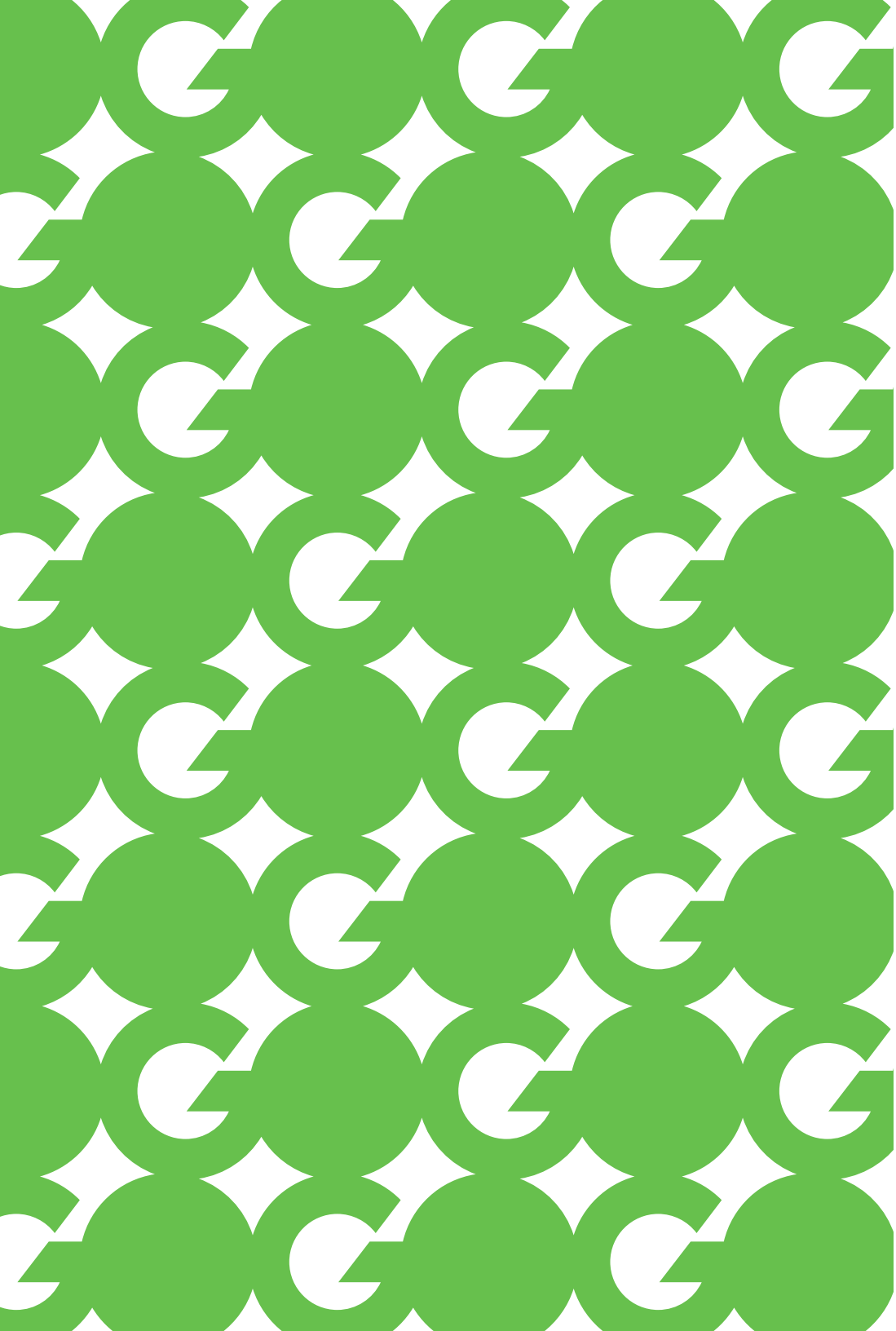




Gibson County Housing Needs Assessment

GIBSON COUNTY ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION



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Introduction

Gibson County, Indiana

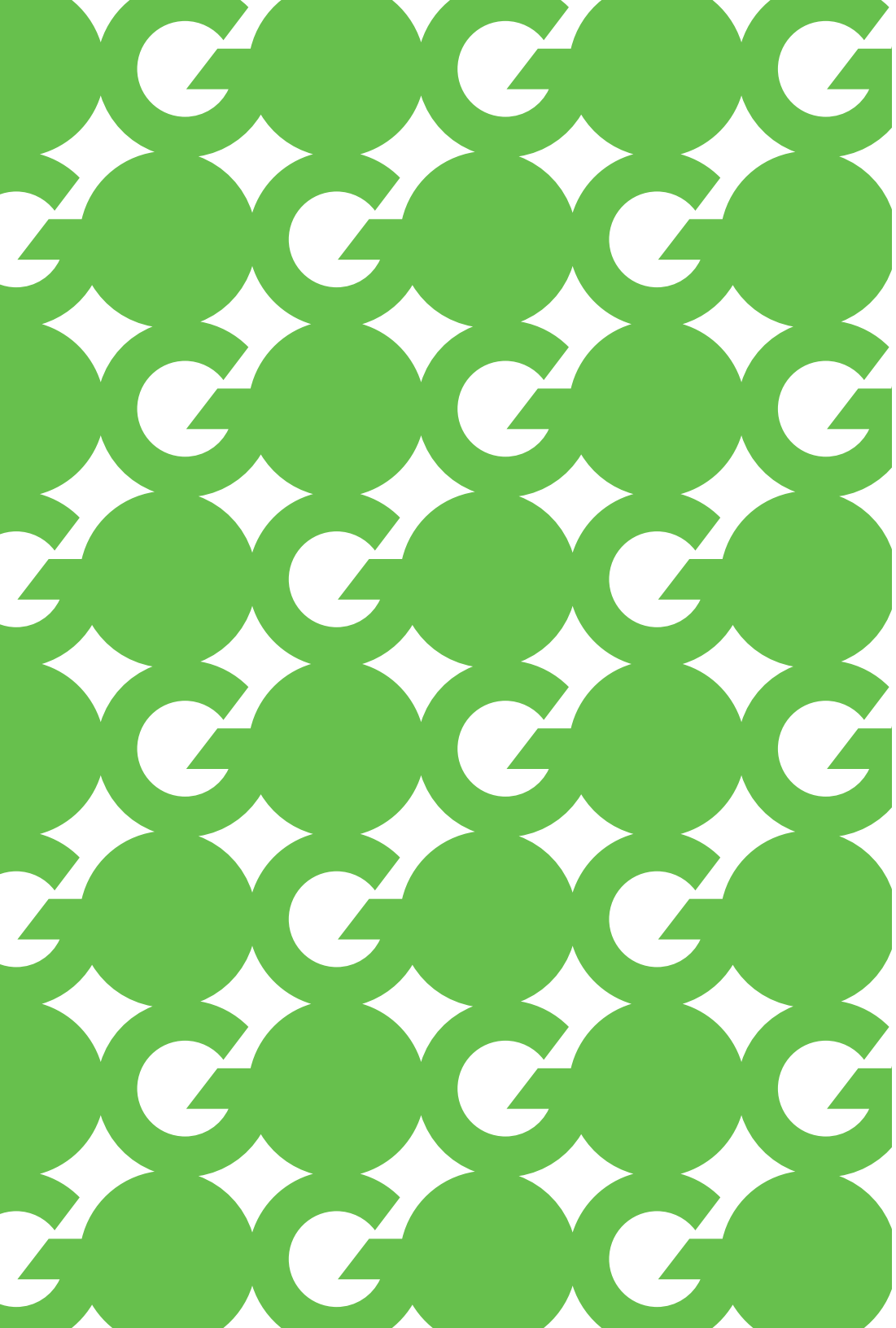
Gibson County, Indiana, is a rural community located in the southwestern corner of the state. Home to roughly 33,000 people, the county has maintained its small-town charm for many decades. While many of its best features – like rolling farmlands, tight-knit communities, and historic architecture – have remained the same, new growth in the county and surrounding region is impacting the local economy. As major employers expand and the workforce changes, new demands are being placed upon the housing market. To proactively address this wave of growth, local leaders are working together to map out a vision for the county's future with a specific eye to strategic housing development.

Project Scope

In 2024, the Gibson County Economic Development Corporation and the Gibson County Community Foundation partnered with Thomas P. Miller & Associates (TPMA) to conduct a Housing Needs Assessment. As the county continues to experience new growth, it is important to ensure that an adequate supply of housing is available to support the community's needs. This study is intended to serve as a tool to help county officials and community leaders make informed decisions regarding new housing development.

Process & Methodology

A multi-faceted approach was taken to evaluate the housing needs of the county. First, a comprehensive review of relevant planning documents was conducted. Next, a robust analysis of quantitative data – collected from a variety of public and private data sources – was undertaken. Then, with a preliminary understanding of some of the most pressing challenges faced by the county, local stakeholders were engaged. A public opinion survey was circulated throughout the county, and in-person focus groups were held with many community representatives. Finally, taking into consideration all the information collected throughout the foregoing process, a set of goals and strategies were crafted to address the county's current housing needs. In the report to follow, each step in this process is outlined and key findings are provided.



Document Review

Document Review

To understand current conditions in Gibson County, the project team collected and reviewed a variety of local plans and reports. These documents can provide insight into past planning projects and goals outlined in previous studies. With this context, newly formulated strategies can build on existing efforts and avoid obstacles that might have inhibited progress in the past. Specifically, this review sought to collect information on previously recommended strategies, existing and planned projects, and community strengths and assets.

Documents Reviewed

The project team reviewed four planning documents:

- City of Princeton Comprehensive Plan
- Downtown Princeton Neighborhood Housing Strategy
- Oakland City Comprehensive Plan 2035
- Oakland City Housing Assessment

A brief summary of key findings is provided below.

City of Princeton Comprehensive Plan

Completed in August 2023, the City of Princeton Comprehensive Plan outlines the vision, plan, and goals of the City of Princeton. Five goals were defined:

- Promote diverse, quality, affordable, and desirable housing types for residents of all income levels and familial needs while encouraging healthy, safe, connected, active, and livable communities with a focus on a high standard of living in existing and future neighborhoods.
- Encourage community pride by providing opportunities for reinvestment and redevelopment, promoting beautification, implementing placemaking techniques, protecting existing neighborhood character and history, and fostering a safe and healthy environment with appropriate land uses of varying densities that provide quality places to live, work, and play.
- Support policies that balance nature and the built environment and conserve open space landscapes.
- Coordinate with the city and regional partners to promote innovative and diverse economic development by attracting, retaining, and growing new and existing commercial, industrial, and local businesses.
- Strive for efficient and safe transportation through all systems while ensuring connectivity throughout the city.

Given that housing is the focus of the present report, special attention was given to the strategies recommended for accomplishing the first goal. Several strategies were outlined, relating to infrastructure funding, code enforcement, modifications to the zoning ordinance, and the support of specific development types, as well as a variety of community improvements that could have an indirect impact on housing development.

Downtown Princeton Neighborhood Housing Strategy

The Downtown Princeton Neighborhood Housing Strategy was completed in July 2021 and intended to be an amendment to the City of Princeton 2009 Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The housing strategy is cited to be driven by a strong need for affordable and workforce housing development in the city. Six policy goals for redeveloping under-utilized sites are provided at the conclusion of the report.

- Provide high-quality, diverse housing choices.
- Restore empty properties to the tax base.
- Improve neighborhood safety, services, and capacities.
- Revive commercial activity.
- Accelerate economic development.
- Enhance local public schools.
- In addition, three target sites are identified as having high potential for reuse as housing:
 - The former middle school site at 410 E. State Street, between Race and Seminary streets.
 - The former Universal Scientific site at W. Warnock Street, between 2nd and 4th streets.
 - The former elementary school site at 800 South Prince St., between Christian and Illinois streets.

Ultimately, the goal of the report is to attract new interest and investment to the area. These site analyses and strategies provide a foundation for doing so.

Oakland City Comprehensive Plan 2035

The Oakland City Comprehensive Plan 2035 was completed in August 2022. The objective of the plan was to guide growth and development within Oakland City. Several focus areas were discussed in the report, including placemaking, economic development, transportation, and housing, to name a few. Housing-specific strategies were defined as follows:

- Establish programs and resources to improve the condition of Oakland City's housing stock.
- Improve communication between the city administration, renters, and landlords.
- Promote homeownership opportunities for all individuals regardless of their income status.
- Expand the types of housing options available within Oakland City

In addition to the objectives outlined above, some key takeaways of the report include the following:

- The top challenges identified include community appearance, housing conditions, access to youth activities and programs, and resistance to change.
- When participants were asked about future development, single-family residential, neighborhood services, and general businesses were the most desirable land uses.
- The community needs to prioritize population growth to keep the school open.
- Participants felt access to jobs, affordable housing, reliable public services, and a strong school system were very important elements of quality of life.

