

Honoring tradition

**THE  
SWAYZEE**

Inspiring tomorrow

**WAY**

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**DECEMBER 2024**

# BACKGROUND

## What Is A Comprehensive Plan?

The comprehensive plan, also known as a master plan, is a policy document that guides and outlines the long-term vision for a city or town. The plan typically includes policies and strategies that create a general framework for the future development of a city. These policies and strategies are usually aimed at land use, housing, transportation, public services, economic development, and environmental sustainability.

The plan directs the growth of the city and ensures that a community's resources, especially development on land, are managed in such a way that aligns with residents' needs and vision for the city. Not only does the plan serve as a vision for the future, but it also serves as the bridge between property owners and the city, helping to provide an understanding for how their land can be developed.

A comprehensive plan is deemed "comprehensive" because it is developed through extensive public consultation and is flexible enough to be updated every 5-10 years to reflect changes in population, changes in goals, and new aspirations of residents. The plan also encompasses zoning and development decisions providing a basis for local government decision-making on replatting, rezoning, variance requests, and other land use changes. A comprehensive plan may also serve as the determining factor in securing funding for the city through various public and private funding sources. For example, organizations such as the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA) and the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) require a comprehensive plan to provide funding for a city.

## How To Use A Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive plan retains value if, and only if, it is implemented and referenced on a regular basis as the city makes decisions about its development. The goals embedded in the plan must serve as the guidelines for the decisions made by the city for future developments and land decisions. All future projects such as economic development, transportation, housing, and all other land-based decisions must reflect the general framework of development in the comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan should at once be rigid enough to serve as the guiding document for the town, but flexible enough to accommodate changes such as population growth and decline, economic shifts, new trends, and improvements in technology. Thus, the plan should be referenced and reviewed often to gauge progress made towards achieving the goals set for the city. The plan should also incorporate the views of residents to ensure that their goals and aspirations are reflected in the development of the municipality.



The image features a decorative background with four vertical stripes of varying shades of brown and tan. A diagonal line splits the image from the bottom-left corner to the top-right corner. The area below the diagonal is a solid light tan color, while the area above is divided into the four vertical stripes.

**AM**



# **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

# THE ONLY SWAYZEE IN THE

Swayzee, Indiana, is a small town in Grant County, East Central Indiana. The town was established in 1880 and incorporated in 1890. Swayzee is named after James Swayzee, the owner of the land at which the Indiana and Eastern Railroad tracks, which run from Converse to Fairmount, crossed when they were laid in 1880. Swayzee is in Sims township (see Figure 1), which was founded by Jacob Pence in 1845. The township was named after Pence's father, Joseph Sims. Swayzee is well-known for its unique claim to fame as the "Only Swayzee in the World." The town got this moniker from the story that a postcard was sent by a serviceman overseas during World War II to Swayzee without an address and no other information, but the letter was successfully delivered to the addressee in Swayzee, Indiana.

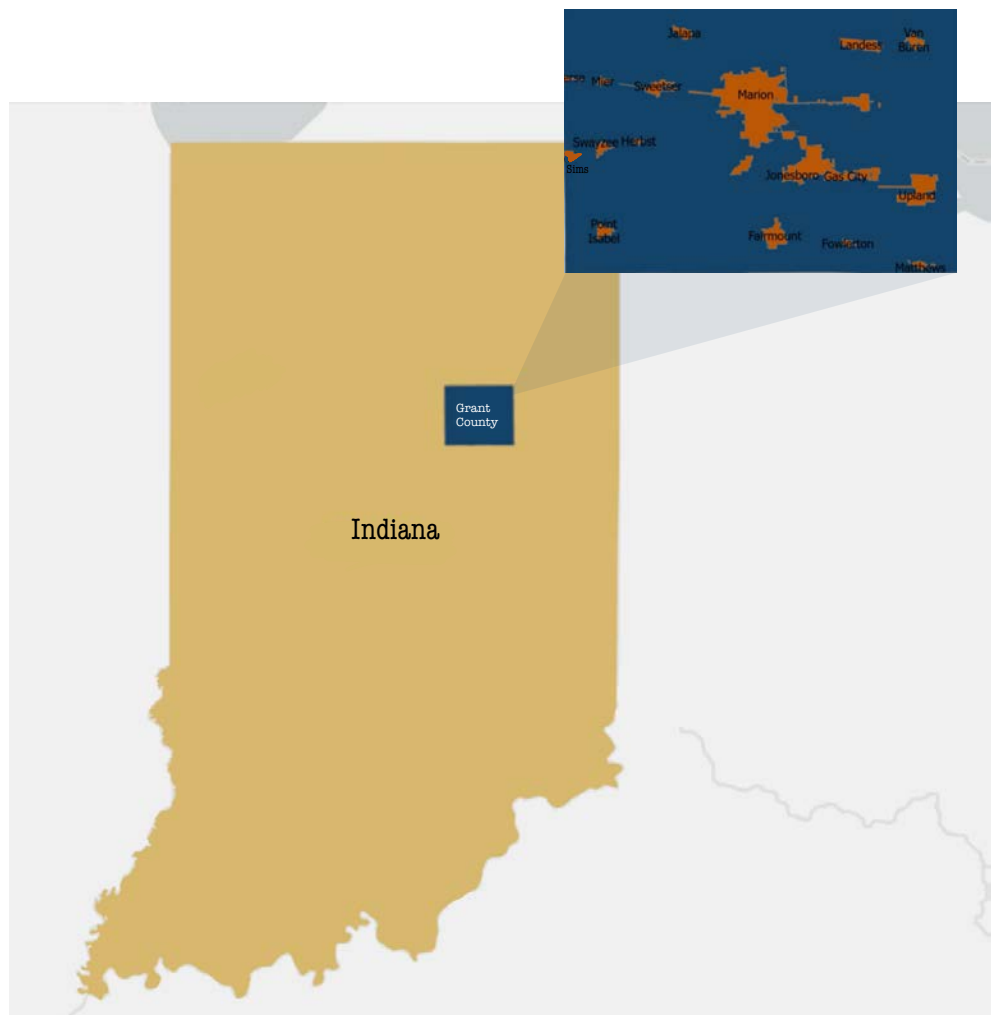


Figure 1: Location of Swayzee in its regional context.

As shown in Figure 1, Swayzee is in Grant County, where Marion is the main city as well as the county seat. Historically, East Central Indiana was an industrial powerhouse, particularly known for its manufacturing and automotive production. However, the region has faced an economic downturn due to the decline of these industries, shifting the focus back to agriculture, which remains a significant economic driver in the region.

Swayzee is a closely knit community with a strong sense of local identity and pride in its heritage and culture. The town epitomizes the rural character of East Central Indiana, blending agricultural roots with the small-town charm, which is typical of the region. The survey that was conducted as part of the process for preparing the comprehensive plan found that most people are longtime residents, having lived in the town for more than 10 years (see Figure 2). Most respondents also indicated that they intend to continue living in the town and not move out of Swayzee in the foreseeable future (see Figure 3).

# WORLD

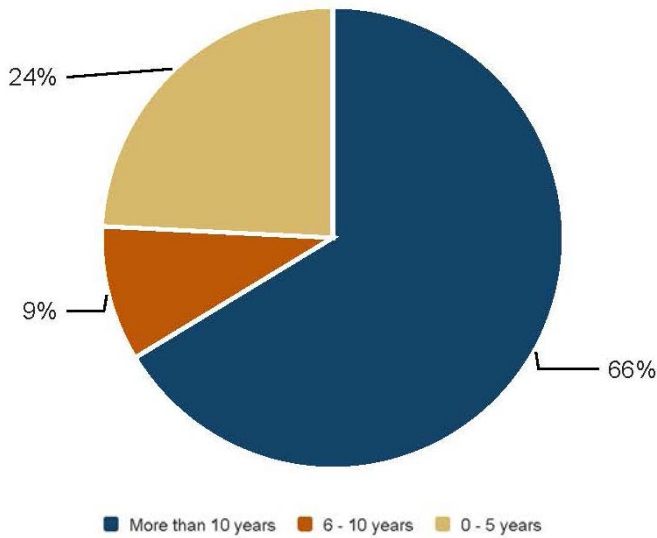


Figure 2: Length of residence of survey respondents.

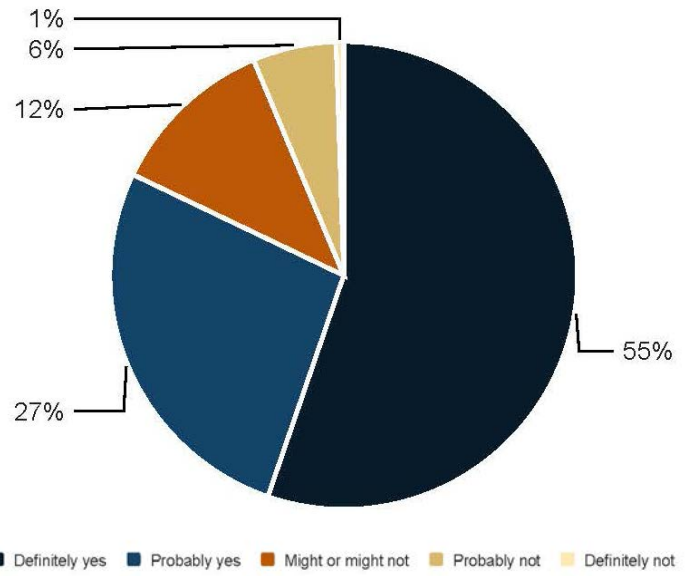


Figure 3: Intention to continue living in Swayzee.

Residents know their neighbors well as they interact with them frequently, almost daily or weekly (see Figure 4). Residents also like the fact that Swayzee is a small town with a rural feel that is safe, quiet and friendly. There is thus a high degree of satisfaction with the quality of life in the town (See Figure 5).

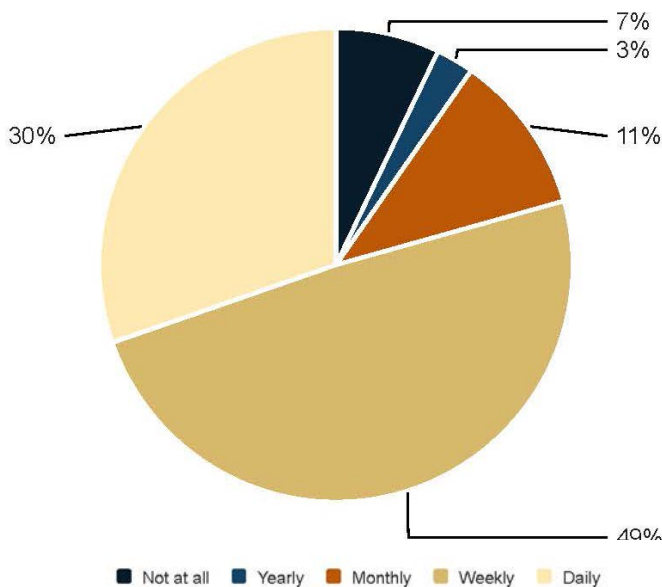


Figure 4: Frequency of interaction with neighbors.

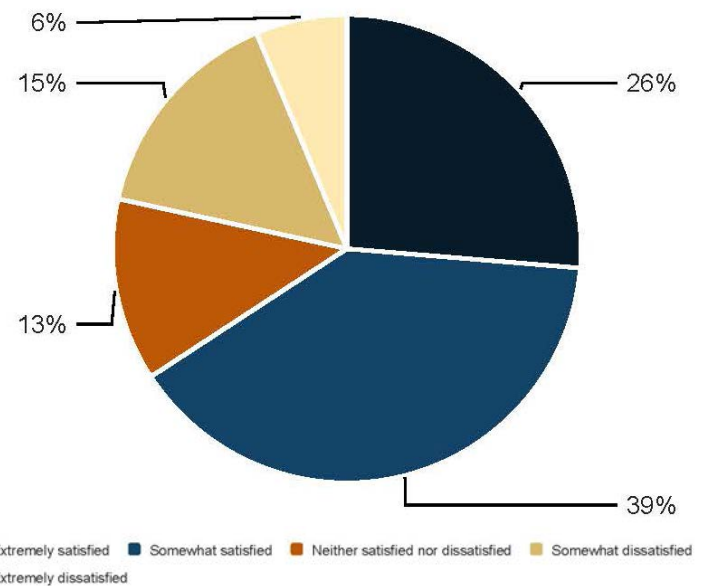


Figure 5: Level of satisfaction with quality of life in Swayzee.

# SWAYZEE HISTORY



**Figure 6:** A historic train line in Swayzee at West Lyons Street.

Swayzee's growth is tied to the railway (Figure 6) and to the discovery of natural gas in the area. In 1880 the Clover Lear Railroad tracks, later renamed the Kokomo-Marion-Wabash Traction Line were laid through town and connected Marion to Kokomo. The railroad lines made Swayzee an attractive location for residents and businesses in the region leading to residential growth in the area. The discovery of natural gas in 1887 further boosted the economy of the town, resulting in new businesses locating in the town, with over 40 such new businesses opening in town in this period.

A Justice of the Peace was elected in 1848, and the first school was built in 1849. Joseph Clinger established the first trading post in 1855, the same year that the first grain and sawmill also opened in town. The town continued to grow its economy and add to its population through the nineteenth century, but this growth was halted at the turn of the twentieth century when the natural gas dried up. Additionally, an accident at the glass factory caused it to explode in 1901 and several fires also destroyed businesses and churches early in the twentieth century. For example, the lumberyard burned down in 1901, the two churches in town burned down in 1918, and the flour mill caught fire in 1927. These businesses were never rebuilt, and this had a profound impact on the local economy.

# PRESENT DAY

Swayzee's current economic base comprises of a mix of small businesses and local employers (see Figure 7), with the largest being Cates Trucking Inc. Other key employers include Swayzee Elementary School, TTG Equipment, and the Swayzee Volunteer Fire Department. Swayzee is also home to several local businesses such as a John Deere Dealership and Farm Implement Store, Swayzee Loinz, Chuckwagon Pizza, a branch of Grant County State Bank, and Fiberhawk phone/internet service. Residents also have a gas station, an insurance company, a beauty shop, a funeral home, and a used bookstore.



Figure 7: Some of the town's famous businesses, Swayzee Loinz and Chuckwagon Pizza.

The town's educational system is anchored by Swayzee Elementary School, which boasts a student-teacher ratio of 17:1. Other schools in the Oak Hill district, such as Converse and Sweetser Elementary Schools, and Oak Hill Junior High and High School, are all highly rated. These schools offer various levels of academic rigor and student engagement, reflecting the dedication to education in the area.

# COMMUNITY VISION

As Swayzee looks to the future, it is guided by a shared vision, articulated through a community-wide deliberative process of residents and civic leaders, indicating where the town intends to place its priorities and commit its resources. Succinctly, the vision for Swayzee's development can be expressed as follows:

***“The Town of Swayzee envisions a vibrant and thriving future that fosters local business development, a rehabilitated main street, and public spaces that encourage socialization of residents, without compromising its small-town charm and rich traditions.”***

***- The Swayzee Way Vision Statement***

From this vision statement, it can be stated that by 2034 Swayzee will be a place where:

- Public spaces enhance quality of life and contribute to community cohesiveness;
- The main street and downtown are rehabilitated;
- Local businesses are thriving; and
- Swayzee's small-town charm is preserved (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Operationalizing Swayzee's vision for the next 10 years.

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

Swayzee's municipal plan is guided by Indiana's state law on comprehensive planning, which serves as a framework for sustainable community development. Comprehensive plans in Indiana aim to guide the physical development of jurisdictions, focusing on land use, transportation, public services, housing, and community facilities. Comprehensive plans help municipalities to achieve their vision through a thoughtful and deliberate development process that ensures that investment and reinvestment decisions and the physical development of a municipality such as zoning and land use align with the municipalities' long-term objectives. Indiana's planning law emphasizes public participation, requiring hearings before the adoption of the comprehensive plan to ensure that the community's voice is central to future development decisions. Swayzee's adherence to these principles in the plan will ensure that the town continues to address challenges while leveraging opportunities for growth and revitalization without compromising its identity.

The purpose of this plan is therefore to meet the following goals:

- Identify residents' vision for Swayzee's development.
- Incorporate residents' voices in the future development of the town.
- Guide the socioeconomic and physical development of the town through a thoughtful and deliberate process.
- Prioritize investment and reinvestments in Swayzee.
- Ensure that decisions on zoning and land use align with the municipalities' long-term objectives.

## Components of the Comprehensive Plan

Indiana law mandates that comprehensive plans include the following three key elements:

1. A statement of objectives. This outlines the general goals for community development, including considerations for economic development, conservation, and quality of life.
2. A statement of policy for the land use development of the jurisdiction. This provides guidance on the physical development of the community.
3. A statement of policy for the development of public ways, public places, public lands, public structures, and public utilities.

### Legal Status

Once adopted, the comprehensive plan serves as an advisory document for local government decisions. However, it gains legal authority through the adoption of zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, and other related land-use controls that must conform to the plan.

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Plan Updates and Amendments

The comprehensive plan is a dynamic document that should be reviewed and updated periodically, typically every 5 to 10 years, to reflect changes in community needs, population growth, and other factors. Amendments to the plan require a similar public process as the original adoption, ensuring ongoing community involvement.

## Coordination with Other Jurisdictions

Indiana law encourages coordination between adjacent jurisdictions and regional planning entities to ensure that comprehensive plans are consistent with broader regional and state objectives, particularly regarding transportation, environmental protection, and economic development.

## The Planning Process

Figure 9 shows the steps that were used in preparing the comprehensive plan. It involved first, collection of data about Swayzee to provide a good background of the history of the town, the assets and challenges facing the town, its socioeconomic characteristics, the physical layout, land use types, and residents' vision for the town. Once the data was collected, it was analyzed and synthesized to derive meaning from it and to help inform the priority development concerns of residents. These priority issues formed the basis for the development of the elements of the plan that unfolded. At completion, the Town Council will next adopt the plan and proceed to implement it in order to achieve the residents' vision for the town's development.

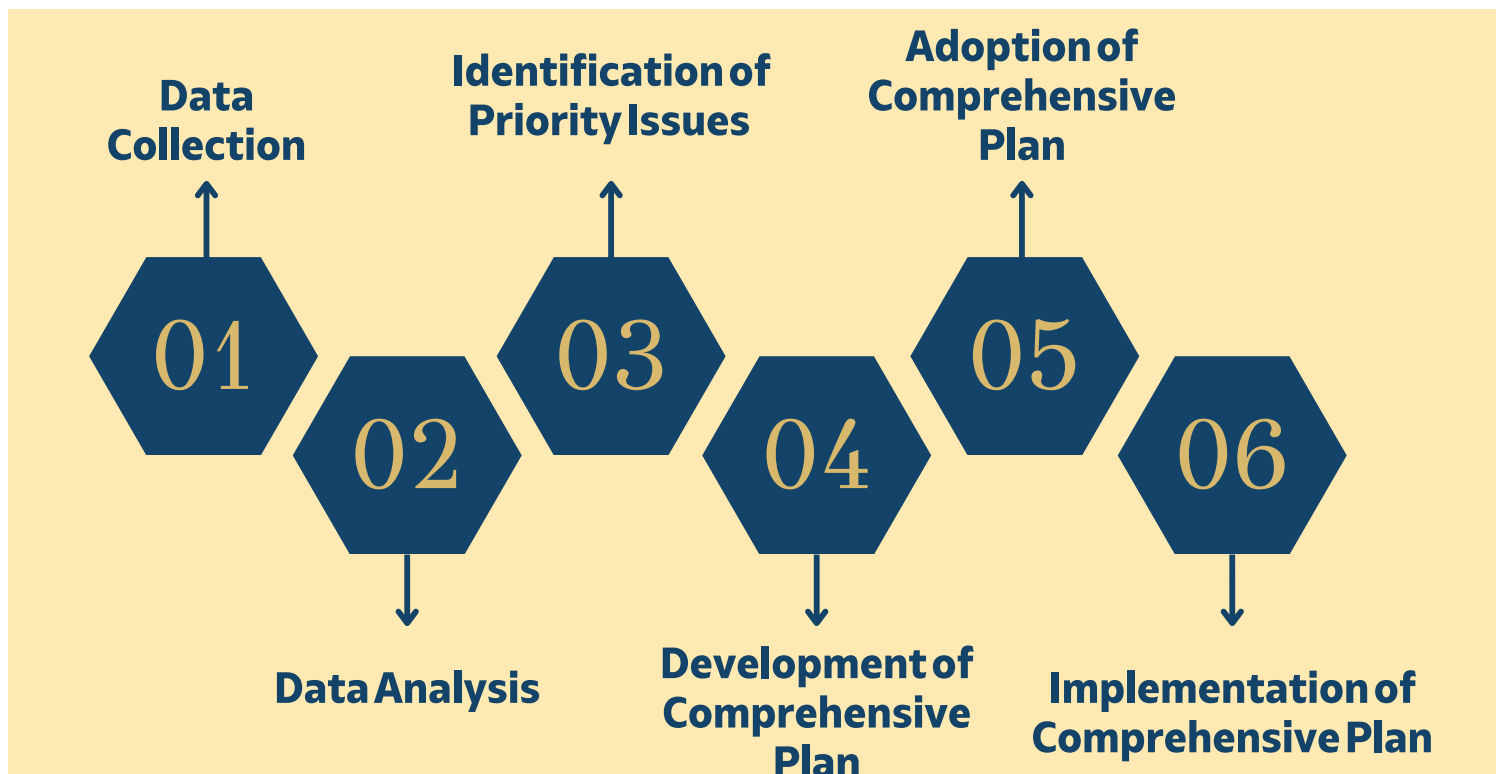


Figure 9: Steps in the preparation of the comprehensive plan.

