



Terre Haute Vigo County *Comprehensive Plan*



Chapter 1: Introduction

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Introduction

The Terre Haute/Vigo County Comprehensive Plan, THRIVE 2025, is a policy document related to the physical, economic, and social development of the Terre Haute and Vigo County communities. It establishes a policy direction that provides guidance to local elected officials and plan commission members in making decisions regarding development approval, rezoning, and variances. It was developed through consideration of other plans, analysis of the existing conditions, and input from the public and a local steering committee.

Understanding that planning is an ongoing process, THRIVE 2025 should not be taken as “THE” plan, but rather an attempt to establish a long-term collective view of how land can be utilized. This plan document does address fundamental public policies which should be developed using the collective wisdom of residents, voters, current standing elected or appointed officials, and neighborhood groups. It is intended to establish a dynamic context through which forces acting on the future can be received, understood, and used to fully capitalize upon the human and civic potential of the area.

THRIVE 2025, a by-product of an ongoing planning process, rather than the end product, serves as a reference point in the planning process, which strives to offer:

- A framework or context for public policy as it may effect the long-term utilization of rural/agricultural areas, the urban form of the community, and the built environment of the Terre Haute/Vigo County community;
- A long-term view that is intended to be prescriptive rather than retroactive. It seeks to eliminate past problems from arising in future developments;
- A firm public resolve through which regulatory tools and implementation standards can evolve. However, it is not a regulatory tool, such as a zoning ordinance, nor does it imply any specific development regulations per se; and,
- A cohesive and integrated structure from which future development decisions – public and private – can be orchestrated and policies evaluated against changing development and socio-economic conditions.

Foundation and Vision

Several general presumptions and findings underscore the need for the adoption of THRIVE 2025. These are:

- Development conditions have changed rather significantly since the early 1980’s and the Comprehensive Development

Plan for the City of Terre Haute (1983), the Comprehensive Plan for Vigo County, Indiana (1984), the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance for the City of Terre Haute (1967), the Unified Zoning Ordinance for Vigo County (1996), and the Subdivision Control Ordinance (1973) have not kept abreast of changing development styles and demographic imperatives;

- The financial capacity of local units of government in Indiana to support future public capital improvements has dramatically declined in the recent past. Future prospects for enhancing the fiscal capacity of local units of government in Indiana are limited, at best;
- There is a perception that past development has exceeded the effective capacity of public infrastructure – especially roadways. Moreover, it is commonly perceived that much of the development that has occurred during recent years has resulted in more, but not necessarily better, development. That is, no improvement in quality of life has been associated with increases in the size of Terre Haute and its surroundings; and,
- There has been no broadly shared sense of what constitutes appropriate investment and development in the Terre Haute/Vigo County community.

These have generated a strong and compelling need for a new set of community based policies that can be translated into mechanisms for positive and progressive community change. The difficulty is that everyone has a different view of what changes should be made to make the Terre Haute/Vigo County community better, or a different perspective about the Terre Haute/Vigo County characteristics which make it a “Level Above” as a place to live, work and conduct business.

Through interviews and public meetings, a need for improved quality of life in the area was expressed. Although quality of life, like beauty, resides in the mind of the observer, it embodies a community pride that defines a shared attribute, which compels allegiance. This unifying item was the basis for the vision statement of THRIVE 2025:

Terre Haute, Riley, Seelyville, West Terre Haute, and Vigo County Communities, through land use planning and regulation, will preserve, protect, promote, enhance, and re-establish the diverse range of options in land use to insure the area becomes a “level above” as a place to live, work, and conduct business.

Key Concepts

Some of the key issues that were raised in the planning process were related to: sprawl, protection of prime farmland, neighborhoods, redevelopment, transportation, economic development, and physical appearance. These issues accompanied the following findings:

