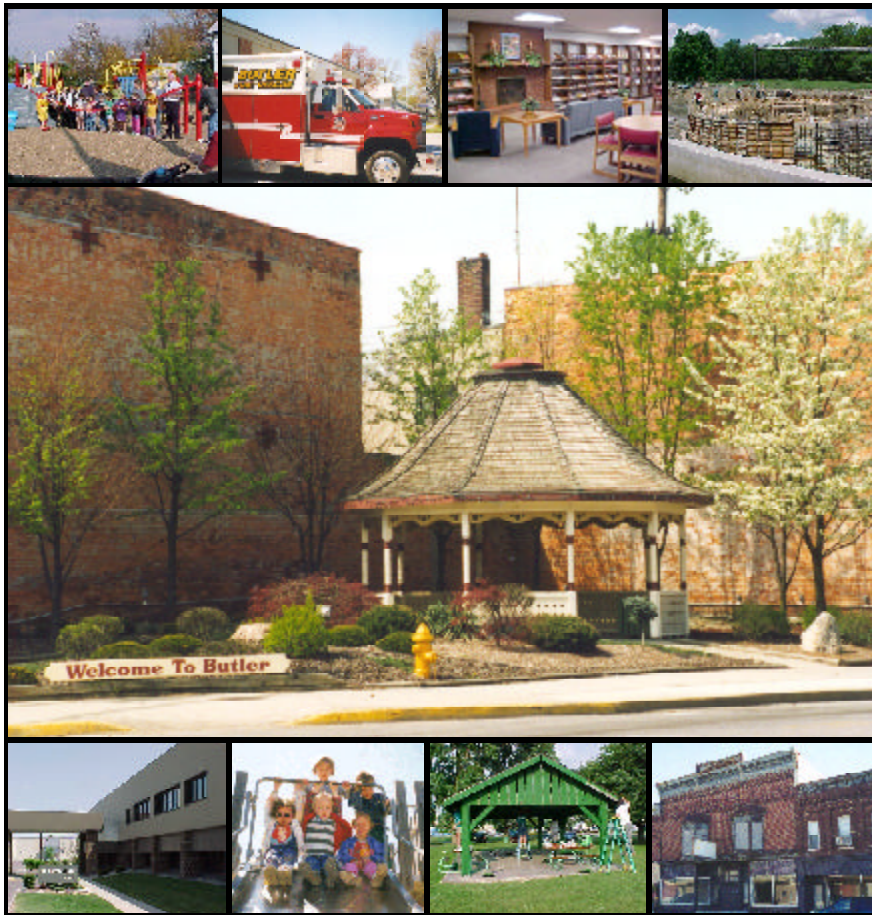


# City of Butler

## 2001 Comprehensive Plan



Prepared by  
Butler City Plan Commission

November 2001

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# Acknowledgments

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# INTRODUCTION

The City of Butler 2001 Comprehensive Plan will serve as an update and replacement for the 1982 Comprehensive Plan. The 1982 Plan has not been updated and is very general in nature.

Since the completion of the 1982 Plan, Butler has participated and completed other planning studies that have and will continue to assist the community.

1. *Five-Year Community Development Plan and Capital Improvements Program*: Completed in 1993 with assistance from Allen County Department of Planning Services.
2. *Total Quality of Life Action Plan (TQL)*: Completed in 1995 by Ball State University School of Continuing Education and Public Service.
3. *Downtown Implementation Plan*: Completed in November of 1998 by Bonar Group with financial assistance from an Indiana Department of Commerce Planning Grant.
4. *Five-Year Parks & Recreation Master Plan*: Completed in January of 2000 by Butler Recreation Board.

The *Downtown Implementation Plan* and the *Five-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan* are “current” and can be used to implement projects. These plans are detailed plans that deal with a specific aspect of the community: downtown revitalization and parks and recreation. These plans will be referred to in this *2001 Comprehensive Plan* for supplemental information.

The two older plans, the *Five-Year Community Development Plan* and *Total Quality of Life Plan*, provide benchmarks. They are useful in determining past successes and failures. Because they are dated, these can no longer be used to implement projects.

The purpose of the 1982 Comprehensive Plan was to “guide civic officials and the public in the future development and improvement of the community.” Although the document stressed the need for review and updates, no such updates were completed. Since the time the document was adopted by the City Council, Butler has undergone significant changes that include:

1. Significant industrial development and growth;
2. County Road 61 overpass;
3. Increase in train traffic;
4. Increased traffic on US 6 - particularly truck traffic;
5. Slow revitalization/deterioration of downtown; and
6. Sluggish residential and commercial growth.

The 1982 Plan identified sound planning principles that the Butler Plan Commission believes are still appropriate.

- Direct orderly and efficient growth that will meet the social, environmental, and economic needs of Butler’s residents.
- Insure that all developments have adequate public facilities and utilities in order to maintain safe and sanitary conditions.

- Insure that all future growth maintains the integrity of natural site limitations and characteristics, such as woodlands, topography, soils, and drainage patterns.
- Protect prime agricultural areas from incompatible land uses.
- Consider the rural atmosphere surrounding the City of Butler when making planning decisions.
- Encourage activities that will minimize land use conflicts, avoid traffic congestion, and encourage structures, which are compatible with surrounding developments.

## **Purpose**

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The purpose of the *2001 Comprehensive Plan* is the same as that of the 1982 Plan: “to guide civic officials and the public in the future development and improvement of the community.” However, comprehensive planning for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is important to the Butler Community for other reasons. In addition to guiding development in a positive direction, the new plan has other purposes:

1. Provide a framework and guidelines for the development and update of the zoning and the subdivision control ordinances;
2. Plan for the area beyond the City’s current jurisdiction and legally extend the City’s planning jurisdiction when necessary; and
3. Establish a capital improvement planning process leading to the development of a five-year capital improvements plan;

This Comprehensive Plan shows that the City of Butler has analyzed its strengths and weaknesses. The Plan is not intended to be rigid. It is intended to provide a broad overview of the community and anticipate the future of the community. The Plan shows that the community is ready for development; it makes the City more attractive for investment. When detailed plans with specific implementation projects are needed, those plans will be produced, such as the *Five-Year Parks and Recreation Plan*.

Many things have shaped the way Butler has developed: railroads, US Highway 6, County Road 61, and industrial growth. While local people have worked hard to attract growth and manage change, many of the critical components that have shaped Butler’s land use patterns were not predictable. Having a current Comprehensive Plan will assist the City in dealing with the predictable, as well as the unpredictable.

## **Methodology**

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The 1982 Comprehensive Plan was used as a base for this new plan. Information from the other planning studies was also used. Limited information from the 2000 Census is becoming available as this Plan is being completed. Where Census 2000 information is not available, unconventional sources such as permits, new housing starts, etc. were used to supplement the 1990 Census information.

A significant amount of interaction between the City of Butler and DeKalb County has been critical to the potential expansion of the Butler Planning Jurisdiction. Presentations to and discussions with City Leaders, County Leaders, Plan Commissions, and concerned citizens have introduced the idea of jurisdictional expansion to all of those involved.

By looking at where Butler is today and where we want to be in the future, the Butler City Plan Commission was able to develop goals and objectives for the community. These goals were divided into “accomplishable” objectives. Projects supporting these goals and objectives were then developed.

# COMMUNITY SECTION

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*City of Butler ~ 2001 Comprehensive Plan*

History  
Statistics & Analysis  
Civil & Social Services  
Summary

# HISTORY

In 1816 Indiana gained statehood. Twenty years later, DeKalb County was organized and township lines were drawn. The first settlers in the Butler/DeKalb County area secured land in 1836 and came mostly from middle and eastern Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Charles Norris bought and platted a small area, now known as the Norris Addition in the late 1830s. This area is in the southwestern quadrant of what is now the City of Butler. The Original Plat soon followed, as did the construction of a schoolhouse, sawmill, and dwellings. By 1856, “Norristown” as it was known, had a population of about 40, a dozen stores, and a line of the Michigan and Southern Railroad through town. The small community was called Norristown, Jarvis, Butler Station, and Butler between 1850 and 1866. In 1866, the community was incorporated as “Butler” and governed by Township Trustees.

A second set of tracks was completed in 1873 by the Eel River Railroad Company from Logansport. The Wabash Railroad Company leased those tracks in 1880 and extended the rail line to Detroit. At this time, the Wabash Railroad Company established its division point in Butler. This would result in the largest population boom in the Town’s history.



*The presence of the railroad has been an asset to Butler.*

Between 1880 and 1890 Butler’s population grew from 1,200 to 2,800. The Wabash Railroad Company’s monthly payroll was around \$100,000. By 1885 the local business directory listed over 40 businesses including hotels, carriage shops, restaurants, clothing, furniture, jewelry, drug stores, groceries, saloons, a band, and both a



*This picture shows a street festival held in the 1890s on Broadway.*

Republican newspaper, the “Record,” and a Democratic newspaper, the “Review.” Factories, as well as retail businesses, prospered in Butler in the mid-1880s.

The boom did not last long; in 1893 Wabash Railroad Company divided the Butler division point between Ashley, Indiana and Montpelier, Ohio. Butler’s population diminished as quickly as it had grown.

In 1903, Butler became a “City” and installed a public sewer system. By 1910, the community was paving streets. The small city continued a controlled growth, paving more streets and providing public utility service for lights, water, and sidewalks to its residents. In 1933, the City of Butler reverted to the “Town of Butler” because of new population requirements set by the State of Indiana.



*This photo was shot looking south from the corner of Oak and Broadway. The Thompson Block Opera House is visible on the left side of the photo.*

The 1941 business directory listed six Butler industries and more than 80 businesses and offices. In the 1941 program to the City’s Century Celebration, James Cather writes,

*“We, the people of Butler, are justly proud of our prosperous little City in Northeastern Indiana... Butler is located at the very crossroads of America... A spirit of friendliness and cooperation is apparent by the number of business organizations, fraternal organizations, and clubs in the City.”*

The importance of industrial development has always been in the thoughts of Butler residents. In 1936, Jerry Barber wrote,

*“A town without industry cannot be an enterprising one, and devoid of this is almost sure to settle into a gradual decadence. Manufacturing should receive a town’s constant attention and encouragement.”*

Shortly after the Century Celebration in 1941, new “industries” began replacing old “factories.” In 1950 industrial growth surged with Universal Tool and Stamping Company’s move to Butler. Universal Tool was soon followed by Federal Fertilizer Company in 1950; Hendrickson Tandem in 1953; Bohn Aluminum and Brass Company in 1957; Crane Edmund Corporation in 1959; and Commercial Shearing and Stamping Company in 1962.



*An aerial photo of Butler that is estimated to be taken in the 1970s. Maxton Motors is in the lower right.*

In 1956 Butler once again became a City because of a change in State law. New housing development was fairly consistent from figures presented in the 1990 Census. Between 14% and 17% of Butler’s housing units were built each decade from 1950 to 1990.

Butler has seen a resurgence of industrial growth in the late 1980s. and 1990s. Steel Dynamics, Incorporated built a steel mini-mill on 750 acres four miles southwest of the City Limits. The State of Indiana constructed a vehicular overpass over US Highway 6 and the railroad tracks to accommodate truck traffic. That road was relinquished to DeKalb County and is now known as County Road 61. There has been and continues to be significant industrial growth along the County Road 61 Industrial Corridor. At this time, these new industries are almost entirely related to the steel industry.

Industries inside Butler City Limits have also experienced growth in the form of new building construction and new manufacturing equipment. Industry has been one sector of Butler’s economy that has experienced significant growth. Residential and commercial growth have not kept pace with the growth of industry in Butler.

A quick review of a 1999 phone directory lists 13 industries inside the Butler City Limits. An additional 11 are located outside the City Limits, but within the Butler Zip Code. These industries have some dependence on Butler for services. Over 50 commercial/service businesses were found in the same directory.

# STATISTICS & ANALYSIS

Only very limited statistics from the 2000 Census were available during the preparation of this plan. Information from the 1990 Census can be used as a basis, but should not be considered completely accurate because of its age. Other, less conventional sources were explored and used to gather information that is more recent and more accurate. This section looks at Butler’s characteristics with regard to population, education, labor and income, and housing.

## Population Characteristics

The 2000 Census population for the City of Butler is 2,725; by comparison, the 1990 Census population figure is 2,601. The City grew by 4.8% between 1990 and 2000. Over the past three decades, Butler’s population has increased at a slow, but steady rate. Figure 1 shows the population figures and changes for the City of Butler and DeKalb County.

A large majority, 98%, of Butler’s population is white. This has remained consistent according to the 2000 Census figures. The percentage of the population that considers themselves of Hispanic Ethnicity has increased from 1% in 1990 to 2.2% in 2000.

