

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

OF

WELLS COUNTY, INDIANA

1993

	UNION	JEFFERSON
	ROCK CREEK	LANCASTER
	LIBERTY	HARRISON
JACKSON	CHESTER	NOTTINGHAM

WELLS COUNTY AREA PLAN COMMISSION

Planning Consultants

Paul Dotterer, Area Plan Commission Director

Michael W. Lautzenheiser, Sr. of  
LAUTZENHEISER, MYERS & HOLDMAN

The Legislative Bodies and the People of Wells County

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The Citizens of Wells County, Indiana
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The Comprehensive Plan for Wells County, Indiana, presents proposals and policies to guide the growth of the county for the next 20 years. It incorporates component plan elements which focus upon future land use, major thoroughfares, public utilities service, community facilities, parks, and open space areas and the Bluffton business district. In addition to proposals for future development, each of the separate plan elements contains recommendations concerning existing conditions, facilities and resources.

Proposals for future residential land use reflect recent development trends in the county. The plan examines and attempts to solve the conflicts arising between residential and agricultural uses in the rural area of the county. It also examines the sprawling residential and commercial road frontage development along Indiana Route #1 from Bluffton north and south. The industrial proposals of the plan include new industrial districts in various localities and the expansion of many others.

To improve traffic circulation in the county and to lessen congestion in the Bluffton business district, the major thoroughfares plan proposes the creation of an "outer loop" road around the city.

The parks and open space plan proposes the expansion of park facilities within the county. The plan seeks to place the financial burden for future public facilities on the land, the developers, and the benefiting residential areas.

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RESOLUTION ON ADOPTION  
OF  
20-YEAR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING AND APPROVING THE 20-YEAR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF THE COUNTY OF WELLS, THE CITY OF BLUFFTON, THE TOWN OF MARKLE, THE TOWN OF OSSIAN, THE TOWN OF PONETO, THE TOWN OF UNIONDALE, THE TOWN OF VERA CRUZ, AND THE TOWN OF ZANESVILLE.

WHEREAS, the General Assembly of the State of Indiana has enacted legislation which states that a County Area Plan Commission shall establish a Comprehensive Plan of the County and the participating Legislative Bodies; and

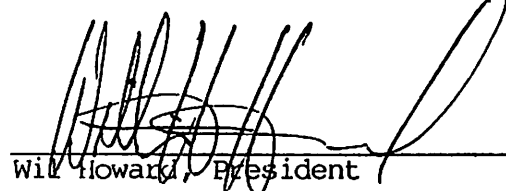
WHEREAS, such Comprehensive Plan is designed to assure the promotion of public health, safety, comfort, convenience, and general public welfare, for the sake of efficiency and economy in the process of development; and


WHEREAS, in June of 1970, the participating Legislative Bodies and jurisdictions did duly enact, approve, and adopt the original Comprehensive Plan to cover the initial 20-year zoning period; and


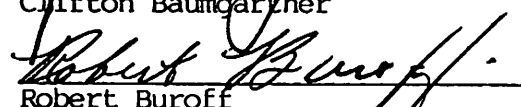
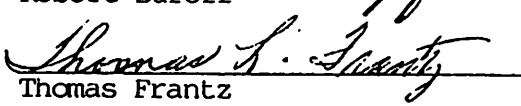
WHEREAS, the initial 20-year zoning period expired and it was necessary to adopt a new 20-year Comprehensive Plan in order to insure the proper development of all the participating jurisdictions.


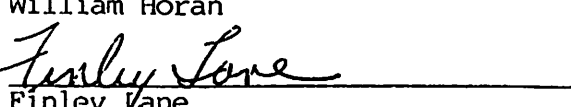
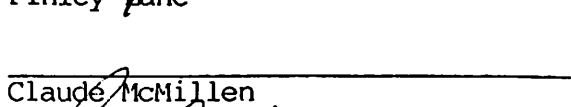

NOW THEREFORE, ON THE 7<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF APRIL, 1993, THE WELLS COUNTY AREA PLAN COMMISSION DOES HEREBY APPROVE, ENACT, AND ADOPT THIS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, TO REPLACE THE AFOREMENTIONED ORIGINAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, AFTER PROPER PUBLIC NOTICE AND HEARING.

DATE ADOPTED: June 10, 1993

SIGNED:   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Wil Howard, President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ted Martz, Vice-President  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Paul Dotterer, Secretary

ATTEST:   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Clifton Baumgartner  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert Buroff  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Thomas Frantz

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
William Horan  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Finley Lane  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Claude McMillen  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Guy Stewart

## THE WELLS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 1993

### INTRODUCTION

The original "Comprehensive Plan" which was adopted in June of 1970 began its introduction with these words:

"Wells County has changed drastically in the 140 years since the first modern settler arrived. The land, which was once covered by woods and swamps, has been cleared and drained to accommodate the agricultural economy which has dominated through-out most of the county's history. In recent years the county has experienced increasing urban and residential growth, while farming activities have gradually decreased."

More than two decades later the trend towards urbanization is continuing. Recent census figures show substantial increases in suburban homes, as well as homes located in previously agricultural areas. This is especially true in the northern half of the county where the shift to urban life is most prevalent.

One of the principal goals of zoning in the next 20 years will be the preservation of adequate agricultural land. Additionally, a growing focus on the environment also requires that zoning concentrates on the retention of lands dedicated to wildlife and natural beauty. The orderly growth of the urban population, the preservation of agricultural lands, and the concentration on environmental needs will require a modification of the original Comprehensive Plan and an expansion of the role of zoning in the next two decades. It shall not be the intent of such modification and expansion to adversely impact upon or deliberately favor one taxing unit within the county over another similar taxing unit.

While the preservation of adequate agriculture land remains a goal of the Comprehensive Plan, we must realize that continued growth, particularly within the southern portion of the county is also a recognized goal. Orderly residential growth will compliment the agricultural heritage of our county and will assure a financial base for the preservation and expansion of existing areas of commerce. Residential growth will also guarantee a viable future for the public school systems within the jurisdiction of the 20-year plan.

Utilizing the original Comprehensive Plan as a foundation upon which to build, the participating legislative bodies, the Area Plan Commission, and the citizens of Wells County are being utilized to shape the comprehensive plan for the next 20 years. Committees and sub-committees were organized from the county and the participating city and towns. These citizens' committees, along with the Area Plan Commission, will serve as the sole architects of this new comprehensive plan.

The Comprehensive Plan itself is a master plan intended to guide long-term development in Wells County and in its incorporated communities. Specifically it is intended for use during a 20 year planning period - until the year 2013. The plan is made up of separate component plans which outline proposals for future land use, thoroughfares, public utilities

service, community facilities, parks and open spaces, and the Bluffton business district. The plan proposals for each of these topics are mapped and discussed in greater detail in the report sections which deal individually with these plan elements. In addition to the proposals and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, the texts of the separate plan elements offer explanations of the planning principles upon which the plan is based. They also represent policies to be followed by government officials in implementing the plans and achieving the objectives of the planning program.

The Comprehensive Plan is only a guide and it will have little practical effect unless implemented by governmental action and unless the proper tools are provided to enforce plan proposals and recommendations. Among these tools are sound and comprehensive zoning and subdivision control ordinances, and building housing, and other related codes. A zoning ordinance and a subdivision control ordinance have already been enacted and modified on various occasions. A revision of the zoning ordinance will probably be necessitated after the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan.

### Plan Proposals For Wells County

This and the following sections summarize the proposals of the Comprehensive Plan for Wells County, for the city of Bluffton, and for the towns of Ossian, Markle, Poneto, Uniondale, Vera Cruz and Zanesville. Included area proposals dealing with each of the specific plan elements described in the introduction. These proposals are mapped and discussed in greater detail in the report sections dealing with each specific plan element.

### Land Use Proposals

The Comprehensive Plan anticipated increased urban-type development in the county during the 20 year planning period. As illustrated on the maps, space is allotted for all types of future development, including residential, commercial, industrial and public land uses. While it is understood that this urban-type development will be important to the economy and character of the county, it is also understood that sufficient good crop land must be reserved to ensure the continuance of the county's sound agricultural base. Areas of natural beauty and importance must also be protected from encroachment because of the important conservation functions they perform and in order to meet an anticipated increased need for recreational areas, to retain elements of natural beauty, and to ensure a good living environment for future county residents. Areas are therefore reserved for agriculture and conservation as illustrated on the plan map.

The most significant land use trend apparent in recent years has been the increasing residential development around the communities and unincorporated portions of northern Wells County. The population in these suburban and rural areas was once almost entirely agriculture-oriented. It is now composed, to a great extent, of persons who commute daily to work in the surrounding area. Much of the new residential development has been of the road frontage or "strip" type. This wasteful land use practice encroaches upon agricultural land and contributes to traffic congestion along state and county roads. It also presents problems in the provision of public facilities and utilities service.

The Comprehensive Plan proposes that new residential development be of the cluster type and that this development be located in the areas immediately surrounding the county's urban communities. The plan recommends that growth be directed to make the best use of available land starting at the present city limits and town boundaries, and spreading outward only as available land is utilized in areas immediately surrounding the communities. However, in areas that do not have existing urban communities the Comprehensive Plan recognizes the need to allow residential development. In these areas the plan encourages incorporation of existing and adequately populated small towns. Additionally, the plan suggests the approval of major subdivisions in such areas if said subdivisions can adequately address utility needs and not be detrimental to the surrounding neighborhood.

The plan proposes that commercial activity in Wells County continue to be centered in Bluffton's business district and within the primary business districts of the county's other urban communities. In recent years, commercial development outside the primary business districts has tended to spread out along major traffic arteries leading in and out of the county's urban communities. For the same reasons described in relation to residential strip development, this commercial road frontage development is also undesirable.

The plan, therefore, envisions the creation of commercial clusters or shopping centers at the locations illustrated on the plan maps. New commercial establishments situated outside the primary business districts of the county's urban communities should be located within these proposed districts. To the extent possible, existing commercial establishments whose locations conflict with other existing land uses should also be re-located within these districts. The locations of the proposed commercial districts are based primarily upon existing commercial concentrations.

The primary considerations in determining the size and scope of the industrial districts illustrated on the plan maps are: The location of existing industries, the availability of transportation, and the relationship with adjacent land uses, both existing and proposed.

The plan proposes an extensive system of conserved open space following the county's major watercourses as illustrated on the plan maps. It is proposed that these areas be protected from encroachment by unsuitable land uses through the provisions of the county's zoning ordinance. The preservation of these streams, flood plains, stream banks, and wooded areas will produce multiple benefits in the future. Through conservation, the most beautiful of the county's natural areas will be preserved for posterity; the control of erosion and stream pollution will be facilitated; and numerous potential park and recreational sites will be preserved.

### Thoroughfares Proposals

The plan proposes a county-wide system of specialized traffic arteries designed to meet traffic circulation needs during the planning period and to correct existing thoroughfare deficiencies. The system is composed of arteries which vary in size and scope from local streets in residential

subdivisions through interstate super highways. The details of this specialization, descriptions of each classification category, and specific recommendations for necessary improvements to State and Federal highways, county roads, and urban streets are all contained in the text accompanying The Thoroughfares Plan.

The major traffic artery in the Wells County area is Interstate 69, which passes along the western edge of the county, entering the county itself for only about one mile in the extreme northwestern corner. The major planning consideration in regards to Interstate 69 is the improvement of connections between all points of Wells County and this major limited-access highway. This is accomplished through the designation of roads leading to Interstate 69 interchanges as arterial or major collector highways, and the designation of strategically located county roads as collectors to carry traffic to these routes.

Aside from Interstate 69, the three major highways in Wells County are State Route #1, #3, and U.S. Route #224. The Thoroughfares Plan recommends that these routes be designated as arterial highways and their continued use in this classification during the planning period. The primary considerations for the application of this designation are the heavy traffic volumes carried on these routes and the important connections they provide within the county and to the north, south, east, and west.

The plan proposes the designation of three State highways and one county road in Wells County as major collector highways and their continued use in this classification during the planning period. These highways, State Routes #116, #124, #218, and County Road #300 West, are so designated because of the traffic volumes they carry and because of the connections they provide between urban concentrations, with Interstate 69 interchanges, and with the arterial highways.

The plan also proposes a by-pass around the City of Bluffton which primarily utilizes existing county roads. It is anticipated that this by-pass will become a reality in the near future. The purpose of the by-pass is to improve the traffic flow around the perimeter of the City and to lessen congestion along the principal thoroughfares within the City.

The Thoroughfares Plan also establishes a network of county roads which are to function as collector roads during the 20-year planning period. The roads selected for this collector network have been chosen so as to offer optimum vehicular connections proposed by the Comprehensive Plan, as well as between these land use concentrations and the arterial and major collector highways. For reasons of economy, the roads selected for the collector network have been limited, to the extent possible, to those roads which are presently improved. The remaining county roads are designated as local access roads and are intended to serve in this category during the planning period.

#### Public Utilities Proposals

At present only the city of Bluffton and the towns of Ossian and Markle provide public utilities service to their residents. The Public Utilities Plan proposes improvement in the service provided by these communities and the expansion of their service areas. In addition, it proposes that public utilities systems be established in the incorporated towns of Poneto,

All county parks would provide opportunities for picnicking, day camping, hiking, nature study, and other passive recreational activities. Limited active recreational facilities, such as small playing fields or

In addition to the commitment to conservation and protected public and private open space areas described previously, the Comprehensive Plan also proposes the expansion and upgrading of county and municipal parks and recreation areas.

Parks and Open Space Proposals

New branch fire stations are proposed in the future for various locations at sites illustrated in the text of this plan. The construction of these new fire stations would improve fire protection throughout the participating area.

The future expansion of the facilities and curriculum of the school corporations must be constantly under study and evaluation by the Board of School Trustees and administrative staff of the school systems. Experts in the field of school needs and construction such as survey teams provided by the various State universities and the State Department of Education should be consulted, as needed, to keep the community and those in responsible positions informed concerning the necessary steps to be taken to keep the school programs up-to-date.

The text accompanying the component Community Facilities Plan assesses the quantity and quality of existing community facilities in Wells County and presents proposals for both the improvement of existing facilities and the installation of new facilities where necessary. The major plan proposals include schools, new fire stations, new municipal buildings, and libraries.

Community Facilities Proposals

It is the intent of the plan that development in these out-lying areas be limited to large tracts of land suitable for the installation of private water supply and sewage disposal systems. In the alternative, these out-lying areas would need to arrange for the sharing of services with incorporated cities and towns, or the unincorporated improved areas. Future commercial and industrial development should be limited to the illustrated growth areas. Detailed recommendations and planning policies concerning future public utilities service in Wells County are presented at greater length in the text accompanying the Public Utilities Plan.

The proposed future service areas of these utilities systems are coterminous with the areas outlined for urban growth during the planning period. These include areas for commercial, industrial, high-density residential, and medium density residential development. Portions of Wells County located outside these proposed future urban growth areas are not programmed for public utilities service by the plan.

Uniondale, Vera Cruz and Zanesville as well the larger unincorporated communities.

playgrounds, might also be included. It is the intent of the plan that the county provide park sites oriented toward passive recreational pursuits and active recreational opportunities.

The plan also recommends the continued use of school outdoor recreational facilities by children living nearby, after school hours, and during the summertime.

#### PLAN PROPOSALS FOR BLUFFTON

The plan's proposals for the city of Bluffton are illustrated on the accompanying map, "Comprehensive Plan", for the city. Included are proposals for future land use, thoroughfares, public utilities, community facilities, parks and open spaces, and the business district. Each of these components is discussed in the following paragraphs and each is described more fully in the report sections dealing with the individual component plans.

#### Land Use Proposals

Plan proposals for the city of Bluffton call for the retention and preservation of the vast majority of the city's traditional residential neighborhoods. As the passage of time eliminates non-conforming uses within the residentially zoned areas, the plan calls for the Area Plan Commission to protect the residential character of these areas by preventing the reinstatement of these uses. The plan establishes multiple categories of residential land use within the City of Bluffton. These categories range from high population density areas with multi-family structures to low density suburban areas. The original 20-year plan concentrated the high-density residential uses in the central or older portion of the city with fringes of the city being reserved for low-density, single-family dwellings. However, the past 20 years have seen the location of high-density, multi-family developments along the fringes of the City of Bluffton. Accordingly, the past twenty-year plan must be modified. The plan proposal for the next two decades reflects the presence of multi-family areas in all sectors of the city. The multi-family areas are to be located as buffers between non-residentially zoned areas and low-density residentially zoned areas. In this way high-density housing can be located outside of the central city, and at the same time, provide a transition area to single-family land uses. Urban growth, in general, continues to stretch the limits of community. Residential growth continues to the traditional north, but expansion is also expected in other directions, especially to the south.

The proposed plan seeks to recognize and to strengthen the city's central business district. Nevertheless, the plan must be cognizant of other existing and potential commercial uses. The area from the Wabash River bridge on State Highway 1 and north to the corporate limits is now primarily business oriented. The plan calls for the creation of a business district on both sides of State Highway #1 north to the corporate boundaries. To the south the plan is different. The area from the edge of the central business district south to Spring Street is to remain primarily

residential. From Spring Street south to the corporate limits, another commercial strip is to exist. The central business district may expand slightly to the east and west.

Industrial zoning occurs in areas primarily to the south and west of the city. These lands are in close proximity to either existing rail lines, State Highway 1, or the proposed city by-pass. The current industrially-zoned land appears to be sufficient to meet the needs of the next 20 years. If it is not, the plan could accommodate additional industrial land to the west of the city, along the proposed by-pass.

### Thoroughfares Proposal

The city of Bluffton experiences the most critical traffic circulation problems of all of Wells County's incorporated communities. At present six State highways and several heavily-travelled county roads intersect within the city or in the area immediately surrounding the city. The existing traffic circulation system channels much of the traffic along these roads through the heart of the city and its business district, thus adding to the circulation problems and congestion inherent in the inner-city. In the business district the situation is further complicated by the convergence of several major intra-city collector streets, vehicular and pedestrian shopper traffic, and numerous north-south intersections, due to an unusual street alignment dating back to the original plat of the city.

The proposed plan is concerned with two basic resolutions to the problems outlined above. The specifics of the proposed solutions are detailed in the "Thoroughfares Plan" section, however, in general, this plan hopes to route truck traffic around the city and better organize other traffic within the city.

Just as in the original 20-year plan, the plan for the next 20 years calls for an outer-loop road around the perimeter of the City of Bluffton. The by-pass proposed around the city would also aid in relieving traffic congestion with the heart of the city by providing an alternative route to cross-county traffic, along the State and county roads, in order that this traffic might avoid the interior portion of the city of Bluffton. Although portions of this loop system could be designated immediately, necessary improvements to all portions of the system will require considerable expenditure on a long-term basis.

Within the interior portion of the city, the plan proposes the use of the following:

1. The widening, where feasible, of major arterial and collector streets;
2. The elimination of parking on major arterial and collector streets; and
3. The designation of one-way streets to channel traffic through the city's interior.



The original 20-year plan advocated an additional bridge across the Wabash river adjacent to the bridge for State Highway #1. This bridge was to connect to Scott Street, and Scott Street was to serve as one of the principal one-way streets through the city's interior. While this plan does not completely abandon the plan for a new bridge, this plan does recognize the financial, engineering, and political drawbacks to said bridge.

#### Business District Proposals

The business district plan proposes the continuing rejuvenation and rearrangement of the downtown business district through both public and private initiative and expenditures. The focal points of the plan would be to make the area more aesthetically pleasing, to make shopping access more convenient, and to encourage new downtown businesses while preserving the old downtown businesses. This plan has been in effect for several years, and the implementation of the plan can be seen in new public buildings, in new sidewalk areas, and in the presence of Kehoe Park. An elaboration of the strategies for the next 20 years can be found in the "Bluffton Business District Plan" contained later in the ordinance.

#### Other Plan Proposals

The Public Utilities Plan proposes the orderly, long-term expansion of public utility services into recently annexed areas and into new development areas beyond the present city limits, as represented by the future urban growth area illustrated in the accompanying maps and sketches. The Community Facilities Plan calls for new school construction, as needed, on existing school properties. The need for one or more branch fire stations, necessary to provide adequate fire protection to the ever-increasing service area, is recognized.

