the Elkhart-LaGrange Amish affiliation.

LaGrange has approximately 7 square miles of water consisting of several small lakes and the pigeon river. The county is predominantly made up of rural farmland but also houses some rolling hills and several lakes. The county seat is the Town of LaGrange, with two other incorporated towns—Topeka and Shipshewana. The town of Wolcottville is divided between LaGrange and Noble Counties, although its local governance is overseen by Noble County. Additionally, LaGrange County is home to several unincorporated communities, including Howe, South Milford, Mongo, and others.



= 45 minute drive time

Connect LaGrange County Stellar Participation Thus Far

The core of Connect LaGrange County's participation has been the deep collaboration with community leaders, organizations, and residents. This extensive engagement has allowed the team to build a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing LaGrange County from both our stakeholders and our residents' points of view, uniting them with a clear and cohesive vision. From this unified vision, the steering committee established the goals and objectives that form the backbone of the county's Strategic Investment Plan.

Since the beginning of the Stellar Pathways process, Connect LaGrange County has taken a collaborative and community-centered approach to shaping its Strategic Investment Plan. Under the leadership of Regional Project Manager Emilee Buller, a steering group of 26 dedicated individuals was established, and has convened multiple times throughout the process. This steering committee has been instrumental in identifying key stakeholders, discussing potential projects, organizing community engagement events, and promoting widespread participation in a highly successful online survey. Their efforts have helped spread awareness of LaGrange County's pursuit of a Stellar Pathways designation, generating excitement and support throughout the region.

Throughout the process, the steering committee and community members have worked together to brainstorm, refine, and develop the projects and programs that serve as the centerpiece of the Strategic Investment Plan. Some of these project's stem from new ideas generated during community engagement, while others have been in development for months or even years. Each step involved meaningful public input, with community members playing an active role in shaping the future of LaGrange County.



Connect LaGrange County has made a concerted effort to ensure that the voices of residents are at the forefront of the planning process. Meetings, open houses, and pop-up engagements were conducted directly in the communities that stand to benefit from these projects, ensuring a high level of accessibility and public involvement. In addition to in-person events, Connect LaGrange County utilized a variety of media channels, including social media platforms, newspapers, and radio appearances to encourage broad participation. The feedback gathered through these efforts has been both enthusiastic and invaluable, serving as a strong foundation for the projects and programs included in our Strategic Investment Plan.

Additionally, Emilee Buller has been promoted to Vice President of Community Development

and Engagement at LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC), allowing her to dedicate 100% of her working time to the management and implementation of Connect LaGrange County's Stellar Pathways Designation, as well as the County's Comprehensive Plan. This new role is jointly funded by LaGrange County and LCEDC, reinforcing the importance of these initiatives. Having a dedicated leader focused solely on community development and engagement ensures that these initiatives will receive the necessary attention to maximize their success and impact in our communities.

This Strategic Investment Plan is the product of many months of hard work by community leaders, steering committee members, and the people of LaGrange County, and represents a transformative opportunity for our entire region.



Connect LaGrange County – Commitment to Collaboration

Our approach to ensuring all partners benefit from the project in a fair and meaningful way is rooted in a commitment to collaboration, mutual support, and the interconnectedness of the communities within our region. While our partners have varying levels of eligibility for funding streams due to demographic considerations, our focus remains on maximizing collective impact and nurturing inclusive growth.

Connect LaGrange County region has town managers who regularly communicate and collaborate with one another. Channeling this spirit of cooperation to make decisions as a team, we have considered the needs and priorities of each partner when selecting projects that will have the biggest impact on the region. Considering projects that are the most mutually beneficial ensures that resources are directed to yield the greatest benefits for our residents, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability for all.

The Connect LaGrange County team views the success of neighboring communities as a mutual benefit rather than competition. From the outset our project design and planning process has been inclusive and participatory, involving input and feedback from all partnering municipalities. This ensures that the objectives, scope, and outcomes are aligned with the needs, priorities, and aspirations of each community, thereby reinforcing feelings of ownership and investment in the success of every project regardless of which municipality the project falls in.

The composition of our region is unique – approximately half of our 40,000-person population is Amish which is fascinating to visitors. This is demonstrated by the approximately two million people who visit Shipshewana each year. Leveraging the time and dollars spent by these visitors is one of the many ways that we can collectively benefit. Recently, there has been a major push from our partners to see that happen which has resulted

in the collaborative development of countywide projects like the Agricultural Heritage Trail, Off the Beaten Path Audio Driving Tour, Barn Quilt Trail, Art Trail, and Scenic By-way.

While funding may not be evenly distributed among the four partnering municipalities due to eligibility criteria, our region’s readiness to collaborate has prioritized the communities that demonstrate readiness to proceed and a strong ability to work together. This calculated approach ensures that resources are allocated where they can yield the greatest impact and will leverage each partner’s existing strengths.

Beyond direct funding, it is our hope and intention that our projects will have mutually beneficial outcomes and synergies among both our participating partners and other areas in the region. We will prioritize joint initiatives, shared resources, and collaborative problem-solving, creating a ripple effect of positive results that extend beyond individual municipalities to benefit the entire region. In summary, our commitment to ensuring all participating partners benefit from the projects in a fair and meaningful way is underpinned by a collaborative ethos and vision of inclusive regional development. By employing our strengths, encouraging collaboration, and prioritizing community impact, we are confident that this process will generate lasting benefits for our region and beyond, creating a more resilient, vibrant, and connected group of communities for generations to come.



MISSION STATEMENT

“The mission of Connect LaGrange County is to create a unified and coordinated effort to improve quality of life, bolster economic development, and create new investment in our communities and county.”

VISION STATEMENT

“The vision of Connect LaGrange County is to collaborate on building thriving communities that attract residents, workforce, and visitors through the creation and implementation of projects and programs focused on improving quality of place, community health, and economic development.”

Connect LaGrange County’s goals, mission and vision were developed by the leadership team as a part of this process in conjunction and correlation with the feedback received from community stakeholders and residents about their vision for progress in our county.

CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY GOALS

TALENT
ATTRACTION

1

Over 37% of LaGrange County is over forty-five and we recognize the critical necessity to attract young talent to our region. Executing transformative quality of place projects to enhance recreational and cultural offerings and encourage a healthy ecosystem for entrepreneurship and career development is our chosen method to do that. By positioning the region as a destination for young professionals, we anticipate a talent influx that fuels economic growth and resilience, trackable via continued monitoring of future census data, and continued community engagement with residents aged 20-40.

HOUSING

2

Our 2019 housing study revealed a total annual market potential for absorption of 725 dwelling units across our three municipalities, with an additional annual potential of 1,185 households expressing interest in moving within/ into our region. The public engagement process also confirmed the desire and need for additional housing, especially affordable housing, in the county. By increasing the number of available units, we aim to attract and retain a population that contributes to the region’s vitality.

QUALITY
OF PLACE

3

Our team seeks to enhance overall quality of life and place by investing in community amenities. This includes improving infrastructure, promoting outdoor recreation opportunities, supporting local economy, and promoting belonging and community pride. There was overwhelming support from the public engagement for improving and adding assets and amenities in the communities such as multi-use trails, streetscape improvements, park improvements, and new public gathering & event spaces.

COMMUNITY
HEALTH

4

The fourth over-arching goal of our plan is to improve community health through implementation of projects and programs focused on access to and resources for healthy living. For many residents, access to healthy food, recreational opportunities, and fitness facilities is a major challenge. Feedback from the Community Connections Survey noted that physical fitness resources were a top priority for health and wellness. To gather progress feedback on all goals, we plan to host annual regional community meetings or surveys with metrics to help gauge process and satisfaction.

CHILDCARE

5

LaGrange County aims to improve the offering of community facilities and quality childcare. Stakeholder and public engagement efforts showed that childcare facilities were lacking, and needed to attract families and younger workforce. Access to physical fitness facilities such as a community center is seen as extremely important to improving community health.

Key Regional Assets

LaGrange County is a place where rural living meets a desirable quality of life, with key community assets in every direction. The four incorporated towns that are central to our Strategic Investment Plan—LaGrange, Shipshewana, and Topeka—along with our unincorporated communities Howe, Mongo, and South Milford, all contribute to the unique character of our region. Taking stock of these key assets is essential in shaping how the Strategic Investment Plan can strengthen what makes each community special. Having a deep understanding of what LaGrange County currently offers and input from our residents has helped guide us in determining what our communities need for the future.

Shipshewana: Located in the western half of LaGrange County, Shipshewana draws over two million visitors each year. Known for its Amish culture, delicious food, and high-quality handcrafted goods, Shipshewana offers much more than meets the eye. Visitors can explore a wide variety of shopping options, from quaint downtown shops to locally produced meats and cheeses, along with outdoor recreation, world-class entertainment, and the Midwest’s largest flea market.

The Shipshewana Auction & Flea Market spans roughly 30 football fields and features hundreds of vendors from across the Midwest. It’s a bustling hub of activity, hosting events, auctions, and seasonal attractions that keep visitors coming

back throughout the summer and into the winter for holiday festivities.

For those seeking entertainment, Shipshewana is home to the Michiana Event Center and the Blue Gate Performing Arts Center, which together offer hundreds of concerts and events each year. With a large Amish population, Shipshewana provides an authentic opportunity to immerse yourself in the Amish way of life. Visitors can savor a traditional Amish meal at the Blue Gate Restaurant & Bakery, which seats over 750 guests, and enjoy a family-friendly musical at the Blue Gate Performing Arts Center. For a deeper dive into Amish history and heritage, the Menno-Hof Museum offers a rich, educational experience.

Shipshewana also serves as the eastern entry point of the Pumpkinvine Trail, a beloved biking and walking trail that spans 17 miles, connecting Elkhart and LaGrange Counties. This scenic trail winds through the picturesque Northern Indiana countryside, offering stops to rest, grab a bite to eat, or take in the sights of Amish farms and local attractions. Shipshewana has something for everyone, making it a town unlike any other.

With its strong job market and the economic boost from tourism, Connect LaGrange County will build on these community strengths to launch projects that improve the quality of life for residents in Shipshewana—not just for visitors. By focusing on developments near established assets like the flea market and downtown, we can enhance connectivity and walkability in the area. These new community assets will help retain and attract residents while supporting existing attractions, creating more opportunities for local businesses and encouraging growth around Shipshewana’s popular destinations.



Key Regional Assets

LaGrange: LaGrange is a quintessential, small Midwestern town, blending historic charm, outdoor activities, and a surprisingly impressive culinary scene. As the county seat since 1843, LaGrange is home to some of the area’s most notable architecture, including the county courthouse, completed in 1879 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1980. The courthouse also houses an archive of artifacts that tell the story of the town’s history. While the rest of the historic downtown isn’t on the National Register just yet, it features “restaurant row,” a stretch of popular eateries, along with shops and local businesses, and a few vacant storefronts.



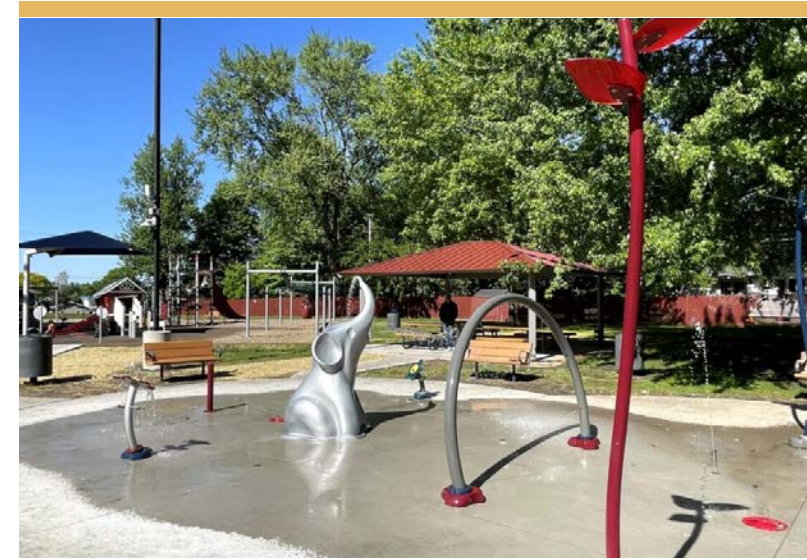
LaGrange is also evolving as a hub for recreation, with newer attractions like the LaGrange Park Splash Pad. The town park is ADA accessible and offers a free playground, a spinner, and food trucks with live music on the second Saturday of every month in the summer. Just across the street, you’ll find a ballfield, basketball court, playground, and skate park—perfect for family outings.

Parkview Hospital, located in LaGrange, is essential to the county, providing not only healthcare services but also various community health programs. Their support and collaboration in the community make them a key partner. On

the west side of downtown, the LaGrange County Public Library serves as a bustling hub, especially for young families. They offer everything from story times to video game sessions, book clubs, and culinary programs. Main Street LaGrange, a volunteer group dedicated to promoting and cultivating a vibrant downtown, has done a fantastic job hosting events like the Chili Shuffle, Graze LaGrange, and Final Fridays—a monthly event in the summer months bringing hundreds of people downtown for food trucks, live music, local vendors, and more. Their Fall Finale event wraps up the season.

LaGrange also embraces public art. The town is home to three murals along its main stretch, including the iconic “Welcome to LaGrange” mural, a sepia-toned history themed mural, and the well known and loved Betsy and Molly mural which features a pair of cows in front of a vibrant quilt background. Soon, the courthouse square will also feature a 10-foot tall interactive sculpture, designed by LaGrange County Arts and built by local business Spreuer and Sons.

Connect LaGrange County will utilize key community assets in LaGrange to bolster future development and proposed planning efforts from this Strategic Investment Plan. With park improvements and additions already occurring, LaGrange will build on that momentum to implement more park improvement projects aimed at answering community needs and improving quality of place. Preserving the existing historic structures of LaGrange is also a goal of the community and of this Strategic Investment Plan, providing an opportunity to restore and protect these buildings and drive additional businesses into vacant storefronts.



Key Regional Assets

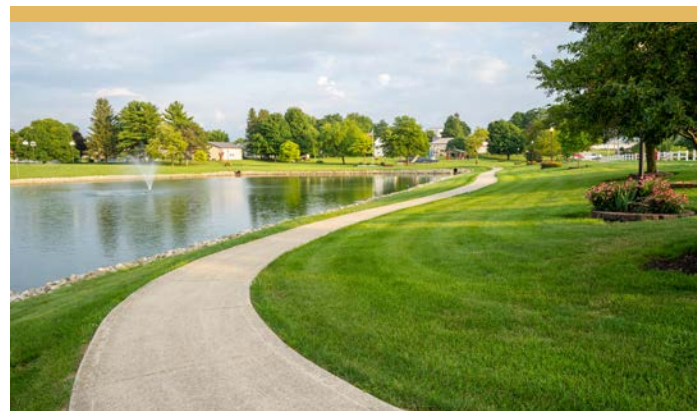
Topeka: Topeka, Indiana is a vibrant community known for its rich cultural heritage, strong agricultural roots, and dedication to progress. Located in the heart of LaGrange County, Topeka combines small-town charm with a forward-thinking approach to community and economic development, making it a key asset in the region.

One of Topeka’s most notable features is its large Amish population, which contributes significantly to the town’s identity and economy. Known around the world for its draft horse auctions, Topeka also boasts a growing industrial base. Visitors and locals alike can experience authentic Amish craftsmanship, from handcrafted furniture to locally grown produce, at various shops and markets both in town and in local “cottage shops,” housed on nearby Amish homesteads. This deep connection to Amish culture brings a unique tourism element to the area, attracting visitors who seek a quieter, more traditional way of life.

Topeka’s commitment to recreation and outdoor amenities is another key asset. The town is home to the scenic East and West Parks, green spaces offering areas for picnicking, sports, and family gatherings, they also provide recreational amenities such as baseball fields, basketball & tennis courts, playgrounds, pavilions, and a beautiful walking trail around a pond. A significant housing project is also underway, reflecting Topeka’s recognition of the need to support growth and progress for its residents.

Looking ahead, Topeka plans to build on its community assets by linking future developments to key areas on each side of town. With two well-loved parks on the east and west ends, new development efforts will focus

on connecting and expanding these essential spaces. This approach offers a unique chance to enhance the parks and surrounding areas with projects that meet residents’ needs while also attracting new community members. A proposed public gathering space in downtown Topeka will help draw more visitors and residents into the heart of town, boosting foot traffic for existing businesses and creating an inviting atmosphere for new businesses to open and thrive.



Howe: Howe is a small vibrant unincorporated community located in the northern part of LaGrange County. With a population of around 700, Howe offers a welcoming atmosphere while boasting access to amenities not commonly found in such a small town. One of its most significant assets is its proximity to major transportation routes, including the I-80/90 Indiana Toll Road, which places it just two hours from the eastern edge of Chicago. This strategic location makes Howe an appealing place for both residents and businesses alike, providing the charm of small-town living with the convenience of nearby urban centers.

The town is home to several key local amenities that enrich the lives of its residents and attract visitors throughout the year. Cedar Lake Golf Course and Twin Mills Camping Resort offer recreational opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts, while The Kingsbury in Howe, a newly established business and incubator space, provides support for local makers. Howe is also known for hosting the largest and most well-attended summer farmers market in the county, a testament to the strong community ties and local support for agriculture. Additionally, the town park acts as a central hub for community events and activities, fostering a sense of togetherness among residents.

For those seeking outdoor adventure, Howe does not disappoint. Pine Knob County Park, a nearby 254-acre preserve, offers 4 miles of accessible hiking and walking trails that wind through wetlands and forests. The park is also home to a unique 3-D archery trail, featuring life-sized game targets, making it a popular destination for recreational archers. Additionally, Duff Memorial Park provides a 1.25-mile mountain biking trail with ongoing improvements, offering another outlet for outdoor enthusiasts.

With a community centered around outdoor recreation, understanding Howe’s unique character and identifying new recreation options that enhance rather than detract from it will be essential. Incorporating existing amenities into future planning and development will help improve connectivity, accessibility, and walkability throughout the area. Additionally, driving new business into Howe’s downtown corridor is a priority, with efforts to attract shops and services that complement the community’s recreational assets. Howe may also explore the possibility of incorporation, creating new opportunities for growth and development that strengthen its infrastructure and community appeal.



Key Regional Assets

Mongo: Mongo is one of LaGrange County’s best-kept secrets, offering a blend of natural beauty, outdoor recreation, and small-town charm. Though an unincorporated community, Mongo plays a vital role in the region’s appeal, especially for those who appreciate the tranquility of rural life paired with exceptional access to nature.

The town’s most notable asset is its proximity to the Pigeon River Fish and Wildlife Area, a sprawling 12,000-acre state-managed preserve. This natural haven draws outdoor enthusiasts from across the region for activities such as fishing, hunting, birdwatching, and, perhaps most famously, kayaking and canoeing on the Pigeon River. The river itself winds through scenic landscapes, offering a peaceful retreat for adventurers looking to connect with nature. Mongo’s position as a gateway to this outdoor paradise makes it a significant draw for eco-tourism and recreation.

Other key assets are the Mongo Trading Post and Mongo River Run, two well-known local businesses catering to outdoor enthusiasts and

tourists alike. They both offer kayak and canoe rentals, allowing visitors to fully experience the beauty of the Pigeon River. During the warmer months, the area sees a surge in tourism, with people flocking to Mongo for its outdoor activities and the charming, laid-back atmosphere of the town.

Mongo’s identity is strongly tied to outdoor recreation, and future development opportunities will focus on enhancing this connection while also cleaning up properties in the downtown area. Efforts will prioritize making natural resources more accessible and inviting for both residents and visitors. Also the treasured local park near downtown offers residents recreational opportunities such as basketball courts, a playground, and pavilion within walking distance. By integrating these assets thoughtfully into future developments, Mongo aims to increase engagement with its natural areas, promote community involvement, and strengthen the area’s appeal. These initiatives form key aspects of the Strategic Investment Plan.



South Milford: South Milford is rich with community-focused businesses that contribute to its vibrant small-town charm. A staple in South Milford is Gropp’s Fish Shack, a favorite destination known for its relaxed atmosphere and delicious fare, drawing both locals and tourists alike. Recently, Coffee and Cream of South Milford has become a new gathering hub, born from a community vision and spearheaded by Jeff Wohlheter, the current Executive Director. When an old corner building went up for sale, Jeff’s passion and the community’s dedication transformed it into a beautiful, welcoming space. Through donations, grants, and volunteer labor, the project was completed with generous contributions, such as donated hickory hardwood floors, lighting, and cabinetry. Today, Coffee and Cream is cherished by locals throughout LaGrange County. A cornerstone in the area since 1892, JO Mory has played a foundational role in supporting local development, financially backing numerous projects, including parks and the beloved Coffee and Cream. This historic company’s investments have helped shape

South Milford’s unique character, fostering community gathering spaces and enhancing local amenities.

For outdoor recreation, the Township Park and Austin Park are key regional assets in South Milford. Austin Park, a well-maintained public space, has recently added a walking trail, providing residents with a scenic place to enjoy the outdoors and stay active. The park serves as a community hub, hosting events and providing a space for family activities and outdoor enjoyment. The Township Park is home to a popular baseball field in the heart of the town.

With new business coming to South Milford, combining this success with other future planning developments, aimed at improving quality of life, will help South Milford achieve desired growth. Expanding and improving existing recreational assets will also boost the appeal for new residents to make South Milford their home and also attract tourism and economic activity in the town. Building on momentum is key for future planning success.



CURRENT MOMENTUM IN THE REGION

Key Goals for Each Community Through Stellar

Independent from Stellar Pathways, LaGrange County has been pushing towards improving the quality of life in its communities for several years. Organizations like the LaGrange County Plan Commission, LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation and the LaGrange County Community Foundation have laid the foundation of change with the formation of LaGrange County Together and the adoption of the county-wide Comprehensive Plan in 2022. This planning document provides a framework for strategic county improvements and was actively used as a reference document when creating the goals, objectives, projects, programs, and other opportunities for each community for the LaGrange County Strategic Investment Plan. This section will review the goals that each community within the region would like to achieve with the Stellar Pathways designation.

Shipshewana: With over 2 million visitors a year, Shipshewana serves as an economic driver for LaGrange County with an abundance of commerce, retail, and entertainment. Shipshewana only has a sitting population of 855, which illustrates just how transient the population is and how the town is mostly occupied with visitors at any given time. Shipshewana is committed to shifting its focus to providing improved quality of life benefits for those who call their community home and encouraging others to make the permanent move to Shipshewana. Like the rest of the county, Shipshewana has experienced a slow in population growth and in housing units built since 2020. Shipshewana hopes to achieve several goals through Stellar Pathways and the Strategic Investment Plan, including reigniting housing development, attracting and retaining new residents, improving quality of life, and providing community amenities—like parks—that are independent of commerce, all aimed at making the town a more desirable place to live.

- SHIPSHEWANA GOALS**
-  New Housing Development
 -  Retaining and Attracting New Residents and Visitors
 -  Parks & Recreation Improvements
 -  Quality of Life Improvements



LaGrange: As the county seat, the Town of LaGrange is positioned at the center of LaGrange County and operates at the transportation crossroads of US-20 and IN-9. LaGrange is also the largest community in LaGrange County, a town of more than 2,700. Like the rest of the county, some of the first goals set forth by LaGrange for this Strategic Investment Plan were to address the need for new housing development and to attract new residents to their community. A new senior apartment complex was recently opened to offer a new housing option to the older population and further development could offer housing diversity to the large population of young families both in the county or looking to move to the county.

LaGrange also wants to improve the quality of life, more specifically by offering public facilities that would benefit the community. A childcare facility and a fitness center/ community center were at the front of this list, with overwhelming support from the community to invest in this sort of project. Previous plans had been assembled for this type of project but fell short due to funding, something Stellar Pathways could help change.

Another goal includes updating the town park spaces in LaGrange. A new splash park was recently opened and has been a huge success for the community. Riding this momentum, other park improvement projects would further boost the experience that LaGrange offers for its residents and encourage residents from surrounding communities to visit LaGrange and enjoy their outdoor recreation amenities.

Last, LaGrange wants to preserve and renovate their historic downtown. The county courthouse is a testament to the fantastic historic

architecture that LaGrange has on display. This also includes many historic downtown buildings, most of which were built in the 1800's. Unfortunately, some of these buildings have fallen into disrepair, and their preservation is in question. Establishing a historic district would protect these iconic buildings from destruction and facade/interior improvement projects will spark new interest for their use. Streetscape improvements would complement the facades and help attract people to the downtown area by making it safer and more visually appealing for residents and visitors. Stellar Pathways would propel these projects and breathe life back into the historic downtown.

- LAGRANGE GOALS**
-  Retaining and Attracting New Residents and Visitors
 -  Preserving and Renovating the Historic Downtown
 -  Parks & Recreation Improvements
 -  New Childcare Facility or New Community Center



Topeka: Topeka faces many of the same challenges as neighboring communities, and through Stellar Pathways, aims to address these issues and create a brighter future. One of the key priorities for Topeka is housing development. While no new housing units had been built since 2020, this year saw the groundbreaking of a new development, which is a promising step forward. With many manufacturing jobs in Topeka, a significant portion of the workforce commutes due to a lack of available housing. Expanding and diversifying housing options will be critical to helping more people call Topeka home.

Topeka's strong manufacturing presence—where nearly 60% of the population works in the industry—provides a solid employment base but also leaves the community vulnerable during economic downturns. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic led to temporary layoffs, impacting nearly half the population, and the current slowdown in the RV industry has hit their workforce hard. By creating more diverse job opportunities, we can build resilience in their local economy.

With manufacturing as a key industry, only 4.4% of Topeka residents hold a bachelor's degree, compared to the 19.1% state average. To grow and diversify our local economy, we must attract young professionals and others who have pursued higher education, expanding our workforce and opening doors for new types of jobs.

Topeka also has its sights set on enhancing parks, recreation, and trails, recognizing the value of public green spaces in improving quality of life and attracting new residents. These spaces provide a much-needed escape for residents, many of whom work in demanding

manufacturing jobs. Topeka is also working to breathe new life into their downtown through the addition of amenities, development, and events. An outdoor public entertainment and gathering space is a high priority, and a downtown master plan will help guide us as we look to the future of Topeka.

TOPEKA GOALS



New Housing Development and Diverse Housing Options



Creating Job Diversity & Creating Avenues to Attaining Higher Education



Attracting Residents to Downtown More Consistently



Parks & Recreation Improvements



County & Unincorporated Towns: Several countywide goals have emerged through our planning efforts and public engagement efforts over the last five years, and more specifically in this process. One of the primary objectives is to enhance community health and wellness through various projects and programs. A key strategy could involve improving and expanding initiatives that provide food and resources to underprivileged residents. Specifically, we aim to incorporate healthier options and locally sourced foods into these programs to promote better eating habits, especially among children. With several backpack and food pantry programs already in place across the county, Stellar funding could help us create processes that introduce healthier options and connect these programs with local farmers. One initiative we'd like to launch is a "Farms to Food Banks" program that enables local growers to donate surplus produce. To make this service effective, we would need cold storage for both farmers and food banks to access.

Another exciting project idea is a "Tradition Kitchen," designed to provide a space for culinary programs where seniors, who may be experiencing loneliness and a disconnection from our communities, can teach younger generations family recipes, cooking techniques for locally grown foods, and methods for food preservation. Additionally, we envision a youth physical activity program aimed at encouraging kids to get outside and engage in active play, especially given the younger generations' increasing reliance on technology and sedentary lifestyles.

Agriculture and tourism define LaGrange County's identity. While much of our tourism efforts are concentrated in Shipshewana, there's

significant potential to expand these initiatives to the southern and eastern parts of the county. We've already begun this process with the planned Agricultural Heritage Trail, which will guide visitors to various historic and cultural sites throughout LaGrange County. In observance of this we could also enhance programs that support farmers, such as establishing a low-interest revolving loan fund to provide additional economic stability for our large agricultural community.

The unincorporated areas of Howe, South Milford, and Mongo have actively engaged in the Strategic Investment Plan to improve health and quality of life within their communities. Our priority in these areas of the county is to invest in public green spaces and other quality-of-life projects, including sidewalks, trails, community gardens, and recreational opportunities to bolster the residents' enjoyment of the spaces in which they live, work and play.

COUNTY & UNINCORPORATED TOWNS GOALS



Health and Wellness Programs



Expanding Agriculture and Tourism



Quality of Life Improvements



Parks & Recreation Improvements



Improving Sidewalk Infrastructure

Current Projects – LaGrange County and Participating Entities

In recent years, LaGrange County has been building and gaining momentum with projects focused on enhancing the quality of life for residents and improving the conditions of our towns. This progress is evident through a series of projects, either recently completed or currently underway, in each community. Below, you'll find a chart detailing these projects, including their locations, descriptions, completion statuses or planned timelines for the next five years, and their funding sources.

CURRENT LAGRANGE COUNTY PROJECTS & FUNDING SOURCES			
PROJECT LOCATION	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	COMPLETION	FUNDING
SHIPSHEWANA DOG PARK	A 2023 parks survey in the town of Shipshewana revealed that the residents in their town wanted a dog park. By the end of the year 2024, they will be putting in a dog park in town in response to the public support.	End of 2024	LOCAL \$20,000 so far
SHIPSHEWANA PICKLEBALL COURTS	A 2023 parks survey in the town of Shipshewana revealed that the residents in their town wanted pickleball courts. By the end of the year 2024, they will be putting in pickleball courts in town in response to the public support.	Spring 2025	LOCAL & PRIVATE Approximately \$40,000
SHIPSHEWANA STATE RD 5 PROJECT	This project kicked off in 2023 and sought to extend sidewalks along State Road 5 in Shipshewana from downtown all the way to US 20. This project will also include the addition of two crossovers for foot traffic. Project completion is planned for end of fall 2024.	COMPLETED 2024	STATE \$19.6 Million
SHIPSHEWANA PUMPKINVINE TRAIL EXTENSION	The Pumpkinvine trail connects Goshen to Shipshewana. 0.97 miles were added to the Pumpkinvine Trail, extending the trail east into Shipshewana from its current terminus outside of town at County Road 850 West. The new extension follows North Street, ending in North Park.	COMPLETED 2022	LOCAL - \$241,441 STATE - \$953,481 (Next Level Trails)
SHIPSHEWANA NORTH STREET PROJECT	This project is extending and paving an existing gravel road from State Road 5 to 735 W. The project's goal was to provide an alternative route for Amish on bicycles and in buggies as opposed to using heavier trafficked routes.	End of 2024	LOCAL - \$529,543 STATE - \$950,529 (CCMG)
SHIPSHEWANA BASEBALL FIELD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT	Private improvements made to existing baseball fields in town. Project was funded by Warrior Youth Baseball Program who leases the fields from the town.	End of 2024	LOCAL \$453,456

CURRENT LAGRANGE COUNTY PROJECTS & FUNDING SOURCES			
PROJECT LOCATION	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	COMPLETION	FUNDING
SHIPSHEWANA NORTH STREET INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT	In 2023, new infrastructure for water and sewer were added and updated along State Road 5 and North Street. This project was apart of a list of projects aimed at improving the infrastructure and utilities in town.	COMPLETED 2023	LOCAL \$414,335
SHIPSHEWANA INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS	Water and sewer pipe replacements at Sumney, State and Walnut Streets. This project was apart of a list of projects aimed at improving the infrastructure and utilities in town.	COMPLETED 2023	LOCAL - \$320,006 (Match) STATE - \$960,019 (CCMG)
SHIPSHEWANA NEW SUBDIVISION	New subdivision encouraged by countywide housing study. Project being funded and going in from private developer Paul Yoder in the north of town. Estimated 30 new homes will be apart of this project.	ONGOING	PRIVATE
LAGRANGE WASTEWATER TREATMENT	A series of upgrades and changes were made to the wastewater treatment plant. Project was aimed at replacing worn equipment and updating facilities.	COMPLETED 2024	LOCAL \$65,600
LAGRANGE CEMETERY STORAGE BARN	Currently in the design phase, this project is planned for completion in 2025. Project includes the replacement of the storage barn is being planned in order to provide maintenance crews with better facilities. In process of site review and planning commission approval now.	2025	LOCAL \$133,400
LAGRANGE TOWN HALL PARKING LOT	Currently in the design phase, this project is planned for completion in 2025. Project includes planned improvements to resurface the parking lot.	2025	LOCAL Pending
LAGRANGE STREETS DEPARTMENT HEATING SYSTEM	This project was apart of a list of projects aimed to improving facilities and equipment at local departments. This project was to replace the heating systems and doors related to the Streets Department.	COMPLETED 2023	LOCAL \$3,800
LAGRANGE FIRE DEPARTMENT RESPONDER VEHICLE	This project was apart of a list of projects aimed to improving facilities and equipment at local departments. This project included the replacement of the Fire Department's first responder vehicle, new ariel tower truck, new utility truck 2500 long bed, and new rescue 10.	2024 2025 2027	LOCAL - \$695,000 PRIVATE - \$36,000

CURRENT LAGRANGE COUNTY PROJECTS & FUNDING SOURCES			
PROJECT LOCATION	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	COMPLETION	FUNDING
LAGRANGE WATER DEPARTMENT NEW METERS	This project was apart of a list of projects aimed to improving facilities and equipment at local departments. This ongoing project is related to replacing all water meters with auto read meters.	End of 2025	LOCAL \$154,000 so far
TOPEKA SOFTBALL DIAMONDS	Project included replacing the dirt infield with turf and if planned for the end of the season in 2024. Local funding made this project possible in response to public support for softball field improvements.	Fall 2024	LOCAL \$550,000
TOPEKA WEST PARK	Project was aimed at improving amenities at Topeka West Park. Upgrades included replaced walking paths, pavilion and playground surface.	COMPLETED 2024	LOCAL \$1.2 Million
TOPEKA WWTP UPGRADES	This project was completed in 2023 and was funded locally. Upgrades included replacing equipment and installing a new press.	COMPLETED 2024	LOCAL \$2.872 Million
TOPEKA WATER PLANT UPGRADE	Completed in 2023, the Topeka Water Plant Project was funded locally. This included building an entirely new water treatment plant to service the community.	COMPLETED 2022	LOCAL \$3.76 Million
TOPEKA SHERIDAN DRIVE/ZOOK ST IMPROVEMENTS	A part of a list of infrastructure projects that was funded through INDOT Community Crossings Matching Grant and local funds. At this location the project included reconstructing roads, storm water additions, and adding new water mains.	COMPLETED 2024	LOCAL - \$1,309,417 STATE - \$756,802
TOPEKA MICHIGAN STREET IMPROVEMENTS	A part of a list of infrastructure projects that was funded through INDOT Community Crossings Matching Grant and local funds. At this location the project included reconstructing roads and storm water additions.	COMPLETED 2024	LOCAL - \$383,450 STATE - \$243,197
TOPEKA EAST LAKE STREET IMPROVEMENTS	A part of a list of infrastructure projects that was funded through INDOT Community Crossings Matching Grant and local funds. At this location the project included reconstructing roads, storm water additions, and adding new water mains	COMPLETED 2024	LOCAL - \$1.875 Million STATE - \$1.5 Million

CURRENT LAGRANGE COUNTY PROJECTS & FUNDING SOURCES			
PROJECT LOCATION	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	COMPLETION	FUNDING
TOPEKA PINE & BABCOCK ST IMPROVEMENTS	A part of a list of infrastructure projects that was funded through INDOT Community Crossings Matching Grant and local funds. At this location the project included reconstructing roads, storm water additions, and adding new water mains.	Fall of 2024	LOCAL - \$1,534,878 STATE - \$1,151,159
TOPEKA N MAIN ST IMPROVEMENTS	A part of a list of infrastructure projects that was funded through INDOT Community Crossings Matching Grant and local funds. At this location the project included reconstructing roads, storm water additions, and adding new water mains	COMPLETED 2024	LOCAL - \$1,283,476 STATE - \$904,745
TOPEKA HARRISON, ZOOK, NATURE TRAIL ST IMPROVEMENTS	A part of a list of infrastructure projects that was funded through INDOT Community Crossings Matching Grant and local funds. At this location the project included reconstructing roads, storm water additions, and adding new water mains.	Fall of 2024	LOCAL - \$968,815 STATE - \$595,554
TOPEKA SOUTH MAIN STREET IMPROVEMENTS	A part of a list of infrastructure projects that was funded through INDOT Community Crossings Matching Grant and local funds. At this location the project included reconstructing roads and storm water additions.	COMPLETED 2024	LOCAL - \$986,122 STATE - \$633,677
TOPEKA PICKLEBALL COURTS	A 2023 parks survey in the town of Topeka revealed that the residents in their town wanted pickleball courts. As a response, the town has started to install pickleball courts and is also in the process of purchasing land to add more courts and park amenities.	ONGOING	LOCAL \$250,000
HAWPATCH TRAIL	The Hawpatch Trail is a proposed 17-mile trail that will connect the towns of Millersburg, Topeka and Wolcottville. This trail is included in the county's master trails plan, with several secured and pending funding sources from state, local and private sources.	PENDING	PENDING
TOPEKA NORTHVIEW ESTATES	In response to the need for housing and based on the encouragement from a recent housing study, a new subdivision is going in. Locally funded, this project is planned to have first homes built in spring 2025.	First Homes Set to Build Spring 2025	LOCAL \$3,928,430
LAGRANGE COUNTY HOWE FIRE DEPARTMENT	This project provided a \$150,000 loan for the purchase of a new fire truck. Project was started in order to upgrade the county's aging fire department fleet.	COMPLETED 2021	LOCAL \$150,000

CURRENT LAGRANGE COUNTY PROJECTS & FUNDING SOURCES			
PROJECT LOCATION	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	COMPLETION	FUNDING
LAGRANGE COUNTY TRAILS PROJECT	The county pledged \$1.5 Million Dollars to the ongoing Hawpatch Trail projects. Continued expansions across the county are aimed at increasing connectivity across communities and improving accessibility.	ONGOING	LOCAL \$47,165
LAGRANGE COUNTY REMC BROADBAND	The county pledged \$5.3 Million Dollars to REMC for County Broadband initiative. This project was aimed at bringing broadband services to rural locations and connecting more people with high speed internet.	COMPLETED 2021	LOCAL \$5,265,000
LAGRANGE COUNTY SPREUER PARK BALL FIELDS	The county pledged a total of \$380K for use in the development of the new baseball fields at Spreuer Park. Located in LaGrange, the fields have not been updated in many years and this project will bring them back to competitive play standards.	ONGOING	LOCAL \$379,959
LAGRANGE COUNTY UNINCORPORATED TOWN FUNDING	The county used \$192K in various unincorporated areas to spur economic and community development (sidewalks, parks, fire department gear etc). Projects were based on community needs and local support.	COMPLETED 2023	LOCAL \$192,000
LAGRANGE COUNTY ROAD PROJECTS	County-wide \$6.2 Million Dollars in roads projects. Still ongoing, this project is tasked with improving road infrastructure across the county and its communities.	ONGOING	LOCAL \$6.2 MILLION
LAGRANGE COUNTY COMMUNITY CROSSING MATCH FOR ROAD PROJECT	County's \$146K grant matching in the Community Crossings Match Grant. An INDOT program, the Community Crossings Matching Grant Program provides funding to cities, towns, and counties across Indiana to make improvements to local roads and bridges.	COMPLETED 2021	LOCAL \$146,207
LAGRANGE COUNTY THRIVE BY 5	\$25K annually pledged by the county to help pay for a consultant to address childcare shortage issues in the county. Thrive by 5 is supporting early childcare and education in LaGrange and Noble Counties with initiatives to increase capacity, quality, and affordability.	ONGOING	LOCAL \$25,000
LAGRANGE COUNTY VISITOR ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY	An economic impact study of 2023 tourism to LaGrange County. Locally funded, this study is planned to be completed by end of 2024 and hosted 120+ surveys to businesses in the region.	Fall 2024	LOCAL \$13,000

CURRENT LAGRANGE COUNTY PROJECTS & FUNDING SOURCES			
PROJECT LOCATION	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	COMPLETION	FUNDING
LAGRANGE COUNTY VISITOR PROFILE STUDY	A clear understanding of what motivates travelers to come to LaGrange County and how well the area's vacation products currently deliver against their expectations; what tourists to LaGrange County want in the way of new attractions and other facilities of use to them based on expectations; comprehensive Visitor Profile information on trip planning, trip characteristics, demographics, and the vacation experience of visitors to LaGrange County during the primary tourism seasons (spring thru Christmas) which is needed to develop a consistent and effective promotional message for the area; the brand/image of LaGrange County as a tourism destination in comparison to a major competitor on a range of image dimensions.	ONGOING	LOCAL \$15,000
LAGRANGE COUNTY USABILITY & WEBSITE FOCUS GROUP STUDY	Targeted key demographic audiences were tasked to "plan a vacation to LaGrange County" remotely using the website, results were recorded, tabulated and shared to determine functionality, preferences, expectations, generalizations, perceptions, etc. A comparison study was done of LaGrange County's CVB website against Holmes County, OH website and Lancaster County, PA website.	COMPLETED 2024	LOCAL \$6,000
LAGRANGE COUNTY AGRICULTURE HERITAGE TRAIL DEVELOPMENT STUDY	Project was done to identify and curate potential agricultural places, people, stories and history of LaGrange County that might be appropriate to develop an Agriculture Trail. Identification and development is in process. Promotion/Marketing TBD when funds are available in next phase.	COMPLETED 2024	LOCAL \$33,000
LAGRANGE COUNTY SCENIC BYWAY PROJECT	Establish an officially designated Indiana Scenic Byway in Shipshewana, Topeka and Middlebury, Indiana. USDA Grant application submitted by LCEDC to determine funding feasibility. If not awarded, project will wait for funding sources.	End of 2024	PRIVATE \$18,000
LAGRANGE COUNTY TRAILS MASTER PLAN	The LaGrange County Community Foundation has partnered with LaGrange County Trails to create a countywide trails master plan. Through a cohesive and comprehensive approach to trails planning, this document will guide LaGrange County Trails and community leaders as they develop, expand, and improve trail infrastructure and programs. This undertaking is made possible through a grant from Lilly Endowment's GIFT VIII Initiative.	2024-2025	STATE \$50,000 (Lilly Endowment + Local Match from Community Foundation)

CURRENT LAGRANGE COUNTY PROJECTS & FUNDING SOURCES			
PROJECT LOCATION	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	COMPLETION	FUNDING
LAGRANGE COUNTY VISITORS CENTER SOAR ANALYSIS STUDY	Rozzi Associates will lead a SOAR analysis to determine the best function, practices, needs, location, facility and activity for the LaGrange County Visitor Center. This project is planned for completion in 2024, and this project was funded locally.	End of 2024	LOCAL \$4,000
LAGRANGE COUNTY CVB ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2021	LaGrange County CVB Executive Director developed and led, Board approved, LaGrange County Innkeepers Tax Commission monitored. This project was completed in 2020, and this project was funded locally.	COMPLETED 2020	Internally Developed & Funded
LAGRANGE COUNTY CVB ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2022	LaGrange County CVB Executive Director developed and led, Board approved, LaGrange County Innkeepers Tax Commission monitored. This project was completed in 2021, and this project was funded locally.	COMPLETED 2021	Internally Developed & Funded
LAGRANGE COUNTY CVB ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2023	LaGrange County CVB Executive Director developed and led, Board approved, LaGrange County Innkeepers Tax Commission monitored. This project was completed in 2022, and this project was funded locally.	COMPLETED 2022	Internally Developed & Funded
LAGRANGE COUNTY CVB ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2024	LaGrange County CVB Executive Director developed and led, Board approved, LaGrange County Innkeepers Tax Commission monitored. This project was completed in 2023, and this project was funded locally.	COMPLETED 2023	Internally Developed & Funded
LAGRANGE COUNTY ARTS PUBLIC ART SCULPTURE	Tall, metal, artistic sculpture communicating LaGrange County natural and artistic stories in art. LaGrange County Arts designed, led, and managed the project while LaGrange County Government sponsored it. The sculpture was installed on LaGrange County Courthouse grounds.	COMPLETED 2024	LOCAL \$10,000
LAGRANGE COUNTY MONGO COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION PUBLIC ART	TBD large, hand-painted, art mural, on the Mongo General Store depicting the story/history/heritage of Mongo in LaGrange County. LaGrange County Arts design and leadership in collaboration with the Mongo Community Association. This project is funded by the LaGrange County CVB.	Spring 2025	LOCAL \$8,000
LAGRANGE COUNTY OFF THE BEATEN PATH AUDIO DRIVING TOUR	100+ mile, scenic, signed, driving route telling the stories of 6 small towns, past 120 Amish cottage shops and featuring 80 Barn Quilts. This project was funded through IDDC Placemaking Grant Funds plus additional funds by the LaGrange County CVB.	COMPLETED 2024	LOCAL - \$45,000 STATE - \$45,000

CURRENT LAGRANGE COUNTY PROJECTS & FUNDING SOURCES			
PROJECT LOCATION	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	COMPLETION	FUNDING
LAGRANGE NEW WATER PLANT	Project included the building of a new water treatment plant in LaGrange. Project was funded locally and is still ongoing.	ONGOING	LOCAL \$7.2 Million
LAGRANGE SOUTH WATER TOWER REHAB	This project was funded locally and is still ongoing. Project includes improvements and updates to equipment and exterior of South Water Tower in LaGrange.	ONGOING	LOCAL \$501,300
LAGRANGE SPLASH PAD	The LaGrange Splash Pad was a project that was completely community funded. Documentation of the fundraising effort can be found in the appendix.	COMPLETED 2021	PRIVATE
LAGRANGE COUNTY TOURISM ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY 2023	This project included contracting Rockport Analytics Research to identify tourism economic impact countywide in LaGrange County. This study is planned to be completed by the end of 2024.	End of 2024	Provided by State
LAGRANGE COUNTY BARN QUILT TRAIL	This project supported and funded 80 Handpainted barn quilts around LaGrange County including in South Milford, Wolcottville, Topeka, Howe, Shipshewana, Mongo and LaGrange. 3 sizes of hand built and hand painted Barn Quilts were offered to LaGrange County residents and businesses free of charge by the LaGrange County CVB.	COMPLETED	LOCAL \$10,000
LAGRANGE COUNTY ARTS TRAIL	This project included the curation and identification of existing art murals, sculptures and other public art in a one piece, cohesive trail guide. The project was completed in spring of 2024 and funded by LaGrange County CVB.	COMPLETED 2024	LOCAL \$1,000
LAGRANGE COUNTY AGRICULTURE HERITAGE TRAIL	Project included positioning identified agritourism and Hoosier Homestead locations in LaGrange County onto a cohesive marketing/branding campaign. The project also plans to develop further additional stops and experiences along this trail for the future.	2025	LOCAL \$15,000
LAGRANGE COUNTY VISITORS CENTER	This project includes the creation of a new, state of the art, comprehensive Visitors Center. This key attraction to LaGrange County will tell the story of LaGrange County people, places, and history. It also is highlighted for providing increased economic impact and extending of stays.	2025-2026	PENDING

How Stellar Will Further LaGrange County's Goals

Connect LaGrange County is strategically positioning itself to address a range of challenges and capitalize on opportunities through the Stellar Pathways Designation. Our region faces several pressing issues, including a recent (since 2010) slowdown in population growth, limited housing options (affordable and otherwise), insufficient childcare capacity, and an aging population and workforce. These challenges are compounded by vacant downtown spaces, aging infrastructure, historic downtown buildings in need of restoration, and a general lack of amenities. This leads to a perception of limited recreational and cultural offerings and difficulty in attracting families and younger workforce and talent.

The Stellar Pathways Designation presents a unique chance for Connect LaGrange County to tackle these challenges head-on. By focusing on increasing the affordability and availability of housing units, implementing transformative quality of place projects, improving childcare, and developing projects focused on health and wellness, we aim to create a more inclusive and vibrant community that attracts and retains young skilled talent. This demographic shift is crucial to address the aging population and workforce dynamics prevalent in our region.

Furthermore, the designation opens avenues to enhance the overall quality of life for residents through the funding of additional and more

robust projects. This could potentially include aiding ongoing revitalization efforts in our downtown areas, addressing outstanding infrastructure needs, aiding with the restoration of historic buildings in need of facade and interior improvements, and ensuring ADA compliance in those buildings to make them more accessible and more business friendly. Also worth noting is our ongoing trails projects in the Connect LaGrange County region and the need for additional funding to move forward. These initiatives not only improve the aesthetics and functionality of our communities but also create a more welcoming environment for businesses, residents, and visitors alike.



One of the key benefits of the Stellar Pathways designation is the potential influx of funding, estimated at over \$7 million, which can be strategically utilized to address longstanding challenges and help complete shelved projects. Our region is actively working on implementation of a county-wide Comprehensive Plan completed in 2022, LaGrange County Together, which contains seventy-five action items or projects. A number of them are 'on the shelf' due to a lack of funding. Unlike the reactive spending common in rural areas, these funds enable proactive investment in critical infrastructure,

community development, and economic revitalization efforts. This initiative-taking approach empowers Connect LaGrange County to seize opportunities, leverage partnerships, and realize its vision for a thriving, resilient, and dynamic region.

In summary, the Stellar Pathways Designation represents a pivotal opportunity for Connect LaGrange County to build on our existing regional planning efforts, build our capacity, strengthen our local economy, and further engage with our community to implement projects that are transformative.

LAGRANGE COUNTY TOGETHER

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

OUR VOICE. OUR VISION. OUR FUTURE!

September 2022

CAPACITY OF CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY

Our Development Team - Leadership Capacity

Connect LaGrange County embodies a robust leadership capacity that stems from the diverse expertise and collaborative spirit of its members. Led by Emilee Buller and Sherri Johnston of LCEDC, our team has been purposefully built to represent a strategic blend of vision, operational acumen, and community engagement. It is our belief that the success of any team hinges on effective communication, collaborative effort, and a shared vision towards achieving common goals.

The inclusion and involvement of our civic leaders from the inception of our efforts has been a key piece of the puzzle for building a team that can champion the Connect LaGrange County Region. Since the program announcement in January, we have had conversations with our Town Managers, Town Councils and County Commissioners to keep them informed about our application and their participation in the process. The crucial players from each municipality have stepped up to effectively contribute to the development of the Strategic Investment Plan. The involvement of these essential players underscores our commitment to inclusive governance and comprehensive representation. This collective of community leaders ensures that our initiatives are rooted in a deep understanding of local needs, priorities, and opportunities.

Additionally, we have invited leadership from several of our community partners and stakeholders into the conversation, leveraging the strengths and resources of their organizations to ensure that we are creating a synergistic team that is driving sustainable development and community prosperity. Those partner and stakeholder organizations have also had consistent representation in our steering committee meetings, stakeholder engagement, and public engagement activities. Our track record speaks volumes about our team's ability to implement multi-project plans effectively

as it is with many of these same community partners that LaGrange County Together, our county's comprehensive plan, was successfully developed over the last few years and is now in the implementation phase.

Through strategic planning, clear communication channels, and a shared commitment to excellence, Connect LaGrange County stands ready to execute complex initiatives that benefit our residents, businesses, and overall quality of life.

In addition, Emilee Buller has been promoted to Vice President of Community Development and Engagement at LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC), a role that will see her spearheading the implementation of both the County's Comprehensive Plan and the Stellar Pathways initiative for LaGrange County. This position, funded collaboratively by LaGrange County and the LaGrange County EDC, ensures dedicated leadership to guide these vital efforts, promoting the success and sustainability of our community development initiatives. In her new role, Buller will be responsible for maintaining regular communication with participating entities, the leadership team, and the steering group, fostering collaboration and ensuring that all stakeholders are aligned in their efforts to enhance the quality of life and economic vitality within the county.



FOCUS AREAS AND ACTION ITEMS FY 2024-2025

BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION

Working to understand the needs of existing businesses and fostering an entrepreneurial spirit within LaGrange County

- One hundred local business visits annually to gather insights into challenges, opportunities, and growth potential
- Facilitation of networking events around the county
- Promote local business development
- Support infrastructure development
- Celebrate local success stories
- Create and Cultivate a business friendly environment

BUILDING UPON ASSETS

Strategically building upon existing assets, to create a unique identity, attract investment, and stimulate economic development - all while fostering a sense of pride and ownership in LaGrange County

- Promote natural resources and tourism as a source of economic development
- Identify and nurture local talent by investing in education to assist in the development of a skilled and viable workforce
- Support local farmers and agribusiness
- Community engagement and empowerment

BUSINESS ATTRACTION

While most of the county's opportunities are likely to come from BR&E efforts, attracting new businesses increases the tax base and creates new job opportunities to reinforce population retention and attraction.

- Pursuing new businesses that match LaGrange County's values and assets will contribute to both new opportunity and future prosperity
- Establishment of shovel ready site(s)
- Targeted industry recruitment
- Infrastructure Investment

QUALITY OF LIFE & PLACE

Attracting and retaining a skilled and ready workforce is a critical factor in the success of any business, and it is closely tied to the overall quality of life and appeal of a local community

- Promote cultural and recreational amenities
- Encourage development of housing projects that meet the needs of our diverse workforce
- Collaborate with local healthcare providers to ensure accessibility
- Promote a diverse and inclusive community
- Support Childcare and early learning initiatives in the County
- Pursue Stellar Pathways designation with OCRA
- Actively serve on LaGrange County Together leadership Committee

ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

The long-term funding needs of LCEDC will be carefully monitored and assessed. The priorities established by the LCEDC Board of Directors are all important to the long-term success and prosperity of LaGrange County and the businesses that call LaGrange County Home.

Our Development Team - Partnerships & Steering Committee Capacity

Our 26-person steering and development team is uniquely positioned to implement a multi-project plan with great success. This diverse group brings together representatives from various key sectors across LaGrange County, including municipalities, local non-profits, healthcare and mental health facilities, educational leaders such as all three county school superintendents, local businesses, unincorporated communities, and members of the Amish community. This broad spectrum of expertise and perspectives ensures that the team touches every cross-section of our region, enabling us to develop and implement projects that truly reflect the needs and aspirations of the entire county. By intentionally including such a dynamic group, we've created a steering network that not only drives engagement but also builds lasting collaboration across sectors.

The members of this steering team are deeply rooted in the community and have a proven track record of executing plans across multiple facets of local life. They are involved in everything from local governance and education to business development and healthcare, meaning they bring both professional experience and personal investment to the projects at hand. One shining example of this network's ability to lead complex processes is the Envision process, which transitioned into our Comprehensive Plan initiative. This community-driven plan is now well into its implementation phase, with several key milestones already achieved.

Another noteworthy accomplishment of the community was the creation of a new Unified Development Ordinance for LaGrange County, a major project that involved over 25 community engagement meetings. This level of engagement showcases the steering team's commitment to transparency, inclusivity, and thoroughness in executing large-scale initiatives. Their ability to build consensus and drive tangible outcomes, combined with their connection to every facet of life in LaGrange County, makes this group exceptionally equipped to lead the multi-project plans of Connect LaGrange County's Stellar Pathways and beyond.



Our Team’s Experience – Multi-Project Plans and State/Federal Funded Projects

Over the last five years, LaGrange County has been actively working to adopt and implement a variety of multi-year and multi-faceted planning documents aimed at making improvements across the county. This includes general community planning efforts, planning efforts related to promoting community wellness, planning efforts related to promoting quality of place, and planning efforts related to strengthening local economies. These planning documents also outlined desired outcomes, programs, and projects. The following section provides some of Connect LaGrange County’s experience when implementing multi-year plans as well as implemented projects and programs that were state or federally funded.

LaGrange County Together: LaGrange County Together is a community-driven initiative for a comprehensive plan for the County, the towns of LaGrange, Shipshewana, Topeka, and Wolcottville, and all unincorporated areas - it was adopted in September 2022 after extensive community engagement efforts were implemented for its development. In January 2024, Darci Stanner Gaff was hired as the Director to ensure the projects outlined by this plan are being executed, and in September of 2024 the role was taken over by Stellar Regional Project Manager, Emilee Buller.

LaGrange County Unified Development Ordinance: Stemming from LaGrange County Together, the County has funded a consultant to assist our County Zoning Admin with the development of an updated Unified Development Ordinance for the first time in 20+ years. These efforts have been heavily community led with a series of public meetings held every couple of months to review new drafts each time they are released with the latest draft and set of meetings having occurred in March 2024. This UDO will address several issues with our current zoning ordinance and be more approachable for community members to read and access.

2023-2025 LaGrange County CVB Strategic Plan: 3 year strategic plan, countywide, led by Geist & Associates, establishing a countywide vision/mission statements, identified key goals for the CVB in 2023-2025 to include 1) work to enhance the visitor experience (placemaking), 2) advocate for destination enhancing development 3) build a year-round economy by developing the winter season and 4) enhance organizational excellence & collaboration.

2022-2025 Community Health Needs Assessment: This report provides an overview of the approach taken to identify and prioritize significant health needs in LaGrange County - identified Obesity, Child Abuse and Mental Health (includes substance use and abuse, and suicide) with corresponding programming to address these community concerns.

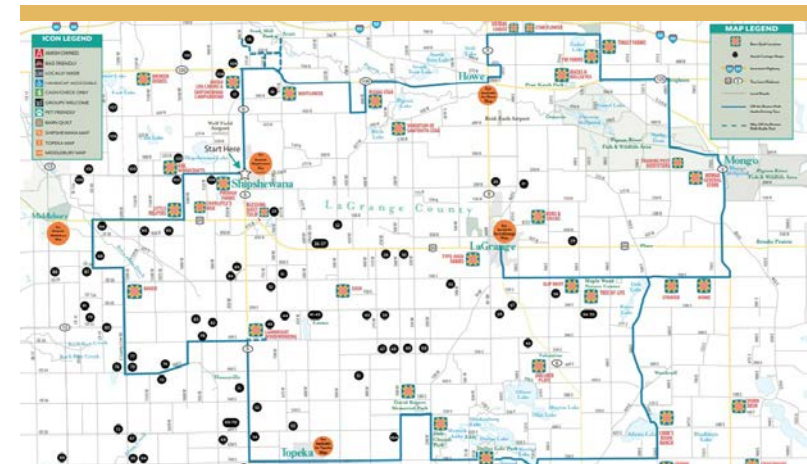
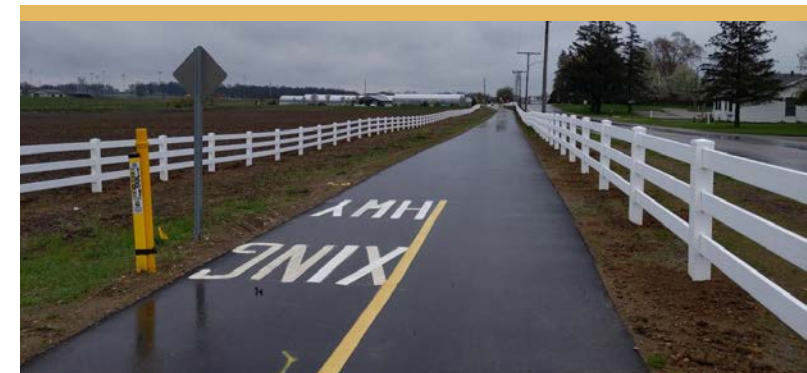
2022-2023 LaGrange Housing Strategy: LaGrange County funded a housing study (\$60K) in 2022/2023 to assess housing needs in LaGrange County.

Pumpkinvine Trail Expansion: Completed in May 2022, the Pumpkinvine trail connects Goshen to Shipshewana with a total of miles of trail for outdoor recreation and exercise. The 0.97-mile asphalt multi-use trail was constructed by the town with help from a \$953,482 Next Level Trails grant.

2024 Community Crossing Matching Grant & Topeka Road Improvements: Launched in 2016 in partnership with INDOT, the Community Crossings Matching Grant Program provides funding to cities, towns, and counties across Indiana to make improvements to local roads and bridges. Topeka and LaGrange County received the maximum \$1.5 million from the grant and implemented multiple road improvement projects across Topeka and LaGrange County. Topeka also received the grant in 2017.

2024 LaGrange County Off The Beaten Path Audio Driving Tour: A combination of state and local funding made this unique experience possible. This self-guided, driving audio tour takes visitors through 100+ miles of scenic and signed driving routes, telling the stories of 6 towns in LaGrange County. The tour goes past over 120 Amish cottage shops and features 80 Barn Quilts on the route.

Shipshewana State Rd 5 Project: A state funded project through INDOT, this project kicked off in 2023 and sought to extend sidewalks along State Road 5 in Shipshewana from downtown all the way to US 20 with the addition of two crossovers for foot traffic. Proposed improvements also include adding a shared center left turn lane, new storm sewer and inlets, and concrete curb/gutter.



Connect LaGrange County – Financial Capacity: Incentives and Tools

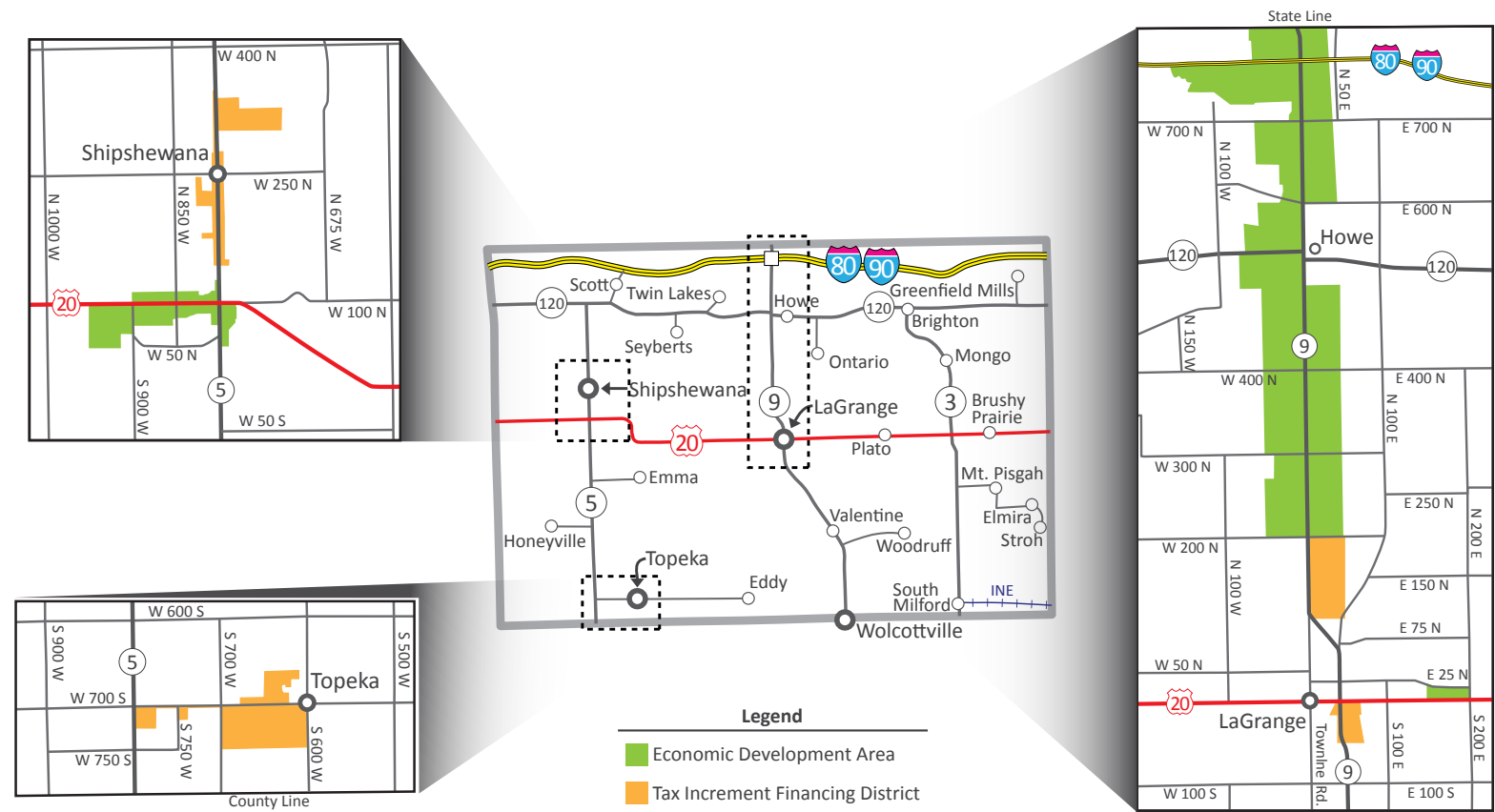
The LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation, in partnership with the State of Indiana, employs a range of financial incentives and economic development tools to spur growth, attract businesses, and support entrepreneurial ventures.

One of the key incentives utilized is Property Tax Abatement/Property Tax Phase-In, which provides temporary relief from real and personal property taxes for new industrial constructions or expansions, including the reuse of vacant industrial buildings. This incentive encourages investment in industrial facilities, contributing to economic growth and job creation. LaGrange County Council’s designation of unincorporated areas as Economic Revitalization Areas expedites tax abatement approvals, streamlining the process for users.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts are vital in funding infrastructure and development enhancements in the Connect LaGrange County Region. Managed by Redevelopment Commissions across LaGrange County, TIF districts capture taxes generated by investments within specific areas, directing these funds towards targeted improvements. These districts are strategically implemented in unincorporated and incorporated communities, contributing to the economic vitality of the region. The Town of LaGrange has a TIF funded Downtown Façade Program, however it has been placed on hold indefinitely due to a re-allocation of funds to cover crucial road and wastewater projects. Additionally, the LaGrange County Revolving Loan Fund, established in 2012, offers financial assistance to companies relocating or expanding in the county, and to new entrepreneurial ventures. This fund complements traditional financing options by providing loans of up to

\$200,000 or 10% of the available fund balance, whichever is lower. This fund is held by LaGrange County and administered by LCEDC.

These financial incentives and economic development tools demonstrate the commitment of our region to fostering a conducive business environment, attracting investments, and driving sustainable economic development. Through strategic utilization of these incentives, our region aims to catalyze growth, create employment opportunities, and enhance economic resilience in the region.



The maps on this page are for illustrative purposes only, to determine if a property is in an EDA or a TIF district contact the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation.



Connect LaGrange County – Match Capacity

The LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC) has undertaken comprehensive efforts to ensure that each community within the region is well-prepared to meet the matching fund and implementation requirements associated with the Stellar Pathway Designee program and partner agency initiatives. Through individual meetings with town managers, presentations at town council meetings, and engagements with the president of LaGrange County Commissioners, Connect LaGrange County has diligently communicated the importance of securing matching funds and leveraging existing resources effectively. Resolutions for matching funds commitments have been received from LaGrange County and each of the Communities involved in Connect LaGrange County.

The region’s ability to satisfy match requirements is bolstered by the availability of diverse funding sources such as Major Moves monies, Economic Development Income Tax (EDIT) funds, Commissioners’ fund allocations, Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds, unrestricted funds from the LaGrange County Community Foundation, private contributions, and the pursuit of any additional qualifying grants. This diverse funding portfolio provides flexibility and enables the region to strategically allocate resources based on project priorities and

funding availability. These funding sources are described on the following pages.

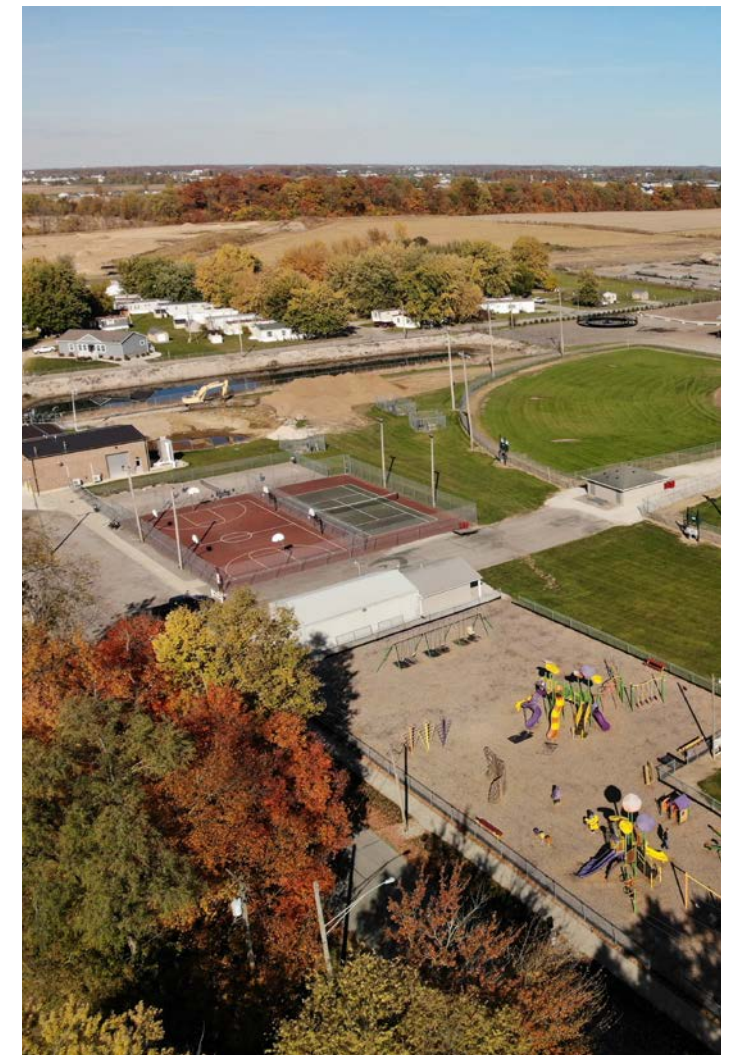
Our team also has experienced leadership in LaGrange County and its communities that understand what it takes to implement and sustain capital projects. Our proposed projects have been reviewed by applicable county and town leadership and personnel, partner organizations, community leaders, and other stakeholders to ensure feasibility and sustainability.



The Connect LaGrange team has a track record of successfully securing grant funding, meeting match requirements, leveraging existing funds effectively, and implementing grant-funded projects and programs within the budget and schedule. The region’s familiarity with grant receipt processes and the importance of match requirements ensures a collaborative and practical approach to advancing initiatives and driving economic development within the region. Examples of grants received and managed by our region and its partners include two \$250,000 CARES Act funded OCRA grants to retain LMI jobs in the county post-COVID; over \$3 Million in READI 1.0 dollars for a housing project in Topeka; workplace preparedness grants funded by The Don Wood Foundation, held by the LaGrange County Community Foundation, and administered by LCEDC; and several successful allocations from the Lilly Endowment. Additionally, LaGrange County

has applied for and successfully received and managed several state and federally funded grants for our roads and highways, and county parks.

In summary, the region is well-positioned to implement the proposed projects for the Stellar Pathways program. Our team’s proactive communication, comprehensive engagement efforts, diverse funding sources, and track record of success demonstrate a strong commitment to leveraging resources and advancing strategic initiatives that benefit the county and its communities.



Connect LaGrange County – Additional Leverage & Resources for Match

To maximize project development and implementation within the Connect LaGrange County region, a strategic approach will be utilized to leverage all additional resources efficiently and effectively. With a comprehensive understanding of funding streams, we feel we can capitalize on various sources to advance our Strategic Investment Plan. Below we have included a list of additional resources that we plan to utilize:

1. READI 2.0 and the Lilly Endowment Grant: The region’s receipt of \$45 million from READI 2.0 and \$250 million from Lilly Endowment Inc. presents a significant opportunity for quality of place investments. These funds will be strategically allocated to support rehabilitation of properties, bolster arts and culture initiatives, and enhance community vibrancy. Collaborating with the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) and leveraging READI’s resources will enable the region to maximize the impact of these grants.

2. The Northeast Indiana Strategic Development Commission (NISDC) Grant: With \$30 million available for Northeast Indiana, the NISDC grant will be instrumental in driving growth across key areas such as population, per capita income, and degree attainment. By aligning project proposals with the goals outlined by the NISDC, the region can access funding to support initiatives that foster sustainable economic development and workforce advancement.

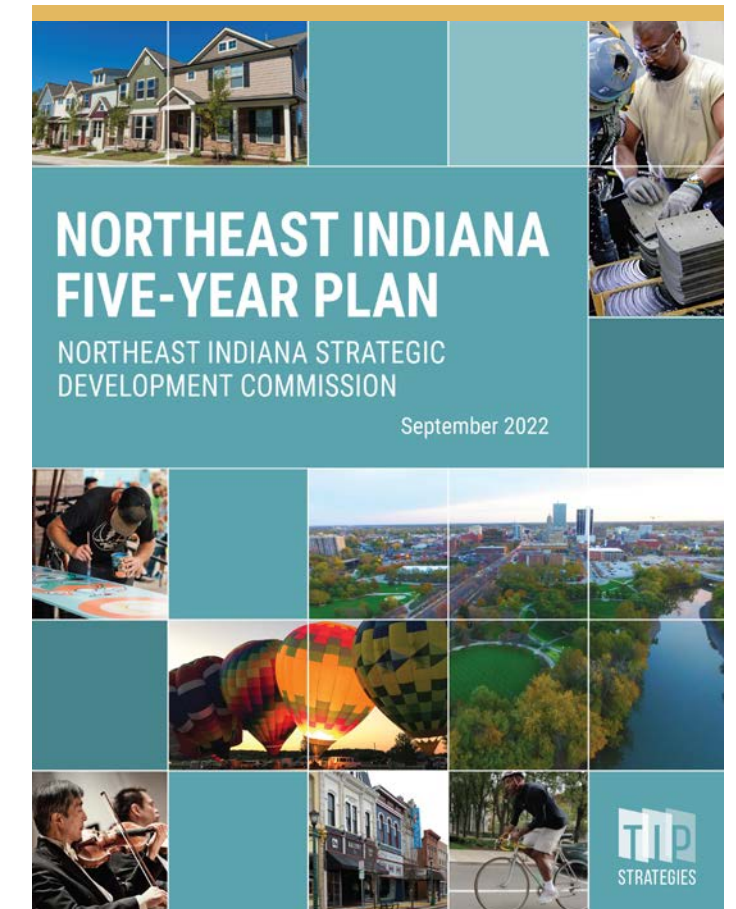


3. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and Major Moves Fund: The Major Moves Fund, initially seeded with \$2.6 billion from the lease of the Indiana Toll Road, continues to be a valuable resource for infrastructure and economic development projects. LaGrange County’s share of \$37,398,366.16, coupled with the current available balance of \$13,826,891.22, provides a significant pool of funds for future projects. By leveraging EDA grants and Major Moves funding, the region can invest in infrastructure improvements and catalyze economic growth.

4. Revolving Loan Fund: The LaGrange County Revolving Loan Fund offers financial assistance to businesses and entrepreneurial ventures in LaGrange County. Despite its underutilization, the fund’s available balance of \$1,473,671.61 presents an opportunity to stimulate economic activity by providing low-interest loans for expansion and relocation projects. By promoting awareness of the fund and streamlining application processes, the region can encourage greater utilization and maximize impact. This fund is held by LaGrange County and administered by LaGrange County EDC.

5. LaGrange County Community Foundation (LCCF) Funding: The LCCF’s Community Impact Grants, ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000, support nonprofit organizations across various sectors including arts and culture, community development, health, education, and more. Leveraging these grants will enable the region to fund innovative projects that address community needs and enhance quality of life. Building strong partnerships with the LCCF leadership and board will facilitate access to funding and foster collaboration on impactful initiatives.

In summary, by strategically leveraging READI 2.0, Lilly Endowment grants, NISDC funding, Major Moves resources, the Revolving Loan Fund, and LCCF grants, the Connect LaGrange County region can accelerate project development and implementation, drive economic growth, and enhance community well-being. Through collaborative partnerships and prudent fiscal management, the region will unlock the full potential of these resources to realize its strategic vision for sustainable development and prosperity.



GRANT ADMINISTRATOR’S CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT MULTI-PROJECT PLANS & STATE/FEDERAL FUNDED PROJECT EXPERIENCE

Kleinpeter Consulting Group (KCG), founded by Mike Kleinpeter in 2015, is a highly experienced firm specializing in administering state and federal grants. With a dedicated team of 14 professionals, including seven certified Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) Grant Administrators, KCG offers deep expertise, particularly in managing Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). The team has a combined 100+ years of experience, having written and secured funding for over 140 OCRA CDBG grants, and successfully closed out 103 of them, underscoring their competence with OCRA CDBG requirements.

Over the past year, KCG has completed significant infrastructure projects across Indiana, including the City of Hartford City Water Project (October 2024), the Gas City Wastewater Project (August 2023), the Wheatland Water Project (November 2023), and the Cambridge City Water Project (October 2023). These projects reflect KCG’s proven ability to administer complex projects efficiently and effectively.

Currently, KCG manages 28 active OCRA construction projects and 11 active planning grants. The firm also served as the Health and Heritage Stellar grant administrator, where they successfully implemented multiple Stellar projects in Fortville and Greenfield. All of these projects were completed on time, without any findings, and with full compliance.

Kleinpeter Quick Facts:

- Kleinpeter Consulting Group (KCG) provides comprehensive grant administration services with a focus on state and federal funding programs.
- KCG has completed significant infrastructure projects across Indiana, including water and wastewater projects in Hartford City, Gas City, Wheatland, and Cambridge City.
- The team has over 100 years of combined experience in administering Community Development Block Grants (CDBG).
- KCG has successfully closed out 103 OCRA CDBG grants and is currently managing 28 construction projects and 11 planning grants.
- KCG has extensive experience in Stellar project management and is involved in compliance work, such as Davis-Bacon Wage compliance.

Though KCG has not previously worked with LaGrange County on OCRA CDBG grants, they recently secured a Federal FEMA 2023 Assistance to Firefighters Grant for \$120,543.80. KCG is also overseeing Davis-Bacon Wage compliance for the Town of LaGrange’s \$7.2 million water project, funded by the State Revolving Loan fund. This experience further positions KCG as a valuable partner for compliance and grant administration, particularly in large-scale projects like Stellar Pathways.

