

Syracuse Comprehensive Plan

May 2006



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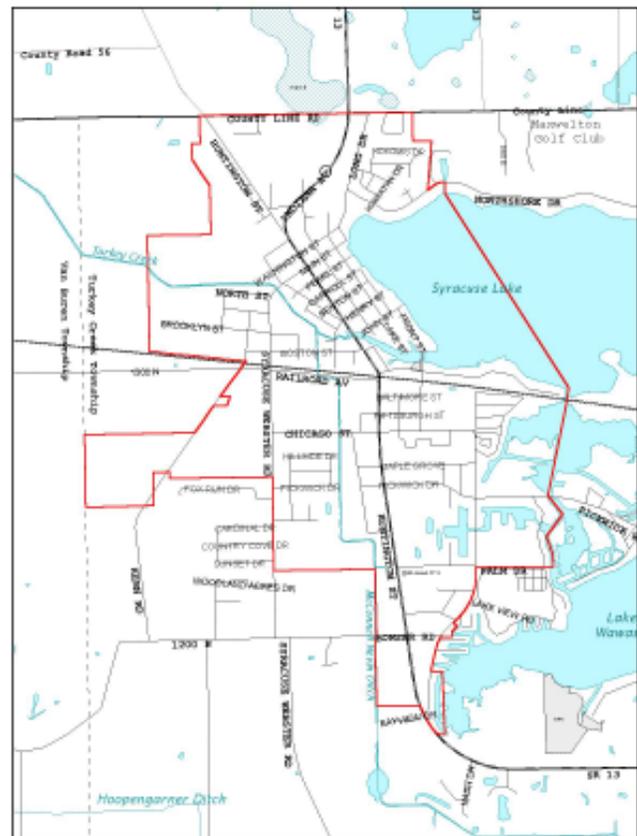
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Update of the Ball State Planning and Design Study from 2000

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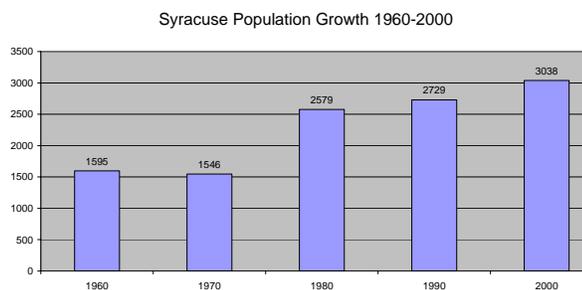
The Town of Syracuse is a dynamic community faced with many challenges that small towns tackle each day. However, the community is unique in that it is home to the largest natural lake in the state, which influences the population and business climate seasonally. The community struggles to find its own identity as either a typical small town versus a premiere lake community.



The community has a large manufacturing base that attracts additional workers to the town during the week and the lakes draw many out-of-town guests on the weekends. The business community prospers as a result during peak times, but also struggles during the off season.

Finding a common balance between small town and resort community has been a common theme throughout the year long process of drafting this comprehensive plan. This plan is a thorough attempt to tear down barriers that have kept the residents from both the town and lake from unifying into one community with a common goal to build a better community. The overall goal of the plan is to establish a clear and distinct vision for what steps should be taken to help achieve unity and enhance the overall quality of life.

This document is a result of a detailed planning process that involved citizen participation through a diverse task force of community leaders, a series of public workshops, and extensive research and discussions with community officials. Through this public participation process, the comprehensive plan reflects the existing conditions of the community, analyzing trends and relationships, and identifying issues related to various community issues. Ultimately a series of goals, recommendations, and action steps were designed to provide the framework for providing orderly growth and development in the community while maintaining the small town character that the residents desire and embracing the lake culture as an important role in the development of the town.



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The Town of Syracuse has grown and developed as most small cities. Economic opportunity created further economic opportunities and so on, which in time resulted in the growth of a town. At this juncture, Syracuse finds itself faced with contemporary challenges posed to all towns of its size. Until recently, raw opportunistic driven growth has served Syracuse and similar towns adequately. But it is now clear that such growth cannot be sustained without community involvement in the development and planning of the future of Syracuse.

