



RESOLUTION ADOPTING COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT

RESOLUTION NO. 440

RESOLUTION OF THE FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF FRANKLIN,
INDIANA AMENDING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF THE COUNTY OF FRANKLIN,
INDIANA.

WHEREAS, the Plan Commission of Franklin County, Indiana, did on December 11, 2024, hold a public hearing to consider adoption herein attached comprehensive plan amendment for the county, and

WHEREAS, the Plan Commission did consider said Comprehensive Plan amendment until all remonstrances were heard, and

WHEREAS, the Plan Commission found that this plan amendment meets the requirements of IC 36-7-4-500, and the adoption of this plan amendment to be in best interests of the county and

WHEREAS, the County Commissioners finds that it is in the best interest of the county to adopt this plan amendment.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the County Commissioners hereby adopts the attached amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to the County of Franklin, State of Indiana.

This resolution shall be effective from and after its passage.

DULY ADOPTED BY THE COUNTY OF FRANKLIN, INDIANA, on this 30th day of December, 2024

Rerecorded due to 1st page
of exhibit missing. KB

Nay
Tom Wilson

Gerald Wendel
Gerald Wendel

John Heis
John Heis

ATTEST:

Karla J. Bauman
Karla J. Bauman, County Auditor

Date: 12-30-2024

Chapter 9 - Agricultural Land Use

According to the most recent USDA Agricultural Census data from 2022, there were a total of 683 farms that reported approximately 144,173 acres of productive farmland in Franklin County, about 57% of the total land area in the county.

While large scale farming operations of 1,000 acres or more represent about 4% of total farms, most are family-owned and serve as a source of family income. The agriculture census definition of a farm is any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, agriculture is defined as the science, art, or practice of cultivating soil, producing crops, raising livestock, and, to varying degrees, preparing and marketing the resulting products. Chapter 9–Agricultural Land Use will use this definition for all points related to the term agriculture.

Farms by Size	Number	% of Farms
1 to 9 acres	30	4
10 to 49 acres	190	28
50 to 179 acres	252	37
180 to 499 acres	140	20
500 to 999 acres	47	7
1,000+ acres	24	4

Figure 1- 2022 USDA Census, Farm Size by Acreage

Agricultural Products

Franklin County, Indiana, is primarily known for its corn and soybean production. With over nine million bushels produced annually, these two crops dominate the agricultural landscape. However, other crops like wheat, hay, and occasionally fruits and vegetables are also grown on a smaller scale, often for local consumption or niche markets.

Franklin County contributes 1% of Indiana’s agriculture sales with 88% coming from crops and 12% from Livestock, poultry and product sales. While the county is a crop-producing region, livestock also plays a role in its agricultural economy. Cattle, primarily for beef production, and hog farming are the most common livestock. Poultry, goat, and sheep production is also present to a lesser extent. There are other uses including single and multi-family residences, small business operations, concentrated feeding operations (CFO), grain storage, and light industrial operations.

Over the last few decades, while corn and soybean production has increased, livestock production has experienced a decline. The 1987 census reported over 90,000 cattle and hogs while in the most recent census of 2022, farmers reported a total of 24,000 in that category. According to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, there are currently seven CFOs in the county, which are critical to the production of large-scale livestock.

1 Percent of state agriculture sales	
Share of Sales by Type (%)	
Crops	88
Livestock, poultry, and products	12
Land in Farms by Use (acres)	
Cropland	100,256
Pastureland	10,623
Woodland	24,048
Other	9,246
Acres irrigated: (D)	
	(D)% of land in farms
Land Use Practices (% of farms)	
No till	28
Reduced till	19
Intensive till	19
Cover crop	10

Figure 2 - 2022 USDA Census, Land Use Statistics

Soil Quality in Franklin County, Indiana

Franklin County, Indiana, is characterized by well-drained soils with a mix of loam, silt loam, and clay loam. This soil is fertile and suitable for agricultural purposes. However, the specific soil quality can vary significantly across the county due to factors such as topography, parent material, and land use practices.

