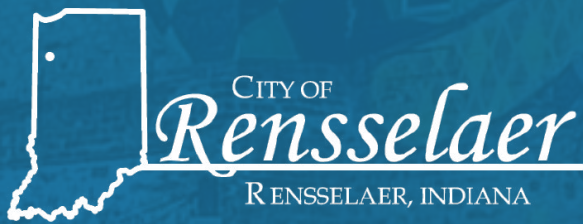


CITY OF RENSSELAER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



RESOLUTION 26-2023
A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RENSSELAER, INDIANA
ADOPTING THE 2023 CITY OF RENSSELAER
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

WHEREAS, the City of Rensselaer, Indiana (the "City") is a duly formed municipal corporation within the State of Indiana, governed by its duly elected Mayor and Common Council ("Council"); and,

WHEREAS, the Council has the duty and authority to review, amend, and approve amendments to the City of Rensselaer Comprehensive Plan adopted and certified by the Rensselaer Advisory Planning Commission ("Plan Commission"); and,

WHEREAS, a Comprehensive Plan was previously adopted by the City of Rensselaer on June 25, 2007 by Resolution 13-2007; and

WHEREAS, the Plan Commission held a public hearing on July 24, 2023 for Resolution No. 02-2023, "2023 City of Rensselaer Comprehensive Plan", as required by law pursuant to Indiana Statute 36-7-4-500 series; and,

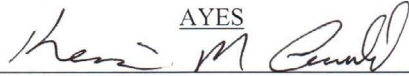
WHEREAS, the Plan Commission has found said "2023 City of Rensselaer Comprehensive Plan" to be in accordance with the promotion of public health, safety, morals, convenience, order and/or general welfare for the sake of efficiency and economy in the process of development of the community and has certified to the Council its adoption by a vote of 4 ayes, 0 nays and 1 absent.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved and adopted by the Common Council of the City of Rensselaer, Indiana as follows:

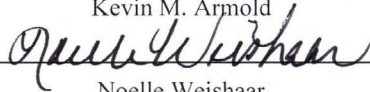
- Section 1. That the Council hereby adopts the 2023 City of Rensselaer Comprehensive Plan as evidenced by Exhibit A, attached hereto and incorporated by reference herein.
- Section 2. That all prior adopted resolutions and exhibits or parts thereof in conflict herewith are repealed and deemed to conform to the provisions of the "2023 City of Rensselaer Comprehensive Plan."
- Section 3. This Resolution shall be in full force and effect immediately upon passage.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Common Council of the City of Rensselaer, Jasper County,
Indiana on this 24th day of July, 20 23.

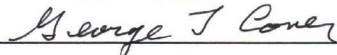
AYES



Kevin M. Arnold

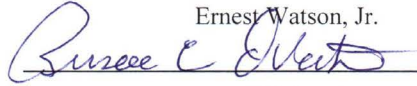


Noelle Weishaar



George T. Cover

Ernest Watson, Jr.



Russell Overton

NAYES

Kevin M Arnold

Noelle Weishaar

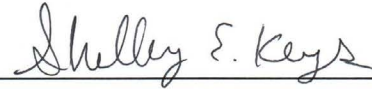
George T. Cover

Ernest Watson, Jr.

Russell Overton

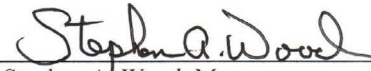
ATTEST:

Presented by me to the Mayor of the City of Rensselaer, Jasper County, Indiana on this 24th day
of July, 20 23.



Shelby E. Keys, Clerk-Treasurer

Approved by me on this 24th day of July, 20 23.



Stephen A. Wood, Mayor
CITY OF RENSSELAER, INDIANA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CITY OF RENSSELAER EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

The Honorable Mayor Stephen Wood

Shelby Keys, City Clerk-Treasurer

CITY OF RENSSELAER DEPARTMENTAL STAFF

Juanita Saucedo, Mayor's Secretary

Kevin Cochran, Building Commissioner

Josh Davis, Building Commissioner

REVIEW TEAM MEMBERS

Stephen A. Wood

Juanita Saucedo

Kevin Cochran

Noelle Weishaar

Ernest Watson, Jr.

Jerry Lockridge

Kenny Haun

Heather Smart

Mary Scheurich

Stace Pickering

Brienne Hooker

Jason Arnold

Joann McElfresh

Scott Malone

Jeff Rayburn

RENSSELAER CITY COUNCIL

William A. Hollerman, 1st Ward

Noelle Weishaar, 2nd Ward

George T. Cover, 3rd Ward

Ernest Watson Jr., 4th Ward

Russ Overton, At Large

RENSSELAER PLAN COMMISSION

Jeff Rayburn

Jason Arnold

Pat Fox

Stan Haines

Cliff Wood

Deana Rule

Ryan Musch

Mike Davis

Kevin Cochran, by Virtue of Office

PLAN PREPARATION

American Structurepoint, Inc.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The process for updating the City of Rensselaer Comprehensive Plan began in May of 2022. A Review Team oversaw the plan development and maintained frequent contact with the project team.

The process involved several public engagement opportunities at the Jasper County Fair, open houses, conversations with community stakeholders, and an online survey. The plan includes several long-term projects and recommendations that will help strengthen the future of the City of Rensselaer. An existing conditions report analyzes the community's strengths and challenges and is available in the Appendix.

In addition to the recommendations, this plan also outlines some additional actions, such as:

- Partnering with community partners to explore the potential of a childcare center.
- Creating and enforcing a historic overlay district to protect the unique character and attributes of downtown Rensselaer.
- Sponsoring a façade renovation program for downtown buildings.
- Providing a building inspection program.
- Upgrading, maintaining, and creating new roadways, sidewalks and trails.
- Encouraging beautification and streetscape improvements.
- Exploring additional opportunities for parks and community programs.
- Partnering with educational groups to provide additional skills training.
- Accommodating accessory dwelling units or other temporary structures.
- Expanding broadband infrastructure.
- Expansion of housing that is affordable at multiple income levels.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	2
Executive Summary.....	3
What is a Comprehensive Plan?	6
Community Profile.....	10
Regional Overview	10
History	12
Key trends.....	13
Projections.....	16
Past planning efforts	17
Community Engagement Overview	18
Review Team	18
Stakeholder Groups	20
Public outreach	20
What We Heard.....	21
Community Vision	22
Vision Statement.....	22
Goals	22
Focus Areas	23
Objective Statements	23
Strategies.....	23

Chapter 1: Land Use	24
Future Land Use Map.....	26
Land Use Categories.....	30
Chapter 2: Transportation	40
Future Transportation Map.....	42
Chapter 3: Public Facilities and Services	44
Chapter 4: Historic and Archaeological Resources	46
Chapter 5: Government and Fiscal Capacity.....	48
Chapter 6: Placemaking	50
Chapter 7: Natural Resources.....	52
Chapter 8: Parks and Recreation	54
Chapter 9: Economic Development.....	56
Chapter 10: Agriculture.....	60
Chapter 11: Housing	62
Chapter 12: Hazard Mitigation.....	70
Chapter 13: Broadband.....	74
Implementation.....	76
Critical Path Strategies	77
Updating the Plan.....	92
Appendix A / Online Survey Results	95
Appendix B / Existing Conditions.....	109

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is a strategic guide containing policy statements for effective decision-making in private development projects and community initiatives for the public good.

It can be thought of as a roadmap for a community's vision and growth over the next 20 years. The plan provides a snapshot of the current time and a vision for the future, guiding long-term investment, growth, and development.

A comprehensive plan also assists policy, land use, and infrastructure decisions but is not legally binding. The planning process gathers input from various sources to build consensus around the plan and its vision for the future. To increase its chance of success, a comprehensive plan should be treated as a living document that the City should update as changes occur in land use, transportation, infrastructure, resources, demographics, and priorities within the community.

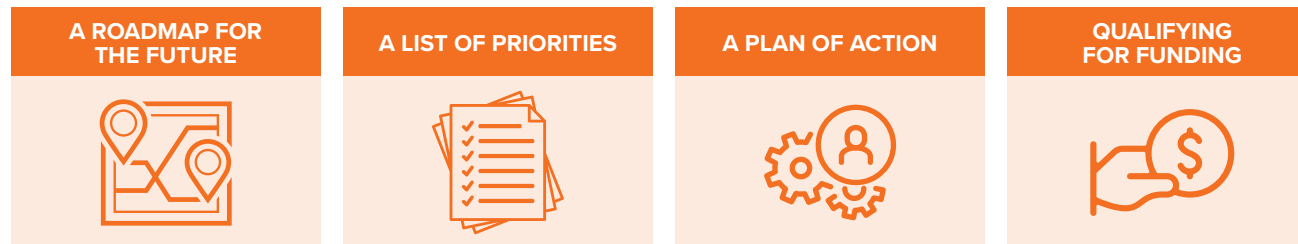
Although the plan contains recommendations for zoning and future land use, it is not a rezoning document. The plan is used as a reference when future decision-making occurs, but its contents are not binding. Any future zoning changes within the city must follow standard Indiana law and the City's process for rezoning a property, updating, or amending, the text of the ordinances. Recommendations within the comprehensive plan may require further, in-depth studies to provide the best possible solutions to specific issues.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?