The purpose of this comprehensive plan is to document the vision for future growth and development of Syracuse. Recognizing that the Area Planning Commission and County Zoning is no longer meeting the needs of the town, this plan is both an acknowledgment and assessment of the current state and future needs of Syracuse. It is clearly evident that long-range comprehensive planning at a local level must be used to redress some issues arising from previous eras of growth and to plan for an orderly and economically viable future while enhancing the small-town atmosphere residents expect.

Syracuse has many strengths and opportunities. Syracuse residents enjoy a thriving small-town atmosphere and are actively involved within the community. Natural beauty and recreation opportunities abound within the region, and the area also enjoys a relatively stable employment base. The town's central location within the manufacturing rich area of northern Indiana can



further encourage future industrial growth. Small-town retail experiences are available and the town's residents actively support local businesses. Infrastructure is in place to service the current needs of the town and has some availability for expansion. Overall Syracuse stands comparatively prepared to compete with its regional neighbors for growth.

Syracuse has suffered in the past with a lack of community consensus on what manner to pursue growth and allocate resources. It should be evident through this plan that not only are residents of Syracuse affected by the lack of planning but also surrounding adjacent neighborhoods. Balancing the needs and desires of constituents with those of orderly and pleasing growth will be a fundamental challenge for future leaders of Syracuse. Future leaders should not only work with constituents but also will have to work with the Kosciusko County Plan Commission as well as respective bodies within Elkhart County due to the unique geographic location of the town.

Syracuse's strengths however sometimes mask some of the challenges faced by the town. The natural beauty and summer recreational opportunities result in seasonal fluctuations of population that strain the resources of the town and its businesses. The duality of Syracuse's existence is reflected in the population disparities between the winter and summer months. The seasonal nature of this change and the transient nature of summer residents have strained business and government functioning. Traffic during the summer months is a major concern as are aesthetic issues that normally are associated with a resort community. Added to these concerns are the heavy truck and train traffic through town. Poor planning has further confused the driving patterns particularly in the "village" shopping district.



This plan identifies a possible bypass route around the town to allow for heavy trucks and through traffic while relieving the commercial corridor of such heavy use. Proposals have been made for the aesthetic improvement of the "village" as well as the historic downtown areas and the linking of these two areas through signage and pedestrian ways. Addressing aesthetic qualities of life will primarily function as a means of maintaining the small-town resort feel that residents and summer guests have come to value. However, Syracuse will not prosper and grow on resort traffic alone and already possesses a manufacturing and industrial base. Balancing manufacturing and industrial growth of the community within the needs of a small-town resort will ensure steady and stable economic growth.



Manufacturing sector jobs are on the decline nationwide and Syracuse has experienced first-hand the effects of this decline. Although the setbacks have been hard they have for the most part been surmounted. The town of Syracuse is aware of its need for manufacturing diversity and growth but lacks acceptable large-scale tracts suitable for industrial and manufacturing development. This plan recommends the identification of such areas within the master plan and the development of infrastructure to meet the needs of this future growth. By identifying these areas and incorporating these areas into the transportation plan noted prior, Syracuse can avoid or minimize the traffic difficulties similar to what it now faces.

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The scarcity of developable land is not limited to just industrial and manufacturing needs but extends to affordable entry-level housing. Quite literally Syracuse is out of room to expand. This plan encourages the comprehensive identification of areas for growth and proactively working with industries and developers to build the kinds of projects that will become a cohesive part of the community. Included in

