



Chapter 9

Implementation

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Introduction

Compared to implementation, preparing the comprehensive plan is relatively uncomplicated. The real challenge often comes in translating a plan’s vision, goals, and recommendations into the day-to-day operations and actions of City government. The main purpose of the City of Elkhart’s Comprehensive Plan Update is to implement its recommendations,

When the City determines how to implement the Comprehensive Plan’s recommendations, it is important to continuously consider the integrity of the planning process, the community’s values, and why those ideas are so important. A plan is a community’s future. It is the collective will and dreams of its citizens and a community’s duty is to find ways to give it life that keep it true to the vision and maintain its integrity.

A comprehensive plan is comprehensive for a reason – because everything in a living community is interconnected – and it must be implemented in a way that treats its components as part of a whole. It takes great care to make every decision within the context of that basic reality. With these thoughts in mind, this chapter is meant to help a community adopt, implement and update a comprehensive plan and make it available to the public.

Adoption

A local government must prepare a resolution to adopt its comprehensive plan to ensure that it promotes the public health, safety, morals and convenience, order or the general welfare and for the sake of efficiency and economy in the process of development. Typically each Common Council has a process for adopting resolutions and generally involves a public hearing allowing public comment. If residents are actively involved throughout the planning process, the public hearing should go smoothly. Using a resolution, the local government formally adopts the plan – by a simple majority vote. The procedures for adopting a plan are described in Indiana Code, 36-7-4-501. Even with a well-designed planning process, a community may lack consensus on certain issues or, in the worst case, may not have enough support to adopt a plan. In that case, a local government may want to:

- Setup a committee to work through the remaining issues. The committee should have balanced representation from all sides of the issues in dispute and a definite timeline for reporting back its recommendations.
- Recommend further study of the issues with a clear timeline. Through additional study, participants may discover new information that will help them develop a consensus.

- If the community is extremely divided on an issue, it may be necessary to bring in a professional facilitator or a mediator to help it find a solution. Sometimes a community must make tough choices and move on.

Program Administration & Development

The City’s comprehensive plan contains many different recommendations in each Chapter that will be carried out through existing departments and programs. During the creation of this plan, several departments have come together to create this plan. The future implementation of the plan requires the ongoing communication and interaction between these departments. Strong partnerships are needed to foster good communication and provide additional alliances in the implementation of some of these recommendations. The implementers/champions should present the recommendations of this plan formally to the City’s various boards and commissions. Some of the key departments that need to continue to be involved include: Community Development & Redevelopment, Economic Development Department, Neighborhood Associations, Planning & Zoning Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, Street Department, Parks and Recreation, Public Safety and Emergency Management, and the Office of the Mayor. To achieve the vision and goals set forth in this plan, some of the existing programs and policies the City current uses may need to be modified so the policies and recommendations contained herein can be implemented. Some of the recommendations proposed may also require new initiatives for the City. These should be implemented when the necessary resources are available.

As mentioned in Chapter One: Introduction section under “How to Use this Plan,” the plan should be adopted as a matter of land use and redevelopment policy for the City. After the plan is adopted the City should create an implementation task force and include a periodic review of the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan to ensure that it is consistent with the changing environment within the City.

Each department will carry out the recommendations spelled out in Chapter Three and summarized priorities at the end of this chapter. These recommendations will be carried out through day to day policy decisions which will be made by Planning and Engineering staff, Plan Commission and City Council. The future land use map illustrates the targeted redevelopment of areas within the City. To that end, the future land use map, itself, is a visual representation of the recommendations and the future direction of growth. The map is a conceptual snapshot of how the City should look in 20 years in terms of land use. Because of the uncertainty associated with the timing, market conditions, and

location of future development, the administration of this plan will require that Elkhart remain flexible in the possibilities associated with the future development, while still remaining true to the overall intention of this plan.

Interpretation

The Elkhart Comprehensive Plan should serve as Elkhart’s guide for land use and development policies for development and redevelopment in the study area. The long range goals, objectives, and recommendations, along with the supporting maps, are intended to guide development decisions towards the community’s collective vision of the future. Members of the city staff, Plan Commission and City Council should interpret the goals and objectives as a long-term and deliberately broad vision. The commission and council should keep in mind that this plan reflects the community’s values. City officials cannot expect to control all circumstances. However, the spirit of this plan should be adhered to in order to ensure that the community’s values are maintained. The strategic action steps, on the other hand, are intended to direct the day-to-day decisions concerning more specific and task oriented activities. Members of the City Council should interpret the strategic actions steps by saying, “given our long-term goals and changing community conditions, these are the projects and programs that we want to complete in the short-term and long-term, and this is how we plan to accomplish them.” Interpreting the plan in this way will enable the members of both the commission and city to justify their approval, or denial, of any proposed development or redevelopment in Elkhart.

When a new annexation, rezone, planned unit development (PUD), subdivision, or site plan review request is filed with the Planning & Development Department, the City planning staff as well as other city departments should review and evaluate the application against the Elkhart Comprehensive Plan and the City’s ordinances and provide a staff report with a formal recommendation to the Plan Commission regarding its findings. The staff report should include an evaluation of the development and the degree to which the proposed project conforms to the plan’s goals, objectives, recommendations, and future land use, environment & design, economic development, and corridor and character maps.

The Elkhart Comprehensive Plan does not contain the actual decisions that should be made; however, it does serve as a reminder and provide guidance of the community’s collective vision for the future growth and development of this area and should be interpreted as such.

Rezoning

Zoning protects the rights of individual property owners while promoting the general welfare of the community. The purpose of zoning is to locate specific land uses where they are most appropriate. In determining the most appropriate zoning designation, the City must consider such things as public utilities, road access, and the existing or established development pattern of the area in which development is proposed.

In general, the Plan Commission and City Council should consider that a rezone is only justifiable under the following circumstances:

- When the requested rezoning is consistent with long range land use plans adopted by the appropriate governing body
- When there was an error or oversight in the original zoning of the property
- When changes have occurred to conditions in the vicinity of the property which prevent the reasonable use of the property as currently zoned
- When the requested rezoning benefits the community at large

Rezoning should not be granted because of a single hardship expressed by a property owner or group of property owners. The community’s collective vision for the future is not negotiable.

Should the Plan Commission recommend approval to the City Council for numerous rezoning that are substantially inconsistent with the future land use map associated with the Elkhart Comprehensive Plan, the plan should be updated. This is an indication that the area’s conditions, issues and/or priorities have changed.

Implementation Task Force

The Plan Commission and/or City Council should consider appointing an implementation task force to guide the implementation of the plan. It is recommended that this task force be a committee of the Plan Commission and/or the City Council and be appropriately named the “Planning and Zoning Committee”. This task force should spearhead City planning initiatives, interface with the Community Development Department, Public Works and Streets Departments, and provide input on all planning related decisions for the City in accordance with the Elkhart Comprehensive Plan. Such a task force should include project steering committee members, representatives of the City Council, and Redevelopment Commission, Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, planning staff, and citizens. For the implementation of the Plan to be successful, organizations

and agencies assigned to each implementation item must be aware of their role, responsibility, and/or abilities.

Work Plan

The Elkhart Comprehensive Plan covers a broad variety of issues and subject matters. In order to implement the plan, the implementation taskforce should, on an annual basis, prioritize the recommendation and action steps outlined in the plan for that fiscal year and develop a strategy for moving these items forward. This information should be shared and approved by the City Council, since they control the budget for the City. It will be important that this is completed prior to City budgeting time in order to ensure adequate funding is in place if funds are anticipated from the City budget.

