

QUALITY OF PLACE & WORKFORCE ATTRACTION PLAN

MARTIN COUNTY, INDIANA

DECEMBER 2025



REGIONAL
OPPORTUNITY
INITIATIVES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 03

OUR STORY 04

ENGAGEMENT 07

DATA 10

CONTEXT 13

SOLUTIONS 28

CLOSING 33

December 2025

Prepared for Martin County, Indiana

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2019 Plan prepared by eSolve Solutions

Updated by TPMA in 2025

INTRODUCTION

As part of an overarching strategy for improving economic and community prosperity in the Indiana Uplands, Regional Opportunity Initiatives (ROI) established a grant opportunity for the 11 counties of our region to help ensure the region is ready for the opportunities ahead.

Ready Communities grants provide communities and organizations with resources to strategically develop programs and projects that build quality of place, grow regional capacity for workforce development and attraction, and improve the attributes and amenities that make the Indiana Uplands a desirable place to live, work, and play.

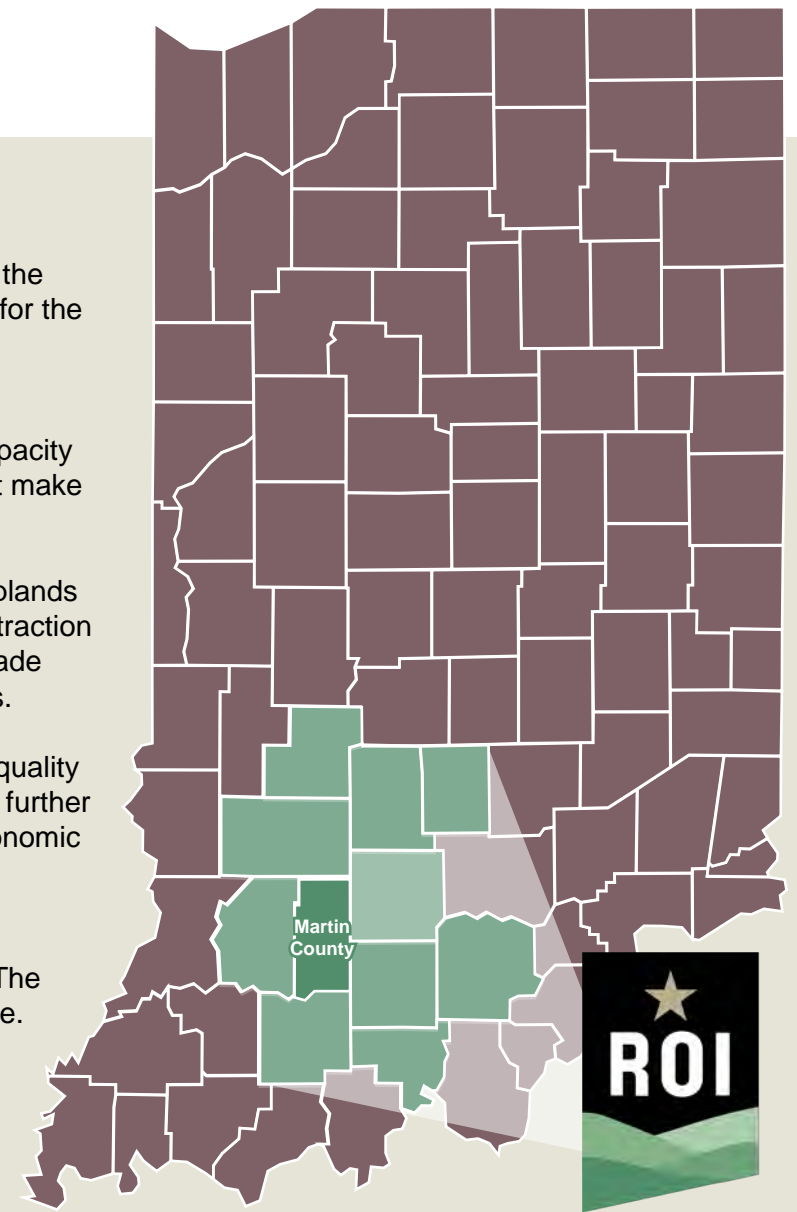
In 2019, the process began with Ready Communities Planning Grants. Each Indiana Uplands county received a \$50,000 planning grant to develop Quality of Place and Workforce Attraction Plans. Following the Ready Communities Planning Grant stage, up to \$3 million was made available for competitive quality of place and workforce attraction implementation grants.

These planning and implementation grants from ROI provided the foundation for many quality of place and workforce attraction initiatives and projects. Uplands counties were able to further utilize their plans to capitalize on funding opportunities through the state's Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI 1.0 and 2.0).

Recognizing the success of these initial planning efforts, ROI sought to reconvene our county partners to update the Quality of Place and Workforce Attraction plans in 2025. The hallmark of these plans is inclusive community input in developing priorities for the future. The consensus built around these priorities provides a roadmap for success.

What Is A Quality of Place and Workforce Attraction Plan?

The Quality of Place and Workforce Attraction Plans provides county and community leaders a strategic plan for, developing and implementing projects and initiatives to build quality of place amenities, strengthen local and regional capacity for workforce attraction and improve residents' quality of life. Together these efforts make the Indiana Uplands a desirable place to live, work and play.



The plan that follows was funded by a grant from the Regional Opportunity Initiatives, Inc. (ROI) and was completed as part of a wholistic strategy for improving economic and community prosperity in the Indiana Uplands counties (Brown, Crawford, Daviess, Dubois, Greene, Lawrence, Martin, Monroe, Orange, Owen and Washington).

OUR STORY

Rooted in history and inspired by innovation, Martin County stands at a crossroads of tradition and progress. Here, neighbors still look out for one another—a way of life that has defined our communities for generations. Whether lending a hand in times of need or celebrating each other’s successes, the people of Martin County embody the true spirit of small-town connection and care. Nestled in the heart of Southern Indiana, Martin County’s landscape tells its own story—rolling hills to the east, rich farmland to the west, and scenic waterways weaving between. Outdoor enthusiasts find endless opportunities to explore and recharge, from hiking the trails at the Bluffs of Beaver Bend to visiting the historic Hindostan Falls. The White River and West Boggs Lake invite fishing, boating, and quiet reflection beneath breathtaking sunrises and sunsets. At the center of Martin County’s identity is a deep sense of family, community, and patriotism. Home to Naval Support Activity (NSA) Crane, the world’s third-largest naval installation, the county plays a vital role in supporting our nation’s defense. This partnership not only strengthens our economy but also reinforces the county’s relevance in the national security and defense sectors. Education is another cornerstone of Martin County’s strength. With two dedicated school districts, the county takes pride in small class sizes, strong STEM programs, and close collaborations with local industries. These efforts ensure that every student is prepared to thrive in a world that values both innovation and integrity. Today, Martin County continues to honor its legacy while looking toward the future. Our residents recognize the county’s vital role in national security, key industries, and the prosperity of the Indiana Uplands. The priorities outlined in this Quality of Place Plan build upon that foundation—guiding us as we continue to enhance the quality of life, opportunity, and community that make Martin County home.



COMMUNITY ASSETS & CULTURAL HERITAGE

Since Martin County's founding in 1820, residents have taken pride in its natural beauty and peaceful way of life. With nearly 16,500 acres of national and state forests, the county's landscapes remain one of its greatest assets—rolling hills to the east, rich farmland to the west, and neighborly communities throughout.