ACTION PLAN
FOR A COMMUNITY'S VISION
OVER THE NEXT 20 YEARS
.....
PEOPLE • ECONOMY • PLACE

PURPOSE



The City of Rensselaer Comprehensive Plan is a long-term strategic guide to help the community manage and facilitate stable and desired economic growth to achieve the vision determined by the community. The plan is designed to showcase the existing conditions of the community, specify the desired goals and objectives, and illustrate appropriate strategies to achieve the overall vision. It also demonstrates a community's apparent intent to carry out projects they request for funding.

In addition to guiding local government officials, the plan also serves to guide other non-government community organizations, leaders, and all citizens in designing the future of their community. The planned changes outlined can give residents and stakeholders plenty of notice of what may happen and how they can react. Strategies and goals in the plan can be used in support of winning grants and other funding to better the community. An updated plan will allow the City of Rensselaer to apply for state and federal funding for proposed projects.

A critical outcome of the comprehensive plan is economic development. By coordinating the actions of multiple agencies and organizations, the comprehensive plan helps to provide public services and infrastructure efficiently. The plan also recognizes the best areas for certain types of growth, whether residential, commercial, or industrial, and what would be best for the community, which makes the city resilient and financially flexible.

DID YOU KNOW?



Communities may adopt comprehensive plans described by the Indiana Code to promote public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, or the general welfare and the sake of efficiency and economy in the development process. Indiana Code 36-7-4-500 series sets forth the standards for developing and evaluating a comprehensive plan.

Required elements include the following:

- A statement of objectives for the future development of the jurisdiction.
- A statement of policy for the land use development of the jurisdiction.
- A policy statement for developing public ways, places, lands, structures, and utilities.

HOW THIS DOCUMENT IS ORGANIZED

The organization of this document loosely follows the timeline of the four phases described in the planning process graphic. First, an existing conditions report was created, providing pertinent information about the City of Rensselaer and its people. The complete Existing Conditions report is included in the Appendix, with key trends discussed in the following section.

This plan identifies the goals and objectives from the public input received through Phase 1 of Rensselaer's Comprehensive Plan development. An overview of the public engagement process and its results is discussed in the Community Engagement Overview section. This document describes the vision statements that act as guiding principles for each goal section of the Comprehensive Plan. Following that, the goals and objectives are provided. The goals and objectives aim for broad guidelines to achieve the community's vision.

Following the goals and objectives is the implementation section (Phase 3) of the plan, which includes best practices, recommendations, and critical path strategies. These latter activities are relatively low in cost, quick to complete, or require fewer human resources. Critical path strategies include direct, actionable steps, an estimated timeline, and an estimated cost.

PLANNING PROCESS







COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Community Profile overviews key trends from the Existing Conditions Report.

The complete Rensselaer Existing Conditions Report can be found in the Appendix. The comprehensive planning process for the City of Rensselaer began in May 2022. Following the project kickoff, an existing conditions report was completed to examine the community's demographics.

Rensselaer is a community in Marion Township, Jasper County, Indiana, along the Iroquois River and is the county seat. About halfway between Chicago and Indianapolis, Rensselaer is just east of I-65, with the main access points through US-231 and SR 114.

Regional Overview
City of Rensselaer Comprehensive Plan

0 7.5 15 Miles

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DRAFT | PAGE 13

HISTORY

Platted in 1839, Rensselaer was originally named Newton. It wasn't until 1844 that the city's name was changed to Rensselaer. St. Joseph's College, located just outside Rensselaer's southern city boundary, was a Catholic, liberal arts institution. Founded in 1889, St. Joseph's College opened in 1891 as a high school and junior college. The college became a four-year institution in 1936 but remained all-male until 1968. Between 2017 and 2020, St. Joseph's College suspended academic operations. In 2021, the college was re-opened as an in-person and online certificate and associate degree program. Though technically outside the city limits, St. Joseph's is an asset to the community.^{1,2}

KEY TRENDS

Key trends were developed by connecting demographic data with trends heard through public engagement and stakeholder meetings. Key trends identify pros and cons and potential opportunities, influencing the strategies and recommendations mentioned later in this plan. A demographic summary shows the primary demographics for the City of Rensselaer from 2010 to 2026.

DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY³

	2010	2021	2026 PROJECTION
Population	5,903	5,889	5,921
Median Age	36.5	37.8	38.2
Median Household Income	--	\$53,367	\$58,396
Households	2,389	2,384	2,363
Race and Ethnicity			
White	95.3%	98.8%	--
Hispanic or Latino	5.4%	6.1%	--

¹ [*Saint Joseph's College.*](#)

² [*Indiana Historical Society.*](#)

³ [*ESRI Business Analyst.*](#)

CENTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Although not technically within the city limits, St. Joseph's College has been an asset to Rensselaer and is associated with the city's identity. Despite St. Joseph's temporary closing and subsequent transition to a certificate and associate degree program, much of the city's demographics and character still have remnants of its former college town identity. Some of these demographic indicators include a high proportion of renter-occupied housing, younger median age, an increase in the proportion of multi-family units, a quarter of householders under the age of 35, and the city's artistic culture. St. Joseph's College and its impact on the community were mentioned in every stakeholder conversation, and most responses to the survey and are discussed further in the next section. A younger demographic is associated with a lower median income since younger people are just entering the workforce. With a younger demographic and lower median incomes, the city needs more starter homes. A new partnership with St. Joseph, other local employers, and education facilities could provide opportunities for joint efforts to retain youth, provide workforce development programs, and retain youth in the city.



PROS

- Higher retention of youth.
- Associated with more livability.
- Strong cultural identity.
- Availability of employees to enter the local workforce.
- Regional attraction and destination.



CONS

- Lower median income.
- Loss of students on St. Joseph's campus.
- Need for more starter homes.



OPPORTUNITIES

- Utilize St. Joseph's facilities.
- Establish partnerships with local education facilities and employers.
- Offer other education programs such as trade schools or workforce development.

RURAL COMMUNITY

Communities of rural character are an attractive destination for those seeking a life away from the city and suburbs. While a rural lifestyle appeals to some, rural communities often experience slower growth rates coupled with an older population. While Rensselaer's population is younger than most rural communities, the city can still offer older individuals the opportunity to age in place.

Located halfway between Chicago and Indianapolis with nearby agritourist assets such as Fair Oaks Farm, Rensselaer's location allows for a rural home life with the option to visit or work in larger cities such as nearby Lafayette. Rensselaer could also attract remote workers to live in the city by continuing to support quality-of-life initiatives. The city also has an opportunity to expand agritourism in the area.

Older populations can require more services, such as senior living facilities, healthcare, and emergency services. Quality of life initiatives such as walking trails or the county transit service can help aging populations travel within the community.



PROS

- An attractive destination for certain lifestyles.
- Opportunities for aging in place.
- Proximity to the Chicago area, Lafayette and Indianapolis.



CONS

- Slow growth.
- Limited market reach.
- Higher ages require higher service demands.



OPPORTUNITIES

- Continued quality of life initiatives.
- Variability in housing types.
- Promote and increase agritourism.
- Expand on being a regional destination.

REGIONAL HUB

Rensselaer is a rural hub due to its central location and status as the county seat of Jasper County. Assets such as St. Joseph's College, I-65, the Jasper County Airport, proximity to Fair Oaks Farm, and many regional employers who are a draw to people who visit or live in or near the community. During public engagement, many people stated they traveled from other areas of Jasper County to shop in Rensselaer. A higher strain on services was heard in stakeholder conversations with CASA, as more children needed child services in Rensselaer than in other Jasper County communities. Rensselaer can expand this trend by encouraging development at I-65 intersections and increasing agritourism opportunities.



PROS

- Assets such as St. Joseph's College, Airport, Fair Oaks Farms, major employers, County Services, I-65, Amtrak stop.
- Central location and proximity to larger markets (Chicago, Lafayette, Indianapolis).
- Drawing in shoppers from other Jasper County Communities.



CONS

- Higher strain on services.
- Lack of public transportation.
- Growing pains for increased development .