## Data Collection Methods

Several methods were used to gather data in the preparation of the plan. They included a historical study of the settlement, Census data analysis, field assessment, a community-wide survey, and public forums.

### Content Analysis

To better understand Swayzee and its context within Grant County and Indiana, we collected information from several sources. This included reviewing the comprehensive plan that was prepared for Grant County in 1997 to establish the context for the Swayzee plan. We also read newspapers and reviewed social media content to obtain current deliberations in the town.

### Census Data Analysis

We retrieved Census data for Swayzee both from the decennial Census, the American Community Survey (ACS), the annual survey conducted by the Census Bureau that provides data on the US population, housing and economy, and from ESRI Business Analyst. We analyzed the data to obtain information on the socioeconomic characteristics of the town. This enabled us to determine the demographic trends, living arrangements, the economic base of the town, housing characteristics, commuting patterns, and the occupational and income characteristics of residents, among others.

### Field Assessment

We visited Swayzee on several occasions to do a visual field inventory and assessment of the town. Using ESRI Field Maps, a computer assisted field data collection application, we created ArcGIS maps for several layers of the town. During the field assessment, we recorded our observations of the different land uses in Swayzee, the location and quality of the housing stock and buildings, rated the streets and sidewalks, the location and quality of open and green spaces, as well as civic and cultural buildings in the town. This data was later analyzed to obtain a better understanding of the physical environment and the quality of public and private facilities in the town.

### Survey

We created a survey in Qualtrics, an online survey platform, to obtain information from town residents. Four broad types of questions were asked in the survey; attributes, attitudes, beliefs and behavior questions. We provided a link to the Swayzee Economic Development Corporation (hereafter referred to as the SEDC) to place on the town's Facebook site and on other social media platforms. The survey yielded a record 190 responses from residents, more than 20% of the town's population. Responses to the survey were analyzed as part of the community engagement part of the planning process.

### Public Forum

Several public forums were held in Swayzee to obtain input on residents' ideas and vision for the town, to present our preliminary findings from the analysis of the data, and to discuss the draft comprehensive plan with residents. The public forums were well attended with over sixty residents participating in the first public forum to share their ideas and vision of the future of the town.

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Community Assets

Swayzee boasts several assets that make it a desirable location for businesses and families (see Figure 10) These assets provide the foundation for the proposals in the plan. The main asset of the town is its people, a closely knit small town where residents take pride in their community and are willing to support each other and work to maintain a good quality environment for all. These attributes were demonstrated by the large number of residents that showed up at public meetings to provide input in the town's development, and by the high proportion of longtime residents who have called Swayzee home for decades.

In addition to the strong community ties, Swayzee residents take pride in the looks of their personal property, strive to keep communal areas clean, and value safety in their community. Every summer, the Swayzee Code Enforcement Neighborhood Improvement Cooperative (hereafter referred to as SCENIC) recognizes community members who enhance their yards visually, encouraging residents to improve the appeal of their properties, and rewards residents for doing so.

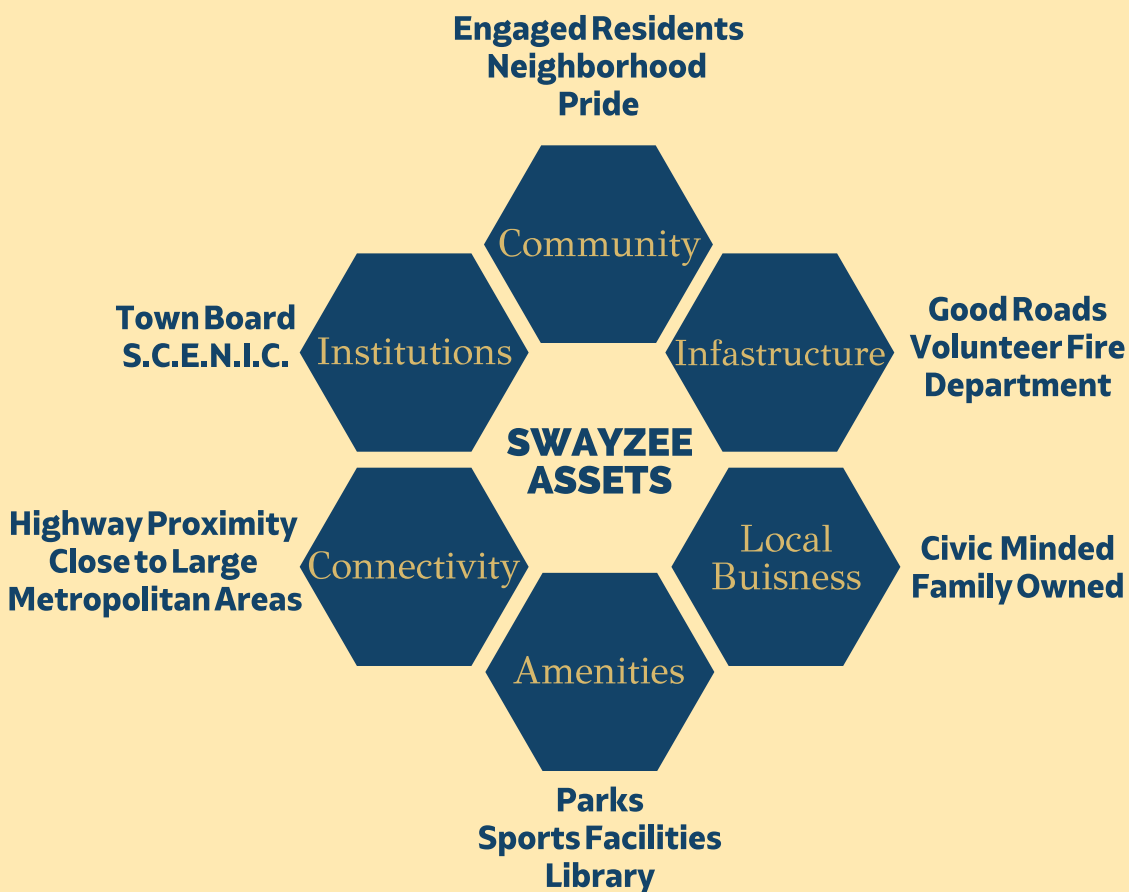
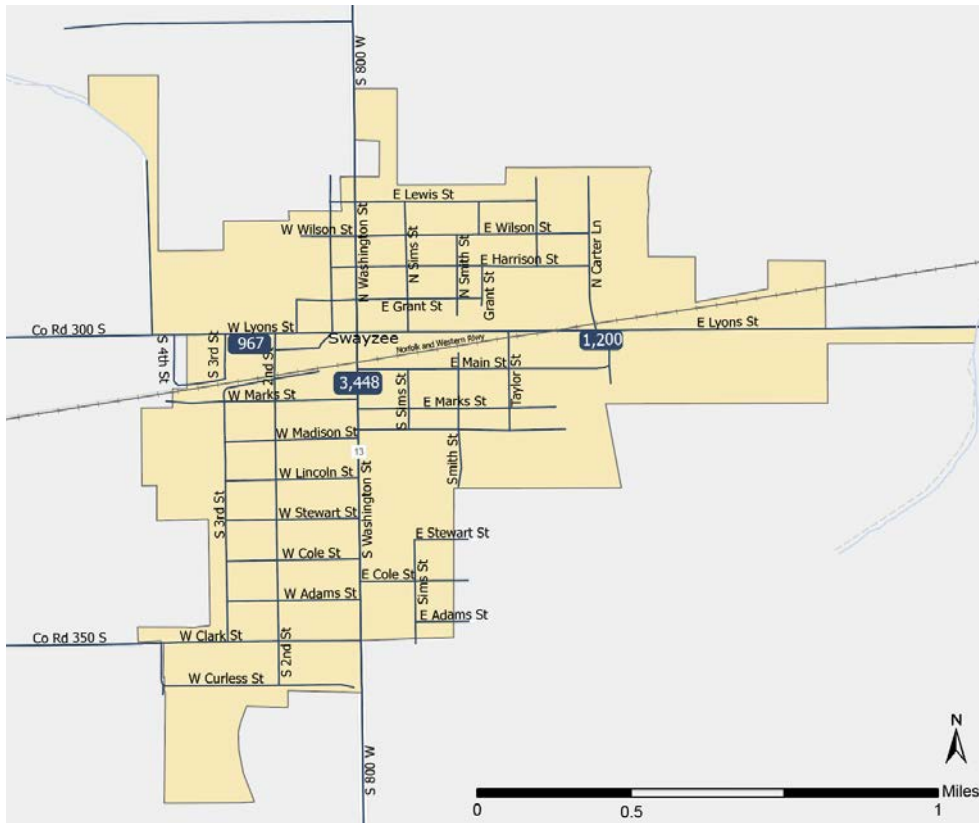


Figure 10: Community assets

## Community Assets

Swayzee's community spirit was on display after a tornado hit the town in April 2023 that damaged more than a dozen buildings and the Swayzee Elementary School. The tornado also damaged farm equipment at the John Deere dealership on the western edge of town. The Town Council and the Swayzee Volunteer Fire Department, supported by 21 active volunteer firefighters mobilized the town to clean up and quickly recover from the catastrophic event.

Swayzee is strategically located at the intersection of two roads that bring traffic through town. Figure 11 shows Swayzee is located at the intersection of County Road 300 South and County Road 800 West. The average daily traffic count on these roads is shown in Figure 11 with County Road 300 South carrying 2,167 vehicles a day and County Road 800 West carrying 3,448 vehicles daily. The high level of traffic that passes through Swayzee provides an opportunity to attract customers to businesses located in town.



**Figure 11: Traffic count on major roads running through Swayzee.**

The town is also close to neighboring towns such as Converse, Bluffton, and Kokomo, and within easy reach of the two largest metropolitan areas in the state, Indianapolis and Fort Wayne. Swayzee's location near farmland and nature is an additional attraction to those who prefer a rural atmosphere, and this can be used to attract remote workers to settle in the town. Currently about 12 percent of the workforce in the US work from home and the number is projected to grow in the future. Swayzee's location can be an asset for attracting this group of workers by showcasing its rural character, quality environment and low crime rates.

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Community Assets

While there is a railroad crossing through Swayzee, the town lacks a station, reflecting the limited public transit options available to residents. Swayzee manages its own water, waste, sewage, and stormwater through the Town of Swayzee Water Works, which also handles residential and commercial water disposal. A recent update to the town's waste management has seen the introduction of a new provider, OnPoint Waste Services, enhancing local service delivery.

Swayzee Days, an important annual event that takes place over several days, brings residents together to socialize and reconnect with each other. On this day, several events are held including a silent auction that features prizes from local businesses. The day also includes a 5K run and a bike parade for children, among other events.

The town is run by a dedicated five-member Town Council, which is vested with both the executive and legislative powers of the municipality. The Town Council elects a President who chairs meetings of the Council, and a Town Clerk/Treasurer. The Swayzee Area Planning and Zoning Board has responsibility for current planning and zoning compliance in the town's development.

Several amenities are either planned or in progress within a short drive from Swayzee. Residents of Swayzee have easy access to these amenities. Construction work is progressing for a Grant County Performing Arts Center in Gas City, located 18 minutes from Swayzee, supported by a recent READI grant. The center will have a capacity of 1,830 seats and will serve as a venue for school performances and regional entertainment. The Kennedy Arts Center, 20 minutes from Swayzee in Marion, is another project funded by the READI grant. Renovation funds are being used to transform a building at 141 East 3rd St, into a mixed-use space. The first floor will house a community art gallery, office space for local arts organizations, and entrepreneurial ventures, accommodating up to 114 people.

Swayzee has two parks (see Figure 13). The Walter Young West Park is the largest park in Swayzee and is located on the northwest side of town. The park is approximately five acres and has a basketball court, a children's swing set, two tennis courts, a shelter, a baseball diamond, picnic tables, charcoal grill, and a walking trail. The baseball and softball fields are available for rent for community events, employee games, and family picnics. East Park is a smaller park of about one acre and is located just south of Lyons Street on the east side of town. It has picnic tables, charcoal grills, a paved and lighted basketball court, and a horseshoe pit.

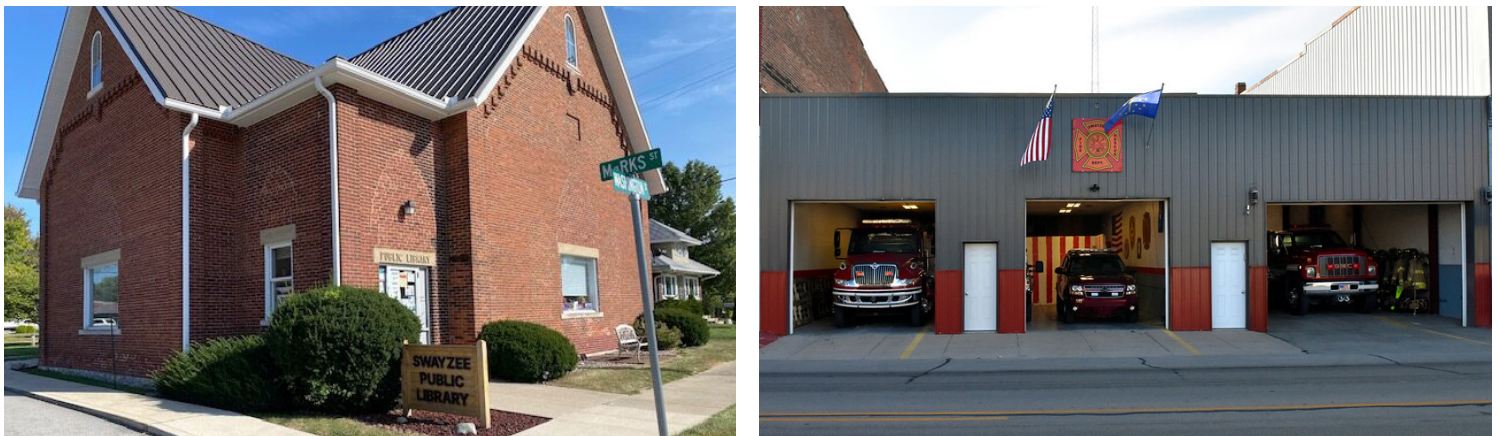


Figure 12: Swayzee Day 2024 flyer and the town's water tower.



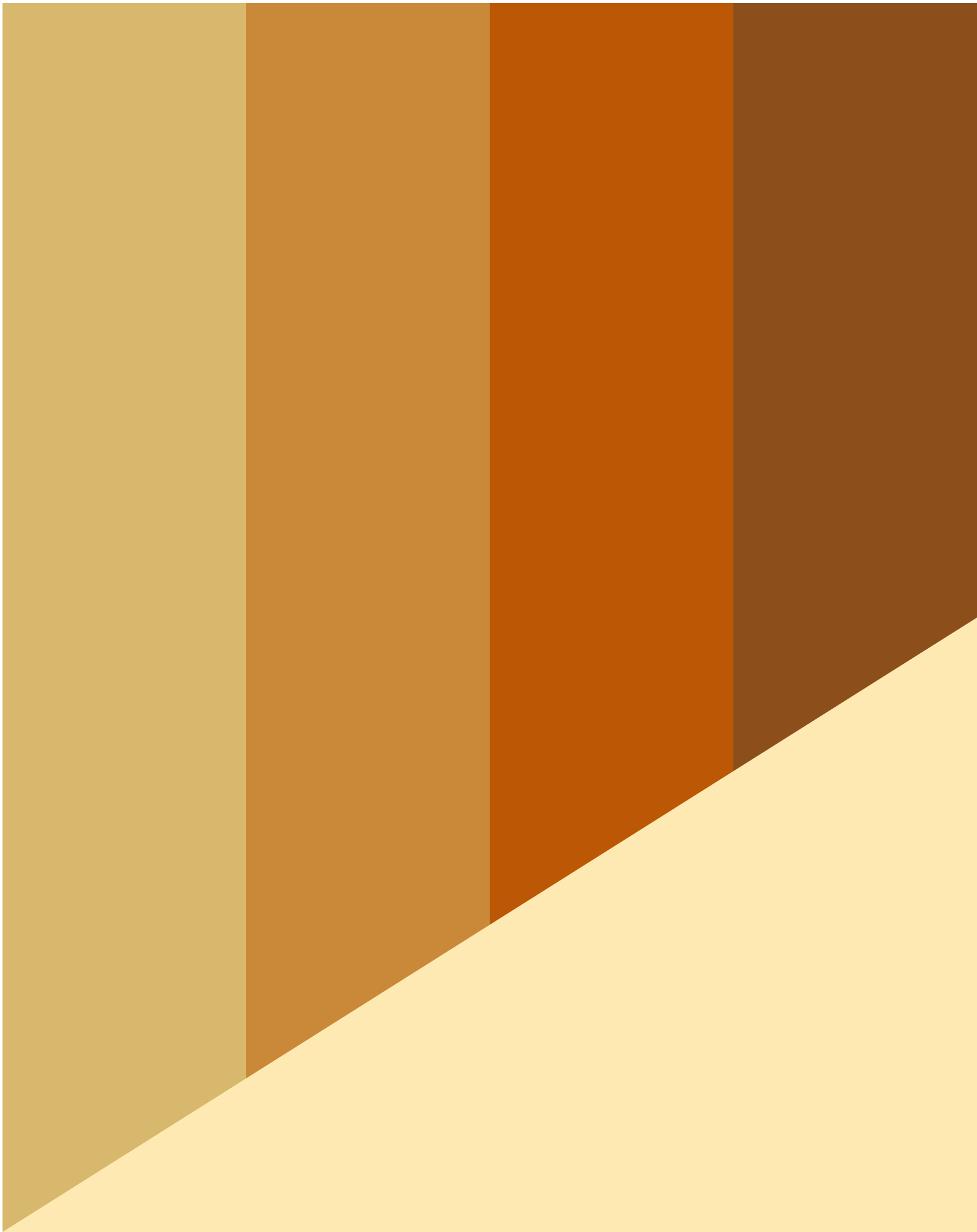
**Figure 13: Outdoor recreational areas in Swayzee (the Westside and Eastside Park, the soccer and baseball fields.)**

The town's soccer fields are a major attraction that brings people from the region to soccer games and could be used as a tool to introduce visitors to Swayzee and to attract new residents and local businesses to locate in town. Swayzee has seven soccer fields located next to the Swayzee Elementary School in which the Oak Hill Soccer Association (OHSA) holds recreational soccer games. The Oak Hill Soccer Association is a youth soccer program. It operates a recreational league every fall for ages four through eighth grade. The fall youth program runs on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. The OHSA also operates a competitive soccer travel program for kids that plays surrounding schools in the spring each year serving players who are in grades six through eight. Although the soccer programs serve primarily kids in Swayzee, children in the surrounding area can and do participate in these soccer programs.



**Figure 14: The Swayzee library and fire station buildings.**

Swayzee has a public library with a collection of 21,000 books and magazines. It also has over 2,000 DVDs and audiobooks. The library was founded by Moses Mark in 1919, with 850 books, which were housed in several locations until the building that housed a former Methodist Protestant Church at 301 S. Washington Street was purchased and renovated to house all its collections. The renovated church opened as a library in 1950 and now houses the library's collection. The Swayzee library currently circulates 12,000 pieces annually and more than 1,000 patrons access library privileges every year.

