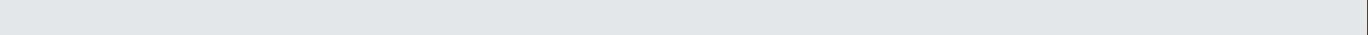


Planning is a process that brings individuals or groups together to think about a shared goal for their future. When communities plan, it provides for an opportunity to think through specific and unique needs that directly relate to the residents, business owners, employees and visitors of a specific area. By undertaking a planning process, a community can develop and achieve a character of its own. Planning is a community's chance to tell their story and craft their individual dream for the future.

FORWARD Kosciusko County is a one-of-a-kind update to the County's current 1996 comprehensive plan. The effort - led by Kosciusko County, the local incorporated communities and their strategic community partners - encourages residents, community leaders and community organizations to come together to discuss local challenges, identify unique community features and determine how Kosciusko County and the local communities can grow, evolve and improve.

**FORWARD Kosciusko County is intended to represent all of us and will be OUR tool to build a better future together.**





1 Read the statement

2 Drop one token to record your opinion

The County should plan for and fund infrastructure projects including roadways, bridges, sidewalks, water and wastewater improvements.

3 Add your comments

LEAD PARTNER NOT NEEDED NOT SURE

1 Read the statement

2 Drop one token to record your opinion

The County should provide... that protect and restore the area... including lakes, shorelines and...

3 Add your comments

LEAD

# Overview

FORWARD Kosciusko County is a set of detailed policy documents that serves as the County's comprehensive plan. The *FORWARD Kosciusko County Comprehensive Plan* provides the framework for regulatory tools like zoning, subdivision regulations, annexations, and other County or Town policies. While the Plan is not a regulatory tool in and of itself, the recommendations of this Plan are organized to ensure that the County's shared vision of the future has the greatest chance of succeeding. To truly take advantage of the wealth of opportunities found throughout Kosciusko County, county and local leaders and stakeholders will need to use data and input to GUIDE their decision making process, ACT strategically to make necessary improvements and PARTNER to expand local capacity and governmental resources.

**The *FORWARD Kosciusko County Comprehensive Plan* materials are organized to provide tools and resources in three primary ways:**



## GUIDE

*The tools and recommendations within this section provide guidance on how to make decisions on public and private land development proposals, the expenditure of public funds, availability of economic development incentives, cooperative community efforts and issues of local concern.*



## ACT

*The proposed projects and initiatives within this section provide for the long-term maintenance, modernization and enhancement of the County's public infrastructure including streets, drainage ways, and water, wastewater and stormwater systems.*



## PARTNER

*The potential partners and available resources listed within this section are intended to identify ways in which local community partners can assist in County and local efforts moving forward.*





# 2019

Seeing a broader need to craft a strategic plan for the County's future, the Kosciusko County Community Foundation (KCCF) applied for funding through the Lilly Endowment Inc.'s seventh round of Giving Indiana Funds for Tomorrow (GIFT) initiative. After successfully completing six previous rounds of GIFT initiatives, in March 2019 the Endowment awarded the KCCF a Community Leadership Planning Grant to undertake a county-wide citizen outreach.

Between July and August 2019, KCCF contracted Becker Consulting to conduct eleven Hometown Chats, inviting citizens to share concerns and aspirations for their communities and compare broad community input with issues previously identified by KCCF's board and community leaders.

With one of the top priorities being Community Planning and Visioning, KCCF, Kosciusko County and K21 Health Foundation, in partnership with the Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG), came together to invest in the now named FORWARD Kosciusko County effort, a multi-jurisdictional strategic planning process aimed at identifying the unique, local assets and challenges.

# Our Process

## 2020

In June of 2020, MACOG initiated the pre-planning process by bringing together the project steering committee to discuss the overall process, the intended outcomes and the development of the request for proposals to assist in the selection of a planning consultant. A final planning consultant team led by Taylor Siefker Williams Design Group was selected in December of 2020.

## 2021

In January of 2021, the project team officially kicked-off an anticipated 14-month planning process. The four phased planning process allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the county and the local incorporated communities. Through data analysis, multiple field visits, steering committee meetings, focus groups, public open houses, planning workshops, and one-on-one conversations, a series of common ideas or findings were identified to help guide the development of the final plan's priorities and recommendations.