Monitoring & Update

Planning does not have a defined beginning and end. It is an on-going process that responds to new information and circumstances and incorporates changing conditions into decisions. Circumstances that may change include physical conditions of buildings and/or infrastructure, economic climate, the natural environment, and social and community goals.

Once the plan is adopted it will need to be revised from time to time to ensure that it stays consistent and relevant to current conditions. It is best that the City continue in the same partnership manner it has to undertake the creation of this plan. An implementation committee should be used to monitor and update this plan. A plan update should occur at intervals of approximately every five years. The purpose of the plan update is to re-evaluate the goals, policies, and strategies contained within this Plan (noting those to change and those to remove), and to develop new policies if necessary to make sure that this Plan is being effective. The plan update process is further described below.

A disciplined schedule for plan review is helpful in plan implementation. Noting areas of the plan’s success helps to build support for future planning activities. The identification of less successful components of the plan may suggest a need for refinement and/or amendment. The City Council, in a joint work session with the Plan Commission, should therefore conduct a thorough annual review of the plan, asking whether the conditions on which the plan was predicated still hold true. An annual “report card” should be prepared by the City staff which reviews and documents the activities of the Redevelopment Commission, Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, and City Council that are relevant to Elkhart.

Also, prior to preparing the annual City operating budget, an assessment should be completed that documents the impacts of

the plan implementation activities. This assessment should consist of the following:

- Major differences between projected economic and demographic growth rates and actual growth
- Necessary adjustments to the implementation tools and techniques - these may be brought on by changes in state legislature, etc.
- Deviations by the Redevelopment Commission or Plan Commission from the plan, and why those deviations were made
- Requests for amendments to the plan, in order to determine if there is a pattern of requested changes emerging
- Changes in the local/regional political structure that may affect the implementation of the plan
- Identifying the programs and projects completed that were identified in the plan.
- For each implementing program/project, develop criteria that can be used to measure the effectiveness of the program, apply those criteria, and write a report summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of the program
- Identify new programs, if any, that could be implemented

A separate process exists for amendments to the Plan. The City should perform amendments on a yearly or periodic basis as needed. This plan amendment should be at the recommendation of the implementation committee. Plan amendments may include revisions to one or more sections of this plan as a result of changes within the market, infrastructure, a specific issue/policy change or change in state law. Plan amendments may include changes to the land use plan map or may be as small as correcting text. The process for making these amendments is described below.

Plan Update Process

This plan should be updated at least every five (5) years, unless otherwise directed by the Plan Commission or Common Council. This is important, especially since the land use plan focuses on redevelopment of key core areas and large parcels in the City. The City's prime consideration in making a determination of when an update should be initiated, should include what changes have occurred since the Plan was last updated. These changes may be in such areas as the economy, the environment, changes in administration, traffic congestion, jurisdictional priorities, projected growth or something else significant. The plan update should include a thorough review and evaluation of the vision

and development policies contained within Chapter 3 of the plan. Within that review, each development policy should be reviewed for achievement, in process or lack of relevancy. Policies that have been achieved or are not relevant should be changed or removed from the plan. New policies should be developed, if necessary, to accommodate any changes in conditions and ensure the plan is still effective. A plan update should also include a thorough review of the validity of all the information contained within the plan and should include extensive opportunities for involvement by the public, boards and commissions, elected and appointed officials, staff and other affected interests.

Plan Amendment Process

Plan amendments should be considered when the overall vision and development policies still remain. This process should be undertaken when changes are needed to specific redevelopment parcels, as identified in this plan, or a stretch of road that might be changed. An amendment should be considered only when it will not change the overall vision or development principals established. The amendment would be in accordance to IC 36-7-500 series and occur as follows:

- The City’s Plan Commission would give notice for a public hearing for an amendment to the jurisdiction’s Comprehensive Plan in accordance with IC 5-3-1
- Hold a public meeting(s) and approve the amendment by certifying the Comprehensive Plan amendment to the appropriate jurisdiction’s legislative body
- A resolution shall be adopted by the appropriate jurisdictional legislative bodies

Fiscal Considerations

The implementation of the comprehensive plan will require the City’s financial commitment and support to carry out the policies and achieve the vision and goals set forth herein. These financial commitments should include existing programs and policies the city currently has in place. Although it is the City’s intent to administer this plan with the current financial resources available, monies may need to be set aside in future budgets to carry out some of the recommended actions. The adoption of the Comprehensive Plan does not authorize expenditures for its implementation. The City Council, in accordance with state statutes and the City policies, may authorize the financial resources to implement the plan.

Funding may be available from outside sources. When opportunities become available and make sense financially, the City should seek these funds through federal, state or local grants, loans and other financial resources. This may also include the city

investing in sending a staff member to be certified by the state in some granting programs, Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA), for example.

Tools

In today's current economy, development has slowed tremendously from the pattern from the late 90's and early 2000's. Cities will not see the housing boom again and many today have to cope with foreclosures and an overabundance of housing stock. As noted in Chapter 2 Process & Methodology, the City of Elkhart's Housing Condition is fairly stable and there is not a large gap between the supply and demand of housing. However, the City has the largest percentage of housing (almost 44%) in the value range of \$50,000 to \$100,000.

In terms of industrial and commercial development, the trends in the City have shown that these land uses have decreased. In terms of the tax base, this has been a hard hit for the City's budget. However issues of over commercialization of Elkhart's corridor and environmental issues on industrial property have left large areas of redevelopment potential within the City. With this slowdown in the economy, while difficult for the City, an opportunity exists to redefine areas and put the City in a position for strong redevelopment and the creation of jobs when the economy recovers.

While the City is struggling, it should be cautious in terms of just accepting any development. Any development occurring should be considered appropriate and consistent with the direction that Elkhart desires and is stated in the Comprehensive Plan. The City should evaluate development on a case by case basis. Since the economy is in recovery mode, infill or targeted economic development will need incentives to help make it spur development. There are a variety of tools and mechanisms that the city can use to help attract this growth.

The purpose of this section is to provide a list of tools that can be used to implement the plan. In some cases the City is already using some tools, in other cases there are other options and incentives that the City can employ to implement the vision of this plan and spur economic redevelopment. Below is a discussion of the tools out there that the City could use:

Loans and Grants

Federal

The Federal Government has many different loan and grant programs through many of its federal agencies that may assist in the implementation of this plan.

Economic Development Administration (EDA) – The EDA is a department under the Department of Commerce. Their mission is to promote the federal economic development agenda by promoting innovation and competitiveness, preparing American regions for growth and success in the worldwide economy. The EDA has many different granting programs to implement both planning and infrastructure projects. This information can be found on the EDA’s website at WWW.EDA.GOV. As discussed in Chapter 7, Elkhart has a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. That document will be critical in the seeking of grants. The following grant programs are currently available under the EDA program:

FY 2012 EDAP FFO: Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs opportunity: *Synopsis taken from Grant Announcement:* EDA supports development in economically distressed areas of the United States by fostering job creation and attracting private investment. Specifically, under this FFO, EDA will consider construction, non-construction, and revolving loan fund investments under the Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance programs. Grants made under these programs will leverage regional assets to support the implementation of regional economic development strategies designed to create jobs, leverage private capital, encourage economic development, and strengthen America’s ability to compete in the global marketplace. Under this FFO, EDA solicits applications from rural and urban communities to develop initiatives that advance new ideas and creative approaches to address rapidly evolving economic conditions.

