

CHAPTER 7

SPECIAL STUDY AREAS

Introduction

Special study areas are those geographic areas of the community that, due to a special status or nature, warrant additional focus and study.

Two special study areas that emerged from the planning process were downtown and the I-74/US 421 interchange. The following sections will introduce these topics and discuss them in some level of detail.

Downtown

Greensburg's downtown is one of the key assets of the community and serves as the identity for the city and the county. In recent years several efforts have been made to improve the downtown and increase its economic vitality. These efforts continue as the community works to balance the new development to the northwest of the community with preserving and maintaining the community's historic core.

The community listed the downtown area on the National Register of Historic Places in 1995. The district includes the area surrounding the courthouse square.

A number of events currently occur in downtown Greensburg that draw visitors from around the region as well as encourage a sense of pride in the community. These events include Master Harold's Fiddlefest, the Greensburg/Decatur County Farmers Market, the Fourth of July Parade, the "Just Take it Downtown" Car Show, and the Tree City Fall Festival.

A 2004 study by HyettPalma established an action agenda for the downtown, including:

- Making downtown viable for future generations
- Filling vacancies with a better mix of stable and unique businesses
- Increasing the number of retail businesses and food establishments including a greater variety of food and outdoor dining
- Developing upscale apartments
- Creating additional draw and reasons for people to come downtown
- Stressing downtown's architectural history
- Ensuring that downtown becomes a destination in its own right, and not a pass-through between destinations
- Making downtown a scene that is alive, cool, and artsy – with day and evening activities
- Attracting residents, tourists, and people of all ages
- Making sure downtown continues to be a "slice of Americana"

Two groups have emerged to address issues of downtown development in Greensburg. The Downtown Greensburg Development Corporation (need info here). Heart of the Tower Tree (HOTT) City is a not-for-profit public/private partnership that was established in 2005 to promote

commercial growth, preserve the historic aspects, and enhance the quality of life of downtown. HOTT City is the community's MainStreet affiliate. They have a grant pool available and are responsible for such programs as the Farmers Market, the façade improvement grant, and the spring cleanup project. The Downtown Greensburg Development Corporation, formerly the Downtown Merchant's Association, is the other downtown organization. The Downtown Greensburg Development Corporation was incorporated in September 1985 as a 501(c)(3) organization "to preserve the heritage of the area surrounding the Decatur County courthouse generally referred to as the 'downtown' and to promote, enhance, and develop this area and its viability as a part of the larger community."

The needs identified for downtown through the comprehensive planning process include establishment of a downtown publication and building repair. Another issue identified is the need to consolidate the two downtown organizations in order to make efficient use of the resources available and minimize competing agendas between the organizations.

Information

Indiana Main Street

Indiana Main Street encourages the redevelopment and revitalization of downtown areas. The program is based on the National Main Street program objectives of economic restructuring, design, organization, and promotion. Downtowns need quality design and promotion of their businesses and activities to be vibrant. Implementing design programs and promotional activities requires an organization that can support and coordinate those programs. The most successful design and promotional programs and organizational support will not make downtown thrive without understanding the market realities of the area and the businesses downtown. This is why the Main Street approach to downtown development must include all four components.

Greensburg is a certified member of Indiana Main Street through the HOTT City program. A downtown development initiative that can be a single, coordinated, strong voice for downtown issues is needed to effectively implement a downtown revitalization effort.

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register is part of a program to coordinate and support efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect historic resources. Properties listed in the register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, engineering, and culture.

Generally, properties eligible for listing in the National Register are at least 50 years old. Properties less than 50 years of age must be exceptionally important to be considered eligible for listing.

Under federal law, owners of private property listed in the National Register are free to maintain, manage, or dispose of their property as

they choose provided there is no federal involvement. Owners have no obligation to open their properties to the public, to restore them or even to maintain them, if they choose not to do so.

Listing on the National Register adds prestige to a property, makes the property eligible for planning consideration in federally funded projects, and makes the property eligible for some tax programs.

Façade Improvement Programs

Façade improvement programs often take the form of grant or low interest loan programs linked to design standards that are intended to improve the character of an area while providing the necessary incentives to property owners to “do it right.” The design standards are as much a teaching tool – what are and are not historically appropriate changes to facades – as they are a regulatory tool. Grant funds do not have to be repaid. Low interest loans are often established as a loan pool where the repayment of one loan allows for the issuance of another loan.

Historic Preservation Ordinances

A historic preservation ordinance establishes the procedures and policies established by a local unit of government in order to encourage preservation of the community’s historic structures. Such an ordinance may be part of the zoning ordinance.

Historic preservation ordinances generally require the owners of historic properties or properties in historic districts to obtain a certificate of appropriateness before any building activity. Under IC 36-7-11, municipalities may create a preservation area in conjunction with the establishment of a Preservation Commission. The procedures to be followed by the commission are outlined in the enabling legislation.