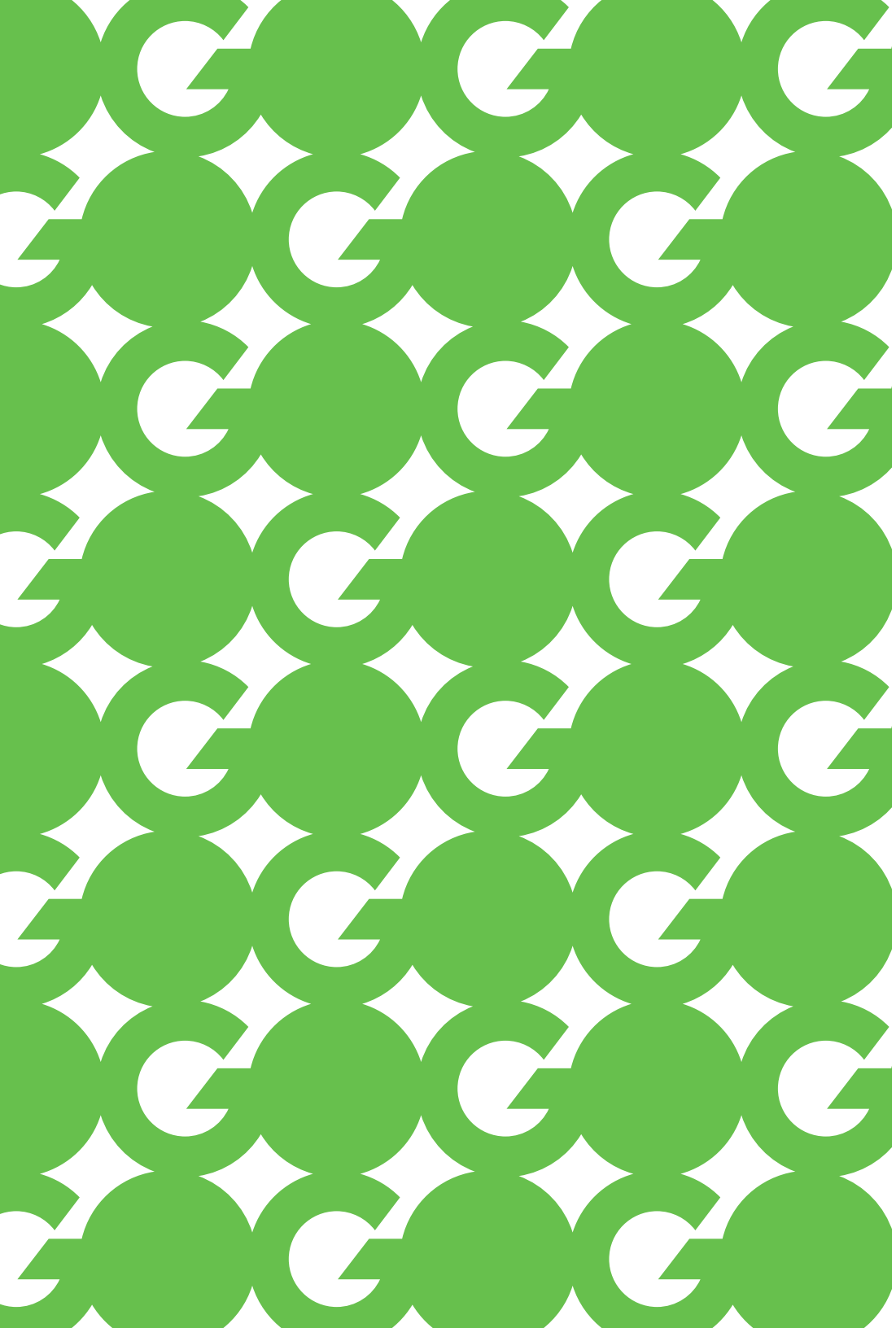
Oakland City Housing Assessment

To prepare for an application for a USDA infrastructure grant to support housing development, Oakland City conducted a housing needs assessment in April 2023. The Primary Market Area (PMA) of this study included all of Gibson County and a northern section of Vanderburgh County. Key findings are summarized below:

- A variety of data were provided throughout the report which indicate unmet demand for new housing in the PMA. The authors of the report expect continued demand for both owner- and renter-occupied housing options.
- Favorable economic conditions in the PMA could lead to population growth, which will increase the demand (and likely cost) of housing.
- Economic data and housing stock analysis indicate high unmet demand for affordable and market-rate multifamily housing.
- Significant increases in costs of single-family homes, paired with a preference of many residents for low-density housing, could drive development of for-sale single-family homes.

Since the release of this Oakland City Housing Assessment, more recent data have become available and will be analyzed throughout the present report.





Data Analysis

The plan's quantitative data analysis has been broken into three sections: demographics & workforce, housing stock, and housing analysis and demand. The data below have been used to guide the stakeholder engagement sessions and are ultimately the foundation of many of the recommendations provided at the conclusion of the report.

Data Analysis

Demographics & Workforce

Population Trend

Since 2000, the population in Gibson County has hovered between 32,500 and 33,500 people. As of the most recent population count in 2020, there were roughly 33,000 people living in the county. As is the case for many rural communities, Gibson County's population is projected to decline over the next 10-15 years. However, it should be noted that the models which produce these projections do not always take into consideration all the economic conditions specific to the community of focus. For example, Toyota Motor Manufacturing Indiana has announced that it plans to expand its operations in Gibson County in the coming years, which will attract a larger workforce to the area. This development will likely result in considerable population growth over the next decade, even if the predictive models do not anticipate it. Moreover, population growth often follows infrastructure; if new housing and supportive infrastructure is developed to support a growing population, that growth will be achieved.

When evaluating county-wide growth trends, it can be helpful to measure the growth of smaller communities within the county. In Figure 2, a map of historical population growth at the Census Block Group level is provided. Between 2012 and 2022, some areas of the county - mostly in the northern and eastern regions - experienced population decline. Other areas, however - such as the central and southern regions - saw their populations grow over the ten-year period. This map demonstrates that specific communities within the county are changing in different ways; therefore, each community will require housing solutions that can be adapted to their specific needs.

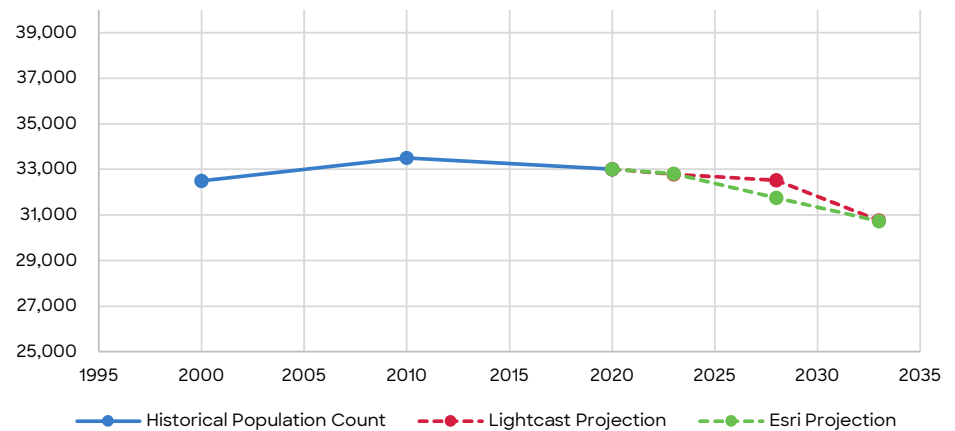


Figure 1: Population Trend. Source: U.S. Census; Lightcast 2024.2; Esri, 2024

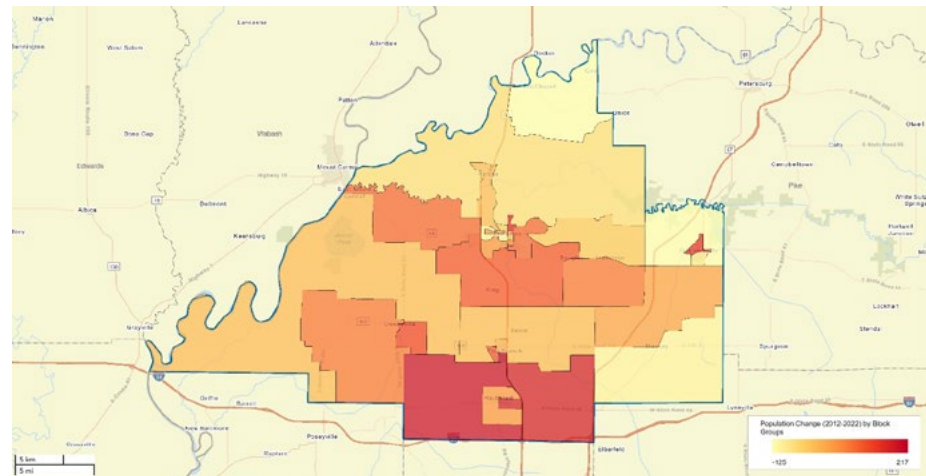


Figure 2: Local Population Change by Census Block Group. Source: Esri, 2024

Aging Characteristics

Between 2012 and 2022, the age distribution in Gibson County remained relatively unchanged. The most notable shift in age demographics can be seen in the population over the age of 65 years. Over the ten-year period, the portion of the population comprised of this age group increased by about 2.1 percentage points. As is the case throughout much of the country, Gibson County is seeing an increase in the senior population. The “Baby Boomer” generation - which includes people born between 1946 and 1964 - is aging, and an older population is beginning to make up a larger part of the population. An aging demographic can affect the workforce, healthcare, and housing, as older individuals have unique needs in all these areas.

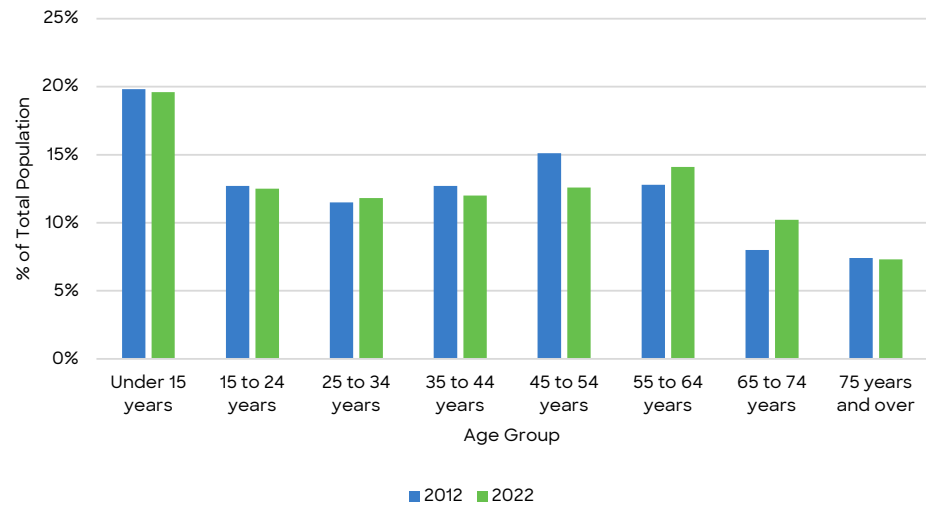


Figure 3: Age Distribution. Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

Population by Race

Racially, Gibson County’s population is relatively homogenous. As of the 2020 Census, more than 91% of residents were White. Black or African American individuals made up 1.79% of the total population. The remaining 6-7% of the population is comprised of individuals of some other race or a combination of two or more races.

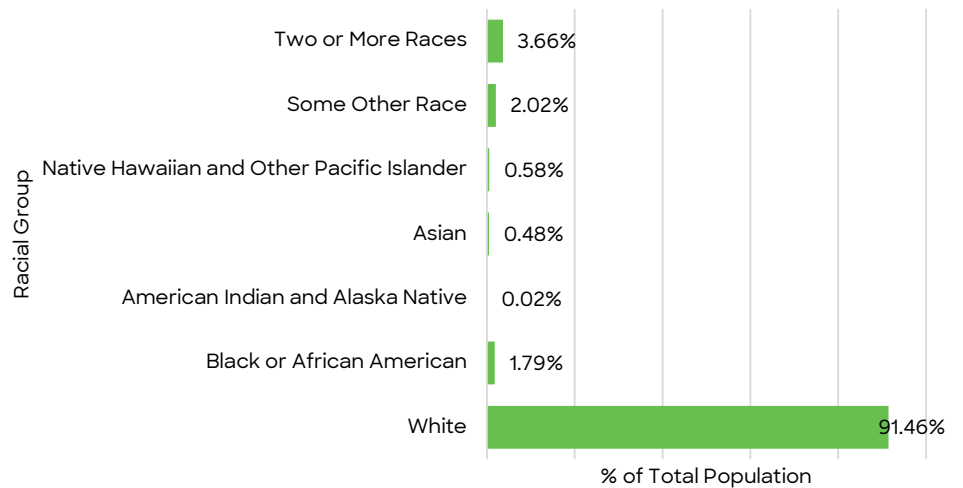


Figure 4: Population by Race. Source: 2020 U.S. Census

Household Income

As of 2022, the median household income in Gibson County was \$64,153. As illustrated in Figure 5, incomes are fairly evenly distributed in the county. About 22.9% of households earn less than \$35,000 annually. The majority of households – about 67.2% – earn between \$35,000 and \$150,000 annually. Approximately 9.9% of households earn more than \$150,000 per year.

