



it's **HOBART'S** *time*
2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (September 7, 2023)

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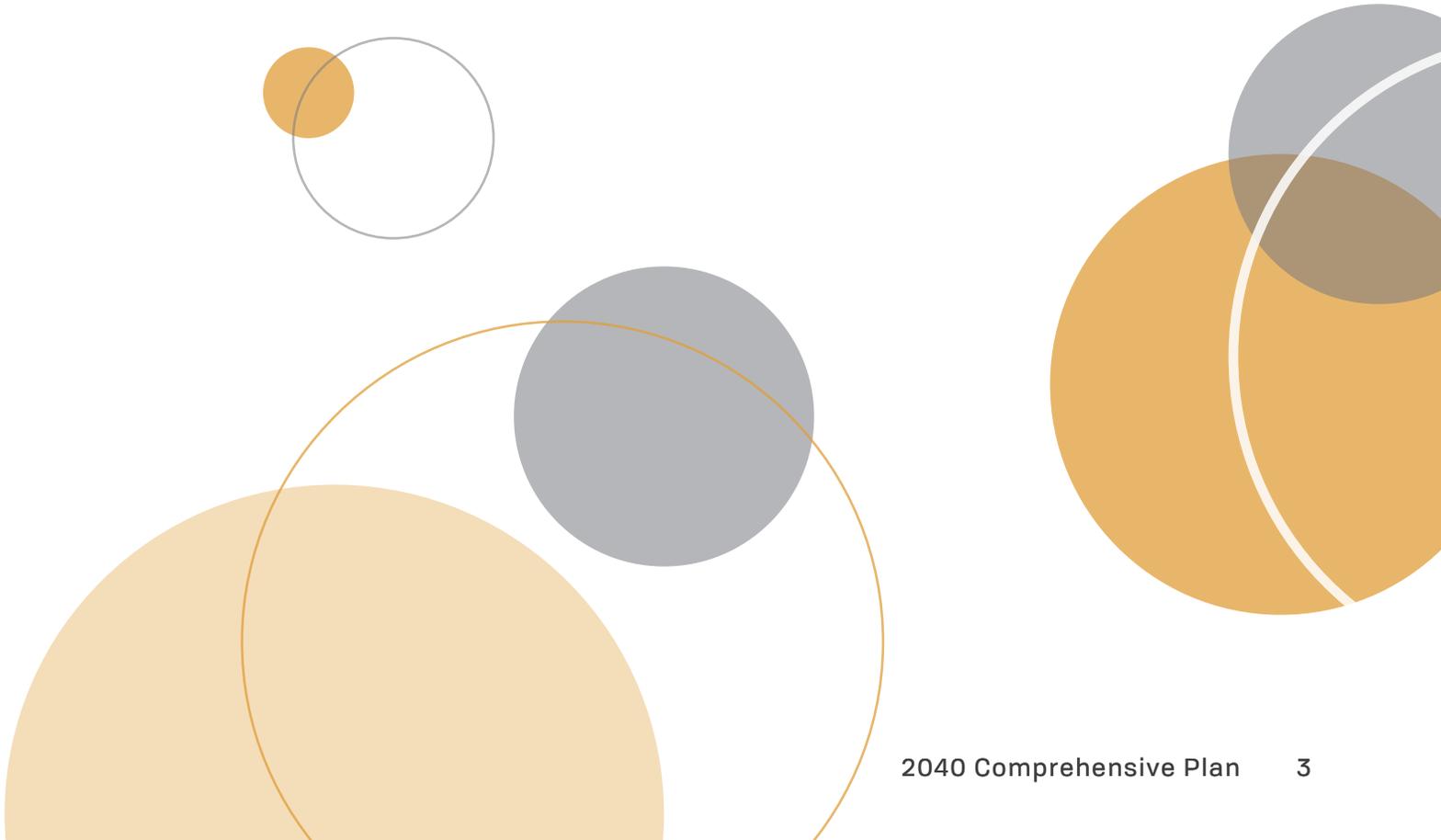
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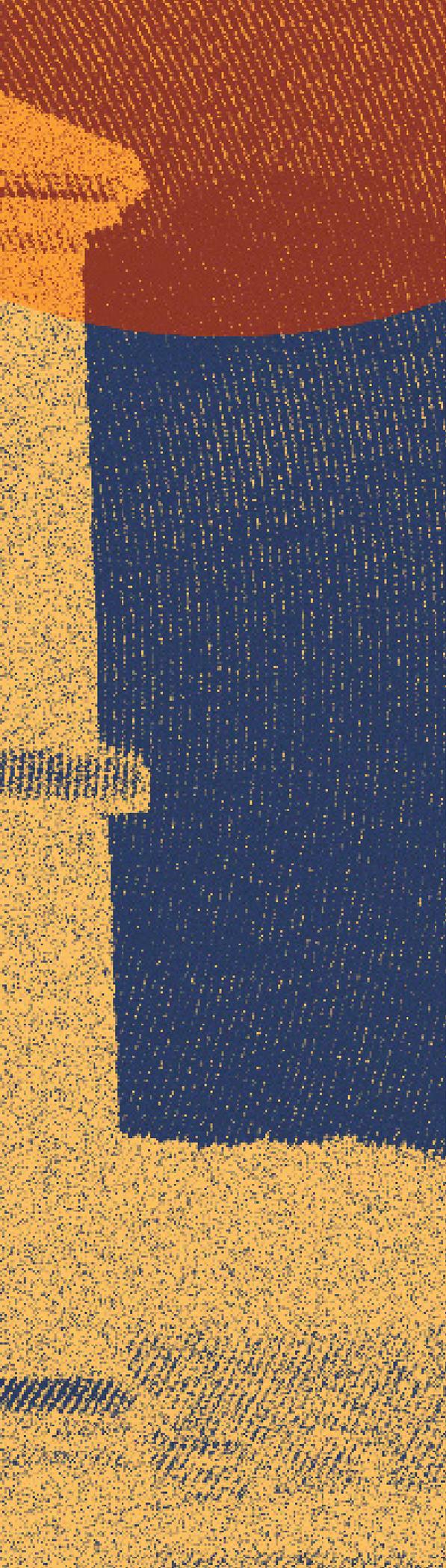
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The background is an abstract composition of textured, woven-looking shapes. On the left, a large, semi-circular shape in shades of blue and teal dominates the foreground. To its right, a larger, more complex shape in shades of yellow and orange forms the background. A circular window with a dark, grid-like pattern is visible on the right side of the yellow/orange shape. Below the window, there is a dark, rectangular shape that resembles a doorway or a shadow. The overall texture is reminiscent of a coarse fabric or a woven basket.

