PURDUE UNIVERSITY® | Extension

CLIMATE CHANGE

Implementation Examples of Smart Growth Strategies in Indiana

Authors:

Kara Salazar
Assistant Program Leader and Extension Specialist, Purdue Extension, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant

Dan Walker
Senior Community Planning Extension Specialist, Purdue Extension, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant

Amanda Heideman,
Purdue University, Natural Resources and Environmental Science student, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant, 2021 summer intern

The *Climate Change and Sustainable Development* Extension publication (https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/ID/ID-524-W.pdf) outlines the definition and background of the 10 basic smart strategies developed by the Smart Growth Network, a partnership of government, business, and civic organizations. Below are publicly available references highlighting examples of how Indiana communities have implemented smart growth strategies through community planning.

1) Allow Mixed Land Use

The integration of mixed land uses into communities is a critical component of achieving better places to live and thereby improving the quality of life for the residents. This type of development pattern looks like neighborhoods designed with shops, offices, schools, religious institutions, parks, and other community amenities near homes.

- Allow mixed-use options with zoning ordinances.
- Zone areas by building type, not by building use only.

- Convert abandoned malls to mixed use.
- Provide financial incentives for mixed use.

Community Example: 2040 Land Use Plan, Fishers, Indiana

https://www.fishers.in.us/DocumentCenter/View/26139/Fishers-2040---Land-Use

The Fishers land use plan calls for two categories of mixed-use to be implemented in its zoning ordinance. The first is a neighborhood-scale mixed-use zone, which is intended to be of a lower intensity in terms of commercial activity and the number of dwelling units. Commercial activities include retail shops and offices. The plan also calls for regional mixed-use development, which is to occur at greater densities and include more intense commercial uses; most are to be appropriate for downtown. Both forms of mixed-use development offer benefits to the community, including reduced trip generation, enhanced walkability, and benefits to the natural environment.

Regional Mixed-Use

Image courtesy of: www.visitindy.com

Neighborhood Mixed-Use

2) Use Compact Building Design

Provide opportunities for communities to incorporate more compact building design as an alternative to conventional, land-consumptive development practices.

- Emphasize communication of Design, not Density.
- Balance street type and building scale.
- Ensure access to parks and open space.
- Ensure privacy with yard design.
- Reduce impervious surfaces to minimize stormwater runoff.

Community Example:
2020 Comprehensive Plan, Noblesville, Indiana

https://www.cityofnoblesville.org/egov/documents/1582723614_08048.pdf

Noblesville's comprehensive plan encourages compact building design to maintain growth and promote urbanization. The plan encourages compact buildings that remain pedestrian-scaled. Recommended building types for development include buildings with access to courtyard areas. This type of development encourages walkability.

3) Increase Housing Choice

Provide housing choices for all income levels.

- Identify and market vacant buildings.
- Revise codes to widen choice by builders.
- Enact an inclusionary zoning ordinance.
- Support community land trusts for homebuyers.

Community Example: Comprehensive Plan, City of Kokomo, Indiana

https://www.cityofkokomo.org/document_center/City%20of%20Kokomo%20Comprehensive%20Plan%20March%202017.pdf

In this example, Kokomo seeks to increase the diversity of housing options available in its downtown through the policies of its comprehensive plan. In the downtown element of the plan, the community included the objective of "Investigate an incentive program that encourages investment of the land uses planned for downtown, such as retail, professional offices, and attached single-family and multi-family housing options for a mix of incomes." Within its land use element, the community states the objective to "remove barriers to infill development on vacant residential lots." This would, in effect, create a mix of older and newer housing units at a range of prices.

4) Create Walkable Communities

Create places where people live, work, learn, and play and that make these communities desirable from any point of view. A walkable community includes accessible amenities within a reasonable walking distance from residential areas. View the walk, transit and bike scores for an address, neighborhood or community: https://www.walkscore.com

- Connect neighborhoods with pathways.
- Locate amenities near homes.
- Improve sidewalk infrastructure and accessibility.
- Make walking safe (consider improvements to crosswalks, speed bumps, traffic islands, lighting, and obstructions).
- Connect shopping areas with pathways, sidewalks, and trails.

