

CITY OF BLUFFTON

COMMUNITY REPORT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bluffton stands out as Wells County's economic and cultural hub, a role that was underscored by county-level data showing relatively strong household incomes and steady population growth. Results from the local public meeting and survey underscored the need for downtown revitalization, enhanced dining and entertainment options, and better access to healthcare services. As a result, Bluffton's Vision Principles concentrate on creating a vibrant downtown-riverfront district, upgrading infrastructure to growing demand, restoring and expanding healthcare facilities, and offering a mix of mid-priced single-family and market-rate multi-family housing. In practice, these principles become action items such as façade improvement grants for downtown redevelopment, strategic investments in stormwater and utility upgrades, active recruitment of medical providers, and planned sidewalk and trail expansions that link neighborhoods to Bluffton's historic core.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

As the largest city and economic center of Wells County, Bluffton plays a crucial role in regional development and economic sustainability. Understanding the physical and land use characteristics of Bluffton is essential for shaping a master plan that supports growth, infrastructure improvements, and community well-being. This section examines current zoning, infrastructure, environmental assets, and land use patterns, providing a foundation for strategic decision-making.

Bluffton's land use reflects a blend of residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural areas, with a growing focus on downtown revitalization and economic expansion. While agriculture remains prevalent in the surrounding areas, Bluffton's commercial and industrial hubs are concentrated along major corridors, particularly around State Roads 1 and 116.

The city recognizes the need for continued investment in infrastructure improvements, particularly in stormwater management, utility upgrades, and road maintenance. Many infrastructure systems are aging and in need of replacement or expansion to meet the demands of future growth and business development. Additionally, enhanced stormwater drainage solutions will be key to preserving Bluffton's road infrastructure and mitigating flood risks in low-lying areas.

Bluffton's natural assets, including the Wabash River and Ouabache State Park, provide opportunities for recreation, tourism, and environmentally integrated development. These resources contribute to economic and ecological benefits, particularly as Bluffton seeks to integrate natural surroundings into its development plans.

By assessing these current conditions, this section provides a comprehensive overview of Bluffton's development landscape, guiding strategies that balance economic vitality, infrastructure investments, and environmental stewardship to support the city's future growth.

As the county seat and largest city in Wells County, Bluffton serves as an economic, residential, and transportation hub. The following maps provide insight into the natural features, zoning, land use, and infrastructure that shape Bluffton's current development and future growth opportunities.

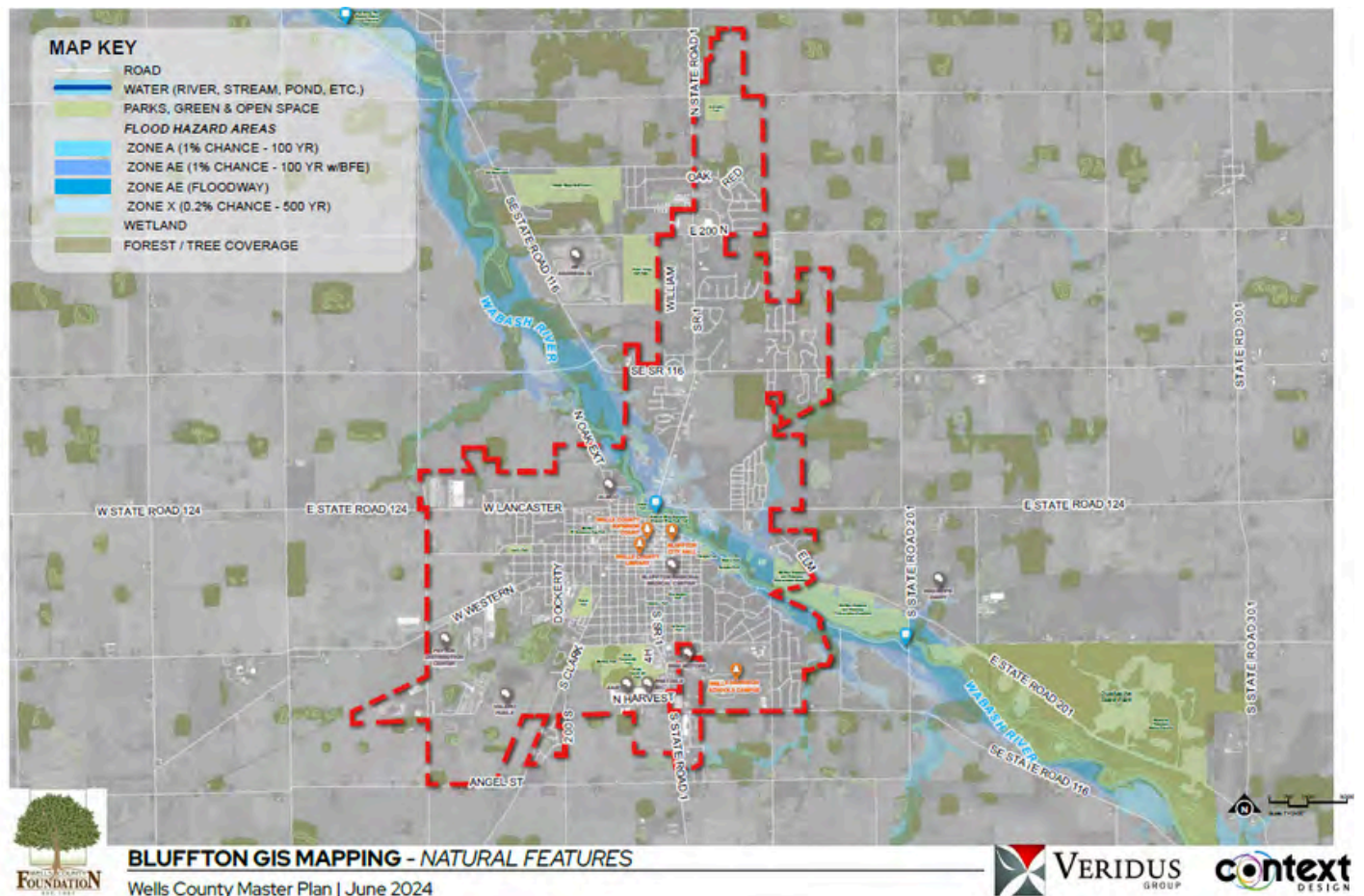


Figure 33: Bluffton Natural Features Map; Source: Context Design

The Bluffton Natural Features Map highlights the city’s environmental assets and constraints. The Wabash River, which runs through Bluffton, is a defining feature of the city, providing both recreational opportunities and environmental challenges. The map identifies wetlands, tree coverage, and flood hazard areas, indicating locations where development may be constrained by natural conditions.