Recently Completed Projects for KCG Within the Last Year Include the Following:

- City of Hartford City Water - Oct 2024
- City of Gas City - Wastewater Project - Aug 2023
- Town of Wheatland Water Project - Nov 2023
- Town of Cambridge City Water Project - Oct 2023
- Depot Street Park, Greenfield, IN - June 2022





CHAPTER 3

DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY PROJECTS

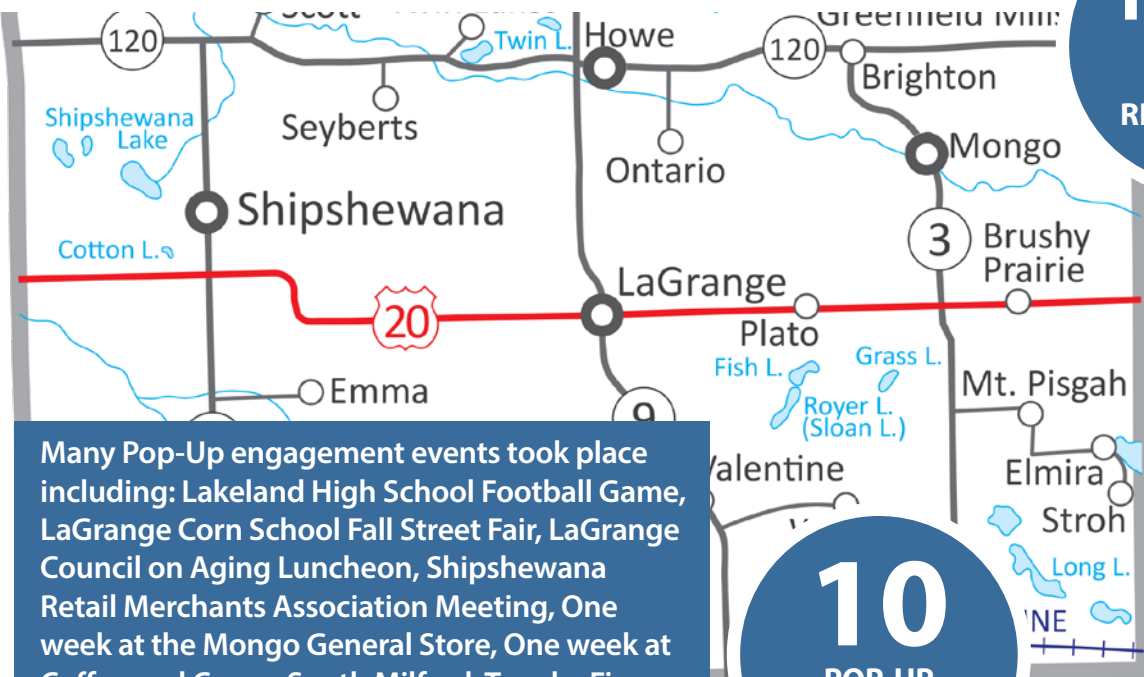
- Connect LaGrange County Community Engagement Strategy
- Project & Program Identification

3

A successful public engagement process should achieve several key goals: gather valuable input on the unique challenges and opportunities each community is facing, build strong support for the initiatives laid out in the Strategic Investment Plan, and enhance understanding of the Stellar Pathways program. While Connect LaGrange County and other stakeholder groups are leading the master planning efforts, meaningful public participation is essential to identify specific action items that truly reflect community needs. To ensure broad involvement, we utilized a variety of outreach methods to engage residents from every corner of LaGrange County and maximize the impact of this planning process.

The feedback gathered through public engagement then became the cornerstone of our planning efforts. It has been and will continue to be the driving force behind setting new goals, sparking ideas, and shaping the development of projects. With public support and a clear understanding of each community's needs, we have been able to identify action items that not only benefit the community but also meet its underlying demands. The projects and programs developed in this section are a direct reflection of the input we've received, making this process a critical component of LaGrange County's Strategic Investment Plan.

CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY



1,060
TOTAL SURVEY RESPONSES

17
TOTAL COMMUNITY EVENTS

Many Pop-Up engagement events took place including: Lakeland High School Football Game, LaGrange Corn School Fall Street Fair, LaGrange Council on Aging Luncheon, Shipshewana Retail Merchants Association Meeting, One week at the Mongo General Store, One week at Coffee and Cream South Milford, Topeka Fire Department Fish Fry (over 3,000 served), Amish Pop-Up at Founders Forum Meeting, Pop-Up Information at 4H Fair, Pop-Up Boards at Major Soccer Tournament in Shipshewana (over 1,000 people in attendance)

10
POP-UP ENGAGEMENT EVENTS



5
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT MEETINGS



5
COMMUNITY CONNECTION OPEN HOUSES



LaGrange, Topeka, Shipshewana, Howe, & South Milford



10+
PUBLICATIONS & SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Connect LaGrange County Community Engagement Strategy

The Connect LaGrange County team have pulled out all the stops in their public engagement efforts as part of this Strategic Investment Plan. Securing Stellar Pathways funding will be pivotal for improving the quality of life across LaGrange County, which is why we've made a strong push to connect with residents, gather feedback, and engage the community in shaping these goals, ideas, and projects. We've used various strategies to ensure everyone has a chance to weigh in, from public input surveys and stakeholder meetings to open houses in five different communities, pop-up events, and a broad range of media publications, all aimed at keeping the community informed and involved in the process, we worked to ensure that our engagement touched every corner of the county.

Community Connect Survey: The Connect LaGrange County Community Connection Survey was a key tool in gathering valuable feedback from residents across the county. This 13-question survey was made easily accessible to the public through social media, a QR code, and printed copies distributed throughout the community. With 1,060 total responses, the survey was a resounding success, providing both online and offline options to ensure all residents, including those in Amish communities without internet access, had the chance to participate. Printed copies were available at every public engagement event and town halls to reach as many people as possible, and a copy was shared via an Amish fax service to over 500 households.

The feedback from this survey provided clear, quantitative evidence of the challenges LaGrange County is facing, aligning closely with the goals of the Strategic Investment Plan. Among the most pressing concerns in the county were the need for "Quality Housing" and addressing the "Condition of Infrastructure," both of which emerged as top responses. When asked about specific housing projects, respondents showed a strong preference for new single-family homes and the redevelopment of existing neighborhoods. In terms of infrastructure, street beautification and sidewalk improvements were identified as the highest priorities.

Survey participants also expressed a desire for improvements in downtown areas, with popular responses focused on historic preservation of downtown buildings, downtown facade improvements, and attracting more small businesses. Sidewalk and streetscape enhancements also ranked high on the list.

Parks and recreation were another area of focus. Respondents indicated strong interest in expanding multi-use trails, improving parks, and creating public spaces for community events. Access to fitness facilities was also highlighted as a priority.

Finally, the survey revealed a need for more community programs, with respondents emphasizing the importance of additional community events, childcare initiatives, career development programs, and more physical fitness facilities.

These survey results played a crucial role in shaping the priorities of the Strategic Investment Plan and are further detailed in the appendices.

PUBLIC SURVEY PRIORITIES



Quality Housing, Types of Housing, & New Housing Development



Downtown Area Improvements: History, Business, & Aesthetics



Parks & Recreation Improvements, Multi-Use Trails, & Public Event Space



Community Events, Fitness Facility, & Career Development Programs



Connect LaGrange County Community Engagement Strategy

Stakeholder Engagement Meetings: Connect LaGrange County held a Stakeholder Engagement Meeting as a key part of our public engagement efforts for the Strategic Investment Plan. Around 30 people attended, including community leaders, non-profit leaders, business owners, school superintendents and engaged residents. The meeting focused on gathering input on the four major goals of our plan: Housing, Talent Attraction, Health & Wellness, and Community Amenities.

Attendees were asked to share their thoughts on these goals, using sticky notes to add comments and suggestions. Their feedback was invaluable, and we've organized it by goal area below. A full list of comments can be found in the appendix.

- **Housing:** The feedback here made it clear that LaGrange County needs more affordable housing options, particularly multi-family units, mixed-income housing, and temporary housing solutions. There was also an emphasis on repurposing existing homes to create multiple-unit housing. A specific call was made for affordable homes in the \$250,000 to \$500,000 range, particularly for younger people looking to settle in the county.
- **Talent Attraction:** Stakeholders highlighted the need to attract skilled individuals by improving our community amenities and expanding career and mentor programs in high schools. Suggestions included creating more professional networking opportunities, adding childcare facilities, developing a community center, and enhancing parks. There was also a strong focus on job development, college scholarships, and job shadowing programs.

- **Health & Wellness:** Input for this goal stressed the importance of building a volunteer base and expanding community partnerships. Suggestions ranged from healthier food options in schools and food basket programs to developing fitness facilities and youth support services. Mental health was a key focus, with many calling for more mental health programs, businesses, and awareness initiatives around child abuse and human trafficking.
- **Community Amenities:** This section received a wide variety of feedback, but some clear themes emerged. Residents expressed a strong desire for a community center or fitness center, pickleball courts, and local multi-use trails, along with a county-wide trail system. Other popular suggestions included a sports complex or improvements to sports fields, more youth activity spaces, and amenities like dog parks, a movie theater, and public event spaces.

These Stakeholder Engagement Meetings were crucial in helping us better understand the needs and priorities of LaGrange County's residents. The ideas shared have shaped the development of projects and programs within the Strategic Investment Plan, and we're excited to see these visions come to life.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PRIORITIES

-  Affordable/Mixed Income Housing for Younger People & Housing Diversity

-  Talent Attraction; Mentor Programs, Job Development, & Education

-  Improving Health by Local/Healthy Food Options, Youth Recreation, & Adult Fitness

-  Community Amenities; Community Center, Parks & Recreation Options

Connect LaGrange County Community Engagement Strategy

Pop-Up Engagement Events: Connect LaGrange County hosted ten pop-up engagement events to create opportunities for residents to provide feedback in familiar, convenient settings such as local events and busy locations. By reaching out where LaGrange County residents naturally gather, we aimed to maximize participation without imposing on their time or convenience—two common barriers in public engagement.

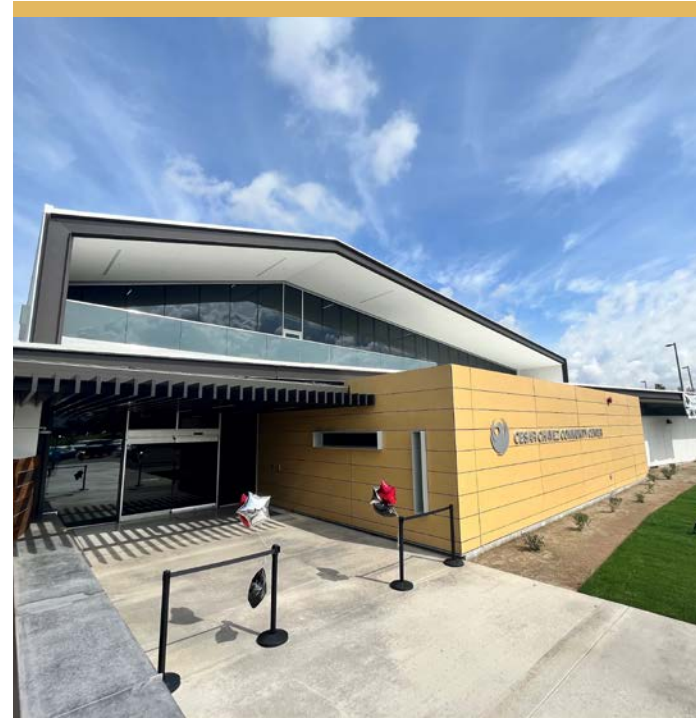
At each event, our team set up boards showcasing a variety of proposed amenities for the communities, inviting residents to vote for their favorites using dot stickers. The amenities were carefully selected based on insights gathered from stakeholder engagement meetings, the public survey, and previous planning efforts. We also provided paper copies of the Community Connections Survey and QR codes for easy access to the survey if they hadn't already participated.

These pop-up engagements took place at a range of events, including a Lakeland High School Football Game, the LaGrange Corn School Fall Street Fair, the LaGrange Council on Aging Luncheon, the Shpshewana Retail Merchants Association Meeting, a week at the Mongo General Store, a week at Coffee and Cream in South Milford, a monthly Founders Forum meeting for Amish entrepreneurs, a week at the County 4-H Fair, a soccer tournament attended by over 1,000 people, and the Topeka Fire Department's Fish Fry, which served over 3,000 (predominantly Amish guests).

The following pages highlight some images of the most popular amenities based on the votes collected. While feedback varied slightly across different communities, the provided images summarize the overall preferences for specific amenities and community features that resonate with LaGrange County residents.

POP-UP ENGAGEMENT FAVORITE AMENITIES

Town of LaGrange - Community Center



Town of LaGrange - Multi-Use Trails



Town of LaGrange - Facade Improvements



Town of LaGrange - Alley Activation



Town of LaGrange - Parks & Playgrounds



POP-UP ENGAGEMENT FAVORITE AMENITIES

Town of Shipshewana - Public Event Space



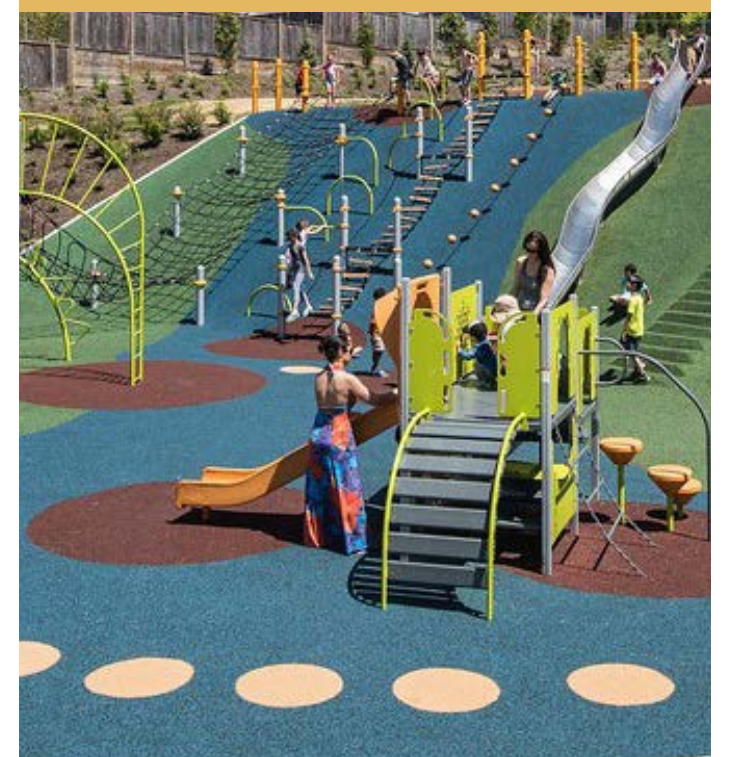
Town of Shipshewana - Pickleball Courts



Town of Topeka - Pickleball Courts



Town of Topeka - Parks & Playgrounds



Town of Shipshewana - Splash Pad



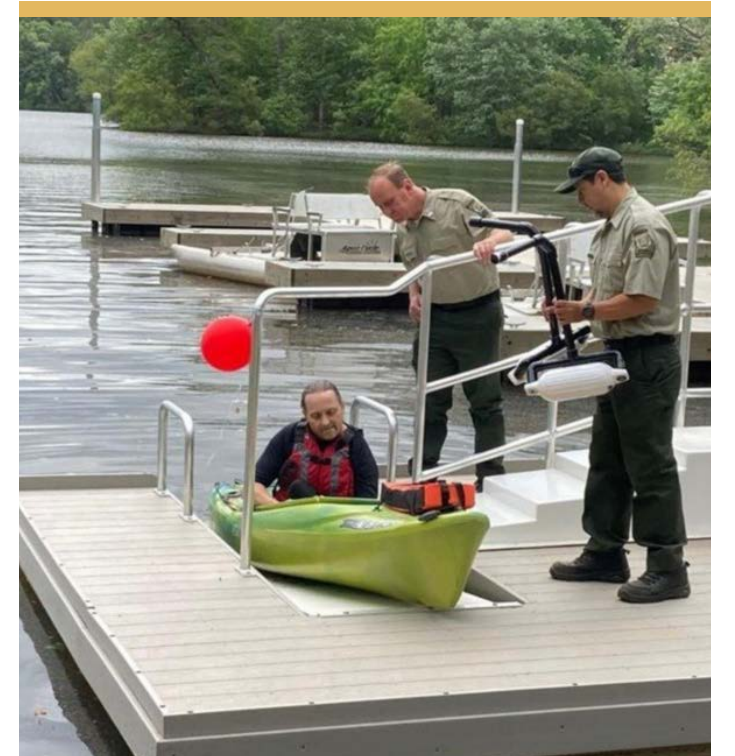
Town of Topeka - Multi-Use Trails



Other Unincorporated Towns - Trails & Sidewalks



Other Unincorporated Towns - Natural Resource Access



Connect LaGrange County Community Engagement Strategy

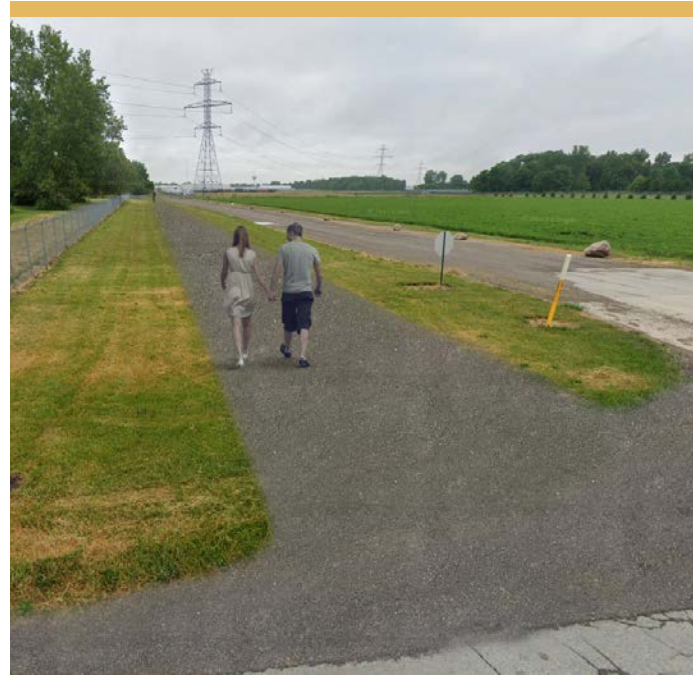
Community Connection Open Houses: Connect LaGrange County hosted five public open houses as part of the public engagement process for the Strategic Investment Plan, taking place in the towns of LaGrange, Topeka, Shipshewana, Howe, and South Milford. Each event featured boards displaying proposed projects, programs, and amenities for the communities, allowing residents to vote on their favorite ideas or those they believed would most benefit their community. These meetings also provided an informal space where residents could meet with members of our leadership team who were present to ask questions about the Stellar Pathways Program and learn more about our pursuit for designation. Many of the proposed park projects and amenities were developed based on feedback gathered during these engagements.

One challenge we faced was making these open houses accessible to residents spread throughout the county. Recognizing that most people wouldn't travel far to attend, we strategically chose locations within or near communities actively participating in the Strategic Investment Plan. Over a two-week period, we held open houses in LaGrange, Shipshewana, Topeka, Howe (serving both Howe and Mongo), and South Milford.

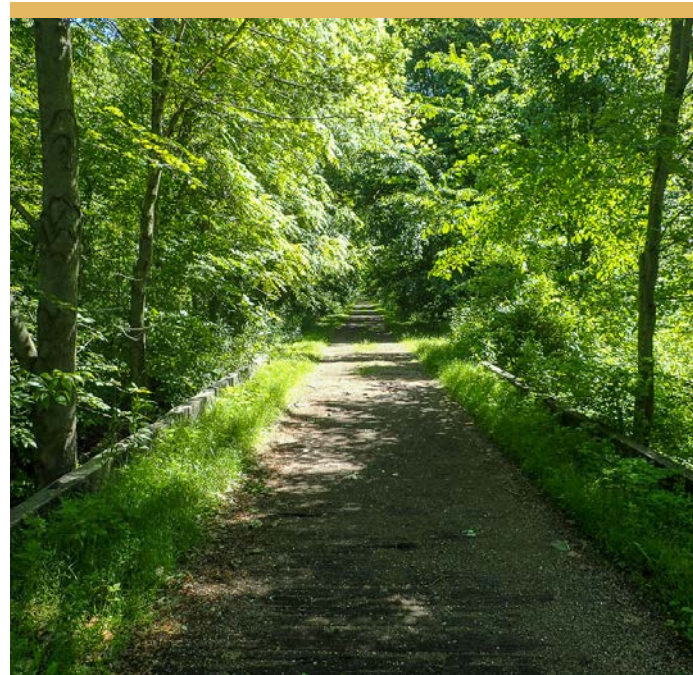
The following pages showcase images of the most popular amenities from each community, along with the favored programs for LaGrange County. While feedback varied slightly across the communities, the images provided summarize the total votes for specific amenities and community features that resonate with LaGrange County residents.

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES FAVORITE AMENITIES

Town of Topeka - Hawpatch Trail



Town of Topeka - Hawpatch Trail Connection



Town of Topeka - Gathering Space Pavilion



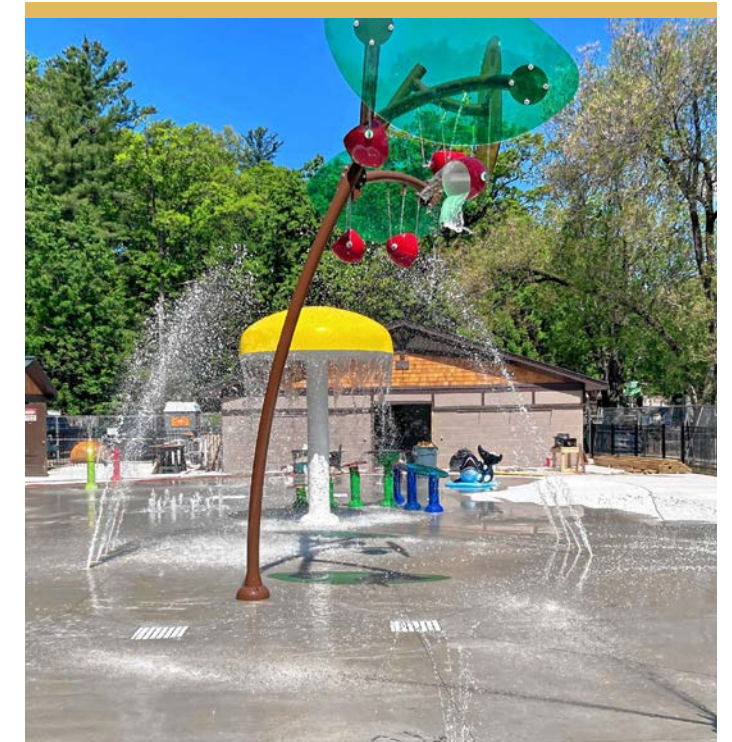
Town of Topeka - Park Amenity Pickleball



Town of Topeka - Gathering Space Food Trucks



Town of Topeka - Park Amenity Splash Pad



PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES FAVORITE AMENITIES

Town of LaGrange - Park Amenity Playground



Town of LaGrange - Park Amenity Walking Trail



Town of LaGrange - Community Center Feature Fitness Center



Town of LaGrange - Community Center Feature Childcare/Kids Zone



Town of LaGrange - Streetscape Beautification



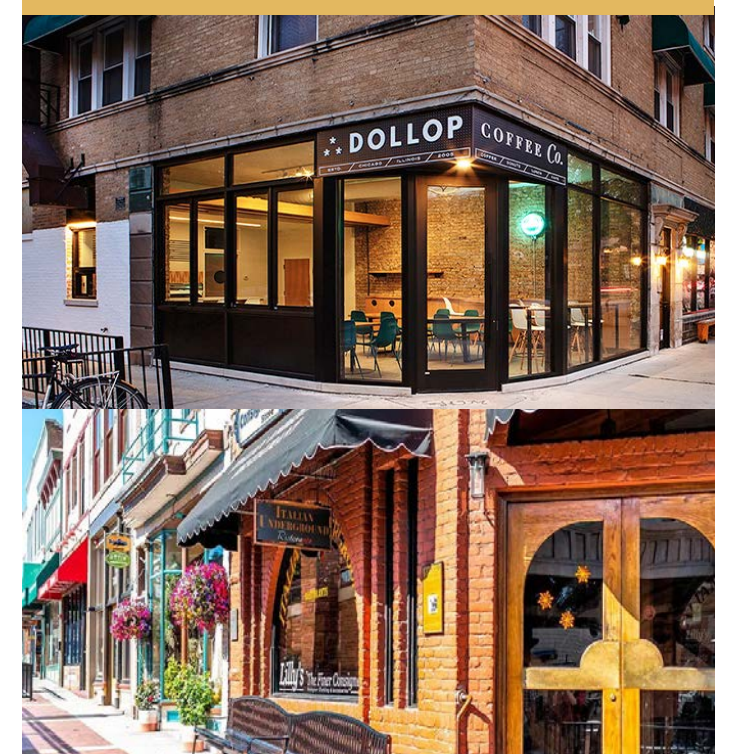
Town of LaGrange - Townhome Style Housing



Town of LaGrange - Downtown Facade Improvements For Brick & Painting



Town of LaGrange - Downtown Facade Improvements For Entrances & Canopies



PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES FAVORITE AMENITIES

Town of Shipshewana - Park Amenity Amphitheater



Town of Shipshewana - Park Amenity Splash Pad



South Milford - Ballfield Improvements With Added Parking



South Milford - Park Amenity Permanent Cornhole Boards & Updated Playground



Town of Shipshewana - Park Amenity Pickleball



Town of Shipshewana - Park Amenity Walking Trail



Mongo - Park Amenity Updated Playground & Pavilion

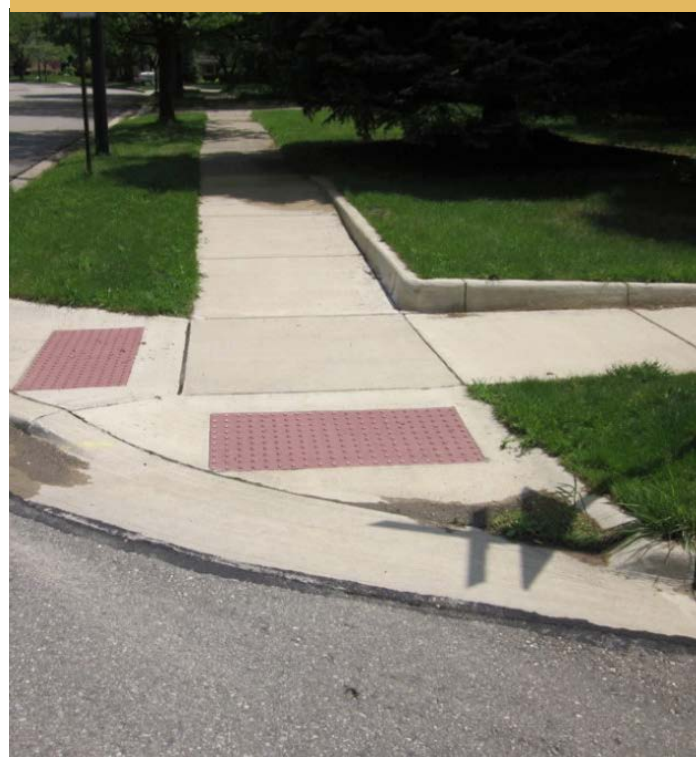


Mongo - Park Amenity Community Garden & Walking Trail



PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES FAVORITE AMENITIES

Howe - Sidewalk Improvements



LaGrange County Programs - Youth Physical Activity Funding



Howe - Park Amenity Updated Playground



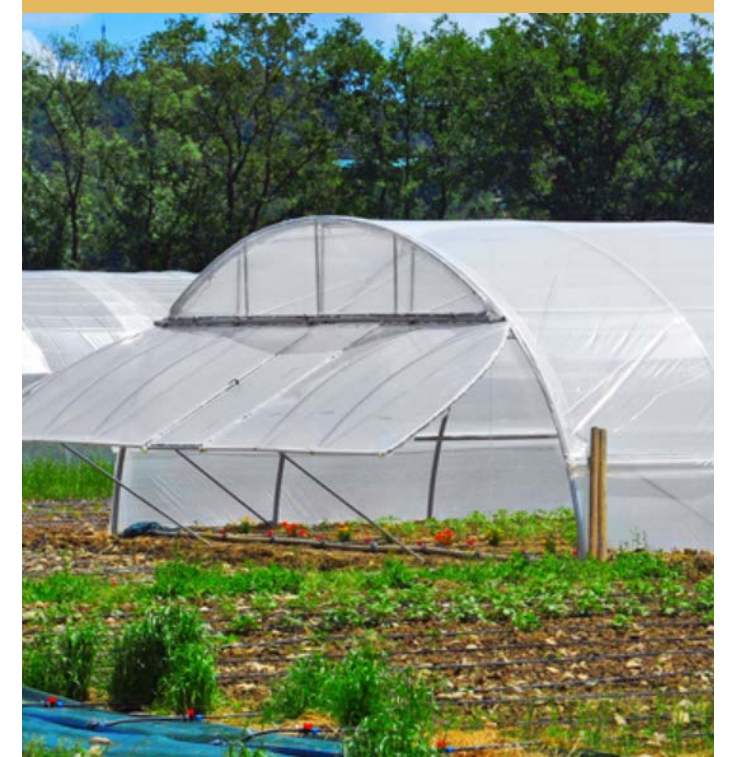
LaGrange County Programs - Northeastern Center & Mental Health Services



LaGrange County Programs - Transition Kitchen Program Cooking Classes



LaGrange County Programs - Greenhouses for Growing Season Extension



LaGrange County Programs - Locally Grown Produce to Local Food Banks



Challenges to Engagement

Connect LaGrange County faced significant challenges in community engagement, primarily due to the unique demographics of the county. Approximately half of LaGrange County's population is Amish, a community that typically lacks internet access and is often disconnected from social media. This presented a substantial hurdle as many Amish residents do not utilize grant dollars directly due to their religious beliefs. Recognizing the importance of including this population in our engagement efforts, our team implemented strategies to reach them effectively. We distributed printed copies of the Community Connection Survey and utilized a fax network that reaches over 500 Amish households. Additionally, we made it a point to be present at local events where Amish community members would already be attending, such as the Founders Forum, the Topeka Fire Department Fish Fry, and a local soccer tournament. By meeting them where they were, we could share information about the Stellar Pathways program and the potential benefits of these grants for community amenities they could also utilize.

Another challenge we encountered was ensuring that we engaged populations that are less active on social media, particularly given that our survey had gained significant traction on Facebook. To address this, Emilee took the initiative to present at a LaGrange Council on Aging Luncheon, bringing along paper surveys and engagement boards to encourage participation from elderly community members. This approach

allowed us to gather valuable insights from a demographic that may not have participated otherwise. Emilee also made a direct request to the three local school superintendents, asking them to distribute the survey to their students. This effort effectively reached younger community members, driving engagement with those under 20 years old.

Overall, these tailored strategies helped us to successfully navigate the obstacles we faced in community engagement, ensuring that we included diverse voices in the development of our Strategic Investment Plan. By building relationships with trusted community leaders and adapting our outreach methods, we were able to foster greater participation and gather comprehensive feedback that truly reflects the needs and desires of LaGrange County residents.



Community Engagement - Reporting to the Region

Throughout the community engagement process for Connect LaGrange County, we made it a priority to consistently report back to both our steering group and stakeholder group, keeping them informed every step of the way. The steering group, consisting of 26 key individuals, and the 80+ member stakeholder group, identified early in the process, were essential to ensuring transparency and gaining feedback on the activities we conducted. Regular updates were provided, detailing participation levels, survey results, and key feedback gathered throughout the process.

In addition to formal reporting, we also communicated real-time results as they came in to our communities. At various pop-

up engagements, Community Connection open houses, and other public forums, we shared the results gathered from different towns and demographics. We also leveraged community events like LaGrange County Chamber luncheons, LaGrange Council on Aging luncheons, and local meetings with the County Council and Commissioners to keep a diverse audience in the loop.

Radio appearances, press releases, and active social media updates further broadened the reach of our communications. These efforts helped maintain momentum throughout the engagement process, ensuring that residents, stakeholders, and leaders alike were continuously involved and informed.



LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation

July 3 · 🌐



Last week we interviewed with [Inside INdiana Business](#) regarding our Stellar Pathways efforts with the [Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs](#) - happy to share this article with more details about our journey to being a Stellar Pathways Designee! The article also features beautiful local photography from our friend [Keith James Photography!](#)



Previous & Ongoing Public Engagement Efforts

In the past three years, our community has actively engaged in various initiatives that were heavily influenced or driven by public participation and community engagement. These initiatives have seen substantial participation, with each meeting yielding valuable outcomes and insights. This section discusses the various public engagements implemented before this Strategic Investment Plan process began.

The Envision Process: Led by Becker Consulting, and not within the mentioned three-year period, it is crucial to mention as it's played a significant role in shaping Connect LaGrange County. These meetings aimed at engaging the community to determine how to best utilize Lilly funding. They were widely attended and hosted members from both English and Amish communities. During these sessions, consultants utilized large sheets of paper for recording ideas and responses to specific questions, fostering crucial input that propelled us toward developing the County Comprehensive Plan. This process included six community engagement meetings throughout our region with an impressive turnout of over two hundred community members. These meetings identified eight opportunities and eleven challenges.

The Comprehensive Plan Process - LaGrange County Together: Led by Planning NEXT, this process was another endeavor that engaged our community. Led by a steering committee comprised of both Amish and English community leaders, this process involved two rounds of engagement meetings. The initial round of engagement garnered feedback from over 250 residents through in-person discussions and online activities. This feedback provided the planning team with a comprehensive understanding of residents' thoughts, ideas, and concerns regarding the county's future. The second round included approximately 100 attendees at a public meeting with the steering committee, along with 225 residents who participated in an online summit following the in-person event, resulting in more than 325 participants.



The LaGrange County Unified Development Ordinance Process: Locally known as the UDO, this plan development marks a significant shift from an outdated zoning ordinance that had remained unchanged for over two decades, despite demographic shifts and evolving community needs. This stagnation led to frustrations, particularly regarding the excessive variances required for activities like residential development and rural business startups. Led by McBride Dale Clarion, the new UDO addresses these concerns while introducing enhanced safeguards for our natural resources, including our lakes and agricultural land. Community engagement was paramount throughout the process, with an impressive total of 26 public meetings being held. These meetings, led by County Zoning Administrator Robbie Miller, drew representatives from key sectors, as well as representatives from our Amish community, local business owners, and lake residents alike. The consistent attendance of an average of sixty-three community members per meeting underscored the widespread involvement and commitment to shaping a more responsive and sustainable regulatory framework for LaGrange County.

Topeka Parks Survey: This effort exemplifies proactive and adaptive community engagement. Leveraging social media outreach and direct conversations, including in person discussions with Amish community members, they gathered input. Among the key outcomes was the construction of a new pavilion at West Park, driven by requests for amenities like a kitchenette at the pavilion used for family gatherings. The new pavilion with upgraded bathrooms and kitchen facilities was completed, alongside a revamped playground surface. Another request voiced by residents was for pickleball courts, prompting efforts

from the town to acquire $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre across the street from the park for this purpose in 2024.

Shipshewana Parks Survey: Conducted in 2023, this survey's primary motivation was to assess interest in upgrading their baseball diamonds, however when alternative funds were identified for this effort, they were able to re-allocate funds to other high priority amenities identified in the survey. Analyzing feedback, Shipshewana has prioritized plans for pickleball courts and a dog park, with future intentions to upgrade playground equipment. They distributed surveys to every household in Shipshewana, resulting in forty-one responses.



Previous & Ongoing Public Engagement Efforts

Amish Engagement: Engaging with our Amish population poses unique challenges due to their limited use of modern communication tools except for specific business purposes. Furthermore, their religious beliefs preclude them from running for or holding political offices, which restricts their community involvement to serving on various boards across the county. Despite these challenges, we currently have Amish community members represented on several boards, including the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC) Board, LaGrange County Chamber Board, Parkview LaGrange Hospital Board, Community Health Clinic Board, LaGrange County Plan Commission, and LaGrange County Trails Board, among others. Their involvement on these boards is an essential piece of our engagement with their community.

Additionally, LCEDC initiated a series of meetings in December 2022 aimed at enhancing engagement with Amish business owners. These monthly meetings, hosted in Topeka and Shipshewana on the second Tuesday of each month serve as a resource for entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs, particularly within our vibrant Amish community but open to all. Over the past 16 months, we have had more than 120 unique businesses owned by Amish individuals in the county in attendance, with over 500 unique addresses receiving regular updates about the meetings. These gatherings have facilitated improved communication channels between county government and the Amish business community, fostering a level of interaction that was previously absent. Moreover, they have bolstered the comfort level of our Amish population with our organization, enabling us to provide more direct and impactful support.

Coffee with the County: The LaGrange County Chamber began this event in 2024 with the goal to connect our community and business leaders with the opportunity for influence. Our county is unique in that we are geographically located the farthest away from the Statehouse. We are also unique in that 50%+ of our people represent a conservative religious community who do not participate in advocacy or legislative efforts. Coffee with the County is a quarterly program in which county stakeholders and legislators are connected with community members in a public forum to share about the processes, potentials, and issues facing LaGrange County. At its inaugural meeting, Coffee with the County saw over fifty business owners, community members and stakeholders gathered to listen in and ask questions.



Connect LaGrange County Overall Communication Plan

Our communication plan for the Stellar Pathways Process was designed to ensure transparency, community engagement, and active participation throughout every stage. From the outset, we prioritized outreach and educational sessions with stakeholders, civic leaders, partner organizations, and the community. These sessions provided key insights into the Stellar Process, our goals, and timelines while also creating an opportunity to gather feedback. Through a combination of interactive discussions and meeting people where they were at, we facilitated deeper understanding and encouraged attendees to share ideas on potential uses for the grant funds.

We implemented a landing page and communication portal on the LCEDC website, making it the go-to hub for all Stellar-related information. Stakeholders and residents could access updates, meeting schedules, project milestones, find the Community Connection Survey and even submit project ideas. With over half of our region's population being Amish, we made special efforts to ensure they were informed. By utilizing a fax network managed by an Amish business owner and an email list for Amish business owners, we were able to keep nearly 500 Amish households and businesses in the loop. We also ran ads in the People's Exchange, an Amish publication, to maximize outreach.

In addition to these efforts, we worked closely with local media outlets, issuing press releases, participating in radio interviews, and ensuring coverage of key events to keep the broader public aware and engaged. Regular updates were shared through social media, newsletters, and emails to various groups, helping us maintain

a steady flow of communication and foster a sense of inclusivity. Community input was a core element of our plan, with surveys, public meetings, and pop-up engagements providing various platforms for citizens to contribute.

As the process continues, Emilee Buller, now the Vice President of Community Development and Engagement at LCEDC, will play a crucial role in sustaining our communication efforts. She will maintain the momentum by continuing her regular radio appearances, releasing frequent press updates on both the county's Comprehensive Plan and the Stellar process, and delivering monthly and quarterly updates to the County Council and commissioners. Additionally, she will ensure ongoing community feedback by implementing an online and printed Community Connection Survey to monitor regional priorities and public opinions on progress every two years. This will help maintain a strong connection between residents and the development efforts moving forward.

Furthermore, we will actively engage with the local media to disseminate information and raise awareness about the Stellar Pathways Program, the process, and our team's involvement and progress. This includes press releases, media interviews, and coverage of key events and achievements along the way. By leveraging media channels, we aim to reach a broader audience and generate public interest in our efforts with the Connect LaGrange County Region.

Public input and feedback are integral to the success of the Stellar Pathways Process. We will continue to implement as many mechanisms for gathering public input as possible - ideas include surveys, public meetings, and online portal submissions. These platforms will allow citizens to voice their opinions, share ideas, and contribute to the process, fostering a sense of ownership and inclusivity. Regular updates have been and will be provided through various channels, including newsletters, email updates and social media posts. Media examples are shown in the appendices.

Overall, our communication plan prioritizes transparency, engagement, and collaboration, ensuring that citizens, stakeholders, and key individuals are well-informed, involved, and empowered throughout the Stellar Pathways process. By fostering open dialogue, gathering feedback, and leveraging diverse communication channels, we aim to build trust, unity, and momentum towards achieving our shared goals for the community's prosperity and well-being.

Please reference the below link for more info and updates on Connect LaGrange County's efforts for Stellar Pathways:

- <https://www.lagrangecountyedc.com/2024/06/18/stellar-pathways/>

Marketing the Region to Attract Residents and Businesses

The LaGrange County Strategic Investment Plan is all about creating a coordinated effort to improve our quality of life, boost economic development, and attract new investment into our communities. By working together under a shared vision, we're focused on building vibrant communities that draw in residents, a talented workforce, and visitors through impactful projects and programs. These initiatives will enhance our quality of place, community health, and economic opportunities, ultimately bringing in outside investment and talent. Connect LaGrange County is already putting this vision into action with our regional planning efforts and a dedicated team pursuing funding to make these projects possible. Earning a Stellar designation will accelerate these quality-of-life investments, sparking growth in the region while ensuring that we protect and support the residents and workers who are so vital to our communities.

The Stellar Pathways designation will provide a unique opportunity to market the communities of LaGrange, Shipshewana, Howe, Topeka, Mongo, South Milford, and the overall county as vibrant places to live, work, and do business. Shipshewana already draws in a significant amount of tourism traffic, being one of Indiana's most popular visitor destinations, with its famous flea markets, events, and shops. However, our goal has been to extend that tourism traffic into other parts of LaGrange County, showcasing the diverse offerings in all our communities. With the proposed Stellar projects, we will be significantly more marketable to both new residents and businesses, as these projects will enhance the overall quality of life, create more attractive amenities, and improve our infrastructure countywide. With things like a Façade Improvement Program and Streetscape updates we will have incentives to offer potential new business owners into our vacant downtown buildings.

In addition to our efforts to leverage tourism for countywide growth, LaGrange County is actively exploring Make My Move, a platform designed to attract remote workers by offering an incentive package. This initiative is part of our broader strategy to attract new residents, particularly

remote workers, by highlighting our community's potential as a great place to live and work.

Currently, we struggle to retain our young people after they graduate and leave for college, as well as to attract new residents, because we lack the modern amenities that appeal to today's workforce. The Stellar Pathways designation will provide us with the resources to develop the kinds of amenities and community features—such as parks, trails, recreational facilities, and enhanced infrastructure—that will make LaGrange County more attractive to both new community members and our younger generation who we want to bring back home.

By driving investment dollars into the entire county, rather than just Shipshewana, we will be able to market the entire region as a thriving, interconnected community with much to offer in terms of quality of life, career opportunities, and overall desirability. This designation represents a chance to create long-term, sustainable growth for all of our towns, benefiting current and future residents alike, and giving businesses a thriving set of communities to operate in.



Marketing the Region to Attract Residents and Businesses

The overarching goal of the LaGrange County Strategic Investment Plan is to encourage sustainable economic growth, opportunity, and prosperity in LaGrange County and its communities. Under a unified vision focused on improving quality of life, this plan will create projects that attract outside investment and talent. Connect LaGrange County is already making this happen with recent regional planning efforts and a team dedicated to pursuing funding options to make quality of life projects possible for LaGrange County communities. A Stellar designation will allow quality of life investments to reignite growth in the region, and will enable this to happen without displacing low-to-moderate income residents and workers who currently live and work in the region.

Housing: Stellar funding will be a game changer for both current residents purchasing homes and for new workforce talent looking to relocate to our region. By focusing on a Down Payment Assistance Program to help make home-buying more approachable in our county, and investing in mixed-income housing, we'll be able to retain our local residents while also growing our labor force. Increasing the availability of housing units is key to attracting and keeping a population that fuels the vitality of our community. With more units and down payment assistance, we can market homeownership opportunities to both those already living in LaGrange County and those outside our area, positioning us as an attractive place to call home.

Talent Attraction: Attracting young talent is a top priority for LaGrange County, and we know that quality-of-life improvements are key to making that happen. By implementing transformative projects that enhance recreational, cultural, and entrepreneurial opportunities, we can create an environment where young professionals not only want to live but can also grow their careers. Marketing these efforts will position LaGrange County as a destination for talent, fueling economic growth, resilience, and diversity. Investments in gathering spaces, parks, trails, transportation, arts, and culture will create a community that celebrates diversity, inclusion, and overall well-being – making LaGrange County a more desirable place to live and raise a family.

Childcare & Attracting Young Families: One of the main goals of our Strategic Investment Plan is to attract and support young families. This starts with providing adequate housing and quality childcare. Right now, LaGrange County only meets 11% of its childcare capacity needs, according to Thrive by 5 for Noble and LaGrange Counties. Expanding childcare capacity is crucial to helping working families thrive and to driving population growth and talent attraction. We're seeing momentum build around the idea of incorporating childcare into a community center or other facilities, and Stellar funding could be the catalyst that moves these projects forward. By leveraging marketing channels, we can attract more young families and let them know LaGrange County is the ideal place to live and grow.

Quality of Place: LaGrange County is committed to enhancing quality of life by investing in the amenities that matter most to our residents and future workforce. This means improving infrastructure, creating more outdoor recreation opportunities, supporting our local economy, and fostering a sense of belonging and community pride. Major investments like Stellar will bring much-needed revitalization to our downtowns, attract new businesses, and create an environment where current businesses can thrive. From streetscapes to connectivity, utilities, and placemaking, these projects are essential to making LaGrange County a place where people want to live, work, and invest. Being able to market the amenities we are able to provide with these transformational dollars will undoubtedly help us to gather additional investment into our communities, and to market the entire county to both new potential residents and tourists alike.

Community Health: One of the central goals of our plan is to improve community health by creating more opportunities for healthy living. For many residents in LaGrange County, accessing healthy food, recreational spaces, and fitness facilities remains a challenge. Public feedback gathered through our input surveys clearly indicated that physical fitness resources are a top priority when it comes to health and wellness. By implementing projects that expand access to these types of resources as we move into the future, we aim to create a healthier, more active community, and a community with great food accessibility resources. This includes potential investments in community centers, parks, fitness programs, and wellness initiatives that meet the diverse needs of our residents, as well as in programming like our proposed Farms to Food Banks program and our Tradition Kitchen. These types of amenities are key to be able to market any community.

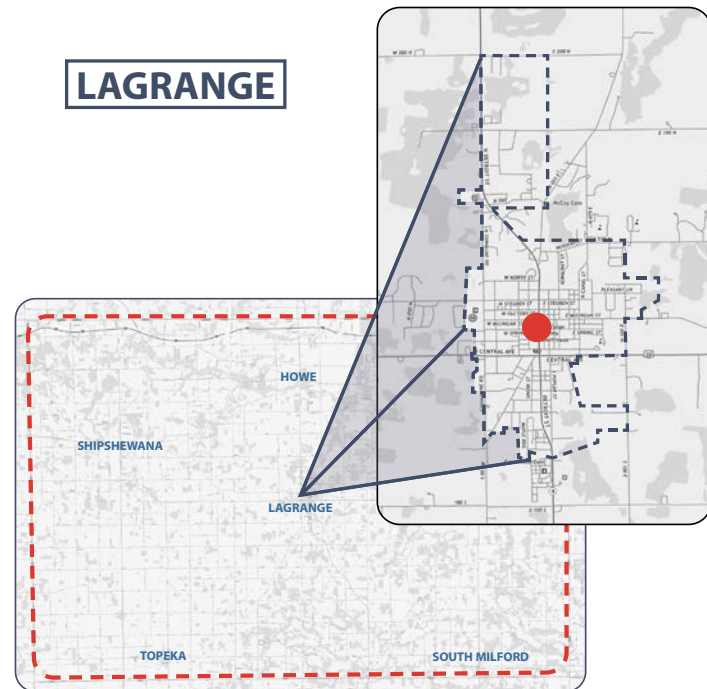


PROJECT & PROGRAM IDENTIFICATION

LaGrange Detroit Street Streetscape Improvements

Project Description:

Detroit Street (SR 9) is the main street running through downtown LaGrange, connecting US 20 to the historic courthouse square. Many businesses including restaurants, stores, and service providers have frontage on Detroit Street. The existing conditions are not comfortable for pedestrians or welcoming visually. The proposed streetscape project includes reconstruction of the sidewalk and adding streetscape elements on Detroit Street from US 20 north to Michigan Street. Proposed streetscape elements include an entry feature at US 20, decorative lighting, planters and/or street trees, street furniture, curb ramps and crosswalks. The project also includes an alleyway activation project that will provide a people-focused space downtown to relax or enjoy a meal or beverage from a nearby restaurant.



Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

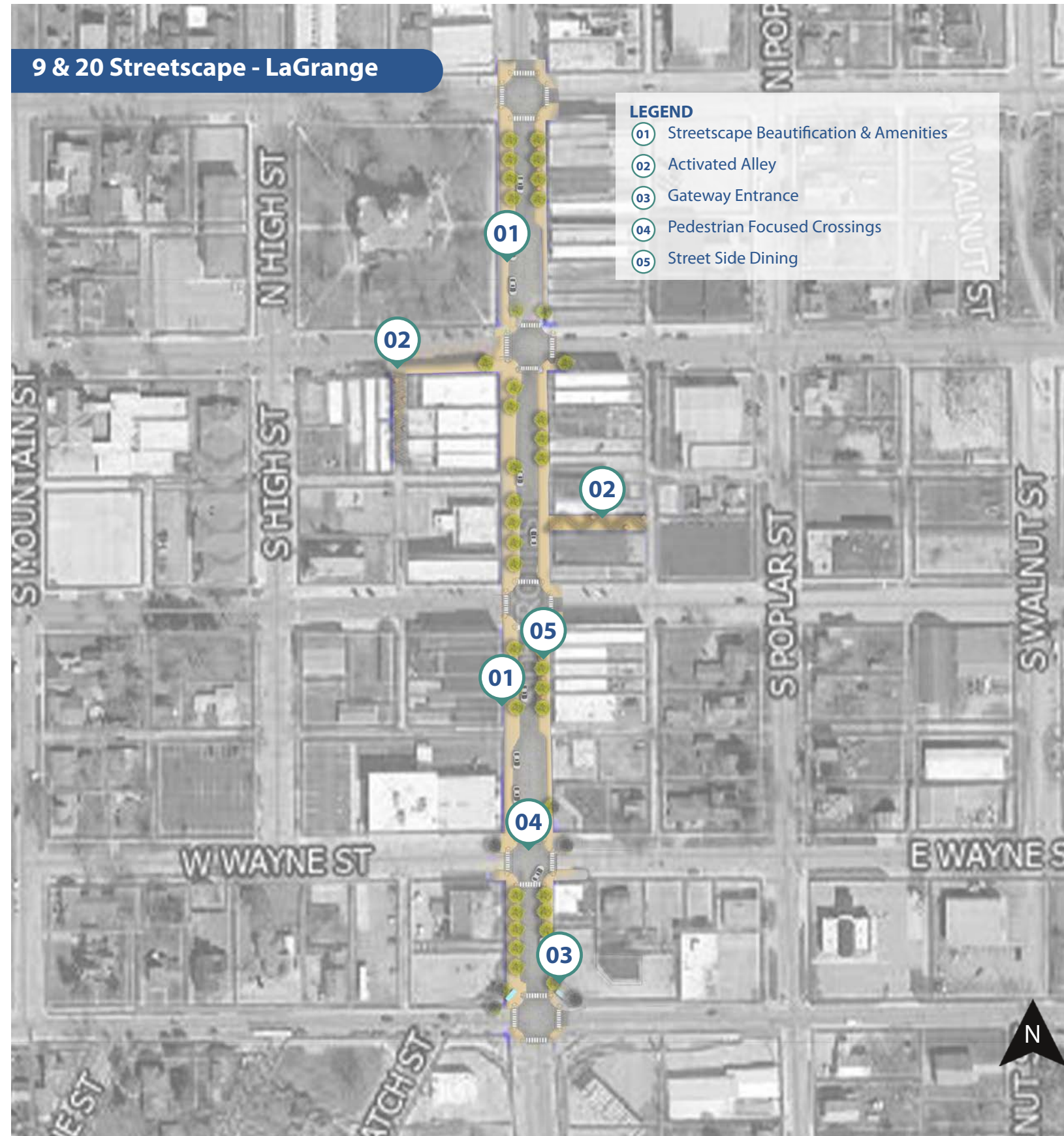
The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including transformative quality of place and strengthening local economies.



Transformative Quality of Place



Strengthening Local Economies



LaGrange Detroit Street Streetscape Improvements

Project Need:

The gateway leading into downtown LaGrange from the bustling intersection of SR 9 and US 20 doesn't currently offer the inviting entrance that our historic courthouse square and downtown businesses deserve. By transforming the streetscape along Detroit Street (SR 9) from this intersection to the courthouse, we can create a more vibrant and welcoming corridor that aligns with our Connect LaGrange County goals for revitalizing downtown, attracting new businesses, and drawing more people into our community's heart. This project would make downtown LaGrange a more appealing place for both residents and visitors, encouraging them to linger longer, explore, and support our local businesses. An enhanced streetscape along this high-traffic area would also make a strong impression, showcasing the charm and energy of LaGrange to all who pass through.

Community Engagement Support:

Throughout the engagement process, consistent feedback was received that downtown LaGrange needs revitalization efforts. In one of the Community Connection survey questions, out of eight project types listed, "streetscape and downtown facade/beautification" ranked 2nd. During pop-up engagement events, streetscape improvements and downtown beautification received many votes and were frequently mentioned in conversations.

Proposed Project Schedule:

Phase	2025				2026				2027				2028			
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
Grant Application																
Procurement																
Contracts																
Design																
Bidding																
Construction																
Closeout																

Key Project Partners:

- LaGrange Town Council
- LaGrange Redevelopment Commission
- OCRA
- INDOT
- LaGrange Cty. Economic Dev. Corp.
- Business Owners
- Main Street LaGrange

Leveraging Resources:

The streetscape project leverages several other resources and investments. This includes adjacent proposed projects such as the downtown historic district creation, facade grant program, and the 9 & 20 housing project. These projects together will provide a tremendous improvement to this corridor and downtown LaGrange, utilizing funding from the town, multiple state agencies, community organizations, developers, and business owners.

Budget:

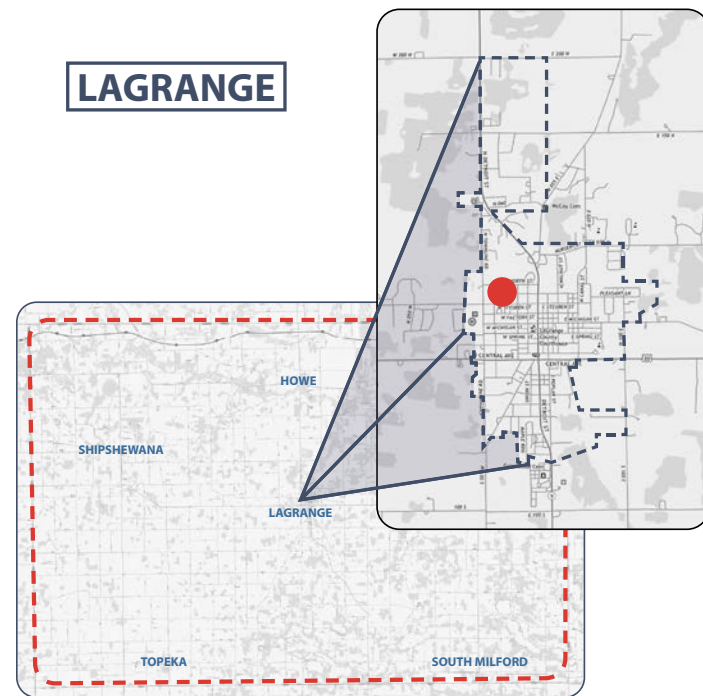
Estimated Total Cost	\$1,630,000
OCRA Funding	\$1,265,000
Local Leverage	\$365,000



LaGrange Town Park Improvements

Project Description:

The proposed improvements at LaGrange’s Town Park include a renovation of the playground, renovating one of the two basketball courts into pickleball courts, resurfacing and replacing the hoops on the other basketball court, construction of a walking trail around the perimeter of the park, and the addition of a pump track. Accessibility improvements will also be made including parking improvements, new sidewalks, a curb ramp, and crosswalk to the splash pad across the street. These new amenities and improvements to existing amenities will expand the recreational offerings of the park to meet the needs of both residents and visitors. While some amenities such as the walking trail and playground will be mostly enjoyed by local residents, unique amenities such as the pump track will attract visitors from throughout LaGrange County and neighboring counties.



Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including transformative quality of place and promoting community wellness.

- Transformative Quality of Place
- Promoting Community Wellness



LaGrange Town Park Improvements

Project Need:

The project need is evident from the amount of residents that use the parks, and the desire for physical fitness and recreation facilities identified in our community engagement. The current basketball courts and playground equipment are dated and in need of repairs. Because of the age and condition, additional maintenance is required to ensure function and safety. There is also a desire to create some unique amenities in the parks. While each community has recreation staples such as ballfields, courts, and playgrounds, unique amenities can provide a boost to the recreational offerings and attract new visitors to the parks and community.

Community Engagement Support:

Throughout our engagement process, we repeatedly heard that people want more and better amenities in our parks. Among the suggestions, pickleball courts, playgrounds, and trails stood out as the most popular choices. We received numerous comments highlighting the need for more facilities that support physical fitness and recreation, which people see as essential to improving health and wellness across the county. High-quality parks are consistently shown to boost both health and quality of life, and it's clear our community values these benefits.

Proposed Project Schedule:

Phase	2025				2026				2027				2028			
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
Grant Application																
Procurement																
Contracts																
Design																
Bidding																
Construction																
Closeout																

Key Project Partners:

- LaGrange Town Council
- LaGrange Redevelopment Commission
- Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources
- LaGrange Cty. Economic Dev. Corporation

Leveraging Resources:

The Town Park Improvement project leverages several other resources and investments. This includes the DNR Land and Water Conservation Fund and local match, support from the Economic Development Corporation, and the LaGrange Park Authority.

Budget:

Estimated Total Cost	\$1,000,000
DNR LWCF Funding	\$500,000
Local Leverage	\$500,000



LaGrange Downtown Façade Improvements

Project Description:

The proposed LaGrange Downtown Façade Improvements project includes facade renovations for privately owned commercial buildings in their historic downtown. Facade improvements could include windows and doors, painting and staining, signage, lighting, canopies and awnings, masonry improvements, etc. A preliminary list of potential buildings has been created, but more specifics and final selection of properties will occur as part of the funding application upon designation.

Project Need:

Several historic downtown facades have seen better days and could greatly benefit from renovation. A facade improvement program could provide business owners with the financial support they need to move forward with these updates. Not only do facade improvements draw more people downtown, but they also attract new businesses and encourage nearby owners to invest in their properties. These upgrades can lead to higher property values, lower maintenance costs, and a stronger sense of community pride. This project would be a major boost for downtown's appeal, complementing both the Detroit Street streetscape project and the proposed 9 & 20 Housing Development.

Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including transformative quality of place and strengthening local economies.



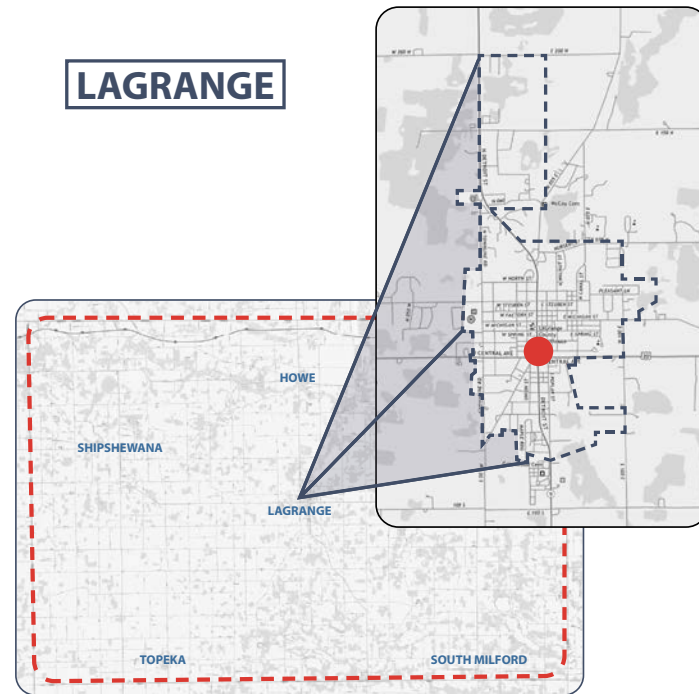
Transformative Quality of Place



Strengthening Local Economies

Community Engagement Support:

Many residents expressed interest in historic preservation and improvements to the historic buildings in downtown LaGrange. This was evident in the Community Connection survey and through pop-up engagement activities and discussions. Downtown facades and beautification ranked 2nd out of 8 potential project types in one of the survey's questions.



Key Project Partners:

- LaGrange Town Council
- LaGrange Redevelopment Commission
- OCRA
- DNR-DHPA
- LaGrange Cty. Economic Dev. Corp.
- Business Owners
- Main Street LaGrange

Leveraging Resources:

The Façade Improvement project leverages several other resources and investments including OCRA funding and local match, and private match from business owners. The project also leverages the Historic District creation, potential DNR-DHPA historic renovation, Detroit St streetscape project, and the proposed 9 & 20 Housing Development.

Parcel ID: 44-07-19-300-003.036-002
Property Address: 201 N. Detroit Street
Owners: Peter M. & Rollin C. Carney 10/06/2022 to present

The Carney Family has owned this building for at least 40-years. Rollin and Estella ordinarily owned the building. After Rollin passed, Estella transferred the property to their son Patrick who owned the building until he passed. At this time it was transferred to his sons Peter and Rollin. Prior to Peter and Rollin acquiring the building it was a retail furniture and flooring business with apartments located on the second floor. Peter and Rollin continued with the apartments upon taking ownership but the furniture and flooring business was closed and the first floor of the building was vacant for a period of time. Approximately 1-year ago Peter and Rollin agreed to sell the building to an investor from California who has begun making some improvements to the building and currently has the first floor rented to two retail businesses. The apartments remain on the second floor.



Proposed Improvements:

Updates to the exterior of the building have not been made in decades with the paint and exterior details peeling off the building facade. Future improvements would be aimed at improving the brick work and masonry, repainting the building or restoring the brick, and other additions like canopies, entrance additions, and new framing.

Parcel ID: 44-07-19-300-001.027-002 & 44-07-19-300-001.026-002
Property Address: 101 S. Detroit Street & 103 S. Detroit Street
Owners: FS LaGrange Properties, LLC 11/17/2022 to present

101 S. Detroit Street was an appliances retail store in the 1990's until it was purchased by Heartland Real Estate and Management, LLC, Joe & Cheryl Albergo. The Albergo's remodeled the building into a restaurant. In 2022, Mrs. Albergo sold the building to FS LaGrange Properties, LLC which continues to operate the building as a restaurant. 103 S. Detroit Street was owned for many years by the Merriman Family Trust/ Arnold & Elizabeth Merriman. It was rented to Trowbridge Accounting until Mr. Trowbridge passed and his daughter took over the business. Around 2010 she relocated the business. The building was vacant until Heartland Real Estate Management, LLC purchased it in 2013 to expand their restaurant. The building was sold along with 101 S Detroit to FS LaGrange Properties, LLC in 2022 where it remains a restaurant.



Proposed Improvements:

Exterior Updates for this building would clean up the appearance and create more cohesion between the two units that are now one. Creating a unified appearance to the entrance area, brick cleaning and updates, and other framing updates are a priority for this project.

LaGrange Downtown Facade Improvements

Parcel ID: 44-07-19-300-001.013-002
Property Address: 122 S. Detroit Street
Owners: Runabout Properties, LLC 02/29/2008 to present

Foltz Bakery has been a staple business in the Town of LaGrange for more than 60-years and is housed in the front lower portion of the building. It was started by the Foltz Family and over the years has been operated by 4 or 5 different individuals. Currently it is operated by the Boyles family. The backside of the building currently contains a small Mexican restaurant and over the past 15-years or so has been primarily used as a restaurant. The second story of the building currently sits vacant but for many years it was the lodge for the Knights of Pythias until they disbanded in the early 2000's. It has also housed a Real Estate Sales Business upstairs in the past.



Proposed Improvements:
 Facade improvements would be aimed at improving the brick work, paint, entrance features, and other cosmetic updates.

Parcel ID: 44-07-19-300-001.049-002 & 44-07-19-300-003.090-002
Property Address: 118 N. Detroit Street & 122 N. Detroit Street
Owners: KCM Enterprises LLC 02/16/2011 to present

Frederic Brown owned these two-buildings starting in the early 1960's. Mr. Brown was a pharmacist and operated Brown's Pharmacy and Drug Store from the buildings until around 2004. The Diehms Family bought the properties and divided the two-buildings. They rented 118 N. Detroit St. to the State of Indiana, which was used to operate the LaGrange County BMV office. They also rented 122 N. Detroit to the State of Indiana and it operated as the LaGrange County Division of Family and Children Services. In 2011 the Diehms sold the buildings to KCM Enterprises, LLC. KCM Enterprises continued to rent the buildings to the two-state agencies until the end of 2023 when both agencies relocated to a new location on the North side of LaGrange. The buildings have remained vacant since.



Proposed Improvements:
 Updates to the building exterior would be prioritized in order to get the building in desirable condition for a new tenant and business to move in. Cleaning the brick and stone, repainting the window frames, and other framing improvements are among some of the most important tasks.

Parcel ID: 44-07-19-300-001.031-002
Property Address: 107 W. Spring Street
Owners: Bloomfield Creative, LLC 08/30/2024 to present
Board of Commissioners of LaGrange County 08/15/2023 to 08/29/2024
Main Street LaGrange, Inc. 09/10/2021 to 08/14/2023
Board of Commissioners of LaGrange County 01/01/2016 to 09/09/2021
Kadish D. Evans 07/22/2011 to 12/31/2015
BCK Real Estate Holdings, LLC 01/17/2008 to 07/21/2011
Ronald Plassman & Steve Wappes (?) to 01/16/2008

For many years this property was a Title Company operated by Mr. Plassman and Mr. Wappes. In 2011 when Mr. Wappes retired Kadish D. Evans, owner of Lakeland Title, desired to purchase his business and clients. Mr. Wappes was unwilling to sell just the business, so the building and the business were sold to Mr. Evans. The building remained vacant until Mr. Evans gifted the building to the Board of Commissioners of LaGrange County in 2016. At that time the Commissioners needed space to store old court files that had previously been stored in the attic of the Courthouse. These files needed to be relocated to allow for the planned renovations to the Court building. In 2021 The Board of Commissioners, no longer needing the building for storage, gifted the building to Main Street LaGrange with the condition that they must obtain funding to renovate the building, or it would return to them. In 2023 the building was returned to the Commissioners. In 2024 the Commissioners advertised and took bids for the sale of the building. The building was purchased by Bloomfield Creative, LLC which has begun renovations to the building where they plan to locate their lavender sales business, Bloomfield Apothecary.



Proposed Improvements:
 Facade improvements for this project will prioritize entrance area upgrades, including the stairs, brick work, framing, and painting. Other additional improvements include canopy and signage additions to improve the storefront presence of any future business.

LaGrange Downtown Facade Improvements

Schedule:

The facade improvement project will begin with OCRA application and program development in 2025, with business owner applications starting in 2026 with continued applications and implementation in 2027 and 2028.

Budget:

Budget is anticipated to be \$400,000 depending on the final number of selected properties and the desired improvements. It is proposed that \$200,000 will be OCRA funding and \$200,000 coming from local town match and business owner investment.



WINDOW & GLASS UPGRADES



PAINTING & STAINING



CANOPY & ENTRANCE AREA ADDITIONS



BRICK & MASONRY IMPROVEMENTS



SIGNAGE IMPROVEMENTS



LaGrange Historic District

Project Description and Need:

Currently there is not a designated historic district in the town of LaGrange, with just the county courthouse recognized on the National Register. Surrounding the courthouse there are many other historic buildings and neighborhoods. Before being eligible for Historic Preservation funding from DNR, a historic district must be created and approved. The proposed historic district shown on the adjacent map includes the historic courthouse as well as houses and downtown buildings with historic character. The area is roughly between Spring St south to Michigan St, and Sherman St east to Poplar St. There are potential additions to this map. The district boundary will be discussed further with DNR-DHPA regarding the Historic Preservation Fund Grant Program guidelines and eligibility.

Community Engagement Support:

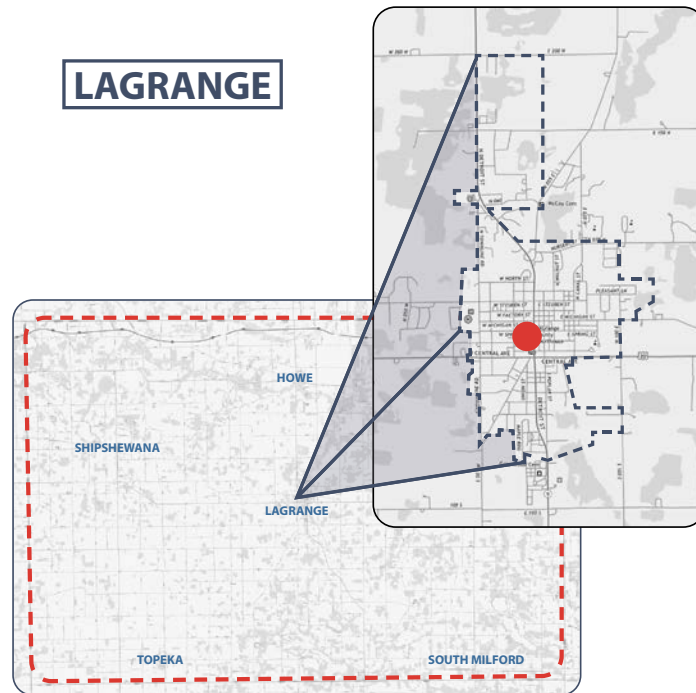
Many residents expressed interest in historic preservation and improvements to the historic buildings in downtown LaGrange. This was unmistakable in our Community Connections survey and throughout our pop-up engagement activities and discussions. Downtown facades and beautification ranked 2nd out of 8 potential project types in one of the Community Connections questions. In another question from the survey, of five choices related to culture and arts, historic preservation was ranked number 2. The courthouse was also consistently mentioned as a priority for preservation and renovation.

Key Project Partners:

- LaGrange Town Council
- LaGrange Redevelopment Commission
- IDNR Dept. of Historic Preservation
- LaGrange Cty. Economic Dev. Corporation

Leveraging Resources:

The Historic District project leverages support from several entities in the town and county along with the DNR DHPA. The project then enables further funding eligibility and historic preservation programs to aid in future improvements in the district.



Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including transformative quality of place.



Transformative Quality of Place



Budget:

Estimated Total Cost	\$10,000
DNR Funding	\$5,000
Local Leverage	\$5,000

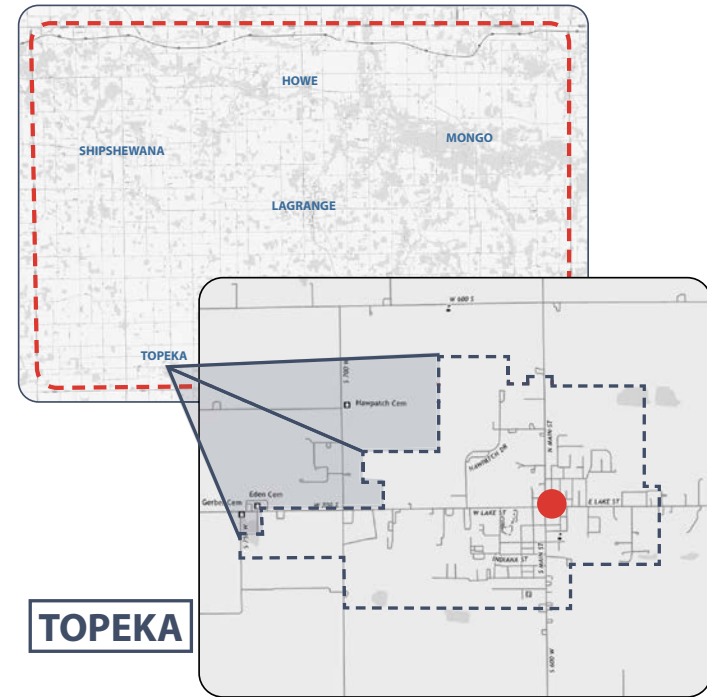
Schedule:

This process is anticipated to begin with IDNR in early 2025 in hopes that we will have the historic district established as soon as possible during the implementation period.

Topeka Gathering & Event Space

Project Description:

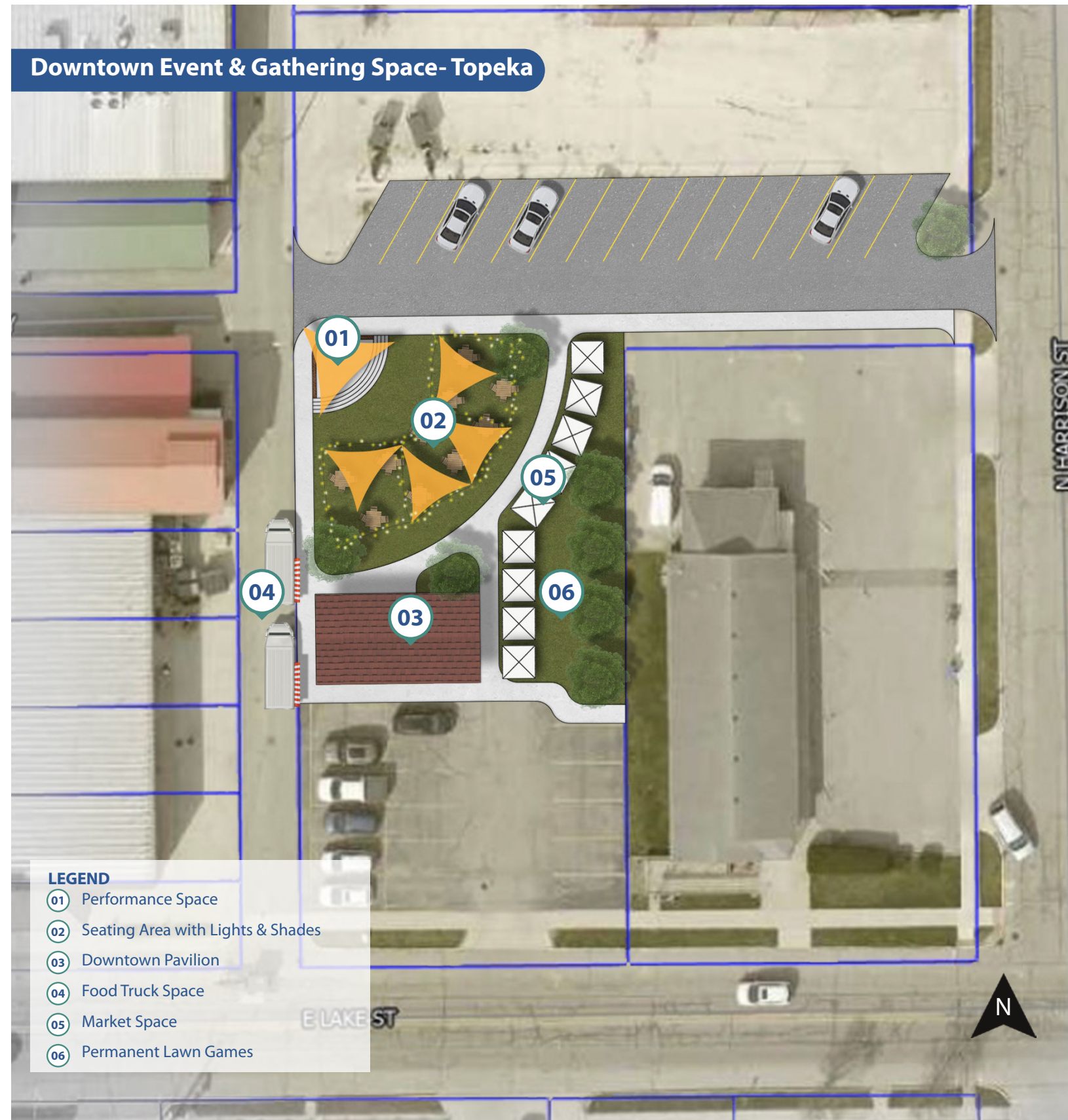
The Topeka Gathering & Event Space project transforms an existing parking lot in downtown Topeka into an activated space with permanent seating, event space with a performance stage, trees, lighting, and lawn games. The space can be used as a daily basis to relax or eat outside with food or drink from nearby restaurants. It can also hold events such as the farmers market, food trucks, holiday gatherings, and other festivities. While the existing parking lot isn't often full, some of the lost parking spaces can be added near the alley just north of the site.



Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

This project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including transformative quality of place, promoting community wellness, and strengthening local economies.

-  Transformative Quality of Place
-  Strengthening Local Economies
-  Promoting Community Wellness



Topeka Gathering & Event Space

Project Need:

Outside of Fridays, when many Amish come to town for their weekly shopping, downtown Topeka doesn't see much foot traffic. The goal is to make better use of this town owned space by creating a welcoming public area for people to enjoy daily and to host events and gatherings. Adding seating downtown would be ideal, as there's currently no dedicated place to sit and enjoy food or drink from nearby restaurants. Although events like the farmers market and food truck gatherings currently take place in the parking lot at the park, a dedicated event space downtown would help enhance these activities and create a sense of vitality that we are currently missing.