Families continue to gather in backyards, parks, and public spaces to celebrate the place they call home. Over the past five years, opportunities for recreation have continued to grow.

In addition to its national and state forests, Martin County is home to beloved local destinations such as West Boggs Park, Martin State Forest, and the scenic Hindostan Falls—a favorite spot for relaxing, exploring the river's edge, and taking in the sound of the falls. Outdoor enthusiasts also enjoy a growing network of trails, including Bluffs of Beaver Bend and Tanks Spring, offering even more ways to experience the county's natural heritage.

The people of Martin County are known for their strong work ethic and commitment to creating a prosperous future for their families. From the hands-on dedication of farm families to the innovation of engineers and entrepreneurs, the county benefits from a diverse and skilled talent base.

Education is a central part of this strength. Martin County is served by two school corporations—Loogootee Community Schools and Shoals Community Schools—both of which have made significant strides toward achieving STEM certification. Loogootee also operates Lion Manufacturing, a student-run business that provides real-world experience in advanced manufacturing. Shoals' Shop Class continues to make impressive progress as well. Students have built a barn on school grounds, raise pigs and chickens, and incorporate the products into the cafeteria, giving students a true farm-to-table learning experience within their own school system.



WHERE WE ARE NOW:

Since the implementation of the Quality of Place Plan, Martin County has experienced notable growth, renewed community engagement, and a strong sense of forward momentum. What began as a vision to strengthen our quality of place has evolved into a series of accomplishments driven by passionate citizens, collaborative leadership, and a shared commitment to honoring our heritage while building our future.

One of the county's most remarkable stories of revival is the return of Hindostan Days. Once a one-time event held in the 1980s, a group of community-minded residents brought the festival back to celebrate the heritage of Hindostan—the former county seat and an important chapter in Martin County's early history. Held the first Saturday in October, the event has become a gathering place for local makers and artisans who come together to honor what Hindostan once meant to the community. Starting with only 15 vendors in Year One, Hindostan Days has grown into a 100-vendor event with a waitlist by Year Five, reflecting a deep regional interest in culture, heritage, and craftsmanship.

Housing development has also taken meaningful steps forward. In the City of Loogootee, the Country Court V project—a READI 1 investment—converted a 32-acre property into 41 parcels for new custom homes, providing much-needed residential options and setting the stage for continued growth. Additionally, Loogootee is now home to Oak Street Village, a new 50-unit apartment community that expands workforce housing opportunities and supports the county's long-term economic vitality.

Community collaboration has been at the heart of many recent successes. When the want for a new shelter house at Hindostan Falls emerged, the county rallied together, raising \$40,000 in just one week through a crowdfunding initiative. This effort demonstrated not only strong public support but also the belief that Martin County's natural assets should remain accessible and inviting for generations to come.

FIVE YEARS OF MILESTONES AND MOMENTUM

In the Town of Shoals, creativity and placemaking have taken center stage. After attending the Creative Convergence Conference through the Indiana Arts Commission, a team of local citizens secured \$10,000 to bring art to Overlook Park. They later received additional support from the Martin County Community Foundation, enabling the construction of a new observation deck that enhances the visitor experience and celebrates the county's scenic beauty.

Investing in future leaders has become another cornerstone of progress. The Martin County Alliance launched the Legacy–Martin County Leadership Program in 2024 to engage residents, strengthen civic involvement, and build a long-term leadership pipeline. Since its launch, the program has completed two cohorts with a total of 23 participants. Individuals from a wide range of professional backgrounds have taken part—including small business owners, educators, and local bankers—and NSWC Crane has remained a significant supporter of the initiative. At the same time, the community came together to bring the Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) Program to both Loogootee and Shoals Schools. This program helps high school students, junior and seniors, develop business skills, build local networks, and connect meaningfully with Martin County's business community.

Artistic expression has also blossomed in downtown Shoals. The Shoals High School art class completed the community's first large-scale mural on the back of a historic building—a work that depicts the county's major assets. The mural carries a powerful story of inclusion: the design originated from an inmate housed in the Martin County Jail who had never personally visited many of the locations but created the concept using only local history books and newspaper clippings. Students brought his vision to life, and the mural now serves as a vibrant welcome to the historic downtown.

ENGAGEMENT

The 2019 Martin County Quality of Place & Workforce Attraction Plan was developed through a structured, multi-month engagement process. Over the course of several months, eSolve Solutions worked with the Quality of Place Advisory Team, which included local government, businesses, schools, civic organizations, and other community leaders. Public input was gathered through a 36-question Community Perceptions Survey, stakeholder workshops, and community mapping sessions. In total, the process engaged around 100 individuals and 28 organizations, combining resident feedback with health, demographic, and physical-environment data. This broad engagement effort formed the foundation of the priorities and strategies that were ultimately included in the 2019 plan.

The 2025 update process has been more streamlined, relying on focused engagement over a shorter period of time. A revamped Quality of Place Advisory Team was assembled to guide the work, and the group participated in two in-person planning sessions with Regional Opportunity Initiative, Inc. Public input was collected through an online community survey, which was open from October 10–24, 2025, and received 515 responses, providing strong insight into current community priorities.



2025 QUALITY OF PLACE ADVISORY TEAM (QPAT TEAM)

Steve Deckard- The Shoals News

Curt Johnson- Martin County Community Foundation

Pamela Loughmiller- Loughmiller Tool & Design

Steven Burch- Harvest Health and Rehab

Danielle Murphy- Martin County Community Corrections

Bill Greene- Martin County Historical Society

Nathan Rihm- West Boggs Park

Racquel Hanks- United States Gypsum

Audrey Gibson- Star Mill Gathering Place

Monty Gregory- Martin County Council

Brian Ader- City of Loogootee Mayor

Josh Greene- Martin County Sheriff

Cary Albright- Town of Shoals

Shelley Christmas- Loogootee Community School Corporation

Ashley Bearden- East Fork Water, Inc.

Kindra Hovis- Shoals Community School Corporation

Paul George- Martin County Commissioner

Jared Sullivan- Martin Courant

Dena Held- Purdue Extension/Martin County 4H Program

Jessica Potts- Martin County Alliance for Economic Growth, Inc.



Members of the QPAT Team during the first in-person facilitation meeting at French Lick Resort. Martin County was proud to have the largest group of representatives participate in shaping the 2025 Quality of Place Plan update.

2019 ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

1. Strong Emphasis on Recreation, Social Activities, & Well-Being

Residents expressed a strong desire for more social, recreational, and wellness opportunities for all ages, highlighting a need for local sports, arts, gathering spaces, and both indoor and outdoor amenities that promote health, togetherness, and a stronger sense of community.

2. Broadband/Connectivity Is a Major Concern

During a county-wide broadband summit, community members voiced frustration over limited or nonexistent internet access, noting impacts on students' ability to do homework, challenges with telemedicine, and barriers to remote work. This lack of connectivity was also seen as a significant obstacle to attracting and retaining new residents, particularly younger and remote workers.

3. Workforce Opportunity & Training Gap

While overall unemployment in the county is low, residents noted that good-paying jobs are harder to access due to gaps in training and qualifications, and that limited affordable childcare further restricts parents' ability to work or pursue additional education and skills.

4. Perception Challenges & Need for Branding

Focus groups revealed mixed perceptions of Martin County—described as “rural,” “safe,” and “naturally beautiful,” but also “poor”—highlighting the community’s interest in developing a county brand that celebrates its heritage, natural beauty, and future potential.