Key Characteristics of Franklin County Soils:

- **Fertility:** Generally considered fertile due to the presence of essential nutrients.
- **Texture:** A mix of loam, silt loam, and clay loam provides a good balance of water retention and aeration.
- **Erosion Control Potential:** Franklin County can be susceptible to soil erosion, especially on steeper slopes or with improper land management.

Franklin County Soil Survey Map

The map in Figure 3 is from the 1989 Soil Survey completed by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Given that the map highlights areas more conducive to farming in the northeast and northwest corners of Franklin County, these regions have soil characteristics that are particularly favorable for production of crops.

As shown in Figure 4, well-designed agricultural zoning district should ideally align with the soil survey to ensure efficient land use. The soil survey provides valuable information about soil properties that are crucial for successful farming, zoning regulations help to preserve the value of agriculture areas.

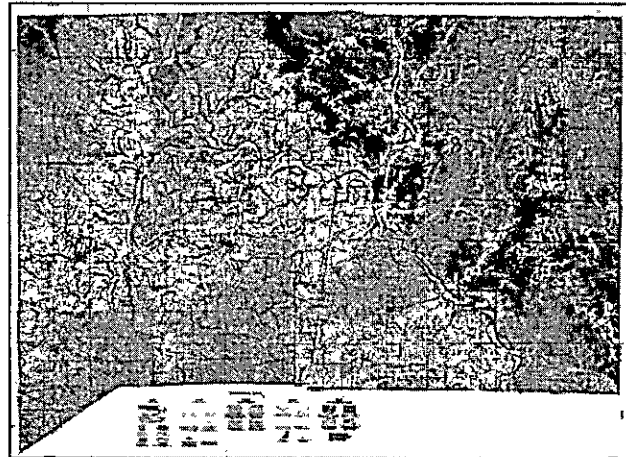








Figure 3 -1989 USDA Soil Survey of Franklin County

Franklin County Zoning Map

	A-1 Prime Agriculture
	A-2 Secondary Agriculture
	R-E Recreation District
	I-1 Enclosed Industrial
	I-2 Open Industrial
	R-1 Single Family Residential

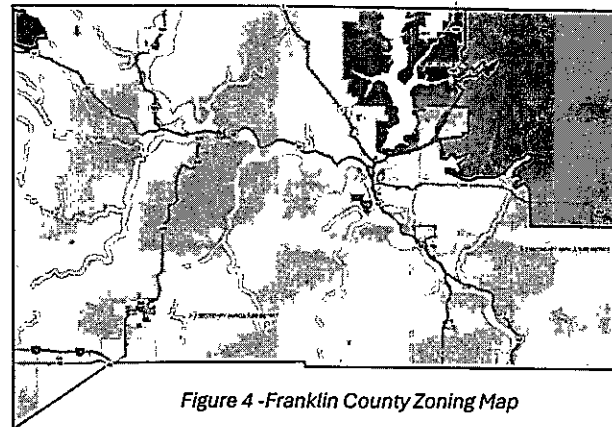


Figure 4 -Franklin County Zoning Map

Economic Impact of Agriculture in Franklin County, Indiana



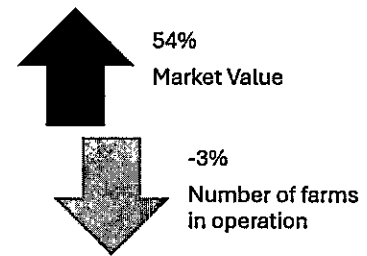
Value of Land & Buildings
\$1.29B



Value of Machinery & Equipment
\$107M

Agriculture is a cornerstone of Franklin County's economy. It contributes significantly to the local tax base, supports related industries like farm equipment sales and service, feed, veterinary services, and offers employment opportunities. The production of corn and soybeans, in particular, generates substantial revenue for the county.