Community Engagement Support:

One of the main ideas we heard for Topeka from both stakeholders and public feedback was the need to draw more people into the downtown area. Fridays are bustling with the Amish community shopping, but increased foot traffic on other days would benefit local businesses and strengthen community bonds. While multi-use trails topped the list of desired amenities, the idea of a gathering and event space was also highly favored. Pop-up engagement activities and project voting in Topeka highlighted this interest, as did responses to our Community Connections survey. Public spaces for community events ranked as the top choice among arts and culture project types and came in second for desired assets and amenities in our survey.

Proposed Project Schedule:

Phase	2025				2026				2027				2028			
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
Grant Application																
Procurement																
Contracts																
Design																
Bidding																
Construction																
Closeout																

Key Project Partners:

- Topeka Town Council
- Topeka Redevelopment Commission
- OCRA
- Downtown Business Owners
- LaGrange Cty. Economic Dev. Corp.
- Topeka Together
- Topeka Farmers Market

Leveraging Resources:

The Topeka Gathering & Event Space Improvement project leverages several resources and investments. This includes downtown business owners, especially the adjacent retail store and coffee shop that offers food and beverage. Topeka Together and the local farmers market will also be partners in contributing to and utilizing the space. The project will also tie into the E Lake St improvement project that will be constructed in 2025, which is funded in part by INDOT's Community Crossings Program.

Budget:

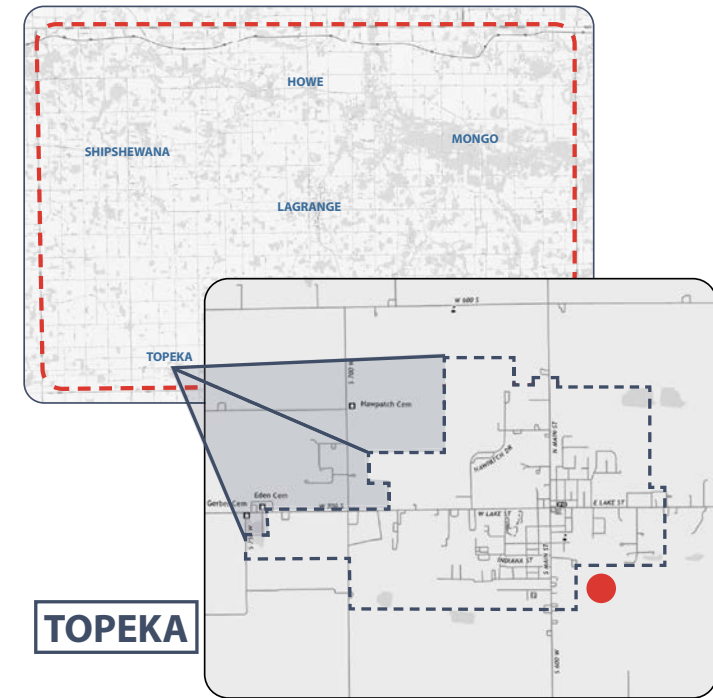
Estimated Total Cost	\$810,000
OCRA Funding	\$648,000
Local Leverage	\$162,000



Topeka East Park Improvements

Project Description:

East Park is the go-to spot in the community for active recreation, with its two baseball fields, basketball and tennis courts, temporary pickleball setup, and playground. Both Amish and English residents, along with visitors, regularly enjoy the park's offerings. The East Park Improvements project aims to both enhance existing features and bring in new attractions. Plans include renovating the tennis and basketball courts, adding dedicated pickleball courts, and introducing a splash pad. Additionally, a new pavilion and a looping walking trail through the western area of the park will be added. These upgrades will refresh amenities that currently demand a lot of upkeep, which will help offset some of the increased maintenance required for new features like the pavilion and splash pad.



Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

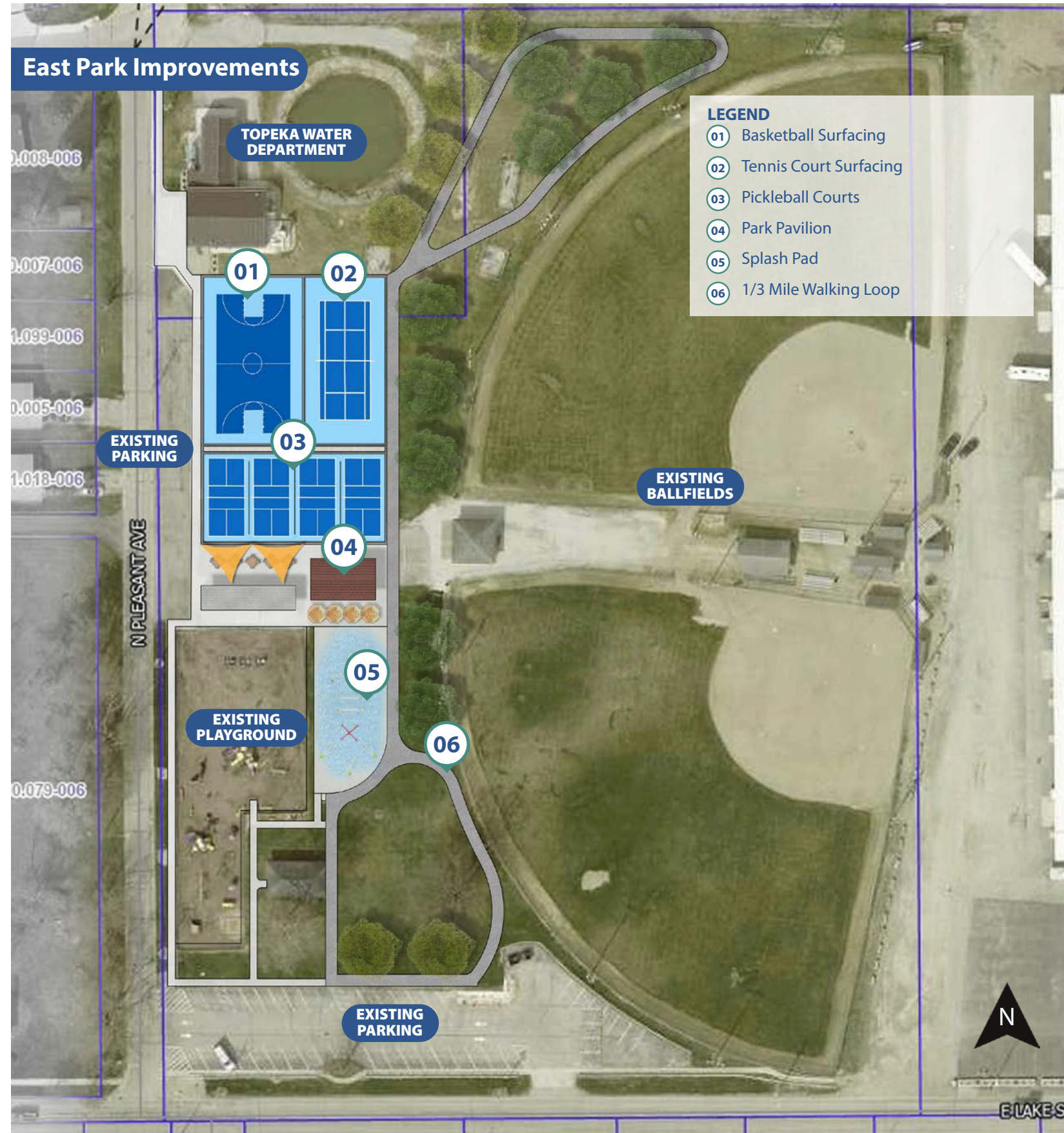
The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including transformative quality of place and promoting community wellness.



Transformative Quality of Place



Promoting Community Wellness



Topeka East Park Improvements

Project Need:

The need for this project is clear, given the number of residents who regularly use East Park and the strong demand for more fitness and recreation options, as highlighted in our community engagement. Right now, the basketball and tennis courts are showing their age and need repairs, which increases the maintenance required to keep them safe and usable. Although there's a temporary pickleball court, there's a real need for dedicated, permanent courts. Adding a splash pad is another popular request, offering residents a fun, cooling activity for the hot summer months. East Park is an ideal spot for it, with existing restrooms, water access, and parking already in place.

Community Engagement Support:

In our Community Connections survey, park improvements were rated as the third most important out of eight proposed project types. Specifically, improvements to parks—like upgrading sports fields, courts, and playgrounds—were the top-rated choice within the category of desired amenities. When presented with an open-ended question in our survey, many Topeka residents shared that they'd like more activities available for kids and teens since options are limited locally. Enhancing and expanding park amenities will help create more dedicated spaces for young people in our community.

Proposed Project Schedule:

Phase	2025				2026				2027				2028			
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
Grant Application																
Procurement																
Contracts																
Design																
Bidding																
Construction																
Closeout																

Key Project Partners:

- Topeka Town Council
- Topeka Redevelopment Commission
- Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources
- LaGrange Cty. Economic Dev. Corp.
- Topeka Together

Leveraging Resources:

The park improvement project will leverage local funding resources along with DNR funding. Support from other organizations such as Topeka Together and the Community Foundation will help with the project process. The project also leverages a current improvement project within East Park for a pavilion, as well as drainage improvements and the installation of turf at the ballfields.

Budget:

Estimated Total Cost	\$1,000,000
DNR LWCF Funding	\$500,000
Local Leverage	\$500,000



Topeka Trail - Hawpatch Trail Connector

Project Description:

This multi-use trail project will connect the town of Topeka to the up and coming Hawpatch Trail, and serve as an extension of the Hawpatch Trail through the town of Topeka. It will also connect the southwest portion of the community with the downtown, and provides connections from East Park to West Lake Park. The proposed trail will be ten feet wide along the former railroad corridor, and eight feet wide along Morrow Street and West Lake Street. Acquisition or a permanent easement is planned for the former railroad corridor, and the trail along Morrow and W. Lake Street will be within the existing right-of-way as much as possible. Some minor temporary or permanent right of way acquisition may be necessary.

Project Need:

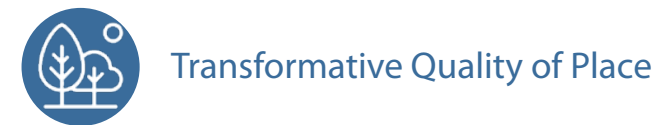
There is a strong need and real excitement for trails in Topeka and to connect communities across the county. The planned Hawpatch Trail is set to run east-west through the county, passing right through Topeka. The county trails group is actively working on funding and completing major sections of this trail, and Topeka plans to support these efforts by developing its own section through town. With local roads often busy, especially with Amish residents traveling by foot and bicycle, this trail will also provide a safer option for everyone.

Community Engagement Support:

Throughout the engagement process, consistent feedback was received that trails were the top priority, especially in Topeka. This was evident through the Community Connections survey, and especially in pop-up engagement where trails received about ten times more votes than any other type of project. Additionally, there has been a great deal of community engagement taking place throughout the county as the countywide trails group works on a county-wide trails master plan, and the Hawpatch Trail routing through Topeka is a top priority county trail identified in that plan.

Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

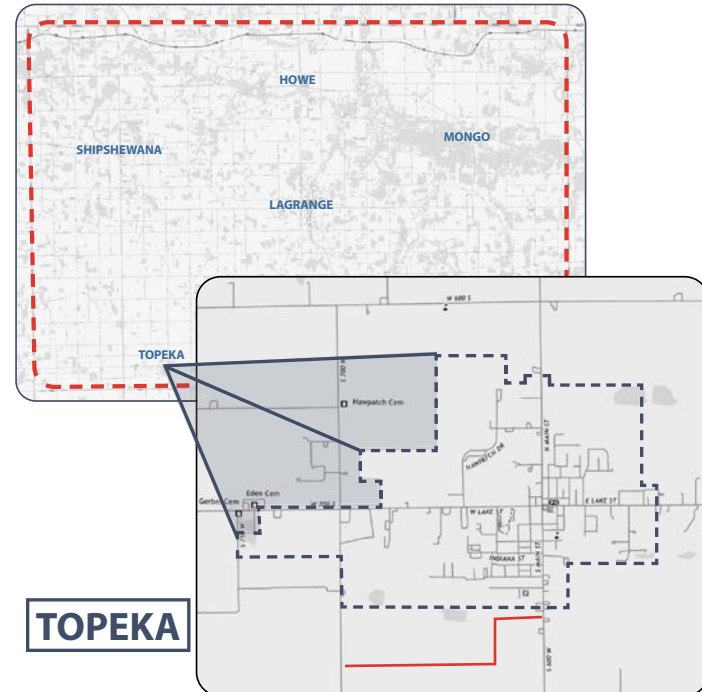
The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including transformative quality of place and promoting community wellness.



Transformative Quality of Place



Promoting Community Wellness

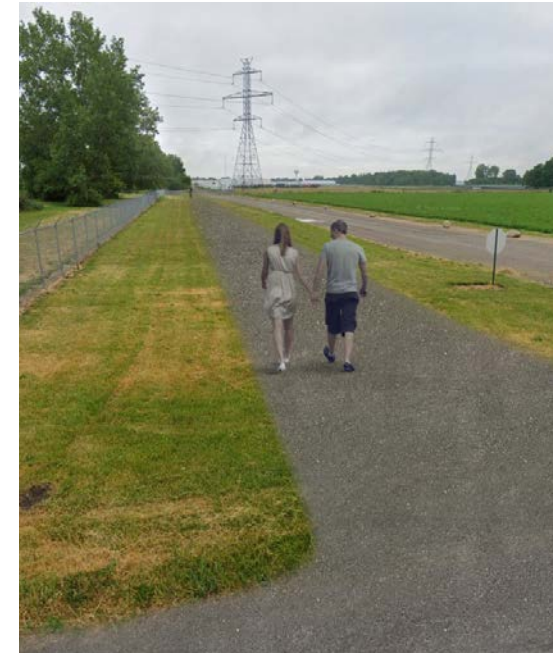
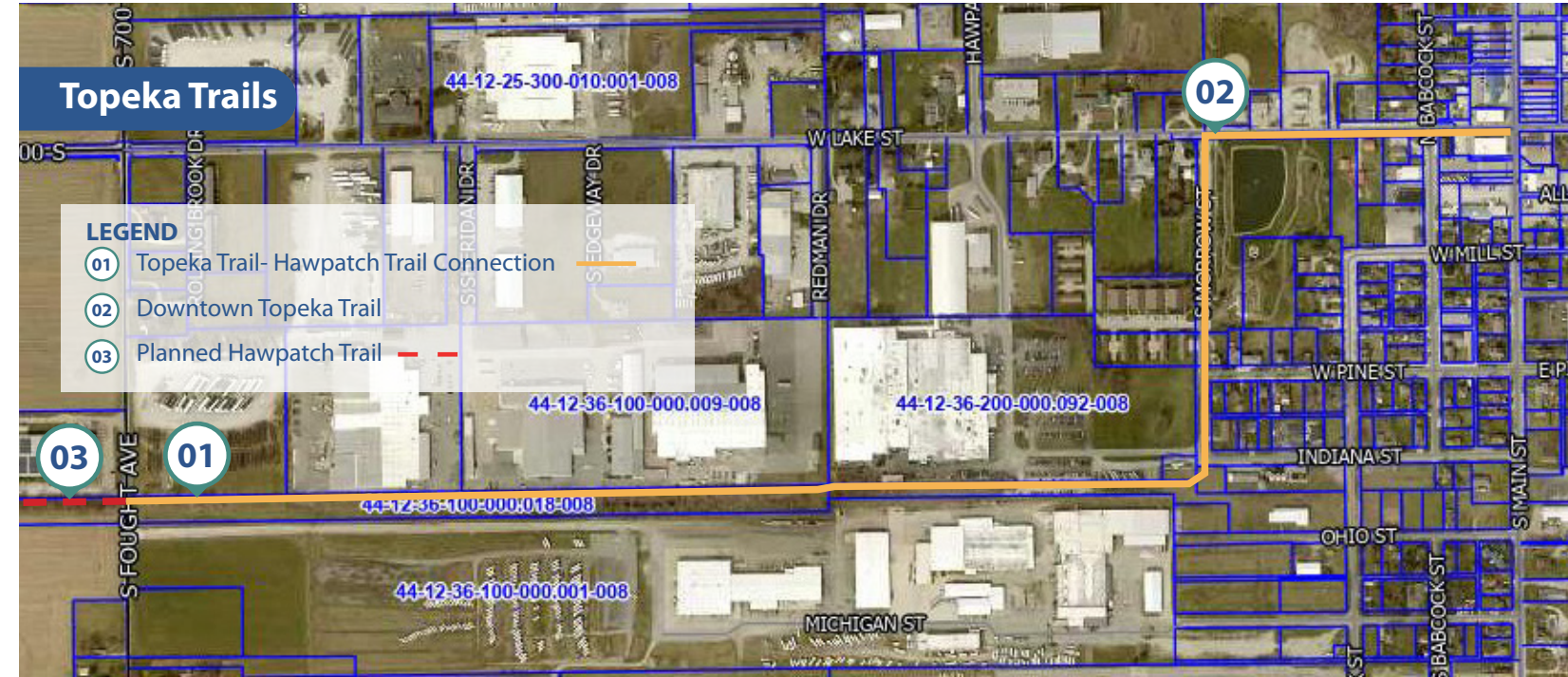


Key Project Partners:

- Topeka Town Council
- Topeka Redevelopment Commission
- INDOT
- LaGrange County Trails
- Topeka Together
- LaGrange Cty. Community Foundation

Leveraging Resources:

The project will leverage funding from INDOT and town sources along with support from the LaGrange County Trails and the planned Hawpatch Trail and its funding sources. The Community Foundation is also supporting trail initiatives in the county.



Budget:

Estimated Total Cost	\$1,520,000
INDOT Funding	\$984,000
Local Leverage	\$536,000

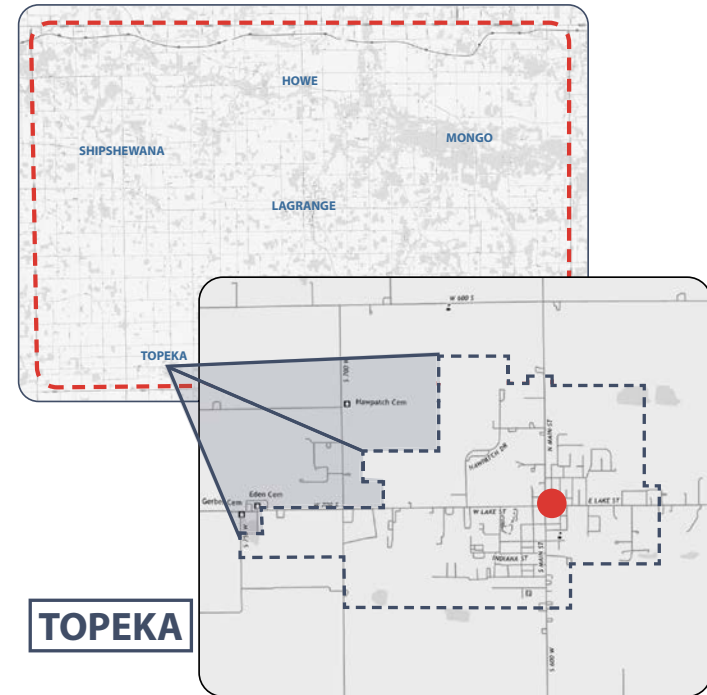
Proposed Project Schedule:

Phase	2025				2026				2027				2028				2029			
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
Grant Application																				
Procurement																				
Contracts																				
Engineering																				
Environmental																				
Right of Way																				
Letting																				
Construction																				
Closeout																				

Topeka Downtown Master Plan

Project Description:

The Topeka Downtown Master Plan would analyze the existing conditions of the Topeka downtown area including infrastructure, land use, business and economic data, history, social and cultural use, facades, transportation, and many other factors. Extensive community engagement would occur, more specifically on the downtown area, that would bolster the input received during the Connect LaGrange County engagement. After thorough review, analysis, meetings with town personnel and stakeholders, and benchmarking peer communities, a master plan with recommendations and prioritization will provide a guide for future development of downtown Topeka.



Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

This project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including transformative quality of place and strengthening local economies.



Transformative Quality of Place



Strengthening Local Economies

Key Project Partners:

- Topeka Town Council
- Topeka Redevelopment Commission
- OCRA
- Downtown Business Owners
- Topeka Together
- LaGrange Cty. Economic Dev. Corp.

Budget:

Estimated Total Cost	\$50,000
OCRA Funding	\$40,000
Local Leverage	\$10,000

Schedule:

The project plans to begin application and procurement in summer of 2025. The planning process will start late 2025 and be completed by end of 2026.

Project Need:

Topeka does not have a plan in place for the development and improvement of its downtown. There are several decisions upcoming about land use and other planned improvements for which it would be helpful to have a master plan completed that engages the community and analyzes the many components that help create a successful downtown.

Community Engagement Support:

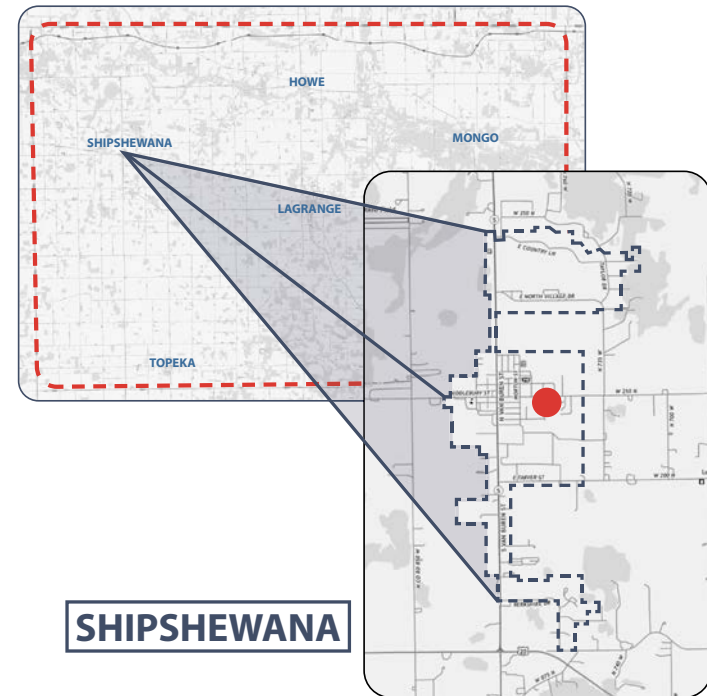
During public engagement it was heard often the importance of improving the downtowns in the communities. Stakeholder engagement showed great interest from Topeka to complete a downtown master plan to help guide the town in future decisions.



Shipshewana Town Park Improvements

Project Description:

Shipshewana Town Park serves as the primary public recreation amenity in the community, providing two baseball fields, playground, and the westernmost trailhead for the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail. The park is frequently used by both Amish and English residents and visitors. The proposed Town Park Improvements project creates new amenities within the park. Amenities include pickleball courts, a new splash pad, performance stage and seating area, a new pavilion and a walking trail that loops around the park. Most of the new amenities will be located in an open area on the east side of the park.



Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including transformative quality of place and promoting community wellness.

- Transformative Quality of Place
- Promoting Community Wellness



- LEGEND**
- 01 Walking Trail
 - 02 Pavilion
 - 03 Splash Pad
 - 04 Pickleball Courts
 - 05 Multi-Use Sports Field
 - 06 Amphitheater
 - 07 Proposed Dog Park

Shipshewana Town Park Improvements

Project Need:

The project need is demonstrated by traffic in the park, and the desire for physical fitness and recreation facilities that has been noted in the engagement process. While there are many tourist attractions in Shipshewana, the amenities for recreation for residents are currently lacking. There is a great need for pickleball courts in the community. There is also a need and desire for a public amphitheater space for performances and events, especially in the evenings when many private attractions are closed.

Community Engagement Support:

In the Community Connections survey, park improvements ranked number three out of eight different proposed project types. Within the category of proposed assets and amenities, parks improvements such as sports fields/courts improvements and playgrounds were the highest rated choice. In the Community Connections survey, many Shipshewana residents noted in the write-in question that they wanted more public amenities available for their families and activities for kids and teens. Improving and adding park amenities and creating a performance/event space will help provide more options for our residents and visitors alike.

Key Project Partners:

- Shipshewana Town Council
- OCRA
- LaGrange County CVB
- LaGrange Cty. Economic Dev. Corp.

Leveraging Resources:

The park improvement project will leverage local funding resources along with OCRA CDBG funding. Support from other organizations and businesses in the community such as E&S Sales will help with funding and the project process. The project also leverages a current improvement project within the park that is constructing a dog park and renovating the parking lot.

Budget:

Estimated Total Cost	\$1,000,000
OCRA Funding	\$730,000
Local Leverage	\$270,000

Proposed Project Schedule:

Phase	2025				2026				2027				2028			
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
Grant Application																
Procurement																
Contracts																
Design																
Bidding																
Construction																
Closeout																



County Parks & Sidewalks Improvements

Project Description - Parks & Sidewalks Improvements in Mongo, South Milford, and Howe:

There are several unincorporated areas in LaGrange County that have aged parks facilities in need of renovation and modern amenities. The parks are well-used and loved by residents and a focal point of our smaller communities. These communities also lack sidewalk infrastructure in many locations, making it difficult or unsafe for people to walk to key community assets. The proposed projects in Mongo, South Milford, and Howe provide improvements such as pickleball courts, playground renovations, walking trails, basketball court renovations, ballfield upgrades, as well as new sidewalks that connect community assets.

Project Need:

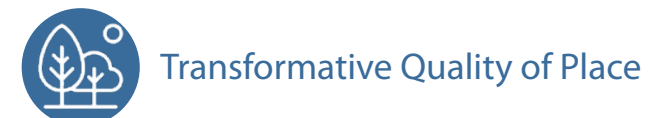
The need for these projects is evident in the number of residents utilizing parks in the unincorporated areas and the absence of sidewalks for pedestrians. The parks act as the hub for most community activities and celebrations. Many unincorporated park amenities are outdated and in poor condition, requiring significant maintenance or renovation. Additionally, new amenities like pickleball courts are lacking in these communities, despite high demand. Without sidewalks in most areas, residents are often forced to walk on the road or drive for short distances within the community. Adding and improving sidewalks would greatly enhance community health and safety.

Community Engagement Support:

In the Community Connections survey, park improvements ranked third out of eight different proposed project types. Within the category of proposed assets and amenities, parks improvements such as sports fields/courts improvements and playgrounds were the highest rated choice. In response to a question regarding types of infrastructure projects, street beautification and sidewalk additions were the top two choices selected among out residents.

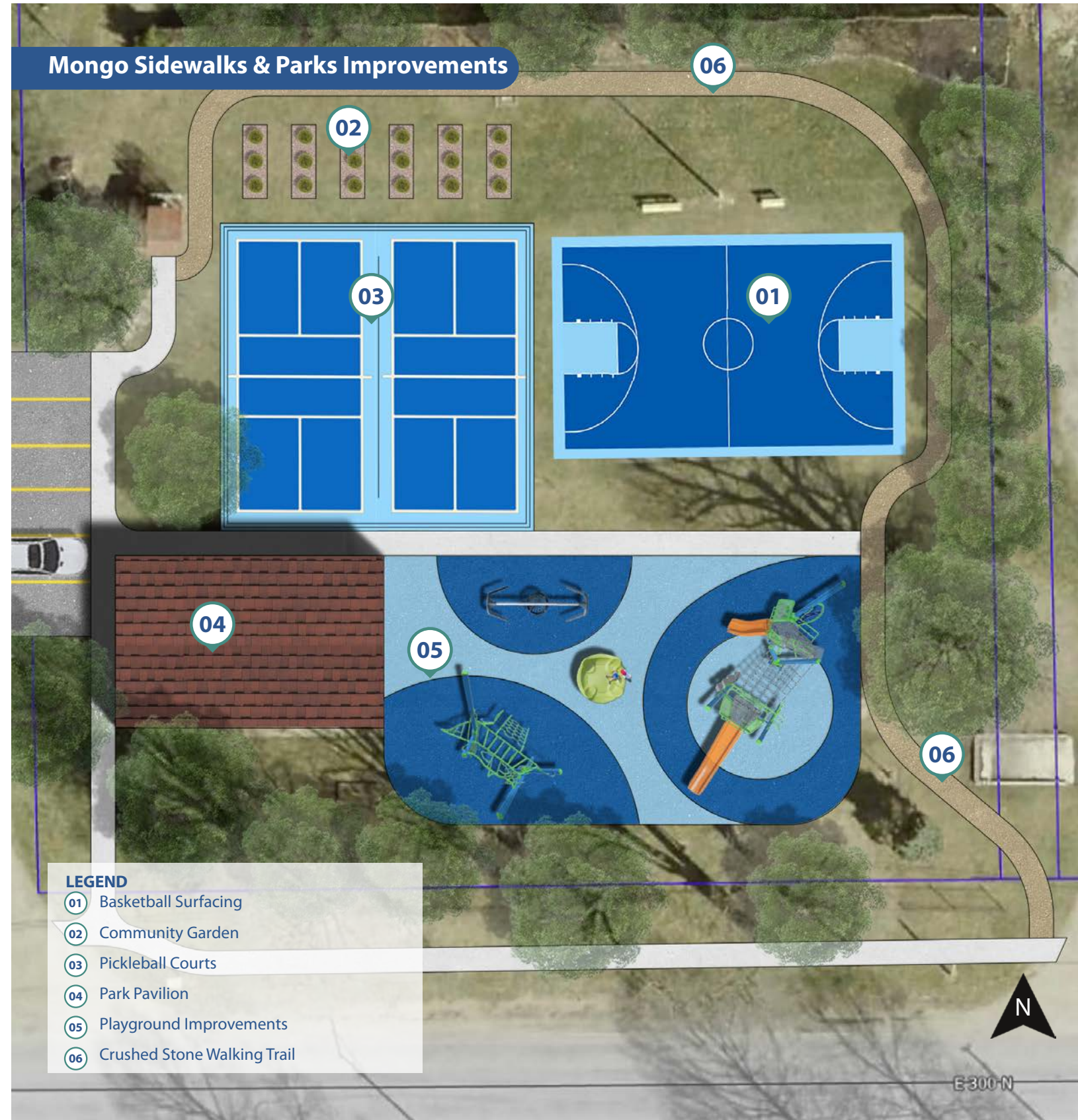
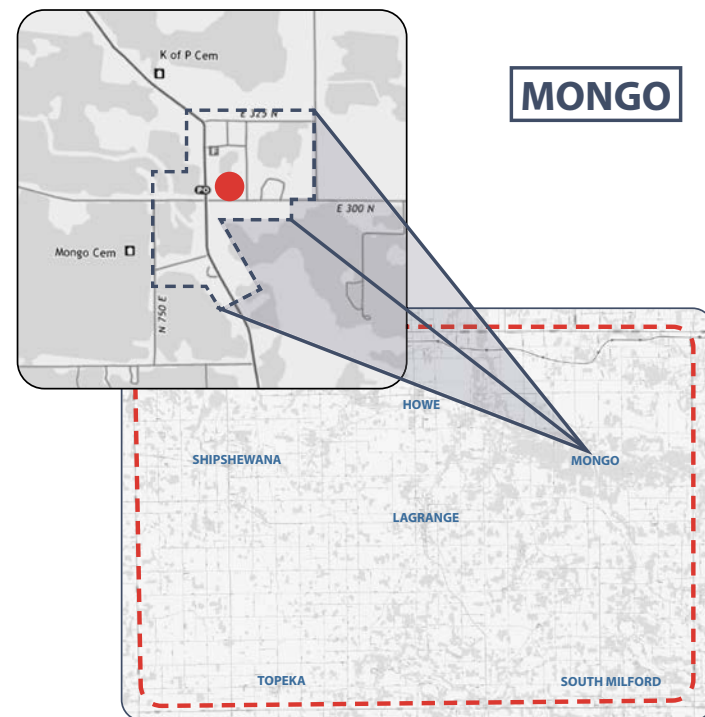
Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including transformative quality of place and promoting community wellness.



Project Description & Need - Mongo:

The park in Mongo is a treasured community asset by residents. The existing pavilion is in good condition, but the basketball court and playground need to be renovated and/or replaced. The proposed project will resurface the basketball court, add two pickleball courts, and renovate the playground with modern equipment and accessible surface. Also proposed is a community garden and a walking trail that will provide resources to help improve community health through physical activity, social interaction, and local healthy food options.



- LEGEND**
- 01 Basketball Surfacing
 - 02 Community Garden
 - 03 Pickleball Courts
 - 04 Park Pavilion
 - 05 Playground Improvements
 - 06 Crushed Stone Walking Trail

County Parks & Sidewalks Projects

Project Description & Need - South Milford:

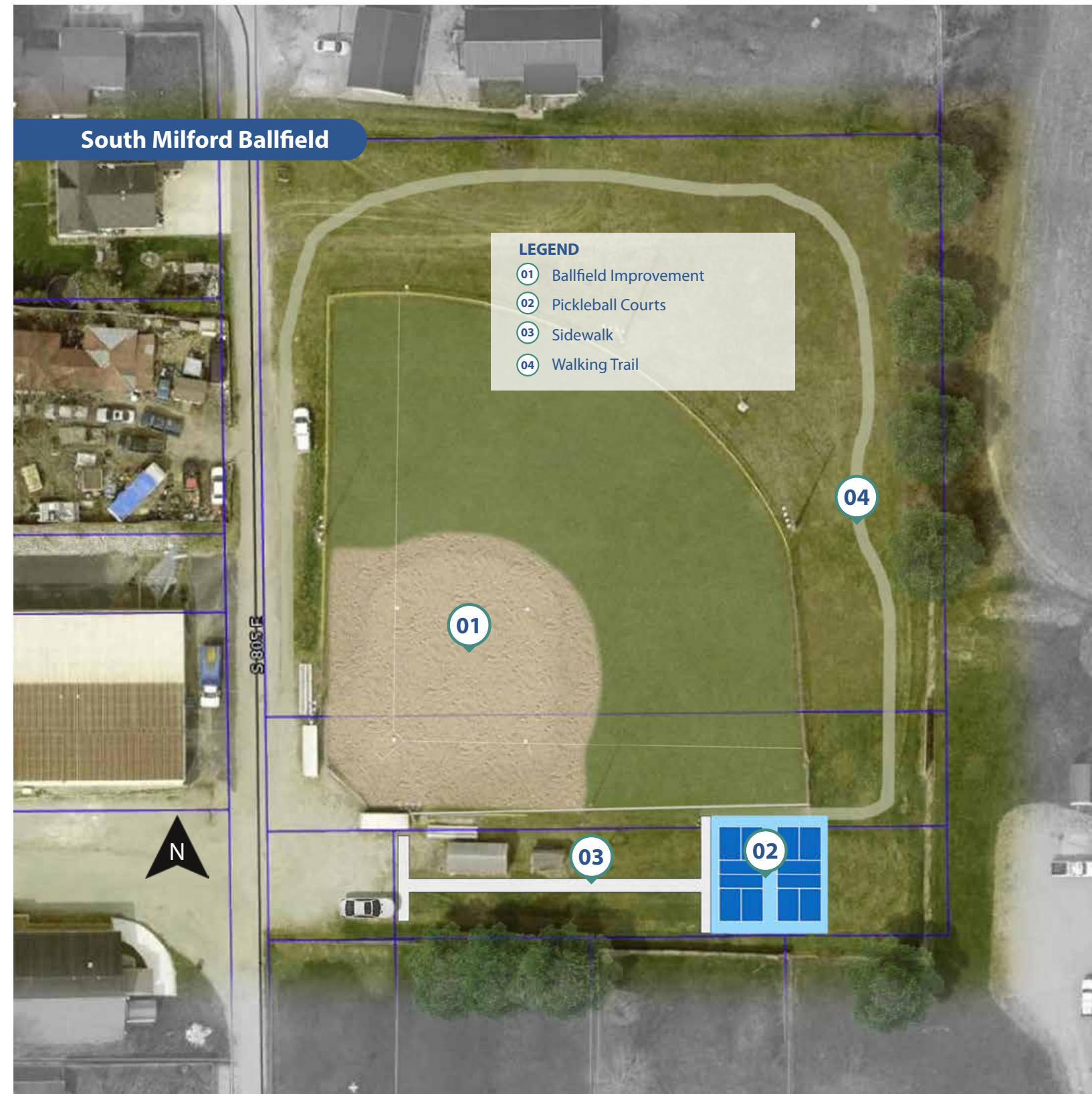
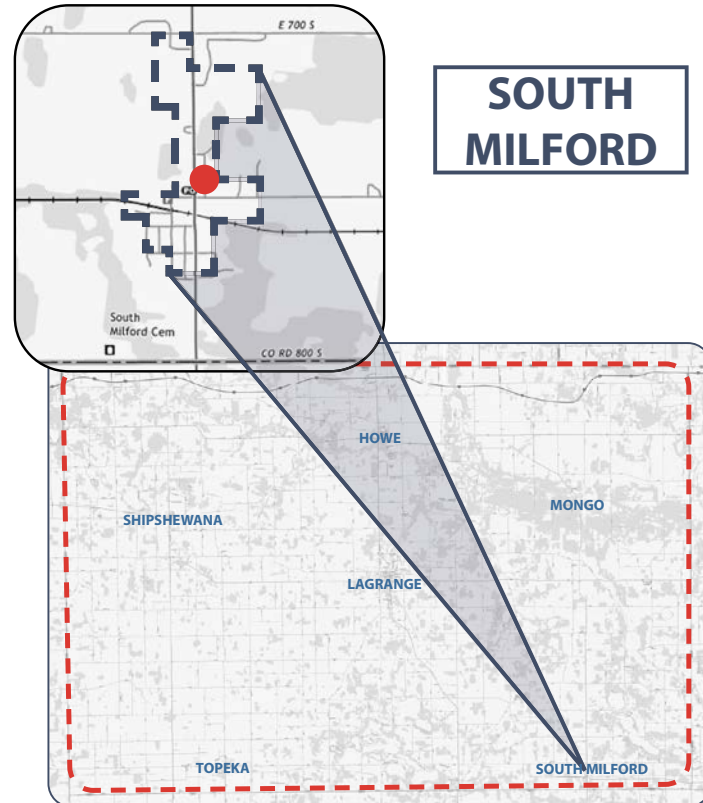
The project need is evident from the condition of the existing amenities and the desired usage of the park facilities. The baseball field is well used but in need of major renovation. The basketball court isn't used frequently and is proposed to be converted and expanded into pickleball courts, which will be a better suited amenity for this community. A loop around the park will be added for community members to walk.

Key Project Partners:

- LaGrange County Council
- LaGrange County Commissioners
- OCRA
- LaGrange Cty. Community Foundation
- Howe Community Association
- Mongo Community Association
- South Milford Community Association
- LaGrange Cty. Community Foundation

Leveraging Resources:

The park and sidewalk improvement projects are a partnership between LaGrange County, its Community Foundation, and some of its unincorporated areas. Support for the projects was shown by the County Council and Commissioners, as well as organizations such as the Economic Development Corporation and Community Foundation.



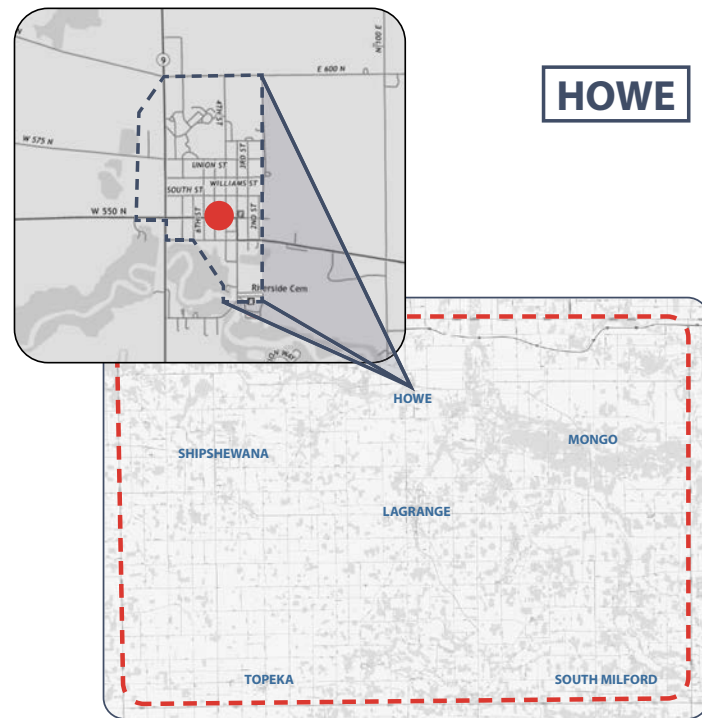
County Parks & Sidewalks Projects

Project Description & Need - Howe:

The project need is evident from the lack of sidewalks in the community, causing residents to walk in the street or drive short distances. A quality of life benefit for living in a small community should be the ability to walk safely to many community assets, and this project will help make that possible. The town park has a well-used pavilion for social gatherings and events, but there are no restrooms available. There is also a great demand for pickleball courts to provide residents with a modern recreational activity for all ages to enjoy.

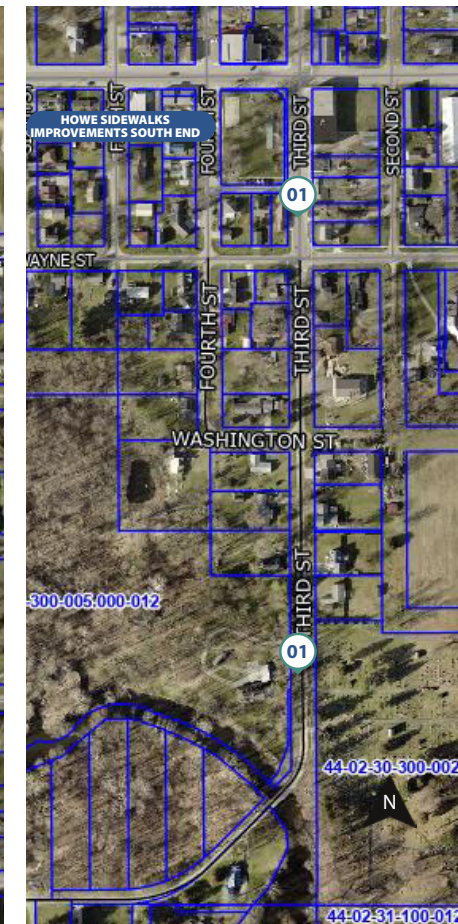
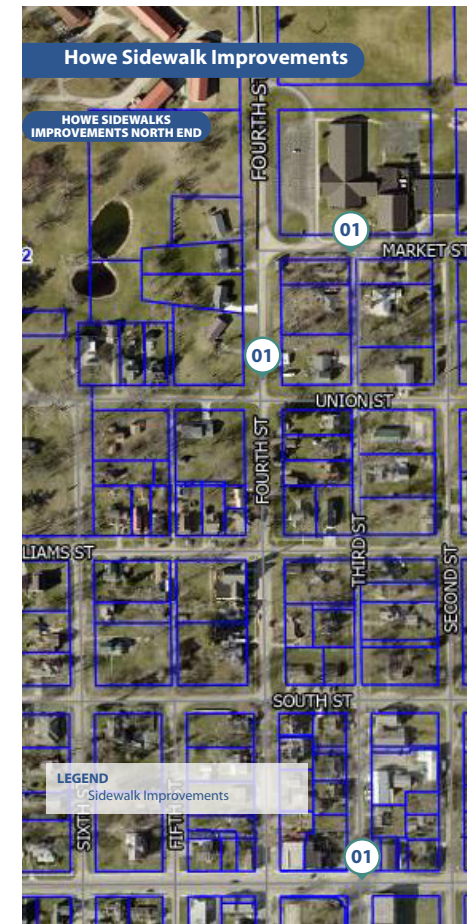
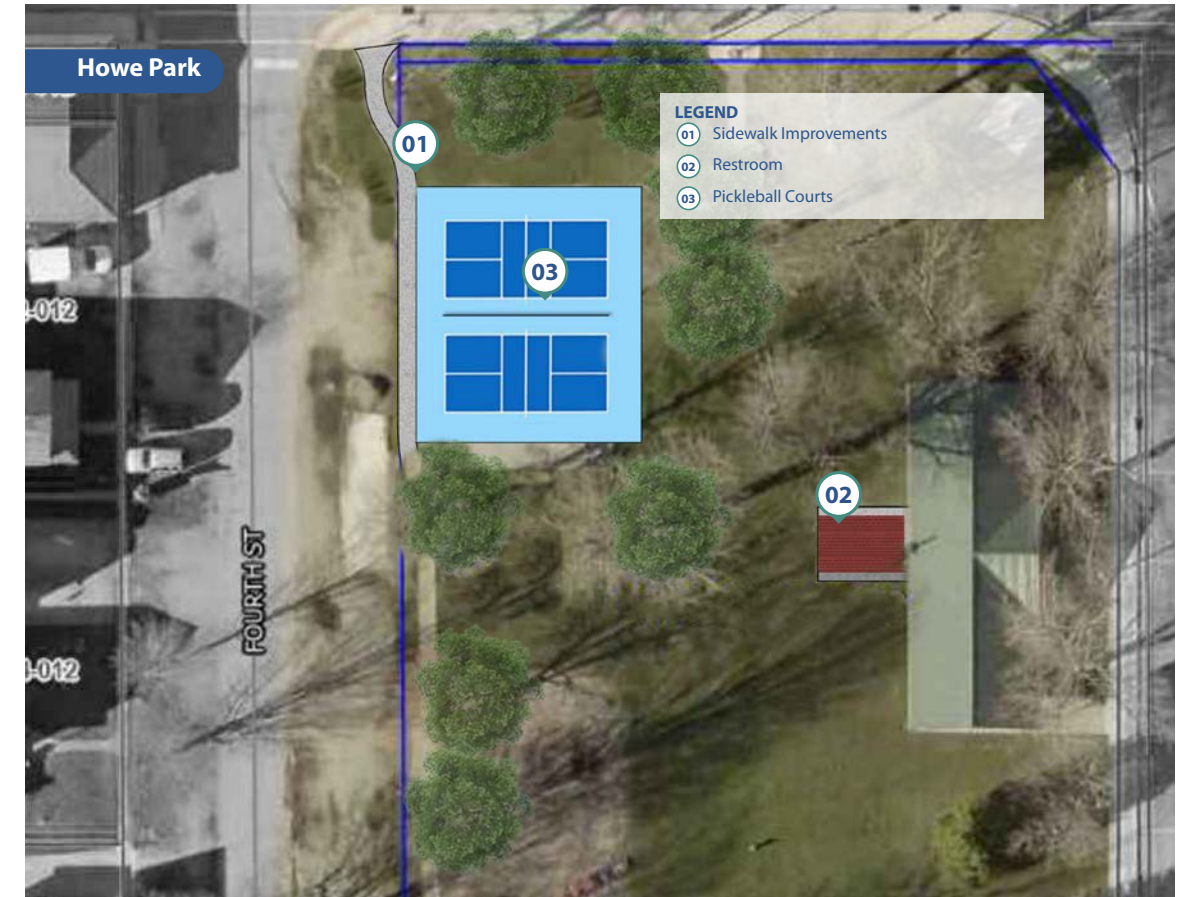
Budget:

Mongo Project Estimated Cost	\$520,000
S. Milford Project Estimated Cost	\$410,000
Howe Project Estimated Cost	\$690,000
Estimated Total Cost	\$1,620,000
OCRA Funding	\$1,157,000
Local Leverage	\$463,000



Proposed Project Schedule:

Phase	2025				2026				2027				2028			
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
Grant Application																
Procurement																
Contracts																
Design																
Bidding																
Construction																
Closeout																



LaGrange County Courthouse Electric Upgrades

Project Description and Need:

The historic LaGrange County Courthouse is in need of major electrical upgrades to meet current codes and safety requirements. The proposed electrical upgrades include new electrical panels, breakers and feeders on the first and second floor and in the basement, replace existing and install new additional 120-volt receptacles, GFI receptacles and switches on all floors, install new smoke detectors in the attic, inspect existing wire and light fixtures, and update all fire alarm stations, smoke detectors, horns, and strobes to meet latest code. Currently, much of the courthouse electric is functioning with daisy chained extension cords, presenting a significant fire risk.

Community Engagement Support:

Many residents expressed interest in historic preservation and improvements to the historic buildings in downtown LaGrange. This was evident in the Community Connections survey and throughout our pop-up engagement activities and discussions. In one question on the Community Connections survey, of five choices related to culture and arts, historic preservation was ranked number 2. The courthouse was also consistently mentioned as a priority for preservation and renovation.

Key Project Partners:

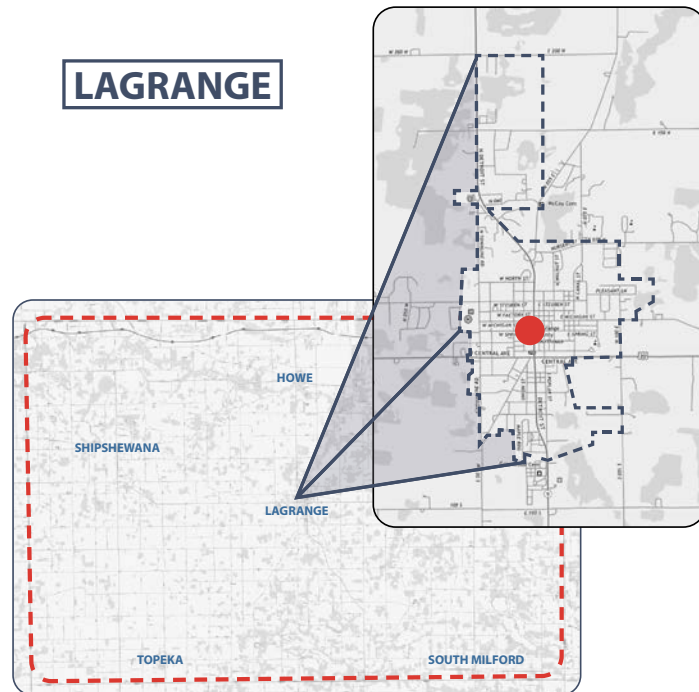
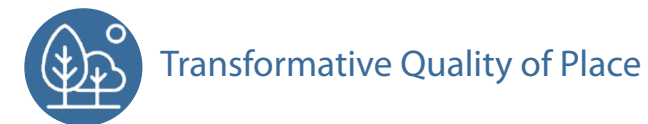
- LaGrange County Council
- LaGrange County Commissioners
- IDNR Dept. of Historic Preservation
- LaGrange Cty. Economic Dev. Corp.

Leveraging Resources:

The Courthouse renovation project leverages support from several entities in the town and county along with the DNR DHPA.

Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including transformative quality of place.



Schedule:

It is anticipated to begin the process with DNR in 2025 and have project completion by early 2026.

Budget:

Estimated Total Cost	\$365,000
DNR Funding	\$75,000
Local Leverage	\$290,000



LaGrange County Down Payment Assistance Program

Project Description & Need:

LaGrange County completed a housing study in 2019 that showed a need for more homes in the county. Many people live outside of the county and commute in for work every day. This is especially true for the large manufacturing workforce. There are new housing developments underway in Topeka and Shipshewana that will make about 200 homes available when completed. However, these are planned to be market rate housing and may be difficult for many families to afford. There is a regional down payment assistance program called Hoosier Homes through the Club 720 Corporation. This program is available to first time and repeat home buyers looking to purchase a home in LaGrange County. Some applicants will be accepted into the program, others will be deferred to IHCD programs, and then connected with lenders through either program. Hoosier Homes has income limits of 140% AMI, where IHCD programs typically have limits of 80% of the state-wide median family income. LaGrange County is looking to partner with IHCD to offer and expand down payment assistance programs for residents.

Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including strengthening local economies.



Strengthening Local Economies

Key Project Partners:

- LaGrange County Council
- LaGrange County Commissioners
- IHCD
- Club 720 Corporation
- LaGrange Cty. Economic Dev. Corp.

Leveraging Resources:

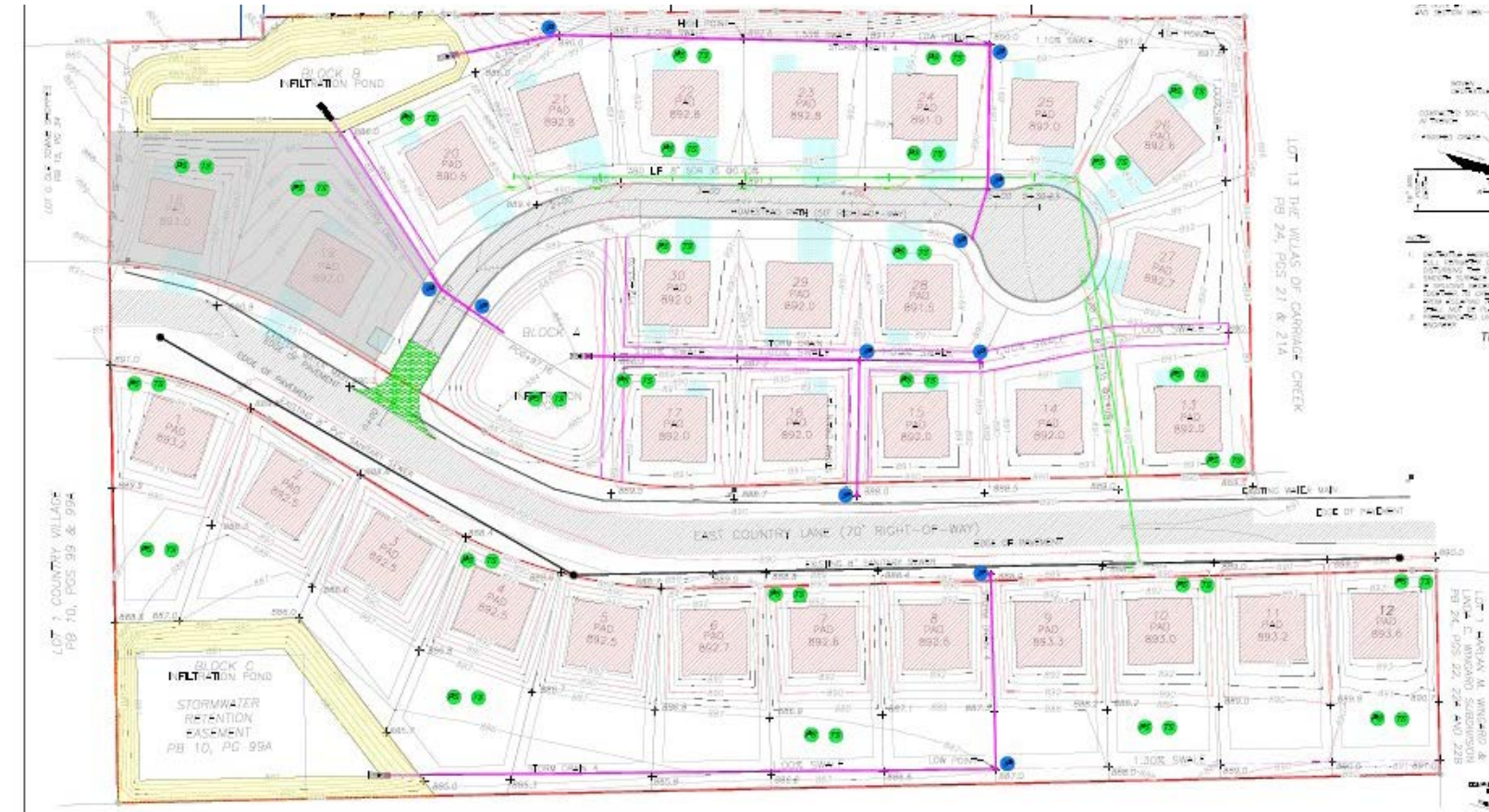
The project will leverage support and funding from LaGrange County, IHCD, and the Club 720 Corporation, and local lenders. The project also leverages several housing developments underway or planned within LaGrange County.

Community Engagement Support:

Throughout the stakeholder and public engagement activities, housing was mentioned as a consistent challenge and priority. This was especially evident in the stakeholder workshop. In the Community Connections Survey, housing development ranked fifth out of eight project types, although it had the second most first place votes. The results seem to show that housing development is a more polarizing topic among residents. While new housing development was more polarizing, making housing more affordable was consistently mentioned as a current challenge and priority.

Proposed Project Schedule:

The project will begin development in 2025 with program funding application to ISDA in late 2025. The Down Payment Assistance Program is proposed to begin accepting homeowner applications in 2026.



- LEGEND**
1. WALKING PATH
 2. CUL-DE-SAC DUPLEX VILLAS
 3. FAMILY HOMES
 4. POCKET PARK COMMONS
 5. PLAYGROUND
 6. POND
 7. ESTATE HOMES
 8. MAIN INTERSECTION

LaGrange Tradition Kitchen

Project Description & Need:

This innovative project plans to upgrade our Senior Center’s kitchen to a full commercial setup, creating a space where community members can lead classes on things like preparing heirloom family recipes, food preservation methods, and cooking with locally sourced ingredients among many other options. This space will offer a meaningful gathering spot for older adults in our community, giving them an opportunity to share their knowledge and feel valued, while also passing down invaluable skills to younger generations.

Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including transformative quality of place and promoting community wellness.



Transformative Quality of Place



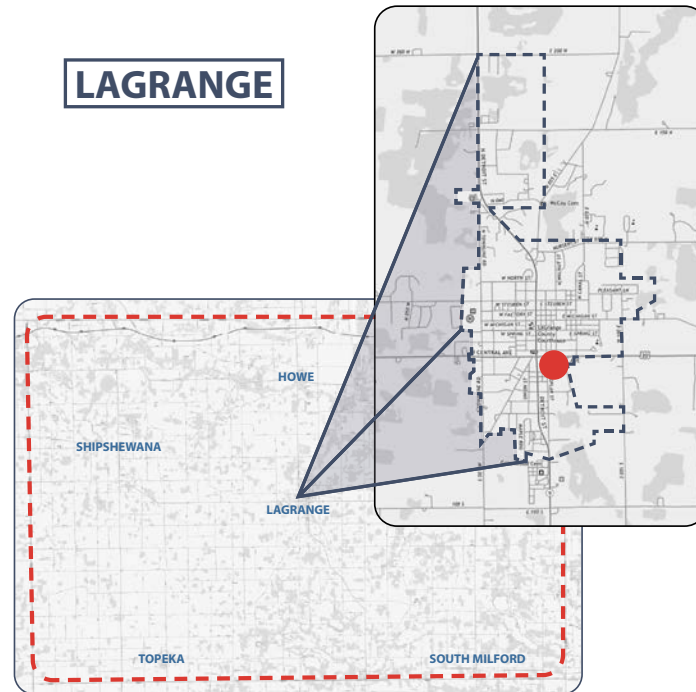
Promoting Community Wellness

Key Project Partners:

- LaGrange County Council
- LaGrange County Commissioners
- OCRA
- Indiana State Dept. of Health
- Indiana State Dept. of Agriculture
- LaGrange Cty. Economic Dev. Corp.
- United Way

Leveraging Resources:

The Tradition Kitchen project is a partnership between LaGrange County, its Economic Development Corporation, United Way, the Council on Aging, and state agency partners OCRA, ISDH, and ISDA.



Community Engagement Support:

In the public engagement pop-up feedback boards, many potential programs and projects were listed relating to agriculture, community health, wellness, and social/cultural initiatives. The Tradition Kitchen was one of the programs or projects receiving the most votes.

Budget:

Total Estimated Cost	\$275,000
County Funding	\$37,500
United Way Funding	\$120,000
OCRA Funding	\$70,000
ISDA Funding	\$30,000
ISDH Funding	\$17,500



Photo of Existing Council on Aging Kitchen



Precedent Image for Proposed Tradition Kitchen

Proposed Project Schedule:

Phase	2025				2026				2027				2028			
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
Grant Application																
Procurement																
Contracts																
Design																
Bidding																
Construction																
Closeout																

LaGrange County Farm to Food Bank & Cold Storage

Project Description & Need:

In our agriculturally rich community, a significant amount of fresh produce is wasted each year simply because there's more produce than can be sold or consumed before it spoils. Our local food banks often lack sufficient access to fresh, nutritious options, which are essential to supporting families in need. A farm-to food-bank program could help close this gap, providing better access to local produce and reducing food waste. This project would fund the purchase and installation of cold storage to keep the surplus produce fresh longer, supporting food banks across the county. A consideration for the addition of larger walk-in cold storage was considered, however with approximately half of our population traveling predominantly by horse or bicycle, and gas prices being a potential barrier for residents who drive, it was decided that the best option would be to fund commercial freezers and refrigerators in multiple food bank locations throughout the county. The program would also establish a system to raise awareness to encourage more donations. Additionally, funding from ISDA could be directed toward mileage reimbursements at the current state rate for food bank employees/volunteers, allowing the potential to pick up donations directly from farms and eliminating a barrier of getting food from growers to food banks.

Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including promoting community wellness.



Promoting Community Wellness

Community Engagement Support:

In the public engagement pop-up feedback boards, many potential programs and projects were listed relating to agriculture, community health, wellness, and social/cultural initiatives. The Farm to Food Banks Program and Cold Storage received the most votes.

Budget:

Total Estimated Cost	\$200,000
County Funding	\$47,000
ISDA Funding	\$50,000
ISDH Funding	\$20,000
United Way Funding	\$80,000
Parkview Hospital	\$3,000

Proposed Project Schedule:

The project will begin development in late 2025 with funding applications completed early in 2026. Construction and program development will occur in 2026, with the program beginning in the spring/summer of 2027.

Key Project Partners:

- LaGrange County Council
- LaGrange County Commissioners
- Indiana State Dept. of Agriculture
- Indiana State Dept. of Health
- United Way of LaGrange County
- Parkview Hospital
- LaGrange Cty. Economic Dev. Corporation
- Local Food Banks

Leveraging Resources:

The project will leverage funding from ISDA and ISDH, with local county match, contributions from United Way, and Parkview Hospital. Project partners also include local food banks, farmers, and the Economic Development Corporation.



COMPLEMENTARY PROJECTS

LaGrange County Innovation Center

Project Description & Need:

The LaGrange County Innovation Center (LCIC) is a collaborative project led by the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC), born from a pressing need for more childcare options in the community. It began when the LaGrange County Community Foundation in partnership with Thrive by Five submitted a successful proposal for a new childcare facility in the county, and was awarded \$500,000 through the Early Years Initiative Grant to expand local childcare services. Currently, a local childcare provider named in the grant proposal, Imagination Station, serves 16 children and maintains a wait list of 30, highlighting a critical shortage in LaGrange, which has only 92 state-licensed childcare spots. Of these, 76 are through LaGrange Head Start, leaving just 16 full-time licensed seats at Imagination Station. Estimates indicate that LaGrange needs 591 more childcare spots to meet local demand.

To address this, the GO Foundation—established by the owners of Imagination Station—plans to create 72 additional licensed, high-quality childcare seats for children ages 0-5. Although the GO Foundation initially hoped to secure a vacant surgery center in north LaGrange for expansion, they were unable to do so alone. LCEDC has now entered a purchase agreement for the surgery center and is seeking READI 2 funding to bring the LCIC to life.

In addition to housing Imagination Station’s expanded 72-seat daycare, the LCIC will provide office space for LCEDC and the Chamber of Commerce, a co-working area, office suites, and a community meeting room with a 60-person capacity.

Community Engagement Support:

The need for more quality childcare options was evident during pop-up engagement feedback and especially in the stakeholder workshop. Attracting younger families and workforce is a goal, and having quality childcare options is essential for this effort.

Budget:

Total Estimated Cost	\$4,608,071
Grant Funding	\$3,134,071
Public Match	\$395,000
Private Match	\$1,079,000

Leveraging Resources:

The project leverages several local resources and grant programs including the GO Foundation, READI 2.0, Early Years Initiative Grant, LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation, and LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce.

Key Project Partners:

- LaGrange County Council
- LaGrange County Commissioners
- LaGrange Cty. Economic Dev. Corporation
- GO Foundation
- READI 2.0
- LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce
- LaGrange County Community Foundation
- Thrive by 5

Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including strengthening local economies and transformative quality of place.



Strengthening Local Economies



Transformative Quality of Place



Existing Site Photo

LaGrange County Community Center

Project Description & Need:

The proposed LaGrange County Community Center is a collaborative project designed to serve all residents of LaGrange County. While there are a few community centers currently, they were established by the Amish community and serve only the Amish Community. Community feedback gathered over the last several years and through recent engagement efforts for Stellar show a strong desire among the wider community for a shared space offering programs for both adults and children. LaGrange County boasts an excellent parks system, and while there are planned outdoor park improvements in our municipalities and throughout the county, indoor recreation options are limited and would be especially valuable during cold winter months. Our goal is to secure a location for the center soon and establish a board to develop a sustainable plan based on community needs. We'll use insights from the Community Connections survey and Open House feedback to identify priority programs, with more engagement planned to shape the center's development. The vision includes spaces for a gym with weightlifting and cardio equipment, a group exercise room, rental meeting spaces, and classrooms for arts programming. Additionally, we hope to offer below market rental space for county nonprofits and businesses seeking an accessible, multi-use facility.

Community Engagement Support:

A deep desire for a community center was unmistakable in our Community Connections Survey feedback and was very heavily discussed during pop-up engagements and in our stakeholder workshop. In one question on the Community Connections Survey, nearly 36% of respondents rated a community center in their top three of eight choices for types of projects.

Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including transformative quality of place, strengthening local economies, and promoting community wellness.

-  Transformative Quality of Place
-  Strengthening Local Economies
-  Promoting Community Wellness

Key Project Partners:

- LaGrange Town Council
- LaGrange Redevelopment Commission
- LaGrange Cty. Economic Dev. Corp.
- LaGrange Cty Community Foundation
- OCRA
- YMCA

Leveraging Resources:

This project is in development but hopes to leverage several local and grant programs including potential dollars from CDBG, The Dekko Foundation, Don Wood Foundation, Cole Center Family YMCA, The LaGrange County Community Foundation, Parkview LaGrange and others.

Budget:

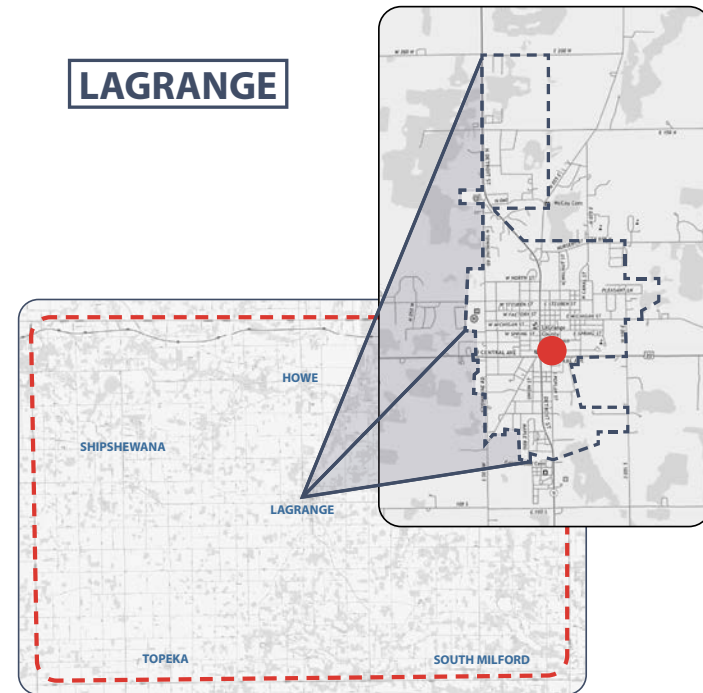
Total Estimated Cost \$15,000,000



LaGrange 9 & 20 Housing Project

Project Description:

The town of LaGrange acquired several parcels of property on the northeast corner of SR9 and US 20 in downtown. The town, a private developer, and the LCEDC are working together to initiate the project. The existing buildings on the property are vacant and in poor condition. They will be demolished and the site cleared for this new housing development. The planned housing includes a mix of townhomes and condos. The location will provide a more urban living experience with walkability to downtown businesses and the historic courthouse square.



Community Engagement Support:

Housing was a top priority mentioned throughout the stakeholder and public engagement process. Renovations and redevelopment for housing scored very high on a question in the Community Connections Survey regarding housing. Downtown revitalization efforts was also shown to be a priority, and this project will revitalize the main intersection in downtown LaGrange.

Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including transformative quality of place and strengthening local economies.

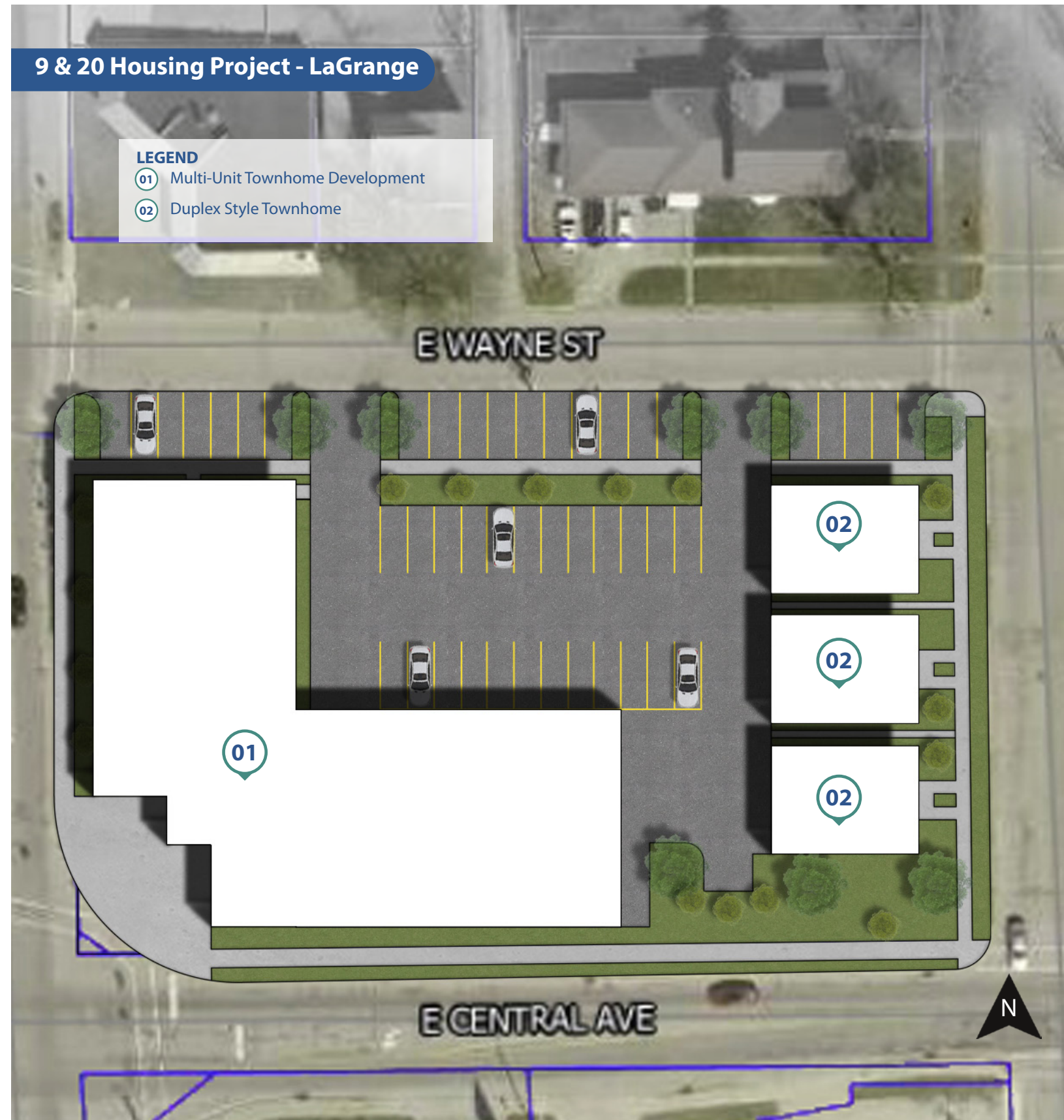
- Transformative Quality of Place
- Strengthening Local Economies

Key Project Partners:

- LaGrange Town Council
- LaGrange Redevelopment Commission
- Private Developer
- LaGrange Economic Development Corp.
- READI 2.0

Leveraging Resources:

The proposed project has support and funding from the Town of LaGrange, a private developer, and a funding application to READI 2. The project would leverage the Stellar Pathways projects of the adjacent Detroit Street streetscape and facade improvements.



Topeka Housing Development

Project Description & Need:

LaGrange County completed a housing study in 2019 that showed a need for more homes in the county. Many people live outside of the county and commute in for work every day. This is especially true for the large manufacturing workforce in Topeka. The pre-development analysis showed that the optimum market position in Topeka for new housing is rental apartments at 600 to 1,250 SF at \$725 to \$1,400 per month and for detached houses 1,250 to 1,650 SF at \$175,000 to \$225,000. These prices are based on 2021 market numbers. This new housing development in Topeka has its first phase underway. The first phase includes 20 family homes, three duplexes, and three estate homes for a total of 29 units. The full development consists of four proposed phases providing a total of 151 units.

Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including transformative quality of place and strengthening local economies.



Transformative Quality of Place



Strengthening Local Economies

Key Project Partners:

- Topeka Town Council
- Housing Resource Hub
- READI

Leveraging Resources:

The proposed project has support and funding from the Town of Topeka, READI, and its developer to get the first phase of implementation underway.



Shipshewana Housing Development

Project Description & Need:

LaGrange County completed a housing study in 2019 that showed a need for more homes in the county. Many people live outside of the county and commute in for work every day. Shipshewana attracts millions of tourists each year and has a large workforce to support the tourism industry. According to the housing study, the optimum market position for the Town of Shipshewana is rental apartments at 600 to 1,300 SF at a price of \$800 to \$1,650 per month, townhouses at 1,100 to 1,350 SF at \$150,000 to \$175,000, and detached houses at 1,350 to 1,850 SF at \$210,000 to \$275,000.

This single-family housing development called Country Lane Estates is located on the north side of Shipshewana. There is existing infrastructure of Country Lane including access to water and sewer infrastructure. It is planned to provide 30 detached homes when completed. Some lots have already been sold and homes have been built.

Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including transformative quality of place and strengthening local economies.