- Flood hazard areas, marked in blue, outline locations subject to 100-year and 500-year flood events, requiring careful land use planning to mitigate risks.
- Parks and open spaces are distributed throughout the city, offering green space for recreation and conservation.
- Forest and tree coverage areas, shown in green, help maintain Bluffton’s environmental quality and contribute to its small-town character.

Preserving these natural resources while accommodating growth is a key consideration for Bluffton’s future development strategy.

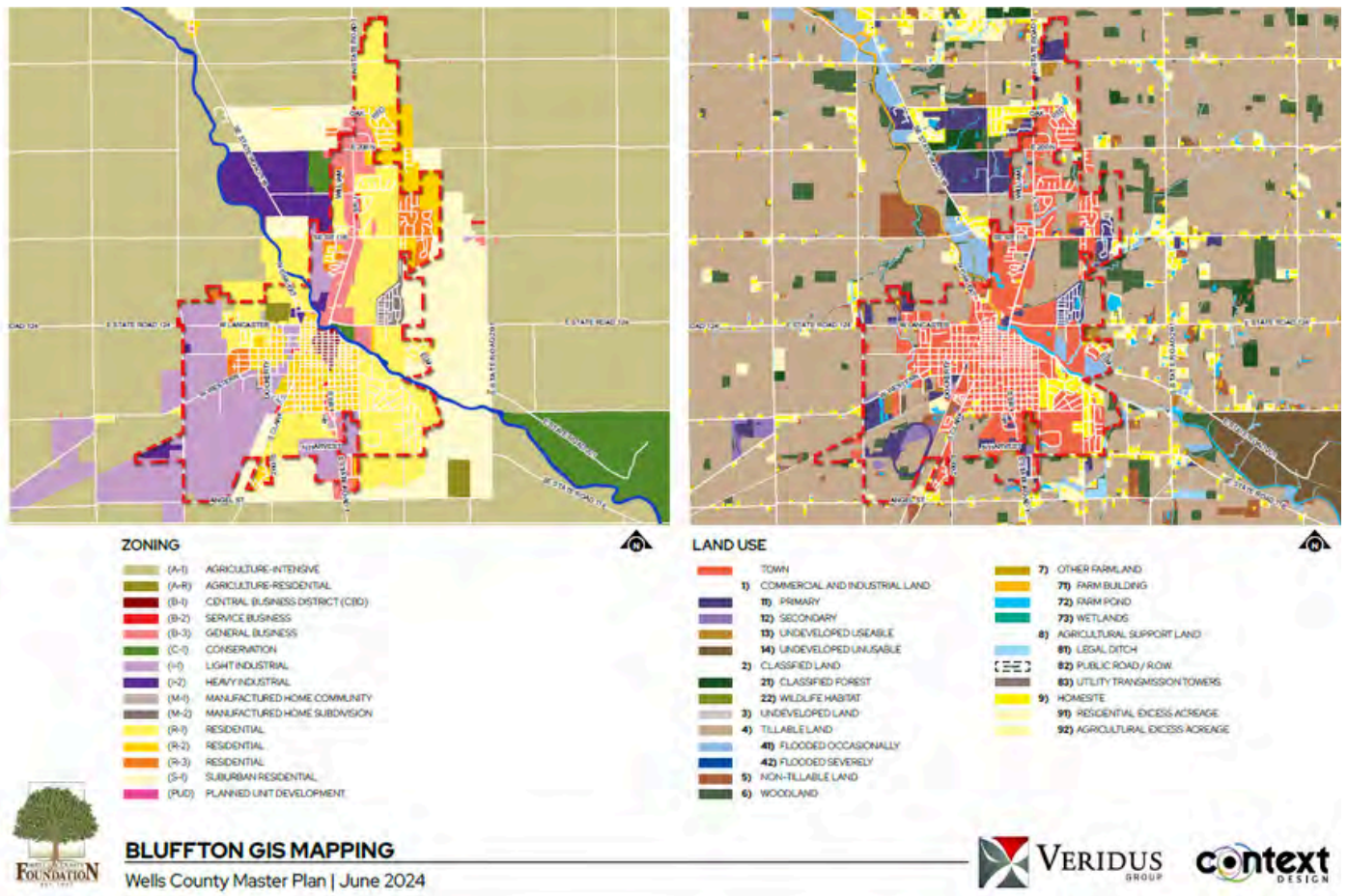


Figure 36: Bluffton Zoning and Land Use Map; Source: Context Design

The Bluffton Zoning and Land Use Map provides a breakdown of how land is currently designated within the city. Bluffton's zoning framework supports a mix of residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural uses, ensuring a balanced and functional urban environment.

- Agricultural land (A-1, A-R) remains present around the city's periphery, preserving farmland while allowing for future growth.
- Residential zoning (R-1, R-2, R-3, suburban residential) is concentrated in established neighborhoods and expanding areas, accommodating a range of housing types from single-family homes to higher-density developments.
- Commercial and business districts (B-1, B-2, CBD) are centered in downtown Bluffton and along major corridors, supporting retail, services, and professional offices.
- Industrial zones (I-1, I-2) are strategically located near major transportation routes, facilitating manufacturing and logistics operations.

The land use map further classifies developable land, wetlands, flood-prone areas, and agricultural support lands, providing a comprehensive understanding of how Bluffton's land is utilized and where future growth is feasible.