EDA’s Planning and Local Technical Assistance Programs: *Synopsis taken from Grant Announcement:* Under the Planning program EDA assists eligible recipients in creating regional economic development plans designed to stimulate and guide the economic development efforts of a community or region. As part of this program, EDA supports Partnership Planning investments to facilitate the development, implementation, revision, or replacement of Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS), which articulate and prioritize the strategic economic goals of recipients’ respective regions. In general, EDA provides Partnership Planning grants to the designated planning organization (e.g., District Organization) serving EDA-designated Economic Development Districts to enable these organizations to develop and implement relevant CEDS. In addition, EDA provides Partnership Planning grants to Indian Tribes to help develop and implement CEDS and associated economic development activities. The Planning program also helps support planning organizations, including District Organizations, Indian Tribes, and other eligible

Recipients, with Short Term and State Planning investments designed to guide the eventual creation and retention of higher-skill, higher-wage jobs, particularly for the unemployed and underemployed in the Nation’s most economically distressed regions. The Local Technical Assistance program strengthens the capacity of local or State organizations, institutions of higher education, and other eligible recipients to undertake and promote effective economic development programs through projects such as feasibility analyses and impact studies.

Housing & Urban Development (HUD): HUD’s mission, as stated on their website (WWW.HUD.GOV) it to create strong, sustainable inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all. HUD has been instrumental in dealing with Elkhart’s housing issues by providing funding to update plans, purchase properties, rebuild and renovate homes. The majority of Elkhart’s housing funding comes from the Community Development Block Grant Fund (CDBG). HUD has been in partnership with DOT and EPA to provide funding for the Sustainable Communities Initiative, Choice Neighborhood Planning Grants and Livable Communities Grant. The department also has grants for the Fair Housing Initiatives Program, and other programs. The best way to monitor this is to work with Elkhart’s Community Development Manager, Crystal Welsh, and monitor HUD’s website.

Department of Transportation (DOT): The DOT’s primary mission is to support the United States Highway system, airport system, transit system among other areas. However they also provide funding to states who thereby provide funding to the Indiana MPO’s. Besides general funding, the DOT also accepts applications for other grants such as the HUD/EPA/DOT joint programs of sustainable communities, choice neighborhood programs, and livable communities grants. The DOT also has calls for TIGER Grants, FHWA Highway Grants, Transportation Safety grants, FTA Grants and FAA spaceport grants. More information of these grants can be found on DOT’s website at WWW.DOT.GOV. Like the other federal grant process, it is imperative that the City work with MACOG as they will keep abreast of these initiatives.

State

Shovel Ready Program: The Indiana Economic Development Corporation helps communities certify economic development sites as “ready for development.” The program is aimed at helping companies locate and develop a site quickly. Indiana’s Shovel Ready Program has a series of criteria that qualify a site to be shovel ready. Grant funding for this program can be found at <http://iedc.in.gov/programs-initiatives/indiana-shovel-ready-program>.

Industrial Development Grant Fund: This Indiana Economic Development Corporation program provides financial support for infrastructure improvements in conjunction with projects creating jobs and generating capital investment in Indiana. This program would apply to a company located in Indiana that was to expand or locate a new facility. The funds from this program would need to be matched by Elkhart and the company. Grant funding for this program can be found at: <http://iedc.in.gov/programs-initiatives/industrial-development-grant-fund>.

Indiana Brownfields Program: This Indiana Finance Authority program provides educational, financial, technical and legal assistance to identify and mitigate environmental barriers that prevent the utilization of potential development sites. Grants and loans are available. The program website is www.in.gov/ifa/brownfields/.

Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE) Program: This Indiana Economic Development Corporation program is a refundable tax credit program that rewards companies creating jobs and contributing to the growth of Indiana’s economy. EDGE credits are calculated as a percentage of payroll tax withholding for net new Indiana jobs. EDGE credits may be awarded for a period of up to 10 years. The website for this program is: <http://iedc.in.gov/tax-credits-exemptions/economic-development-for-a-growing-economy-tax-credit>.

Venture Capital Investment Credit: This Indiana Economic Development Corporation program was established to improve access to capital to fast growing Indiana companies by providing individual and corporate investors an incentive to invest in new firms. To participate in the program, businesses must enroll. Investors who provide qualified debt or equity capital to enrolled firms receive a credit against their Indiana income tax liability. The website for this program is: <http://iedc.in.gov/tax-credits-exemptions/economic-development-for-a-growing-economy-tax-credit>.

Hoosier Alternative Fuel Vehicle Manufacturer Tax Credit: The purpose of this program is to provide job creation and higher wages for Indiana businesses who help reduce the energy dependency and help to reduce air pollution due to the manufacturing or assembly of alternative fuel vehicles in Indiana. This program provides a tax credit to those businesses who manufacture alternative fuel vehicles. The business must compensate its employees at least 150 percent of the state’s hourly minimum wage and agree to maintain operations for at least 10 years. More about the program can be found at the website: <http://iedc.in.gov/tax-credits-exemptions/hoosier-alternative-fuel-vehicle-manufacturer-tax-credit>.

Hoosier Business Investment Tax Credit: HBI Tax Credit provides incentive to businesses to support jobs creation, capital investment and to improve the standard of living for Indiana residents. The non-refundable corporate income tax credits are calculated as a percentage of the eligible capital investment to support the project. The credit may be certified annually, based on the phase-in of eligible capital investment, over a period of two full calendar years from the commencement of the project. More about the program can be found at the website: <http://iedc.in.gov/tax-credits-exemptions/hoosier-business-investment-tax-credit>.

Industrial Recovery Tax Credit: The Industrial Recovery tax credit provides an incentive for companies to invest in facilities requiring significant rehabilitation or remodeling expense. After a building has been designated as an industrial recovery site, companies may be eligible for a tax credit calculated as a percentage of qualified rehabilitation expense. This particular program would be ideal for many of Elkhart’s industrial buildings. More information can be found on the website: <http://iedc.in.gov/tax-credits-exemptions/industrial-recovery-tax-credit>.

Loan Guaranty Program (IEDC): This Indiana Economic Development Corporation program provides loan guarantees to lenders for the benefit of a high-growth/high-skilled company, manufacturer, rural development project, value-added agricultural enterprise or another type of business that creates or retains a significant number of Hoosier jobs. For rural development and value-added agricultural projects, the guaranty is \$300,000. The guaranty for high-growth/high-skilled companies and manufacturing projects may be up to a maximum of 75%-90% of the principal balance of the loan, depending on the collateral. The website for this program is: www.in.gov/iedc/LoanGuarantyProgram.htm.

Certified Technology Parks: This Indiana Economic Development Corporation program supports the attraction and growth of high-technology business in Indiana and promotes technology transfer opportunities. Designation as a Certified Tech Park allows for the local recapture of certain state and local tax revenue which can be invested in the development of the park. The website for this program is: <http://iedc.in.gov/programs-initiatives/indiana-certified-technology-parks>.

Indiana 21st Century Research and Technology Fund: The Indiana 21st Century Research and Technology Fund was created to stimulate the diversification of the state economy by developing and commercializing advanced technologies in Indiana. Grant funds are available. This program operates under the leadership of the Indiana Economic Development Corporation. [<http://www.elevateventures.org/>]

Façade Improvement Program

With a façade improvement program, the City would provide both technical and financial assistance to Elkhart property owners or business tenants who are seeking to renovate or restore commercial, historic residential or industrial building facades and associated elements, including signage and lighting. The program’s purpose would be to support the vitality of the City of Elkhart’s designated commercial, historic or targeted redevelopment sites and to encourage re-investment and redevelopment throughout the area by improving the appearance of existing buildings and other elements associated with the appearance of the property (ie signs and lights). The program would need to limit the improvements to such items as window and door repair, repair and restoration of historic architectural details, painting, removal of siding or other elements that would bring the building back to its original design, storefront rehabilitation, repair/replace awnings; façade lighting; signs; masonry repairs/tuck pointing; and major landscape improvements consistent with city improved streets.