Population for City of Butler & DeKalb County				
Year	City of Butler		DeKalb County	
	Population	Change	Population	Change
2000	2,725	4.77%	40,285	14.04%
1990	2,601	3.67%	35,324	5.11%
1980	2,509	4.80%	33,606	8.98%
1970	2,394	10.02%	30,837	9.08%
1960	2,176	13.69%	28,271	8.64%
1950	1,914	6.69%	26,023	5.12%
1940	1,794		24,756	

Figure 1

DeKalb County has grown at a faster rate than the City of Butler since 1980.

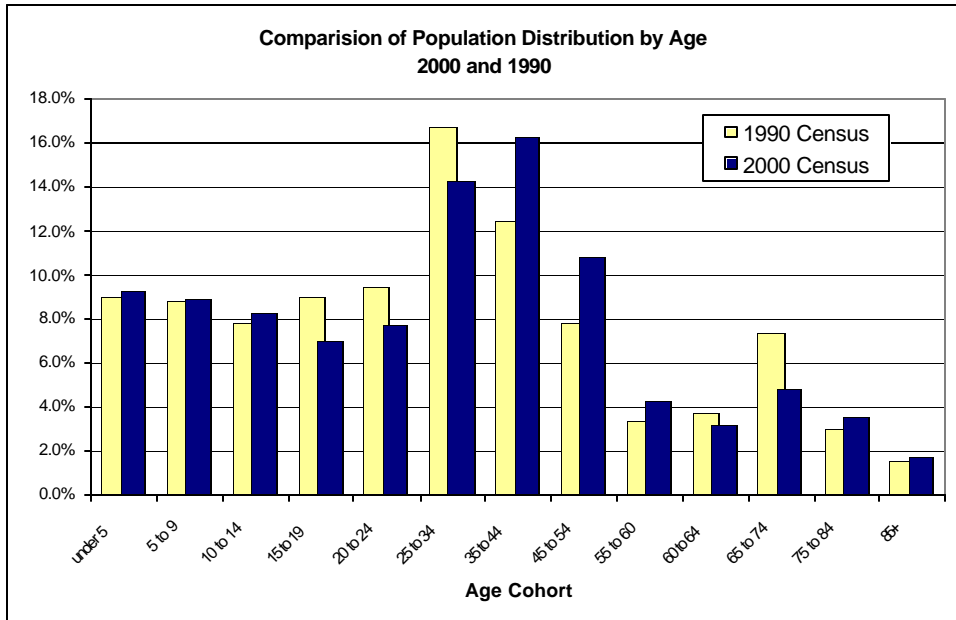


Figure 2

A comparison of population distribution by age shows that some age cohorts have experienced significant increases, while others have decreased.

Figure 2 compares Butler’s population distribution by age in the 2000 Census to the same distribution in the 1990 Census. While the actual number of residents age 14 and under increased from 664 to 721 between 1990 and 2000, this age group still makes up about 26% of Butler’s total population. The most dramatic shift was the decrease in young adults, those aged 15 to 34. In 1990, these age groups accounted for 35% of the total population; according to the 2000 Census, only 787 people, or 29%, of Butler’s population is 15 to 34. This cohort encompasses the child bearing age groups. If this trend continues, Butler could see a decrease in the number of youngsters in the future.

Those individuals 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 increased in real numbers, as well as in the percentage of the population. In 1990, these groups made up 20% of the total population; in 2000, that same percentage was 27%. Additionally, Butler’s median age increased from 29.1 years in 1990 to 30.9 years in 2000.

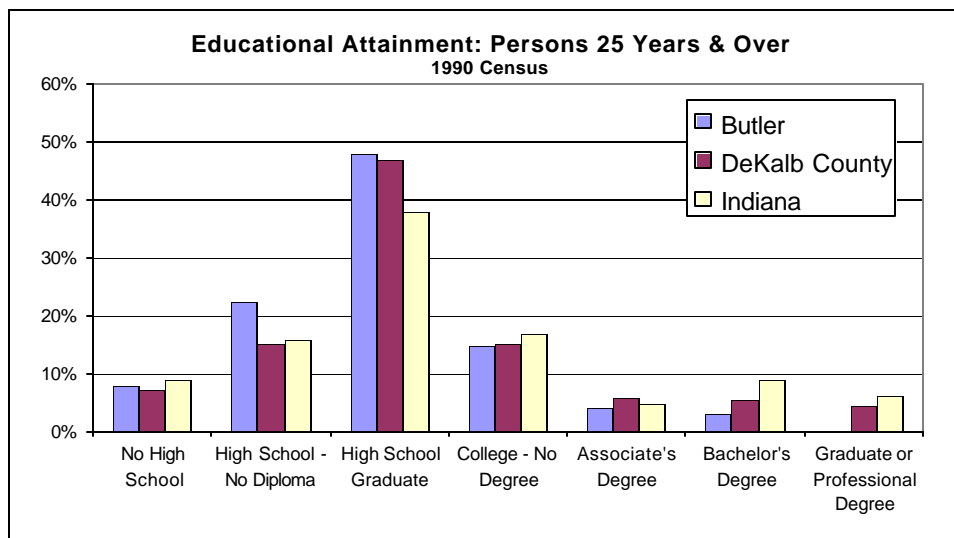
There were 983 households in Butler according to the 2000 Census. This figure is up from 936 in the 1990 Census; an increase of 4.8%. Average household size decreased to 2.68 in the 2000 Census. Females living alone with children under 18 head 86 or 9%, of Butler households.

### **Educational Attainment**

About half of Butler citizens age 25 and over have obtained a high school diploma or GED as their highest level of education. Twenty-two percent have had some education beyond high school, while 31% have not obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent.

In general, Butler has a greater percentage of residents with lower educational attainment levels than the State of Indiana. The percentage of high school graduates (as the highest level of attainment) in Butler is high compared to the State probably because fewer go on to obtain education beyond the high school level.

Butler’s educational attainment figures are consistent with the strong industrial heritage of the community. Moderate to high wage jobs have been available locally for young adults immediately after high school graduation. In addition, there are also positions available that may not require a high school diploma or a GED.



*Figure 3*

*Educational attainment for Butler residents 25 years old and over compared to figures for the entire State of Indiana. Figures are from the 1990 Census.*

## Labor Force and Income Characteristics

Nearly 70% of employed Butler residents work in DeKalb County. The 1990 Census category, Time Leaving Home for Work, indicates that Butler residents work all three shifts.

Forty-four (44%) percent of working Butler residents are employed in the manufacturing of durable goods. This same figure for the State of Indiana is 18%. Just over 18% of employed Butler residents are in the retail trade industry. About 10% are involved with manufacturing nondurable goods. Almost 8% are in the health field, educational industry, or other professional service field. The remaining 20% are in industries that include construction, transportation, public administration, agriculture, service, and wholesale trade.

*Figures 4 & 5*

*Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the major employers that responded to a telephone survey in October of 1999. Each company was asked to estimate its current number of employees. Please note that these tables are not all-inclusive.*

Major Industries Inside City Limits	
Company	Employees
Bohn Aluminum	375
Therma Tru	361
Dura Automotive	361
Pullman Industries	76
DeKalb Molded Plastics	70
Rods Indiana, Inc.	45
Hendrickson Suspension	21
Abros	12
Service Steel	10
Color Master, Inc.	9
Engineered Materials	8
TOTAL	1348

Major Industries with City Zip Code	
Company	Employees
Steel Dynamics, Inc.	560
Heidtman Steel	150
Tri-Wall	150
Dekko Engineering	100
Affiliated Metals	50
Butler Mill	37
Air Products	31
Cookie Carriers	25
Feralloy North American Steel	22
Laub Brothers	17
New Millennium	est. 200
New Process	est. 40
TOTAL	1382

Labor force characteristics are indicative of the strong presence of industry in Butler. Growth in Butler has not been limited to new industry. In 1999 and 2000, four existing industries expanded their facilities and added new jobs. This is clearly a sign of a healthy economy and strong business climate. In addition, industry in the Butler Community is diversified: steel, plastics, building products, automotive-related products, packaging, and more. Large and small companies alike have found the Butler location to be an asset.

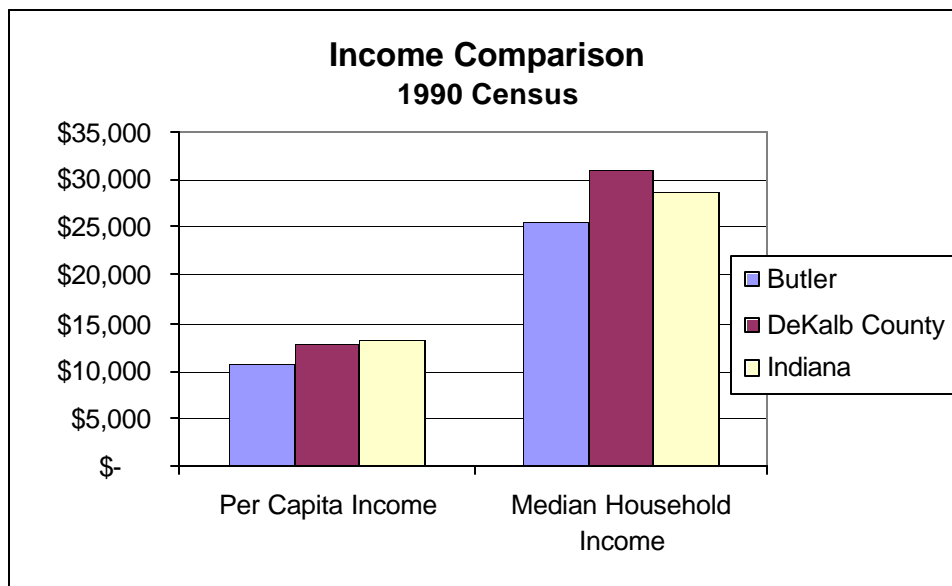
Unemployment rates have consistently been low in Butler, DeKalb County, and northeast Indiana. That trend continues with rates of unemployment hovering around 3%.

The City of Butler has experienced minimal growth in the commercial and retail sectors of the economy. Nearly all of the commercial growth has been along US Highway 6 in the form of automobile-centered developments: gas stations, convenient stores, fast food restaurants, and other automobile-related developments.

The City's other commercial area, the historic downtown, has seen some businesses grow and others close. "Downtown revitalization" has been the subject of a study and much discussion in Butler. The Eastside Area Community Foundation has acquired the Thompson Block Opera House (formerly the Nugen Building). The

Foundation has enlisted the assistance of the City of Butler to help revitalize the building. Two historical museums have been proposed in downtown Butler by two different non-profit associations. The DeKalb County Historical Society plans to use the Butler Carnegie Library building to house a County History Museum. The National Heartland Association has signed a lease for a portion of the old Butler Company Complex to house an “industrial power engine” museum. These projects are veering away from traditional retail uses to tourism and cultural uses; they are critical to the revitalization of the downtown.

The City of Butler falls below the State and DeKalb County in per capita income and median household income according to the 1990 Census. In addition, a 1997 Income Survey completed by Research Resources concludes that nearly 60% of Butler households have income that is 80% of the State’s Median Household Income. That figure (80% of Indiana Median Household Income) in 1999 was \$38,500 for a family of four.



*Figure 6*

*Figure 6 compares income for Butler, DeKalb County, and Indiana. Note: These figures have not been adjusted for inflation.*

### **Housing Characteristics**

The Butler Community has struggled to maintain adequate housing development for the amount of industrial development that is occurring in and around the community. According to the 2000 Census, there are 1,075 housing units in Butler; this is a net gain of 69 units from the 1990 Census. This figure includes apartments, mobile homes, modular units, as well as stick built homes. Of the 1,075 units, approximately 8.6% were vacant - either for rent, for sale, or abandoned. About 70% of the 983 occupied housing units in Butler were owner-occupied according to the 2000 Census. The remaining 30% (288 units) are renter-occupied.

According to the 1990 Census, about 70% of all housing units in Butler are single-family dwellings. Mobile homes accounted for 12% of the housing units; duplexes and apartment units accounted for 15% of the housing units.

The Median Year Structure Built, according to the 1990 Census, is 1958; this means half the homes in Butler were built before 1958 and half after 1958. The Median House Value according to the 1990 Census was \$37,200. When adjusted for inflation, that figure would be \$50,840 in 1999.

Housing development in Butler was virtually non-existent in the early 1990s. In 1995, the City instituted a Residential Property Tax Abatement Program to encourage the development of new housing in the community. Since the program was instituted, Butler has seen a small, but consistent number of new residential construction permits.

Residential Building Permits		
Year	Qty	Notes
2000	2	
1999	7	2 were prefabricated homes
1998	11	4 were prefabricated homes
1997	12	6 were duplexes
1996	8	3 were prefabricated homes
1995	3	1 was a prefabricated home

Figure 7

The number of new residential construction permits has been small.

There are two subdivisions in Butler where the majority of the stick-built homes are being built: Northwood Section II and Mayerknoll Plat III. Currently, Northwood Section II has 21 empty lots that are platted, but not developed. Mayerknoll Plat III was approved in 1996, and is just beginning to develop. Four homes are now completed. Twenty-one lots are available for development in Mayerknoll Plat III.

