



Terre Haute Vigo County *Comprehensive Plan*



Appendix D: Policy Development, Neighborhood Development and Redevelopment

APPENDIX D: Policy Development, Neighborhood Development And Redevelopment



*Rough transition between
incompatible land uses*



*Need to identify, celebrate, and
protect historic neighborhoods*

Current Initiatives

Neighborhoods are the organizational structure for cities, particularly the core city developed prior to the middle of the last century. The vitality of the city itself is often determined by the vitality of the neighborhoods. Similarly, cities are often viewed in terms of vacant buildings and lots and how they respond to the need to redevelop certain areas.

Neighborhood development was identified in Chapter 2 as an issue in terms of the high percentage of rental units, the age of the housing stock, vacancy rates, household income, and physical appearance. Neighborhood development was also identified as a critical area through public input the primary issues related to neighborhoods were clean up, recognition and preservation of historic neighborhoods, zoning protections for neighborhoods to minimize conflicting land uses, housing improvements, and addressing vacant homes and lots.

Farrington's Grove and Collett Park neighborhoods are listed on National Register of Historic Places, a recognition that will help prevent the destruction of historic buildings. Established in 2004, the Terre Haute Neighborhood Partnership uses the services of six active neighborhood association members and works in partnership with the City Administration. The Neighborhood Partnership has been working to identify neighborhoods in the community.

The 13th Street Corridor neighborhood has engaged in planning processes and has developed a map of property ownership in the neighborhood, streetscape design amenities, and a list of development objectives.

A city agency, the Department of Redevelopment, employs administrators to manage the Housing Program, Real Estate and Finance, and Public Works.

A Historic Facade Incentive Grant is offered by the Terre Haute Urban Enterprise Association (UEA) to owners of architecturally and historically significant commercial properties as an incentive to restore the original character of their buildings. This program is administered by the Department of Redevelopment for the UEA.

The purpose of the Downtown Housing Development Program is to cause more people to live and work in the downtown area by offering financial assistance to owners of real property that rehabilitate their buildings and utilize the upper floors for residential space. This program is also administered by the Department of Redevelopment.



Need to fill in vacant lots

A Demolition Program was established to purchase and demolish decaying buildings and allow development for very little cost.

An Adopt-A-Street Tree Program allows residents to purchase trees and TREES, Inc. will plant the adopted tree in the street tree median (if possible) or the purchaser's property. Keep Terre Haute Beautiful, a part of TREES Inc., with the support of the city of Terre Haute, the Mayor's Office and the Greater Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce, sponsors a citywide trash clean-up effort. Another effort from TREES Inc. is the Third Street Corridor Beautification Project.

The City Engineer's Office has organized a Neighborhood Curb/Sidewalk Matching Program where the City provides funding for the improvement of curbs and sidewalks in front of residential, commercial and institutional properties. The city has set up a ranking system to identify sidewalks in need of repairs. Anything rated #7 (heavily cracked) or worse is eligible for funding. Residents also have the ability to report potholes and burnt out streetlights through an online form that can be reached through the city web page.

The Building Inspection Department makes sure unsafe buildings get repaired or demolished, through building codes and health nuisance ordinances. They also enforce regulations regarding weed and vegetation, control junk vehicles and building codes.

The Terre Haute Redevelopment Department has tax increment finance (TIF) districts downtown and on the north side of the ISU campus as redevelopment tools. They also have an urban enterprise zone, with special incentives to encourage development in that area.

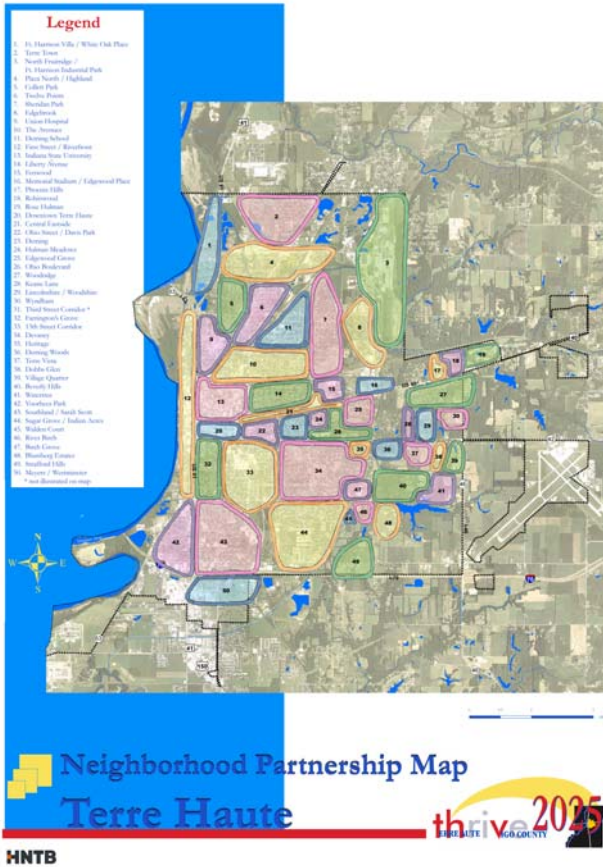
Assessing Neighborhoods

Assessing and classifying neighborhoods in order to allocate resources and address the specific concerns of each neighborhood are a practice that has been put into place in several urban communities.