These maps collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of Bluffton's current conditions, guiding planning efforts to balance economic growth, environmental conservation, and infrastructure investments. As the city expands, strategic zoning policies, floodplain management, and transportation improvements will play a crucial role in ensuring a sustainable and vibrant future for Bluffton and its residents.

ANALYSIS OF VACANT PARCELS IN BLUFFTON

The below map highlights the current distribution of vacant parcels across Bluffton, with concentrations both within the city core and along its periphery. Clusters of undeveloped land are notably present near major roads and rail corridors, suggesting areas with potential for future growth. The future opportunities for these parcels need to align back to the Vision 2035 future land use plan.

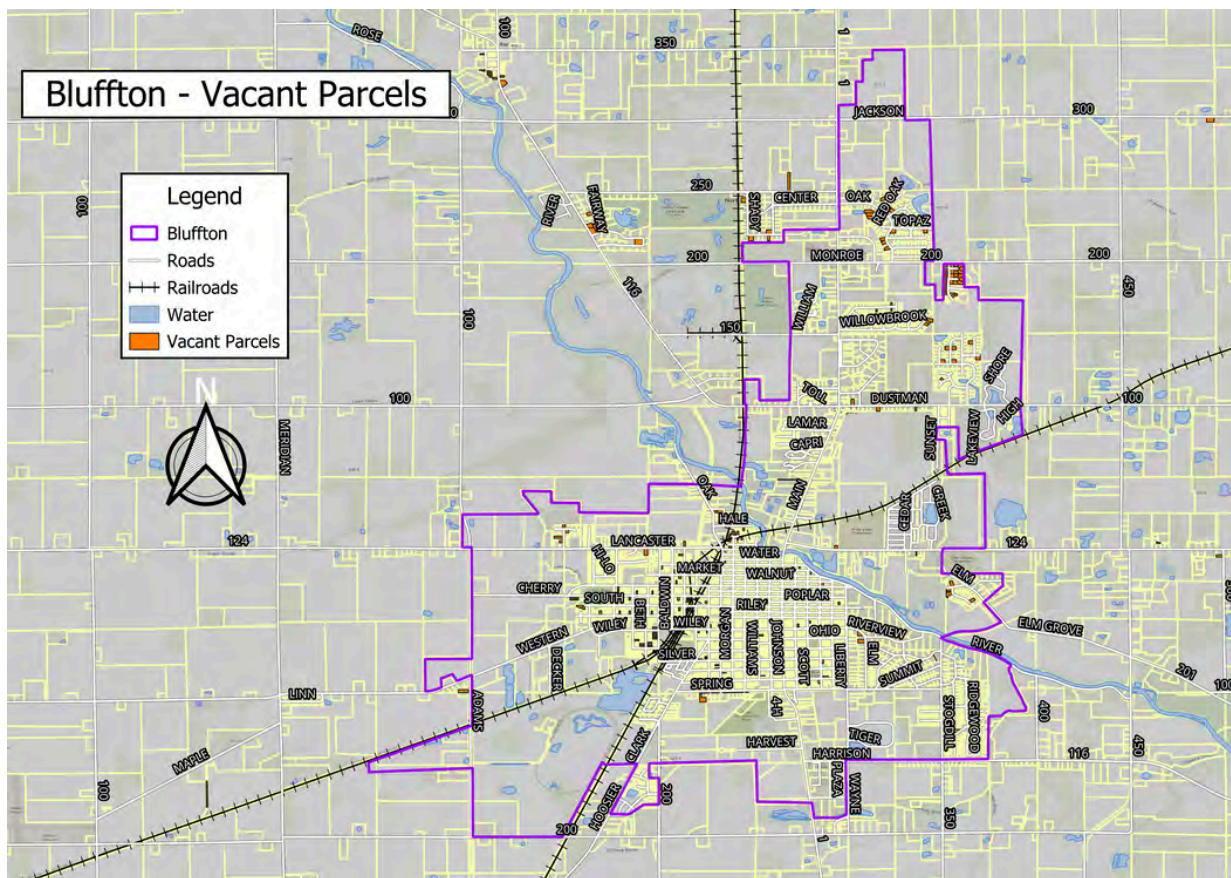


Figure 35: Bluffton Vacant Properties Map; Source: Wells County GIS

Infill parcels within established neighborhoods indicate available land for development without significant infrastructure expansion, while larger vacant areas on the outskirts align with transportation networks. Proximity to water features may present considerations related to flood risk or recreational use. The distribution of these parcels reflects a mix of urban infill potential and outward expansion trends, shaping Bluffton's land-use landscape.

COMMUNITY MEETING

The feedback collected during the Bluffton community meeting provides valuable insights into key priorities and areas of improvement that residents feel are missing in downtown Bluffton. Based on the sticker voting exercise, several themes emerge regarding community needs and priorities.

Key Priorities Identified:

1. Quality Dining and Entertainment Options – This category received a high number of votes, with a mix of high (green) and medium (yellow) priorities, indicating strong demand for additional restaurants, entertainment venues, and nightlife options.
2. Enhanced Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure – A significant number of votes across all priority levels suggest that improving walkability and cycling access is an important consideration for downtown vitality.
3. Downtown Riverfront Development – The community sees the riverfront as an opportunity for growth, with mixed perspectives on priority levels, but a clear interest in leveraging it for development.
4. Public Restrooms and Amenities – This was heavily marked, showing a strong need for additional restroom facilities and other public conveniences to support downtown visitors.

Additional Considerations:

1. Housing Revitalization and Infill received mostly high and medium priority votes, emphasizing the importance of maintaining and expanding residential opportunities in the downtown area.
2. Community Gathering Spaces and Public Art had moderate engagement, suggesting they are seen as desirable but not urgent.
3. Green and Sustainable Initiatives and Historical and Cultural Preservation received fewer overall votes but were still marked as important by some attendees.

Emerging Needs:

One noteworthy addition under "Other" was childcare, indicating that at least some community members feel there is a gap in available childcare services in Bluffton.