Tax Phase-In

The tax phase-in is the gradual collection of property taxes on new improvements to real estate and/or personal property during a designated number of years. Personal property that is eligible for the incentive includes equipment for manufacturing, research and development, logistic distribution, and information technology. The phase-in may extend from one to ten years.

Application for a phase-in begins with city staff meeting with the potential recipient to determine the firm’s needs. The applicant then formally submits paperwork for review by staff. The application is scored by staff members, who determine the number of years for which the phase-in should be offered. The Common Council retains final authority to either approve or deny the phase-in application.

This is currently an incentive program the City implements.

Tax Abatement

Tax abatement is a tool used by local governments to spur on private development and lure companies to locate in their jurisdiction. Tax abatement is used to help spur job creation by exempting a portion or all of assessed value from hitting the tax rolls of a new development. Tax abatements can be granted for both new construction and for redevelopment projects (rehabilitation of an existing building or redevelopment of a site into a new use). Additionally, the City has the opportunity to provide property tax abatements on equipment for manufacturing and laboratory uses and/or computer equipment for experimental research and

development laboratories that have not been previously taxed in Indiana. Tax abatement can be granted for up to ten years and is typically developed on a graduated scale to come back onto the tax rolls. In order to offer tax abatement, the City will have to implement four tasks including:

1. Eligibility Requirements – property must be characterized as either undesirable for normal development or designated as an economic revitalization area and an application tailored to Elkhart’s tax abatement process should be filled out prior to any development or personal property being purchased.
2. Evaluation, Recommendation and Public Process – evaluate application, determine if any conditions should be met prior to the granting of tax abatement (wage level, number of jobs, clean industry, etc.), prepare resolution for approval, and hold preliminary and confirmatory public hearing.
3. Post Approval Requirements – after construction has been completed and new assessment has been determined, property owner is required to file additional paperwork with the county auditor.
4. Annually Monitor Program – property owner is required to file additional paperwork with the county auditor 60 days after the end of each year. The City Council should review information to ensure that the property owner is compliant with the conditions of the abatement.

The City currently uses the Tax Phase-In in a similar manner as tax abatement.

Aurora Capital Loan Program

The Aurora Capital program finances the rehabilitation and construction of commercial real estate in the heart of the city. The maximum loan amount for work is \$50,000 with a fixed interest rate of 2.5 percent.

The objective of the loan pool is to stimulate physical improvements to small businesses in downtown Elkhart. Funds shall be used only for downtown development projects. Program guidelines mandate that each project: be located within a specific boundary area, be compatible with the Redevelopment Plan, and have a substantial positive impact on the downtown area. Funds can be used for development of market rate housing – but not low-income housing – and projects must incorporate at least partial office or commercial uses.

This is currently an incentive program the City implements.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

TIF is a funding technique that takes advantage of development or redevelopment to pay public infrastructure costs or other improvements within a designated area. The tax increment is the difference in the tax capacity and tax revenues generated after development has occurred compared with the tax capacity and tax revenues previously generated. The City then uses this “captured increment” to pay or repay incurred public costs that are eligible expenditures, including acquiring property, removing structures, utility improvements, streetscape improvements, additional studies, etc. The City currently uses TIF and has seven active TIF districts as noted in Chapter Seven, Economic Development.

It has been the general policy of the City to use TIF only for commercial, office and industrial redevelopment to help pay for needed improvements through tax increment financing. The City typically pays for the infrastructure improvements prior to the development build out. This puts the city at a bit of risk, and especially within this current economic climate, of paying for infrastructure projects without the guarantee that the development will materialized.

One of the options the City could consider is the “pay as you go” approach. In this particular scenario, the City puts the onus on the development rather than taking the risk themselves. In this situation, the City would reimburse the developer for those agreed upon and eligible project costs after the development has been constructed. Using this type of approach ensures that increments will be generated from the new construction and the City does not issue bonds for financing a project. TIF is an implementation device for economic development and redevelopment and is currently used by the City.

Regulatory Controls & Policy

Zoning & Subdivision Control Ordinance Updates

The Elkhart Comprehensive Plan is a statement of policy and it is not a regulatory document. The most common regulatory means for implementing the plan include zoning and subdivision ordinances. Zoning is the most direct method for regulating land use. In addition to restricting uses, zoning ordinances also dictate the bulk of development (typically through height requirements, floor-area ratios, etc.) and its site placement (typically through the use of building lot setbacks). The subdivision ordinance relies on the right of municipalities to regulate the subdivision of land, and places the burden of implementing public infrastructure directly on the developer.

Currently the zoning for the City is managed through Elkhart’s Planning Department as well as the Plan Commission. Therefore, the City should consider revising its ordinances to be consistent with the recommendations of this plan.

Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

The CIP is a planning document that covers a timeframe of three to five years, and is updated annually and implements the comprehensive plan by providing the necessary funding for short-range infrastructure and capital improvement projects. The document provides guidance and planning for capital improvements throughout the city and allocates financial resources to various community needs and requests. The document states the City Council’s prioritization of the financial resources available for capital project spending by identifying which projects should be included, when they should be constructed and how they will be financed.

This plan represents the City’s tentative commitment to comply with the plan unless circumstances or priorities change in the future. The commitment is more certain in the first year of the CIP and becomes increasingly more tenuous in subsequent years. Nevertheless, the CIP should be used as the City’s present plan and priority over the next three to five years. Even though the CIP is a planning document, it should not be an automatic authorization of the construction of projects, because of the procurement process and the allocation of resources.

This would be a new program for the City to implement.

Infrastructure Replacement Plan and Policy (IRPP)

Planning and providing financing for capital replacement costs is a difficult challenge for the City during this economic climate. Determining replacement costs involves evaluating assets and their expected useful lives, projecting replacement costs, examples of financing options, determining bonding levels, estimating users fees and tax levies and evaluating impacts on property owners. This issue is addressed through the annual budgeting process as well as using the CIP (discussed above). While both of these approaches are important components of any capital planning process, neither provides enough information about long-term replacement needs.

Therefore, planning for Elkhart’s long term replacement needs is even more essential to support the redevelopment targeted in this plan. Typically, in the past, as an incentive the City’s policy has been to pay for replacement costs of infrastructure through TIF, tax levies or through the general budget. The City may need

to consider special assessments to an area to cover some of the replacement costs if TIF or general funds are not available.

To respond to these issues, the City Council may want to create and adopt an infrastructure replacement plan and policy for the city. This plan would describe the city’s policy and conditions necessary in paying for replacement infrastructure. The plan would also present information derived through analysis of replacement needs over the next fifty years. Examining future needs well in advance, and consistent with the redevelopment objectives of this plan, will allow the City to develop strategies for meeting future demands. The infrastructure replacement policy requires a long-term analysis of replacement needs in an effort to:

- Moderate changes in tax levies
- Manage debt levels
- Predict and plan for future debt issuance
- Maintain quality services
- Limit the use of special assessment

This would be a new program for the City to implement.

Housing Program

The recommendations support initiatives to conserve and rehabilitate sound housing and to broaden housing opportunities for the residents of Elkhart. The recommendations in this plan support the initiatives of the Housing Needs Assessment Update (April 2010). The future land use map illustrates appropriate areas for housing. For detailed implementation measures regarding Elkhart’s housing stock, the implementation task force of the comprehensive plan should refer to the 2012 Housing Needs Assessment Update.

Private Land Use Decision

The Plan guides landowners in the City of Elkhart. If landowners want to use their land in a new way, they need to identify the zoning district in which the property is located, and determine whether the zoning regulations allow the development of the proposed land use. If not, the owner needs to examine the Comprehensive Plan concerning the property, since a change in zoning must be consistent with the intent of the Plan.

