

North Manchester 2002 – 2012

**A Community Vision
and
Strategic Development Plan**

Coordinated by

**The Town Forum Steering Committee
and
The Hudson Institute**

Report presented March 2003

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Foreword

The Ubiquitous Warning Label:

Nearly any tool you pick up carries some warning for safe use; this tool is no different!

This tool is called a Strategic Plan; it might be better called a Strategic Vision. The message of this report is written in very positive, almost predictive language. What may sound like an accomplished fact on first blush may actually be a challenging seed for thought. This process has harvested bushels of ideas from a sampling of North Manchester area residents and has melded them into visions of what might be our future.

When pursuing a vision, the horizon may change suddenly, dramatically, or ever-so-slowly. This Vision includes goals and strategies (destinations and highways) that may take different turns as we travel our future. Our journey may hit some dead ends, pursue some alternate routes, or choose some unseen destinations. This tool is, like a good map, designed to encourage exploration and discovery.

You may find this report stretching your comfort zone; reaching toward new alignments of achievement or baring sensitive areas of concern. One of the strengths of the streamlined, higher-tech process we used to gather community ideas is that every idea has been saved. A shortcoming of this process is that you may not recognize all the ideas presented here. Every effort has been made to assure that this report represents an accurate synthesis of our community's perceptions and desires, put in the perspective of the changing world in which we live.

And now, the warning: **Failure to use this tool may result in community stagnation and loss of identity.**

Strong words? Yes. The end product of this plan / vision is yet to be seen. It depends entirely upon how well we use this tool. We can achieve anything we believe. Believe it ...and join the journey.

David Grandstaff
Chair
Town Forum Steering Committee

1. Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of the North Manchester Strategic Plan Update has been to review the progress of earlier development plans and to systematically revisit strategies for action for the first decade of the 21st Century. The 90's were a period of significant economic and social change in the nation and world. Many things have changed in North Manchester since initial strategic planning of the early 90's and many initiatives proposed at that time have been acted upon, while others had been reprioritized.

Big things are happening to small towns:

- Technology change has accelerated with the advent of high speed internet and constantly improving computers.
- Demographic change in North Manchester includes aging of the population along with the arrival of a new wave of immigrants.
- Economic change resulted in a 5% loss of manufacturing jobs in Wabash County between 1990 -2000. A highly skilled workforce is necessary to attract high paying jobs in the new economy.
- Global change means tough competition for business, but also great opportunities. Several North Manchester businesses are responding to the global marketplace.
- Environmental change is demanding a commitment to preserve farmland/open space while reducing pollution from towns, farms and factories.
- Educational change emphasizes the need for high skills and knowledge to get high pay. More jobs in the future will be "knowledge jobs".

This Plan and planning process was designed to keep North Manchester leaders aware of the opportunities and threats created by these trends of change and to spur action to ensure North Manchester's economic prosperity and social well being into the 21st century.

The Planning Process

This Plan is the result of a twelve month effort initiated and directed by the Town Forum Steering Committee (TFSC). The process included data collection from federal statistical sources, leader interviews, four community-wide forums and multiple brainstorming meetings of the TFSC.

Consultant support was provided by Graham Toft and Shane Burkhardt of Hudson Institute and Idea Lab technology and facilitation was provided by Rick Gregory and Teresa Altemeier. In keeping with the approach of earlier strategic development planning in North Manchester, equal emphasis was placed on fact finding and idea creation with lots of opportunity for citizen and civic leader input.

The Community Defined

It is difficult to define the boundaries of a town strategic development plan, since some critical issues may be more appropriately addressed by stretching well beyond town limits. This planning process has had five boundaries in mind. All have been taken into account, depending on the issue:

- Town boundaries.
- Town limits for land use planning and zoning: 1-2 miles beyond town boundaries.
- School boundaries – North Manchester, Chester and Pleasant Townships.
- “Service Area” – for retail, library, town recreation programs and facilities: 10 and up to 20 miles in some cases.
- Commuting Area – about 30 miles – commuter traffic on SR114 and SR13 is quite heavy in the morning and evening.

2. North Manchester Today: Snapshot of Assets and Liabilities

The following summarizes the assets and liabilities discussed in interviews and at Community Forums and confirmed by data, where available.

Physical/Locational Characteristics:

Assets:

- “Charm.”
- Victorian downtown and houses.
- Trees! Trees! Trees!
- Safety.
- Ease of getting around.
- Good amenities – schools, sports, and library.
- The picturesque Eel River.
- Proximity to Indiana’s second largest metro area, Fort Wayne.

Liabilities:

- Off Indiana’s major interstates, where most of the growth has been occurring.
- Not high likelihood of major thoroughfare upgrades on SR114 and SR13 in the next 10 years.
- Town has grown to its boundaries—not much space to expand without planned annexation.
- The River is not enjoyed scenically or recreationally due to poor access and in adequate riverfront conservation planning.