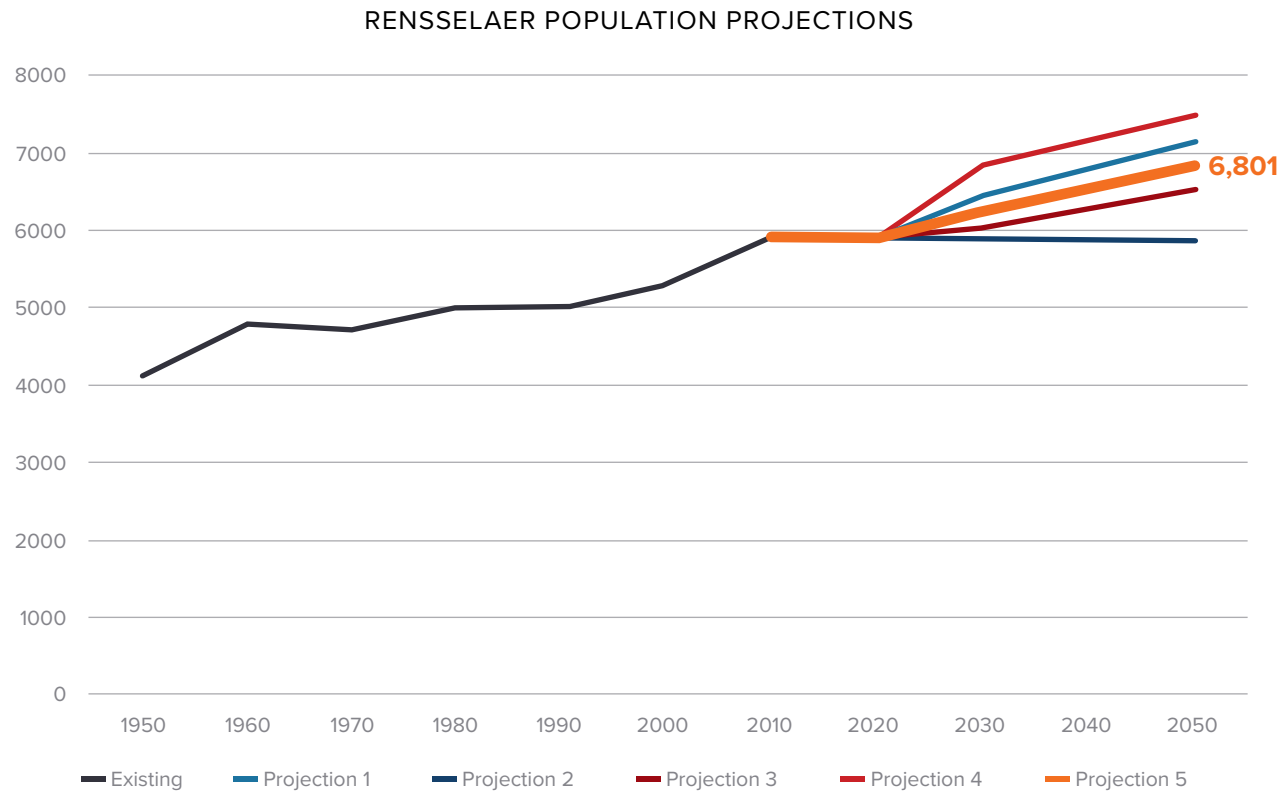


OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand development at I-65 intersections.
- Start a tourism and marketing campaign.
- Increased housing development and variability.

PROJECTIONS

Population projections from ESRI Business Analyst forecasted the city to grow to 5,921 in 2026. Several population forecasting methods were used to project the population in 20 to 30 years. While population projections are not set in stone, they are essential in anticipating the city's needed future land uses and services.



Several methods of population projections were used to forecast Rensselaer's 2050 population.
Source: American Structurepoint, Stats Indiana, City of Rensselaer.

Using data from the past 100 years from Stats Indiana as a starting point, several projection methods were used to forecast Rensselaer's population to 2050. Projection 2, the population projection that examined and applied the city's growth rate from 2000 to 2020, showed a gradual decline over time. However, Projection 2 was the only projection that showed a declining growth rate. Projection 4, which had the highest forecasted growth, reflected trends based on the city's building permits over the last five years. Projection 5, an average of Projections 1 and 3, was believed to be the most accurate, forecasting a population of 6,801 in 2050. Projection 5's population forecast was utilized to calculate the acreages for future land uses, discussed in the land use section.

PAST PLANNING EFFORTS

Part of the planning process involves revisiting past planning efforts from the city, county, and region. Past plans provide an insight into what was essential to the community and how it has changed. The goals and objectives discussed in the following sections were partly developed based on goals from previous plans.

Rensselaer's last comprehensive plan was adopted in 2007. Several additional plans and studies were completed in the region and were reviewed and used to formulate goals and objectives for this plan. Each past planning effort is unique and offers a particular perspective on the desired goals and outcomes of the city. An overview of past plans was completed to understand better their content, purpose, impact, and relevance to this plan. The plans and documents that were reviewed included:

- Rensselaer Comprehensive Plan (2007)
- Jasper County Comprehensive Plan (2009)
- Northwest Indiana READI Proposal (2021)
- Jasper Newton Foundation: Driving Home (2020)
- Jasper Newton Foundation: 2020 Annual Report
- City of Rensselaer Design Build Standards (2007)
- City of Rensselaer Subdivision Control Ordinance (2008)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Community engagement is a vital part of the planning process and informs every component of the comprehensive plan.

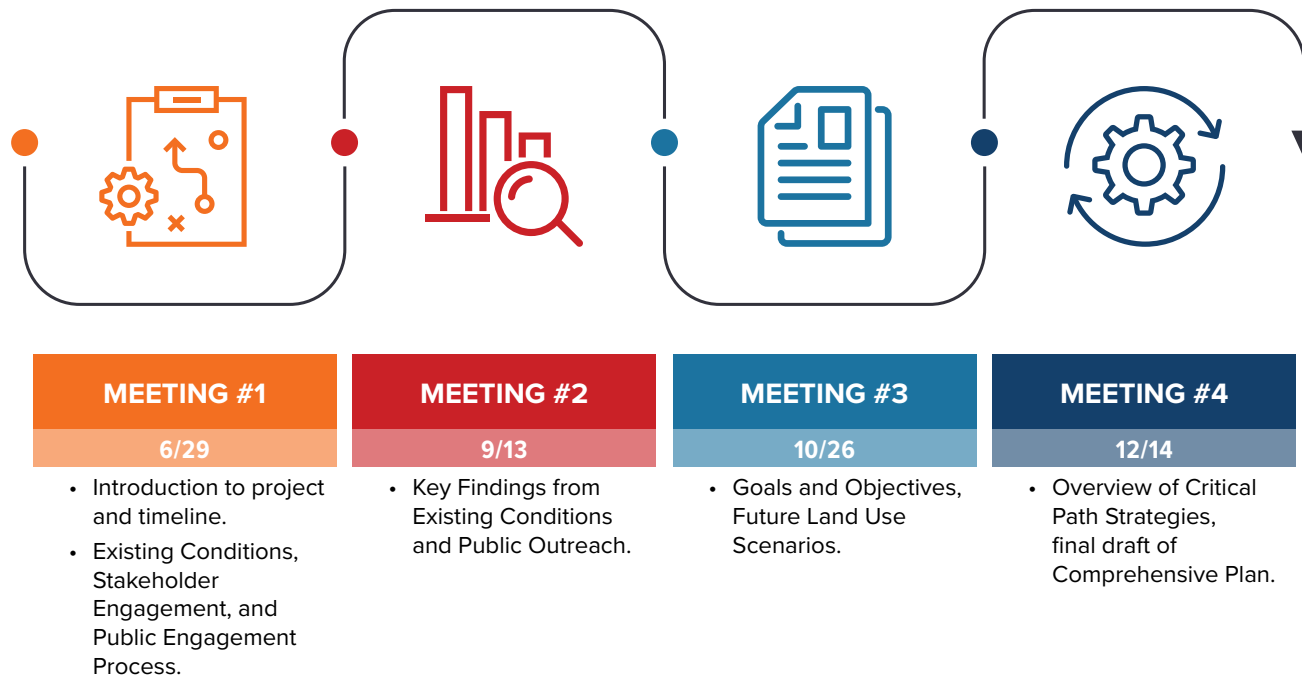
Engagement included review team meetings, stakeholder conversations, surveys, and public workshops. The goals and objectives discussed in the next section were heavily influenced by what was heard from the public during the community engagement activities.

REVIEW TEAM

The Review Team is a coalition of local leaders who work together with the project team, guiding the process, providing immediate feedback, and deciding the final character of the plan. Members were selected by Rensselaer City staff based on their roles in the community and the perspective they brought regarding its future. The Review Team consisted of the following members:

- Stephen A. Wood – Mayor
- Juanita Saucedo – Administrative Assistant
- Kevin Cochran – Building Commissioner
- Noelle Weishaar – City Council Member / Local Realtor
- Ernest Watson – City Council Member / INDOT
- Jerry Lockridge – Project Coordinator
- Kenny Haun – Fire Chief / Former Building Commissioner / Redevelopment Commission Member
- Heather Smart – Utility Office Manager
- Mary Scheurich – Jasper County Planning & Development Department
- Stace Pickering – Main Street Committee / Parks for People / Insurance Counselor
- Brienne Hooker – Executive Director – Jasper Newton Foundation, Inc.
- Jason Arnold – BZA and Advisory Planning Commission Member
- Joann McElfresh – Realtor
- Scott Malone – Business Owner / BZA Member
- Jeff Rayburn – Business Owner / BZA Member

Throughout the project, the Review Team met four times and reviewed all project materials before they were released to the general public. The Review Team helped suggest community stakeholders to meet, provided insight on local public events and happenings, refined goals and objectives, and helped draft the future land use plan. A timeline shows the meeting dates and the significant discussions at each meeting.





STAKEHOLDER GROUPS











A critical part of the success of the planning process is the participation of property owners, residents, business owners, and other stakeholders in the community. The project stakeholders represent various community interests, including major employers, developers, community organizations, and leadership. Eighteen stakeholder interviews were conducted throughout the summer of 2022. The interviews ranged from in-person to virtual meetings.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Public outreach was held to gather input from the community and spread awareness about the comprehensive plan effort. The project team gathered public input at the Jasper County Fair and August Chamber of Commerce lunch. An online survey, open from July through September, asked various questions about the City and its future and received over 150 responses. An open house was held at City Hall on September 13, 2022, with over 20 attendees, to present the plan's progress and ask residents for input. The survey and open house were advertised on Facebook, the City's website, local newspaper, and in flyers. A second online survey was available from January through February and asked for feedback on the proposed critical path strategies and prioritization of the plan's goal categories. Detailed survey and public outreach data can be found in the Appendix.