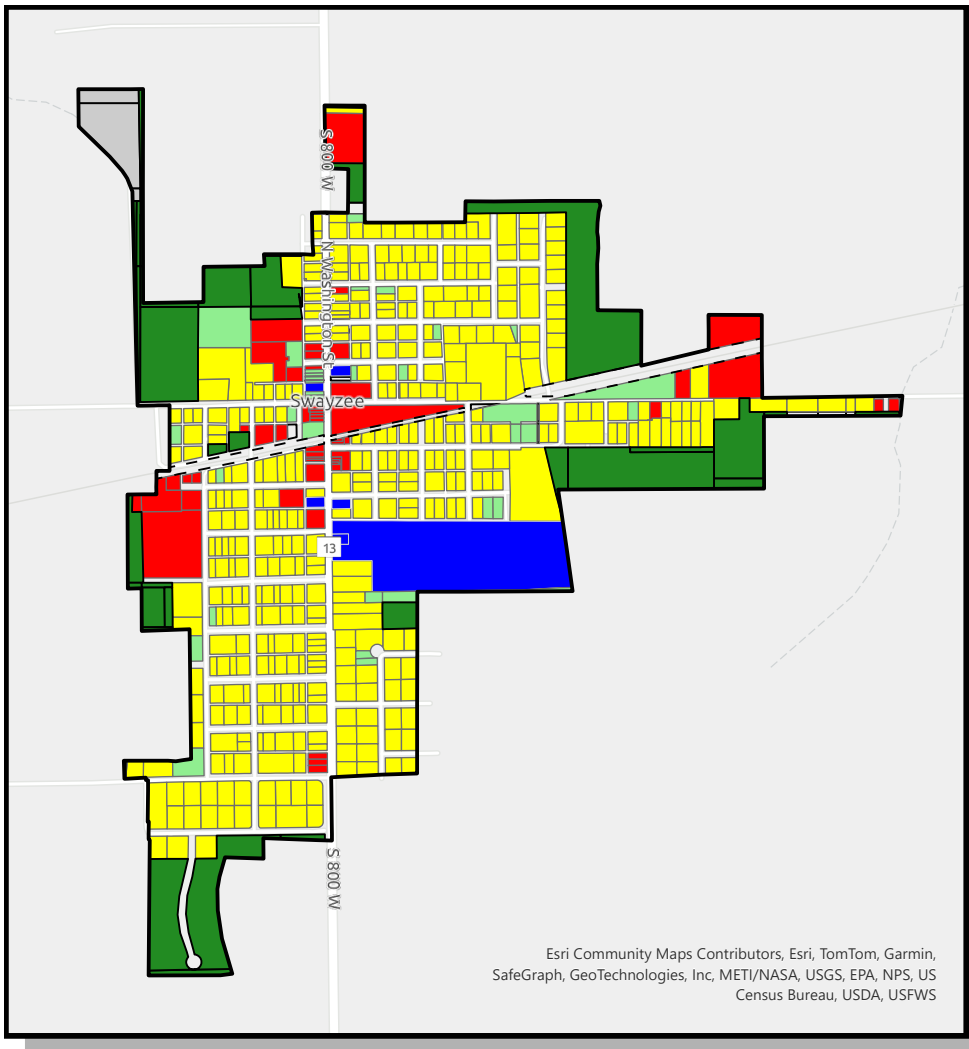




**TRENDS AND  
PROSPECTS  
FOR SWAYZEE'S  
DEVELOPMENT**

# LAND USE

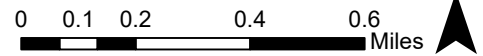
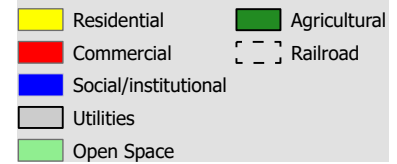
Swayzee's assets are paramount to the town's development. In addition, however, the town's development will be influenced by national and regional trends, but most importantly, local conditions and prospects. Some of the important considerations relate to local demographic changes, land use, housing, education, transportation and employment. The specific ways in which these trends will impact Swayzee is discussed below.



Esri Community Maps Contributors, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, US Census Bureau, USDA, USFWS

## Swayzee Land Use

### Observed Land Uses



### Frequency of Land Use

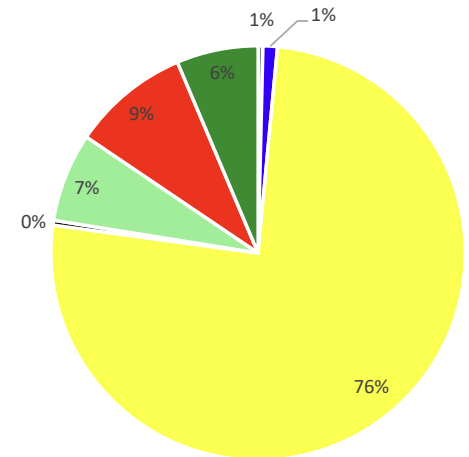
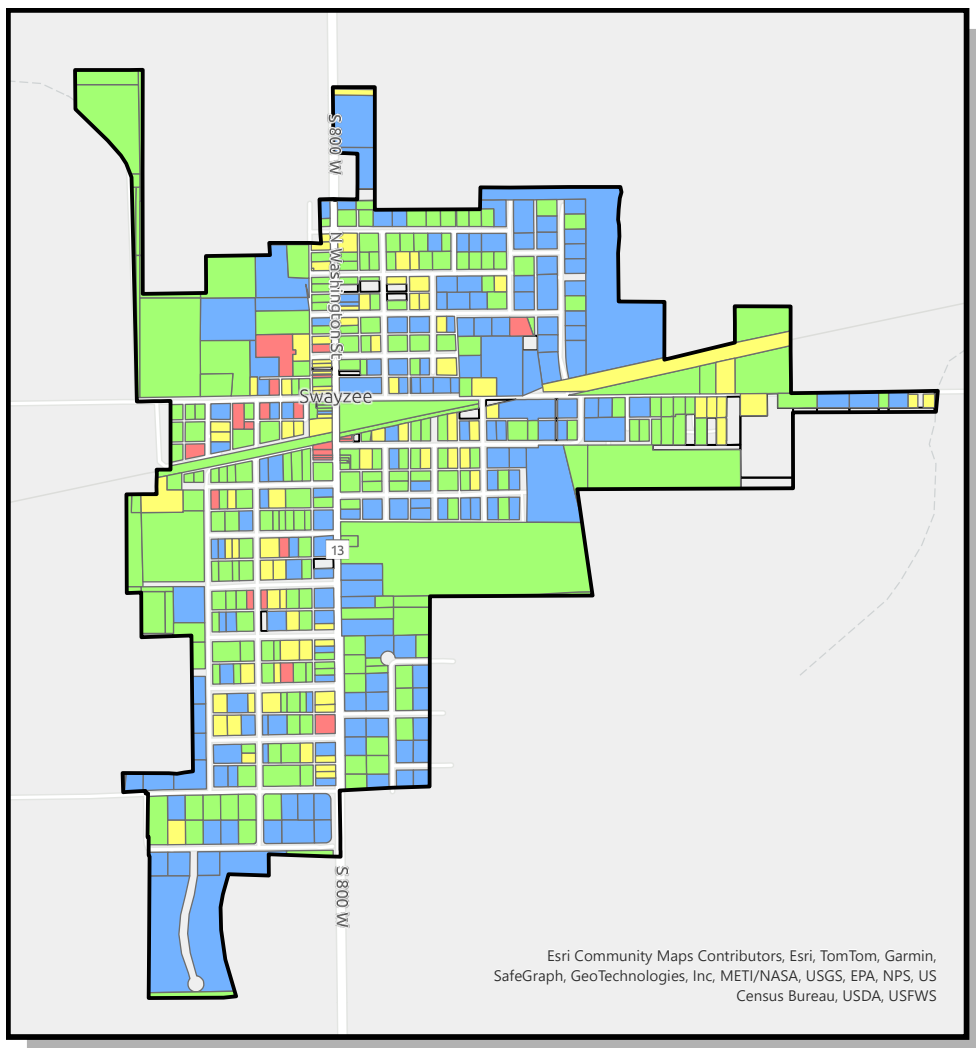


Figure 15: Existing land use.

# LAND CONDITIONS

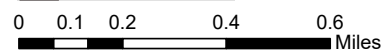
Land and its use constitute the most visible and important visual impact on a community. Local revenue is also dependent on the property tax so the quality of the structures on land has a significant effect on a community's ability to meet its obligations of providing municipal services. Figure 15 shows that most of the land in Swayzee is in residential use. The second largest land use is commercial, and agricultural land is a large part of the land use in the town. Most of the commercial and institutional uses are concentrated in the downtown area. Based on our visual assessment, most of the land in Swayzee is in excellent or good condition, meaning there are no contaminants, and the lawns are well kept and not decrepit (see Figure 16).



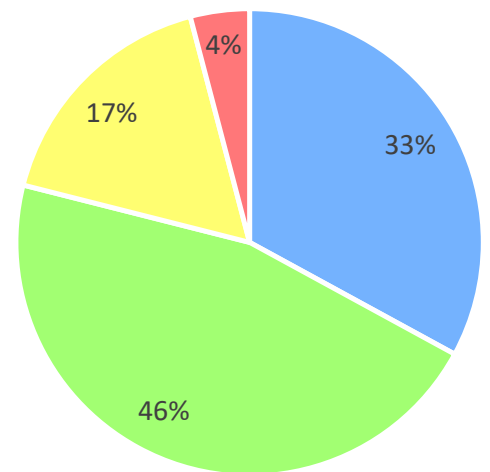
## Swayzee Land Conditions

### Land Conditions

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor



### Land Conditions



- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

Figure 16: Land conditions.

# OPEN SPACE

The undeveloped land in Swayzee comprises of agricultural land, parking spaces, parks, gravel and vacant land. This is conveyed in Figure 17. As Figure 18 shows, however, there is a concentration of vacant and underutilized land to the southwest of town. Care must be taken to avoid the concentration of vacant buildings otherwise the “broken windows theory” could lead to blight.

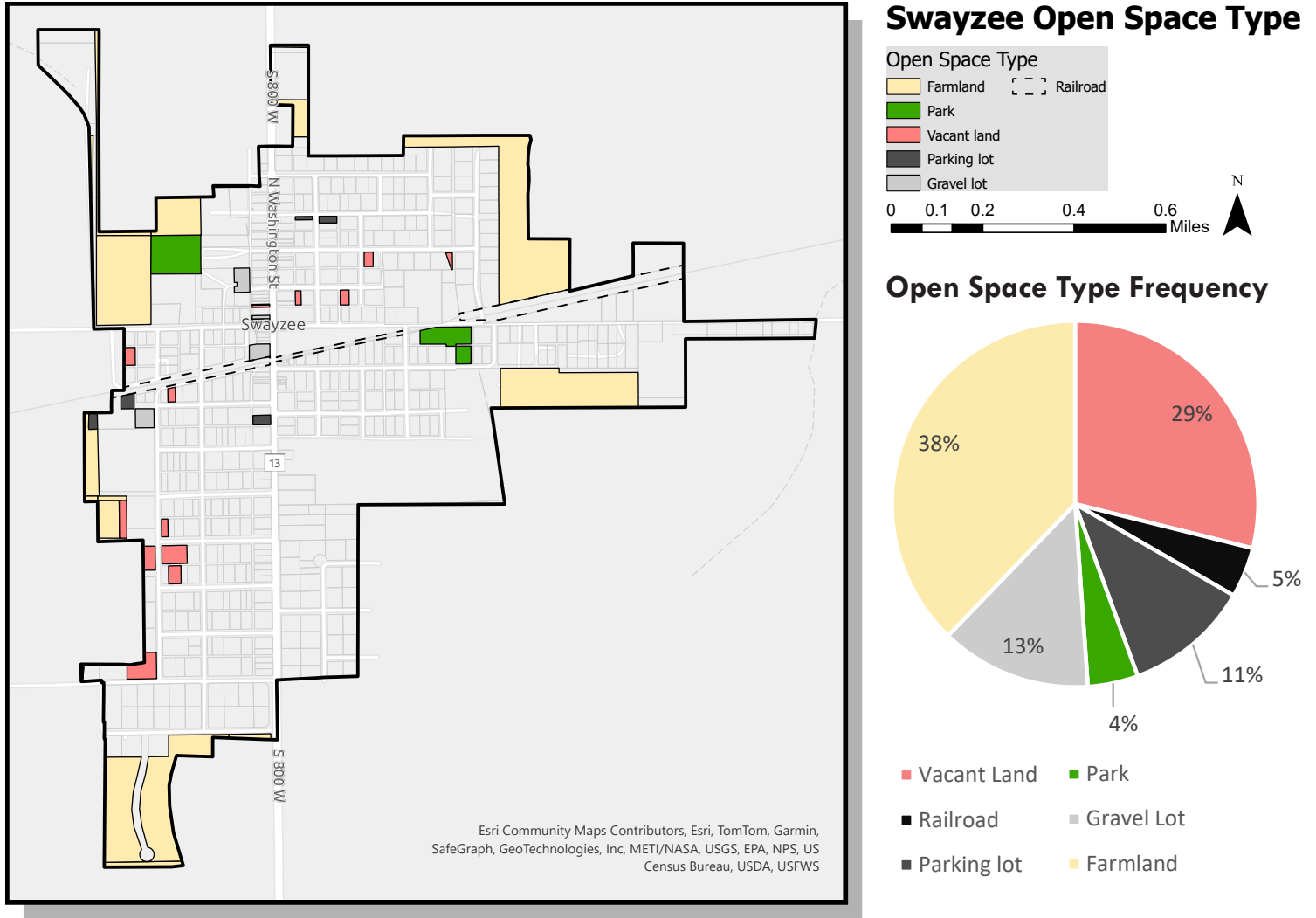


Figure 17: Types of open spaces in Swayzee.

There are two good parks that meet the recreational needs of residents in Swayzee. The State of Indiana has provided level of service standards for parks. The guidelines require that municipalities provide 20 acres of locally owned and operated public outdoor recreation areas per 1,00 residents (Indiana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2021-2025, <https://www.in.gov/dnr/state-parks/files/outdoor-recreation/or-scorg-chap3.pdf>). Swayzee has two parks totaling about 6 acres. In addition, there are several soccer and baseball fields that are available for use by residents. Thus, the town meets the minimum state guidelines for outdoor recreation areas.

# AREA OF CONCERN

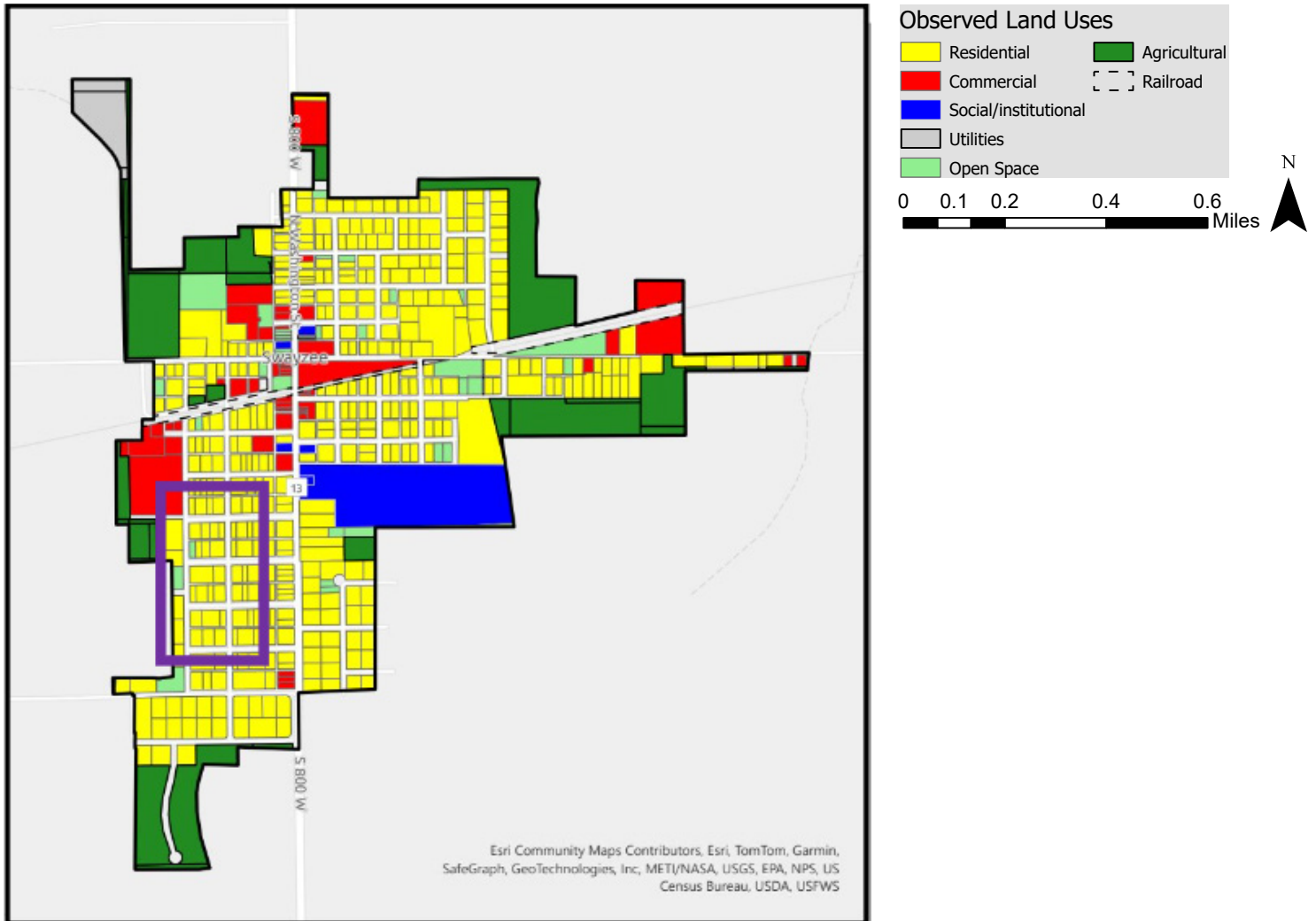
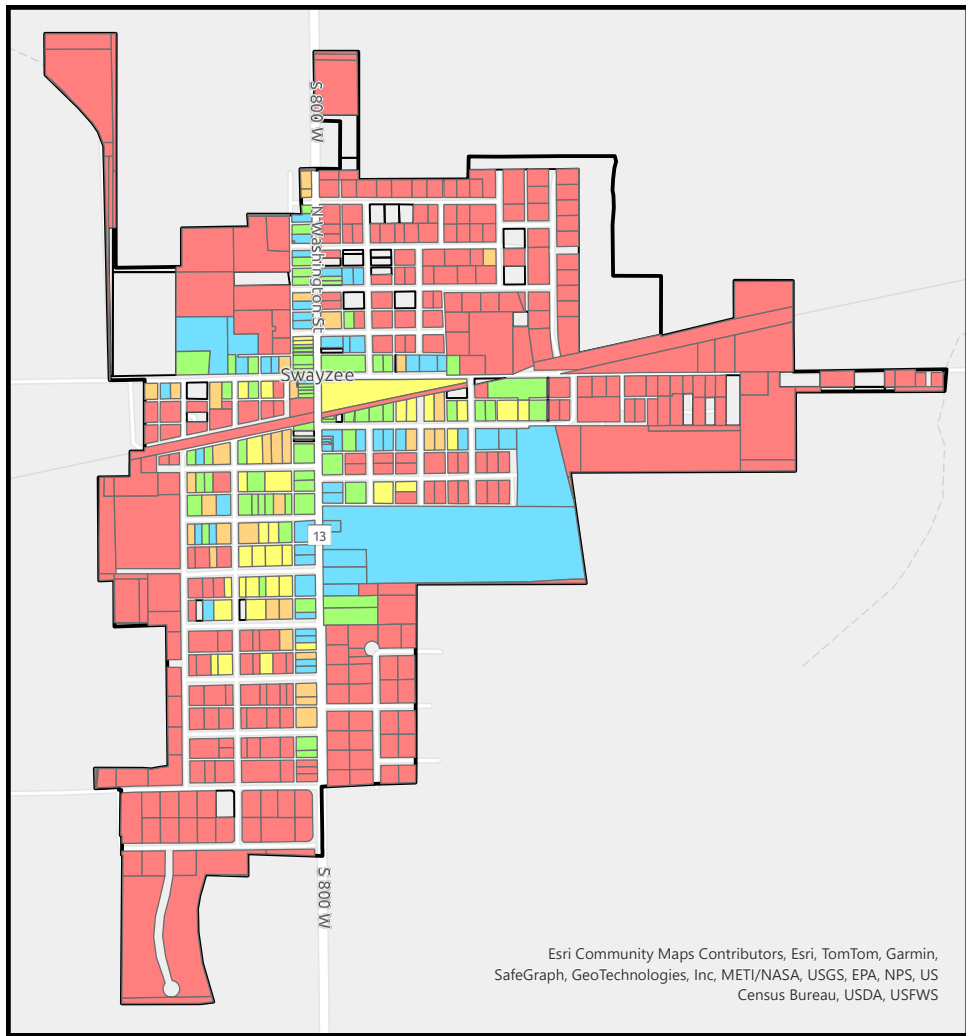


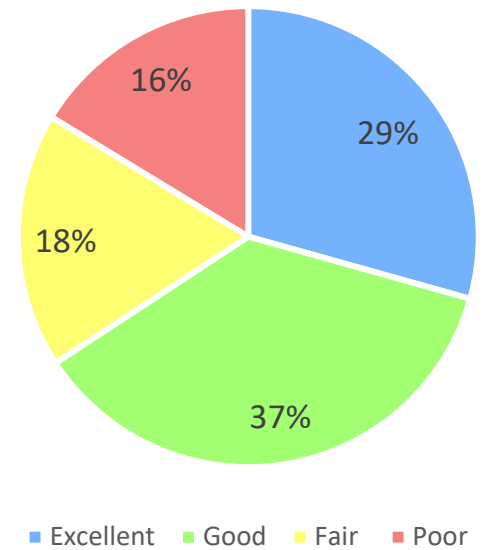
Figure 18: Critical area of concern in Swayzee.