Conclusion:

Overall, the feedback highlights a desire for economic vibrancy, infrastructure improvements, and enhanced public amenities in downtown Bluffton. While priorities vary among residents, common themes include the need for more entertainment and dining options, improved public facilities, and greater connectivity for both pedestrians and cyclists. The insights gathered from this meeting will be instrumental in shaping future development strategies and policy decisions.

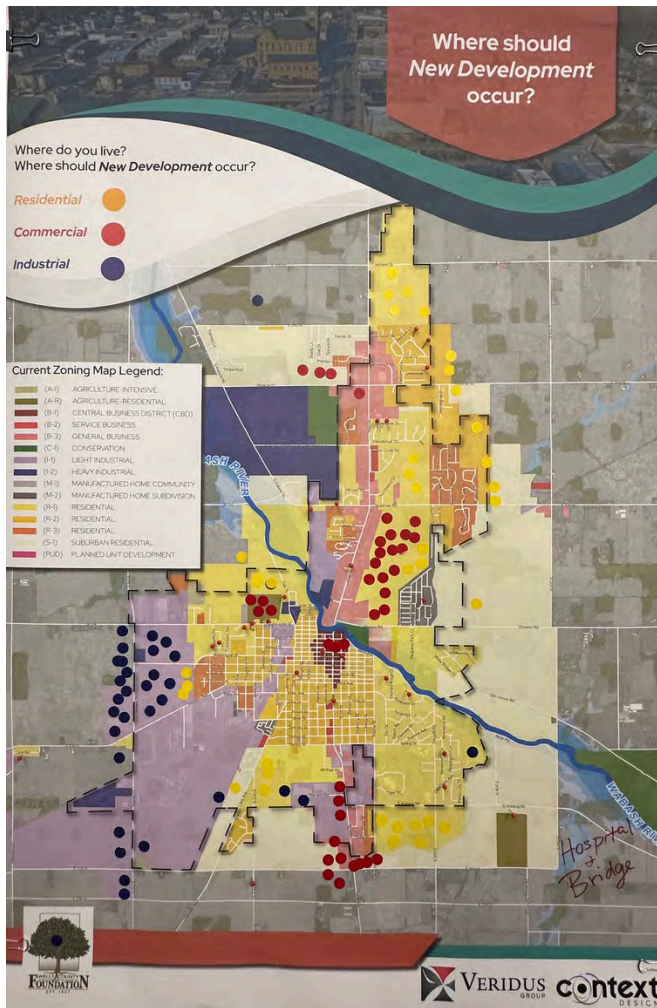


Figure 37: Bluffton Public Meeting Map;
Source: Bluffton Community Meeting



Figure 38: Bluffton Public Meeting Needs;
Source: Bluffton Community Meeting

FUTURE VISION

The City of Bluffton's future vision is rooted in community engagement and stakeholder input, ensuring that its growth reflects the needs and aspirations of residents, businesses, and leaders. Through surveys, public meetings, and discussions, common themes emerged, shaping a set of vision principles that will guide Bluffton's future.

This section outlines Bluffton's key vision principles, which will serve as the foundation for land use planning, infrastructure investments, and economic growth. Bluffton aims to enhance its downtown core, expand housing opportunities, strengthen economic corridors, and improve public amenities. Investments in infrastructure modernization, stormwater management, and transportation enhancements will be critical for ensuring sustainable growth.

These vision principles will guide future policy development, particularly in areas such as land use regulations, expansion of public spaces, and enhancement of community facilities. As the city implements this vision, strategies will be further refined into specific actions, ensuring that Bluffton remains a vibrant, thriving, and connected community within Wells County.

VISION PRINCIPLES: CITY OF BLUFFTON

Bluffton's future is built on a strong foundation of community, connectivity, and quality of life. As the city continues to grow, strategic investments in key areas will ensure a vibrant and sustainable future. A thriving downtown, modern infrastructure, accessible healthcare, and varied housing options will support Bluffton's long-term success while preserving its small-town charm. These vision principles, based on Vision 2035 and community feedback, will guide development, enhance economic opportunities, and improve daily life for residents, ensuring that Bluffton remains a welcoming and resilient community for generations to come.

1

Downtown Bluffton will be a vibrant, connected hub for dining, entertainment, and community engagement while preserving its small-town charm.

2

Bluffton will invest in modern infrastructure to support growth, improve connectivity, and enhance quality of life. Upgrading roads, utilities, and public services will ensure a safe, efficient, and sustainable foundation for the city's future.

3

Bluffton will work to restore and expand healthcare services, ensuring residents have access to essential medical care. By attracting providers, developing new facilities, and exploring innovative healthcare solutions, the city will build a stronger, more accessible healthcare system.

4

Strengthen Bluffton's community fabric through housing.

FOCUS AREAS

As the largest city and economic center of Wells County, Bluffton’s growth strategy focuses on sustainable development, infrastructure improvements, and downtown revitalization. The Focus Areas section for Bluffton translates the city’s vision principles into actionable strategies, guiding future land use decisions and public investments.

Key growth priorities for Bluffton include:

- Expanding housing options to accommodate a growing population.
- Enhancing downtown revitalization efforts to support local businesses and attract new development.
- Improving transportation and road infrastructure to enhance mobility and connectivity.
- Upgrading water, sewer, and stormwater management systems to accommodate growth.
- Preserving green spaces and integrating recreational amenities into urban development.

To support these initiatives, the below map outlining designated growth areas and infrastructure investments is included, ensuring that development aligns with Bluffton's long-term goals. These Focus Areas will guide public and private sector investments, ensuring that Bluffton remains a vibrant and sustainable city.