5. Desire for Better Services & Infrastructure

Participants emphasized the need for improved county services and amenities—including infrastructure, childcare, connectivity, parks, and cultural activities.

2025 ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

515
Total
Surveys
Completed

71%
of respondents expressed
some level of satisfaction with
living in Martin County.

MOST REQUESTED NEW OR EXPANDED BUSINESSES:

Grocery Store

(by far the top response for Shoals)

In July 2025, Shoals lost its only grocery store, creating a significant gap in local access to fresh food and essential goods; residents now must travel at least seven miles to meet their basic grocery needs.

Restaurants

(including sit down and family options)

Martin County’s restaurant options are limited, with an abundance of fast-food establishments and most dine-in choices concentrated primarily in Mexican and pizza offerings, resulting in a lack of diverse dining experiences for residents and visitors.

Manufacturing and local job opportunities

Martin County’s economy is largely composed of small businesses with limited industrial presence, and residents have expressed a desire for more local employment opportunities close to home.

IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

(Top 5 Themes from Open Responses)

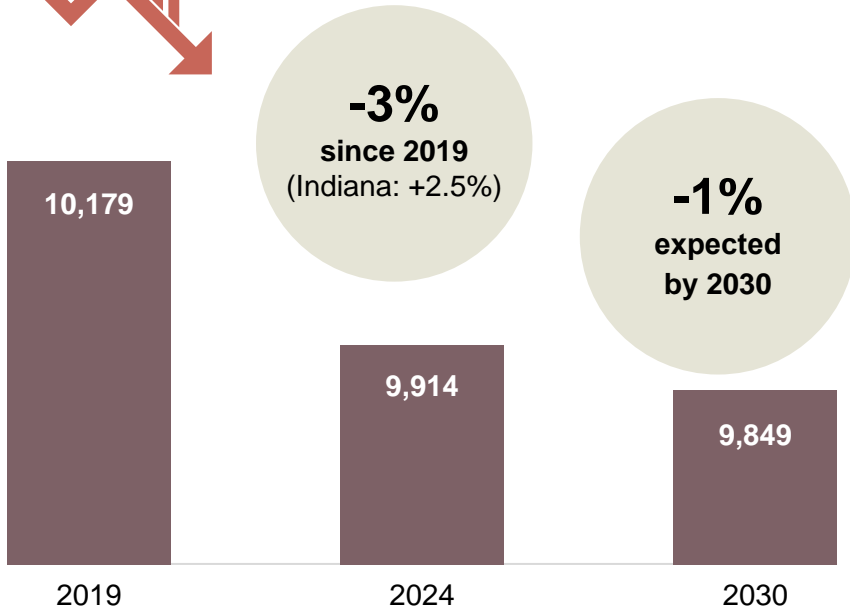
1. Housing Availability and affordability
2. High quality, good paying jobs
3. Local shops, restaurants, and entertainment
4. Parks, recreation, and outdoor spaces
5. Education and childcare services

DATA PROFILE



POPULATION CHANGE

Source: Lightcast, 2024



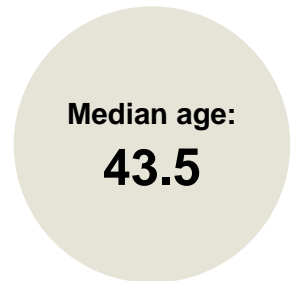
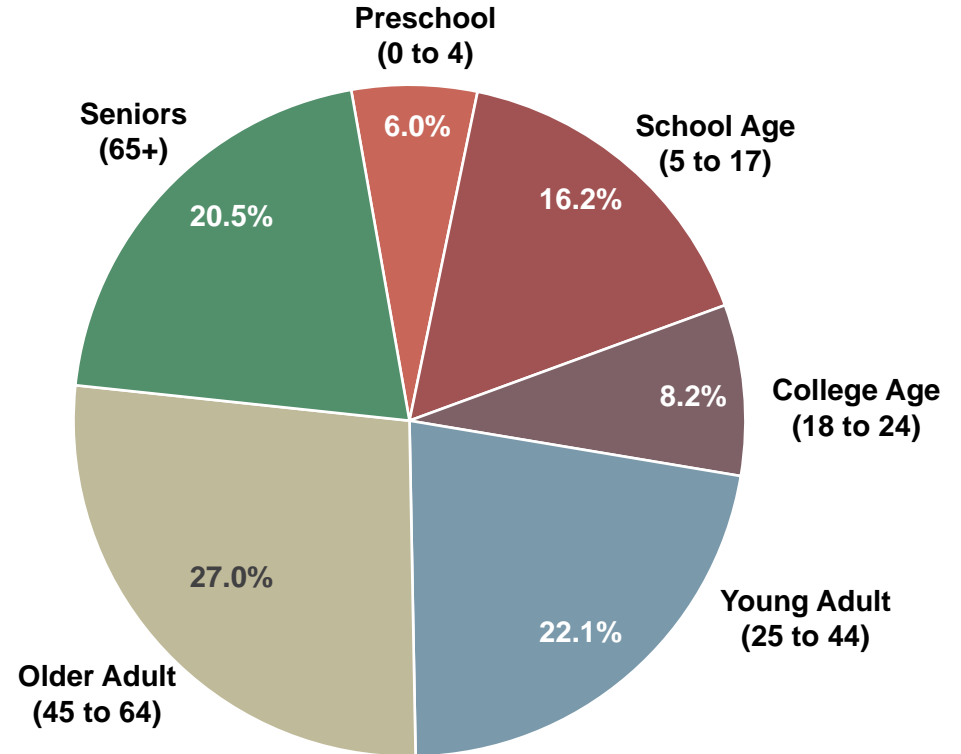
RACE & ETHNICITY

Source: Lightcast, 2024

White	95.3%
Hispanic/Latino	1.8%
African American/Black	0.6%
Asian	0.7%

AGE DISTRIBUTION

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023



(Indiana: Seniors 17.5%; Older Adult 23.9%; Young Adult 25.9%; College Age 9.7%; School Age 17.0%; Preschool Age 5.9%)

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Source: American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2023



\$65,345

(Indiana: \$70,051)

MEDIAN HOME SALE

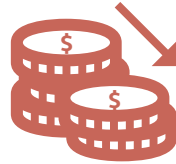
Source: Indiana Association of Realtors, 2025



\$182,450

POVERTY

Source: American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2023



31.6%
AMONG CHILDREN

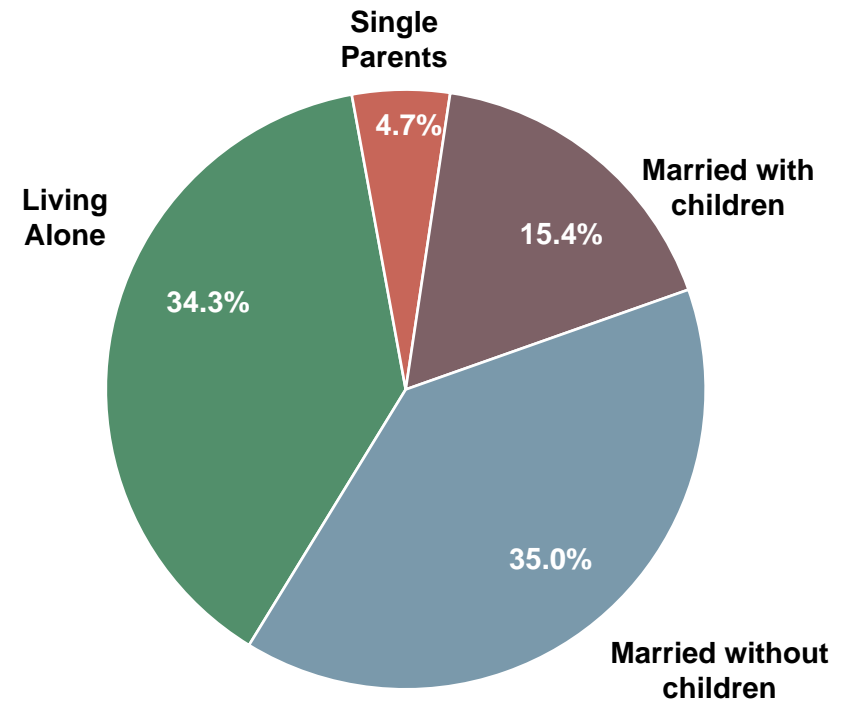
(Indiana: 15.7%)