## 2022

The *Kosciusko County Community Conditions Assessment* documents, which were published in February 2022, were organized into six sections that provided detailed information on the history of the project, the current local and county-wide conditions, the market conditions of the area, the availability of childcare and early learning facilities and an assessment of fiscal capacity at a county level.

Following a thorough review and public input process, the final FORWARD Kosciusko County Comprehensive Plan documents were adopted in May 2022 by the County Commissioners.



## KOSCIUSKO COUNTY

Kosciusko County has begun a vision and strategic framework and its incorporate and future aspirations. For

The following question

1. Are you employed part-time (35 hours or less)?
- ☒ Full time
  - ☐ Part-time
  - ☐ Not currently employed

3. Which of the following best describes your company?
- ☐ Banks, Financial Services and Insurance Offices
  - ☐ Construction/ Contractor
  - ☐ Corporate or Administrative Offices
  - ☐ Educational Facility
  - ☒ Hospital or Health Care Provider
  - ☐ Manufacturing or other Production Facility
  - ☐ Median, Website or Information Service
  - ☐ Non-Profit Agency
  - ☐ Not Relevant (I am not currently employed)

4. Where is your job located in Kosciusko County?
- ☐ Warsaw-East (Lake City Highway area)
  - ☐ Warsaw-Downtown Area
  - ☒ Warsaw-North (Route 15/North Detroit Street)
  - ☐ Warsaw-Other
  - ☐ Winona Lake
  - ☐ Syracuse/Lake Wawasee
  - ☐ North Webster

**FORWARD**  
KOSCIUSKO COUNTY

**FORWARD**  
KOSCIUSKO COUNTY

# Our Goals

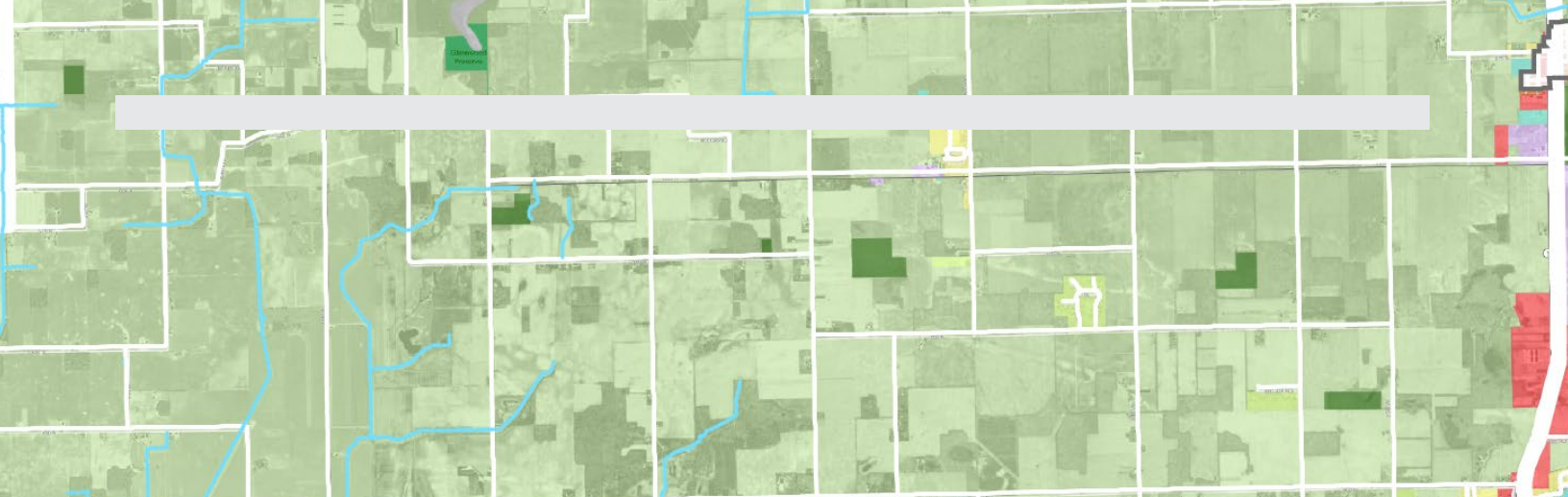
The final *FORWARD Kosciusko County Comprehensive Plan* documents are comprehensive, both in scale and scope, with recommendations for the entire County and all incorporated communities for land use, housing, economic development, transportation (vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle), utilities, parks and recreation, community facilities, health and wellness initiatives, placemaking components and implementation.