Community Example: Unified Development Ordinance, Bloomington, Indiana

https://bloomington.in.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/Bloomington%20UDO_04-18-2020_final.pdf

Bloomington's Unified Development Ordinance contains a section specific to Access and Connectivity, where creating a more walkable community is highlighted. The ordinance requires a pedestrian network, including sidewalks or paths, multiuse trails, and pedestrian connector paths between developments and public destinations to improve accessibility. Additionally, all buildings are required to have a sidewalk connection from the building entrance to the adjacent public street. For pedestrian safety, all sidewalks are required to be spaced a minimum of five feet away from the curb or pavement to provide an area for tree plantings and a buffer between pedestrians and vehicles.

A sidewalk and pedestrian trail provide safe pedestrian connections between developments in Bloomington.
Image source: Google Earth

5) Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place

Develop a vision and set appropriate standards to meet the vision for development and construction within the community. The standards therefore correspond to the community's values of architectural beauty and distinctiveness, as well as provide greater choice in available housing and transportation.

- Protect and preserve what is unique to the area.
- Plant trees; protect older trees during construction; have open spaces; preserve scenic vistas.
- Allow sidewalk vending, dining, kiosks, etc.
- Create opportunities for community interaction.
- Use visual cues to define neighborhoods.
- Establish funds for historic preservation.
- Develop "wayfinding" systems in town centers.
- Highlight cultural assets through public art and event nights.
- Provide funding to create places of distinction.

Community Example: Parks & Recreation Master Plan 2018-2022, Fort Wayne, Indiana

http://www.fortwayneparks.org/images/PDF/2018-2022_FWPRD_Master_Plan.pdf

Through the Fort Wayne Parks & Recreation Master Plan, the City of Fort Wayne wants to foster a distinctive, attractive community where residents can establish a strong sense of place through parks. Plan goals include creating opportunities for community interaction through recreation, provide high-quality facilities, and exceed citizen expectations. The plan highlights preservation of unique historical landmarks and how these cultural assets are promoted in festivals and other community activities.

Image courtesy of: www.fortwayneparks.org

3

6) Protect Farms, Unique Natural Features, Critical Environmental Areas, and Open Spaces

Preserve critical environmental areas to improve a community's quality of life; guide new growth into existing communities.

- Inventory special places and make plans to protect them.
- Establish zoning to encourage clustering.
- Protect farmland and open lands through purchase of development rights (PDR) or a transfer of development rights (TDR)
- Work with land trusts.
- Connect greenways.
- Adopt urban agriculture policies.

Community Example: Zoning Ordinance – Karst and Sinkhole Development Standards, Monroe County, Indiana

https://www.co.monroe.in.us/egov/documents/ b4f005df_6ea0_e47e_cd74_5320e821ef1b.pdf

Monroe County has unique natural features, including karst topography and sinkholes, which impact stormwater runoff and water quality and can influence a community's quality of life. To protect these areas, the ordinance established development requirements for all construction. Sinkhole conservancy areas (SCA) are established to inventory the features and create use restrictions. Additionally, construction is prohibited in an SCA, and permits are required for other land modifications. These restrictions will assist in protecting the public and the unique natural features in the county and assist in enhancing the community's quality of life through protection of water quality.

Image courtesy of: Daniel Walker

7) Direct New Development Toward Existing Communities and Infrastructure

By directing new development back toward the communities and using already existing infrastructure and resources, you ultimately conserve open space and natural resources on the urban fringe. Incentives can be provided to encourage or entice developers to direct their new development toward existing communities and infrastructure.

- Facilitate programs that encourage home renovation and rehabilitation in existing neighborhoods.
- Locate new public buildings (schools, government offices) in the town center, not on the fringe.
- Strengthen infill and brownfield programs.
- Upgrade existing infrastructure first.