WHAT WE HEARD

The project team used what was heard from the public to develop the goals, objectives, strategies, and recommendations for this plan. Each goal section contains relevant viewpoints from what we heard to justify the proposed strategies.

 <p>St. Joseph's College</p>	 <p>Workforce skills and programs needed</p>	 <p>City should communicate/share available resources</p>	 <p>Focus more development efforts near I-65</p>	 <p>High demand for housing but low availability</p>
 <p>More activities and things to do (especially for youth)</p>	 <p>Need opportunities to age in place like granny flats</p>	 <p>Need for more alternative transportation</p>	 <p>Continue revitalizing the downtown</p>	 <p>More support for social services and community resources like mental health, affordable housing, and daycare</p>

*Key themes that were mentioned during stakeholder interviews, public outreach, and the survey.
Source: American Structurepoint.*

Overall, the key themes from stakeholder interviews aligned with the key themes from the survey and public engagement. Every stakeholder interview and most survey responses mentioned St. Joseph's College in some way. The comments revealed that much of the community and areas outside the immediate city boundaries saw St. Joseph's College as an asset but were concerned, confused, or unsure about its future role with the city. Another key theme was the need for more social and community services such as mental health resources, recovery programs, and daycare. Many also expressed that downtown is an asset and should continue to be revitalized.

COMMUNITY VISION

The Review Team members created a community vision statement for this comprehensive plan update. The community vision uniquely outlines the residents' personalities and aspirations.

The community vision was designed to balance embracing the past, maximizing the present, and improving the future to create a thriving community for people and businesses. The goals, objectives, and strategies identified within this plan strive to help the city achieve this community vision.

VISION STATEMENT

While it has maintained its small-town feel and charm, Rensselaer is adapting to its changing environment by embracing its artistic side and promoting the community's identity and quality of life. It also celebrates its unique atmosphere and welcoming environment, all while honoring its past as a center for higher education.

GOALS

Goals are the targeted statements identified in the plan to see measurable outcomes in the community. These goals are meant to overlap plan focus areas and tie all objectives statements to familiar themes. This plan seeks to enhance and propel the City of Rensselaer into the next 20 years through the following goals:

- ✓ Develop diverse, quality, attainable, and desirable housing types for residents of all income levels and ages that are properly maintained over time.
- ✓ Promote Rensselaer's identity by encouraging neighborhood pride, creating vibrant and livable spaces, embracing the city's artistic culture, and preserving traditional neighborhoods, key features, and unique assets such as downtown Rensselaer.
- ✓ Ensure organized and effective governance and ordinance enforcement that increases resident satisfaction, promotes population growth, utilizes limited resources efficiently, promotes sound development throughout the community, and diversifies the tax base with a mix of land uses with smart growth practices.
- ✓ Promote safe and efficient modes of transportation that support an active and healthy citizenry by developing multi-modal transportation systems, maintaining and expanding infrastructure, and encouraging connectivity and walkability in all systems.
- ✓ Encourage innovative and diverse economic growth by supporting efforts to grow local businesses, retain youth, ensure necessary social and community services, and promote life-long learning initiatives.
- ✓ Support the natural environment and its vital role in human and economic health by promoting natural landscaping throughout the community, beautification and landscaping, preserving natural corridors for wildlife and recreational use, and conserving prime agricultural land.

FOCUS AREAS

A Comprehensive Plan aims to outline and guide the community to achieve its fullest potential and vision. To address all future ideas, a Comprehensive Plan must address a wide range of topics that affect the community. These focus areas become the goals that influence the objectives and strategies within this plan. The focus areas for the City of Rensselaer reflect these key themes from public engagement:

- Opportunities and partnerships with St. Joseph's College.
- Development opportunities near the I-65 and SR 114 interchange.
- Workforce skills and programs.
- Housing affordability, accessibility, and supply.
- Social and community services.
- Quality of life initiatives.
- Continued revitalization of downtown.

OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS

The objective statements are essential in establishing a better understanding of the more detailed strategies mentioned later within this plan.

The objective statements are policy objectives related to the previously mentioned goals. These statements are aspirational to guide the community toward its future goals and overall community vision. They were created using a variety of data inputs. The primary sources used when crafting these statements include input from:

- Past planning documents from the community.
- Online Survey.
- Review Team.
- Various Stakeholder Groups.
- Community Engagement Sessions at the Jasper County Fair and Public Open House.

As a community, we should all strive to achieve these objective statements to achieve our vision.

STRATEGIES

Strategies are concrete initiatives intended to carry out an idea, goal, or objective identified within the plan. Each strategy will be a specific projection or program to implement. The implementation section of this plan further identifies strategies into critical path strategies, which are seen as high-priority strategies that the city should implement over the next three to five years. More details about critical path strategies will be discussed in the implementation section. The strategies listed in the following sections were developed following the goals and objectives. Additional best practices provide examples for the implementation of specific strategies.

Using the previously listed focus areas, the goals and objectives were grouped into several categories required by OCRA: land use, transportation, public facilities and services, historic and archaeological resources, government and fiscal capacity, placemaking, natural resources, parks and recreation, economic development, agriculture, housing, hazard mitigation, and broadband.

RELEVANT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

- ✓ Develop diverse, quality, attainable, and desirable housing types for residents of all income levels and ages that are properly maintained over time.
- ✓ Ensure organized and effective governance and ordinance enforcement that increases resident satisfaction, promotes population growth, utilizes limited resources efficiently, promotes sound development throughout the community, and diversifies the tax base with a mix of land uses with smart growth practices.
- ✓ Encourage innovative and diverse economic growth by supporting efforts to grow local businesses, retain youth, ensure necessary social and community services, and promote life-long learning initiatives.
- ✓ Support the natural environment and its vital role in human and economic health by promoting natural landscaping throughout the community, beautification and landscaping, preserving natural corridors for wildlife and recreational use, and conserving prime agricultural land.

CHAPTER 1: LAND USE

The future land use portion of the plan is meant to guide development over the next 10 to 20 years and complement the plan's goals and objectives. The Future Land Use Map serves as a visual representation of the city's intended future development, redevelopment, and reinvestment. The recommended land use plan promotes the integration of compatible land uses, infill development, city-wide growth, thoughtful downtown redevelopment, and place-making qualities.

OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS

- ! Coordinate new growth in areas of expected improvements or investments in infrastructure.
- ! Support a mix of commercial, industrial, residential, and mixed-use developments.
- ! When evaluating new developments or revitalization projects, refer to the future land use plan.
- ! Preserve the character and identity of Rensselaer's historic neighborhoods, such as downtown.
- ! Employ the practice of establishing mixed-use when in an applicable and appropriate setting.

STRATEGIES

- Ensure consistency between the zoning ordinance and the land use element of the comprehensive plan.
- Evaluate possible public works projects relative to the land use element of the comprehensive plan.
- Explore the city's ability to acquire potential residential or industrial sites and market them to regional developers.
- Ensure the zoning ordinance and other supporting documents reflect the goals and future land use map.
- Evaluate development ordinances to allow for infill development.
- Encourage mixed-use and infill development in the downtown.
- Develop a district plan for the I-65 interchange that promotes a mix of uses while maximizing the value of the interstate proximity.
- Collaborate with St. Joseph College to develop a reuse plan that promotes a mix of uses.

WHAT WE HEARD



Key themes from stakeholder conversations included focusing more development efforts near I-65 and continuing to revitalize the downtown.



Every stakeholder interview and a majority of survey responses mentioned St. Joseph's College in some way.

The comments revealed that much of the community and areas outside the immediate city boundaries saw St. Joseph's College as an asset but were concerned, confused, or unsure about its future role with the city



Supply and affordability of housing were ranked as Rensselaer's top challenges on the survey.



Expanding the local economy and the number and affordability of housing choices were the top two most crucial items for Rensselaer's future from the survey.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP

Using the forecasted population for 2050, land use projections for residential, commercial, and industrial acreages were calculated. Three land use scenarios were prepared and discussed in depth with the Review Team. These scenarios consisted of development based on existing growth patterns, existing growth patterns, development focused on downtown and its neighborhoods, and new neighborhood growth. The Review Team provided feedback on each scenario, resulting in the final Future Land Use Map. A map showing the existing land uses in the city and planning area is available in the existing conditions report in the appendix.

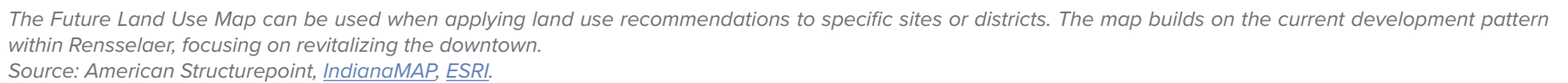
Land use plans are created to protect the character of a community as it grows and make choices that allow desirable development patterns to become established. A map of community land is used to diagram the different ways that a community needs to use the land. City officials can use the diagram as a visual reference when making responsible decisions about future development in the community. Areas within Rensselaer and outside growth areas have been classified into ten unique character types. Unlike traditional land use designations, which are applied parcel by parcel, character-type designations can define the nature and desired character of uses on a larger scale. The approach allows for greater flexibility regarding future land use decisions and emphasizes how adjacent character types interact and impact one another. Each of Rensselaer's ten character types describes the character, land uses, and level of connectivity within each designation. Land use character types have been designated based on existing land use, built form, physical characteristics and conditions, growth trends, and community input. Definitions for each of these land use designations is provided in subsequent sections of the document. Following the adoption of the comprehensive plan, the city should regularly review the Future Land Use Map and individual character types to ensure that the land uses are responsive to the community's needs and goals.