The Local Economy: Stability and Growth

Assets:

- Diversified economy for a town its size.

- Agriculture (crops, poultry) successful, but very competitive, poor commodity prices. Farmers are looking for “new business”/value-added agriculture (e.g. egg processing, organic farming).
- Manufacturing – an anchor, but not as dominant as in surrounding communities; industrial park filling slowly.
- Health Care (retirement industry) very strong; labor supply largely saturated.
- Knowledge Industry – college remains an anchor; US growth in knowledge industries; lots of change facing small colleges in next 20 years.

Liabilities:

- Retail: primarily a local market. Downtown could be a draw but difficult to generate the critical mass of outside customers.
- Population growth has been slow but better than the county as a whole; newcomers are retirees and immigrants with special needs.
- Housing: limited availability and choice.
- Business growth has been modest.
- Job growth has been modest, and not in high pay-high skill jobs.
- Loss of young adults.

The Spirit and Feel of the Community

Assets:

- A generational community – commitment to both children/youth and the aging; firehouse – a good project.
- Friendly.
- A church-going community – commitment to well being of the total person, e.g., Town Life Center, homeless shelter, food pantry, thrift store.
- A worldview aided by the College; firms doing international business.
- Creative tension between the College and the community.

Liabilities:

- Tolerance not where it needs to be for a global, multi-racial society.
- Differences, some dating back decades, between some who are more liberal at the College and some who are more conservative in the community.
- “Not a good place to wear your wealth on your sleeve;” not proud of its achievers.
- Entrepreneurship, innovation, and creativity undervalued (these are hallmarks of today’s knowledge economy).

Civic Energy, Leadership, Communication and Collaboration

Assets:

- Thoughtful, energetic leaders (CAPE is an example).
- Openness and flexibility among civic leaders – spirit of cooperation and civic action.

Liabilities:

- Not enough opportunities for regular dialogue among civic leaders.
- A vision and “ownership” is present among some, but not yet broadly held.
- “The table” may not be round and big enough.
- Incomplete information and dissemination about positive change in the community.
- Insufficient merger of capital, vision, and energy.

Income, Wealth and Tax Base

Assets:

- College and retirement communities contribute financially to the community.

- Tax base has been able to support improvements in public facilities, e.g. Town Hall, library, schools, local streets/roads and utilities.

Liabilities:

- Slowing Indiana economy in the early 2000's is putting real pressure on town, school and library budgets.
- Wages per job are not growing at US rate.
- Notable income disparity between the well off and the poor; wealthy, college-educated – functionally illiterate, poor.
- School funding is directly tied to enrollment, which is declining.
- Housing is expensive relative to earnings/income.

3. Key Challenges

Five key challenges were identified in the planning process

Challenge 1: Quality Growth for Economic Well Being: How to Get it and How to Build Community Consensus For It.

Initial discussion in the Town Forum process surfaced ambivalence among both leaders and citizens about growth as a goal. As Forum meetings progressed, mounting consensus emerged that North Manchester must focus on growth—**quality growth** that provides more higher skill/higher paid jobs and that pursues good residential design, consistent building standards and pleasant townscape.

Population Change – Over the past two decades, Wabash County has been one of the 13 slowest growing counties in Indiana (declining 10% or more in population since 1980). As shown below, North Manchester growth has been stronger, keeping up with Indiana but below the US. The ten mile radius around and including North Manchester presents very slow growth.

- ✓ Population growth 1900-2000
 - US 269%
 - IN 142%
 - Wabash County 24%
 - North Manchester (town) 161%
 - 10 mile radius 21%

- ✓ North Manchester population growth 1990-2000
 - Slightly negative

- ✓ Although from a small base, North Manchester has experienced significant growth in non-white population. Minority faculty and student increases at Manchester College probably account for much of the black and Asian growth. Hispanic growth has occurred primarily in the 10 mile radius.

1990-2000	North Manchester	10 Mile Radius
White	-3.93%	4.9%
Black	314.3%	217.4%
American Indian	13.3%	22.2%
Asian/Pacific Island	30.23%	12.7%
Hispanic/Latino Origin	43.4%	124.5%

Income, wages, and property values

Important measures of growth have to do with wealth creation. Growth in standard of living is more important than growth in sheer number. Here North Manchester presents a very mediocre performance. It is 16% below Indiana and 23% below US in per capita income and 36% below Indiana and 48% below US in wages/job.

Below par economic performance shows up as very slow growth in assessed value of real property and below average assessed value per student in the local school system. These statistics create difficulties for local officials in providing quality education and superior local municipal services, amenities and services everyone wants.