INTRODUCTION



OVERVIEW

Hobart is a unique city with active commercial corridors, established residential neighborhoods, a charming downtown on the shores of Lake George, and a network of parks and natural areas that sets it apart from peer communities. The City adopted a comprehensive plan in 2003 establishing its vision for growth, economic development, housing, and downtown revitalization. The plan guided decisions over the years, facilitating Hobart's development into an important part of northwest Indiana's fabric of communities. With the passage of time, however, the City's Comprehensive Plan needs to be updated to reflect current conditions and new challenges.

To chart a path to the future, the City embarked on an update to the Comprehensive Plan in 2021, labeled *It's Hobart's Time 2040 Plan*. The Plan's vision is the result of considerable analysis and study of the community's existing conditions - its downtown business district, residential neighborhoods, economic climate, commercial corridors, open space, streets and infrastructure, and urban design and overall character - as well as extensive collaboration, participation, and input from Hobart residents and stakeholders throughout the planning process.

PLANNING PROCESS

Updating Hobart's Comprehensive Plan is a three-phase process: **Assess** the State of the City, **Envision** goals and solutions for the community, and develop strategies to **Implement** the vision established in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.



Lake George 

STATE OF THE CITY ASSESSMENT

An essential first step in updating Hobart’s Comprehensive Plan was understanding current planning issues, constraints, and opportunities for the City’s long-term growth and development. This assessment provided the starting point for crafting planning strategies and recommendations, guiding the community for the next twenty years. Topics that the State of the City Assessment focused on included:

LAND USE, ZONING, AND DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS

This analysis includes a detailed review of existing land uses and development patterns in Hobart to establish a baseline of information for future land use, planning and development strategies. Additionally, this report will include a review of Hobart’s zoning code and regulatory environment to identify challenges and opportunities, and evaluate the City’s capacity to fully support future development goals.



 **Knight Coin Jewelry**
237 Main St

PARK & RECREATION ANALYSIS AND NATURAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT

This analysis will include an inventory of park and recreation resources in the City, including passive and active spaces. A detailed assessment of each park, including park acreage, amenities, and recreation elements, provides the basis for future improvements. This assessment will take natural resources into consideration, including Lake George, the nature preserves, and the Turkey Creek corridor.



 **Robinson Lake**
Along the Oakwood Trail

DEMOGRAPHIC, MARKET, AND HOUSING ANALYSIS

This analysis will provide demographic and economic assessment and discuss socioeconomic growth trends in the City. It will also provide an in-depth analysis of the existing housing stock by unit type, age, and current housing construction permit activity. This will build a foundation of knowledge to determine the future demand and market potential for residential, commercial, and industrial development in Hobart and identify market potentials for key uses and activities in the City.



↑ Lakefront Park
(Source: Southshore Indiana)

MOBILITY AND THOROUGHFARE PLANNING

This analysis will review the regional and local street network serving Hobart and its key community activity generators. Assessing mobility patterns in the City through traffic count data, US Census data, and other resources will aim to produce a thoroughfare and connectivity plan, Active Transportation recommendations, and access management and safety strategies.



↑ Main Street
Downtown Hobart



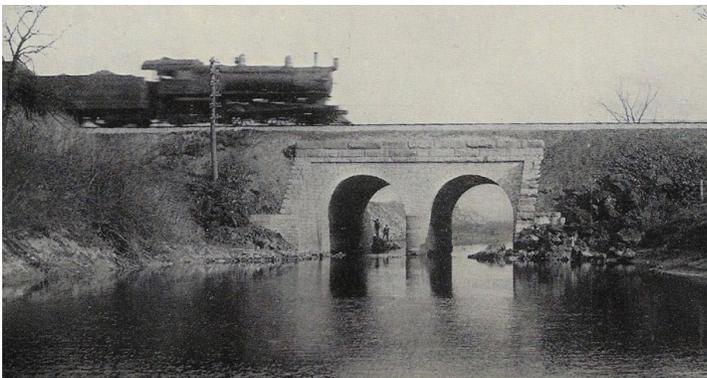
Downtown Hobart ↑

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOBART

HOBART YESTERDAY

The City of Hobart is located in Lake County, northwestern Indiana on lands once inhabited by the Pottawatomie Indian tribe. In 1845 George Earle, a wealthy landowner from England, came to the area and constructed a dam along Deep River in order to power lumber mills and gristmills. This dam resulted in the creation of Lake George, which is a defining feature of the Hobart landscape today. In 1849, Earle recorded the plat for the new town of Hobart.

In 1858, the construction of the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne, and Chicago Railroad allowed Hobart to become a railroad hub for shipping food products and bricks to Chicago. Brick-making quickly became the town's largest industry, and the first large brickyard was established by Joseph Nash in 1886. Kulage Brick Works and W.B. Owen Brickworks, which later became the National Fireproofing Company, were two of the largest brick and terra cotta manufacturers in town until 1920 and 1964, respectively.



Hobart was incorporated as a town in 1889 and reincorporated into a city in 1921. The City continued to grow until the 1960s when development was halted due to a sewer moratorium. Construction resumed in the 1990s and large annexations of nearby Hobart Township in 1988 and Ross Township in 1992 helped to kickstart the City's growth once more. Hobart residents continue to celebrate their City's history, and homage to Hobart's past, particularly the brick-making industry, can be found throughout the City today.



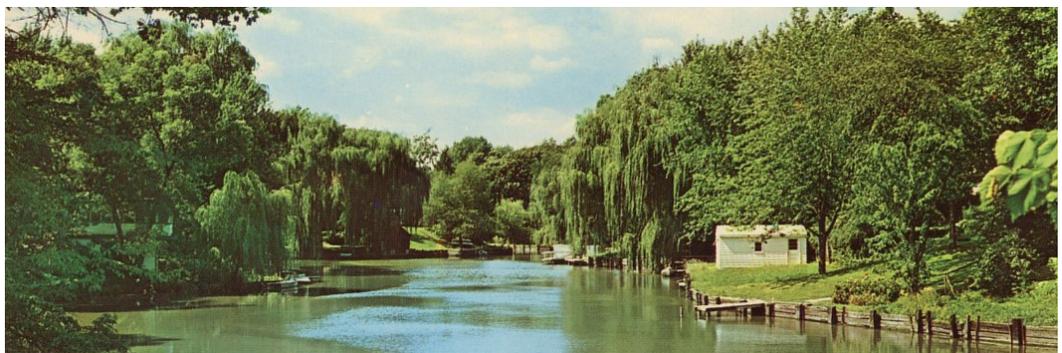
CFE-CSX-Conrail-Pennsy-PFW&C Bridge (1858)

(Source: industrialscenery.blogspot.com)



Lake George (1965)

(Source: flickr.com)



HOBART TODAY

Hobart's location, approximately 40 miles southeast of Chicago and ten miles south of Gary, Indiana, puts the community in a unique position to serve both areas. The City is bordered to the north by Lake Station and New Chicago, to the east by several small communities in Porter and unincorporated Portage County, to the west by Gary, and to the south by Merrillville.