16.4%
OVERALL

(Indiana: 12.2%)

HOUSEHOLD TYPE

Source: American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2023



(Indiana: Single Parents 9.0%, Married with children 17.2%; Married without children 29.4%; Living Alone 29.8%.)

CHILD CARE

Source: Transform Consulting Group, 2024



\$5,566

Average Annual Cost of
Child Care in the County

(Indiana: \$8,590, Source for Indiana data: Early Learning Indiana, 2024)



COMMUTING TRENDS

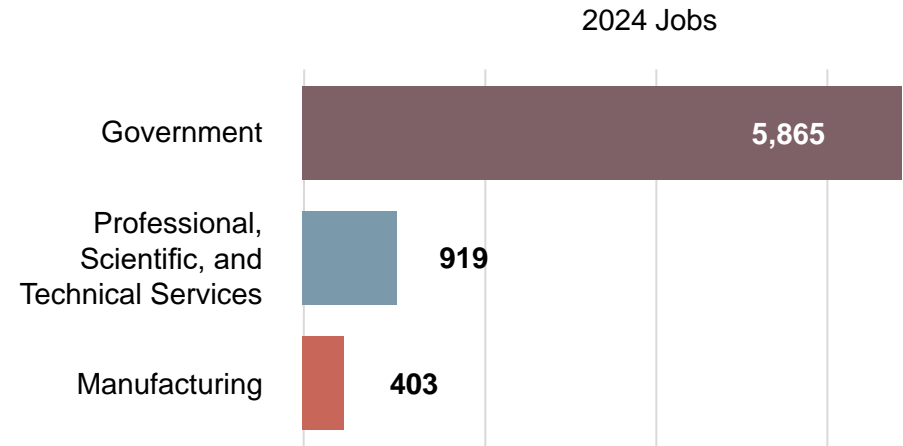
Source: Lightcast, 2024

Top Counties for Inbound Commuters	Top Counties for Outbound Commuters
Daviess	Daviess
Lawrence	Dubois
Orange	Lawrence



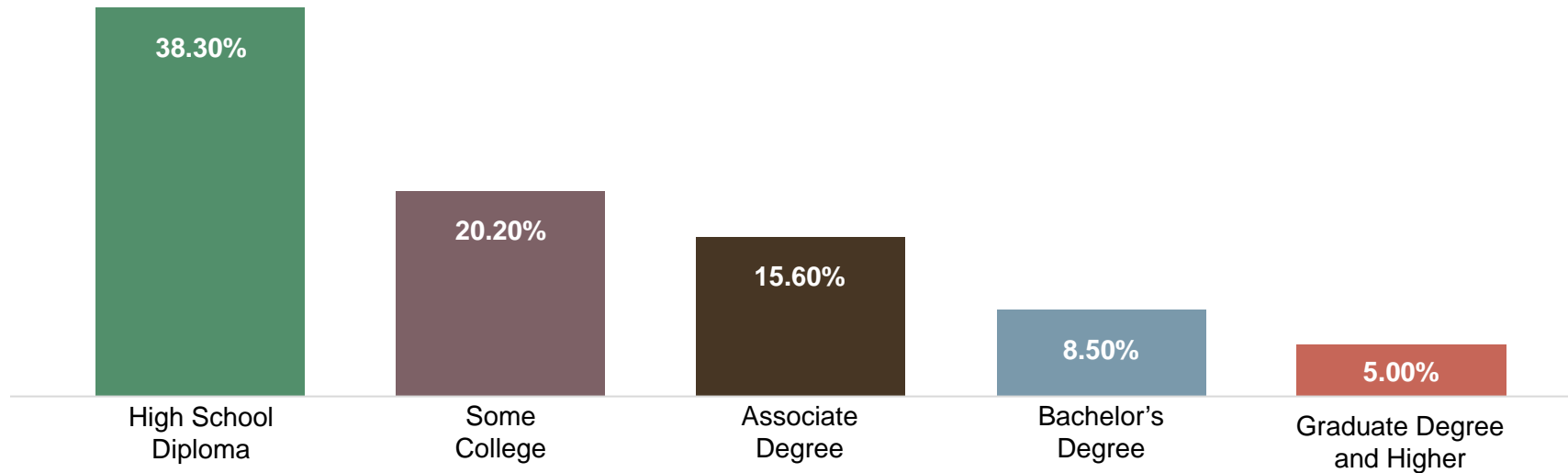
TOP INDUSTRIES

Source: Lightcast, 2024



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Source: Lightcast, 2024



CONTEXT

The original Martin County Quality of Place Plan was developed in 2019. When a new Quality of Place Plan Team reconvened in 2025, the group carefully reviewed and incorporated the findings from the 2025 Community Quality of Place Survey. Using this updated community input, the team identified a clear set of priority solutions to guide our efforts moving forward, ensuring that the plan continues to reflect local needs, aspirations, and opportunities for growth.



PROGRESS

MARTIN COUNTY CEO PROGRAM

In an effort to retain young people in Martin County, community leaders and residents joined together to fundraise for the implementation of the Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) program in both Loogootee and Shoals Community Schools. For a small rural county, this was an ambitious undertaking. Some doubted that raising \$70,000 was achievable—but once the community understood the program’s purpose of keeping youth in the county, building strong connections between students and local businesses, and fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, support quickly grew. The county rallied behind the initiative, successfully met the fundraising goal, and today the program is in its second year.

LEGACY- MARTIN COUNTY LEADERSHIP

In 2024, the Legacy: Martin County Leadership program launched as a new initiative designed to cultivate a pipeline of local leaders. Like many communities, Martin County faces challenges with volunteer capacity, and this program was created to strengthen leadership skills, help participants recognize their individual strengths, and introduce them to the many programs, resources, and opportunities available throughout the county. Each cohort completes a capstone project focused on giving back to the community. Now two years in, the program has attracted diverse participants with a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, and talents—united by a shared commitment to Martin County. This initiative is intentionally structured to foster connections among residents who may not normally work together, expand local networks, and encourage participants to put their abilities to work for the greater good.

HINDOSTAN FALLS SHELTER HOUSE

In October 2023, the Martin County Alliance launched a fundraising effort through the CreatINg Places grant program sponsored by Patronicity. The goal was to rebuild a shelter house at Hindostan, once the county seat and still one of Martin County's most cherished historic and natural sites. Known for its iconic flat rock along the White River and the sound of the nearby falls, the property is now owned by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Before fundraising could begin, the County and DNR executed a memorandum of understanding to allow improvements on the site.