The Future Land Use Map highlights the development along SR 114 and the I-65 interchange. New residential growth was assigned near St. Joseph's College to round out the city's boundary and existing service areas of fire, police, and water. A focus on new industrial and commercial development is shown along SR 114 and the I-65 interchange.

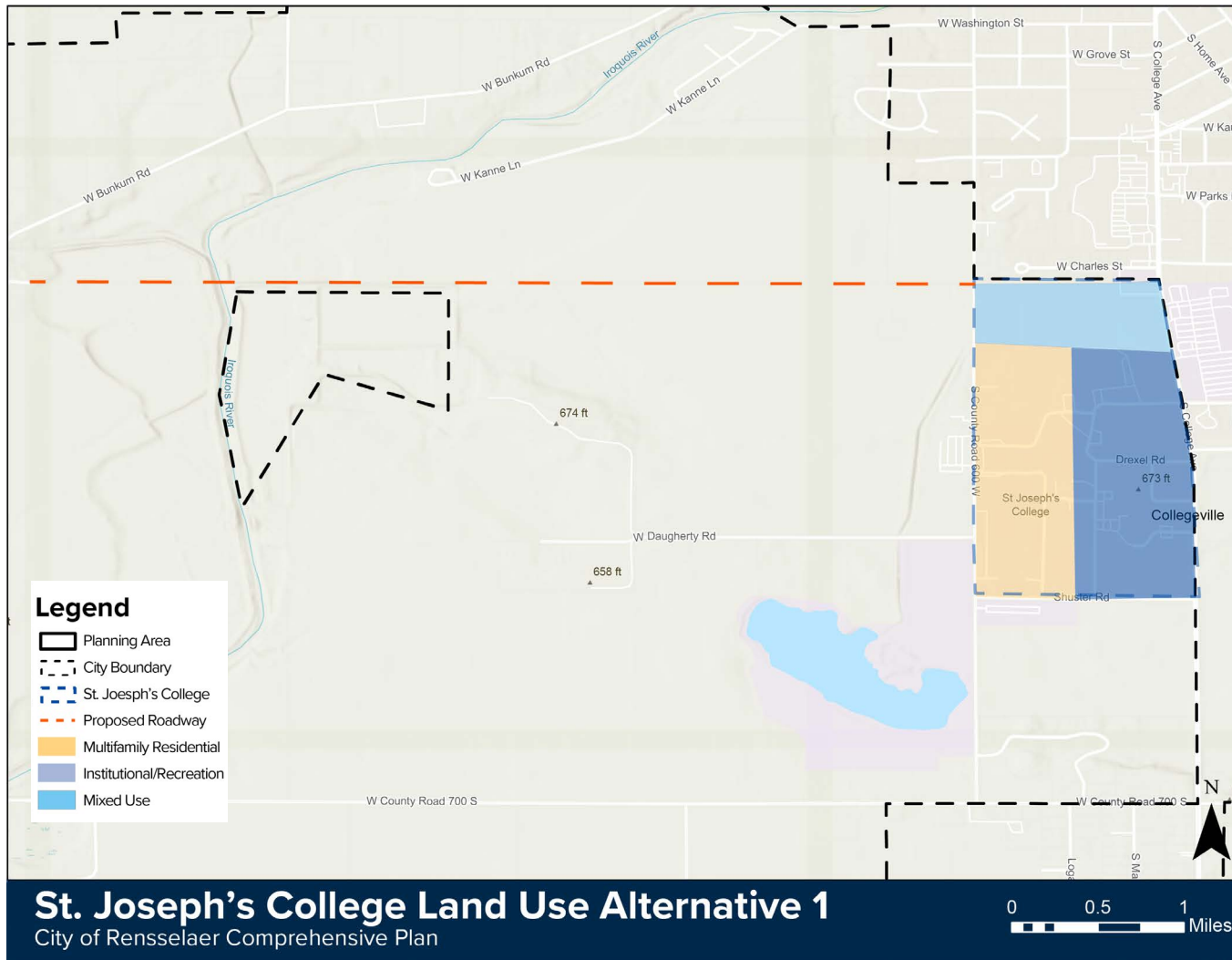
Due to the unknown nature of the St. Joseph's College site's future, two land use alternatives were put together specifically pertaining to St. Joseph's College and the surrounding area, which can be found on the following pages.

Legend

	Planning Area
	City Boundary
	Agriculture
	Conservation
	Suburban Residential
	Traditional Neighborhood
	Multifamily Residential
	Neighborhood Commercial
	General Commercial
	Urban Core
	Light Industrial
	Heavy Industrial
	St. Joseph's College / Proposed Annexation

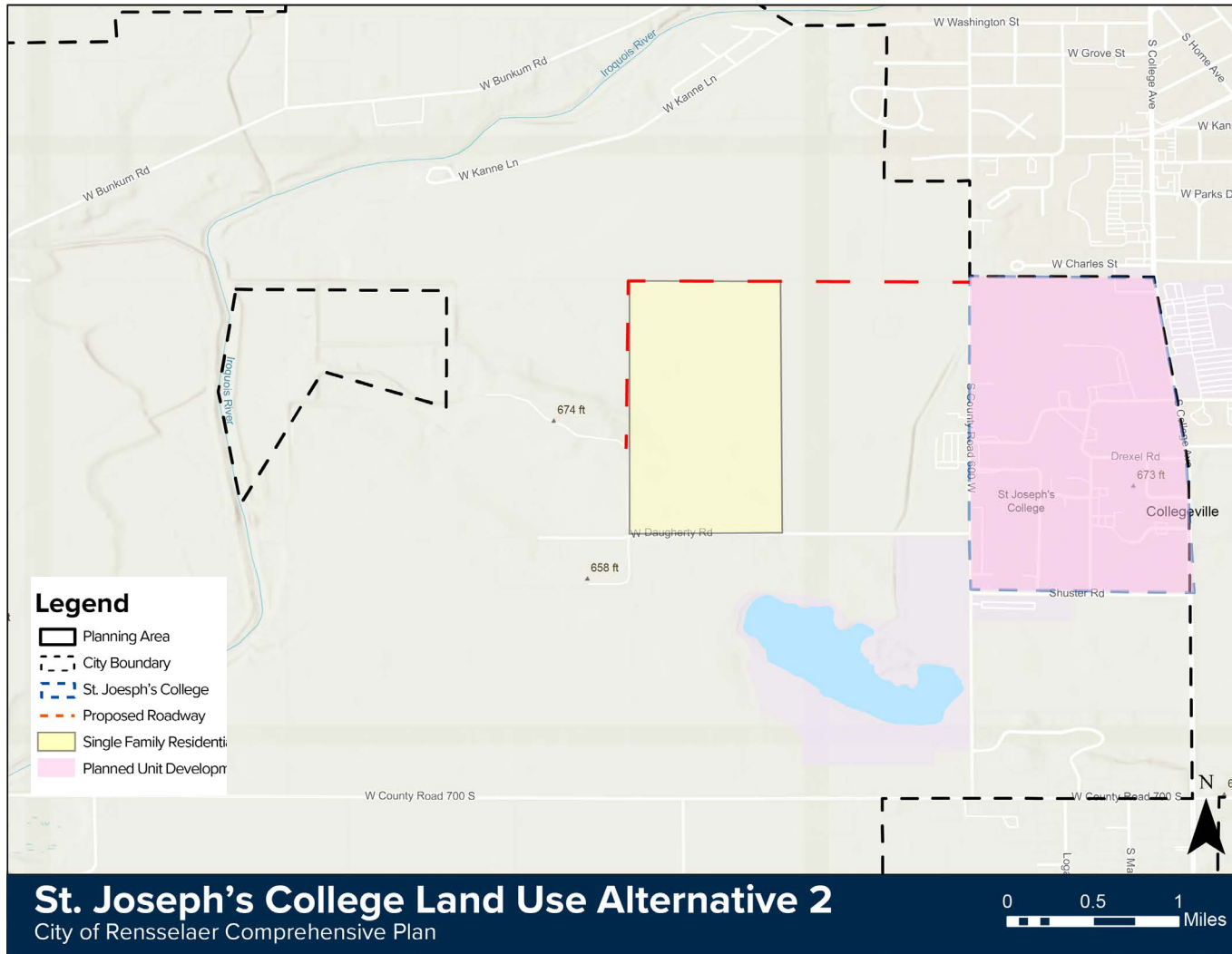


The first alternative for St. Joseph's College proposed splitting the site into multifamily and mixed-use while keeping some existing institutional and recreational capacities, such as the Core Building, for continued educational use. Alternative one also proposed a new roadway connecting the city's southern edge to the west end.



One proposed alternative land use for St. Joseph's College, which proposed a new road connection across the Iroquois River.
Source: American Structurepoint, [IndianaMAP](#), [ESRI](#).

The second proposed land use alternative for St. Joseph's College proposed the site be a planned unit development (PUD), allowing the city to have more control over how the site could be developed in the future by an outside developer. This option proposes a single-family residential near the college to encourage growth in the city's southern portion. A proposed roadway is shown to connect the PUD to the single-family residential area.