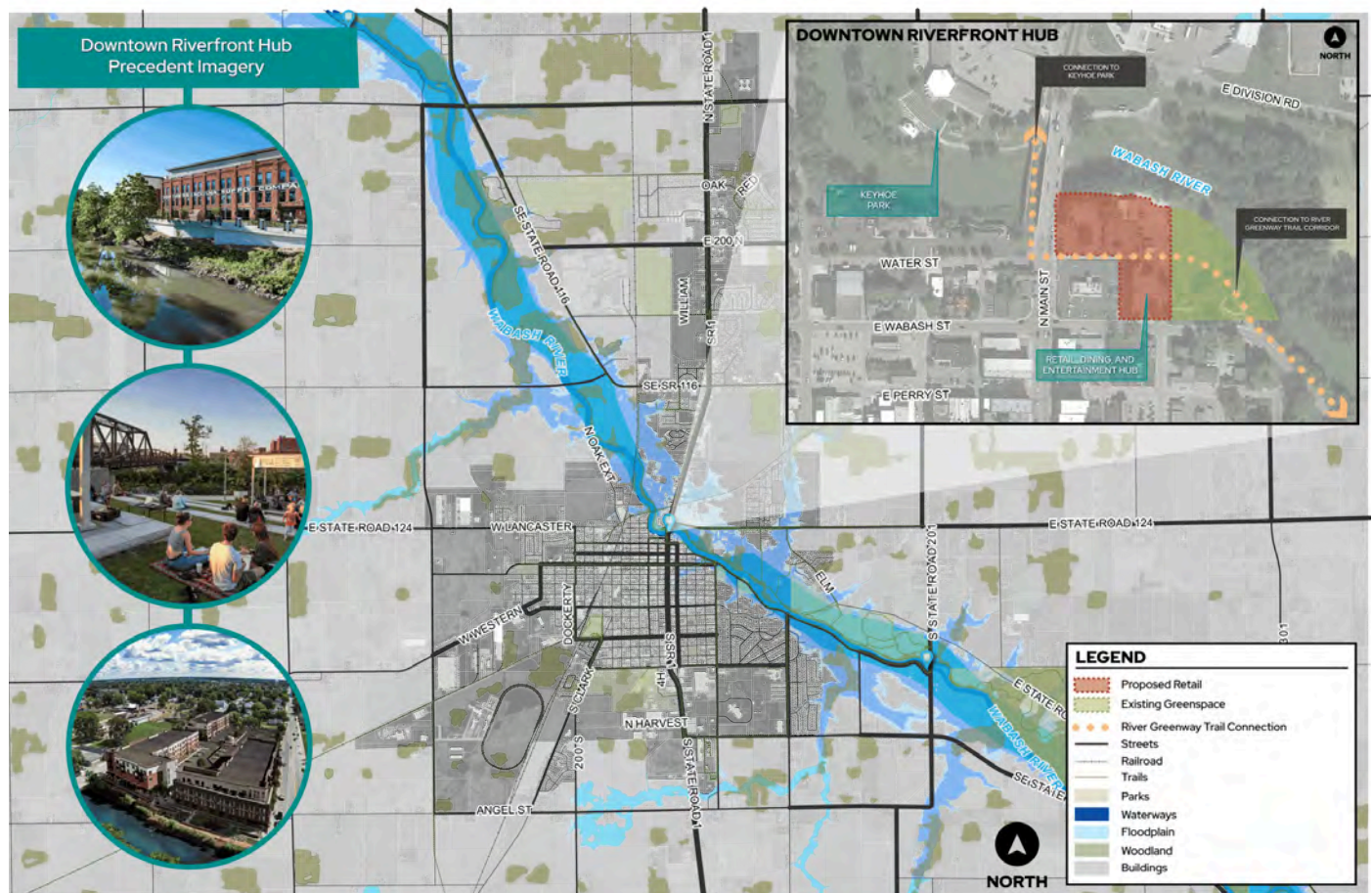


Figure 39: Bluffton Focus Areas; Source: Context Design

Building on these priorities, the Downtown Riverfront Hub emerges as a key opportunity area for revitalization and economic development. As illustrated in the map, this area leverages Bluffton's connection to the Wabash River, creating a vibrant destination for retail, dining, and entertainment. A key component of this vision is the integration of green space and recreational connectivity, ensuring that development enhances both community engagement and environmental sustainability.

The map highlights planned improvements and connections within the riverfront district, including a proposed retail hub that will serve as a catalyst for downtown activity. Enhanced pedestrian pathways will link the Downtown Riverfront Hub to Keyhoe Park, strengthening access to existing green space and reinforcing Bluffton's commitment to walkability and outdoor recreation. Additionally, connections to the River Greenway Trail Corridor will provide seamless access for both residents and visitors, fostering an active and accessible downtown environment.

Beyond the riverfront, Bluffton's broader growth strategy remains focused on expanding housing options, enhancing infrastructure, and supporting business development; all of which will ensure that the city's long-term vision for sustainable and strategic growth is realized. By aligning investment with these priorities, Bluffton is laying the foundation for a thriving and dynamic community.

IMPLEMENTATION

Bluffton's implementation framework provides a structured approach to advancing the city's long-term vision through two comprehensive matrices. These tools will help align resources, track progress, and ensure accountability as Bluffton pursues strategic growth and infrastructure improvements.

The first matrix identifies key priorities and goals, along with:

- Responsible Parties: Local government, community organizations, and private sector partners.
- Potential Funding Sources: Grants, economic development incentives, and infrastructure investments.
- Cost: The estimated total cost for each strategy on a scale of \$ - \$\$\$\$.
- Priority Level: A classification system to help sequence projects effectively.
- Timeline: A realistic timeframe for each initiative to maintain momentum.

The second matrix provides a step-by-step breakdown of each goal, identifying the specific actions necessary to achieve success. By detailing required tasks, roles, and funding strategies, this tool ensures that Bluffton's goals translate into tangible outcomes.

These matrices will serve as a roadmap for the city's future, guiding project coordination, economic development efforts, and infrastructure investments to create a stronger, more connected Bluffton.

CITY OF BLUFFTON VISION 1

Downtown Bluffton will be a vibrant, connected hub for dining, entertainment, and community engagement while preserving its small-town charm.