Hobart has excellent connectivity to regional transportation facilities, including Interstate Highways 65, 80, 90, and 94, U.S. Highways 30 and 6, and State Roads 51 and 130. These connections provide convenient routes to the Chicago metropolitan area, as well as smaller cities more proximate to Hobart.

Two prominent communities in northwest Indiana are within easy driving distance of Hobart: Crown Point and Valparaiso. While their populations do not differ a great deal from Hobart's — approximately 33,000 and 34,000 respectively compared to Hobart's 29,000 — these communities differ in character. Crown Point and Valparaiso feature healthy downtowns and thriving business districts that attract visitors from the Midwest. Hobart can benefit from its proximity to these neighboring communities by offering complementary amenities and services, all while maintaining a strong sense of identity.

“Enjoying local foods on Lake George while light and music trickles out from the bandshell would be great!”

- STAKEHOLDER COMMENT



Downtown Hobart



Lake George

HOBART BY THE NUMBERS

Information below provides a summary of Hobart's demographics.

Population Change

Over the last decade, the City's population has held relatively steady, with a slight increase of only 498 residents since 2010, according to the U.S. Census. Currently, Hobart's population is estimated at 29,219, with a minor decrease of 0.12% projected for the next five years. Hobart is relatively middle aged, with a median age of 41, trending upward compared to the U.S. median age of 38.9 for 2022. Hobart's daytime population is estimated at 31,183, larger than the total resident population.

Fig 1: Population Size



HOBART'S DEMOGRAPHICS ARE SHIFTING, WITH A PROJECTED INCREASE IN THE CITY'S YOUNGEST GENERATION.

Fig 2: Median Age



Fig 3: Population by Generation

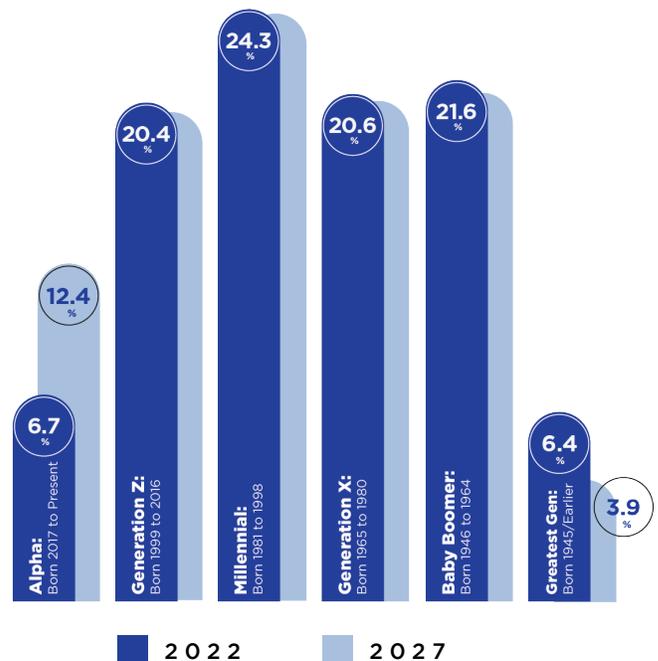
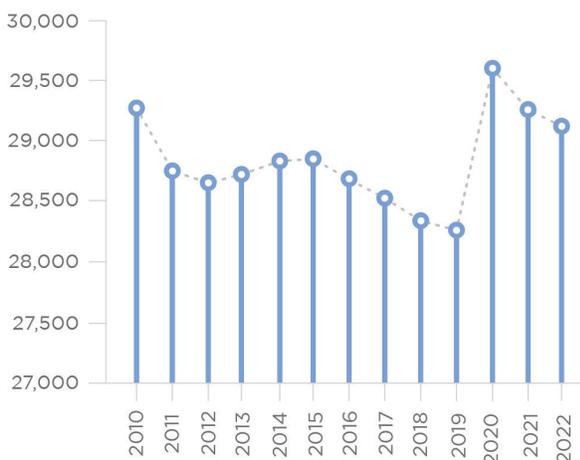


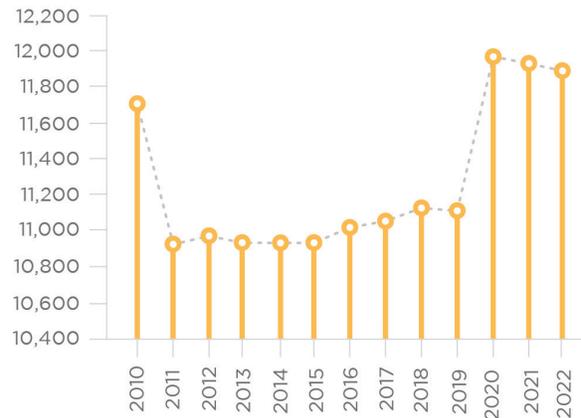
Fig 4: Population Change



Households

According to the 2022 estimates, there are 11,894 households in Hobart, a slight decrease from 2010. The number of households is expected to increase marginally by 2027 to 11,920. When compared to the projected decrease in population, the projected increase indicates a trend toward smaller one or two person households. The average household size is 2.44 and is expected to decrease to 2.42 in 2027.

Fig 5: Population Change (2010 to 2022)



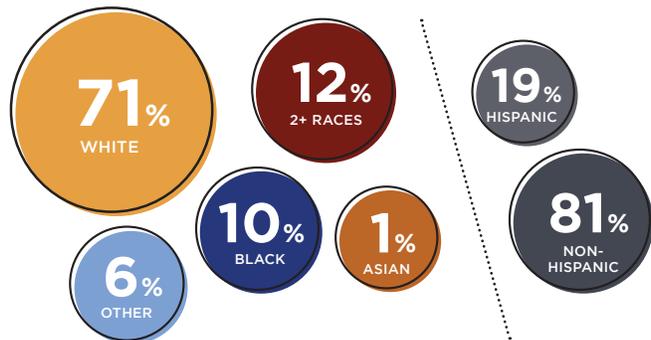
Household Income

In 2022, the median and average household incomes are estimated to be \$67,802 and \$88,492 respectively, which is slightly less than the U.S. median and average household incomes of \$72,414 and \$105,029, respectively. In five years, Hobart’s median income is projected to be \$82,492 and the City’s average household income is projected to be \$105,266. Low-income households (<\$35,000) account for 20.6% in 2022 and are estimated to decrease to 14.6% by 2027. Mid-income households (\$35,000 to \$99,999) represent 46.1% in 2022 and are also estimated to decrease to 43.7% by in 2027. Whereas High-income households (\$100,000+) that account for 33.4% in 2022 are estimated to increase to 41.6% by 2027. Almost half of all households in Hobart (49.7%) have a disposable income of \$35,000 and \$99,999 per year. Additionally, almost 12% of households in Hobart are below the poverty level.