Transformative Quality of Place



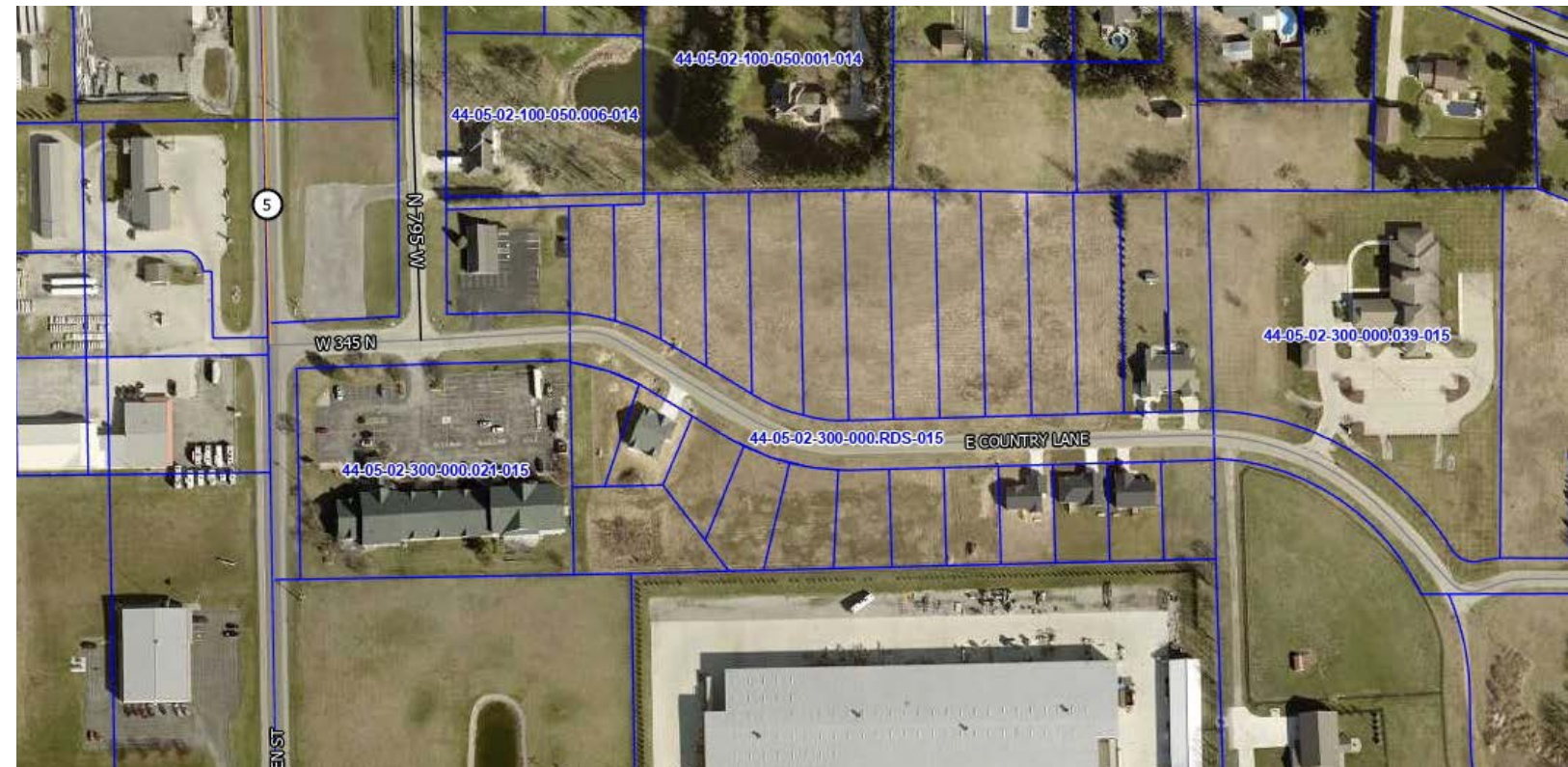
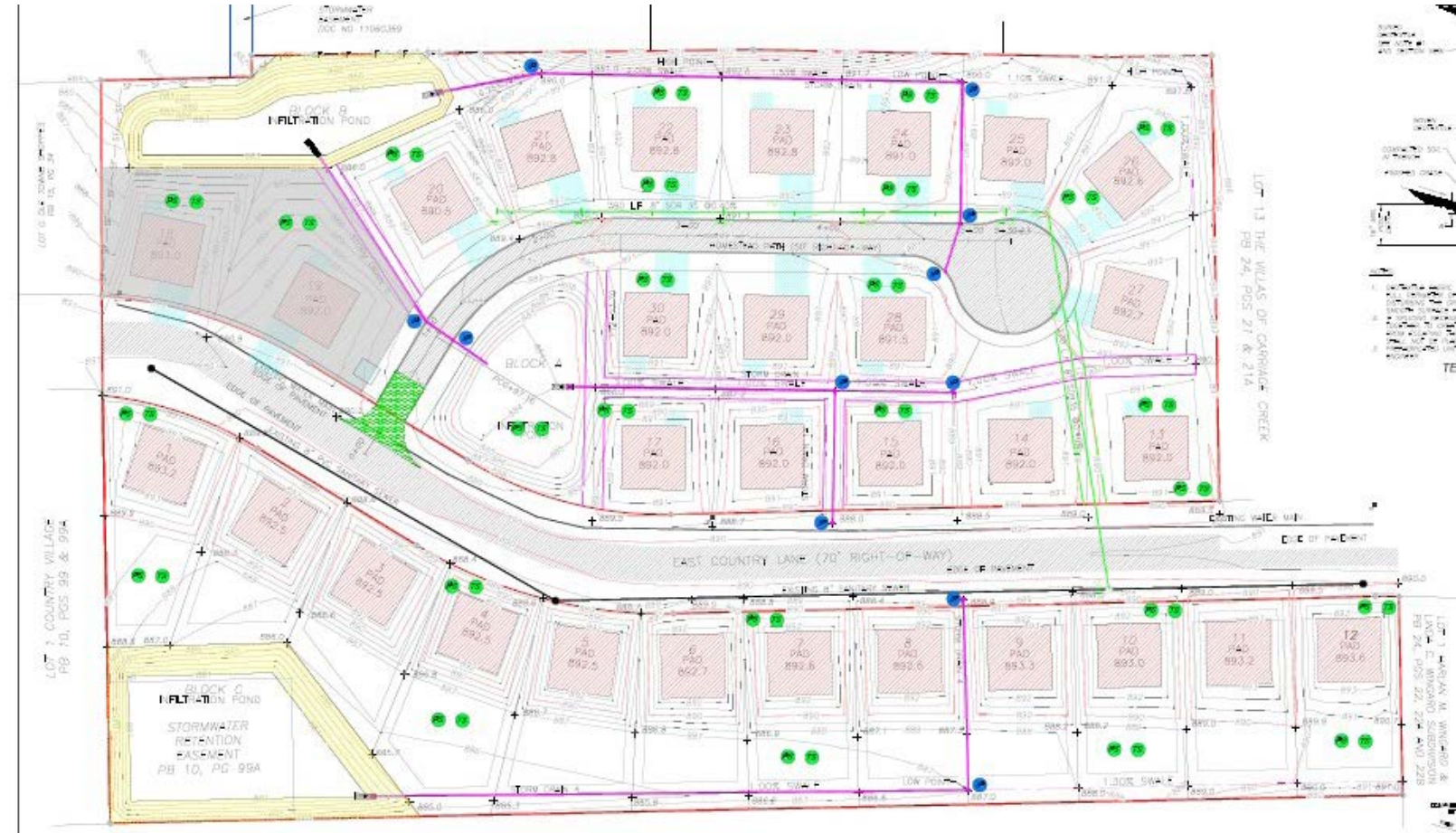
Strengthening Local Economies

Key Project Partners:

- Town of Shipshewana
- Yoder Investment Properties
- Dallas Lake Construction
- Homeowners

Leveraging Resources:

The development has support from the Town of Shipshewana, as well as private investment from Yoder Investment Properties and Dallas Lake Construction. The project also leverages existing infrastructure in place along Country Lane.



LaGrange County Agricultural Heritage Trail

Project Description & Need:

The LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC) and the LaGrange County Convention and Visitors Bureau (LCCVB) are working collaboratively to develop a LaGrange County Agricultural Heritage Trail which will celebrate the people, history, places and density of the LaGrange County agricultural story. When completed, this trail will feature over 60 agricultural experiences including farm tours, produce stands, farmers markets, and farm-to-table dining options throughout the entire LaGrange County area.

LaGrange County has a rich heritage in agriculture and a story to tell the outside world about this important part of the local economy. Recent research by the National Travel Center (NTC) indicates that 79% of LaGrange County land is devoted to agriculture which includes 2,144 farms, averaging 91 acres, the largest number of farms in a single county in the entire state of Indiana. In addition, LaGrange County is second highest in the United States by having the youngest producers and the largest number of certified organic farms in the state of Indiana. Once developed, this Agricultural Heritage Trail also will celebrate the 31 Hoosier Homestead farms in LaGrange County still operating by the same family heritage line for 100, 150, or 200 years.

This new development vision is to increase economic impact to the local economy by offering local farm experiences to increase revenues. As people continue to look for unique, authentic experiences while traveling, agritourism answers that desire by allowing visitors and residents the opportunity to enjoy a more relaxing getaway, particularly in rural, small towns and regions. This is especially of interest to urban dwellers who want a deeper understanding of where their food comes from. Visitors will enjoy visiting farms, u-pick fields, participating in farm activities, purchasing farm products, and otherwise learning about farms, farm operations and food sourcing.

Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including transformative quality of place and strengthening local economies.



Transformative Quality of Place



Strengthening Local Economies

Key Project Partners:

- LaGrange County Council
- LaGrange County Commissioners
- LaGrange Cty. Economic Dev. Corp.
- LaGrange County CVB

Leveraging Resources:

The Heritage Trail leverages many resources throughout the county. With support and funding from LaGrange County, LCEDC, and LaGrange County CVB, the program expands tourism in the county by leveraging the many resources and assets that LaGrange County has to offer.

Budget:

Total Estimated Cost \$20,000



LaGrange County Area Transit (LCAT) Barn Project

Project Description & Need:

The LaGrange County Area Transit (LCAT) Garage Project will provide a dedicated, weather-protected facility for overnight storage of the entire LCAT fleet, currently composed of 16 transit vehicles, with two additional vans approved through an INDOT grant arriving next year. As LaGrange County's primary public transportation provider, funded through the Indiana Rural Transit 5311 Grant and overseen by INDOT, LCAT serves the community by providing critical early-morning and long-distance trips, including work commutes beginning at 4 a.m. and dialysis transports to Kendallville as early as 5 a.m. Currently, vehicles are parked outdoors, which leads to operational and maintenance challenges, especially during harsh winters. Icy conditions often make it difficult to access vehicles, delaying daily operations, while frozen suspension parts, wire harnesses, and door mechanisms frequently result in costly repairs, adding strain to the budget and aging fleet, with many vehicles already exceeding 300,000 miles.

The new LCAT Garage will address these issues by housing vehicles in a heated facility with drainage, reducing the time required for vehicle preparation each morning and significantly lowering maintenance costs associated with winter weather damage. This facility will support vehicle longevity, improve safety, and enhance service reliability for the over 2,900 trips LCAT averages monthly. For LCAT, a heated, protected garage has long been a goal and a crucial part of our strategy to continue delivering dependable transportation to LaGrange County residents. With the recent nearing of payoff for our Council on Aging-owned building, we are well-positioned to make this garage a reality.

Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including strengthening local economies.



Strengthening Local Economies

Key Project Partners:

- LaGrange County Council
- LaGrange County Commissioners
- LaGrange Cty. Economic Dev. Corp.
- LaGrange County Area Transit
- INDOT

Leveraging Resources:

The project leverages resources from its partners including LaGrange County, LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation, and LaGrange County Area Transit. It also leverages a grant from INDOT for additional fleet vehicles.

Budget:

Total Estimated Cost \$200,000



LaGrange County Scenic Byway Project

Project Description & Need:

LaGrange County, Indiana, is home to 369 small businesses spread across its charming small towns and rural roads, with no single town boasting a population over 3,000. This distribution presents challenges in fostering economic development and attracting visitors to local enterprises. To address this need, the proposed project aims to develop a designated scenic byway that not only showcases the natural beauty of the county but also highlights the businesses along its route, creating a unique experience for travelers. Indiana recognizes the value of scenic byways, which are known to significantly boost visitor spending—averaging between \$250,000 and \$450,000 per mile per year.

With both the Economic Development office and the Visitors Bureau actively involved, the project is poised for robust promotion and implementation, ensuring the byway becomes a vital economic asset for the community. The requested funding will facilitate the creation of a Corridor Management Plan and the necessary steps to secure official designation from the State Department of Transportation. This project is essential for LaGrange County, where 79% of the landscape consists of rural farmland. A scenic byway represents one of the few environmentally friendly avenues for stimulating economic development beyond agriculture, drawing visitors to experience the county's unique charm and supporting local businesses in the process.

Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including strengthening local economies.



Strengthening Local Economies



Key Project Partners:

- LaGrange County Council
- LaGrange County Commissioners
- LaGrange Cty. Economic Dev. Corp.
- LaGrange Cty. Visitors Bureau
- USDA Rural Development
- INDOT

Leveraging Resources:

The project leverages resources and funding from its partners including LaGrange County, LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation, and LaGrange County Visitors Bureau, and a Rural Business Development Grant through USDA Rural Development. It also leverages the assets of the many unique businesses and attractions in the county communities and along the rural roads in the county.

Budget:

Total Estimated Cost \$32,000

LaGrange County Trails Master Plan

Project Description & Need:

The LaGrange County Community Foundation has partnered with LaGrange County Trails to create a countywide trails master plan. Through a cohesive and comprehensive approach to trails planning, this document will guide LaGrange County Trails and community leaders as they develop, expand, and improve trail infrastructure and programs. LaGrange County Trails is a 501c3 nonprofit committed to developing trails in LaGrange County with a goal of improving connectivity with neighboring counties. They are actively working on the Hawpatch Trail connecting Millersburg to Wolcottville through Topeka. For the purposes of this plan, the Hawpatch Trail is considered an existing trail. Walking and biking are common in LaGrange County despite being predominantly rural. The Census Bureau estimates 4.5% of workers walk to work, and 7.8% bike – both substantially higher than the national average of 2.5% and 0.5% respectively. This is largely due to LaGrange County’s sizable Amish population, which makes up nearly half of the county’s total population. Until this plan, LaGrange County had no community-driven guide for trail expansion and desired to identify potential corridors for trail development. LaGrange County’s 2022 comprehensive plan, LaGrange County Together, identified trail expansion as a top priority. This plan is an opportunity to update, unify, and define non-motorized transportation in LaGrange County. This plan’s goal is to unite the county, as well as towns, in the potential for new trails.

Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including strengthening local economies, transformative quality of place, and promoting community wellness..

- Strengthening Local Economies
- Transformative Quality of Place
- Promoting Community Wellness

Key Project Partners:

- LaGrange County
- LaGrange County Trails
- LaGrange Cty. Community Foundation
- Lilly Endowment GIFT VIII Initiative

Leveraging Resources:

The project leverages funding from its partners including LaGrange County Community Foundation and the Lilly Endowment GIFT VIII Program.

Budget:

Total Estimated Cost \$50,000

LaGrange County Hawpatch Trail

Project Description & Need:

The purpose of the Hawpatch Trail is to vastly improve citizen, resident, and motorist safety by constructing an ADA compliant non-motorized trail according to acceptable engineering standards. Additionally, all improvements under this project will lead towards enhancing quality of life for all LaGrange County residents, and connecting the towns of Millersburg, Topeka, and Wolcottville.

The county roads that grid the area between Millersburg and Wolcottville are typically narrow and many are unimproved or have stone surfaces. These conditions do not allow for a safe route for pedestrians to travel along the region. With the local culture including a large Amish community, a large number of pedestrians exist on foot and bicycle. Having a direct trail that is isolated will provide a safe and direct route for these pedestrians to traverse among the three towns as well as potential future connections to other area trails.

The planned route for the Hawpatch Trail is near other regionally connecting trails and will consist seventeen miles completed in 5 phases with a future goal of connecting it to additional trails in our county and surrounding counties.

Stellar Pathways Goals Alignment:

The project aligns with goals of the Stellar Pathways program including strengthening local economies, transformative quality of place, and promoting community wellness.

- Strengthening Local Economies
- Transformative Quality of Place
- Promoting Community Wellness

Key Project Partners:

- LaGrange County Council
- LaGrange County Commissioners
- LaGrange County Trails
- LaGrange Cty. Economic Dev. Corp.
- LaGrange Cty. Community Foundation
- Lilly Endowment GIFT VIII Initiative
- INDOT

Leveraging Resources:

The project leverages resources and funding from its partners including LaGrange County, LaGrange County Community Foundation, LaGrange County Trails, LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation, and LaGrange County Visitors Bureau, and potentially READI 2.0, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, and/or Indiana Department of Transportation for implementation funding.

Budget:

Total Estimated Cost \$18,000,000



CHAPTER 4

PROJECT FULFILLMENT & STRATEGIES

- Implementation
- Sustainability
- Key Acknowledgements

4

The proposed Stellar projects have identified funding sources for local match of at least twenty percent, and many projects have additional local funding, private funding, or funding from other sources. Some of the complementary projects have also received funding from the county and local organizations and individuals. The Connect LaGrange County team will be utilizing a grant administration consultant and design consultants familiar with OCRA and INDOT's project implementation process. Most projects have a conceptual design or schematic design in place with a detailed preliminary cost estimate to help ensure the proposed project elements can be funded with the proposed budgets. Project estimates also include a 10% contingency to provide for inflation and other project elements that may arise during design.

The sustainability of projects and programs within the Connect LaGrange County initiative is a cornerstone of our team's commitment to lasting impact and community resilience. We have worked to develop a comprehensive sustainability plan that encompasses transparent and accountable project management, robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and collaborative leadership to ensure the continued success of our endeavors that result from this program.

IMPLEMENTATION

Progress Measurement & Reporting Outline

Ensuring that Stellar Pathways projects have a positive impact on LaGrange County communities is essential for successful implementation. Having measurable data to show, support, and communicate the positive effects of projects on a community will garner more opportunities to further develop and improve LaGrange County quality of life. Progress can be measured in a multitude of ways and Connect LaGrange County is committed to documenting these metrics in order to understand how a project is impacting each community and then leverage project success for future planning efforts, grant funding and other public funding opportunities, and investments for economic development in those communities.

1. Public Support & Follow-Up: At the heart of LaGrange County’s Strategic Investment Plan is improving the quality of life and place for our residents. Enhancing the quality of life directly impacts housing, population growth, and economic development. In addition to tracking those metrics, we will assess the quality of place through ongoing public engagement and feedback. Gaining resident support is key to ensuring the success of the projects and programs outlined in this plan, as it fosters a sense of pride and ownership in the positive changes taking place across our communities. To that end, the Connect LaGrange County will host

bi-annual regional community engagement and satisfaction surveys, and LaGrange County Together will hold an annual State of the County Event. This feedback will be essential both during and after the four-year Stellar designation period, allowing us to confirm that these projects have made a meaningful, positive impact on LaGrange County residents, and guiding our continued efforts into the future.

2. Population Growth: We will track population growth alongside the development of new housing units, using both as a key metric.



A major focus of our Strategic Investment Plan is attracting young professionals and families by increasing housing options and incentives, having quality childcare available, and offering improved amenities like parks and recreational facilities. To measure our success, we will closely monitor new resident data and examine demographic shifts to see if we’re effectively attracting younger talent and talent with higher levels of education. The 2030 Census, which will take place shortly after the four-year Stellar designation period, will be a critical tool in analyzing the impact of these efforts.

3. New Businesses: A key outcome of the Stellar designation is driving economic development in LaGrange County. LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation is dedicated to supporting new business owners and helping existing businesses expand by providing resources and guidance. Connect LaGrange County aims to position LaGrange County as a destination for business growth, talent attraction, and industry expansion. To track our progress, we will measure key indicators such as new business registrations, expansions of existing businesses—particularly in sectors that align with talent attraction—and the number of jobs created. Beyond job creation, we will also analyze data from the census to monitor shifts in the educational qualifications of our residents, including degrees and certifications, as an indicator of the county’s ability to attract skilled professionals. Additionally, entrepreneurial activity can be tracked by monitoring the number of new startups or small businesses launched, which reflects the influx of talent looking to create their own opportunities in the county.

4. Student Retention Rates: One key measure of success for LaGrange County’s Stellar Pathways initiative is whether our quality-of-place enhancements are encouraging young professionals to return to the community after completing their education. By tracking student retention rates—particularly the number of local graduates who choose to return and establish their careers in LaGrange County—we can gauge the effectiveness of our efforts to create a vibrant, appealing environment. Enhancements such as affordable housing, improved amenities, and expanded recreational opportunities are designed to attract this demographic. Monitoring these retention rates will help us understand how well we are positioning the county as a destination where young professionals want to live, work, and raise their families.

5. Tourism Tracking & Taxes: A key metric that Connect LaGrange County will track throughout the Stellar designation period is tourism and its impact on local tax revenues. The LaGrange County Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) already monitors tourism taxes and visitor numbers to the county. In 2023, the CVB commissioned a CERTEC study, which revealed that the tourism industry contributed nearly \$253.9 million to the local economy, with almost 2 Million visitors directly spending \$181.9 million and generating \$59.7 million in tax total revenues. Additionally, more than 1,965 jobs were created as a result of this economic activity. To measure the impact of Stellar implementation on tourism and the local economy, we plan to conduct a similar study towards the end of the designation period. This data will provide valuable insights into how our projects and programs have contributed to the growth and success of LaGrange County communities.

Progress Measurement & Reporting Outline

Progress for the projects and initiatives implemented through the Connect LaGrange County Strategic Investment Plan will be measured and reported through a combination of public support tracking, census data analysis, and regular community feedback. To ensure that our efforts align with the needs and desires of our residents, we will conduct bi-annual Community Connections surveys moving forward. These surveys will gauge public satisfaction with our progress and provide critical insights into the areas where residents want to see investment, including potential grant opportunities. This ongoing engagement will help guide the municipalities' budgeting decisions and keep our development plans in sync with community priorities.

Public support will also be tracked through key metrics such as housing growth, population changes, and economic indicators. The U.S. Census Bureau will be a primary tool for monitoring these impacts, with data from both the annual American Community Survey and the 2030 Decennial Census helping to track progress over time. Of particular importance is talent attraction—drawing in new residents, particularly younger professionals and families. By analyzing demographic shifts and changes in housing and economic patterns, we will assess how effectively we are positioning LaGrange County as a destination for talented individuals. The 2030 Census, which will occur just after the conclusion of the four-year Stellar designation period, will be pivotal in confirming the long-term impact of our efforts.

In addition to tracking population changes, we will monitor the health of our entrepreneurial ecosystem through indicators such as new business registrations, expansions of existing businesses, and job creation, with a focus on industries linked to talent attraction. We will

also use census data to measure shifts in the educational qualifications of our residents, looking at increases in degrees and certifications as a sign that LaGrange County is successfully attracting skilled professionals. Entrepreneurial activity will be another vital metric, as the launch of new startups and small businesses is a key indicator of a thriving economy driven by innovative talent.

Additionally, we plan to track student retention rates to evaluate how our quality-of-life enhancements are impacting the return of local graduates. By working with local high schools and using census data to track shifts in the population's age demographics, we can gauge whether young professionals are choosing to return to LaGrange County after completing their education to establish their careers and lives here. This will help us understand how well we are creating an appealing environment for the next generation of residents.

Finally, we will collaborate with the LaGrange County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) to monitor the effects of our Stellar implementation on tourism and the local economy. The CVB regularly tracks tourism taxes and visitor numbers, and this historical data will serve as a baseline to measure the impact of the projects we implement. Towards the end of the Stellar designation period, we will utilize their new study to assess how tourism and local economic contributions have grown, providing a comprehensive picture of our progress and success.

Please reference the below links for some statistics informing the proposed metrics for measuring success. Further information is in the appendices.

- <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/lagrangecountyindiana/LFE041218>
- https://www.stats.indiana.edu/profiles/profiles.asp?scope_choice=a&county_changer=18087
- https://www.hoosierdata.in.gov/highlights/profile.asp?geo_val=S18;C087&page_id=1



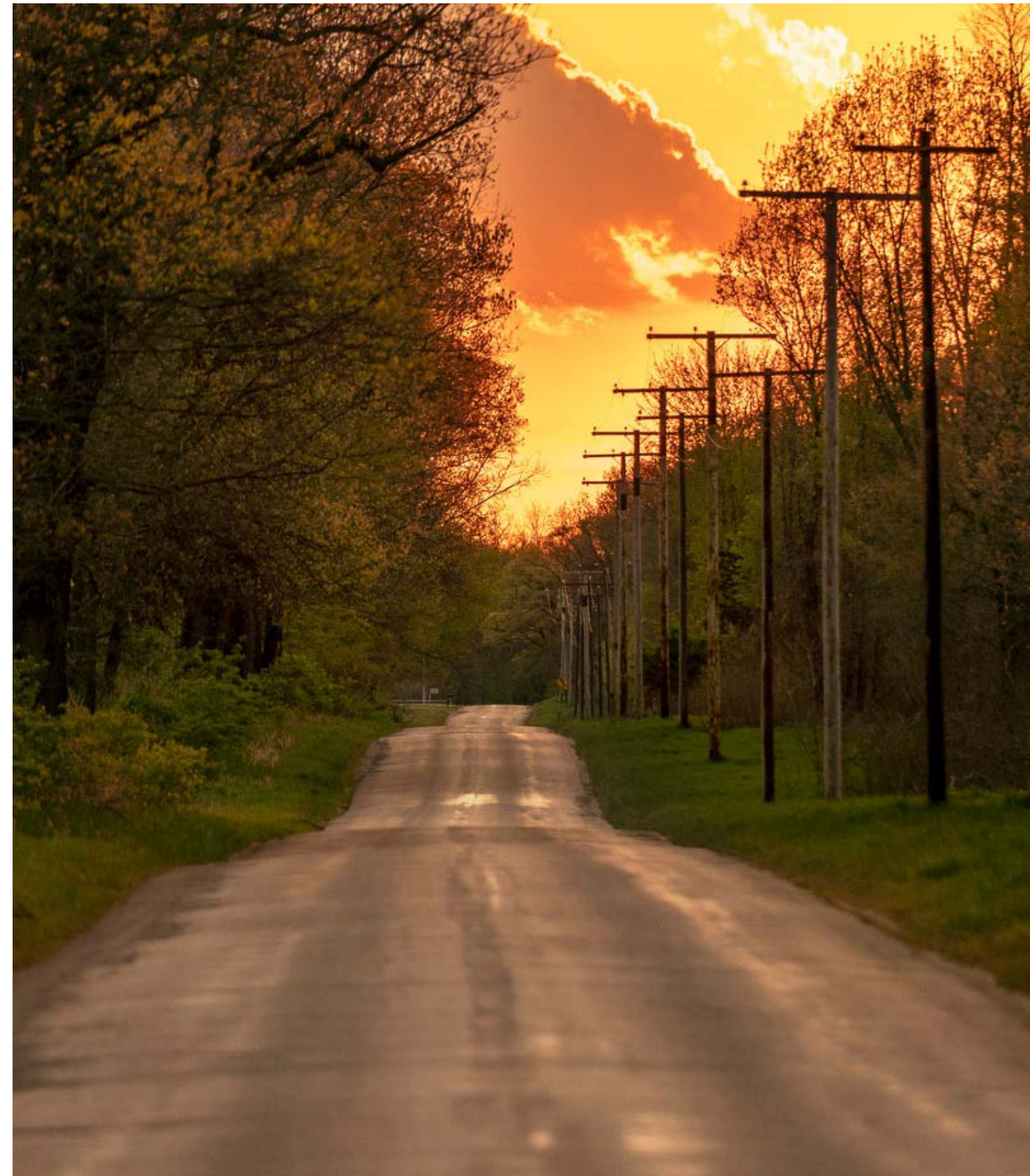
How This Plan Will Progress Without State Partnership

LaGrange County is already riding a wave of significant momentum, thanks to the dedicated efforts of Connect LaGrange County, LaGrange County Together, LaGrange County EDC, the Chamber, the Community Foundation, the CVB, individual community associations, revitalization groups, supportive and involved businesses, and of course, our incredibly dedicated residents. We know we are STELLAR in every sense of the word, and we're standing on the edge of something great. Our communities are committed to progress, and we're focused on creating sustainable, long-term change that will set LaGrange County up for success well into the future. Our goal is to be recognized as a vibrant, culturally diverse, family-friendly community that values innovation, collaboration, and economic success.

While achieving Stellar Pathways designation would undoubtedly amplify and accelerate the impact of Connect LaGrange County's Strategic Investment Plan, it won't stop our momentum if the designation isn't received. Nor will it stop once the designation period ends. Our team

is committed to finding new ways to build on our successes and continue benefiting our communities. This commitment is evident in the county and LCEDC's decision to fund a dedicated position solely focused on community development and engagement.

If Connect LaGrange County doesn't receive the designation, we'll keep pushing forward. Our communities will still work to implement the projects outlined in the plan, and Emilee Buller, VP of Community Development and Engagement, will continue to pursue grant dollars and other funding opportunities to make sure that happens. Should the unfortunate situation of not being designated befall us, we'll be submitting project applications and local match funding through general competitive grant rounds—whether it's OCRA CDBG, DNR LWCF, INDOT Local Public Agency funding, or other state and federal programs. We're also going to keep leveraging local resources to support our funding efforts and ensure that the momentum we've built keeps moving us forward.



SUSTAINABILITY

Connect LaGrange County’s Sustainability Post Designation

Our commitment to ensuring the long-term success and vitality of our team and any resulting projects of this process is rooted in intentional planning, proactive communication, and on-going collaboration. One significant contributing factor is that we are already working in a very synergistic and collaborative fashion, so none of these mechanisms will be foreign as we move forward. To guarantee that our alliances thrive now and into the future, we have devised a multifaceted approach encompassing several key strategies:

1. Clear Communication Channels: We will continue to utilize regular communication channels, including regular meetings and updates, to ensure that all partners remain informed, engaged, and aligned with our collective goals and initiatives. This open communication framework will facilitate the sharing of ideas, resources, and best practices, fostering a culture of transparency and collaboration. We will also be working diligently to ensure that the community engages in planning for the projects in as many ways as possible.

2. Planning and Goal Setting: Through collaborative planning sessions, we will collectively define clear objectives, action plans, and measurable outcomes for our initiatives and the resulting projects. These deliberate and measurable goals will serve as a roadmap for our joint efforts, guiding us towards the most impactful and sustainable outcomes.



3. Adaptive and Flexible Approach: In a landscape that is continuously evolving we understand the need for adaptability and flexibility. Our team will continue to embrace an adaptive approach, allowing us to pivot, innovate, and respond proactively to changing circumstances, emerging opportunities, and evolving community needs. We know that our goals and the community’s list of wants and needs must align for any approach to be successful and will continue our work in a manner that ensures that happens.

4. Resource Sharing and Collaboration: We will continue to foster a culture of resource sharing and collaboration, leveraging each partner’s strengths, expertise, and networks for mutual benefit. This collaborative exchange of resources, whether it be funding, technical expertise, or community connections, will enhance the impact and scalability of our initiatives.

5. Long-term Vision and Sustainability: Our partnership is grounded in a shared long-term vision for sustainable community and economic development, and prosperity. We are committed to ensuring the continuity and sustainability of our collaborative efforts by engaging in long-range planning and continued meetings, succession planning, and strategic investment into projects that will have the biggest impacts for our region. We understand that sustainability is one of the most important pieces of our efforts, which is why we have recruited the strongest team possible to implement any investment made here. Additionally, Connect LaGrange County has a dedicated staff member Emilee Buller, VP of Community Development and Engagement for LCEDC, who will be responsible for sustaining the projects and programs.

By implementing these strategies and fostering a culture of communication, smart goal setting and planning, and resource sharing we are confident that our partnership will not only thrive now but also endure and flourish into the future, creating lasting positive impacts for generations to come.



Connect LaGrange County’s Sustainability Post Designation Period

The leadership of the sustainability effort will be spearheaded by the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC) with active support from each municipality and several key partner organizations. As a recognized 501c3 non-profit organization with a long-standing history of community and economic development work in the county, LCEDC is well-positioned to lead the sustainability plan. Additionally, LCEDC has added a staff position that is solely focused on implementation and sustainability of our County’s Stellar Pathways Designation and our County comprehensive Plan. We bring expertise, credibility, and a deep understanding of the local context to drive our sustainability efforts forward.

Our sustainability plan is built on a solid foundation that encompasses transparent and accountable project management practices, ensuring that every step is visible, responsible, and aligned with our community’s needs. We have adopted a data-driven approach, leveraging comprehensive data collection and analysis to guide decision making, track progress, and optimize resource allocation for maximum impact. Funding for the sustainability of our initiatives will be sourced from a mix of private and public sources, reflecting the shared commitment of both individuals and institutions to our collective vision. Community collaboration lies at the heart of our plan, with active engagement from civic leaders, county organizations, and community stakeholders, fostering a sense of ownership, shared responsibility, and collective action towards sustainable outcomes that benefit everyone involved.

Our sustainability plan will prioritize regular monitoring, evaluation, and reporting to track progress, assess impact, and ensure that benefits are equitably realized across all participating partners, even after the Stellar designation period. By maintaining transparency and accountability, we can demonstrate the effectiveness and sustainability of our initiatives. We will utilize comprehensive data collection

and analysis methods to monitor project outcomes, identify challenges, and capitalize on opportunities for improvement. This data driven decision-making process enables us to course-correct, optimize resource utilization, and continuously improve outcomes for stakeholders.



Processes for Project Progress

Implementation of the sustainability plan will involve close collaboration with each municipality involved in the Connect LaGrange County initiative in order to keep projects moving forward. This includes the Town of LaGrange, the Town of Shipshewana, the Town of Topeka, associations in our three impacted unincorporated communities, and LaGrange County itself and their corresponding leaders. Civic leaders from these municipalities have been actively engaged in this process and the resulting designation and will continue to be heavily involved throughout the implementation, and sustainability portions of the program for their respective projects. This collaborative leadership approach ensures alignment, coordination, and shared responsibility for sustainability outcomes.

Moreover, we have partnered with countywide organizations such as the LaGrange County Community Foundation, LaGrange County Convention and Visitor’s Bureau, LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce, Main Street LaGrange, and LaGrange County Together to assist in the process from the beginning and into the sustainability portions of any resulting projects. This co-operative of countywide organizations helps to ensure that should there be any changes in leadership there are multiple informed and involved parties to help sustain the region’s efforts.

The leadership team of the Connect LaGrange County region passionately believes that good leadership is rooted in humility, integrity, and continuous learning. As part of our sustainability plan, we have incorporated feedback from three former Stellar Designees on the process up to this point, and plan to continue meeting with them into the future. This feedback has encompassed lessons learned, successful strategies, and areas for improvement, and will provide invaluable insights as we implement the Strategic Investment Plan and sustain beyond the implementation period. We aim to engage in ongoing conversations throughout the entire five-year Stellar Pathways process, ensuring that

we adapt, grow, and foster collaborative efforts that benefit the community and the region as a whole.

Our leadership team, comprised of representatives from each town and county organizations, will continue to meet as needed to discuss implementation of projects, alignment with our goals, and metrics for success, with regular communication and updates being shared by Emilee to the Leadership, Steering, and Stakeholder groups.



Connect LaGrange County’s Financial Support For Further Implementation & Summary of Implementation

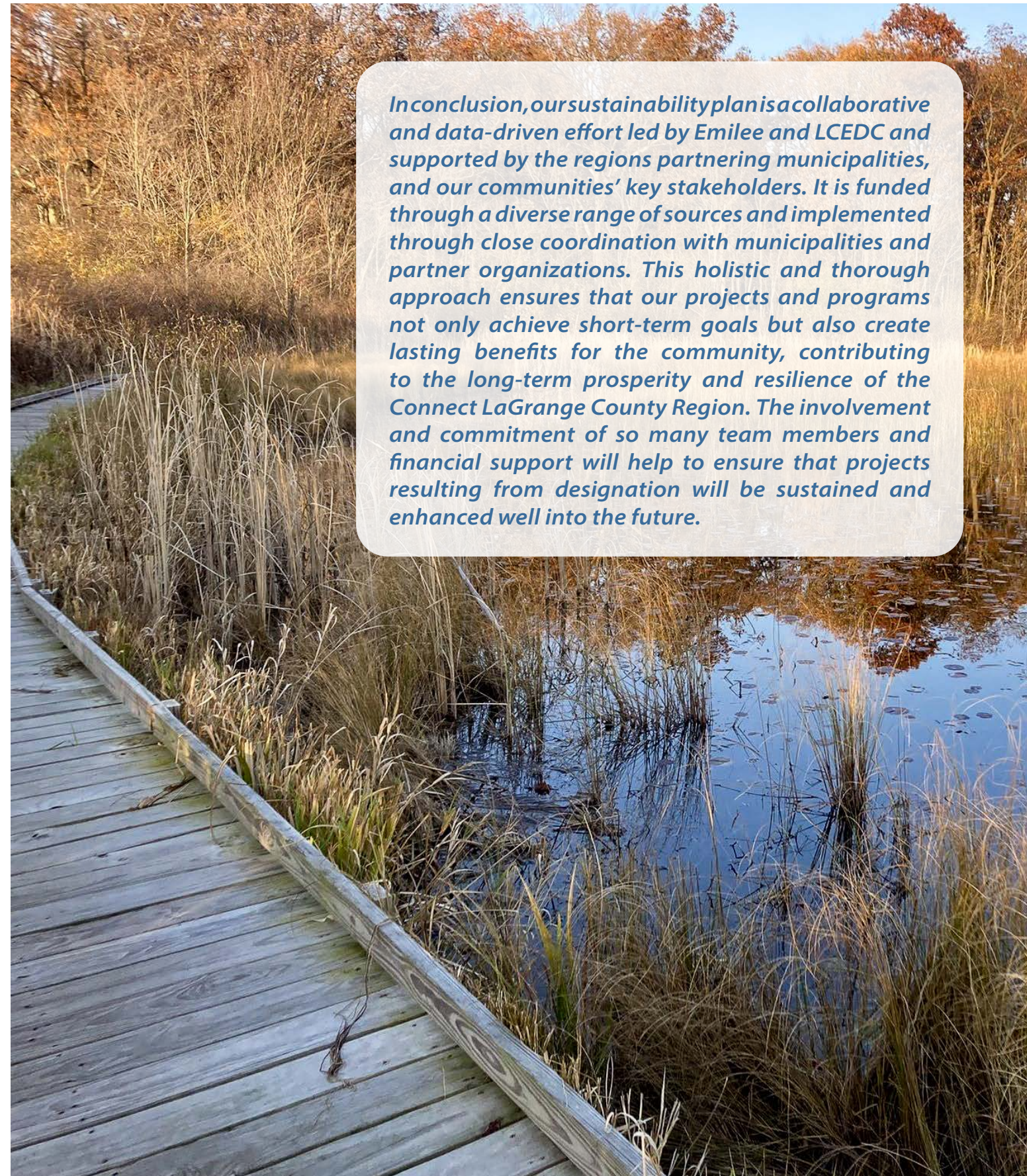
The Connect LaGrange County Region understands that funding plays a crucial role in sustaining grant funded projects and programs and moving these public works forward. The sustainability plan will be funded through a multi-faceted approach, leveraging various funding sources to support ongoing initiatives. These sources include major moves monies, Economic Development Income Tax (EDIT) funds, Commissioners’ fund allocations, Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds, unrestricted funds from the LaGrange County Community Foundation and the utilization of any other potential qualifying grants. This diverse funding portfolio provides flexibility and resilience in funding sustainability initiatives

Each of our project has been reviewed for planned sustainability and maintenance costs. We understand that adding new amenities and public space will increase the maintenance costs and efforts to keep these spaces functional, safe, and aesthetically pleasing. Whether it is resurfacing of pickleball courts, maintenance of playground surfacing, or weekly maintenance efforts, these considerations will also be integrated into future budget planning for town departments. The many funding mechanisms listed above will also be integral for supporting larger or special maintenance efforts, associated capital improvements, or additional phases of projects. Our county organizations and governmental bodies will fund continued operations of our Stellar programs and all associated projects through annual budgeting and/or endowments with continued analysis of our success metrics. The reporting and communication plan will provide consistent accountability.

In addition to the funding sources indicated above, LaGrange County is fortunate to have a community of generous private donors who are deeply invested in the region’s development and success. These individuals, with their philanthropic spirit and commitment to making a positive impact, are willing to pledge funds to projects and programming that align with their passions and values. This is made evident in projects like:

- **Coffee and Cream of South Milford:** A community funded effort to bring a coffee shop to a vacant building to downtown South Milford. The total cost of this project was \$300,000, of which \$237,500 was financial and in kind donations from the community, which is 79% of the projects total funding.
- **The Community Health Clinic:** A clinic specializing in rare genetic conditions in our county whose 2024 operating budget is \$3.27 million of which 32% is covered by community fundraising.
- **The LaGrange Town Park Splash Pad:** The Splash Pad was heavily funded by community support, with a total combined donation and grant amount of \$157,114.14, around half of the funding for the project was locally sourced.
- **The Farm Place:** Provides a home leased to a licensed foster care family in a 10-acre farm setting, using animal companionship in a safe, nurturing, and restorative space. The Farm Place has raised \$1,043,457 in donations and fundraisers, and \$42,263 in grant funding.

Our community members contributions go beyond financial support; they represent a shared vision for a vibrant and thriving community, where everyone can prosper. Their generosity not only helps to fund critical initiatives but also inspires others to join in creating a brighter future for LaGrange County.



In conclusion, our sustainability plan is a collaborative and data-driven effort led by Emilee and LCEDC and supported by the regions partnering municipalities, and our communities’ key stakeholders. It is funded through a diverse range of sources and implemented through close coordination with municipalities and partner organizations. This holistic and thorough approach ensures that our projects and programs not only achieve short-term goals but also create lasting benefits for the community, contributing to the long-term prosperity and resilience of the Connect LaGrange County Region. The involvement and commitment of so many team members and financial support will help to ensure that projects resulting from designation will be sustained and enhanced well into the future.

Connect LaGrange County's Local Match & Leverage

LaGrange County has pledged \$717,000 for Howe, Mongo and South Milford Parks Projects, Electrical Upgrades at the Courthouse, and proposed programming for the county utilizing IDOH and ISDA funding

The Town of LaGrange has pledged \$965,000 for LaGrange Town Park Improvements, Detroit St. Streetscape Improvements, Downtown Historic District Listing, Façade Improvements Programming, 9&20, and projects and programs in the town of LaGrange associated with IDOH and ISDA funding

The Town of Topeka has pledged \$1,210,000 for Topeka East Park Improvements, The Hawpatch Trail Connector, Downtown Gathering and Event Space, and a Downtown Master Plan

The Town of Shipshewana has pledged \$250,000 for Shipshewana Town Park Improvement

E&S Sales has pledged \$20,000 for Shipshewana Parks Improvements

Farmers State Bank has pledged \$5,000 for any Stellar Projects in LaGrange County

LaGrange County Community Foundation has pledged \$80,000 for Howe Parks Improvements, and \$40,000 to be used between South Milford and Mongo for their parks improvements

Linder's Tavern on Main has pledged \$2,000 for any Stellar Projects in LaGrange County

Parkview LaGrange Hospital has pledged \$3,000 for Stellar Initiatives that align with the 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment

Crossroads United Way has pledged \$200,000 for Tradition Kitchen and Farms to Food Banks Programming



KEY ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Strategic Investment Plan Contributors

LAGRANGE COUNTY EDC

- Emilee Buller
- Sherri Johnston
- Lydia Young
- Board of Directors



LAGRANGE COUNTY TOGETHER

- Emilee Buller



MAIN STREET LAGRANGE

- Jenny Landez
- Board of Directors



TOWN OF LAGRANGE

- Mark Eagleson
- Laurie Miller
- Ray Hoover
- Town Council



TOWN OF TOPEKA

- Stewart Bender
- Lea Parks
- Adam Lambright
- Town Council



TOWN OF SHIPSHEWANA

- Terry Martin
- Christine Yoder
- Town Council



THE CHAMBER OF LAGRANGE COUNTY

- Sara Patrick
- Ian Mullen



LAGRANGE COUNTY CVB

- Sonya Nash



CROSSROADS UNITED WAY

- Bill Purcell



LAGRANGE COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

- Octavia Yoder
- Board of Directors



PARKVIEW LAGRANGE HOSPITAL

- Jordi Disler
- Christina Blaskie



TROYER GROUP

- Mike Reese
- Ben Smedley
- Maggie Aravena
- Jonathan Geels



ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTORS

- LaGrange County Commissioners
- LaGrange County Council
- Topeka Together
- South Milford Community League
- The Howe Community Association
- Mongo Community Development Association
- Mike Kleinpeter and Kleinpeter Consulting Group
- Gary Mast - LaGrange County Maintenance Manager
- Ryan Chasey - Housing Resource Hub
- Lake Area Designs
- LaGrange County Arts
- Shipshewana Trading Place
- LaGrange County Parks
- Fireside Craft Burgers and Brews
- LaGrange County Health Department
- Northeaster Center - LaGrange
- Bowen Center
- Fritz Helmuth - S&H Metal Products
- Robbie Miller - LaGrange County Plan Commission
- Traci Blaize - Lakeland Schools Superintendent
- Randy Miller - Westview School Superintendent
- Jeff Reed - Prairie Heights School Superintendent
- Howard Helmuth - Helmuth Quality Power
- Andy Linder - Mongo Community Development Association and Trading Post
- Jeff Wohlheter - Coffee and Cream of South Milford
- Katie Bowman - South Milford Community League
- Terry Iannerelli - Lima Township Trustee, Howe Community
- Marion Wiggins - Bloomfield Lavender
- Andi Sherman - Kingsbury in Howe
- Joe Urbanski - Farmer State Bank
- TJ Kempf - Farmer State Bank
- LaGrange County Council on Aging
- State Rep. Joanna King
- State Senator Sue Glick
- Keith James Photography
- Indigo Web Design
- I.Mullen Media
- Ripcord Media
- The LaGrange County Community at large



LaGrange
COUNTY IN.

APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY OF THE REGION

County Demographics

Population: LaGrange County is still feeling the aftereffects of COVID-19, with a marked slowdown in population growth since 2020. Between 2015 and 2020, our population growth rate reached up to 5%, but from 2020 to 2024, this rate has declined significantly, landing at just 1.04%. The State of Indiana has seen a similar trend. Reversing this slowdown and revitalizing population growth in LaGrange County is a key priority for our Strategic Investment Plan.

Our county's demographics also reflect a notably younger population compared to the state, with a median age that's 6.4 years lower than Indiana's overall. Retaining this younger generation by providing resources, career opportunities, and affordable housing is essential, and it's a core focus of this plan. At the same time, we aim to support the retention and quality of life for our older population, ensuring a balanced and thriving community for all.

SOURCE FOR ALL INFORMATION ON THIS PAGE: UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU

LAGRANGE COUNTY % GROWTH 2020-2024

1.04%

INDIANA % GROWTH 2020-2024

1.5%

MEDIAN AGE LAGRANGE COUNTY

31.9

MEDIAN AGE STATE OF INDIANA

38.3

POP. % 65 & OLDER LAGRANGE COUNTY

13.9%

POP. % 65 & OLDER STATE OF INDIANA

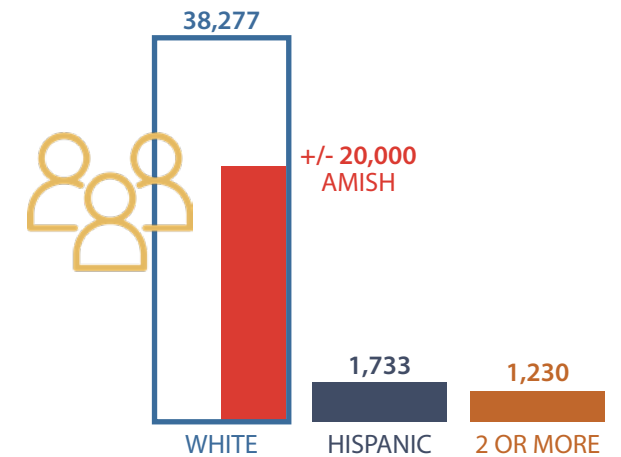
17.2%

	STATUS		POPULATION		2015 - 2024 CHANGE	
	TOWN	UNINCORP.	2020	2024	GROWTH	PERCENT
LAGRANGE COUNTY			40,542	40,966	424	1.04%
LAGRANGE	X		2,714	2,738	24	0.9%
TOPEKA	X		1,214	1,224	10	0.8%
SHIPSHEWANA	X		849	855	6	0.7%
HOWE		X	610	1,005	395	64.8%
SOUTH MILFORD		X	NA	198	NA	NA
MONGO		X	NA	335	NA	NA

Race & Language: According to the 2020 Decennial Census, LaGrange County has 38,277 of 40,446 people (95%) in the county identifying as "White". This however doesn't reflect the unique diversity of the LaGrange County population. Based on estimates from the LaGrange County Convention and Visitor's Bureau, there are approximately 23,000 Amish identifying people living in the county in 2024. While "Amish" is not an identifying classification on the census, it can be confirmed by the 2020 census where we see that 42.1% of the population (roughly 17,000 people) spoke other Indo-European languages, common for the Amish population. Planning efforts in the county accommodate this unique demographic and embrace it as an opportunity for involvement and integration.

LaGrange also has a nearly 5% Hispanic or Latino population, with 3.4% of the population speaking Spanish. In addition, over the last decade there is also a growing Muslim population in the county of

Yemeni origin. An underlying goal of this Strategic Investment Plan is to make sure all populations had an adequate opportunity to provide their input and feedback on how this plan can improve the communities they live in. This is reflected in the public engagement portion where significant efforts were made to engage with these populations where they live, making it as convenient as possible to ensure their voices were heard. Encouraging and embracing diversity will not only help LaGrange County grow physically but also culturally as well.



SOURCES: UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU & <https://groups.etoan.edu/amishstudies/twelve-largest-settlements-2024/>

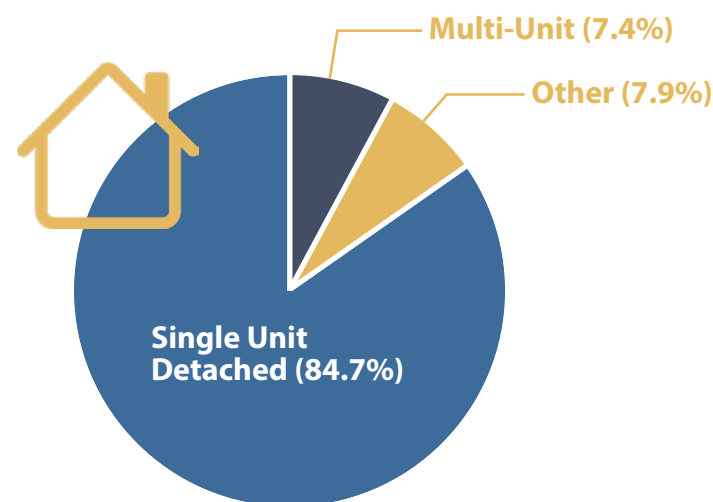


County Demographics

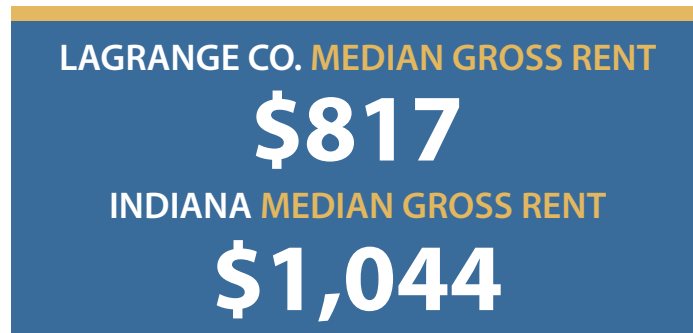
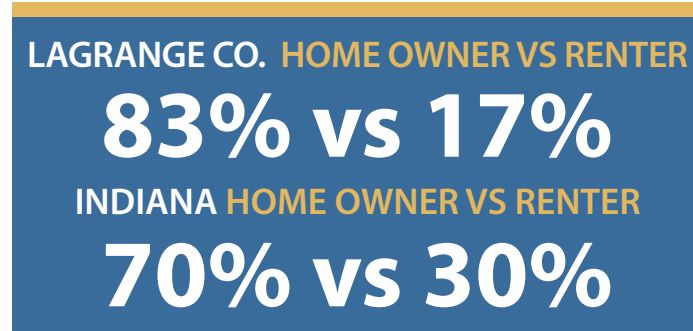
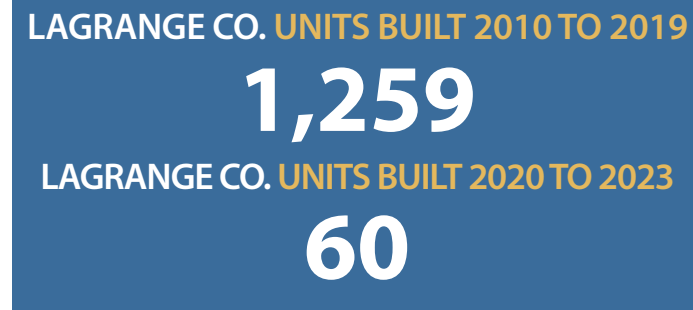
Housing: The housing market of LaGrange County was also touched by COVID-19 in recent years. A combination of factors including slowed population growth, rising inflation, and high interest rates has restricted new housing development in the county. As a result, only 60 new housing units were built between 2020 to present, as compared to the 1,259 units built in the 10 years before 2020. This Strategic Investment Plan will look to bolster population growth with key projects and programs, making LaGrange a more desirable place to live and sparking plans for additional new development.

A key priority will be increasing housing diversity, with a focus on expanding affordable housing options for LaGrange County's young families and young professionals in neighboring areas. Rising home prices and higher interest rates have made homeownership less feasible for young families, highlighting the importance of accessible rental options, which the county is also short on. This need is further underscored by LaGrange County's competitive median gross rent, which is over \$200 lower than the Indiana average, positioning it as an appealing location for renters.

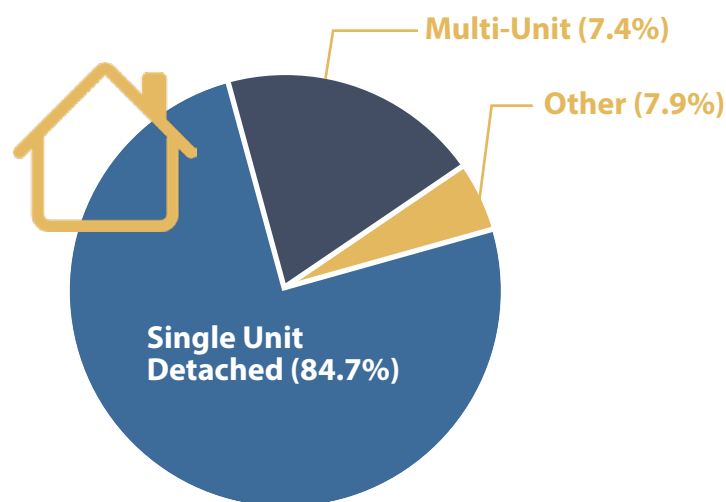
LAGRANGE COUNTY HOUSING TYPE



SOURCE FOR ALL INFORMATION ON THIS PAGE: UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU



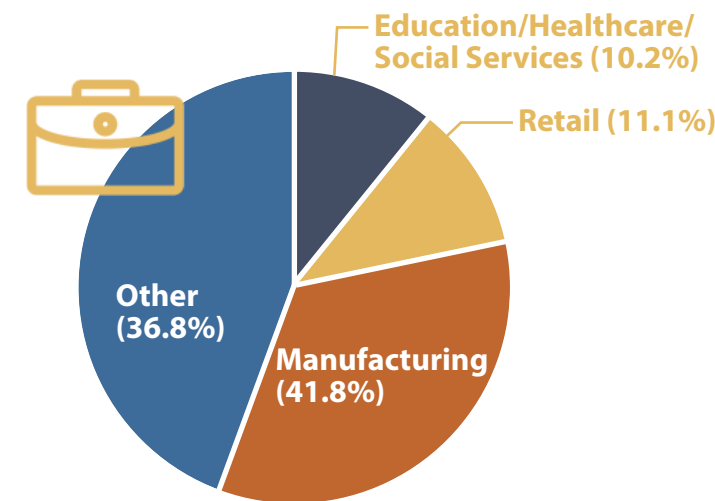
INDIANA HOUSING TYPE



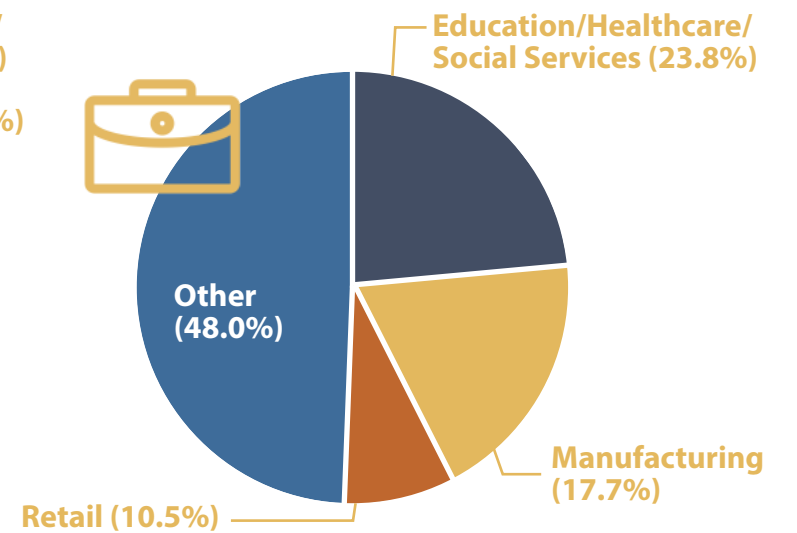
County Demographics

Economy: LaGrange County is home to hardworking communities with a stable economy largely driven by its manufacturing workforce. A closer look at employment data shows that 41.8% of the workforce is employed in manufacturing, with the next largest sectors—retail, and education, healthcare, and social services—each comprising around 10%. This significant concentration in manufacturing is notably higher than the state average, emphasizing LaGrange County's unique economic profile. Through strategic projects and programs, this Investment Plan aims to support job diversity to strengthen resilience against economic challenges. Expanding employment opportunities across various sectors will help LaGrange County build a more adaptable and robust economy.

LAGRANGE CO. EMPLOYMENT INDUSTRY

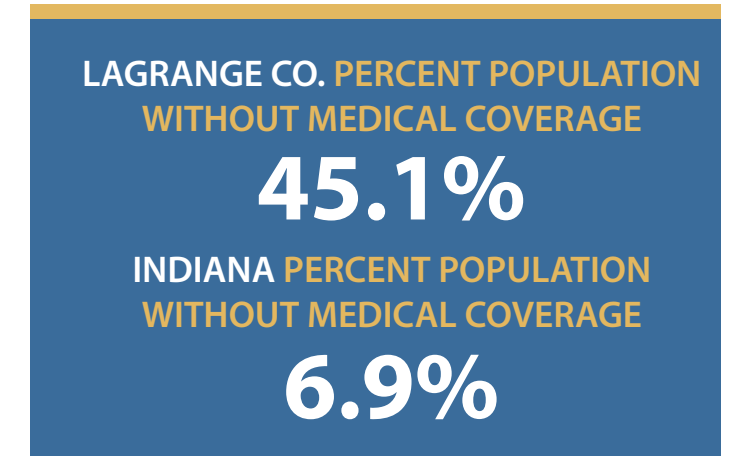


INDIANA EMPLOYMENT INDUSTRY



Public Health: Public health, public safety, and access to medical coverage plays an integral role for quality of life in a community and is another pillar of the LaGrange County Strategic Investment Plan. Over 45% of the population of LaGrange County are without medical coverage, as compared to the 6.9% average for the entire state of Indiana. Again, this is a skewed statistic due to the Amish population, who do not carry traditional insurance coverage. LaGrange does currently have two mental health centers, Parkview LaGrange Hospital, and an Indiana Health First Coordinator. However, there are opportunities to provide and expand resources for both the Amish and English

communities to improve public health and wellness through programs and projects that should be implemented through this strategic investment plan.



Key Anchor Institutions - Shipshewana

LaGrange County Public Library-Shipshewana Branch Library: The Shipshewana branch of the LaGrange County Library system is located on Depot Street. Amenities include access to the Evergreen Indiana system, books, magazines, DVDs, and internet-connected computers, along with study rooms and a community room.



Michiana Event Center: The Michiana Event Center, "The MEC", is a multi-purpose venue located in Shipshewana, Indiana. Originally located in Howe, Indiana, The MEC started a new chapter with new ownership and moved to its brand new facility in 2017. From concerts to rodeos, The MEC is a premier event venue, bringing big things to Michiana.



Trading Place Auction & Flea Market: Established in 1922, the Shipshewana Trading Place is the Midwest's largest flea market. With weekly antique, livestock and horse auctions, excellent lodging, delicious dining locations, gorgeous event facilities, craft & vintage shows, antique markets, and RV service, Shipshewana Trading Place is a must-stop when visiting Northern Indiana's Amish Country.



Shipshewana Historical Society: The Historical Society is located in the renovated one room Farver School in uptown Shipshewana. Visit displays of artifacts from Chief Shipshewana and the early town as well as surrounding communities.



Key Anchor Institutions - Shipshewana

Shipshewana-Scott Elementary School & Meadowview Elementary School: Shipshewana-Scott Elementary School is a public school with 370 students in grades K-4 and a student-teacher ratio of 14 to 1. Meadowview Elementary School is a public school with 376 students and the school serves PK-6.



Menno-Hof Interpretative Center: The Menno-Hof Interpretative Center is a non-profit information center in Shipshewana that teaches visitors about the faith and life of Amish and Mennonites. Multi-image presentations, historical environments, and colorful displays take visitors on a fascinating journey inside the unique world of the Amish and Mennonites.



Blue Gate Performing Arts Center, Musical Hall, Restaurant, & Garden Inn: Visitors can enjoy some of the best Amish/Mennonite cooking around, outstanding entertainment, shop for locally crafted furniture and much more. The company now has 3 retail stores, a restaurant, bakery, theatre, hotel, event center, catering, and a carriage business.



Shipshewana LaGrange County Visitors Bureau: Full service Visitors Center offering brochures, festival & event information, as well as regional information and area maps. The Visitors Bureau can connect groups with partners and step-on-guides for customized itinerary planning, FAM tours, and group discounts. They are also there to answer any questions and point people in the right direction during their visit to Amish country.



Key Anchor Institutions - LaGrange

LaGrange County Public Library-LaGrange Branch Library: The main branch of the LaGrange County Library system is located in downtown LaGrange. The original Carnegie Library, constructed in 1917, still stands at the corner of Spring and High Streets. The beautiful new addition to the library was finished in 2011.



Parkview LaGrange Hospital: Parkview Health is a not-for-profit, community-based health system serving a northeast Indiana and northwest Ohio population of more than 1.3 million. With more than 15,000 co-workers, it is the region's largest employer.



The Garage Community Event Center: The facility offers opportunities for community members to rent the space for private events including anniversary celebrations, birthday parties, reunions, business meetings, trainings, seminars, etc.



LaGrange County Courthouse: The County Courthouse, built in 1878, is listed on the National Register of Historical Places and still serves as the County Courthouse for LaGrange County. People can also step inside to check out the historical artifacts and read the placards telling the story of the town.



Lakeland Schools: Lakeland Jr/Sr High School is a public school with a student population of 858 and the school serves 7th to 12th grade. Lakeland Intermediate School is a public school with a student population of 450 and the school serves 3rd to 6th grade. Lakeland Primary School is a public school with a student population of 331 and the school serves K to 2nd Grade.



Key Anchor Institutions - LaGrange

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation: The LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation is a 501 (c) 3 not-for-profit organization who serves as the central point of contact for economic development efforts in LaGrange County, Indiana.



The Waters of LaGrange Rehabilitation & Skilled Nursing Center: The Waters of LaGrange Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation is focused on providing passionate, quality care focusing on the particular needs and expectations of residents and their families.



LaGrange County Sheriff's Office: Serving all of LaGrange County, the LaGrange County Sheriff's office is located just south of town and will continually strive to provide impartial, professional and responsive law enforcement services to all citizens of the county.



LaGrange County 4-H Fairgrounds: With a campground, grand stand events, other daily vents, livestock showings and auctions, and the week long LaGrange County Fair in the summer, the LaGrange County 4-H Fairgrounds is full of activity, especially during the summer months.



LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce: The Chamber is an action-ready organization, aimed at meeting the community's business needs. Small and large businesses alike make up their inner circle, and together, they work to advance the interest and well-being of LaGrange County through legislative, information, and business resources.



Key Anchor Institutions - Topeka

LaGrange County Public Library-Topeka Branch Library: The Topeka branch of the LaGrange County Library system is located on North Main Street, just half a block from the Topeka Pharmacy and the main intersection in town. Amenities include access to the Evergreen Indiana system, books, magazines, DVDs, and internet-connected computers, along with study rooms and a community room.

Topeka Elementary School: Topeka Elementary School is a public school located in Topeka, IN, which is in a distant rural setting. The student population of Topeka Elementary School is 282 and the school serves K-4 and the student teacher ratio is 13:1.

Topeka Livestock Auction: The Topeka Livestock Auction hosts regular auctions of carriages, antiques, sleighs, horse implements, and livestock, including one of the largest draft horse auctions in the world.

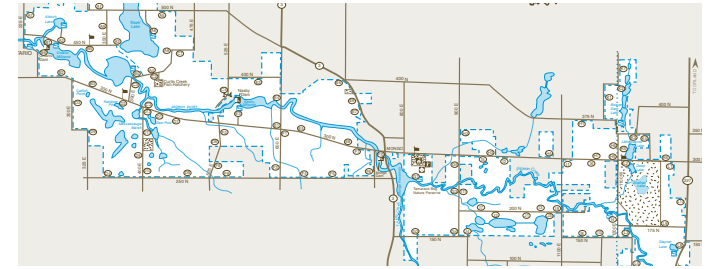
Forest River Plant: Forest River, Inc. is a company based in Topeka, IN that specializes in the manufacturing of recreational vehicles and trailers. This facility is one of the largest plants in the country for this type of industry.

Topeka General Store: The largest grocery store in town, Topeka General Store features decor, bulk food, books, puzzles, games, toys, camping & grilling, housewares, kitchen, clothing and baby items. There is also a newer coffee shop located in the building that has become a favorite spot among locals.



Key Anchor Institutions - Unincorporated Towns

Mongo - Pigeon River Fish & Wildlife Area: Pigeon River Fish & Wildlife Area provides quality outdoor recreational opportunities while maintaining 11,794 acres of land, 529 acres of lakes and impoundments and 17 miles of free-flowing river.



Emma - Westview Junior-Sr High School: Westview Junior-Senior High School is a public high school located in Emma, Indiana. The student population is 733 and the school serves 6th -12th grade.



South Milford - YMCA Camp Potawatami: The camp is an overnight summer camp for youths. Campers gain a sense of accomplishment by trying activities and developing new skills, all while making new friends.



Howe - Two Mills Camping Resort: The resort is a family oriented RV campground with outstanding facilities, full-time recreation program and local off site activities.



South Milford - JO Mory: Local HVAC, plumbing, electrical, geothermal, fire protection, and metal fabrication company.



South Milford - South Milford Grain: South Milford Grain Inc is a grain handling and storage facility. The company specializes in providing services related to the processing and distribution of various types of grains.



Mongo - Trading Post & RiverRun: Both family-owned businesses that specialize in renting canoes and kayaks to explore the Pigeon River.



Steering Committee Resumes

1. Emilee Buller (Formerly Bonifay) – VP of Community Development and Engagement, LCEDC: Emilee is a Northeast Indiana native who graduated from Angola High school and went on to earn her B.S. from Penn State University. She has lived in four states outside of Indiana since graduating and has worked in a variety of leadership roles that have ranged from accounting to family advocacy. Her current role includes oversight of the efforts for both LaGrange County Together and Connect LaGrange County: our countywide comprehensive plan and pursuit of a Stellar Pathways Designation from the state. She also serves as the Secretary of the Board for Main Street LaGrange and is a LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce Ambassador. She has volunteered in LaGrange County schools to lead Junior Achievement for the last two years and is a part of Crossroad's United Way's Read United program. She is also an OCRA-certified Grant Administrator and has attended many seminars and training on small town vitality and community development efforts. Outside of work Emilee aspires to have a hobby farm and homestead. She enjoys gardening, cooking and baking, spending time with her husband Kenny and their dogs, and creating.

2. Sherri Johnston – President/CEO, LCEDC: Sherri is a lifelong resident of rural LaGrange County, Indiana with a diverse business background in manufacturing, distribution, transportation, energy infrastructure, entrepreneurship, and nonprofit management. She is currently honored to serve LaGrange County as the President/CEO of the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation. Sherri holds a B.S. in Accounting from Marian University. She serves on the LaGrange County REMC Operation Round up Committee, the NIPSCO Community Advisory Panel, and is a member of the Mongo Lions Club and Delta Theta Tau Sorority. Professionally, Johnston is a member of the Indiana Economic Development Association and the Mid-America EDC. She also serves Springfield Township as their Township Trustee. She believes that by nurturing economic development, improving access to essential services, and encouraging local collaboration, we can create a thriving and supportive community where everyone has the opportunity to succeed. She is honored to be part of shaping the future of LaGrange County for generations to come. Sherri and her husband Todd have raised 2 daughters - Lydia, a 2022 Purdue Graduate, and Amelia currently studying Construction Management at Purdue. In her free time, she enjoys a beach vacation, kayaking the Pigeon River, Purdue Basketball and spending quality time with family.

3. Mark Eagleson – Town Manager, Town of LaGrange: Mark began his career in civic service in 1986 when he accepted a position with LaGrange County Sheriff's Department. He worked there for thirteen and a half years, ultimately obtaining the rank of Captain. Shortly after his departure from the Sheriff's Department, Mark began working for a local law firm that represented several of the county's Towns and Governmental Agencies. In 2006, Eagleson was elected to the LaGrange Town Council, and in 2014 he was hired as the Town's Manager where he continues to serve. He is currently a certified municipal official and serves on the Town of LaGrange Redevelopment Commission, LCEDC's Board of Directors, Region 3-A Board of Directors, the LaGrange County Emergency Management Advisory Board, and the LaGrange County LEPC Board.

4. Ray Hoover – Town Board President, Town of LaGrange: Ray Hoover is a retired Safety Manager from the Indiana Toll Road with a lifetime of service to the LaGrange community. As President of the LaGrange Town Board, Ray is a key figure in local governance. His public service also includes 33 years as a volunteer firefighter for the LaGrange Fire Department and 16 years with the LaGrange Police Reserves, both of which he has since retired from. A committed leader, Ray has served as the Past Master of the Meridian Sun Lodge #76 and is a member of the Scottish Rite, York Rite Shrine, and Eastern Star, where he is a Past Patron. Ray is also dedicated to helping children in need, transporting them to clinical appointments in Chicago, IL and Dayton, OH. In addition, Ray is an active member of the Sons of the American Legion, serves as Police Commissioner for the Town of LaGrange, and plays a vital role on the St. Joe River Valley Basin Commission and Northeast Solid Waste District Board. He also assists as the Finance Officer for the American Legion. Ray has lived in LaGrange for nearly 65 years of his 72-year life, graduating from Lakeland and raising a family of three children, five grandchildren, and one great-granddaughter. His ongoing dedication to the community exemplifies a life lived in service to others.

5. Terry Martin – Town Manager, Town of Shipshewana; President, LaGrange County Commissioners: Terry Martin started his career in LaGrange County in 1984 as an Indiana State Police Officer. Prior to joining the police force, he served in the US Navy for 5 years. Following his time with the State Police, Terry moved on to the LaGrange County Sheriff's Department in 1991 where he was employed for the next 25.5 years, serving as elected Sheriff the last 8 years of his tenure. Following his term as Sheriff, he was elected a LaGrange County Commissioner in the Fall of 2014 and is currently serving the county in that capacity as the President. Terry also holds the position of Shipshewana Town Manager. Outside of his professional career, Terry was involved in LaGrange County 4-H for 15 years as a leader and board member. He taught women's self-defense classes in the county's high schools for 15 years, and also coached little league baseball and high school baseball.

6. Christine Yoder – Town Council President, Town of LaGrange: Christine Yoder has dedicated years to her community through her work as a civil servant in the Town of Shipshewana since 1998, alongside extensive volunteer and advocacy efforts. Her experience includes serving as a medic in emergency services, a 12-year CASA volunteer, and the President of Elijah Haven domestic violence shelter for 12 years. Christine is currently the President of the Shipshewana Town Council, where she acts as a liaison for police and fire services and leads the Shipshewana Redevelopment Commission. As the State Lead Ambassador for the American Cancer Society's Cancer Action Network, she has played a pivotal role in advocating for cancer awareness and legislative change, including the passage of Indiana's Biomarker Testing Bill. Christine balances her community work with being a mother to four biological and seven foster children, and she passionately shares the story of her grandson, Ollie, who is battling brain cancer. Following Ollie's loss of voice due to his illness, Christine has committed herself to advocating for cancer patients and raising awareness through her correspondence with President Biden.

Steering Committee Resumes

7. Stewart Bender – Town Manager, Town of Topeka: Stewart Bender serves as the Town Manager for the Town of Topeka, where he is responsible for overseeing the administration and operations to ensure efficient services for the community. With extensive experience in municipal management, Stewart has developed a solid understanding of public policy, budget management, and community engagement. His leadership has been key in implementing infrastructure improvements and enhancing local services, while also fostering strong relationships between the town and its residents. Committed to transparency and sustainability, Stewart continues to influence the town's growth and development, prioritizing initiatives that benefit the community as a whole.

8. Adam Lambright – Town Council President, Town of Topeka: Adam Lambright is a dedicated member of the Topeka Town Council and currently serves as Topeka's Town Board President. With 24 years of service in the Topeka Fire Department, he currently holds the position of Assistant Fire Chief. In addition to his work in public service, Adam co-runs KMiller Farm and KMiller Trucking with Kenny Miller. He has also been an active member of the town's Redevelopment Commission (RDC) for 5 years, contributing to the growth and development of the community.

9. Fritz Helmuth – Owner, S&H Metal Products: Fritz Helmuth is a lifelong resident of LaGrange County, where he has dedicated himself to his community and family. Married since 1977, he and his wife are proud parents of two sons and two daughters, all of whom are married and blessed with 12 grandchildren. Fritz grew up just half a mile from his business in Eaton Township (Topeka) and was inspired to build his career in the heart of the community he loves. He is a chartered member of both the Jaycees and the Lions Club and has demonstrated his commitment to youth sports by sponsoring numerous softball and basketball teams for over 26 years, along with providing uniforms and equipment to local schools. A self-taught entrepreneur, Fritz has launched several ventures, including the Topeka Family Store, Topeka Bargain Center, USA Eagle Satellites, Crossroads RV, Hutch and Such, and S&H Metal. His community involvement extends to serving on the LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce Board and the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC). He also participates in the 2020 Board, which meets monthly to support local business ideas, and has partnered with a local manufacturer to create a program that nurtures young entrepreneurs as they start their businesses.

10. Sonya Nash – Executive Director, LaGrange County CVB: Sonya Nash brings over 30 years of experience in tourism and hospitality to her role as Executive Director of the LaGrange County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB). After serving as Director of Sales at Amish Acres, a heritage cultural resort in Nappanee, she worked as the Group Sales & Services Coordinator at the South Bend/Mishawaka CVB, assisting conventions and groups in various sales roles. Since joining the Elkhart County CVB in 2000, Sonya has held significant positions, including Director of Group Sales & Experiential Development and Project Manager for the Quilt Gardens along the Heritage Trail, which allowed her to cultivate her passion for collaboration, community building, and Quality of Place initiatives throughout Northern Indiana. Leading a dedicated team, she now promotes the Heart of Amish Country brand to over 2 million annual visitors to Shipshewana, enhancing the local tourism economy with her customer-centric approach. A graduate of Indiana University, Sonya has held various leadership roles within the industry, including serving on the national American Bus Association Marketplace Education Subcommittee and

as Past President of the former Tour Indiana organization. She is a Certified Destination Management Executive through Destinations International and has earned additional certifications as a Certified Tour Planner and Certified Travel Industry Specialist. Residing in Granger, Indiana, with her husband Richard, Sonya enjoys baking, cooking, reading, and spending time with her great-nieces and nephews.

11. Robbie Miller – Plan Commission Director, LaGrange County: Robbie Miller serves as the Plan Commission Director for LaGrange County, where she has witnessed the community unite in support of a new Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2023, replacing an outdated framework that no longer met the county's needs. This new plan necessitated the development of a Unified Development Ordinance, which was successfully adopted by the LaGrange County Commissioners in August 2024. Robbie considers the community's enthusiastic support for both the Comprehensive Plan and the Unified Development Ordinance to be the highlight of her career. In addition to her roles as Plan Commission Director, Zoning Administrator, and Floodplain Administrator, Robbie has actively engaged in community service, serving as a 4-H leader, Girl Scout leader, and Boy Scout leader, as well as holding various positions on Parent Teacher Organizations. She is currently a member of the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) Board and Purdue Extension Board, further demonstrating her commitment to fostering growth and development in LaGrange County.

12. Traci Blaize – Superintendent, Lakeland School Corp.: Traci Blaize is the superintendent of Lakeland School Corporation, making history as the first graduate of Lakeland (class of 1990) to hold this position. With nearly 20 of her 30 years in education dedicated to Lakeland, Traci's experience includes roles as a special education teacher, middle school assistant principal, and elementary principal. Before returning to Indiana, she spent a decade in Rawlins, Wyoming, where she served as an elementary principal, middle school principal, and Director of Special Education. Traci holds an undergraduate degree from Butler University, a Master's in Curriculum and Instruction from Indiana Wesleyan University, and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of Wyoming. In 2022, she was honored as the Indiana Association of School Principals District 3 Elementary Principal of the Year. Beyond her educational leadership, Traci actively contributes to the LaGrange County community through her board membership with the LaGrange County Chamber, collaborations with the LaGrange County Economic Development Association, participation in various leadership roundtables, and volunteering as the annual emcee for the LaGrange County Corn School Queen Contest. Traci finds great fulfillment in developing programs that foster student success and promote community growth.

13. Jeff Reed – Superintendent, Prairie Heights School Corp.: Jeff Reed has devoted 27 years to the field of education, with the last 18 years spent at Prairie Heights Community Schools. His educational journey began as a teacher for 4th and 5th grades at Wawasee Community Schools before he transitioned to Prairie Heights, where he has held various leadership positions, including Assistant Principal, Principal, and Assistant Superintendent. Currently, Jeff is in his 11th year as Superintendent, where he continues to advocate for student success and community engagement. His extensive experience in educational leadership has equipped him with the skills to foster a positive learning environment and implement effective strategies for growth within the district.

Steering Committee Resumes

14. Randy Miller – Superintendent, Westview School Corp.: Randy Miller is a lifelong resident of LaGrange County, having graduated from Westview High School in 1999. After completing his college education, he returned to his roots and dedicated 21 years to the local school system as a public educator, coach, and leader. Following this, Randy served as the Principal of Westview Junior High School for an additional six years. Currently, he has been the Superintendent of Westview School Corporation for seven years, a role he deeply values for the opportunity to work alongside a dedicated team and serve the community he loves. His passion for education and commitment to his students and colleagues continue to drive positive change within the Westview School Corporation. Additionally, Randy serves on the LCEDC Board of Directors.

15. Howard Helmuth – Owner, Helmuth Quality Power: Howard Helmuth's career has been driven by a commitment to creating quality family time, not only for his customers but also for his team, which is the mission of his company, Helmuth Quality Power. His professional journey began at Shelt Homes in Middlebury, where he produced mobile homes, later transitioning to work as a mechanic in a truck garage. In 1980, after being laid off, he entered the RV industry and subsequently began working with small engines. By 1983, Howard had started his own business, Helmuth Quality Power, specializing in designing generator sets and engine-powered equipment. Howard takes great pride in seeing the benefits his customers gain from his products. Outside of his business, Howard is a dedicated Amish community member, serving on the LCEDC Board of Directors and assisting with local fundraisers for the LaGrange and Topeka Fire Departments by providing essential generator equipment. He is a devoted family man, married with five sons, two daughters, and fourteen grandchildren, and enjoys traveling with his family by Amtrak.