# SIDEWALKS

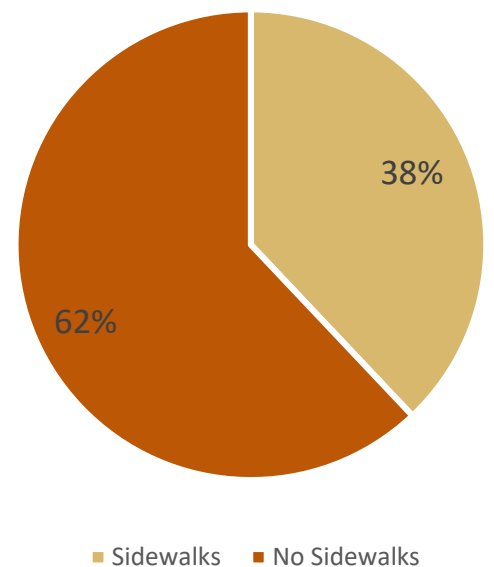
Streets, sidewalks and infrastructure provide the life blood of a community. Most streets in Swayzee are generally in good or excellent condition. Sidewalks are not present in a large part of the town (see Figure 19). However, major destination points such as the school, parks, and retail businesses do have sidewalk provided.



**Quality of Sidewalks**



**Percent of Lots With Sidewalks**



## Swayzee Sidewalk Conditions by Parcel

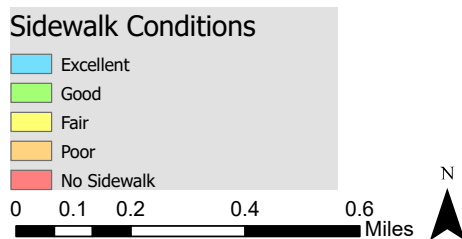
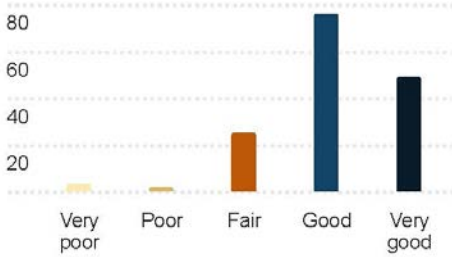


Figure 19: Location and quality of sidewalks.

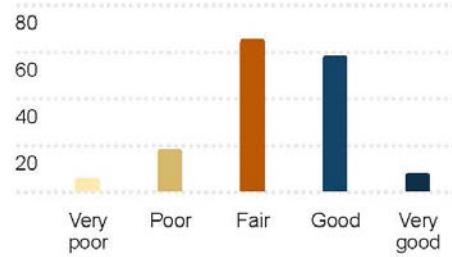
# INFRASTRUCTURE

Figure 20 shows that residents rated the schools, garbage collection, EMS, and internet as very good, while water, police and sewerage were rated as very poor. These responses suggest areas for improvement in Swayzee.

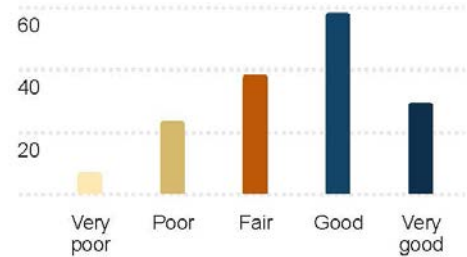
## Garbage Collection



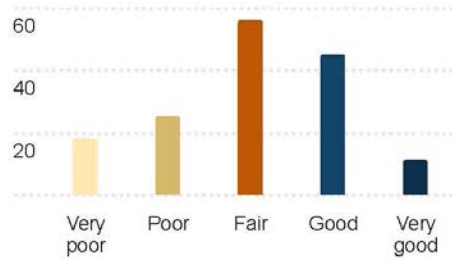
## Streets and Transportation



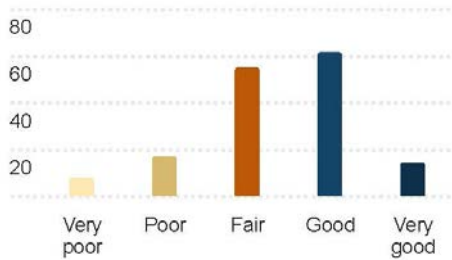
## Internet



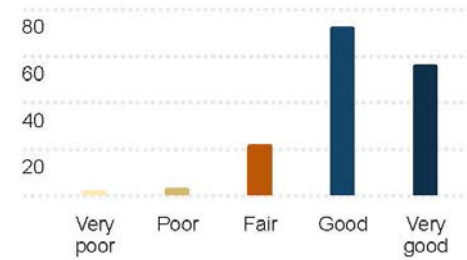
## Water



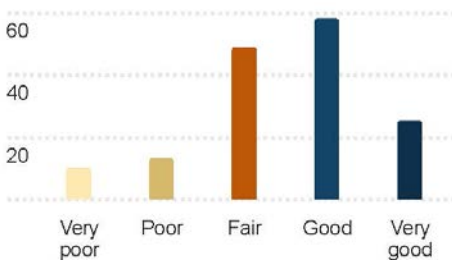
## Sewage



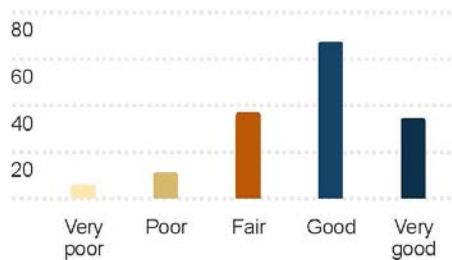
## Schools



## Police



## Emergency Medical Services



## Parks

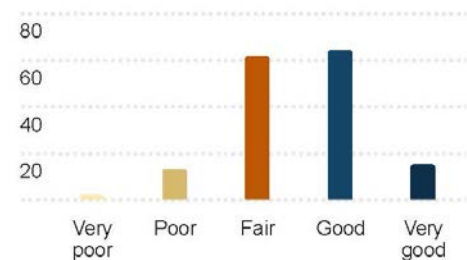


Figure 20: Residents' rating of Swayzee's infrastructure.

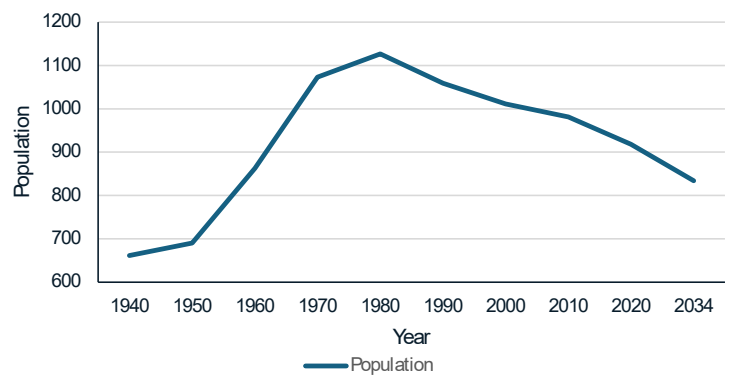
# DEMOGRAPHICS

The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to improve the welfare of residents in Swayzee. At the same time demographic changes affect the development of the town. A municipality that has a large working age population produces “demographic dividends” as residents are more productive than a town that has a large dependency population. Demographics also influence demand for services and amenities such as schools, housing, and recreational facilities such as parks and open spaces.

Swayzee’s population is in decline and has been decreasing since 1980. The projected population for the next ten years indicates that Swayzee’s population will decrease from the current population of 918 to 879 by 2024 (see Table 1 and Figure 21). This drop in population is the equivalent of about one family leaving town each year through 2034.

**Table 1: Population trend in Swayzee from 1940 to 2034.**

Year	Number	Percent Change
1940	661	
1950	690	4.4%
1960	863	25.1%
1970	1,073	24.3%
1980	1,127	5.0%
1990	1,059	-6.0%
2000	1,011	-4.5%
2010	981	-3.0%
2020	918	-6.4%
2034 (Projected)	834	-9.1%



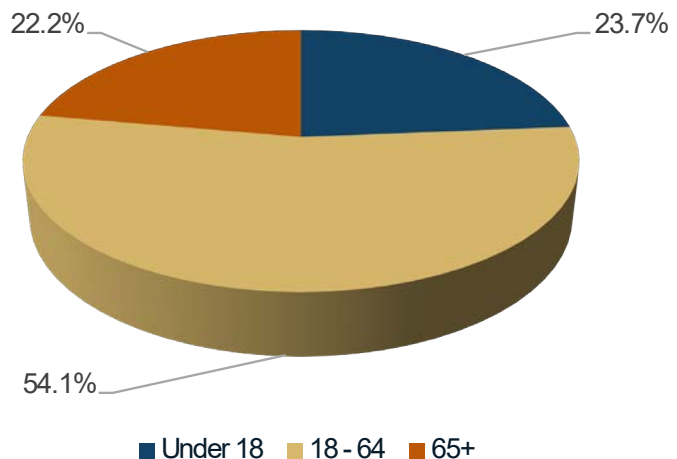
**Figure 21: Demographic trends.**

## Aging of the Population

Swayzee’s population is not only in decline, but also aging (see Figures 22 and 23). The median age in Swayzee is 42.5 compared to Indiana’s median age of 38.3 making the town’s population older than the state. Of the older population, 14% are between the ages of 65 and 74, 5.8% are between the ages of 75 and 84 and 2.4% are older than 85 years.

Swayzee’s population is also older on average than the national population. Noticeable differences of the population are the following:

- Swayzee’s population under 18 is 23.7%, compared to the 22.1% nationwide.
- Swayzee’s working population (between 18 and 64) is 54.2%, compared to 61.4% nationwide.
- Swayzee’s elderly or the senior population (over 65 age) is 22.2% as compared to 16.5% nationwide.



**Figure 22: Population by age cohort. Source: American Community Survey, 2018 – 2022.**

## Population by Age

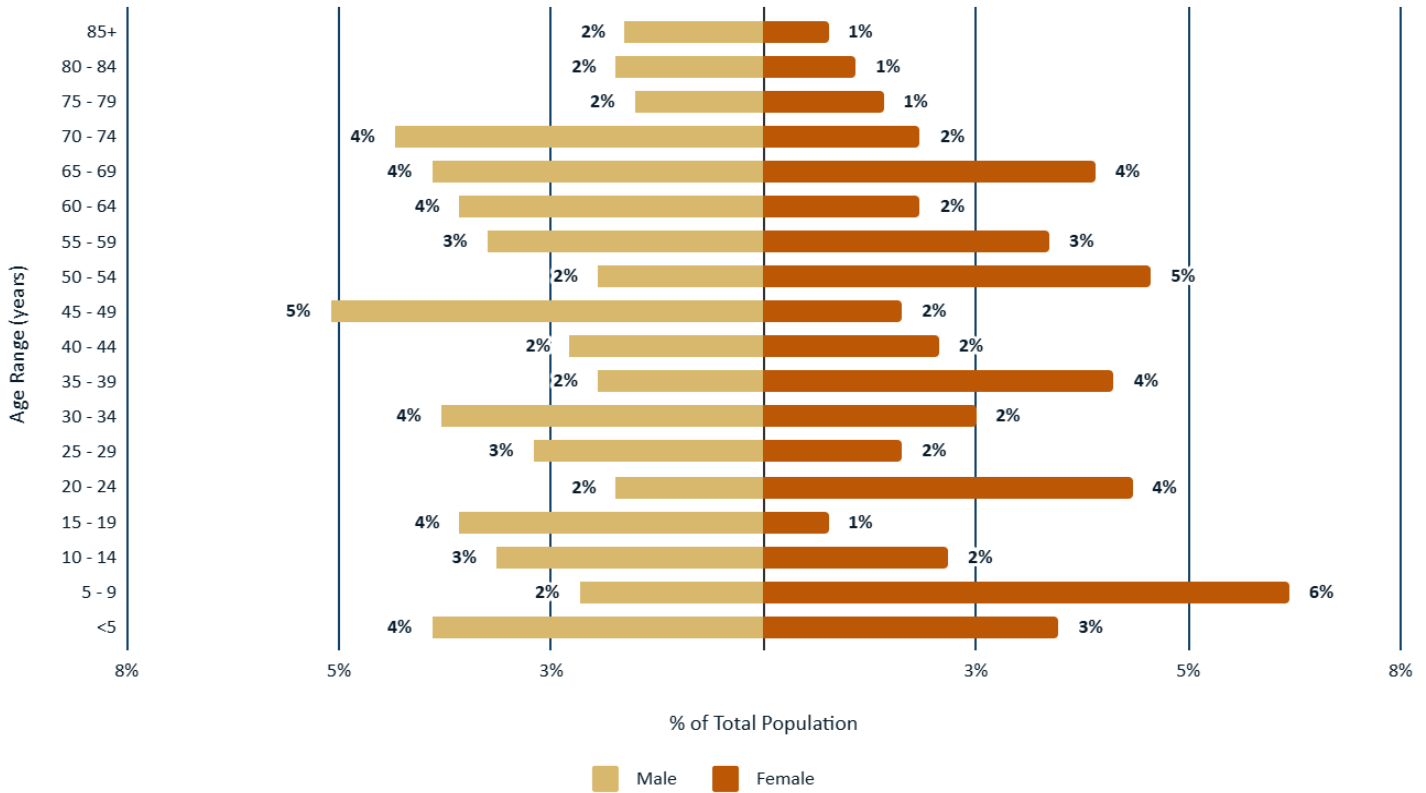


Figure 23: Population by age and gender cohorts, 2024. Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables.

Swayzee’s demographic trend could be due to the observation that young residents that leave for higher education elsewhere rarely return to live in Swayzee. Another factor is simply that like national trends, people are living longer lives than before.

Swayzee had 363 households in 2020, and an average household size of 2.53. An analysis of Swayzee’s population shows that:

- Youth dependency ratio, which is the number of children aged 0-14 per 100 persons aged 15-64, is 37.1.
- Old-age dependency ratio, which is the number of persons aged 65 or over per 100 persons aged 15-64, is 39.0.
- The total dependency ratio is 76.1.
- The potential support ratio, which is the number of youth (working age population) per elderly, for Swayzee is 2.6.

Figure 24 shows that almost a quarter of households have a person with a disability. This affects their ambulatory capacity and ability to get around town particularly on streets that do not have sidewalks.

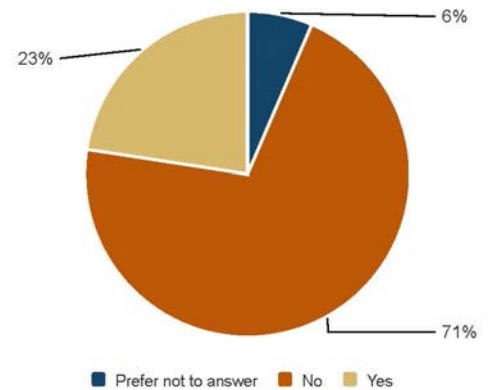


Figure 24: Households that have a person with a disability.

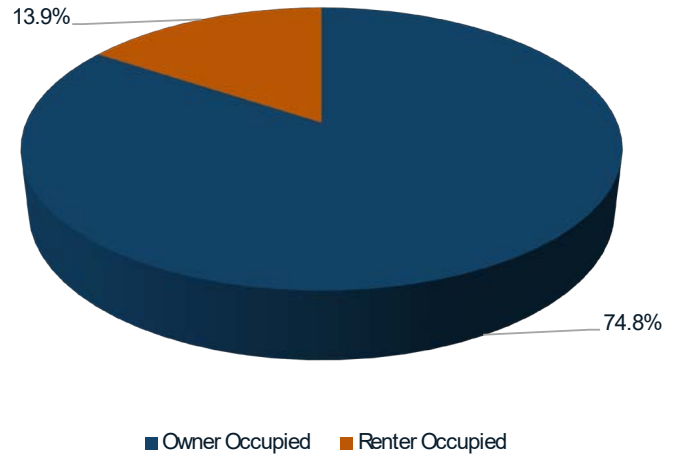
# HOUSING

Swayzee had 409 housing units in the 2020 Census. The town has a high home ownership rate of nearly 75% (see Table 2 and Figure 25). This is significantly higher than the national home ownership rate of about 66%. This may in part be because housing is affordable in Swayzee. Table 2 shows that 306 homes were owned while only 57 were rented in the 2020 Census. The housing vacancy rate of 11.2% is however higher than the conventional rate of 7%. This signals a weak housing market, but it also provides an opportunity for the town to absorb more residents without having to build more housing units to accommodate them.

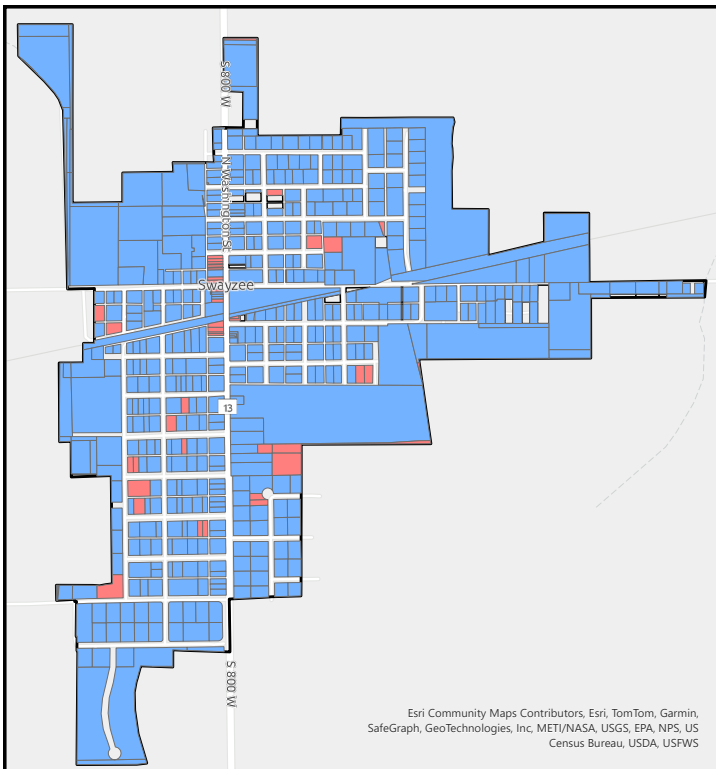
**Table 2: Housing tenure, Source: US Census Profile, 2020.**

	Number	Percentage
Owner occupied	306	74.8%
Renter occupied	57	13.9%
Total housing units	409	100%
Vacant	46	11.2%

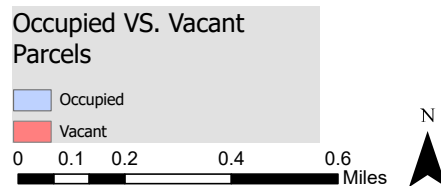
As Figure 26 shows, most of the housing units in Swayzee are occupied. This is essential since absentee owners often engage in deferred maintenance, which would affect housing quality. A few vacant housing units are scattered throughout the town but are not concentrated in a few neighborhoods.



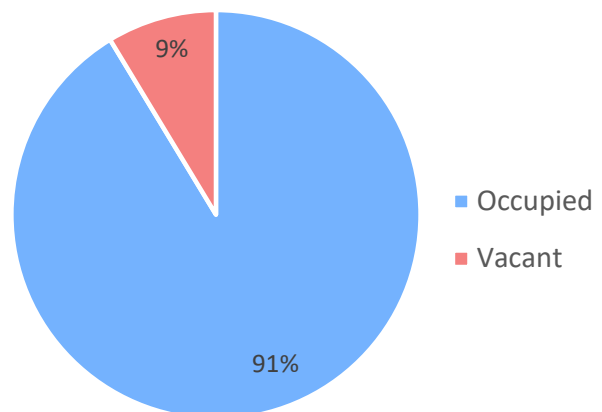
**Figure 25: Occupied housing units by tenure.**  
Source: US Census Profile, 2020.