✓ Per Capita Income (1999)

▪ US	\$21,587
▪ IN	\$20,397
▪ NM	\$17,140
▪ 10 mile radius	\$17,141

While the college student population lowers per capita income, wages per job also under perform Indiana and the U.S.

➤ Wages/Job (2000)

▪ US	\$34,371
▪ IN	\$31,636
▪ 10 mile radius	\$24,406
▪ NM	\$21,779

➤ Percent Changes in Real Assessed Value, 1981-2001

▪ IN	30.1%
▪ NM (town)	7.2%

➤ Schools: Assessed Value Per Student (ADM), 2002

▪ IN average	\$183,339
▪ MSD Wabash County	\$172,336
▪ Manchester Community	\$156,838

Services and amenities critical to the Town's future are threatened by slow or stagnant growth. Most importantly, schooling is the future of any community and school budgets are threatened by declining enrollments (resulting in declining state subsidies), and a slow growth tax base. Further, the recently passed tax restructuring legislation limits expenditure growth by state and local government to the six year average growth in personal income. Consequently, for the Town of North Manchester to provide improved municipal services, the town must improve its wealth creation.

Bottom Line: For NM to enjoy the benefits of quality small town living to which it aspires, it must grow its economic base. Growth in quality jobs and prosperous businesses is more important than sheer growth in numbers.

Quality Housing Growth in All Price Ranges

Several issues raised above also apply to housing. North Manchester boasts very attractive old (Victorian style) houses. But the housing stock at large is aging and rehabilitation/reconstruction is required in some blighted parts of town. Further, new houses priced for the middle and upper middle market are hard to come by. The town is land locked and mainly grows by annexing surrounding farmland. This will require thoughtful planning and capturing opportunities as land becomes available.

Because of the limitations in supply, the price of housing relative to local income is high. Ways must be found to make more quality housing available at affordable prices.

The real key to quality housing availability is making land available. This involves several key players: land owners, groups of investors, builders/developers, elected officials, and utility executives. At present the housing challenge is not addressed in a coordinated and concerted fashion.

Limits to Growth

Several attitudinal and physical factors constrain growth:

- Town leaders and citizens have lacked a commitment to quality growth.
- Housing availability is a big problem!
- Manchester College is positive force for quality of life, but becoming a potential partner for economic growth remains elusive ("making money", innovation and entrepreneurship have not been its focus, however a Chair of Entrepreneurship was created in 2001.)
- No major highway; Indiana is growing primarily along interstates.

- Not enough channels of communication and brainstorming among leaders.
- High educational aspirations are not held by all.
- Access to broadband communications at affordable prices is a constant challenge for small towns.
- Lack of real-time electronic banking systems and 3:30 P.M. UPS pick up also limit participation in global economy.
- Not enough attention is paid to circulating income within the community as a means to stimulating economic activity.

The argument for quality economic growth is pretty convincing:

- Sustains and improves basic public services by growth in the tax base.
- Creates more advancement jobs, enabling incumbent workers to move up.
- Creates more starter jobs, enabling young people leaving school and adults reentering the workforce to find an entry point.
- Enables those who are economically or socially disadvantaged to get started on a self-sufficiency career path.

North Manchester would not want to grow numerically just for the sake of it, even if it could. Rather, a solution lies in a focus on **quality growth**. This would involve modest numeric growth which pays attention to those aspects of the community economy that show promise to increase good pay job opportunities and strengthen the tax base. Indicators associated with quality growth have to do with increasing average wages per worker, increasing number of jobs that include benefits, and increasing the tax base.

Challenge 2: Quality Growth for Livability: How to shape a positive townscape for ease of getting around, enjoyment, and pleasant appearance.

Today, one cannot have community development without economic development and vice versa. Growing businesses with good pay jobs provide the tax base to support the basic community infrastructure and services that make the community attractive as a residential location for well-paid working families.

In particular, younger generation families demand high quality of life – good schools, safety/security, civic amenities for family fun, sports clubs, church

groups, etc. North Manchester has many of those but it must pay increasing attention to make the town a great place to live. To that end, the Town Government updated the town's Comprehensive Plan in 2002.

No longer can the Town Government and civic leaders allow growth and development to occur in a piecemeal, unplanned fashion. A vision for quality design, pleasant appearance and orderly development can be implemented with little extra cost to businesses and government, if done thoughtfully.

It will be important to build community-wide commitment to the vision and intent of the Comp. Plan, and not get caught up with minutia of detailed and often burdensome regulations. Those responsible for economic development should take the Comp. Plan seriously, recognizing that quality community development is now an important part of economic development.

While communities of the size of North Manchester may not be appealing to young singles, every effort could be made to market the community to those in their late 20's who desire to return to small town America, this includes marketing the Town to past graduates of Manchester College.