16. Jenny Landez – President, Main Street LaGrange: Jenny Landez currently serves as the Human Resources Director for LaGrange County. Prior to her role with the county, she was the Director of Human Resources for Lakeland School Corporation. Jenny gives back to the community in various ways. She is involved in Main Street LaGrange where she serves as the President. In her role as President, she oversees/coordinates community events, supports & promotes local businesses, advocates for improvement of downtown LaGrange infrastructure and business facades. She has served as a Chair for several community fundraisers that support the needs within LaGrange County and provide scholarships to local high school students; while also serving on the Northeastern Center Board of Directors as Secretary. In her spare time, Jenny is a member of LaGrange Mu Chapter and Associate Chapter. She volunteers time to support other organizations at their events. She is an advocate for the importance of mental health in our community, is the county's ADA Compliance Admin, and leads Strengths Trainings throughout the region.

17. Sara Patrick – Executive Director, LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce: Sara Patrick, B.A., M.B.A., serves as the Executive Director of the LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce, a vital organization that advocates for its members' success through legislative support, information dissemination, and business resources. Under her leadership, the Chamber is driven by strategic goals and a results-oriented approach. Previously, as Group Sales Manager with Blue Gate Hospitality, Sara established sustainable systems that significantly increased annual sales and expanded the customer

database. She graduated with honors from Anderson University with a degree in Bible & Religion and later earned her Master of Business Administration from Western Governors University. Passionate about uniting LaGrange County's influencers to promote community welfare, Sara takes pride in leading the Chamber as it works to empower local initiatives. Outside of her professional life, she is happily married to James and is a devoted mother to two children, Colt and Joelle. In her free time, Sara enjoys playing various musical instruments, including her cherished Taylor acoustic guitar, as well as camping, gardening, homesteading, and indulging in her love for movies.

18. Octavia Yoder – Executive Director, LaGrange County Community Foundation: Octavia Yoder has cultivated a diverse career in both nonprofit leadership and media. After three years as Program Officer at the LaGrange County Community Foundation, Octavia was appointed Executive Director in October 2019. Under her leadership, the Foundation's assets have grown from \$17 million to \$28.2 million. Before transitioning into the nonprofit sector, Octavia worked as a reporter and editor for a northeast Indiana media company. With her role at the Foundation, she is focused on contributing to the positive growth and development of LaGrange County. Outside of work, Octavia stays actively involved with her family and community, while raising two young boys.

19. Andy Linder – Owner, Trading Post Outfitters; President, Mongo Community Development Association: Andy Linder is a lifelong resident of LaGrange County who returned to his roots in 2018 after moving back from Indianapolis. Along with his wife, he purchased the Trading Post and later acquired the Town and Country Market in 2023, transforming it into the Mongo General Store. Before venturing into local business, Andy gained valuable experience as a sales manager for Ray's Trash, the largest trash and recycling company in Indianapolis, and managed a branch for The Brickman Group, a commercial landscaping company servicing half of the Indianapolis area. His commitment to community service is evident through his past roles on the Redevelopment Commission for LaGrange County, the steering committee for LaGrange County Together, and the steering committee for DECA with the Lakeland School Corporation. Currently, he serves as the board president of the LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce, secretary of the LaGrange County Sheriff's Office Merit Board, board member of the LaGrange County Convention and Visitors Bureau, and president of the Mongo Community Development Association.

20. Jeff Wolheter – Executive Director, Coffee and Cream of South Milford: Jeff Wolheter is a lifelong resident of LaGrange County, where he was born and raised. After earning his degrees from Purdue University and Wesley Biblical Seminary, he moved to Kendallville, IN, to plant and pastor Bridgeway Church for over a decade. In 2019, Jeff returned to his hometown of South Milford with a vision to foster community connections. This inspired the dream of opening a coffee shop that would serve as a welcoming space for relationships to flourish. In May 2024, Coffee & Cream of South Milford opened its doors as a nonprofit coffee shop housed in a historic 130-year-old building, with Jeff serving as the Executive Director. The shop has quickly become a popular gathering place, offering quality food and drinks to the community. In addition to his work at Coffee & Cream, Jeff is actively involved in the South Milford Community League, where he advocates for the needs and interests of his community.

Steering Committee Resumes

21. Terry Iannerelli – Township Trustee, Lima Township; Howe Community: Terry Iannerelli and his wife have been active, dedicated members of the LaGrange County community for 23 years. Their journey began in the restaurant industry in Michigan, eventually leading them to purchase a charming red building in Howe that reminded Terry of his grandparents' home. Committed to his community and faith, Terry is a devoted member of the Howe Community Association and a volunteer with the Lions Club. Over the past decade, he has worked with Lakeland School as a bus driver, substitute teacher, and kitchen worker, serving the students with dedication. Six years ago, Terry took on the role of Lima Township Trustee, where he continues to serve. His community involvement also includes active roles in the Howe Community Association, local parks programs, and farming, contributing significantly to the area's growth and well-being.

22. Jackie Feller – Health First Indiana Coordinator, LaGrange County Health Department: Jackie Feller has proudly called LaGrange County home for the past 34 years after moving from Northeast Indiana with her husband to raise their children. Active in 4-H during their school years, she cherishes the friendships and memories created during that time. A member of LaGrange First Church of God, Jackie is involved in various ministry opportunities, reflecting her commitment to faith, family, and community. With a healthcare career spanning over three decades, Jackie considers herself a continual learner, having earned three college degrees with encouragement from those who shaped her professional journey. Her time at Parkview Health was instrumental in her development, preparing her for her current role as the Health First Indiana Coordinator at the LaGrange County Health Department. In this capacity, she collaborates with community partners to implement programs aimed at enhancing public health for the present and future, a mission that brings her immense joy and gratitude.

23. Jeff Campos – County Commissioner, LaGrange County: Jeff Campos has built an impressive career spanning both business and public service, dedicated to the growth and safety of LaGrange County. He began his career as the owner of Campos Excavating from 1993 to 1998, later transitioning to law enforcement, where he served with the LaGrange Police Department as a Reserve Officer before joining the LaGrange County Sheriff's Office in 1998. Over 24 years, Jeff held numerous roles, including Jail Officer, Deputy, Detective, Chief Deputy, and finally, Sheriff, a role he held until 2022. In 2023, Jeff was elected as a County Councilman and also took on the role of Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative Coordinator. Outside of his professional roles, Jeff is a highly active community leader, serving as President and Educator for Junior Achievement, President and Member of the Purdue Board, and President of the United Way Board, as well as a dedicated Rotarian. As Sheriff, he founded two impactful programs: the 4th Grade Health and Safety Day Camp and "Halloween & Heroes," a Trunk-or-Treat event with local law enforcement, first responders, and firefighters. Jeff is also passionate about youth sports, coaching football, baseball, and wrestling for grades 2–8 and serving as a high school football coach from 2002 to 2016. Jeff's commitment to his community, both on and off the field, continues to leave a positive and lasting legacy.

24. Marion Wiggins – Owner, Bloomfield Creative; local preservationist: Marion Wiggins grew up in Tempe, Arizona, and earned her bachelor's degree from Wellesley College before pursuing a Master of Science in Deaf Education at Washington University in St. Louis. She began her career teaching at

Sunshine Cottage School for Deaf Children in San Antonio, later becoming a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in Western Kentucky, where she also received a Post-Graduate Certificate in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling from the University of Kentucky. Marion's diverse experience includes working in the city manager's office in Fredericksburg, TX, where she led community visioning efforts, authored budget narratives, and researched family leave and childcare policies. In September 2018, Marion and her family moved to LaGrange for her husband Greg's position as Chief of Anesthesia at Parkview LaGrange Hospital. They purchased a historic schoolhouse in December 2020, which was added to the National Register of Historic Places in November 2021, with plans to create a small event space and cultivate lavender. With 4,400 lavender plants, they are set to open the Bloomfield Lavender Apothecary in November 2024. Marion and her husband have three children—twins Annie and George (age 9) and August (age 2.5)—and are active members of LaGrange First United Methodist Church and the board of the Arc of LaGrange County. Her passions include historic preservation, downtown revitalization, supporting women-owned small businesses, and fostering inclusive environments for individuals with disabilities.

25. Christina Blaskie – Leader of Community Health Improvement, Parkview LaGrange: Christina Blaskie serves as the leader of community health improvement at Parkview LaGrange Hospital, where she is a dedicated advocate for enhancing healthcare systems and tackling the pressing health concerns of LaGrange County. With a commitment to improving community health, Christina founded three groups focused on analyzing local health data and services, enabling targeted responses to the community's needs. She played a pivotal role in establishing the county's first Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) program, which supports effective mental health crisis response. In addition to her work at the hospital, Christina is an active member of the Chamber of Commerce board of directors and oversees the county's community health needs assessment and implementation process. Her extensive volunteer efforts reflect her passion for making meaningful improvements in LaGrange County, as she tirelessly works to enhance the well-being of its residents. Certified in CIT, QPR Suicide Prevention, Parent Café, and the Sequential Intercept Model (SIM), Christina trains others to better serve the community. She also serves on the Chamber of Commerce board, helping drive local initiatives for a healthier community.

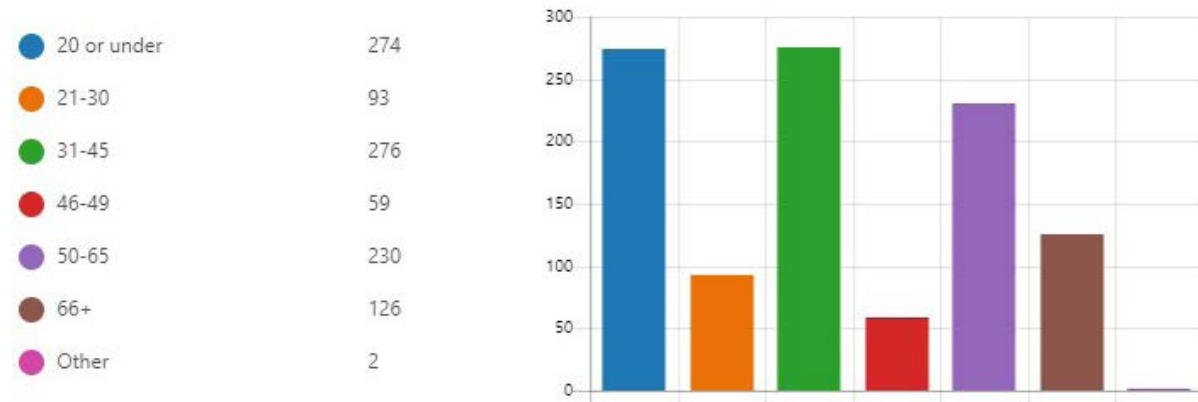
26. TJ Kempf – Executive VP and Chief Lending Officer, Farmers State Bank: TJ Kempf is the Executive Vice President and Chief Lending Officer at Farmers State Bank, where he has dedicated the past eight years of his 23-year banking career. With 16 years of executive experience, he previously held positions at Honor Credit Union and United Federal Credit Union in Southwest Michigan. A graduate of Indiana University in South Bend with a degree in Communications/Broadcasting, TJ began his professional journey in radio and television before transitioning to banking. He furthered his expertise by earning the Certified Credit Union Executive (CCUE) designation from the University of Wisconsin through the Credit Union National Association (CUNA) Management school. Driven by a passion for helping others achieve their financial goals, TJ takes pride in supporting both individuals and businesses in the community. He currently serves as the Treasurer on the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation Board and on the Lacasa Board in Elkhart County. Outside of work, TJ enjoys spending quality time with his wife, Kirsten, of 27 years, and their two daughters, Sydney and Courtney.

APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

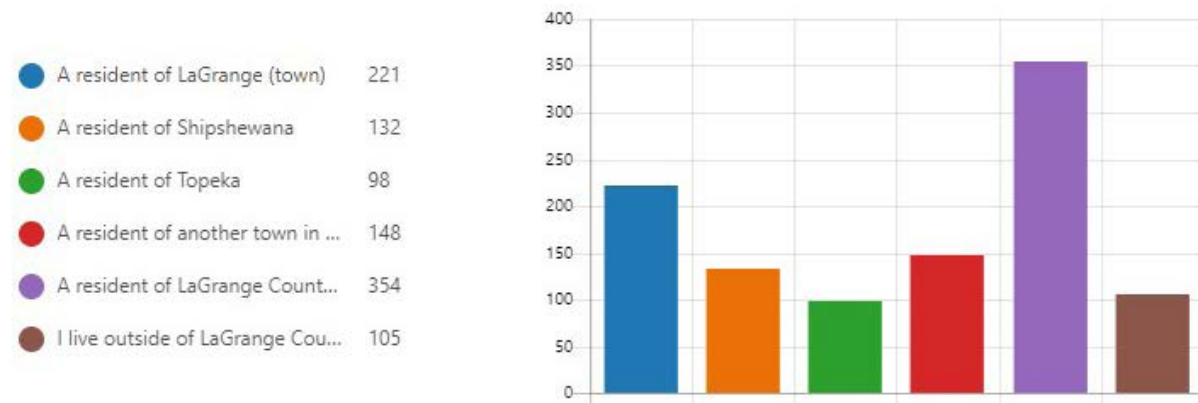
Community Connections Survey Results

1060 Responses 12:24 Average time to complete Closed Status

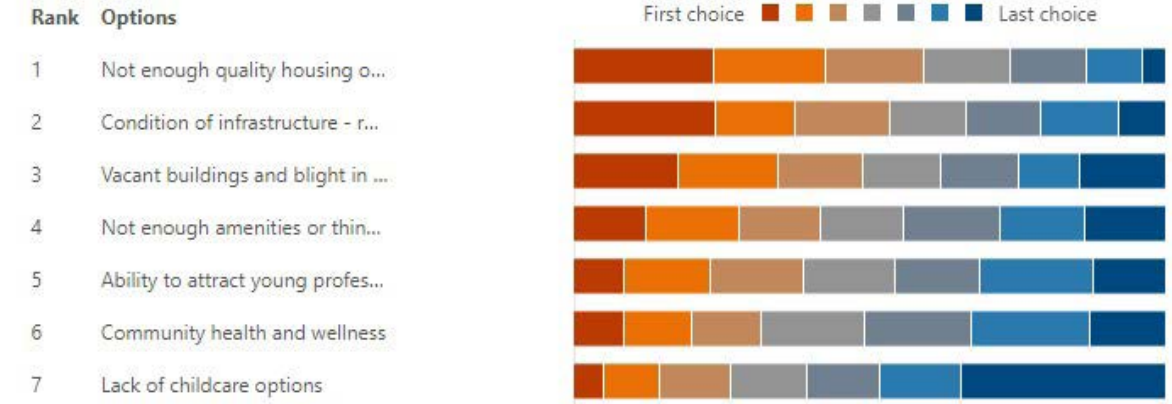
1. What is your age group



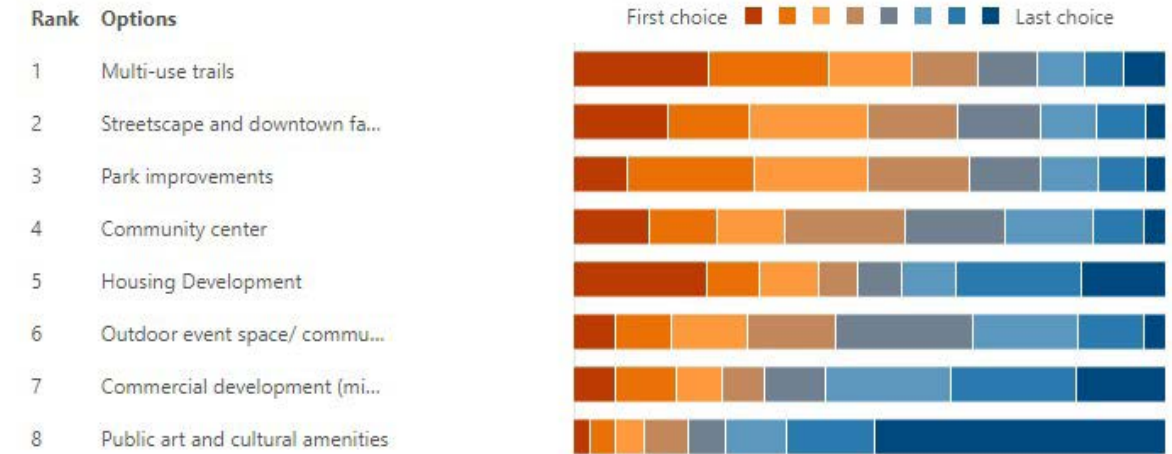
2. I am currently:



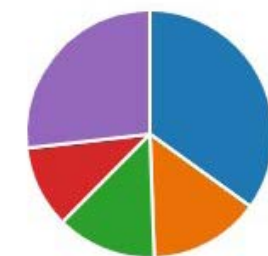
3. Please rank the following challenges in LaGrange County with the top choice being the most important to address:



4. Please rank the following project types from most important to least important to you:



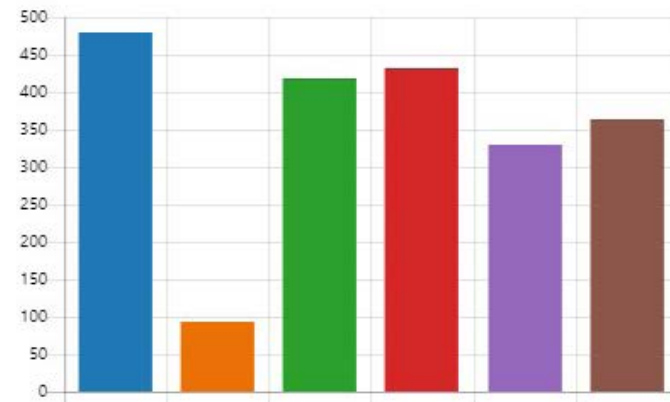
5. What types of projects would you like most to see in LaGrange County pertaining to housing? (pick two)



Community Connections Survey Results

6. What types of projects would you like most to see in LaGrange County pertaining to assets and amenities? (pick two)

- Park improvements - ballfields... 479
- Acquisition of land for new pa... 93
- Access to natural resources - t... 419
- New or enhancement of publi... 432
- Community Center 329
- Public pool/ aquatics/ splash ... 364



7. What types of projects would you like most to see in LaGrange County pertaining to infrastructure? (pick two)

- Street beautification improve... 713
- Sidewalk additions/ improvem... 664
- Drinking water utility improve... 291
- Wastewater utility improveme... 173
- Broadband expansion 275



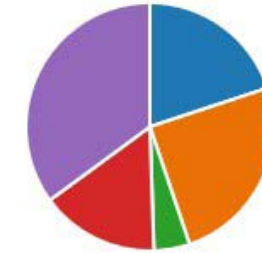
8. What types of projects would you like most to see in LaGrange County pertaining to biking and walking? (pick two)

- Regional trail connections 543
- Multi-use trails within your co... 744
- Signed bike routes/ bike lanes 392
- Sidewalks and curb ramps/ wa... 437



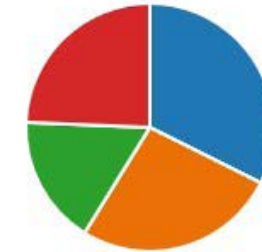
9. What types of projects would you like most to see in LaGrange County pertaining to arts and culture? (pick two)

- Art in public spaces (murals, s... 422
- Historic preservation 526
- Gateway signage 99
- Public performance venues 327
- Public spaces for community e... 742



10. What types of projects would you like most to see in LaGrange County pertaining to employment and business development? (pick two)

- Downtown re-development 685
- Retail/business corridor devel... 560
- Professional workforce recruit... 356
- Small business incubators 515



11. What types of projects would you like most to see in LaGrange County pertaining to programs and initiatives? (pick two)

- Marketing and advertising livi... 527
- Expanding tourism developme... 330
- Career development programs 698
- Childcare Initiatives 561

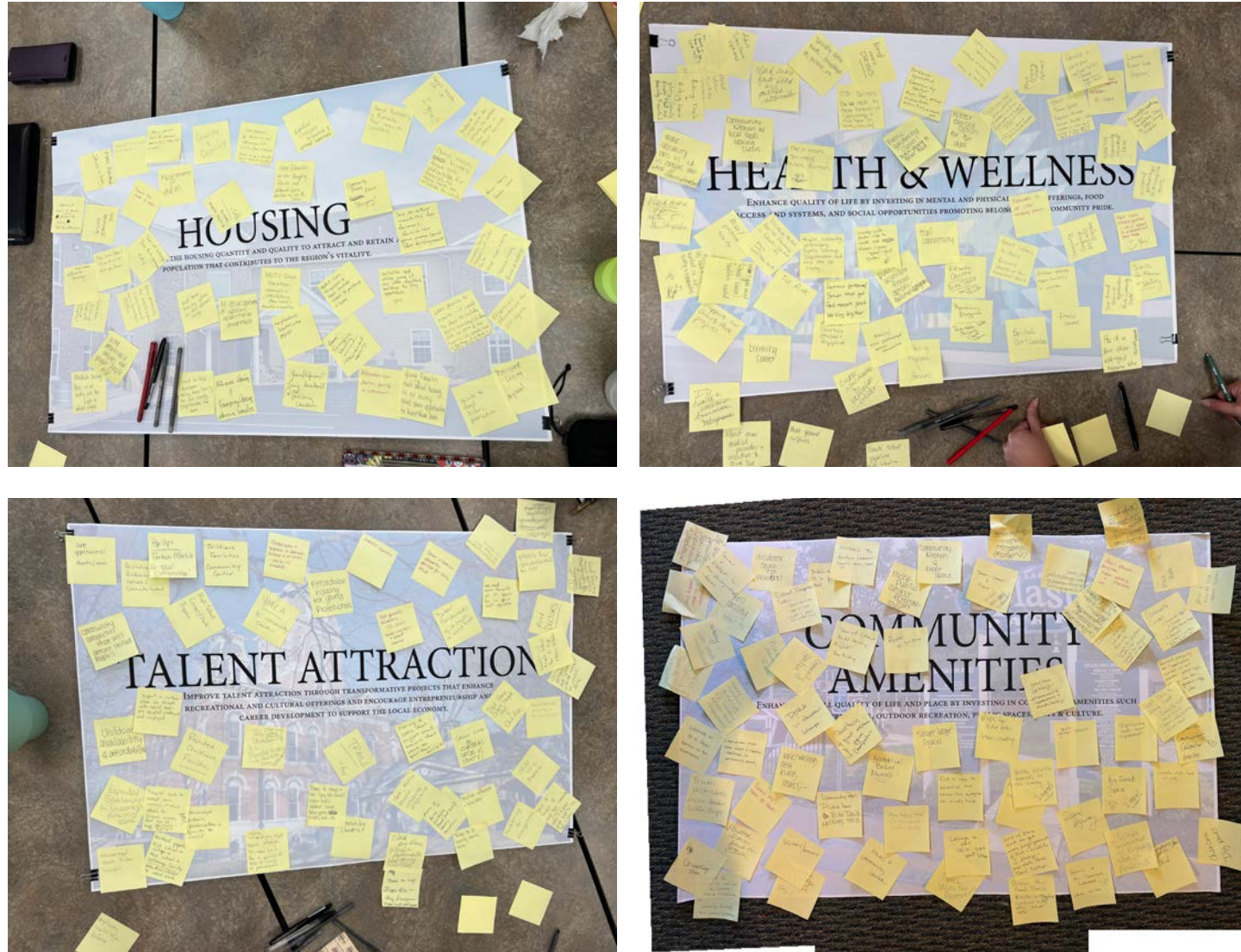


12. What types of projects would you like most to see in LaGrange County pertaining to health and wellness? (pick two)

- Mental health awareness, pro... 447
- Substance use and abuse pro... 330
- Access to healthy food options 402
- Availability of fitness facilities 660
- Social and community events ... 300



Stakeholder Engagement Results



LaGrange County Stakeholder meeting

Sticky note transcript

HOUSING

- Need more of it
 - I agree!!
- Support for caregivers so elderly/disabled can stay in their homes
- Need recovery and rehab for men and women
- Need more homes that are affordable for families to move here to relocate for work
- Multi-Family Housing units
- Tax or other incentives for farmers, Amish to gain more land for development
- Integrate housing programs with mental health
- Mixed income housing
- Temporary housing
- Reuse of buildings
- Revitalize and utilize some of our older downtown buildings for tiny apartments
 - Yes!
- When planning for housing- it would be ideal to include early learning/childcare pods as part of the housing. We already have a shortage of childcare so adding housing will increase that.
- Financial education for all ages
- Assisted living
 - Day care!
- Grants to assist in historic preservation
- Young families can't afford housing in our county. Need more opportunities to keep them here.
- HGTV Show hometown example- refurbishing older homes and deserted properties
- Student loan forgiveness – more available income to purchase a home
- Emergency housing/Transitional housing
- Affordable yes
- Starter, family & retirement
- Youn professional hiring development @ 062 Publishing Company
- Neighborhood beautification projects
- Re-development of upstairs apartments downtown
- Need more housing options in \$250-500,000 range
- Need to help developers bring more housing to our county, Shiphewana for sure
- Town of LaGrange Town Park improvement funding
- Any possibility for mobile homes (tiny homes) have capacity to build
- More affordable housing for younger people also...
- Affordable housing. Prices in our county are too high to attract people
- Need more affordable housing
- Town homes/ retail Corner of 9 & 20

Stakeholder Engagement Results

- Need gap funding
- Transition housing (treatment, disabled peoples)
- Rebuilding of vacant lot downtown LaGrange
 - Potential for housing
 - Town homes/ apartments
- More Apartments/Starter homes
- Expand city water to home
- Apartments @ 9 & 20
- Rehab downtown space for apartment opportunities. Upper level of retail
- Planed housing projects at all stages
- Quality & Quantity
- Middle Income housing
 - Yes!
- Land purchase for subdivision and infrastructure with utilities (site is important)
 - Needs to be a meaningful project to help rectify the issue.
- More education on the Buying Process and different Loans available w/ no \$ down!
- Education about & increase wetland projects
- Community events about buying!

TALENT ATTRACTION

- Art opportunities
 - Theater/music
- Community amenities that will attract skilled people!!
- Pop Ups- Farmers Markers for NEW Entrepreneurs!
- Revitalize Professional Network & Community Involvement
- High School Career/ Mentor Program
- Childcare Facilities
- Community Center
- YMCA or Community Center
- Revitalization and upgrades to downtown building in all areas
 - Similar to Kendallville
- Affordable housing for you professionals
- Industry expansion
- High Quality childcare
 - Tri-share county-employer & parent supported
- Career & technical education facilities for county schools
- Better Restaurants
 - Sit down and fast food
- We need more therapists OT, PT, speech for our special need's population
- Places for professionals to live
- Workforce development to create skills and training
- Volunteer opportunity development

- Curated coordinated effort
- ID where talent is going
 - If not LaGrange County, where are they going to
- Need Doctors
- Local trade school for Jr. High & above grades
- Survey people and see what would need to move here
- Dept Store (Kohl's, Target, etc) & Chick fil a
- Planned housing projects in all our towns
- Career Center or Vocational Center in County!
- Child Care support
- Spruce up! Freshen up downtown communities
 - Make it a place people want to live, stay, and play
- Mentoring for entrepreneur s
- Childcare- affordable and available!
- Things to do
 - Bowling, movies, YMCA
- More of...
 - Arts
 - Culture
 - Food (not bars)
 - Music
 - Theaters
- Art, music theater, concert programs
- Need big name stores that young people like
 - Based on my 20-year-olds they disagree, they want more small owner business
- Community theater
- Places to shop and eat (bug box stores, chain foods) Walmart, Kroger, dairy queen, culvers, aldi, etc.
- Trails
 - YES!
- College Scholarships that require students to come back for a period of time to work as professionals
- Job Shadowing (full multi-work programs) to Provide Insights into the cast area opportunities
- Reputed Childcare Facilities
- Encourage historic preservation and grants to assist
- Hospital needs to accept more insurance
 - More options for business owners that may be more affordable for employees
 - YES!
- Medical Pipeline
 - High school to college to med school to LaGrange County
 - Incentives/ desire to come back
- Encourage/ require higher wages

Stakeholder Engagement Results

- Expand scholarships to Encourage returning talent
- Childcare availability & affordability
- Support for culture where our friends with special needs are accepted, embraced, and employed
- Emphasize work/life balance

HEALTH & WELLNESS

- Launch Parent Café Program
- Develop a workplace wellness tool kit
 - Diabetes
 - Hypertension
 - Mental health
 - ETC.
- Concept
 - Pumpkinvine Trail to Hawpatch Trail to other county trails
- Establish community volunteer base
 - Manage community calendar
- Increased partners to accomplish more
- Start Young Sprouts program through Farmers Markets- kids compete an activity to earn \$1.00 to spend on fresh produce
- More grocery store options
- Train non-law enforcement/first responders on crisis Intervention & support
 - CISM or something similar
 - CIT is in place & trans Law & responders
- Access to fitness facilities
- Supportive programs
- Farmers Markets
- Community Gardens
- Winter exercise options for ALL ages
- Parkview sponsored Community Center
 - Gym
 - Pool
 - Other recreational activities
 - Events
 - ETC
- Public gardening classes!
 - Teach people to grow food
- Need more DOCTORS
- OB Services
 - Be able to have babies in LaGrange & not have to leave the county
- Specialty doctor needs
 - Dermatologist
 - OB
 - Pediatric
 - ETC
- Need more fast food named restaurants
- Encourage oversight on Rental Properties via Health dept. (Some rentals are not safe to live in)
- Biking Trails & Biking Lanes along county roads that are heavily traveled
- Expand outdoor activities in eastern side
- More Specialty DRS in LA in order for lack of transportation
- Need more dinning open after 5 in Shipshe
- Community Gardens
- Birthing center
- Need more Primary Care Doctors
 - Yes
- Bike/ Pedestrian trails
- County-wide garden club to create and maintain flowers & green spaces & quiet gardens
 - Yes
- Trails connection Millersburg, Topeka, LaGrange, Shipshewana, and east into our county
- Increase Mental Health Programs is schools- Elementary, Middle, High School
 - Bullying
 - Vaping
 - Coping with stress amount
- OB care & sipper needed in our county and communities
 - Yes
 - I agree
- Indoor/ Year-Round fitness center and facilities
- Support our county park projects
- Ice Rink
- Attract more medical providers-incentive to move her
- More general surgeons
- ID health and wellness businesses
- Increase Awareness and prevention efforts related to child abuse and neglect and human trafficking
- Create new health and wellness events
- Food in clothes basket support
- Current programs and groups that feed food insecure people working together
- Mentoring Programs & Services
- Reputable, safe, reliable child care
- Trails and more passages between commuting
- Publicly accessible fitness options
 - Facilities and Programs
- Adult Day Care Options
- Sidewalks in all School walking zones

Stakeholder Engagement Results

- Start Mens and Womens recovery housing and then transitional housing
- Spiritual Care & Connections
- Trail Connectivity
- Adult indoor athletic facilities
 - Lots of interest in pickleball and other things
 - Yes!
 - 😊
- Safe Roadways (Wider birms)
- Trails for fitness and safety
- Launch LOSS Team
- How do we serve those with food insecurities better
 - Delivery Expansion

COMMUNITY AMENITIES

- ATV & side by side trail system
- Movie Theater
 - Yes!
- Community Center
 - Exercise Equipment and Classes
 - Cooking Demos
 - Pickleball
 - Classes
 - Knitting
 - Pottery
 - Building
 - Etc.
- Focused projects on "downtown" spaces in all towns, things to do, gathering spaces
- Host farm to table Events
 - Community visit local farms
 - Learn about gardening
 - Enjoy food
- Create a Community Calendar of events
- Completion of the Topeka bike path
- Shipshewana needs sewer improvement
- Big Event space
 - I agree!
 - Yes! 100%
 - Lifestyle instruction to encourage use of amenities
- Childcare
- Dog parks
- Scenic Byway
- Facelift on all downtown LaGrange
 - More inviting

- Yes!
- Grow the food truck events & maybe combine with other local spots
- Work w/ state DNR to get more engagement of Fish & Wild Life in Morgo
 - New State Park
 - Trail System
- Youth Activities especially in the evening
 - I agree!
- Find a way to advertise the amenities and programs we already have
- LaGrange to East 100 + sized event space
- More greenspace
- Downtown LaGrange enhancements and approvements to facades/buildings
- Maps for Bike Paths thru county
- "Linger longer" spaces
- Historical Based Murals!
- More buggy lanes for out county roads- safety
- Fitness & community center
- Community pool
- Pickleball
- Bike trails
- Walking trails
- Winery/Brewery
- Co-working space
- Painted Grain Bins in @ Town
- Youth Activities
 - Movie Theater
 - Coffee Shops
- Sidewalk on 50 N from town line to the subdivisions
- Hawpatch Tail
 - Train depot in Topeka trailhead w/ community space
- Bike/walking path along roads
- Dora in downtown LaGrange
- More outdoor activities
 - E.g. outdoor fitness trail w/ equipment
- Winery
- Outdoor concerts and entertainment
- Fitness facility
 - Yes!
 - Yes!
- Sewer & Water in non-incorporated towns
- Incubator space for new biz!
- Expand Transportation System
 - Hours available
 - Uber or Lyft

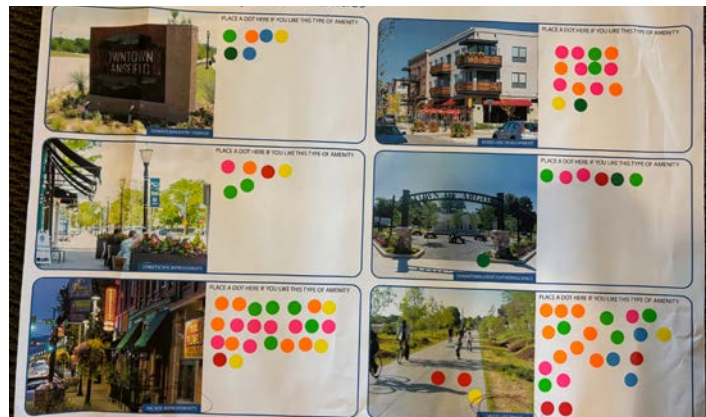
Stakeholder Engagement Results

- LCAT is great but limited hours
- Community Garden
- Town of LaGrange 9 + 20 Housing Project.
 - GAP funding
- More public outdoor entertainment space
- Community kitchen & event space
- Alcohol in Shipshe
- Downtown grant assistance programs for beautification
 - Yes please
- Sport Complex & Fitness
 - Several throughout communities
- Fairgrounds Community
- Building renovated for more meeting/ banquet hall space
- Adult athletic facilities
 - Indoor walking
 - Indoor pickleball
 - Etc
- Expansion of Trails
 - Connect to Wolcottville/ Rone City
 - Connect to Shipshewana, Pumpkin vine
 - Connect to Morgo & South Milford
- Countrywide Historical Museum Improvements
- Countrywide Community Pride Storytelling Campaign
- LaGrange Downtown sidewalk enhancement and streetscape
- Sidewalks in all the school walking zones
- Pickleball is a passing trend
- Pickleball courts <3 this!
- Enormous zipline track to connect communities
 - Cool!
- Programs for teens to use up time to prevent parties & substance abuse.
- LaGrange Culture to use Cultural competence
- Agricultural Heritage trails
 - Yes!
- Winter indoor space ideas for recreation
- Maps for Bike paths thru county
- Create a community calendar of events
- Focus projects on “Downtown” spaces in all towns-parking, things to do, gathering spaces, etc.
- Collaborate partnerships opportunities between towns & areas to build cross promotion

Pop-Up Engagement & Open House Photos



Pop-Up Engagement & Open House Photos



APPENDIX C: COMPREHENSIVE CONSTRUCTION DESCRIPTIONS

LaGrange Detroit Street Streetscape Improvements

Current Conditions:

Detroit Street (also SR 9) is a two lane street with parallel parking from Spring Street to Lafayette Street. Towards Wayne Street the parallel parking ends and a southbound turn lane is added. From Wayne Street to US 20 there is a southbound left hand turn lane for US 20, and no parallel parking. Concrete sidewalks are on both sides of the street, spanning from the curb to the building in most locations. The intersections have curb ramps and crosswalks, although not all meet current ADA requirements. Lighting is provided by cobrahead fixtures on 30' poles on alternating sides of the roadway. There is no historic, decorative or pedestrian scale lighting present. There are no street trees or permanent planters in the streetscape.

Environmental/Site Hazards:

There are no known environmental hazards within the project area. Site hazards could include the vehicular traffic on Detroit Street, as well as the historic building facades and foundations that abut the streetscape sidewalk.

Historical Significance:

While the project area is not currently within a recognized historic district, this section of streetscape is within the historic downtown area. Also, the county courthouse, which is on the historic register, is located just west and adjacent to the project area. Given the age of some adjacent buildings, and the historic character of the area, efforts should be taken in the streetscape design to recognize and complement the historic character.

Socioeconomic Factors:

The project is located in the heart of downtown LaGrange, along a heavily traveled roadway. The project area is used and impacted by adjacent business owners, nearby residential neighborhoods, residents of LaGrange and visitors that travel

through the space. Construction will temporarily disrupt vehicular and pedestrian traffic, potentially making access to the businesses more difficult. Upon completion, the streetscape improvements will provide a great benefit to the downtown and its businesses, improving safety, function, and aesthetics.

Supporting Physical Assets & Resources:

The streetscape will be supported by the utility infrastructure and roadway that will remain in place. Adjacent business owners take pride in their storefronts and will help support the streetscape improvements.

Service Gaps and Needs that Exist in the Target Area:

The streetscape serves all residents in LaGrange as well as visitors to the downtown area, and those that are traveling through town on Detroit Street, which is SR 9, a major north-south corridor. There is a need for a street that is safe for vehicles and pedestrians that also creates an atmosphere focused on people's experience while using the site that will help attract people to the downtown area.

Financial Status of the Existing Facility:

Detroit Street is a state road, so maintenance and renovations within the roadway and streetscape is shared with the Town of LaGrange and the Indiana Department of Transportation.



Recommended Option for Implementation

Alternative Options:

Detroit Street (SR 9) is the main street of downtown LaGrange, connecting US 20 to the historic courthouse square. Many businesses including restaurants, stores, and service providers have frontage on Detroit Street. The existing conditions are not comfortable for pedestrians or welcoming visually. Leaving the streetscape in its current condition does not contribute to the revitalization of the downtown area that is desired. Another option would be to focus financial resources on another area, but this is the highest priority area since it is the primary entrance to downtown from the main intersection of Detroit St (SR-9) & US-20, connects to the historic courthouse square, and is home to the most downtown businesses.

Scope of Work:

The project focuses on improving pedestrian safety, function, and aesthetics contributing to the historic downtown atmosphere. The proposed streetscape project includes adding streetscape elements and renovating some areas of sidewalk on Detroit Street from US 20 north to Michigan Street. Proposed streetscape elements include an entry feature at US 20, decorative lighting and pavement, planters and/or street trees, street furniture, curb ramps and crosswalks. The project also includes an alleyway activation project that will provide a people-focused space downtown to relax or enjoy a meal or beverage from a nearby restaurant.

Site/Land Acquisition Considerations:

There is no land acquisition anticipated for this project. Access and maintenance of traffic will need to be optimized to minimize disturbance to traffic flow and access to downtown businesses.

LaGrange Detroit Street Streetscape Improvements

Pro-Forma for Operations:

The streetscape improvements will initially reduce the maintenance needs for some items, but will add some potential maintenance for new amenities and any trees/planters. Preventative maintenance will be coordinated and implemented to extend project life. Roadway maintenance and upgrades will be coordinated with INDOT, and lighting with NIPSCO.

Projected Number of Users:

The project area is a heavily utilized state road. Acting as a major north-south corridor through town, vehicular traffic will likely remain similar. It is a goal and anticipated that the pedestrian traffic and number of residents and visitors using the space will increase due to the improved safety, function, atmosphere, and related projects that will be leveraged such as facade improvements and the 9 & 20 housing development.

Possible Partnerships:

The streetscape project possible partnerships include Town of LaGrange, INDOT, OCRA, DNR-DHPA, LCEDC, Main Street LaGrange, downtown businesses, and potential developers. Adjacent proposed projects such as the downtown historic district creation, facade grant program, and the 9 & 20 housing project will provide a tremendous improvement to this corridor and downtown LaGrange, utilizing funding from the town, multiple state agencies, community organizations, developers, and business owners.

Potential Construction Problems:

Potential construction problems include maintenance of vehicular traffic for the roadway

Proposed Project Schedule:

Phase	2025				2026				2027				2028			
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
Grant Application																
Procurement																
Contracts																
Design																
Bidding																
Construction																
Closeout																

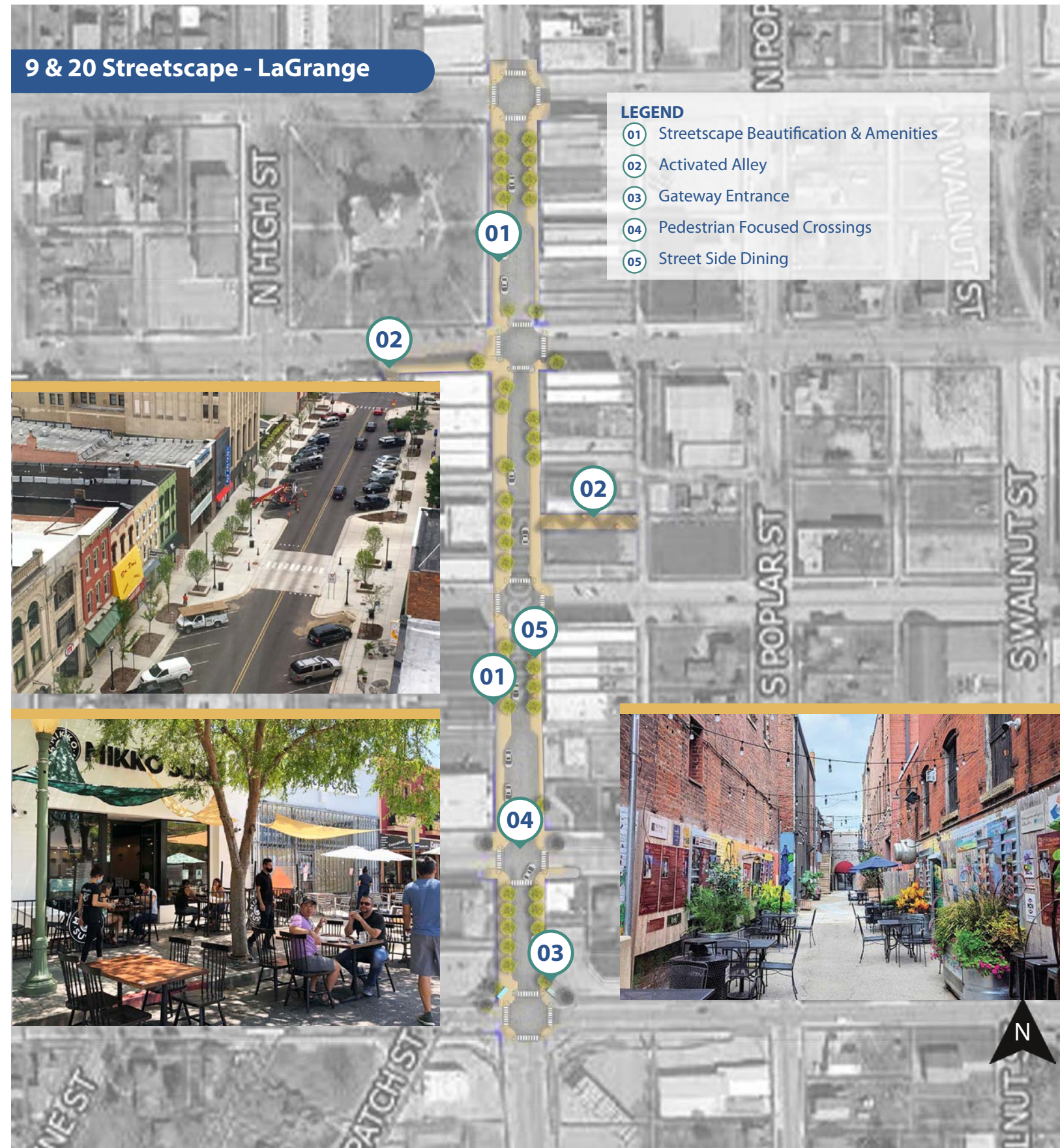
and pedestrian traffic for the downtown businesses. It is important to communicate consistently with business owners, and limit disruption to the downtown businesses by providing temporary access as needed during construction. Other problems include conflicts with underground utilities, vaults, or buried foundations. It is important to mark all utilities, take care during demolition, and report any issues immediately and work quickly towards a solution that ensures long-term viability.

Sustainability Considerations:

Preventative maintenance will be coordinated and implemented to extend project life. Roadway maintenance and upgrades will be coordinated with INDOT. Integrated and adjacent projects such as facade improvements, INDOT signal upgrades, and new development will help sustain the corridor.

Budget:

Town of LaGrange Detroit St Streetscape Improvements				
Description	Unit	Unit Cost	Quantity	Total Cost
Demo/Excavation	LS	\$ 175,000	1	\$ 175,000
Concrete Sidewalk	SYS	\$ 110	700	\$ 77,000
Curb Ramps	LS	\$ 40,000	1	\$ 40,000
Curb & Gutter	LS	\$ 35	1250	\$ 43,750
Decorative Pavement	LS	\$ 50,000	1	\$ 50,000
Lighting & Electrical	LS	\$ 350,000	1	\$ 350,000
Planters/Landscape	LS	\$ 60,000	1	\$ 60,000
Street Furniture	LS	\$ 40,000	1	\$ 40,000
Asphalt Patching	LS	\$ 25,000	1	\$ 25,000
Crosswalks	LS	\$ 30,000	1	\$ 30,000
Alleyway Activation	LS	\$ 75,000	1	\$ 75,000
Drainage Improvements	LS	\$ 100,000	1	\$ 100,000
Utility Updates/Allowance	LS	\$ 60,000	1	\$ 60,000
Maintenance of Traffic	LS	\$ 25,000	1	\$ 25,000
Erosion Control	LS	\$ 10,000	1	\$ 10,000
Mobilization/Demobilization	LS	\$ 90,000	1	\$ 90,000
Construction Surveying	LS	\$ 20,000	1	\$ 20,000
Construction Subtotal				\$ 1,270,750
Topographic Survey	LS	\$ 20,000	1	\$ 20,000
Engineering/Const. Admin	LS	\$ 135,000	1	\$ 135,000
Grant Administration	LS	\$ 55,000	1	\$ 55,000
Project Total				\$ 1,480,750
10% Contingency/Inflation				\$ 148,075
Project Grand Total				\$ 1,628,825



LaGrange Town Park Improvements

Current Conditions:

The existing conditions at Town Park include a baseball field, two basketball courts, playground, skate park, restroom building, pavilion, gravel parking lot, and some open lawn areas. Most of the park is well maintained but in deteriorating condition due to the age of the facilities. There are not accessible routes to the amenities from the parking lot or between the amenities.

Environmental Hazards:

There are no known environmental hazards at LaGrange Town Park.

Historical Significance:

There are no historic structures at Town Park or other known historical significance on site.

Socioeconomic Factors:

The park is located on the north side of LaGrange in a residential area. The surrounding neighborhoods has an assumed mix of low to moderate income, with single family and apartment housing. The park improvements will provide a great benefit to the adjacent neighborhoods, providing access to new and improved recreational amenities. It was noted in the public input survey that access to physical fitness and quality recreation facilities was very important to residents.

Supporting Physical Assets & Resources:

There are existing facilities at the park that will remain including a baseball field and skate/bike park. The proposed pump track will serve as an expansion to the overall bike/skate facilities in the park by adding a unique and modern amenity. In the newer part of the park across the street, a splash pad was constructed and opened in 2021.

Service Gaps and Needs that Exist in the Target Area:

The park serves all residents in LaGrange with some unique amenities such as the splash pad, skate park, and basketball courts. There are baseball fields and playgrounds in some other parks as well, but these amenities at Town Park serve as extra capacity and to better serve adjacent residential areas.

Financial Status of the Existing Facility:

The existing park is operated and maintained by the Town of LaGrange through its maintenance staff and budgeted funding. While weekly and seasonal standard maintenance is completed, additional renovations and improvements are not funded within the operating budget.



Recommended Option for Implementation:

Alternative Options:

The new amenities and improvements to existing amenities will expand the recreational offerings of the park to meet the needs of residents and attract visitors. While some amenities such as the walking trail and playground will be mostly enjoyed by local residents, unique amenities such as the pump track will attract visitors from throughout LaGrange County and neighboring counties. Other options included leaving the existing amenities in their current condition, or complete removal of some amenities from the park. Since some existing amenities were in a degraded condition that had safety concerns, accessibility issues, or maintenance needs, it wasn't recommended to leave those facilities in their existing condition. Since the basketball court and playground were still desired amenities, and able to be improved in their current location, removal of those amenities was not a recommended option.

Scope of Work for Proposed Project:

The improvements at Town Park include a renovation of the playground, renovating one of the two basketball courts into pickleball courts, resurfacing and replacing the hoops on the other basketball court, construction of a walking trail around the perimeter of the park, and adding a bicycle/skate pump track. Accessibility improvements will also be made including parking improvements, new sidewalks, curb ramp, and crosswalk to the splash pad across the street.

LaGrange Town Park Improvements (Continued)

Site/Land Acquisition Considerations:

There is no land acquisition necessary for this project. Site access can follow existing locations. No issues are anticipated for ingress/egress.

Pro-Forma for Operations:

The existing and proposed amenities will be analyzed and integrated into the operating budget for Town of LaGrange Parks. While some of the renovations of the playground and basketball courts will reduce some initial maintenance costs, adding new amenities such as the walking trail, pump track, and pickleball courts will increase the required funding for maintenance and operations.

Projected Number of Users:

While an exact number of park users has not been tracked, it is anticipated that the new improvements will greatly increase the amount of park users. The new playground will attract more families with young children, the pickleball courts will be heavily used by residents in the town and surrounding areas, and the pump track could attract users regionally since it is a unique facility.

Possible Partnerships:

The Town Park Improvement project utilizes several potential partnerships. This includes the DNR Land and Water Conservation Fund and local match, support from the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation, and the LaGrange Park Authority.

Potential Construction Problems:

There are minimal construction problems expected with the proposed improvement project. It is possible to encounter unforeseen conditions underground. Also there can be schedule issues depending on material lead times. These should be coordinated early in the construction period.

Sustainability Considerations:

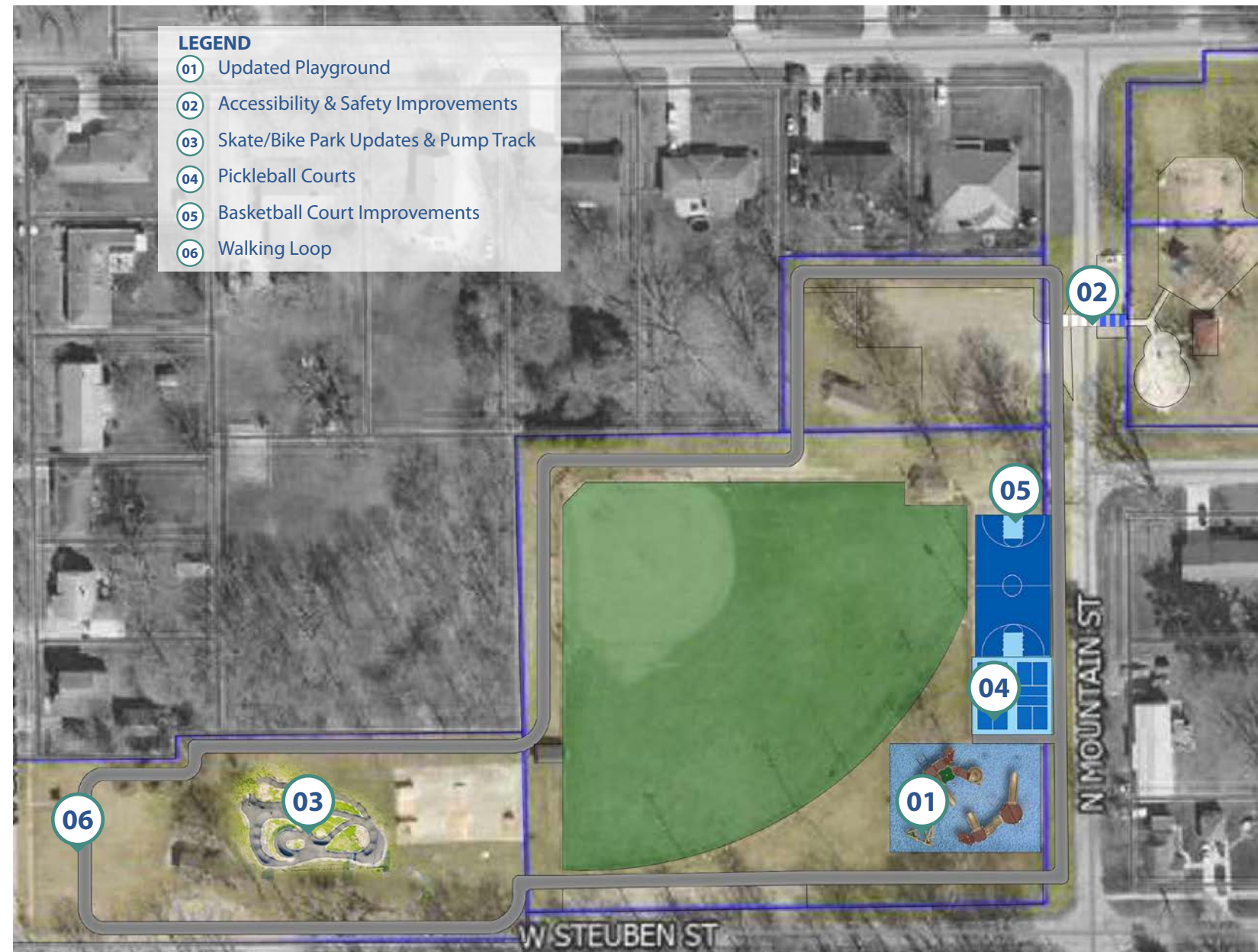
The existing and proposed amenities will be analyzed and integrated into the operating budget for Town of LaGrange Parks. The Connect LaGrange team along with community organizations will also monitor and facilitate sustainability efforts.

Budget & Cost Estimate:

Town of LaGrange Town Park Improvements				
Description	Unit	Unit Cost	Quantity	Total Cost
Demo/Excavation	LS	\$ 40,000	1	\$ 40,000
Concrete Sidewalk	SYS	\$ 95	300	\$ 28,500
Walking Trail	SYS	\$ 55	900	\$ 49,500
Pickleball Courts	LS	\$ 90,000	1	\$ 90,000
Bike/Skate Pump Track	LS	\$ 200,000	1	\$ 200,000
Playground Improvements	LS	\$ 225,000	1	\$ 225,000
Basketball Court Improvements	LS	\$ 50,000	1	\$ 50,000
Parking Improvements	LS	\$ 30,000	1	\$ 30,000
Benches/Litter Receptacles	LS	\$ 10,000	1	\$ 10,000
Trees/Landscaping	LS	\$ 6,000	1	\$ 6,000
Topsoil & Seeding	LS	\$ 15,000	1	\$ 15,000
Maintenance of Traffic	LS	\$ 5,000	1	\$ 5,000
Erosion Control	LS	\$ 5,000	1	\$ 5,000
Mobilization/Demobilization/GC	LS	\$ 60,000	1	\$ 60,000
Construction Surveying	LS	\$ 15,000	1	\$ 15,000
Construction Subtotal				\$ 829,000
Topographic Survey	LS	\$ 10,000	1	\$ 10,000
Design/Construction Admin	LS	\$ 70,000	1	\$ 70,000
Project Total				\$ 909,000
10% Contingency/Inflation				\$ 90,900
Project Grand Total				\$ 999,900

Proposed Schedule:

Phase	2025				2026				2027				2028			
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
Grant Application																
Procurement																
Contracts																
Design																
Bidding																
Construction																
Closeout																



LaGrange Historic District

Current Conditions:

Currently there isn't a historic district in LaGrange, although the county courthouse is a recognized historic building. Surrounding the courthouse there are some other historical buildings and neighborhoods. Before being eligible for Historic Preservation funding from DNR, a historic district must be created and approved.

Environmental Hazards:

Not applicable for this project

Historical Significance:

This project would allow the historic district to be eligible for renovation funding programs and other programs and requirements that help protect its historical value and significance.

Socioeconomic Factors:

While it isn't anticipated, there may be cultural and social factors that could impact the boundary creation of the historic district such as the cultural relationship or social use and history of certain properties.

Supporting Physical Assets & Resources:

The historic buildings and resources in the area will support and impact the creation of the historic district.

Service Gaps and Needs that Exist in the Target Area:

There is a need to protect and the historic character and renovate historic buildings in downtown LaGrange as many buildings have deteriorated over time and would be at future risk of loss if renovations are not completed.

Financial Status of the Existing Facility:

Not applicable for this project

Recommended Option for Implementation

Alternative Options:

The alternative option would be to not create a historic district in downtown LaGrange. While there is some cost and requirements associated with the downtown historic district, the benefits of creating

the historic district far outweigh these. The best option is to create the historic district to provide eligibility for historic renovation programs and to help ensure preservation of historic value and significance in this area.

Scope of Work:

The proposed historic district shown on the adjacent map includes the historic courthouse as well as houses and downtown buildings with historic character. The area is roughly between Spring St south to Michigan St, and Sherman St east to Poplar St. The district boundary will be discussed further with DNR-DHPA regarding the Historic Preservation Fund Grant Program guidelines and eligibility.

Site/Land Acquisition Considerations:

Not applicable for this project

Pro-Forma for Operations:

Not applicable for this project

Projected Number of Users:

Not applicable for this project

Possible Partnerships:

Potential partnerships include the Town of LaGrange, LaGrange County, Main Street LaGrange, DNR-DHPA, and the LCEDC.

Potential Construction Problems:

Not applicable for this project

Sustainability Considerations:

The creation of the historic district will be operated and maintained per DNR-DHPA guidelines. Historic renovations and improvements through funding programs will help sustain the character, quality, and value of the structures in the historic district.

Schedule

It is anticipated to begin the process with DNR in early 2025 in hopes to have the historic district established as soon as possible during the implementation period.

Budget

The estimated cost is approximately \$10,000.



LaGrange Facade Improvements

Current Conditions:

Currently there are many downtown businesses that have deteriorated facades that are in need of masonry repair, new windows or doors, painting, new or repaired canopies or awnings, lighting, and other potential improvements.

Environmental Hazards:

While no environmental hazards are anticipated for facade improvements, some buildings could have hazardous materials such as asbestos.

Historical Significance:

While none of the downtown businesses are on the historic register, the project will allow renovation of historic building facades downtown to help preserve the historic character of the downtown area.

Socioeconomic Factors:

While it isn't anticipated, there may be cultural and social factors that could impact the proposed facade improvements such as the cultural or social use and history of certain buildings and/or businesses.

Supporting Physical Assets & Resources:

The historic buildings and business owners downtown will support the project. The project will also leverage the proposed Detroit St. Streetscape project on which some downtown businesses have frontage.

Service Gaps and Needs that Exist in the Target Area:

There is a need to protect and the historic character and renovate historic buildings in downtown LaGrange as many buildings have deteriorated over time and would be at future risk if renovations are not completed.

Financial Status of the Existing Facility:

Each business owner will have different financial capabilities for facade improvements and private match for the program.

Recommended Option for Implementation

Alternative Options

The alternative option would be to not improve the downtown business facades through this program and hope that over time business owners will make improvements themselves. While that has happened in some instances, largely the downtown buildings have deteriorating facades and business owners need some financial help to get improvements completed. The greatest impact on downtown LaGrange would be a program that allows a larger amount of business owners to all make improvements and improve the image and historical character of downtown.

Scope of Work

The proposed LaGrange Downtown Façade Improvements project includes facade renovations for privately owned commercial buildings in their historic downtown. Facade improvements could include windows and doors, painting and staining, signage, lighting, canopies and awnings, masonry improvements, etc. A preliminary list of potential buildings has been created, but more specifics and final selection of properties will occur as part of the funding application upon designation.

Site/Land Acquisition Considerations:

Not applicable for this project

Pro-Forma for Operations:

The facade improvements will reduce immediate maintenance costs since the deferred maintenance will have been renovated. Over time, business owners should be proactive in upkeep and preventative maintenance strategies.

Projected Number of Users:

Not applicable for this project

Possible Partnerships:

Potential partnerships include the Town of LaGrange, OCRA, DNR-DHPA, and the LCEDC.

Potential Construction Problems:

Construction for facade renovations could include maintaining safe access to the building entrance during construction, encountering unexpected issues with existing building conditions, and availability and lead times for new construction materials.

Sustainability Considerations:

Selected materials for construction shall be sustainable and of quality to last while fitting with the historic character of the downtown. As mentioned, it will be important for business owners to protect the investment with proactive upkeep and preventative maintenance strategies.

Schedule

It is anticipated to begin the process with OCRA in 2025 and have the facade program underway in 2026 for individual business owners to apply.

Budget

The estimated overall budget is \$400,000 for funding from OCRA and the Town of LaGrange, and business owners.



Topeka Gathering & Event Space

Current Conditions:

The project area existing conditions is an asphalt parking lot that serves the downtown area and adjacent post office. The parking lot is not often full, but is still utilized on a daily basis. Just to the north of the east-west alley is a large Amish buggy parking area. It is rarely full except on Fridays when many Amish come to downtown to shop. An overhead power line runs along the western edge of the existing parking lot.

Environmental Hazards:

There are no known environmental hazards.

Historical Significance:

There are no historic structures in the project area. While the project site is not historically significant, it is located in the historical downtown area.

Socioeconomic Factors:

The project is located in the heart of downtown Topeka. The project area is impacted by adjacent business owners and residents of Topeka that visit downtown. Many Amish use the project area for buggy parking and access to the downtown businesses. Although some parking spaces will be lost, the proposed improvements will provide a great benefit to the town, providing a public space for cultural events and gatherings as well as daily use for all residents to enjoy.

Supporting Physical Assets & Resources:

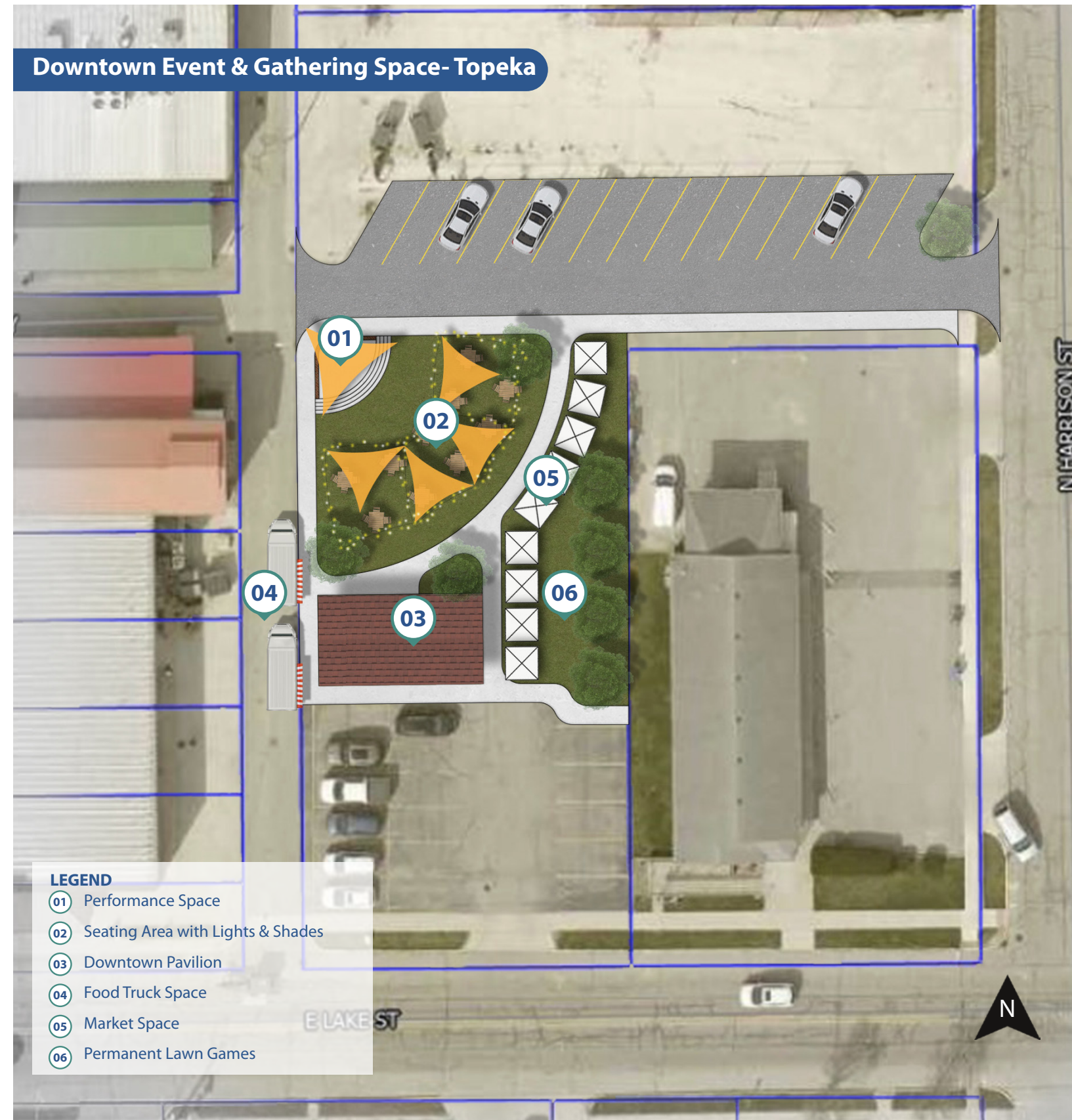
There are nearby parking lots and street parking that will offset the lost parking spaces from this project. The adjacent businesses and restaurants that sell food and drink can have patrons use this space for public outdoor seating. The adjacent alleys allow for easy access for food trucks, farmers market to set up tents, or other needed access for events.

Service Gaps and Needs in the Target Area:

There typically aren't many people out and about in downtown Topeka outside of Fridays when it is common for many Amish to come in and do weekly shopping. It is desired to activate the downtown by creating a public space that can be utilized and enjoyed daily, while also hosting town events and gatherings. A public space with seating is desired as there isn't a space downtown to sit and enjoy food or beverage from the local coffee shops or eateries. While some events such as the farmers market and food truck events are currently held at the park, a dedicated space downtown for these events would function better and attract additional people downtown.

Financial Status of the Existing Facility:

The existing space is operated and maintained by the Town of Topeka through its maintenance staff and budgeted funding. Weekly and seasonal standard maintenance is completed through the operating budget.



Topeka Gathering & Event Space (Continued)

Recommended Option for Implementation

Alternative Options:

Other options include leaving the existing parking lot in its current condition and/or finding a different location for the gathering & event space. Since the creation of the gathering & event space fits the needs and goals stated by Topeka stakeholders and residents, it is recommended that a public space be created that can support cultural and community events, promote togetherness, and attract people to the town. It was also a goal to attract more people downtown and beautify the downtown area. This location would be able to support both of those goals, as well as provide a space for people to eat, drink, and relax while visiting downtown merchants, so this location is the recommended option for development of the gathering & event space.

Scope of Work:

The Topeka Gathering & Event Space project transforms an existing parking lot downtown Topeka to an activated space with seating, event space with a performance stage, trees, lighting, and lawn games. The space includes design elements so users can relax or eat outside with food or drink from a nearby restaurant, and also host events such as the farmers market, food trucks, holiday gatherings, and other festivities.

Site/Land Acquisition Considerations:

Land acquisition for this project is not anticipated since the land is owned and controlled by the Town of Topeka. The site is ready for implementation of the project. There are no anticipated issues for site access during construction.

Proposed Project Schedule:

Phase	2025				2026				2027				2028			
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
Grant Application																
Procurement																
Contracts																
Design																
Bidding																
Construction																
Closeout																

Pro-Forma for Operations:

The proposed amenities will be analyzed and integrated into the operating and maintenance budget for Town of Topeka. Maintenance considerations over time will be needed for the performance stage and the pavilion. Weekly maintenance schedules will be needed for mowing and other maintenance and operations practices.

Projected Number of Users:

It is anticipated that about fifty people would use the site on daily basis, with hundreds using it if there was an event such as the Farmers' Market or food trucks.

Budget:

Estimated Total Cost	\$810,000
OCRA Funding	\$648,000
Local Leverage	\$162,000

Possible Partnerships:

Potential partnerships include the Town of Topeka, OCRA, downtown business owners, Topeka Together, and the Topeka Farmers Market.

Potential Construction Problems:

Potential construction problems could include unforeseen underground conditions such as utilities and buried foundations.

Sustainability Considerations:

The proposed amenities will require some maintenance which will be performed as needed by the town staff. Amenities will be checked seasonally for signs of wear and handle maintenance proactively. The town and community groups will regularly schedule events in the space to maximize its function and impact on the downtown area.



Description	Unit	Unit Cost	Quantity	Total Cost
Demo/Excavation	LS	\$ 75,000.00	1	\$ 75,000.00
Concrete Sidewalk	SYS	\$ 95.00	300	\$ 28,500.00
Asphalt Drive & Parking	SYS	\$ 55.00	570	\$ 31,350.00
Curb	LF	\$ 30.00	280	\$ 8,400.00
Performance Stage	LS	\$ 70,000.00	1	\$ 70,000.00
Lighting	LS	\$ 40,000.00	1	\$ 40,000.00
Electrical Work	LS	\$ 25,000.00	1	\$ 25,000.00
Drainage	LS	\$ 25,000.00	1	\$ 25,000.00
Pavilion	LS	\$ 150,000.00	1	\$ 150,000.00
String Lights & Posts	LS	\$ 30,000.00	1	\$ 30,000.00
Benches/Tables	LS	\$ 20,000.00	1	\$ 20,000.00
Litter Receptacles	LS	\$ 3,000.00	1	\$ 3,000.00
Shade Sail Structures	LS	\$ 35,000.00	1	\$ 35,000.00
Irrigation	LS	\$ 20,000.00	1	\$ 20,000.00
Trees	LS	\$ 10,000.00	1	\$ 10,000.00
Planters	LS	\$ 5,000.00	1	\$ 5,000.00
Topsoil & Seeding	LS	\$ 7,000.00	1	\$ 7,000.00
Signs	LS	\$ 3,000.00	1	\$ 3,000.00
Maintenance of Traffic	LS	\$ 5,000.00	1	\$ 5,000.00
Erosion Control	LS	\$ 5,000.00	1	\$ 5,000.00
Mobilization/Demobilization	LS	\$ 50,000.00	1	\$ 50,000.00
Construction Surveying/Engineering	LS	\$ 15,000.00	1	\$ 15,000.00
Construction Subtotal				\$ 661,250.00
Topographic Survey				\$ 10,000.00
Design/Engineering/Construction Admin	LS	\$ 65,000.00	1	\$ 65,000.00
Grant Administration	LS	\$ 50,000.00	1	\$ 50,000.00
Project Total				\$ 736,250.00
10% Contingency/Inflation				\$ 73,625.00
Project Grand Total				\$ 809,875.00



Topeka East Park

Current Conditions:

East Park serves as the active recreation hub in the community, providing two baseball fields, a basketball court, tennis court, temporary pickleball court, and playground. The park is frequently used by Amish and English residents and visitors. The existing basketball, tennis, and pickleball courts are in deteriorating condition. There is an existing restroom and maintenance building, and a playground that is in good condition.

Environmental Hazards:

There are no known environmental hazards.

Historical Significance:

There are no historic structures in the project area.

Socioeconomic Factors:

The park is located on the east side of Topeka in a residential area. The surrounding neighborhoods is a mix of assumed low to moderate income single family and apartment housing. The park improvements will provide a great benefit to the adjacent neighborhoods, providing access to new and improved recreational amenities. It was noted in the public input survey that access to physical fitness and quality recreation facilities was very important to residents.

Supporting Physical Assets & Resources:

The existing playground, parking lots, and restroom building will remain on site to support the proposed amenities. Also, there is a project underway to improve the ball fields on the east side of the park. Water service exists at the current restroom which will be easily accessible for the proposed splash pad.



Service Gaps and Needs that Exist in the Target Area:

The park serves all residents in and around Topeka with amenities such as the playground, ballfields, tennis and basketball courts. There is no splash pad or pickleball courts in Topeka, but a need is evident from community feedback.

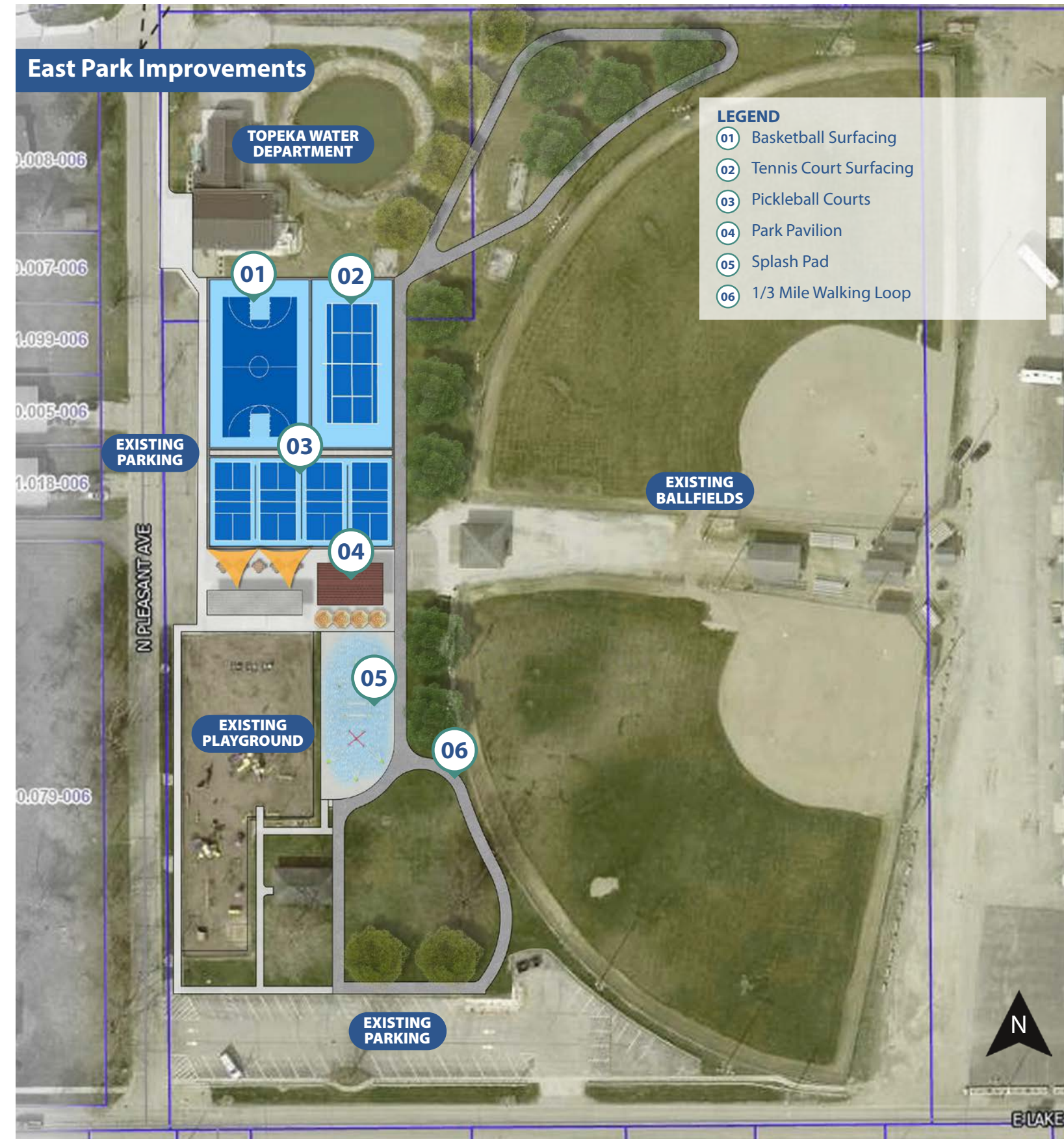
Financial Status of the Existing Facility:

The existing space is operated and maintained by the Town of Topeka through its maintenance staff and budgeted funding. Weekly and seasonal standard maintenance is completed through the operating budget.

Recommended Option for Implementation

Alternative Options:

The new amenities and improvements to existing amenities will expand the recreational offerings of the park to meet the needs of residents and attract visitors. While some amenities such as the walking trail will be mostly enjoyed by local residents, unique amenities such as the splash pad will attract visitors from throughout LaGrange County and neighboring counties. Other options included leaving the existing amenities in their current condition, or complete removal of some amenities from the park. Since some existing amenities were in a degraded condition that had safety concerns, accessibility issues, or maintenance needs, it wasn't recommended to leave those facilities in their existing condition. Since the basketball court and tennis court were still desired amenities, and able to be improved in their current location, removal of those amenities was not a recommended option.



Topeka East Park (continued)

Scope of Work:

The proposed East Park Improvements project renovates existing amenities and creates new attractions within the park. The existing tennis and basketball court will be renovated, pickleball courts will be added, and a splash pad will be constructed. The project also includes a new pavilion and walking trail that loops through the western portion of the park.

Site/Land Acquisition Considerations:

Land acquisition for this project is not anticipated since the land is owned and controlled by the Town of Topeka. The site is ready for implementation of the project. There are no anticipated issues for site access during construction.