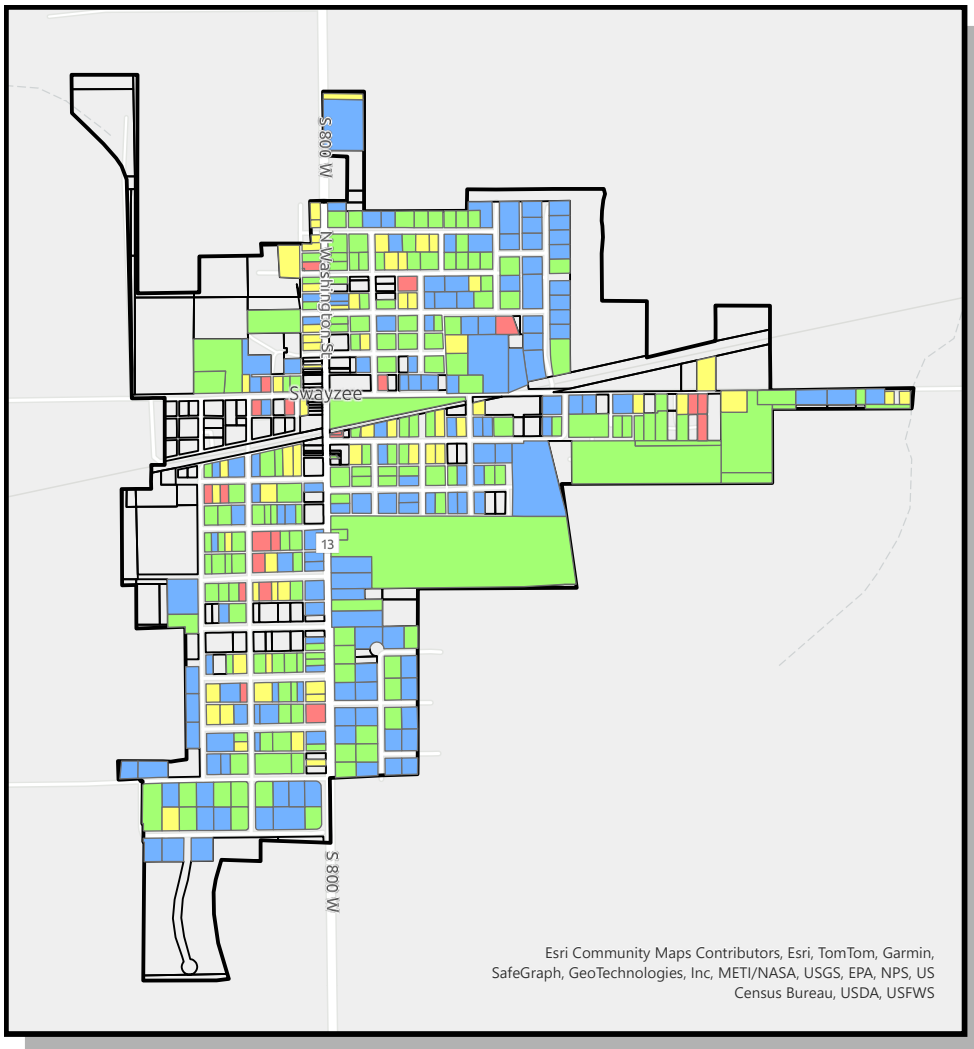
## Swayzee Occupied VS. Vacant Properties



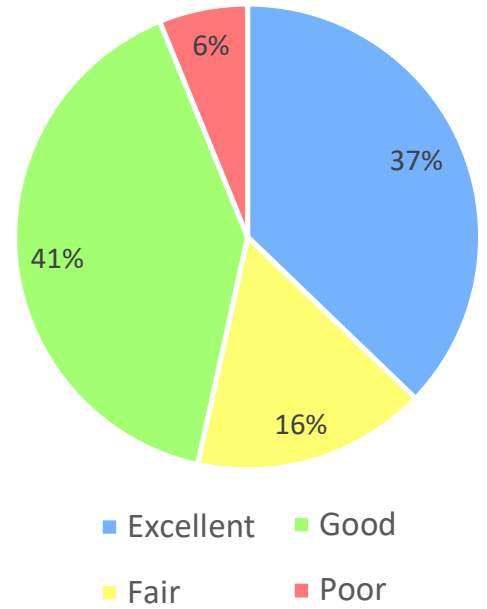
## Occupied vs. Vacant Lots



**Figure 26: Occupied and vacant open spaces.**



### Housing Stock Conditions



## Swayzee Housing Stock Conditions

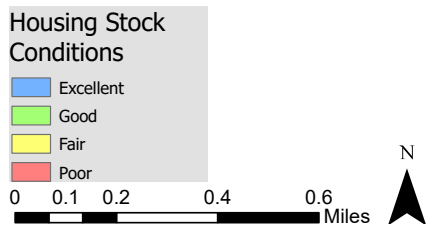


Figure 27: Housing stock conditions in Swayzee.

# HOUSING

## Housing Affordability

Housing affordability measures the extent to which housing is within reach of residents. According to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, a household should not spend more than 30% of its income on housing otherwise the household will be faced with a housing burden. When this happens, the household will have difficulty meeting its other obligations such as education, transportation and health care. Table 3 shows that the housing affordability index in Swayzee is 155, higher than the baseline of 100, which means housing in the town is affordable.

The housing affordability data for Swayzee also shows that 7% of households whose houses have a mortgage spend more than 30% of their monthly income on housing costs compared to 9.7% for those who do not have a mortgage on their house. Renters shoulder the highest housing burden as 28% of such households pay more than 30% of their household income on housing.

**Table 3: Housing affordability index**

Indicator	Assessment
Housing Affordability Index	155
Percent of Income for Mortgage	16.4%

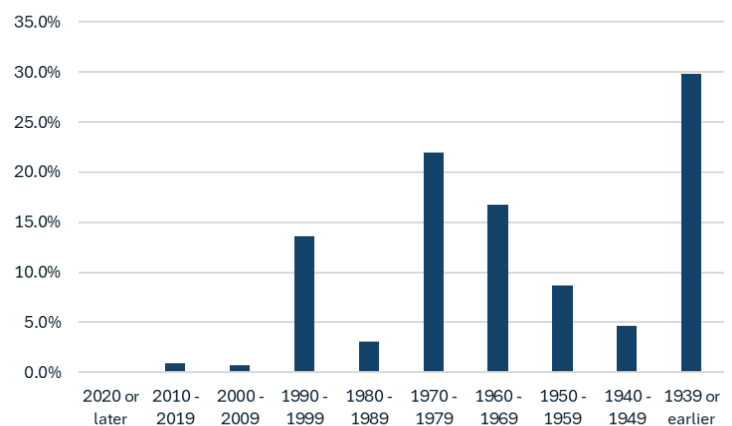
## Age of the Housing Stock

Swayzee's housing stock is relatively old (see Table 4 and Figure 28). Almost 30% of the housing stock was built before 1940, and almost all of the housing in Swayzee, 98%, was built before 2000. Thus, the median year that a house was built in Swayzee was in 1964. The older housing stock requires maintenance to ensure its' continues durability and this may place an additional burden on homeowners.

**Table 4: Age of the housing stock**

Year house built	Number	Percentage
Built 2020 Or later	0	0.0%
Built between 2010 and 2019	4	0.9%
Built between 2000 and 2009	3	0.7%
Built between 1990 and 1999	61	13.6%
Built between 1980 and 1989	14	3.1%
Built between 1970 and 1979	99	22.0%
Built between 1960 and 1969	75	16.7%
Built between 1950 and 1959	39	8.7%
Built between 1940 and 1949	21	4.7%
Built 1939 or earlier	134	29.8%

Source: ACS Housing Summary 2018 - 2022

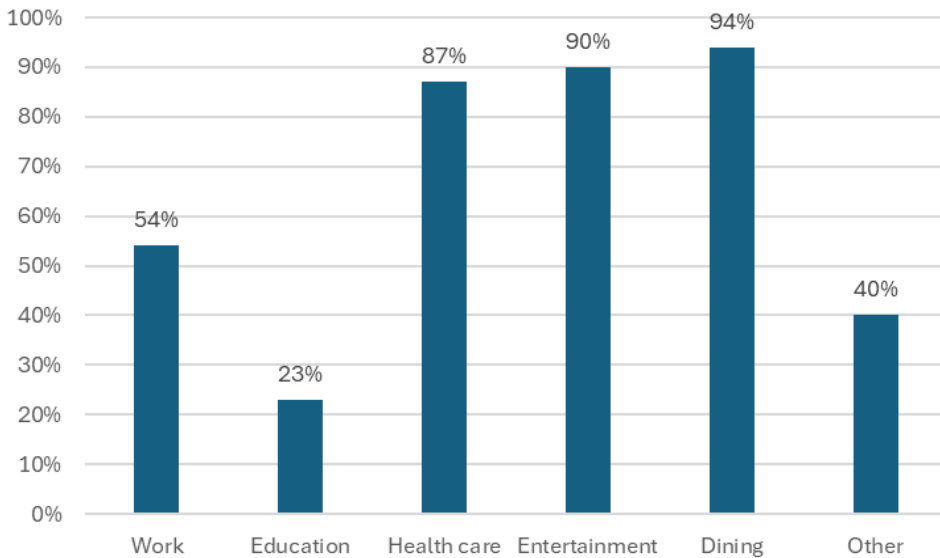


**Figure 28: Age of the housing stock.**

One critical observation about housing in Swayzee is that there are no group quarters in town. These are housing units in which non-households such as the frail elderly or the sick who need care would live. Given the aging of the population, some nursing homes or elderly care facilities may need to be provided to take care of the needs of those who cannot live independently.

# ECONOMY

Swayzee does not have a diverse economy, so most residents work outside town. The lack of diversity also means most disposable income of residents leaks to communities in the region and thus Swayzee does not benefit from the multiplier effect this expenditure could generate. In the survey that was conducted, residents indicated that they leave town to obtain most of their daily needs such as healthcare, entertainment, and dining (see Figure 29). Census data also shows that only 6% of the labor force in Swayzee work in town as shown in Figure 30.



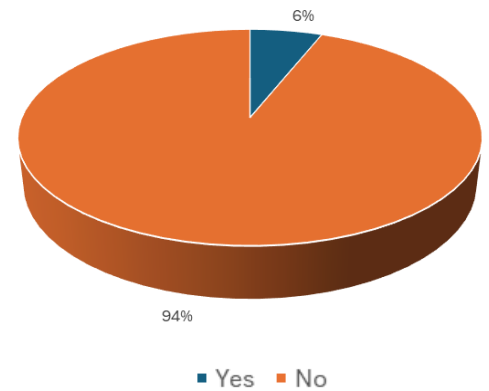
**Figure 29: Where residents spend their disposable income.**

The Census data shows that only 2.3% of workers in Swayzee work from home while nationwide, some 12% of the population work from home. This sector has been growing since Covid-19 and provides an opportunity for small rural communities such as Swayzee to attract such workers to live in them.

**Table 5: Employment by Industry**

Industry	Percent Employed
Agriculture Mining	0.5%
Construction	2.2%
Manufacturing	22.9%
Wholesale trade	0.0%
Retail trade	9.4%
Transportation/utilities	7.2%
Information	1.2%
Finance/Insurance/ Real Estate	6.0%
Services	48.2%
Public administration	2.4%

Source: Civilian labor force profile, Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029.



**Figure 30: Proportion of the town's workforce that work in Swayzee.**

Table 5 shows Swayzee's economy, like the rest of the nation is undergoing deindustrialization, that is, a decrease in manufacturing and growth of the service industry. The table shows that 22.9% of Swayzee's workforce is employed in manufacturing and that 48.2% are employed in the service sector. This trend is likely to continue to grow in the future. Swayzee would need to diversify the local economy by growing or attracting businesses that pay higher wages to make up for a decrease in manufacturing employment, which usually is high paying.

# ECONOMY

## Economic Dependency Ratio

The economic dependency ratio is a measure of the number of people in a population that are not part of the workforce compared to the number of people that are working. That is, the number of economically dependent people per 100 economically productive population. Table 6 shows that there is a high economic dependency of the population in Swayzee with 112 residents dependent on 100 of those who are in the workforce.

**Table 6: Economic Dependency Ratios**

Total	111.8
Child (<16)	41.2
Working age (16-64)	31.6
Senior (65+)	39.0

Source: Civilian labor force profile, Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029.

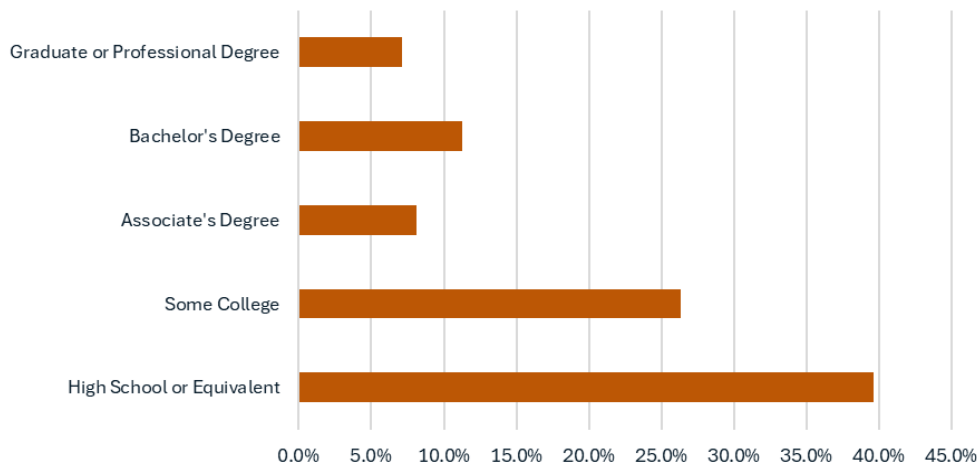
# EDUCATION

**Table 7: Population 25+ by educational attainment**

Level of Education	Number	Percent
No schooling	0	
Some High School	43	6.8%
High School Diploma	201	31.9%
GED	49	7.8%
Some College	166	26.3%
Associate's degree	51	8.1%
Bachelor's Degree	71	11.3%
Postgraduate Degree	45	7.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey

Of the population of Swayzee residents that are older than 25 years, 18.4% have a bachelor's degree (see Table 7 and Figure 31). This is lower than the rate for the state of Indiana where 30.2% have a bachelor's degree. This may make it difficult for the town to attract industry that requires highly skilled and technical jobs requiring a high level of education.



**Figure 31: Education attainment (Population 25 Years and Older)**

Source: 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

# PARKS AND TRANSIT

## Parks Access

The State of Indiana guidelines are that municipalities should have 20 acres of public outdoor recreation areas per 1,000 residents. Swayzee has two main parks that are about 6 acres. When the soccer fields are added, the town meets more than the minimum guidelines for outdoor recreation areas. With respect to access to the local parks, most residents are within a 10-minute walk to a park. In Figure 32, only residents at the southern end of the town (in yellow) would have to walk more than 15 minutes to get to a park.

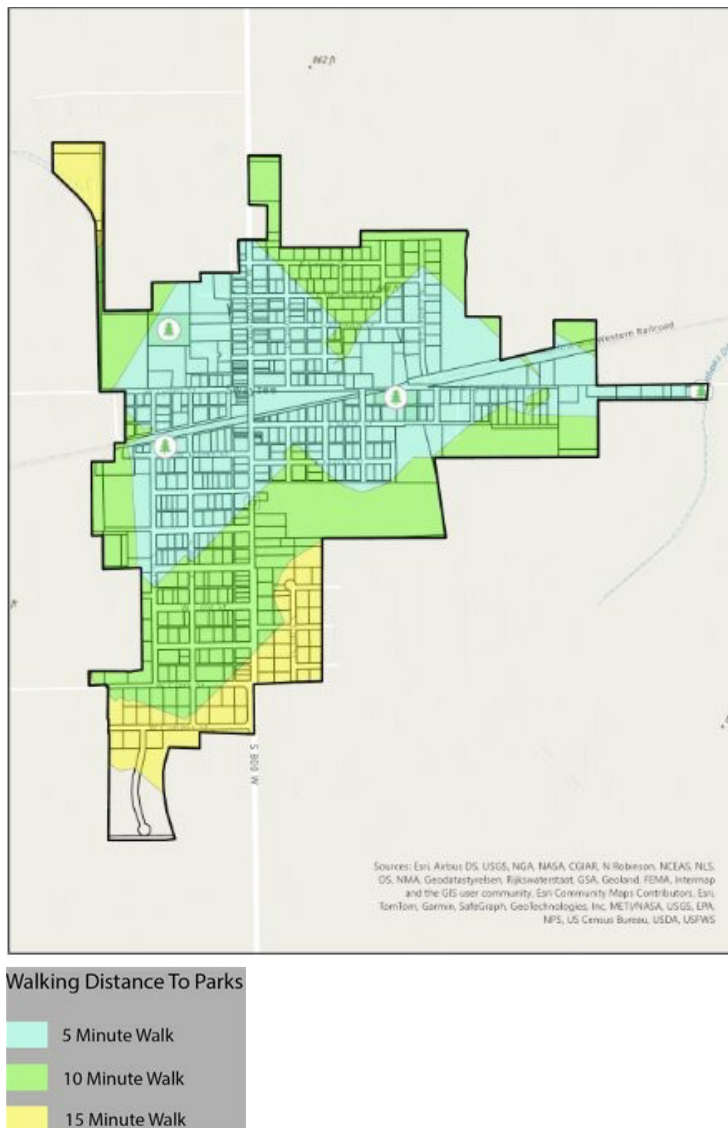


Figure 32: Walkable access to parks.

## Transportation

As is characteristic of most of the country, most workers in Swayzee use the private automobile to get around but especially to get to work. Thus, 85.5% of workers either drove alone or carpoled (6.5%) to work. Also, 4.2% walked to work and 2.3% worked from home. Most residents, 84.5%, work within a half hour drive of their home. Only 2.9% of workers drive more than one and half hours to their place of work.

Most amenities in town such as the sporting facilities and parks, as well as businesses are within a short walk from residents' home. Due to the low density and small size of Swayzee's population, it would be inefficient to provide public transportation in town. This absence, however, can be made up for through ride hailing and the use of taxicabs.

## An Untapped Development Potential Awaits

The preceding analysis shows the strengths and challenges facing Swayzee in the pursuit of its future vision. While the town is experiencing a declining population and has limited employment opportunities for example, there is also ample scope for growth that will improve the quality of life for residents. For example, Swayzee has not capitalized on its strategic location at the intersection of County Road 300 South and County Road 800 West for the town's development.

The soccer fields are a regional asset that can be marketed to attract recreational users and tourists to the town. The quality of the town's housing stock and high homeownership rates, coupled with housing affordability are assets that can be marketed to attract new residents. Additionally, the high disposable income of residents is an untapped source of revenue for new businesses that choose to locate in Swayzee. Given these prospects, we next consider how Swayzee can tap into these opportunities to achieve its vision for the future.

The background features a vertical color gradient from light beige on the left to dark brown on the right. A diagonal line splits the image from the bottom-left corner to the top-right corner. The area below this line is a uniform light beige color. The text 'INT' is positioned in the bottom-right corner of the light beige area.

**INT**



**TRANSLATING  
OPPORTUNITIES  
AND PROSPECTS  
O COMMITMENTS**

# LAND USE

Land use is one of the most visible and impactful elements that help to shape a community and its character. It directly governs the aesthetic appeal, overall livability of the area, and environmental health of a community. A community's land use also has financial implications that are critical to its economy in the form of property taxes. These taxes play a crucial role as a primary source of local revenue and can be linked to the quality of structures built on the land. The higher the quality of these structures, the better a community is able to raise revenue to provide services such as public safety, community development, and infrastructure maintenance.

Information collected from the field assessment highlights both strengths and weaknesses of land use in Swayzee. Many of Swayzee's lots are in good condition and are already serviced with utilities and infrastructure. However, there are a few lots, some of which are in the downtown area, that are either vacant or occupied by vacant structures. Notably, two vacant lots in the heart of downtown could serve as a starting point for redevelopment, addressing community needs for a restaurant and gathering space and sparking broader revitalization efforts (Figure 34).

## Goal: Revitalize the main axis points of Swayzee.

Currently Swayzee does not have a public gathering space that will bring the community together to socialize. An ideal location for such a space is at the intersection of Washington Street, and Lyon's Street (County Rd 300 South and County Rd 800 W). The street view of the corner points of this intersection is shown in Figure 33.



Figure 33: Street views of the intersection of Washington Street and Lyons Street.

**Strategy: Provide a public square at the intersection of Washington and Lyons Street.**

As a starting point for revitalizing downtown Swayzee, a public gathering space should be provided at the intersection of the two streets to serve as the focal point of the town and to serve as a catalyst for downtown’s development. This site is currently vacant and would serve such a purpose. The gathering space would serve as a communal living room for residents.

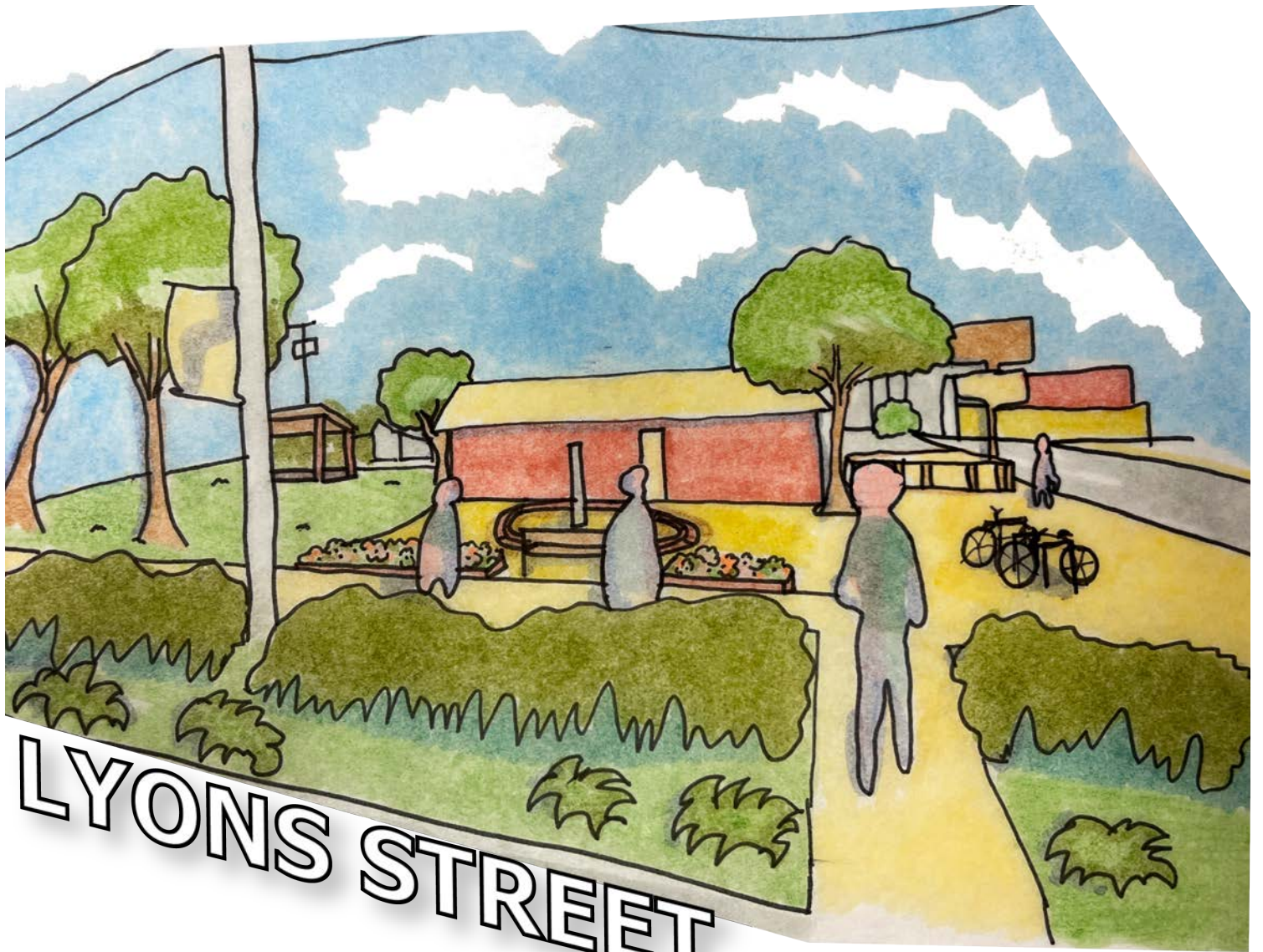
The public square could have a monument in the form of a sundial at the southeast corner of the intersection. Other amenities that could be provided would include an amphitheater with a stage for performances and green space for community events such as a farmers’ market (See Figure 34).