The Butler Plan Commission approved an additional subdivision, Chapman Trails, in 1998. Phase I of Chapman Trails, 21 stick built homes, has been approved. However, the subdivision is in transition. The City anticipates active development to begin in this subdivision in 2002.

Pre-fabricated (manufactured) homes are permitted in all residential districts in Butler, but must meet the same requirements as stick built homes. A new manufactured housing community is currently being developed in Butler. Phase I of this community, South Shore Manufactured Housing Community, will consist of 39 homes. Upon completion of the entire community, there will be 258 single and double-wide manufactured homes in the South Shore Manufactured Housing Community.

In addition to the new subdivisions for conventional homes and the new South Shore Manufactured Housing Community, Butler has other residential opportunities. Northcrest Trailer Park is an older manufactured housing community that has been very well-maintained. Fawn Haven Apartments, Country Place Apartments, and Town House Apartments are apartment complexes in Butler. Portions of Fawn Haven and Country Place are reserved for low/mod-income families and senior citizens. There are also a number of private landlords with rental properties.

Butler also has older neighborhoods with homes built on the traditional gridiron streets. Like many communities with older homes, there are problems with upkeep and proper maintenance on some properties. The City of Butler is actively engaged in a code enforcement program designed to repair or demolish unsafe buildings. In less than two years, one home has been rehabilitated, 6 homes have been demolished, 4 garages have been demolished, and 1 home has been repaired. Three other homes are currently involved in the process.

# CIVIL & SOCIAL SERVICES

## City Departments

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Butler has an elected Mayor, Clerk-Treasurer, Judge, and five-member City Council. There are four councilmanic districts, and one at large council member. All public works are approved by a three-member Board of Public Works: the Mayor and two mayoral-appointees.

The Mayor oversees all the governmental activities of the City. He appoints department heads and sees that all City departments are functioning properly. The Mayor is the figure head of the community and hears and responds to various citizen complaints. The Mayor's Office is housed in the City Utility Office.

The Clerk-Treasurer and the Clerk's Assistant are responsible for all of the City's financial accounts, claims, investments, payroll, benefits, human resources issues, and cemetery records. The Clerk's Office is housed in the City Utility Office.

Butler City Hall houses the Butler City Court. The Court is staffed by an elected City Judge and two administrative employees that assist with the processing of traffic violations issued by various law enforcement agencies and City ordinance violations. Although the City Court has a City Council-approved budget, the City Court functions somewhat independently of the rest of the City Departments.



*The Butler City Hall, built in 1963, houses the Court, City Council Chambers, Fire Department, and EMS quarters.*

Butler has a Water Utility and Wastewater Utility. (Additional information on the utilities can be found in the Infrastructure Section of this plan.) The Water and Wastewater Utilities share one superintendent and a staff that ranges between 7 and 10. These employees are responsible for operation, maintenance, Federal and State compliance, testing, billing and collection, and planning for expansion of both utility systems. These employees are also responsible for the maintenance of City streets, the Cemetery, and City parks. The Utility Billing Department is housed in the City Utility Office. Most maintenance equipment is housed in the City Barn. All testing is conducted at the Wastewater Treatment Plant and/or the Water Plant.

The Department of Community Development is staffed by a City Planner. This department is responsible issuing permits, overseeing the City's tax abatement programs, enforcing the Zoning Code, and planning and research for the City's various boards and commissions. Butler has an active Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Economic Development Commission, and Recreation Board. The Community Development Department is housed in the City Utility Office.

## Emergency Services

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The Butler Police Department maintains law and order in the Butler Community. A chief, 7 officers, 10 reserve officers, and a part-time administrative assistant staff the Butler PD. The department has 3 police cars that are on a 3 year replacement cycle; a vehicle is replaced each year. The department's main responsibilities are enforcing the criminal statutes of the State of Indiana and the ordinances of the City. This typically involves enforcing traffic laws, responding to calls, thefts, vandalism, and enforcing the nuisance ordinance with regard to junk vehicles, tall grass, and dog complaints. Butler PD is housed in its own building at 201 North Broadway.

The Butler Volunteer Fire Department provides fire protection and emergency assistance to the City of Butler as well as Wilmington, Stafford, Troy, and Franklin Townships. The Fire Department is served by a chief, 4 line officers, 15 regular members, 5 township members, and 10 reserves. In addition to fire-fighting, the department is qualified to handle hazardous material situations, rescues, and medical assistance. Two pumps, 2 tankers, 2 grass rigs, a rescue truck, and a suburban make up the Fire Department's fleet. The vehicles range in age from 37 to 2 years old. The Fire Department averages 35 runs a month.



*The Butler Fire Department's 1998 Fire Rescue Truck is 1 of 8 vehicles.*

In addition to regular fire prevention programming, the Fire Department has a smoke detector program, a rural reflective sign program, a top finder program (stickers for the windows of rooms with kids), and a reserve & junior fire-fighter program. The Fire Department is housed in the Butler City Hall. Because of its age, the City Hall Building poses problems with ventilation, doors, space, electrical wiring, and plumbing.

The DeKalb County Emergency Medical Service (EMS) is headquartered at DeKalb Memorial Hospital and serves all of DeKalb County through three stations: one each in Garrett, Auburn, and Butler. The EMS employs 18 full-time paramedics, 3 administrative staff, and 10 "call-in" medical technicians. The Butler EMS station averages about 13 runs per week. Two EMS employees are on duty in each location 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Butler City Hall houses the EMS quarters and a 1995 ambulance that exceeds the minimum requirements set by the State of Indiana. The EMS's largest ongoing issue is funding. The service is funded by a tax subsidy that is not keeping pace with rising costs of emergency medical service.

## **City Facilities**

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The City of Butler's government offices are located in various places.

City Utility Office ~ 201 South Broadway The City Utility Office houses the water office (where utility bills are paid), the Clerk-Treasurer's Office, the Mayor's Office, and the City Planner's Office. There is a small, non-private conference area in the building. Only one office is private, and there is no waiting/reception area. The basement is used for record storage. This structure is very close to being at capacity.

Butler Police Department ~ 201 North Broadway This building has a waiting/reception area, three offices (all private), a private conference room, interrogation/questioning room, locker area for officers, and a garage area. The Police Chief believes the current facility will adequately serve the Police Department for many years to come.

Butler City Hall ~ 120 West Main Street City Hall is comprised of the Butler City Court, Butler Council Chambers, and the Butler Fire Department. Knowing that improvements are needed to this building, a Modernization Feasibility Study was recently completed looking at alternative improvements to the facility. The Fire Department needs more room for offices, a training room, room for storage, taller bays for the trucks, and an improved HVAC system. The City Court is very close to capacity. The City Council Chambers is adequate for some city meetings, but not for others. There is a permanent council panel that seats seven, even though some of the boards are larger than that. The room comfortably seats about 30 spectators. The restrooms in the City Hall are not handicap accessible.

Butler City Barn ~ Depot Street The Barn is a storage area for much of the city's equipment: dump trucks, snow plows, street sweeper, mowers, and tools. There is a break room for city workers, as well.

Butler Water Treatment Plant & Tower ~ 141 West Willow Street Water quality testing is completed at the Butler Water Treatment Plant. A 300,000 gallon water tower and iron removal facility is also on site.

Butler Wastewater Treatment Plant ~ 695 East Green Street The Wastewater Treatment facility is currently under expansion to double the capacity of the facility. On site garages serve as storage for vehicles and equipment associated with the Treatment Plant and maintenance of the sewer system.

## **Educational Opportunities**

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The DeKalb Eastern Consolidated School District is comprised of Wilmington, Stafford, Concord, Spencer, and Newville Townships. The district includes 3 schools: Butler Elementary, Riverdale Elementary, and Eastside Jr./Sr. High School. The school system offers basic K-12 education with extra-curricular opportunities in athletics, band, and other clubs. Enrollment has been up and down over the past 5 years. The School Board has purchased 160 acres on the south side of Butler and discussed various projects.

The City of Butler has access to a number of higher educational opportunities in nearby communities: Ivy Tech State College, Freedom Academy, ITT Technical Institute, Tri-State University, Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, Indiana Institute of Technology, St. Francis College, Taylor University, and Indiana Wesleyan University. Most of these institutions are within a 45 minute drive.

In 1999, the citizens of Butler recognized the need for a new library. The Butler Library had been housed in a Carnegie Building since the early 1900s. The Carnegie Building was limited in size, technological capabilities, and accessibility. In an effort provide better service to the community, the Library Board of Directors decided to renovate an existing structure on the edge of downtown. The new Butler Public Library has more space, a community room, and new enhanced computer capabilities. It is one of Butler's greatest assets. The new Library Director is developing programs for all age groups in the community.



*The Butler Public Library opened a more accessible facility in April of 2000 to better serve the public.*

The Butler Community Day Care Center, Inc. has been in operation since 1987. A Community Focus Fund Grant from the State of Indiana and a local fund-raising campaign funded the construction of a new facility in March of 1993. The nonprofit Center is supported by United Way funds and Federal Title 20 monies which help low-income families with day care costs. The Day Care Center is governed by an 18 member Board of Directors. The Center is pursuing accreditation and making plans to care for children under age 2. Currently, 96 kids - ages 2 through 12 - are enrolled. The Day Care Center provides a variety of opportunities and an environment conducive to learning and new experiences for children. The Day Care Center is a valuable asset and, along with the Library, a shining example of what the Butler community can accomplish.

## **Health Care**

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DeKalb Memorial Hospital has located and staffed a general practice clinic in Butler. A local dentist is also available to provide dental care to Butler residents. The Laurels of DeKalb is a modern skilled nursing and assisted living center in Butler that was recently renovated to provide a specialized care unit for Alzheimer's patients.



*Dr. Emilio Vazquez completes a check-up at the Butler Clinic.*

## **Civic Groups**

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The City of Butler benefits significantly from the large number of civic groups that are active in the community. There are seven churches inside the Butler City Limits and more in the surrounding rural area.

In addition to the churches, the City has numerous civic organizations: American Legion, Sons of the American Legion, Fraternal Order of the Eagles, Eagles Auxiliary, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, Eastside Area Community Foundation, and a downtown merchants group known as the Six And One Association. The Heartland Museum and the DeKalb County Historical Society also have plans of opening museums in Butler. These organizations provide residents with ample opportunity to become involved for a variety of different causes.

## SUMMARY

The following conclusions can be drawn from the Community Section:

Butler has a strong industrial heritage that is very visible in the community today. The presence of the railroads, lower educational attainment levels than the state, and lower median income are all indicative of the strong industrial heritage.

Butler's local industry is growing. This is indicated by low unemployment figures, the high number of residents employed in manufacturing, the expansion of existing industries, and the development of new manufacturing facilities in and around Butler. In addition, the industrial base is diversified which provides protection from economic slowdowns.

DeKalb County's population is growing. The City of Butler's population is changing -- if not in size, than in composition by age, race, and ethnicity.

Housing development continues to be a priority for the City. The community would benefit from more new housing starts in the form of single-family homes, duplexes, and apartments and the new residents these homes would bring.

Compared to industrial development, commercial development has been fairly static.

An excellent mix of civil and social services are provided locally for the size of the community. However, the City's facilities (fire station, city court, utility office, council chambers) are going to need upgraded. The improvement of these facilities should be looked at comprehensively. Serious consideration should be given to the use of the newly acquired Thompson Block building for these things.

There is potential for cultural growth in Butler with the revitalization of the Thompson Block Opera House theater and the development of the Heartland Museum and the DeKalb County Historical Society Museum. Downtown Butler could see a tremendous benefit from the success of these projects.

# GOALS

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*City of Butler ~ 2001 Comprehensive Plan*

# GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Goal-setting is a vital part of the comprehensive planning process. The following goal statements are not measurable; rather, they are intended to shape policy and provide direction for City leaders and decision-makers. New developments, rezonings, annexations, proposed changes in land use, and policy changes or additions that require compliance with the Comprehensive Plan should be measured against these goals.

Where possible, each goal is broken down into a series of objectives. Objectives provide more details about the goal. Strategies and actions that will assist in achieving each goal are included in the following sections on Land Use and Infrastructure.

## **Maintain Butler’s small town character.**

*Goal 1*

- Encourage, promote, and plan for the harmonious existence of all land uses that increase the quality of life in Butler.
- Be cognizant of the impacts certain development has on the City’s character and the surrounding rural atmosphere. The Plan Commission should strive to minimize negative impacts of new developments.
- Maintain adequate sidewalks, tree-lined streets, park and recreational facilities, and other residential amenities.
- Recognize the role mixed-use development plays in small town character and adopt applicable regulations.
- Promote the revitalization of downtown Butler.
- Encourage growth from the City Limits outward; discourage sprawl and “leap frog” development.
- Encourage growth in areas zoned for that type of growth. Keep rezonings and variances to a minimum.