Ethnicity

Hobart is gradually becoming more diverse. The Diversity Index, which measures the probability that two people from the same area will be from different race/ethnic groups, is 63.4% in Hobart. This is only slightly lower than the national diversity index of 72.6%. According to 2022 estimates, 9.9% of the population is African-American, 19.3% of the population is Hispanic, and 71.1% of the population is White.

Fig 6: Ethnicity (2022)



Annual Growth Comparison

Hobart is projected to decrease by 2027, which is not in line with state and national projections for population growth, compared to the state of Indiana and the nation as a whole. Home owner households will be increasing at 0.30% by 2027, which is a slightly less than the state and national projections. Median household income in Hobart is projected to increase at 4%, which is more than the projected increase for the state and the nation.

Table 1: Trend Comparison, Annual Growth 2022-2027

| DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE 2022 TO 2027 | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------|---------|-------|
| INDICATOR | HOBART | INDIANA | USA |
| Population | -0.12% | 0.20% | 0.25% |
| Households | 0.04% | 0.27% | 0.31% |
| Home Owner HHs | 0.30% | 0.46% | 0.53% |
| Median Household Income | 4.00% | 3.72% | 3.12% |

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010 & 2020 Census, ESRI BIS forecasts for 2022 and 2027, VCE



“

**It would be nice to see
some lake view multi-
family housing.”**

- STAKEHOLDER COMMENT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

It's Hobart's Time 2040 Plan will rely on feedback from the community and key stakeholders. Community thoughts and ideas will help guide the planning process and inform the Plan recommendations. During the initial phases of this process, the planning team created a project website, conducted several stakeholder focus group sessions, held a community Open House, and distributed an online survey, which resulted in extensive community input. The following pages include a summary of stakeholder input and focus group discussions. Community input is also referenced throughout the different sections of the *State of the City* report and serves to inform each section.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

The planning team collaborated with the City of Hobart to hold six focus group discussions with a total of 25 community stakeholders. These stakeholders represented various segments of the community, including business owners, real estate professionals, residents, local organizations, school districts, key institutions, and City employees, among others. From these initial meetings, several salient themes emerged.

Downtown Hobart is an Asset

Hobart's charming downtown is seen by many as one of the City's greatest assets, especially when considering its proximity to the Lake George lakefront. Many believe that downtown Hobart has the potential to become a celebrated and unique community hub with the addition of more restaurants, specialty shops, mixed-use development, and community events. Stakeholders mentioned the need to enhance the looks and feel of downtown by improving facades and storefronts, filling vacancies, and redeveloping underutilized sites. Stakeholders also want to embrace Lake George, which is mere steps from many downtown businesses and restaurants. The proximity to the lake provides an opportunity for lakefront dining and more water-facing businesses, which could help foster the vibrant and revitalized downtown environment sought by many Hobart residents.

Mobility, Connectivity, and Wayfinding

Hobart has numerous assets, including parks, vast open spaces, bike trails, a unique downtown area, and a strong retail corridor. According to stakeholders, many of these assets are difficult to reach, or in some cases even find, due to a lack of mobility options, connections, and clear wayfinding. A lack of public transportation and demand-response transit services makes it difficult for the City's most vulnerable populations – disabled, low-income, and senior residents – to access critical services and jobs, as well as enjoy the variety of recreational opportunities in Hobart. Subsidized ride-share or shuttles could help to ameliorate this issue.

While there are large segments of Hobart that are inaccessible due to a lack of infrastructure, Hobart's pedestrian and bicycle accessibility increases closer to the downtown area and denser residential neighborhoods. The City has several off-street bike paths and multiuse trails that allow for recreational use.

However, Hobart’s on-street bicycle infrastructure is lacking in some areas, which hinders everyday use. Enhanced bicycle connectivity could facilitate more visits to areas like downtown Hobart, Lake George, Hobart Nature District, Oak Savannah Prairie, and the Route 30 commercial corridor.

Hobart also has an opportunity to improve wayfinding and signage to better guide residents and visitors throughout the City. Stakeholders discussed the fact that it is difficult to locate downtown from nearby bike paths, as well as from some of the city’s main activity generators, such as Albanese and the Orchard on County Line. Wayfinding could encourage visitors to explore new parts of the City, which can make Hobart more of a destination for those coming from surrounding communities and the Chicago area.

Unique Community Character

Hobart residents are proud of their City and what it has to offer. Stakeholders cited its small, hometown feel, unique 1800s era architecture, walkability, bikeability, natural beauty, and welcoming vibe as reasons for moving to or staying in Hobart. The City has made strides in recent years towards livability, aesthetics, and character, which stakeholders recognize and appreciate. Acknowledging the characteristics that make Hobart wonderful and striving to accentuate them will help foster a forward-looking and thriving community while still retaining Hobart’s distinct qualities.

Growth Obstacles and Opportunities

Overall, Hobart is a safe, well serviced City primed for growth. There are large, uninhabited areas of the City, opportunities for densification, and a demand for living near numerous regional roads and highways that lead to Chicago and surrounding communities. Residential growth could spur economic development and vibrancy throughout Hobart. However, there are several obstacles that stand in the way of growth. Large swaths of land in areas annexed by Hobart are not served by sanitary and sewer systems or power lines. City service providers, such as the police and fire departments, are not yet equipped to handle an increase in population. Therefore, the cost of developing Hobart will not just be the responsibility of developers but will also be shouldered by the City.



Summer Market on the Lake
Community Open House #1 

OPEN HOUSE AND ONLINE SURVEY

In June of 2022, the planning team held a public, in-person Open House with a variety of interactive exercises. Participants were able to voice their opinions about opportunities and issues facing the community and provide their vision for the future of Hobart. Exercises included a “Big Map” activity where participants were able to identify public space, development, and public art opportunities; they were also able to point out pedestrian issues, parking issues, and other areas for improvement. Additional engagement opportunities included Visual Preference exercises, where participants ranked imagery and character of downtown development, housing, streetscapes, and types of programming they would like to see in parks and community gathering spaces.

The Open House was followed by an online survey that mirrored the Open House exercises and questions. This provided an opportunity for more than 300 residents to give further feedback. As part of the Open House and survey, participants were asked to complete the vision statement “In the year 2040 Hobart will be...” and the following were some of the responses provided by the community:





A place that continues to cultivate its small-town feel, while still being welcoming to new residents and supporting the development of small businesses.