The original Comprehensive Plan proposed new park and recreational areas adjacent to the Wabash River. Kehoe Park and the River Greenway are the first fruits of that plan. The new proposal seeks to tap the natural appeal of the Wabash River and to expand the recreational and aesthetic opportunities already in existence.

PLAN PROPOSALS FOR THE TOWNS

The following sections summarize the Comprehensive Plan's proposals for the towns of Markle, Ossian, Poneto, Uniondale, Vera Cruz, and Zanesville. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the need for a public utilities system to be located in all incorporated communities.

MARKLE

The comprehensive plan's proposals for the Town of Markle are illustrated on the accompanying map. As illustrated, low density residential development is proposed for the areas to the north and northwest of the existing corporate boundaries. Higher density residential growth is planned for the area on the eastern edge of town and north of State Route #116. A new sanitary sewer system, which was completed in 1992, should facilitate the anticipated residential growth.

Commercial land uses currently exist in two major areas. One area is the traditional business district along State Route #116 between the County Line Road and State Route #3 and along U.S. Route #224 on the northern edge of the community. Future commercial growth should remain in these two areas. However, a third area is proposed to the west of Interstate 69 and along U.S. Route #224. This new commercial area is to accommodate businesses uniquely adaptable to a B-3 zoning classification.

The major thoroughfares utilized by the community are Interstate 69, U.S. Route #224, State Route #3, and State Route #116. The existing industry along U.S. Route #224 and Interstate 69, should handle the community's industrial growth needs for the next 20-year period.

The community has a well developed park complex along State Route #3 on the southern edge of town. Additionally, there exists an abundance of conservation land owned by the U.S. Government to the east, south, and west of town. Together the park complex and the conservation land provide ample recreation opportunities for the community.

OSSIAN

The map, "Comprehensive Plan," for Ossian illustrates the plan's proposals for that community during the 20-year planning period. The future growth area proposed for Ossian is the largest proposed for any of the towns in Wells County. Because of Ossian's central location between Fort Wayne and Bluffton and the importance of State Route #1 as a direct connection between all three communities, the growth area of Ossian is extended much

farther northward and southward than in the other directions.

The residential development proposed for the growth area is recommended to be of the cluster type in order to facilitate service by community facilities and public utilities systems and in order to lessen the number of entry-exit points along State Route #1 and other important thoroughfares. High-density residential development is proposed in the older portions of the community while medium-density residential development is programmed for the proposed growth area. The plan recommends and anticipates a business corridor running along State Route #1 from County Road 1050 North down to County Road 700 North. Residential development is proposed in existing subdivisions to the north and south of the existing town boundaries, with residential expansion often to be located beyond the business corridor. Additionally, low-density housing is planned for the area from County Road 1050 North up to County Road 1200 North, with the only major exception being an existing mobile home park to be zoned M-1. Industrial development is proposed in areas to the south and west of the downtown district in close proximity to the current railroad line and existing industrial parks.

The Thoroughfare Plan proposes the continuation of Jefferson Street as the community's major arterial street. An illustration of existing and anticipated arterial and collector streets and roads is found in the town's thoroughfare plan map. All other streets are intended to serve local access purposes in the future.

The Utilities Plan recognizes the need for expanded sewage facilities necessitated by anticipated residential, industrial, and business growth. The Facilities Plan considers the replacement or upgrading of fire department and library facilities serving the town.

#### PONETO

The Comprehensive Plan's proposals for Poneto are illustrated on the accompanying map. As illustrated, the proposed future growth area of the community extends beyond the existing town boundaries in the east and south. Residential development is proposed in the presently undeveloped portions of the town and beyond the present boundaries in the east and south. Commercial activity is programmed for consolidation within the existing central business area. The existing industrial district in the west is expanded by the plan beyond the present western boundaries. The obtainment of public utilities, primarily a public sanitary sewer system, is essential for the town to realize its anticipated residential, industrial, and commercial growth.

Two of the county's proposed major collector highways intersect at Poneto. Main Street carries State Route #218 through the community from east to west, while the Meridian Road, which is classified as a major collector highway, in conjunction with the Hoosier Highway, passes through the community from north to south. Both of these streets are designated as collector streets by The Thoroughfares Plan, and the plan proposes their continued use in this function throughout the planning period. All other

streets in Poneto are classified as local streets.

Plans call for the retention of existing parks and community recreational facilities. However, if residential growth occurs, additional facilities will be required.

#### UNIONDALE

The Comprehensive Plan's proposals for the town of Uniondale are illustrated on the accompanying map. Residential areas remain substantially unchanged from the original Comprehensive Plan, with residential development being channeled to the north, east, and west of the existing town boundaries. The existing business district is being expanded to the north to allow for the presence of adequate B-3 land within the corporate limits. The previous industrial area will be re-thought and reduced due to the abandonment and removal of former Erie-Lackawana Railroad tracks.

U.S. Route #224 forms the southern boundary of the town. The original Comprehensive Plan envisioned residential growth south of the highway, however, this growth has never materialized. If a workable sanitary sewer plan can be achieved, then residential growth south of U.S. Route #224 may become a reality in the next 20 years.

In any event, it is planned that U.S. Route #224 shall remain a controlled-access arterial highway with access available only from widely scattered intersections. The principal collector roads would be Meridian Road and County Road 100 West from the north and south and County Road 600 North from the east and west. The remainder of the streets and roads within the corporate town limits are to remain as local access streets.

The existing recreational facilities consist of a park and ball field on the southwestern edge of town. There are proposals for a smaller park within the downtown business district. Unless residential growth greatly increases the current park facilities would appear to be adequate to handle the passive and active recreational needs of the town.

The original Comprehensive Plan recommended the replacement of the town hall-fire department structure. The town has recently remodeled the town hall building, but subject to residential growth, all municipal structures may need to be renovated or replaced during the next 20-year period.

#### VERA CRUZ

The Comprehensive Plan's proposals for the town of Vera Cruz are illustrated on the accompanying map. As illustrated, residential development is proposed for a short distance beyond the present town boundaries. The Plan also proposes the development of vacant land within the existing town boundaries for residential use and the removal of

## THE WELLS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 1993

blighted housing within the community. There is only a slight expansion of the existing business area being planned, as the existing business area is considered to be of sufficient size to contain commercial activity during the planning period.

Wabash and Center Streets presently function as collector streets within the community and are proposed for continuance in this category during the planning period. The remainder of the community's streets are classified as local streets and should remain as such during the period. During the planning period, consideration should be given to the acquisition of facilities to utilize for the conduct of municipal business.

The community has limited parks and recreational facilities within the corporate boundaries. The previous 20-year plan proposed a five-acre wooded site along the Wabash River at the southwestern city limits. However, this park has not become a reality, and no plan currently exists for its construction.

### ZANESVILLE

The Comprehensive Plan's proposals for the Town of Zanesville are illustrated on the accompanying map. Zanesville is the newest corporate community having been incorporated in early 1992. However, the town has had an established residential and commercial base for many years. The town has had considerable residential expansion since the time of the original Comprehensive Plan, with much of that growth being attributable to a subdivision located at the east edge of the town. The town's proximity to southern Allen County's industries provides the promise of even more residential growth. The town is actively pursuing a sanitary sewer system. When this project becomes a reality the residential and commercial potential of the town should rise dramatically.

The community sits at the junction of Marzane (Indianapolis) Road and Feighner Road or Wells County Road #300 West. (Old State Road #303). Coupled with the nearby Interstate 69, these crossroads should serve the transportation needs of Zanesville for the balance of the next planning period. As growth occurs the collector and local public ways may need to be upgraded to accommodate the expansion.

With the hopeful increase in residences the town looks for a substantial expansion of the business district. In anticipation Zanesville has requested that new areas along the major arteries be classified for the commercial activities. The town presently enjoys adequate park and recreational facilities. However, an increase in population may necessitate new parks, ball diamonds and other recreational opportunities.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: UNINCORPORATED TOWNS

The rural unincorporated communities within the jurisdiction of the 20-year Comprehensive Plan are important, social, educational, and commercial centers in the County. While said towns are under the legislative control of the County Commissioners, the Plan recognizes the independent significance of these communities. Liberty Center, located in Liberty Township, and Petroleum, located in Nottingham Township, have provided a synopsis of their plans and goals for the next planning period. The common goals of the other unincorporated towns discussed in the section on "Other Communities."

LIBERTY CENTER

Liberty Center is a small, rural community located at the heart of Liberty Township. While the exact boundaries of an unincorporated town are obviously undefined, the area referred to as Liberty Center has achieved some residential growth since the inception of the original Comprehensive Plan. Residential growth has been restricted to tracts around the perimeter of the community. The town acknowledges that future growth on any significant scale will be difficult unless the proper infrastructure can be installed in the area. In particular, the Town will be looking at the feasibility of a sanitary sewer system and possible public water system during the next 20 years. These plans may include the incorporation of the Town if other funding options are unavailable. Shorter term goals would be drainage maintenance and local ditch construction.

The Town is part of the Southern Wells Community School District, and has an existing commercial base. This commercial base includes five (5) retail businesses and an agricultural business. There are also two (2) churches, a volunteer fire department, and a U. S. Post Office at or near the central business district. Recreational opportunities include a baseball field and park which are scheduled for several improvements in the next planning period.

The principal thoroughfares in and through Liberty Center are County Road 300 West running north and south, and County Road 300 South running east and west. The intersection of these two routes is in the center of the community.

PETROLEUM

Petroleum is a rural community located in the southern part of Nottingham Township. The traditional boundaries of Petroleum include an established high density residential core surrounded by some larger residential lots on the fringe of the town. As with most unincorporated towns, substantial residential growth has been stymied by the lack of available public utilities. Future growth may be dependent on the attainment of a sewer system and other public services. It is unclear whether incorporation

would be critical to achieving these goals.

Petroleum is a part of the Southern Wells Community School District, and as such, is concerned with maintaining a viable commercial and business base. The area has some small businesses and agriculture related services. Increased residential growth is the key to broadening this commercial base during the next 20 years. There is a church and a volunteer fire department located in the town as well. The Petroleum Lion's Park provides recreational opportunities for the local residents. The Town wants to expand the park services, yet maintain local control over the facility.

The major thoroughfare for Petroleum is State Route Number 1 which bisects the community running north and south. The principal east and west route is County Road 900 South which intersects with State Route Number 1 near the center of town.

#### OTHER COMMUNITIES

Criss-crossing the County are numerous other small, rural communities of varying size and potential. These communities include Banner City, Craigville, Curryville, Dillman, Domestic, Greenwood, Jeff, Keystone, Kingsland, McNatts, Murray, Mt. Zion, Nottingham, Phenix, Reiffsburg, Rockford, Tocsin, Travisville, Uniontown, and Wellsburg.

While these towns have not provided specific plans for the next planning period, they all share some common goals. All of them are restricted as to future residential, business, and industrial growth unless public infrastructure can be made available. The most important service necessary for expansion is sanitary sewers. The size of most of the communities prohibits a self-funded and maintained system. In these areas future growth will probably be dependent on County participation in the development of said infrastructure. Such participation is being encouraged by the Comprehensive Plan. If there is an expanded residential base, new commercial growth will follow. If the residential base remains stagnant, then business and industry will also lag behind. If one of the goals of this Plan is to achieve cluster-type development in order to minimize the cost of resultant infrastructure, then the Plan must encourage residential viability and growth in the small communities.

THE LAND USE PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Comprehensive Plan for Wells County is intended to guide land development throughout the county for the next 20 years. The plan includes all of the unincorporated areas in the county as well as the city of Bluffton and the six incorporated towns participating in the County Planning Program. The accompanying map illustrates the county's over-all Comprehensive Plan. Maps included elsewhere in this report detail the plan proposals for Bluffton, and the towns of Markle, Ossian, Poneto, Uniondale, Vera Cruz, and Zanesville.

Extensive studies and analyses have been performed throughout Wells County, in order to identify and assess the county's existing land use patterns and development trends. It has been determined that the county's overall land use pattern and the individual land use patterns of the incorporated communities are basically sound and will form a solid base for future land development within the county. The plan, therefore, reflects these existing land use patterns and development trends.

The Comprehensive Plan, like the other plan elements which go together to form the county's Comprehensive Plan, is prepared for use by decision-making public officials and governmental bodies in guiding and shaping the future of Wells County. The plan is recommended for adoption by the Wells County Area Plan Commission, the County Commissioners, the Bluffton City Council, and the Town Boards of Markle, Ossian, Poneto, Uniondale, Vera Cruz, and Zanesville.

The plan is based upon sound principles of land use planning. In order that the intent of the plan may be clearly understood, these principles are discussed in the following section. Also included in this report is a series of planning policies. These planning policies are procedural statements presented for adoption and utilization by decision-making individuals and organizations in order that the overall goals and specific objectives of the Comprehensive Plan may be realized.

Land Use Planning Principles

The land use plan accepts as a basic tenet that sound land use patterns are composed of land use districts or neighborhoods which are properly located and inter-related. These districts or neighborhoods should be specialized and should be mutually exclusive. Industrial or commercial uses, for example, should not normally be located within residential neighborhoods. The reverse is also true.

Land Use Districts Should Have Well-defined Borders.

In cases where two or more districts specializing in differing types of land uses abut, they should be separated from one another by buffer zones of landscaped areas, major transportation barriers, natural topography breaks, or open spaces. These buffers, or other suitable divisions, protect each district from detrimental influences of surrounding districts.



Future development in Wells County should be concentrated intensively in specific locations, as opposed to being spread out over large areas or along federal and state highways and county roads in the form of road frontage development. The development of concentrated, specialized, and separated clusters of land uses makes possible the more economical provision of services and utilities in newly developed areas. Cluster type development results in: shorter water lines, sewers, and street; more concentrated and better defined service areas for fire and police protection, garbage collection and other governmentally-supplied services and facilities; fewer problems and less expense in providing new schools and parks and in determining the locations for these facilities; and more convenience for residents of these new areas. Notwithstanding the above stated policy the Comprehensive Plan does not advocate the categorization of large portions of the county as "purely agricultural". The 20-year plan should seek to maintain the benefits of cluster type development but do so in a fashion that facilitates more uniform and even residential growth throughout the entire jurisdiction of the plan.

Cluster developments, whether they be composed of residential, industrial, or commercial land uses, should be arranged along major thoroughfares in such a manner that they are accessible from a limited number of exit-entry points. When development is grouped in this manner, rather than being spread out as road frontage development, traffic congestion is lessened and traffic safety improved. Situations are eliminated wherein numerous automobiles make left and right turns into an unlimited number of residential driveways and commercial and industrial parking lots. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, cluster type development is less wasteful of land than is development of the road frontage type or other widespread indiscriminate development.

Future land development policies in Wells County should provide for a variety of environments. Variations should be planned in the intensity of development, the types of housing units provided and the availability of public facilities and utilities. Variety is essential since no one environment is suitable for every present and future resident of the county.

Future residential development, for example, should provide apartment buildings, apartment or town house complexes, and single-family homes. Residential development should vary in intensity from typical medium-density residential subdivisions in or around urban areas where municipal utilities may be provided, to low-density development on estate size lots in outlying areas where such services are infeasible.

Variety should also be provided in districts comprised of other land uses. Industrial districts, for example, should be specialized to contain both light and heavy industry. Commercial districts should be diversified according to their location, the area they serve and the types of business establishments they contain.

Conserved natural open spaces are essential to the future of the county because of their scenic and recreational aspects and the important land use function they perform. Areas of natural beauty, if preserved, provide sites for future public and private parks and recreation areas, nature study, conservation and stream pollution control programs. If properly

incorporated within future urban development areas, these natural open spaces will serve to beautify residential neighborhoods and provide recreation for their residents. They may also be utilized to form buffer zones between districts of differing land uses.

The Comprehensive Plan for Wells County establishes districts and neighborhoods to be composed exclusively of specialized land uses varying in density and separated from one another by a system of parks and conserved natural open spaces. Areas are outlined for the orderly expansion of urban and suburban development during the next 20 years.

#### LAND USE PLANNING POLICIES

The following land use policies relate the principles of land use planning to the specific objectives of Wells County's planning program. They have been formulated and are present in this report for use by decision-making public officials and governmental organizations at both the county-wide and local level in: Implementing the Comprehensive Plan; achieving the specific land use objectives of the planning program; stimulating and controlling sound and orderly development in urban and suburban areas; and in assuring the continuance and expansion of workable, liveable land use patterns throughout the county during the 20 year planning period.

County-wide zoning and subdivision control ordinances have been prepared and adopted in order to control the use and subdivision of land in the unincorporated areas of the county. Zoning and subdivision control ordinances have also been prepared for the incorporated towns. The Area Plan Commission will support their enforcement and will assist the towns in matters related to the implementation and retentions of their plans, codes or ordinances.

As a part of the county planning program, zoning and subdivision control ordinances will remain in existence for the county and for the six incorporated towns of Markle, Ossian, Poneto, Uniondale, Vera Cruz, and Zanesville.

Future development will be encouraged whenever consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the community goals. The Area Plan Commission will assist and cooperate with communities in the administration of zoning and subdivision control ordinances in the urban fringe areas of these municipalities, in order to ensure that sound and orderly patterns of development occur in these areas.

The unincorporated areas surrounding Bluffton and Ossian have experienced haphazard urban sprawl along the highways and roads at the approaches to the communities. This indiscriminate sprawling of uses into unincorporated areas, if unchecked, results in the waste of great quantities of land as well as infringement upon agricultural activities. Most of the county's land use conflicts are found in these areas.

Present land use conflicts will be removed when feasible and such conflicts will be avoided in future developments. The elimination of Non-Conforming Uses through natural attrition and a prohibition against "Spot Zoning" are the expressed goals of the participating governing bodies and the Area Plan

Commission.

It would not be wise or feasible to attempt to remove immediately all of the conflicting land uses now existing in Wells County. These uses will be listed as non-conforming uses in the zoning ordinances and, as such, will be subject to restrictions governing expansion and reconstruction. Through these restrictions, land use conflicts will be gradually eliminated. Those home-occupations which will be permitted to remain in their present locations within residential and agricultural areas will be limited to their size and in the scope of their non-residential activities. Future development will conform to the specialized districts outlined in the zoning ordinance.

The Land Use Plan programs the consolidation of uses within specialized districts. In order to bring about this consolidation and specialization within the boundaries of present development and to ensure its existence in new development areas, a sound zoning ordinance is essential.

Future land development should enhance and complement existing land uses and should occur in appropriate and compatible locations.

The Land Use Plan and the zoning ordinances will ensure the compatibility of future land developments to one another and to their sites. The subdivision control ordinances and the various codes will be of additional assistance ensuring that new developments, regardless of type, enhance and complement surrounding developments.

Through subdivision control ordinances, standards of design and construction will be enforced in all new developments. The standards set forth in these ordinances are minimum standards consistent with health, safety, and the general welfare. Standards which are higher than these minimums will be encouraged to utilize advanced principles of design in order to achieve cohesive neighborhoods and in order to create a truly superior and more rewarding living environment. Local municipal officials will be educated to the advantages of advanced neighborhood design.

Under the provisions of the subdivision control ordinances, all plans for new residential subdivisions, new commercial centers, new industrial developments, and any other land subdivision will be subject to review and approval of the Area Plan Commission. It will be the duty of the Plan Commission to ascertain that these proposals meet minimum standards prior to approval. It is at this time that reasonable recommendations for higher standards or more advanced design principles will be recommended to the developer, as well as options provided by the ordinances which would result in a superior development at no additional expense to the developer. It will be the duty of the Plan Commission to assist citizens and developers so the building projects can best fit in with the Land Use Plans and best meet the broad public interest.

The Area Plan Commission recognizes and accepts the need for flexibility in the design of large subdivisions. Neighborhoods which are planned as a unit will be welcomed provided only that they meet standards for review of such projects set forth in the zoning and subdivisions control ordinances.

The zoning and subdivision control ordinances provide for flexibility in subdivision design. The land developer may be granted the opportunity of

transferring density from one area of his tract to another, and of locating homes and streets in order to achieve the best arrangement in relation to the site. Under these conditions, lot sizes may vary from the given standard. In order to obtain this leeway, however, the developer must provide a sound overall plan which is suitable to the site and which provides adequate usable open space.