How Others Have Approached Neighborhood Assessment

In order to address the challenges facing neighborhoods, some communities have chosen to assess and classify their neighborhoods. The classification allows for the targeting of scarce resources into the neighborhoods that need the greatest level of effort to stabilize.

One method of classification is to simply use the US Department of Housing and Urban Development criteria of income classification. Those neighborhoods with incomes below 30% of the community median household income are very low income; 30 to 50% are low income; 50 to 80% are low moderate income; 80 to 12% are moderate income.



Another method used considers a variety of indicators. Some common indicators are: substandard housing code occurrences, crime incidence, age of housing stock, age of population, building permits, private mortgage investment, city investments, average number of days properties are on the market, poverty, and public assistance. Some of these indicators require that the community have databases of the information assigned to geographic locations, such as housing code violations, building permits, and crime.

Indicators used

Since neither the City of Terre Haute nor Vigo County maintains data in easily accessible formats that are geographically referenced, the indicators used in the assessment that was conducted by HNTB include only Census-based measures. The indicators were broken into three categories: economic indicators, social indicators, and physical indicators.

Economic indicators:

- Percentage of home values under \$25,000 in 2000
- Median household income
- Rents or mortgage payments in excess of 20% of income

Social indicators:

- Percentage of households with public assistance income
- Percentage of rental units
- Percentage of residents arriving recently to the neighborhood

Physical indicators:

- Percentage of vacant housing units
- Percentage of large multi-family structures
- Percentage of housing units built prior to 1940
- Percentage of mobile homes

Classification

A method of classifying neighborhoods was developed as a part of the process. The classifications presented here are one approach to the process.

Maintain the high quality of strong and stable neighborhoods. Strong neighborhoods may be characterized by the vitality of their real estate markets. Houses for sale at fair prices will sell relatively quickly, indicating that the neighborhood is perceived as a desirable place to live not only by its residents, but also by outsiders. Housing quality is good, there are few conflicts between adjacent land uses, and social problems

are minimal. The public sector strategy in these strong neighborhoods is, therefore, to maintain and enhance the existing quality of the area through streetscape enhancement, road and sidewalk maintenance, etc. Parks are occasionally included in these healthy neighborhoods.

Monitor neighborhoods with certain social, economic, or physical characteristics that could be early indicators of decline. Maintaining rental units with management companies in neighborhoods with many renters can ensure the maintenance of the area. Home ownership counseling as a condition of first mortgages and working to eliminate predatory lenders from the community may limit people from buying more of a home than they can afford and afford to maintain. Areas with many new residents and high owner or renter turnover may need special code enforcement to prevent decline in property maintenance. Lower home values can be improved through efforts to rebuild and enhance infrastructure and maintain properties. There may be a few conflicts between adjacent land uses in these neighborhoods.

Improve transitional or problem areas. A mixture of good housing conditions and some noticeable deterioration characterizes some neighborhoods. Housing deterioration may be due to deferred maintenance by either homeowners or rental property owners. In addition, there may be a lack of needed special services for elderly, young or unemployed residents. There may also be specific public infrastructure problems or inappropriate commercial or industrial uses within or on the edges of the neighborhood. All of these factors negatively affect the private real estate market in these areas.

However, none of the conditions in these neighborhoods have deteriorated to the point that selective positive actions could not substantively restore the neighborhoods' attractiveness and private market appeal. Here, targeted public sector investments in the maintenance and renewal of the housing stock, essential human services, or selected public infrastructure, can bring needed improvements and encourage further revitalization efforts by neighborhood residents, organizations and other private investors. Detailed planning with residents is needed to identify problems and define appropriate action strategies.

Change seriously deteriorated or deficient conditions. Within some of Terre Haute's neighborhoods, deterioration has progressed to the point that major corrective action is needed. Entire blocks may contain a mix of vacant lots and vacant or seriously deteriorated houses. In many instances, conflicts between incompatible industrial and residential uses have helped to create these conditions. Here the private housing market is almost non-existent. Social or economic problems are often pervasive. In blighted neighborhoods, areas of strength and areas of weakness must be defined. Detailed planning with residents, supplemented by expert technical assistance, should examine options

to change those conditions that are so serious that building rehabilitation alone may not help.

Challenges

Evaluating neighborhoods by using block group boundaries and Census data can present a limited or even distorted view of what the conditions are in the neighborhood. This occurs because the neighborhood boundaries that are recognized by the people in the community do not necessarily align well with the Census block group boundaries. In addition, the Census data does not provide such qualitative data, as a housing conditions survey would be able to provide. This level of data, in combination with building permit, vacant lot information, and crime data can provide a better assessment of the neighborhoods, especially when combined with Census data.