## **Promote the growth and development of business and industry in Butler.**

*Goal 2*

- Promote the expansion, retention, and growth of existing industrial and commercial businesses.
- Promote and encourage new industrial and commercial business ventures in areas zoned for it.
- Continue to focus on diversifying the local economic base with regard to types of industry, employment opportunities, wages, etc...
- Invest reasonable time and resources in downtown revitalization.

## **Improve the quality and increase the quantity of housing opportunities.**

*Goal 3*

- Promote the clean-up and improvement of existing neighborhoods.
- Cooperate with developers, land owners, real estate agents, quasi-governmental agencies, and financial institutions to encourage the development of new housing opportunities.
- Not to sacrifice quality of development for quantity.

**Actively support new educational opportunities, cultural opportunities, and recreational opportunities for all age groups.**

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*Goal 4*

- Support the School Board in its endeavors to improve the community’s educational facilities.
- Support the Butler Park Board as it continue to assess and improve the local parks and recreational facilities.
- Create and/or maintain relationships with the day care, the library, and other non-profits and civic organizations.
- View the Thompson Block restoration, as well as the development of museums, as an opportunity for cultural growth.

**Ensure adequate public facilities are available for development**

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*Goal 5*

- Create and maintain up-to-date information on all utility systems: streets, sidewalks, trees, parks, water, wastewater, and storm drainage.

At first glance, Butler’s goals may appear to be contradicting: Is it possible to maintain small town character while promoting growth in all types of land uses and in utilities?

The Butler Plan Commission recognizes this may seem contradictory. However, by applying the planning principles (from the 1982 Plan) and through the careful review of developments, the Plan Commission believes Butler’s small town character can remain intact with development and can even grow stronger. Through projects like new curb on US 6, downtown revitalization, neighborhood clean ups, new commercial centers, and park projects, the Plan Commission believes the small town foundation that ties the community will grow stronger.

The 1982 Plan identified sound planning principles that the Butler Plan Commission believes are still appropriate. Implementing these principles will allow Butler to grow in population and in size while preserving the small town character.

- Direct orderly and efficient growth that will meet the social, environmental, and economic needs of Butler’s residents.
- Insure that all developments have adequate public facilities and utilities in order to maintain safe and sanitary conditions.
- Insure that all future growth maintains the integrity of natural site limitations and characteristics, such as woodlands, topography, soils, and drainage patterns.
- Protect prime agricultural areas from incompatible land uses.
- Consider the rural atmosphere surrounding the City of Butler when making planning decisions.
- Encourage activities that will minimize land use conflicts, avoid traffic congestion, and encourage structures, which are compatible with surrounding developments.

# LAND USE SECTION

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*City of Butler ~ 2001 Comprehensive Plan*

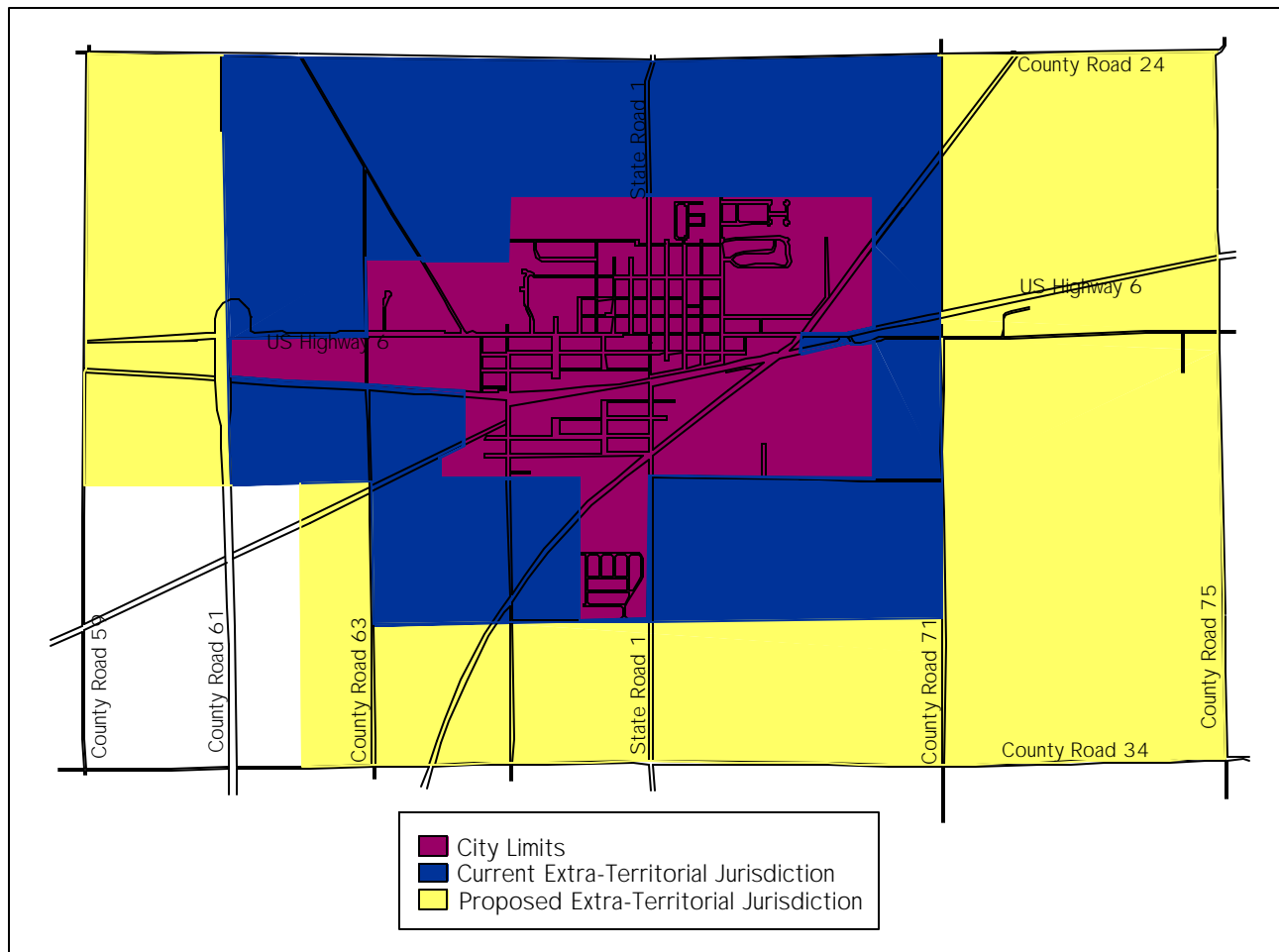
Jurisdiction  
Land Use  
Strategies & Actions

# JURISDICTION

The City of Butler and DeKalb County have a long history of discussion concerning the area immediately outside the Butler City Limits. The Butler Plan Commission has extra-territorial jurisdiction over land roughly bounded by County Road 24, County Road 71, County Road 32 (extended) and County Road 61. Extra-territorial jurisdiction rights and responsibilities are not clearly addressed in Indiana Code. This has created some conflict between the Butler City Plan Commission and the DeKalb County Plan Commission. It is our goal to cooperate with the County in all aspects of planning and zoning that affect the City of Butler.

*Map 1*

*The area in yellow is the proposed addition to the City's planning jurisdiction.*



The City of Butler Plan Commission has proposed the extension of its extra-territorial jurisdiction to include the area roughly bounded by County Road 24, County Road 75, County Road 34, and County Road 59. The Butler Plan Commission is requesting an expansion in extra-territorial jurisdiction for the following reasons:

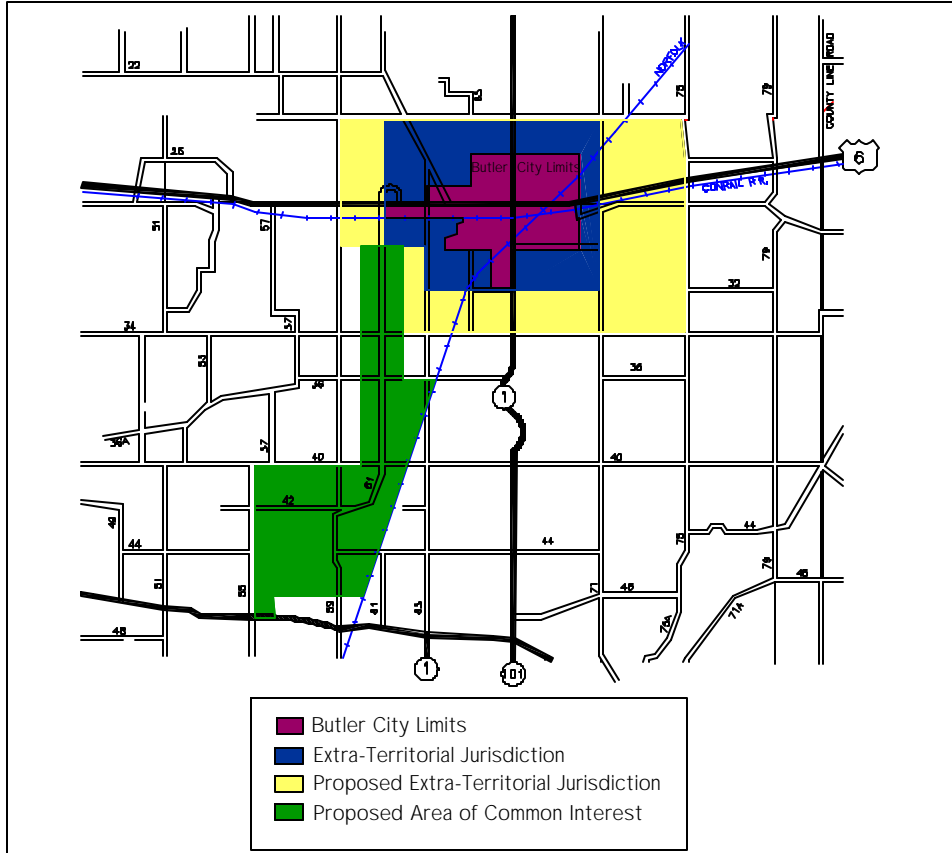
1. The 2001 Comprehensive Plan will plan for the areas within the proposed new extra-territorial boundaries.
2. The City Limits are at portions of the southern and western extra-territorial jurisdiction boundary.
3. The City wants some influence in the development of the land near the new school property.

4. The County Road 61 industrial corridor has a large impact on many different facets of the Butler Community, and the City would like some knowledge of and influence over developments in that corridor.
5. The City supplies sewer and wastewater treatment to the industrial corridor.
6. The City has no influence around the city-owned cemetery property. Additionally, the new cemetery requires a special exception from the DeKalb County Plan Commission.
7. Developments in the proposed extra-territorial jurisdiction impact traffic, land use, property values, and development in the City.
8. The City has invested a significant amount of money in the collection of data for this area through the County-City GIS Project.

Both Commissions have an interest in communicating better. Currently, the Commissions are working together to develop agreements covering these items:

1. Establishing written rules and procedures for developments within the extra-territorial jurisdiction;
2. Allowing the Butler Plan Commission to have review privileges for developments within an “Area of Common Interest;”
3. Creating new boundaries for shared influence.

For the purposes of this plan, the areas in yellow, blue, and burgundy will be considered Butler’s Planning Area. The green area will be referred to in the plan as Butler’s Area of Common Interest.