Through density transfer, the developer may set aside woods, slopes, flood plains and area of rough topography as open spaces which give identity to the neighborhood and provide pleasant breaks in the development pattern. Parks and playgrounds can also be incorporated into the design in appropriate locations. The developer would be permitted to place each home on a lot slightly smaller than normally required, provided that the total number of homes does not exceed the number which could be built without the open space provisions.

Future land uses should be arranged harmoniously in compact neighborhoods units.

The advantages of these planned unit developments are considerable for both the land developer and the county. The developer can locate streets on better ground and at shorter lengths. In the end, his subdivision will be more appealing to prospective residents and his lots easier to sell. The county benefits from a more stable, and livable neighborhood, lower street maintenance costs, a more efficient street system, additional open spaces for aesthetic and recreational units and planned industrial and commercial clusters along major thoroughfares. A smooth interchange of traffic may be accomplished with a minimum of congestion and delay.

Local municipalities will be encouraged to adopt and enforce sound building, housing and related codes in order to establish standards and in order to maintain present residential neighborhoods, as well as to properly develop new residential neighborhoods.

All of the incorporated communities in Wells County contain residential structures which are in poor condition, although the number and percentages of such homes varies greatly from town to town. To ensure the proper maintenance of older homes and the protection of other residences located nearby, as well as for the assurance of the proper construction of all new buildings, sound codes are essential.

Programs will be established for the elimination of substandard housing conditions. The provision of suitable low-cost and moderate-rent housing will be encouraged as a means of replacing existing substandard residential structures.

Throughout most of the county, in both unincorporated areas and incorporated towns, poor housing is scattered individually or in small groups of homes. In these cases, enforcement of housing and related codes, the removal of individual blighted structures, and voluntary projects such as paint up-fix up campaigns or contests would suffice.

The Comprehensive Plan provides for residential development at varying densities. Within the central portions of the urban communities, where high-density residential development has occurred, provisions are made for the retention of such uses and the construction of new multi-family structures. Around the periphery of these communities and in some

adjacent unincorporated areas, development of a medium-density is planned. In outlying districts surrounding urban centers, only low-density development will be permitted.

Public facilities and utilities will be provided in and around growth areas as specified in the Comprehensive Plan. Areas which cannot feasibly be served at the present or in the very near future will be limited to low-density residential development. Developers and local municipal officials will be educated to the advantages of the use of soil surveys as a guide to proper land development.

The outlying areas surrounding urban centers which are beyond the reach of present or planned utilities systems are reserved for single-family residences on estate-size lots and for agriculture. Since private water wells and sewerage systems will be used in this area, larger lots are necessary in order that there is sufficient room for these facilities to operate properly, particularly in the areas where soil is not well-suited.

Strong effort shall be directed toward encouraging future development within an efficient thoroughfares system in order to provide quick and easy interchanges of people and goods.

The highways, road and streets in Wells County are accessible from an unlimited number of points. These include intersecting roads and streets, outlets from commercial and industrial parking areas and private driveways. New development of the cluster type, composed of residential, commercial or industrial uses, would lessen the number of access points along adjacent thoroughfares. As a result, traffic safety would be increased and circulation would be significantly improved. For this reason, this type of development is recommended to be incorporated with an improved, more efficient traffic circulation system.

New commercial development will be planned and controlled based upon sound principles of location with respect to present and future population, thoroughfares and space requirements. The Plan Commission recognizes the need for differing types of commercial areas specializing in differing types of goods and services.

The Comprehensive Plan recommends the consolidation, strengthening and revitalization of the primary or central business district of the county's communities and the grouping of other commercial uses into well-defined secondary business areas.

Steps should be taken to alleviate the physical problems which beset the Bluffton business district and in the other commercial areas located along Main Street, or State Route #1, in and near the city. The widening of State Route #1 from the central business district north to State Route #116 has already helped alleviate the problems.

Although significant strides have been made in the past few years, Bluffton's central business district continues to suffer from several problems. Among these are: the appearance of some of its buildings; traffic congestion; and the lack of sufficient off-street parking facilities. Proposals for alleviating these problems are contained in a separate Central Business District Plan. The implementation of the proposals of this plan and enforcement of the zoning ordinances will result

in the strengthening of the district.

The plan also proposes the removal of scattered commercial uses from residential areas and their relocation within these compact commercial centers, which are defined in the enclosed comprehensive plan maps.

Strategic properties suitable for industrial development shall be conserved in order to encourage and promote the establishment of stable, diversified industries within specialized industrial districts or parks.

The Comprehensive Plan proposes the consolidation and expansion of present industrial districts in Bluffton, Markle, and Ossian and in the smaller communities. The locations of these districts are based upon the availability of transportation facilities, particularly road and rail, and upon their relation to the locations of present industrial uses and districts comprised of other types of uses.

Industrial districts, like commercial districts or residential neighborhoods, should be specialized. These districts or industrial parks are normally developed for either light industry or heavy industry. Light industry and light industrial districts may normally be located nearer to residential neighborhoods and community facilities than may heavy industry. Industries in the light manufacturing category do not cause conditions that would be objectionable to neighboring properties. They involve no process which produces noise, vibration, electrical disturbances, air or water pollution, heat, glare, waste matter, odor, fire hazard, or outside storage of materials. Heavy industries may have some of the objectionable characteristics mentioned, although not on a continuous basis, and outside storage or operations are frequently involved.

The beauty of rural Wells County will be protected through land use controls regulating signs, residential developments, commercial and industrial activities. Careful planning can realize this aesthetic goal while promoting sufficient residential and commercial growth which is vital to the health of the local economy.

Areas of obvious recreational potential and areas of natural beauty and importance, such as watershed areas, river banks, and historic sites, will be protected, through zoning, from development of non-conforming nature. Future parks and open space areas will be designed so as to incorporate these sites when possible, and to coordinate with existing and new public, semi-public, and private recreational facilities.

## FUTURE COUNTY LAND USE

The following sections outline the proposals of the Comprehensive Plans for Wells County. The map, "Comprehensive Plan," illustrates the anticipated growth areas of the county's incorporated and unincorporated communities, as well as rural land reserved for agricultural and conservation areas. These urban growth areas were defined based upon such considerations as: drainage conditions, soil limitations, existing land use patterns, municipal utilities service limitations, development trends and transportation access.

### Future Residential Land Use

Population projections for Wells County indicate that there will be a need for many new dwelling units in the county during the next 20-year period. Traditionally the major areas of residential growth center around the city of Bluffton and the town of Ossian, and in the northern portion of the county in general. However, if community utilities, such as sewer and water, are made available all of the smaller communities should experience substantial residential growth.

The Comprehensive Plan proposes residential development of four types, based upon the density of development. These categories are entitled high-density, medium-density, low density and rural residential development. In the older portions of Bluffton, for example, where houses are situated on small lots and where there are many multiple-family dwellings, the plan proposes high-density residential development. Density in this area would range from seven to ten dwellings per acre. Single-family homes, duplexes, room houses and apartment houses are anticipated in the area.

In the undeveloped portions of the incorporated communities and in the areas immediately adjacent to their corporate boundaries, the plan proposes medium-density residential development. This category is composed of typical single-family residences in subdivisions with densities of four dwelling units per acre. The medium-density residential areas are proposed in order to provide for the orderly expansion of the communities into areas which can be served by public utilities systems during the planning period. At present, only Bluffton, Ossian and Markle have municipal utilities systems.

In the fringe areas surrounding medium-density development, which cannot be served with municipal utilities, residential development of low-density is proposed. The average number of dwelling units per acre in these areas is two. This limit is set up so that home sites will be large enough to safely utilize private wells and septic tanks in soils which are not generally conducive to their use in close proximity.

### Future Commercial Land Use

The original Comprehensive Plan anticipated that commercial activity in Wells County would be centered around the city of Bluffton. While the city of Bluffton continues to have the largest and most densely developed commercial area in the county, other areas of significant importance have

developed during the past 20 years.

The Ossian central business district is also programmed for retention and strengthening. Secondary districts are proposed in Ossian and the area immediately adjacent to its northern and southern boundaries on State Route #1. The continuation of the business areas of towns is also programmed, as illustrated on the plan map. The plan anticipates that these areas will be sufficient to meet the needs of the community during the planning period.

Similarly, the preservation of the town of Markle's traditional business district along State Route #116 is planned. However, the continued strengthening and development of the newer business district along State Route #224 is also programmed.

In the smaller communities, in the areas around the fringe of the larger communities and in the unincorporated communities there exists the need for secondary commercial districts. These secondary districts are intended to serve only their immediate neighborhoods. Such districts result in greater customer convenience, better control of the environment, and better traffic management.

#### Future Industrial Land Use

In recent years there have been several significant trends in the location of industries. Large manufacturing industries, once rooted within the community, have begun to disperse from the urban areas to the surrounding fringe areas and even to rural locations. The major stimuli which have brought about this dispersal are: improved road transportation facilities; the advent of the space age industries, which manufacture smaller products and do not depend on rail transport for bulky raw materials; and the need for larger sites, which are difficult to find in urban areas.

Industries require more land now than in the past due to changes in plant design, the practice of planning ahead for future expansion room, and the need for extensive off-street parking facilities for employees and visitors. In addition, most modern industries desire space for the provision of amenities such as landscaping, deeper setbacks and, in some cases, on-site recreational facilities for employees.

Modern industries, particularly light industries, desire good locations and attractive sites. Industrial uses, in general, now create fewer nuisance problems (smoke, noise, and odor) than was the case in the past. They desire to be located in districts or industrial parks containing compatible industries. Thus, separate districts should be established for light and heavy industrial uses.

Light industrial uses are characterized by modern one-story units in which a variety of small goods are produced, often from synthetic materials. Heavy industries, on the other hand, are producers of large items such as automobiles and machinery, or are engaged in the refinement of raw materials, as in the case of steel mills. Heavy industrial uses often produce nuisances. Nearly all of the manufacturing uses in Wells County may be classified as light industries. The major exceptions are the extractive uses in the form of gravel pits.

In the past, industrial uses in Wells County have been located along the



rail lines, particularly within Bluffton and Ossian. The great majority of manufacturing operations in the county have taken place within the city of Bluffton, while those industrial uses found in other portions of the county frequently consist of uses such as gravel pits, grain elevators, and gas storage tanks and other non-manufacturing uses.

The trend toward dispersal of industries is apparent. This is true not only in and around the city of Bluffton, but throughout the county. Industry is expanding to the west and south of the city of Bluffton. Substantial industry exists in an area to the south of the town of Ossian and in the northern section of the town of Markle. Ossian plans further expansion to the south as well as to the west of the town. In Markle, industrial growth is programmed for an area to the west of town, adjacent to Interstate Route 69.

#### Future Open Space and Conservation Areas

The conservation of areas of natural beauty and importance should be considered essential in order to protect some of the scenic beauty of the county through future years, and in order to ensure a good living environment for both present and future residents. Important natural areas should be preserved and protected from encroachment by urban development in order to guarantee that they may be enjoyed by residents of the county not yet born.

In addition to their natural beauty and importance, these areas serve other important functions. They offer a myriad of appropriate sites for parks and recreation areas. Within the land use pattern they serve to connect existing and proposed public facilities, parks, and recreation areas. They also serve as buffer zones between the incompatible uses.

The present 20-year plan has eliminated the extensive county wide greenbelt network proposed by the original comprehensive plan. The present plan calls for the expansion of the present River Greenway Trail along the Wabash River near the city of Bluffton. The proposed expansions would extend the Greenway Trail south to Ouabache State Recreational Area and north towards the unincorporated community of Murray.

An emphasis would be give to both the creation and expansion of athletic recreational facilities. With the expansion of the urban area, older parks located in the central areas of the city and towns do not adequately serve the recreational needs of the fringe areas. New baseball and soccer areas are planned for available sites in the fringe residential developments and on school properties.

The original 20-year plan was concerned with the disappearance of woodlands in Wells County. When the original plan was adopted, seven percent (7%) of the total area in the county, or approximately 17,000 acres, were woodlands. The continuing urban sprawl, particularly the influx of homes on low acreage lots in agricultural and conservation areas has undoubtedly reduced the amount of woodlands over the past 20 years. The Comprehensive Plan recommends the conservation of the county's remaining woodlands and their protection from encroachment by urban-type land uses. These woodland are comprised, for the most part, of small scattered woods and tree stands. The larger and more numerous are located in the southern half of the county. The most important of these, from a conservation standpoint, are

those along the Salamonie River and those along the Wabash River.

Future Agricultural Land Use

In Wells County, particularly in the northern half, a conflict between suburban living and farming is growing, due to the widespread location of non-farm suburban homes along county roads. This widespread sprawl of suburban residential development endangers the agricultural base of the county, takes farm land out of production, and poses problems for farmers, non-farm residents, and county officials. Non-farm residents of rural areas are bothered by noises, odors, dust and other by-products of necessary farm activities. Farmers are in jeopardy of paying higher taxes for urban-type public services which they would not normally require. County officials are pressed to provide expanded public services to this widespread development.

All of the land areas in the county not proposed specifically for urban or suburban uses or for conservation are proposed for agricultural use. This land will not be needed and should not be used for urban-type development during the planning period since areas which should be adequate for urban growth have been designed. The protection of this agricultural land from encroachment will benefit farmers and the economic base of the county of will ensure the growth of attractive and well-serviced residential development within the areas designed.

The plan does not intend to expressly prohibit all non-farm dwellings in agricultural areas. It does, however, propose that they be situated on large tracts of land, unless situated in connection with an approved major subdivision. Presently a one acre or larger tract with at least 200 feet of road frontage is all that is required for a minor subdivision in all agriculturally-zoned areas.

FUTURE URBAN LAND BLUFFTON

The Comprehensive Plan for Bluffton is illustrated on the accompanying map of the city. It represents the optimum arrangement of future land uses, based upon the existing, well-established land use pattern and the planning principles and policies listed earlier in this report. Within the older, more intensely developed portion of the city, the plan proposes the retention of most of the existing land use districts.

It recommends, however, that these districts be strengthened and unified by the removal of conflicting land uses by consolidation and by the better definition of their borders. In the outlying areas of the city, which are more sparsely developed, the plan establishes new land use districts. These are based upon the land uses which do exist in the area, the land use pattern of the developed portion of the city, and upon the aforementioned policies and principles. The following paragraphs detail the proposals of the plan for each of the existing and proposed land use districts.

Future Residential Land Use

In planning future residential neighborhoods, the major objective is the creation of a stable, pleasing and healthy residential environment. The protection and improvement of existing neighborhoods is equally important. The latter aim is particularly important to the older, well-strengthened neighborhoods and to the improvement of their residential environment through the removal of the conflicting commercial land uses which are presently intermixed throughout the older section of the community.

These commercial uses may be relocated in the business district or in the other proposed commercial areas. Some home-occupations should be permitted to continue in their present locations providing they meet requirements and do not exceed the limitations of zoning controls. Such a removal program will, of necessity, be a long-term process, to be accomplished through zoning ordinance enforcement or through the volition of the proprietors of the commercial establishment.

Within the aforementioned older residential neighborhoods, the majority of high-density housing is programmed. Medium and low-density housing is planned for areas on and around the city's fringe. Traditional areas to the southeast of the city and north of the Wabash River off of State Route #1 are slated for expansion. Potential new areas of residential development include areas to the west of town, but east of the proposed by-pass, south of the city along the Hoosier Highway, and north of State Route #116 and east of State Route #1.

Future Commercial Land Use

Much of Bluffton's commercial activity and that of Wells County is conducted in the central business district, which is of sufficient size and complexity to merit a plan of its own. Details of proposals for the business district, therefore, are contained in the separate business district plan.

The majority of the commercial uses located outside the business district are strung out along State Route #1, from one end of the city to the other.

Existing land use studies categorized the commercial activity along State Route #1 as being of the "Main Business Thoroughfare" type. The commercial uses located along this heavily-travelled artery consist of automobile-oriented establishments, convenience goods stores and service establishments.

The new comprehensive plan recognizes the important commercial appeal of State Route #1. Accordingly, a business corridor along State Route #1 from County Road 200 South to County Road 250 North is proposed.

Many of the commercial uses presently situated within residential neighborhoods are classified as "home-occupations." These are commercial enterprises conducted in a structure which is also used as a residence, usually by the proprietor of the business. It is recommended that the home-occupations which are offensive to surrounding residences be relocated in the secondary commercial districts. Those which are permitted to remain should be restricted. Several methods of restriction are possible. One method is that of restriction by use. Through this method, certain named types of home-occupations (medical offices, barber shops, and beauty shops, for example) might be permitted to remain, while all others would be excluded.

A second, frequently used method is that of restriction by limitation. This method is, perhaps, the better of the two. Under this method, home-occupations permitted to locate within residential neighborhoods would be limited in regards to the number of people they employ or the type of machinery or equipment used (no objectionable noise or odor, etc.). Further limitations should be applied in regards to the size of signs, exterior storage or other obviously non-residential features visible on the exterior.

#### Future Industrial Land Use

The diminishing importance of railroads as industrial transportation has created new industrial districts within the city of Bluffton. While traditional industrial areas adjacent to rail lines continue to exist, new districts are planned for the next 20 years. These new industrial districts are located to the south of the city on the west side of State Route #1, to the west of the city adjacent to the proposed city by-pass, and to the north and west of the city in an area south of the junction of the proposed by-pass. The retention of the traditional industrial areas coupled with the new proposed areas should meet Bluffton's industrial needs for the next two decades.

#### Future Parks and Open Spaces

The "Comprehensive Plan" map illustrates the future park and open space proposals for the city of Bluffton. These will be discussed in a separate plan but since they are a significant and integral part of the Land Use Plan they are summarized here. The City plans to expand to non-passive recreation opportunities. Proposals include the upgrading and expansions of sports fields and the establishment of new baseball, soccer and general recreational areas in the future residential developments. The maintenance and possible expansion of the Wabash River Greenway is the major passive recreational program outlined in the new 20-year plan.

MARKLE

The community of Markle is located in the northern part of the county where the majority of the residential growth is taking place. This fact, coupled with the town's proximity to Interstate 69 will be the main factors effecting the growth of Markle during the next twenty years.

Future Residential Land Use

The established residential areas of the town will continue to provide high-density residential dwellings, along with the apartment complex to the north and east of the original town. Medium-density residential use is slated for the areas north of State Route #116. Low-density residential areas are planned to the north and west of the town, which will act as a buffer for the agricultural areas.

Future Industrial Use

The current industrial areas along State Route #224 will continue to be utilized. However, an industrial zone to the west of town and adjacent to Interstate 69 is proposed for the future.

Future Commercial Use

Markle has two primary business areas. One is the traditional central business district located along two blocks of State Route #116. The other area lies along State Route #224. These existing areas are scheduled for rejuvenation and expansion. A new area to the west of the town along State Route #224 is proposed to coincide with the present REMC property.

Future Parks and Open Spaces

Markle and the surrounding area are blessed with recreational land and facilities. The park and swimming facilities which are south of town along State Route #3 are more than adequate to handle existing park needs. In addition, the town has ready access to acres of land owned by the federal government, as well as the Huntington Reservoir. Finally, the town has acquired a small area in the center of town which will serve as a passive park facility.

OSSIAN

The future growth area proposed for Ossian is the largest proposed for any of the towns in the county. Like the Bluffton growth area, the land proposed for future development adjacent to Ossian is oriented to State Route #1. This configuration reflects recent development trends in and around the community and the importance of State Route #1 as the county's major traffic artery.

Future Residential Land Use

The concentration of high-density residential dwellings is planned for the establishment and more centrally located residential areas of the town of

Ossian. Medium-density residential use is proposed for an area to the southeast of the town between County Roads 800 North and 900 North, for an area to the north of the existing Rose Ann Heights subdivision located on the west side of State Route #1 extending up to County Road 1050 North, and for an area east of the Ossian Elementary School north of County Road 900 North. Low-density housing is intended for the area north of County Road 1050 North to County Road 1200 North, and for the area between County Roads 900 North and 1000 North on the west side of the existing railroad tracks.