Figure 34: Plan view of the southeast corner of the intersection of Washington Street and Lyons Street.



Figure 35: Street views of the southeast corner of the intersection of Washington Street and Lyons Street.



LYONS STREET

At the northwest corner of the intersection, a family-friendly public space would also be provided. This space will have a serpentine wall for children, benches, landscaping and green space as shown in Figure 36 and Figure 37. These amenities will bring families with children to downtown, increase foot traffic to support downtown businesses, enliven the downtown and serve as a catalyst for its development.

Once the public square is provided community events should be scheduled at the downtown gathering space to help bring residents to the downtown. Such events could include a Farmers' Market, scavenger hunt for kids, Swayzee Days, movie nights, etc.

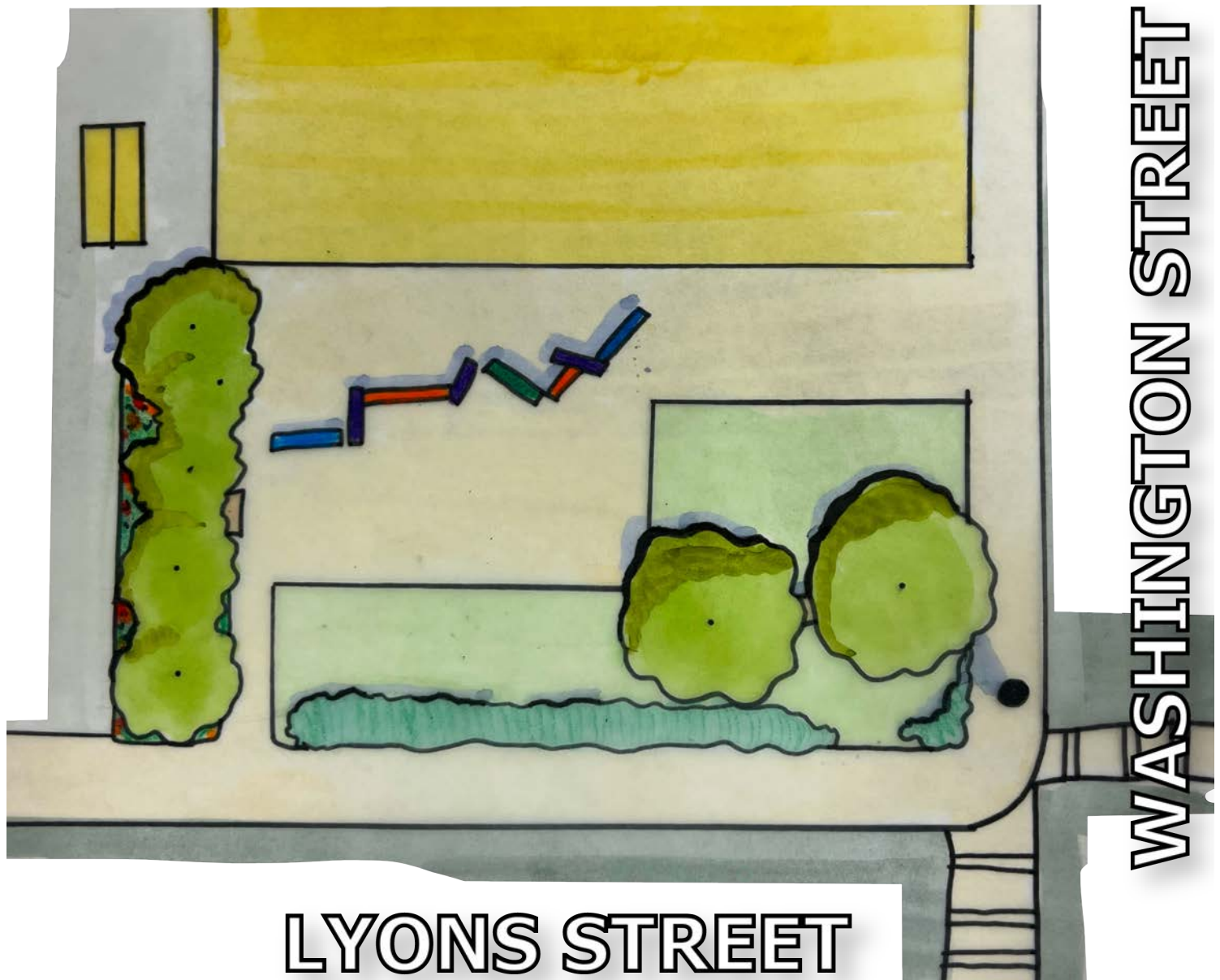


Figure 36: Plan view of the northwest corner of the intersection of Washington Street and Lyons Street.



Figure 37: Street view of the northwest corner of the intersection of Washington Street and Lyons Street.

# ECONOMY

Swayzee has a strong economic foundation with a mix of local businesses such as Swayzee Loinz, Chuckwagon Pizza, John Deere Dealership, Farm Implement Store, Needham-Storey-Warmpner Funeral and Cremation Service, Hoosier Books and Media, Sassy Diva’s Boutique, and more. These businesses are helping to keep Swayzee’s economy afloat. In 2013, the town also formed the Swayzee Economic Development Corporation (SEDC), a 501(c)(3) organization with the goal of improving the town and enhancing its overall development through the attraction, retention, and expansion of local businesses. With the creation of SEDC, the town can also access grant opportunities that are available at the state and federal levels.

Yet, one of Swayzee’s weaknesses is that the economy is not diverse enough to sustain the existing labor force resulting in most residents working outside of town. Swayzee also faces challenges with a lack of diverse businesses, particularly in areas like restaurants and entertainment, forcing residents to leave town for these amenities. Most expenditures by residents thus take place outside Swayzee and constitute a leakage of the local disposable income and expenditure to neighboring communities. During the public forums, residents expressed a need for growing local businesses. Swayzee can capitalize on its economic assets of low tax rates and high disposable income to grow the local economy.

Table 8 shows that Swayzee’s property tax rate of 3.05% is comparable to other nearby municipalities and lower than that for Sweetser and Sims but is higher than that for Converse, a town that residents in Swayzee stated was an aspirational community for what they would like Swayzee to become. Table 9 shows that Swayzee’s property tax rate is higher than the median for Indiana but lower than the highest tax rate in the state. Swayzee’s lower comparable tax rate is an asset for attracting and growing local businesses and the economy.

**Table 8: Swayzee’s property taxes compared to its neighbors.**

City/Town	Tax Rate
Swayzee	3.05%
Converse	4.02%
Sweetser	2.51%
Fairmount	3.06%
Sims	2.24%

**Table 9: Grant County Property Taxes Compared to the State.**

	Grant County	Indiana
Highest	5.0297	8.8169
Lowest	1.6457	0.1741
Median	2.68	1.96

Although the local tax rate may be lower than neighboring towns, potentially an attracting consideration for new residents, the town’s economic base remains insufficiently diversified, with few major employers, particularly in the downtown. This leaves Swayzee vulnerable to competition from surrounding communities with more developed business districts. Additionally, the town’s small population may be insufficient to support essential services like a grocery store, further limiting growth opportunities. The absence of tax increment financing (TIF) programs only deepens these challenges, as Swayzee lacks the financial tools to drive local economic development and infrastructure improvements.

## Goal: Support the development and retention of new and existing businesses.

The primary economic development goal is to incentivize the location of new businesses and the retention of existing ones to help diversify the local economy and provide jobs for residents.

### Strategy 1: Create a Tax Increment Finance District to incentivize development downtown.

Grant County is currently home to 19 Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts with a combined Gross Assessed Value of over \$740 million in 2023 according to Gateway Indiana. All but two of these are in Gas City and Marion. A downtown TIF district would be Swayzee's first and would ensure that any improvements made directly benefit the town. TIF Districts operate by capturing any new tax revenue from improvements made to properties within the district boundary specifically for use within the district.

#### How Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Districts Work

When a TIF is created the base assessed value at the time of establishing the TIF is frozen and the tax revenue from this base continues to go to the existing tax beneficiaries such as the county, city, school district, and fire district. Following the TIFs creation, it is anticipated that the property values within the district will increase over time and that new investments (buildings and businesses) will take place in the district. The additional tax revenues from the TIF district are captured and used for development within the TIF district (see Figure 38). Thus, the TIF becomes self-funding from the increased revenue collected. After the TIF is dissolved, all the revenue in the district returns to the general pool where it benefits all tax-sharing entities as shown in Figure 38 .

### TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF) *The basics of how a TIF works*

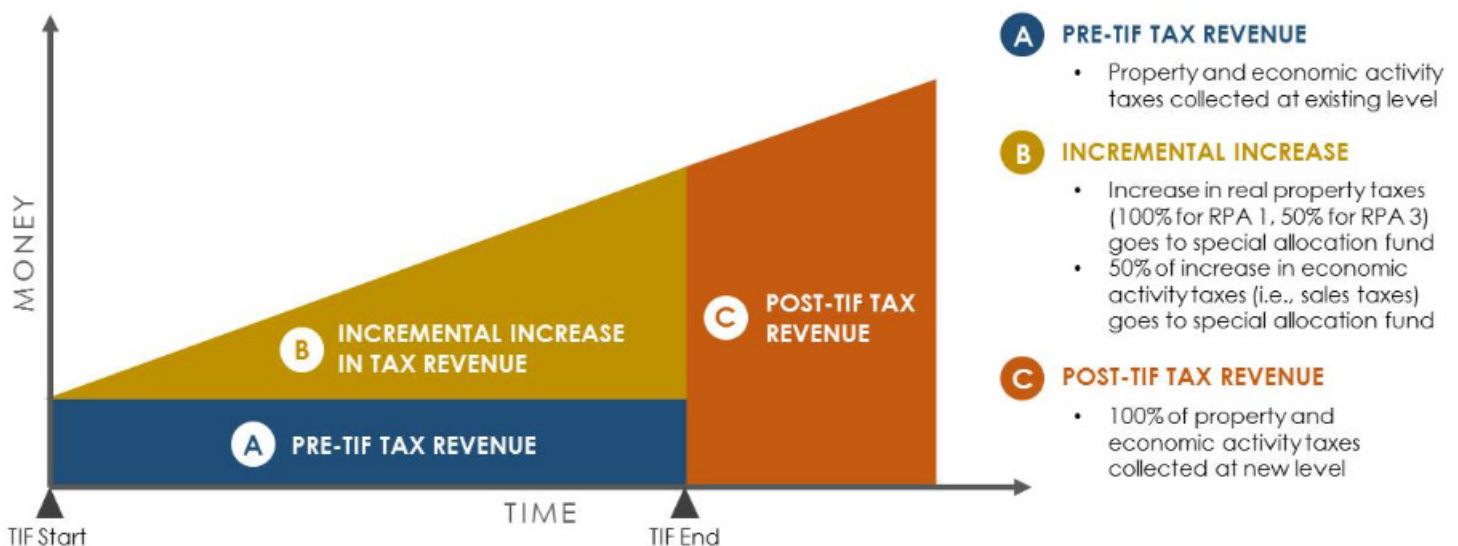


Figure 38: TIF diagram.

### Creating a Downtown Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District in Swayzee

First, the SEDC would need to define the boundaries of the TIF district. The boundary of downtown Swayzee, as shown in Figure 39 covers 30 acres of town, and 105 properties centered around the main intersection of West Lyons Street (West 300 South) and North Washington Street (County Road 800 W). The proposed boundaries run from Wilson Street to the north, Sims Street to the east, Madison Street to the south and Second Street to the west.(Figure 39)

The 105 parcels that make up the downtown area of Swayzee have a combined assessed value of \$8,664,700. Uses include single-family homes, commercial spaces, and vacant land. The existing base revenue for the downtown district is calculated as the tax rate of 3.0503% multiplied by the current assessed value of \$8,664,700, which is \$264,299 in 2024. Over the duration of the TIF district (20 years), the assessed value of properties in the district would grow by an additional \$61 million (assuming a conservative 2% annual increase in property value) and generate \$1.9 million in revenue. There are also 16 vacant properties within the downtown boundary, eight of which are undeveloped. The average property value downtown is \$72,300 (see Table 10). This average excludes tax-exempt institutions such as the Swayzee Public Library. The additional revenue from the TIF district would be captured and used to promote development specifically within the district (see Table 10).

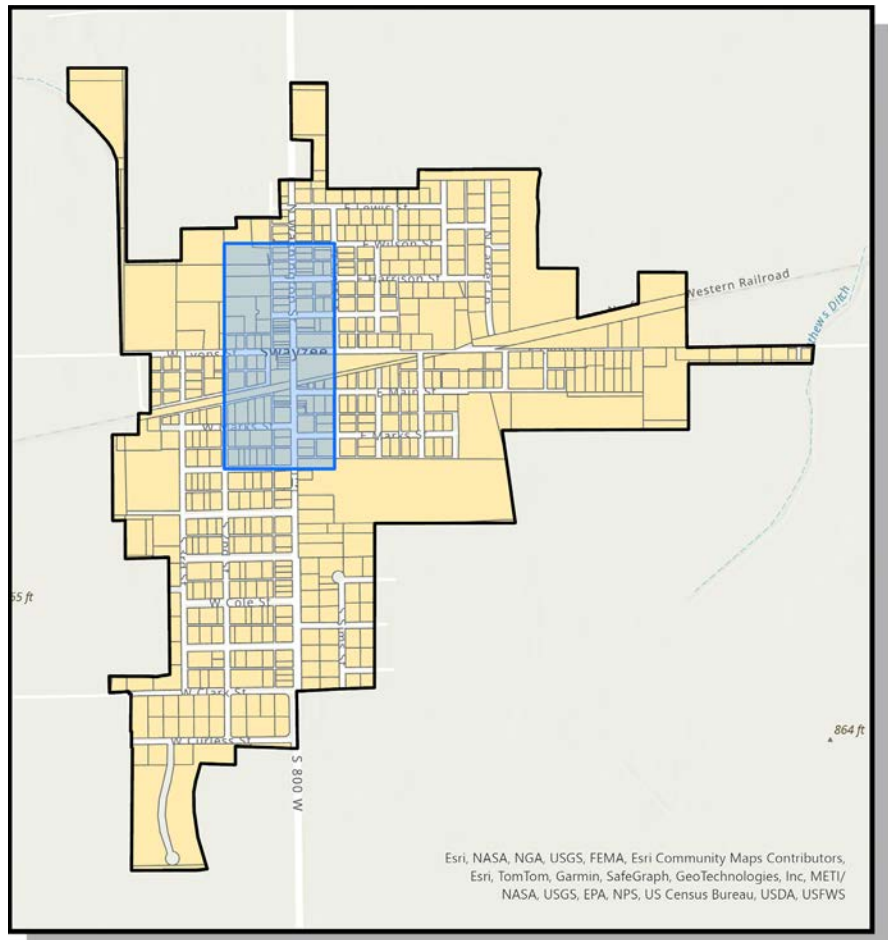


Figure 39: Downtown boundary of Swayzee.

In addition to the existing buildings, infill development on the vacant properties could also add value to the downtown TIF district. Assuming the vacant properties will have an assessed value equal to their current value plus the average property value of \$72,300 following development, the infill properties will contribute \$735,853 in tax revenue to the TIF district over the life of the TIF district (20 years).

Table 10: Assessed value and revenue from downtown Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district.

	2024 Assessed Value	Property Value Increase Over 20 Years	Tax Rate	Cumulative Tax Revenue For TIF
Downtown Properties	\$8,664,700	\$61,024,483	3.0503%	\$1,861,430
Vacant Properties and Infill Development	\$238,068	\$24,123,971	3.0503%	\$735,853

The additional revenue from the TIF district would be captured and used to promote development specifically within the district (see Table 10).

## Case Study: Van Buren, Indiana TIF District (T27002), Population 790

Table 11: Assessed value and revenue from downtown Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district

Total number of properties in the TIF	40
Real property records in TIF	39
Gross assessed value for all properties in TIF	\$34,684,120
Net Assessed value for all properties in TIF	\$34,298,472
Base value for all properties in TIF	\$9,506,461
Incremental value for all properties in TIF	\$24,792,011

Van Buren, a town of 790 people in Grant County, established TIF district T27002 in 2020. Thus far, the TIF district has grown in revenue by \$24,792,011 in incremental value since its creation (see Table 11).

### Strategy 2: Incentivize location of a Farm store or co-op grocery store to provide an incentive for residents to shop at the store. The co-op should sell mainly fresh/local produce.

Swayzee does not currently have a grocery store forcing residents to go to either Kokomo or Marion to do their grocery shopping. The main location for purchasing food is the Speed King Convenience Center at the Marathon gas station near the center of town. The population of Swayzee is not large enough to support a full-size grocery store, but it is large enough to support the creation of a co-op grocery store.

A co-op grocery store in Swayzee would be a community-owned grocery store where members have a stake in the store's ownership and operations. Members of the co-op would pay a one-time or annual membership fee to help fund the store's initial setup and operational expenses. In return, they gain voting rights on store policies, operations, and any profits generated. Unlike conventional stores, co-ops are driven by community needs rather than profit, often prioritizing local products, affordable prices, and sustainable practices.

In Swayzee, a co-op grocery store could function as a local source for fresh produce, pantry staples, and other essentials, reducing the need to travel to larger towns for groceries. Members could volunteer in the store and participate in decision-making through meetings and voting on key issues like pricing and product sourcing. A co-op could also focus on supporting local farmers and suppliers, providing healthier and more sustainable options for the community, and fostering a shared sense of ownership and investment in the town's food supply. The co-op could be located in the empty Swayzee Cafe building to take advantage of its central position and proximity to a future public green.

### Funding

A co-op by definition will be partially funded by the owners and residents of the area that it serves. Locals can pay to become co-op partners and receive a percentage of the profits as well as having a vote in decision-making for the store. A second option would be grant funding such as The Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLFPP) from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. The Local Food Promotion Program has \$11.75 million available to assist in the development, improvement, or expansion of local and regional food business enterprises, such as co-ops.

## Case Study: Post 60 Market in Emerson, Nebraska, Population 824

Post 60 Market was established in 2022 after the town had lacked a grocery store for the past five years. Those who invest in the co-op receive discounts, profit dividends and elect a board of directors annually to monitor large financial decisions. Post 60 is the only place in Emerson where residents can buy fresh fruits, vegetables and meat but it's also an important social space for residents. Some 110 community members purchased shares to get the market up and running. The co-op also received support from the state legislature, which is supporting efforts to create small grocery stores in small and underserved areas.

### **Strategy 3: Nurture local business startups through “Show of Hands.”**

Our conversations with residents in Swayzee revealed that they would like to see more businesses in town. Residents mentioned the need for a coffee shop, an ice cream shop, and a restaurant. An approach that small towns have found to be effective for grooming local entrepreneurship is through “Show of Hands.” This is a community-led crowd-funded approach that solicits business ideas from residents and then supports them through local financial contributions. Budding entrepreneurs put together a business plan and an idea that would positively impact the community. Residents then meet to hear the pitch from each of the entrepreneurs and vote for their favorite business idea through a show of hands. Residents pay an entrance fee of say \$5 or \$10 to enter the venue for the meeting. The funds collected at the event together with any philanthropic support from community groups are given to the business that receives the most votes so they can start their business.