One proposed alternative for St. Joseph's College proposed a single-family residential and planned unit development, with a new roadway connecting them.

Source: American Structurepoint, [IndianaMAP](#), [ESRI](#).



LAND USE CATEGORIES

Each category describes the character, land uses, and connectivity. Land use character types have been designated based on existing land use, built form, physical characteristics and conditions, growth trends, and community input. Following the adoption of Rensselaer's Comprehensive Plan, the City should regularly review the Future Land Use Map and individual character types to ensure that the land uses reflect residents' needs and goals.

AGRICULTURE

Lands classified as agricultural consist of areas of extremely low density within the extraterritorial jurisdiction and city. The agricultural category generally includes land for farming, livestock, poultry, and low-density residential. As the lowest density in Rensselaer, these areas usually include large expanses of undeveloped, open land and natural areas. New development of other land use categories within the agricultural areas should be discouraged to limit the conversion of these areas to more intense development.

DEVELOPMENT TYPES

- Farming, including factory farm operations such as Rose Acres, Fair Oaks, CAFO, etc.
- Livestock.
- Residential homesteads.
- Parks, public spaces, nature preserves, and passive recreation.

CHARACTER

- Wide open landscapes.
- Rural homesteads situated on large, scattered sites, typically an acre or more in size.

CONSERVATION

The conservation character-type category refers to uses such as parks and recreations, open spaces, natural areas, agricultural areas, unique assets, or environmentally sensitive areas. Facilities under this category can be both publicly and privately owned. A secondary use for this category is residential. However, this should only be considered after priority areas identified for residential have already been developed.

DEVELOPMENT TYPES

- Parks and recreation.
- Open space.
- Natural and agricultural areas.
- Environmentally sensitive areas.
- Floodplain zones.

CHARACTER

- Existing natural features.
- Connectivity to nearby neighborhoods and existing parks and trails.
- Park design can match the area's existing character.





SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL

The suburban residential neighborhood category includes many planned or platted areas of the city that have not yet been developed or are in the process of being developed. The suburban residential neighborhood is intended to be somewhat of a blend of housing types, including detached single-family homes and attached single-family residential homes such as duplexes or townhouses. This residential category can serve as a transition between higher-intensity commercial or mixed-use areas and other lower-density residential areas.

DEVELOPMENT TYPES

- Detached single-family residential.
- Attached single-family residential.
- Public facilities such as schools, fire stations, and religious institutions.
- Parks and open spaces.

CHARACTER

- Walkable neighborhoods with wide sidewalks.
- Buildings with street-facing front entrances.
- Open space, street trees, and landscaping.

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD

The traditional neighborhood category includes older residential neighborhoods within or around the city's existing urbanized areas and downtown Rensselaer. The traditional neighborhood typology occurs in traditional block-grid patterns on smaller lots featuring an older housing stock. These neighborhoods are in dense, walkable environments with quick access to commercial areas, parks and open spaces, community facilities, and local destinations. Typically the oldest areas within a city, reinvestment, upkeep, maintenance, and ownership pride are critical to these neighborhoods' long-term stability. New construction, significant renovations, and building additions should consider the surrounding area's existing scale, style, and character. Traditional neighborhoods will require maintenance and infill to vacant areas in existing neighborhoods.

DEVELOPMENT TYPES

- Detached single-family residential.
- Attached single-family residential.
- Public facilities such as schools, fire stations, and religious institutions.
- Parks and open spaces.
- Small scale-commercial.

CHARACTER

- Dense, walkable streets with sidewalks.
- Grid-like street network.
- Street-facing entrances.
- Shared personal driveways or driveways via alley access.
- Open spaces, street trees, and landscaping.



Source: [Google Earth](https://www.google.com/maps/@42.3333333,-73.8333333,15z).



MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL

The multifamily residential neighborhood category includes apartments and condos. Multifamily areas should be established nearby commercial or mixed-use areas. These areas can be walkable and include community parks and services within walking distance.

DEVELOPMENT TYPES

- Apartments.
- Condos.
- Townhouses.

CHARACTER

- Medium to high-density residential neighborhoods.
- Walkable with sidewalks or trails and access to community facilities such as parks.
- Recommended height of two or three stories.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL

The neighborhood commercial character type is intended to serve the day-to-day shopping needs of adjacent residents and neighborhoods. This use encourages walkable, compact, and dense development and was closely integrated with residential uses.

DEVELOPMENT TYPES

- Moderate intensity business.
- Limited retail uses.
- Office or personal services.

CHARACTER

- The main entrances of buildings are oriented towards the street.
- Visible green spaces, street trees, and ornamental plantings.
- Sidewalks, bike lanes, or multi-use paths, if applicable.
- Open spaces with outdoor seating.
- Surface lot parking screened or hidden from the street frontage.



Example of Neighborhood Commercial development.



GENERAL COMMERCIAL

The community commercial character type is primarily located along highly-traveled corridors, which serve as primary entry points to the city. The community commercial district operates primarily as a shopping district for Rensselaer residents and visitors by providing a mix of everyday essentials and unique goods and services. The position of the commercial area serves both residents and regional visitors.

DEVELOPMENT TYPES

- Commercial and retail stores.
- Corporate and professional offices.
- Higher education facilities.
- Active or passive recreation.

CHARACTER

- The main entrances of buildings are oriented towards the street.
- Visible green spaces, street trees, and ornamental plantings.
- Sidewalks, bike lanes, or multi-use paths, if applicable.
- Surface parking lots screened from street view.

URBAN CORE

The urban core category is a mixed-use category located in historic or downtown areas of Rensselaer. This typology is the community's focal point. It offers various uses to serve as a core area. Downtown is intended to be one of Rensselaer's most diverse areas with a scale of development catered to the pedestrian. This typology should have high-intensity development with compact blocks.

DEVELOPMENT TYPES

- Local commercial and retail stores.
- Professional office space.
- Personal services.
- Upper-story residential.
- Attached single-family residential.

CHARACTER

- Compact blocks with buildings adjacent to the street, with street-facing main entrances.
- Pedestrian-oriented with wide sidewalks and crosswalks.
- On-street parking, shared lots, or surface lots behind buildings hidden from street view.
- Urban design elements including art, outdoor seating, landscaping, and lighting.





Example of Industrial development.

LIGHT INDUSTRIAL

The light industrial land use character type includes a variety of low-intensity industrial and office uses that are moderate in scale and impact, with lower noise, odors, and traffic generation than most heavy industrial uses. Typical uses include manufacturing operations, wholesale, storage activities, office, and final assembly of goods. Limited to no outdoor storage or operations should take place. Operations should be enclosed within a building and conducted so that no adverse impacts are created or emitted outside the building. Light industrial should be used as a transition between heavy industrial uses and community commercial areas. This land use character type also includes business and technology parks.

DEVELOPMENT TYPES

- Manufacturing, warehousing, wholesale, business parks, office.
- Company headquarters.
- Corporate campus.
- Medical and healthcare facilities.
- Research and development.

CHARACTER

- Buildings with front entrances oriented toward the street.
- Limited visibility of truck docks.
- Visible green spaces, street trees, and ornamental plantings.
- Sidewalks, bike lanes, or trails, if applicable.

HEAVY INDUSTRIAL

The heavy industrial land use character type is intended to provide areas for intense industrial uses such as fabricating, manufacturing, processing, extraction, heavy repair, and dismantling industries where outside operations and storage areas may be required. Heavy industrial uses should be located away from residential areas and appropriately screened in transition areas to light industrial or community commercial character types. Industrial performance standards should be utilized, which set quantitative measurements for qualitative descriptions typically used in zoning codes. These consist of eleven fields; noise, smoke, odor, dust and dirt, toxic gases, glare and heat, fire hazards, industrial wastes, transportation and traffic, aesthetics, and psychological effects.

DEVELOPMENT TYPES



- Industrial park.
- Fabricating, manufacturing, heavy repair, and processing.
- Gravel pits.
- Heavy commercial uses.

CHARACTER

- Buffers when adjacent to less-intensive uses.
- Limited visibility of truck docks and outdoor storage.
- Deeper setbacks, screens, and buffers when along higher-traffic roadways or lower-intensity land uses.







RELEVANT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

-  Promote safe and efficient modes of transportation that support an active and healthy citizenry by developing multi-modal transportation systems, maintaining and expanding infrastructure, and encouraging connectivity and walkability in all systems.
-  Support the natural environment and its vital role in human and economic health by promoting natural landscaping throughout the community, beautification and landscaping, preserving natural corridors for wildlife and recreational use, and conserving prime agricultural land.

CHAPTER 2: TRANSPORTATION

Transportation and connectivity include all forms of travel that move a person from one space to another. The future transportation component of the plan focuses on enhancing the connections throughout the city for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, public transportation, and other forms of travel. Transportation is vital for daily life and essential for future growth, environmentalism, and resiliency.

OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS

-  Support efforts to improve alternative transportation and accessibility to increase the quality of life, safety, connectivity, and walkability, produce cost savings and promote better public health.
-  Maintain an interconnected multi-modal transportation system throughout the community that prioritizes efficient movement of people, products, and services by supporting alternative transportation options and improving existing infrastructure.
-  Identify areas for roadway improvements.
-  Encourage regional transportation planning through the continued development of the Jasper County Airport and roadways near the I-65 corridor.