- STAKEHOLDER COMMENT



EXISTING PLANS

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR FUTURE LAND USE, 2003

The Comprehensive Plan for Future Land Use, adopted in 2003, focuses on public and private development, rezoning, and subdivision applications. The City adopted the plan in response to a series of critical changes that happened in Hobart's history and over the course of the decade preceding the Plan. These included the City lifting its sewer and development moratorium, instituting an aggressive residential tax abatement program, and annexing Ross Township. During that period, Hobart experienced a wave of new residential development and a population increase that expanded its footprint significantly.

The plan's recommendations and conclusions focused on Downtown, Lake George, schools, public health, green space, and a variety of other topics. While the plan's recommendations act as a guiding vision for Hobart going forward, there are no implementation strategies to help bring this vision to fruition.

HOBART MARSH MASTER PLAN, 2013

The City of Hobart created the Hobart Marsh Master Plan in order to better connect Hobart's conservation lands, which are owned and managed by a variety of different public agencies and non-profit organizations. The goal of the plan is to establish a consistent trail network that connects the City's natural resources to downtown Hobart, regional trails, and surrounding communities. This plan aims to create an eco-attraction that draws both residents and visitors seeking a unique hiking or biking experience. In addition to linking conservation lands and developing a land use framework to support this effort, additional recommendations support new biking and hiking trails, branding and marketing efforts, and safety guidelines.

HOBART SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBORHOODS ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECOLOGICAL SUB-PLAN (2013)

The Hobart Sustainable Neighborhoods (HSN) Plan was created to advance sustainability in the City of Hobart, particularly in high-risk neighborhoods by providing recommendations to address sustainability issues and ensure that future development is environmentally sensitive. The benchmarks of environmental sustainability used to assess and remediate issues on the neighborhood level included environmental hazards; sanitary and stormwater lines and facilities; impervious surfaces; land cover and open spaces; managed lands, parks, trail, and recreational facilities; waterways; and tree canopies.

HOBART PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN 5-YEAR UPDATE, 2017

The Hobart Parks and Recreation Master Plan, adopted in 2017, recognizes the benefits of a well-maintained park system include increased real estate values, improved physical and social development of residents, and the attraction of future community members. The goal of the plan is to promote a well-thought-out and planned park and natural resource system that adapts to the changing needs of the community and encourages an improved quality of life for all. The plan focuses on assessing park land, facilities, programs, and services. Additionally, the plan highlights park and recreation trends, encourages local and regional partnerships, provides funding mechanisms to achieve plan recommendations. Long-range plan items include more cost and labor-intensive projects as well as ongoing actions, such as addressing erosion problems along the shores of Lake George, providing a large destination playground for the community, and expansion of recreation programs and facilities. Short-range plan items are organized by year (2017-2021) and include specific, actionable recommendations.

HOBART CONSERVATION ZONING AND SUB AREA PLAN, 2019

The Hobart Conservation Zoning + Sub Area (CZSA) Plan was adopted in 2019 with the dual purpose of creating new zoning districts to apply to existing and future managed conservation lands, and identifying potential development opportunities that enhance these environmentally sensitive areas. The plan calls out the Lake George watershed and local habitats as key natural features in need of conservation, and establishes best practices to guide development plans, minimizing environmental impacts.

The plan explores low-impact design principles and concepts, specifically focusing on residential and industrial developments. The proposed concepts seek to minimize impervious surfaces, building footprints, peak runoff rates, and infrastructural costs, while maximizing conservation area land coverage. The CZSA also provides a stormwater management toolkit, complemented by a variety of recommendations related to maintenance and the partnership process.



 Downtown Hobart
600 E. 3rd St.

EXISTING LAND USE SUMMARY

Fig 7: Land Use Map

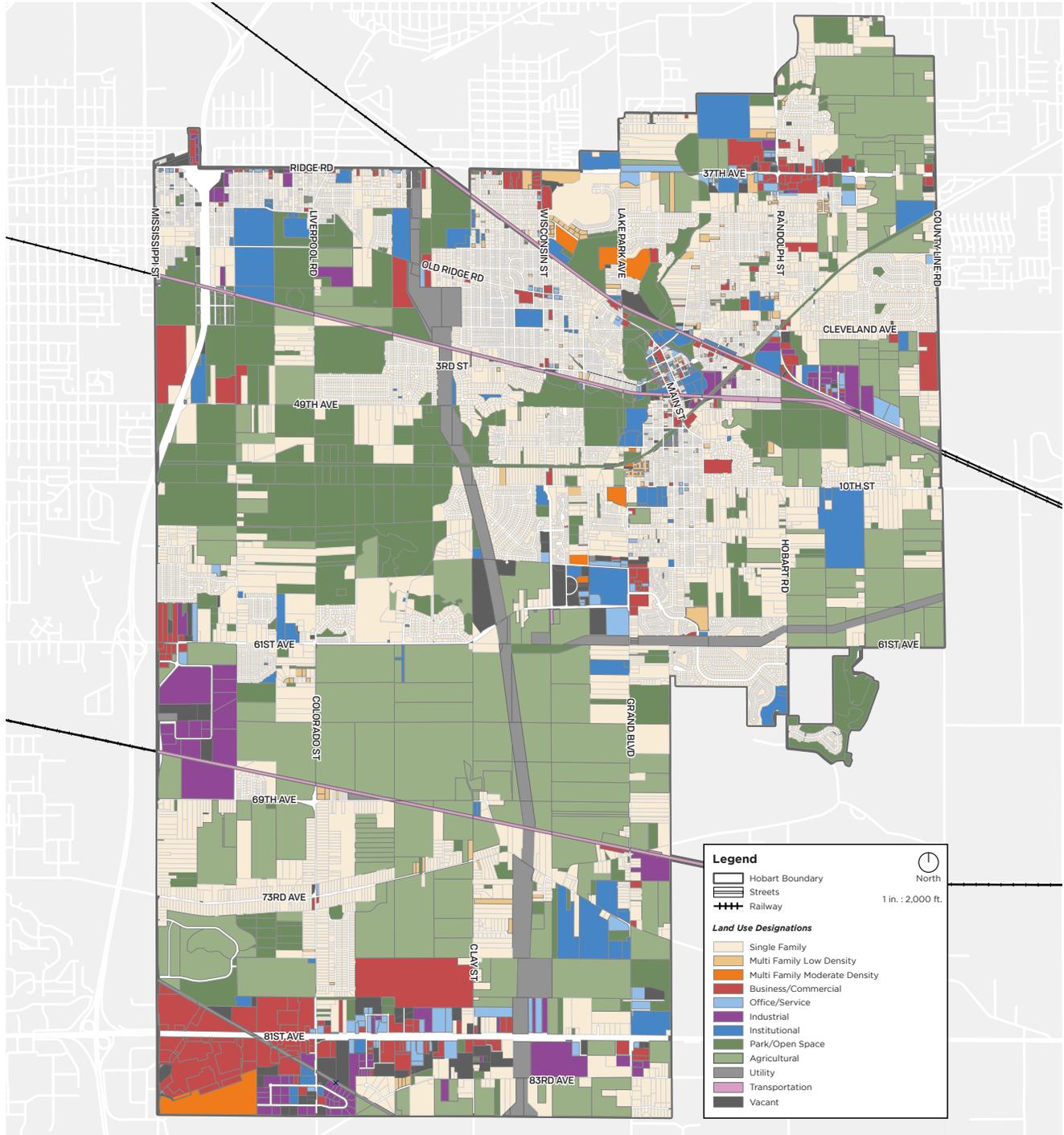
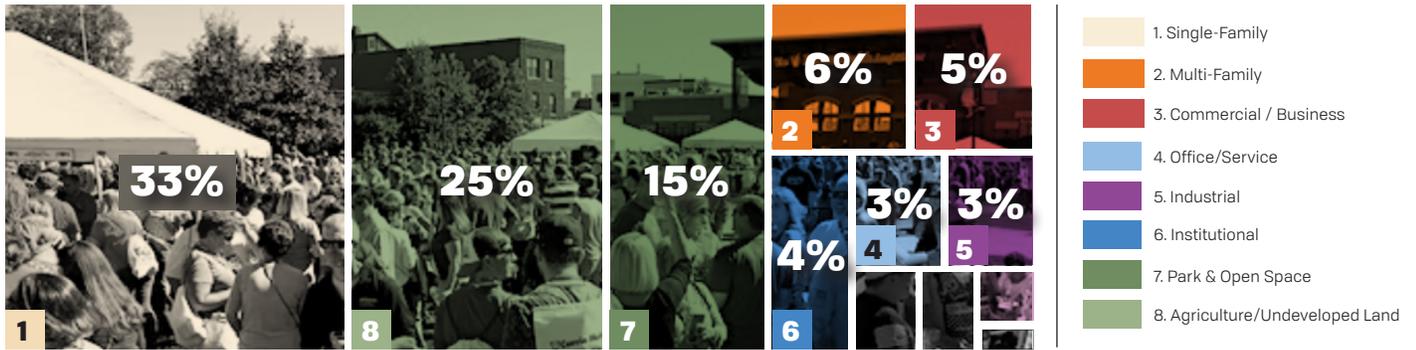