As shown in Figure 5, in a five-year trend from 2017-2022, the total number of operating farms reported dropped 3%, while market value increased 54% to a total of \$103M in 2022. Increased prices for grain and beef along with yield improvements in seed and agronomy practices are leading reasons for the increase in market value. The benefits of this growth include more investments in capital improvements, long-term property tax income, and spending in local markets for goods and services.



Total and Per Farm Overview, 2022 and change since 2017		
	2022	% change since 2017
Number of farms	683	-3
Land in farms (acres)	144,173	+8
Average size of farm (acres)	211	+12
Total (\$)		
Market value of products sold	103,017,000	+54
Government payments	1,306,000	-59
Farm-related income	4,391,000	+30
Total farm production expenses	73,344,000	+30
Net cash farm income	35,370,000	+103
Per farm average (\$)		
Market value of products sold	150,830	+58
Government payments ^a	8,767	-2
Farm-related income ^a	15,794	+32
Total farm production expenses	107,386	+34
Net cash farm income	51,786	+110

Figure 5 - 2022 USDA Census, Farm Overview

Public Input

Through a focus group of citizens involved in agricultural operations, businesses, civic organizations and government services along with a series of town hall meetings, the public provided feedback and ideas to guide the planning effort. The public's concerns and suggestions highlight the urgent need for increased support, education, and policy changes to ensure the sustainability of our local farms. By addressing challenges such as land preservation, market access, and economic viability, we can create a more prosperous and resilient agricultural sector that benefits both farmers and the community as a whole.

Impact on Community

- **Generational Legacy:** The generational support farmers provide to young farmers is a testament to the strength and resilience of the agricultural community.
- **Economic Impact:** Agriculture provides income opportunities for people in the community, contributing to the local economy, and historically has had a positive impact on the well-being of the region.
- **Cultural Heritage:** The rich history of agricultural family heritage in Franklin County is a source of pride and connection to the land, shaping the community's identity and values.
- **Youth Engagement:** The 4-H, FFA programs and young farmers engage youth in agricultural activities, fostering a love for farming and ensuring a future for the agricultural sector.
- **Positive Values:** Farmers demonstrate hard-working ethics, strong morals, and community support, making them invaluable assets to the community.

Community Recommendations

Public Awareness and Engagement

- **Education and Outreach:** Provide agricultural education resources, such as 4-H and Purdue Extension programs, to inform the public about the importance of agriculture and its contributions to the community.
- **Community Involvement:** Encourage increased public engagement and visibility on agricultural issues through events, workshops, and social media campaigns.

Cultural and Community Engagement

- **Youth Development:** Assist younger generations with education and training in agriculture to ensure a future for agriculture in Franklin County.
- **Heritage Preservation:** Document and celebrate the cultural history of family farms to recognize their contributions to the community and promote agricultural heritage.
- **Networking and Collaboration:** Foster collaboration and networking among family farms, agricultural organizations, and community groups to enhance knowledge sharing, resource access, and market opportunities.

APC APPROVED – 12.11.24

Local Market for Agricultural Products

- **Value-Added Agriculture:** Encourage complementary farming operations, such as processing plants, to enhance efficiency, profitability, and market access.
- **Local Food Systems:** Incentivize the development of small farms and agricultural industries to support local food systems and strengthen the local economy.
- **Local Food Purchasing:** Support local farmers markets and purchase produce locally to contribute to the success of the agricultural community.
- **Promote Local Products:** Develop marketing campaigns that highlight the local agricultural economy, such as promoting restaurants that use homegrown products or creating local food hubs.
- **Encourage Diversification:** Promote the cultivation of diverse crops or raising livestock to reduce risk and increase income.
- **Support Sustainable Farming:** Support sustainable farming practices like small family farms, organic farming, and permaculture to enhance environmental sustainability and community resilience.