STRATEGIES

- Coordinate with the Indiana State Department of Health to develop a bicycle and pedestrian master plan.
- Adopt a complete street ordinance.
- Establish connections between existing parks and trails.
- If applicable, encourage new developments to install sidewalks and connect them to the existing sidewalk network.
- Document existing gaps in the sidewalk infrastructure and create a plan to connect them.
- Work with INDOT to create a multi-use trail along SR 114 to increase safety between downtown and I-65.
- Partner with St. Joseph's, Franciscan Health, Rensselaer Schools, and local employers to support efforts to connect existing city areas.
- Explore options to limit truck traffic through SR 114 to downtown by implementing a truck route that bypasses the city core.
- Monitor locations of pedestrian-motorist accidents for potential identification of problem areas.
- Continue to monitor traffic flows throughout the community to identify and eliminate bottlenecks.
- Focus on new development near the SR 114 and I-65 exit, specifically retail and warehousing.
- Support the mission of the Jasper County Airport.
- Implement appropriate height restrictions around the airport.
- Continue partnerships with KIRPC and Jasper County Community Services to provide community transportation buses.

WHAT WE HEARD



Key themes from stakeholder conversations included focusing more development efforts near I-65 and providing more options for alternative transportation.



Increasing alternative transportation was listed as the third most important item for Rensselaer's future on the survey.



42% of responses from the survey indicated Rensselaer's future starts with expanding opportunities for public services (public transportation) and providing/maintaining infrastructure.



Common responses to the survey question "What would make you visit the parks more?" included walking and biking trails.

Comments from the survey specifically mentioned a walking or biking trail from the I-65 intersection to downtown on SR 114.

FUTURE TRANSPORTATION MAP

The Future Transportation Map complements the Future Land Use Map and this plan's goals, objectives, and strategies. The Future Transportation Map guides the city's plans for roadway, trail, and pedestrian infrastructure improvements.

Transportation plans often guide short, mid, and long-range transportation projects. Transportation plans often provide guidelines and recommendations on corridor functional classification, critical design standards, and the integration of public utilities and are often critical in securing infrastructure funding.

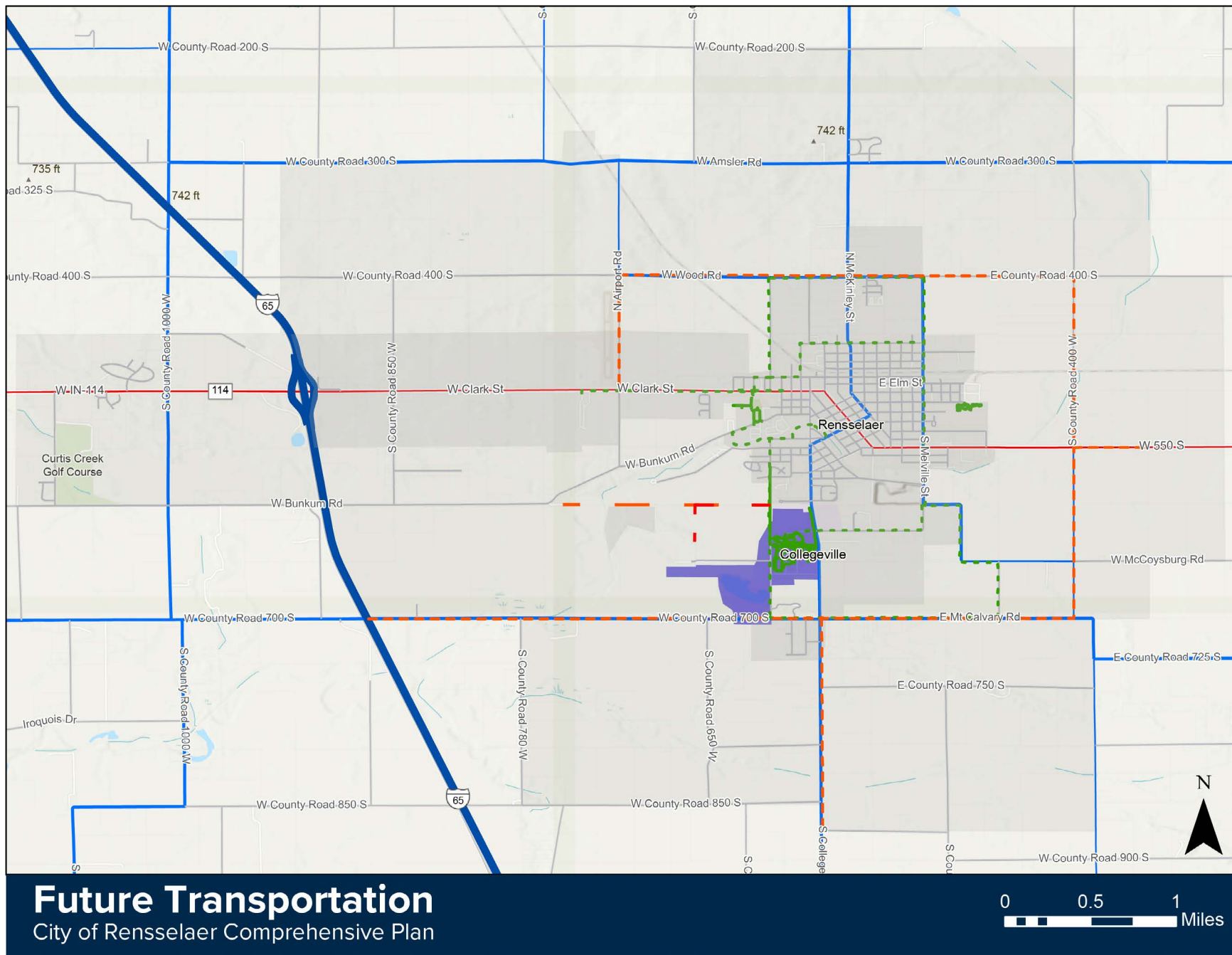
A partnership between Rensselaer, Jasper County, and INDOT will be crucial in improving infrastructure following the future transportation plan. The recommendations in this section are a tool intended for all parties to understand the implications of land use development patterns on motorized and non-motorized systems and to balance the community's functional needs with their desire to maintain a small-town feel.

This map should be used when applying land use recommendations to specific sites or corridors. The Future Transportation Map builds upon the current development pattern within Rensselaer, focusing on improving key corridors or intersections and prioritizing specific growth areas.

The Future Transportation Map includes several proposed roadways and trails. As shown in the St. Joseph's land use alternatives, two roadways are proposed to connect the south portion of town to the west by creating a roadway to connect SR 231 with Bunkum Road across the river. One of the most heard comments from public engagement was the need for a trail or multiuse path to connect downtown along SR 114, specifically to provide safe paths for those traveling to and from the community corrections center. While this project will require the collaboration of several entities, including INDOT, it is a high priority to the plan.

Legend

	Planning Area
	City Boundary
	St. Joseph's College / Proposed Annexation
	Interstate
	Principal Arterial
	Minor Arterial
	Major Collector
	Minor Collector
	Local Road
	Existing Trail
	Planned Trail
	Proposed Roadway
	Proposed Truck Route



The Future Transportation Map can be used when applying land use or transportation recommendations or improvements to specific sites or districts. The map builds upon the current development pattern within Rensselaer.
Source: American Structurepoint, [IndianaMAP](#), [ESRI](#), [IDNR](#).

RELEVANT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

- ✓ Ensure organized and effective governance and ordinance enforcement that increases resident satisfaction, promotes population growth, utilizes limited resources efficiently, promotes sound development throughout the community, and diversifies the tax base with a mix of land uses with smart growth practices.
- ✓ Encourage innovative and diverse economic growth by supporting efforts to grow local businesses, retain youth, ensure necessary social and community services, and promote life-long learning initiatives.
- ✓ Support the natural environment and its vital role in human and economic health by promoting natural landscaping throughout the community, beautification and landscaping, preserving natural corridors for wildlife and recreational use, and conserving prime agricultural land.

CHAPTER 3: PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

As part of their responsibilities, local governments and agencies are required to provide certain public services to protect the community's health, safety, and welfare. Public services can mean various things, but for this plan, public services include utilities, public safety, and social and community services.

OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS

- ! Improve the activities, accessibility, and programming of recreational spaces for users of all ages.
- ! Assist with social programs such as childcare, mental health, and recovery services to all people regardless of age, income, or stage of life.
- ! Offer family-friendly destinations and activities throughout the city that leverage the existing natural assets available to the community.

STRATEGIES

- Establish partnerships between social and community service providers.
- Partner with Appleseed Childhood Education, CASA, and other potential community partners to explore the possibility of a childcare center on campus for students, co-working space members, and other community members.
- Explore potential partnerships between Franciscan Health to increase mental health services available.

WHAT WE HEARD



A key theme from stakeholder conversations was more support for social services and community resources like mental health, recovery programs, and daycare.



52% of responses to the survey listed youth programming as the most important amenity to them.



When asked what industries Rensselaer should focus on supporting, 47% of responses listed childcare.



From the survey, parks and recreation facilities were listed as Rensselaer's second most significant asset, with quality of life being its greatest.



Many responses from the survey indicated the need for additional park programming and events, ADA accessibility, recovery programs, mental healthcare providers, and childcare.