With a fundraising target of \$40,000 and 60 days to reach it, community support exceeded all expectations. Current and former residents alike contributed, many moved by memories of childhood visits to Hindostan. Within just one week, 144 donors had joined the effort. The campaign ultimately surpassed its goal, raising \$41,735. With Patronicity's \$40,000 match and an additional \$15,000 from the Martin County Community Foundation, the community secured the resources needed to construct a new shelter house—now a welcoming space for gatherings, reunions, celebrations, and events at this historic location.



HINDOSTAN DAYS

Hindostan was founded around 1816 on the East Fork of the White River at a natural waterfall. Positioned along an important early stagecoach route and river crossing, the settlement grew quickly. At its peak hosting around 1,000-1,200 people, complete with mills, a post office, and even serving as the original county seat. Tragically the town's success was short-lived. In the early 1820s, a devastating epidemic (likely cholera or yellow fever) swept through the community, decimating the population and prompting many to leave.

Compounding this disaster was an economic downturn, and by 1830 the post office closed and the town was abandoned. Hindostan Days, an event that was established in 2020 to celebrate the Community and the County's heritage, began as a small community gathering with about 15 vendors and roughly 500 attendees. By 2025, it had grown significantly, featuring more than 100 vendors, a waitlist, and over 4,000 visitors.

Today, Hindostan Days stands as an annual celebration of the history, culture, and natural beauty of Hindostan—once the county seat and still one of Martin County's most iconic landmarks. The event brings families, friends, and visitors together to experience the flat rock, the river, and the stories that define this special place. Through community activities, food, music, and historical interpretation, Hindostan Days honors the past while creating new memories for future generations.

HOUSING

Martin County has experienced notable growth in housing development, particularly within the City of Loogootee. The Country Court V subdivision spans 32 acres and has been divided into 41 lots available for single-family home construction. Since becoming available, these lots have seen strong sales in the first few months.

Additionally, the Oak Street Village Project has broken ground within the city limits, introducing 50 units of workforce housing. The project is on track for completion by February 2027, further expanding housing options for residents and supporting the county's workforce needs.

Shaded Lane Estates, a newly established senior community for individuals aged 55 and older, is located near the City of Loogootee within the county's jurisdiction. Construction is underway, with the first three duplexes completed. If progress continues as planned, the community will ultimately include 32 additional units, providing expanded housing options for older residents in Martin County.

Martin County is also a part of the Indiana Uplands Regional Landbank, initiative, a regional effort to rehabilitate and redevelop vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties in Southern Indiana. Through this effort, some properties have been purchased with a plan for redevelopment of these parcels in the future.

SHOALS MURAL

The mural on the back of the building formerly known as the Alco Dime Store, now SC Draperies, was brought to life through a collaborative effort between the Town of Shoals, the Martin County Alliance for Economic Growth, SC Draperies, the Shoals High School Art Class, and the economic development team at Hoosier Uplands. The Martin County Alliance secured a small grant from Hoosier Uplands to purchase the necessary supplies, while SC Draperies embraced the idea of their building serving as a welcoming sign to the historic downtown district.

Interestingly, the Town of Shoals already had a mural rendering in hand during planning. The design was created by a Vigo County inmate housed in the Martin County Jail. The former Clerk Treasurer, Sierra Rutledge, had collaborated with the sheriff at the time, Travis Roush, bringing history books and old newspapers to the jail and asking if inmates could contribute to a mural design. While the Town had the design, the building location had not yet been identified. Through the combined efforts of all partners, the town's first mural was installed on the back of the former Alco Dime Store, sparking a positive revitalization in downtown Shoals.

CONNECTIVITY

In 2024, the Martin County Alliance received a \$28,000 MHS Serves grant to expand public Wi-Fi access across the county. This funding supported new Wi-Fi availability in Loogootee City Park and the Downtown Pavilion, enhancing connectivity in high-traffic community spaces. The grant also strengthened digital access at the Shoals Library by funding three new laptops and three new iPads, allowing more residents to utilize the library's Wi-Fi and technology resources.



ASSETS

Martin County's quality of place is strengthened by its natural beauty, historic character, and community-driven investments. Ongoing beautification efforts and cohesive design standards enhance the look and feel of public spaces, while improvements in connectivity and infrastructure support safe, accessible movement throughout the county. A rich mix of arts, culture, entertainment, and outdoor recreation—ranging from festivals to trails and forests—adds vibrancy and reinforces local identity.

Strong partnerships in education and workforce development help align training opportunities with employer needs and support the retention of local talent. Housing and utilities infrastructure continue to evolve to meet demand, ensuring reliable services and a balanced mix of housing options near jobs and amenities. Health and safety remain core priorities, with accessible healthcare, emergency services, and safe public environments contributing to overall community well-being.

Together, these assets reflect a county committed to building a welcoming, connected, and resilient future.



ASSETS

AESTHETICS AND BEAUTIFICATION

- New signage for Hindostan Falls, Bluffs of Beaver Bend, Tank Springs
- Shelter Renovations
- Repaving of roads
- Flower pots in Loogootee and Shoals
- Christmas Decor
- New Fountain in downtown Loogootee
- Hindostan Shelter House
- 18 hole putt-putt course at West Boggs
- The Martin County Historical Museum remodeled
- Facade Program/Updates to downtown buildings
- Overlook Park Updates

ARTS, CULTURE, ENTERTAINMENT & RECREATION

- New Pavillion in downtown Loogootee
- West Boggs Park New Stage
- Tiny Home Community
- Opening of two new Mexican Restaurants- Chavas and Los Amigos
- Loogootee Park Walking Trail
- Renovations to Star Mill Gathering Place
- Martin Courant
- Big L Times
- Hindostan Days
- Hindostan Shelter House
- Jug Rock Nature Preserve
- Bluffs of Beaver Bend
- Greetings from Loogootee Mural in downtown Loogootee
- Atlas View Resort
- Overlook Park
- Hindostan Falls
- Hoosier National Forest
- Martin County State Forest
- West Boggs Park
- Community Holiday Parades
- Martin County 4H Fair
- Loogootee Summerfest
- Shoals Catfish Festival
- West Boggs Park Events

CONNECTIVITY INFRASTRUCTURE

- RTC Communications has expanded into the City of Loogootee and Town of Crane
- Public Wifi Spots at the Loogootee City Park and Downtown Pavillion

ASSETS

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Establishment of the Martin County CEO Program into both Loogootee and Shoals Schools
- Shoals added a welding class
- Shoals Robotics
- Loogootee School Corporation is a STEM Certified School
- Shoals Elementary is STEM Certified School
- WestGate STEM Lab
- Shoals Early Rox Pre-K
- 60 new childcare seats with the new facilities that is attached to the Oak Street Village Project in Loogootee
- Martin County participates in the Choose Southern Indiana Program
- Loogootee School Corporation
- Shoals Community School Corporation
- Purdue Extension Office
- Martin County Museum
- NSA Crane
- West Gate at Crane Technology Park
- United States Gypsum
- Gold Bond
- Crane-related contractors