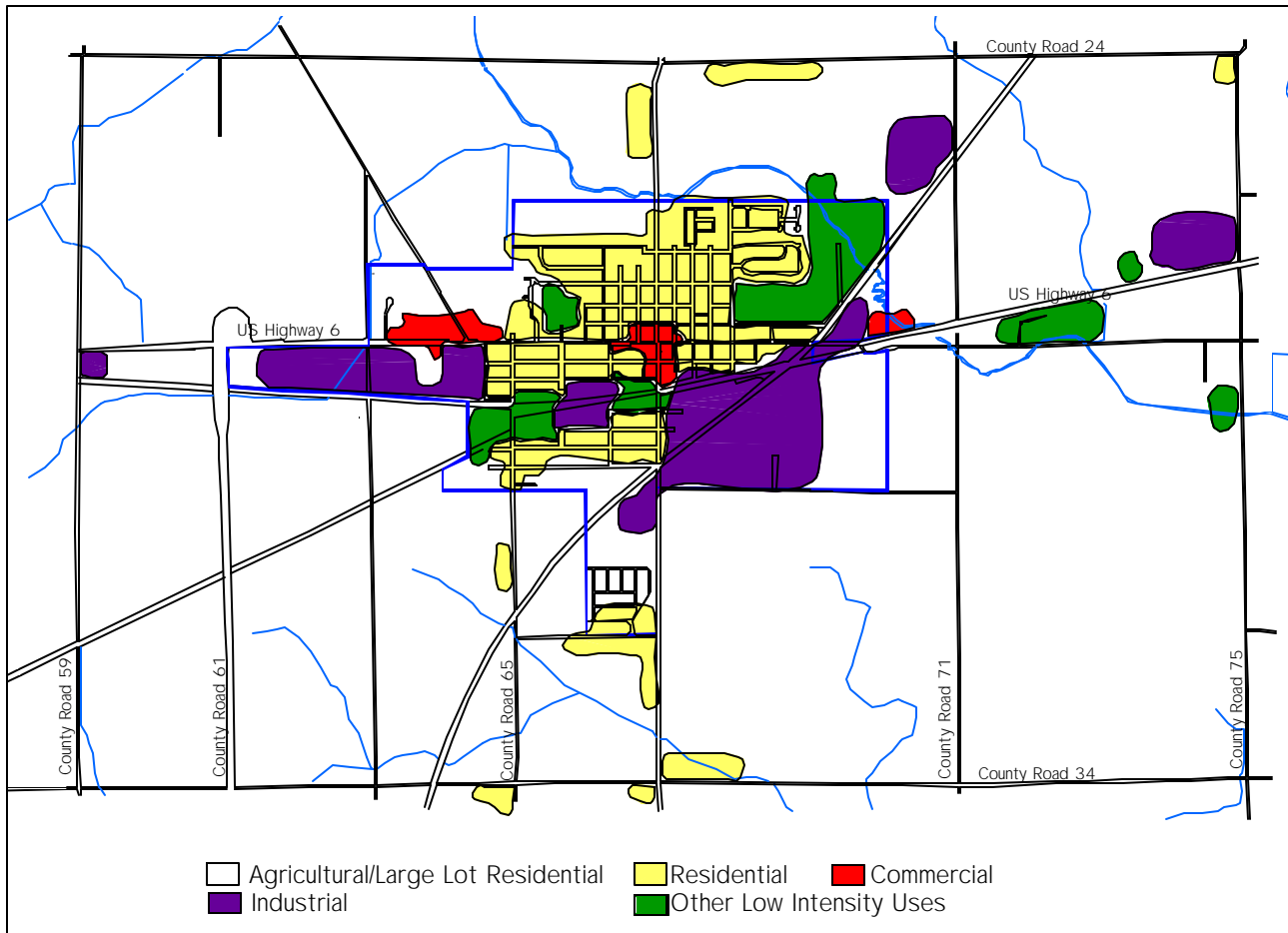
Map 2

*The Butler Plan Commission is working with the DeKalb County Plan Commission to accommodate the development needs of both jurisdictions.*

# LAND USE

## Current

The City's existing land use pattern is fairly consistent with the zoning. Below is a map of the existing land uses for the City of Butler's Planning Area. For the purpose of this plan, land uses were divided into five categories: agricultural/large lot residential, residential, industrial, commercial, and other low-intensity uses. (Please note: the map is generalized; not every single use is identified.)



The blank/white area on the map is agricultural and large lot residential. This land has primarily not been subdivided and for all practical purposes is undeveloped. Much of the land outside Butler's City Limits fits into this category.

The areas in yellow are subdivided residential areas. The areas in yellow included stick-built homes, manufactured homes, and apartments. The majority of residential neighborhoods in Butler are traditional gridiron development. Butler has two manufactured housing communities: Northcrest and South Shore. In addition, subdivisions have been platted and developed at various times in Butler's history: Parklane in the 1950s and 1960s; Northwood Sections and Mayerknoll Additions in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Approximately 47% of land inside Butler City Limits is zoned for residential use. Some of that residentially zoned land has not been subdivided and could accommodate new residential subdivisions.

*Map 3*

*Current land use in the Butler Plan Commission Planning Area is illustrated in Map 3.*

Approximately 38% of land inside Butler's City Limits is zoned for either light or heavy industrial uses. Because accessibility is key, most of the industry is located along railroads and/or main thoroughfares. Older industrial areas (built before 1950) are more centrally located. Newer industries, built after 1950 are located along the outside edge of town. Undeveloped, industrial-zoned land is available inside Butler City Limits, just outside City Limits, and along the industrial corridor.

The commercial areas are shown in red. Butler has two main commercial business areas. The Central Business District is located at the City's main intersection of US Highway 6 and State Road 1. This is the historic commercial area with restaurants, specialty shops, and services that are geared to pedestrian shoppers. The second commercial area is on the west side of Butler along the north side of US Highway 6. These businesses are geared more toward automobile traffic. Only 7% of the land inside Butler City Limits is used by commercial businesses. Only 10 acres of undeveloped, business-zoned land is available inside the Butler City Limits.

The green areas on the map represent other low-intensity uses. These uses include the school, parks and recreational areas, the nursing home, churches, and cemeteries and are usually located within an Institutional District or an Open Space/Recreational District. These uses are typically compatible with most other uses and often act as a buffer between non-compatible uses. About 8% of the land inside Butler City Limits is used by low intensity, non-residential uses.

## **Projected Land Use**

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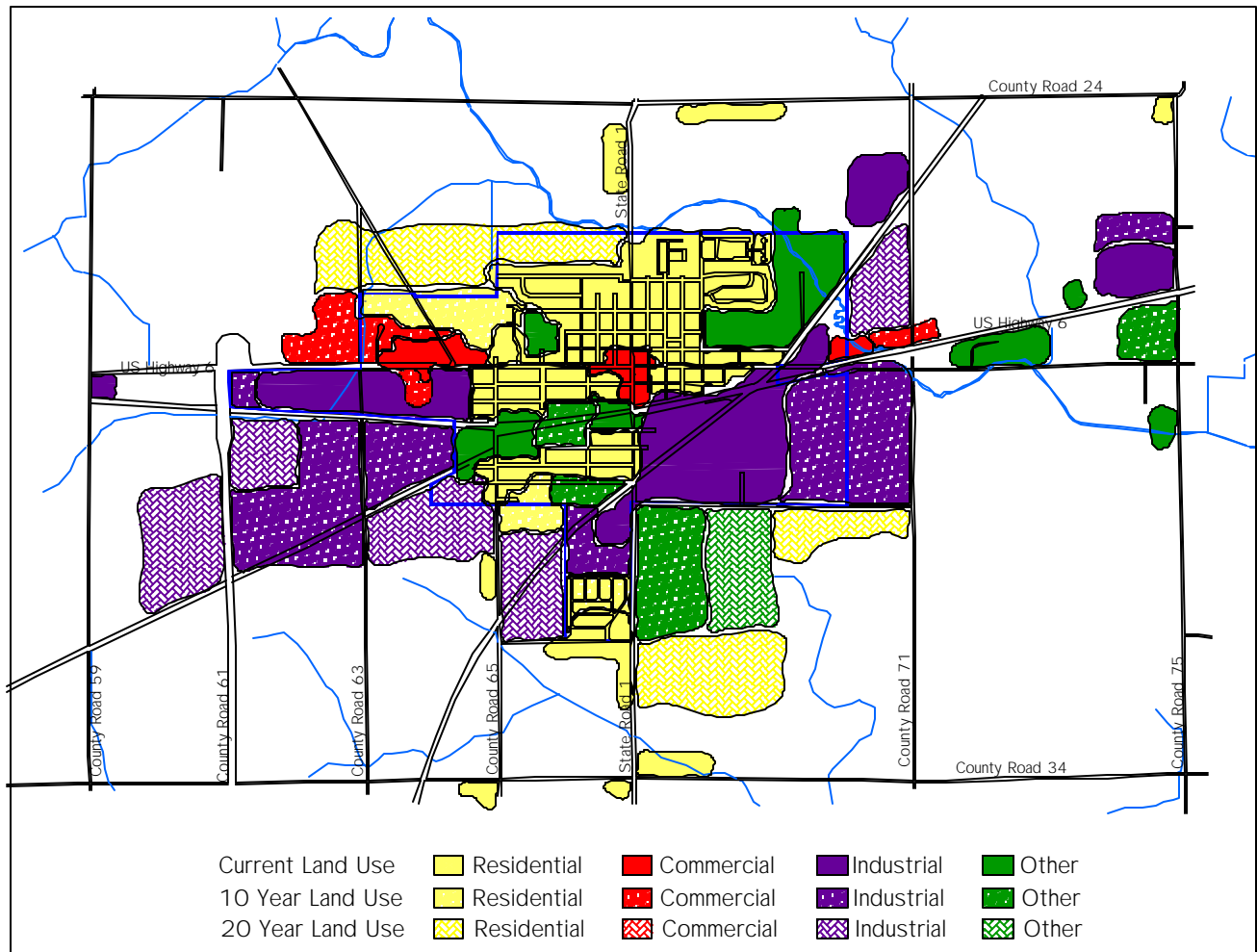
Map 4 illustrates how the Plan Commission envisions Butler's land use patterns developing and changing over the next 20 years. The map is simply a projection. The projections depend on a variety of different factors over which the Plan Commission may have no control. The projections were made for 10 years from now (2000-2010) and 10 to 20 years from now (2010-2020). Obviously, the projects from 2010 to 2020 have many more variables and are less definitive.

The only change projected in the agricultural/large lot residential areas will occur as a result of other land uses developing. Ideally, development will be centralized and occur from the City Limits outward at a density equivalent to the existing developed area.

Over the next 10 years, residential areas will begin "filling out." Already subdivided lots in Mayerknoll III, Chapman Trails I, and Northwood II will be built upon. Empty lots in traditional neighborhoods will be developed, and the new manufactured housing community will become fully occupied. Between 2010 and 2020, new residential subdivisions may be platted and subdivided north and west of Meadowmere Drive and west of Chapman Trails (in the northwest) and near the school-owned property (in the southeast).

Industrial development will follow the same trends it has since the beginning of Butler. Industries will select sites that are easily accessible to the railroad and to highways and in areas that are zoned appropriately. The west side of Butler will see the growth of industry on the south side of US Highway 6. Existing industrial lots on

State Road 1, near the ColorMaster facility, will develop. Industrial growth will also occur along RE Jones Road, to the east of the existing Therma-Tru facility. Growth will also continue to occur along the County Road 61 industrial corridor. Much of the small industry left near downtown Butler may exit the “inner city.” Development from 2010 to 2020 will simply be the growth and expansion of the existing industrial areas.



Commercial growth will occur along US Highway 6 - primarily on the west side of town and on the north side of 6. Although it is not reflected on the map, the City anticipates the revitalization of the downtown commercial district to take shape and become more apparent in the next 10 years.

*Map 4*

*Projected land use for Butler's Planning Area is illustrated in the map above.*

The growth in other low intensity uses will come from an increase in public park acreage, new school facilities, and the expansion of the Butler Cemetery. Also, with the anticipated exodus of industry from the downtown area, it is likely that this land will also become a non-industrial, non-residential low intensity use.

# LAND USE STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

The goals of the Butler Plan Commission have been outlined. Changes and the development of land uses in the Butler Planning Area have been projected 10 and 20 years into the future. This section of the Plan identifies strategies and actions that will be necessary to achieve the type of development that is projected and to accomplish the earlier stated goals.

## **Review and Update the Butler Zoning Code**

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The Butler Zoning Code was adopted in 1956. In 1991 the bulk and density requirements were updated. Other changes have been made, sections have been added, but no thorough review of the zoning code has been completed. This has resulted in a set of ordinances that contradicts itself and sometimes makes development and administration difficult. The Butler City Zoning Code needs to be constantly reviewed and updated. Some areas that need specific attention include:

- provisions for mixed use development/planned unit developments
- flexible setbacks for older residential lots
- buffer yards for incompatible uses
- requirements and conditions for special exceptions & conditional uses
- clarify building permit and improvement location permit section of code
- section on manufactured housing
- fence requirements
- definitions
- home occupations
- signage
- regulations for utility structures/telecommunications
- findings of fact
- non-conforming structures and uses

The Zoning Map is part of the Zoning Code. The Zoning Map was updated in 1999 and should be maintained. All rezonings should be recorded on the map.

## **Review and Update the Butler Subdivision Control Ordinance**

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Butler's Subdivision Control Ordinance is outdated and needs to be rewritten. Technological advances in the construction industry have changed the way development occurs. The Subdivision Control Ordinance must be consistent with the new construction specifications. The new subdivision control ordinance will result in well-planned residential and commercial developments, and should be in place within three years.

*An improved zoning code will help Butler meet all of its goals.*

*A better subdivision control ordinance will assure all new development is of the highest quality. (All goals)*

## Annexation

The City of Butler should continue to annex land when it is necessary and good planning requires it. To determine feasibility, the Plan Commission should review State Laws with regard to annexation, City services that are already provided to the area, the cost to provide services that are not provided, direct benefits the area receives from the City, and the impact of the tax rate and tax burdens.