Pro-Forma for Operations:

The proposed amenities will be analyzed and integrated into the operating and maintenance budget for Town of Topeka. Maintenance considerations over time will be needed for the proposed amenities such as resurfacing pavement, splash pad maintenance and winterization, and replacing parts. Weekly maintenance schedules will be needed for mowing and other maintenance and operations practices.

Projected Number of Users:

While an exact number of park users has not been tracked, it is anticipated that the new improvements will greatly increase the amount of park users. The splash pad will attract more families with young children, and the pickleball courts, basketball and tennis courts, and walking trail will be heavily used by residents in the town and surrounding areas.

Proposed Project Schedule:

Phase	2025				2026				2027				2028			
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
Grant Application																
Procurement																
Contracts																
Design																
Bidding																
Construction																
Closeout																

Possible Partnerships:

Potential partnerships include the Town of Topeka, DNR, Topeka Together, LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation, and local donors.

Potential Construction Problems:

Potential construction problems could include unforeseen underground conditions such as utilities, and lead times for certain materials.

Sustainability Considerations:

These improvements aim to renovate amenities that currently require higher levels of maintenance. This will help offset some of the initial increase in maintenance and operations from the new amenities such as the pavilion and splash pad. The splash pad will be designed to reduce maintenance and operation needs as much as possible. Water conservation methods such as push button activation will be used.

Budget:

Estimated Total Cost	\$1,000,000
DNR LWCF Funding	\$500,000
Local Leverage	\$500,000

Town of Topeka East Park Improvements				
Description	Unit	Unit Cost	Quantity	Total Cost
Demo/Excavation	LS	\$ 75,000	1	\$ 75,000
Concrete Sidewalk	SYS	\$ 95	600	\$ 57,000
Walking Trail	SYS	\$ 65	450	\$ 29,250
Basketball Court	LS	\$ 50,000	1	\$ 50,000
Pickleball Courts	LS	\$ 125,000	1	\$ 125,000
Tennis Court	LS	\$ 50,000	1	\$ 50,000
Splash Pad	LS	\$ 150,000	1	\$ 150,000
Tables & Chairs	LS	\$ 30,000	1	\$ 30,000
Benches/Litter Receptacles	LS	\$ 10,000	1	\$ 10,000
Shade Sail Structures	LS	\$ 30,000	1	\$ 30,000
Pavilion	LS	\$ 65,000	1	\$ 65,000
Pavilion/Seating Area Lighting	LS	\$ 25,000	1	\$ 25,000
Trees	LS	\$ 12,000	1	\$ 12,000
Topsoil & Seeding	LS	\$ 15,000	1	\$ 15,000
Maintenance of Traffic	LS	\$ 5,000	1	\$ 5,000
Erosion Control	LS	\$ 5,000	1	\$ 5,000
Mobilization/Demobilization	LS	\$ 65,000	1	\$ 65,000
Construction Surveying/Engineering	LS	\$ 20,000	1	\$ 20,000
Construction Subtotal				\$ 818,250
Topographic Survey	LS	\$ 10,000	1	\$ 10,000
Design/Engineering/Construction Admin	LS	\$ 80,000	1	\$ 80,000
Grant Administration	LS	\$ 50,000	1	\$ 50,000
Project Total				\$ 998,250
10% Contingency/Inflation				\$ 90,825
Project Grand Total				\$ 999,075



Topeka Hawpatch Trail Connector

Current Conditions:

This multi-use trail project will connect the town of Topeka to the Hawpatch Trail, and serve as an extension of the Hawpatch Trail in Topeka. The west side of the project is a former railroad corridor that has grown over with grass, brush, and some trees. The trail then heads north along Morrow Street, where it will be located in current tree lawn and meet with an existing trail in West Lake Park. The trail exits the park at the north end at W. Lake St. and runs along the south side of the road. The current conditions is lawn with driveway approaches.

Environmental Hazards:

There are no known environmental hazards.

Historical Significance:

There are no historic structures in the project area.

Socioeconomic Factors:

The trail is located on the southeast side of Topeka traversing a mix of industrial, park, and residential areas. The trail will provide a great benefit to the adjacent neighborhoods, providing access to new and improved recreational amenities. It was noted in the public input survey and pop-up engagement feedback that multi-use trails were the top priority as it can improve quality of life for all residents.

Supporting Physical Assets & Resources:

There are existing assets and resources that aid in development of the trail including the former railroad corridor allowing for ease of development of a trail, a connection to West Lake Park and its current trail, and a connection to downtown Topeka. In addition, the trail will connect to the in-progress Hawpatch Trail that runs east-west through the southern portion of the county and connects to Topeka.

Service Gaps and Needs in the Target Area:

The trail provides a much needed amenity to all residents in Topeka that currently utilize roadways or sidewalks where available to walk, run, or bicycle. The trail also provides a missing connection in the County's proposed Hawpatch Trail.

Financial Status of the Existing Facility:

The existing trail corridor is comprised of right of way or park land maintained by the town, and former railroad corridor that is still owned by Norfolk Railroad.

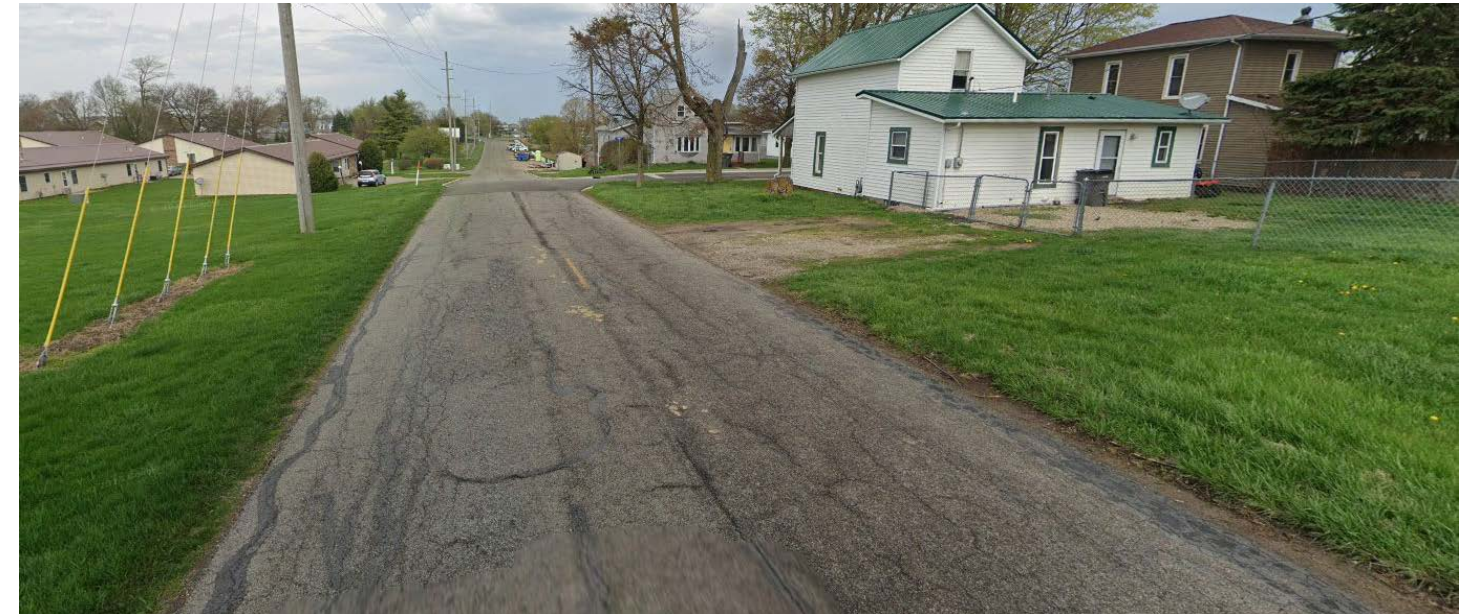
Recommended Option for Implementation

Alternative Options:

The trail will provide much needed recreational infrastructure for residents to safely walk, run and bicycle. The trail will also provide pedestrian connectivity between downtown, West Lake Park, residential areas, industrial area, and the proposed Hawpatch Trail. Other options included leaving the existing conditions alone and people could continue to use the road shoulders and limited sidewalks. Since there is a safety concern with this option, and there is overwhelming community input requesting a trail, this is not a feasible option. Another alternative would be to locate the trail in a different area. Different routes were analyzed, and each of those options presented more potential issues with property acquisition, topography, structures, utilities, or other impacts. Because of these concerns, the proposed route was identified as the best option.

Scope of Work:

This multi-use trail project will connect the town of Topeka to the Hawpatch Trail, and serve as an extension of the Hawpatch Trail in Topeka. It also connects the southwest portion of the community with the downtown, and provides connections to West Lake Park. The proposed trail will be a ten foot wide asphalt trail along the former railroad corridor, an eight foot wide asphalt trail along Morrow Street, and an eight foot wide concrete trail along W Lake Street.



Topeka Hawpach Trail Connector (continued)

Site/Land Acquisition Considerations:

Acquisition or a permanent easement is planned for the former railroad corridor, and the trail along Morrow and W Lake Street will be within the existing right-of-way as much as possible. Some minor temporary or permanent right of way acquisition may be necessary.

Pro-Forma for Operations:

The trail will require some annual maintenance such as mowing alongside the trail. Operationally, signage should be installed and the trail occasionally patrolled to ensure users are abiding by the rules. The asphalt should be inspected annually to provide maintenance as needed such as crack-sealing to increase the longevity of the pavement. After about 15-20 years it should be planned to resurface or renovate the asphalt trail.

Projected Number of Users:

It is anticipated that the trail will have a very high volume of users. The large Amish population in the town and surrounding areas will use the trail frequently for riding bicycles for transportation, as well as recreational use. Multi-use trails were the highest priority in Topeka based on public engagement feedback.

Possible Partnerships:

The project will leverage funding from INDOT and town sources along with support from the LaGrange County Trails and the planned Hawpach Trail and its funding sources. The Community Foundation is also supporting trail initiatives in the county. Due to local desire for trails, a large amount of additional local funding may be available.

Potential Construction Problems:

Potential construction problems could include unforeseen underground conditions such as utilities, and utilizing federal funding there can be delays or issues discovered during the environmental documentation process.

Sustainability Considerations:

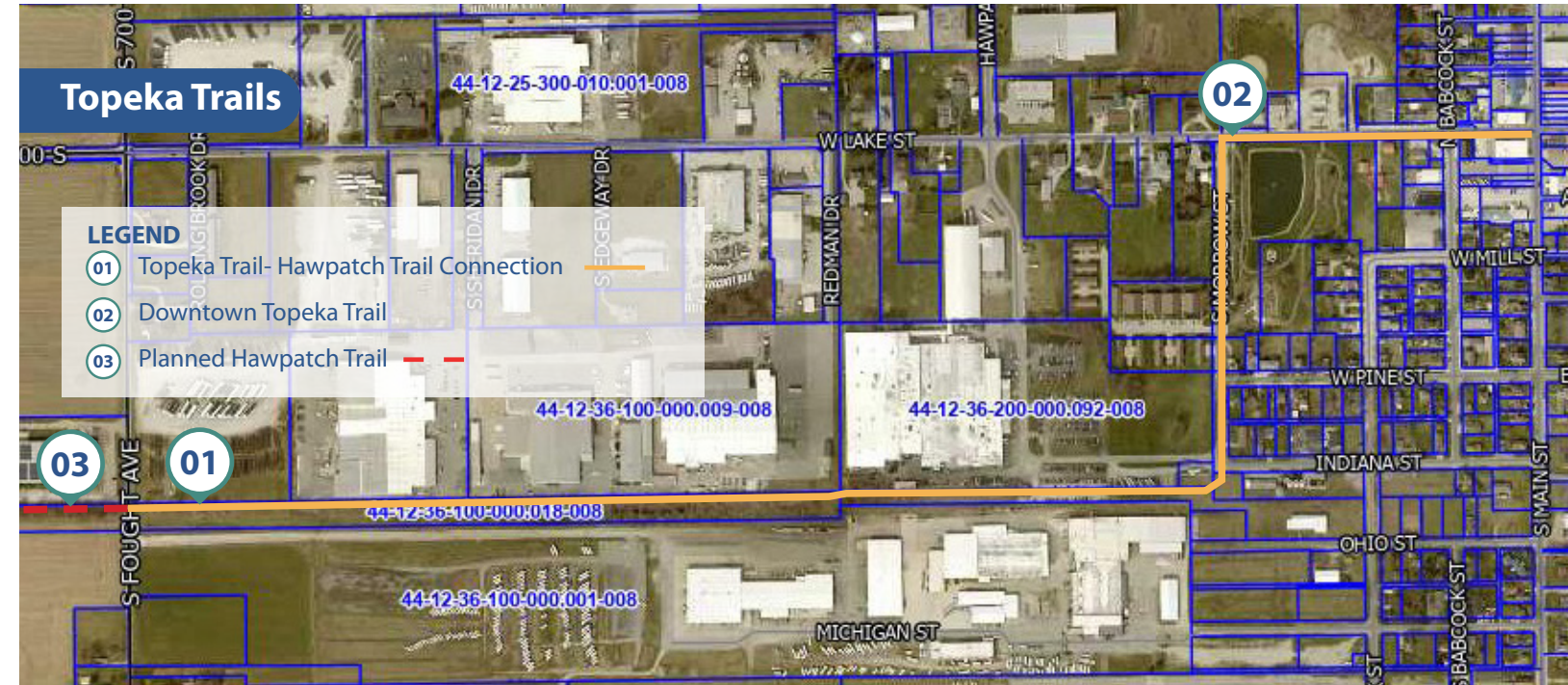
The asphalt should be inspected annually to provide maintenance as needed such as crack-sealing to increase the longevity of the pavement. After about 15-20 years it should be planned to resurface or renovate the asphalt trail. Seal coating should be avoided near any environmentally sensitive areas.

Budget:

Estimated Total Cost\$1,520,000
 INDOT Funding \$984,000
 Local Leverage \$536,000

Proposed Project Schedule:

Phase	2025				2026				2027				2028				2029				
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	
Grant Application																					
Procurement																					
Contracts																					
Engineering																					
Environmental																					
Right of Way																					
Letting																					
Construction																					
Closeout																					



Town of Topeka Hawpach Trail Connector				
Description	Unit	Unit Cost	Quantity	Total Cost
Preliminary Engineering Phase				
Location Control Route Survey	LS	\$ 30,000	1	\$ 30,000
Environmental	LS	\$ 25,000	1	\$ 25,000
Archaeological	LS	\$ 25,000	1	\$ 25,000
Engineering	LS	\$ 140,000	1	\$ 140,000
Preliminary Engineering Phase Subtotal				\$ 220,000
Right of Way Phase				
Appraisal	LS	\$ 25,000	1	\$ 20,000
Acquisition	LS	\$ 40,000	1	\$ 50,000
Right of Way Subtotal				\$ 70,000
Construction Phase				
Demo/Excavation/Clearing	LS	\$ 120,000	1	\$ 120,000
Concrete Sidewalk Trail	SYS	\$ 110	950	\$ 104,500
Concrete Approach	SYS	\$ 150	350	\$ 52,500
Curb Ramps	SYS	\$ 300	45	\$ 13,500
Curb	LF	\$ 35	1125	\$ 39,375
Asphalt Trail	SYS	\$ 65	4200	\$ 273,000
Signs	LS	\$ 10,000	1	\$ 10,000
Drainage Allowance	LS	\$ 100,000	1	\$ 100,000
Utility Updates	LS	\$ 40,000	1	\$ 40,000
Topsoil & Seeding	LS	\$ 50,000	1	\$ 50,000
Maintenance of Traffic	LS	\$ 30,000	1	\$ 30,000
Erosion Control	LS	\$ 15,000	1	\$ 15,000
Mobilization/Demobilization	LS	\$ 80,000	1	\$ 80,000
Construction Engineering (Survey)	LS	\$ 25,000	1	\$ 25,000
Construction Inspection	LS	\$ 115,000	1	\$ 115,000
10% Contingency/Inflation	LS	\$ 162,000	1	\$ 162,000
Construction Phase Subtotal				\$ 1,229,875
Project Grand Total				\$ 1,519,875

Shipshewana Town Park Improvements

Current Conditions:

Shipshewana Town Park serves as the primary outdoor recreation amenity in the community, providing two baseball fields, playground, and trailhead for the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail. The park is frequently used by Amish and English residents and visitors. The baseball fields were recently converted to synthetic turf and are in great condition. The parking lot between the ballfields and proposed park amenities was just paved in the fall of 2024.

Environmental Hazards:

There are no known environmental hazards.

Historical Significance:

There are no historic structures in the project area.

Socioeconomic Factors:

The park is located on the east side of Shipshewana in an area with adjacent industrial, residential and commercial land use. Both local Amish and English population use the park often, and improvements will provide a great benefit to adjacent neighborhoods and residents.

Supporting Physical Assets & Resources:

There are existing assets and resources that support the park including the Pumpkinvine trail which has a trailhead within the park. The Pumpkinvine connects Shipshewana to Middlebury and Goshen. There are many assets in Shipshewana that attract millions of tourists each year, so even though it is a small town there are many potential park users. The park also has some existing assets such as the synthetic turf ballfields, a dog park that is under construction, and recently paved parking lots.

Service Gaps and Needs in the Target Area:

While Shipshewana has many amazing assets that attract tourists, there are less amenities that are focused on its residents. There is a need for more recreational activities for local families, and spaces for events and gatherings especially in the evenings when many places are closed in town.

Financial Status of the Existing Facility:

The existing park is operated and maintained by the Town of Shipshewana through its maintenance staff and budgeted funding. Weekly and seasonal standard maintenance is completed through the operating budget.

Recommended Option for Implementation

Alternative Options:

The park will provide much needed recreational amenities for residents including pickleball courts, a splash pad, and performance stage with seating. Other options included leaving the park in its existing condition and people could continue to use the current amenities. Since there was much stakeholder and public input for a splash pad, pickleball courts, and a public space for evening events and concerts, this is not considered to be a good option. Another alternative would be to focus improvements in a different location. While other locations and types of amenities were considered, the proposed project was identified as the best option due to feedback from stakeholder and public engagement, as well as the open space in the park available for new amenities that is currently owned by the town and is shovel-ready.

Scope of Work:

The proposed Town Park Improvements project creates new amenities within the park. Amenities include pickleball courts, a splash pad, performance stage and seating area, a new pavilion and a walking trail that loops around the park. Most of the new amenities will be located in an open area on the east side of the park.

Site/Land Acquisition Considerations:

No acquisition is needed for the project. A wellhead area should be avoided, but otherwise the site is open and able to include the proposed amenities.



Shipshewana Town Park Improvements (continued)

Pro-Forma for Operations:

The proposed amenities will be analyzed and integrated into the operating and maintenance budget for Town of Shipshewana. Maintenance considerations over time will be needed for the proposed amenities such as splash pad maintenance, winterization, parts replacement. Weekly maintenance schedules will be integrated into the budget and staff planning for mowing and other maintenance and operations practices.

Projected Number of Users:

While an exact number of park users has not been tracked, it is anticipated that the new improvements will greatly increase the amount of park users. The splash pad will attract more families with young children, and the pickleball courts and walking trail will be heavily used by residents in the town and surrounding areas. The performance stage will draw residents and tourists to the park for events and concerts.

Possible Partnerships:

The project will leverage funding from OCRA and town sources, private donors like E&S Sales, along with support from the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation and other local organizations such as pickleball groups, and organizations that could utilize the performance stage.

Potential Construction Problems:

Potential construction problems could include unforeseen underground conditions such as utilities, and production delays for certain materials or components.

Sustainability Considerations:

There will be some increased maintenance considerations for new amenities such as the performance stage and splash pad. The splash pad will be designed to reduce maintenance and operation needs as much as possible, but will need proactive maintenance checks to replace wearable components. Water conservation methods such as push button activation will be used.

Budget:

Estimated Total Cost\$1,000,000
 OCRA Funding \$730,000
 Local Leverage \$270,000

Town of Shipshewana Town Park Improvements				
Description	Unit	Unit Cost	Quantity	Total Cost
Demo/Excavation	LS	\$ 50,000	1	\$ 50,000
Concrete Sidewalk	SYS	\$ 95	600	\$ 57,000
Walking Trail	SYS	\$ 65	750	\$ 48,750
Pavilion	LS	\$ 80,000	1	\$ 80,000
Pickleball Courts	LS	\$ 140,000	1	\$ 140,000
Performance Stage	LS	\$ 80,000	1	\$ 80,000
Splash Pad	LS	\$ 150,000	1	\$ 150,000
Tables & Chairs	LS	\$ 20,000	1	\$ 20,000
Benches/Litter Receptacles	LS	\$ 10,000	1	\$ 10,000
Pickleball/Pavilion Lighting	LS	\$ 60,000	1	\$ 60,000
Trees	LS	\$ 12,000	1	\$ 12,000
Topsoil & Seeding	LS	\$ 15,000	1	\$ 15,000
Maintenance of Traffic	LS	\$ 5,000	1	\$ 5,000
Erosion Control	LS	\$ 5,000	1	\$ 5,000
Mobilization/Demobilization	LS	\$ 65,000	1	\$ 65,000
Construction Surveying/Engineering	LS	\$ 20,000	1	\$ 20,000
Construction Subtotal				\$ 817,750
Topographic Survey	LS	\$ 10,000	1	\$ 10,000
Design/Engineering/Construction Admin	LS	\$ 80,000	1	\$ 80,000
Grant Administration	LS	\$ 50,000	1	\$ 50,000
Project Total				\$ 907,750
10% Contingency/Inflation				\$ 90,775
Project Grand Total				\$ 998,525

Proposed Project Schedule:

Phase	2025				2026				2027				2028			
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
Grant Application																
Procurement																
Contracts																
Design																
Bidding																
Construction																
Closeout																



LaGrange County Courthouse Electric Upgrades

Current Conditions:

The existing electrical system in the courthouse is aged and creates potential safety hazards and functional inefficiencies. There are also parts of the system that are not up to current code.

Environmental Hazards:

There are no known environmental hazards according to the maintenance manager that has been with LaGrange County the last 12 years.

Historical Significance:

This project would help protect the historic courthouse by making the electrical systems safer and more functional, preserving the historic crown jewel of LaGrange County.

Socioeconomic Factors:

There are no expected socioeconomic factors impacting this project.

Supporting Physical Assets & Resources:

The county courthouse and its staff will be an asset and resource for this project to help diagnose issues, optimize function of the proposed electrical upgrades, and maintain the systems moving forward.

Service Gaps and Needs that Exist in the Target Area:

The current electrical system causes safety and function concerns, creating a need for all staff and LaGrange County residents that visit the building.

Financial Status of the Existing Facility:

The building is operated and maintained by LaGrange County through its maintenance staff and budgeted funding that is addressed and updated annually.

Recommended Option for Implementation

Alternative Options

Other options include replacing only portions of the electrical system, but that would not fix the entirety of code, safety, and functional issues present. It is the most efficient to complete the entire electrical renovation project at once to ensure a complete, functional product.

Scope of Work

The historic County Courthouse is in need of major electrical upgrades to meet current codes and safety requirements. The proposed electrical upgrades include new electrical panels, breakers and feeders on the first and second floor and in the basement, replace existing and install new additional 120 volt receptacles, GFI receptacles and switches on all floors, install new smoke detectors in the attic, inspect existing wire and light fixtures, and update all fire alarm stations, smoke detectors, horns, and strobes to meet latest code.

Site/Land Acquisition Considerations:

Not applicable for this project

Pro-Forma for Operations:

The electrical system upgrades will create a more efficient electrical system that will save on annual costs for electricity and lighting.

Projected Number of Users:

Not applicable for this project

Possible Partnerships:

Potential partnerships include LaGrange County, DNR-DHPA, and private donors.

Potential Construction Problems:

Potential construction problems include unforeseen conditions or issues with the existing electrical systems, and potential material delays for new electrical equipment.

Sustainability Considerations:

The electrical upgrades will greatly improve the sustainability, safety, and function of the courthouse. The newer system will be easier to use and maintain, and designed to meet the future power needs for the courthouse building and its function.

Schedule

It is anticipated to begin the process with DNR in 2025 and have project completion by early 2026.

Budget

The estimated construction cost is about \$365,000.



County Parks & Sidewalks Improvements

Current Conditions:

Howe:
There is a lack of sidewalks in the community, causing residents to walk in the street or drive short distances. The town park has a well-used pavilion for social gatherings and events, but there are no restrooms available. An existing basketball court isn't used frequently and a makeshift pickleball court has been developed with a temporary net placed on the basketball court. The park also has a playground and open lawn area, along with on-street parking.

Mongo:
The park in Mongo is a treasured community asset by residents. The existing pavilion is in good condition, but the basketball court and playground need to be renovated and/or replaced. The existing gravel parking area is in good condition.

South Milford:
The baseball field is well used but in need of major renovation. The basketball court isn't used frequently and is proposed to be converted and expanded into pickleball courts. There is a gravel parking area at the entrance to the park.

Environmental Hazards:
There are no known environmental hazards in the areas of the proposed parks improvements or sidewalks.

Historical Significance:
There are no structures on the historic register within the project areas. The Howe park project site is in the historic area downtown Howe. The pavilion structure will remain, and the new restroom will match the architecture and materials of the pavilion.

Socioeconomic Factors:
These project locations are in assumed low to moderate income areas surrounded mostly by single family housing. The park improvements and sidewalks will provide a great benefit to the adjacent neighborhoods, providing access to new and improved recreational amenities.

Supporting Physical Assets & Resources:

Howe:
The sidewalks provide connectivity to several assets including the school at the north end of town, the downtown area, town park, and residential areas. The town park improvements are supported by existing amenities such as the pavilion and existing basketball court that can be resurfaced and expanded into pickleball courts.

Mongo:
The park improvements are supported by the existing parking area and pavilion that will remain. The sidewalks and walking trail will connect to existing sidewalk infrastructure.

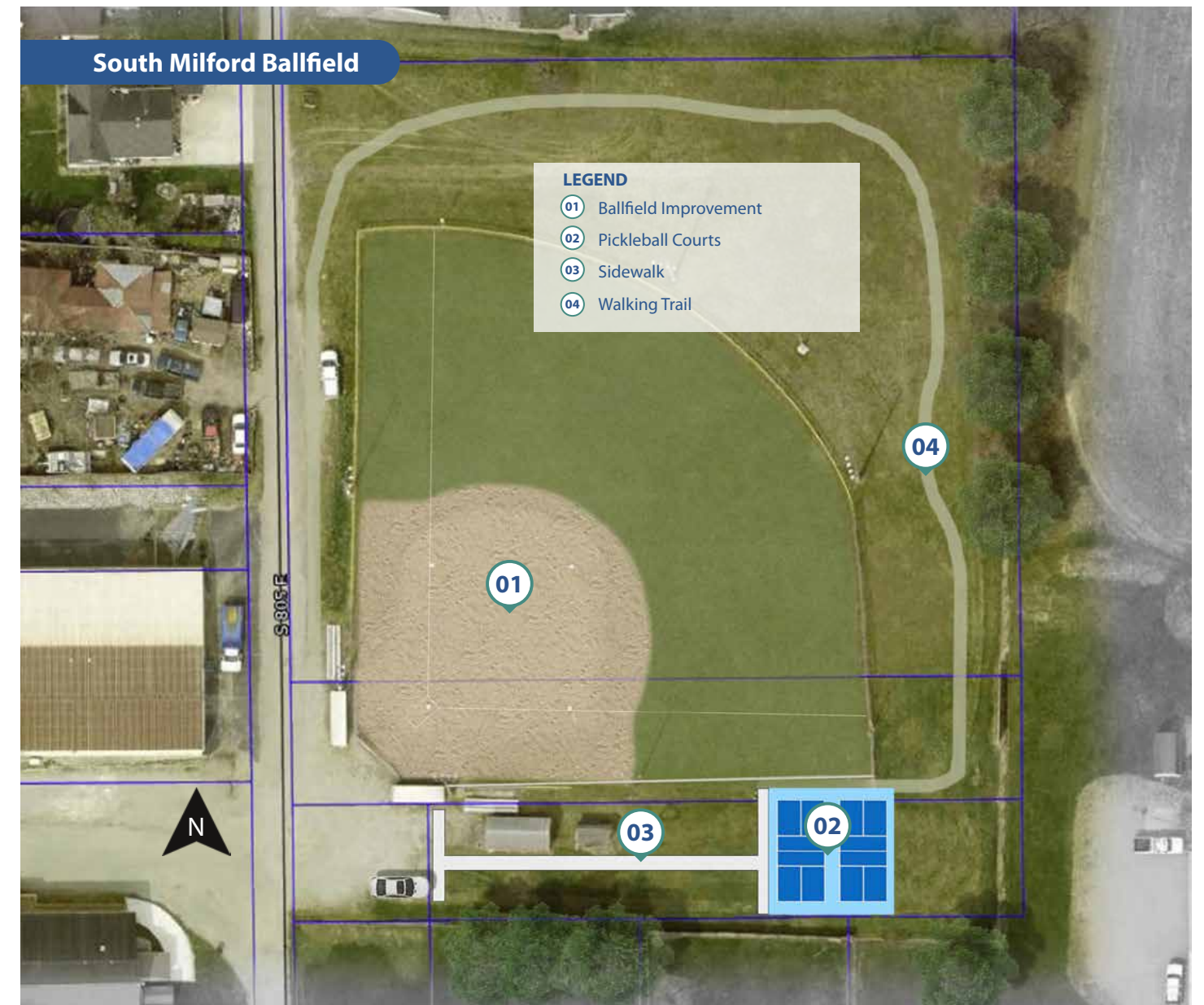
South Milford:
The proposed improvements are supported by the existing baseball field and its lighting, as well as the existing parking area.

Service Gaps and Needs that Exist in the Target Area:

These parks are the primary recreation facilities in each community and do not currently adequately serve the residents for the needed and desired recreation options. Improving amenities that are well-liked but in poor condition, and adding new amenities that support modern recreation needs, will provide the community with an asset that improves health and quality of life. The Howe sidewalks fill a major gap in pedestrian infrastructure, allowing residents to safely walk to key assets in town.

Financial Status of the Existing Facility:

The parks are owned by the communities or local township, and maintained through county staff and budgeted funding that is addressed and updated annually, as well as volunteer efforts from each community.



County Parks & Sidewalks Improvements (Continued)

Recommended Option for Implementation

Alternative Options

Howe:

An alternative option would be to not implement the sidewalks or park improvements. Given the community input about the need for sidewalks and the current safety concerns, as well as the need for modern recreational amenities at the park, this would not be a good option. Different locations for the sidewalk were analyzed, but this location was selected since it connected key assets in the community, and had a wide right-of-way so property acquisition wasn't necessary.

Mongo:

An alternative option would be to leave the park in its existing condition. Since the playground had safety and maintenance concerns, and the basketball courts condition impacted playability, it was determined that these amenities should be improved. Funds could have been allocated for other potential projects in the community, but based on community input the park was a priority asset for improvement.

South Milford:

An alternative option would be to implement a different project such as sidewalks or improvements at Austin Park. Sidewalks along SR 3 had challenges with right of way and community input about large vehicles and turning movements at the intersection of E 750 S. Austin Park recently had a walking trail installed, and the playground and pavilion are in good condition. The ballfield is still a priority amenity, but is in very poor condition. After reviewing options and community input, the ballfield and pickleball courts project was determined the highest priority and most feasible.

Scope of Work

Howe:

Sidewalks, curb ramps, and crosswalks will be installed starting at the school at the north end of town, on the east side of Fourth Street into the downtown area, connect with existing sidewalks in good condition, and then more new sidewalk added south of downtown along Third Street south to the cemetery.

Mongo:

Proposed park improvements include new pickleball courts, resurfacing the basketball court, a crushed limestone walking trail around the park, a community garden with raised garden beds, and improving the playground with new equipment and accessible engineered fiber mulch surfacing.

South Milford:

The baseball field will be renovated including re-grading and adding new material for the infield. Improvements to the dugouts will also be made. The basketball court isn't used frequently and is proposed to be converted and expanded into pickleball courts, which will be a better suited amenity for this community. A compacted crushed limestone trail around the park will be added for community members to walk.

Site/Land Acquisition Considerations:

There is no anticipated land acquisition necessary for these projects. No issues with site access, utilities, or other site considerations are anticipated.

Pro-Forma for Operations:

The proposed amenities will be analyzed and integrated into the operating and maintenance budget for the county and its unincorporated areas. Maintenance considerations over time will be needed for the proposed amenities such as courts surfacing and playground surfacing. Weekly maintenance schedules will be integrated into the budget and planning for mowing and other maintenance and operations practices. Also local volunteer efforts will bolster park upkeep.



County Parks & Sidewalks Projects (Continued)

Projected Number of Users:

Not applicable for this project

Possible Partnerships:

Potential partnerships include LaGrange County, OCRA, the LaGrange County Community Foundation, the Howe Community Association, Mongo Community Development Association, and South Milford Community League.

Potential Construction Problems:

Potential construction problems include unforeseen conditions such as underground utilities, and material lead times.

Sustainability Considerations:

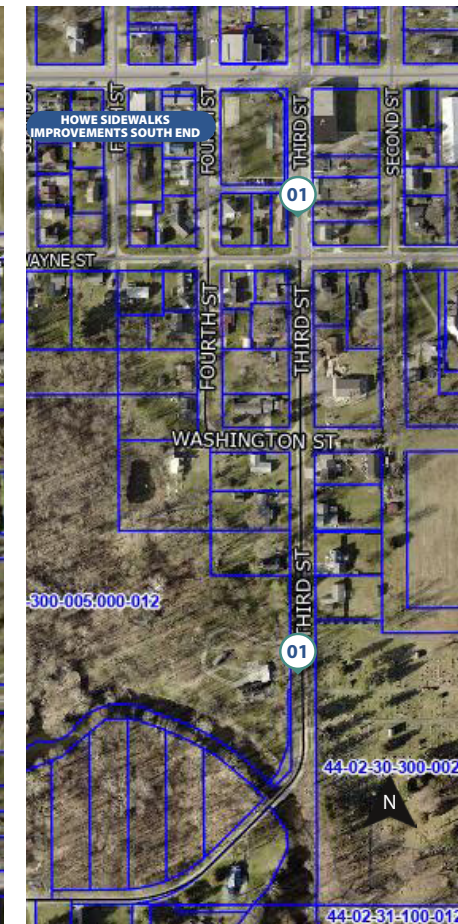
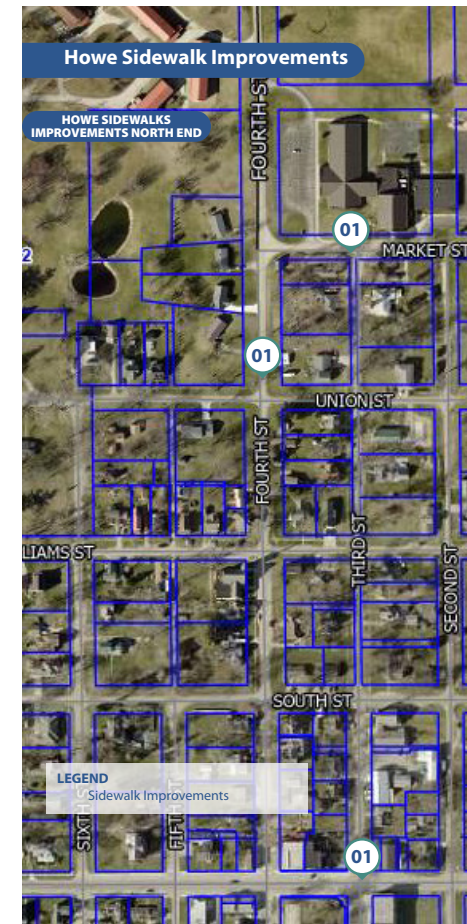
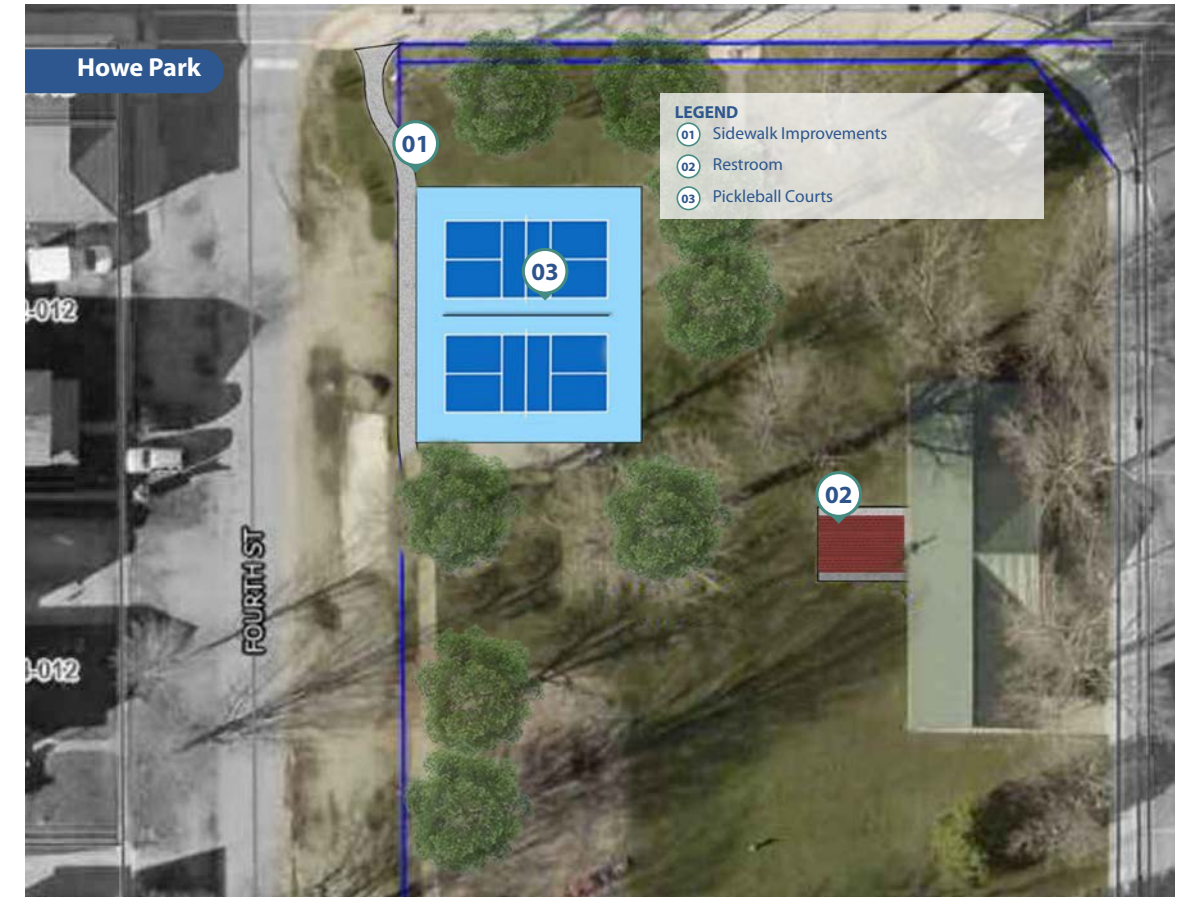
These improvements aim to renovate amenities that currently require higher levels of maintenance. All three unincorporated communities have both active community volunteer groups as well as stakeholding businesses that are vested in the success of these projects. This will help offset some of the initial increase in maintenance and operations from the new amenities such as the pickleball courts and walking trails.

Budget

Mongo Project Estimated Cost	\$520,000
S. Milford Project Estimated Cost	\$410,000
Howe Project Estimated Cost	\$690,000
Estimated Total Cost	\$1,620,000
OCRA Funding	\$1,157,000
Local Leverage	\$463,000

Proposed Project Schedule:

Phase	2025				2026				2027				2028			
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
Grant Application																
Procurement																
Contracts																
Design																
Bidding																
Construction																
Closeout																



APPENDIX D: COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

LaGrange County Down Payment Assistance Program

Current Conditions:

Currently there are some options for homebuyers in LaGrange County through the current IHCDCA programs available, or through the Hoosier Homes Plus program. Hoosier Homes Plus is a down payment assistance program in northeast Indiana available through Club 720 Corporation that helps low and moderate income individuals and families buy a home in approved areas. Qualified homebuyers receive up to a percentage of assistance for down payment and closing costs, plus a loan with a competitive interest rate with potential buy-down opportunities. The program is backed by a \$2 million allocation from the Northeast Indiana Strategic Development Commission for the 11 counties in northeast Indiana. Since this is spread out through 11 counties, and there are current funding difficulties state-wide with the Hoosier Home program due to current mortgage markets and investor participation, it can be difficult for potential home-buyers to access these programs.

Service Gaps and Needs in the Target Area:

While there are some homebuyer assistance programs in the state and northeast Indiana, there are gaps in service due to varying eligibility requirements, high demand for the program, and current housing and mortgage market issues. A collaborative down payment assistance program with IHCDCA and LaGrange County could help fill some of these gaps and needs by increasing access to homebuyer assistance programs.

Financial Status of the Existing Program:

The Hoosier Homes Plus program had a \$2 million investment from the Northeast Indiana Strategic Development Commission for its 11 counties. However, between high demand and the current mortgage market and investor issues state-wide the financial backing of available down payment assistance programs isn't as strong currently.

Socioeconomic Factors in the Target Area:

There are many low to moderate income individuals

and families in LaGrange County that are looking to purchase a home, but need financial assistance to make it happen in today's housing market. With the limited number of homes available, it is difficult for low to moderate income homebuyers to be competitive and able to purchase a home.

Recommended Option for Implementation

Scope of Work

The down payment assistance program will be a collaboration between LaGrange County and IHCDCA. The program will follow the requirements and processes of IHCDCA's First Step Down Payment Assistance Program, with modifications as needed and allowed to fit the program and homebuyer needs in LaGrange County. The program will provide conventional 30-year fixed rate program that assists the homebuyer with down payment assistance for the purchase of a single-family home. Assistance is provided in an amount not to exceed six percent of the lesser of the purchase price or appraised value of the subject property. The program can be financed as a Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac loan, and must follow the requirements of the selected option.

Description of Program Management:

The program will be managed by LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC), Club 720 Development Corporation, and IHCDCA. Club 720 is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that fosters productive private-public partnerships to help tackle the housing crisis and bridge the wealth gap through empowering homeownership and facilitating workforce housing production.

Local Selection Criteria for Awards and/or Access to the Program:

Selection of homebuyer applications will be reviewed by program management to determine eligibility. Eligible homebuyers will work with program management and approved local lenders to purchase the home.

Management Processes/Roles for the Community and Program Manager:

The program will be managed by Emilee Buller with LCEDC, Ryan Chasey with Club 720 Development Corporation, and IHCDCA. The program could be integrated with Club 720's mobile app and systems in place.

Strategic Outreach & Promotion for the Program:

Outreach and promotion for the program will be through the existing avenues and networks from Club 720, as well as additional local promotion from the LCEDC through its media channels.

Outline of How Funds Awarded will be Managed:

Funds awarded will be managed by a collaboration of LCEDC and Club 720.

Draft Program Materials:

Not available at this time.

Projected Number of Users:

It is estimated that the program could help reach approximately 40 homebuyers over the program implementation period.

Budget:

The estimated cost is \$500,000.

Implementation Timeline:

The program will begin development in 2025 with the goal of being available to potential homebuyers in 2026, and running through the end of the Stellar Pathways implementation period or until funds have been allocated.

List of Potential Funding Sources:

The planned funding sources include IHCDCA and LaGrange County.

List of Possible Partnerships:

The possible partnerships include IHCDCA, LaGrange County, Club 720 Corporation, LCEDC, and local lenders.

Potential Implementation/Execution Problems:

Potential implementation/execution problems include the ability for low to moderate income individuals and families to be able to purchase

homes in the current housing market. Even with down payment assistance, this can still be challenging. While some existing homes are for sale and new housing developments are being built, the available housing stock is low. Challenges can also occur with lenders and homebuyers during the process.

Sustainability Considerations:

The program will be sustained by the partnership between Club 720 Corporation and LCEDC. Club 720 has processes and systems in place that can help sustain the program.

LaGrange County Transition Kitchen

Current Conditions:

The proposed Tradition Kitchen Program is a new initiative for LaGrange County, aimed at transforming the LaGrange Council on Aging Senior Center’s kitchen into a fully equipped commercial kitchen. The project will use funds to support these vital upgrades and to purchase materials specifically for the Tradition Kitchen Program, which is designed to bridge generations by engaging older adults in leading instructional courses for younger generations. Through classes taught by our older community members on heirloom family recipes, food preservation techniques like canning, and cooking with locally grown ingredients, this program will preserve traditional skills and foster intergenerational connections. The Tradition Kitchen Program will serve as a meaningful space for older adults in our community, many of whom may experience loneliness or feel disconnected. By sharing their knowledge, seniors will have the opportunity to connect, feel valued, and pass down invaluable skills to those who may lack family mentors in these areas. The program will also promote lifelong learning and enrich the community by offering an attractive amenity for younger generations. Additionally, the upgraded kitchen will enhance the Senior Center’s capacity for expanded programming, benefiting all who use the space. Currently the kitchen is utilized as a community food bank space, provides a workspace for meals on wheels, and sees the preparation of the Council on Aging’s monthly luncheon.

Service Gaps and Needs in the Target Area:

The existing kitchen at the Council on Aging’s Senior Center is functional but very dated, and does not have the capacity to serve the number of patrons that they are regularly serving. With an aging population in LaGrange County (over 37% of the county is over 45 years old) it is pertinent that we prioritize resources for our elderly community members and continue to keep them involved.

Financial Status of the Existing Program:

The LaGrange County Council on Aging is a not for profit agency that was established in 1975. They are funded by LaGrange County, a multitude of grant opportunities, and private donations. The management and maintenance of the facility is handled by the Council on Aging Staff and Board, and will continue to be with the kitchen improvements and implementation and expansion of programming.

Socioeconomic Factors in the Target Area:

Elderly individuals belong to a presumed Low to Moderate Income Class as most of them are living on fixed incomes, and are disabled at a higher percentage rate in comparison to their younger counterparts, however we do not foresee these factors being an issue as the Council on Aging also manages the LaGrange County Area Transit (LCAT) Program and many of our seniors utilize these services.



Photo of Existing Kitchen



Precedent Image Example of Proposed Kitchen

LaGrange County Transition Kitchen (Continued)

Recommended Option for Implementation

Scope of Work

The project focuses first on remodeling the existing kitchen at the Council on Aging Senior Center to make the space usable for the proposed and existing programming, and to allow for expansion of programming. The proposed improvements include removal of aged cabinets, countertops, sinks, worktables etc. and the installation of new commercial grade cabinets, countertops, work stations, appliances. The project also focuses on the implementation of the Tradition Kitchen programming in the new kitchen, which will require the purchase of instructional materials and ingredients, and enough utensils and apparatuses that participants can follow along.

Description of Program Management:

The program will be managed by The Council on Aging staff with assistance from Emilee Buller, VP of Community and Development and Engagement where needed. Additionally, Purdue Extension may also play a role in implementation of programming and marketing.

Local Selection Criteria for Awards and/or Access to the Program:

Selection of programmers will fall to the Council on Aging and Purdue Extension, and programming will be open to any member of the community. Accessibility to the program will work on a registration basis. Programming will be marketed via local media outlets, community organization newsletters, the LaGrange County Community Calendar, and at various luncheons throughout the county. Programmers do not have to be elderly members of the community, and participants do not have to be from younger generations. While this is a goal, continuing lifelong learning and passing of skills is the ultimate goal.

Management Processes/Roles for the Community and Program Manager:

The program will be managed by The Council on Aging staff with assistance from Emilee Buller, VP of Community and Development and Engagement where needed. Additionally, Purdue Extension may also play a role in implementation of programming and marketing.

Strategic Outreach & Promotion for the Program:

Programming will be marketed via local media outlets, community organization newsletters, the LaGrange County Community Calendar, and at various luncheons throughout the county. Programmers do not have to be elderly members of the community, and participants do not have to be from younger generations. While this is a goal, continuing lifelong learning and passing of skills is the ultimate goal.

Outline of How Funds Awarded will be Managed:

Funds awarded will be managed by LaGrange County EDC with LaGrange County Council on Aging as the subrecipient.

Draft Program Materials:

Not available at this time.

Projected Number of Users:

Class sizes will need to be determined based on the end size of the kitchen after improvements and the amount of workspace available. It is our hope to accommodate 5-10 participants per workshop, and to engage as many members of the community to facilitate monthly programming as possible.

Budget:

The estimated cost is \$275,000.

Implementation Timeline:

The program will begin development in early 2025 with funding applications completed in Q2 2025. Construction and program development will occur in 2026 with the program beginning in the beginning of 2027.

List of Potential Funding Sources:

The planned funding sources include \$37,500 from LaGrange County, \$120,000 from United Way, \$70,000 from OCRA, \$30,000 from ISDA, and \$17,500 from ISDH.

List of Possible Partnerships:

The Tradition Kitchen's possible partnerships include LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation, LaGrange Council on Aging, LaGrange County, Crossroads United Way, OCRA, ISDA, ISDH, and Purdue Extension. Adjacent proposed and complementary programs such as the Farms to Food Banks program and the new LCAT Barn will provide a tremendous improvement to programming that the Council on Aging is able to provide for our aging population, and will utilize funding from the county, multiple state agencies, community organizations, residents and business owners.

Potential Implementation/Execution Problems:

Potential implementation/execution problems include limited capacity for use of the senior center while construction is underway, and a potential impact on regularly scheduled programming. It will be important to communicate these limitations with both patrons of the senior center and the construction company to ensure as little disturbance as possible for an already underserved population.

Sustainability Considerations:

Maintenance and sustainability will be coordinated and implemented by the LaGrange County Council on Aging Staff and Board, with assistance from Emilee Buller, VP of Community Development and Engagement if needed.

LaGrange County Cold Storage & Farms to Food Bank

Current Conditions:

In our agriculturally rich community, a significant amount of fresh produce is wasted each year simply because there's more produce than can be sold or consumed before it spoils. Our local food banks often lack sufficient access to fresh, nutritious options, which are essential to supporting families in need. A farm-to-food-bank program could help close this gap, providing better access to local produce and reducing food waste. This project would fund the purchase and installation of cold storage to keep the surplus produce fresh longer, supporting food banks across the county. A consideration for the addition of larger walk-in cold storage was considered, however with approximately half of our population traveling predominantly by horse or bicycle, and gas prices being a potential barrier for residents who drive, it was decided that the best option would be to fund commercial freezers and refrigerators in multiple food bank locations throughout the county. The program would also establish a system to raise awareness to encourage more donations. Additionally, funding from ISDA could be directed toward mileage reimbursements at the current state rate for food bank employees/volunteers, allowing the potential to pick up donations directly from farms and eliminating a barrier of getting food from growers to food banks.

Service Gaps and Needs in the Target Area:

Existing food banks throughout the County include the Food and Clothes Basket (a non-profit focused on providing for those in need), several churches, and the Council on Aging Food Pantry. All of them could benefit from additional cold storage with a goal of providing fresh, locally grown or produced products like Milk, Meat, and produce, as the majority of donations received and disseminated are heavily processed pantry stable foods.

Financial Status of the Existing Program:

This program does not currently exist in the capacity that we are proposing. There are several Food Bank/Pantry programs in existence throughout the

county who are all functioning in a supported and stable capacity at this time, but could benefit from the addition of new cold storage.

Socioeconomic Factors in the Target Area:

The proposed Farms to Food Banks Programming will work to identify and direct funding toward potential mileage reimbursements for food bank employees/volunteers, allowing the potential for them to pick up donations directly from farms and eliminating a barrier of getting food from growers to food banks. Additional funds identified may also allow for the eventual ability to provide a delivery service if patrons of the food banks can demonstrate a need for that service.

Recommended Option for Implementation

Scope of Work

The project focuses on the purchase and installation of cold storage throughout the county at existing food banks and pantries, implementation of a marketing strategy to local farmers to encourage donation of their excess locally grown and produced goods, and providing funding for pick-up from local farmers where necessary and/or applicable.

Description of Program Management:

This program will be managed by Emilee Buller, VP of Community Development and Engagement, with the help of the managing bodies of the existing food banks throughout the county. Program oversight will fall to food banks, with regular reporting to Emilee for tracking.

Local Selection Criteria for Awards and/or Access to the Program:

All existing food banks will be considered for participation in the program. Applications for participation will be turned in to Emilee who will meet with each agency and evaluate their current need for additional cold storage. With the help of a portion of the Stellar Steering Group, awards will be designated for the purchase of cold storage.



Cold Storage & Farms to Food Bank (Continued)

Management Processes/Roles for the Community and Program Manager:

This program will be managed by Emilee Buller, VP of Community Development and Engagement, with the help of the managing bodies of the existing food banks throughout the county. Program oversight will fall to food banks, with regular reporting to Emilee for tracking.

Strategic Outreach & Promotion for the Program:

Emilee with the help of leadership from Connect LaGrange County's Partner Organization and the existing non-profit partners group in LaGrange County (<https://lccf.net/lagrangepartners>) will work to market availability of the program, and helping the food banks market the additional food items they will now be able to accept and offer.

Outline of How Funds Awarded will be Managed:

Funds awarded will be managed by LaGrange County EDC with designated food banks as subrecipients.

Draft Program Materials:

Not available at this time.

Projected Number of Users:

Not available at this time.

Budget:

The estimated cost is \$200,000.

Implementation Timeline:

The project will begin development in late 2025 with funding applications completed in early 2026. Implementation and program development will occur in 2026, with the program beginning in the spring of 2027.

List of Potential Funding Sources:

The planned funding sources include \$47,000 from LaGrange County, \$80,000 from United Way, \$50,000 from ISDA, and \$20,000 from ISDH, and \$3,000 from Parkview Hospital.

List of Possible Partnerships:

The Farms to Food Banks Program possible partnerships include LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation, LaGrange Council on Aging, LaGrange County Clothes and Food Basket, Several Area Churches, LaGrange County, Crossroads United Way, ISDA, ISDH, and Parkview LaGrange Hospital.

Potential Implementation/Execution Problems:

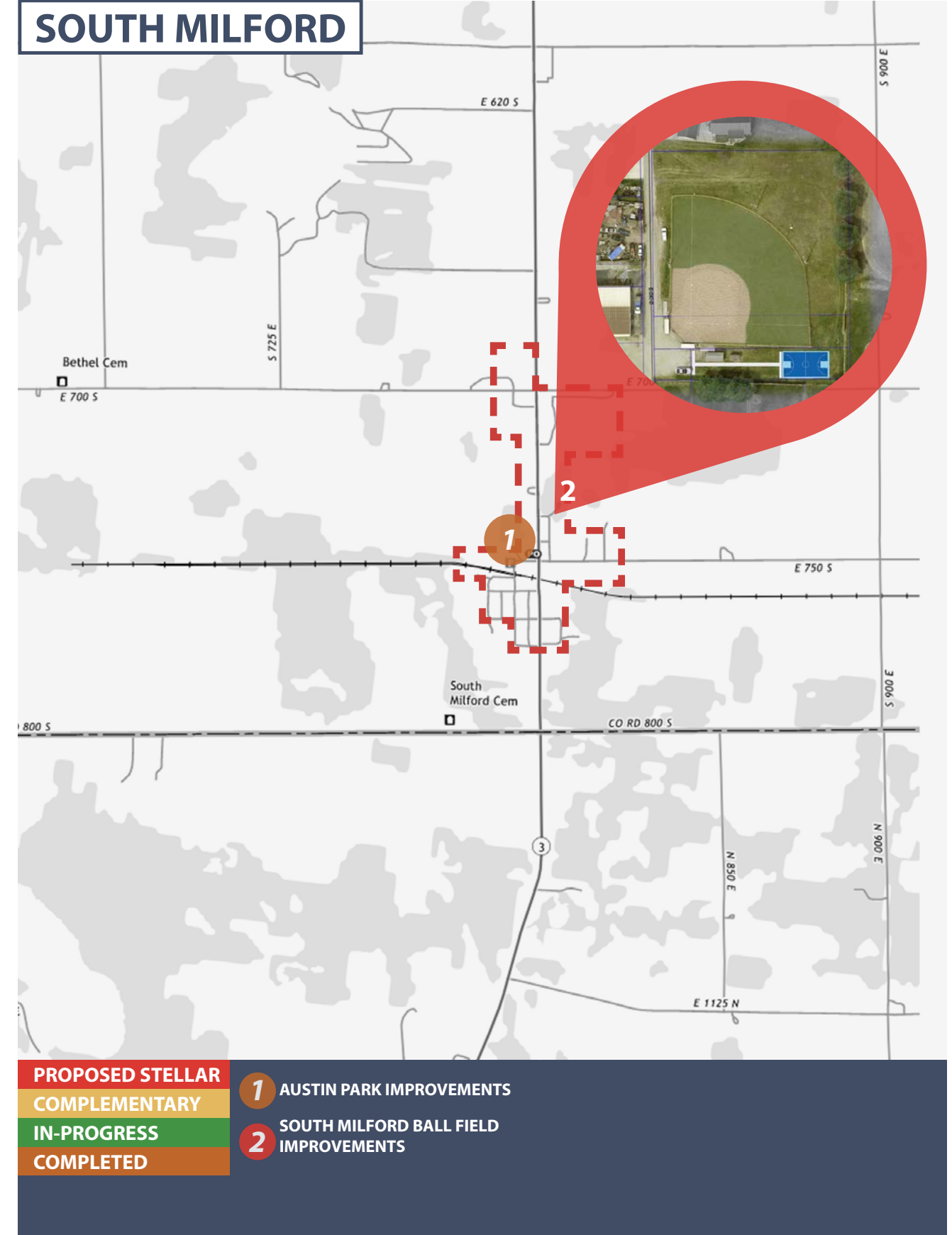
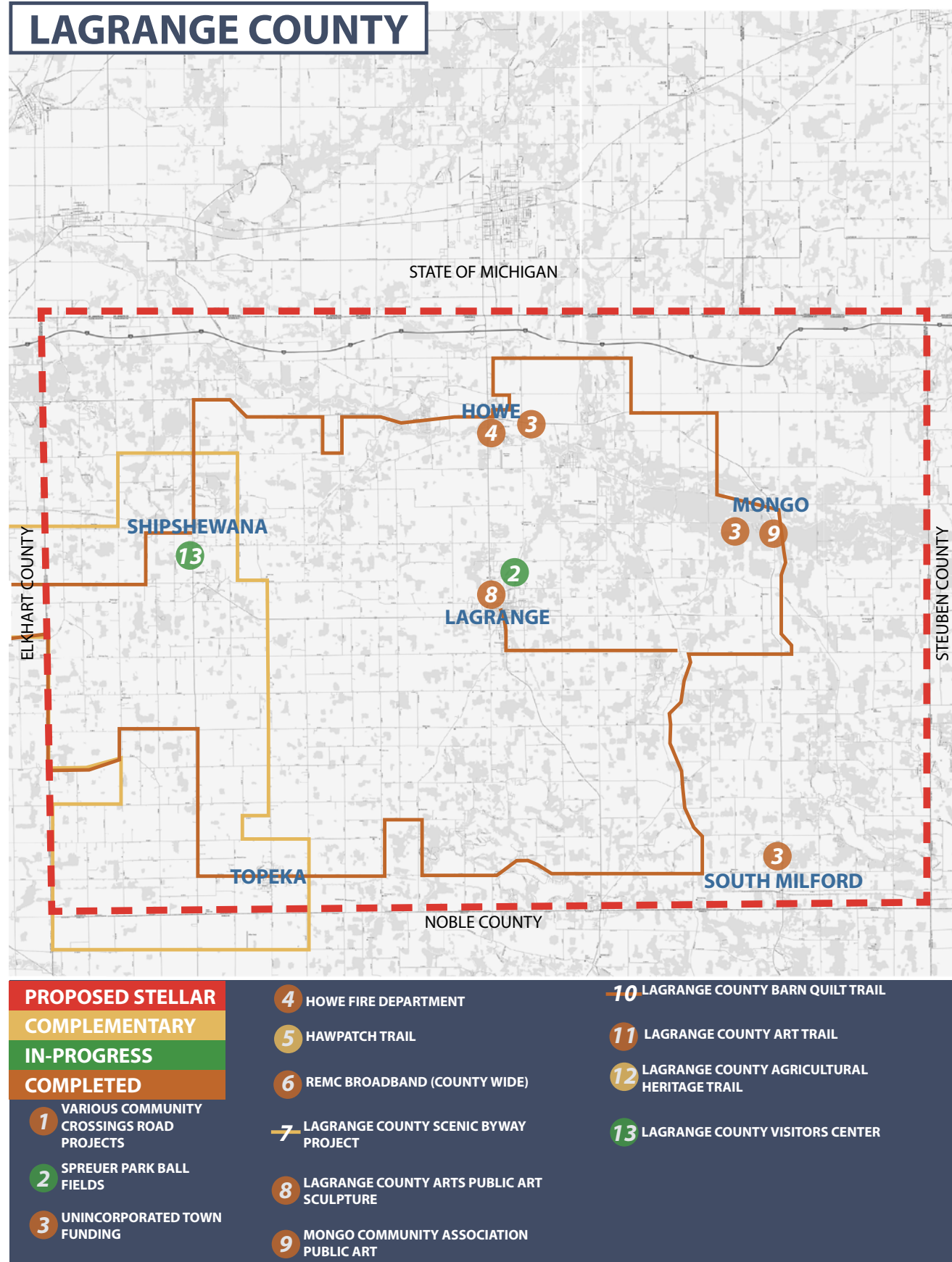
Potential implementation and execution problems include a lack of potential space to accommodate additional cold storage, an inability for farmers and growers to find time in their very busy schedules to drop donations during operation hours, and volunteer shortages in the food banks that would limit their ability to retrieve donations from local farmers.

Sustainability Considerations:

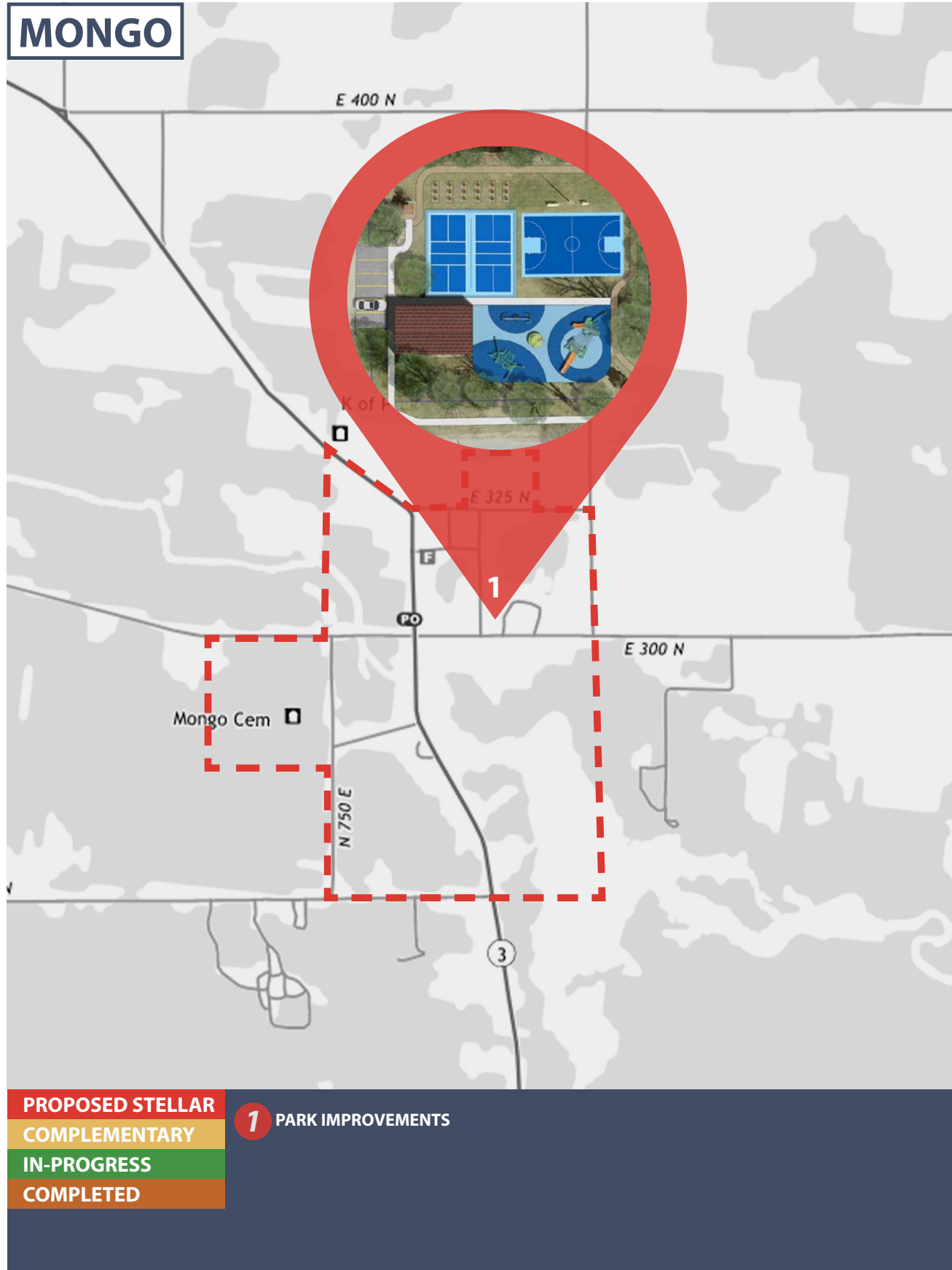
Maintenance and sustainability will be coordinated and implemented by the designated food banks, with assistance from Emilee Buller, VP of Community Development and Engagement where needed.



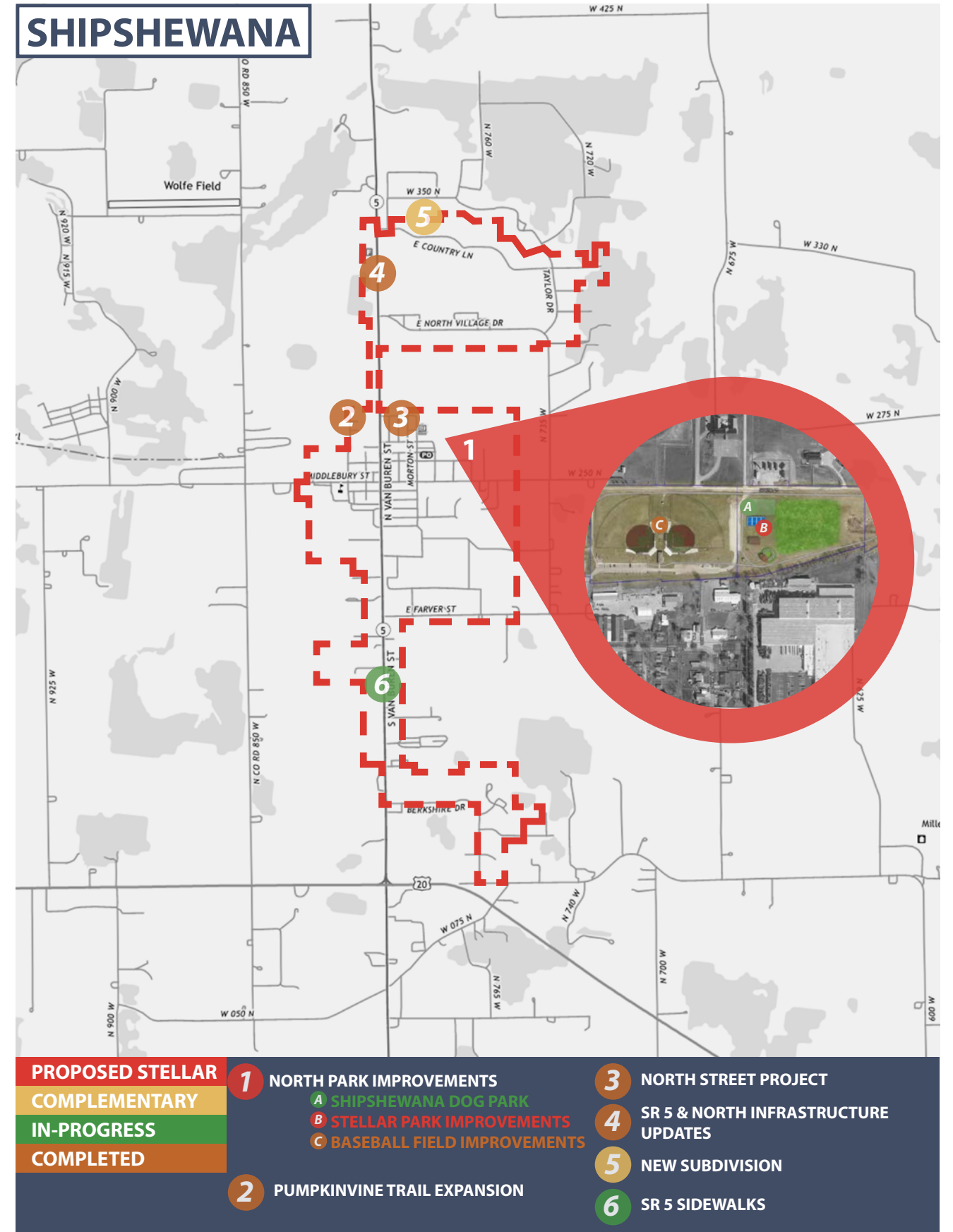
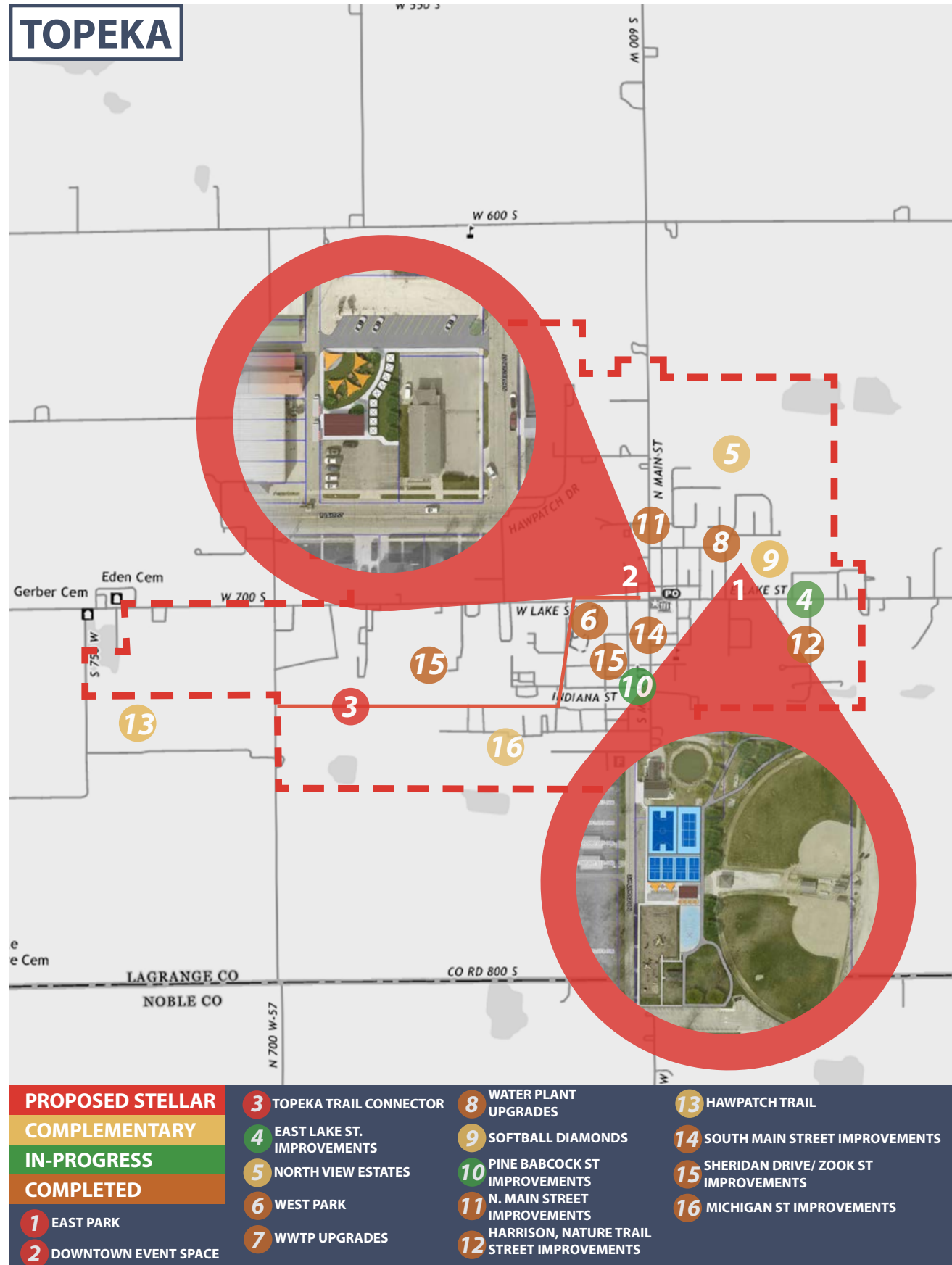
APPENDIX E: MAPS



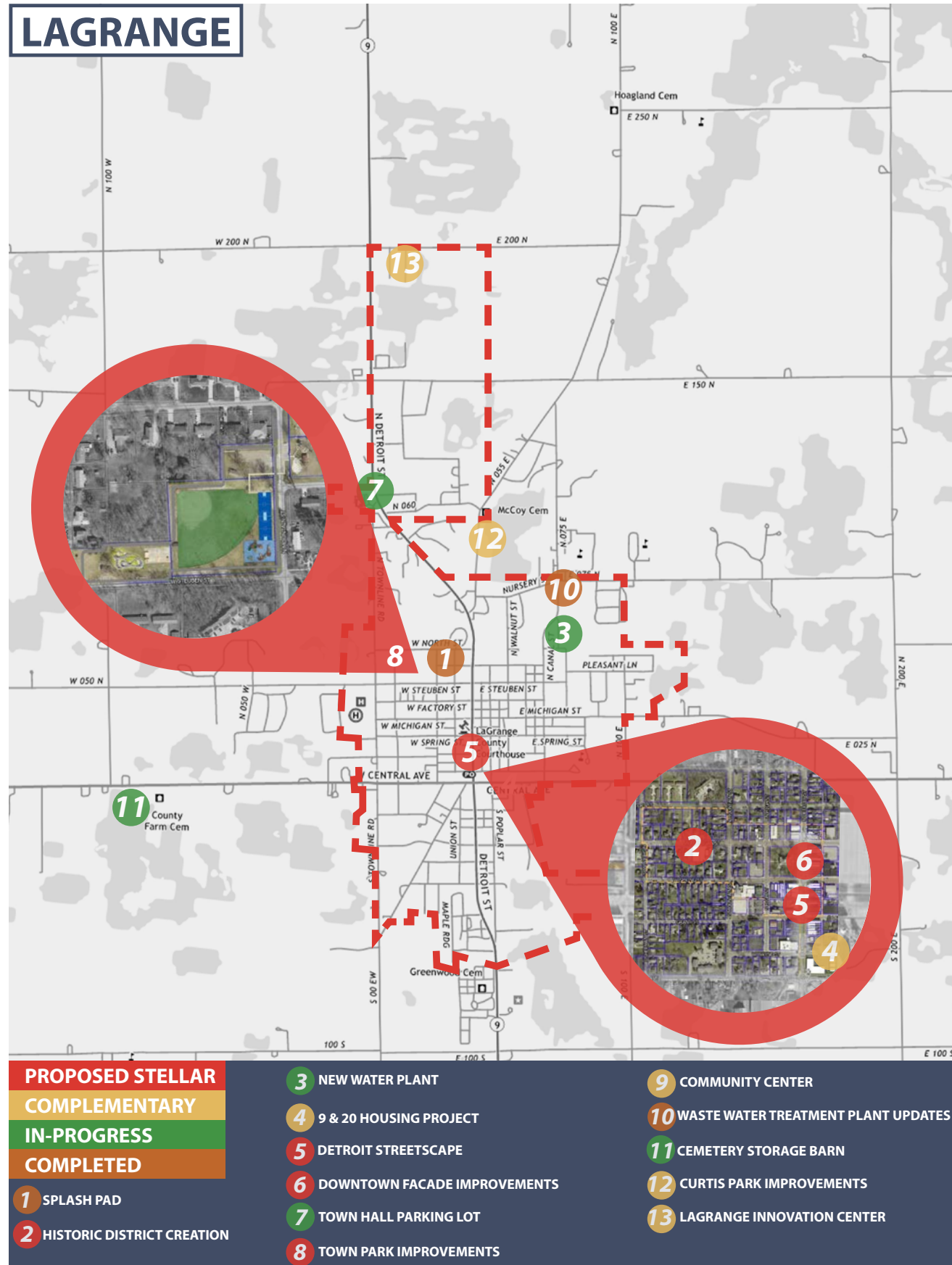
Appendix E: Maps



Appendix E: Maps



Appendix E: Maps



APPENDIX F: FEASIBILITY MATRIX

Project Name	Financing		Site Control			Environmental Review			Schematic Design			Architectural/ Prelim Engineering Documents		
	Identified	Unknown	Complete	Ongoing	Not Started	Complete	In Process	Not Started	Complete	In Process	Not Started	Complete	In Process	Not Started
LaGrange Town Park	x		x					x	x					x
LaGrange Detroit St. Streetscape	x		x					x	x					x
LaGrange Downtown Historic District	x			n/a			n/a			n/a			n/a	
LaGrange Downtown Façade Improvements	x			x				x			x			x
Topeka Hawpatch Trail Connector	x			x				x		x				x
Topeka Downtown Event Space	x		x					x	x					x
Topeka East Park Improvements	x		x					x	x					x
Topeka Downtown Master Plan	x			n/a				x		n/a			n/a	
Shipshewana Town Park Improvements	x			x				x	x					x
LaGrange County Sidewalk & Park Improvements	x			x				x	x					x
LaGrange County Down Payment Assistance	x			n/a			n/a			n/a			n/a	
LaGrange County Courthouse Electrical Upgrades	x		x					x	x					x
LaGrange Tradition Kitchen	x		x					x			x			x
Cold Storage & Farms to Food Bank Program	x			x			n/a			n/a			n/a	
LaGrange Community Center		x	x		x			x			x			x
LaGrange Innovation Center	x			x				x		x				x
Topeka East Park Ballfield Improvements	x		x					x	x				x	
LaGrange 9 & 20 Housing Development		x	x					x		x				x
Shipshewana Housing Development	x		x					x	x				x	
Topeka Housing Development	x		x					x	x				x	
LaGrange Curtis Park		x	x					x		x				x
Agricultural Heritage Trail	x			n/a			n/a			n/a				x
Scenic Byway	x			n/a			n/a			n/a			n/a	
LaGrange Transit Authority Barn	x		x					x	x				x	

Budget Matrix

Stellar Project Name	Total Project Cost	Private Investment	Local Leverage	Other Sources (foundations, etc.)	Gap	% of Local Leverage
LaGrange Town Park Improvements	\$ 1,000,000.00		\$ 500,000.00		\$ 500,000.00	50%
LaGrange Detroit St Streetscape Improvements	\$ 1,630,000.00		\$ 365,000.00		\$ 1,265,000.00	22%
LaGrange Downtown Historic District	\$ 10,000.00		\$ 5,000.00		\$ 5,000.00	50%
LaGrange Downtown Façade Improvements	\$ 400,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 95,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 200,000.00	50%
Topeka Hawpatch Trail Connector	\$ 1,520,000.00		\$ 536,000.00		\$ 984,000.00	35%
Topeka Downtown Event Space	\$ 810,000.00		\$ 162,000.00		\$ 648,000.00	20%
Topeka East Park Improvements	\$ 1,000,000.00		\$ 500,000.00		\$ 500,000.00	50%
Topeka Downtown Master Plan	\$ 50,000.00		\$ 10,000.00		\$ 40,000.00	20%
Shipshewana Town Park Improvements	\$ 1,000,000.00		\$ 250,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 730,000.00	27%
LaGrange County Sidewalk & Park Improvements	\$ 1,620,000.00		\$ 343,000.00	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 1,157,000.00	29%
LaGrange County Down Payment Assistance	\$ -				\$ 500,000.00	0%
LaGrange County Courthouse Electrical Upgrades	\$ 365,000.00		\$ 290,000.00		\$ 75,000.00	79%
LaGrange County Tradition Kitchen	\$ 275,000.00		\$ 37,500.00	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 117,500.00	57%
LaGrange County Cold Storage & Farms to Food Bank	\$ 200,000.00		\$ 47,000.00	\$ 83,000.00	\$ 70,000.00	65%
Totals	\$ 9,880,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 3,140,500.00	\$ 348,000.00	\$ 6,791,500.00	36%

Complementary Projects	Total Project Cost	Private Investment	Local Leverage	Other Sources (foundations, etc.)	Gap	
LaGrange Community Center	\$ 15,000,000.00	\$ 2,000,000.00	\$ 4,000,000.00	\$ 5,000,000.00	\$ 4,000,000.00	73%
LaGrange Innovation Center	\$ 4,608,000.00	\$ 1,079,000.00	\$ 395,000.00	\$ 3,134,000.00	\$ -	100%
Topeka East Park Ballfield Improvements	\$ 1,300,000.00	\$ -	\$ 1,300,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	100%
LaGrange 9 & 20 Housing	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Shipshewana Housing Development (Infrastructure)	\$ 575,000.00	\$ 575,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	100%
Topeka Housing Development	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
LaGrange Curtis Park	\$ 200,000.00	\$ -	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 150,000.00	\$ -	100%
Agricultural Heritage Trail	\$ 20,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 20,000.00	\$ -	100%
Scenic Byway	\$ 32,000.00	\$ -	\$ 19,000.00	\$ 13,000.00	\$ -	100%
LaGrange Transit Authority Barn	\$ 200,000.00	\$ -	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ -	100%
LaGrange County Trails Master Plan	\$ 50,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 50,000.00	\$ -	100%
LaGrange County Hawpatch Trail	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	

Leverage Matrix

Leverage Resource	Proposed (P) or Committed (C)	Amount	Designated Project
Town of LaGrange	C	\$ 365,000	Detroit St Streetscape
Town of LaGrange	C	\$ 5,000	Historical District Creation
Town of LaGrange	C	\$ 500,000	Town Park
Town of LaGrange	C	\$ 95,000	Façade Improvements
Town of Topeka	C	\$ 162,000	Downtown Event Space
Town of Topeka	C	\$ 500,000	East Park Improvements
Town of Topeka	C	\$ 536,000	Hawpatch Trail Connector
Town of Topeka	C	\$ 10,000	Downtown Master Plan
Town of Shipshewana	C	\$ 250,000	Town Park Improvements
LaGrange County	C	\$ 343,000	Unincorporated Areas Parks & Sidewalks
LaGrange County	C	\$ 290,000	County Courthouse Electrical Upgrades
LaGrange County	C	\$ 37,500	Tradition Kitchen
LaGrange County	C	\$ 47,000	Cold Storage & Farm to Food Banks
LaGrange Cty. Community Foundation	C	\$ 120,000	Unincorporated Areas Parks & Sidewalks
United Way of LaGrange County	C	\$ 80,000	Cold Storage & Farm to Food Banks
United Way of LaGrange County	C	\$ 120,000	Tradition Kitchen
Parkview Hospital	C	\$ 3,000	Cold Storage & Farm to Food Banks
Farmers State Bank	C	\$ 5,000	Unrestricted
E&S Sales	C	\$ 20,000	Shipshewana Town Park
LaGrange Downtown Business Owners	P	\$ 100,000	Façade Improvements

APPENDIX G: MEDIA & PUBLICITY RELATED TO THE STELLAR PATHWAYS PROCESS

Posted Media & Communications

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Emilee Buller
July 3

Last week we interviewed with *Inside Indiana Business* regarding our Stellar Pathways efforts with the *Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs* - happy to share this article with more details about our journey to being a Stellar Pathways Designee! The article also features beautiful local photography from our friend *Keith James Photography!*

INSIDEINDIANABUSINESS.COM
LaGrange County focusing on Stellar Pathways win - Inside Indiana Business
The Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) recently selected Connect LaGrang...