Fig 8: Land Use Breakdown



The total amount of land uses does not sum up to a hundred. Additional land uses include utilities, transportation, vacant land, and other.

RESIDENTIAL LAND USES

Residential land uses in Hobart, including single-family and multi-family developments, represent approximately 26% of Hobart’s total land acreage. Distribution of uses in Hobart reflects the original historically-industrial pattern that developed around Lake George, which continued to grow over the years with the annexation of land to the north and south. The old industries of milling and brick-making are long gone but have laid the foundation for neighborhoods of small lot single-family development spreading outward and away from the lake. Shaped and guided by transportation routes and the availability of sewer service, small-lot single-family residential blocks occupy much of the land north, east, and south of Lake George. Single-family residential subdivisions also developed in the southern half of Hobart along key arterial roadways such as Colorado Street, 73rd Avenue, and Grand Boulevard. A mix of housing typologies, including multi-family developments, appears along the Highway 30 corridor in the southern part of Hobart with single-family properties on the eastern end and a dense multifamily / townhome development on the west.

While the City has an abundance of single-family housing, neighborhood characters differ in different parts of town. The character areas can be generalized as:

Rural / Large Lot Housing—There are large swaths of undeveloped land outside of Hobart’s downtown, some of which focus on active agricultural use, while others remain as open land or woodland. Residential properties sprinkled between undeveloped open lands have a distinct rural character.

Mid-Century Suburban Housing—A substantial proportion (42%) of single-family homes in Hobart was constructed between 1950 and 1979. This lends a specific character and feel to the neighborhoods around Lake George and throughout the northern part of the City.

Contemporary Suburban Housing—There have been a number of planned developments and single-family residential subdivisions developed in Hobart in the last 20 years that create a unique character that is different from the rural or mid-century areas. Reflected in the building materials and modern designs of the houses, these neighborhoods are an important part of the City’s diverse housing supply.

Early Residential Development—The City of Hobart is fortunate to have an inventory of older homes and commercial properties, some of which date back to the 1920s. Brick buildings and high architecture styles, including Neoclassical styles, Italianate Commercial style, and Colonial Revival style bring a unique sense of character to the Hobart community.

HOUSING TYPES

Single-family housing comprises over 72% of the total residential units in Hobart. While there are multi-family developments in the community with notable density, the majority of multi-family buildings have fewer than ten units. The southwest corner of the City features a dense townhouse development. Overall, the multi-family land use represents approximately 6% of Hobart's total land acreage. Manufactured housing is present in Hobart, though not in great quantities. It can represent an important stratum of housing need in a community and, as long as the properties and structures are well-maintained, can be contributive.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Additional initiatives, incentives, and policies can support the maintenance and prosperity of Hobart's character and charm, including the Mid-Century housing character.

Changing demographics in the City of Hobart and surrounding regions can drive recommendations to fill a housing gap and better cater to current and future community housing needs.

Housing affordability and attainability was a reoccurring theme during stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions.

School City of Hobart District is more desirable than other school districts, which has led to an increase in demand and subsequent increase in housing costs in north Hobart.

Planning for future housing development in Hobart is key and can be driven by a clear vision for the vast open lands and woodlands within the community. Key opportunity sites and subarea plans shall be further explored as part of the future land use framework.



COMMERCIAL & LIGHT INDUSTRIAL LAND USES

Commercial and light industrial land uses represent 5.2% and 2.8% of Hobart's total land acreage, respectively. Regional transportation routes, including interstate highways, state roadways, and railroad lines have guided the establishment and development of non-residential land uses in Hobart. Commercial corridors follow roadways on the periphery of the City, including Ridge Road on the north, Highway 30 on the south, and Mississippi Street on a portion of the western municipal border. Interior corridors are established along Route 51 (Grand Avenue) and State Road (Route 130).

Recognizing key corridors and their relationship to existing business districts can provide a clear understanding of how residents and visitors alike navigate through the City and access commercial areas.

The St. Mary Medical Center campus, situated in the center of the City, along Grand Avenue, represents a prominent cluster of healthcare-related land uses. Retail uses are clustered most prominently in the mall shopping area at the intersection of Highway 30 and Interstate 65, in the southwest corner of the City. Restaurants, typically a more experiential land use and not included in total retail sales, are featured on Ridge Road at Hobart Street on the north end of town, as well as in Hobart’s downtown.