Deteriorating Properties

As Elkhart continues to recover from the effects of the recession on its local economy and the increased vacancy in buildings and land due to the closing of businesses, the City will need to assess and address deteriorating properties. These properties could be

considered to be “eyesores” within the community and impact the success of economic development efforts. There are a few action steps that the City could undertake to mitigate any potential “community eyesores.” These action steps include the following:

1. Create and Adopt a Design and Aesthetics Overlay Ordinance
 - Conduct aesthetics and design survey within the downtown, existing overlay districts and key targeted redevelopment properties.
 - Determine appropriate design and aesthetic treatments for the various areas within the community and key redevelopment sites.
 - Develop overlay district that would correspond to each area where it would be implemented.
 - Determine how improvements would occur whether it be through public, private, or a combination of mechanisms.
 - Adopt Aesthetics Overlay Ordinance.
2. Create a formalized list of unsafe buildings, under-utilized properties and key properties for redevelopment.
 - Identify/inventory buildings.
 - Prioritize worst cases.
 - Determine if design & aesthetics overlay would be pertinent to implement on identified property.
 - Begin outreach to property/business owners to determine clean-up/aesthetic treatments.
 - Determine if formal code enforcement is needed. Consider litigation if necessary.
 - Incentivize compliance by property owner to clean up properties/site by providing tax incentives, disposal assistance, mitigation assistance, infrastructure improvements, or partnership to create redevelopment plans.
3. The City should develop a more formalized pursuit of non-conformities and obsolete uses.
 - Identify/inventory buildings which are obsolete & uses that are conformity/compatibility issues.
 - Prioritize worst cases/biggest offenders.

- Determine higher/better use for sites which could be just green space, tree production, sod production, solar field, community facility, etc.
 - Determine relocation opportunities of businesses into zoning districts or industrial parks that are planned for such uses.
 - Incentivize relocation or removal including moving assistance, tax incentives, disposal assistance, mitigation assistance, break on permit fees/utility permits and connection fees.
 - Determine who can take title to land if current owner wants to sell, or make donation.
4. Consider de-annexation.
- The City should have conversations with the County to determine if County is interested in taking back excess land.
 - Prior to any de-annexation, the City should confirm that if de-annexation occurs it does not create legal issues for City in the future if failure to comply with annexation ordinance or associated “Fiscal Plan” ever occurred.

Goals & Recommendations Prioritization

Throughout this comprehensive plan, several goals and recommendations were made. As mentioned in this chapter, this plan is a 20 year document and therefore, not all of the recommendations can and should be implemented at one time. The purpose of this section is to summarize the goals and recommendations and identify what tools are needed to implement the recommendations. The table below also spells out who, whether public or private, should be involved in the implementation of that particular recommendation. A lead entity is identified with the support entities listed below it. It is anticipated that the lead entity will spearhead that particular recommendation and involve the support entities to assist. The level of importance and level of difficulty help to prioritize the recommendations along with the timeline for implementation. The level of importance signifies how important the recommendation is to the City’s vision in regards to the series of recommendations under the goal. A high importance obviously increases the priority whereas a low priority means that the recommendation is one of the last ones to be implemented. The level of difficulty indicates how difficult a recommendation is to implement. A level one means there are little to no challenges or constraints to implement the recommendation. If the level of difficulty is coupled with the high level of importance, then the recommendation becomes

one of the top recommendations under that goal to implement first. However, if a level of difficulty is four, it means there are a number of challenges to implement and it will likely take some time before the recommendation can be fully implemented. If a high level of difficulty is coupled with a high level of importance then the recommendation will be a higher priority but may take longer to implement, whereas a low importance and a high level of difficulty makes that recommendation one of the last ones to be implemented as noted by the timeframe. There is nothing to say, however, that a recommendation must fall within the suggested timeline for implementation.

DOWNTOWN/CULTURAL GOAL: Continue revitalization of Elkhart’s downtown to re-establish itself as a center of commercial, civic, cultural, and social activity.

Downtown is a part of Elkhart’s iconic identity. In most communities, the economic health and vitality of a city is gauged by the condition of its downtown. Revitalization of Downtown Elkhart has been a continuous effort for more than a decade. Elkhart’s citizens and City leadership have indicated on numerous occasions that downtown is important and should be an economic development priority for the community. Downtown has many residential, retail, and commercial space competitors throughout Elkhart and the Michiana Region. Responding to this competition and downtown’s competitive advantages, the *Comprehensive*

GOAL: Continue revitalization of Elkhart’s downtown to re-establish itself as a center of commercial, civic, cultural, and social activity.					
DOWNTOWN/CULTURAL	Recommendation	What tools are needed to implement this recommendation? <i>(Potential options listed)</i>	Responsibility: Who is the lead? Who is the support?	Level of Importance Level of Difficulty <i>1 to 4 (1 has no or relatively few challenges or constraints, 4 has multiple & significant challenges or constraints)</i>	Timeline for Implementation
	Promote mixed-use occupancy in downtown buildings and judiciously permit uses that support the intentions outlined in the Downtown Action Agenda.	ZO update Incentive zoning	LEAD Downtown Elkhart, Inc. SUPPORT Business community, Redevelopment Commission, City Planning	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Short (0-5 years)
	Scale and design new structures to be compatible with adjacent buildings and context.	ZO update Overlay zoning City as Developer Public/private partnership	LEAD City Planning SUPPORT Private developers	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Short (0-5 years)

DOWNTOWN/CULTURAL	<p>Create development opportunity for live/work spaces in downtown buildings.</p> <p>Note: more Class A office space is needed</p>	<p>City is currently doing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City as Developer Incentive zoning Public/private partnership Website devoted to downtown properties Revolving loan (SBC) Financial incentives 	<p>LEAD</p> <p>City Economic Development</p> <p>SUPPORT</p> <p>Business community, brokers, private developers</p>	<p>High Med Low</p> <p>1 2 3 4</p>	<p>Short (0-5 years)</p>
	<p>Clear unkempt properties to create turn-key sites for business location in priority areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City clearance Violation program City as Developer Non-profit task Public/private partnership Shovel Ready program Greening of City 	<p>LEAD</p> <p>City Economic Development</p> <p>SUPPORT</p> <p>Redevelopment Commission</p>	<p>High Med Low</p> <p>1 2 3 4</p>	<p>Short (0-5 years)</p>
	<p>Establish cooperative agreements between the City and private property/business owners to advance Elkhart's downtown revitalization efforts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public/private partnership Infrastructure improvements Financial incentives Revolving loan 	<p>LEAD</p> <p>Redevelopment Commission</p> <p>SUPPORT</p> <p>Downtown Elkhart, Inc.</p>	<p>High Med Low</p> <p>1 2 3 4</p>	<p>Short (0-5 years)</p>
	<p>Continue support of Downtown Elkhart, Inc.</p> <p>Note: need to re-establish the professional downtown management organization.</p> <p>Need a downtown business association.</p> <p>DEI has a narrower focus than Elkhart Centre???</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial incentives Infrastructure improvements Shovel Ready program 	<p>LEAD</p> <p>City Economic Development</p> <p>SUPPORT</p> <p>Downtown businesses</p>	<p>High Med Low</p> <p>1 2 3 4</p>	<p>Short (0-5 years)</p>
	<p>Update the downtown plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultants Internal update 	<p>LEAD</p> <p>City Planning, Redevelopment Commission</p> <p>SUPPORT</p> <p>Downtown businesses, Downtown Elkhart, Inc.</p>	<p>High Med Low</p> <p>1 2 3 4</p>	<p>Short (0-5 years)</p>

Plan Update recommends preparing downtown properties for a streamlined redevelopment process, capitalizing on downtown’s unique qualities, enhancing downtown’s civic, cultural, and social niche, and assisting the downtown management organization. The *Comprehensive Plan Update* supports the previous planning endeavors, in particular the 2004 *Downtown Action Agenda*, which outline strategies for downtown redevelopment, revitalization, and organizational initiatives.