#### Future Commercial Use

During the next 20-year period, the town of Ossian anticipates the expansion of commercial or business districts into three major areas: between County Roads 1000 North and 1050 North on the east side of State Route #1, on the west side of State Route #1 between County Roads 900 North and 850 North, and on both sides of State Route #1 between 850 North and 800 North.

#### Future Industrial Use

Since the inception of the original Comprehensive Plan, an industrial area or park has developed on the south edge of the town of Ossian on the west side of State Route #1. The retention and expansion of this existing industrial area is planned. However, a second industrial area between County Road 850 North and 800 North on the west side of the existing railroad tracks is also anticipated.

The town of Ossian intends to utilize the new zoning overlay district for recycling centers (L-I) to allow for recycling activities inside of the town on both existing private and public lands.

#### Future Parks and Open Spaces

Presently, recreational facilities exist with the Melching residential subdivision and the Ossian Elementary School property. New recreational areas are planned within the Sandalwood residential subdivision and to the west of the existing town hall. Additionally, the expansion of the recreational opportunities on the school property are programmed.

#### PONETO

The proposed future development area of Poneto extends beyond the existing town boundaries in three directions--east, west, and south. The plan proposes residential development in the presently undeveloped portions of the town and beyond the present boundaries in the east and south. A proposed community sewer system could have a substantial impact on residential growth. As illustrated on the plan map, the business area is to be consolidated within its existing area. The western industrial area is programmed for expansion beyond the present corporate boundaries. A new public park is proposed for the residential development in the northeast.

UNIONDALE

The proposed future development area of Uniondale extends beyond the present town boundaries in the north, east, and west. Residential development is proposed for these areas and for the presently undeveloped areas within the town. A proposed community sewer system could have a substantial impact on residential growth. The plan envisions that the present size of the business area will be sufficient for the planning period, if it is consolidated through the use of presently vacant sites and the removal of conflicting land uses. A community park exists in the western portion of the community. The industrial uses located along the railroad in the northeast are continued, and the district is expanded to the east. The previously proposed industrial area to the west of the town of Uniondale has been eliminated in the present Comprehensive Plan due to the abandonment and removal of the railroad tracks that passed through the town from east to west.

VEIRA CRUZ

Development is planned beyond the present town boundaries in the north, east, and west. Residential uses are proposed for these areas, and for the undeveloped land within the town boundaries. A proposed community sewer system could have a substantial impact on residential growth. The business area is planned for consolidation within its present boundaries and a community park is proposed for the southwest. This park would be incorporated with the Wabash River Conservation area.

ZANESVILLE

The town of Zanesville has just recently incorporated. The town is located in the far northwest corner of Wells County, with the newly established corporate limits also encompassing a sizable area in southwestern Allen County. The community is located within two high residential growth areas. These areas are northern Wells County and southwestern Allen County. The unique location of the town will be the main factor contributing to Zanesville's growth over the next 20 years.

Future Land Use

The established residential areas of the town will continue to provide high to medium density housing. Medium to low density housing is programmed for the southeast, southwest, and northeast areas of the community.

Future Industrial Use

Zanesville's only existing industry consists of two pre-existing conditions. These uses will continue as pre-existing conditions in lands zoned for residential or business uses. No land within the town is scheduled to be zoned for industry as the probability of any significant industrial growth over the next 20 years is remote.

Future Commercial Use

In order to serve an expanded residential base, the town feels that a substantial expansion of the current business is necessitated. The proposed business district will be located on both east and west sides of the Marzane and Feichner Road, predominately in Allen County portion of the town. It is anticipated that convenience and service oriented business will be attracted to these areas.

Future Parks and Open Spaces

Presently Zanesville has a well-kept recreational facility, the Lion's Park, located on Van Horn Street between Marzane Road and County Road 300 West. The facility serves the needs of the current population. However, future residential developments will need to consider the inclusion of the parks and open spaces in their project plans in order to serve Zanesville's recreational needs for the next twenty years.

THE THOROUGHFARES PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Thoroughfares Plan establishes a comprehensive system of traffic arteries intended to fill Wells County's traffic circulation needs in the next twenty years. The system is composed of specialized highways, roads, and streets, each of which is intended to serve a specific function. These are illustrated on the accompanying map, "The Thoroughfares Plan." Because of the tremendous expenditures required to construct new roads, the future thoroughfares system must make optimum use of the highways, roads, and streets which now exist in Wells County. The Plan, therefore, focuses upon the proper utilization of existing roads and upon necessary improvements along those roads deemed the most important to the future traffic circulation systems. Except in areas adjacent to the county's larger population centers, Bluffton and Ossian, no new roads are proposed.

The Thoroughfares Plan has been based, to a great extent, upon information gathered through extensive studies of the existing traffic circulation system.

The Major Objectives of the Thoroughfares Plan, therefore are:

The improvement of traffic circulation within the county, including:

1. access to Bluffton and other incorporated communities from urban areas;
2. traffic flow between these communities and other important land use concentrations; and
3. the circulation systems of the urban communities themselves.



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The improvement of traffic circulation between points within Wells County and larger economic centers, such as cities of Fort Wayne, Marion, and Indianapolis;

The improvement of traffic ties between points within Wells County and the five nearby interchanges along Interstate #69 and #469 through which the entire nation-wide super highway system is accessible;

The re-routing of through-traffic around the City of Bluffton in order to avoid the congestion now present within the city to lessen this congestion, and to improve circulation through-out the county;

The elimination of unsafe and inefficient conditions on existing highways, roads, and streets, and the elimination of hazardous intersections;

The proper location of new road county roads and city streets with respect to new and proposed development within the county;

The proper design and construction of new local streets within developing residential subdivisions which, although installed at private expense, will become the maintenance responsibility of the county and its communities; and

The assurance of accessibility to existing and proposed recreational facilities from all portions of their intended service areas.

### PLANNING POLICIES

The following thoroughfares planning policies, based upon sound and widely accepted principles of thoroughfares planning, are recommended for adoption by the Wells County Area Plan Commission. Adherence to these policies will aid in implementing the proposals of the Thoroughfares Plan and in accomplishing its objectives.

#### The Determination of Form and Function

Strong effort shall be directed toward encouraging future development within an efficient thoroughfares system in order to provide quick and easy interchange of people and goods.

This important planning policy, first stated in the county's Comprehensive Plan, points out the need for the interrelation of existing and anticipated development in Wells County and existing and proposed thoroughfares systems. The text accompanying the Land Use Plan describes the wasteful road-frontage development which has occurred along the county's major arteries and points out the congesting effect this development has had upon traffic circulation, due to the numerous exit and entry points from commercial and industrial parking lots and private driveways. The plan proposes that new development be of the cluster type in order to lessen the number of access points along adjacent thoroughfares. Development of residential, commercial, and industrial clusters would lead to improved traffic circulation and increased traffic safety.

New thoroughfares in both incorporated and unincorporated areas should be located so as to avoid disruption of existing urban concentrations, while,

at the same time, opening up areas for future residential, industrial, and commercial development.

### The Elimination of Present Defects

In addition to the numerous exit and entry points along Wells County's major thoroughfares, other unsafe conditions, inefficient road alignments, and surface deficiencies exist. The Thoroughfares Plan offers proposals to remedy these defects and deficiencies and presents the following policy to further serve as a guide to the Plan Commission in such matters.

Unsafe conditions and inefficient alignments of county roads and streets will be removed whenever possible and avoided in future construction. The county and its urban communities will continue to improve roads and streets which are presently deficient in surface width and material through long-range improvement programs scheduled according to financial ability to perform necessary improvements.

The redesign and reconstruction of federal and state highways which pass through Wells County are the responsibility of the State Highway Department and, as such, are not the concern of the county. The county, however, is responsible for improvements to its local county roads and the urban communities within the county are responsible for the maintenance and improvement of those local streets not designated as Federal or State highways.

The widening, paving, realigning, or otherwise improving of all roads in Wells County would be both economically infeasible and unnecessary. The Thoroughfares Plan, however, designates certain heavily travelled and importantly located county roads which should receive first priority for improvements and upgrading as collector roads. These are illustrated on the Plan Map. The plan recommends that as many of those roads as is economically feasible be improved as a part of the long-range program during the 20-year planning period. It is further recommended that unsafe and inefficient conditions be removed through redesign and realignment whenever possible at the time of the improvement of the road.

Thoroughfares Plans for each of the incorporated communities participating in the planning program are included later in this report. These designate certain heavily travelled and importantly located local streets to serve as arterial and collector streets. It is recommended that these streets be improved as a part of a long-range program based upon economic feasibility.

### The Specialization of Thoroughfares

Wells County's thoroughfares system and the thoroughfares systems of each of its incorporated communities have been undergoing an evolutionary process in recent years. From undifferentiated grids of county roads and city streets, a network of highly specialized thoroughfares has developed. This specialization is expected to develop further during the planning period.

The Area Plan Commission recognizes the necessity for the specialization of highways, roads, and streets within the thoroughfares system, ranging from local access roads and streets to limited access expressways.

The studies and analyses performed concerning the county's existing

thoroughfares system and those of its incorporated communities included the classification of thoroughfares according to their existing specialization into generally accepted thoroughfares classification categories. With minor modifications these same categories are used in planning the future specialization of Wells County's thoroughfares. For the purposes of this report and the Thoroughfares Plan itself, the classification used to categorize all thoroughfares in the county, in both incorporated and unincorporated areas are: limited-access expressways, arterial highways, major collector highways, collector roads, local-access roads, arterial streets, collector streets, and local streets. A brief description of each of these classifications follows:

Limited-access Expressways are the most specialized arteries of the thoroughfares system. Included in this category are interstate super highways and principal intra-state highways which are constructed to super highway standards. The name applied to the classification derives from the method of gaining access to the route. Limited-access routes may be entered or departed only at widespread interchanges, rather than from intersecting roads, streets, or private driveways. one interstate highway, Interstate 69, presently passes through Union Township. Although this route bisects only the extreme northwestern corner of the county and no interchanges are located within its borders, it is considered of extreme importance to the county's future.

Arterial Highways are those Federal and State routes which connect large, urban population centers or which carry heavy volumes of traffic for great distances through several counties. The major arterial highway which passes through Wells County, aside for Interstate 69, is State Route #1. The entire length of this highway through Wells County is classified as an arterial route, and it is anticipated that it will remain as such throughout the planning period. State Route #3 has declined in importance as an arterial highway due to the opening of Interstate 69 which parallels this route between Fort Wayne and Indianapolis. Remaining traffic volumes along the route, however, indicate that it continues to be used as an arterial highway within Wells County and between Wells County and Fort Wayne to the north. U.S. Route #224 has increased in importance as an arterial route since Interstate 69 was opened. This route serves not only as an arterial route through Wells County but it is also the major connector between the city of Decatur to the east and the Route #224 - I-69 interchange to the west.

Major Collector Highways connect smaller urban communities and carry traffic from outlying portions of the county to the city of Bluffton. They also connect that city with the county's other incorporated communities and arterial highways with the interchanges along Interstate 69. Nearly all of these routes also perform some minor arterial functions. Most of the routes designated by The Thoroughfares Plan as major collectors highways are state highways. The exceptions are: the Hoosier Highway, a heavily travelled county road which connects the communities of Bluffton and Poneto and the proposed loop road around Bluffton. The other major collector highways in Wells County, as designated by the Thoroughfares Plan are: State Routes #124 and #218, which run from east to west; County Road 300 West, which runs from north to south; and State Route #116, which crosses the central portion of the county on a diagonal from the southeast to the

northwest.

Collector Roads perform the same function as major collector highways but on a smaller scale. They connect small communities and carry traffic from incorporated and unincorporated land use concentrations to major collector or arterial highways. The Thoroughfares Plan designates a network of these county roads to perform collector functions during the twenty-year planning period. Nearly all of the roads designed by the plan are presently paved and are included in the FAS system.

Local Access Roads have as their primary functions: the provision of direct access to residential neighborhoods and subdivisions; the transfer of traffic from point to point within these neighborhoods; and the carrying of these neighborhoods to collector routes. With the exception of a few new residential subdivisions in urban fringe areas, such as those on State Route #1 near the communities of Bluffton and Ossian, most of the residences in the county's unincorporated areas are scattered along county roads and State and Federal highways. Thus, of the county's thoroughfares, except I-69, perform local access functions to some extent. Because of the grid pattern of county roads, it is also true that some roads designated at local access roads by the Thoroughfares Plan are presently utilized to some extent as collectors. It is felt that the improvements proposed to the collector roads designated by the plan, if carried out, will encourage their use and, thereby, remove collector traffic from the designated local access roads.

Arterial Streets are the major thoroughfares within the urban areas of the county. Those streets classified as arterial streets by the Thoroughfares Plan consist of portions of arterial highways which pass through the urban communities. In Bluffton and Ossian, for example, the streets proposed to carry State Route #1 through the communities from north to south are classified as arterial streets. U.S. Route #224 is classified as an arterial street along the existing southern town boundaries of Uniondale.

Collector Streets perform the previously described collector functions over shorter distances within urban areas. They carry traffic from residential neighborhoods to major land use concentrations or to arterial streets. Collector streets have been designated for all of the incorporated communities participating in Wells County's planning program. These are illustrated on the city and town maps included later in this report and are discussed in the text accompanying these plans.

Local Streets, ideally, should carry traffic only within residential neighborhoods or from those neighborhoods to collector or arterial street. Local streets should be designed so as to discourage through-traffic, truck traffic, or other high-volume, high-speed traffic which would detract from the residential character of the neighborhood. In many instances, because of the grid pattern followed by the local streets presently overlap. The improvements to the collector streets designated by the Thoroughfares Plan will, hopefully, encourage their use as collectors with the resulting removal of collector traffic from local streets in future residential subdivisions

be designed so as to discourage their use by through-traffic, truck traffic, and other high-volume, high speed traffic.

#### Design Standards for Future Thoroughfares

All new thoroughfares, regardless of their classification, shall be designed to meet standards which will guarantee their safe and efficient performance of the functions of their classification.

The Thoroughfares Plan establishes a network of arteries each of which is intended to perform a specific function as an arterial, collector, or local highway, road or street. Recommendations and proposals are put forth in this report regarding improvements to existing roads and streets in order that they may properly perform their specialized functions as envisioned by the Thoroughfares Plan.

The limited-access expressways, the arterial highways (except Marzane Road) and all but three of the major collector highways illustrated on "The Thoroughfares Plan" map are federal or state roads. These fall under the responsibility of the County Highway Department, while other urban streets are the responsibility of the community in which they are located. To the extent feasible, all county roads and urban streets to be constructed or improved in the county should meet standards set for the specialized category in which they are intended to perform within the thoroughfares system.

#### Limited-Access Expressways

Limited access expressways should be designed to make possible a continuous high-speed flow of traffic uninterrupted by cross traffic, pedestrian traffic, or slow moving vehicles. They should provide four or more divided traffic lanes each of which is at least twelve feet wide. The right-of-way of an interstate highway should range between 260 and 360 feet, depending upon frontage road requirements. They should be paved with a concrete or bituminous material with a combined surface and base thickness of seven inches or more. Shoulders should be ten feet wide on the right and four feet on the left, while the median should be at least forty feet wide. The maximum curvature of the road should be 2.5 degrees and the maximum gradient should be 3 percent. Stopping sight distance should be 600 feet. Bridges less than 250 feet in length should have a clear roadway width of at least thirty-nine feet, while those over 250 feet in length should be at least thirty-three feet wide. Vertical clearance of bridges and underpasses should be at least sixteen feet, three inches.

#### Arterial Highways

Arterial highways should be designed so as to carry high volumes of traffic at relatively fast speeds with a minimum of interruptions. They should provide two or more lanes of at least twenty feet in width and a left shoulder width of at least four feet should be maintained. A right shoulder width should be ten feet. A total right-of-way at least 200 feet should be reserved.

Arterial highways should also be paved with concrete or a bituminous material with a combined surface and base thickness of seven inches or more. The maximum curvature of the road should be 2.5 degrees and the

maximum gradient should be 4 percent. Stopping sight distance should be 600 feet and passing sight distance should be 2,300 feet. Bridges less than 150 feet in length should have a clear roadway width of at least thirty-nine feet, while those over 150 feet wide in length should be at least thirty-three feet wide. Vertical clearance of bridges and underpasses should be at least fifteen feet, three inches.

Ideally, these roads should have controlled access. That is to say they should be accessible only from wide-spread intersections with major thoroughfares. Access for adjacent land uses, such as shopping centers, industries and homes, should be prohibited. These uses should be accessible from service roads located in conjunction with the designated intersections. None of the existing arterial highways in Wells County are of the controlled-access type. Maintenance on these existing roads is the responsibility of the State Highway Department, except for the Marzane Road (Old State Road #3) where it is the responsibility of Wells County.

### Major Collector Highways

- Major collector highways should be designated so as to carry moderate volumes of traffic (1,000 vehicles a day or more) at a relatively high rate of speed. These roads should also have a minimum of interruptions but need not be of the controlled access type. They should provide two lanes of at least twelve feet in width and shoulders at least eight feet wide. They should be paved with concrete or bituminous material with a combined surface and base thickness of seven inches or more. The total right-of-way reserved should be at least 100 feet.

The maximum curvature of the road should be no more than 5 degrees and the gradient should be no more than 5 percent under normal conditions of 8 percent in hilly terrain. The stopping sight distance should be at least 2,000 feet. Bridges less than 150 feet in length should have a clear roadway width of at least thirty-eight feet, while those over 150 feet in length should be at least twenty-eight feet in width. Vertical clearances of bridges and underpasses should be at least fourteen feet, six inches.

All of the highways designated as major collectors by The Thoroughfares Plan are state highways except three: the Hoosier Highway, 300 West, and the Bluffton outer loop road. While the other major collector highways are maintained by the State Highway Department, these three would be the responsibility of Wells County.

### Collector Roads

Collector roads should be designed to carry moderate traffic flows at moderate speeds. They should provide two traffic lanes of at least eleven feet in width and shoulders of at least eight feet. The total reserved right-of-way should be at least sixty feet. The maximum curvature of the road should be no more than 4 percent in normal terrain, or 8 percent in hilly terrain.

The stopping sight distance should be at least 350 feet, and the passing sight distance should be at least 1,700 feet. Bridges less than 150 feet in length should have a clear roadway width of thirty feet, while those over 150 feet should be at least twenty-four feet wide. Vertical clearance under bridges and underpasses should be at least fourteen feet, six inches.

Collector roads should have either a high bituminous surface (more than four inches in thickness of surface and base) or an adequate compacted aggregate base.

#### Local Access Roads

Local access roads should be low capacity, low speed roads which provide access to homes and property. To the extent possible, residence driveways and other entry-exit points should be oriented to local access roads, rather than to collector roads. Local access roads should provide two traffic lanes of ten feet each in width and should have a total reserved right-of-way of at least fifty feet. The surface should be of a low bituminous material between one and four inches in thickness on an adequate compacted aggregate base.

The maximum curvature of local access roads should be 18 degrees and the maximum gradient 9 percent. The minimum gradient should be 4 percent. Shoulders should be five feet in width, and the stopping sight distance should be at least 275 feet on level terrain, or 240 feet on hills. Further specifications for local access roads are given in the county's Subdivision Control Ordinance.

#### Arterial Streets

Arterial streets should be so designed as to have the greatest possible distance of uninterrupted traffic flow. Traffic control signals along arterial streets should be located only at the intersection of two arterials or at the intersection of an arterial with a collector street. Within central business districts, however, it is frequently necessary to place traffic control signals at more frequent intervals along arterial streets. Stop signals should, under no circumstances, be utilized on arterial streets. Whenever possible, railroad crossings should be either elevated or depressed. The streets may be made of two or four lanes, but each lane should be at least twelve feet wide; and the pavement should be of a sufficient strength and thickness to allow for the heaviest type of truck.

The right-of-way reserved for an arterial street should be, at the minimum, seventy feet in width. Divided arterial streets, or parkways, should have a medial strip twenty feet in width and a right-of-way width of 100 feet; on each side of the arterial streets, whether separated by a medial strip or undivided. Parking should be discouraged along arterial streets and, whenever possible, curb cuts and driveways limited.