Swayzee could use this idea to support the launch of a coffee shop. To decrease initial startup cost, the business could start with a mobile truck located in the proposed public square. As the business grows and becomes more profitable, it can then move to one of the vacant spaces in the downtown area. An iteration of the process can be used to generate and nurture several businesses in town.

#### **How Show of Hands Works**

- Attendees make a donation of \$5 for a vote.
- Four pre-selected proposals for projects that benefit the community are presented.
- Attendees cast their vote for the project they want to help fund.
- The project with the most votes receives the money raised by those voting and any additional money raised from community partners.
- Winners come back to a future Show of Hands to tell the audience how their project went/is progressing, how they used the money, and the impact it had on the community.

#### **Funding**

Funding for this idea would be through the gate fees paid by Swayzee residents who would have a vested interest in seeing that the businesses they support grow and thrive since they have their personal and financial support.

#### **Case Study: Wheeling, West Virginia, Population 27,062**

Wheeling “Show of Hands” is organized by Wheeling Heritage. The city has used this idea to support the launch of several local businesses. At each event, four presenters are selected to pitch their business ideas to the community for funding. Residents participate in the “Show of Hands” event by paying an entrance fee to the event and by voting on the business they would support with a show of hands. Local philanthropists also provide additional funding through the “Friends of Show of Hands” fund raiser. The winner of the votes receives the money collected through the entrance fee and donations to fund their project idea.

Alex Panas, program manager of Wheeling Heritage explains the value of the program, “Even though it’s just a \$5 donation at the door, they are investors in these businesses, and you can tell that they are interested in seeing these entrepreneurs really succeed and thrive. What we see after this event is even those who don’t win really do receive so much love and support through the community, whether that be through patronizing their business or just getting some more shares on social media to build awareness of their business. It’s really great all around.”

#### **Strategy 4: Hold a farmers market downtown at the site of the co-op grocery store.**

In conjunction with the introduction of a co-op grocery store, a farmers' market in downtown Swayzee would offer a variety of positive benefits to the community. Farmers markets not only provide fresh produce and local goods, but they also provide a community gathering place and can bring in others from outside the town of Swayzee. Local farmers would have a place to sell their produce and interact with their neighbors within Swayzee. This would also give local businesses an opportunity to showcase their produce outside of their storefront.

Possible locations for the farmers market would be either in front of the co-op described in Strategy 3, or in the public green described in Strategy 1 of Land Use Opportunities.

#### **Funding**

Funding for this project could be provided from several sources. One is that vendors pay dues to rent a booth space each month. A second option would be from grants such as The Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLFPP) from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. The Farmers Market Promotion Program has about \$11.75 million available each year to fund the creation or improvement of farmers markets.

#### **Case Study: Fairmount Farmer's Market, Fairmount, Indiana, Population 2,653**

The nearby town of Fairmount has seen great success with their farmers market since its establishment in 2023 (see Figure 40). The Fairmount Farmers Market is open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the first Saturday of each month from May through October. Each designated Saturday, 40 to 50 vendors come to sell everything from produce to charcuterie boards. Many vendors travel to several farmers markets each week. Fun activities such as a face-painting booth are often provided to make the event a family friendly venue for kids.



Figure 40: A farmers' market in Fairmount, Indiana.

Source: <https://showmegrantcounty.com/event/fairmount-farmers-market/>

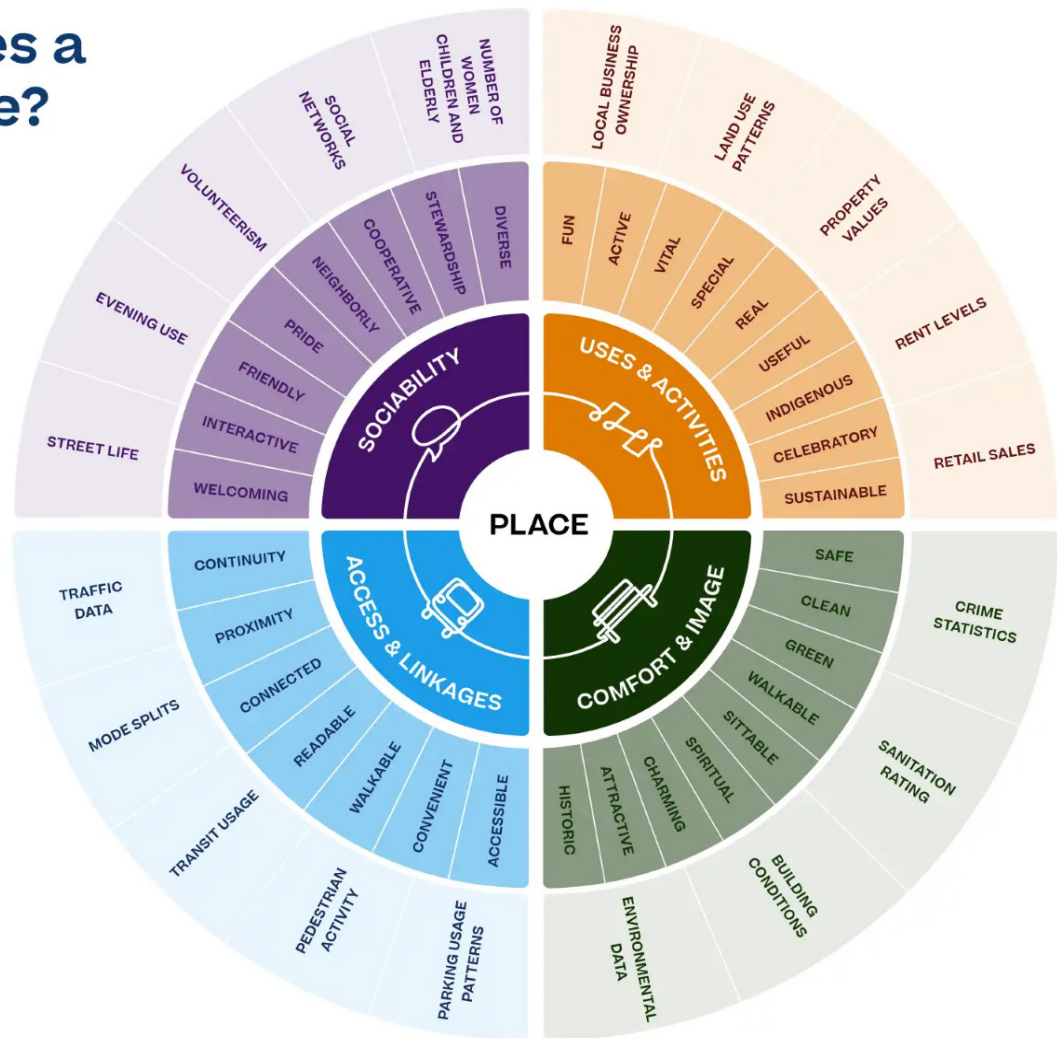
# PLACEMAKING

## What Is A Comprehensive Plan?

Swayzee, tucked along County Road 300 South and County Road 800 West, has a steady traffic flow through town every day. People create a first impression of the town as they drive through it and so it is important for Swayzee to provide a positive image for those going through town. A good curb appeal could also entice drivers to stop and explore the town. Swayzee can use placemaking as a way to improve its visual appeal.

Placemaking is a strategy used in urban planning and design to create meaningful places that inspire people and connect them with public spaces. Placemaking helps to define the quality of public spaces by sharpening their social, physical and cultural identities and thereby creating communities where people want to live, work and play. The Project for Public Spaces summarized the significance of placemaking, and the attributes of good public spaces as shown in Figure 41. These attributes include comfort and image, sociability, access and linkages, and uses and activities.

## What Makes a Great Place?



Project  
for Public  
Spaces

Figure 41: Qualities of a good public space.  
Source: <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>.

Quality public spaces in Swayzee would encourage residents to gather at these places, make connections, and build community cohesiveness. These spaces of social interaction include the city's parks, open spaces, sidewalks, the soccer fields, and the proposed public square downtown.

## Goal: To improve quality of place in Swayzee

Swayzee has great potential to improve its quality of place and unique identity. Preserving its historical heritage, designing a cohesive town, and revitalizing the downtown will help foster a sense of belonging that attracts new families, visitors, and businesses.

### Strategy 1: Provide hanging banners and hanging baskets of plants/flowers along the key traffic routes in town.

Adding hanging banners and flowerpots to light poles in town will help strengthen the town's identity by creating visual appeal especially for the traffic that drives through town along the key thoroughfares. The banners can be rotated depending on the season and can be used to celebrate special events such as Christmas, veterans' days, and to honor special people in town or celebrate the town's history. These banners could be placed on light poles or on buildings. These actions and additions to Swayzee's downtown area are inexpensive items that the Swayzee Economic Development Corporation could help fund and would enhance Swayzee's overall appeal. Examples of similar strategies that have been used in cities and towns are shown in Figures 43 and 44.



Figure 42: Street view of the strategy application in Swayzee.

### Case Study: Mount Vernon, Iowa, Population, 4,000

Banners and flowers are affordable effective ways and tools that create a sense of charm and attractiveness for a town or city. Mount Vernon, Iowa is home to about 4,000 residents and has had success in using tactical street improvements to increase the town's visual appeal. Some of those investments have been in the addition of flowers and banners to the downtown. The city used a combination of grants and local resources to fund these beautification projects. One of their biggest sources of funding is through Main Street America. Main Street America is a nationwide program that focuses on the revitalization of historic downtowns and other preservation efforts. Through their program, eligible towns can get grants or funding assistance to revitalize their downtowns. The Iowa Economic Development Authority has also assisted in providing funding for these revitalization efforts. In Swayzee, SCENIC. can lead the way in funding these community beautification efforts.



Figure 43: Logansport street furniture.



Figure 44: Light pole banner campaign, Village of Lisle, IL.

### Strategy 2: Implement a murals program with assistance from local artists to cover blank walls along main road arteries.

A mural is a beautiful art piece that is drawn on the side of buildings to beautify the wall and tame the bland space on the building (Figure 46). Murals can also be used to memorialize a significant person or event and provide a source for conversation.

The SEDC can identify blank walls in town and work with local artists to paint murals on these walls. It can also provide a way to bring the community together to talk about ideas of what the mural should mean for the town. An example of a mural that was done on a building in Indianapolis is shown in Figure 45.



Figure 45: An example mural for downtown Swayzee.



Figure 46: A mural in downtown Indianapolis.

There are a number of arts associations in Grant County that have the potential to be a part of this murals project. Marion Community School of the Arts is an arts school for youth and adults that house artists. Marion Community School of the Arts is about 15 minutes away from Swayzee. Kokomo Arts Association is about 20 minutes away from Swayzee and the art association supports public arts initiatives. Both of these Associations are great candidates for a partnership for the murals project.

**Case Study: Mount Vernon, Iowa, Population, 4,000**

Colquitt, Georgia is a small town in central Georgia with about 2,000 residents. The Colquitt Miller Arts Council had a goal to showcase the town’s culture and history using the arts as an economic development strategy. This initiative birthed the murals program in 1999.. The Millennium Mural Project was launched with support from the National Endowment for the Arts. Sixteen beautiful murals were created that honor the town’s charm and rich cultural history. This initiative has made the town a cultural and tourism hub that has brought joy to residents and visitors alike.



Figure 47: Murals in Colquitt, GA.



Source: <https://icma.org/success-stories/embracing-the-arts-and-community-voice-an-unexpected-path-to-economic-development>

### Strategy 3: Add landscaping to major thoroughfares.

Adding landscaping such as trees and plants to the major thoroughfares in town would enable Swayzee to appeal to visitors and show a more welcoming and friendly environment as visitors enter or pass through town. Strategic landscaping on Swayzee's main roads would help to soften the hardscape and could encourage people to stop and explore all that Swayzee has to offer. Some examples of landscaping would be the planting of trees along the streets and the provision of some flower beds (see Figure 48).

There are numerous advantages of adding landscaping with trees and shrubs. Trees add natural beauty to the urban landscape and soften the harsh lines of buildings and pavement. Greenery also helps to purify the air by absorbing pollutants such as carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide. Mature trees provide shade and help regulate temperatures by reducing the urban heat island effect. The foliage of trees can act as a natural sound barrier, helping to absorb and deflect noise from traffic and other urban activities. This contributes to a quieter and more peaceful downtown environment. Well-placed trees can also create shaded areas where people gather, relax, and socialize. Adding landscaping to Swayzee's major thoroughfares could additionally allow for drivers passing through town to slow down and enjoy the town's visual appeal of landscaping.



Figure 48: Street view with and without landscaping.

#### Case Study: Valentine, Nebraska, Population, 2,621

Valentine, Nebraska is a city that adopted an infrastructure improvement plan that included landscaping. In addition to adding new storm sewers, water lines and streetlight improvements, the city also added parklets and plantings to these streets. Valentine worked closely together with the Nebraska Department of Transportation to help implement the project. The Economic Development Administration awarded the city of Valentine with \$1.9 million grant focused on stormwater and infrastructure improvements, and the city complemented this with a \$1.4 million local contribution.

#### **Strategy 4: Provide more amenities at the Walter Young West Park such as a playground for kids.**

Swayzee's parks are great amenities for residents as they use the facilities for their favorite past times such as physical exercise, walking, enjoying barbecues, and family get togethers. The largest park, Walter Young West Park, has a small playground for children, but the equipment could be improved and updated with the addition of a seesaw, jungle-gym, sandbox, trapeze rings, playhouses, a maze and more.

#### **Case Study: Brookfield, Missouri, Population, 4,200**

Brookfield, Missouri is a small town that prioritized the improvement of its parks. Not only was new park equipment needed to help the town enhance its visitor attraction, but it also helped to provide more family-friendly activities for residents. The South City Park was one of the parks that was chosen for improvement. These successful improvements were made possible through grants. The improved park amenities have allowed the city to hold events at the park such as the Brookfield's "Fall Fest" that has become very popular with residents.

#### **Strategy 5: Implement a façade improvement program for some of the downtown buildings.**

Swayzee's downtown has several buildings with aging facades and blank spaces that could use a facade improvement. Such a program could also lengthen the useful lives of these buildings and enable the buildings to retain their historic integrity. The historic brick could also benefit from repointing, as well as new doors and windows.

Given Swayzee's history and tight knit community, a façade improvement would not only enhance the town's visual appeal but would also enable the town to employ local artisans in historic preservation.

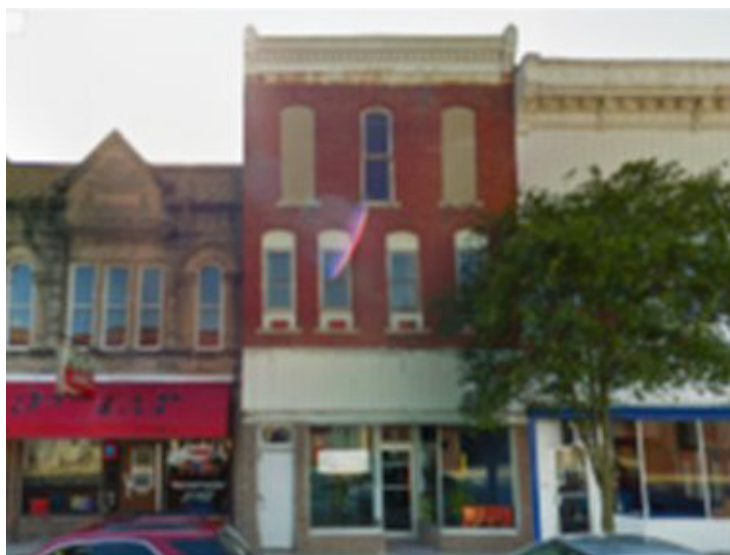


Figure 49: Buildings before and after facade improvement.

#### **Case study: Pella, Iowa, Population, 10,000**

Pella, Iowa is a town of about 10,000 residents that has worked hard to promote and preserve its Dutch architectural heritage and in addition promote and support the town's economic development. Pella has worked alongside downtown building owners to encourage the improvement of the downtown building façades. Using a variety of local and state funding, Pella has been able to complete many facade improvement projects including the Pella Opera House Restoration. Funding from the Iowa Economic Development Corporation and the city's Downtown Revitalization fund have been used for funding the projects.

# HOUSING

Swayzee has preserved its historic buildings, particularly those along Lyons Street and Washington Street, which lends the town a unique character and charm. By preserving the town's historic buildings, Swayzee's identity and its appeal is enhanced, making it attractive for those who appreciate small-town heritage and architecture. These buildings often serve as landmarks that connect the present with the town's rich past.

Many of the properties in Swayzee are in great or excellent condition, demonstrating the pride and care taken by homeowners and the efforts by organizations like SCENIC that encourage quality placemaking. Well-kept homes maintain property values and contribute to a welcoming atmosphere that can attract new residents who seek a pleasant, peaceful environment.

Swayzee has a strong sense of home ownership, which is a positive aspect for those seeking the American dream. A high percentage of owner-occupied homes also fosters stability, stronger community bonds, and pride in ownership, contributing to the close-knit neighborhood feel.

Despite the town's many well-maintained properties, there are some vacant homes that have fallen into disrepair. These neglected properties can be a blemish on the community, negatively impacting the surrounding neighborhood's visual appeal and property values. Such properties also pose safety risks and may attract vandalism, detracting from the otherwise well-kept and serene ambiance of the town.

Swayzee does not have sufficient rental housing, as most homes are owner-occupied. The deficiency of rental options can limit the diversity of the population and make it challenging for individuals such as young professionals, retirees, or those unable to afford homeownership to find suitable housing. A broader range of housing options could increase the town's attractiveness to a wider demographic.

A sizable portion of Swayzee's homes were built before 1940, meaning many of them may need updates or renovations to meet modern standards. Older homes often require investments in areas such as plumbing, electrical systems, insulation, and energy efficiency, which can be costly. While these homes add to the historic character of the town, the need for updates may deter prospective buyers or renters who prefer newer, low-maintenance properties.

Three primary goals were developed to help address the shortcomings identified in the housing sector in Swayzee. The first goal is to be an age-friendly city in all aspects of the town's development but especially in the variety of housing that is provided. The second goal is to ensure the upkeep of the housing stock in Swayzee. The third is to increase the availability of rental opportunities in Swayzee.

## **Goal 1: Swayzee will endeavor to be an age-friendly town.**

Data from the survey of town residents and the Census show that Swayzee's population is getting older. The median age of 42.5 is higher than the state average. Moreover, some 23% of residents in the survey indicated that they have someone with a disability in their household, which may impair their activities of daily living (ADL). Swayzee will therefore seek to be an age-friendly community and take measures to ensure that all aspects of the town's development are cognizant of this demographic shift. In particular, the town will ensure that there is availability of different housing types for people of all ages.

Nearly a quarter of Swayzee's current population is 65 or older, which introduces a unique set of challenges for the community. Yet, there are no housing facilities for the frail elderly who may need assistance with activities of daily living (ADL) such as a senior assisted living facility. Swayzee can begin to address some of these needs, by offering opportunities for residents to age in place and to remain in Swayzee instead of seeking appropriate housing elsewhere. The following strategies are ways the town can address this goal.

### **Strategy 1: Support elderly residents to age in place.**

As residents get older, most would prefer to stay in their homes rather than be forced to move to other facilities if they can live independently. In a study by the AARP, some 80% of people 50 years and older expressed such a preference. However, homeowners who grow old and have some disabilities may be forced to move if their housing is not retrofitted to accommodate their needs.

The SEDC can work with local banks such as Grant County State Bank to provide low interest or interest free home remodeling loans to older people so they can remodel their homes to install grab bars, walk-in showers, and adjustable counter-tops that will enable them to age in place.

A Senior Handyman Program can also be implemented where people in the home construction industry can assist low-income elderly homeowners to make minor repairs to their houses. An age and income limit can be used to determine eligibility for assistance.

### **Case Study: Palatine Township, Illinois**

The Wheeling Senior Handyman Housing Program provides support for low-income elderly homeowners to remodel their homes. To be eligible you have to be 60 years or older. The fee to homeowners varies from \$10 to \$30 depending on income and fees are waived to make the program accessible to the very low-income households. Work done by the Senior Handyman Program includes grab bars, hanging curtains, soffit repair, etc. The program is funded by the North West Housing Partnership (NWHP) based in Schaumburg, Illinois and AgeOptions, a nonprofit organization that connects older adults with resources to enable them to live independently.

### **Strategy 2: Identify a suitable location in town and work with a developer to provide supportive housing for the elderly.**

There are multiple vacant lots in Swayzee that could be used to provide an assisted living facility for the frail elderly. Ideally such a facility will be in or near downtown so the elderly can have easy access to the town's amenities such as parks, and shops.

A suitable local housing developer can be identified to work with the SEDC to access state and federal funds for the development. An example of such a developer would be AHEPA Senior Living, a non-profit developer in Indiana that can work with SEDC to build an assisted living facility in town. The organization works specifically in the development of section 202 housing for low-income seniors. AHEPA started in the 1980s and has since built facilities that provide housing for over 5,000 seniors. The organization's mission is to be at the forefront of creating exceptional communities and providing quality aging services, allowing older adults to live full, meaningful lives at home and as valued members of their communities. The organization has a large area of reach with developments across the U.S. and an office in Fishers, Indiana.