NEIGHBORHOODS GOAL: Direct investment, amenities, and new housing development to established residential areas within the City’s boundaries to create additional opportunities for diverse ages, income levels, and stages of life in neighborhoods of choice.

Neighborhoods are the places where everyday life occurs. They create and form communities and flourish with the availability of quality and proximate housing, schools, jobs, health care, public safety, retail, and services. Elkhart’s residential population has experienced a modest increase since 2000. The demand for new housing, however, is stagnant and older neighborhoods near the center of the City are continuing to experience high vacancy rates. Residential growth has occurred primarily through annexation of subdivisions in suburban areas adjacent to Elkhart’s outer City limits. The *Comprehensive Plan Update* emphasizes the need and desire to maintain and reinvest in existing residential neighborhoods within the existing City limits. This maintenance and reinvestment involves physical improvements to housing stock and gateways, public and private sector financial commitments, revised review and approval processes, and programmatic support to reinforce Elkhart’s residential neighborhoods. Through these various means, it is important to provide housing products at various price points that appeal to homebuyers and renters that demand a quality home in or near the center city.

Housing in the City of Elkhart should be affordable and attractive to all citizens, regardless of income or whether they rent or own their homes. The following action steps provide guidance to City policy and decision-makers to support the Neighborhoods Goal. Policy development requires the leadership and commitment of Elkhart City officials and collaboration with other partners. It is not solely up to the City to implement the following action steps; however, it is necessary that the City create an environment that is conducive to success in this area by dedicating more resources to organizing efforts, setting guidelines, and enforcing ordinances to enhance and promote assets, creating and maintaining partnerships, and galvanizing stakeholders. Neighborhood associations are the essential partners in accomplishing the action steps.

<p>GOAL: Direct investment, amenities, and new housing development to established residential areas within the City’s boundaries to create additional opportunities for diverse ages, income levels, and stages of life in neighborhoods of choice.</p>						
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>What tools are needed to implement this recommendation? <i>(Potential options listed)</i></p>	<p>Responsibility:</p>		<p>Level of Importance</p>	<p>Timeline for Implementation</p>	
		<p>Who is the lead?</p>	<p>Who is the support?</p>	<p>Level of Difficulty <i>1 to 4 (1 has no or relatively few challenges or constraints, 4 has multiple & significant challenges or constraints)</i></p>		
<p>NEIGHBORHOODS</p>	<p>Dedicate efforts and funding to improving current “at risk” residential neighborhoods with the highest potential for long-term stability.</p>	<p>Financial incentives Neighborhood assessment program Infrastructure improvements</p>	<p>LEAD City Community Development</p>	<p>SUPPORT Public Works</p>	<p>High Med Low 1 2 3 4</p>	<p>Short (0-5 years)</p>
	<p>Address vacant residential properties to reduce any adverse effects of abandoned properties on stable neighborhoods.</p>	<p>Greening of City City demolition Vacancy ordinance Update Minimum Housing Ordinance Violation program</p>	<p>LEAD City Community Development</p>	<p>SUPPORT Public Works Building Code</p>	<p>High Med Low 1 2 3 4</p>	<p>Short (0-5 years)</p>
	<p>Develop a program to create and maintain neighborhood entrances and common areas in areas that do not have a homeowners association.</p>	<p>Greening of City Infrastructure improvements Financial incentives to neighborhoods</p>	<p>LEAD City Community Development</p>	<p>SUPPORT Public Works</p>	<p>High Med Low 1 2 3 4</p>	<p>Medium (5-10 Years)</p>
	<p>Create or re-establish and promote neighborhood identities. Note: sense of belonging/pride in ownership.</p>	<p>Neighborhood assessment program Neighborhood plans</p>	<p>LEAD City Community Development</p>	<p>SUPPORT Public Works</p>	<p>High Med Low 1 2 3 4</p>	<p>Short (0-5 years)</p>
	<p>Establish residential design guidelines for infill housing construction on lots within established neighborhoods.</p>	<p>ZO updates Design guidelines Infill policy</p>	<p>LEAD City Planning</p>	<p>SUPPORT City Community Development</p>	<p>High Med Low 1 2 3 4</p>	<p>Long (10-20 Years)</p>
	<p>Prepare specific neighborhood revitalization plans and implementation strategies for targeted neighborhoods.</p>	<p>Neighborhood assessment program Neighborhood plans Public infrastructure</p>	<p>LEAD City Community Development</p>	<p>SUPPORT City Planning, Public Works</p>	<p>High Med Low 1 2 3 4</p>	<p>Short (0-5 years)</p>

MOBILITY GOAL: Establish and maintain a balanced and connected system for all modes of transportation within the City and to regional networks.

Elkhart’s transportation system includes air, rail, water, and surface. A balanced transportation system provides opportunity for all means of travel in a cooperative and coordinated manner to meet the needs of the community. It also fully integrates with adjacent land uses, serves the travel demands and desires of citizens, and is compatible with the natural environment. A transportation system that provides safe, convenient, and efficient movement of traffic is vital to a community’s well-being. It has significant influence on the appearance, character, and economic viability and is an important consideration when current and future land use decisions are made. It affects the “where, when, and way” that development takes place and creates access to markets, employment, and investment.

The *Comprehensive Plan Update’s* recommendations pertaining to mobility include strategies that increase efficiency and safety while meeting the access and needs of all motorized and non-motorized modes of transportation. These recommendations are intended to assist public officials, developers, and other interested parties in making decisions relating to land use, public right-of-way improvements, funding opportunities, future public investment, and other transportation issues.

GOAL: Establish and maintain a balanced and connected system for all modes of transportation within the City and to regional networks.														
MOBILITY	Recommendation	What tools are needed to implement this recommendation? <i>(Potential options listed)</i>	Responsibility: Who is the lead? Who is the support?	Level of Importance Level of Difficulty <i>1 to 4 (1 has no or relatively few challenges or constraints, 4 has multiple & significant challenges or constraints)</i>	Timeline for Implementation									
		Incorporate facilities for all modes of transportation into road resurfacing and reconstruction projects. Note: not enough ROW to create safe bike/ped facilities along all existing roads.	CIP Infrastructure replacement plan & policy	LEAD Public Works SUPPORT	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>High</td> <td>Med</td> <td>Low</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>4</td> </tr> </table>	High	Med	Low	1	2	3			4
High	Med	Low												
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	Install bicycle lanes along the routes recommended by the Pedal Panel.	CIP Financial incentives DPW Standard Construction Specifications update	LEAD Public Works SUPPORT	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>High</td> <td>Med</td> <td>Low</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>4</td> </tr> </table>	High	Med	Low	1	2	3			4	Short (0-5 years)
High	Med	Low												
1	2	3												
		4												