#### Collector Streets

Collector street should be designed so as to accommodate an efficient flow of traffic at moderate speeds. Traffic signals should be located along collector streets only at the intersection of two collector or at the intersection of a collector with an arterial street. Collector streets are normally two lanes wide. Each of these lanes should be of a minimum of eleven feet in width, or a total pavement width of twenty-four feet. If on-street parking is to be permitted along the street, parking lanes eight feet in width should be included. The minimum pavement width for a collector street with parking on both sides is thirty-eight feet.

A right-of-way of eleven feet should be reserved on each side of the collector street, allowing five feet for a sidewalk on each side and six feet of additional right-of-way. The total right-of-way to be reserved for a collector street, therefore, should be sixty feet. Truck traffic along collector streets should be limited to those vehicles whose destination is within an adjacent area. Parking should be prohibited along collector streets unless the above standards are met. As in the case of arterial streets, curb cuts and driveways along collector streets should be kept to a minimum.

#### Local Streets

Local streets should be designed as to discourage through-traffic. Crossing intersections between local streets should be avoided. When avoidance is impossible or when such streets already exist, stop signs should be placed upon only one of the streets. "T" intersections should be permitted on one side and thirty-eight feet if parking is permitted on both sides. Parking should, however, be discouraged along local streets in new residential subdivisions. The off-street parking requirements of the Zoning Ordinance should serve to discourage on-street parking in these areas.

A right-of-way should be reserved in a total width of fifty feet for local streets upon which no or one-side parking is permitted, and sixty feet for local streets upon which parking is permitted on both sides.

#### Other Urban Street Standards

The location of all future urban streets, regardless of classification, should effectively conform to the topography of the land. In order to permit proper drainage, streets should be sloped laterally, and longitudinally level streets should be avoided. Excessive grades should be avoided. Adequate turning radii should be provided to facilities sight distances for approaching traffic. The radius of curve for the centerline of local streets should not be less than 200 feet and the radius at intersections should not be less than fifteen feet.

The angle at which streets meet must be close to a right angle and not less than 70 degrees under circumstances. Dead-end streets should be avoided unless they are provided with a turn-around or cul-de-sac arrangement. Any street proposed should allow for future access to adjacent undeveloped tracts of land. Alleys should be avoided in residential sections, but should be encouraged in commercial and industrial sections where they serve to provide off-street loading access. Cross-streets should be spaced so that a length of block under normal circumstances would not be more than 800 feet.



THE FUTURE COUNTY THOROUGHFARES SYSTEM

Limited-Access Expressways

The Thoroughfares Plan anticipates that Interstate 69, which passes along the western edge of the county, and Interstate 469, which passes near the northern part of the county, will continue to exert a major influence upon the county's thoroughfares system throughout the 20-year planning period. Classifications of other Wells County highways have been adjusted accordingly, as will be noted in the following sections. Neither the Indiana State Highway Commission nor the Federal Government has plans, at present, for the construction of additional limited-access expressways through Wells County during the planning period.

Arterial Highways

The Thoroughfares Plan proposes the continued use of three area highways for arterial purposes. No new arterial highways are deemed necessary, nor are any proposed by the plan.

State Route #1 is the major existing arterial highway in Wells County. It passes through the county from north to south, bisecting the communities of Ossian and Bluffton. State Route #1 has already been improved and widened in the northern section of the city of Bluffton. The Comprehensive Plan calls for a similar improvement and widening in the southern section and to the south of the city, as well.

The plan proposes that State Route #3 and the Marzane Road continue to act as an arterial highways within Wells County, providing access to Interstate 69, to Fort Wayne in the north, and to Hartford City and Muncie in the south.

U.S. Route #224 is proposed for continuance as an arterial highway across Wells County. It connects points within the county with its interchange with I-69 in the west and the city of Decatur in the east. It also connects the city of Decatur with Interstate 69. Since the arterial highways in Wells County are federal or state routes, their repair and improvement is the responsibility of the State Highway Department.

Major Collector Highways

The Thoroughfares Plan proposes that three existing State highways function as major collector highways during the 20-year planning period. In addition, it proposes that two heavily-traveled county roads be upgraded to function as a major collector highway and that a major collector loop system be established around the city of Bluffton.

State Road #124 passes through the center of Wells County from east to west. It carries traffic into and through the city of Bluffton and is the most frequently used route between that city and the State Route #5 and Interstate 69 interchange, located to the west of Wells County. The Thoroughfares Plan proposes that State Route #124 continue in use as a major collector highway, to carry traffic from east and west into the City of Bluffton. Cross-county traffic on State Route #124, including traffic to and from the State Route #5-Interstate 69 interchange, would be routed

around the City of Bluffton along the proposed outer loop road.

State Route #218 parallels State Route #124 across Wells County six miles to the south. It carries traffic from east and west to the town of Poneto and to State Routes #1 and #3 and County Road 300 West. It is also utilized to carry traffic from the southern portion of Wells County to the city of Warren, immediately to the west, and traffic between Berne, which is located to the east of Wells County, and the State Route #5-Interstate 69 interchange. The Thoroughfares Plan proposes the continued use of this route as a major collector highway.

State Route #116 crosses the central portion of Wells County on a diagonal from southeast to northwest, passing through the city of Bluffton. In addition to its collector function of carrying traffic in and out of the city, the road is the most direct connection between Bluffton and Markle and is a part of the most direct route between the cities of Bluffton and Huntington. Since the opening of Interstate 69, State Route #116 has increased in importance as the most direct route between Bluffton and the U.S. Route #224-Interstate 69 interchange. The Thoroughfares Plan proposes that State Route #116 continue to act as a major collector route carrying traffic in and out of the city of Bluffton, while cross-county traffic along the route should be re-routed along the proposed perimeter road surrounding the city in order to avoid the congestion of inner-city traffic.

The Hoosier Highway, along with Meridian Road, forms the most direct route between the communities of Poneto and Bluffton and is the most heavily travelled of the county roads. It also offers the most direct connection between the city of Bluffton and the western portion of Route #218. Since it is anticipated that the moderately heavy traffic volumes carried along this road will continue to increase during the 20-year planning period, the Thoroughfares Plan proposes that the Hoosier Highway-Meridian Road function as a major collector highway during the 20-year planning period. It is recommended that the portion of the Hoosier Highway from State Route #218 to Bluffton, which is presently surfaced with a low bituminous material 18 feet in width, be reconstructed and paved at a width of 24 feet. Also recommended was the realignment, reconstruction, and paving of Meridian Road to 24 feet in the segment between Poneto and the Hoosier Highway.

County Road 300 West (Old State Route #303) is the only north-south road proposed as a major collector highway by the Thoroughfares Plan. The highway presently carries moderately-heavy traffic volumes from point to point within the western portion of the county. It also carries traffic to the major east-west roads and to the city of Montpelier to the south. In addition, it is a part of the most direct route between Montpelier and Fort Wayne.

The Bluffton Outer Loop is proposed by the Thoroughfares Plan as a perimeter road around the outskirts of the city. The location and configuration of the loop system is based primarily upon existing state highways and county roads which would be incorporated into the loop. Other prime considerations in the location of the road are the extent of existing development in and around the city of Bluffton and development proposed for the area by the Comprehensive Plan.

As proposed by the Thoroughfares Plan, the outer loop road would be

constructed to meet major collector highway standards. The installation of the loop system is intended as a long-range project, however, and the simultaneous construction or upgrading of all segments to these standards would not be necessary. The project could be completed in phases on a segment by segment basis as economically feasible. The plan proposes the original installation of a two-lane system with sufficient right-of-way to be reserved for the eventual widening of the system to four lanes when necessary.

The northern segment of the loop would follow the 100 North grid line and would incorporate 100 North Road and a portion of State Route #116. The installation of this northern segment would necessitate the construction of a small segment of new road and an additional bridge across the Wabash River. The southern segment of the proposed loop would connect State Route #116 to County Road 100 East, via Harrison Road and a new segment of road aligned with Harrison Road.

The eastern segment of the proposed loop would occupy the 450 East grid line and would be composed of existing State Route #201 and 450 East road. The western segment of the loop road would occupy the 100 East grid line. A project known as the West Side Connection, Phase I, is currently being designed. Phase I would include County Road 100 East from State Route #124 to County Road 100 North, County Road 100 North from County Road 100 East to the Wabash River, and a new segment of road from County Road 100 North to State Route #116. Upon installation, the loop system would provide for improved traffic circulation around the outskirts of Bluffton and an alternate route upon which cross-county traffic along five State highways and seven county roads could bypass the presently congested center of the city. The system would also incorporate one much-needed alternate river crossing in the east-central portion of the county.

### Collector Roads

The Thoroughfares Plan establishes a network of county roads which are to function as collectors during the 20-year planning period. These will carry traffic from residential neighborhoods and local access roads to major collector and arterial highways or to the county's urban communities. They will also serve to connect major collector and arterial highways. The roads selected to function as collector roads are illustrated on the map, "The Thoroughfares Plan", for Wells County.

In selecting the roads which comprise this collector network, the primary consideration was the relationship of the system to the Wells County's Comprehensive Plan. They are included by The Thoroughfares Plan in order that the future thoroughfares system might better meet the needs of the county during the 20-year planning period, based upon the proposals of the Comprehensive Plan.

The final major factor in the selection of county roads to be improved to collector standards was the consideration of the existing roads in Wells County which are presently paved. According to 1991 figures, the most recent figures compiled and available at the time of this printing, 349 miles of Wells County's 718 miles of county roads were surfaced with a low-type bituminous material, while the remaining 369 miles were surfaced with crushed stone or gravel. Currently, the miles of county roads selected to be included in the collector road system, none are presently

unpaved.

In conjunction with the road improvements which will be necessary during the planning period, the replacement of many inadequate bridges will also be necessary on county roads which have been designated as both collector and local access roads. In recent years, Wells County has conducted a regular program of bridge replacement utilizing some federal funds under the FAS Road System. The Thoroughfares Plan recommends the continuation of this program. The financing of road improvements and bridge replacement will be discussed in detail in a later section of this report. All road and bridge improvements proposed by the plan are shown on the accompanying map.

#### PROPOSED COUNTY ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

There are many miles of unpaved roads in Wells County. While the paving of all these roads would be a noble goal, financial realities would make it such an undertaking fiscally irresponsible. Therefore, the county must select which roads during the next 20 years should be paved and which roads will have to wait. In order to be fair to all residents of the county the plan calls for the establishment of a priority system that is not based solely on commercial concerns, population density, and traffic patterns. While all of the aforementioned factors must necessarily be important in the decision making process other concerns such as bus routes, equality between the various taxing units, and plans for growth should also be considered.

The Comprehensive Plan calls for the creation of a citizens advisory committee that would work out a fair and equitable road paving priority plan, and then recommend such a plan to the county commissioners. Membership on the committee should include county highway officials, people with knowledge of fiscal concerns and representatives from various taxing units within the county. Care should be given to insuring representation from all areas of the county.

BLUFFTON

Thoroughfare Plan

Traffic circulation in Wells County is most complicated and congested within urban communities. The city of Bluffton, being the largest and most populous of the urban communities, experiences the most critical traffic circulation problems. Historical, social, economical, political, and geographical factors have all contributed to this congestion.

From the time of Bluffton's selection as the county seat and the beginnings of its growth as the county's major market place, roads were constructed from virtually all corners of the county to the city. Many of these early roads which converged upon Bluffton are now designated as state highways. At present, six state highways and several heavily travelled county roads intersect in the city or in the area immediately surrounding Bluffton. In some cases a large percentage of the traffic along these routes is cross-county through-traffic which is routed through the city only because there are no convenient alternative routes. This situation is most apparent along State Route #1 which passes through the city from north to south along Main Street.

The bridge which carries Main Street and State Route #1 across the Wabash River in the city of Bluffton is the only river crossing within the city limits and is one of only four bridges across the Wabash in all of Lancaster and Harrison Townships. Thus, traffic on all of the locally intersecting state highways and a major portion of all north-south traffic in the eastern portion of Wells County is channelled across this bridge. This through-traffic is therefore routed through Bluffton's central business district, which is located immediately to the south and west of the bridge.

In the central business district, the situation is further complicated by the convergence of several major intra-city collector streets, vehicular and pedestrian shopper traffic, and numerous intersections. Intersections along north-south streets through the business district are twice as numerous as those along east-west streets. At the time the area was originally platted, narrow east-west streets were included between the major east-west streets at the same interval as alleys were platted between the major north-south streets. This doubled the number of east-west streets in the area. The problem is particularly apparent along Main Street, the city's busiest thoroughfare.

Arterial Streets

The only major arterial street in Bluffton at the present time is Main Street. The Thoroughfares Plan recommends the widening of Main Street to accommodate more traffic flow from the Spring Street intersection to at least the south boundary of Harrison Plaza. Ideally, this would include four lanes of traffic and a common turn lane. This traffic improvement may also require the increase in traffic lanes between Spring Street and Wiley Street. Finally, all parking should be removed from Main Street, including a small area in front of the current Post Office.

The original Comprehensive Plan suggested making Main Street and Scott

Street one-way streets with one going north and one going south. Additionally, a second bridge was to be constructed at the north end of Scott Street to carry the newly routed traffic across the Wabash River. This Comprehensive Plan deletes any such project. Popular sentiment, high cost, great hardship and inconvenience to residents in the near vicinities, and an incalculable negative impact on our downtown retail establishments all militate against any further disruption of present traffic patterns.

For better or worse, Bluffton was laid out by our forebears to embody a physical closeness, a neighborliness, and a sense of community that generally characterize the best of early 19-century settlements. Bluffton's first planners were not concerned with rapid, non-stop vehicular traffic or with the parking habits of casual visitors. Instead, street widths, lot sizes, and the early presence of sidewalks all bespeak their emphasis on the comfort and quality of neighborhood family life.

This community still holds those early values to be important, and, in attempting to recreate something of the ambience of that time, the continual tinkering with our normal traffic patterns simply in order to permit the fastest possible ingress and egress of strangers, is surely counterproductive of that end.

Collector Streets

The Thoroughfares Plan proposes a network of collector streets for the city of Bluffton as illustrated on the plan map. The designation of those streets illustrated as collectors and the upgrading of these arteries to collector standards will greatly improve the flow of traffic throughout the city and particularly between residential, commercial, and industrial districts.

Of particular importance is the movement of traffic cross-town and through the central business district from east to west.

To the south the plan proposes that Washington and Cherry Streets, which cross the entire width of the city, be designated as collector streets. Within the business district the same streets form the basis for a more extensive coupled one-way street system.

All other collector streets proposed by the Thoroughfares Plan are intended for use by two-way traffic. The north-south streets, which are proposed for upgrading to collector standards, include Midway, Bond, Clark, Jersey, and Oak Streets in the west, as well as Wayne Street and Stoddard Road in the east.

In addition to those east-west streets mentioned previously, the plan also designates as collectors Lancaster Street, or State Route #124, Wiley Avenue-Riverview Drive, Spring Street-McCoy Road, Willowbrook Trail, and Dustman Road.

In the east the plan designates State Route #316 and Elm Grove Road as collectors and proposes that County Road 450 East be upgraded to major collector highway standards and incorporated into the outer loop system. In the west the plan proposes the upgrading to collector status of Corning Road, and the upgrading of County Road 100 East to major collector highway standards. The latter would form the western segment of the proposed

by-pass. To form the southern segment of the loop road, the plan proposes that County Road 200 South be upgraded to major collector highway standards. In addition to this road, the Hoosier Highway and County Road 200 East are also designed as collectors by the Thoroughfares Plan.

The selection of the streets which comprise the proposed collector network was based upon several factors. These include: traffic volumes, the configuration of the streets, their location with respect to existing development; the locations of new development areas as proposed by the city's Comprehensive Plan; and the designation of collector streets by the state-financed Highway Needs Study performed in Bluffton.

In an effort to ease traffic from the collector route State Route #116 onto South Main Street, the plan calls for the re-routing of State Route #116 through the city of Bluffton. State Route #116 should be diverted northward at either County Road 450 East or at Wayne Street directly to the River Road (Wabash Street.) State Route #116 would intersect State Route #1 at Main Street and Wabash Street intersection and then proceed north along its present course.

### Local Streets

Contemporary standards for the design and construction of local residential streets specify a curvilinear pattern of non-connecting streets in order to discourage through-traffic in residential neighborhoods. The streets in the older portions of the city are laid out in a grid pattern of long, straight connecting streets. In the past this has encouraged their use by collector traffic as well as local residential traffic. It is felt that the upgrading of those streets designated as collectors by the Thoroughfares Plan will encourage their use by collector traffic and, thereby, decrease the non-residential traffic along the local streets.

In addition to the discouragement of through-traffic, curvilinear street patterns such as those found in the new residential subdivisions in the north and east are economically advantageous. They require fewer and shorter streets in order to provide access to all of the residential sites within the subdivision; they permit the better use of land available within the area; and they result in fewer and shorter utilities lines. It is therefore recommended that plats for new residential subdivision within the community and in the surrounding area be closely examined by the Plan Commission and other community officials with respect to their street patterns, in order to ensure the most judicious use of land in future subdivisions as well as the proper function of future local streets.

The city's Subdivision Control Ordinance contains design standards and requirements concerning the streets to be installed in all new subdivisions. In addition to streets, these standards and requirements cover curbs, shoulders, drainage structures, and cul-de-sacs. The installation of streets which fulfill these standards and requirements, as well as those design standards mentioned previously in this report, will ensure that future local streets function properly in providing access to residences while discouraging through traffic.

The Subdivision Control Ordinance also requires that all streets, curbs, shoulders, drainage structures, and cul-de-sacs platted for each new residential subdivision be constructed by the developer. The city,

however, will assume the responsibility for maintaining these streets once they are properly installed. The immense financial burden of the construction of many miles of new streets in residential subdivisions will thus be shared by those benefiting most from those streets rather than by all of the taxpayers of the city. The inclusion of adequate streets will be guaranteed and all new residential subdivisions will thus be improved. Further, it will not be necessary for the city to pay for the reconstruction in inadequately designed or constructed streets.

Sidewalks:

In order to ensure the quality of life and the safety of our residents, we urge that the city council of Bluffton arrive at some plan that will enable the upgrading or damaged sidewalks and bike paths throughout the city. Perhaps the establishment of a permanent reconstruction fund, added to on a regular basis each year, would enable such repairs to be made gradually and in an orderly manner. Some inducement must be found to persuade absentee landlords and first-time, low-income home owners to participate in this plan.

City Right-of-Way:

Remembering the ravages of the Dutch Elm disease some years ago, and keeping in mind this city's proud appellation, "The Parlor City," we urge the establishment of a joint city-volunteer program for the immediate and on-going "reforestation" of the streets of Bluffton. It is apparent that many of the large maple trees all over the city are sick, dead, or dying. It is apparent, too, that we will soon be denuded of all significant shade trees along most of our city streets. To avoid a long period in which unattractive, bare streets predominate here, we believe a 20-year program of gradual replacement and the careful tending of our present healthy resources should be undertaken immediately under expert guidance.



MARKLE

Thoroughfares Plan

The Thoroughfares Plan for the town of Markle is illustrated on the accompanying map. Interstate 69, a major limited-access highway, although not passing through Markle, does pass close enough to the town to influence its thoroughfares system. Because of its interchange with this interstate highway, U.S. Route #224, the major traffic artery through Markle, becomes even more important as the town's gateway to the vast interstate system. U.S. Route #224 is the east-west axis of the community.

State Route #3, passing through the town along Clark Street, forms the north-south axis of the town. The average daily traffic flow on Route #3 is almost identical to that of U.S. Route #224. Both U.S. Route #224 and State Route #3 are considered arterial highways. The third arterial highway running through Markle is State Route #116. It begins on the west side of Markle, passes through the business district, and runs southeast to Bluffton.

Inside the town and just outside the town the County Line Road and County Road 500 East are classified as collector routes. All of these thoroughfares are considered local. Through-traffic should be discouraged on local streets. This end can be accomplished by designing the streets so as to make them inconvenient for through-traffic. Alleys are not to be considered streets and should not be included in residential areas. On the other hand, they serve the useful purpose of providing access for loading and unloading in commercial and industrial areas. In the construction of subdivisions, allowance must be made for access to undeveloped areas adjoining the subdivision, but dead-end streets are to be avoided except when provided with a turnaround.