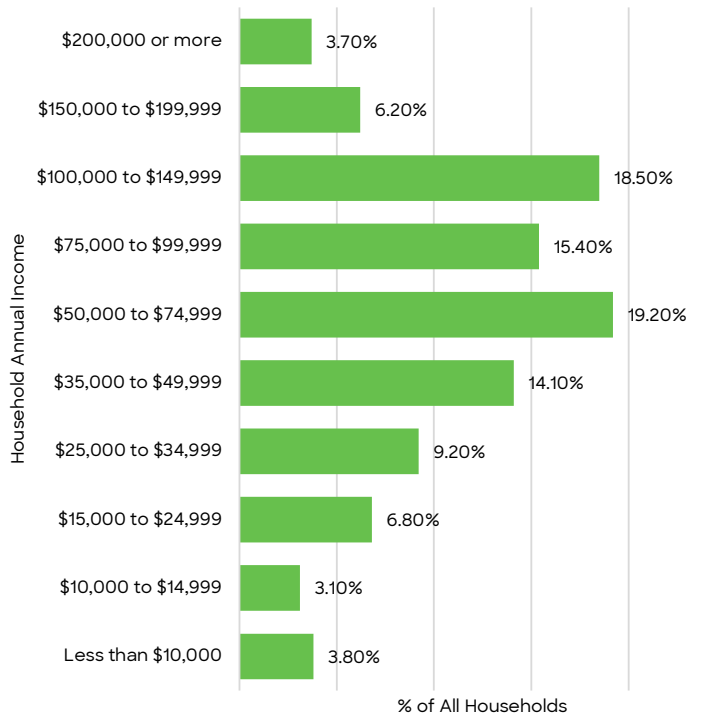


Figure 5: Household Income. Source: ACS 2022 5-Year Estimates



Industry Breakdown

In Figure 6, employment in the county is categorized by industry. Due to the presence of Toyota Motor Manufacturing Indiana, the manufacturing industry employs more than six times as many workers as any other industry in the county. In 2024, this industry employed nearly 11,400 workers. The local importance of this industry is expected to increase as Toyota Motor Manufacturing Indiana expands its operations. The next highest-employing industries are the Retail Trade, Government, and Healthcare and Social Assistance industries. Collectively, these industries employ more than 4,400 workers.

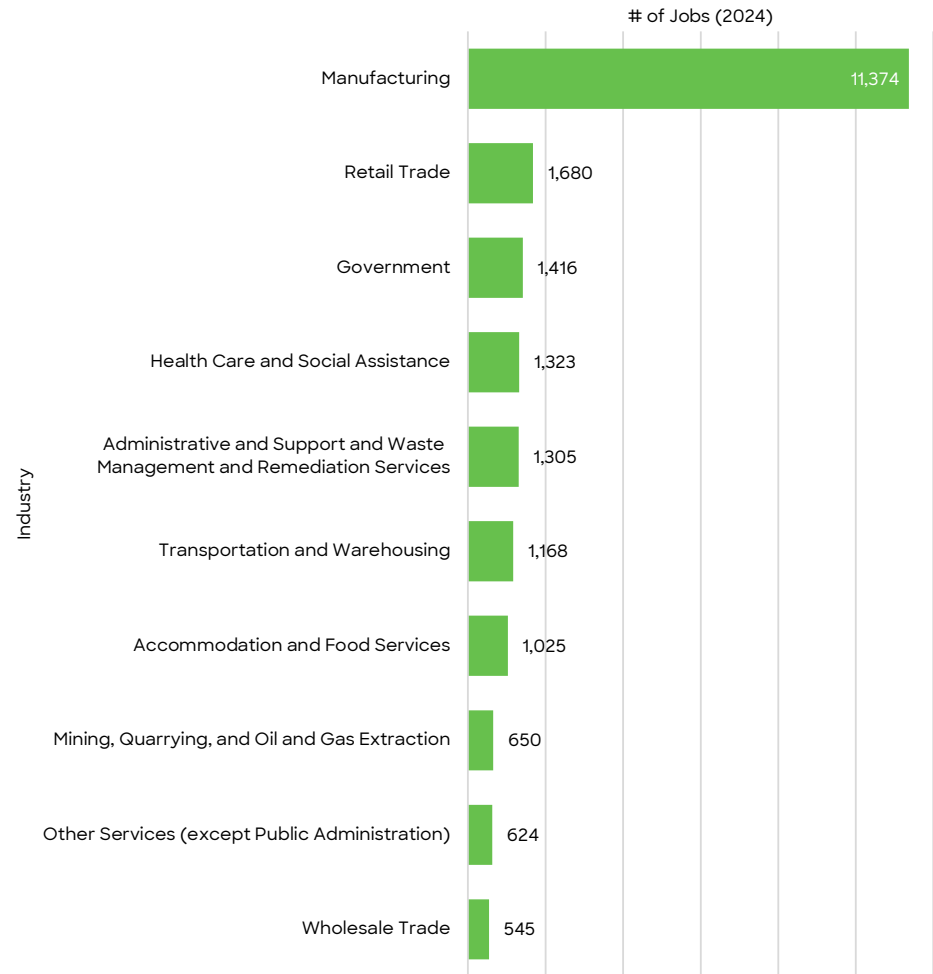


Figure 6: Top Industries by Employment. Source: Lightcast 2024.2

Commuting Patterns

The economic reach of the Toyota Motor Manufacturing Indiana plant extends far beyond the borders of Gibson County. As can be seen in Figures 7 and 8, the regional workforce is geographically fluid. In other words, workers throughout the region have demonstrated that they are willing to tolerate long commutes. In one sense, these commuting patterns exhibit a strength of Gibson County: the local business environment is enough to attract workers from beyond county borders, and the county's economy benefits as a result. At the same time, however, it is important to acknowledge that many of the inbound commuters would likely choose to live closer to their place of employment if suitable housing options existed. High inbound commuting patterns can indicate a shortage of housing; additional housing development could allow the county to retain some of the inbound commuters as permanent residents, which would support future growth.

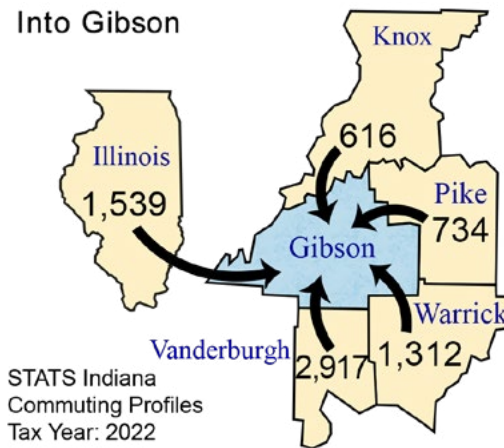


Figure 7: Inbound Commuting Patterns. Source: STATS Indiana, 2022

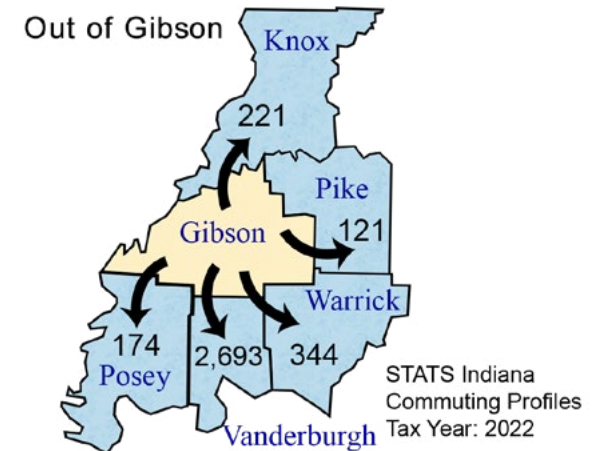


Figure 8: Outbound Commuting Patterns. Source: STATS Indiana, 2022

In Table 1, a more detailed breakdown of commuting patterns in Gibson County is provided. This table includes counties which either send or receive at least 10 people into or out of Gibson County.

| County Name | Commute Into Gibson County From | % of Gibson County Workforce | Commute Out of Gibson County To | % of Gibson County Labor Force |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| OUT OF STATE ¹ | 440 | 1.6 | 116 | 0.5 |
| CRAWFORD COUNTY | 16 | 0.1 | 1 | 0.0 |
| DAVISS COUNTY | 185 | 0.7 | 38 | 0.2 |
| DUBOIS COUNTY | 195 | 0.7 | 97 | 0.4 |
| GREENE COUNTY | 25 | 0.1 | 4 | 0.0 |
| KNOX COUNTY | 616 | 2.2 | 221 | 1.0 |
| MARION COUNTY | 4 | 0.0 | 20 | 0.1 |
| MARTIN COUNTY | 18 | 0.1 | 13 | 0.1 |
| MONROE COUNTY | 3 | 0.0 | 15 | 0.1 |
| PERRY COUNTY | 29 | 0.1 | 7 | 0.0 |
| PIKE COUNTY | 734 | 2.6 | 121 | 0.5 |
| POSEY COUNTY | 377 | 1.3 | 174 | 0.8 |
| SPENCER COUNTY | 133 | 0.5 | 16 | 0.1 |
| SULLIVAN COUNTY | 69 | 0.2 | 5 | 0.0 |
| VANDEBURGH COUNTY | 2917 | 10.4 | 2693 | 11.7 |
| WARRICK COUNTY | 1312 | 4.7 | 344 | 1.5 |
| ILLINOIS | 1539 | 5.5 | 120 | 0.5 |
| KENTUCKY | 266 | 1.0 | 47 | 0.2 |
| WISCONSIN | 37 | 0.1 | 1 | 0.0 |

Table 1: Detailed Commuting Patterns. Source: STATS Indiana, 2022

¹ Commuters to/from Illinois, Kentucky, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania are shown separately and are not included in the “Out of State” category.

Top Occupations & Earnings

An analysis of occupational earnings can be helpful for understanding what “affordable housing” means within the context of Gibson County. In Figure 9, the top ten occupations (by number of jobs in the county) are provided; in addition, the average annual earnings of a worker in each of those occupations is provided. The most common occupation – Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators – provides an average annual salary of roughly \$48,000. Some occupations, such as First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers earn higher salaries, typically greater than \$63,000 per year. Still others, such as Cashiers and Retail Salespersons, earn lower salaries, typically below \$35,000 per year. As workers within the county earn substantially different wages, their housing needs are quite diverse. The development of a diverse housing stock is critical for meeting the needs of a diverse population.

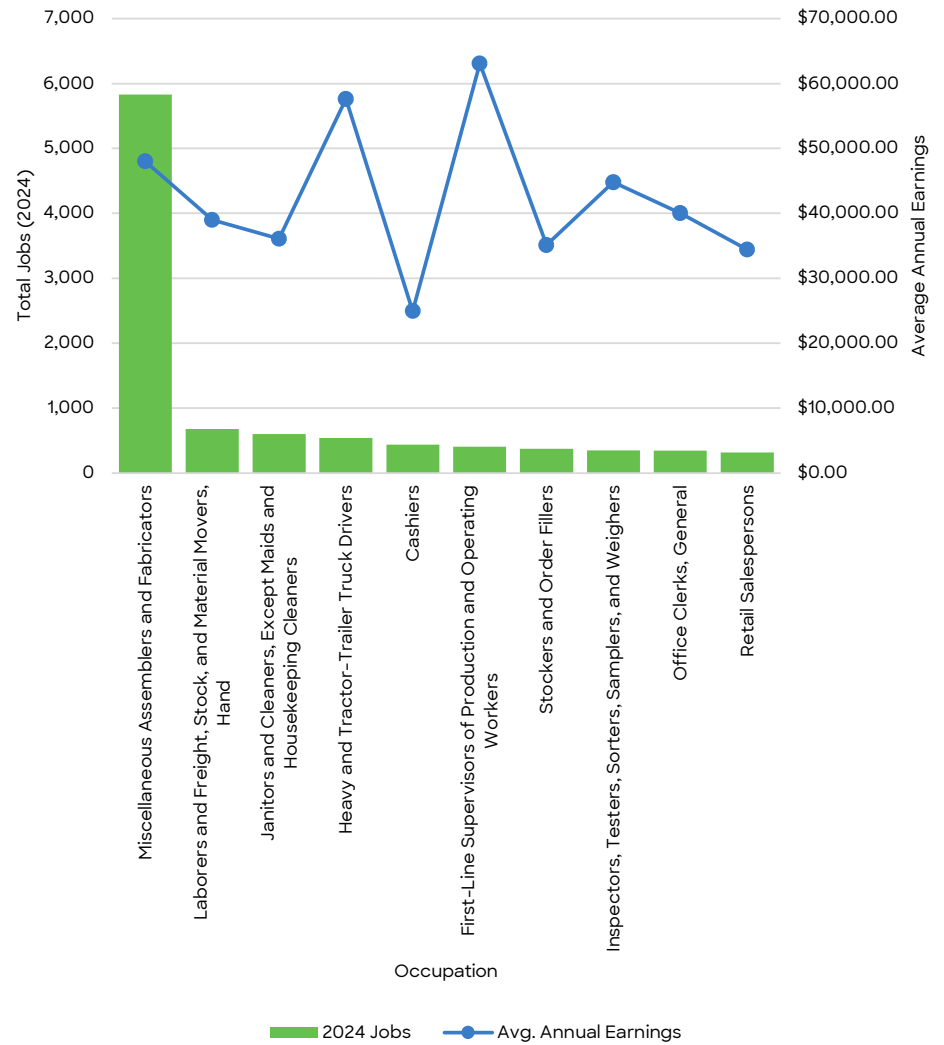


Figure 9: Top Occupations & Earnings. Source: Lightcast 2024.2

Poverty

The Census Bureau’s poverty thresholds are updated annually and vary based on family size and age of the family members. As of 2022, approximately 3,200 people in Gibson County were estimated to be living below the poverty level. 846 children under the age of 18 years were found to be living below the poverty level, as were 462 seniors over the age of 65 years. These data indicate a need for support services tailored to assist residents of all ages struggling with financial insecurity.