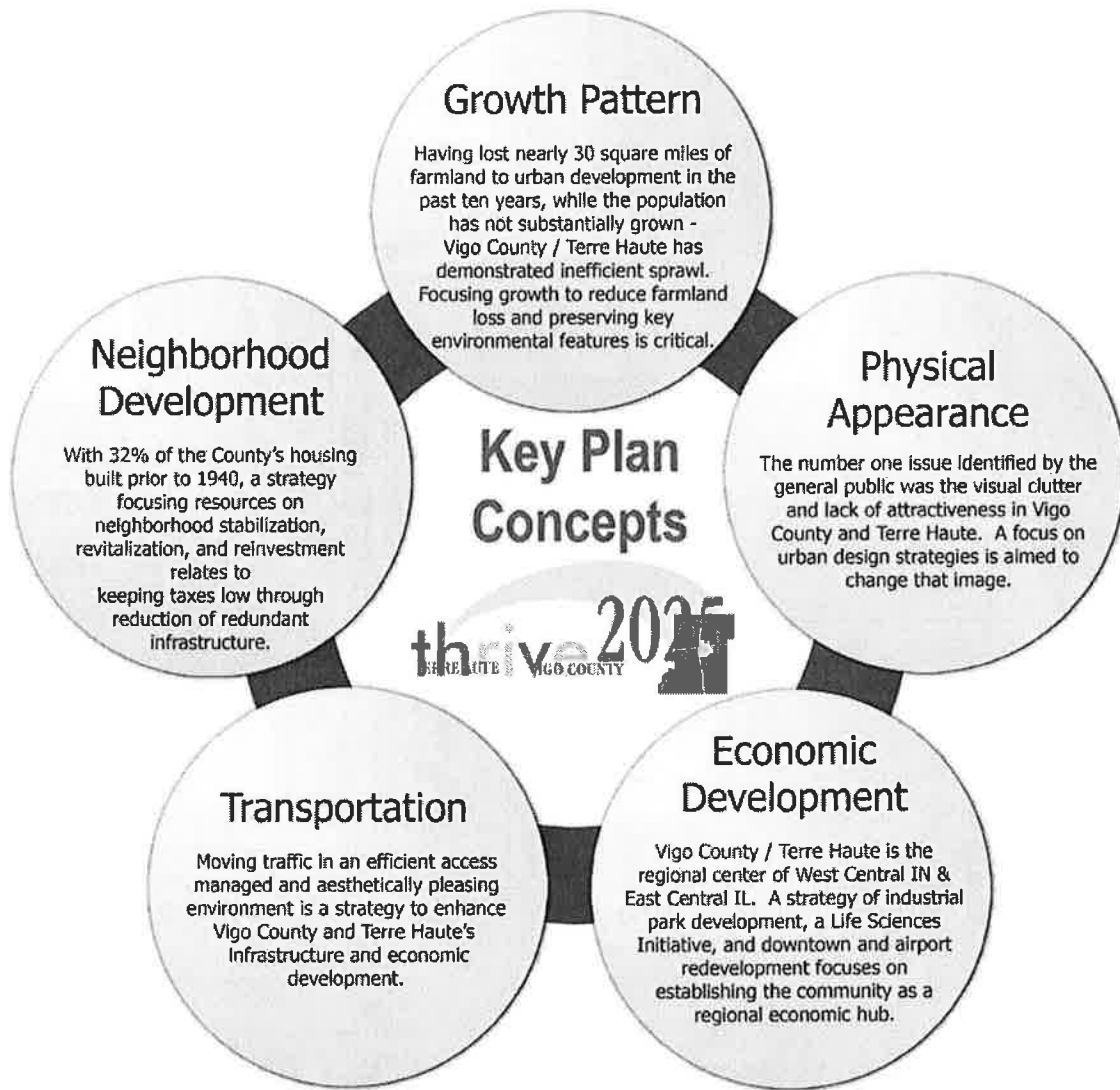
- The Vigo County population is projected to reach 113,700 by the year 2025. This is slow, but steady growth for the community. However, in the past 20 years, the county's population shrank by 6 percent while the urbanized area of the county grew by 50 percent;
- Development has primarily occurred south of Terre Haute, along major transportation corridors. Subdivision development has occurred primarily outside of the City of Terre Haute and some neighborhoods inside the city are suffering from disinvestment;
- The transportation network suffers from congestion, in particular corridors such as US 41, as the community's core has shifted to the Honey Creek Square area;
- Terre Haute serves as a regional employment center for West Central Indiana and East Central Illinois. Service and retail growth is anticipated, while manufacturing employment will remain important to the local economy;
- The community graduates thousands of students from its colleges and universities each year, but does not retain many of those graduates;
- The life sciences are of growing importance in the county, but there is not a central address or contact for the life sciences in the county; and,
- Residents are concerned about the appearance of the community, ranging from cleanliness to gateways and signage.

Five key concepts emerged:

- GROWTH PATTERN, which describes the strategic growth scenario to address a land utilization pattern which is consistent with the community needs;
- NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT, which addresses the organizational structure of urbanized areas: neighborhoods. It is related to the growth pattern in the sense that development should be directed into existing neighborhoods to the extent possible, but there are additional concerns about how the neighborhoods should be stabilized;
- TRANSPORTATION, which focuses on the relationship between the street network and land use. It is a departure

from a conventional transportation plan because that work has been completed in another planning process, but it does include a thoroughfare plan/functional classification map and focuses on how transportation is related to growth, economic development, and the community's physical appearance;

- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, which explores how land use decisions can have a positive and supportive impact on the development of trade and industry, particularly in the areas of Brownfield redevelopment, downtown, the airport, existing industrial parks, and creating an address for the life sciences. It is consistent with the community's overall economic development policy created by the Terre Haute Area Economic Development Corporation (THAEDC); and,
- PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, which addresses all aspects of the visual character of the community, including those related to neighborhoods and transportation corridors. This concept focuses on the more outward signs of a community that make it healthy, appealing and reflective of a high quality of life.



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