OSSIAN

Thoroughfare Plans

The Thoroughfares Plan for the town of Ossian is illustrated on the accompanying map. Based upon traffic volumes and upon their location with respect to existing and proposed development, the town streets are classified as arterial, collector, and local streets. The only existing arterial street in Ossian is Jefferson Street, which passes through the city and its business district from north to south carrying Route #1 through the community. The Thoroughfares Plan proposes its continued use as an arterial street throughout the planning period. No new arterial streets are proposed.

The plan establishes a network of collector streets which are intended to effectively channel intra-city traffic throughout all portions of the community and to connect all portions of the community with important land use concentrations. These include the commercial district and school along Jefferson Street and the industrial district in the west. Within the presently developed portion of the town, Mill Street and LaFever Street are proposed as collectors. These are the only two existing east-west streets which cross Eight Mile Creek and the railroad tracks. Because of this,

Mill Street and LaFever Street presently perform collector functions. The plan proposes the upgrading of these streets in order that they may function more efficiently as collectors.

Other east-west streets designated by the plan as collector streets are Davis Road in the north and County Road 900 North in the south. The plan proposes the extension of 900 North Road along the southern edge of the community in order to provide access to the proposed industrial district in the southwest area. This one and one-half mile extension would connect the two segments of 900 North Road as proposed by the County Thoroughfares Plan. The resulting county-wide collector road would significantly improve traffic flow in the northern portion of this county, connecting rural areas in the north with the town of Ossian and with State Routes #1, #3, and #303.

With the exception of Jefferson and Metts Streets, there are no north-south streets which span a significant portion of the community. In order to correct this deficiency and to provide north-south collector streets to meet present and future needs, the plan proposes the extension of three existing north-south streets. In the east, Melching Street, which is presently in two segments, is connected by the plan and is extended northward beyond Davis Road to improve access to proposed residential developments in that direction.

The remainder of the streets illustrated on the Thoroughfares Plan map are designated as local streets. The plan proposes the connection of the two segments of Maxine Drive along the eastern edge of the community. Although the existing street pattern in Ossian is basically a grid system, the pattern is interrupted so frequently that most streets presently function properly as local residential streets. The plan proposes that all future local streets installed in new residential subdivisions be designed so as to fulfill the traffic circulation and environmental needs of the neighborhood, while discouraging their use by through-traffic as specified in the design standards section of this report.

#### PONETO

#### Thoroughfare Plans

State Route #218, which is classified by the Wells County Thoroughfares Plan as a major collector highway, passes through Poneto from east to West on Main Street. Meridian Road, which passes through Poneto from north to south, is also classified as a major collector highway on the county plan, because it is the most direct route between Poneto and the city of Bluffton and because it is used to connect Route #218 with that city. It is the major north-south collector street in Poneto. No arterial highways pass through the town and none of its streets are classified as arterial streets. The plan proposes the continued use of Main Street and Meridian Road to collector standards. All other streets in Poneto are classified as local streets.

UNIONDALE

Thoroughfare Plans

The Thoroughfares Plan for the town of Uniondale is illustrated on the accompanying map. The plan designates specific arteries to serve as arterial, collector, and local streets in order to meet the town's traffic circulation needs during the 20-year planning period. The assignment of classifications is based upon traffic volumes, the configuration of existing streets, and the location of the streets with respect to existing and proposed development.

One of the county's major arterial highways, U.S. Route #224, passes along the southern town boundaries of Uniondale and is classified by the town's Thoroughfare Plan as an arterial street. Development is proposed to the south of this route by Uniondale's Comprehensive Plan, thus placing the highway within the town. It is intended, however, that the route remain a controlled-access arterial highway, with access only from widely scattered intersections.

Meridian Street and 100 West Road form a north-south collector system through the town, and Railroad Street and 600 North Road form an east-west collector system. The Thoroughfares Plan proposes that these streets continue to function as collector streets during the 20-year planning period. The remainder of the streets in Uniondale are designated local streets.

VERA CRUZ

Thoroughfare Plans

As illustrated on The Thoroughfares Plan map for Vera Cruz, several of the town streets are classified as collectors, with the remainder being designated as local streets. None are proposed as arterial streets. Wabash Street, which crosses the community from southeast to northwest, carries traffic on County Road 300 South into the town in the southeast. It also carries traffic on State Route #316 through the northwestern portion of the community. The town's commercial activity is centered around the intersection of Wabash Street with Center Street.

State Route #316 enters Vera Cruz from the southwest along Center Street. Traffic from Church Road is also carried into the town along this street in the northeast. Wabash and Center Streets presently function as collectors within the town of Vera Cruz and are proposed for continuance in this category during the planning period. The remainder of the community's streets are classified as local streets and should remain as such during the period.

ZANESVILLE

Thoroughfare Plans

The Thoroughfares Plan for the town of Zanesville is illustrated on the accompanying map. Based upon traffic volumes and upon their location with respect to existing and proposed development, the town streets are classified as arterial, collector, and local streets. The Marzane Road (State Route #3) and County Road 300 West are designated as arterial roads within the town. Both of these arterial roads pass through Zanesville from the south to the north.

The only true collector road or street within the town is County Road 1200 North (County Line Road.) This road is the principal east-west feeder to both of the above mentioned arterial roads. All other streets and roads within and around the town are designated as local roads. Through-traffic is to be discouraged on all local streets.

Given the potential for residential growth in Zanesville, consideration is to be given whenever new residential developments are planned to organize vehicular traffic. The local traffic of any new development is to be quickly routed to the arterial and collector roads and streets as much as possible. Within developments, streets will generally be local streets. Dead-end streets will be discouraged unless they provide for an adequate turnaround at the end of said street.

THE PUBLIC UTILITIES PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The location and scope of future urban growth in Wells County will be determined to a large extent by the availability of public utilities service. In order to ensure the sound and orderly spread of medium-density residential development and in order to stimulate and properly serve future industrial development, foresight and pre-planning in the fields of public water and sewerage service are essential. The Public Utilities Plan for Wells County, illustrated on the accompanying map, programs the orderly expansion of public water and sewer systems beyond present municipal service areas. The proposals of the plan and the future service areas it establishes are designed to meet the needs of anticipated growth in the county during the 20-year planning period. The major objectives of The Public Utilities Plan are:

1. to insure adequate and healthful water supplies and water distribution systems capable of meeting present, and future residential, commercial, and industrial water demands and fire protection needs, and
2. to plan for new or expanded waste treatment facilities and sewage disposal systems so as to eliminate existing health hazards and stream pollution and to avoid future problems in these areas.

Present Utilities Service

Presently the communities of Bluffton, Ossian, and Markle have sanitary sewer systems. Additionally, the Northern Wells School and the Southern Wells School complex have sanitary sewer systems to cover their own needs.

Policies For Public Utilities Service

Adequate public water and sewer utilities should be provided for the safety and convenience of existing urban areas and as a guiding stimulus for future land development activity.

This general policy for public utilities and the following specific planning policies are presented for adoption and use by the Area Plan Commission and other concerned county and local officials and agencies. Adherence to these planning policies will result in the sound and orderly expansion of municipal water and sewerage service during the 20-year planning period.

The immediate and future extension or expansion of water and sewer utilities shall be based upon population density or upon the intensity of commercial or industrial land uses.

The provision of safe and adequate water supplies and the collection and treatment of sewage in all developed areas is a desirable objective for the county. This aspiration must be balanced, however, with the economic feasibility of installation. With this consideration in mind, the Public

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Utilities Plan anticipates future utilities service in only more intensely developed portions of the community and surrounding area.

Low-density residential development, conservation areas, and agriculture will be permitted and encouraged in areas which cannot be served with public utilities.

Sewers or water lines cannot be economically installed in areas of sparse or scattered population since the number of users per mile of installation would not justify the installation costs. County and municipal policy, therefore, is directed towards the gathering of higher density residential areas in sections which can be economically provided with sewers and water, as illustrated on The Public Utilities Plan. The land use determinations and density requirements of the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance are also aimed toward the implementation of the Public Utilities Plan.

It is anticipated that individual water wells and private sewage treatment facilities, such as septic tanks and package treatment plants, will be utilized in the areas beyond the future utilities service areas of Bluffton and the towns. Where septic tanks are to be utilized, however, mandatory percolation tests must be made to prove that the soil is satisfactory for the safe absorption of effluent. Sufficient area per dwelling must be maintained so that no contamination of water supplies develops from individuals residing too close to each other in areas served by private septic tanks.

The past and present trend is to construct a home on a small tract of land in agriculturally-zoned areas. Presently, except for major subdivision, the only limitation on these tracts is the number of minor subdivision a landowner has left to divide off. This plan suggest that a limitation be placed on the number of residential homes that can exist in a given area. For example, only ten homes may be allowed in a one-square mile area. Such a limitation would minimize the reduction of prime agricultural land while helping to curtail a growing sanitary sewer system problem.

Separate package and sewage treatment plants should be discouraged in those areas which can be served effectively by existing sewage systems.

In the interest of economy and efficiency, the developers of land within proposed utilities service areas should be required to connect their sewer lines to the existing municipal sewer system.

If such developments are located outside the immediate service areas of existing systems, separate package sewage treatment plants may be permitted if they are so constructed that they may be easily connected into the expanding municipal system at a later date.

Future sewer service areas shall be based upon natural topographic conditions in order to provide the most economical and efficient water and sewer service.

The installation of lift stations and force mains to pump sewage uphill is less economical than the provisions of sewer service by the gravity-flow method. For this reason, the future utilities service areas proposed by The Public Utilities Plan are based upon natural drainage divides in order to provide sewer service to all portions of the area with the least

possible amount of lift pumping.

Immediate steps shall be taken to alleviate the most critical existing water and sewer deficiencies and to eliminate sewage disposal practices which threaten contamination of water supply or present other health hazards.

As has been pointed out previously, the town of Uniondale, Poneto, Vera Cruz and Zanesville have no public water or sewerage systems and Ossian's sewerage system is inadequate. In addition, there are several unincorporated communities in the county which provide no such services to their residents. In some cases these towns are larger than the smaller incorporated towns.

Considerable new residential growth has also occurred in areas immediately surrounding Bluffton and Ossian which are not served with municipal utilities. The lack of public water and sewer systems in themselves do not present unusual hardships or inconvenience to the homeowner. The low permeability of the soils in many areas, however, and the relatively high water table, lead to problems ranging from unpleasantness to health hazards. Most of these problems stem from individual septic tanks that have failed to function properly and threaten biological contamination of water supplies.

#### Future Utilities Service

The Public Utilities Plan recommends that all portions of the county's incorporated communities be served by public water and sewerage systems during the planning period. In addition to those areas within the present municipal boundaries, the plan programs the expansion of public water and sewerage systems into the areas in which industrial, commercial, and medium density residential development is proposed by the Comprehensive Plan. These proposed future service areas are illustrated on the map, "Public Utilities Plan." Service areas are also illustrated for those communities which do not presently have water and sewerage systems.

#### BLUFFTON

Residential and commercial expansion is anticipated to extend well north of the current city limits. Similar growth on a slightly smaller scale is expected to the east, west, and south of the city. These expansions, coupled with the projected industrial growth reference in the land use section of this plan, clearly demonstrates the need for increased municipal water and sewer service. This increase in service will take the form of new water and sewer lines and a new sewer treatment facility. The accompanying map of the city of Bluffton and the area on the periphery of the city illustrates the expanded services for the next 20 years.

MARKLE

The Town of Markle anticipates substantial residential growth and, hopefully, some industrial growth during the next two decades. The town has recently upgraded the sewage treatment plant and some of their sewer lines. The continued upgrading of the sewage collection system is a goal of the town. Another goal of the town is to maintain and improve the public water system. If the anticipated residential and industrial growth is realized, the Comprehensive Plan calls for the extension of public water and sewage service to these areas of growth.

OSSIANN

The Public Utilities Plan for Ossian recommends the upgrading of the town's sewage treatment plant, as well as the expansion of sewer and water services to areas of future growth. Based upon the anticipated growth of the town as enumerated in the Comprehensive Plan, the future water and sewage service area for Ossian extends considerably beyond the north and south borders of the town along State Route 1. Utility services to industrial areas is already a reality, however, maintenance and expansion of these services is programmed for the next 20 years. A map of the proposed service area is included in the Comprehensive Plan.

PONETO

Poneto has also realized the need to have at least public sewage available to its citizens. Plans are currently being drawn up for such a system. Hopefully, public sewage will become a reality in Poneto in the next 20 years. Public water service would be a positive community asset, but a water system is not as pressing a need as a sewage system.

UNIONDALE

At present, Uniondale has no public utilities. However, the town understands that the best interests of the community would be served by the implementation of such services. Plans are currently being drafted and considered for the development and construction of a public sewage system. The realization of this plan is scheduled for early in the 20-year plan of the town. A public water system will be considered only when a need and financial capability are demonstrated.



VERA CRUZ

Vera Cruz has found it difficult to maintain its population base. The number of residents in Vera Cruz is steadily declining. In order to stop this obvious trend, the town has proposed a public sewer system for the community. Located within the Bluffton-Harrison School District, the existence of public sewage should enhance residential growth and construction. Like the other smaller towns, public water service is a long range goal.

ZANESVILLE

Located in the northern part of Wells County and the Southern part of Allen County, Zanesville has substantial residential growth potential. While only recently incorporated, the town is already the fourth largest town within the jurisdiction of the Comprehensive Plan. Even before incorporation, the town has been planning for a public sewage system. Community health concerns and constant growth make the implementation of a public sewage system imperative. With its growth potential, Zanesville may have to consider a public water system as well during this 20-year plan.

THE COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The overall for future public facilities planning should be as follows:

Future schools, libraries, hospitals, fire stations, and public buildings shall be located so as to efficiently and adequately serve both existing and future development areas in the county. At the same time, development should be shaped and guided through implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinances in order that these facilities will not be overextended.

The Community Facilities Plan for Wells County is illustrated on the accompanying map. Shown on the map are those facilities which presently exist and those which are proposed by the Community Facilities Plan. Included in these facilities are schools, libraries, hospitals, fire stations, and public buildings. The following sections examine individually each of these facilities. Those which are considered adequate to serve throughout the planning period are recommended for retention in their present form or with minor improvements. Proposals are presented for the expansion or replacement of inadequate facilities and for the construction of new facilities where it is determined that they will be needed during the planning period.

SCHOOLS

Wells County is divided into three school districts. The public schools located within Harrison Township are administered by the Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District. Schools in the northern portion of the county, including Union, Jefferson, Lancaster, and Rock Creek Townships are administered by Northern Wells Community Schools. Southern Wells Community Schools incorporate the public schools in the southern portion of Wells County, including Liberty, Chester, Jackson, and Nottingham Townships. The boundaries of these three school districts and of the individual schools which they administer are illustrated on the map, "Community Facilities Plan."

THE BLUFFTON-HARRISON METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Numerous changes have taken place in the facilities utilized by the school system since the original Comprehensive Plan. In the original plan the facilities included four elementary schools, a junior high school and high school. Presently the facilities include a high school, a new junior high, or middle school and two elementary schools.

Allen High School,

Allen High School, located on a five-acre site near the center of the city of Bluffton, was constructed in 1922. A large new addition was completed in 1969. This addition contains complete auditorium facilities as well as classrooms, offices, shop and band facilities, and other instructional

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rooms. Grades 9 through 12 are currently being taught at the school, and recreational facilities are located at multiple locations, including the high school, the new middle school, and the football and baseball areas adjacent to the new middle school.

### Bluffton Middle School

The newest of the Bluffton-Harrison buildings, the Middle School rests on a seventy acre tract of land, along with the East Side Elementary School, in the southeastern section of Bluffton. This modern building presently houses grades five through eight. The school has its own gymnasium and it contains the aquatic facilities for the entire school system. On the adjacent grounds are located a baseball diamond, a football stadium, tennis courts, and considerable open area that serves a variety of recreational purposes.

### Columbian Elementary School,

Columbia Elementary School, constructed in 1960, is located on an eleven-acre site near Bluffton's western city limits. While the school originally housed grades from Kindergarten through 6 for the western portion of the school district, it now houses grades 3 and 4 for the entire school district. It is presently using temporary classrooms to accommodate the student population.

### East Side Elementary School,

East Side Elementary School, constructed in 1965, is located along with the middle school, on a seventy-acre site in the southeastern section of Bluffton. The larger of the two functioning elementary schools, East Side contains grades Kindergarten through 2.

### Park Elementary School, Poplar Grove Elementary School, and the Vera Cruz School

Park Elementary School, Poplar Grove Elementary School, and the Vera Cruz School for Special Education have all been closed since the original Comprehensive Plan. The Park Elementary School facility is now being used as the administrative offices for the school district. The special educational services formerly provided by the Vera Cruz school are now being provided by the Adams-Wells Training Center which is administered by Bi-County Services.

### Plan Proposals

The future expansion of the facilities and curriculum of this corporation must be constantly under study and evaluation by the Board of School Trustees and administrative staff of the school system. In the middle of the last 20-year planning cycle, school enrollments were dwindling, and several school facilities were closed. Now the declining enrollment trend has reversed, and the district is faced with a potential lack of usable facilities. Alternatives have included the reapportionment of the grades among the present facilities, the expansion of existing facilities, to the construction of new facilities. Student needs and financial ramifications will have to be carefully considered when planning for the next 20 years. Some deviation from the present arrangement will be necessary if student enrollment continues to increase.

THE NORTHERN WELLS COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

The Northern Wells facilities have also changed substantially since the original Comprehensive Plan. The Rock Creek Elementary School has been closed and demolished, while the remaining facilities have been upgraded and expanded.

Norwell High School

Norwell High School opened in the fall of 1968 on a forty-acre site near the northwestern corner of Lancaster Township. This relatively modern facility was designed to accommodate 1000 students and currently houses grades 9 through 12. Due to its location in the fastest growing area of Wells County, the high school has already been remodeled and expanded. All recreational facilities, including an indoor swimming pool, are available on site.

Norwell Middle School

In 1980 the Norwell Middle School was constructed on the forty-acre site occupied by the high school. The middle school facility is physically attached to the high school, but it is operated as a separate facility. The middle school presently accommodates grades 6 through 8. The middle school shares the recreational facilities of the High School.

Ossian Elementary School & Junior High School

The original Ossian Elementary School and Junior High School were located on a twelve-acre site in the southern portion of Ossian along State Route #1. When the Norwell Middle School was constructed, the Ossian structure became solely an elementary school. In 1990 a new elementary school was constructed on the twelve-acre tract. Only the original gymnasium was not razed, and it was incorporated into the new building. The Ossian Elementary School handles grades kindergarten through 5 for the northern portion of the school district. Adequate recreational facilities are available on site.

Lancaster School

Lancaster School built in 1922, also originally housed an elementary school and a junior high school at the time of the first Comprehensive Plan. Situated on a twelve-acre site near the center of Lancaster Township on State Route #1, the school now accommodates grades kindergarten through 5 for the southern portion of the school district. Adequate recreational facilities are available on site.

Plan Proposals

The school system is experiencing a greater growth factor than the other two school corporations in this county. Part of this is due to its proximity to Fort Wayne. Also, the fact that much of the growth of the city of Bluffton is to the north beyond the Wabash River which is actually in the Northern Wells School District, even though it is within the city limits of Bluffton. As a result of this growth potential, the adequacy of the present facilities will always be a problem. The Lancaster school building is the oldest active school building in the County. Despite

relatively recent renovations, the reconstruction of the facility is a possibility for the next 20-year period. A continuing increase in enrollment will also necessitate further expansion of both the high school and the middle school. Since all four school buildings are located on large, under-utilized tracts of land, any expansion or reconstruction would logically take place on the existing school district properties.

The administrative offices for Northern Wells Community Schools are located in a separate structure in Ossian, Indiana. The offices are currently considered appropriate for the school systems' needs, and no expansion or relocation of said offices is anticipated. However, if remodeling occurs at other school facilities, the incorporation of new school system offices may occur during the next 20-year period.

SOUTHERN WELLS COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Like the other school systems in the county, Southern Wells Community Schools has seen changes since the original Comprehensive Plan. The school system evidenced its innovation just prior to the timeframe of the original plan by constructing Southern Wells Jr.-Sr. High School by using the first circular design for an educational facility in the state of Indiana. This innovation was again evidenced through the award-winning design and construction of Southern Wells Elementary School. As a matter of fact, Southern Wells Community Schools is the only school system within the county which has replaced all school facilities that were in existence prior to 1966.