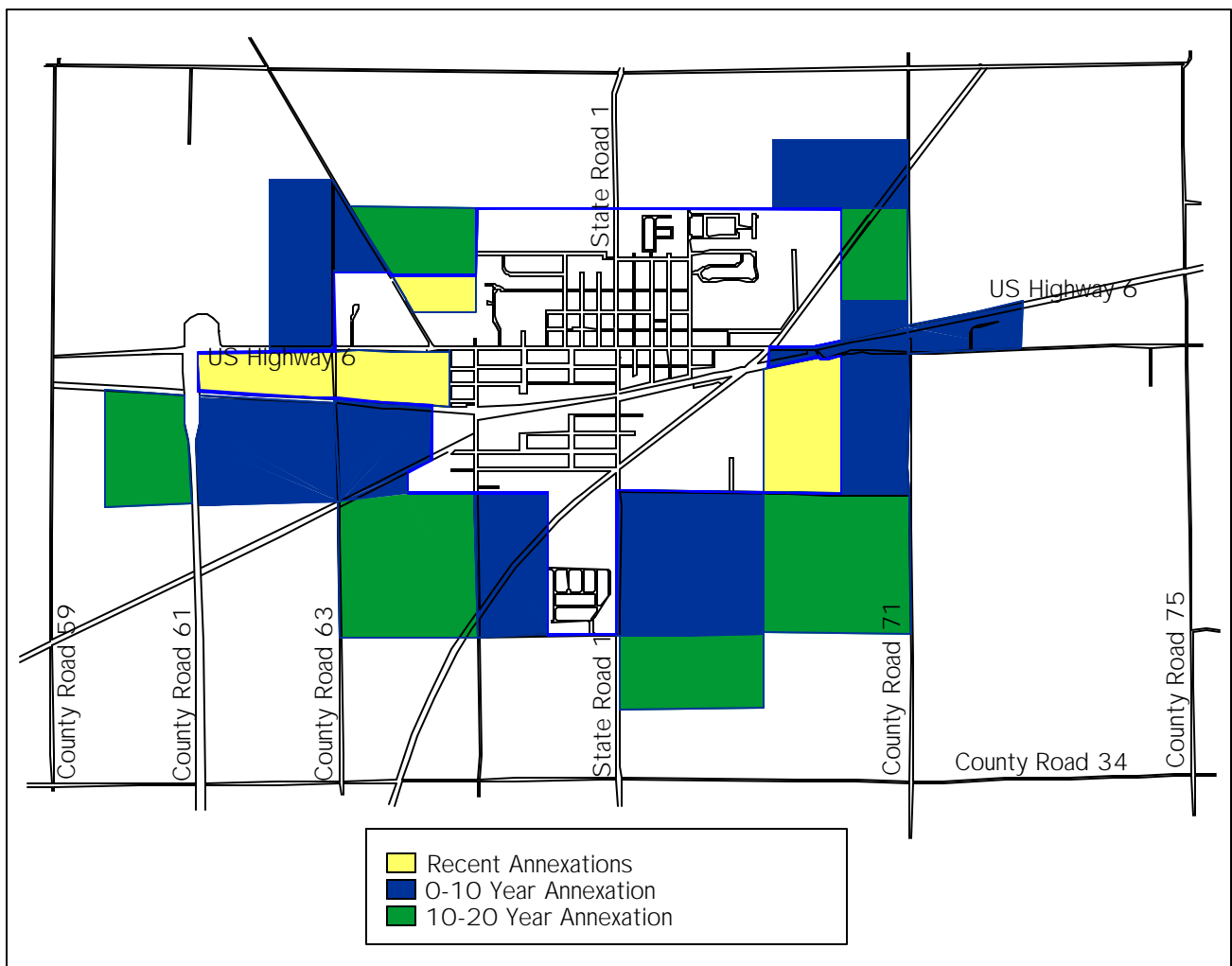
*Fair annexation policies will protect all taxpayers. (All goals)*

The City of Butler should consider the annexation of undeveloped land if the owner of the property volunteers or if the land is needed or preferable for new development. Also, the City should require annexation agreements be signed before utilities are extended or hook ups are offered.

The map below is a projected annexation map for the next 20 years. Again, the exact date of annexation will correlate directly with the development of the property. This map is based on accessibility to roads and railroads, zoning, proximity of other land uses, proximity of utilities, and current status. Developments that occur in the vicinity of the City and that request City services will likely be annexed before the City provides access to City utilities.

*Map 5*

*Recent and projected annexations.*



The Plan Commission may want to look at the feasibility of annexing the existing Tri-Wall Facility, the northern portion of the County Road 61 industrial corridor, and the school owned property on the south side of Butler in the very near future.

### **Continue to Work with DeKalb County Agencies**

Cooperation between the DeKalb County Plan Commission and the Butler Plan Commission is critical. The recent discussions surrounding new extra territorial jurisdictional boundaries have been a positive start. The spirit of cooperation and teamwork will be important as development occurs outside the Butler City Limits and within Butler's Planning Area.

*All goals*

The Geographic Information Systems project that the City of Butler is working on with DeKalb County and other local communities has significant potential. The City should continue to participate in the County-wide project.

Additionally, the Butler Plan Commission needs to take advantage of the expertise offered by the DeKalb County Surveyor's Office. The County Surveyor, as well as members of his staff, are willing to review developments and offer comments about proposed drainage plans. The Surveyor's Office offers an impartial professional opinion for free.

### **Establish and Implement a Development Plan Review Process**

There is currently no mechanism to review development plans for commercial and industrial developments. Basically, if a development meets the setbacks, coverage, height, and parking requirements, a permit is issued. A Development Plan Review process would give the Plan Commission the opportunity to review a development plan before a permit is issued. The review process would offer each city department head the opportunity to comment and give the Plan Commission the authority to require certain things be done before a permit is issued. For example, the Plan Commission may require entrance and exit drives line up with existing curb cuts.

*All goals*

The State of Indiana has enacted statutes governing development plans. The City of Butler intends to adopt an ordinance as provided by in State Law. The Development Plan Review process should be required for most commercial and industrial developments, as well as some developments in Institutional Districts and Open Space/Recreational Districts. In residential developments, the Development Plan Review Ordinance should coincide with the Subdivision Process.

### **Continually Review and Assess the City's Planning Components**

This Comprehensive Plan should be updated every 3 to 5 years. In addition, the Butler Zoning Code and the Subdivision Control Ordinance should continually be assessed. The processes involved in obtaining a permit or getting a rezoning should also be continually assessed. These processes need to be simple and quick, while

*Up-to-date planning components insure new concerns are addressed. (All goals)*

providing ample opportunity for review. The processes should reflect changes in the State statutes.

The City should also work to fully integrate the GIS into everyday work flows. The systems will allow quick assessments and up-to-date ownership information with the stroke of a key.

## **Industrial Growth and Development**

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Butler has a strong industrial heritage; the presence of industry continues to be important to the economic well-being of the community. Strategies and policies listed below will assist in maintaining and improving the industrial sector of the economy.

- Encourage and provide the opportunity for local industries to be involved in community activities.
- Appropriate acreage and tracts of land should be zoned for industrial use or development, minimizing the need for rezonings.
- Continue to provide the opportunity of tax abatements to existing and new industry. Be proactive and designate potential industrial land Economic Revitalization Areas (ERAs) to speed up the process of the tax abatement. Attention should be given to the type of industry (diversifying the local economy) and the type of job opportunities provided. Abatements should be granted to companies that actively serve the community.
- Continue to work with economic development agencies in northeast Indiana to provide incentive packages to existing and new industry. Those agencies include Indiana Northeast Development, NIPSCO, AEP, and the Business Development Division of the Indiana Department of Commerce.
- Develop an Economic Development Information Packet with local wage information, employment figures, industry types, etc...
- Be available to meet with representatives of local industry.
- Recognize companies that invest and improve the Butler Community.
- Maintain a close relationship with the Butler Chamber of Commerce and other civic organizations.

### *Goal 2*

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*Promote the growth and development of business and industry in Butler.*

### *Goal 2*

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*Promote the growth and development of business and industry in Butler.*

## **Commercial Growth and Development**

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Commercial development has not kept pace with industrial development. The City of Butler should go out of its way to land quality, commercial development. This development should be located in the two major existing commercial areas in Butler: commercial downtown and along US Highway 6 on the west side of Butler. The City should

- Encourage the improvement of downtown properties, and publicize the Community Development Revolving Loan Fund to downtown property owners. Continue to enforce the Unsafe Building Ordinance (when appropriate) to bring downtown properties into

compliance.

- Retain and improve the commercial developments that exist.
- Lead by example. The City is showing the importance of downtown revitalization by taking a lead role in the redevelopment of the Nugen Buildings (Thompson Block/Mutzfeld Building). These structures should be redeveloped into a facility that helps rejuvenate downtown and benefits the entire community.
- Develop partnerships with property owners of undeveloped, commercially-zoned land, commercial developers, financial institutions, and commercial businesses to facilitate new commercial development.
- Publicize the Community Development Revolving Loan Program. Research and develop some type of incentive program for commercial businesses, especially those that improve an existing building.
- Be certain adequate acreage is zoned for commercial and business uses. Overzone for commercial development.
- Recognize long-standing businesses and those that contribute to the community.
- Develop modern regulations for home-based businesses.

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*Goal 3*

*Improve the quality and increase the quantity of housing opportunities.*

## **Residential Growth and Development**

Residential growth is one sign of a healthy, thriving community. Residential growth has been minimal over the past decade. City officials are striving to increase new housing starts in Butler. However, there is an understanding that quality of development is more important than quantity.

- Vigorously enforce the Unsafe Building Ordinance and the nuisance regulations to bring abandoned and dilapidated properties into compliance. This protects others who are investing in residential properties.
- Clarify zoning regulations surrounding manufactured housing and include this as part of the zoning code.
- Adopt new zoning regulations to allow flexibility for improvement on traditional size residential lots.
- Encourage the library and local retailers to offer “do-it-yourself home improvement classes” to the public.
- Actively recruit and partner with home builders, residential developers, and lending institutions.
- Continue to provide and publicize the Residential Tax Abatement Program. After residential development “takes off,” this program should be re-evaluated.
- Continue to provide city services: access to utilities, leaf pick-up, snow plowing, sidewalk replacement, recreational opportunities, etc.
- Evaluate different mechanisms and associated program costs to inspect rental properties for health and sanitation conditions. Voluntary programs have not been effective.

## **Growth in Educational, Cultural, and Recreational Opportunities**

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There is a link between housing development and educational, cultural, and residential opportunities. The City needs to support and encourage the creation of such opportunities to improve the quality of life for our existing residents and to make the community attractive to new residents.

- Continue to provide DeKalb Eastern CSD with any information it requests regarding population growth and other community statistics. Support decisions to improve and upgrade school facilities.
- Support the revitalization of downtown Butler.
- Take advantage of the opportunity the Thompson Block Building has to offer. This structure could serve many purposes related to the community, civil government, education, culture, and recreation.
- Maintain an up-to-date Recreation Plan, and support the Park Board in its endeavors to improve recreational opportunities.
- Continue to work with AEP and Hendrickson Corporation to acquire acreage on the south side of Butler for a potential baseball/softball facility.
- Continue to support facilities such as the library and day care.
- Maintain good working relationships with all area non-profits: churches, youth leagues, the youth center, the Six & One Association, the DeKalb Historical Society, the Heartland Museum group, the YMCA, and others.
- Publicly recognize area non-profits groups when appropriate.

### *Goal 4*

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*Actively support new educational opportunities, cultural opportunities, and recreational opportunities for all age groups.*

# INFRASTRUCTURE SECTION

*City of Butler ~ 2001 Comprehensive Plan*

Transportation & Thoroughfare Plan

City Utilities

Capital Improvements Planning

# TRANSPORTATION & THOROUGHFARES

The Transportation and Thoroughfare Plan looks at the various modes of transportation and how they coexist in the City. Each method of transportation and the system associated with that method are reviewed. Issues and subsequent projects are then identified.

## **Rail Travel**

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Two sets of railroad tracks, both owned by Norfolk Southern, cross on the east side of Butler, just south of US 6. One set of tracks carries traffic directly east-west. The second set splits the City diagonally, coming from the northeast and leading to the southwest corner of the City.

The tracks are used primarily by freight trains, but passenger trains occasionally use the east-west tracks. Trains can be seen (and heard) about every 20 minutes. The freight trains can travel up to 59 mph. Pullman Industries and Tri-Wall each have rail spurs, and other industries have strongly considered adding spurs.

The tracks physically split the community. Railroad crossings on US 6 and two different crossings on State Road 1 can cause significant vehicular traffic delays in Butler. Recent cooperation between the City and Norfolk Southern has dramatically decreased the frequency of these tie-ups. In addition, the Butler Fire, Police, and EMS are located north of both sets of railroad tracks on State Road 1 and west of the tracks on US Highway 6. Trains blocking crossings or simply running regular routes can increase response times and make it difficult to respond to calls in certain locations.