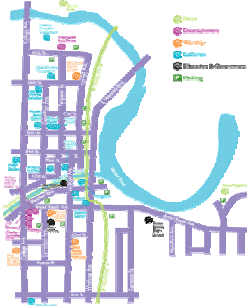
Historic District Overlay Zones

An overlay district is a layer of zoning regulations that are imposed on a specific area in addition to the base zoning requirements. In a historic district this may include additional architectural or landscaping requirements, varied setbacks or bulk standards, different sign and lighting regulations, and/or an additional review process before permits are issued.

Overlay districts are adopted as a part of the zoning ordinance and are administered in the same way as the zoning ordinance. Decisions related to the overlay district may be appealed to the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Publications

Publications can help a downtown organization get the word out about what is happening in the downtown. They market events and programs in addition to sharing information to help build momentum for programs. Some publications focus on a local market, while others are geared more toward a tourist market.



Examples of downtown publications include Muncie’s “Do it Downtown” and the Broad Ripple Village (Indianapolis) District Guide. Muncie’s “Do it Downtown” publication has largely converted to a web site with daily reminders of activities downtown, the ability to sign up for event reminders, news stories, and a calendar of events. The site also includes a directory organized around “eat”, “play”, “shop”, and “live” downtown.

The Broad Ripple Village district guide provides residents and visitors with information about the village’s history, events, a business directory, and a map. It is supported by a web site that includes much of the same information in an online format.

I-74/US 421 Interchange

The I-74/US 421 interchange is a key gateway to the Greensburg community and the focus of new industrial development with the development of the Honda Manufacturing of Indiana plant near the interchange.

At this time there is relatively little urban development north of I-74 due to constraints including the lack of adequate infrastructure in the area and private property owner decisions. The new development occurring south of the Interstate have led many in the community to believe it is necessary for the community to extend north of the interstate.

The land north of the interstate is in unincorporated Decatur County. As the land immediately south of the interstate is annexed into the City of Greensburg, contiguity will exist for the community to consider annexation north of the interstate.

Information

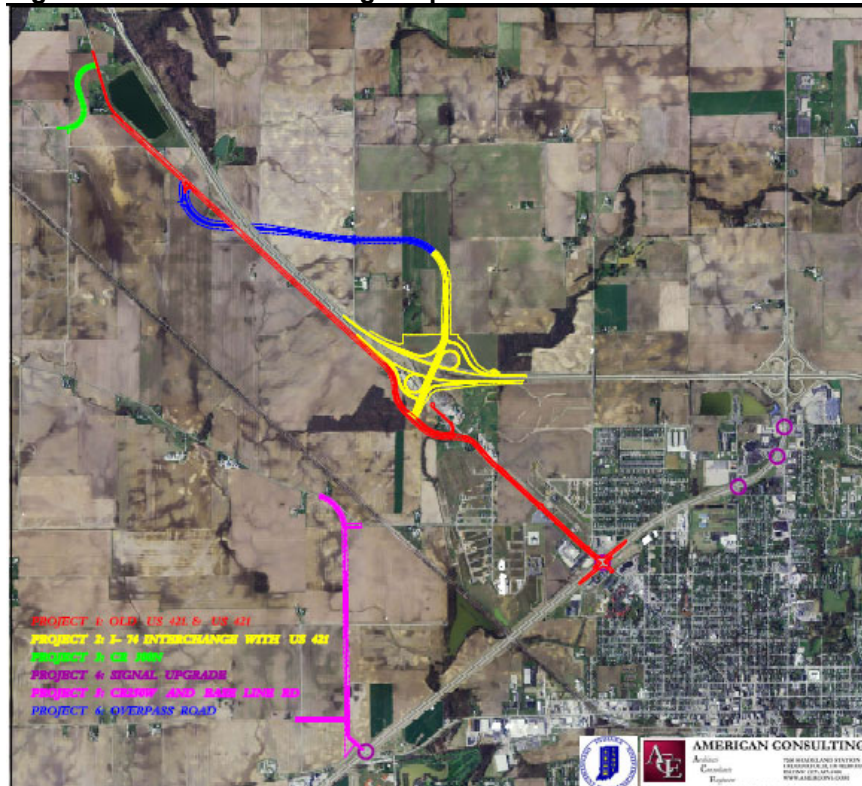
Planned Transportation Improvements

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) has a major project underway at this interchange. The major activities that are a part of this project are:

- 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

Figure 7.1 shows the interchange improvements that are part of the project.

Figure 7.1: INDOT Interchange Improvements



Recommended Development Pattern

Development north of I-74 at the US 421 interchange should be of a highway/regional commercial or light industrial/distribution nature. Access to the roadways should be carefully managed to prevent traffic congestion problems that affect the key highways.

The Future Land Use map shows industrial development north of I-74, east of US 421 and south of I-74, west of US 421. Commercial development is shown south of I-74, east of US 421 and along the Interstate frontage.

Since the interchange area is a key gateway to the community, design considerations in the area are critically important. The area surrounding the interchange should be subject to an overlay district that creates site design, architecture, signage, and lighting standards more stringent than in other areas of the community.

The City should develop an annexation strategy for the process and timing of bringing the developable areas north of the interchange into the corporate limits.

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