Community Example: Comprehensive Plan, City of Greencastle, Indiana

https://cityofgreencastle.com/wp-content/ uploads/2015/03/Greencastle-Comprehensive-Plan.pdf

The city of Greencastle indicated many places where infill development policies can be applied in the area, including south of Veterans Memorial Highway and east of U.S. 231, as well as in many residential areas. In the city's growth management objectives, repair and maintenance of existing infrastructure is highlighted as a specific action item that will enhance the infill development and growth. Additionally, establishing zoning standards to encourage high-density development within and adjacent to city limits is recommended to encourage development toward the town center. The plan also highlights that infill development opportunities are present within downtown and historic neighborhoods. By incorporating infill policies and identifying areas where these policies can be utilized in the city, it will allow development to be directed toward existing communities and infrastructure.

Image courtesy of: cityofgreencastle.com

8) Offer A Variety of Transportation Choices

The key is making available to the residents more choices in housing, shopping, communities, and transportation.

- Provide auto, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit options.
- Link modes of transportation.
- Build higher density around transit stops.

Community Example: Comprehensive Plan, Morgan County, Indiana

https://www.dropbox.com/s/rtepunfjxjjk1ca/Morgan%20 County%20Comprehensive%20Plan%20Final%207.16.2019. pdf?dl=0

In Morgan County's Comprehensive Plan, one of the goals outlined included developing a variety of transportation choices. Quality roads, trails, and public transportation are proposed options. This variety of transportation will assist in increasing residents' quality of life, help combat climate change, and provide options for residents in the community.

9) Make Development Processes Predictable, Fair, Efficient, and Cost Effective

Make sure that the private sector is engaged in the process.

- Conduct an audit to update local codes.
- Assist developers who try new sustainable development projects.
- Use point-based project evaluation to encourage sustainable development.

Community Example: Carmel Clay Comprehensive Plan

https://www.carmel.in.gov/home/ showdocument?id=15657

This plan highlights the involvement of the private sector in sustainable development. The Hamilton County, Indiana, city plans to set a precedent for development standards to ensure that the processes for development are predictable, fair, efficient, and cost effective.

The city plans to work with the private sector on areas of redevelopment, ensuring that the process is sustainable but still driven by the private sector. This will ensure cost efficiency for the city while establishing sustainable development standards.

10) Involve Community Stakeholders

Make sure that the community is intimately involved in the process of sustainable development practices, since the residents of the community know how they want their community to grow, and their vision of self is reflected in their community.

- Seek professional assistance in community outreach and engagement and integrate it throughout a planning process.
- Ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion is a central focus for community engagement.
- Use community visioning exercises to identify and describe desired, future outcomes for local planning efforts.
- Ensure community ideas are included in the planning process from start to finish.
- Work with the media.
- Consider new ideas.

Community Example: Comprehensive Plan, City of Greenfield, Indiana

https://www.greenfieldin.org/planningdocuments?download=2523%3Afinal-comprehensive-plan-2015-adoption-reduced-size

Community stakeholders were actively involved in the process of developing the comprehensive plan for the city of Greenfield. Public input was collected through workshops, surveys, and feedback cards. The input was used to create a vision statement for the city, ensuring that the ideas provided by the community are being included in the planning process.

Review the companion document, Climate Change and Sustainable Development, to learn more about sustainable development strategies.

Review the companion document, *Climate Change and Sustainable Development* - https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/ID/ID-524-W.pdf to learn more about sustainable development strategies.

Related publications

- ID-525-W, *One Water Approach to Water Resources Management*
- ID-520-W, *Climate Change: Are You Preparing for it?*
- ID-519-W, *Climate Change: Communication Strategies to Support Local Planning*

Reviewed by:

Scott Gabbard and Jeff Pell

Sea Grant
ILLINOIS-INDIANA

PURDUE
UNIVERSITY®

Purdue Climate Change Research Center

PURDUE UNIVERSITY® | Extension

purdue.edu/extension

Find out more at
THE EDUCATION STORE
edustore.purdue.edu

EXPERT REVIEWED