The Federal Street crossing has been the scene of two fatal accidents. The State of Indiana has installed warning lights and cross arms at the Federal Street crossing. A year 2000 traffic count showed approximately 850 vehicles using this crossing in a 24 hour period.

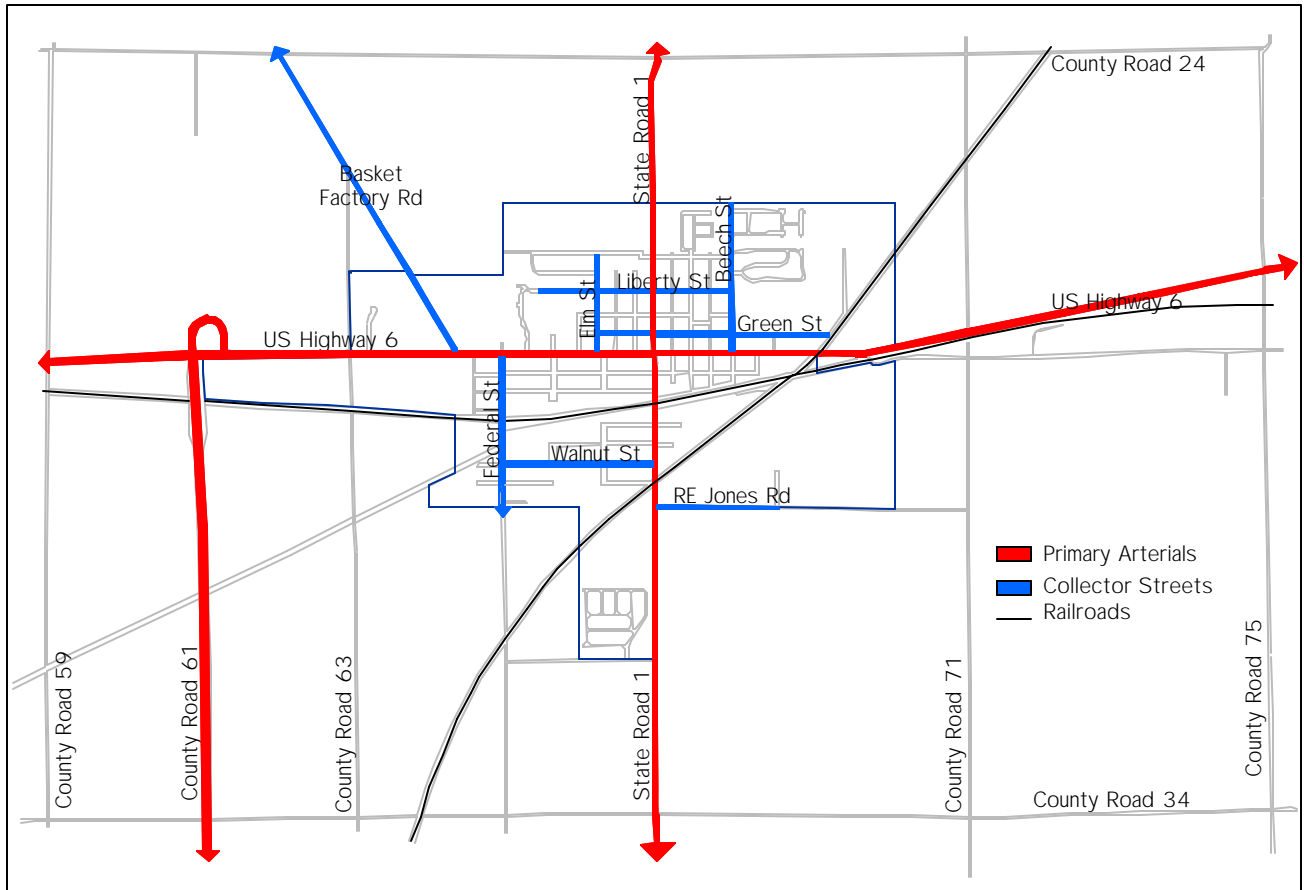
Two other railroad crossings, both unguarded, are of concern. The Erie Street crossings (actually Erie Street crosses both sets of tracks unguarded) have been an area of concern for both the City and the railroad company. Erie Street is unpaved and hazardous. The street provides access to five residential properties. A year 2000 traffic count showed 77 trips across both tracks in a 24 hour period.

## **Vehicular Travel**

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Butler was developed with the traditional grid iron pattern of streets. The primary arterials include US Highway 6 (running east/west) and State Road 1 (running north/south). US 6 is a major east/west National Road. Both US 6 and State Road 1 are two-lane highways maintained by the Indiana Department of Transportation. County Road 61 is considered a primary arterial, as well. It was built by the State of Indiana to access a major industrial development, but relinquished to DeKalb County after construction was complete. County Road 61 takes traffic south of US Highway 6, overpassing the highway and railroad tracks.

Collector streets “collect” traffic from local streets and connect with the primary arterials. Federal Street, Elm Street, Basket Factory Road, and Beech Street are north/south collectors that lead traffic to US Highway 6. Walnut Street, RE Jones Road, Green Street, and Liberty Street are east/west collectors that lead traffic to State Road 1.



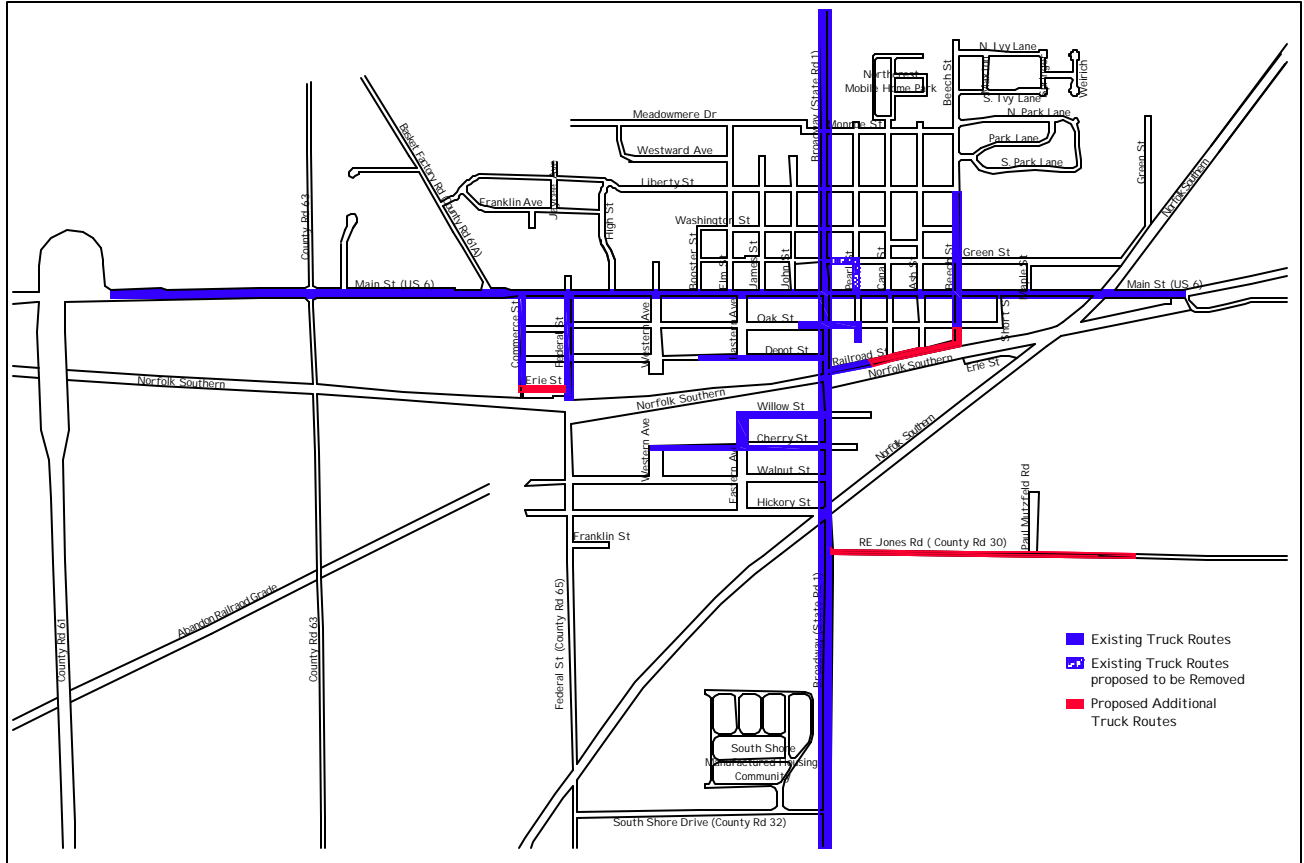
The Northeast Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC) recently conducted a traffic study for all of DeKalb County. It is estimated that over 20% of the traffic on Butler’s arterials is heavy truck traffic. Even though it is believed that the quantity of traffic has increased since 1997, the study included the following 24 hour traffic counts taken in 1997:

*Map 6*

*Primary arterials are shown in red. Collector Streets are in blue.*

- West Main Street (near downtown) ~ 10,230
- West Main Street (near County Road 63) ~ 7,030
- East Main Street (near downtown) ~ 9,660
- East Main Street (near County Road 28 ~ 6,160
- North Broadway ~ 3,430
- South Broadway/Oak Street Intersection ~ 8,090
- South Broadway/Willow Street Intersection ~ 3,800
- State Road 1/County Road 32 Intersection ~ 2,730

In 1964, the Butler City Council passed an ordinance creating truck routes in the City. The quantity of truck traffic in Butler and the nature of truck traffic has changed significantly since 1964. The City is currently assessing truck routes in the City and the weight and size of trucks to which the ordinance applies. Identifying truck routes protects city streets that are not designed for heavy truck traffic and protects the residential character of neighborhoods.



Map 7

Only streets within the City Limits are designated as truck routes.

The City of Butler funds street improvement projects each year. The most recent improvements include new curb along US Highway 6 in cooperation with the State Highway resurfacing project and the rebuilding of Meadowmere Drive. The City of Butler is also in the process of adopting street specifications. These specifications require different types, widths, etc. depending on whether the street is classified as an industrial, commercial, or residential street. Those streets identified as truck routes shall be considered “industrial streets” by the City of Butler. The remaining streets shall be considered residential. This classification may change depending on future land development and rezonings that may occur.

### Pedestrian Travel

An important characteristic that emphasizes Butler’s small town atmosphere is the ability to walk from one end of town to the other in little time. In order to improve the quality of sidewalks, the City offers a sidewalk replacement program to residents. The City provides assistance in the demolition of old sidewalks and provides forms for new walks. Property owners are responsible for other materials and labor.

In addition, the City has aggressively replaced sidewalks throughout the community. The goal has been to have high quality sidewalks in Butler. While that goal has not been met yet, the City is well on its way. The condition of all City sidewalks was inventoried and recorded in 2000.

There is less than one mile of “off road” natural trail in Maxton Park. Significant physical barriers hinder the development of an off-road pedestrian trail through the community: two heavily traveled railroads and US Highway 6 with a significant amount of traffic.

### **Potential Long-Term Projects**

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In addition to annual street improvement projects, the City of Butler needs to be conscience of other large scale projects to proactively combat future traffic problems. These projects do not have to be entirely city-funded. As development occurs, the City can reference a specific project in this plan and encourage or assist in completing it. Butler should continue to develop and adopt new street specifications and modify the subdivision code to be consistent with those specs.

*RE Jones Road Improvement and Intersection Widening ~* The City has approached the State of Indiana about improving the intersection of State Road 1 and RE Jones Road. There is potential for significant development on the south side of Butler that would greatly impact this intersection. RE Jones Road serves Pullman Industries and Therma-Tru Corporation. An additional 150 acres along RE Jones Road/County Road 30 may also be developed for industry. Completion of South Shore Manufactured Housing Community may add 1,200 trips through this intersection, and the completion of a school project could add up to 1,000 trips depending on what type and size of facility is built. The intersection accommodates truck traffic even though the street is not in the condition or designed to accommodate trucks. As new industry begins to develop and the school property develops, the City and developers should look seriously at improving RE Jones Road/County Road 30 from State Road 1 to County Road 71. The State of Indiana will continue to monitor the intersection as development occurs.

*Erie Street Railroad Crossings ~* These crossings have been the topic of discussions between the City and Norfolk Southern for some time. Two different alternatives were briefly explored in 1997: extending a road from RE Jones Road north to Erie Street or extending County Road 28 west to Erie Street. Both alternatives were not feasible. The City of Butler will continue to look for ways to eliminate these unguarded crossings.