	Strategy	Responsibility	Funding	Cost	Priority	Timeline
1	Implement a coordinated plan to revitalize Bluffton's downtown and riverfront by expanding dining and entertainment options, enhancing public spaces, and programming events that establish the area as a vibrant community hub.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected Officials • Redevelopment Commission • Wells County Chamber of Commerce • Wells County Economic Development • Bluffton NOW! • Bluffton Parks Board • Wells County Tourism • Local Service Clubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Budgets • Utilities • Tax Increment Financing • Economic Development Programs • READi 	\$\$\$\$	High	18 - 36 Months
2	Promote a thriving local economy by supporting entrepreneurship, encouraging investment in locally owned businesses, and leveraging Bluffton's small-town character and natural assets to enhance quality of place and attract new economic opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wells County Chamber of Commerce • Bluffton NOW! • Wells County Economic Development • Bluffton Redevelopment Commission • Ivy Tech • Small Business Development Center • Local Financial Institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants • TIF • Annual Budget • Revolving Loan • Incubator • Small Business Startup Grant • Facade Grant 	\$\$	High	18 - 36 Months
3	Enhance downtown's walkability and infrastructure, revitalize underutilized properties, and promote modern design principles that respect Bluffton's heritage while improving quality of life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected Officials • Redevelopment Commission • Plan Commission • Park Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Budget • General Fund • Utility Revenues • State or National Incentives or Grants 	\$\$	Medium	3 - 6 Years

Vision 1, Strategy 1: Vibrant Downtown Riverfront Hub – Transform downtown into a dynamic gathering place by integrating riverfront development, expanding dining and entertainment options, and activating public spaces with events.

Objectives	Tactics
Enhance Riverfront Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a master plan for riverfront improvements, including public access points, trails, and gathering spaces. • Partner with private developers to introduce mixed-use projects that complement downtown’s character. • Install seating areas, lighting, and landscaping along the river to create an inviting and walkable destination.
Expand Dining and Entertainment Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract new restaurants, breweries, and entertainment venues through targeted business incentives and marketing efforts. • Encourage outdoor dining and seasonal pop-up vendors to enhance the downtown experience. • Support live music, street performers, and interactive public art to increase downtown’s vibrancy.
Activate Public Spaces with Events and Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a year-round event calendar featuring festivals, markets, and cultural activities along the riverfront. • Develop a community-led initiative to organize outdoor movie nights, concerts, and art walks. • Encourage businesses and organizations to host public events, such as fitness classes, historical tours, and craft fairs, in downtown spaces.

Vision 1, Strategy 2: Thriving Local Economy & Quality of Place – Encourage investment in locally-owned businesses, support entrepreneurship, and leverage Bluffton’s small-town charm and natural assets to strengthen community identity and economic opportunities.

Objectives	Tactics
Support and Attract Locally-Owned Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a small business grant or incentive program to assist with startup costs and downtown revitalization efforts. • Establish a mentorship network connecting new entrepreneurs with experienced business owners. • Streamline permitting and zoning processes to make it easier for small businesses to open and expand.
Enhance Bluffton’s Unique Identity and Sense of Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop branding and marketing initiatives that highlight Bluffton’s charm, history, and riverfront assets. • Invest in streetscape improvements, including façade enhancements, decorative lighting, and pedestrian-friendly features. • Promote heritage tourism by preserving historic buildings and incorporating local storytelling into downtown experiences.
Expand Economic and Community Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with regional economic development organizations to attract investment while supporting existing businesses. • Establish a downtown business alliance to foster collaboration, shared promotions, and coordinated events. • Encourage partnerships between businesses and local schools to create workforce development programs and entrepreneurial opportunities for students.

Vision 1, Strategy 3: Sustainable (Re)Development & Connectivity – Enhance downtown’s walkability and infrastructure, revitalize underutilized properties, and promote modern design principles that respect Bluffton’s heritage while improving quality of life.

Objectives	Tactics
Improve Walkability and Downtown Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian pathways to ensure safe and accessible movement throughout downtown. • Expand bike lanes and install bike racks to encourage alternative transportation. • Enhance public lighting, benches, and wayfinding signage to create a more inviting and navigable downtown.
Revitalize Underutilized and Blighted Properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a downtown redevelopment incentive program to encourage investment in vacant or underused buildings. • Partner with property owners to repurpose upper floors of historic buildings for residential or office space. • Offer façade improvement grants to enhance the visual appeal of storefronts while maintaining Bluffton’s architectural character.
Promote Thoughtful and Modern Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish downtown design guidelines that balance historic preservation with contemporary functionality. • Encourage mixed-use development that integrates retail, office, and residential spaces for a more dynamic downtown environment.

CITY OF BLUFFTON VISION 2

Bluffton will invest in modern infrastructure to support growth, improve connectivity, and enhance quality of life. Upgrading roads, utilities, and public services will ensure a safe, efficient, and sustainable foundation for the city's future.

	Strategy	Responsibility	Funding	Cost	Priority	Timeline
1	Develop a comprehensive Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan for Bluffton that prioritizes new sidewalks and trail extensions beyond the downtown core, ensuring safe, accessible, and connected routes throughout the entire community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected Officials Plan Commission Wells County Trails Bluffton Parks Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Fund Parks Budget Grants 	\$	High	18 - 24 Months
2	Improved Transportation and Streetscapes – Upgrade roads, sidewalks, and trail systems to enhance mobility, pedestrian safety, and overall accessibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected Officials Plan Commission Wells County Trails Bluffton Parks Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Fund Parks Budget Grants Utility Budgets 	\$\$\$	Medium	3 - 6 Years, Ongoing
3	Develop and implement a strategic infrastructure plan that aligns with Bluffton's economic development priorities and long-term growth objectives, ensuring that future improvements support both community needs and fiscal responsibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected Officials Plan Commission GIS/Engineering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utility Funds 	\$\$\$	High	18 - 24 Months
4	Modernized Utility and Water Systems – Invest in reliable water, sewer, and storm water management infrastructure to support development and protect public health and promote economic development in strategic locations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected Officials Utility Board GIS Engineering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utility Funds Grants 	\$\$\$\$	Medium	3 - 6 Years, Ongoing

Vision 2, Strategy 1: Improved Transportation and Streetscapes – Upgrade roads, sidewalks, and trail systems to enhance mobility, pedestrian safety, and overall accessibility.