HEALTH & SAFETY

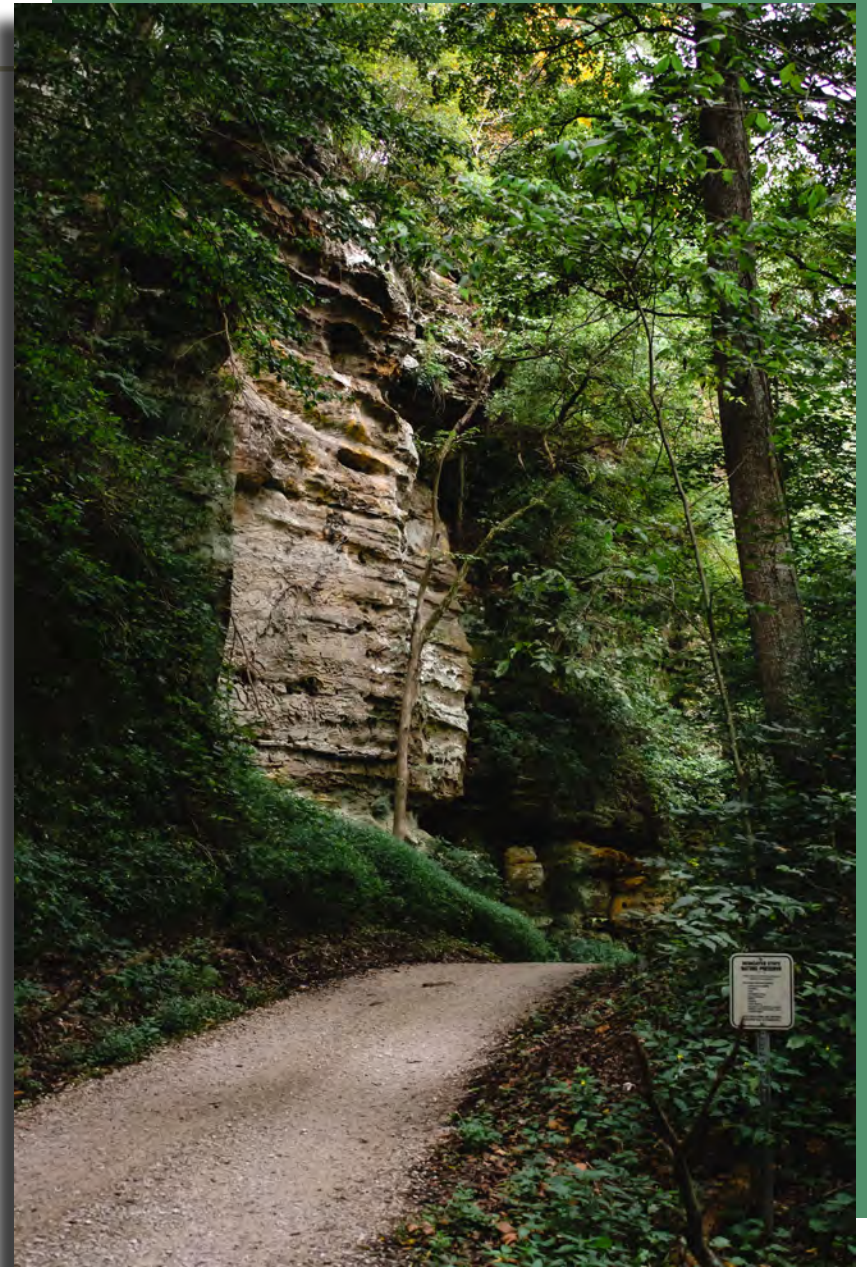
- Updates to programs and services to both the Loogootee and Shoals Senior Centers
- Martin County Urgent Care reopened
- Martin County Sherriff's App
- Matter of Balance Classes
- Nursing Classes at Shoals High School
- Children's Health Fair

HOUSING & UTILITIES INFRASTRUCTURE

- Oak Street Village Project- bringing 60 new childcare seats to Martin County
- Water Towers
- New lift station
- The development of Country Court 5 subdivision
- Shaded Lane Estates- Senior Apartments Development

PRIORITIES

The original Martin County Quality of Place Plan was developed in 2019. When a new Quality of Place Plan Team reconvened in 2025, the group carefully reviewed and incorporated the findings from the 2025 Community Quality of Place Survey. Using this updated community input, the team identified a clear set of priority solutions to guide our efforts moving forward, ensuring that the plan continues to reflect local needs, aspirations, and opportunities for growth.



PRIORITIES

Objective 01

Housing & Utilities Infrastructure

STATEMENT:

Increase the availability, quality, and diversity of housing options by encouraging redevelopment, reducing barriers for developers, and supporting investment that meets the needs of current and future residents.

WHY IS THIS A PRIORITY?

Improving the availability, quality, and diversity of housing is essential because it supports every part of a thriving community. Safe and affordable homes help attract workers, retain residents, and strengthen neighborhoods. By redeveloping underused properties, reducing barriers for developers, and encouraging smart investment, Martin County can meet the needs of current and future residents. Without this focus, the county risks slowing growth, missing investment opportunities, and falling short in supporting the next generation.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

Planning for housing and utilities must ensure that water and sewer capacity keeps pace with anticipated residential growth, preventing strain on existing systems and supporting long-term development. A balanced mix of market-rate, workforce, and senior housing is essential to meet the diverse needs of current and future residents. Additionally, the location of new housing plays a critical role in its success; proximity to jobs, schools, and key amenities significantly influences demand and helps create more connected, livable communities.

PRIORITIES

Objective 02

Arts, Culture, Entertainment, & Recreation

STATEMENT:

Expand recreational, cultural, and entertainment opportunities by enhancing and better promoting our community assets. This includes improving aesthetics, strengthening regional marketing, preserving historic resources, and enhancing gateways. It also involves creating inviting public spaces that encourage social interaction and civic pride, along with more intentional storytelling that highlights our community's past, present accomplishments, and authentic identity.

WHY IS THIS A PRIORITY?

These amenities enhance quality of life and help the community thrive. Improved aesthetics, preserved history, and inviting public spaces build civic pride and attract residents, visitors, and investors. Strengthening community identity supports local businesses and helps Martin County stay competitive for growth and workforce attraction.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

When shaping priorities for arts, culture, entertainment, and recreation, it is essential to ensure that parking, signage, and overall walkability effectively support the vitality of nearby retail businesses. A coordinated downtown branding strategy can further strengthen cohesion, helping visitors experience the district as a unified and welcoming destination. Additionally, targeted marketing support for available spaces will be critical in attracting new tenants, activating unused areas, and reinforcing the community's broader cultural and economic goals.

PRIORITIES

Objective 03

Aesthetics and Beautification Enhancements

STATEMENT:

Strengthen community identity and downtown vitality by improving aesthetics, preserving historic assets, enhancing gateways, and creating inviting public spaces that encourage social interaction and civic pride

WHY IS THIS A PRIORITY?

Strengthening community identity and downtown vitality is essential because vibrant, attractive downtowns create a strong sense of place, draw people in, and support local businesses. Improving aesthetics, preserving historic assets, and enhancing gateways helps showcase what makes the community unique, while inviting public spaces encourage social interaction and build civic pride. Without these efforts, the community risks losing its distinct character, economic activity, and opportunities to bring people together.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

Effective aesthetics and beautification efforts must be designed with clear, simple tasks so volunteers can participate confidently, with public recognition serving as an important tool for long-term engagement. Projects should account for transportation needs, particularly for youth and seniors, and all improvements must meet ADA requirements. Unified branding—such as consistent colors, fonts, signage, and overall style—should be adopted across towns to strengthen regional identity and align with broader tourism and recreation priorities. Site selection should emphasize safety and high foot traffic, while clearly defined maintenance responsibilities are essential both for preserving the quality of enhancements and for reducing the risk of vandalism.