Southern Wells Jr.-Sr. High School

Southern Wells Jr.-Sr. High School, was opened in 1966, and is located on a forty-acre site in Chester Township. This facility was originally constructed to accommodate 700 students and currently houses grades seven (7) through twelve (12). All recreational facilities are available on site. Southern Wells Jr.-Sr. High School is the only secondary school within the county to currently be designated an Indiana 2000 school by the Indiana Department of Education.

Southern Wells Elementary School

Southern Wells Elementary School, was opened in 1974, and on a twenty-acre site which adjoins the secondary school site to the south. This facility has a capacity of 750 students and currently houses kindergarten through grade six (6). The Elementary site has ample recreational space, as well as having access to the secondary level facilities.

Plan Proposals

The future needs of the school system are reviewed by the patron representatives, staff, and the Board of School Trustees to assure that circular and facility needs relative to the educational program of the district are being met. At present, the leadership of the Wells County Library and Southern Wells Community Schools are working together to establish a model-site branch library on school premises using technology

of computers and site-to-site based transmissions. In the future, further technology expansion and facility development for the improvement of instruction and school-community usage are anticipated.

### Markle and Zanesville

Part of the Town of Markle is in Huntington County and is serviced by the Huntington North School System. A portion of Zanesville is located in Allen County and those children attend the Southwest Allen County School System. Due to the limited student enrollment affected by the above school systems, no reference is being made to future proposals in this Comprehensive Plan.

## LIBRARIES

The Wells County Public library system is a state of the art information system consisting of the Bluffton - Wells County Public Library (main library) and the Ossian Branch and the new Southern Wells branch expected to be in operation by 1993. The main library provides full reference service including on line searching for any subject category via the Dialog Information Service and the Economic Development Information Network. Interlibrary loan is available from more than 3000 libraries via the On-line Computer Library Center. With the exception of a very small area within the Markle city limits, the library system serves all of Wells County. Any Wells County Citizen may obtain a library card at no cost by proving residency in the County or real estate tax payment.

Both school age and preschool children are encouraged to develop reading skills by an active children's service providing story hours, challenging and interesting activities and a well developed summer reading program. Interesting and educational adult programming is provided as well as a developing summer reading program to encourage reading.

The library also supports an in-house on line catalog and circulation system for library materials including books, videos, and audio materials. This system is available at all branches. The library was the first of all libraries in the state to use wireless transmission of its on line system when dedicated line service was prohibitively expensive. This means that use of the on line catalog is now available to all of the county. A long range goal of the library is to make the system available to all schools, and to dial in modems for the public when financially possible. In the summer of 1992, a long range planning committee developed seven goals:

1. Improve accessibility to and increase use of library materials;
2. Improve and develop library services and programming;
3. Improve the physical environment and accessibility of the library facilities;
4. Promote public awareness and understanding of the library

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collections, services and facilities;

5. Improve and develop cooperation and partnerships with the community organizations and institutions;
6. Ensure dynamic and effective library and information services for all Wells County citizens by accommodating technology; and
7. Provide continues evaluation and revision of the plan.

The emphasis is on usage of facilities and services for all Wells County citizens.

### MARKLE LIBRARY

The only area not serviced by the Wells County Public Library system is the community of Markle. Markle maintains its own independent library, which is located within the town's Municipal Building. While not as extensive as the Wells County Library the Markle Library provides a broad array of services for the town and surrounding area.

### HOSPITALS AND LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

The residents of Wells County share the benefits of two hospitals, the Wells Community Hospital and the Caylor-Nickel Clinic and Hospital. Both of these facilities have their principal offices and structures within the city of Bluffton. Since the drafting of the previous Comprehensive Plan, the Caylor-Nickel Clinic has constructed a satellite facility in the town of Ossian. Caylor-Nickel also has a family medicine building and other specialty practice buildings located in the area surrounding its hospital. Caylor-Nickel has also constructed an administration and distribution center in north Bluffton along State Route #1.

The town of Markle also has local medical facilities. The Markle Medical Center is located within the town and serves not only the town of Markle, but the surrounding rural areas.

Within the jurisdictional area of this Comprehensive Plan there are six long-term care facilities. These facilities include West Haven Health Care, Cooper Community Care, and Meadowvale Care Center in the city of Bluffton. In the town of Ossian there is Ossian Health Care, and in Markle there is the Markle Health Care on the edge of the town. The newest facility is the Christian Care Retirement Community which is located on the eastern edge of the city of Bluffton. The Christian Care Retirement Community provides not only a traditional nursing home structure, but also semi-independent living facilities.

The residents of Wells County have adequate hospital, medical, and long-term care facilities to accommodate the next 20 years.

WELLS COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Wells Community Hospital will continue to provide services per its Mission Statement to residents and around Wells County, Indiana. The hospital anticipates remaining in acute care facility with emphasis in primary care services. The hospital plans to maintain and attract not only Family Practitioners, but other primary care physicians and appropriate speciality physicians.

The intent of Wells Community Hospital will be to continue to adopt and adjust to the ever changing health care environment with a greater emphasis in ambulatory care. The institution's plan includes remodeling the existing campus located at 1100 South Main Street and properties adjacent to the existing site. Additionally, the hospital will evaluate the potential of offsite facilities which could include physical plants in other portions of the community. The Wells Community hospital is considering the placement of a satellite medical facility within the Town of Ossian during the next twenty years.

The hospital anticipates there will continue to be changes in the health care delivery system that will require a greater emphasis on and input by the local community, business and industry.

The hospital will remain diligent in its efforts to provide comprehensive maternal child health services, family center services and geriatric services, efficiently accommodate outpatient services, including , but not limited to X-ray, pharmacy, lab and health care. The hospital will center efforts in providing quality patient health care and work in cooperation with other health care organizations and in offering high value for the services obtained.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS)

The Wells County EMS (Emergency Medical Service) is organized as a paramedic level advanced life support provider of pre-hospital emergency medical services based out of the Wells Community Hospital.

Wells County EMS is funded through a combination of user fees and county governmental subsidies. A direct funding approximately equal to the amount of bad debt incurred each year has been provided to off set the operating budget. This enables the EMS to be operated as a break even department of the Wells Community Hospital. A portion of the general hospital levy is internally set aside as funding for capital budget items, such as ambulances and equipment.

The Wells County EMS is currently staffed with twelve full time emergency medical technicians. Seven are paramedics and five are advanced EMT'S (Emergency Medical Technicians). Two part time paramedics are also on staff. Wells County EMS also employs a full time director and a full time EMS education coordinator. Additionally Wells County EMS maintains a staff



of twenty-five "reserve" (non-career) EMT'S at various levels. Operationally, Wells County EMS maintains four vehicles. Two are located in the north end of the county at the Ossian EMS base, and two are located in Bluffton at the Wells Community Hospital.

One ambulance in each location is staffed 24 hours a day seven days a week, 365 days a year. Minimum staffing consists of one paramedic and one basic or advanced EMT. Full time medics work for 24 hours and then are off duty for 48 hours. Currently part time medics work 8:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M., Monday through Saturday.

Monday through Friday during regular business hours a second vehicle is staffed as needed by a part time medic and either the EMS education coordinator or the EMS director. In an extreme emergency, a fourth unit would be staffed by a combination of off duty career staff and reserve EMT'S.

When not functioning on the ambulance or involved in public education and awareness programs, EMS personnel provided support and assistance to various hospital departments. Included among these departments are the emergency department, radiology department, and materials management.

Consideration should be given to housing either a transporting or non-transporting basic/advanced EMT level EMS vehicle in the southern portion of the county. Initially, it could be staffed and operated by first responders and EMT'S out of the local community. However if run volume and educational requirements reach the point that a "reserve" staff has difficulty keeping up or if performance and quality fall below acceptable minimums, full time staffing by career EMS personnel should be considered.

Consideration should be given to adding a full time vehicle and staff to operate a "transfer" unit. this unit will handle inter-hospital, inter-facility, convalescent, emergency, and non-emergency patient transfers during normal business hours, Monday through Friday.

Consideration should also be given to up-grading the communications capabilities of the Bluffton Police Department's Dispatch Center equipment. Training and staffing should also be improved for dispatchers working in the dispatch center. Full time professional dispatcher should be trained to the D.O.T. level dispatchers, and specifically training to be emergency medical service dispatchers.

If population growth and shift justify it consideration should be given to expanding the service to four full time, fully staffed paramedic ambulances. They should be located in the North in Ossian, in the South near Petroleum, and two in Bluffton at the Wells Community Hospital.

## FIRE PROTECTION

Fire protection in Wells County is provided by local fire departments, as well as by fire departments from adjacent counties. Even though outside the jurisdiction of this Comprehensive Plan, the Montpelier Fire Department provides fire protection coverage to a large area of southwestern Wells County.

The largest and best equipped of the area's fire departments is the Bluffton Fire Department. The Bluffton Fire Department principally serves Harrison and Lancaster Townships. The Department has its facilities in the Police/Fire Building on the corner of Market and Scott streets. It is manned by three full-time firemen and numerous part-time volunteers. The Department has several fire and emergency vehicles. The volume of vehicles and fire-fighting equipment may necessitate the construction of additional facilities in the next 20 years. There has been discussion concerning a second fire station within Harrison or Lancaster Townships. Any new facility would probably be located to the west of the railroad tracks. Consideration should be given to locating any new station close to the proposed industrial area adjacent to the future Bluffton bypass.

Outside of Harrison and Lancaster Townships, volunteer fire departments exist in the incorporated towns of Ossian, Markle, Uniondale, and Poneto. Volunteer fire departments are also found in the unincorporated town of Liberty Center and in Nottingham and Chester Townships. The various volunteer fire departments have traditionally provided services for neighboring areas, and have been eager to cooperate when a situation is too large for a particular department to handle alone.

The fire-fighting facilities for the County would appear to be adequate for the next 20 years. The lone exception would be the newly incorporated town of Zanesville. Given its population growth potential, Zanesville should form and maintain a local fire department within the time frame of this Comprehensive Plan or contact with an existing fire protection service.

## PUBLIC BUILDINGS

### County Buildings

The majority of the county services are housed in the Wells County Court House. One major exception is the Wells County Jail which is located on the western edge of the City of Bluffton. The jail was constructed in 1985. A second exception is the County Highway Garage, which is considered adequate for service during the planning period. The Court House is an older four-story structure located in downtown Bluffton. Due to the expansion of services, the increase in the volume of work, and the employment of greater numbers of staff personnel, the Court House has become woefully inadequate to accommodate existing county offices and

services. It is recommended that additional space be obtained outside of the Court House and appropriate offices and service be transferred to the newly obtained space.

Plans should be considered to moving the Cooperative Extension Service and related services to a new facility that would be constructed on the Wells County 4-H Park. It has also been suggested that the County purchase or lease one or more of the vacant structures in downtown Bluffton. Additional space acquisition is critical to the maintenance of proper governmental services.

### Municipal Buildings

Since the original Comprehensive Plan was drafted, the City of Bluffton has constructed a second municipal facility that houses the Police Department, the Fire Department, the City Court, and the City Council chambers. All other governmental offices are housed in the Bluffton City Hall, which is a two-story structure that was constructed in 1926. It may be necessary to expand or renovate one or both of these structures as the growth of the City of Bluffton requires greater services.

As called for in the last Comprehensive Plan, the town of Ossian has a new municipal facility that houses the administrative offices, as well as the Fire Department, EMS, and Police Department. The most recent expansion accommodated two new days for the Fire Department, two new days for the EMS services, as well as living quarters for the EMS personnel. While these facilities are presently adequate, if the growth potential of Ossian is accurate, new or expanded municipal facilities may be necessitated in the next 20 years.

The Town of Markle has two new facilities. One structure handles the Fire Department and physical municipal services. The other structure houses the municipal administrative offices. Both facilities would appear adequate for the next 20 years.

The towns of Uniondale and Poneto have facilities for public meetings and to house their fire services. The town of Vera Cruz meets in a private facility donated by a local citizen. The newly incorporated town of Zanesville has not yet addressed the issue of public structures. The degree of growth in all four of these communities will dictate the adequacy of their respective public structures during the next planning period.

THE PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Population projections indicate an anticipated increase in the county's population by the year 2013. Considering the direct influence of the Fort Wayne-Allen County economic center upon the northern half of Wells County, it is entirely possible that growth, particularly in the north, will exceed present expectations. Recent history and present trends indicate that increases in the average family income and in leisure time will accompany population increases. At the same time, the spread of urban development will consume more and more of the available land in Wells County. For these reasons, it is imperative that steps be taken immediately to protect the county's areas of natural importance and beauty, and to provide for the ever-increasing recreational needs of county residents. These, then, should be the principal goals of the county's open space and recreation planning.

The county's recreation needs are as varied as its people. Different types of recreational facilities are necessary for various age groups and for individuals and families. The outdoor recreation needs of children are predominantly baseball diamonds, basketball courts and other facilities for individual and team sports. Passive recreational facilities, however, do benefit children and also contribute to their development and education. Parks which provide nature study opportunities, for example, may be used to augment school study programs.

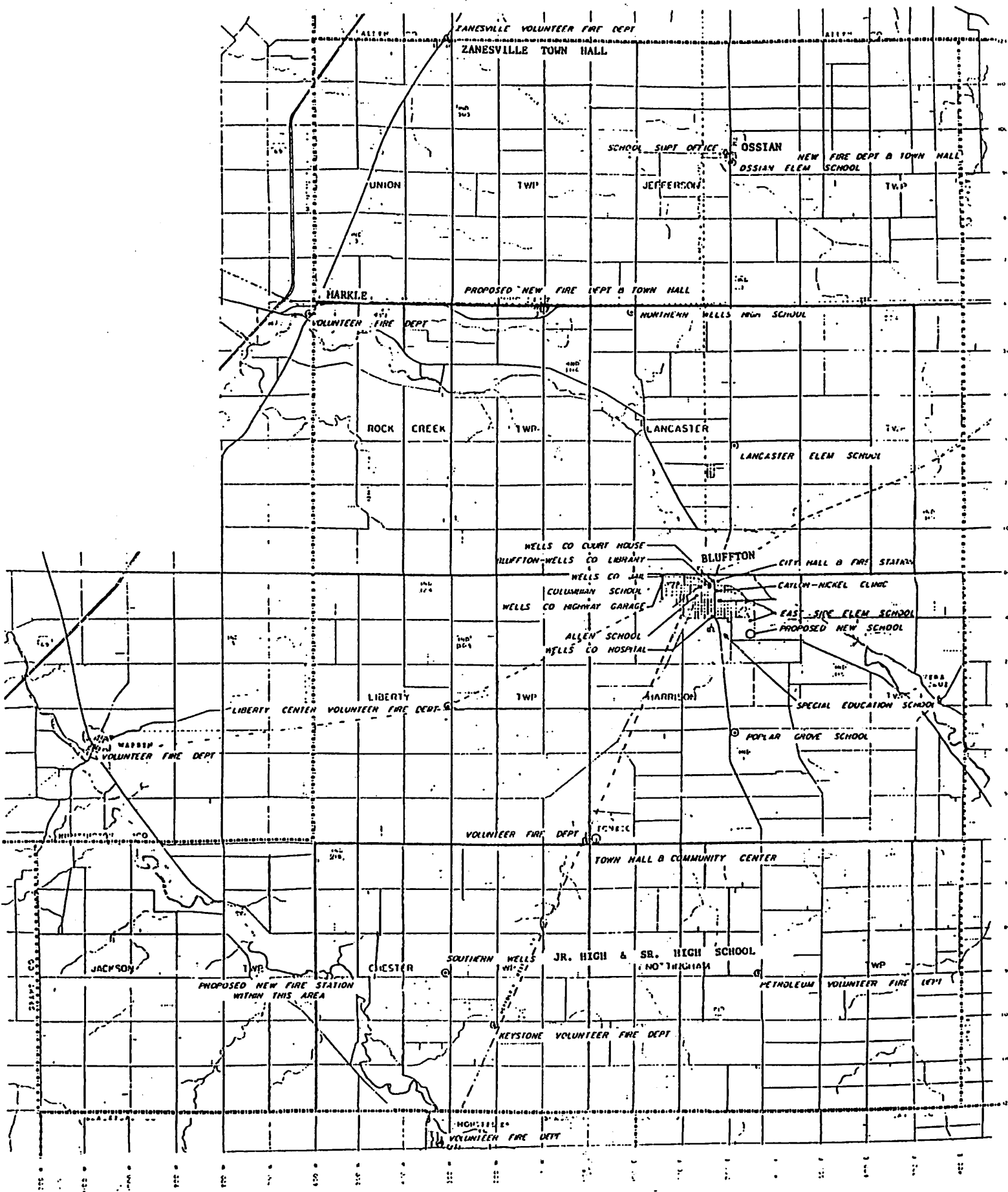
Active outdoor recreation facilities for adults are oriented primarily to individual activities such as tennis, fishing, and golf. Passive facilities should offer opportunities to walk, ride, or simply commune with nature. Family-oriented facilities should provide for picnicking and camping as well.

Outdoor recreation areas also vary according to the population served. At one end of the scale is the small neighborhood park or playground. At the other end of the scale is the large county park, which provides extensive facilities for varying types of recreational activities, and which is intended to serve the entire population of the county.

In the selection of sites for future parks and recreation areas, several factors should be considered: A major factor in the location of any such facility is its location with respect to the population served. Properly located, a park or other recreation facility should be conveniently accessible to all those it is intended to serve. Another major factor is its location with respect to other land uses, particularly those which conflict with recreational activities.

Parks and other outdoor recreation facilities should also be located so as to take advantage of beneficial natural features such as a lake or other water area, woodlands, or scenic vistas. The installation of a park on such a site helps to ensure its preservation for future generations. Other important factors to be considered in selecting park sites include soil

COMMUNITY FACILITIES MAP COUNTY



types and characteristics, drainage conditions, topography, and flooding.

Specific objectives to be attained in planning for future parks and recreations areas, therefore, are:

1. to provide a well balanced program with a variety of facilities designed to best serve the differing recreational needs of the county's citizens;
2. to coordinate future park and open space development with existing and new public, semi-public, and private recreational facilities;
3. to include in recreation plans and to protect by means of land use controls those areas with obvious recreational potential, areas of natural importance, and historic areas and objects; and
4. to encourage the development of neighborhood parks and playgrounds in areas of new residential development.

#### Existing Facilities and Goals

Wells County is the home of numerous parks and recreation facilities, including the 1065 acres of Ouabache State Park. In close proximity are the Huntington and Salamonie Reservoirs with swimming, boating, and fishing opportunities. We are also bordered by Allen County which has excellent park facilities, including the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo, and the Foellinger Botanical Gardens. With the total population of Wells County expected to increase from 25,948 to 28,825 by the year 2,013; the existing facilities -- with appropriate maintenance and internal expansion -- appear sufficient to accommodate projected recreational needs for the foreseeable future. The following four major goals reflect the reality that little new money will be available for park and recreation projects, emphasizing the need to carefully plan for the future.

The first priority of those involved in park and recreational facility leadership must be concentrated on the maintenance and expansion of existing facilities -- with minor exceptions. The role of government is crucial in providing the financing, leadership, and organization necessary for the preservation of these facilities. Bluffton citizens pay for a park system that is used by all county residents and Ossian has recently formed a Park Board which will eventually be supported by Ossian residents. Over half of the counties in Indiana have county park boards, including neighboring Adams, Allen, and Blackford counties, which require all citizens to pay their fair share for parks. Wells County should create a county-wide park board as a conduit for funding recreational improvements for the benefit of all county citizens.

The second major need is for the restoration of the Deam Arboretum. Charles Deam is one of Wells County's most famous sons, having been the first State Forester, widely read author, and a recognized botanical expert. For several generations, from 1920 to 1960, the trees and shrubs which constitute the arboretum were visited by thousands of out-of-county residents -- including bus loads of school children from Fort Wayne. The cost of restoration and upkeep of this historic area is minor when compared

to the economic windfall which Wells County can reap by promoting this unique asset. In association with this restoration, consideration should also be given to the construction of a replica of the Deam Drugstore, in turn of the century condition, as a tourist attraction for downtown Bluffton.