Support Family Farms

- **Farmer Support:** Support programs that help farmers maintain agricultural land and implement sustainable practices, such as technical assistance, financial incentives, and education.
- **Financial Support:** Collaborate with financial institutions to offer loans, grants, and other financial support for family farm preservation.
- **Financial Assistance:** Offer grant opportunities through organizations like the Community Foundation and provide grant-writing assistance to help family farms access necessary funding.
- **Tax Incentives:** Develop tax incentives to support and sustain agriculture, providing financial relief to farmers and encouraging investment in the agricultural sector.
- **Education and Training:** Develop educational programs on sustainable land management, conservation practices, and agricultural best practices in partnership with local agricultural and extension services.
- **Business Retention:** Create opportunities for the development, production, and sale of agricultural products in our county, to support retention and growth of agricultural businesses (vertical integration).
- **Mentorship and Succession Planning:** Facilitate mentorship programs between retired and young farmers to ensure the continuity of farming practices and provide legal advice on succession planning, estate planning, and deed restrictions.
- **Healthcare and Well-being:** Advocate for access to affordable healthcare services, including mental health support, for agricultural workers.

Challenges Facing Farmers

- **Economic Diversification:** Creating more small business opportunities in agriculture can help diversify the sector and provide additional income sources for farmers, reducing reliance on commodity prices.
- **Market Volatility:** Land prices and crop prices can fluctuate significantly, making it difficult for farmers to plan and manage their finances effectively.
- **Financial Stressors:** Stress, land prices, cash rent costs, input prices, and weather can all impact farmers' livelihoods.
- **Land Access:** Lack of land for grazing.
- **Labor Shortage:** The lack of young people returning to the area after secondary education can contribute to a shortage of skilled labor in the agricultural sector.
- **Land Acquisition:** Competing with housing lot prices for farmland can make it difficult for farmers to acquire or retain land for agricultural use.

Public Input for Agriculture Land Use Planning

- **Zoning Protection:** Implement zoning regulations that protect agricultural land to preserve farmland for future generations and to maintain a thriving agricultural sector.
- **Land Trusts:** Promote establishment of community land trusts dedicated to preserving farmland and ensuring its long-term agricultural use.
- **Development Considerations:** Implement zoning regulations that protect the natural resource of agricultural land to maintain a thriving agricultural sector.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Support agricultural policies that strengthen family-owned and operated farms, such as tax incentives, subsidies, and programs that promote local food systems.
- **Value-Added Agriculture:** Encourage vertical integration of farming operations, such as processing plants, to enhance efficiency, profitability, and market access.
- **Protect Infrastructure:** Ensure integrity of field drainage and ditches.
- **Siting of Commercial Alternate Energy Systems:** The public is not in favor of industrial scale AES projects.¹

Key Takeaways from Public Input

- Preserve prime agricultural land in Franklin County.
- Alternate energy development should be strictly regulated.
- Develop zoning ordinances that support growth in agriculture-related businesses.
- Work with organizations that promote protection of natural resources including water.
- Develop long-term strategy to upgrade county infrastructure that supports agriculture.

1- In a recent survey conducted in April 2024 by Farm Bureau of its membership, 85% of the (117) survey respondents were opposed to using prime farmland for commercial solar projects and 86% do not support government money being spent for commercial solar projects on farmland.

Agricultural Future Needs

To ensure the continued prosperity of Franklin County, we must proactively find and address the evolving needs of our agricultural sector and build proper land use development strategies. By understanding the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, we can develop a roadmap that preserves our natural agricultural resources and strengthens our local economy.

The following goals and recommended actions support and align community input for future growth.

Diversifying the Agricultural Economy

Goal: To foster a thriving agricultural ecosystem and drive economic development by promoting complementary businesses, creating jobs, and enhancing farming operational efficiency.

Objectives

1. Develop Businesses Akin to Agricultural

- **Identify Target Industries:** Identify and attract agricultural industries that align with the county's strengths and resources, such as value-added processing or agritourism.