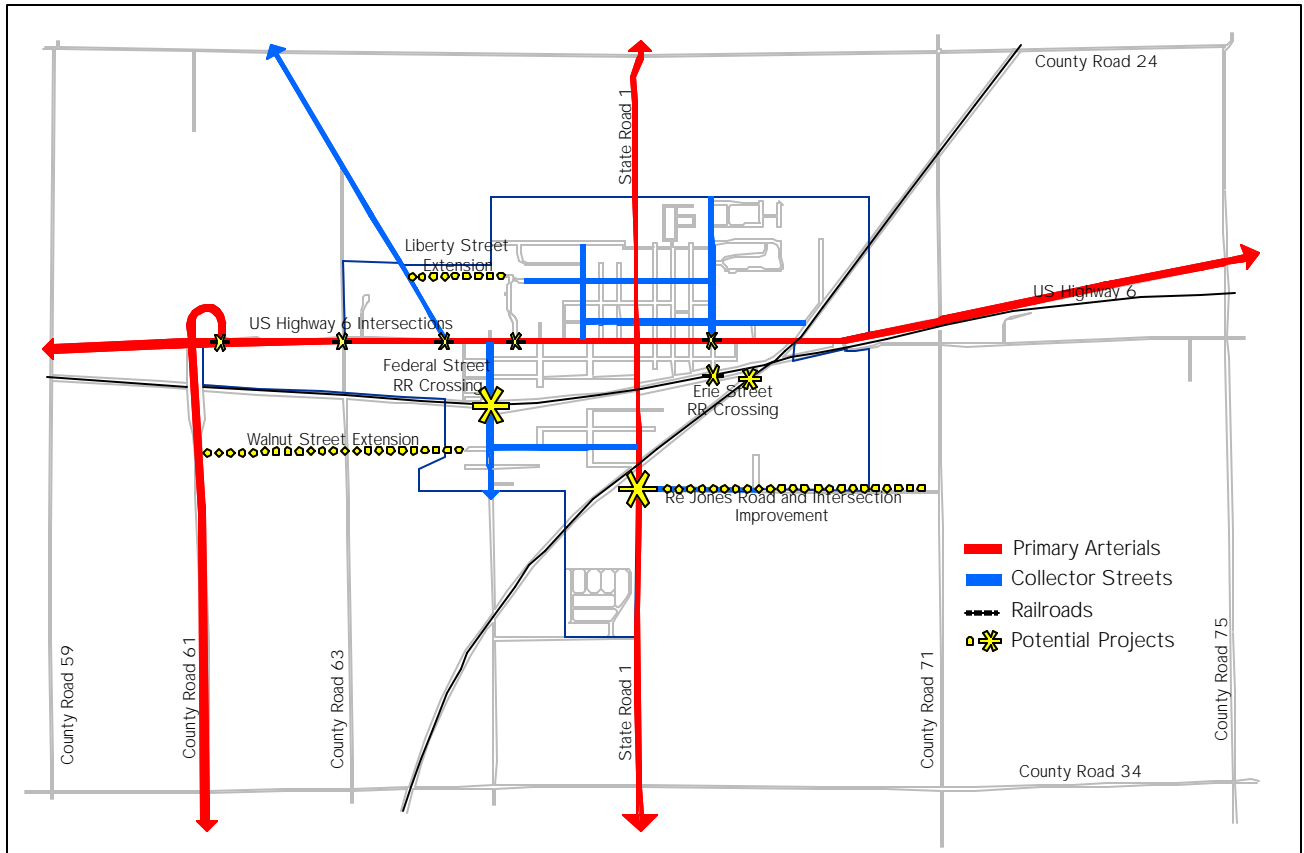
*US Highway 6 Intersections with High Street, Basket Factory Road, CR 63 ~* As traffic counts continue to increase along US Highway 6 and Butler continues to develop, intersections of side streets and US 6 may become hazardous. This is already occurring at certain intersections and at certain times of the day. The City of Butler should keep the Indiana Department of Transportation informed on traffic back ups and dangers associated with turning onto and off of US 6.

*Liberty Street Extension West to Basket Factory Road* ~ The land between the existing Liberty Street and Basket Factory Road was purchased with intentions of residential development. Preliminary plans for the subdivision included extending Liberty Street to Basket Factory Road. However, there have been some setbacks with the subdivision. The extension of Liberty Street is a route that is critical to create an alternative route through town.

*Walnut Street Extension west to County Road 61* ~ Although there are no immediate plans for development in this area, extending Walnut Street to County Road 61 provides an alternative around potentially blocked railroad crossings. It also provides an alternative to US Highway 6 for local travel.

Map 8

Potential projects are shown in yellow.



# PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

## Water Utility

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The Butler Water Utility consists of 2 active wells, a 300,000 gallon storage tank, and water treatment plant that can produce up to 720,000 gpd. The City is in the middle of the State-mandated wellhead protection program that will protect the aquifer that is the source of Butler's water.

The Water Department has been working with consultants to assess the current and future needs of the department. The Water Department is in the process of entering into a contract with a consultant to complete a study that will project water consumption and model the Butler water system. The information listed below is directly from the utility consultants.

The City plans to increase its water storage capacity. The City is currently purchasing land to construct a new 500,000 gallon water tower that will more than double the City's water storage capacity and improve water service throughout the City. Consultants have also suggested improving the water distribution system through looping. Looping the distribution lines will result in improved pressure at certain locations. Production and treatment will also eventually need to be increased to approximately 1.44 MGD (million gallons per day).

The Water Utility should begin annual programs of fire hydrant maintenance and upgrades. The utility should also assess water rates every 2 years and make small periodic increases to alleviate one large increase every 10+ years.

### Water Utility Priorities

1. Construct New Water Tower ~ the City has identified land on the northwest side of Butler and is pursuing the purchase of that land. The estimated \$1.1 million cost of the project includes land purchase, tower construction, and a 12" main to connect the new tower to the existing system.
2. Southeast Area Loop ~ Install water lines along RE Jones Road and then back to the north and tie in around US 6. This project will likely be expensive because it involves crossing the railroad and/or US 6.
3. Southwestern Loop ~ Install water lines along County Road 32 and extend westward to CR 63 or County Road 61; then go north and tie in at US Highway 6.
4. Well & Treatment Plant Expansion ~ The existing Water Treatment Plant is landlocked and expansion will eventually be necessary to increase the City's pumping capacity.

These projects will be financed with bonds, grants, ratepayers, capacity fees, and tap fees from new developments that may tap into the new looped lines.

## **Wastewater Utility**

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The Butler Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) is currently being expanded. Like the Butler Water Department, the wastewater utility has been working with several different consultants to make sure all applicable State and Federal guidelines are being met. The consultants have also helped the community deal with the large flows from the Steel Dynamics industrial complex just south of Butler.

The largest issues for the Butler Wastewater Treatment Plant are adequate capacity and compliance with various State and Federal regulations. The current WWTP expansion project will solve the capacity issue and will address wet weather combined sewer overflows (CSO's).

After completion of the Wastewater Treatment Plant expansion, the City should undertake some additional projects to improve the system. A new sewer camera truck will allow the Wastewater Department to inspect old sewers and accurately detect and locate problems.

Various sewer extension projects have also been discussed.

- Extending east along US Highway 6 to County Road 71, and then, north and south along County Road 71. This project is expensive and difficult because of US 6 and the railroad. It may also require a pumping station.
- Extend west along US Highway 6 to County Road 59.
- Extend north along State Road 1 to County Road 24. This project will likely include a pumping station.

Like the water rates, wastewater rates should be evaluated once every two years for small periodic increases, rather than one large increase.

## **Storm Water Management**

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Storm water drainage is an issue in Butler. Currently, the largest issue is the Butler City Drain, a County legal drain that runs along the south side of the northern most railroad tracks. The County is in the process of maintaining the drain. This drain will give the City somewhere to "channel" the water on the south side of Butler. Currently, the water just stands.

There are other blocks in Butler that have to deal with inadequate storm water drainage. Like many older sewer systems, much of Butler's system is combined sewers. State and Federal Regulations now prohibit storm water inlets on any sewer that serves as a sanitary sewer.

## **Public Parks**

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The Butler Recreation Board has been active for over 2 years. The Board has organized and raised funds for two large, new play equipment project, while organizing numerous small volunteer projects.

A Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan was approved in 2000 by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources making Butler eligible for State grants. As mentioned in that Plan, the Board intends to focus attention the next few years on major improvements on the South Side of Butler. The project involves acquiring property from Hendrickson Corporation and American Electric Power for improved youth league facilities.

The Park Board should maintain the detailed Five Year Plan. Also, the Board may want to begin to incorporate the “Thompson Block” building into their plans. An open theater can be an asset to “recreational” programming.

### **City Facilities**

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The City’s largest concern is the City Hall building that is home to Fire Department, the Butler City Court and Butler City Council Chambers. The Fire Department, specifically, has problems because of the size of new equipment. The exhaust system is inadequate to filter fire engine exhaust out of the building. Additionally, the City Council Chambers is also inadequate in size for certain public meetings.

The City of Butler needs to look, *comprehensively*, at all of the City buildings before pursuing any project for one department. The City Court and City Utility Office are both very close to capacity. The Thompson Block Building should be assessed as part of these facilities. Capital improvement programs and planning, as the last segment of this Plan explains, can help the City identify everything that needs done so that the most effective scheduling and funding can be implemented.

# CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLANNING

## General Information

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A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a multi-year schedule of physical public improvements. The schedule usually covers 5 years, and sets forth proposed expenditures for the construction, maintenance, replacement, and improvement of the capital assets of a community. The CIP includes expenditures as well as sources of funding for those projects.

*The general information regarding CIP's is taken from: Capital Improvement Programs - Linking Budgeting and Planning. Robert A. Bower  
APA Planning Advisory Service  
Report #442. 1993.*

The first year (or upcoming year) is called the capital budget and is included in the annual operating budget. The capital budget should include all capital projects that have been appropriated by the governing body.

Capital improvements should be major, non-recurring expenditures that are long-term such as buildings, renovations, or vehicles or equipment with a useful life-span of over 7 years. Generally, the cost should be over \$20,000 for it to be considered a capital improvement (rather than part of the operating budget.) Projects that should be included as capital improvements are major, non-recurring expenditures. Examples include:

1. The acquisition of land for a public purpose;
2. Any construction of a new facility; building, water line, ball field;
3. Any addition to or extension of such a facility;
4. A non-recurring rehabilitation or a major repair of all or a part of a building, its grounds, or facility;
5. Purchase of equipment provided that the cost is \$20,000 or more and the improvement will have a useful life of 10 years or more;
6. Purchase of major equipment at a cost of \$20,000 or more and with a useful life of over 5 years;
7. Any planning, feasibility, engineering, or design study related to an individual capital improvement project or to a program that is implemented through individual capital improvement projects.

Each year when the annual budget proposals are submitted, each department should also submit all capital projects for the department for the next five years. This allows decision makers to see what each department anticipates its needs will be. For example, for the 2002 budget proposals, the Butler Fire Department might submit its regular operating budget proposal and a capital improvement proposal that includes a new suburban in 2002 (the current year) and a new fire station in 2004. The Water Department might submit a capital improvement budget that includes an assessment in 2002, a new water tower in 2003, and looping of certain lines in 2005.

Each project proposed should include a basic description of the project, a schedule (if it is multi-year), the estimated cost for the project, the basis of cost estimate, any alternative financing (such as grants), and coordination with any other capital project.

## **A Butler Capital Improvements Plan?**

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Capital Improvements Planning is critical now for the City of Butler. The City is in a situation where there are a lot of different potential projects are on the table - at the same time.

- Wastewater Treatment Plan Expansion
- Fire Station/City Hall Improvements
- Water Tower Project
- Thompson Block Project
- Parks Improvements
- Water Line/Sewer Line Improvements and Expansions

A CIP will help organize and schedule these and other projects. It will allow decision makers and the community see the relationships between each project and correlate the financing of each project.

City departments can draw upon plans that have already been completed for planning capital projects, describing those projects, and estimating costs: water and wastewater improvements recommended by various engineering firms, the Five Year Parks and Recreation Plan, the Thompson Block Feasibility Study, and the City Hall Modernization Study.

The CIP is a tool that allows communities to plan for and maintain their capital assets. So often, the capital assets of a community are overlooked because the operating budget requests always seem to prevail because they are generally smaller amounts (that are easier to budget for) and more urgent (now...not in three years).

# CONCLUSION

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*City of Butler ~ 2001 Comprehensive Plan*

## CONCLUSION

The City of Butler 2001 Comprehensive Plan is a guide for civic officials and the public to manage the future development and change of the community.

This Plan deals generally with the various physical aspects of the community: land use and infrastructure. It does not contain specific details about every aspect of the community because such a Plan would be so lengthy that it would provide less value to leaders. As more detailed information becomes needed, strategic plans should be developed ~ such as the Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan or a plan identifying the water utility status and needs for the next ten years.

This page should not be regarded as the end of the Plan, but rather the beginning of implementation. Updates and amendments to this Plan are critical to its long-term success. This Plan should be reviewed, at minimum, every five years to accommodate changes in growth patterns and development.

# SOURCES

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*City of Butler ~ 2001 Comprehensive Plan*

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