An important aspect of livability for the parents of young families pertains to the "heart and soul" of the community not just its physical characteristics. Generations X and Y are looking for places that respect diversity, enjoy multiculturalism and provide opportunities to participate in community affairs. Leader interviewees indicate that North Manchester is not as tolerant and open-minded as will probably be required to fully embrace the trends of diversity, multiculturalism, and internationalism in 21st century American society.

Challenge 3: A Learning Community: How to become a community committed to lifelong learning for career and personal growth and development.

North Manchester presents notable disparity in education levels. Many residents are well educated, many are not.

Of all action recommendations made at Community Forum #2, none was more widely supported than providing more education and training to meet the increased demand for skills and knowledge in the workplace. Participants wanted expanded ways Manchester College, in particular, and in collaboration with other entities such as Ivy Tech and Heartland Career Center, could provide education and training for the town's incumbent workforce.

For its size, North Manchester is well endowed with education and training organizations. Each are focused on particular learning needs or groups. Where gaps in learning exist, the CAPE initiative is addressing many. CAPE offers programs to improve early childhood education to strengthen parenting skills, to

improve the skills of childcare givers, to provide after school programming, to encourage youth to go on the college, to encourage businesses to demand academic and school credentialing when hiring, to increase the professional development of teachers and to upgrade the skills of those with less than a high school diploma (Learn More).

What remains to be done is to structure better ways for incumbent workers to upgrade knowledge and skills. Only through continuing education and training can the town help local businesses maintain/enhance their productivity and competitiveness. Further, ways must be found to continue with CAPE after the Lilly Funding expires in 2005 and to develop additional outlets for recreational learning.

Challenge 4: Telecommunications, the New Infrastructure: How to fully capitalize on the benefits of the Internet and broadband access for the benefit of all age groups and businesses.

No technological development offers greater promise to reduce the impediment of distance for rural communities than high-speed communications (the information super highway). Yet because rural markets are relatively small and scattered, major telecommunication providers have focused on larger, more profitable markets in urban areas. For rural communities to benefit, they must routinely appraise their digital infrastructure and services and seek to constantly keep it competitive with urban areas.

A sizeable variety of telecommunications capacity is available in the North Manchester Community. In fact, North Manchester's offerings are ahead of some larger towns and outlying suburbs of some metro areas.

The town's challenges are as follows:

1. Market telecommunications services more effectively. Many residents are not aware of the options available and the benefits which can be attached to current capabilities. In other words, do a better job of marketing the services already available to increase citizen and business useage.
2. When users get beyond dial up connections, the costs can become a challenge, particularly for individuals. One of those costs is purchase and installation of required hardware on computers. The town needs to find ways to keep costs as low as possible to make it possible for all citizens to partake of broadband services.
3. Technology change is rapid. Resources must be organized to assure that the community can keep up with telecommunications developments.

Challenge 5: Maintaining/Strengthening Civic Vitality: How to continue to achieve the “public life” and improve public participation, voluntary civic action, shaping civic attitude and outlook.

Between work, family, church, and community life, North Manchester residents are very busy. It is difficult for them to find time for traditional “public meetings”, yet there is a high degree of interest in the community. In fact, a part of quality of life is having a local democracy that works.

Infrastructure must be created to improve civic communication, collaboration and participation in community affairs, tapping into talented residents for the community good. The ways in which citizens interact and collaborate affects all other challenges in this Plan. Special news updates in local newspapers could be improved and a common e-mail list should be established to spread news around, especially to government, civic, business and religious leaders. The Chamber of Commerce or other civic organizations could be responsible for a weekly “community update” and calendar for the upcoming week.

Other creative ideas include a “Volunteer Day,” an internet master community calendar, and better ways to promote community events.

4. Vision and Goals

We want North Manchester to be a great Midwestern small town for **jobs**, **family life** and **quality living**:

- By 2007, North Manchester will be known as a thriving, technology savvy town for small/mid-size business and new business formation/entrepreneurship leading to jobs with average pay climbing back to Indiana's average.
- By 2010, North Manchester will be known as one of the Midwest's preferred small towns for family living because of its safety/security, handshake loyalty, outstanding lifelong learning opportunities, appearance and greenways, distinctive downtown, faith-based activities, cultural harmony and collective spirit.
- North Manchester will become a national model for a seamless learning system for all ages by integrating traditional and non-traditional schooling, work-related training, formal post secondary education, and non-credit offerings – a learning system that offers technical knowledge and skills, social skills, and life skills.

5. Bold Strategies That Will Make a Difference

The following bold strategies are recommended in response to the five key challenges in Part 3

Strategy 1: Enterprise North Manchester: a consortium representing Town Government, Chamber of Commerce, higher education, and key industries to advance industrial development, housing development, small/mid-size business growth/entrepreneurship.

