

CHAPTER 1

CONTEXT

History

The site for the county seat of Decatur County was chosen in June 1822 and named Greensburg in honor of the Pennsylvania community of origin for the city's founder Thomas Hendricks' wife.

In 1823, a county jail was the first government structure built in the community. It was located on the southeast corner of the courtyard.

The oldest part of the current courthouse structure was first constructed in 1874. The courthouse was renovated and expanded in the late 1990s, and completed in 1997.

The courthouse "Tower Tree" has long been the best known feature of Greensburg. In the early 1870s the tower tree began as a small sprig growing from the northwest corner of the courthouse roof. The sprig grew into several trees. In 1888 some of the shrubs were removed. The remaining tree grew to approximately 15 feet before it died. It remains at the Decatur County Historical Society. Another tree made an appearance at the southeast corner of the courthouse tower during that time. The "Tower Tree" has become a famous landmark, the symbol of Greensburg, and is promoted as a tourist attraction.

A Carnegie library opened in the community in 1905 at the site of the Watson Foundry. The library moved to a larger facility on East Main Street in 1994. Following the library's move, the city offices were located in the building until 2006 when the city government offices moved to a renovated elementary school on West Washington Street.

State Road 3 was built in 1937. This highway connects Greensburg with Muncie and Ft. Wayne to the north and the Indiana suburbs of Louisville, Kentucky to the south.

Interstate 74 was completed through Decatur County in 1964. The interstate became the primary means of transportation between Indianapolis and Cincinnati and points beyond. During the early 1900s, the Interurban, operated by the Indianapolis and Cincinnati Traction Company, provided rail service between Indianapolis and Cincinnati. The trains were replaced with busses in 1932. A connecting bus service existed between Greensburg and Cincinnati, and a through route between Indianapolis and Cincinnati evolved. Bus service continued into the 1980s.

Local Dynamics

Greensburg is an incorporated city with a five member city council and a mayor. Four of the five council members are elected from districts, while one is elected at-large.

The Greensburg Community School Corporation serves Greensburg. The school district has an elementary school, the Greensburg Community Junior High School, and Greensburg Community High School. The junior

high building was originally the high school when it opened in 1957. The high school opened in 1971 and underwent significant renovations in 2000. The city is home to one parochial school, St. Mary's which serves Pre-K through sixth grade. In 2004, the Greensburg Community Learning Center opened. A variety of post-secondary classes are offered at the Learning Center.

In June 2006, Honda Manufacturing of Indiana announced that Greensburg would be the location for the company's new plant, a \$500 million investment that is projected to create 2,000 jobs. The company is locating the plant along I-74, just outside the northwest side of the city. The city and Honda have reached an agreement for annexation of the property over a period of time. This will bring the factory into the city's jurisdiction for both tax base and future expansions or site development.

As a part of the Governor's Major Moves initiative, I-74 through Decatur County will experience major road enhancement and preservation projects. These two projects will affect I-74 from Newpoint to Penntown and from the Shelby County line to SR 3. Other major transportation improvement projects from INDOT include:

- Reconstruction of US421/Old 421
- Reconstruction of the I-74/US 421 interchange
- Realignment of CR 300N
- Reconstruction and extension of CR 250W
- New construction of an overpass road

Water supply is currently an issue in Greensburg and Decatur County. Decatur County Rural Water purchases their water supply from the City of Greensburg. In late 2006, Rural Water began denying new water permits in Zone 5 (near the new Honda plant) based on their contractual limit with the City of Greensburg. The issue is in the process of being resolved, but raises questions about the control of water delivery in the areas immediately adjacent to the City of Greensburg.

The railroads have been historically significant to the Greensburg economy and will continue to be important as Honda begins operations. One of the challenges associated with the railroads is the number of at-grade crossings. These crossings can create access problems for emergency equipment when trains block intersections. The crossings can also create traffic congestion when there is train activity during peak traffic times. At grade crossings also pose potential safety hazards for pedestrians and motorists.

Relocation of the Decatur County Airport has been a long-discussed project in the area. In 2006, the Decatur County Council failed to support the expansion project and the City of Greensburg decided to take on the airport expansion as a city project. The Decatur County Council relinquished control of their portion of the airport, enabling the city to proceed with the project.

Another long-considered project in Greensburg has been the improvement of Lincoln Street. The project is expected to begin in 2008 and be completed in 2009. The newly constructed portion of the road, from First Street to the bypass, will enhance the gateways to the community and make the area more accessible and desirable as a business address.

Downtown continues to be the heart of Greensburg and Decatur County. The downtown area is focused on the courthouse square and surrounding blocks. Two downtown organizations have emerged to address the continued vitality of the downtown.

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