Objectives	Tactics
Enhance Roadway Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize resurfacing and widening key roads to accommodate increased traffic and improve safety. • Implement traffic-calming measures, such as roundabouts and speed reductions, in high-pedestrian areas. • Upgrade stormwater drainage systems along roadways to prevent flooding and extend pavement lifespan.
Expand and Maintain Sidewalk Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and fill sidewalk gaps to ensure continuous pedestrian access throughout downtown and residential areas. • Improve sidewalk conditions with regular maintenance, ADA-compliant upgrades, and better lighting for safety. • Encourage streetscape enhancements, such as trees, benches, and decorative elements, to create a more welcoming pedestrian experience.
Develop a Connected Trail System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand existing trails to improve connectivity between neighborhoods, parks, and commercial areas. • Construct pedestrian bridges or safe crossings where trails intersect with major roadways. • Work with local organizations to establish trail maintenance programs and promote community use.

Vision 2, Strategy 2: Improved Transportation and Streetscapes – Upgrade roads, sidewalks, and trail systems to enhance mobility, pedestrian safety, and overall accessibility.

Objectives	Tactics
Upgrade Water and Sewer Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace aging water and sewer lines to improve reliability and reduce maintenance costs. • Expand water and sewer capacity in growth areas to support future residential and commercial development. • Implement a proactive leak detection and repair program to improve system efficiency and reduce water loss.
Enhance Stormwater Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a comprehensive stormwater master plan to address drainage issues and reduce flooding risks. • Upgrade stormwater detention and retention systems to better manage heavy rainfall and runoff.
Improve Utility Resilience and Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernize utility monitoring systems with smart technology to improve response times and system management. • Encourage underground utility placement in new developments to enhance reliability and aesthetics. • Partner with regional utility providers to ensure long-term infrastructure stability and service reliability.

Vision 2, Strategy 3: Strategic Infrastructure Growth – Plan and implement infrastructure improvements that align with Bluffton’s economic development and long-term sustainability goals.

Objectives	Tactics
Align Infrastructure Investments with Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify priority development areas and ensure infrastructure improvements support business expansion and job growth. • Upgrade utility capacity in key commercial and industrial zones to attract new investment. • Coordinate infrastructure projects with private sector developments to maximize efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
Plan for Long-Term Growth and Capacity Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a citywide infrastructure master plan that anticipates future growth and aligns with zoning and land use policies. • Conduct regular assessments of road, water, and utility systems to prioritize upgrades based on projected demand. • Secure funding through state and federal grants to support large-scale infrastructure projects.
Enhance Regional and Intergovernmental Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with county and state agencies to align transportation and utility improvements with broader regional plans. • Partner with surrounding communities to develop shared infrastructure solutions where appropriate. • Establish a long-term capital improvement plan to ensure sustainable infrastructure funding and maintenance.

Vision 2, Strategy 4: Modernized Utility and Water Systems – Invest in reliable water, sewer, and storm water management infrastructure to support development and protect public health and promote economic development in strategic locations.

Objectives	Tactics
Ensure the Capacity and Efficiency of Water, Sewer, and Storm Water Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a thorough assessment of current infrastructure to identify system bottlenecks and prioritize areas needing immediate upgrades. • Develop a phased capital improvement plan that aligns with projected residential, commercial, and industrial growth patterns. • Pursue partnerships and funding opportunities, such as grants, low-interest loans, and private investments, to expedite needed expansions and improvements.
Improve System Reliability and Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a proactive maintenance program that schedules regular inspections and timely repairs of aging pipes, pumps, and water treatment facilities. • Integrate backup service lines and redundant power sources for pumps and treatment plants to minimize downtime during emergencies. • Implement real-time monitoring tools and sensors that track water flow, pressure, and quality, enabling swift response to leaks or system malfunctions.
Promote Sustainable and Environmentally Responsible Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize green infrastructure (e.g., rain gardens, bioswales, permeable surfaces) to reduce storm water runoff and alleviate pressure on sewer systems. • Encourage water conservation efforts through community education, incentive programs for installing water-efficient fixtures, and industrial best practices. • Modernize wastewater and storm water treatment processes to minimize environmental impacts, reduce energy consumption, and meet or exceed regulatory standards.

CITY OF BLUFFTON VISION 3

Bluffton will work to restore and expand healthcare services, ensuring residents have access to essential medical care. By attracting providers, developing new facilities, and exploring innovative healthcare solutions, the city will build a stronger, more accessible healthcare system.

	Strategy	Responsibility	Funding	Cost	Priority	Timeline
1	Partner with healthcare providers and regional systems to restore access to urgent care, primary care, and specialty services by recruiting physicians and supporting new medical facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wells County Economic Development Elected Officials Bluffton NOW! Local Schools Regional Health Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Grants County General Funds 	\$\$\$\$	High	18 - 24 Months
2	Pursue innovative healthcare delivery models—such as partnerships, telehealth, and mobile health units—to expand access to essential medical services for all Wells County residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected Officials Wells County Economic Development Local Schools Regional Health Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Grants 	\$\$\$	Medium	2 - 5 Years
3	Coordinate and expand community-based health and wellness initiatives by increasing access to preventative care, mental health services, and local wellness programs that improve long-term health outcomes for all residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wells County Health Department Bluffton Parks Department Regional Health Partners Caylor-Nickle YMCA Bluffton NOW! Bluffton Rotary Club 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants Park Funding 	\$	Medium	Ongoing

Vision 3, Strategy 1: Restored Medical Facilities – Support the establishment of new urgent care, primary care, and specialty services to replace lost hospital resources.