See insights and ads Boost post

11 likes 1 comment 1 share

Like Comment Share

LaGrange County Council On Aging & LCAT
Awesome article great job to all I really hope you win !! I want to get on the bus !!!!

14w Like Reply Hide

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Canva
July 5

This weekend we are launching our first round of Community Connection pertaining to our Stellar Pathways Designation pursuit. We want to hear your input about the needs you see in our county! You'll find this QR code posted throughout the county in the coming weeks - first stop? The fair! This will take you to our Stellar Pathways Updates page on our website where you will find more information about our efforts, the latest news, and a link to a survey that we have put together to connect with you. If QR codes aren't for you, that is totally ok! Give us a call to chat at 260-499-4994 or send an email to efincher@lagrangecountyedc.com - we can't wait to hear all of your thoughts and ideas!

Our Community Connection Survey can also be accessed at the following link:
<https://forms.office.com/r/3Yez30J2mx>

See insights and ads Boost post

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Canva
September 5

YOU ARE INVITED!!!!!! Stellar Community Connections are a series of five meetings across the county to provide a place for you to come learn more about our countywide Stellar Pathways efforts and share your input on what kinds of transformative projects you would like to see for the future of LaGrange County. These meetings will be an open house 'come and go as you please' format, require no RSVP, and are open to anyone living in LaGrange County. Residents are encouraged to ... See more

COUNTY
You're Invited!
STELLAR COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS
These open house events will provide an opportunity for you to learn about Stellar. Come share your voice and input regarding challenges in LaGrange County and potential future grant dollar spending! These events are come and go as you please, we ask only that you help spread the word and invite your friends and neighbors!

Wednesday September 18th
4-6pm at LaGrange Town Hall

Thursday September 19th
4-6pm at Topeka Fire Department

Wednesday September 25th
4-6pm at The Wolfe Building - Shipshewana

Thursday September 26th
4-6pm at Howe Community Building (Howe & Mongo)
4-6pm at South Milford Fire Department (Stroh & South Milford)

TAKE THE SURVEY HERE **Connect LaGrange County is the regional Stellar Pathways effort headed by LCEDC and made up of LaGrange County, and the towns of LaGrange, Shipshewana and Topeka.**

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
The LaGrange County EDC is the single point of contact for economic develop... Call now

See insights and ads Boost again

LaGrange County Community Foundation and 14 others 2 comments 10 shares

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Emilee Buller
September 16 at 11:03 AM

We can't wait to talk to you starting this Wednesday at one of our FIVE Stellar Community Connections Open House Meetings! Come out, learn more about Stellar Pathways and share your input about how we can best be impactful for the residents of LaGrange County with these transformative investment dollars!

Wednesday September 18th
4-6pm at LaGrange Town Hall

Thursday September 19th
4-6pm at Topeka Fire Department... See more

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
The LaGrange County EDC is the single point of contact for economic development efforts in L...

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Lydia Young
1m

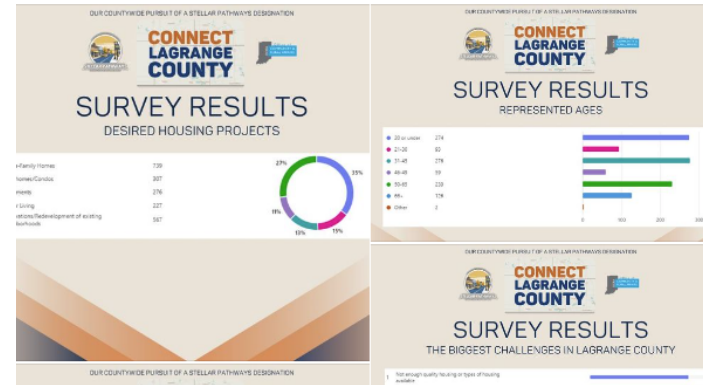
And the results are in... 🌟

As you may be aware, we are one of four finalists of the Stellar Pathways Program. This program rewards areas with \$7.2 million to use on transformative projects that will enhance quality of place, promote community wellness, and strengthen our local economies!

We asked you, the people of LaGrange County, to participate in a survey to provide input on what you would like to see improved in our area if we are named a finalist for the Stellar Pathways Program and the community did not disappoint! We had 1,060 responses which is HUGE! The survey included questions that asked individuals what you would like to see in regards to housing projects, infrastructure projects, biking & walking projects, and so on. These responses are going to play a big role in determining what the \$7.2 million will go towards in LaGrange County.

We are so excited to share the results below! We would like to give a big THANK YOU to those who took the time to participate in the survey, we are very excited to see what the future holds for LaGrange County.

To learn more about the Stellar Pathways Program, please visit <https://www.lagrangecountyedc.com/.../18/stellar-pathways/>



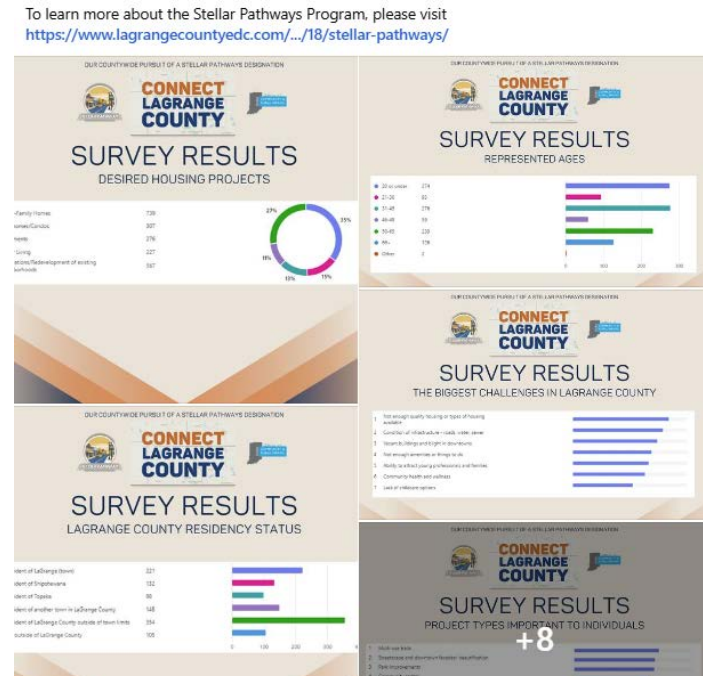
LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Emilee Buller
June 18

Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch
June 18

Congratulations to the four regions named finalists for the 2024 Stellar Pathways program by the *Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs!*

The program works with communities to promote local and regional partnerships and assists in implementing sustainable solutions to challenges Indiana's rural communities face and improving quality of life. As finalists, each region will receive \$50,000 to put towards the development of its final strategic investment plan!

The following regions have been chosen as finalists:
 One Dearborn County: Stellar Pathways for Indiana Gateways: **One Dearborn Economic Development**, Dearborn County, **Town of Dilisboro** and **Greendale**
 Connect LaGrange County: **LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation**, LaGrange County, **Town of LaGrange Indiana**, **Town of Shipshewana**, **Town of Topeka**



LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Emilee Buller
June 18

We are beyond thrilled to share that LaGrange County has been selected as one of the final four communities in the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs Stellar Pathways Program 2024! We are so honored to head this effort, but we could not do it without the incredible collaboration that's happening with all of our partnering municipalities and our community partners. Congratulations to all involved - **Town of LaGrange Indiana Town of Topeka Town of Shipshewana & LaGrange County**

2024 STELLAR PATHWAYS FINALISTS

Connect LaGrange County

Wabash County

Warren County Region

One Dearborn County: Stellar Pathways for Indiana Gateways

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
June 18

Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch and OCRA today announced the four finalist regions for the 2024 Stellar Pathways program. Each region earned their finalist designati... See more

No insights to show Boost a post

Posted Media & Communications

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Emilee Buller
September 12 at 10:32 AM

Emilee was with **Mike Stiles** this morning at **WBET Sturgis** to discuss Stellar Updates and share about our upcoming Community Connections Open House Meetings! We hope to see you there!

Wednesday September 18th
4-6pm at LaGrange Town Hall

Thursday September 19th
4-6pm at Topeka Fire Department

Wednesday September 25th
4-6pm at The Wolfe Building - Shippshewana

Thursday September 26th
4-6pm at Howe Community Building (Howe & Mongo)
4-6pm at South Milford Fire Department (Stroh & South Milford)

You can take the survey here: <https://forms.office.com/r/3Yez30J2mx>

WBET Sturgis was live.
September 12 at 8:39 AM

Emilee Fincher is here with an update on an LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation project.

No insights to show Boost a post

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Emilee Buller
August 26

Have you taken the Connect LaGrange County Community Connections Survey yet? We are in pursuit of a Stellar Pathways Designation from the **Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs** and the Lieutenant Governor's Office and WE NEED YOUR HELP! Tell us what you think the most pressing issues are facing LaGrange County right here: <https://forms.office.com/r/3Yez30J2mx>

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Public & Government Service

Call now

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Emilee Buller
August 26

Have you taken the Connect LaGrange County Community Connections Survey yet? We are in pursuit of a Stellar Pathways Designation from the **Indiana Office of Comm...** See more

No insights to show Boost again

19 4 comments 45 shares

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Emilee Buller
May 16

Your LCEDC ladies were live from Sturgis this morning talking about the recent Letter of Intent and Narrative they submitted for OCRA's Stellar Pathways Designation! We want everyone as excited as we are about this potential investment into our county. If you have questions about the process or the program, give us a call!

WBET Sturgis was live.
May 16

Emilee and Sherri are here to talk about a great opportunity for the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation

No insights to show Boost a post

5 1 share

Like Comment Share

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Emilee Buller
September 12 at 10:25 AM

Our survey is still live and we are looking for LOTS more feedback! Please share with friends and family, and help us encourage input from as many LaGrange County Residents as possible! <https://forms.office.com/r/3Yez30J2mx>

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Public & Government Service

Call now

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Emilee Buller
August 26

Have you taken the Connect LaGrange County Community Connections Survey yet? We are in pursuit of a Stellar Pathways Designation from the **Indiana Office of Comm...** See more

No insights to show Boost a post

2 shares

Like Comment Share

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Emilee Buller
September 25 at 2:29 PM

We are in the final days for responses to our Community Connections Survey, and we cannot say thank you enough to all of our community members who have already completed the survey! If you have not - Join the party and share your input with us! We've heard from over 1000 of you, and that's pretty incredible - but we would love to reach another 1000 before the survey closes THIS SUNDAY! Follow this link - <https://forms.office.com/r/3Yez30J2mx> - and let us know what you think the priorities for Connect LaGrange County should be!

OUR COUNTYWIDE PURSUIT OF A STELLAR PATHWAYS DESIGNATION

CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY

SCAN HERE TO LEARN MORE & SHARE YOUR INPUT

The Stellar Pathways Program is a multi-agency, multi-million-dollar investment initiative led by the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs, and we were recently named one of four finalists in the state! What does this mean? It means that the Connect LaGrange County Region is in the running for \$7.2 Million to use on transformative projects that will enhance quality of place, promote community wellness, and strengthen our local economies! Scan to read more, see updates, and share your input! If QR Codes aren't for you, that's ok! Call us at 260-499-4994 & let's talk!

LaGrange County Council On Aging & LCAT
August 28

Please click on the link to complete the survey to share your input! Lots of exciting things could happen if **LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation** wins this program! They have been selected as one of the four state finalists in the Stellar Pathways Program. This prestigious recognition underscores their commitment to sustainable growth, economic prosperity and community enhancement in LaGrange County!

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY & RURAL AFFAIRS

STELLAR PATHWAYS
A REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

LAGRANGECOUNTYEDC.COM
LaGrange EDC Finalist for Stellar Pathways | LaGrange County EDC
Share Your Input Here! Scan this QR code for the Stellar Community Connection Survey => LaG...

Completed View results

Link clicks
YOU ARE INVITED!!!!!! Stellar Community Connections are ...

1,330	28	\$60.00
Reach	Link clicks	Spent of \$60.00

Completed View results

Link clicks
Have you taken the Connect LaGrange County Community ...

1,434	37	\$64.32
Reach	Link clicks	Spent at \$3.00 per day

Completed View results

Post engagements

4,929	187	\$68.00
Reach	Post engagements	Spent of \$100.00

Jenny Landez
September 4

If you live or work in LaGrange County and you have not yet taken a few minutes to complete this survey, please complete it. Every completed survey helps LaGrange County, our local communities, get some much needed grant money that can help fund many needed community improvement projects. It will only take you a few minutes and will be very helpful. Thank you!

Show Attachment

Town of LaGrange Indiana and 8 others 2 4

Like Share

Tyler Fry Done!!
5w Like

Cathy Phillip Done
5w Like

Posted Media & Communications

Founders Forum
A Program of LaGrange County EDC

Tuesday June 11, 2024

TOPEKA PIZZA	WOLFE BUILDING
8:00 am - 9:00am	3:00 pm - 4:00pm
118 S. Babcock St., Topeka, IN. 46571	345 Morton Street Shipshewana, IN. 46565

Special Guest
Scott Zeigler of Hand to the Plow Surveying

Please join us for a free 1 hour meeting led by Scott Zeigler of Hand to the Plow with a Surveyors Perspective and Q&A

For more information: 260-499-4994 or efincher@lagrangecountyedc.com

Howe Community Association
September 21 at 3:39 PM

CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY

You're Invited! STELLAR COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

These open house events will provide an opportunity for you to learn about Stellar. Come share your voice and input regarding challenges in LaGrange County and potential future grant dollar spending! These events are come and go as you please, we ask only that you help spread the word and invite your friends and neighbors!

Wednesday September 18th
4-6pm at LaGrange Town Hall

Thursday September 19th
4-6pm at Topeka Fire Department

Wednesday September 25th
4-6pm at The Wolfe Building - Shipshewana

Thursday September 26th
4-6pm at Howe Community Building (Howe & Mongo)
-6pm at South Milford Fire Department (Stroh & South Milford)

TAKE THE SURVEY HERE [QR Code]

Connect LaGrange County is the regional Stellar Pathways effort headed by LCEDC and made up of LaGrange County, and the towns of LaGrange, Shipshewana and Topeka. For more info: www.lagrangecountyedc.com Or please reach out to Emilee at 260-499-4994 / efincher@lagrangecountyedc.com

LaGrange County Community Foundation
September 6

COUNTY

You're Invited! STELLAR COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

These open house events will provide an opportunity for you to learn about Stellar. Come share your voice and input regarding challenges in LaGrange County and potential future grant dollar spending! These events are come and go as you please, we ask only that you help spread the word and invite your friends and neighbors!

Wednesday September 18th
4-6pm at LaGrange Town Hall

Thursday September 19th
4-6pm at Topeka Fire Department

Wednesday September 25th
4-6pm at The Wolfe Building - Shipshewana

Thursday September 26th
4-6pm at Howe Community Building (Howe & Mongo)
4-6pm at South Milford Fire Department (Stroh & South Milford)

TAKE THE SURVEY HERE [QR Code]

Connect LaGrange County is the regional Stellar Pathways effort headed by LCEDC and made up of LaGrange County, and the towns of LaGrange, Shipshewana and Topeka.

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
The LaGrange County EDC is the single point of contact for economic dev... Call now

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Canva
September 5

YOU ARE INVITED!!!!!! Stellar Community Connections are a series of five meetings across the county to provide a place for you to come learn more about our cou... See more

Lucy's Vedic Twist
September 6

COUNTY

You're Invited! STELLAR COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

These open house events will provide an opportunity for you to learn about Stellar. Come share your voice and input regarding challenges in LaGrange County and potential future grant dollar spending! These events are come and go as you please, we ask only that you help spread the word and invite your friends and neighbors!

Wednesday September 18th
4-6pm at LaGrange Town Hall

Thursday September 19th
4-6pm at Topeka Fire Department

Wednesday September 25th
4-6pm at The Wolfe Building - Shipshewana

Thursday September 26th
4-6pm at Howe Community Building (Howe & Mongo)
4-6pm at South Milford Fire Department (Stroh & South Milford)

TAKE THE SURVEY HERE [QR Code]

Connect LaGrange County is the regional Stellar Pathways effort headed by LCEDC and made up of LaGrange County, and the towns of LaGrange, Shipshewana and Topeka.

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
The LaGrange County EDC is the single point of contact for economic dev... Call now

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Canva
September 5

YOU ARE INVITED!!!!!! Stellar Community Connections are a series of five meetings across the county to provide a place for you to come learn more about our cou... See more

Thunder Country 105.5 WTHD
September 5

COUNTY

You're Invited! STELLAR COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

These open house events will provide an opportunity for you to learn about Stellar. Come share your voice and input regarding challenges in LaGrange County and potential future grant dollar spending! These events are come and go as you please, we ask only that you help spread the word and invite your friends and neighbors!

Wednesday September 18th
4-6pm at LaGrange Town Hall

Thursday September 19th
4-6pm at Topeka Fire Department

Wednesday September 25th
4-6pm at The Wolfe Building - Shipshewana

Thursday September 26th
4-6pm at Howe Community Building (Howe & Mongo)
4-6pm at South Milford Fire Department (Stroh & South Milford)

TAKE THE SURVEY HERE [QR Code]

Connect LaGrange County is the regional Stellar Pathways effort headed by LCEDC and made up of LaGrange County, and the towns of LaGrange, Shipshewana and Topeka.

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
The LaGrange County EDC is the single point of contact for economic dev... Call now

Town of LaGrange Indiana
September 4

Please complete the survey in the photos in connection with the Stellar Grant application. If awarded the grant, LaGrange County could see approximately \$7.2 million in funds to multiple important projects. Input is crucial in the process!

CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY

SCAN HERE TO LEARN MORE & SHARE YOUR INPUT

[QR Code]

The Stellar Pathways Program is a multi-agency, multi-million...

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Comment as LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation

Main Street LaGrange Inc
August 27

Great way to put your input and help with this awesome project! Our county is one of 4 finalists! Let's help make sure we WIN in December! 🙌🙌🙌

CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY

SCAN HERE TO LEARN MORE & SHARE YOUR INPUT

[QR Code]

The Stellar Pathways Program is a multi-agency, multi-million...

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Public & Government Service
Call now

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Emilee Buller
August 26

Have you taken the Connect LaGrange County Community Connections Survey yet? We are in pursuit of a Stellar Pathways Designation from the Indiana Office of Comm... See more

Town of Topeka
September 17 at 9:56 PM

WBET Sturgis was live.
September 12

Emilee Fincher is here with an update on an LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation project.

LaGrange County Council On Aging & LCAT
1 share

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Comment as LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation

Posted Media & Communications

Town of LaGrange Indiana
September 5 · 🌐

COUNTY
You're Invited!
STELLAR COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

These open house events will provide an opportunity for you to learn about Stellar. Come share your voice and input regarding challenges in LaGrange County and potential future grant dollar spending! These events are come and go as you please, we ask only that you help spread the word and invite your friends and neighbors!

Wednesday September 18th
4-6pm at LaGrange Town Hall
Thursday September 19th
4-6pm at Topeka Fire Department
Wednesday September 25th
4-6pm at The Wolfe Building - Shipshewana
Thursday September 26th
4-6pm at Howe Community Building (Howe & Mongo)
4-6pm at South Milford Fire Department (Stroh & South Milford)

TAKE THE SURVEY HERE [Connect LaGrange County is the regional Stellar Pathways effort headed by LCEDC and made up of LaGrange County, and the towns of LaGrange, Shipshewana and Topeka.](#)

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
The LaGrange County EDC is the single point of contact for economic dev... [Call now](#)

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Canva
September 5 · 🌐

YOU ARE INVITED!!!!!! Stellar Community Connections are a series of five meetings across the county to provide a place for you to come learn more about our cou... See more

1 Like 3 shares

Town of Topeka
September 8 · 🌐

CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY
SCAN HERE
TO LEARN MORE & SHARE YOUR INPUT

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Public & Government Service [Call now](#)

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Emilee Buller
August 26 · 🌐

Have you taken the Connect LaGrange County Community Connections Survey yet? We are in pursuit of a Stellar Pathways Designation from the **Indiana Office of Comm...** See more

1 Like 3 shares

Main Street LaGrange Inc
September 25 at 3:45 PM · 🌐

If you have not yet complete this survey, please take a moment to do so. The feedback is an important part of helping the LaGrange County EDC win this grant funding to help make improvements to our communities. The link to the survey is below. Thank you for helping!

OUR COUNTYWIDE PURSUIT OF A STELLAR PATHWAYS DESIGNATION
CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY
SCAN HERE
TO LEARN MORE & SHARE YOUR INPUT

The Stellar Pathways Program is a multi-agency, multi-million-dollar investment initiative led by the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs, and we were recently named one of four finalists in the state! What does this mean? It means that the Connect LaGrange County Region is in the running for \$7.2 Million to use on transformative projects that will enhance quality of place, promote community wellness, and strengthen our local economies! Scan to read more, see updates, and share your input!
If QR Codes aren't for you, that's ok! Call us at 260-499-4994 & let's talk!

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Emilee Buller
September 25 at 2:29 PM · 🌐

We are in the final days for responses to our Community Connections Survey, and we cannot say thank you enough to all of our community members who have already ... See more

LaGrange County Health Department - LCHD
September 4 · 🌐

CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY
SCAN HERE
TO LEARN MORE & SHARE YOUR INPUT

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Public & Government Service [Call now](#)

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Emilee Buller
August 26 · 🌐

Have you taken the Connect LaGrange County Community Connections Survey yet? We are in pursuit of a Stellar Pathways Designation from the **Indiana Office of Comm...** See more

Town of Topeka
September 19 at 5:12 PM · 🌐

Jackie Bender
September 19 at 4:46 PM · 🌐

Go to the Topeka fire station today from 4 to 6 to cast your vote for some community projects

LaGrange County Council On Aging & LCAT and 5 others
4 shares

Like Comment Share

Topeka Volunteer Fire Department
August 31 · 🌐

Town of Topeka
August 31 · 🌐

Please click on the link to complete the survey to share your input! Lots of exciting things could happen if LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation wi... See more

STELLAR PATHWAYS
A REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
LAGRANGECOUNTYEDC.COM

LaGrange EDC Finalist for Stellar Pathways | LaGrange County EDC
Share Your Input Here! Scan this QR code for the Stellar Community Connection Survey => ...

1 Like 3 shares

Comment as LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation

Topeka Volunteer Fire Department
September 19 at 5:12 PM · 🌐

Jackie Bender
September 19 at 4:46 PM · 🌐

Go to the Topeka fire station today from 4 to 6 to cast your vote for some community projects

1 Like 1 share

Town of Topeka
August 31 · 🌐

Please click on the link to complete the survey to share your input! Lots of exciting things could happen if LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation wins this program! They have been selected as one of the four state finalists in the Stellar Pathways Program. This prestigious recognition underscores their commitment to sustainable growth, economic prosperity and community enhancement in LaGrange County!

<https://www.lagrangecountyedc.com/.../stellar-pathways/.....> See more

STELLAR PATHWAYS
A REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
LAGRANGECOUNTYEDC.COM

LaGrange EDC Finalist for Stellar Pathways | LaGrange County EDC
Share Your Input Here! Scan this QR code for the Stellar Community Connection Survey => LaG...

2 Like 7 shares

View more comments

Lisa Stutzman Done!

Posted Media & Communications

Jessica Bratt
September 20 at 1:26 PM · 🌐

Show Attachment

Like Comment Share

Comment as LaGrange County Economic...

Krissy Hartz
September 14 at 4:04 PM · 🌐

LaGrange County residents! Please take a few minutes to complete this!

Show Attachment

1

Like Comment Share

Comment as LaGrange County Economic...

Tina Olivares
September 14 at 3:03 PM · 🌐

Please fill out this quick survey on the most pressing issues in LaGrange County, so we can continue to make our county a great place to live. Thanks! 😊

Show Attachment

1

Like Comment Share

Comment as LaGrange County Economic...

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Emilee Buller
September 12 · 🌐

Our survey is still live and we are looking for LOTS more feedback! Please share with friends and family, and help us encourage input from as many LaGrange County Residents as possible!
<https://forms.office.com/r/3Yez30J2mx>

Show Attachment

2 📌

Topeka Volunteer Fire Department
September 8 · 🌐

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Public & Government Service

Call now

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
Published by Emilee Buller
August 26 · 🌐

Have you taken the Connect LaGrange County Community Connections Survey yet? We are in pursuit of a Stellar Pathways Designation from the Indiana Office of Comm... See more

Like Comment Share

Comment as LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation

LaGrange County Health Department - LCHD
September 4 · 🌐

Connect LaGrange County is the regional Stellar Pathways effort headed by LCEDC and made up of LaGrange County, and the towns of LaGrange, Shipshewana and Topeka. For more info: www.lagrangecountyedc.com or please reach out to Emilee at 260-499-4994 /efincher@lagrangecountyedc.com

CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY

You're Invited! STELLAR COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

These open house events will provide an opportunity for you to learn about Stellar. Come share your voice and input regarding challenges in LaGrange County and potential future grant dollar spending! These events are come and go as you please, we ask only that you help spread the word and invite your friends and neighbors!

- Wednesday September 18th**
4-6pm at LaGrange Town Hall
- Thursday September 19th**
4-6pm at Topeka Fire Department
- Wednesday September 25th**
4-6pm at The Wolfe Building - Shipshewana
- Thursday September 26th**
4-6pm at Howe Community Building (Howe & Mongo)
4-6pm at South Milford Fire Department (Stroh & South Milford)

TAKE THE SURVEY HERE

Connect LaGrange County is the regional Stellar Pathways effort headed by LCEDC and made up of LaGrange County, and the towns of LaGrange, Shipshewana and Topeka. For more info: www.lagrangecountyedc.com Or please reach out to Emilee at 260-499-4994 /efincher@lagrangecountyedc.com

An email was composed and sent out via 'In the Loop,' a plain community email to fax system that reaches upwards of 500 Amish/Mennonite households concerning the public meetings. There were additional informational blasts sent out via this network, but because it is handled externally it's difficult to track.

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)

Visit Our Website
Contact Us
Add us on Facebook
Follow us on Instagram

Only TWO MORE DAYS left to take the Community Connections Survey for Connect LaGrange County and our Stellar Pathways Pursuit!

[Click Here to Take the Survey!](#)

OUR COUNTYWIDE PURSUIT OF A STELLAR PATHWAYS DESIGNATION

CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY

SCAN HERE TO LEARN MORE & SHARE YOUR INPUT

The Stellar Pathways Program is a multi-agency, multi-million-dollar investment initiative led by the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs, and we were recently named one of four finalists in the state! What does this mean? It means that the Connect LaGrange County Region is in the running for \$7.2 Million to use on transformative projects that will enhance quality of place, promote community wellness, and strengthen our local economies! Scan to read more, see updates, and share your input!
If QR Codes aren't for you, that's ok! Call us at 260-499-4994 & let's talk!

[Click Here to Take the Survey!](#)

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
304 N. Townline Rd., Suite 2
LaGrange, IN 46761

(260) 499-4994
www.LaGrangeCountyEDC.com



LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation | 304 N. Townline Rd., Suite 2 | LaGrange, IN 46761 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!

Posted Media & Communications

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LaGrange County Economic Development Leads Countywide Effort in Pursuit of Stellar Pathways Designation

LaGrange County, Indiana – [05/01] – LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC) is proud to announce its leadership role in spearheading the county's endeavor to become a Stellar Pathways Designee with their submission this week of a Letter of Intent and all required accompanying documents. This initiative marks a significant step forward in the county's commitment to sustainable growth, economic prosperity, and community enhancement, and could result in an influx of \$7.2 Million in grant funding to fund projects in the county. The program works with communities within a county boundary on a shared vision for community and economic development, promotes local and regional partnerships, and assists in implementing sustainable solutions to challenges facing Indiana's rural communities.

Under the guidance of LCEDC, a coalition of key stakeholders has coalesced to form the Connect LaGrange County team. This collaborative effort includes Sherri Johnston, President/CEO of LCEDC; Emilee Fincher, Marketing & Ops Manager of LCEDC; Darci Stanner Gaff, Director of LaGrange County Together; Town Managers from LaGrange, Shipshewana, and Topeka; and the President of LaGrange County's Commissioners. Additionally, strong support comes from the LaGrange County Community Foundation, LaGrange County Convention and Visitor's Bureau, LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce, and Main Street LaGrange.

Emilee Fincher, regional project manager for this effort, emphasizes the importance of partnership and collaboration in achieving Stellar Pathways Designation: "Our collective efforts underscore the unity and determination of LaGrange County to embrace sustainable development practices, foster economic growth, and enhance our quality of life. We are leveraging the strengths of each partner to create a strategic roadmap that will guide our community's progress for years to come."

The Connect LaGrange County team is drawing from a wealth of experience and insights, including input from a former Stellar Designee, to inform its sustainability plans. This comprehensive approach integrates transparent and accountable project management, robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and a commitment to ongoing engagement throughout the Stellar Pathways process.

"This initiative exemplifies our dedication to inclusive growth and meaningful impact," says Sherri Johnston. "By harnessing the collective expertise and resources of our partners, we are poised to unlock new opportunities, address challenges head-on, and build a thriving LaGrange County that benefits all residents."

The Connect LaGrange County team's Letter of Intent and Narrative submission for Stellar Pathways Designation represents a pivotal moment in the county's development journey. It reflects a shared vision for a dynamic, resilient, and forward-looking community that prioritizes innovation, sustainability, and inclusivity.

For media inquiries or more information about the Stellar Pathways Designation effort in LaGrange County, please contact Emilee Fincher at efincher@lagrangecountyedc.com or 260-499-4994

About LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC):

LCEDC is a recognized 501c3 non-profit organization dedicated to encouraging sustainable economic growth, opportunity and prosperity in LaGrange County. LCEDC works collaboratively with public and private partners to create a supportive business environment, attract investment, and promote sustainable development strategies.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LaGrange County EDC leads the Charge for a Different Kind of Final Four

LaGrange County, Indiana – [06/18] – Hoosiers love basketball, and what we love even more is a Final Four qualification. In May, LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC) submitted a Letter of Intent and the required accompanying documents to be considered for the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs Stellar Pathways Program. Today, LCEDC is thrilled to announce that it has been selected as one of four statewide finalists in the Stellar Pathways Program. This prestigious recognition underscores LCEDC's commitment to sustainable growth, economic prosperity, and community enhancement in LaGrange County.

"The Stellar Pathways program empowers communities to invest in transformative improvements, and these four regions have displayed the vision required of a Stellar project," said Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, Indiana's Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development. "All four of these teams have not only understood but embraced the challenge of collaboration, which is an important foundation for improving quality of life for Hoosiers in their communities." Connect LaGrange County is joined on the podium by teams from Dearborn, Wabash, and Warren Counties.

The Stellar Pathways Program, a multi-year, multi-million-dollar initiative led by the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA), works with communities within a county boundary on a shared vision for community and economic development. It promotes local and regional partnerships and assists in implementing sustainable solutions to challenges facing Indiana's rural communities. Emilee Fincher, regional project manager for this effort, emphasized the importance of partnership and collaboration in achieving the Stellar Pathways designation: "Our collective efforts underscore the unity and determination of LaGrange County. We are prioritizing collaborative and transformative projects that prioritize talent attraction, housing, childcare and quality of place to create a strategic roadmap that will guide our community's progress for years to come."

As finalists, each region will receive \$50,000 to develop its final strategic investment plan over the coming months, and a customized one-day workshop with Ball State University's Indiana Communities Institute in August to discuss project alignment and continued planning efforts. Those Strategic Investment Plans will be evaluated after their submission in November with two winners announced in January of 2025.

"Our participation in this program exemplifies our dedication to inclusive growth and meaningful impact," said Sherri Johnston, President and CEO of LCEDC. "By harnessing the collective expertise and resources of our partners, we are poised to unlock new opportunities, address challenges head-on, and build a thriving LaGrange County that prospers for many years to come." The Stellar Pathways Program is designed to provide resources for transformative quality of place improvements by applying previous planning efforts, leveraging existing assets, fostering regional investments, and stimulating continued growth.

For media inquiries or more information about the Stellar Pathways Designation effort in LaGrange County, please contact Emilee Fincher at efincher@lagrangecountyedc.com or 260-499-4994

About LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC):

LCEDC is a recognized 501c3 non-profit organization dedicated to encouraging sustainable economic growth, opportunity and prosperity in LaGrange County. LCEDC works collaboratively with public and private partners to create a supportive business environment, attract investment, and promote sustainable development strategies.

Posted Media & Communications

Press Release: Connect LaGrange County Announces Stellar Community Connections Meetings

LaGrange County, Indiana – September 2024

Connect LaGrange County is excited to announce a series of five Stellar Community Connections meetings aimed at providing the public with critical information about the Stellar Pathways initiative and gathering feedback on how residents would like to see grant funds utilized. These meetings are part of the county's effort to engage the community in shaping the future of LaGrange County through this transformative program.

The Stellar Pathways Program, a multi-year, multi-million-dollar initiative led by the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA), fosters partnerships within a county to promote community and economic development. The program is designed to implement sustainable solutions to challenges faced by Indiana's rural communities, including workforce attraction, housing, childcare, and enhancing the overall quality of life.

Emilee Buller, regional project manager for Connect LaGrange County, emphasized the collaborative nature of the effort:

"Our collective efforts underscore the unity and determination of LaGrange County. We are prioritizing projects that will transform our community by addressing critical needs in talent attraction, housing, childcare, and quality of place. The input we receive from our residents through these meetings will help guide our strategic roadmap for years to come."

Stellar Community Connections Meeting Schedule:

- **Wednesday, September 18th:** 4:00-6:00 p.m. – LaGrange Town Hall
- **Thursday, September 19th:** 4:00-6:00 p.m. – Topeka Fire Department
- **Wednesday, September 25th:** 4:00-6:00 p.m. – The Wolfe Building, Shipshewana
- **Thursday, September 26th (two locations):**
 4:00-6:00 p.m. – Howe Community Building (Howe & Mongo)
 4:00-6:00 p.m. – South Milford Fire Department (Stroh & South Milford)

These meetings provide a space for residents to share their input on how the community can best use the Stellar Pathways funding to drive economic growth and improve the quality of life for all. Public participation is key in ensuring that the projects funded align with the needs and aspirations of LaGrange County residents.

Connect LaGrange County also currently has a public engagement survey available online. The survey is accessible via LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation's Facebook page, the attached QR code, or via the following link: <https://forms.office.com/r/3Yez30J2mx>

For media inquiries or more information about the Stellar Pathways Designation effort in LaGrange County, please contact **Emilee Buller** at efincher@lagrangepublicedc.com or **260-499-4994**.

About LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC)

LCEDC is a recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to promoting sustainable economic growth, opportunity, and prosperity in LaGrange County. Working closely with public and private partners, LCEDC strives to create a supportive business environment, attract investment, and promote development strategies that benefit the community at large.

Join us in shaping the future of LaGrange County!

Press Release – Connect LaGrange County Stellar Pathways Journey Continues

LaGrange County, Indiana – October 2024 At the start of 2024, the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) unveiled a revamped version of their Stellar Communities Program, now called Stellar Pathways. This was the moment Sherri Johnston, President of the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC), and Emilee Buller, Vice President of Community Development and Engagement, had been waiting for. After hearing time and time again from granting agencies that LaGrange County had not previously been funded and that interest in our area was growing, they knew it was time to act.

Together, they launched Connect LaGrange County, a countywide effort aimed at securing the Stellar Pathways designation. In May, Emilee submitted a comprehensive 21-page Letter of Intent and Narrative to OCRA, outlining the county's vision for progress. By June, they received the exciting news – LaGrange County was one of only four finalists in the state!

Since then, the Connect LaGrange County team has been hard at work, organizing several stakeholder and steering group meetings, and engaging with the community through a variety of channels. Their online survey drew over 1,050 responses, and they hosted five public input meetings. They also participated in local events, including Chamber luncheons, the LaGrange Council on Aging luncheon, Corn School, a fish fry and football games, ensuring that they heard from a broad range of residents and stakeholders. Additionally, the team presented at Town and County Council meetings and gathered letters of support from across the county.

As the process nears its final stages, Connect LaGrange County will submit their Strategic Investment Plan to OCRA on November 1st. On December 3rd, the team will travel to Indianapolis to present to the granting agencies and show them what makes LaGrange County truly STELLAR!

Two communities will be selected to receive \$7.2 million each in grant funding. Coupled with pledged match dollars, this designation could result in nearly \$10 million of investment into transformative quality of life and place projects for LaGrange County.

For more information about the Stellar Pathways program, potential projects, letters of support or funding sources, please reach out to Emilee Buller at ebuller@lagrangepublicedc.com or 260-499-4994. Let's continue to work together to make LaGrange County the best place to live, work, and thrive!

About LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC)

LCEDC is a recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to promoting sustainable economic growth, opportunity, and prosperity in LaGrange County. Working in partnership with public and private entities, LCEDC aims to create a supportive business environment, attract investment, and implement sustainable development strategies

Letters of Support & Resolutions - LaGrange County Council

COUNTY OF LAGRANGE, INDIANA

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-10-15- A

COUNTY COUNCIL RESOLUTION PLEDGING SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS THROUGH THE STELLAR PATHWAYS PROGRAM.

WHEREAS, pursuant to Indiana Code (“IC”) 36-2-3-2, the LaGrange County Council (“Council”) is the fiscal body of LaGrange County, Indiana (“County”);

WHEREAS, LaGrange County is seeking designation for Stellar Pathways and is creating a Strategic Investment Plan which includes demonstrating financial support for community improvements in the county and its communities; *and*

WHEREAS, LaGrange County has identified and supports the proposed projects for the county, its towns, and unincorporated areas to improve the associated infrastructure, community assets, quality of life, housing, talent attraction, and other aspects.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LAGRANGE COUNTY COUNCIL OF LAGRANGE COUNTY, INDIANA THAT:

SECTION I – FINDINGS

- A. The Council supports the expense of \$717,000 towards the local match for the proposed projects of parks and sidewalks improvements in Howe, Mongo, and South Milford, electrical upgrades at the County Courthouse, and the proposed County projects and programs associated with the IDOH and ISDA.
- B. The Council will support these expenses as needed during the five-year implementation period of the Stellar Pathways Program.
- C. The funding herein will be combined with additional funding from the communities, additional partners and organizations, and in-kind donations for the proposed projects in the Strategic Investment Plan over the course of the implementation period.

SECTION II – MISCELLANEOUS

- A. Conflicts; Severability. No part of this resolution shall be interpreted to conflict with any local, state, or federal laws, and all reasonable efforts should be made to harmonize the same. Should any section or part thereof of this resolution be declared by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, the decision shall not affect the validity of this resolution as a whole, nor any other portion thereof, and for this purpose the provisions of this resolution are hereby declared to be severable.
- B. Promulgation. The Auditor is hereby authorized, empowered, and directed to take all action necessary or proper to authenticate, record, publish, promulgate, and/or otherwise make this resolution effective.

C. Codification. As this resolution concerns a one-time fund commitment, the codifier of ordinances shall omit codification of this resolution.

D. Effective Date. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

SECTION III – ADOPTION

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

Abstentions: 0

Adopted and resolved this 15th day of October 2024.

THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF LAGRANGE COUNTY, INDIANA

Michael G. Strawser, President

James Young, Vice President

Jeffrey L. Brill

Harold D. Gingerich

Ryan Riegsecker

Steven E. McKowen

Jeffrey Campos

ATTEST:

Letters of Support & Resolutions - LaGrange County Council

Kathryn Hopper, Auditor

WAIVER OF SECOND READING

On motion duly made and seconded, the second reading of the foregoing resolution was unanimously waived, and the resolution shall be deemed effective as provided therein.

THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF LAGRANGE COUNTY, INDIANA

Michael G. Strawser, President

James Young, Vice President

Jeffrey L. Brill

Harold D. Gingerich

Ryan Riegsecker

Steven E. McKowen

Jeffrey Campos

ATTEST:

Kathryn Hopper, Auditor

3EL1180



LAGRANGE COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
114 WEST MICHIGAN STREET
LAGRANGE, INDIANA 46761
(260) 499-6314 (260) 499-6401
TELEPHONE FAX

October 15, 2024

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
1 North Capital Avenue
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Stellar Pathways Committee Members,

On behalf of the LaGrange County Council, I am writing to express our strong financial commitment to the Connect LaGrange County Stellar Pathways efforts. The LaGrange County Council is proud to pledge matching grant funds of up to \$717,000 in support of this transformative initiative.

As public servants, it is our duty to ensure that we are acting in the best interest of the residents of LaGrange County. Over the course of this Stellar Pathways process, and in conjunction with the Envision and Comprehensive Plan processes, extensive community engagement has been conducted to ensure that the proposed projects truly reflect the needs and desires of our current and future residents. Through numerous conversations and feedback opportunities, it has become clear which areas would be the most impactful for our communities, and we are fully confident in the direction set forth by Connect LaGrange County.

We believe that the key to attracting new residents and sustaining our communities lies in investing in projects that add real, tangible value to our quality of life. The grant dollars from the Stellar Pathways program have the potential to drastically accelerate these improvements, allowing us to complete meaningful projects in a much shorter time frame than we could otherwise achieve. These projects will ensure that LaGrange County remains a desirable place to live, work, and raise a family, while also fostering economic growth.

The LaGrange County Council is honored to be a part of this effort, and we are excited to see the positive changes these investments will bring. We stand firmly behind Connect LaGrange County's pursuit of the Stellar Pathways designation and are committed to helping bring these impactful projects to fruition.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael G. Strawser, President
LaGrange County Council
mstrawser@lagrangecounty.org

Letters of Support & Resolutions - LaGrange County Commissioners

202405151
SHEILA GETZ
LAGRANGE COUNTY RECORDER
RECORDED AS PRESENTED
10/21/2024 11:58 AM
PAGES: 3



COUNTY OF LAGRANGE, INDIANA
RESOLUTION NO. 2024-10-21- A

COMMISSIONERS' RESOLUTION PLEDGING SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS THROUGH THE STELLAR PATHWAYS PROGRAM.

WHEREAS, pursuant to Ind. Code 36-2-2-2, the Board of Commissioners of the County of LaGrange ("Commissioners") is the executive of LaGrange County, Indiana ("County");

WHEREAS, LaGrange County is seeking designation for Stellar Pathways and is creating a Strategic Investment Plan which includes demonstrating financial support for community improvements in the county and its communities; *and*

WHEREAS, LaGrange County has identified and supports the proposed projects for the county, its towns, and unincorporated areas to improve the associated infrastructure, community assets, quality of life, housing, talent attraction, and other aspects.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE COUNTY OF LAGRANGE, INDIANA, THAT:

SECTION I - FINDINGS

- A. The Commissioners support the expense of \$717,000.00 towards the local match for the proposed projects of parks and sidewalks improvements in Howe, Mongo, and South Milford, electrical upgrades at the County Courthouse, and the proposed County projects and programs associated with the IDOH and ISDA.
- B. The Commissioners will support these expenses as needed during the five-year implementation period of the Stellar Pathways Program.
- C. The funding herein will be combined with additional funding from the communities, additional partners and organizations, and in-kind donations for the proposed projects in the Strategic Investment Plan over the course of the implementation period.

SECTION II - MISCELLANEOUS

- A. Conflicts; Severability. No part of this resolution shall be interpreted to conflict with any local, state, or federal laws, and all reasonable efforts should be made to harmonize the same. Should any section or part thereof of this resolution be declared by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, the decision shall not affect the validity of this resolution as a whole, nor any other portion thereof, and for this purpose the provisions of this resolution are hereby declared to be severable.
- B. Promulgation. The Auditor is hereby authorized, empowered, and directed to take all action necessary or proper to authenticate, record, publish, promulgate, and/or otherwise make this resolution effective.

- C. Codification. As this resolution concerns a one-time fund commitment, the codifier of ordinances shall omit codification of this resolution.
- D. Effective Date. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

SECTION III - ADOPTION

Ayes: 3
 Nays: 0
 Abstentions: 0

Adopted and resolved this 21st day of October 2024.

THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE COUNTY OF LAGRANGE, INDIANA



Terry A. Martin, President

Peter A. Cook, Vice President

Kevin R. Myers, Member

ATTEST:

Kathryn Hopper, Auditor

Letters of Support & Resolutions - LaGrange County Commissioners

WAIVER OF SECOND READING

On motion duly made and seconded, the second reading of the foregoing resolution was unanimously waived, and the resolution shall be deemed effective as provided therein.

THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE COUNTY OF LAGRANGE, INDIANA


Terry A. Martin, President


Peter A. Cook, Vice President


Kevin R. Myers, Member

ATTEST:


Kathryn Hopper, Auditor

3EL7172



LAGRANGE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
114 WEST MICHIGAN STREET
LAGRANGE, INDIANA 46761

(260) 499-6314 (260) 499-6401
TELEPHONE FAX

October 21, 2024

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
1 North Capital Avenue
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Stellar Pathways Committee Members,

On behalf of the LaGrange County Commissioners, it is my honor to offer our strong support for Connect LaGrange County's application and presentation for the Stellar Pathways Community Designation. Over the past several years, we have been both witnesses to and active participants in incredible efforts aimed at progressing and improving the quality of life for all LaGrange County residents. This Stellar Pathways effort represents the culmination of those efforts, showcasing the power of our collective vision for the future.

As President of the LaGrange County Commissioners, I have come to truly understand how much farther we can go when we work together. The collaboration we have fostered in LaGrange County—between our government, citizens, non-profit organizations, schools, and industry leaders—is second to none. Our ability to unite around a shared goal of creating a thriving, vibrant community is a hallmark of who we are as a county. We believe the pursuit of this Stellar Pathways designation, and our standing as a finalist, is a testament to the remarkable partnerships and dedication of all involved.

This application signifies not only the progress we've made but also the future we aim to build. Through strategic initiatives that prioritize talent attraction, housing, childcare, and quality of place, we are committed to ensuring that LaGrange County remains a place where people want to live, work, and grow. The Stellar Pathways designation would provide us with the support and recognition needed to continue our transformative journey and to further invest in our community's future.

We wholeheartedly support Connect LaGrange County's pursuit of this prestigious designation and look forward to continuing our work together to bring this shared vision to life.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our application.

Sincerely,



Terry Martin, President
LaGrange County Commissioners
tmartin@lagrangecounty.org

Letters of Support & Resolutions - LaGrange Town Council

RESOLUTION No. 2024-10-21(A)

LaGrange Town Council

A Resolution Pledging Funds for Public Improvements through the Stellar Pathways Program

WHEREAS, the Town of LaGrange, along with LaGrange County and its other communities, is seeking designation for Stellar Pathways and is creating a Strategic Investment Plan which includes demonstrating financial support for community improvements in the county and its communities.

WHEREAS, the Town of LaGrange has identified and supports the proposed projects for the town and county to improve the associated infrastructure, community assets, quality of life, housing, talent attraction, and other aspects.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,

LaGrange Town Council pledges and will authorize the expense of \$965,000 towards the local match for the proposed projects of Town Park Improvements, Detroit St Streetscape, Downtown Historic District and Façade Improvements, the 9 & 20 Housing Project, and the proposed projects and programs in the Town of LaGrange associated with the IDOH and ISDA.

LaGrange Town Council will authorize the expense of this funding as needed during the five-year implementation period of Stellar Pathways.

The funding herein will be combined with additional funding from the communities, additional partners and organizations, and in-kind donations for the proposed projects in the Strategic Investment Plan over the course of the implementation period.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the LaGrange Town Council on the 21st day of October, 2024.

LAGRANGE TOWN COUNCIL

By Raymond E. Hoover

By Carlyngleek

By Diane Cameron

By M M

By Edna Bowser

Attest Laurie D. Miller



Laurie D. Miller, Clerk/Treasurer
Mark W. Eagleson, Town Manager
1201 N Townline Road
LaGrange Indiana 46761
260-463-3241

October 21, 2024

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
1 North Capital Avenue
Indianapolis, IN. 46204

Dear Stellar Pathways Committee Members,

On behalf of the Town of LaGrange Town Council, it is our pleasure to provide this letter of financial support for the Stellar Pathways Community Designation program. We are committed to investing in the future of LaGrange and are proud to announce that the Town of LaGrange plans to match up to \$965,000 to contribute to projects that will drastically improve our town as part of this initiative.

This financial commitment reflects our dedication to the transformative projects identified in the Stellar Pathways effort. We believe these initiatives will play a critical role in enhancing the quality of life for our residents, strengthening our local economy, and fostering a thriving, vibrant community. Our investment will directly support projects that focus on talent attraction, housing development, infrastructure improvements, and quality-of-place enhancements

The Town of LaGrange is eager to be part of this collaborative journey, and we see this match funding as a pivotal contribution to ensuring that the Stellar Pathways program has the necessary resources to bring meaningful, lasting change to our community.

We are excited about the potential this designation holds for LaGrange and look forward to partnering with the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs to make this vision a reality. Thank you for your consideration, and we remain fully committed to supporting this initiative.

Sincerely,
Raymond E. Hoover

Raymond E. Hoover
President
LaGrange Town Council
councilward3@lagrangein.org

Letters of Support & Resolutions - Topeka Town Council

RESOLUTION No. 2024-~~10~~-14

Topeka Town Council

A Resolution Pledging Funds for Public Improvements through the Stellar Pathways Program

WHEREAS, the Town of Topeka, along with LaGrange County and its other communities, is seeking designation for Stellar Pathways and is creating a Strategic Investment Plan which includes demonstrating financial support for community improvements in the county and its communities.

WHEREAS, the Town of Topeka has identified and supports the proposed projects for the town and county to improve the associated infrastructure, community assets, quality of life, housing, talent attraction, and other aspects.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,

Topeka Town Council pledges and will authorize the expense of \$1,210,000 towards the local match for the proposed projects of East Park Improvements, Topeka Trail – Hawpatch Trail Connector, Downtown Gathering & Event Space, and Downtown Master Plan.

Topeka Town Council will authorize the expense of this funding as needed during the five-year implementation period of Stellar Pathways.

The funding herein will be combined with additional funding from the communities, additional partners and organizations, and in-kind donations for the proposed projects in the Strategic Investment Plan over the course of the implementation period.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Topeka Town Council on the 14 day of October, 2024.

TOPEKA TOWN COUNCIL

By

By

By

By Marlyn Mast

By Ray Falk

Attest Ara B. Parker

October 14, 2024

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
1 North Capital Avenue
Indianapolis, IN. 46204

Dear Stellar Pathways Committee Members,

On behalf of the Town of Topeka, I am pleased to write in strong financial support of the Connect LaGrange County Stellar Pathways efforts. The Town of Topeka is committed to providing grant matching dollars up to \$1,210,000 for a series of impactful projects that will bring significant improvements to our community. These projects include East Park Improvements, the Topeka Trail - Hawpatch Trail Connector, a new downtown gathering and event space, and the development of a downtown master plan.

We are thrilled at the opportunity to leverage these transformative grant dollars to bring about meaningful progress in our town. The proposed projects are truly game-changers for Topeka, improving public spaces, enhancing connectivity through trails, and revitalizing our downtown area. These initiatives will enhance the quality of life for our residents and contribute to the overall vitality of our community, creating lasting benefits for both current and future generations.

One example of Topeka's commitment to growth and development is our ongoing housing project, which is already making a positive impact on our town. This project highlights our town's absolute willingness to support development and progress, and we are fully prepared to take on further projects that will improve the lives of our residents. The Stellar Pathways initiative presents an invaluable opportunity to fast-track this progress, and we are excited to be part of it.

In addition to benefiting Topeka, we recognize the potential for countywide collaboration and growth through the Stellar Pathways program. Our town is dedicated to supporting the broader development of LaGrange County, and we are ready and willing to contribute however we can to ensure the success of this effort.

Thank you for your consideration of our commitment and support. We look forward to being a part of the transformative changes these grant dollars will bring to Topeka and the entire LaGrange County region.

Regards,

Adam Lambright
President
Topeka Town Council
Alambright@topeka-in.gov

Letters of Support & Resolutions - Shipshewana Town Council



345 N Morton St / PO Box 486 - Shipshewana, Indiana 46565

RESOLUTION No. 2024-A
Shipshewana Town Council

A Resolution Pledging Funds for Public Improvements through the Stellar Pathways Program

WHEREAS, the Town of Shipshewana, along with LaGrange County and its other communities, is seeking designation for Stellar Pathways and is creating a Strategic Investment Plan which includes demonstrating financial support for community improvements in the county and its communities.

WHEREAS, the Town of Shipshewana has identified and supports the proposed projects for the town and county to improve the associated infrastructure, community assets, quality of life, housing, talent attraction, and other aspects.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, Shipshewana Town Council pledges and will authorize the expense of \$250,000 towards the local match for the proposed Town Park Improvement project. Shipshewana Town Council will authorize the expense of this funding as needed during the five-year implementation period of Stellar Pathways. The funding herein will be combined with additional funding from the communities, additional partners and organizations, and in-kind donations for the proposed projects in the Strategic Investment Plan over the course of the implementation period.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Shipshewana Town Council on the 10 day of October, 2024.

SHIPSHEWANA TOWN COUNCIL

By [Signature] President - Town Council

By [Signature] Town Council

By [Signature] Attest Clerk - Treasurer



345 N Morton St / PO Box 486 - Shipshewana, Indiana 46565

October 10, 2024

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
1 North Capital Avenue
Indianapolis, IN. 46204

Dear Stellar Pathways Committee Members,

On behalf of the Town of Shipshewana Town Council, it is my pleasure to extend this letter of financial support for the Stellar Pathways Community Designation program. The Town of Shipshewana is proud to commit \$250,000 in match funding to support the parks improvement project in our community.

Our council is thrilled to witness the incredible collaboration happening across LaGrange County. The partnerships between our communities, government, non-profit organizations, industry leaders, and citizens have been inspiring, and we are excited to see this spirit of cooperation continue through the Stellar Pathways initiative. This collaborative energy has already led to the development of innovative projects that will enhance the quality of life for our residents, strengthen our local economy, and bring about meaningful progress.

The parks improvement project is an excellent example of how these investments will benefit our community, providing enhanced recreational spaces and creating lasting value for both residents and visitors. We are eager to contribute to this initiative and ensure that Shipshewana and the greater LaGrange County region can continue to offer unique, vibrant experiences that draw people in and foster community pride.

The Town of Shipshewana is fully committed to seeing these projects succeed, and we are excited to be part of this collective effort to create a brighter future for all of LaGrange County. Thank you for your consideration of our support, and we look forward to working together to bring these transformative projects to life.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Christine Yoder
President, Town of Shipshewana Town Council
cyoder@shipshewana.org

Letters of Support & Resolutions

E & S Sales

1265 N. State Road 5 Shipshewana, IN 46565
 Phone: 260.768.4736 Fax: 260.768.4786
 DUNS # 16-103-5464

As a part of LaGrange County, we at E&S Sales, are so blessed by our community. This community is made up of hardworking individuals with big hearts. We love and care for each other and are not afraid to dig in and help each other for the greater good. Our business provides employment to 150 hard-working, rural families, in a clean, safe, upbuilding environment.

As an Amish resident, I am very blessed to be able to call Shipshewana, and Lagrange County my home. There are many reasons my wife and I choose to raise our 8 children in this community. Our neighbors are the living, breathing examples of an old Indian proverb in action. "It takes a village to raise a child" is the proverb I'm referring to.

Our community has worked very hard to establish ourselves as a relevant, economically thriving place, which is evident by the number of people that want to live and work here. We would be forever grateful for the Stellar Pathways Grant, and the boost it would give to our already obvious efforts. Lagrange county's goals align perfectly with the Stellar Pathways Initiative in that it seeks to improve quality of place and promote community. No-one gets "community" like LaGrange County. We are a diverse county, rich in history and vibrant in culture. Our neighbors are successful entrepreneurs and blue-collar workers, and family farms are very much alive and well. And let me just say again, we are there for each other in times of need.

In LaGrange County, we know each other. More than just relationships; long, lasting friendships have been established, and with this spirit, we are used to getting things done. I am confident that this community will have the resources, will-power, and collaboration needed to not only sustain, but build upon any new projects made possible by the Stellar Pathways Grant. Please consider entrusting my community with this grant. I can assure you, those dollars will certainly go to good use, improving sustainable quality of place, and strengthening our community for the many that choose to live, work, and visit here.

In support of this grant, we at E&S Sales will match up to \$20,000.00 of any dollars received towards the Shipshewana Park improvements.

Thanks for your time, efforts, and consideration!

Blessings, Jay Chupp (260)463-6175



October 26, 2024

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
 Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
 1 North Capital Avenue
 #600 Indianapolis, IN. 46204

Dear Stellar Pathways Selection Committee,

On behalf of Farmers State Bank, I am pleased to offer this letter of financial support for the Connect LaGrange County Stellar Pathways initiative. As a bank that has been proudly headquartered in LaGrange County since 1915, we take great pride in being a true community bank. We are deeply rooted in this community, represented by the people who work here, live here, and are part of the fabric of LaGrange County. Our team members are friends, family, and neighbors, committed to making LaGrange County the best it can be.

Community and economic development are at the heart of everything we do. In Fact, Farmers State Bank played an important role in the establishment of the LaGrange County Economic Development Corp. At Farmers State Bank, we believe that when our community thrives, we all have a better chance to win. That's why we are deeply involved in supporting initiatives that foster growth and opportunity. We actively participate in key local boards, and we support over 100 community organizations with financial contributions. Our mission is to make a difference in the communities we serve, and we are focused on making sure our community has access to the resources needed to thrive.

The Stellar Pathways initiative perfectly aligns with our mission. This opportunity for LaGrange County will accelerate critical investments that improve quality of life, attract new talent, and grow our local economy. As a community bank, we see this initiative as a vital way to enhance the sustainability and prosperity of the region. A Stellar designation will create lasting benefits for LaGrange County, ensuring that our communities continue to flourish without displacing the residents and workers who call this area home.

In addition to our active support for this initiative, Farmers State Bank is also prepared to offer financial support. We are committed to providing \$5,000.00 in match funding for Connect LaGrange County's Stellar Pathways efforts. We believe these grant dollars can have a transformative impact on our community, and we are proud to be part of making this vision a reality.

We fully support the Stellar Pathways initiative and look forward to seeing the positive changes it will bring to LaGrange County.

Sincerely,



Joe Urbanski
 President, Farmers State Bank

Letters of Support & Resolutions



October 23, 2024

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
1 North Capital Avenue
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Stellar Pathways Committee Members:

I am writing to express our strong support for Connect LaGrange County and its pursuit of the Stellar Pathways designation. The LaGrange County Community Foundation is deeply committed to enhancing the quality of life in LaGrange County through philanthropic partnerships and encouraging individuals, families and businesses to establish permanent funds that address community needs.

Our organization plays a vital role in supporting nonprofits and initiatives that drive positive community outcomes across the county. We are proud to work with partners who share our vision of fostering vibrant communities and Connect LaGrange County’s efforts to pursue the Stellar Pathways designation are aligned with this mission.

Community and economic development efforts are critical to the long-term success of LaGrange County. In 2022, the LaGrange County Community Foundation, in partnership with LaGrange County, LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation, and LaGrange County Plan Commission, supported the development of LaGrange County Together, a new countywide comprehensive plan which provided a road map for community goals. Connect LaGrange County is a natural extension of this initiative, reflecting our community’s commitment to achieving shared goals. Their work enhances and elevates our community’s plan with targeted strategies that improve our community’s infrastructure through park improvements, downtown gathering spaces, improved sidewalks, a trail connection, and community health programs.

Connect LaGrange County is taking proactive steps to promote comprehensive planning, foster collaboration, and enhance the quality of life for residents. Their engagement with our community during the planning process demonstrates an understanding of building a vibrant community plan based on community feedback.

We recognize that initiatives like this are instrumental in ensuring that the county remains a thriving place to live, work, and visit. The designation would bring significant benefits to LaGrange County, including increased access to resources, improved infrastructure, and strengthened collaboration among local stakeholders. Stellar Pathways will provide much-needed funding and deepen the current partnerships between government, civic entities, residents and nonprofits, reinforcing our county’s capacity to thrive.

In addition to our strong endorsement, the LaGrange County Community Foundation is committed to providing financial support to help ensure the success of this initiative. We are committing \$120,000 toward the Stellar Pathways projects, with \$80,000 dedicated to the Howe park and sidewalk improvements and \$40,000 toward the park improvements in Mongo and South Milford.

As the steward of the Howe Legacy Fund at the LaGrange County Community Foundation, we are proud to contribute toward a significant project that can gain additional funding and will have a meaningful impact on the quality of life and opportunities for a growing community. The Howe Legacy Fund was established in 2021 with the primary purpose to provide support for the growth and preservation of Howe.

We are eager to work alongside Connect LaGrange County in this important endeavor and look forward to seeing the transformative impact it will have on our communities.

Warmly,



Octavia Yoder
Executive Director
LaGrange County Community Foundation

Letters of Support & Resolutions



To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing this letter on behalf of Linder's on Main and all of its 20 current employees. As a member of this community from birth, LaGrange has always held a special place for the Linder family. Although I moved away from this town it has beckoned me back. As owners of a small restaurant in town, we have the great pleasure of interacting with most of the residents of LaGrange frequently; With that interaction comes a genuine sense of community and a real shift in the involvement that our residents want to have in our town. As a member of a local board called "Main Street" we have worked hard to our best to bring fun, exiting and free community events to the Town of LaGrange. My wife and I do our very best to take as many resources we are able to spare and put them back into the community. We sponsor many sports and clubs at the local school and will donate to, or help sponsor, just about any need that comes in the door and asks. Our effort is driven from fostering the sense of community that we feel and our desire to spread as far as possible in LaGrange.

For years my wife and I lived in Indianapolis and saw first-hand the benefits in the little community we lived in called Speedway. When we first purchased our home, there were two restaurants and a bunch of empty doors. When we left in 2022, to move back to my hometown, our real-estate value had almost tripled and included six restaurants, a brewery, a wine vault, condos, a brand-new apartment complex and much more. Speedway got investment because of its proximity to a notable landmark in the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, but we really feel that the same thing can happen to LaGrange with a push.

This town is on the cusp of a true transformation from the old to the new and we think something like this grant could be the key to finalizing that transformation. New businesses have opened and our vacant buildings are suddenly buzzing with new life. What we truly need is an investment to continue this progress that our community is putting out already.

Our county is already a pretty large beacon for tourism via Shipshewana and, at our business, we know that they key to give these people a variety of things to go do and see while in the county. We get dozens of visitors per week that are in Shipshewana for the day or a couple days. These people in some cases have some from Canada or the West Coast. If there were other things for these visitors to participate in, we feel confident that it could lift each and every business up considerably.

Linder's believes in the power of an opportunity like this and would gladly match any grant money up to \$2,000 to support The Stellar Pathways initiative.

Cordially,



Josh & Adrienne Linder



Monday, October 21, 2024

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
513 W. Central Ave.
LaGrange, IN 46761

Subject: LaGrange County Stellar Grant Program application

Dear LaGrange County Economic Development Stellar Grant team,

Today I am writing to you as a representative of healthcare providers in LaGrange County and in request to support the application submitted by LaGrange County EDC with collaborative support from the local community foundation, the local chamber of commerce, local child care organizations and local business owners, as well as many others in government, schools, and community members who are engaged in significantly improving the overall quality of home, quality of life, and quality of health in LaGrange County, Indiana.

As you may know, over the past four years, the community organizations mentioned above have been collaborating to form different groups to identify plans to improve key categories in our community that would benefit from improvement. As the only hospital in the county, health improvement opportunities that would result out of this grant would greatly benefit this community. Some of these opportunities include the planning for farm to food bank programming and diabetic teaching programming. Health progamming would also benefit from the trail initiatives not only by the ability to increase health by access to exercise but by enhancing roadside safety and reducing trauma with the possibility of removing some bikes from rural roads and onto the trails between towns.

Parkview LaGrange Hospital will support the Stellar grant up to \$3000 providing that these initiatives align with the 2025 community health needs assessment within LaGrange County.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jordi Disler,
North Market President, Parkview Health
President Parkview LaGrange Hospital, President Parkview Noble Hospital

207 N. Townline Road
LaGrange, IN 46761
260-463-9000
www.parkview.com

Letters of Support & Resolutions

Crossroads United Way

Serving Elkhart, LaGrange & Noble Counties

Mailing Address:

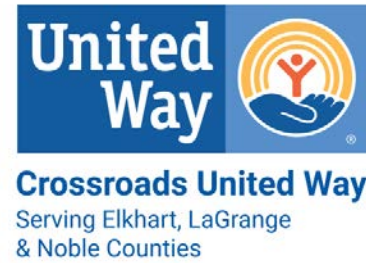
P.O. Box 3048 | Elkhart, IN 46515

Street Address:

601 CR 17 | Elkhart, IN 46516

574.295.1650 | 574.295.0033 (fax)

www.crossroadsuw.org



Stellar Pathways Selection Committee
 Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
 Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
 1 North Capital Avenue #600
 Indianapolis, IN. 46204

Dear Members of the Stellar Pathways Selection Committee,

On behalf of Crossroads United Way, I am writing to express our full support for the Connect LaGrange County Stellar Pathways initiative. As President and CEO of Crossroads United Way, serving the communities of Elkhart, LaGrange, and Noble Counties, our mission is to fight for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in our communities. We believe that strong community and economic development efforts, such as those being proposed through Stellar Pathways, are vital to achieving this mission and creating lasting impact for the people of LaGrange County.

Community and economic development are foundational to the well-being of everyone in LaGrange County. At the end of the day, we are all working toward the same goal—ensuring that every resident has the tools and resources they need to thrive. The projects proposed in the Stellar Pathways initiative will not only enhance the physical infrastructure of the county but also provide critical amenities that directly improve the lives of residents.

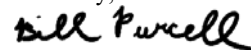
At Crossroads United Way, we focus on impacting the one out of four families in our service area who are working hard but still falling short. We are committed to helping families reach a safer, more sustainable place. The projects outlined in the Stellar Pathways initiative, particularly those focused on improving access to amenities and resources, align closely with our goals of strengthening the health, education, and financial stability of our communities. We vehemently support these efforts, as they will create a lasting positive impact on the residents of LaGrange County and improve their overall quality of life.

The benefits of achieving Stellar Pathways designation in LaGrange County are enormous. These projects have the potential to provide residents with new opportunities for education, recreation, and economic growth, making the county more attractive to new residents and businesses alike. This designation will help to build a more resilient and sustainable community, benefiting every person who calls LaGrange County home.

To support these efforts, Crossroads United Way is exploring financial assistance in the form of match funding for specific projects through the United Way State Capital Projects Initiative. We are prepared to provide with the approval of Indiana United Way, up to \$200,000 in match funding for the Tradition Kitchen and/or food bank cold storage as part of the Farms to Food Banks programming. These initiatives will further our mission of promoting healthier, more sustainable food systems and supporting families in need.

We thank you for your consideration of LaGrange County's Stellar Pathways application and for your continued commitment to supporting community and economic development throughout Indiana.

Sincerely,



Bill Purcell
 President and CEO
 Crossroads United Way

LIVE UNITED®

October 18, 2024

Dear Stellar Pathways Review Committee,

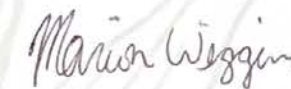
Bloomfield Creative owns and operates Bloomfield Schoolhouse Lavender Farm and Bloomfield Lavender Apothecary. The schoolhouse is the only lavender farm in the US located in a building on the National Register of Historic Places. We were honored to bring that designation to the schoolhouse and community and know the continued restoration will allow many people to use the space for events and visit our lavender fields. Our apothecary, in downtown LaGrange, sells over 100 lavender products and collaborates with other local businesses on lavender drinks, foods, and beauty products.

Even before these businesses, we were passionate about historic preservation and downtown revitalization. We understand the importance of being stewards of buildings and bringing life back into them for the community. We are extremely excited about the opportunities afforded by the Stellar Pathways Grant, especially as they relate to our passions for historic preservation and downtown revitalization. We envision more small businesses moving into downtown spaces, honoring the buildings through preservation, and adding to the economic growth of the community.

We moved to LaGrange in September 2018, when my husband was recruited as chief of anesthesia at our community hospital. Although we planned to stay for only three years, we quickly fell in love with the vibrant, welcoming community and chose to put down roots. Our hope is that other families- especially those without previous ties to the community- discover all that LaGrange has to offer in terms of quality of life. We know the Stellar Pathways Grant will be used in ways that foster economic development and attract talented professionals who will make LaGrange County their home.

We are proud to support Connect LaGrange County in perusing the Stellar Pathways Grant!

Kind Regards,



Marion Wiggins
 Owner, Bloomfield Creative, LLC

Bloomfield CREATIVE, LLC

Letters of Support & Resolutions



P.O. Box 220, 105 EAST MIDDLEBURY STREET, SHIPSEWANA,
 INDIANA 46565 • 888-447-4725, FAX: 260-768-7075 • WWW.BLUEGATERESTAURANT.COM

10/15/2024

Dear Stellar Pathways Selection Committee,

As the President of Blue Gate Hospitality Group and a LaGrange County Councilman, I am proud to express my support for the Stellar Pathways initiative and its efforts to foster community and economic development in our region. Since its inception in 1982 by my parents, Blue Gate Hospitality has grown from a small restaurant into a vibrant hub for dining, entertainment, and community engagement in Shipshewana. Our operations, which include three retail stores, a restaurant, a bakery, a theatre, a hotel, an event center, catering services, and even a carriage business, reflect our commitment to providing exceptional experiences and opportunities for residents and visitors alike.

Community and economic development are essential to the prosperity of LaGrange County, particularly in rural areas where traditional avenues of growth may be limited. Our thriving hospitality and entertainment sectors not only create jobs but also contribute significantly to the local economy. Initiatives like the Stellar Pathways align seamlessly with our mission by emphasizing the importance of collaboration, infrastructure development, and enhanced quality of life.

Tourism is a cornerstone of our local economy, and the projects developed through the Connect LaGrange County initiative have the potential to significantly enrich our community. By focusing on projects that enhance our quality of life—such as improved recreational facilities, cultural programming, and community engagement efforts—we are not only investing in the well-being of our residents but also creating a more attractive destination for tourists.

The benefits of these projects extend beyond immediate economic gains; they have the power to create lasting connections within our community and elevate our quality of place. As our region becomes more appealing to visitors, we anticipate a corresponding increase in tourism income, which will further support local businesses and contribute to the overall economic health of LaGrange County.



P.O. Box 220, 105 EAST MIDDLEBURY STREET, SHIPSEWANA,
 INDIANA 46565 • 888-447-4725, FAX: 260-768-7075 • WWW.BLUEGATERESTAURANT.COM

I fully support the goals and vision of Connect LaGrange County, and I am excited about the positive impact these projects will have on our community. Together, we can create a vibrant environment that celebrates our unique heritage while fostering sustainable growth for years to come.