PRIORITIES

Objective 04

Education & Workforce Development

STATEMENT:

Develop a strong, connected talent pipeline by aligning education and workforce partners, expanding career pathways, and promoting resources that attract and retain residents and businesses.

WHY IS THIS A PRIORITY?

Building a strong, connected talent pipeline ensures our community has the skilled workforce local businesses need, provides residents with clear career pathways, and helps attract and retain both people and businesses, fueling long-term economic growth and opportunity

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

The initiative must prioritize the development of programs that directly align with regional workforce shortages, ensuring that training pipelines meet the needs of local employers and support long-term economic vitality. A central focus will be retaining graduating students within the community by creating clear pathways into local careers and strengthening partnerships that make staying in Martin County an attractive and viable choice. Equitable access is also essential; programs must account for potential barriers such as transportation, affordability, and scheduling so that all residents—regardless of circumstance—can fully participate and benefit from available opportunities.

PRIORITIES

Objective 05

Health, Wellness, & Safety

STATEMENT:

Develop and implement a county-wide health wellness and safety initiative that improves access to healthcare, promotes healthy living, increases community education, and supports long term quality of life.

WHY IS THIS A PRIORITY?

Implementing a county-wide health, wellness, and safety initiative ensures residents have better access to care, promotes healthy lifestyles, and supports long-term quality of life for the entire community

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

The plan must ensure that programs and services are accessible to individuals of all ages, reflecting the diverse needs of the community. Long-term economic sustainability is essential, requiring strategies that balance financial responsibility with the goal of keeping offerings low-cost or free whenever possible. Because the community's rural identity is a defining characteristic, all efforts should honor and preserve this cultural context. Strong collaboration with county partners will be crucial to maximizing resources and maintaining alignment across jurisdictions. Finally, clear and consistent communication will underpin the success of the entire initiative, ensuring that residents remain informed, engaged, and confident in the plan's direction.

PRIORITIES

Objective 06

Connectivity Infrastructure Development

STATEMENT:

Improve county-wide infrastructure and connectivity by expanding broadband access, enhancing trail and sidewalk networks, and increasing transportation options that support mobility for residents and visitors.

WHY IS THIS A PRIORITY?

Improving infrastructure and connectivity strengthens our community by expanding broadband access, enhancing trails and sidewalks, and providing transportation options that make it easier for residents and visitors to live, work, and explore Martin County.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

A key consideration to consider is getting the right partners at the table and keeping them engaged.

SOLUTIONS

Improving housing by revitalizing properties, removing development barriers, and encouraging investment is essential because it strengthens the overall quality, availability, and affordability of homes in the community. Revitalized properties reduce blight, increase neighborhood safety, and boost property values. Removing barriers helps speed up development, making it easier and more cost-effective for builders and investors to create needed housing. Encouraging investment expands the range of housing options available, ensuring residents at all income levels have access to safe, modern, and appealing homes.

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

1.1 Develop community-based plan for incentivizing redevelopment and clean-up of targeted properties.

- 1.1.1 Review Similar plans in other communities
- 1.1.2 Pass relevant ordinances to allocate funds
- 1.1.3 Communicate plan with residents and developers

1.2 Develop county-wide model to address housing needs that includes working with elected officials to streamline processes of building and development.

- 1.2.1 Work with ROI Regional Housing Study to prioritize barriers
- 1.2.2 Develop county-wide coalition to address housing barriers

1.3 Reduce barriers (owner selling the property at inflated rates, owner not wanting to sell the property, lack of incentives to give to developers) for investors providing housing at diverse assessed value points

- 1.3.1 County-wide coalition should work with elected officials to reduce barriers and streamline processes for building

1.4- Prioritize infill development and blight elimination by reinvesting in vacant and underutilized properties, removing or rehabilitating deteriorated structures, and encouraging redevelopment that strengthens neighborhoods and enhances overall quality of place.

- 1.4.1 Identify and inventory vacant blighted properties, prioritize them for rehabilitation or removal and partner with local stakeholders, like the Indiana Uplands Regional Landbank, to support infill redevelopment projects that revitalize targeted neighborhoods.

Objective 01

Improve housing by revitalizing properties, removing development barriers, and encouraging investment.

STATUS

1.1 In Progress, 20% 1.3 In Progress- 30%
1.2 In Progress, 30% 1.4 Planning- 0%

TIMELINE

1.1 ST 1.3 MT
1.2 ST 1.4 MT

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- 1.1 Completion of community-based incentive plan by December 2026
- 1.2 Adoption or endorsement of the housing model by local governing bodies by June 2027
- 1.3 New housing units created in lower, middle, and upper value range by January 2028.
- 1.4 Blighted properties removed or rehabilitated annually.

PARTNERS

Martin County Commissioners, Town of Shoals, City of Loogootee, Private Investors, Town of Crane, Indiana Uplands Regional Land Bank, Martin County Alliance for Economic Growth Inc., Martin County Redevelopment Commission

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Funding for incentive programs; Legal and policy expertise to review zoning, codes, and permitting barriers; Data and market analysis tools to understand housing demands and values; Partnerships with developers, realtors, and financial institutions to align investment needs and opportunities.

SOLUTIONS

Improving community health strengthens overall quality of life, reduces preventable illness, and supports mental and physical well-being. Greater access to healthcare, combined with awareness and opportunities for active living, helps residents lead healthier, more productive lives, lowers long-term healthcare costs, and builds a stronger, more resilient community.

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

2.1 Create and implement health awareness programming for both physical and mental healthcare.

2.1.1 Create county-wide Health and Wellness Committee to develop a plan for supporting increased health in the county.

2.1.2 Develop educational programming

2.1.3 Streamline county-wide activities to focus on healthier living and coordinate with recreational strategies (i.e. develop county health competitions, a calendar of biking, running, and other exercise activities)

2.2 Develop a plan to increase access to healthcare in the county including in-person and tele- medicine options

2.2.2 Develop a plan to provide all residents with access to broadband for telemedicine purposes

2.2.3 Secure locations for community accessed telemedicine

2.2.4 Develop partnerships with IU Center for Rural Engagement and IU School of Public Health

2.3 Develop and advertise county-wide recreation plan to encourage healthy living

2.3.1 Create county-wide Health and Wellness Committee to create alignment of county events that promote healthy living

2.3.2 Committee should develop an advertising campaign to communicate events to residents

2.4 Develop a support group that addresses mental health wellness and identifies resources.

2.4.1 Identify key stakeholders and resources

Objective 02

Enhance community health through access, awareness, and active living.

STATUS

2.1 In Progress- 2%

2.2 In Progress- 20%

2.3 In Progress- 10%

2.4 Planning- 0%

TIMELINE

2.1 ST

2.2 LT

2.3 MT

2.4 ST

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

2.1 Number of health awareness programs developed and implemented annually.

2.2 Number of partnerships established with healthcare providers to expand access.

2.3 Number of residents reached through advertising and promotion

2.4 Forming the group and tracking the numbers of people impacted.

PARTNERS

Local healthcare providers, Martin County Health Department, Local school health teachers/classes, Local non-profits focused on health & wellness and fitness, Local gyms, Faith based organizations, Volunteer groups to assist with events, programs, and outreach

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Funding, Staff and Personnel- for program development, Facilities and equipment, Technology and telehealth platforms, Educational materials, Partnerships with healthcare providers, nonprofits, schools, and fitness organizations, Volunteer support- for program delivery, events, and community outreach

SOLUTIONS

Attracting and engaging residents and visitors supports local economic growth, strengthens community identity, and fosters a sense of belonging. Effective marketing, welcoming initiatives, and well-promoted events help retain current residents, draw new ones, and increase tourism, all of which contribute to a vibrant, thriving community.