Objectives	Tactics
Attract and Support Healthcare Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer incentives such as tax abatements or reduced permit fees to encourage medical providers to establish urgent care and specialty services in Bluffton. • Partner with the Parkview network and healthcare organizations to recruit physicians and medical staff to serve the community. • Develop a marketing campaign showcasing Bluffton’s need and opportunities for new medical facilities.
Facilitate the Development of New Medical Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and designate suitable locations for urgent care centers, clinics, and specialty medical offices. • Streamline zoning and approval processes to fast-track the development of new healthcare facilities. • Work with developers to incorporate medical services into mixed-use developments and commercial centers.
Expand Local Access to Essential Medical Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for the return of key healthcare services, such as emergency care, imaging, and outpatient procedures, within city limits. • Collaborate with regional hospitals to establish satellite locations or partnerships for specialized care. • Support the expansion of pharmacy services and telehealth hubs to improve accessibility for all residents.

Vision 3, Strategy 2: Innovative Healthcare Solutions – Explore partnerships, telehealth, and mobile health services to expand medical access for all residents.

Objectives	Tactics
Expand Telehealth Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with healthcare providers to establish telehealth hubs at community centers, libraries, or other public spaces. • Ensure broadband infrastructure improvements to support reliable telehealth access for all residents. • Promote awareness campaigns to educate residents on telehealth options and how to access virtual care.
Introduce Mobile Health Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with regional hospitals and healthcare organizations to deploy mobile clinics offering routine check-ups, vaccinations, and screenings. • Establish a rotating schedule for mobile health units to serve Bluffton and surrounding rural areas. • Secure grant funding to support mobile healthcare initiatives and expand service availability.
Strengthen Healthcare Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with universities, medical schools, and training programs to create partnerships that bring healthcare students and professionals to Bluffton. • Develop agreements with regional healthcare networks to increase specialist visits and rotating provider schedules in the community. • Support community-based health programs that provide preventative care, mental health resources, and chronic disease management.

Vision 3, Strategy 3: Community Health and Wellness Initiatives – Promote preventative care, mental health resources, and local wellness programs to improve long-term health outcomes.

Objectives	Tactics
Expand Preventative Care Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with local clinics and healthcare providers to offer free or low-cost health screenings, immunizations, and wellness checks. • Develop community education campaigns on nutrition, exercise, and chronic disease prevention. • Establish workplace wellness programs in partnership with local businesses to encourage healthy lifestyles among employees.
Increase Access to Mental Health Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the expansion of local mental health services, including counseling and crisis intervention programs. • Partner with schools and community organizations to provide mental health education and early intervention initiatives. • Create a mental health resource hub to connect residents with available support services and providers.
Enhance Local Wellness and Recreation Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop fitness and wellness programs, such as walking groups, yoga in the park, and senior exercise classes. • Improve access to parks, trails, and recreational facilities to encourage outdoor activity and community engagement. • Organize annual health and wellness fairs to connect residents with healthcare providers, nutritionists, and fitness experts.

CITY OF BLUFFTON VISION 4

Strengthen Bluffton's community fabric through housing.

	Strategy	Responsibility	Funding	Cost	Priority	Timeline
1	Promote a mix of mid-priced single-family and market-rate multi-family housing options that strengthen neighborhood cohesion and meet the evolving needs of residents across all demographics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected Officials Bluffton NOW! Wells County Economic Development Developers & Builders Realtors & Property Managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Funds Incentives TIF 	\$\$\$	High	6 - 12 Months
2	Identify and redevelop underutilized and blighted properties using design standards and development approaches that improve neighborhood connectivity, reinforce community identity, and respect Bluffton's heritage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected Officials Plan Commission Bluffton NOW! Wells County Economic Development Builders & Developers Historical Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Fund TIF Facade Grants Land Banks Overlay Districts 	\$\$\$	Low	2 - 4 Years

Vision 4, Strategy 1: Promote housing types that contribute to the neighborhood cohesion by integrating mid-priced single family, and market rate multi-family residential options that meet the needs of all demographics.

Objectives	Tactics
Expand Mid-Priced Single-Family Housing Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with developers to build new subdivisions that offer attainable homeownership opportunities for middle-income families. • Adjust zoning regulations to allow for moderately sized lots and flexible housing designs that balance affordability with quality. • Offer incentives such as infrastructure assistance or streamlined permitting for developments that align with Bluffton’s housing needs.
Encourage Market-Rate Multi-Family Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and designate key areas for new apartment complexes and townhomes that align with Bluffton’s growth plans. • Work with developers to ensure high-quality design standards that complement surrounding neighborhoods. • Support mixed-use developments that integrate retail, dining, and residential spaces to enhance walkability and community engagement.
Balance Housing Growth with Neighborhood Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement architectural and streetscape guidelines that maintain Bluffton’s small-town charm while accommodating new development. • Promote housing variety within neighborhoods to encourage a mix of home sizes and styles that meet various lifestyle needs. • Ensure new residential projects include pedestrian-friendly features, green spaces, and connections to existing infrastructure.

Vision 4, Strategy 2: Focus on revitalizing underutilized or blighted properties while encouraging designs that enhance neighborhood connectivity, foster community pride, and align with Bluffton’s historic and cultural character.

Objectives	Tactics
Revitalize Underutilized and Blighted Properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify vacant or deteriorating properties and establish an incentive program for redevelopment. • Partner with property owners and developers to repurpose abandoned buildings for residential or mixed-use projects. • Streamline permitting and approval processes for projects that align with Bluffton’s revitalization goals.
Enhance Neighborhood Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve sidewalk and trail connections between residential areas, parks, and commercial districts. • Encourage housing designs that promote front-porch culture, shared green spaces, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes. • Develop infill housing projects that seamlessly integrate with existing neighborhoods to reduce gaps and enhance walkability.
Preserve and Reflect Bluffton’s Historic and Cultural Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement design guidelines that ensure new housing complements Bluffton’s architectural heritage. • Offer façade improvement grants or tax credits to restore historic homes and maintain neighborhood charm. • Support adaptive reuse projects that transform historic buildings into residential spaces while preserving their original character.