The third priority is to develop new park facilities -- neighborhood parks to serve the needs of citizens located in new subdivisions. The subdivision control ordinance should require, as required for a mobile home park development, a specific portion of the land within the subdivision, such as ten percent of the land, to be set aside for recreation. The land to be used to meet this set-aside requirement should be selected with input from the County-City Park Board having jurisdiction over the area. In lieu of setting aside such acreage, developers should be required to pay an impact fee such as ten percent of the value of the land within the subdivision.

A prime example of this concern is the Willowbrook Addition to the city of Bluffton. This densely populated area is devoid of any area parks, playgrounds, or other recreational facilities. Currently, even more concentrated housing is being planned for the undeveloped or adjacent areas of this addition. Care must be taken to set aside land in these developing areas to accommodate appropriate recreational facilities. Such an effort, coupled with the requirement of proper recreational areas in future developments, will insure adequate parks and open spaces for future Wells County generations.

The master plan adopted in 1971 recommended the development of three large county parks. These parks have not been developed because of the large cost of land acquisition, construction, and maintenance. A more realistic program would be to develop parks in association with our area schools. The schools are centrally located in north, central, and southern townships; have existing acreage which is undeveloped; and are already focal points for community events. The joint development of these properties as schools and parks will economically and educationally promote the goals of the schools and the parks.

Specific goals for the planning for parks and recreations are:

1. the formation of a County Park Board;
2. the renovation and promotion of the Deam Arboretum;
3. the inclusion of park areas in all new residential developments; and
4. the close cooperation of the Park Board and School Boards in the development of community parks at our schools.

Existing Parks and Recreational Facilities

At the present time there are over 1500 acres of public parks and private recreational areas in Wells County. The largest park is the Ouabache State Park operated by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. Ouabache features a large swimming pool with a slide, Kunkel Lake for fishing, numerous campsites, and observation tower, and serves as a recreational

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area for citizens from Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. The Park is currently divided by State Road #316, with plans to close this road during the 1990's, and greatly expand camping facilities at the Park. Wells County should support these plans.

A Rivergreenway Trail was built in 1988 along the south bank of the Wabash River. This trail currently extends from downtown Bluffton to the White Bridge approximately one-half mile from Ouabache Park. With the restoration of the Deam Arboretum along the Rivergreenway, the Trail could be extended to Ouabache State Park as a convenient path for park visitors to explore the Arboretum and Bluffton. Consideration should also be given to the extension of the trail along the Wabash River from the trail's western end in the city of Bluffton to the northwest towards the community of Murray.

The three school systems currently own 218 acres which are occupied by school buildings, athletic fields, and playgrounds. Additional acreage is available for purchase near most of these schools for future recreational facilities. The County Park Board, in association with each School Board, should cooperate in the development of facilities for the use of students and residents.

Southern Wells Schools own 60 acres near Poneto, Indiana -- centrally located in the southern three townships. The school already uses a portion of this area as a passive recreational area and picnic facility. The addition of playground equipment and other recreational facilities would make this an excellent park.

Bluffton Schools operates a junior high/elementary complex on the east side of Bluffton consisting of approximately 70 acres. The complex includes an indoor swimming pool, which is available for community use, an exercise trail, tennis courts, and large open areas. Bluffton High School owns a portion of Roush Park which is leased to the Bluffton Park Department for a nominal sum. This land could be permanently transferred to the Park Department -- at no cost. The Columbian Elementary School consists of 11 acres. Its fields serve as practice areas for T-ball and softball, and its outdoor playground equipment is widely used by area youths.

The Norwell School Corporation owns 18 acres at Lancaster Elementary School. The school is beginning an outdoor laboratory for the study of trees and plants on this acreage. However, sufficient land exists for additional active recreational facilities to be placed on the site. The Ossian Elementary School is located in the middle of Ossian, Indiana. The recent building program resulted in the school acquiring a total of 34 acres which can be used for the recreational purposes of Ossian residents. The newly formed Ossian Park Board should work closely with the school to develop a soccer field and other needed recreational facilities. Norwell also owns 54 acres on U.S. #224 at the junior/senior high school. Facilities include tennis courts, an all weather track, an indoor swimming pool, and a gymnasium which are all used by community citizens for recreational purposes.



Bluffton, Indiana, has an active park board that supervises the following facilities:

Jefferson Park which features a lighted baseball diamond, an open practice field, and playground equipment.

Lions Park which has a tot lot, picnic areas, four basketball goals, an open space play area, a T-ball diamond, a lighted softball diamond, and three lighted tennis courts.

Roush Park with playground equipment, three lighted baseball diamonds, two open-air pavilions, picnic areas, and two lighted basketball goals.

Washington Park with three lighted basketball goals, concession stand, a volleyball court, picnic area with outdoor grills, and three lighted tennis courts.

Veteran's Memorial Park has a quiet garden setting for reflection, dedicated to all citizens who have served their country in the Armed Forces.

Rivergreenway Trail with one and one-half mile of walking and jogging pathway that winds along the Wabash River.

Ray Renollet Rotary Park with a picnic area along the Wabash River that includes a pavilion and picnic tables.

Kehoe Park And Amphitheater is a new theatre on the banks of the Wabash River.

Wells Community Swimming Pool consists of one of the few 50-meter outdoor pools used as a regional site for the White River games, with a bathhouse, concession area, and large parking area.

There is no park on the north side of Bluffton, and a goal of the Bluffton Park Department is to develop such a park as soon as funds become available.

The County currently has many fine recreational facilities operated by associations or privately, including:

Parlor City Athletic Club is located in the back of the Bluffton City Building, this facility includes a racquetball court, weight/exercise room, shower facilities, and a gymnasium/basketball court. This facility provides supervised free use by youths on winter weekdays between 3:30 P.M. and 7:00 P.M. and all day Saturday.

Wells County 4-H Park is a site which includes a picnic pavilion, fairground facilities with grandstand, picnic areas with grills, basketball, volleyball, playground equipment, an archery range, and much

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more. A current campaign is under way to build a much needed community meeting facility with indoor recreational facilities.

Hickory Hills Golf Club is a nine hole public golf course on the north side of Bluffton.

Parlor City Country Club is an eighteen hole semi-private golf course and club house located north of Bluffton.

Acres, Inc. is a passive recreational area on the Wabash River for hiking, bird watching, and appreciating the beauty of nature.

Moser Lake is operated by the Ossian Conservation Club and stocked by the Department of Natural Resources. This 20-acre facility and lake are open to fishing for all, and use of the other facilities, including camping, archery, etc. are available for a nominal membership charge.

Vera Cruz has a one-acre park with playground equipment.

Liberty Center has a park area with playground equipment, a ball diamond, picnic tables, and shelter house.

Markle has a park area with swimming facilities, playground equipment, a lighted ball diamond, picnic tables and a shelter.

Ossian has two lighted ball diamonds in a common location, plus a soccer field, horseshoe facilities, playground equipment, and picnic tables at Melching Park.

Petroleum has a park area with a ball diamond, pavilion, and picnic tables.

Uniondale has a basketball court and a ball diamond.

Zanesville has a ball diamond and community park.

The 20-year master plan for Wells County for the period from 1992 to 2013 needs to concentrate on the maintenance and expansion of the above listed facilities. Given a reasonable population increase, these facilities should be sufficient to meet the recreational needs during the plan period. The formation of a county-wide park board will increase support of our parks on an equitable basis by all citizens, with new community parks funded by the developers of new subdivisions. The interaction of the park departments with our schools will increase the interaction between citizens and schools -- an important step from recreational and educational viewpoints. Lastly, the Deam Arboretum must be restored to promote this unique asset to meet educational needs and to serve as a magnet for visitors to our community.

THE BLUFFTON BUSINESS DISTRICT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Bluffton Central Business District has experienced a change in character since the original Comprehensive Plan was prepared for Wells County. Development of commercial areas both north and south of the downtown have given rise to increased retail development in those areas, drawing retail -- which was once centrally located in the community's center -- to these areas. This refocusing of market-driven retail development has contributed significantly to the character change of the downtown from a retail to a service center.

As in the original plan, the downtown remains the political center of the community. The location of government services in the downtown area has steadfastly remained. This is the one factor that has kept downtown Bluffton intact.

During the 1980's, community leaders began to recognize that downtown Bluffton was no longer "the retail center of the county." This awareness developed a sense of urgency to create a new focus for development in the downtown area. The driving force behind the new initiatives for development were the guidelines set forth by the National Main Street program -- a program designed to bring life back to downtowns.

The Main Street ideal focuses on three critical issues: promotion of the downtown, economic restructuring, and design. These ideals were the building blocks of the late 1980's and early 1990's redevelopment strategies put in place through Bluffton Revitalization, Inc., the administering agency for the Main Street program in Bluffton. It is the Central Business District Planning Committee's recommendation that these strategies should continue to guide the development and redevelopment of the Bluffton Central Business District.

Observed Assets and Problems Associated With the Central Business District:

This plan begins by evaluating the positive and negative situations which currently exist in the downtown. The following list is a summary of those discussions.

Assets:

1. Quality and attractive architecture
2. New sidewalks and landscaping conducive to pedestrian traffic
3. Very few empty buildings
4. Good traffic patterns
5. Overall good environment
6. Fairly good mix of retail, office, government and housing

Problems:

1. Limited parking for employees (This creates the sense that little parking is available for consumers.)
2. Too much utility clutter (i.e. overhead lines, signs, etc.)
3. Too many vacant spaces at upper story
4. Too little attention on maintenance of buildings
5. Unlandscaped parking lots
6. Little room for growth

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Downtown development and planning should be focused on one goal.

That recommended goal is:

Maintain a vital and economically stable environment that is conducive to the growth and preservation of the Bluffton Central Business District (CBD).

It is recommended that the following objectives be used to ensure that the County Plan meets this goal:

1. Promote efficient vehicular circulation
2. Attract and cater to the needs of the pedestrian
3. Provide, as a first priority, ample parking for consumers in convenient locations, where and when possible
4. Maximum use of present structures and other assets while preserving their historic character
5. Preserve, when possible, buildings of significant historic value as determined through standards acceptable to the National Historic Trust
6. Provide alternative parking solutions for private and public employees that do not conflict with consumer parking
7. Strengthen present and future land use relationships within a more functional and flexible pattern while maintaining the character of the CBD

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8. Make existing investments work better through restructuring existing space at key locations
9. Encourage new investments where they will make a maximum contribution to overall business vitality while maintaining the character of the CBD
10. Encourage public/private investment

### Changes in Planning Principles

Principles which guided the planning and zoning recommendations outlined in the original plan have been thoroughly reviewed. It is believed that many of these planning guidelines are out-of-date or simply inaccurate based on experiences by this and other communities who have attempted to follow these types of principles.

Comments for each of the principle areas are as follows:

#### Accessibility:

1. It is strongly believed that not all congestion and vehicular movement in the CBD is bad. Congestion suggest that something is happening; it creates a sense of place you are somewhere instead of nowhere.
2. All through traffic need not be rerouted around the community. Passenger vehicular traffic provides exposure to businesses and other areas of interest in the City. Routing all through traffic around town suggests to the traveler that the city is not interested in having them here.
3. Additionally, pedestrian and vehicular traffic should be accommodated, not necessarily separated. Downtown "malls" which have effectively separated vehicles from pedestrians have also effectively separated investment from the downtown. Good development dictates a harmony between pedestrian and vehicular uses.

#### Penetration:

It should not be assumed that pedestrians should be conveyed as closely as possible to their downtown destination; reasonably close would be a better term.

#### Function:

The necessary restructuring of downtown to ensure ongoing private investment dictates that dissimilar land uses be evaluated on a case by case basis. It is agreed that complementary retail or service establishments clustered in the same general location frequently result in commercial interaction-good for all concerned. In addition, mixing building uses between upper and first floors assists the long-term stability of building occupation.

Compactness:

It should be stressed that the razing of buildings should only be considered if the buildings pose an immediate public health and safety threat or, if removed, would make way for an improvement essential to the long-term stability of the downtown. However, the razing of buildings which have historical significance, especially buildings exhibiting unique or well designed architectural features should not be encouraged.

Multiple-Use

The concept of multiple-use is rooted in principles of construction, economic, and building design. Private investors must have reasonable assurance of a profitable operation or there can be no rejuvenation of a business district, neither on an overall or parcel-to-parcel basis. An investment in a business district building may not pay off on the basis of ground floor revenues alone because of the high cost of land development and improvements.

The first floors of business district buildings should be strongly oriented to high volume commercial uses and should be highly accessible to pedestrians. The upper stories should provide quality space for offices, personal services, or secondary commercial activities. The availability of elevator or escalator service within new buildings will overcome many disadvantages mainly attributed to above-ground locations. Each development proposal should be carefully examined for opportunities to create additional benefits for private investors and for the entire business district.

FUTURE BUSINESS DISTRICT LAND USE

CBD Boundary:

The original plan confines itself to the area currently designated as the CBD, generally speaking from Marion Street on the west to Bennett Street on the east. The Committee feels the new CBD boundary should remain fairly similar to that of previous years, with the exceptions as outlined on the Bluffton Business District map. It is felt that a sprawling downtown will negatively affect the surrounding residential areas and will create an undesirable trend of demolition for speculative commercial development. Both of these occurrences would produce undesirable results based on the recommended development strategies for downtown.

Commercial Land Use:

The original plan calls for an intensification of commercial use in the area and the eventual elimination of non-commercial uses. The original plan is in direct conflict with the objectives and principles laid out, in this recommended plan update. The elimination of non-commercial uses from the downtown would effectively destroy the very means by which the downtown has a chance to survive and prosper. As stated previously, multiple uses within buildings and among floors should be encouraged and facilitated to the greatest extent possible. This strategy will ensure a diversified tenant base that will stabilize the CBD's tax base, marketability and encourage other types of commercial establishments, for example: retail catering to potential senior citizens living in the downtown or services catering to government or retail. These strategies fit the Main Street development ideals.

The original plan calls mainly for removal of vacant buildings for additional parking or new buildings and non-commercial uses. In summary, the following are recommended:

1. Renovate existing structures interior and exteriors, maintaining the original architectural style
2. Encourage a mix of uses, (i.e. commercial, residential, office, service, government)
3. Maintain first floor spaces for retail uses where and when possible
4. The area should not include medium or heavy industry or outside storage facilitated businesses, (i.e. lumber yards, etc.)

Industrial Land Use:

There is currently very little industry in the CBD. The existing light manufacturing is acceptable as long as truck access is not a limiting factor. Trucking intensive industries should be discouraged in the downtown.

The downtown area is lacking public space, namely open park area and green space. Development of public green spaces should be considered for the

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southwestern portion of the CBD. This strategy is both consistent with Main Street ideals and tourism strategies discussed later in this report.

### Semi-Public Land Use:

Bluffton's business district contains fifteen semi-public land uses. Included in this group are nine civic clubs and organizations, four buildings of the Caylor-Nickel Clinic, and two churches. These semi-public uses are well-suited to the district and their present locations result in few land use conflicts aside from additional parking demands. Many of the larger facilities provide their own on-site, off-street parking. The plan programs the retention of these semi-public uses within the district but stipulates that those organizations considering relocating or new organizations considering location within the district be encouraged to build or locate in the areas outside the district's inner core.

### Residential Land Use:

The original plan proposed the removal of all single-family residences from the district. This strategy is no longer acceptable. Maintenance of residential units in the downtown area and its surrounding fringes is critical to maintaining a stable CBD and the ambience that makes Bluffton's downtown an attractive place to visit. Maintenance and renovation of residences should be encouraged. Historic residences should be protected from commercial uses that destroy or significantly alter the original building architectures.

New residential units for senior citizens and multi-tenant units would create a "captured" customer base for the downtown and should be encouraged.

### Thoroughfare Plan:

The Committee feels that the existing street layout is effective and that no further changes will need to occur within this planning period. It is believed that the planned division of State Road 1 or Main Street is detrimental to the development strategies proposed in this report and is totally unnecessary based on data collected from the State Highway Planning Division. (See Figure 1-1)

### Future Parking:

Reasonably available parking is expected and needed to ensure the economic vitality of the CBD. However, most of the current and immediate future parking needs can be accommodated within the parking facilities currently downtown. This can be done by policing existing spaces and requiring business and government employees to use the outer-most parking spaces.

Future parking needs can be met by requiring new structures to include on-site parking, either above or under ground. Demolition of buildings for parking is highly discouraged.

All parking areas should be properly landscaped and striped. Ordinances should be established to control the layout and landscaping of all parking lots in the CBD.



OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Tourism As Part of Development:

One area overlooked for growth of the community and stability of the downtown is tourism. Although tourism is clearly not the singular solution to the CBD's problems or long-term growth, it is an important part of the success formula. Through development of "tourism oriented" commercial activities, historic interest, beautification, and pedestrian-vehicular traffic accommodation, a stabilizing force can be created, not only with the core of the city but throughout the entire community.

Protecting the Community's Heritage:

Heritage is an important part of what a community is. Protecting the resources that enable the communities history to be told is important to future generations. However, this protection should not disable growth.

An historic overlay district should be considered for the downtown Central Business District. This overlay would enable growth in business outside the existing CBD while allowing for protection of historic resources.

Special guidelines could be established under the local zoning ordinance that would control the type of business and, more importantly, what extent that business could alter the historic integrity of an historic building. This ordinance could be flexible and provide for future business opportunities to occur, such as bed and breakfast and small gift shops, yet protect the existing residential neighborhood from the negative impact of large remodeling projects or demolitions to accommodate "bigger" or "better" business.

The Wabash River should be considered a functional seam to the community and not regarded as its back door. The river provides a valuable resource, not only environmentally, but economically. In that regard, the river and its surrounding ecosystem should be protected from unnecessary damage or alteration.

The existing zoning for the river area should be maintained with the alternations shown on the Bluffton Business District map.

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Figure 1-1

24 HOUR VOLUME ESTIMATES FOR  
STATE ROAD 1  
FROM STATE ROAD 124 WEST TO SPRING STREET  
Years: 1984 through 2004

1984 VOLUME: 6,700\*  
DESIGN CAPACITY: 27,000\*  
GROWTH FACTOR: 1.02\*

YEAR	VOLUME	24 Hr.
1984	6,700	Actual
1985	6,834	Projected
1986	6,971	Projected
1987	7,110	Projected
1988	7,252	Projected
1989	7,397	Projected
1990	7,545	Projected
1991	7,696	Projected
1992	7,850	Projected
1993	8,007	Projected
1994	8,167	Projected
1995	8,331	Projected
1996	8,497	Projected
1997	8,667	Projected
1998	8,841	Projected
1999	9,017	Projected
2000	9,198	Projected
2001	9,382	Projected
2002	9,569	Projected
2003	9,761	Projected
2004	9,956	Projected

\* Provided by the State Highway Planning Protecting the River Corridor:



NEW ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Zoning Ordinance needs additional designations:

CBD (CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT-B-1). This CBD zone would be the downtown area of the towns only in Wells County. The CBD designation would have a zero set-back and is acceptable for the downtown business district. The B-1 designation could then be used for shopping malls where businesses want to have zero side yard set-backs but would have a large front and rear yard set-back.

L-1 (LANDFILL-1) L-1 would be an overlay district in which an operation for collection of recyclables is a Permitted Use. Sanitary garbage pick-up services, and dump stations for the collection of refuse and recyclables would be Special Exceptions under this classification. A Sanitary Landfill shall not be permitted under this classification.

L-2 (LANDFILL-2) L-2 would be a site of not less than 160 acres of land that is used for a Sanitary Landfill. Any activity that is connected to the operation of a landfill such as, but not limited to the operation of sanitary pick-up trucks, transfer of refuse to be transported to other Sanitary Landfills is a Permitted Use after such designation is approved by the appropriated Legislative Body.

S-2 (Suburban Residential-2) S-2 is a designation primarily to assist small existing incorporated or unincorporated communities in achieving a greater variety of homes on the lots. In an S-2 district the lots sizes could be smaller and manufactured homes could be allowed as Permitted Uses or as Special Exceptions. The S-1 district would be preserved for new areas with traditionally larger lots.