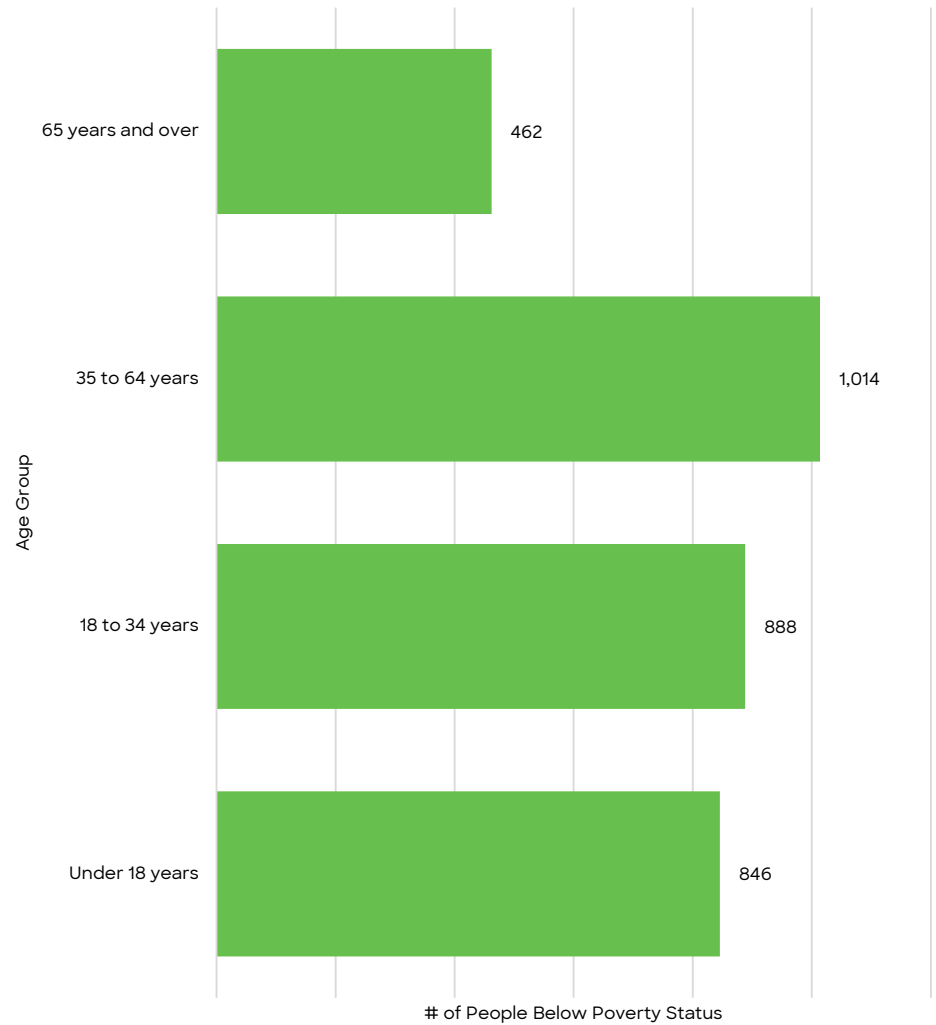


Figure 10: Poverty by Age. Source: ACS 2022 5-Year Estimates

Housing Stock

Housing by Year Built

In Figure 11, a breakdown of the age of the housing stock in Gibson County is provided. While development has occurred fairly continuously over the last several decades, a couple of key findings stand out in the graph. First, it is noteworthy that nearly 20% of Gibson County homes were built before 1940. This older housing stock affects the housing market in a couple of ways. In one sense, older homes can be charming and full of character; this can increase the appeal of the community and attract new families to the area. In another sense, however, older homes can be more difficult to maintain. The costs of general upkeep in an older home can be much higher than in newer homes, which could decrease overall affordability.

The second point of interest is the most recent development category. Slightly more than 9% of the housing units in Gibson County were built since 2010. This category (2010–2022) spans a longer timeframe than the others, but relatively few homes have been developed within it. This indicates that housing development has slowed in recent years. If the population is expected to grow, new development will be required to minimize increases in housing costs.

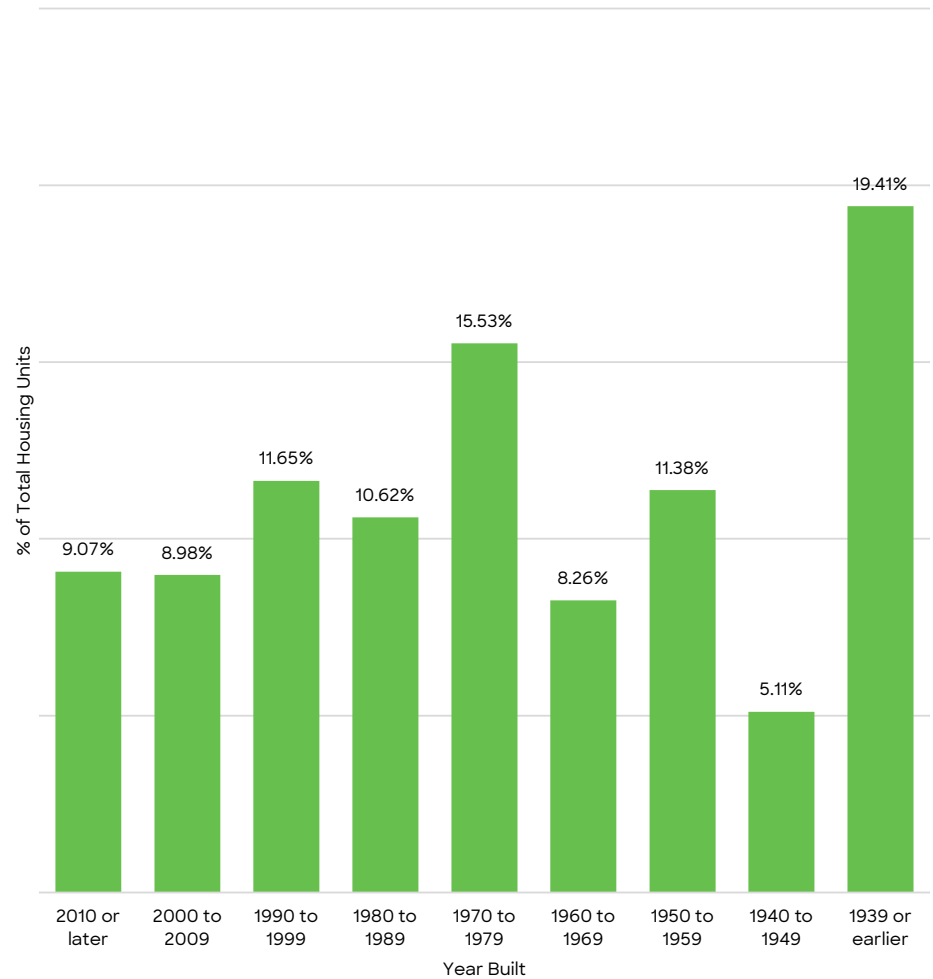


Figure 11: Housing by Year Built. Source: ACS 2022 5-Year Estimates

Housing by Type

As is the case for much of rural Indiana, the majority of housing units in Gibson County can be categorized as single-family, detached units. While the demand for single-family homes is likely to persist for years to come, it can be important to diversify the housing stock to meet a variety of residents' needs. Especially in more concentrated downtown areas, higher density development could be attractive to smaller households, or households which are not prepared to make a long-term commitment to a larger home. A diversity of housing stock supports a diverse population, and demand for a variety of housing options could increase in the future.

Single-Family Home Values

Single-family home values have increased dramatically in Gibson County over the last 12 years. In 2012, the typical value of a single-family home was approximately \$102,000; in 2024, that value has risen to more than \$194,000. Over this 12-year period, costs have increased by more than 90%. This increase could be contributed to a number of factors, such as population shifts, changes in employment patterns, and broader building supply chain expenses; whatever the cause, it is clear that the accessibility of housing within the county has decreased as prices have increased. A successful housing strategy will aim to address increases in costs and reduce barriers to attaining suitable housing.

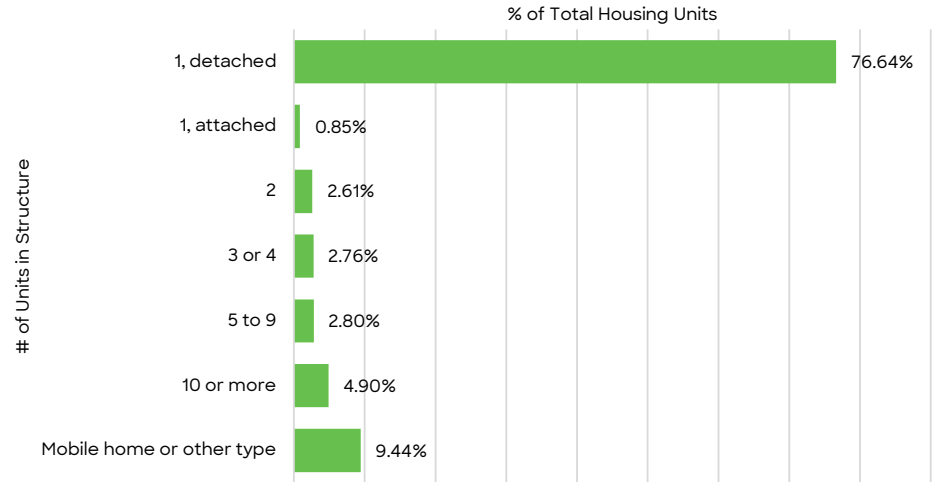


Figure 12: Housing by Type. Source: ACS 2022 5-Year Estimates

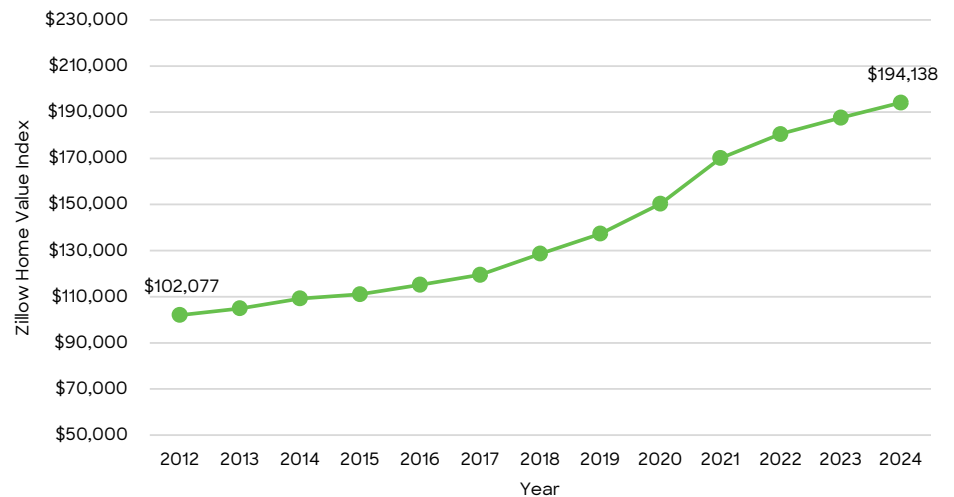


Figure 13: Single-Family Home Values. Source: Zillow.com, 2024

Rental Costs

As single-family home values have increased, so have rental values. Between 2014 and 2024, the average asking rent per unit in Gibson County increased from \$817 per month to \$957 per month. These figures include rent only, and do not account for utilities, insurance, or any other housing-related costs. This increase of 17% in monthly rent indicates a high demand for rental options within the county.

Rental costs are measured for the same period of time in Figure 15, but in this graph, costs are categorized by the number of bedrooms per unit. Costs of 1- and 2-bedroom units increased by 20% and 19%, respectively, between 2014 and 2024. Costs of 3-bedroom units increased by about 13% over the same period. This indicates a greater demand for smaller rental units with fewer than 3 bedrooms.