Strategic Objectives:

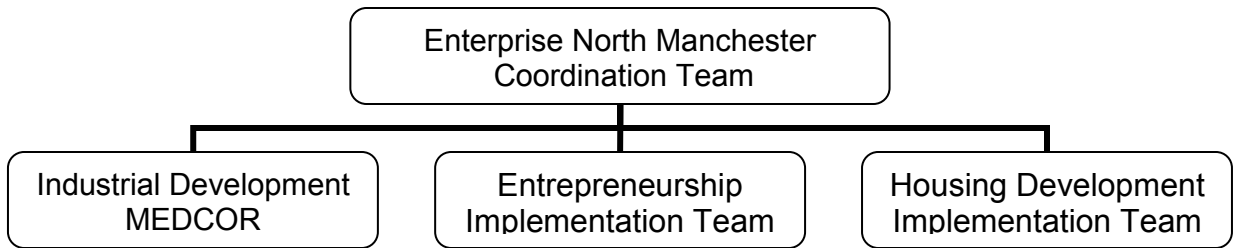
- Increase average wage/job to U.S. average by 2020.
- By 2007, be established as a thriving small town for business growth and new business formation.
- Increase investment by existing business.
- Ensure adequate supply of land to support quality housing development.
- Accelerate the rehabilitation of low-income housing.

Enterprise North Manchester would be a coordinated effort to spur business growth and investment. It would involve the Chamber of Commerce as the lead entity and include the Town Manager and Manchester College. It would engage the "movers and shakers" from all key sectors of the local economy, including retirement, agriculture, real estate, bankers, retail, manufacturing and education.

This group needs to have the full faith of the organizations it represents and be empowered to move quickly in decision-making. It needs an aggressive spirit and proactive communications plan to existing business as much as to prospects from outside. It needs to build alliances in Kosciusko, Huntington, and Whitley counties as well as with WEDCOR.

High pay job growth lies in recognizing that North Manchester has growth potential in specialty advanced manufacturing, value added agriculture, healthcare, and information services businesses. Many of these opportunities can occur "from within" as innovation and entrepreneurship are widely promoted within the schools and college, and chamber activities at large. A special effort should be made to seek out Manchester College graduates, who might relocate their business operations in the town.

Enterprise North Manchester will facilitate coordination of these broad activity areas:



The Coordination Team would comprise 5-6 individuals with the Chamber of Commerce as convener. Its primary function would be to facilitate collaboration between MEDCOR, the Housing Development Implementation Team and the Entrepreneurship Implementation Team. It would also seek ways to do the following across all initiatives:

- Expanded Roles for Retirees: Enterprise North Manchester would explore expanded ways to engage and utilize retirees for economic and community development.
- High Quality Physical Development: Enterprise North Manchester would respect and work within the guidelines of the Comprehensive Plan. It would recognize the critical importance of good town design, appearance and amenities in enhancing future economic development. Quality of life and economic development are inextricably linked.
- Enterprise North Manchester would seek to foster diversity and inclusion.

Industrial Development
MEDCOR

MEDCOR is an existing civic corporation that owns and manages the industrial park. The current level of support for industrial recruitment should continue. MEDCOR should maintain current services to the industrial park; seek tax abatement, as appropriate; and partner with WEDCOR in industrial marketing. Traditional industrial recruitment will not be easy in the slower national and global economy of the early 2000's. But North Manchester could be suited to specialty manufacturing that takes advantage of the advanced skills/training initiatives proposed in Strategy 3.

Entrepreneurship Implementation Team

North Manchester cannot rely on business recruitment for new job creation alone. Most of its new jobs will come from existing business and new business start ups.

The Entrepreneurship Implementation Team would comprise small business owners, college professors and bankers;. It would focus attention on two opportunities for growth:

- **Existing business retention and expansion, especially through e-business.** The Chamber of Commerce should expand the existing business program involving routine surveys with all businesses, providing guidance in matters that would accelerate expansion and growth, such as meeting specialty training needs, infrastructure improvements, permits and regulatory approvals, and obtaining conventional financing.

Communications from the Chamber need to emphasize local capabilities and the benefits of using local suppliers whenever possible even at a small premium in cost. This enables growth by circulating income.

Most importantly, several small/mid-size businesses in North Manchester are already benefiting from smart use of e-commerce as a way to serve customers better and expand markets. Many more opportunities exist. Even in specialty retail it is not inconceivable the Main Street will be revitalized as much by e-commerce customers as walk-in shoppers.