**The final FORWARD Kosciusko County recommendations support the prioritization of our community's people, places, systems, destinations and partnerships so that together we can cultivate a community that:**

- 1. Ensures the safety, wellness and success of our local residents, employers and business owners.**
- 2. Provides for balanced, planned and orderly growth.**
- 3. Plans for effective public services and facilities.**
- 4. Creates and nurtures unique destinations for local and regional enjoyment.**
- 5. Manages local resources and plans for continued reinvestment throughout the County.**

In addition to the County document, as a part of the effort, local, participating communities also adopted a comprehensive plan based on their own unique features, conditions and aspirations. The communities of Warsaw, Winona Lake and Syracuse did not receive a new comprehensive plan as a part of this effort. Due to their community's size and staff capacity each community had completed a long-term planning effort prior to this planning process. To better align these existing comprehensive plans with the county-wide effort, recommendations were provided to each community on goal and objective additions to strengthen the partnerships and efforts moving forward.





The final recommendations of the *FORWARD Kosciusko County Comprehensive Plan* achieve the following objectives for the County and our communities:

**1. Preserved our lakes, waterways and natural features.**

With over 100 lakes and waterways throughout the County, the preservation of these natural features and their supporting tributaries and floodplains is of primary concern. The Future Land Use Map works to minimize potential conflicts by limiting development and the removal of land or change in topography within environmentally protected and sensitive areas.

**2. Preserves our productive agricultural land.**

Kosciusko County's strong history is rooted in its agricultural heritage, identity and economic opportunity. The Future Land Use Map strengthens the agricultural industry by delineating clear growth areas within incorporated communities, supporting policy improvements to strengthen the use and development of agricultural industries, and supporting agritourism activities and destinations.

**3. Supports growth within the incorporated communities.**

Based on the *2020 Kosciusko County Housing Strategy and Market Potential Study*, nearly 4,300 households have the potential to move to Kosciusko County each year. Predominantly, the housing preferences of these individuals include rentals and detached houses. The Future Land Use Plan supports the development of these necessary community spaces to provide local residents with choices and a high quality of life.

**4. Supports business growth and expansion.**

The industries within Kosciusko County have always been unique when compared to the surrounding region, from the poultry and egg industries, which dominated the County in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, to the current biomedical manufacturing of present day. The Future Land Use Map accommodates growth within local industries by delineating areas for commercial and industrial land use expansion that align with areas of existing transportation and utility infrastructure.

**5. Supports additional residential housing diversity.**

A theme that was heard throughout public engagement and reinforced by the housing study is a need for more workforce housing or housing types within the price range of the County's working class. To answer the potential housing deficit that exists, the Future Land Use Map supports the development of housing for new families, young professionals, and recent high school/college graduates, in addition to more options for empty nesters and retirees.





# Our Priorities

## **6. Leverages and enhances historical assets.**

While the County itself has a diverse past that has been influenced by its agriculture, industries, and numerous natural resources, each town within the County has their own unique pasts that shaped the communities of today. The Future Land Use Map encourages the reuse of existing downtown buildings to provide community amenities and activate local downtown areas and business districts.

## **7. Encourages the development of community facilities, parks and open spaces.**

There are numerous community facilities and recreation spaces within the individual communities of Kosciusko County. While the scale of available opportunities varies depending on the community, there is a shared commitment to recreation and community outreach across the County. The Future Land Use Map not only supports the development of new community recreation facilities and spaces, but also identifies strategies that can be used to activate these areas for residential enjoyment.


## **8. Supports the development of complete transportation systems.**

The needs of bicyclists and pedestrians must be integrated in all roadway projects. If a roadway is designed to discourage vehicular speeding, it can be comfortably used by pedestrians and bicyclists alike. A multi-modal approach must be used in developing roadways to include bike and pedestrian facilities alongside the vehicle corridors. The Future Infrastructure Plan supports the development of multi-modal corridors by identifying strategic policies and projects that would improve the movement of vehicles and pedestrians to minimize conflicts.

## **9. Creates linkages between communities and destinations.**

Additions in the form of trails and pathways will improve county-wide quality of life and encourage pride in the local community by establishing a network of safe paths and sidewalks to connect subdivisions, parks, businesses, schools, and other community destinations. The Future Connectivity Plan established a primary goal of connecting communities and destinations to one another through an integral series of trails, pathways and blueway routes.





