

STARKE COUNTY, INDIANA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Public Input Workshop Summary

The first public meeting for the Starke County Comprehensive Plan was held on May 22nd, 2019. This was a free flow style public meeting which was held at in the Commissioner's Room at the County Building Annex. The public meeting started at 6:00pm.

A summary of the response trends is included below, with photos of the actual response boards included at the end of the summary for further reference.

Exercise #1: Visioning Exercises

For this exercise, participants were asked to write down their thoughts and place post-it notes on a board indicating what they like about Starke County, what's missing, how would you describe Starke County today and what hopes you have for the county in the future.

How would you describe Starke County TODAY?

- Underperforming economically
- Low education
- Nice countryside
- Friendly x3 /neighborly
- Rural/small towns x2
- Farming
- Light industry
- A little stuck in the past
- Lack of emphasis on education
- Low wages
- Strong desire to improve things//moving forward x2
- 2 types of communities that sometimes clash- Agriculture vs urban city
- Government buildings in good shape
- New jail
- Needs tweaked

Describe Starke County in TEN YEARS?

- Improved infrastructures x2 (transportation, residential, commercial, industrial)
- Growing the arts and music scene x2
- More tourism at the lakes

- More diversity
- Restaurants
- Better child care and health services
- Vibrant downtowns (small parks, artsy stores, coffee shops and restaurants) x2
- Improved/cleaned up areas- no more shacks!
- Jobs that pay better wages
- County-operated beach with upgrades
- New hospital/health care facilities and ratings x3
- High occupancy in downtown buildings
- New fast food
- Shoe store
- Access to rivers and lakes- beach
- Public transportation
- Public gathering places
- Adequate worker housing
- Good grocery stores and/or co-op grocery & produce
- Prairie trail extended further SE & NW
- Trails connect to city & towns
- Business growth
- Slight population growth

What do you ENJOY MOST in Starke County?

- The lakes x3
- Outdoor opportunities/hunting/fishing x4
- Uncrowded/fewer people/space x2
- Nature/lakes/rivers/wooded areas x3
- Interacting with the people here/neighborly x2
- Safety/low crime x2
- Low traffic
- Small town/rural atmosphere x2
- 4-H
- Yellow River

What is MISSING in Starke County?

- Decent & clean supermarket/Grocery x5
- More community cohesion
- Art opportunities x2
- Cultural Activities
- Access to rivers, lakes beach
- More and improved outdoor rec facilities/parks

- Gathering places for people to meet/engaged spaces
- Working class housing
- Public transportation
- Lack of good restaurants x2 (dairy queen, KFC)
- Unoccupied & poorly maintained downtown buildings
- School enrollment declining/struggling academically
- Update hospital

Exercise #2: What's most important/unimportant to Starke Co?

This exercise asked people to place dots in categories that Starke County should focus on for short term goals.

Top Important Topics:

- Trails and Sidewalks x6
- Quality of Life aspects x6
- Economic Development x6
- Natural Resources x5
- Regionalism x3
- Public Safety x3
- Education & Workforce Development x3

Least Important Topics:

- Roadway Infrastructure
- Utility Infrastructure
- Investment to County wide towns
- Agriculture and Farming
- Gateways

Exercise #3: Land Use Location

For this exercise, participants were asked if new development is encouraged in Starke County, where should those land uses be located?

Areas identified for development:

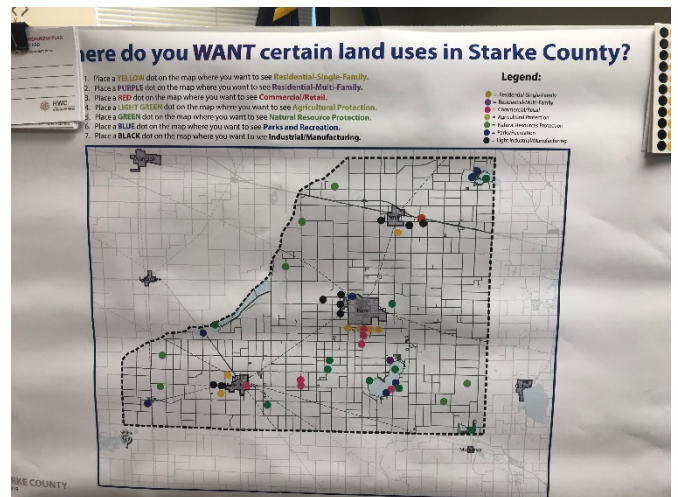
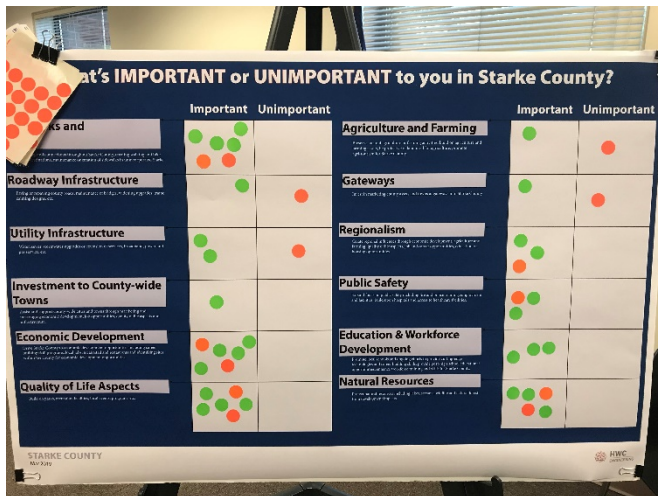
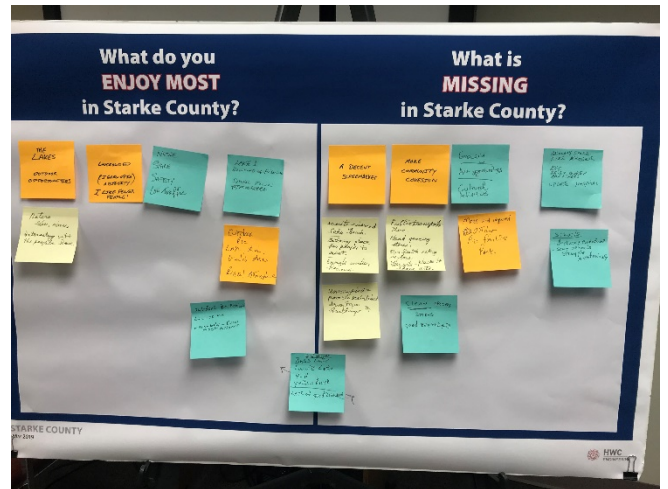
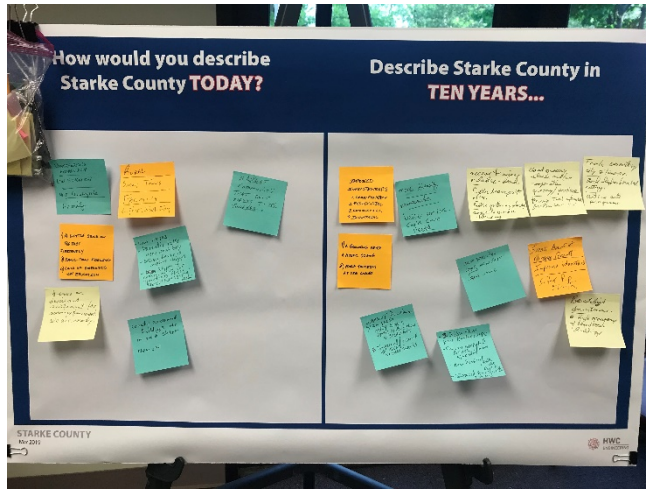
- Single-Family Residential located south of Knox, NW and SW North Judson
- Multi-Family Residential located at San Pierre and around Bass Lake
- Commercial/Retail along US 30 by Hamlet, along US 35 south of Knox, along Bass Lake and SR 10 towards North Judson.
- Agricultural Protection sporadic around county- primarily along western edge of county.
- Natural Resources Protection around Bass Lake, around CR 400/Toto/Monterey
- Parks/Recreation around Koontz Lake, Bass Lake, San Pierre, Knox.
- Light Industrial/Manufacturing located around South/SE Hamlet, NW Knox and West of North Judson

Additional Comments via comment cards

- Utilize the “point” where rivers connect for kayaking and public access
- Need, not desire for broadband service
- No birthing center left in county- need for upgrade/update hospital facility

Public Meeting Board Photos:

Following are photos of some of the meeting participants and photos of the actual response boards from the event.



Public Survey Summary

The Starke County survey received 56 responses total, majority of the responders (26%) have lived in Starke County for over 40 years. Respondents really like that Starke County isn't a big city. It is small and peaceful and provides a different environment compared to larger areas.

What aspects of Starke County are you proud of?

- Small-town/Rural
- People
- Historical
- Sense of community
- Prairie Trail
- Low crime rate
- Nature
- Older/Historic Structures
- Splash Pad

People really appreciate the trail(s) and the nature in Starke County. People also like the safety, history, and the people in the county. People would like the future of Starke County to be thriving, small town, rural, safe, and more employment opportunities.

What are the key issues Starke County is facing today?

- Lack of employment opportunities
- Drugs
- Poverty
- Housing
- No grocery stores

Why do you think people move away from Starke County?

- Jobs
- Housing
- Political differences
- Bigger cities
- Nowhere to shop

Responses with over 50%

55% of respondents disagree that there are enough retail options in Starke County.

50% of respondents disagree that the overall existing housing stock in the county is well maintained.

52% of respondents agree that Starke County can support more living options for seniors.

51% of respondents strongly agree that agriculture should be supported throughout Starke County.

53% disagree that there is a good effort to reuse and redevelop vacant properties.

55% of respondents disagree that there is a clear branding and marketing message for the county.

What makes Starke County better and/or different than other towns?

- Proximity to other areas
- People
- Small towns
- Rural
- Cheaper
- Walking trail

Where do you go for entertainment, shopping, restaurants, and recreation?

- Plymouth
- Valparaiso
- South Bend
- Michigan City

Comment Section

Although a lot of people leave the county for entertainment, a lot of them mentioned that they would like to stay local but can't because lack of amenities. A lot of respondents mention the past and how the community used to be better. There is a lot of opportunity in Starke County and it only needs to be capitalized on.

What are the key issues Starke County is facing today?

Answered: 53 Skipped: 158

RESPONSES (53) WORD CLOUD TAGS (0)

Cloud View List View

Search responses

Customize

education etc grocery stores crime Leadership area
 employment businesses need North Judson Housing
 problem lack opportunities drugs community jobs Meth
 poverty good paying jobs young shopping
 employment opportunities population abandoned good top

What aspects of Starke County are you proud of?

Answered: 49 Skipped: 162

RESPONSES (49) WORD CLOUD TAGS (0)

Cloud View List View

Search responses

Customize

schools county Small NORTH JUDSON community small town town
 much living caring people public trail still family Hamlet
 Safe Small community rural years park