The Entrepreneurship Implementation Team would identify the best ways to ramp up e-commerce activities. One idea is the use of student teams from Manchester College to provide customized broadband and e-commerce assessments to local businesses. Such a joint college-business venture would provide students real world applications while opening up access to college resources local businesses find hard to obtain. The Entrepreneurship Implementation Team would begin the work by reviewing similar practice elsewhere in the U.S.

- **New business starts and entrepreneurship.** The Entrepreneurship Implementation Team would initiate a multifaceted program to foster entrepreneurship in the schools, college, and community at large. It would seek to change community attitude about business success and

acknowledge “winners” in the community regularly. It would seek support to create a seed/early stage capital pool, possibly structured as a Community Development Entity (CDE), eligible for investment tax credits under the New Market Tax Credit program of the U.S. Treasury Department.

- **Business Strategic Alliances.** Where appropriate, the Entrepreneurship Implementation Team will encourage groups of local businesses to band together to solve common problems, penetrate new markets and adapt new technologies. These alliances can be specific to an industry (manufacturing and “new generation value added agriculture cooperatives”) or involve a supply chain of interrelated businesses.

<p>Housing Development Implementation Team</p>
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Small towns suffer from haphazard and piecemeal residential development because there are no large private land developers who buy up and develop large parcels of land. In larger cities, these developers time the supply of land to meet steady growth. The Housing Development Implementation Team would act as the town's watch dog to help ensure an adequate land supply. It would do this by:

- Assessing housing demand, seeking ways to ensure various housing types of good quality are available in a timely fashion.
- Networking among realtors, landowners, builders etc.
- Assisting with marketing the community as a safe, high quality community for family living.
- Seeking co-investors in housing development projects.
- Advising Town Council on the need, timing and funding options for infrastructure improvements to enhance property value, in both new and existing neighborhoods.
- Encouraging redevelopment in areas of low-income housing, block by block.

MEDCOR would be available as the town's development partner to enter into having projects with private interests, should that be necessary.

Strategy 2: Implement the Town’s New Comprehensive Plan; Take it Seriously.

Strategic Objectives:

- Decrease the practice of indiscriminate zoning variance.
- Increase grant awards to implement various components of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Implement River Walk plans over the next five years.

The Town of North Manchester has undertaken a major effort to update its Comprehensive (land use) Plan and Zoning Ordinances.

Select Recommendations from Comprehensive Plan

Streets and Roads

- A Thoroughfare Plan of arterial streets/roads, collector streets/roads and local/cul-de-sac streets that ensures safe traffic flow on busy routes and controlled flow and parking in neighborhoods.
- Make Highway 13 a visually appealing corridor.

Residential Development

- Concentration of future development in areas where local services and infrastructure can be provided cost effectively.
- All planning and zoning functions to one mile beyond the corporate town limits.
- “Clustering” of residential development to reduce municipal service and infrastructure costs.
- A strategy for attracting residential developers.
- Encourage quality residential design among prospective developers.
- Use incentives to attract developers.
- Second floor residential units on Main St.

Commercial and Retail Development

- Concentrated in the Central Business District.

- Development of new child care facilities.
- Development is primarily along Highway 114.

Industrial Development

- Continue to enhance and promote the existing industrial park and encourage new industries to locate there.

Economic Development

- Industrial development that provides high wage retirement-related jobs.
- A training facility for geriatric industries, coordinated with Manchester College & Ivy Tech.
- Attract retirement industries.
- Develop a business incubator to encourage small business development.

Infrastructure

- Extension of water and sewer services, and completion of sewer/storm water separation project.
- Various street and road improvements.
- Develop sophisticated infrastructure to attract telecommunication industry.

Town Image

- Enhance “the sense of arrival” into the Town, possibly at highway entrances in all directions.

Public Awareness and Participation

- Inclusive – minorities, disabled.
- Include youth in government and planning groups; continuance and growth of youth activity center.
- Feature the College.
- Promote establishment of an inter-denominational faith-based non profit organization that could provide seed money and revolving loans.

- Development of large public meeting space in the downtown area.

Historicity and Natural Assets

- Protect structural and historic integrity of existing housing stock.
- Promote River Walk development.
- Maintain trees as significant cultural resource.

This Strategic Plan recommends taking this Comprehensive Plan very seriously since an overarching goal must be to improve the design and appearance of the townscape, ease of getting around, and the Victorian theme of the downtown area. Such goals are very important in improving quality of life which, in turn, is essential to attract and retain high skill, high wage workers.

It is recommended Town Council implement the new Comprehensive Plan by:

- i) Widely communicating its vision and key elements.
- ii) Regularly providing orientation workshops to town officials and community leaders to ensure the vision and intended purposes are widely understood, especially by local boards and commissions.
- iii) Regularly communicating with Enterprise North Manchester (Strategy 1) to ensure integrity between the Comp. Plan and economic development.
- iv) Only very sparingly, make variances to the plan over the next five years, at which time an update should be undertaken.