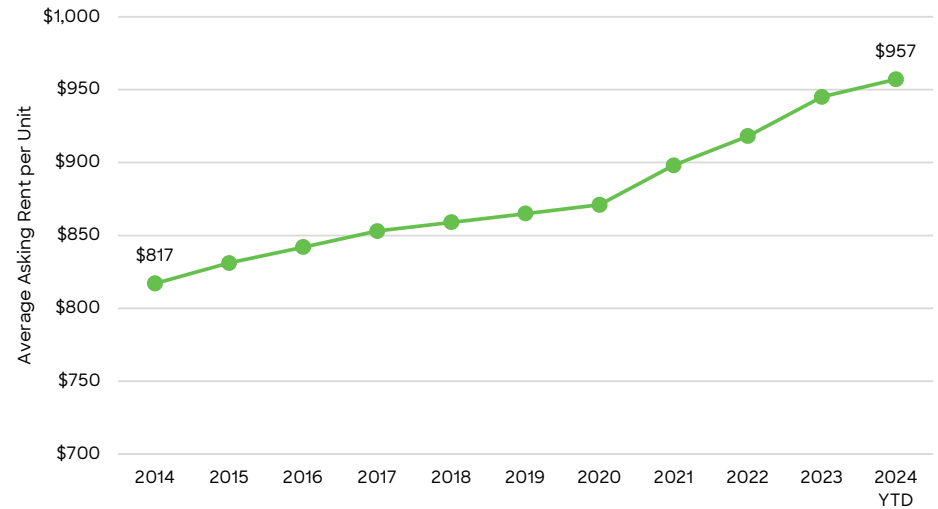


Figure 14: Market Asking Rent per Unit. Source: CoStar, 2024

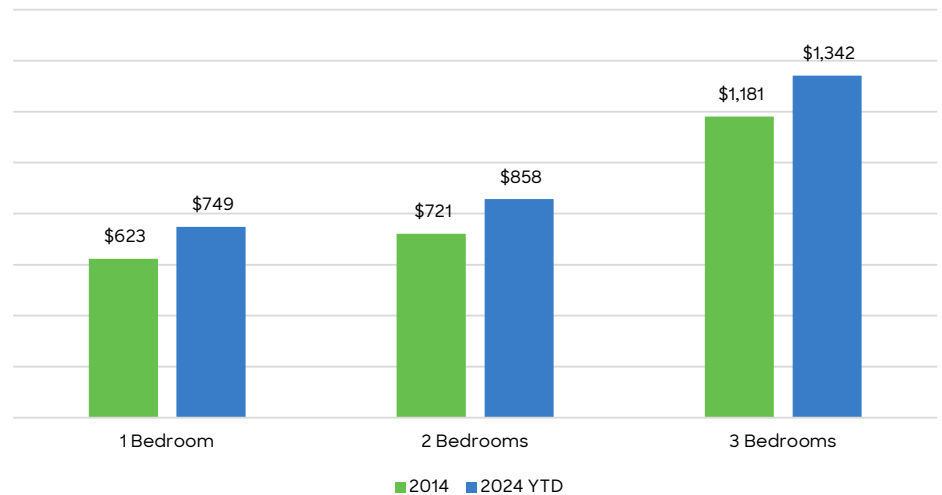


Figure 15: Average Asking Rent by Number of Bedrooms. Source: CoStar, 2024

Renter-Occupied Housing by Type

In Figure 16, the renter-occupied housing units are categorized by type. Roughly 41% of renter households occupy single-family, detached homes. After single-family homes, high-density housing structures, or those which contain 10 or more units, are the next most common options for rental households. About 9% occupy mobile homes or some other type of housing unit. The remaining 31% of renter households occupy units in medium-density structures, or buildings which contain between 2 and 9 units.

Vacancy Rates

Over the last decade, vacancy rates have remained relatively stable in Gibson County. As of 2022, approximately 11.5% of the county's housing units were vacant. As demand for housing increases, it is likely that vacancy rates will fall in an effort to maximize the available supply of housing.

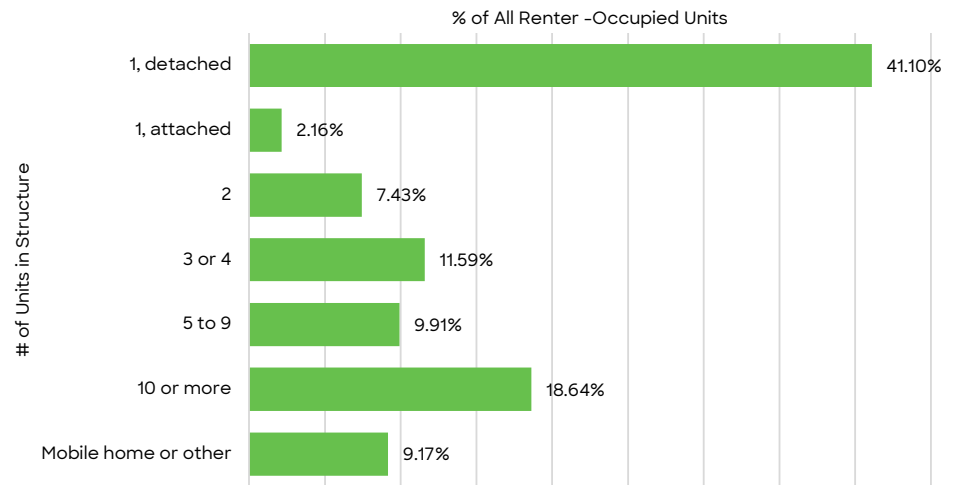


Figure 16: Renter-Occupied Units by Type. Source: ACS 2022 5-Year Estimates

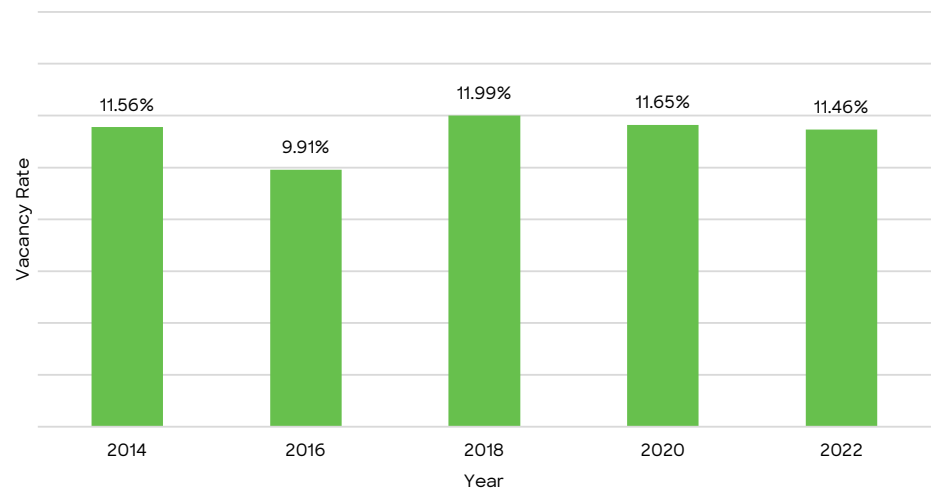


Figure 17: Historical Vacancy Rates. Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

LIHTC Inventory

The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program is one of the primary federal tools for creating affordable housing. This program provides tax credits to developers in exchange for a commitment to provide affordable rent, based on the Area Median Income (AMI) for a period of thirty years. LIHTC-sponsored housing is a critical provider of affordable housing throughout the country.

As of this writing in 2024, there are 66 low-income units in Gibson County, distributed between 3 LIHTC-sponsored developments. Over the next ten years, 48 of those units are set to expire, which means the contracts that ensure affordable rents are maintained will terminate. It is likely that many, if not all, of these units will be converted to market-rate housing following the termination of the contracts. Efforts to expand or retain LIHTC development can help ensure long-term housing affordability.

| Property Name | Property Address | City | Total Low-Income Units | Contract End Year |
|----------------------------|-------------------|--------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| BRUMFIELD PLACE APARTMENTS | 400 N Ford St. | Princeton | 24 | 2032 |
| MAIN STREET COTTAGES | 228 Main St. | Princeton | 18 | 2045 |
| PLEASANT VIEW | 1105 W Morton St. | Oakland City | 24 | 2027 |

Table 2: LIHTC Inventory. Source: Novogradac, 2024



Housing Analysis & Demand

Fair Market Rent & Affordability Analysis

According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Median Family Income (MFI) for Gibson County was \$86,200 per year in 2024. Using this MFI estimate, Table 3 breaks down local income brackets along with the maximum housing cost threshold for housing cost burden.

Fair Market Rent (FMR) is a metric created by HUD to determine appropriate payment obligations for a variety of housing assistance programs. FMRs vary by geography and are updated on an annual basis. In Table 4, FMRs are provided by the number of bedrooms in a unit for fiscal years 2023 and 2024.

| | Median Family Income (MFI) | Median Monthly Income | Monthly Housing Cost Burden Threshold |
|----------|----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| MFI | \$86,200 | \$7,183 | \$2,155 |
| 120% MHI | \$103,440 | \$8,620 | \$2,586 |
| 80% MHI | \$68,960 | \$5,747 | \$1,724 |
| 60% MHI | \$51,720 | \$4,310 | \$1,293 |
| 30% MHI | \$25,860 | \$2,155 | \$647 |

Table 3: Affordability Analysis. Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2024

Final FY 2024 & Final FY 2023 FMRs By Unit Bedrooms

| Year | Efficiency | One-Bedroom | Two-Bedroom | Three-Bedroom | Four-Bedroom |
|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| FY 2024 FMR | \$723 | \$727 | \$883 | \$1,172 | \$1,176 |
| FY 2023 FMR | \$690 | \$694 | \$826 | \$1,105 | \$1,110 |

Table 4: Fair Market Rent Values. Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2024

HUD Income Limits

The figures in Table 5 present HUD’s income limits for 2024. These limits are calculated using the Median Family Income to set affordability thresholds. There are three income designations: Low Income (family earns 80% of MFI), Very Low Income (family earns 50% of MFI), and Extremely Low Income (family earns 30% of MFI). These figures are updated on an annual basis.



| 2024 Income Limit Area | Median Family Income | FY 2024 Income Limit Category | Persons in Family | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|--|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Gibson County, IN | \$86,200 | Low (80%) Income Limits (\$) | 48,300 | 55,200 | 62,100 | 68,950 | 74,500 | 80,000 | 85,500 | 91,050 |
| | | Very Low (50%) Income Limits (\$) | 30,200 | 34,500 | 38,800 | 43,100 | 46,550 | 50,000 | 53,450 | 56,900 |
| | | Extremely Low (30%) Income Limits (\$) | 18,100 | 20,700 | 25,820 | 31,200 | 36,580 | 41,960 | 47,340 | 52,720 |

Table 5: Income Limits. Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2024

Housing Cost Burden

HUD defines a cost-burdened household as any household which spends more than 30% of its income on housing costs. An extremely cost-burdened household spends 50% or more of its income on housing costs. In 2022, approximately 14.5% of owner-occupied households in Madison County were cost burdened; 8.1% spent between 30%-50% of their income on housing costs, and 6.3% spent more than 50% of their income on housing costs. Cost-burden rates in renter-occupied households are higher. In 2022, 29% of renter-occupied households were cost burdened; about 12.2% were extremely cost burdened.

Cost burden occurs at higher rates in low-earning households. Of the households that earn less than \$20,000 per year in Gibson County, more than 75% are cost burdened. That rate falls as household income increases, and only around 1% of households earning more than \$75,000 per year are cost burdened.