## Using the FORWARD Kosciusko County Recommendations

The primary role of the *FORWARD Kosciusko County Comprehensive Plan* is to serve as a detailed guide for county and local leaders to reference when making decisions about the growth and development of the County or local community. While components of the Plan's final recommendations will rely on the efforts of private companies and community organizations, the County and local municipalities have the opportunity to make strategic actions in the short and long-term to meet county-wide goals related to development, preservation, maintenance, modernization and long-term enhancement.

The ACT section of the planning document provides recommendations on immediate actions to move the FORWARD Kosciusko County goals forward. Six short-term transformations were outlined to be completed within the next 12 to 24 months. **Short-Term Transformations** are foundational efforts that are necessary to ensure that the broad recommendations and Mid- to Long-Term Priorities, outlined within the Plan, move forward. These initial administrative and strategic planning efforts will play an instrumental role by informing, and making possible, a significant portion of the projects, programs and initiatives identified within the Plan.

The Plan also provides implementation guidance by applying FORWARD Kosciusko's county-vision, goals and policy objectives to both county-wide and local contexts. In total nearly 300 projects, programs and initiatives were identified across the county. These **Mid- to Long-Term Priorities** are projects and initiatives that provide opportunities for strategic investment in Kosciusko County's people, places, systems and destinations and feature actions that focus on maintenance, modernization, streetscape enhancements, connectivity, community programs and recreation efforts. The listed projects, while critical to the maintenance and improvement of the Town, will require significant capital investment.

Funding resources have been identified for each proposed project and while some projects can be done primarily with local funds, some also have the opportunity to utilize state or federal funding sources as well. An estimated investment horizon has been recommended based on physical conditions, local interest and overall improvement need.

Identified projects have been organized by location to outline how the County and local communities can provide investment at differing scales. Within any given municipality or jurisdiction, projects have not been further prioritized.





# Our Next Steps

## Short-Term Transformations

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### ***Use the FORWARD Kosciusko County Comprehensive Plan***

The County should be a leader in promoting the cooperation and collaboration outlined within the *FORWARD Kosciusko County Comprehensive Plans* recommendations.

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### ***Build Local Community Capacity***

The newly established Community Coordination position is currently funded by the County through 2026. To maximize the investment made through the HELP program, additional resources should be allocated to the continuation of the role.

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### ***Expand Recreation and Connectivity Opportunities***

Using the outcomes of the proposed County-wide Parks and Connectivity Master Plans, the County should work to proactively allocate funds to implement the recommendations of the plans.

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### ***Strengthen County-wide Development Standards and Code Enforcement Efforts***

While many strategic planning initiatives will form in the wake of the *FORWARD Kosciusko County Comprehensive Plan*, the county's zoning ordinance should be updated to more closely align with the vision and goals within this document.

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### ***Improve Access and Transportation Amenities Along US 30***

Elected officials and community leaders from all towns should be directly involved in the planning process for the US 30 Corridor Study, ensuring their community's needs are represented.

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### ***Plan for Continued Strategic Investment***

Nearly 300 actions are outlined with the *FORWARD Kosciusko County Comprehensive Plan*. To further refine this list, a prioritization process is needed to formally rank the benefits and projected impacts of each effort against County goals and objectives.

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Swan Point, Winona Lake, IN | Visit Kosciusko County





# Our Ongoing Role

## **Roles, Responsibilities and Coordination**

Although the FORWARD Kosciusko County effort outlined several specific projects and unique programming opportunities for the Town, it does not identify local priorities and or make recommendations on yearly capital improvement allocations to cover proposed improvement initiatives.

A capital improvement plan (CIP) is a community planning and fiscal management tool used to coordinate the location, timing and financing of capital improvements over a multi-year period — usually 4-6 years. Capital improvements refer to major, non-recurring physical expenditures such as land, buildings, public infrastructure and equipment. However, smaller initiatives and local programs can also be accommodated within the format.

The County and local communities should undertake an independent prioritization process to formally rank the benefits and projected impacts of each proposed effort against County goals and objectives. Once finalized, the priority list can be used to create a yearly capital budget for implementation.

Determination of which projects should take precedence should be decided upon by local governing bodies and should be based on available resources. Additional public input can be used to finalize the improvements listed within the yearly capital budget.