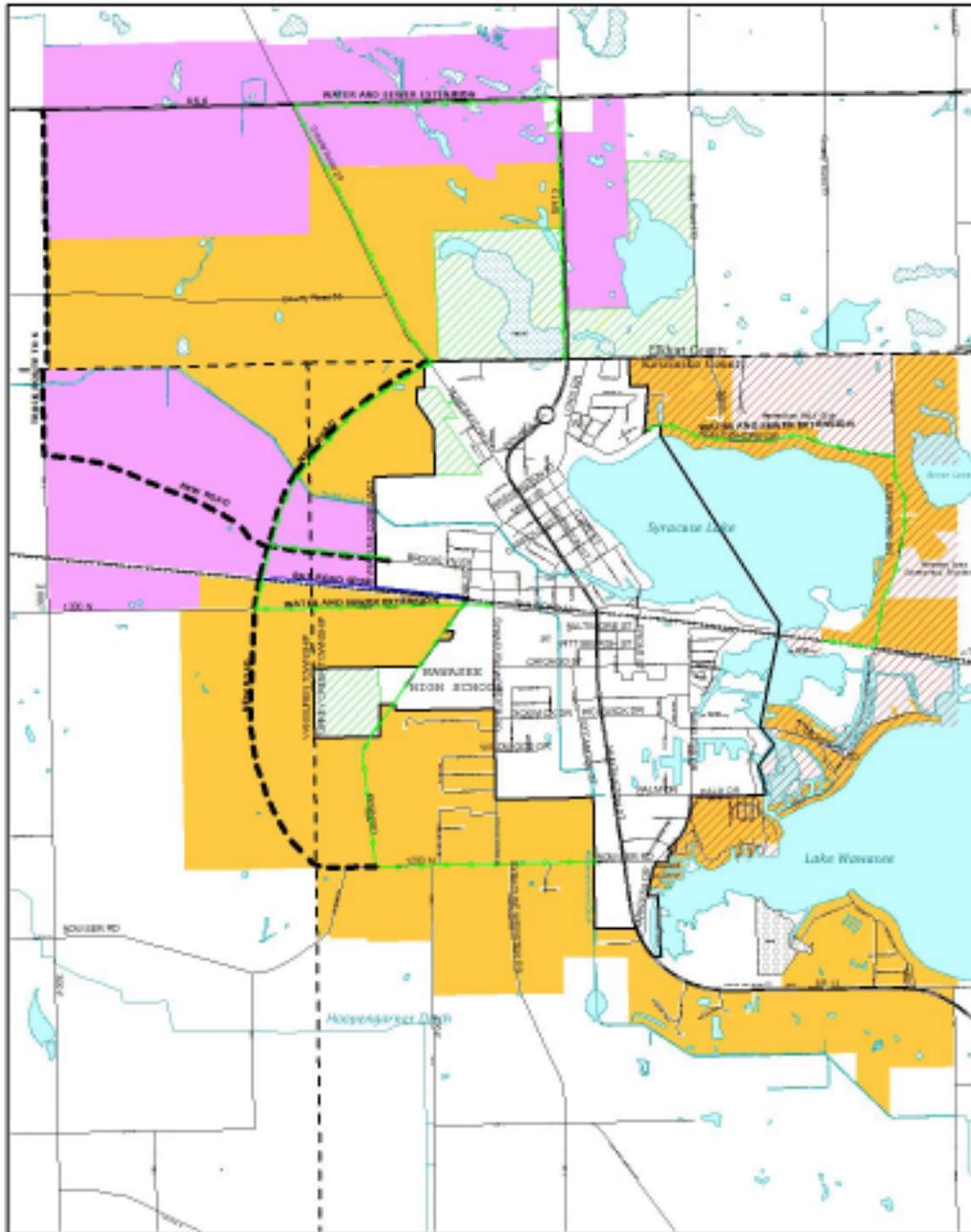


these proposals are the streamlining of applications processes and permitting while buffering neighborhoods from industrial uses. It also assists the development of “homegrown” industries that may need expansion locations and creatively addressing housing needs through “infill” opportunities and multi-family zoning. Preparing for growth into directed specific locations would benefit the quality of life for the current and future citizens of Syracuse.

This plan investigates the historical and geographic context, socio-economic characteristics, growth patterns and transportation challenges as well as the recreation and public service needs of the town of Syracuse. It attempts to synthesize these strengths, needs and challenges into a cohesive plan that will serve to direct future growth some of which are mentioned above.



Throughout the development of this plan the public has participated in open forum and task force committees within the visioning process so that what is reported in this plan reflects not the goals those who prepared the plan but the goals of the citizenry of Syracuse. It is apparent that the desired outcome of all those involved in the planning process is that Syracuse would grow in a manner consistent with its own unique values and character. It is hoped that this plan will not become a static report but will provide constant stimulus and a strategy to move Syracuse successfully into the future.



LONG RANGE PLANNING SUMMARY MAP