## Funding

Several funding sources can be explored by the SEDC including the HUD's Section 202 funds and LIHTC funding. Through the Section 202 program HUD provides interest-free capital advances to private, nonprofit sponsors to finance the development of housing for the elderly. These capital advances do not have to be paid back as long as the project serves low-income seniors for 40 years. Residents in Section 202 housing pay no more than 30% of their adjusted income in rent. The funds received from this program are specifically meant to help pay for rent, transportation, and care for those living in low-income elderly housing.

Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) are another option deemed fit for providing this type of housing. Low Income Housing Tax Credits originated in 1986 in the Tax Reform Act of Congress. This program grants state and local LIHTC-allocating agencies funds in the annual budget authority to issue tax credits for the purchase, recovery, or new construction of rental housing specifically targeted to lower-income households. At the state level in Indiana, the IHCD, administers the program through the Rental Housing Tax Credit program (RHTC). Each year the IHCD awards up to \$30 million in RHTC to developers. The SEDC could find potentially interested developers and investors and work with them to build a housing facility that is specifically geared towards senior assisted living.

### **Case Study: Jasonville, Indiana, Population 1,979**

In Jasonville, Indiana, the Shakamak Retirement Community Apartments serve as a key example of a housing development that is supported by the Section 202 program. This facility is designed specifically for seniors aged 62 and older and provides affordable living options in a community that is convenient and supportive. The apartments that are built through the Section 202 program allow residents to pay only 30% of their income towards rent. Eligibility typically requires that residents earn 50% or less of the area median income.

### **Strategy 3: Work with the local high school to provide training in Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA) to help support the needs of the assisted living facility.**

Many high schools now offer the opportunity for students to take Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) courses allowing them to become career ready by the end of high school. These courses provide valuable opportunities for students and open doors to future healthcare careers. Oak Hill High School can adopt a similar program and partner with the newly developed assisted living facility in Swayzee to enhance their curriculum. The assisted living homes could serve as training sites, offering students hands-on experiences and potential employment. This partnership would not only benefit the residents living in the development but also provide students with practical training, encouraging them to stay in Swayzee.

### **Case Study: Merrillville High School, Ross Township, Indiana**

Merrillville, a town in Ross Township, Indiana with a population of 35,246 started offering courses in Certified Nursing Assistance in 2021. By moving the program to the High School, it decreased the fees that students would otherwise have had to pay to enroll in the program elsewhere. It also removed the transportation challenges for students who would have had to travel to a different location to take the coursework to become nursing assistants. The CNA program has a dedicated classroom and lab and two registered nurses who serve as educators of the program. The program includes both classroom and practice experiences in a real health care setting taking care of patients. The program graduates several students who are primed for the workplace each year. Graduates from the program can begin work in hospitals, long term care facilities, nursing homes, and rehabilitation centers.

## **Goal 2: Ensure the upkeep and quality of the housing stock in Swayzee.**

It is of utmost importance that the housing stock in Swayzee remains high-quality and in compliance with building codes. Housing conditions can determine whether a small-town community thrives or deteriorates. Quality housing stock not only enhances a town's aesthetic appeal but also plays a key role in the health and economic stability of the community.

### **Strategy 1: Enforce building codes.**

Currently the only building code inspector for the town of Swayzee is the Grant County Building Inspector. Swayzee, however, operates independently of the county and therefore does not have a building code inspector. To ensure the quality of housing within Swayzee and stay on top of the building codes, the town could appoint a volunteer building inspector, or someone from SCENIC could play this role.

#### **Case Study: Frankfort, Indiana, Population 16,409**

Frankfort, Indiana has effectively improved their housing stock by enforcing strict building codes and zoning regulations. Frankfort's building services department works diligently to enforce housing standards that ensure safety and livability, which has encouraged property improvements and the cleanup of blighted areas. Their city utilizes the Indiana Residential Code and other statewide building standards. These standards govern the requirements for one- and two-family dwellings and aim to reduce risks such as electrical fires and unsafe structures.

### **Strategy 2: Continue to encourage home improvement through SCENIC and alike competitions.**

The annual SCENIC competition, which encourages residents to improve their yards and overall curb appeal, has been effective in keeping the town clean and beautiful. The program is promoted by the local government and aimed at creating a more attractive home environment. The winners of the competition are awarded the "Swayzee Neighborhood Recognition Award" and are lauded for their commitment to upkeep their properties which benefits both residents and visitors. The local government should continue with the SCENIC program but expand it to include housing upkeep and not just the lawn. The goal is to promote home beautification to the full extent and provide an incentive for residents to continue to maintain their homes.

### **Funding**

Swayzee can utilize Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority's Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Program to provide loans for home rehabilitation and homeowner education. The Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Program (OOR) was first developed in 2021 as a pilot program by the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA). The program has since continued to provide funding for essential home repairs and improvements for low-to-moderate-income homeowners. The program provides funding for home repairs and improvements such as roof repairs, water heating, HVAC replacement, electrical work, and accessibility upgrades with a limit of \$25,000 per household. Implementing such a program in Swayzee Indiana would help to provide funds to repair blighted houses and improve the overall housing stock of the town. This will help to improve the overall aesthetic of the town and provide support for residents to continue to upkeep their homes.

### **Case Study: Lawrenceburg, Indiana, Population 5,130**

Lawrenceburg, Indiana, a small city along the Ohio River in Dearborn County, has utilized multiple funding programs to improve housing and community services for its residents. In 2024, Lawrenceburg was awarded \$350,000 from the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority's (IHCA) Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Program, which aims to help low- and moderate-income homeowners make critical repairs to their properties. This funding allows eligible residents to receive assistance for necessary home improvements, such as updating heating and cooling systems, enhancing accessibility for people with disabilities, and upgrading electrical systems to ensure safety and code compliance. With these grants, individual homeowners will be able to improve their homes and enable the entire community to thrive.

## **Goal 3: Provide a variety of rental housing in Swayzee.**

Offering rental opportunities opens avenues for people of all ages to live in a community. Swayzee currently has few rental housing units making it challenging for individuals, especially young adults, to find accessible housing. Offering rental units such as apartments or upper floor housing would serve the housing needs of a wider demographic, including young professionals and students fresh out of school. The introduction of rental properties could stimulate the local economy and attract new residents by bridging the gap between affordability and accessibility.

### **Strategy 1: Decrease vacancy in the downtown by creating upper floor housing.**

Several buildings in Swayzee, particularly in the downtown area, are either vacant or under-utilized. For example, the upper floors of the buildings at 206 S. Washington Street, and 203 S. Washington Street are both boarded up (see Figure 50). The buildings sit at the south entrance to town and do not provide a good first impression as one gets into Swayzee. These buildings need remodeling to open the windows of the upper floors for rental housing.

#### **Funding**

Funding from the Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district that we are proposing can be used to decrease the cost of remodeling the upper floor spaces of the buildings to create rental housing. Usually, a city would borrow funds by selling municipal bonds to pay for initial development costs and use revenue from the tax increment to retire the debt. The property owners of these buildings can be issued a redevelopment loan from TIF funds for this purpose. The upper floor residential units would be perfect for single person households, empty nesters and retirees. Upper floor housing may even provide an opportunity for the buildings' owners to operate their businesses on the ground floor and live on the upper floors.



**Figure 50: Boarded up upper floors in downtown buildings.**

In addition to TIF funds, Swayzee can also provide tax incentives to relief property owners of some of the tax burden on their property. Property tax incentives can be structured in several ways, such as through abatements and exemptions. Tax abatements reduce or provide a credit toward the amount of taxes owed on a parcel of real estate for a specified period. Tax exemptions reduce the assessed value or rate of taxation for real estate, resulting in a lower tax bill. This is different from an abatement because it changes how the property tax is calculated rather than how much is paid after calculation.

### **Case Study: Rock Island, Illinois, Population 37,108**

The Rock Island, IL Economic Development Corporation has used its TIF funds to assist property owners to create downtown housing through the Upper Story Housing Program.

### **Case Study: Woodbine, Iowa, Population 1,625**

Woodbine natives adaptively redeveloped a historic Odd Fellows building creating six market-rate apartments upstairs and an efficiency apartment on the first floor, an office space and a restaurant.

### **Strategy 2: Incentivize the development of rental properties in Swayzee's TIF district.**

Swayzee currently has two rental properties within the town boundary, making it challenging for individuals, especially young professionals, to find affordable housing. The development of rental units such as apartment complexes would introduce a new market and appeal to a wider demographic. We recommend that the town utilizes the vacant parcels around the town to develop rental properties, preferably within walking distance of downtown and parks. Vacant parcels located within the downtown area could also serve as a suitable location for the development of rental properties such as an apartment complex. Specifically, the location of the old breakfast diner and the surrounding vacant parcel at 109 County Road 800 West could serve as the location for such a development.

### **Case Study: Warsaw, Indiana, Population 16,108**

Warsaw, Indiana has used Residential Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts to encourage housing development and meet community needs. Warsaw created two residential TIF districts aimed at increasing housing availability. Through the creation of the housing TIF Warsaw supported infrastructure upgrades that make areas more appealing for potential developers. The city expects these TIF districts to foster further rental and homeownership options.

### **Strategy 3: Provide a resource for people to find rental housing in Swayzee.**

Currently, Swayzee does not have a centralized location for information on rental opportunities. We recommend that Swayzee add a dedicated section on its website where property owners can post their rental properties with any relevant information regarding the property. Providing this centralized resource will make it easier for tenants to find apartments and houses that are available for rent, increase the visibility for rental options, and encourage further development by making it easier for renters to find available properties.

### **Case Study: Huntingburg, Indiana, Population 6,360**

Huntingburg, Indiana is a small town that has developed online hubs to support local rental markets by providing information for potential renters and property managers. This digital resource is part of their broader properties database on the city's official website. The database features non-residential properties and residential options. By using this central hub, Huntingburg is increasing transparency, improving property visibility, and simplifying the process for potential renters. Posting property information online makes it easier for new residents to explore housing options without needing extensive local knowledge.

# CIVIC AND CULTURAL

As a small-town, Swayzee fosters a unique sense of closeness and goodwill where neighbors interact often and help each other during times of need. Community interaction serves as the cornerstone for life in Swayzee with community members actively finding ways to get together and strengthen their community. This is manifested annually in the celebration of Swayzee Days, which brings residents together to celebrate all things, Swayzee. Additionally, there are several civic organizations that support social activities along common interests. For example, there is the Swayzee Antique Tractor & Machine Club, Swayzee Junior Women's Club, Swayzee Lion's Club, Indiana Free Masons, and Three Arts Club, among others.

Notwithstanding these civic and cultural strengths, Swayzee lacks a dedicated community gathering space. Community centers or other community focal points often serve as a meeting space for social and cultural activities where residents gather, organize social events, and engage in communal decision making. The lack of such a space weakens the sense of belonging. Swayzee also has limited social services due to its size. For example, there is only one full time police officer in the town, there are no services for the elderly, or a day care facility, and there is no local neighborhood watch group to help monitor neighborhood crime.

The survey also revealed that although residents interact frequently with their neighbors, 76% indicated that they are not a member of a community social organization, 53% have never attended a community social event, and most significantly 79% have never attended a Town Council meeting. This indicates a low level of civic engagement, one that needs improvement. The goal is therefore to increase the level of civic engagement by implementing several strategies as outlined below.

## **Goal: Increase civic participation.**

The primary goal of the civic and cultural element in Swayzee is to increase civic participation, specifically in the youth population in order to retain them in town or to bring them back to live in Swayzee. Several strategies are put in place to achieve this goal.

### **Strategy 1: Launch a mentorship program so retired professionals in Swayzee can mentor the youth in town.**

A mentorship program can help direct the youth in their professional development and bind retiree professionals with the young to help pave the way for their future career success (see Figure 51). To do this, the SEDC would need to first enlist volunteer retired professionals from such fields as business, the healthcare professions, engineering, police and the fire service. These volunteers can then be paired with the youth in town either on a one-on-one mentorship relationship or through group mentorship.

Youth mentorships can range from social support to the specific aspirations of an individual. Mentorship programs can also help address the goal of incentivizing the launch of new businesses in Swayzee as young entrepreneurs can learn from seasoned professionals. Mentors can provide important lessons on successful business models, customer service, and financial advice to their mentees. Successful legacy business owners such as the Chuckwagon Pizza owner could help other local entrepreneurs with information on how to start and successfully run a local restaurant.

### **Funding**

There is no financial requirement except that of organizational time to set up the program. Swayzee could tap into the services provided by the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), a chapter of which is located in Fort Wayne.



Figure 51: Benefits of a mentorship program.

Source: <https://umaine.edu/news/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2018/01/Mentoring-news-feature.jpg>

**Case Study: SCORE chapter in Fort Wayne, Indiana, Population 26,597**

A recent SCORE success story focuses on the support and funding which led to the establishment of “Moving Mindz” in Fort Wayne. The program empowers students through academic support and develops them as leaders. The goal is to empower students by building confidence in them, inspiring their curiosity, and helping them envision their path to success. SCORE was also able to locally support the “Luxe Hair Studio” in Central Indiana. SCORE mentors helped develop a clear mission statement, secure a good location, and create a business plan. A similar program in Swayzee would support new business development and increase success for existing establishments.

**Strategy 2: Hold regular civic events throughout the year.**

Events such as Swayzee Days bring the community together to socialize. However, there are few such events in town. Events are a cheap and easy way to create memories of a place and build a sense of attachment to one’s community. This may encourage residents to participate in civic activities, such as serving on the Town Council or on the Economic Development Corporation.

Swayzee Days brings heavy foot traffic to the downtown area, benefiting the local economy and creating a sense of belonging. Other events that could be promoted throughout the year include game and movie nights, farmers markets, and holiday celebrations.

**Funding**

Community events are cheap to fund, and many of the community events could be financially supported through the town’s general revenue fund, which is provided through the property tax. Additionally, as is the case with Swayzee Days, local businesses and residents could sponsor the events and keep the events free to those who attend.

The Community Foundation in Grant County supports community education, elderly and youth services, and community development projects. The Community Foundation could provide a grant for community events through their community development fund. In 2022 the community development fund provided \$314,356 for projects on community engagement. It was through such funding that WonderSpace was created in 2022 in Marion. Wonderspace was awarded \$9,980 to provide STEM-based entertainment to Grant County kids, focusing on ages Pre-K through 4th grade. Swayzee could tap into this fund for promoting events in town.

### Case Study: Greenville, Kentucky, Population 4,401

A citizen-supported restaurant and hotel tax in Greenville, Kentucky established a tourism commission to financially support community events in town throughout the year. This has financed downtown façade improvements, free festivals, and concerts. Greenville also has “Saturdays on the Square” that brings residents to the city’s downtown (see Figure 52). The increased foot traffic in the downtown area contributed to the addition of 9 new businesses and a stronger sense of community pride. Swayzee has an active population that is eager to support community events, and such events could create an opportunity for inclusion, and engagement throughout the town and surrounding communities.



Figure 52: “Saturdays on the Square” in Greenville, KY. Photo courtesy of Amy Hourigan

### Strategy 3: Hold evening activities so the youth can socialize and create community.

The SEDC can organize volunteers to host evening activities that target the young adult demographic at times that they would typically hang out with their friends. Activities such as a town movie night are a good way to bring a large group of youth together and this can be tailored to each age group depending on the movie that is chosen.

Another example would be an overnight lock-in for middle and high-school aged kids. This would include games and socializing time with friends. Such events can be held at the elementary school, or in a church with chaperones. These activities would create social bonding in the youth and may influence their decision to stay in town or return after they have left for higher education.

The first step for a successful lock-in is to connect with the youth. The targeted age group will most likely have their own ideas of games, food, and activities they would like to see at the event so getting them involved in selecting the activities is important. To ensure a fun time, it is important to keep the students busy with scheduled events as well as games set up for those who do not wish to participate. Various examples of lock-in events include a Nerf gun fight, card games, crafts, and music. It should also be noted that adult volunteers must be present and the rules for the event should be made known before it starts.

### Funding

Some funding could be allocated for this program in the annual budget of Swayzee and by using volunteers. Many community events are cheap or free and would drive the community to create deeper connections with one another without the compromise of financially binding events. Grants for youth opportunities are also provided by Youth.gov. Youth.gov has programs to engage with various focus groups, including its program of positive youth development. Positive youth development (PYD) is a social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, and social groups in a manner that is productive. These groups focus on recognizing and enhancing young people’s strengths. Research shows that young people who are imbedded in their community experience more positive outcomes including the development of positive relationships, reduced risk behavior and provide leadership opportunities for the young.

### Case Study: Fairmount, Indiana, Population 2,680

Fairmount is a small town located in Grant County that holds regular events to engage the youth. The town has a wide variety of events from concerts to community contests and celebrations (see Figure 53). Throughout the summer, Fairmount holds community concerts once a week. Every Wednesday from June to August, musicians take to the stage to entertain the community.



Figure 53: A family friendly event in Fairmount, Indiana.

Additionally, every year they hold a James Dean festival to celebrate the local celebrity. This celebration is built around a car show typically showing more than 2,000 retro vehicles. The main event is called “The Grand Parade” where the cars are shown off and compete for the best decorated vehicle, best classic vehicle, best business entry, best community group, and best entertainment. While the central focus is placed on the cars, other events are provided for inclusivity to all age groups and unique interests such as a dance contest, carnival rides, a street fair, live music, and food from multiple vendors.

### Strategy 4: Create programs and activities that engage the youth throughout the year.

Swayzee already has soccer and baseball programs that have proven to be successful in bringing people from the region to experience Swayzee. Additional athletic events to round up the year could add to this regional-based approach. The soccer and baseball fields are outdoor oriented so an addition of basketball tournament could fill in the void in the winter and attract people from surrounding communities.

Adding more youth activities that are not tailored towards athletic ability would also help with inclusivity of all children. Implementing activities like an art class or reading club could help kids discover their specific interests and make connections from a young age.

### Funding

These programs could be supported by resident volunteers at no cost to the town. Youth-engaging projects could also be financially supported by grants from the Indiana Youth Institute (IYI). The institute funds youth-serving activities and organizations that engage the youth in the state.

### Case Study: Converse, Indiana, Population 1,160

Residents have expressed a desire during public forums to make Converse the aspirational community for Swayzee. Converse is geographically and demographically like Swayzee and is a city that has been able to retain its youth population. As the graphics show (Figure 54), Converse has a higher population in the youthful age bracket of 25 to 34 and would provide a good example of how to retain this group in Swayzee as well.

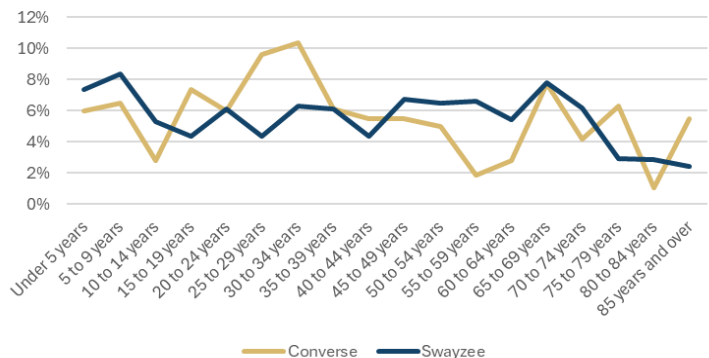


Figure 54: Young demographic age cohort in Converse v. Swayzee.





# **WORK TRACKER**

# WORK TRACKER

ELEMENT	GOAL	STRATEGY	PHASE OF IMPLEMENTATION	STATUS Completed, Ongoing, Not Started
LAND USE	Revitalize the main axis point in downtown Swayzee.	Provide a public square at the intersection of Washington and Lyons Street.	1	
ECONOMY	Support the development and retention of new and existing businesses.	Create a downtown TIF district.	1	
		Nurture local business startups through “show of hands.”	2	
		Incentivize the location of a farm store or Co-op grocery store downtown.	1	
		Hold a farmers’ market downtown.	1	
PLACEMAKING	Improve the quality of place.	Provide hanging banners, baskets and flowers along key thoroughfares.	1	
		Implement a murals program.	1	
		Implement a facade improvement program.	2	
		Add landscaping to major thoroughfares.	1	
		Provide more amenities at West Park.	1	

<b>HOUSING</b>	<b>Become an age-friendly town.</b>	<b>Support elderly residents to age in place.</b>	<b>2</b>	
		<b>Identify a suitable location to provide supportive housing for the elderly.</b>	<b>2</b>	
		<b>Work with the local high school to provide CNA training.</b>	<b>2</b>	
	<b>Ensure the upkeep and quality of the housing stock.</b>	<b>Enforce building codes.</b>	<b>1</b>	
		<b>Encourage housing upkeep through SCENIC.</b>	<b>1</b>	
	<b>Increase the availability of rental housing.</b>	<b>Decrease vacancy downtown through upper floor housing development.</b>	<b>2</b>	
		<b>Incentivize the development of rental properties in the TIF district.</b>	<b>2</b>	
		<b>Provide a resource for people to find housing.</b>	<b>1</b>	
	<b>CIVIC AND CULTURAL</b>	<b>Become an age-friendly town.</b>	<b>Launch a mentorship program.</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Hold regular civic events throughout the year.</b>			<b>1</b>	
<b>Hold evening activities to bring the youth together to socialize.</b>			<b>1</b>	