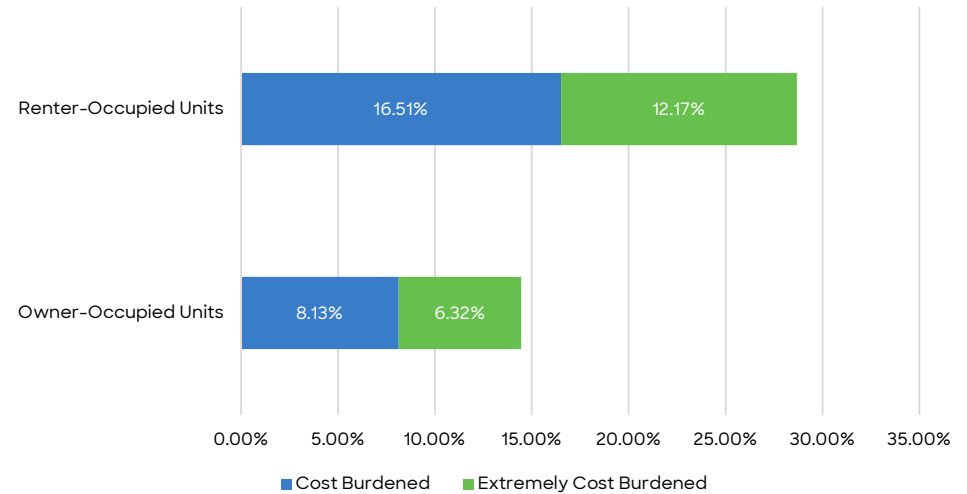


Figure 18: Housing Cost Burden by Tenure. Source: ACS 2022 5-Year Estimates

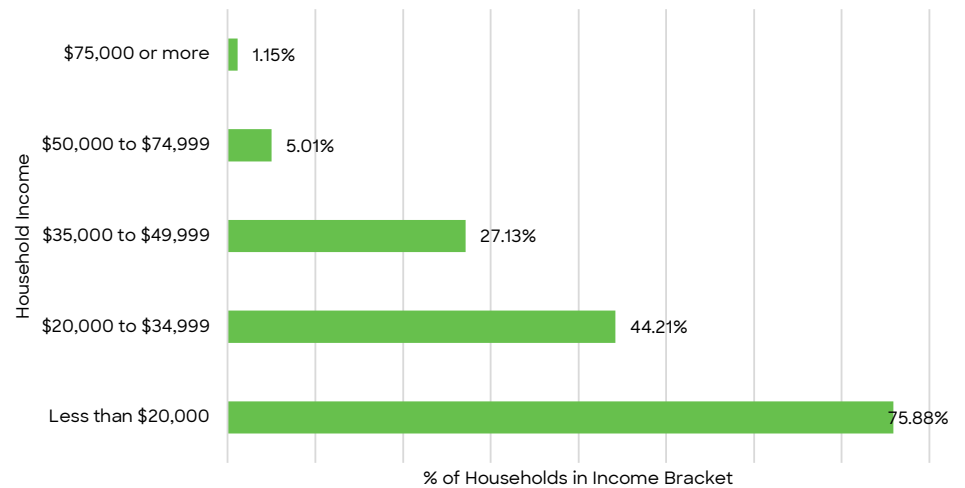


Figure 19: Housing Cost Burden by Income. Source: ACS 2022 5-Year Estimates

Housing Demand Estimates

There are several approaches that can be used to calculate demand for new housing development. One common method is to estimate demand based on projected employment growth. In Gibson County, historical job growth – due in large part to the expansions at the Toyota Motor Manufacturing Indiana plant – has increased demand for housing over the last ten years. Over that period, the costs of single-family homes increased by more than 90%.

As seen in Figure 20, countywide employment levels have hovered between 20,000 and 22,000 over the last five years. A dip in employment levels can be seen to have occurred in 2020, for which the COVID-19 pandemic is likely responsible. Overall, however, between 2019 and 2023, employment in the county increased by about 740 jobs, or roughly 3.5%. If the employment levels in the county continue to increase over the next 10 years at the same rate that they’ve grown over the last five, an additional 1,550 jobs will be added in Gibson County by 2033.

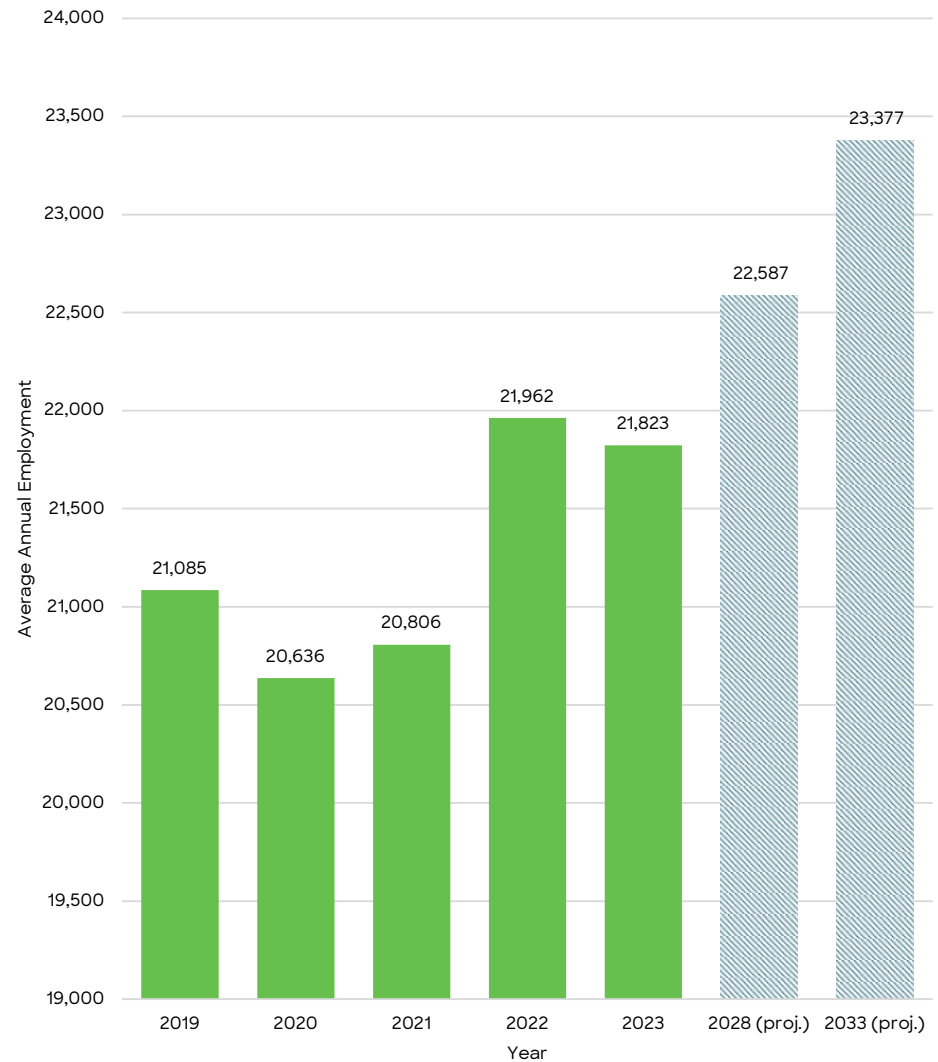


Figure 20: Employment Projection. Source: Lightcast, 2024.2

The task of the demand model, then, is to estimate how many housing units would be required to keep up with rising employment levels in the county. According to the American Planning Association, the target balance of jobs and housing units should be a ratio of 1.5:1.² In other words, for every increase in one and a half jobs, the county should aim to add at least one housing unit. Doing so will help to minimize the

| Year | Increase in Jobs | Housing Unit Development Target |
|----------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2023-2028 | 764 | 509 |
| 2028-2033 | 790 | 527 |
| TOTALS: | 1,554 | 1,036 |

Table 6: Employment-Based Housing Development Targets.
Source: Lightcast 2024.2



In addition to the employment growth expected to occur in the county over the next decade, other indicators signal high demand for additional housing. Commuting patterns, in particular, show that several thousand workers travel into Gibson County for work while living beyond its borders. It is likely the case that some portion of those inbound commuters would prefer to live closer to their place of employment if suitable housing options were available. As demonstrated earlier in the report, there are nearly 9,000 people who travel into the county for work – if only one third of those commuters are in the market for housing in Gibson County, an additional supply of 3,000 housing units would be needed to accommodate them.

It is important to note that neither of the figures provided above as estimates of future housing demand must necessarily be used as benchmarks for development. Population growth could continue without any new housing development; if this were to happen, housing costs would continue to rise. Conversely, many thousands of units could be developed in Gibson County, regardless of whether any population growth were realized; in this case, housing would become over-supplied, and a large part of the housing stock would likely remain vacant. Ultimately, a housing demand model aims to meet future demand for housing as efficiently as possible. If new housing can be strategically and proactively developed to meet the needs of the future population, a new wave of growth can be realized in Gibson County.

² Weitz, Jerry. (2003). Jobs-Housing Balance. American Planning Association. https://planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com/publication/download_pdf/PAS-Report-516.pdf

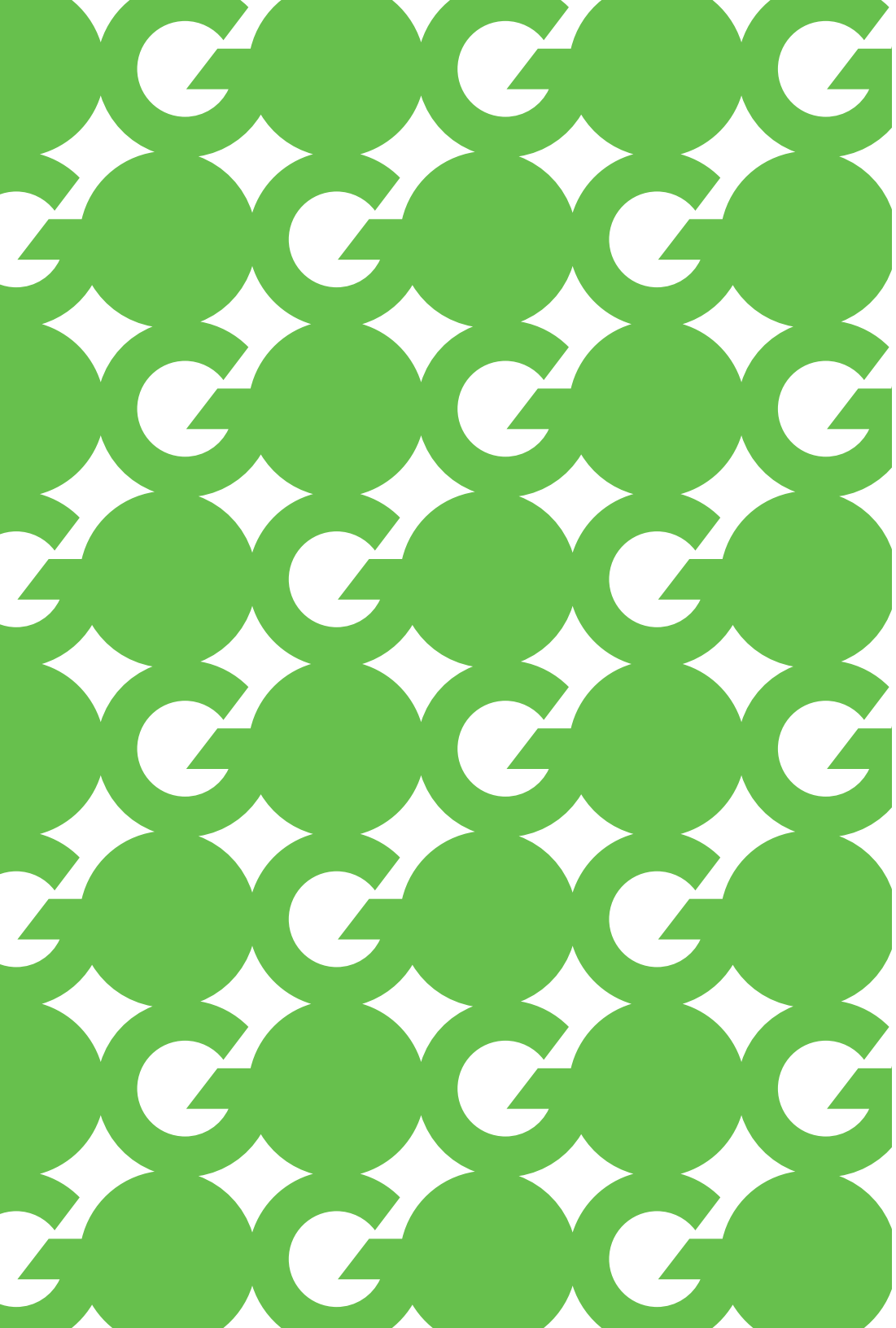
Recent & Planned Development

Since most housing-related data are lagging, it is often the case that recent housing developments are not captured, even in the most up-to-date datasets available. According to the most recent American Community Survey data, there are roughly 14,650 housing units in Gibson County. However, there have been a handful of new developments in the county over the last 3-5 years which are now supplying housing in the county, but which might not be accounted for in the ACS data. In addition, three housing developments are currently underway; like the recently completed developments, these in-progress projects will contribute to the local housing supply but are not yet accounted for in the data. Finally, it is important to note that a couple of housing developments are planned but not yet underway. If these projects are completed, they would collectively provide more than 160 new units in Gibson County. In Table 7, recent and in-progress housing developments are listed.

| Development Name | Location | # of Units | Unit Type | Average Rent | Status |
|-----------------------|--------------|------------|----------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| BALDWIN APARTMENTS | Princeton | 48 | Apartments (1, 2, and 3-bedroom) | \$1,191 | Complete |
| CIRCLE POINT VILLAS | Princeton | 120 | Rental Condos (3-bedroom) | \$1,650 | Complete |
| THE DISTRICT | Princeton | 144 | Apartments (1, 2, and 3-bedroom) | *3 | Complete |
| WHITE CHURCH CROSSING | Princeton | 28 | Single-Family Homes | N/A | Complete |
| BALDWIN PLACE | Princeton | 12 | Single-Family Homes | N/A | Complete |
| PRINCETOWN PLACE | Princeton | 44 | Townhomes | Income-based | In-Progress |
| THE GARDEN | Oakland City | 10 | Duplexes | Income-based | In-Progress |
| THE DISTRICT | Princeton | 114 | Apartments (1, 2, and 3-bedroom) | Market Rate | In-Progress |

Table 7: Recent & Planned Housing Developments.