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

3.1 Develop materials and mechanisms for new and potential residents to connect them into the community.

- 3.1.1 Develop print and digital resources to share current opportunities in the County
- 3.1.2 Create an ongoing process for updating print and digital communications

3.2 Develop an online marketing plan to target potential residents and visitors.

- 3.2.1 Create county committee to develop branding and marketing materials that will be used to share Martin County's resources
- 3.2.2 Develop a marketing plan that will focus on print and digital media
- 3.2.3 Develop a county app to share communications

3.3 Strengthen and expand the impact of our Main Street Organizations.

- 3.3.1 Increase volunteer recruitment and community involvement for developing a coordinated outreach campaign, creating clear volunteer roles, and hosting regular engagement opportunities.
- 3.3.2 Engage more residents in local tourism initiatives through community ambassador programs, tourism focused events, and partnerships with local businesses and organizations.
- 3.3.3 Enhance wayfinding and visibility of key points of interest by designing, funding, and installing consistent signage throughout the County's downtowns and destination areas.
- 3.3.4 Foster creative placemaking by supporting the creation of public art, murals, and storytelling installations that highlight local history, culture, and community identity.

3.4 Create festival/event calendar to share with stakeholders via web, mail, news, and radio

- 3.4.1 Develop strategic plans for organizations to engage funding resources and events to attract renewed energy to Main St. designated areas.
- 3.4.2 Main St. Organizations and other county-wide committees should collaborate to create a county-wide event calendar
- 3.4.3 Develop a process for adding events to the calendar
- 3.4.4 Share the county-wide event calendar online

Objective 03

Attract and engage residents and visitors through marketing, community connection, and events.

STATUS

3.1 In Progress- 5% 3.3 Completed
3.2 In Progress- 5% 3.4 Planning

TIMELINE

3.1 ST 3.3 ST
3.2 MT 3.4 MT

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- 3.1 Number of welcome packets, guides, or digital resources created.
- 3.2 Completion of a formal online marketing plan by December 2027.
- 3.3 Number of active volunteers and volunteer hours contributed annually, and number of new public art pieces, murals, or story telling installations completed annually
- 3.4 Completion and publication of the annual festival/event calendar by December of 2029.

PARTNERS

Local Government, Tourism Board, Local Non-Profits who plan events, CALL and the Historic Shoals River District, Choose Southern Indiana Program- Radius, Local Park Boards, Martin County Alliance for Economic Growth, Inc, Real estate agents

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Staff to work on website updates, Budget for marketing material, Website to host the calendar

SOLUTIONS

Expanding and improving recreational and cultural access enhances quality of life, promotes health and wellness, and fosters community engagement. It attracts visitors, supports local businesses, and strengthens the county's identity as a vibrant, livable place. Access to well-maintained recreational and cultural spaces also encourages physical activity, social interaction, and a sense of pride among residents.

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

4.1 Increase indoor and outdoor recreation events through revitalizing current spaces and developing new revenues for both recreational and cultural events.

- 4.1.1 Engage county-wide committee to develop a plan for strategically addressing events and organizations
- 4.1.2 Seek funding opportunities to address spaces or create new venues
- 4.1.3 Ensure events are published in county-wide calendar and marketing

4.2 Develop system for marking current trails throughout the County

- 4.2.1 Create collaborative committee of county leaders, park officials, and others to develop a process for marking trail throughout the County
- 4.2.2 Develop wayfinding signage
- 4.2.3 Secure funding for signage
- 4.2.4 Create digital and print materials to share trails

4.3 Increase resident and visitor access to walking/biking trails and recreational facilities

- 4.3.1 Develop a strategic plan for increasing access to trails with phased development
- 4.3.2 Create plan for sharing trail development plan with community stakeholders
- 4.3.3 Secure funding for phase 1

Objective 04

Expand and improve recreational and cultural access for residents and visitors.

STATUS

4.1 In Progress- 80% 4.3 In Process- 20%
4.2 In Progress- 80%

TIMELINE

4.1 ST 4.3 LT
4.2 ST

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- 4.1 Number of indoor and outdoor recreation or cultural events held annually.
- 4.2 Number of percentage of existing trails with clear, standardized signage installed.
- 4.3 Number of miles of trails or recreational facilities accessible to residents and visitors.

PARTNERS

Local government, Park Boards, Tourism Board, Local Businesses and Sponsors, Volunteer Groups- to help with maintenance, DNR

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Funding for facility upgrades, trail development, and event programming, Staff/Personnel, Partnerships with local organizations, schools, and cultural institutions to expand programming and outreach, Volunteer programs to support maintenance, events, and community engagement

SOLUTIONS

A strong talent pipeline ensures students and workers have the skills local employers need, supports business growth, and expands opportunities for residents. Better collaboration, relevant training, and reliable broadband help keep talent in the county while attracting new investment and improving overall quality of life.

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

5.1 Create county-wide workforce and education coalition focused on ensuring communication between schools, employers, and adult education leaders

5.1.1 Develop committee to meet quarterly to engage in strategic conversations for workforce development

5.1.2 Develop mutually beneficial relationships between employers and educational institutions

5.2 Increase programming for regionally relevant workforce demands to retain students who are graduating

5.2.1 Identify strategies that can be leveraged to increase retention of graduates

5.2.2 Create program to share strategies with potential residents/ graduates

5.3 Increase broadband quality and access across the county

5.3.1 Identify targeted priority areas to increase broadband access

5.3.2 Develop relationships with providers to encourage development of broadband access in targeted areas

Objective 05

Strengthen the talent pipeline by improving collaboration, expanding career training, and broadband access.

STATUS

5.1 In Progress- 40%
5.2 In Progress- 40%

5.3 In Progress- 40%

TIMELINE

5.1 ST
5.2 LT

5.3 LT

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

5.1 Coalition formally established by December 2027

5.2 Number of graduates employed in local industries after program completion

5.3 Increased participation in remote work, online courses, or digital business opportunities

PARTNERS

Loogootee/Shoals Community School Corporation, Martin County Alliance for Economic Growth, Local Employers, Loogootee/Shoals Public Library, Purdue Extension, RTC Communications, Local Government, Region 8 Workforce Development Board

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Budget for program development, Grants/local/state funding for workforce programs and broadband expansion



**REGIONAL
OPPORTUNITY
INITIATIVES**

Regional Opportunity Initiatives (ROI) would like to thank all of our county and community partners who participated and devoted many hours to updating the Quality of Place and Workforce Attraction Plans. Meaningful conversations, problem-solving and innovation took place throughout the course of this process. Your continued partnership and collaboration make the Indiana Uplands a region on the move.

We would also like to extend gratitude to all of the residents who participated in townhall meetings and submitted their thoughts on the direction and priorities of their community through the survey tool. This level of engagement steered the local committees in their work.

ROI looks forward to assisting stakeholders throughout the region as the plans' priorities are implemented. Together the Indiana Uplands will continue to build a vibrant and prosperous future for our residents.