The River Walk Implementation Team

Most facets of improved townscape have been assigned to one group/organization or another. The one issue that does not have a home and has been agreed upon as important for many years is river front enhancement. In fact, much has already been spent on planning and agreed-upon recommendations are in place. What is lacking is concerted action to implement the plan.

This Strategic Plan calls for the creation of a River Walk Implementation Team that would aggressively pursue plan implementation in cooperation with town government, the Chamber, downtown interests and the new Director of Development.

Strategy 3: Create the Business-Education Exchange: A Community Learning Network that interfaces employer demands with career and learning offerings – linking supply and demand, catalyzing new solutions to address workplace learning needs.

Strategic Objectives:

- Decrease employee turnover in existing business.
- Increase availability of skilled workers.

In most communities, regions, and states the most prevalent missing link in effective workforce development is a lack of coordinated articulation of need by businesses and follow through with training and education programs to meet that need by providers. North Manchester can increase its economic competitiveness and create good jobs by “building a better mousetrap” that links supply and demand for knowledge and skilled workers.

Two current North Manchester activities offer potential building blocks for a locally based lifelong learning initiative: Learn More and the Manchester Institute.

Through the current CAPE grant from the Lilly Endowment, Learn More provides low cost educational offerings in reading, writing, math remediation, basic literacy, and English as a second language, in addition to life and workplace skills training. It is aimed at adult basic education. These are provided in a “store front” setting at the Town Life Center.

The Manchester Institute is a new program of Manchester College designed to provide training and education to business and other organizations. It has offered workshops on diversity, communication skills, PowerPoint presentations, accounting, and violence in the workplace. Manchester Institute can function as a personnel development office for companies that can’t afford a freestanding department. It seeks a market larger than North Manchester to survive. However, expansion of the Institute will increase economic activity in North Manchester. The College is one of the town’s growth industries.

Each of these activities can continue to function well separately. But there is an increasing urgency to connect the dots between education and economic development, including embracing providers outside the community, including the Heartland Center and Ivy Tech.

The Community Learning
Network Implementation
Team

Following the formation of an Implementation Team with vision and community buy-in, steps should be taken to grow the Learn More Center into a full-fledged Community Learning Center. While not overlooking the importance of education for children, a “one-stop,” expanded Community Learning Center would address the need to upgrade skills of the incumbent workforce. It can do this by:

- i) Visiting communities in Indiana that are further along with establishing community learning centers, then crafting a model that best fits with North Manchester’s assets and existing programs.
- ii) Review the education and training needs identified by the retention and expansion survey conducted by the Chamber of Commerce (Strategy 1).
- iii) Convene dialogues among potentially interested businesses to determine if there is a critical mass to offer various forms of training.
- iv) Act as intermediary to seek and contract with appropriate training providers.
- v) Coordinate with the Entrepreneurship Implementation Team to encourage local businesses to form permanent networks of Business Skills Alliances which can routinely articulate training/learning needs.

Strategy 4: Accelerate Broadband Usage.

Strategic Objectives:

- 1300 households (not including retirement communities and college) and all businesses connected to affordable high speed internet by 2005.

North Manchester’s growth, economically and socially, depends on having outstanding telecommunications capacity and service. While individual players, such as the College, the retirement communities, and individual firms can buy their own broadband access, this is expensive and does not lead to community-wide benefits. If North Manchester is to be attractive to higher income residents, and entrepreneurship/small business growth, high speed internet access must be reliable and affordable.

Two complementary strategies have been proposed by a group of interested and energetic citizens at Town Forum meetings:

1. Marketing

- Seek ways to provide telecommunications education to small businesses, perhaps through IVY Tech, the Manchester Institute, or the Broad Band Implementation Team.
- Alert all new and prospective residents of various options.
 - Train real estate agents.
 - Inform through the Chamber of Commerce.
 - Have comprehensive brochures at a variety of locations where new residents might find them.
 - Use local newspapers as information channels.
- Work energetically with companies that already have effective broadband technology available in North Manchester.
- Develop a community education program on the value of connectivity.
- Develop local internet useage by creating a local portal which serves as the community website on all community happenings. This might be operated by student interns.

2. Cost Effectiveness

- Seek grants to provide support for costs of connection to the Web, including building the local portal.
- Encourage telecommunications developers to expand their services into the community to assure that sound competition will control costs.
- Support community technology development through use of revenues from the town's cable television franchise.