*3 Rent data not yet available for this property



Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder Engagement

Public Opinion Survey

The public opinion survey was published in July 2024 and, after remaining open for approximately 6 weeks, closed in August. Over that period, 223 survey responses were collected. The survey posed roughly 40 questions on a variety of topics, including current accommodations, perceived housing demand in the county, affordability of housing, housing preferences, and anticipated support for housing-related policies.

After the survey was closed, an analysis of survey findings was undertaken. All responses were anonymous, and data were evaluated in the aggregate. Key survey findings include:

Affordability

- Approximately 36% of respondents had difficulty affording housing costs (including mortgage or rent payments, homeowners or renters insurance, property taxes, homeowners association fees, and/or utilities) in the last 12 months.
- Approximately 43% of respondents had difficulty affording housing maintenance costs (including: repairs, yard maintenance, water softeners, HVAC, etc.) in the last 12 months.
- The biggest barriers to overall housing affordability were maintenance costs and utility costs.

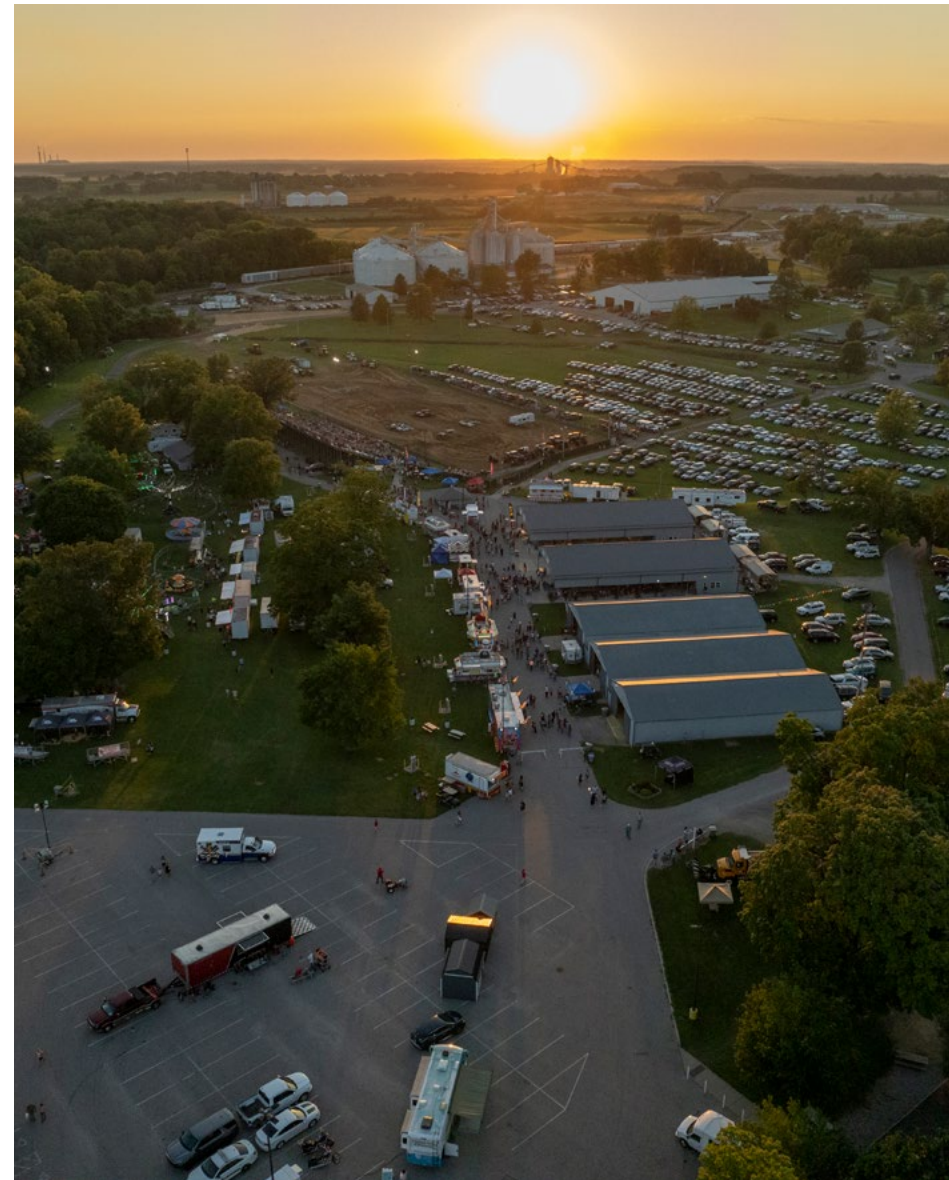
Housing Preferences

- 17% of respondents indicated that they are considering moving out of Gibson County; when asked why they're considering leaving, housing costs, lack of available housing, and high property taxes were the most common reasons selected.
- Most respondents indicated that they'd prefer to own a single-family home; townhomes were the next most popular housing type.
- When choosing a new home, respondents prioritized having a yard, proximity to their place of employment, and limited maintenance.
- Nearly 90% of respondents would support the development of single-family housing; 51% would support the development of duplexes and triplexes.

Demand & Policy

- 76% of respondents agreed that Gibson County needs more for-sale housing options.
- 73% of respondents agreed that more affordable housing is required for essential workers (such as public safety officers or schoolteachers).
- 63% of respondents agreed that Gibson County needs more rental options.
- 74% of respondents felt that first-time homebuyers do not have reasonably priced housing options in the county.
- 75% of respondents did not feel that there is an adequate supply of housing and services for people experiencing homelessness in the county.
- The majority of respondents would like to see an increase in housing options available for seniors, as well as an increase in small, single-family housing communities.

To make the findings as accessible as possible, all survey data have been uploaded into a Tableau dashboard. This dashboard allows for the filtering of responses by a variety of criteria, and it provides an easy-to-operate platform for local leaders and residents to explore the data for themselves. The dashboard has been made available on the Gibson County Economic Development Corporation's website and can be accessed through the following link: [Housing Study Results](#).



On-Site Focus Groups

Two stakeholder focus groups were held in July of 2024, convening individuals, businesses, and organizations involved in the housing ecosystem in Gibson County. A diverse list of key stakeholders participated, representing government, economic development, developers, housing-specific organizations, and community-based organizations. Focus group activities were highly interactive, utilizing various methods to ensure each stakeholder had the opportunity to provide input.

Visioning Themes

Participants were asked to write a statement reflecting their vision for the future of housing in Gibson County. While participants developed a range of vision statements that focused on different aspects of Gibson County's housing landscape, a few themes were consistently present. These include:

- Housing options that cater to a range of physical, financial, and social needs.
- Maintaining the feel of a rural midwestern community and welcoming people from diverse cultures, families, and backgrounds
- Providing connectivity and amenities that allow Gibson County to attract families as a “live, work, play” community
- Balancing the needs and priorities of current residents with a forward-looking vision to attract new residents – especially first-time homebuyers and families

Challenges

Participants were asked to write down as many housing-related challenges in Gibson County as possible on sticky notes. They organized these challenges into categories as a group and identified top priorities to address in the following activities. The most common challenges identified are listed here.

Funding and Resources

- Housing costs: including closing costs and expenses, rising home prices, higher interest rates, and rising cost of living overall
- Lack of amenities/ quality of life diversity and activities compared to larger metros and surrounding areas
- Lack of “ready subdivisions” for potential buyers
- Land and construction costs, overall cost of development

Policies, Ordinances, and Regulations

- Lack of county zoning and the overarching perception of it
- Lack of a Comprehensive or Master Plan for the county
- Low prioritization of housing-related issues by local elected officials

Infrastructure

- Need for more single-family developments/ subdivisions
- Limitations of high-speed internet and fiber infrastructure
- Transportation, especially public transit
- Low inventory and cost of rental options
- Lack of development along I-69 in the county; local interest in housing, hotels, restaurants, gas, and convenience

Collaboration and Capacity Building

- Need for an overarching vision: County Comprehensive/Master Plan, recommended land use, collaborative planning processes
- Potential for greater involvement of the community on housing-related projects
- Collaboration needed to maximize existing land, especially along the I-69 corridor

Other

- Community resistance, potentially stemming from concerns over losing rural heritage
- Community education needed: affordable housing, potential development, current challenges and goals
- Quality and quantity of local amenities around green spaces and recreation

Goal Development

After identifying their key challenges, participants were asked to create goal statements for each challenge. This work was done individually, at first, and then in groups. They brainstormed strategies and outlined actions to be taken to reach their goals. The challenges and goals participants prioritized covered four primary themes. The top strategies and associated actions are outlined here.

Strategic Planning; Addressing Housing Diversity

- Encourage collaboration between community leaders
- Engage and include residents in the process
- Ensure townships and municipalities are invested
- Focus on regional needs
- Explore non-traditional funding opportunities

Development of Single-Family and Senior Housing

- Assess housing needs by household type, including price and functionality
- Work with local organizations for funding and development
- Identify quality of life needs for seniors and families
- Assess location options for housing development

Zoning and Infrastructure Challenges

- Encourage community leaders and officials to collaborate regarding zoning and infrastructure changes and needs
- Investigate infrastructure deficits and upgrade needs
- Consider a county-wide land use map or master plan
- Assess water and sewer upgrade/expansion

Public Education and Amenities

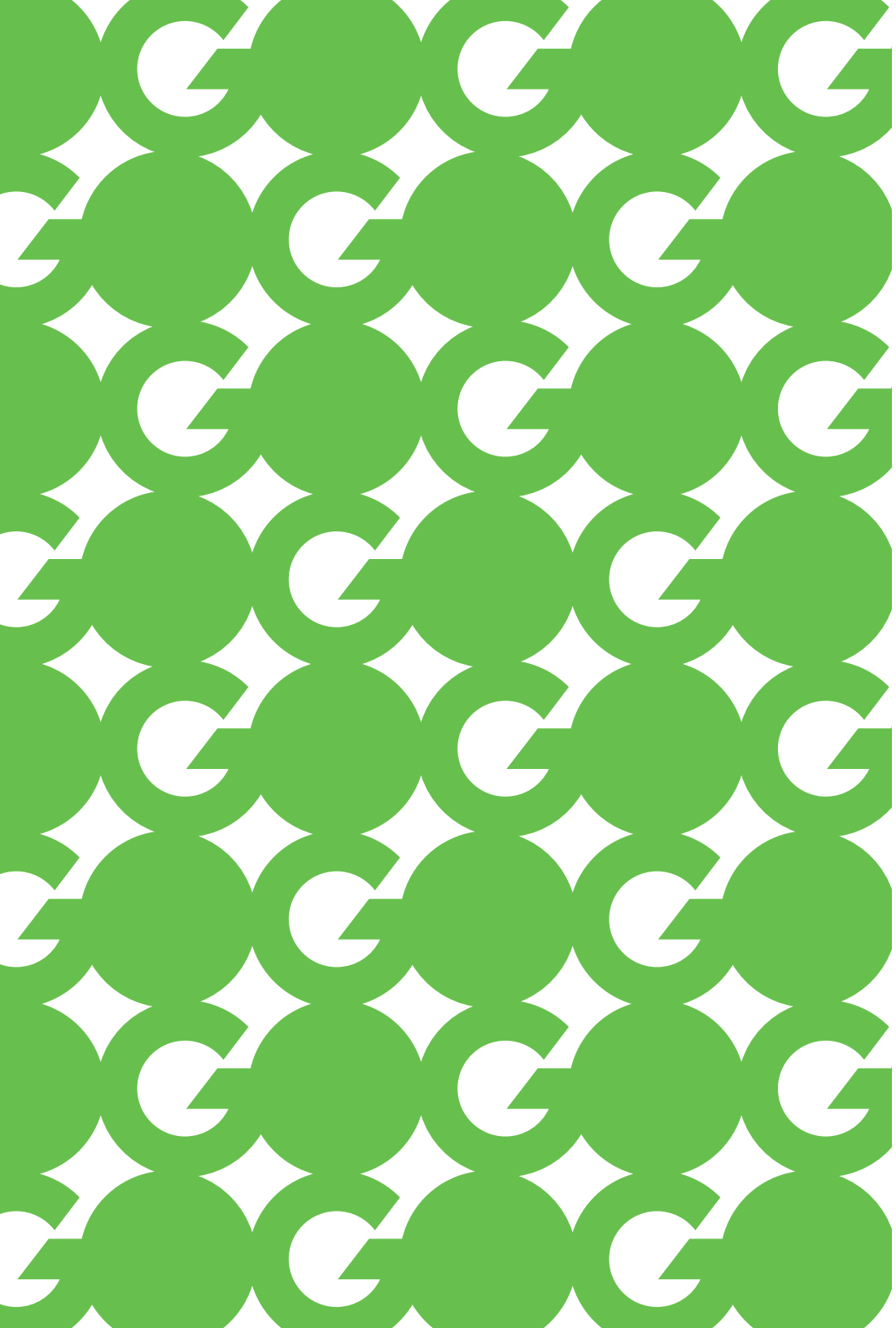
- Work with local organizations to develop first-time homebuyer education programming
- Promote financial literacy programming in schools
- Address community resistance by convening stakeholders and providing education on the housing landscape, affordable housing, etc.
- Educate and encourage community members as advocates
- Expand community amenities and activities for residents
- Study other communities' success to leverage in Gibson County