MOBILITY	<p>Install sidewalks within all residential neighborhoods.</p> <p>Note: requires walk to school program and educational programs.</p>	<p>CIP</p> <p>Financial incentives</p> <p>DPW Standard Construction Specifications update</p>	<p>LEAD</p> <p>Street Department</p> <p>SUPPORT</p> <p>City Community Development</p>	<p>High Med Low</p> <p>1 2 3 4</p>	<p>Long (10-20 Years)</p>
	<p>Install internal sidewalk network in all new commercial, industrial, and institutional developments.</p> <p>Note: Walmart is an example.</p>	<p>SCO updates</p> <p>DPW Standard Construction Specifications update</p> <p>CIP</p> <p>Financial incentives</p>	<p>LEAD</p> <p>City Planning</p> <p>SUPPORT</p> <p>Street Department</p>	<p>High Med Low</p> <p>1 2 3 4</p>	<p>Short (0-5 years)</p>
	<p>Install multi-purpose paths along all major and minor arterials.</p> <p>Note: Cassopolis, North Johnson.</p>	<p>SCO updates</p> <p>DPW Standard Construction Specifications update</p> <p>CIP</p> <p>Financial incentives</p>	<p>LEAD</p> <p>Public Works</p> <p>SUPPORT</p>	<p>High Med Low</p> <p>1 2 3 4</p>	<p>Existing ROW Short (0-5 Years)</p> <p>No ROW Long (10-20 Years)</p>
	<p>Link all internal pedestrian systems (i.e. sidewalks) with the larger, citywide pedestrian/bicycle transportation network.</p>	<p>Thoroughfare Plan updates</p> <p>SCO updates</p> <p>DPW Standard Construction Specifications update</p> <p>CIP</p> <p>Infrastructure replacement plan & policy</p> <p>Financial incentives</p>	<p>LEAD</p> <p>Public Works</p> <p>SUPPORT</p> <p>City Planning</p>	<p>High Med Low</p> <p>1 2 3 4</p>	<p>Medium (5-10 Years)</p>
	<p>Provide for seamless connections among transportation modes including bus, pedestrian facilities, and bicycle facilities.</p>	<p>Thoroughfare Plan update</p> <p>SCO updates</p> <p>DPW Standard Construction Specifications update</p> <p>CIP</p> <p>Infrastructure replacement plan & policy</p> <p>Financial incentives</p>	<p>LEAD</p> <p>MACOG</p> <p>SUPPORT</p> <p>Public Works, City Planning</p>	<p>High Med Low</p> <p>1 2 3 4</p>	<p>Medium (5-10 Years)</p>

EDUCATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL:

Grow and diversify Elkhart’s economy through academic programming, training, and business retention, expansion, and recruitment initiatives. Enhance the skillset and educational attainment of the workforce to qualify it for employment opportunities in a variety of industries and positions.

The local and regional economy is fundamental to a community’s quality of life and its citizens’ standards of living. A healthy economy creates employment opportunities, supports the tax base, attracts residents, funds public facilities and government services, and establishes a community where people want to live. Education and economic development are reciprocally linked in that an educated population positively contributes to economic growth and sustainability and a growing economy expands and increases the quality of educational opportunities.

Economic development has both individual and collective rewards. Increased personal income and wealth increase the tax base so a community can provide the level of services that citizens expect. Likewise, education also has both individual and collective rewards. An educated and skilled individual has the ability to pursue employment opportunities that offer a higher level of salary, thus increasing personal wealth and contributing more to the local tax base. Tax money is reinvested in the community’s educational system which produces additional skilled workers required by current and potential employers. A community that provides a workforce to meet the changing needs of employers will be most attractive for sustainable economic development efforts.

Elkhart prides itself on a skilled workforce. City leaders have recognized for years the importance of diversifying the skill set of its residents through conventional and innovative education and job training endeavors. As economic trends shift, a diversified workforce will not be solely dependent on one industry to provide employment and will be better positioned to handle economic ebbs and flows. The Education & Economic Development Goal of this Comprehensive Plan Update reinforces the education-economic development relationship and outlines techniques to capitalize on the region’s diverse educational resources to advance the City’s traditional economic development efforts of business retention, attraction, and expansion.

In addition to the City of Elkhart’s Economic Development Department, the lead advocate of economic development in Elkhart County is the Economic Development Corporation (EDC). Since 2000, the EDC has been instrumental in attracting and retaining quality businesses in the County and is the City’s key partner in fostering Elkhart’s economy. The following action steps provide guidance to City policy and decision-makers to support

the Education & Economic Development Goal. Policy development requires the leadership and commitment of Elkhart City officials and collaboration with other partners, such as the EDC. It is not solely up to the City to implement the following action steps; however, it is necessary that the City create an environment that is conducive to success in this area by dedicating more resources to organizing efforts, setting guidelines, and enforcing ordinances to enhance and promote assets, creating and maintaining partnerships, and galvanizing stakeholders.

GOAL: Grow and diversify Elkhart’s economy through academic programming, training, and business retention, expansion, and recruitment initiatives. Enhance the skillset and educational attainment of the workforce to qualify it for employment opportunities in a variety of industries and positions.					
EDUCATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	Recommendation	What tools are needed to implement this recommendation? <i>(Potential options listed)</i>	Responsibility: Who is the lead? Who is the support?	Level of Importance Level of Difficulty <i>1 to 4 (1 has no or relatively few challenges or constraints, 4 has multiple & significant challenges or constraints)</i>	Timeline for Implementation
	Continue the City’s economic development efforts of business recruitment, retention, and expansion.	ED Plan update Marketing Plan update & implementation Financial package	LEAD City Economic Development SUPPORT EDC of Elkhart County	High 1 2 3 4	Short (0-5 years)
	Clear unkempt properties to create turn-key sites for business location in priority areas.	City clearance Violation program City as Developer Non-profit task Public/private partnership Shovel Ready program	LEAD City Community Development SUPPORT City Building & Code Enforcement	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Short (0-5 years)
	Identify new and emerging markets where Elkhart has a competitive advantage in terms of location, skills of workforce, economy of scale, building inventory, incentives, or other decision-making factors. Note: City focuses on retaining existing, then attracting new.	Targeted industry study ED Plan update Marketing Plan update & implementation	LEAD City Economic Development SUPPORT EDC of Elkhart County	High 1 2 3 4	Medium (5-10 Years)

GOAL: Grow and diversify Elkhart’s economy through academic programming, training, and business retention, expansion, and recruitment initiatives. Enhance the skillset and educational attainment of the workforce to qualify it for employment opportunities in a variety of industries and positions.					
Recommendation	What tools are needed to implement this recommendation? <i>(Potential options listed)</i>	Responsibility: Who is the lead? Who is the support?	Level of Importance Level of Difficulty <i>1 to 4 (1 has no or relatively few challenges or constraints, 4 has multiple & significant challenges or constraints)</i>	Timeline for Implementation	
EDUCATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	Identify and pursue funding opportunities that support the educational and training needs of existing and emerging businesses in the City.	Federal & State grants or reduced interest loans Public/institutional partnership	LEAD Elkhart County Horizon Project SUPPORT	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Medium (5-10 Years)
	Direct new development and investment to areas within the current City limits rather than in undeveloped/greenfield areas.	Adjacency ordinance Implementation of Land Use Plan Infrastructure improvements Financial incentives	LEAD City Economic Development, Brownfield Coordinator SUPPORT City Planning	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Short (0-5 years)
	Ensure regular communication among school district, higher education institutions, continuing education providers, Chamber of Commerce, and other representatives from the business community to marry local employment opportunities with academic and training curriculums.	Public/institutional partnership ED taskforce	LEAD Elkhart County Horizon Project SUPPORT Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Short (0-5 years)
	Develop new, non-monetary incentives to entice new investors and retain existing businesses. Note: Review City’s administrative review and approval process. Technical assistance committee to provide administrative review for development projects.	Marketing Plan update & implementation Financial package City as Developer Infrastructure improvements Shovel Ready program	LEAD Mayor’s Office SUPPORT EDC of Elkhart County, City Economic Development, Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce, City Council	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Short (0-5 years)

EDUCATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	Cluster similar and complementary businesses to create economies of scale, encourage resource sharing, market an area's identity, and provide a convenient and memorable experience for customers.	Implementation of Land Use Plan Infrastructure improvements Business incubator Client relations management database	LEAD City Economic Development, City Planning, EDC of Elkhart County SUPPORT Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Medium (5-10 Years)
	Update 1986 Annexation Plan.	Annexation Plan update & implementation	LEAD City Planning SUPPORT	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Short (0-5 years)

AESTHETICS, NATURAL RESOURCES & OPEN SPACE

GOAL: Create opportunities for investment, activities, and programs that ensure protection of the City’s built and natural environments, maintenance of open space and greenways, and respect for its heritage.