Needs

The Terre Haute community needs to build consensus on whether they wish to classify neighborhoods for policy decision-making, what geographic level is best for assessment (recognizable neighborhoods or Census block groups), what indicators to use and how/where to get the data needed for those indicators.

The information provided in this chapter is left at a broader assessment level, rather than taken to the step of classifying neighborhoods and assigning policy programs to the various classification based on a lack of consensus surrounding these issues in the community.

Infill development

Infill development can apply to both residential development and commercial or industrial development. It refers simply to using the vacant lots that exist within the urbanized area.

One of the significant obstacles to infill development is land assembly. Particularly in the case of residential development, the trend in the development community is to build a significant number of houses at the same time as part of a subdivision or planned unit development. Infill development can involve a significant number of lots with a single builder or developer, but often those lots are not adjacent, which decreases the efficiencies of building multiple homes. In the case of commercial development, existing parcels may not be large enough to accommodate modern commercial uses while still conforming with the lot, yard, and parking requirements of the zoning ordinance.

A builder for a single home can do infill development, or by a group such as Habitat for Humanity without undue limitations to standard building practices. However, these efforts are often spread out over a long period of time and do not serve as a catalyst for neighborhood improvements as well as a larger scale project would.

Various infill-housing programs in cities around the US have approached these challenges in different ways. Generally they consider reducing the development costs related to obtaining clear title and infrastructure connection.

The incentives needed to encourage infill development are related to infrastructure and permitting. Two key incentives related to infrastructure are upgrading the infrastructure and amenities, and lowering any impact fees. Since Terre Haute does not impose impact fees for development, this incentive would not be needed at this time. The four key incentives related to the zoning and development process are: developing a fast track and streamlined permitting process, reduce lot sizes, setbacks, and parking requirements, zoning for mixed-use development, and increasing the allowable densities.

The Terre Haute Department of Redevelopment works to address infill-housing issues, but the major source of funding (CDBG dollars) has been declining.

The 13th Street Corridor neighborhood has considered and established priorities and projects related to infill development in the neighborhood.

Redevelopment and Brownfield Redevelopment

Redevelopment can occur for both parcels that are considered Brownfield sites and for those who have no risk of having been environmentally contaminated.

Redevelopment of parcels within the existing urbanized area is also needed to eliminate unused or abandoned properties, eliminating blighted areas and turning the parcels into productive uses that can provide tax base for the communities. This type of redevelopment is needed in Terre Haute, West Terre Haute, Riley and Seeleyville.

The City of Terre Haute has some special tools in place that can assist with redevelopment. These tools include demolition programs funded through CDBG or EDIT dollars, façade restoration programs, TIF and tax abatement areas, and the Urban Enterprise Zone. Vigo County also has TIF, EDIT, and tax abatement available.

Some of the same challenges that apply to infill housing development apply to redevelopment of commercial and industrial properties. The parcels may be too small to meet existing zoning regulations or the sizes needed for modern operations. Land assembly and obtaining clear title are obstacles to redevelopment that the local units of government may be able to overcome to encourage development. Infrastructure development is another concern. The rights-of-way may not be wide enough to accommodate safety features like acceleration

and deceleration lanes for driveways, water and sewer services may be inadequate, curbs and gutters may be in disrepair, and Telecommunications infrastructure may be lacking from specific sites. These concerns can often drive new development to green-field sites.

Reclamation of Mining Areas

Vigo County has a significant area that has been either surface strip-mined or had underground shaft mines. However, much of the land that has been mined was most actively mined prior to the 1977 federal requirements for reclamation of the sites after mining operations ceased. The land left behind can have ugly scars, environmental problems, and unsafe mine shaft entrances. However, some of these former mining areas, particularly surface mining areas, can be reclaimed for a variety of uses.

The Unified Zoning Ordinance outlines criteria for development in mining areas. However, this overlay district is to establish areas where mining activities can take place and the reclamation activities that must take place after the operation ceases to exist. It does not establish standards for developing in areas that have previously been mined and were not subject to later reclamation laws.

Abandoned mine sites may contain a variety of problem types including: high walls, hazardous materials, acid water, open shaft entry points, subsidence's, trash, abandoned structures or equipment, lack of drainage control, barren spoil, coal processing wastes, soil stockpiles, non-productive or low productive farmlands, lack of any or an acceptable vegetative cover, severe erosion, undesirable surface water bodies, adverse impacts on residential areas or communities, and others. Some of these conditions are only applicable to shaft mines, while others can be concerns for surface mines as well.

Some of the considerations that need to be made in determining if land is suitable for residential redevelopment include:

- Settlement of the fill material
- Alternative building foundation types that can accommodate settling fill
- Height and stability of high walls
- Potential for dangerous mine gases in deep mining areas
- The following problems can occur to houses, garages, septic systems and other types of structures from spoils settling or to footer drains not operating properly: Interior or exterior wall cracking, bowed basement walls, cracks in walls, water leaks or non-functioning leach fields.

While a limited amount of development may be feasible in reclaimed strip mining areas, development of these areas is not likely to be significant due to the increased site engineering and development costs. As long as more accessible land remains available for development, mining areas will likely remain a substandard option.

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