Thank you for considering my support for this important initiative. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you require further information or assistance.
 Sincerely,



Ryan Riegsecker
 President, Blue Gate Hospitality Group
 LaGrange County Councilman

Letters of Support & Resolutions



Board of Directors

President

Andy Linder
Trading Post Outfitters

Vice President

Dan Byler
LaGwana

Treasurer

Lauri Couture
Farmers State Bank

Secretary

Andrea Howe
Farmers State Bank

Mervin Lehman
Heartland Mattress

Dustin Glick
Eberhard, Weimer, & Glick

Traci Blaize
Lakeland School Corporation

Sabrina Miller
Horizon Bank

Austin Miller
Tire Star of Wolcottville

Christina Blaskie
Parkview LaGrange Hospital

Staff

Sara Patrick
Executive Director

Ian Mullen
Office & Communications
Manager

October 17, 2024

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
1 N Capitol Ave. #600
Indianapolis, IN 46204

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce, I am writing in support of Connect LaGrange County in their pursuit of the Stellar Pathways designation. This opportunity will not only grow and elevate LaGrange County in economic development, quality of place, and talent attraction and retention; it will also provide multi-generational sustainability to the communities that make LaGrange County what it is.

As a strong partner of the LaGrange County EDC, we are daily eyewitnesses to the real-time impact of economic development in our communities. Collaboratively with municipalities, private industry, public sectors, and non-profit organizations, we see workforce development strategies; partnerships between the Amish/Mennonite and “English” communities; growth in diverse products and industries which call LaGrange County home; and the development of opportunities in housing, childcare, and overall quality of life projects. Should LaGrange County receive the Stellar Pathways designation, it will absolutely bolster and multiply the already-collaborative momentum continuing to unfold here in northern Indiana.

As one of LaGrange County’s leading organizations in business and community development, we see firsthand the effects of today’s ever-changing workforce, community, and economic development needs. To be a recipient of a \$7+ million grant in a very rural, nearly-50% Amish county would be generationally transformational. Where we struggle in financial and human resources, these dollars would absolutely make up in long-term impact in more ways than one. We are proud to stand in support of the LaGrange County EDC in their efforts through this Stellar Pathways process.

The LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce is an actionable organization aimed at being a champion of generational prosperity. In short, our Chamber is in the business of legacy creation—supporting and advancing a county in which generations, for years to come, will desire to live, work, and enjoy. Connect LaGrange County’s pursuit of these dollars and this project is crucial to fulfilling this mission. Thank you for your consideration of designating our county as a Stellar Pathways recipient. Should LaGrange County be designated as such, there will no doubt be expansive dividends for generations to come.

Sincerely yours,



Sara Patrick
Executive Director

901 South Detroit Street, LaGrange, Indiana 46761
(260) 463-2443 • www.lagrangechamber.org • info@lagrangechamber.org



coffee & cream of South Milford

mailing address-
P.O. Box 26
South Milford, IN 46786
physical address-
8015 East 750 South
Wolcottville, IN 46795

Phone: 260-249-7344
coffeeandcreamofsouthmilford@gmail.com

To whom it may concern,

I am the Executive Director of Coffee & Cream of South Milford. We are a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. We are located in a small town of South Milford of about 150 people located in Southeast LaGrange County. We exist to provide high quality food and drink and a comfortable and inviting atmosphere for our rural community, while sharing the love of Christ as we do that.

While many rural communities and small towns have seen a decrease in businesses and even quality of living, we are seeing the opposite. With several anchor businesses that have made the commitment over the years to stay in our community, we have seen a carry-out restaurant, a Dollar General, and now a coffee shop come into our community the last 4 years. This has provided jobs, but also a sense of pride and attracted others to our community. Our desire is that we make South Milford a better place to live, work, and visit.

We hope that our small part of community and economic development continues to spread and inspire other organizations and businesses. We are very excited and supportive of the Stellar Pathways initiative and feel it fits perfectly with the positive difference we want to continue to see throughout all of LaGrange County. I believe this will have a great positive impact on our community if we receive it.

It is great to be a part of such a community that cares about the overall health and vitality of our communities, county, and beyond. I am excited about the potential opportunities that are arising to allow us to continue to make LaGrange County a better place to live, work, and visit.

Thank you for considering our community!

Jeff Wolheter



Executive Director
Coffee & Cream of South Milford

Letters of Support & Resolutions

Cheri Perkins
PO Box 107
LaGrange, IN 46761
Phone: 260-463-4161

**Indiana Office of Community and Rural
Affairs
Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
1 North Capital Avenue
Indianapolis, IN 46204**

Dear Stellar Pathways Committee Members,

We are a non-profit agency that is the Public Transportation Provider for LaGrange County through the 5311 Rural Transit Grant from INDOT. We also have a Senior Center that offers activities, luncheons, and educational classes to members of our community. We also have a food pantry, and we deliver CFSP bags of groceries to home bound seniors in our county.

We partner with our Economic Development Corporation quite a bit for various activities, we are overly excited about the Stellar Pathways initiative project. We have helped spread the information on the Stellar Pathways initiative project by having them speak at our luncheon, helping share the surveys and idea boards that were available. A lot of the seniors are extremely excited to see the initiative of improving things in LaGrange County.

Our mission is to be a provider and resource for services that improve the quality of life for older adults of LaGrange County. Our goal is to service people and enable them to retain their independence, including providing safe and reliable transportation. We believe that the Stellar Pathways initiative project aligns with our mission and goals by improving our community and making it a better place to live. We live in a unique community, and we need to make our County more appealing to bring people back here after college.

We are excited about the opportunity to offer classes, education, and knowledge in the kitchen. Some of our seniors love to cook and would absolutely love the idea of sharing some of their knowledge with others. You are never too old to learn and spread the joy of cooking while helping improve someone's life with that knowledge. The impact that the Stellar Pathways could have on our community would be so exciting. We cannot wait to see what happens this could mean to our community that really needs change.

Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this.



Cheri Perkins
Executive Director
10-21-2024

My name is Gary Mast. I have been the Maintenance Supervisor for LaGrange County for twelve years. I am responsible for the general maintenance of county government buildings.

Our organization's role as a County is to prioritize the spending of taxpayer's money. It is important that we also provide a safe environment for County employees, as well as to the members of the public that come to the Courthouse for various reasons.

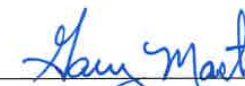
As the population in LaGrange County increases, it is important to myself and the Commissioners that we continue to develop county government buildings so that we can provide a better service to the public.

The Courthouse has been on the National Historic Register since 1980. My goal as a Maintenance Supervisor is to continue to preserve the history of our Courthouse while also making sure that electrical codes are met. The Courthouse still has some of the original wiring. That wiring is now outdated and requires upgrading. With the support of the Stellar Pathways initiative, we would be able to accomplish our goals.

As the Maintenance Supervisor, it is important that electrical upgrades are made for the safety of the community. Replacing old wiring, service panels, and breakers are essential for safety. It has come to my attention that over the past several years, there are not enough resets within the county buildings for offices to function properly. The overuse of power strips can be dangerous for many reasons, one including fires. Service panels are old, outdated, and are being overloaded. The benefits of replacing outdated wiring, servers, and breakers, are preventing future power outages and/or preventing crises that could potentially happen.

I would like to personally thank Stellar Pathways initiative for considering the funding of necessary upgrades to our historical Courthouse in LaGrange County.

Thank you,



Gary Mast, Maintenance Supervisor

Letters of Support & Resolutions



October 21, 2024

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
 Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
 1 North Capital Avenue
 Indianapolis, IN. 46204

Dear Stellar Pathways Committee Members,

I am writing this letter to express my support for the LaGrange County Stellar Pathways application. As the destination marketing organization for LaGrange County, we promote the amazing assets, people and places of a vibrant, beautiful and engaging LaGrange County to both visitors and residents. Many of the LaGrange County Strategic Investment Plan projects include improvements to parks, streetscapes, facades, and historic districts in our small towns. These Stellar Pathways initiatives clearly align with our organizational mission which is to advocate destination development creating unique and multifaceted communities to attract visitors, future residents and potential investors. Once the Stellar Pathways Strategic Initiatives are developed, we offer a community destination development grant program to assist with event/festival creation and activation in public spaces. These events and festivals will extend stays and increase the draw of visitors from Chicago, Grand Rapids, Indianapolis and beyond and could easily qualify for that grant fund program.

The Stellar Pathways grant is imperative to assist us here in LaGrange County in meeting our collective economic development goals. These funds will play a major role in shaping the overall character, visual appearance and identity of our area. Research indicates that a well-designed and upgraded community can foster a sense of community pride among residents while enhancing a spirit of connection and understanding between cultures and lifestyles. Visitors also notice a pleasing environment with a positive overall character and visual appearance which creates an identity of the area that is shared with others for years to come. This "sense of place" is imperative to LaGrange County's growth into the future.

Annually, two million people travel into LaGrange County to enjoy Shippshewana and the Amish culture. These visitors also visit retail establishments, restaurants and other businesses generating millions in revenue for our county and state. The opportunity to bring even more people to Lagrange County will be even greater when we receive the Stellar Pathways Designation and we hope for your support in approving the LaGrange County application and initiatives.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Sonya L. Nash
 Sonya L. Nash, CDME
 Executive Director

Dear Stellar Pathways Committee,

I hope this letter finds you well and energized as LaGrange County continues to pursue the prestigious Stellar Pathways designation through the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs. As an organization committed to providing local residents a fulfilling and balanced career in their personal and professional life, we wholeheartedly support Connect LaGrange County's efforts and are excited by the transformative potential of this initiative for our region.

The \$7 +million in grant funding associated with Stellar Pathways would undoubtedly propel LaGrange County forward by enhancing infrastructure, enriching community resources, and fostering inclusive development. Specifically, your focus on town park improvements, the beautification of streetscapes, historical preservation, essential upgrades to public buildings, and local food and farm support aligns closely with our own value of "Balance" wherein we promote and empower our employees to look for harmony in all spheres that make up their environment, work, and personal life. Such thoughtful initiatives will improve the quality of life for residents across our diverse communities and serve as a foundation for future generations.

Our organization is enthusiastic about the Stellar Pathways initiative as it represents both a shared vision and a shared investment in LaGrange County's future. We recognize the importance of collaboration and broad-based support in reaching these ambitious goals, and we are pleased to pledge our support.

We are confident that, with the Stellar Pathways designation, LaGrange County will establish itself as a thriving hub for community and economic development, creating a legacy of growth, unity, and opportunity. Thank you for your leadership in spearheading this effort, and please do not hesitate to reach out if we can be of further assistance in advancing these shared aspirations.

Sincerely,

Mitchell Herber

Plant Manager & Tool Quoting

mitchell.herber@exo-s.com



Exo-s

6505 N State Road 9

Howe, IN 46746 USA

T.260.562.4144 C.260.499.1494

www.exo-s.com

Letters of Support & Resolutions



Fireside Craft Burgers & Brews
 101 S Detroit St
 LaGrange, IN 46761
 (260) 768-3473
 marsha@fireside.beer

October 21, 2024

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Stellar Pathways Initiative and its goals of revitalizing LaGrange County's downtowns and enhancing the quality of life for our residents.

As a long-time member of the LaGrange County community and a business owner in downtown LaGrange, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges and opportunities that exist within our historic downtown area. While there have been efforts to revitalize the area, the lack of resources has hindered our progress.

The Stellar Pathways Initiative offers a unique opportunity to address these challenges and implement transformative projects that will benefit our community for generations to come. By investing in improvements to our downtowns, we can create more vibrant and attractive spaces that will attract new businesses, encourage economic development, and enhance the overall quality of life for our residents.

By matching grant funding for my building's facade, I hope to contribute to the overall enhancement of downtown LaGrange and create a more inviting and vibrant space for our community.

I encourage you to join me in supporting this important initiative. Together, we can create a brighter future for LaGrange County.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Marsha Gill-Dunker

Marsha Gill-Dunker

Owner, Fireside Craft Burgers & Brews

10/30/2024

Dear Stellar Pathways Selection Committee,

I am writing to express my unwavering support for the Connect LaGrange County Stellar Designation on behalf of both myself and Grogg-Martin Auctioneers & Realty. For over 20 years, I have proudly served the LaGrange community, providing real estate and auction services that help individuals and families achieve their dreams. Working closely with community members through these transitions has given me and our company deep insight into the unique strengths of our area, as well as the importance of strategic community and economic development.

In addition to my role as co-owner of Grogg-Martin, I am honored to serve as President of the LaGrange Farm Bureau, Chairman of the Rainbow Years Learning Ministry, a board member of the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation's board of directors, and as a member of the Knights of Columbus. Community involvement has always been a priority, and I firmly believe that initiatives like Stellar Pathways are essential for ensuring LaGrange County's sustained growth and vitality.

The Stellar Pathways initiative aligns seamlessly with my vision and efforts for strengthening the community. By investing in infrastructure, recreational spaces, and local amenities, the program aims to enhance the quality of life for residents while attracting visitors and potential new residents to our area. This designation has the potential to create lasting economic benefits, helping to attract and retain young families, generate new business opportunities, and enrich the daily lives of those who call LaGrange County home.

Our team at Grogg-Martin recognizes the transformative potential that a Stellar designation could bring. This initiative not only supports our goals as a local business but also aligns with our vision for a stronger, more connected LaGrange County. We are fully committed to supporting Connect LaGrange County's efforts to secure the Stellar designation and look forward to seeing our community thrive through the exciting projects that will follow.

Thank you for considering this impactful opportunity for LaGrange County.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Patka
 Co-Owner, REALTOR®, and Auctioneer
 Grogg-Martin Auctioneers & Realty

Letters of Support & Resolutions



7470 S State Rd. 3 N
 South Milford, IN 46786

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
 Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
 1 North Capital Avenue
 Indianapolis, IN 46202

10/30/2024

Dear Stellar Pathways Committee Members,

J.O. Mory, Inc. has been a part of the LaGrange County community since the beginning of our business in 1892. We are a commercial, industrial, and residential construction company employing trades people in electrical, plumbing and HVAC. Along with this business, we also operate a metal welding fabrication shop located within the county. Between all of our locations, which includes one location in Fort Wayne, Indiana, we employ 110 employees. Approximately 95 of our employees are employed out of our South Milford, Indiana office, in Lagrange County.

From the beginning, our company has held a prominent role in LaGrange County, but more specifically the unincorporated town of South Milford, Indiana. Because of the importance of community to our business and the role we accept within the community, we are very involved and interested in the development of our town, community and county. LaGrange county is rural, and so, any economic development initiatives have a large impact on our community, our employees, and on our own business as well. Because of the nature of our business, not only do we benefit when LaGrange County thrives, but any initiatives to improve the economic health and quality of life within our county benefits our business. Like other rural communities within the state of Indiana, we struggle with attracting workers to our small rural communities, so any initiatives to improve the quality and standard of living is vital to our business.

We welcome the role that the Stellar Pathways initiative could play in the business and economic health of our own business and community, but we also feel that it aligns with the commitment that our company and employees have made to our town and county. Many of our employees have served and continue to serve on boards within the county and

community. Also, within our area we support and have funded many of our community projects and parks. Over the years, our company has donated the land that now houses our ball park in South Milford. We have volunteered on improvement projects that occur throughout the town. Most recently, we pledged time, energy and resources to house a not-for-profit business in South Milford, renovate the town park and allow land to be used to extend the park, allow dual community use of our parking lots for the park and ball park functions, and for the not-for-profit business that opened this past year. Just this past month, our company purchased a blighted house within the town. We intend to clear the lot and provide additional parking for not only our business, but provide additional dual use for the community; more specifically the ball park in town as well. The cost of this project will exceed \$50,000. In rough estimates, our involvement in the economic development of our community has exceeded \$100,000 in the year 2024.

We feel privileged to be a part of LaGrange County and to call our small town of South Milford home. We will strive to continue our involvement in the success of our county community, and our town in the years to come and are excited that our county is being recognized as one of the finalists for the Stellar Pathways Grant.

Respectfully,



John Mory
 President

Letters of Support & Resolutions



LaGrange County Arts, INC is a 501(c)3 organization whose mission is to identify, support, and uplift visual, performing, and literary artists living and working in LaGrange County and the surrounding area. Funded primarily through private donations and grants, we strive to be good stewards of the support we receive, both public and private, in the accomplishment of this mission.

To Whom it May Concern,

LaGrange County Arts is privileged to be a part of the greater community of LaGrange County. Living, working, and raising our families here is what drives us to promote the cultural arts to the benefit of the citizens in our area.

We share the vision of many in this county who seek to raise the quality of life for all citizens within our borders. Through collaborations with the towns and unincorporated communities of LaGrange County, we offer placemaking opportunities for artists of all ages.

The Stellar Pathways Initiative is an exciting opportunity for LaGrange County. As we remain dedicated to supporting our community, we recognize the impact this effort will have on not only LaGrange County Arts, but the myriad of other not-for-profit organizations that are dedicated to sustaining this county.

Serving as stewards of the financial support we receive from supporters of the arts is something we take very seriously. Although we are not in a financial position to offer matching funds at this time, we look forward to the many possibilities that the Stellar Pathways grant funding will open and the opportunities for us to add value to the quality of life in LaGrange County.

Thank you for considering LaGrange County as a recipient of the Stellar Pathways designation. The potential that it brings to the quality of life in our rural county is immense.

Sincerely,

Mary Woodworth, Director
 LaGrange County Arts, Inc.
www.lagrangecountyarts.org
lagrangecountyarts@gmail.com



Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
 Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
 1 North Capital Avenue
 Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Stellar Pathways Committee Members,

The LaGrange County Department of Parks and Recreation plays a crucial role in enhancing community well-being by providing accessible green spaces for recreation, relaxation, and social interaction. We provide spaces for outdoor activities including walking trails, playgrounds, disc golf, an archery range, and beaches. We also host events, festivals, and programs that bring residents together, encouraging a sense of belonging and shared identity. Additionally, well-maintained parks contribute to the local economy by attracting visitors and increasing property values in surrounding areas.

Community and economic development efforts in LaGrange County play a vital role in improving the quality of life for its residents while encouraging sustainable growth. Collaboration among LaGrange County businesses, organizations, and residents is crucial to creating a supportive environment that attracts investment and encourages entrepreneurship.

The LaGrange County Park and Recreation Board supports the efforts of Connect LaGrange County in pursuing the Stellar Pathways designation. The resources provided by this designation would help LaGrange County continue to grow and improve and will help the Parks Department to work towards its mission to develop and maintain a parks system that will preserve natural spaces and provide areas for outdoor recreation for LaGrange County communities and beyond.

The Stellar Pathways designation would help LaGrange County plan economic development initiatives that would lead to job creation, improved infrastructure, and enhanced public services, all of which contribute to a thriving local economy and increase the quality of life of the residents. By prioritizing the chosen projects, LaGrange County can ensure that it not only meets the current needs of its population but also positions itself for long-term success, resilience, and a vibrant future.

Sincerely,



John A. Egli, President
 LaGrange County Park and Recreation Board

0505W 700S Wolcottville, Indiana 46795 • 260-854-2225
www.lagrangecountyparks.org • parks@lagrangecounty.in.gov

Letters of Support & Resolutions



October 28, 2024

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
 Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
 1 North Capital Avenue
 Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Stellar Pathways Committee Members,

On behalf of the LaGrange County Together Steering Committee, I am pleased to express our strong support for the Stellar Pathways initiative. As a community-driven effort focused on creating a comprehensive plan for LaGrange County, our towns, and unincorporated areas, we recognize the transformative potential of Stellar Pathways in advancing the goals identified by our community's residents and leaders.

LaGrange County Together was established with the vision of understanding the present to build a vibrant future for LaGrange County. Our planning process combined rigorous research and data with the values and priorities expressed by our residents—the true experts on LaGrange County. Since entering the implementation phase in January 2024, we have been guided by a collective vision for a thriving, resilient community that fosters both growth and unity.

In support of these efforts, LaGrange County has committed funds to implementing our countywide plan and entered into a contract with the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation to accelerate this progress. We are confident that the work of LaGrange County Together and Connect LaGrange County will overlap and work together cohesively, enhancing each other's impact and advancing shared goals. The goals of the comprehensive plan align well with the vision of Connect LaGrange County, further supporting infrastructure and connectivity that strengthen our community's economic and social vitality.

Furthermore, Connect LaGrange County stands as a pivotal asset to fulfilling our community's vision for growth and sustainability. Through this initiative, we anticipate transformative funding for essential projects such as park enhancements and the Hawpatch Trail connection, reinforcing our commitment to natural resource preservation and expanding public access to outdoor spaces.



The proposed outdoor space in Topeka with a dedicated food truck zone represents another essential step in our mission to stimulate business growth, foster innovation, and fuel the local “maker” economy.

Connect LaGrange County's Strategic Investment Plan is tightly aligned with LaGrange County Together's goals, promising to unlock critical resources that will accelerate our shared vision for a thriving, prosperous LaGrange County. This alignment and anticipated funding will be vital in realizing projects that are poised to significantly enhance the quality of life for our community and support sustained progress for years to come.

Sincerely,



Octavia Yoder

LaGrange County Together Steering Committee Member
 Executive Director, LaGrange County Community Foundation

Letters of Support & Resolutions

October 22, 2024

Letter in Support of Stellar Pathways and OCRA

LaGrange County Trails, Inc consists of a nine member board of community minded volunteers who are focused on developing a bike/pedestrian trail system throughout LaGrange County, Indiana. These trails will provide recreational opportunities for families, enhance economic development efforts for businesses, increase tourism and ultimately provide safe methods of travel for a large segment of our community who bike to work and school.

The Hawpatch Trail is the first bike/pedestrian trail the organization has planned to be constructed in southwest LaGrange County along the Norfolk Southern railroad corridor. The trail will be nearly 17 miles in length and will span three towns, ultimately connecting the Fishing Line in Noble County to the Strawberry Trail in Elkhart County. One of the towns the trail will go through is Topeka, the industrial hub of LaGrange County.

We are a small rural community and rely heavily on each other as it takes many organizations and people working together to get things accomplished. The health of a community is determined by many things, but includes infrastructure and opportunities for leisure and activities for youth and families. LaGrange County is fortunate to have organizations like the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation with a director and staff dedicated to working with others to make our community the best it can be.

Community members attended various meetings to help leaders understand what is most needed in our smaller communities. The Stellar Pathways funding will be directed towards improvements and updates in several town parks, construction and repair of sidewalks, development of town events and gathering spaces throughout our county. Programming is planned for a farm to food bank that will ensure farm products make it to our local county residents to help ensure no one goes hungry.

Most importantly, on behalf of LaGrange County Trails, Inc, the Stellar Pathways grant will provide the funds to connect the Hawpatch Trail from the east park to the west park in the town of Topeka. Several factories within and on the outskirts of town provide viable employment for many of our citizens and also many workers from neighboring counties. The trail through Topeka is a vital link to providing a safe avenue of getting to work for more than 60% of the county's population who are of Amish faith and live and work in the area.

The potential benefits and impacts this Stellar Pathways grant will have on LaGrange County is huge. Funding from this initiative will allow communities and small unincorporated towns to realize the dreams and goals of residents. Funding will benefit all segments of our population and create a means by which different organizations and leaders within our community will collaborate to achieve great things!

Sherryl Rhinesmith
 Vice President, LaGrange County Trails, Inc

Robbie Miller

County Zoning Administrator
 LaGrange County Plan Commission
 114 W Michigan St
 LaGrange, IN 46761
 10/10/2024

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA)
 One North Capitol, Suite 600
 Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Stellar Pathways Committee,

As the County Zoning Administrator for LaGrange County, I am writing to offer my full support for Connect LaGrange County's application for the Stellar Pathways designation. This initiative represents an incredible opportunity to transform and enhance our community, and I firmly believe that the projects proposed under this program will play a vital role in advancing the quality of life and economic development in our county.

Over the past several years, LaGrange County has made great strides in improving its infrastructure, housing, and overall community development. We've seen first-hand the positive impact that collaborative efforts can have when stakeholders from all sectors come together to pursue a shared vision. The Stellar Pathways initiative is a natural extension of this work, and it will undoubtedly help us build upon the progress we've already made.

In my role as Zoning Administrator, I have witnessed the growth and change within our county, and I understand the importance of careful planning and development to ensure that our communities thrive. The proposed projects, including housing, quality of place improvements, and enhancements to public spaces, align perfectly with our goals for sustainable and well-managed development. These projects will support the future needs of LaGrange County, while also preserving the unique character of our rural communities.

Stellar Pathways offers an unprecedented opportunity to bring resources to communities like ours, and I am confident that the designation will have a transformative impact. The support and collaboration seen throughout this process reflect the deep commitment of LaGrange County's leadership, businesses, and residents to make meaningful and lasting improvements.

I wholeheartedly support this application and encourage the committee to consider the immense potential this initiative holds for the future of LaGrange County. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Robbie Miller
 County Zoning Administrator
 LaGrange County Plan Commission

Letters of Support & Resolutions



Dear Stellar Pathway Committee Members,

Thank you for your continued dedication to LaGrange County and your support of the Stellar Pathways Initiative. As a business owner and a stakeholder in the County, I am thrilled that LaGrange County is a finalist in such a transformative program.

Our company has been able to impact this community with the ability to employ a diverse group of people with such a wide spectrum of manufacturing tasks. We are proud to support our community by providing jobs to Women, Men, young, aged, and various ethnic races. We can keep each our employees long term with great wages and benefits, also understanding that this pours back into our community as they spend their money each week for their needs in our local towns.

It is important that our towns continue to provide great amenities, housing, infrastructure, and a place to “experience” great life, so that we may continue to draw more people to live here and in turn as our business grows, we have the chance to employ them.

The benefits this designation of these funds, would have many benefits. LaGrange County has a presence and drawing power for tourism and we can build upon what has already been started to make it an even larger draw and give tourist even more to experience while here. Businesses in LaGrange County have been limited to hiring due to limited availability of workforce. This designation could be vital in enhancing our community, developing new projects, and elevating the quality of life for residents and this would draw new people here to our community.

Thank you so much for your dedication to LaGrange County and support of this initiative. It is exciting to dream about the future LaGrange County!

Best Regards,



Brian Miller

574-536-7361



LaGrange County Health Department

www.lagrangecountyhealth.com

*Protecting the place
where we live!!!...*

304 N. Townline Rd. Suite 1. LaGrange, IN 46761-1319*Phone (260) 499-4182 extension 6*Fax (260) 499-4189

October 21, 2024

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
IN Capitol Ave. #600
Indianapolis, IN 46204

RE: LETTER OF SUPPORT for CONNECT LAGRANGE COUNTY


Dear Stellar Pathways Committee Members,

On behalf of the LaGrange County Health Department, I am extending our resounding professional support of Connect LaGrange County in their pursuit of the Stellar Pathways designation.

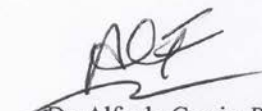
The LaGrange County Health Department strives to promote, maintain, and improve the health and quality of life for our county. As a small local health department, we have provided the foundational services that are considered core to public health. Over the past year, we opted in for the increased public health funding (Health First Indiana initiative) made possible through SEA 4 legislation that evolved from the Governor’s Public Health Commission recommendations. One of the main strategies for the success of Health First Indiana is through community partnerships. We considering partnerships to bring more robust core public health services to our community, we must consider social determinants of health: education access and quality, health care access and quality, economic stability, social and community context, and neighborhood and built environment. Social determinants of health are the factors that bring all our community partners together. We understand that no individual partner can make meaningful, sustainable improvement alone! The Strategic Investment Plan that Connect LaGrange County has shared will bring foundational infrastructure improvements that will markedly accelerate progress in three of the five social determinants of health: economic stability, social and community context, and neighborhood and built environment. For our community that has lost healthcare services due to economic resiliency, this Stellar Pathways designation could very well be the lifeline our community needs!

It is an exciting time to be living and working in LaGrange County. I get to see many capable professionals, planning and striving to bring the whole county together, united with a vision of making our county better for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration of designating LaGrange County as a Stellar Pathways recipient. We have the talent. We have the motivation. We have the partnerships. We just need the opportunity that comes with Stellar designation. If Connect LaGrange County is selected, I have no doubt that every community partner will help to set their plan as the foundation for generational improvement!



Jackie Feller
Health First Indiana Coordinator



Dr. Alfredo Garcia, PhD.
Health Department Administrator

Letters of Support & Resolutions



Lakeland School Corporation

0825 E 075 N, LaGrange IN 46761
 Phone: (260) 499 - 2400 Fax: (260) 463 - 4800

To: Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
 From: Traci Blaize, Superintendent
 RE: Support of LaGrange Co. Connect Stellar Pathways

I am enthusiastically throwing support behind Connect LaGrange County's application for the Stellar Pathways grant!

LaGrange County is divided into three school corporations, and I proudly serve as Superintendent of Lakeland School Corporation located in central LaGrange County. In my position I have been doing outreach into the community through the Chamber of LaGrange County, LaGrange County Community Foundation, and the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation. It is very important that schools work with the community to develop mutually beneficial programming. I believe the Connect LaGrange County Stellar Pathways grant proposal does exactly that! I've been involved in stakeholder groups focused on community needs, and spreading the word & gathering input about the Stellar Pathways opportunity at our football games. People have been very excited by the options this grant may present to our community.

Schools primarily receive funding through the number of students attending and property taxes. Having a community that is attractive to new families and businesses will benefit schools through population growth, increased health & wellness and an improved sense of the "community" it takes to raise children. I believe the Stellar Pathways grant gives LaGrange a chance to make vital upgrades that we could not do on our own.

Lakeland's vision is to be a "Destination Corporation" for students, staff and other educational entities. The Stellar Pathways provide an opportunity for LaGrange County to create some "destination" items that we might not have otherwise. No one wants to move into a community that might appear run down or lacks character, right? Upgrading parks, sidewalks, facades, all helps make LaGrange County an attractive destination for new folks, and a wonderful place to stay for those who are already here! By attracting new families we can create new small business opportunities, and diversify our workforce and in turn see LaGrange County grow!

As a public school corporation, Lakeland is not at liberty to contribute dollars in support of the Stellar Pathways efforts, but that does not mean we won't find other ways to

support it! We've already worked hard to disseminate information about the Stellar Pathways to our school community through information boards at football games, and sending out the community survey to all of our families and our Jr/Sr High students. Our seniors plan senior projects each year, and I am confident there will be ways that they can contribute labor and funding to designated projects. Promoting active and authentic involvement in our community is one way we help students be successful!

I was raised in LaGrange County, and graduated from the school district I now run. I've dedicated the majority of my career to improving LaGrange County through student outcomes. LaGrange County is a special place. It has been a pleasure to be part of the Connect LaGrange County efforts to make LaGrange County an even better place to be!

Respectfully,



Traci A. Blaize, Ed.D
 Superintendent
 Lakeland School Corporation

Letters of Support & Resolutions



Lewis & Lambright, Inc.

AUCTIONEERS AND REALTORS

112 N. Detroit St., LaGRANGE, INDIANA 46761
Phone: (260)463-2012 or (260)463-2013



Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
Attn: Stellar Pathways Selection Committee
1 North Capital Avenue
Indianapolis, IN. 46204

Dear Stellar Pathways Committee,

I am writing to express my support for Connect LaGrange County’s Stellar Pathways Designation on behalf of Lewis & Lambright Auctioneers & Real Estate. As the owner and broker, I am honored to carry forward a business that has been a cornerstone of LaGrange County since 1944. What began as an auctioneering company under my grandfather, Winford J. Lewis, and later my father, Harvey Lambright, has evolved into a comprehensive real estate, auctioneering, and appraisal firm that serves the people of LaGrange County with integrity and dedication.

Lewis & Lambright is deeply rooted in this community, and we have always been passionate about contributing to its growth and well-being. We believe that meaningful community and economic development efforts, like those under the Stellar Pathways initiative, are crucial for enhancing the quality of life in LaGrange County. These projects offer tremendous opportunities to attract and retain residents, foster a sense of community pride, and create an environment that encourages businesses to thrive.

The Stellar Pathways initiative aligns closely with our mission at Lewis & Lambright to support our community in every way we can. We see this designation as a unique chance to not only uplift our local economy but also to showcase LaGrange County as a vibrant place to live, work, and visit. These planned projects have the potential to make LaGrange County even more attractive to new residents and visitors alike, creating a ripple effect of benefits for our small businesses, tourism, and overall community vitality.

As a lifelong resident and business owner in LaGrange County, I am excited by the possibilities this designation would bring. The impact of Stellar Pathways would be felt across all areas of our county, helping to enhance local infrastructure, strengthen our sense of place, and enrich the lives of all who call this community home. I wholeheartedly support Connect LaGrange County’s efforts and look forward to seeing our community grow and prosper through these initiatives.

Thank you for considering this important designation for LaGrange County.

Sincerely,

Denise Scott
Owner/Broker
Lewis & Lambright Auctioneers & Real Estate



October 21, 2024

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
1 North Capital Avenue #600
Indianapolis, IN. 46204

Dear Members of the Stellar Pathways Selection Committee,

On behalf of the Main Street LaGrange Board of Directors, it is my pleasure to express our full support for LaGrange County’s participation in the Stellar Pathways program. As the President of Main Street LaGrange, a volunteer-driven 501(c)(3) organization committed to promoting and cultivating a vibrant downtown in the town of LaGrange, I can attest to the transformative potential that this program can bring to our community.

In 2024, our organization has proudly organized several impactful events such as the Chili Shuffle, Graze LaGrange (a restaurant week), Final Fridays (a series of monthly events drawing hundreds of residents downtown to enjoy food trucks, live music, local vendors, and more), and our Fall Finale event. These community-driven efforts have helped to breathe new life into our downtown, fostering a stronger sense of community and attracting both locals and visitors to experience everything LaGrange has to offer. However, we know that there is still so much potential to unlock in our historic downtown district.

The grant dollars made available through the Stellar Pathways program have the potential to be a major game-changer for LaGrange. With these funds, we can not only preserve and enhance the beauty of our downtown but also actively work to attract new businesses and further stimulate local economic growth. The projects and initiatives that we could pursue with this level of support would open doors that might otherwise take years to walk through.

We are eager to make strides in revitalizing our downtown and expanding our community offerings, and Stellar Pathways can help accelerate this progress. By investing in our infrastructure, supporting our small businesses, and creating spaces where people want to live, work, and play, these dollars will have a direct and lasting impact on the health and prosperity of LaGrange.

We urge you to give LaGrange County full consideration for the Stellar Pathways designation. The funding and resources this program provides would allow us to build on the momentum we’ve created and help turn our vision for a more vibrant, thriving downtown into a reality.

Thank you for your consideration and for the work you are doing to help communities like ours grow and succeed.

Sincerely,

Jenny Landez
President, Main Street LaGrange

Letters of Support & Resolutions

October 3, 2024

Stellar Pathways Selection Committee
Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
1 N. Capitol Avenue, Suite 600
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Members of the Stellar Pathways Selection Committee,

On behalf of the Mongo Community Development Association (MCDA), I am pleased to write this letter in strong support of LaGrange County's Stellar Pathways application. The mission of MCDA is to preserve and enhance the quality of life that makes the town of Mongo so unique, and this initiative aligns perfectly with our goals. As an unincorporated community in Northeast LaGrange County, Mongo is supported by local resident donations and grassroots fundraising efforts, making outside opportunities for development, such as this one, especially meaningful.

While community and economic development are crucial for the entire county, the potential impact of Stellar Pathways dollars on small, unincorporated communities like Mongo cannot be overstated. Typically, we are not first in line to receive resources, but the needs of our residents are just as significant as those in larger towns. This program offers an incredible chance for us to continue preserving our identity while enhancing the experiences for residents and visitors alike.

Mongo is truly one of the best-kept secrets in LaGrange County. Nestled along the beautiful Pigeon River, our town is a hidden gem for outdoor enthusiasts, especially those who enjoy kayaking and canoeing. With the nearby DNR fish and wildlife preserve, Mongo draws a significant number of tourists during the warmer months. Despite the influx of visitors, our infrastructure has not seen the development needed to fully support this growing interest. Stellar Pathways can help us build on this momentum by providing the necessary funding for amenities that will enhance our parks and public spaces, making Mongo an even more vibrant destination.

For the residents of Mongo, this designation would be life-changing. Access to a park full of brand-new amenities would elevate our quality of life, while also increasing tourism and economic growth. What may seem like a simple park improvement to some would be a transformative asset for our community—a symbol of progress, pride, and shared vision.

Thank you for considering LaGrange County for this incredible opportunity. The Stellar Pathways designation will have a positive ripple effect across the county, but for smaller communities like Mongo, it will be a true game changer.

Sincerely,



Andy Linder
President
Mongo Community Development Association



Prairie Heights Community School Corporation

Jeff Reed, Superintendent
305 S 1150 E LaGrange, IN 46761
Phone: (260) 351-3214
Fax: (260) 351-3614

October 16, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express our strong support for LaGrange County's pursuit of the Stellar Pathways designation. As an educational institution deeply rooted in our community, we recognize the transformative impact this grant can have on our county's economic development and community partnerships.

The proposed initiatives, such as enhancements to town parks, streetscape improvements, and building façade upgrades, are vital for fostering vibrant and welcoming spaces that benefit all residents. These projects will not only improve the aesthetic appeal of our communities but also create a more inviting atmosphere for businesses and families considering LaGrange County as their home.

Investing in our infrastructure and public spaces is an investment in our future. By attracting new businesses and residents, we can further stimulate our local economy and provide our students with a thriving environment that nurtures growth, creativity, and opportunity.

We believe that the Stellar Pathways designation will help us build stronger connections within our community and lay the groundwork for sustainable development. We wholeheartedly support LaGrange County in this endeavor and look forward to the positive changes it will bring.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jeff Reed



Superintendent

Letters of Support & Resolutions

LAGRANGE COUNTY REMC

1995 E US Highway 20
 LaGrange, Indiana 46761
 877-463-7165
 Fax 260-463-4329
www.lagrangeremc.com

October 29, 2024

Dear Stellar Pathways Selection Committee,

On behalf of LaGrange County REMC, I am pleased to offer my full support for the Connect LaGrange County Stellar Pathways initiative. As a cooperative utility provider, LaGrange County REMC has been dedicated to serving our members by delivering affordable, reliable electricity to over 7,000 members across a 600-mile network for more than 85 years. Our commitment to the community drives us not only to provide energy solutions but also to foster the growth and vitality of LaGrange County. In recent years, we have expanded our services by building a fiber optic broadband network, offering high-speed internet to further enhance connectivity and quality of life for our members.

Community and economic development efforts such as Stellar Pathways are critical to ensuring that LaGrange County continues to thrive. The ambitious projects being developed through this initiative aim to address essential aspects of our community's well-being, from infrastructure improvements to cultural and recreational offerings. Such enhancements are fundamental to retaining and attracting both residents and businesses, and LaGrange County REMC is proud to support efforts that strengthen our local economy and contribute to a vibrant, prosperous future.

The Stellar Pathways initiative aligns seamlessly with our mission to deliver safe, reliable, and affordable energy, as well as services and solutions that enhance the quality of life in our community. By investing in meaningful quality-of-place projects, Connect LaGrange County is helping to create an environment where residents and businesses can thrive—an environment that LaGrange County REMC is committed to powering for generations to come.

The positive impacts of the Stellar Pathways designation are wide-reaching. Improved infrastructure, enhanced community spaces, and expanded amenities will provide valuable resources for our residents while positioning LaGrange County as an attractive destination for visitors. These projects not only increase our community's appeal but also foster the connections and engagement that make LaGrange County a place people are proud to call home.

We are grateful for the opportunity to support the Stellar Pathways initiative and look forward to seeing the many ways it will benefit our members and the entire LaGrange County community.

Sincerely,



Mark Leu
 CEO

Dear Stellar Pathways Selection Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for Connect LaGrange County's Stellar Pathways designation. As the owner and president of Rock Run Industries LLC, I have been fortunate to witness the resilience, resourcefulness, and potential of LaGrange County. Since starting Rock Run in a 2 ½ car garage in 2001 and growing the business into a full-time enterprise by 2007 with a team of five, we have since expanded to over 100 dedicated employees. Through Rock Run and Rock Run Real Estate LLC, we have been able to contribute to the economic growth and development of our community, employing many residents and supporting economic opportunities for LaGrange County families.

Our commitment to LaGrange County extends beyond business. I currently serve as president of the board of Rock Run Youth Park and have previously served on the board of the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation. I also serve on the board of directors of one of our community banks. I have seen firsthand the impact that community-focused projects can have on the quality of life for residents, creating an environment where families can thrive and businesses can grow. The Stellar Pathways initiative promises to elevate this even further, aligning with our mission of building a prosperous future for our community.

Community and economic development efforts like Stellar Pathways are essential for our region. These projects not only bring infrastructure improvements but also create spaces where people can connect, recreate, and invest back into their hometowns. Connect LaGrange County's goals align perfectly with Rock Run's vision for supporting a thriving local economy while enhancing the daily lives of our employees and residents.

The Stellar Pathways designation would be a transformative opportunity for LaGrange County, bringing about positive, sustainable changes that will foster economic development and enrich our community. By investing in quality-of-life projects and creating a strong sense of place, this initiative would make LaGrange County even more attractive to families, businesses, and visitors, ensuring that our region continues to grow and flourish for generations to come.

I am proud to support Connect LaGrange County's Stellar Pathways initiative and look forward to the long-lasting impact this designation will have on the future of our community.

Sincerely,



Fritz Schlabach
 Owner and President
 Rock Run Industries LLC

Letters of Support & Resolutions

Shipshewana Auction & Flea Market

PO Box 185
 345 S Van Buren St. | Shipshewana, IN 46565
 Ph. 260-768-4129 | Fax 260-768-7041
 info@shipshewanafleamarket.com
 www.ShipshewanaFleaMarket.com



Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
 Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
 1 North Capital Avenue
 Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Stellar Pathways Review Committee Members:

I am writing in support of the Strategic Investment Plan that has been thoughtfully worked on and laid out in detail by LaGrange County representatives from across the county for the Stellar Pathways grant to enhance our community.

As a business owner here in Shipshewana and life-long resident, our organization represents several key attractions, lodging options and annual events that aid in the tourism that comes into LaGrange County each year. Partnerships in improving their experience and creating a positive image, while creating exciting things for both the visitors and residents is key to making these successful. Collaboration on projects such as the Stellar Pathways is one of those many examples to do just that and our Centennial business is excited for this opportunity.

Our goals as an organization are to constantly bring together buyers and sellers and in order to do so, having a great place for those individuals to visit and live is key. Plans identified, that include opportunities to improve the parks, streetscape, structures, events and other improvements like trails throughout the county, will aid and align with our very own goals and initiatives.

For these reasons, as well as, the thoughtful work and collaboration that has taken place in solidifying these plans, I am beyond thrilled for the opportunity to see LaGrange County receive and implement the Stellar Pathways grant funds. Not only will they make a difference to our organization, it will impact the visitors, guests, residents and all who choose to visit, work and live in LaGrange County for years to come!

Thank you for your consideration and approval of this important opportunity for LaGrange County.

Sincerely,



Keith Lambright

Owner/Operator Shipshewana Auction, Inc.
 dba Shipshewana Trading Place Auction & Flea Market

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
 Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
 1 North Capital Avenue
 Indianapolis, IN. 46204

To Whom it May Concern,

The *Community Improvement League Incorporated of South Milford, aka South Milford Community League*, is a not-for-profit corporation formed to provide a structured organization where community members can come together and focus resources on local projects and related activities with the overall objective of improving the quality of life in South Milford.

Our focus is improving the quality of life in our community and surrounding areas. Small communities like South Milford do not have the resources to make our communities more livable for our residents. Basic things, like park improvements, etc. are beyond our budgetary means. We enthusiastically support the Stellar Pathways initiative because this would provide a way for these to happen, not only for us but for all of LaGrange County.

Community improvements would be of great benefit for youth to have safe and enjoyable places to gather and play. They would benefit the older population by giving them spaces to walk in safe and age friendly environments. We are thankful for your consideration of our County for this designation.

Sincerely,



Katie Bowman

President of South Milford Community League

Letters of Support & Resolutions

October 30, 2024

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
 Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
 1 North Capital Avenue
 Indianapolis, IN. 46204

Dear Stellar Pathways Committee Members,

I am writing to express my full support for LaGrange County's pursuit of the Stellar Pathways designation. As the owner of Springfield Acres, a small u-pick sunflower farm on the east side of LaGrange County, I have seen firsthand the need for experiences that add to the quality of place to retain individuals in our community and also the increasing desire for people to connect with nature and experience agriculture in an authentic way. Our farm strives to fill this void in our community by providing accessible, enjoyable agritourism experiences that draw people closer to the land and the agricultural roots of our region, building upon the unique quality of place that LaGrange County can offer.

The opportunity for community and economic development in LaGrange County is immense, particularly within the agriculture and agritourism sectors. By advancing community-focused projects that improve infrastructure, expand resources, and strengthen our county's economic foundation, we can significantly elevate the quality of life here for residents and visitors alike. These efforts will further position LaGrange County as a vibrant place to live, work, and play, while enhancing the opportunities for small farms and agribusinesses like Springfield Acres to contribute to our local economy and enrich our cultural landscape.

The Stellar Pathways initiative aligns seamlessly with our mission and vision at Springfield Acres and also with my personal missions of supporting local food & local farmers. With programs like a tradition kitchen, farm-to-food-bank initiatives, and lower-interest revolving loan funds, the initiative holds the potential to empower farmers, foster community engagement, and provide the means for innovative, sustainable practices. These resources would not only enhance our farm's ability to serve the community but would also support the broader network of farms in our area, promoting resilience and growth across LaGrange County's agricultural sector.

Securing the Stellar Pathways designation would make a transformative impact on LaGrange County for generations to come. With the funding and resources this designation would bring, we can create a legacy of strength, innovation, and community spirit that will benefit **all** who call LaGrange County home – and it very well could tip the scales in our favor when individuals & families are choosing whether to call LaGrange County their home to begin with.

Thank you for considering Springfield Acres' support of the Stellar Pathways designation. I am confident that this initiative will open doors to a brighter, more prosperous future for our county.

Warm regards,
Kara Babinec
 Owner, Springfield Acres

October 17, 2024

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
 Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
 1 North Capital Avenue
 Indianapolis, IN. 46204

To whom it may concern,

As the Trustee for Lima Township, I collaborate regularly with local organizations and businesses to assess our community needs and explore ways to achieve our goals. One of our goals in recent years has been to identify financial support to help with additional amenities in our town park. Our Howe Community Park has no public restrooms, a major concern as it is truly the central hub and gathering place in our very close-knit community. The park hosts many events throughout the spring, summer, and fall. Each Saturday, from May-September hundreds of guests come to the park to shop at our local farmers' market. Amish farmers bring their fruits, vegetables, bake goods and crafts to sell. It is the largest and most attended farmers market in LaGrange County. The second weekend of September each year the Howe Community Association Hosts Indian Summer Days. This brings area vendors in to sell their home-made goods, and food trucks participated. There is a bounce house and games for the kids. A performance by a magician and local musicians entertained the locals. There is a parade lead by the State Police, LaGrange County Sheriff department, Color Guard, scouts and veterans. Fire trucks from surrounding fire stations, several school bands, church floats, a preschool float, classic cars and the local Grand Marshall. Trunk and Treat are held on Halloween each year. Also, our local Lions Club holds several events throughout the year at the park: an Ice Cream Social and a community Christmas, just to name a couple. Additionally, local churches host free cookouts for anyone who wants to stop and eat in our park and local businesses host cars show here, too. Families gather at the park playground to watch their children play. There is a basketball court and an improvised pickleball court. A local resident has started a pickleball league, which brings more traffic to the park.

Our community also needs sidewalks that span from our community park south to our cemetery and north to the local elementary school. We have children walking on our community streets to reach school bus stops, and we have families walking along the road to attend the burials of loved ones. Many community residents use the streets to get their daily exercise. The sidewalks are in bad condition or do not exist, presenting a key safety concern, but the cost for a small community to put in sidewalks has made this project one we've had to continue to put on the back burner.

As a township and as part of the Howe community within LaGrange County, we are eager to participate in this opportunity for growth and development. The Stellar Pathways program is making improvements in these areas possible for our small community on a timeline that would otherwise be very difficult to achieve and will allow our community association and township to allocate funds that would've otherwise been used to accomplish these goals to expand our amenities in other ways. These grant dollars will have an incredible impact on our community and residents' daily lives. The residents of Lima Township are excited to be part of this adventure and partner with Connect LaGrange County, LaGrange County EDC and Stellar Pathways to achieve these much-needed improvements.

Sincerely,



Terry Iannarelli
 Trustee, Lima Township

Letters of Support & Resolutions

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
 One North Capitol, Suite 600
 Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear OCRA Selection Committee,

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for Connect LaGrange County's Stellar Pathways initiative on behalf of The Kingsbury in Howe and Something Blue Stylists. As the owner of The Kingsbury, I am honored to contribute to the revitalization of Howe and foster meaningful community connections through the historic spaces we're restoring.

The Kingsbury buildings have been a cornerstone of Howe since 1864, once a vibrant retreat where visitors could rest and experience the charm of our town. In the last year, I have made it my mission to bring new amenities and renewed energy to Howe by restoring an entire row of downtown buildings, including a community-focused retail space, creative rental areas, and flexible event spaces. We now proudly host **The Little Shoppe**, a boutique that supports small businesses and local makers; **The Work Shoppe**, a rentable space offering interactive and creative activities for all ages; and **The Studio Upstairs**, a larger event space where all proceeds benefit the Howe Historical Society, ensuring continued preservation efforts. Each of these spaces has been carefully curated to provide unique opportunities for creativity, learning, and connection among community members, all while supporting local history and culture.

The Stellar Pathways initiative aligns with The Kingsbury's goals of preserving our rich history while enhancing the quality of life and economic vitality in Howe and LaGrange County as a whole. By incorporating plans for park and sidewalk improvements, Stellar Pathways will breathe new life into downtown Howe, making it safer and more inviting for residents and visitors. These developments will amplify our efforts to create a welcoming, accessible, and vibrant community and will complement our vision of maintaining Howe as a charming, historic, yet forward-thinking destination.

I support Connect LaGrange County's Stellar Pathways initiative and believe this designation would have a profound impact on our area's growth and long-term sustainability. Together, I am confident we can create an environment that honors our past, enriches our present, and secures a bright future for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your support of LaGrange County's vision for a vibrant, connected community.

Warm regards,



Andi Sherman
 Owner, The Kingsbury in Howe
 Something Blue Stylists

130 N Babcock Street

Topeka In 46571

October 22, 2024

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
 Board of Selection
 Stellar Pathways Initiative

Dear Members of the Selection Board,

My name is Marlynn Mast. I'm an elected town council board member of the Town of Topeka, a local resident, professional, and founder/president of Topeka Together Inc., a local nonprofit. I am writing to wholeheartedly support LaGrange County's application for the Stellar Pathways Grant. Our community would benefit tremendously from the transformative opportunities this grant could bring, and I am confident that LaGrange County would fully leverage this support to enhance the vitality and quality of life in our region.

Topeka Together Inc. shares the Stellar Pathways Initiative's vision of fostering economic and social growth through vibrant community spaces and engaging, inclusive events. We have dedicated ourselves to initiatives that align closely with Stellar Pathways, including the use of current event spaces, while planning ahead for new, as we develop community programming to bring our residents together. With the support of the Stellar Pathways Grant, I believe we could work to amplify these efforts, reaching new milestones and expanding the positive impact in LaGrange County.

By selecting LaGrange County as a finalist, you would be investing in a community poised for growth, unity, and long-term success. Together, we can cultivate spaces that foster belonging, celebrate local culture, and build a foundation for ongoing community engagement.

Thank you for considering LaGrange County for the Stellar Pathways Grant. With this grant we will trailblaze together as we continue to enhance the vitality of this connected community.

Thank you,

Marlynn Mast, *President/Founder*
 TOPEKA TOGETHER, INC.



Letters of Support & Resolutions

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
Attn: Stellar Pathways Review Committee
 1 North Capital Avenue
 Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Stellar Pathways Committee Members,

My name is Greg Gunthorp, owner of Gunthorp Farms, a diverse family-owned farm located on the east side of LaGrange County, Indiana. At Gunthorp Farms, we raise pigs, turkeys, and sheep, and operate a USDA-inspected meat processing facility directly on our farm. We sell our meats to upscale restaurants & retailers, as well as to Disney, O'Hare Airport, & Caesar's Palace. Our work is built on a deep commitment to providing high-quality, local meats, and we are proud to play a role in supporting the economic and agricultural vitality of our community. Through this hands-on, sustainable approach to farming, we aim to contribute meaningfully to the growth and resilience of our local food system.

Community and economic development efforts in LaGrange County are crucial for ensuring a bright future for small independent farmers and the local businesses we depend on. Having dedicated the past two decades to advocacy for family farmers and regional food systems, I am encouraged by the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation's plans to revitalize and invest in our towns and unincorporated communities. Enhancing public parks, improving downtown streetscapes, and expanding agricultural support will make LaGrange County a more inviting and viable place for individuals, families, farmers, and business owners alike.

I wholeheartedly support LaGrange County in their pursuit of the Stellar Pathways grant, as it aligns closely with my personal and professional mission to strengthen small farming communities and local economies. Programs like the farm-to-food bank programming, and a lower-interest revolving loan fund for farmers would be transformative for farmers like myself, creating opportunities to build a resilient, sustainable food network that benefits all residents of LaGrange County. These projects will foster connection and innovation across our region and make our community an attractive place for both current and future residents.

The Stellar Pathways designation would provide a vital boost to LaGrange County, allowing us to attract new resources and bolster our ability to implement meaningful change. I am confident that the proposed projects—from creating gathering spaces and trail systems to modernizing infrastructure—will have a long-lasting impact on our residents' quality of life. Additionally, they will offer a strong foundation to further develop a localized economy that benefits both our rural and small-town communities.

While I do not have concrete financial commitments at this time, I am connected with several large nonprofit organizations that are dedicated to funding these types of economic development ventures. I am committed to actively pursuing grant matches for Stellar Pathways initiatives in LaGrange County once projects are outlined for execution. One organization with whom I work closely with is the Walton Family's foundation Good Chaos, and I believe that the programming that will result from the Stellar Pathways Project will align with their goals very well. I am optimistic about potential funding opportunities through this and other partnerships.

Thank you for considering this letter of support. I look forward to seeing LaGrange County thrive as a result of these impactful projects.

Sincerely,
 Greg Gunthorp
 Owner, Gunthorp Farms

C. SUSAN GLICK
ATTORNEY AT LAW
113 West Spring Street
LaGrange, IN 46761
260-463-7414

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
 Stellar Pathway Committee
 1 North Capitol Avenue, Suite 600
 Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

It is my pleasure to join with others from our community in support of the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation's application for recognition as a "Stellar Pathway Community." As a lifelong resident of LaGrange County, having been raised in Shipshewana and having practiced law in LaGrange for over forty years, I believe that our area exemplifies the very qualities which this award recognizes and seeks to enhance.

Whether it is the business climate which seamlessly blends modern technology with the timeless craftsmanship of the handmade Amish-Mennonite woodworking, quilt-making and textiles, or the recreational vehicle and mobile home manufacturing endeavors utilizing the dedication and commitment of hard-working Hoosiers, Hispanics and Amish in the production of quality products for world-wide distribution. In times of plenty and in times of distress, I have witnessed this community work shoulder to shoulder for the benefit of their friends and neighbors.

Grant-funding of this magnitude would have a far-wider impact in a rural area such as ours where community leaders have been challenged to implement innovative practices in the face of prohibitive financial costs. While we often "make-do" with less, this award would allow us to showcase the quality lifestyle inherent in our cohesive, cooperative community, and I hope you will look favorably on the application.

Very truly yours,

C. Susan Glick
 Indiana State Senator
 District 13

Letters of Support & Resolutions

FROM THE DESK OF
 JOANNA KING

April 30, 2024

Indiana Office of Community Rural Affairs
 Stellar Pathway Committee
 1 N Capital, Suite 600
 Indianapolis, IN 46204

To Whom it may concern,

I have been a business owner in LaGrange County Indiana for over 35 years. My first business was JoJo's Pretzels in Shipshewana which was established in 1989. Since that time my husband Levi and I have invested significant time, talent and treasure into this community by opening other small businesses and providing jobs for many families in this region. The involvement of many entrepreneurs in the greater Connect LaGrange County region has proven successful. As business owners we have collaborated with each other, with the Shipshewana Retail Merchants Association, with the LaGrange County Convention & Visitors Bureau and with the community as a whole. This collaboration has included a Quilt Garden tour, bike trails, Barn Quilt tours, Hand-Crafted and Makers Tours which connect our towns within the Connect LaGrange County region.

Many of the small towns that make up LaGrange County are small but have become a highly desired destination for guests from all over the world. Guests enjoy the culture and traditions that are unique to the Connect LaGrange County communities. The requested 7 million dollar grant would be transformative in being able to help these very small communities better serve the over 2 million visitors that visit this region each year. I urge you to consider and award this competitive grant to the Connect LaGrange County for the good of our citizens and for all the guests that come to this beautiful community in our great state of Indiana.

Sincerely yours,



Joanna King

State Representative

PO BOX 728 SHIPSEWANA IN 46565



Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA)

Oct. 16, 2024

Dear Members of the Grant Review Committee,

I am writing to offer my full support for the grant application submitted by Connect LaGrange County and the LaGrange County Economic Development Corp. (EDC) and I encourage you to consider their request for funding for the Stellar Pathways designation. As the Superintendent at Westview School Corporation in western LaGrange County, I understand the benefits of future planning and have witnessed first hand the positive impact local organizations working collaboratively can have for our students, families, and the broader community.

Without local community buy-in and leadership, LaGrange County programs, initiatives, dreams, and problems do not get accomplished and solved. I am a current board member of the LaGrange County EDC and I see firsthand how often our EDC connects the dots to advance programs, local and non-local people, businesses, and interest groups together for greater success economically, but also for the overall health of our community.

Our school is committed to fostering educational excellence and community engagement. Over the years, Westview School Corporation has led our community in academic excellence, community involvement, and strong behavioral expectations that have established the social well-being of our students.

The funding provided by this Stellar Pathways designation community grant would allow Connect LaGrange County to expand its reach, accomplish multi-agency collaborative goals, and impact even more families in our area. The funding would greatly improve our community's likelihood of accomplishing our holistic community goals.

Westview will support the collaborative spirit and objective goals that Connect LaGrange County brings in order to strengthen our entire LaGrange County community but also fostered a sense of unity and resilience throughout the community. We are confident that with your support of this grant, we can make a meaningful contribution to our families.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly recommend Connect LaGrange County and EDC for this community grant. Our dedication to serving others, combined with our proven track record of success, makes us an ideal recipient of this funding. I hope you will give our application your highest consideration.

Thank you for your time and support of this worthy initiative.

Sincerely,

Dr. Randy Miller - Superintendent
 Westview School Corporation

Letters of Support & Resolutions

TRADING POST OUTFITTERS

October 3, 2024

Stellar Pathways Selection Committee
 Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
 1 N. Capitol Avenue, Suite 600
 Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Members of the Stellar Pathways Selection Committee,

We, Andy and Jess Linder, owners of Trading Post Outfitters in Mongo, Indiana, are writing in full support of LaGrange County's Stellar Pathways application. As small business owners in an unincorporated community, we are passionate about the growth and vitality of Mongo and are deeply committed to seeing our town and its residents thrive. This designation offers an exciting opportunity for transformative development that will truly benefit smaller communities like ours.

Our family was living in Indianapolis when we made the deliberate decision to purchase our business and move to Mongo. We saw tremendous potential in this beautiful, rural area, and we were drawn to the natural beauty of the Pigeon River and the vibrant outdoor community it attracts. We knew that Mongo, though small and often overlooked, was a hidden gem, and we felt compelled to be a part of its growth and success.

Running a business in a small, unincorporated town comes with unique challenges. We rely heavily on tourism during the warmer months when visitors come to experience the Pigeon River for kayaking, canoeing, and other outdoor adventures. However, the infrastructure and amenities needed to support this influx of visitors have not kept pace with the growth in demand. The Stellar Pathways designation would provide crucial funding for projects that would not only enhance Mongo as a tourist destination but also improve the overall quality of life for our residents.

Our passion for this community extends beyond our business—we want to see Mongo develop into a place where families can flourish, where visitors are drawn to stay longer, and where future generations can experience the same sense of pride and belonging that we feel. The funding available through Stellar Pathways could make that vision a reality. From new park amenities to improved public spaces, this designation would help Mongo to fully realize its potential as a vibrant, attractive destination for both residents and tourists alike.

Thank you for considering LaGrange County for this incredible opportunity. The impact of Stellar Pathways on our small community would be profound, and we are excited to support this effort to bring lasting, meaningful change to Mongo.

Sincerely,



Andy & Jess Linder
 Owners
 Trading Post Outfitters

To Whom It May Concern,

We, Anthony and Cheri Riegling, owners of Destination 814, are proud to lend our support to Connect LaGrange County's Stellar Pathways initiative. As lifelong residents of Northeast Indiana, and active members of LaGrange County's business community, we have seen firsthand the importance of fostering growth and revitalization in our beloved community. For over 20 years, we have dedicated ourselves to creating vibrant, welcoming spaces through our ventures, from Grossman's Tap Room to CopperTop Tavern, and now, with Destination 814 in LaGrange. Each of our establishments has been more than a business; they are spaces where neighbors gather, friendships are formed, and LaGrange's local spirit thrives.

Destination 814 was born from our shared desire to reinvest in LaGrange and bring people together over good food, great music, and a fun atmosphere. We believe that strong, community-centered businesses like ours play a crucial role in the growth and vitality of LaGrange County. Our role in the community is not only to serve great food and drinks but also to create an inviting gathering space that enhances the quality of life here. We are passionate about supporting LaGrange's growth, and we see the Stellar Pathways initiative as an essential step toward making our area an even better place to live, work, and visit.

Connect LaGrange County's Stellar Pathways efforts align strongly with our goals as local business owners. As champions for community development, we are especially excited about projects focused on improving LaGrange's infrastructure and quality of life. These project, will help to create additional vibrant, usable public spaces, and promise to enhance the atmosphere of downtown LaGrange and attract more residents and visitors alike. Such initiatives are vital for drawing new life into our town center, supporting businesses, and fostering a strong sense of community pride.

We believe that the Stellar Pathways designation would be transformative for LaGrange County. By investing in community development, this initiative will help retain local talent, attract new businesses, and provide valuable amenities that benefit everyone. It's an opportunity to uplift our local economy, boost tourism throughout the entire county, and ensure that LaGrange remains a place where families, entrepreneurs, and visitors feel welcomed and engaged. We are proud to support this endeavor and look forward to seeing the positive impact it will bring to our community.

Thank you for your consideration of this meaningful initiative. We are confident that with the support of Connect LaGrange County and the Stellar Pathways designation, LaGrange County will continue to flourish and become an even more vibrant community.

Warm regards,



Anthony and Cheri Riegling
 Owners, Destination 814

Letters of Support & Resolutions

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of Heartland Mattress LLC, it is my pleasure to express our strong support for Connect LaGrange County and their Stellar Pathways initiative. As a business owner and resident of LaGrange County and an avid biker that has biked thousands of miles across the country, I am proud to witness the efforts Connect LaGrange County is putting into projects that will benefit our community both economically and socially. Their plans to enhance outdoor recreation by adding pickleball courts, improving parks, and developing new trails throughout the county will provide valuable resources for families and visitors alike, encouraging physical activity, community connection, and a higher quality of life.

At Heartland Mattress, we believe in creating products that bring comfort and value to people's lives, and this mission extends to our dedication to the community. As part of the fabric of LaGrange County, we understand that economic development and community well-being go hand in hand. The Stellar Pathways initiative aligns with this belief by investing in amenities and improvements that will enhance the area's appeal, helping to attract new residents, retain our youth, and promote the type of environment that strengthens local businesses.

Supporting community and economic development efforts in LaGrange County is essential for continued growth and prosperity. Connect LaGrange County's vision, with projects like parks improvements and recreational opportunities, will directly impact residents and businesses by creating a more vibrant and inviting community.

The Stellar Pathways initiative is an incredible opportunity for LaGrange County to solidify its standing as a wonderful place to raise a family and grow a business. I fully support this designation and recognize its potential to bring transformative benefits to our community. By fostering an atmosphere of innovation, wellness, and connectivity, Stellar Pathways will undoubtedly leave a lasting legacy for our county.

Heartland Mattress is grateful for the commitment Connect LaGrange County has shown to making these meaningful changes, and we are honored to lend our support.

Sincerely,



Mervin Lehman
 Owner, Heartland Mattress LLC



P.O. Box 1387 • Warsaw, Indiana 46581-1387 • (574) 267-6144

To the Stellar Pathways Selection Team:

On behalf of Lake City Bank, I am pleased to offer our support for Connect LaGrange County and their Stellar Pathways efforts. As a community bank committed to strengthening the local economy and supporting initiatives that enhance the quality of life for our residents, Lake City Bank is proud to support a vision that aligns so closely with our mission to serve and invest in LaGrange County.

At Lake City Bank, we play an integral role in the financial well-being of our community, and we are deeply invested in its economic development. Through our banking services and community involvement, we strive to provide opportunities that drive economic growth, build resilience, and enhance the overall quality of life for LaGrange County residents. We understand that a strong, vibrant community is foundational to the success of local businesses, and we are honored to be a part of this progress.

Community and economic development efforts like those proposed by Connect LaGrange County's Stellar Pathways initiative are vital to creating an environment where individuals and businesses can thrive. Projects that include new parks, expanded trails, and the addition of family-friendly amenities will not only enhance the physical landscape of LaGrange County but will also contribute to our collective well-being by fostering connections and supporting an active lifestyle. These efforts play a crucial role in making our community a desirable place to live, work, and visit, benefiting generations to come.

We entirely support the Stellar Pathways initiative, as it aligns with Lake City Bank's commitment to strengthening communities through investment and collaboration. The Stellar Pathways projects will create meaningful enhancements for LaGrange County that not only bring people together but also support local economic resilience and attract future growth. This designation represents a remarkable opportunity to amplify our county's appeal and further connect people with places they can be proud of.

The potential benefits of Stellar Pathways for LaGrange County are immeasurable, ranging from increased tourism and new business opportunities to stronger community pride and healthier lifestyles. The planned investments in parks, sidewalks, and trails will offer lasting value to all who call LaGrange County home. These enhancements are the building blocks of a thriving community, and Lake City Bank is honored to support Connect LaGrange County as they bring this vision to life.

Sincerely,



Maren L. Barton
 Assistant Vice President, Retail Banking Officer
 901 S Detroit St LaGrange, IN 46761
 260-463-4000 Fax 260-463-2090
 NMLS # 1932765



Documentation Showing Local Fundraising Capabilities During Project Implementation (LaGrange Splash Pad)

Fund Detail History

Date : 10/24/2024 07:41:43 AM
FUND_HIST_DETAIL.FRX

Fund 445
All History

FUND	ACCT PERIOD	TITLE	BEGIN YR BAL	RECEIPTS YTD	EXPENDED YTD	CURRENT BAL
445	12/2020	DONATION (PARK)	\$0.00	\$157114.14	\$155226.75	\$1887.39
DATE	DOC NUM	CK NUM	VENDOR / RECEIVED FROM	RECEIVED	EXPENDED	BAL
01/31/2020	21487		EFTHIMIOU, BALL & COMPANY LLC	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$500.00
01/31/2020	21488		API CONSTRUCTION CORP.	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$600.00
01/31/2020	21489		LARRY'S LOCK & SAFE SERVICE, INC	\$250.00	\$0.00	\$850.00
01/31/2020	21490		BONTRAGER FAMILY DENTISTRY, LLC	\$10000.00	\$0.00	\$10850.00
01/31/2020	21491		ANGOLA INSURANCE & SERVICES, LLC	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$11050.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 01/31/2020				\$11050.00	\$0.00	\$11050.00
02/07/2020	21520		SELKING INTERNATIONAL	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$11150.00
02/07/2020	21521		FRY, THROWBRIDGE & ASSOCIATES, PC	\$2500.00	\$0.00	\$13650.00
02/07/2020	21522		Donation fund #217	\$20000.00	\$0.00	\$33650.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 02/07/2020				\$22600.00	\$0.00	\$33650.00
02/10/2020	21525		ROBERT/ELAINE HOSTETLER	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$33750.00
02/10/2020	21526		FOREST RIVER	\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$34750.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 02/10/2020				\$1100.00	\$0.00	\$34750.00
02/11/2020	21530		BLACKBURN & GREEN	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$35250.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 02/11/2020				\$500.00	\$0.00	\$35250.00
02/13/2020	21536		Judy & Jim Milleman	\$20.00	\$0.00	\$35270.00
02/13/2020	21537		Jen Wines	\$5.00	\$0.00	\$35275.00
02/13/2020	21538		LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce	\$2500.00	\$0.00	\$37775.00
02/13/2020	21539		Community Chiropractic of LaGrange	\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$38775.00
02/13/2020	21540		LAGRANGE APARTMENTS	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$38875.00
02/13/2020	21541		Lewis & Lambright Inc	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$38975.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 02/13/2020				\$3725.00	\$0.00	\$38975.00
02/18/2020	21553		EDWARD & JUDITH KEIL FAMILY TRUST	\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$39975.00
02/18/2020	21554		LAKELAND TITLE COMPANY	\$2500.00	\$0.00	\$42475.00
02/18/2020	21557		CHARLES ASHCRAFT	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$42575.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 02/18/2020				\$3600.00	\$0.00	\$42575.00
02/20/2020	21571		Tim & Tammi Murray	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$42675.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 02/20/2020				\$100.00	\$0.00	\$42675.00
02/25/2020	21580		RADIANT HAIR SALON	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$42775.00
02/25/2020	21581		KAPPA KAPPA KAPPA INC.	\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$43775.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 02/25/2020				\$1100.00	\$0.00	\$43775.00
02/29/2020	21522		Donation fund #217	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$43775.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 02/29/2020				\$0.00	\$0.00	\$43775.00
03/02/2020	21598		KARA GARRETT	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$44275.00
03/02/2020	21599		FRITZ AND DIANE SCHLEMMER	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$44375.00
03/02/2020	21601		IRENE AND DARWIN LUTZ	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$44475.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 03/02/2020				\$700.00	\$0.00	\$44475.00
03/03/2020	21609		KARL AND MARY MCCORMICK FAMILY	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$44575.00
03/03/2020	21610		LAGRANGE MONUMENT WORKS	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$45075.00
03/03/2020	21611		FARMERS STATE BANK	\$10000.00	\$0.00	\$55075.00
03/03/2020	21613		ROBERT AND MICHELE NEFF	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$55275.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 03/03/2020				\$10800.00	\$0.00	\$55275.00
03/04/2020	21619		FOCUS LAGRANGE INC.	\$2000.00	\$0.00	\$57275.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 03/04/2020				\$2000.00	\$0.00	\$57275.00

Fund Detail History

Date : 10/24/2024 07:41:43 AM
FUND_HIST_DETAIL.FRX

03/05/2020	21624	ROBERT AND NANCY GLASNER	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$57375.00
03/05/2020	21625	VISION SOURCE- INNOVATIVE EYE CARE	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$57875.00
03/05/2020	21626	D. BRUCE CLEVELAND	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$57975.00
03/05/2020	21627	PEGGIE STRAWSER	\$25.00	\$0.00	\$58000.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 03/05/2020			\$725.00	\$0.00	\$58000.00
03/09/2020	21636	W.F. CONNELLY	\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$59000.00
03/09/2020	21638	HORIZON BANK	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$59200.00
03/09/2020	21639	HOWE LIONS CLUB	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$59300.00
03/09/2020	21640	EMPLOYEES OF FARMERS STATE BANK	\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$60300.00
03/09/2020	21641	JIM MILLEMAN	\$40.00	\$0.00	\$60340.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 03/09/2020			\$2340.00	\$0.00	\$60340.00
03/10/2020	21653	DBA HOWE LAGRANGE INSURANCE	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$60840.00
03/10/2020	21655	KENNETH AND TAMRA DUZAN	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$60940.00
03/10/2020	21656	HENRY AND GAIL GORE	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$61040.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 03/10/2020			\$700.00	\$0.00	\$61040.00
03/11/2020	21658	CATHY PHILLIP	\$25.00	\$0.00	\$61065.00
03/11/2020	21663	JOHN AND SHARON GRAYBILL	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$61265.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 03/11/2020			\$225.00	\$0.00	\$61265.00
03/12/2020	21671	MAXWELL LANG	\$50.00	\$0.00	\$61315.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 03/12/2020			\$50.00	\$0.00	\$61315.00
03/13/2020	21680	RAYMOND AND COLLEEN HOOVER	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$61415.00
03/13/2020	21681	LAGRANGE COUNTY SHRINE CLUB	\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$62415.00
03/13/2020	21682	MERIDIAN SUN LODGE	\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$63415.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 03/13/2020			\$2100.00	\$0.00	\$63415.00
03/16/2020	21685	RICHARD AND BETH SHERMAN	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$63515.00
03/16/2020	21686	Sons of the American Legion Post 215	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$64015.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 03/16/2020			\$600.00	\$0.00	\$64015.00
03/18/2020	21689	LAKE AREA DESIGNS	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$64215.00
03/18/2020	21690	LUTHERAN CHURCH WOMEN	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$64415.00
03/18/2020	21693	BRUCE AND MADELINE BORNMANN	\$25.00	\$0.00	\$64440.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 03/18/2020			\$425.00	\$0.00	\$64440.00
03/24/2020	21706	KING VETERINARY CLINIC	\$2500.00	\$0.00	\$66940.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 03/24/2020			\$2500.00	\$0.00	\$66940.00
03/26/2020	21715	FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH	\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$67940.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 03/26/2020			\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$67940.00
03/31/2020	21725	LAURIE MILLER	\$150.00	\$0.00	\$68090.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 03/31/2020			\$150.00	\$0.00	\$68090.00
04/02/2020	21743	MIAMI MOWING AND POWERWASHING	\$50.00	\$0.00	\$68140.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 04/02/2020			\$50.00	\$0.00	\$68140.00
04/06/2020	21747	Meredith Cameron/ Debra Lambright	\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$69140.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 04/06/2020			\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$69140.00
04/09/2020	21760	R.G. OR H.S. LEWIS	\$20.00	\$0.00	\$69160.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 04/09/2020			\$20.00	\$0.00	\$69160.00
04/13/2020	21765	STANLEY NOVAK	\$20.00	\$0.00	\$69180.00
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 04/13/2020			\$20.00	\$0.00	\$69180.00
04/27/2020	21813	LEWIS QUALITY HOMES, INC	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$69380.00
04/27/2020	21816	Creating Places Grant (Catalaunch)	\$55634.14	\$0.00	\$125014.14
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 04/27/2020			\$55834.14	\$0.00	\$125014.14

Documentation Showing Local Fundraising Capabilities During Project Implementation (LaGrange Splash Pad)

Page : 3

Fund Detail History

Date : 10/24/2024 07:41:43 AM
FUND_HIST_DETAIL.FRX

05/06/2020	21849	Travis & Carolyn Glick	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$125514.14	
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 05/06/2020			\$500.00	\$0.00	\$125514.14	
05/11/2020	21860	TRENTON AND LINDSEY COWLEY	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$125614.14	
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 05/11/2020			\$100.00	\$0.00	\$125614.14	
05/14/2020	21878	DIANE CAMERON	\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$126614.14	
05/14/2020	21889	DIANE CAMERON	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$126614.14	
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 05/14/2020			\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$126614.14	
05/18/2020	21887	PHP	\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$127614.14	
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 05/18/2020			\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$127614.14	
05/27/2020	21915	INTERRA CREDIT UNION	\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$128614.14	
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 05/27/2020			\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$128614.14	
06/16/2020	14164	25831	COUNTY LINE COMPANIES	\$0.00	\$32500.00	\$96114.14
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 06/16/2020			\$0.00	\$32500.00	\$96114.14	
07/13/2020	22055	LAGRANGE COUNTY COMMUNITY	\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$97114.14	
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 07/13/2020			\$1000.00	\$0.00	\$97114.14	
07/21/2020	14381	25890	COUNTY LINE COMPANIES	\$0.00	\$41140.00	\$55974.14
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 07/21/2020			\$0.00	\$41140.00	\$55974.14	
08/04/2020	14474	25921	COUNTY LINE COMPANIES	\$0.00	\$26688.75	\$29285.39
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 08/04/2020			\$0.00	\$26688.75	\$29285.39	
08/24/2020	22206	THE DEKKO FOUNDATION	\$25000.00	\$0.00	\$54285.39	
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 08/24/2020			\$25000.00	\$0.00	\$54285.39	
11/17/2020	15122	26123	COUNTY LINE COMPANIES	\$0.00	\$7898.00	\$46387.39
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 11/17/2020			\$0.00	\$7898.00	\$46387.39	
11/23/2020	22506	PARKVIEW LAGRANGE HOSPITAL	\$2500.00	\$0.00	\$48887.39	
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 11/23/2020			\$2500.00	\$0.00	\$48887.39	
12/07/2020	15253	26163	COUNTY LINE COMPANIES	\$0.00	\$47000.00	\$1887.39
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 12/07/2020			\$0.00	\$47000.00	\$1887.39	
12/22/2020	15253	26163	COUNTY LINE COMPANIES	\$0.00	\$-47000.00	\$48887.39
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 12/22/2020			\$0.00	\$-47000.00	\$48887.39	
12/23/2020	15336	26196	COUNTY LINE COMPANIES	\$0.00	\$47000.00	\$1887.39
DAILY SUMMARY FOR 12/23/2020			\$0.00	\$47000.00	\$1887.39	
Fund # 445 SubTotal			\$157114.14	\$155226.75	\$1887.39	
*** GRAND TOTAL ***			\$157114.14	\$155226.75		