Elkhart’s heritage and natural resources are essential components of the community. Most notably, the St. Joseph and Elkhart rivers have shaped the development of the City and their presence contributes to the community’s character, environmental quality, and recreational amenities. Because Elkhart’s natural resources are inherent components of the City, the provision of adequate greenspace and the protection of sensitive environmental areas must be considered as necessary public facilities similar to infrastructure and utility services. Additionally, heritage preservation is also an important local government service and a sensible investment, returning multiple benefits from modest expenditures. The intent of the Aesthetics, Natural Resources & Open Space Goal of this Comprehensive Plan Update is to protect significant, scarce, non-renewable resources and develop ways to capitalize on these assets while advancing preservation endeavors. To achieve this goal, environmental and heritage stewardship should be approached as a shared responsibility. Efforts will require coordination among City departments, not-for-profit organizations, the private sector, and other local, state, and federal agencies to work together to maintain Elkhart’s unique sense of place.

AESTHETICS, NATURAL RESOURCES & OPEN SPACE	GOAL: Create opportunities for investment, activities, and programs that ensure protection of the City’s built and natural environments, maintenance of open space and greenways, and respect for its heritage.				
	Recommendation	What tools are needed to implement this recommendation? <i>(Potential options listed)</i>	Responsibility: Who is the lead? Who is the support?	Level of Importance Level of Difficulty <i>1 to 4 (1 has no or relatively few challenges or constraints, 4 has multiple & significant challenges or constraints)</i>	Timeline for Implementation
	Facilitate public-private partnerships and cooperative agreements in beautification and preservation efforts.	Public/private partnership draft agreements Beautification with infrastructure improvements Financial incentives Revolving loan CIP	LEAD City Planning SUPPORT Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Short (0-5 years)

AESTHETICS, NATURAL RESOURCES & OPEN SPACE	Create sustainable urban forests on vacant land and potentially contaminated sites.	Greening of City Brownfield reclamation grants Non-profit land trust/conservancy	LEAD City Economic Development, Brownfield Coordinator SUPPORT City Forrester/Arborist	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Medium (5-10 Years)
	Promote community gardens and local food production.	Greening of City Public/private partnerships City owned land Parks Department program	LEAD Neighborhood associations SUPPORT Master Gardeners, grassroot organizations	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Short (0-5 years)
	Prepare and maintain a natural resource inventory and assessment.	Assessment log Parks Department staff	LEAD City Parks & Recreation, Public Buildings & Grounds SUPPORT	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Medium (5-10 Years)
	Incorporate sustainable design in all new developments, redevelopments, and infrastructure projects.	ZO & SCO updates DPW Standard Construction Specifications update Financial incentives Infrastructure incentives	LEAD City Planning SUPPORT	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Medium (5-10 Years)
	Install multi-purpose paths along the greenway routes recommended by the Pedal Panel. Note: challenges – routes and property.	CIP Financial incentives DPW Standard Construction Specifications update	LEAD Public Works SUPPORT City Parks & Recreation	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Existing ROW Short (0-5 Years) No ROW Medium (5-10 Years)
	Require architectural design of structures within overlay districts to be compatible with development context and corridor character..	ZO updates Design guidelines Overlay Zone Financial incentives	LEAD City Planning SUPPORT	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Short (0-5 years)
	Establish design guidelines for gateways to influence signage, landscape design, parking, and building orientation.	ZO updates Design guidelines Overlay Zone	LEAD City Planning SUPPORT	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Medium (5-10 Years)
	Review and revise local historic district plan and ordinance.	ZO updates Design guidelines Overlay Zone	LEAD City Planning SUPPORT Downtown Elkhart, Inc.	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Short (0-5 years)

HEALTH & SAFETY GOAL: Coordinate public services and amenities with land use decisions to protect the well-being and quality of life of Elkhart’s citizens and its environment.

The advantages of amenable intergovernmental relations include thoughtful and proficient land use decision-making processes, coordinated growth management and preservation, efficient delivery of services, and economies of scale. Growth and development cross jurisdictional boundaries and departmental responsibilities. There are no requirements for comprehensive plans to address intergovernmental collaboration. However, as one of the six primary goals of this Comprehensive Plan Update, the health and safety of the Elkhart community includes maximizing public resources through cooperation, streamlined processes, and consolidated efforts to provide for responsible use of land and logical growth. By coordinating decision-making and approval processes, the City of Elkhart can better connect and align transportation systems, City services, and other infrastructure and resources with neighborhoods, commercial centers, institutions, and recreational facilities.

GOAL: Coordinate public services and amenities with land use decisions to protect the well-being and quality of life of Elkhart’s citizens and its environment.					
HEALTH & SAFETY	Recommendation	What tools are needed to implement this recommendation? <i>(Potential options listed)</i>	Responsibility: Who is the lead? Who is the support?	Level of Importance Level of Difficulty <i>1 to 4 (1 has no or relatively few challenges or constraints, 4 has multiple & significant challenges or constraints)</i>	Timeline for Implementation
	Coordinate decision-making and approval processes among City departments.	ZO updates Design guidelines Overlay Zone Interdepartmental agreement	LEAD Mayor’s Office SUPPORT	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> High Med Low </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> 1 2 3 4 </div>	Short (0-5 years)
	Coordinate transportation and land use planning. Note: coordinate with County public improvement projects and upgrades.	Integration into Thoroughfare Plan TAC Meetings CIP	LEAD Public Works, City Planning SUPPORT MACOG	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> High Med Low </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> 1 2 3 4 </div>	Short (0-5 years)

HEALTH & SAFETY	Coordinate installation of pedestrian/bicycle facilities with programs associated with public health and community wellness.	Integration into Thoroughfare Plan CIP Financial incentives	LEAD Hospital, County Health Department, City Grants Department SUPPORT	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Short (0-5 years)
	Identify key vacant sites and buildings for redevelopment or conservation.	Greening of City Brownfield reclamation grants Non-profit land trust/conservancy	LEAD Redevelopment Commission, City Brownfield Coordinator SUPPORT City Building & Code Enforcement, neighborhood associations	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Short (0-5 years)
	Minimize the appearance of blight. Note: change violation process – State legislation	ZO Updates Nuisance ordinance Blight assessment Design guidelines Land bank	LEAD City Planning, City Building & Code Enforcement SUPPORT City Brownfield Coordinator	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Short (0-5 years)
	Remediate brownfield sites.	Greening of City Brownfield reclamation grants Non-profit land trust/conservancy Shovel Ready Program	LEAD City Brownfield Coordinator SUPPORT	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Long (10-20 Years)
	Establish an Elkhart City-Elkhart County Conservancy District to manage water resources. Note: City Sewer Service District.	Interjurisdictional agreement Conservancy District Task Force	LEAD Sewer Conservancy District SUPPORT	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Long (10-20 Years)
	Strive to build civic facilities and other City buildings using sustainable and green building principles. Note: LEED standards???	ZO updates Sustainability guideline manual City sustainability ordinance	LEAD City Council SUPPORT Mayor's Office	High Med Low 1 2 3 4	Medium (5-10 Years)