Action Steps

- Implement tax incentives, grants, and support programs to attract and retain agricultural-related businesses.
- Increase farm to table businesses where the food grown, or raised, is processed and sold directly to the public.
- Develop farm market businesses that can retail farm products in a convenient location.

2. Planning for Future Needs

- **Strategic Zoning:** Develop appropriate siting and zoning regulations that align with planned goals for agricultural development, ensuring the protection of farmland and the promotion of compatible land uses.

Action Steps

- Distinguish uses in the prime agricultural district in contrast with secondary agricultural and recreational district uses.
- Ensure public health and safety are considered when planning agriculture development.

Protecting Agricultural Natural Resources

Goal: To balance economic growth with environmental sustainability, ensuring the protection of Franklin County's valuable natural resources for future generations.

Objectives

1. Sustainable Development Planning

- **Soil Health, Water Protection and Erosion Control:** Encourage conservation practices that promote soil health, improve water quality, and reduce erosion, such as cover crops, appropriate tillage practices, and precision agriculture.

Action Steps

- Consult with Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation when developing policy to protect watershed areas from activities that could contaminate local rivers and streams, such as pollution and sedimentation.
- Promote grazing management techniques to prevent overgrazing and protect rangelands and pastures.
- Establish effective stormwater management policies.

2. Agricultural Preservation

- **Farmland Preservation:** Preserve the most productive farmland for agricultural uses to support food production and maintain the local agricultural economy.

Action Steps

- Consider implementing land conservation techniques such as cluster development, transfer of development rights, and conservation easements to protect sensitive lands while accommodating growth in appropriate areas.

Infrastructure Planning for Agriculture

Goal: To recognize the significance of agriculture to the County and ensure adequate infrastructure is available to support current and future agricultural activities.

Objectives

1. Transportation and Roadway Needs

- **Rural Road Improvement:** Develop a plan to improve access to farms and markets.

Action Steps

- Evaluate and prioritize transportation and roadway needs for agricultural use including bridge load limits, side ditch maintenance, tree clearance, culvert upgrades, and road widening including guardrail clearances.

2. Water Resources

- **Water Availability:** Evaluate and prioritize water resources for Franklin County's agricultural, residential and business needs.

Action Steps

- Take steps to protect water infrastructure such as lakes, ponds, and drainage ditches to improve water management and reduce water shortages.
- Ensure adequate water availability for agricultural use, including irrigation, livestock watering, and processing, while managing excess water through proper drainage systems.
- Protect water quality through measures such as riparian buffer zones, nutrient management practices, and pollution control measures.

3. Electricity and Communication Needs

- **Infrastructure Expansion:** Plan for future electricity and communication needs to support agricultural operations, electricity, broadband internet, and cellular service.

Action Steps

- Allow intermediate on-farm energy generation to support agricultural operations.
- Provide access to broadband in unserved and underserved parts of the county.

APC APPROVED – 12.11.24

Alternate Energy Development

Goal: Establish updated regulations for commercial alternative energy system development in the county ordinance.

Objectives:

1. AES code clarity and enforceability review

- **Update Ordinance Code:** Evaluate the latest state standards as a minimum and incorporate community needs and values in siting, development planning and compliance ordinances.

Action Steps

- Update the commercial alternative energy ordinance by evaluating state standards for development and decommissioning plans.
- Develop clear implementation and enforcement expectations to ensure compliance with the regulations, such as permit application procedures, review and inspection schedules, and enforcement actions for violations.
- Establish development plan standards for commercial AES to ensure protection for landowners and the county.

2. Regulating growth of commercial AES

Siting Ordinance: Regulate growth and impact of commercial AES development.

Action Steps

- Evaluate standards for maximum acreage allowed per site and minimum distance between sites for commercial AES.
- Conduct public education and outreach efforts to raise awareness about the advantages and disadvantages of alternative energy development, address misconceptions or concerns, and promote community engagement in the implementation process by partnering with local community organizations and Franklin County government officials.