Accelerating Momentum

Finally, each participant chose one of the goals described previously and worked to design an implementation plan. To create these plans, participants were asked to consider the ideal outcomes, collaborators, resources, catalysts, metrics, and timelines for each goal. Some of the common themes are listed here.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>OUTCOMES: WHAT CHANGES WILL WE SEE IF WE ARE SUCCESSFUL?</p> | <p>Population growth, diversity of housing stock, increased housing supply, greater access to funding, expanded infrastructure, and more public greenspaces</p> |
| <p>COLLABORATORS: WHO SHOULD LEAD AND, WHO ELSE SHOULD WORK ON THIS?</p> | <p>Mayors, city and county council members, utility workers, industry representatives, developers, libraries, and community foundations</p> |
| <p>RESOURCES: WHAT POTENTIAL FUNDING, TOOLS, INFORMATION, OR SUPPLIES EXIST?</p> | <p>Planning documents, data, grant/loan funding, private industry investment</p> |
| <p>CATALYSTS: WHAT IS IN PROGRESS OR UPCOMING THAT COULD HELP?</p> | <p>Effective marketing and communication plans, annexation, establishment of a unified county vision</p> |
| <p>METRICS: HOW WILL WE MEASURE OUR PROGRESS?</p> | <p>Ability to meet deadlines, availability of housing, new infrastructure developments, available funding, graduate retention, measured improvement in access to childcare or greenspaces</p> |
| <p>TIMELINES/CHECK-INS: WHEN SHOULD THIS BE COMPLETED? WHEN WILL WE CHECK IN FOR UPDATES AND/OR RE-EVALUATION?</p> | <p>While some goals could be met within 6 months, some would take several years or require ongoing attention.</p> |





Goals & Strategies

Goals & Strategies

Planning for future housing development is no small task, and two objectives have guided the work presented in this report. First, the project team sought to collect and analyze a variety of data related to the housing conditions and needs in Gibson County; a document review, quantitative data analysis, in-person focus groups, and public survey were all undertaken to achieve this goal. The second objective of this report was to provide a list of goals and strategies that could guide future housing development in the county – this list is provided in the section to follow.

All goals and strategies have been informed by the analyses presented in previous sections of the report. Ultimately, this list is intended to inform elected officials, county staff, local leaders, and other members of the community as they make important decisions regarding the future of housing development in Gibson County.



Goal 1: Build Capacity & Consensus

The first step to be taken in planning for future housing development is community organization. To ensure that new housing developments align with the county's goals, residents must work together to create a vision and build consensus. A variety of stakeholders should be involved in this process, including elected officials, county staff, community organizations, and other members of the community. Specific municipalities and regions of the county can advocate for themselves in these conversations, and major employers can help the public understand their local role. Collectively, this process is designed to help answer questions like, 'What are the county's goals?' and 'What resources exist to achieve those goals?'. Then, specific individuals or organizations can take responsibility for leading the effort.





Strategy 1.1:
Assemble a Housing Task Force

A Housing Task Force would be responsible for identifying, pursuing, and securing new opportunities for housing development in Gibson County. Its members would participate as volunteers and should represent a variety of community organizations, such as the local government, private businesses, school systems, and social service organizations. Collectively, representatives of these organizations can help build consensus for specific housing developments within the county, work to maintain affordability, and ensure new development meets the community's standards for quality. Additionally, this group can help the county create a more cohesive vision which incorporates the unique needs of separate municipalities; then, local governments can work together to attract new development.



Strategy 1.2:
Maintain an inventory of developable land

As housing demand increases and budding opportunities for new development are identified, specific parcels of land must be available for use. To prepare for these opportunities, the county could create an inventory of developable land. This inventory could include the key specifications of available properties, list potential uses, and allow the county to act quickly on new opportunities when they present themselves.



Strategy 1.3:
Create a marketing plan for developers

As the county begins to strategically increase housing development, a marketing plan can be useful for supporting the right kind of growth. A countywide brand and overall development objectives – which would ideally be outlined by the Housing Task Force – would be organized into a concise document to be presented to developers. In addition to the county's vision for new development, this plan could list incentives available for developers and high-potential properties.



Strategy 1.4:
Increase collaboration with CAPE

CAPE – the Community Action Program of Evansville – is a nonprofit organization which serves Vanderburgh, Posey, and Gibson Counties. CAPE utilizes federal, local, and private funding sources to support low-income families with housing-related needs, among other things. A more extensive collaboration with CAPE could increase the overall amount of funding available and expand Gibson County residents' access to services provided through the organization.

Goal 2: Increase Housing Affordability

There are many ways that issues related to housing affordability can be addressed; nearly all of them require some sort of interorganizational collaboration. In Gibson County, strategic partnerships between the county, municipal governments, employers, and other groups can facilitate the creation of long-term, effective housing solutions. New development can improve housing availability within the county, and proposed projects should be pursued with the county's goals in mind. Much of the existing housing stock is underutilized, however, and efforts to revive dilapidated homes could increase the available supply of housing, as well. These strategies can be tailored to support specific populations in the county, such as aging and senior households, first-time homebuyers, homeless individuals, or the growing workforce. As each of these groups is unique, new housing developments can be designed to meet their specific housing needs.





Strategy 2.1:
Explore an Employer Assistance Program with major local employers

An Employer Assistance Program (EAP) is designed to help local employers to support their workers through housing-related benefits. Assistance can come in the form of down payment grants, loans, financial counseling, or rent stipends. In some cases, these are only available in return for a commitment from the employee; for example, someone who has received housing-related benefits from an employer might be required to remain at the company for 3-5 years to avoid repaying the housing costs covered by the employer. An EAP could be used to supplement existing relocation incentive programs, such as MakeMyMove and Belong Here. Since reduced housing costs can support the growth of the local workforce, EAPs benefit both workers and employers alike.



Strategy 2.2:
Maintain an inventory of vacant structures

Vacancy can be a significant barrier to housing affordability, because properties with vacant structures do not contribute to housing supply and cannot be used for another purpose. In many cases, the redevelopment of vacant structures can be the most efficient way to address housing demand, as a property with negative value in a vacant structure can be transformed into a home which serves the local population. In cataloguing these properties, Gibson County can more effectively market them to developers interested in revitalizing the community. In addition, this inventory can be used to encourage infill redevelopment in downtown areas.



Strategy 2.3:
Establish a homeowner rehabilitation assistance program

A homeowner rehabilitation assistance program is designed to provide income-qualified homeowners with financing required to maintain or update their homes. In many cases, homeowners do not have access to the capital required to maintain a safe and healthy living space, and a dilapidated property can have negative effects on the inhabitant as well as the surrounding neighborhood. Financial support can come in the form of grants, no-interest loans, or low-interest loans; funding for the program could be acquired through federal programs such as Community Development Block Grant, or local funds could be allocated to the program.



Strategy 2.4:
Provide resources to support home renovation

In addition to financing, there are other creative ways to support home renovation and upkeep. One example is a tool lending library, which allows county residents to rent tools and equipment necessary for DIY projects. To purchase this equipment – which can be very expensive – is often out of the question for homeowners, and a tool lending library provides an alternative. While tools for the library could be purchased with county funds, a more viable option could be to solicit donations from the community.

Goal 3: Improve Housing Ecosystem

It is impossible to separate the county's housing market from the broader economic environment within which it exists, and an investment in placemaking, infrastructure, policy, and public education could have a very positive impact on housing conditions. Residents want to invest in a community they value; similarly, developers want to feel supported in their work by local policies and regulations. To improve housing affordability and availability within the county, a holistic approach to development should be taken. As with the previous two goals, collaboration is key for this part of the process. The establishment of strong community partnerships will be necessary for achieving the strategies outlined in this section.





Strategy 3.1:
Invest in placemaking

Housing development is an investment. When homeowners purchase a home, the proximity to grocery stores, restaurants, parks, trails and other amenities is normally a significant consideration. Renters, too, want to stay in lively communities. As the county promotes new housing development to support a growing workforce, the simultaneous development of quality-of-life amenities should be prioritized. New housing could be built along new trail systems to increase connectivity and promote healthy living; mixed-use developments in downtown areas could revitalize local towns. Placemaking increases the attractiveness of the community to prospective residents and allows for new housing to be plugged into a more complete, vibrant community.



Strategy 3.2:
Prioritize infrastructure improvements

Supportive infrastructure is critical for new housing development. Where supportive infrastructure is inadequate or nonexistent, developers are often responsible for covering the costs of building it. This can be an expensive undertaking, however, and this added cost could be enough to turn prospective developers away from new projects. The Housing Task Force should work with local government officials to create a list of incentives to be offered to developers interested in working with the county. These incentives could be designed to support specific types of development or development in specific areas of the county.



Strategy 3.3:
Develop code to regulate housing maintenance and upkeep

Poorly maintained homes can detract from the community in various ways. They present a hazard, fail to contribute to the functional housing supply, and can even reduce neighboring property values. Local leaders should work to establish standards for housing maintenance and upkeep. These standards can be codified at the county or local level, and a procedure for code enforcement would be clearly defined. This would allow the county to discourage property neglect and direct homeowners to resources available for home maintenance and upkeep.



Strategy 3.4:
Partner with community institutions to provide housing financial literacy education

To purchase a home is to make a significant financial commitment, and it can be difficult for homebuyers to understand exactly what “affordable” means for them. Therefore, a partnership with community institutions (such as schools, libraries, and banks) to provide financial literacy education could benefit new homeowners as they navigate the financing process. Specifically, these programs would be designed for high school students and first-time homebuyers, and the participants would learn how to calculate the amount they can afford to spend on housing costs, how to manage their finances, and other best practices for homeownership.

Best Practices:

[21 Elements Collaboration: San Mateo County, CA](#)

The 21 Elements initiative facilitates regular and meaningful dialogue between San Mateo County and all twenty-one of its constituent cities through a forum for local jurisdictions to share tools, resources, and strategies to meet housing needs. The collaborative meets regularly to discuss changes to state and federal policy and resources, upcoming engagement initiatives, and status updates on ongoing projects. 21 Elements is cosponsored by San Mateo County Department of Housing and the San Mateo City/County Association of Governments.

[Housing Task Force: Carmel, IN](#)

Launched in February 2024, the Carmel Housing Task Force convenes local leaders, experts, and citizens to ensure the housing needs of the growing workforce are being met within the city. This team collects data, meets with industry professionals, discusses housing trends, and seeks to capitalize on budding development opportunities.

[Live Near Your Work: Baltimore, MD](#)

In Baltimore, an employer assistance program has been established through a partnership between the City and several local employers. Through this program, eligible homebuyers can receive funding for a downpayment or closing costs; notably, the City matches the employer's contribution up to \$2,500, which means that up to \$5,000 in assistance is available to prospective homebuyers.

[Vacant Building Inventory and Strategy: Trenton, NJ](#)

Through a collaboration with Rutgers University and a community-based NGO, Trenton, NJ was able to develop a comprehensive inventory of vacant buildings and land in the city, in part through a smartphone GIS survey tool. This allowed the city to develop a vacant property strategy that included a property registration ordinance, market study, and programming to sell, remediate, and auction vacant properties.

[Housing Rehabilitation Assistance: Iowa City, IA](#)

Iowa City's housing rehabilitation programs provide zero-interest loans and/or grants to homeowners to aid in making repairs to their homes. Neighborhood Services staff assist homeowners with home inspections, specifying work plans and repairs and obtaining bids from contractors.

[The Tool Library: Buffalo NY](#)

The Tool Library is an all-volunteer nonprofit tool-lending library located off of Main Street in Buffalo's University Heights neighborhood. They believe that cost shouldn't be a barrier to fixing up your home, growing your own food, or improving your community. For a small annual fee, their members – including people, organizations, and businesses – can borrow from their inventory of over 3,000 tools.

[Development Incentives: Roanoke County, VA](#)

In Roanoke County, developers are considered on a case-by-case basis for a variety of development incentives. These incentives can include assistance with site acquisition, site preparation, and utility extension. Typically, in order to be considered eligible for an incentive, a developer must demonstrate that their project provides some public benefit, such as increased capital investment or new job creation.

[CARE: Chicago, IL](#)

The Credit Abuse Resistance Education (CARE) organization operates out of Chicago and provides financial literacy training for public schools, colleges, and community groups. At these training courses, presentations are made by business professionals, financial professionals, or lawyers about the importance of healthy financial practices. The courses are offered for free, as presenters are primarily volunteers. Collaborations between schools, community organizations, banks, and professional organizations make these programs possible.