The Broadband Implementation Team

North Manchester is endowed with a number of individuals with enthusiasm and energy to work on this issue. This implementation Team would:

- Refine and advance the strategies summarized above.
- Advise on the broadcast of government meetings and other community events into residences.
- Develop case studies and visit other communities using various local approaches to provide broadband services.
- Propose a plan of action including identification of sources of funds that could be tapped to get increased broadband operations going (e.g., federal USDA and NTIA funds, joint ventures with private providers, philanthropic grants).

Strategy 5: Develop Community Organizations and Processes for Increasing Civic Discourse, Collaboration, and Public-Private Partnerships.

Strategic Objectives:

- Increase participation in implementation of recommendations of this plan and ensure successful financing.

Over the next 5 -10 years, many existing human services and civic initiatives will require a heightened degree of communication, collaboration, pooling of resources and civic leadership. While North Manchester has informal networks for coordination among its leaders, improved mechanisms for engagement are required as it becomes more diverse. Healthy and prosperous communities are those with an effective infrastructure for communication and collaboration – a means by which citizens and their leaders can fully participate in an open democracy. It is important that this dialogue draw connections between aspirations and values, on the one hand, and town projects and happenings, on the other.

The Town Forum Steering Committee

The Town Forum Steering Committee has played an important role in bringing key leaders from business, government, education, and civic organizations around the table. It is widely accepted as a credible vehicle for broad-based community planning and action. It has done this by cheerleading, recruiting, convening and celebrating. How can it and other key groups of leaders foster voluntary action on the various Implementation Teams called for by this Plan?

This plan calls for the Town Forum Steering Committee to continue to play a central role in fostering community awareness, engagement, planning, and civic action, in shepherding action. To do this, it would:

- i) Broaden Town Forum Steering Committee membership.
- ii) Connect interested parties and existing organizations in constructive ways.
- iii) Find interested people who support particular strategies and encourage them to take charge. This has proved to be the ultimate test as to whether a strategy “has legs.”

- iv) Coordinate implementation of this plan and measure progress on an annual basis by preparing an Annual Report Card.
- v) Convene community-wide Forums at least every other year to discuss economic and community development progress.
- vi) Conduct seminars for members of civic boards, commissions, committees, etc., to regularly inform about vision and goals and discuss progress. Prepare a users manual for town leaders and provide training for civic leaders.
- vii) Conduct an update of the Strategic Plan on a two to four year cycle.
- viii) Encourage the town to hire a Director of Development to assist in implementing the Comprehensive Plan, chair Enterprise North Manchester, and seek and train others to seek public and private funding opportunities for community projects. It is anticipated that within 2 years the position will be self-supporting from the additional grants and related financial support brought to North Manchester.

6. Wrap Up: Can North Manchester Do It?

Where Will the Resources Come From?

It is apparent that this planning process and the parallel Comprehensive Planning Process have surfaced talented and dedicated leaders to make a difference. What is necessary for full implementation of this Strategic Plan is coordination and shepherding of collective action and additional funds to support various initiatives. As outlined in Strategy 5, the Town Forum Steering Committee will take responsibility for coordination, recruiting Implementation Team members and tracking progress.

North Manchester has a long history of collective action to shape positive community growth. In 1889, the Town of less than 2000 raised \$8,000 to attract a college preparatory school, Roanoke Classical Seminary, to North Manchester. Today, as a college town it benefits from having its own “knowledge industry,” an asset that will be even more to its advantage in the 21st century.

In today’s dollars that \$8,000 amounts to \$155,000 - a tidy sum if the citizens and their leaders were to do the same thing today. In effect, this plan calls for the same serious commitment. The Town’s future depends now on several major initiatives, as outlined in the five Bold Strategies. These require creative funding, leadership, partnerships, and persistence.

7. Members of Town Forum Steering Committee

Annette Ayres

Jim Garber

David Grandstaff

Richard Harshbarger

Sally Krouse

David McFadden

Ralph Naragon

Laura Rager

Nancy Reed

Leonard Williams

8. Thank You!

Nearly 100 citizens of the North Manchester community participated in the public forums and contributed the ideas and concerns that form the basis of this strategic plan. It is bold testimony to the nature of North Manchester that such a diverse group would give their considerable time, energy, and imagination to this process. Even bolder, is this community's track record of forging valuable outcomes from minimal resources. It is with confidence that we present this vision of North Manchester's potential. That confidence is not so much in the perfection of the plan as in the perseverance of the people.

We owe deepest thanks to those who have created this plan and to those who will use it to strengthen our community's economic, educational, social, and cultural fabric.

Financial support for this strategic process has been provided by:

- The Town of North Manchester
- The Community Foundation of Wabash County
- The North Manchester Chamber of Commerce
- Manchester Main Street
- Manchester College
- Beacon Credit Union
- First Federal Savings Bank
- Indiana Lawrence Bank
- Peabody Retirement Community
- Timbercrest

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