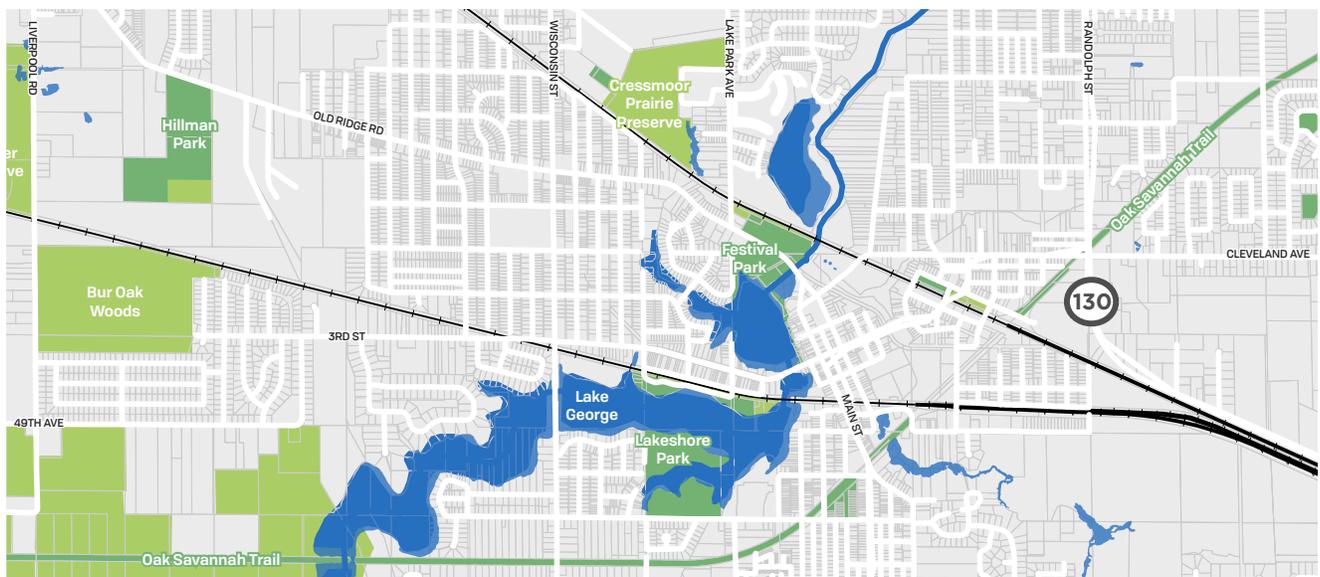
Southlake Mall anchors a significant concentration of retail and service land uses along Highway 30. There are other shopping centers nearby, as well as big box retailers, national franchises in a variety of categories, and restaurants of different scales and styles. This commercial node, accessible from Interstate 65 and Highway 30, represents a regional asset for Hobart.

Downtown Hobart

Hobart’s downtown has a variety of commercial, civic, and institutional land uses, the majority of which are situated in older buildings. The built form of downtown Hobart is defined by small-scale retail, restaurant, and service land uses. Lake George represents a rare amenity that can be capitalized upon more effectively through future land use planning.

Development is concentrated in a small area and growth opportunities for downtown will be dictated by natural barriers. Access to downtown is limited to two points of entry from the west through Third Street and Old Ridge Road. Direct access from the north is impeded by the Deep River flood plain and Duck Creek, creating a natural boundary to the east and pinches developable land south of downtown. The railway south of downtown creates a visual border and the commercial land uses dwindle along Main Street south of the tracks. Light industrial land uses have been concentrated along Highway 30 corridor and State Route 130 on the east side of the City. These include businesses in manufacturing, construction, transportation, and warehousing. Recent zoning changes to undeveloped land in west central Hobart from residential to industrial zoning indicate an interest in increasing the amount of land supporting industrial land uses in the City.

Fig 9: Downtown Hobart Map



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Commercial land use is concentrated in key areas around the City. This could represent a challenge in meeting overall community needs. Additionally, it is important to assess and understand gaps in the current mix of commercial uses.

The recent industrial rezoning could result in a surplus of industrial land uses, if not managed adequately.



INSTITUTIONAL LAND USE

The St. Mary Medical Campus has a substantial presence in the City and is likely to remain one of Hobart's strong assets for the foreseeable future. Several houses of worship, including The Rock Church and South Lake Worship Center, are also large contributors to Hobart's mix of land uses. Other churches and parochial schools are scattered throughout the community. The Hobart Fire Department has four firehouses around the city, though the primary facility is located in the downtown vicinity.

The Police Station, municipal building, public parks, and Bricky Bowl are located in downtown Hobart. The downtown has geographic constraints limiting its ability to expand, so it's notable that a large amount of the land in downtown Hobart is dedicated to institutional land uses.

Two school districts cover the majority of the city: School City of Hobart covers the north half of Hobart, and the Merrillville Community School Corporation covers the southern half, also known as Ross Township. The bulk of the City's public schools are located in the School City of Hobart district, which includes Veterans Elementary, Liberty Elementary, Joan Martin Elementary, Hobart Middle School, and Hobart High School. Wood Elementary School is the only public elementary school in the Merrillville Community School Corporation district.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Compatible and context-sensitive land uses should be considered in the vicinity of the St. Mary Medical Campus. Appropriate land uses could include residential, low-intensity commercial, and office/services.

Office and services land uses can be incorporated into future mixed-use developments.

Consolidation of institutional uses in downtown Hobart

OPEN SPACE & UNDEVELOPED LAND

There is a large amount of undeveloped land in the City of Hobart, 4152 acres, much of which is tillable and may be in use for passive agriculture or left as open fields. Undeveloped land in the City represents approximately 25% of Hobart’s total land acreage. However, 2,590 acres (15.6%) represent active and passive public parks or managed open space. The Hobart Park District manages a variety of mini parks, neighborhood parks, and community parks throughout the City. The community’s Nature District includes over 1,000 acres of scenic parks, wetlands and floodplains, rivers and water bodies, open prairies, and other unique habitats. These ecological features are managed by affiliated organizations and local partners operating in the City Hobart.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Undeveloped land continues to grow in appreciation value due to limited supply and high demand. The abundance of raw land in Hobart presents a variety of opportunities to meet community needs, including residential development or recreational use, in more sustainable and resilient urban forms.

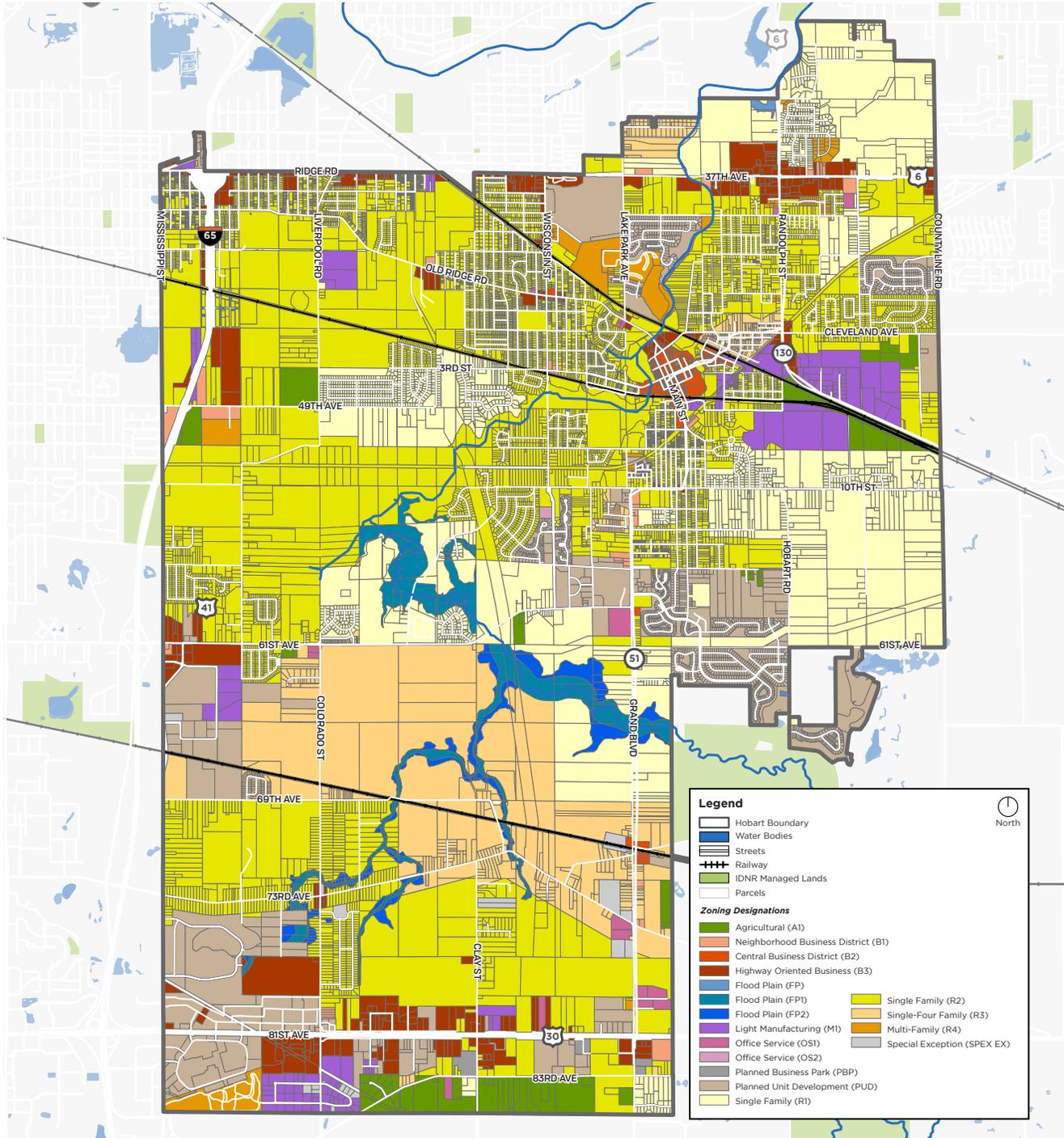
Increasing biodiversity and adding to the ecological system can be achieved if the City takes advantage of raw land.



 Native Plants in Hobart’s Open Spaces

EXISTING ZONING SUMMARY

Fig 10: Zoning Map



ZONING REGULATIONS

The city's zoning ordinance is codified as Chapter 154 of the municipal code.

Residential and Agricultural Districts

The city's existing residential and agricultural zoning districts are differentiated based primarily on allowed residential building types (one-unit detached, two-unit, and multi-unit buildings); allowed nonresidential uses; and lot size, setback, and other building placement and size regulations.

Nonresidential Districts

The nonresidential zoning district regulations generally follow a similar format as the agricultural and residential districts, with allowed uses and applicable "bulk" regulations serving as the primary distinguishing feature among the districts.

Sign Regulations

Some of the existing sign regulations, particularly those related to allowed temporary signs, appear to be based on the message of the sign, which is a practice that should be avoided in sign regulations due to First Amendment (free speech) concerns.

Site Planning

The existing "site plan" regulations found in Secs. 154.415 through 154.424 include some of the newest and most-up-date provisions in the current zoning ordinance. The regulations include plan review considerations and site planning/design criteria addressing land use, traffic impacts, utility impacts, urban design principles, aesthetic and economic impact on neighboring properties, public safety and service impacts, environmental impacts, drainage impacts, stormwater, site design, building design, and landscaping.



 Example Signage in Hobart

SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

The city's subdivision regulations are codified as Chapter 153 of the municipal code.

Subdivision Approval Procedures

The subdivision plat approval process involves four key steps:

- » Tentative plan approval
- » Preliminary plan approval
- » Final plat approval
- » Recording of approved final plat

The regulations appear to lack express provisions for expedited approval of lot line adjustments, lot splits and very minor subdivision-related activity.

Subdivision Design Standards

The design standards article includes general and specific standards governing suitability of land, streets, alleys, easements, blocks, lots, public sites and open spaces, final approval/prerequisite, required improvements, approval of improvement plans, standards for improvements and installations.

STREETS

The street design standards of Sec. 153.061 include fairly typical provisions governing right-of-way widths and street sections. One notable omission from the street standards is the absence of “complete street” specifications. Complete streets are streets designed and operated to enable safe use and support mobility for all users. Those include people of all ages and abilities, regardless of whether they are traveling as drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, or public transportation riders. Also notable is the absence of express provisions requiring that subdivision streets provide for connectivity with newly developing and already



 Main St. Streetscape

developed areas. A connected street network has higher number of street connections, creates multiple route options, and shorter block lengths that support active transportation.

BLOCKS

The block regulations of Sec. 153.064 “recommend” maximum block lengths of up to a quarter mile, which is generally considered an excessive length except in very rural areas.

LOTS

The lot standards are typical of traditional subdivision ordinances, although they do contain minimum area and width requirements that appear to be at odds with (lower than) applicable zoning regulations governing lot area and width.

MAINTENANCE OF COMMON AREAS AND IMPROVEMENTS

The existing subdivision regulations lack specific provisions governing maintenance of common areas and improvements. Maintenance of such facilities, particularly stormwater improvements, has emerged as a very important issue over the years and should be included in any modern subdivision ordinance.



 Multi-family housing in Hobart