RELEVANT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

- ✓ Develop diverse, quality, attainable, and desirable housing types for residents of all income levels and ages that are properly maintained over time.
- ✓ Promote Rensselaer's identity by encouraging neighborhood pride, creating vibrant and livable spaces, embracing the city's artistic culture, and preserving traditional neighborhoods, key features, and unique assets such as downtown Rensselaer.

CHAPTER 4: HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Important structures or areas from the community's past become valuable assets. Preservation tools can help maintain the quality and characteristics of the structure or areas. Governing bodies can identify and document historical, architectural, and culturally significant resources by designating them as historical sites.

Indiana Main Street is an OCRA run program that "encourages community-driven revitalization of downtown areas in Indiana cities and towns." While a Main Street program would be an ideal partner for strategies involving historic and archaeological resources, placemaking, and economic development, [Rensselaer currently does not have an active Main Street organization.](#)

OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS

- ! Protect and preserve the unique assets of downtown Rensselaer.
- ! Encourage a mix of development types in downtown Rensselaer.

STRATEGIES

- Create and enforce a historic overlay district to protect the unique character and attributes of downtown Rensselaer.
- Continue to preserve the appropriate use of brick pavers as roadway material in the downtown.

WHAT WE HEARD



When asked to pick Rensselaer's top five assets, survey respondents ranked quality of life as the greatest, with the downtown environment as third.



Downtown was a typical response to the survey question asking, "what is your favorite thing about living in Rensselaer?"



85% of people who completed the survey said they visited downtown to dine.



52% of people who completed the survey said they visited downtown often (3+ times a week).



Continuing revitalization of the downtown was a common theme heard from stakeholders.

RELEVANT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

- ✓ Develop diverse, quality, attainable, and desirable housing types for residents of all income levels and ages that are properly maintained over time.
- ✓ Ensure organized and effective governance and ordinance enforcement that increases resident satisfaction, promotes population growth, utilizes limited resources efficiently, promotes sound development throughout the community, and diversifies the tax base with a mix of land uses with smart growth practices.

CHAPTER 5: GOVERNMENT AND FISCAL CAPACITY

The government and fiscal capacity section reflects goals and actions involving city staff and services. Focusing on downtown redevelopment will bring life and the economy back to the center of Rensselaer. A continued focus on infill development, pedestrian-oriented commercial uses (such as restaurants and shops), and local amenities contribute to a strong community.

OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS

- ! Ensure buildings and property are properly maintained to support neighborhood stabilization.
- ! Improve areas that have been identified for revitalization and infill development.

STRATEGIES

- Identify seed funding for a façade renovation program for downtown buildings.
- Sponsor a building inspection program for new business owners looking to occupy existing buildings.
- To ensure safe residential, employment, and shopping environments, continue to enforce building codes for structures.
- Reference the future land use plan by the zoning code for new developments or other projects.
- Maintain a database of vacant properties for potential infill development that interested buyers and homebuilders can easily access.
- Coordinate with the Jasper County Economic Development Office for development of economic development and retail recruitment strategies.

WHAT WE HEARD



Stakeholders encouraged the city to share and communicate available resources on its website.



Continuing revitalization of the downtown was a common theme heard from stakeholders.



Downtown was a typical response to the survey question asking, “what is your favorite thing about living in Rensselaer?”



Survey respondents would like to see more small or locally owned businesses, restaurants, retail, beautification, and landscaping downtown.



Many comments from the survey indicated they would like to see homes better maintained.

RELEVANT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

- ✓ Develop diverse, quality, attainable, and desirable housing types for residents of all income levels and ages that are properly maintained over time.
- ✓ Promote Rensselaer's identity by encouraging neighborhood pride, creating vibrant and livable spaces, embracing the city's artistic culture, and preserving traditional neighborhoods, key features, and unique assets such as downtown Rensselaer.
- ✓ Promote safe and efficient modes of transportation that support an active and healthy citizenry by developing multi-modal transportation systems, maintaining and expanding infrastructure, and encouraging connectivity and walkability in all systems.
- ✓ Support the natural environment and its vital role in human and economic health by promoting natural landscaping throughout the community, beautification and landscaping, preserving natural corridors for wildlife and recreational use, and conserving prime agricultural land.

CHAPTER 6: PLACEMAKING

Placemaking focuses on creating spaces that are the heart of the community by focusing on people and their interactions with the everyday environment. Placemaking involves urban design, streetscaping, beautification, identity, and branding to create unique, safe, and welcoming environments.

OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS

- ! Promote beautification and landscaping efforts throughout the community while preserving unique assets such as the historic downtown and arts culture.
- ! Expand and strengthen the unique locational characteristics of the community.
- ! Prioritize developing areas of infill, especially downtown, to create vibrant community spaces that reflect the existing character.
- ! Provide amenities and places that enhance Rensselaer's appeal to attract residents, retain talent, and celebrate diversity within the community.
- ! Support and build upon Rensselaer's artistic identity.

STRATEGIES

- Utilize beautification and streetscape improvements to connect the downtown with the northern gateway to the city.
- Create a gateway specific to downtown Rensselaer.
- Encourage the use of native plantings in new developments.
- Identify seed funding for a façade renovation program for downtown buildings.
- Explore opportunities to create a permanent downtown park or gathering space in the area where the weekly farmer's market takes place.
- Implement a marketing and branding campaign to increase city recognition, attract talent, and instill community pride in residents.
- Communicate and promote potential tourism draws such as Art in the Alley.
- Partner with the Arts Council, Rensselaer Schools, local businesses, and other community partners to create an arts program for youth and community members.

WHAT WE HEARD



25% of responses said Rensselaer's future starts with plantings and streetscaping.



When asked to pick Rensselaer's top five assets, survey respondents ranked quality of life as the greatest, with the downtown environment as third.



Continue revitalizing the downtown was a common theme heard from stakeholders



Downtown was a typical response to the survey question asking, "what is your favorite thing about living in Rensselaer?"



47% of respondents said they would like to see more beautification and landscaping downtown from the survey.



Many comments from the survey indicated they would like to see homes better maintained.



Several stakeholders and comments from the survey mentioned the idea of creating permanent public space downtown for the farmer's market.



Many survey respondents and stakeholders said more should be done to solidify the city's identity and brand as an artistic destination.

RELEVANT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

- ✔ Support the natural environment and its vital role in human and economic health by promoting natural landscaping throughout the community, beautification and landscaping, preserving natural corridors for wildlife and recreational use, and conserving prime agricultural land.

CHAPTER 7: NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural resources can be defined in various ways, but generally, they are materials or substances that occur in nature and can be used for economic gain. Natural resources include minerals, forests, water, fertile land, and more. These features have significant ecological, environmental, and recreational benefits.

OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS



Protect natural corridors and waterways while respecting the inherent natural value of waterways and human health.

STRATEGIES

- Restore the urban tree canopy.
- Protect and preserve the Iroquois River and its natural corridors.
- Provide connections between parks and trails.
- Identify natural corridors in the community for preservation and potential greenway development.

WHAT WE HEARD



47% of respondents said they would like to see more beautification and landscaping downtown from the survey.



Common responses to the survey question “What would make you visit the parks more?” included walking and biking trails.

Comments from the survey specifically mentioned a walking or biking trail from the I-65 intersection to downtown on SR 114.



25% of responses said Rensselaer’s future starts with plantings and streetscaping.

RELEVANT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

- ✓ Promote Rensselaer's identity by encouraging neighborhood pride, creating vibrant and livable spaces, embracing the city's artistic culture, and preserving traditional neighborhoods, key features, and unique assets such as downtown Rensselaer.
- ✓ Promote safe and efficient modes of transportation that support an active and healthy citizenry by developing multi-modal transportation systems, maintaining and expanding infrastructure, and encouraging connectivity and walkability in all systems.
- ✓ Support the natural environment and its vital role in human and economic health by promoting natural landscaping throughout the community, beautification and landscaping, preserving natural corridors for wildlife and recreational use, and conserving prime agricultural land.

CHAPTER 8: PARKS AND RECREATION

A successful parks and recreation system offers residents and visitors both active and passive uses, public and private spaces, and be accessible in both rural and urban settings. Not only do parks and recreation impact quality of life, but there also are several other benefits, including:

- Economic benefits associated with the promotion of tourism, increased property values, attraction of businesses and industries, and reinvestment in a property.
- Health benefits such as increased physical activity can improve mood, lower blood pressure, decrease stress, and lower total cholesterol levels.
- Environmental benefits from open space and vegetation include improved air quality, recharging of aquifers, prevention of pollution of surface and groundwater, and maintenance of wildlife habits and natural systems.

OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS

- ! Support the goals, objectives, and strategies that reflect alternative transportation efforts in the Transportation section.
- ! Continue to recognize the vital importance of parks, recreation, and natural spaces to human health and quality of life.
- ! Encourage connectivity between neighborhoods, retail, employment, and recreation destinations.

STRATEGIES

- Partner with St. Joseph's College to create a multi-use path that connects the campus to the broader community while also adding an asset to the college.
- Promote increased regional tourism through youth sports facilities and other recreational amenities.
- Explore opportunities for funding to fully realize identified multi-use paths, additional programming and activities, and new parks.
- Collaborate with the Rensselaer Parks Foundation to ensure funding for the park improvements and the pool are completed.

WHAT WE HEARD



35% of people who responded to the survey said they visited the parks weekly.



Common responses to the survey question “What would make you visit the parks more?” included walking and biking trails, upgraded equipment, and children’s activities and event.

Comments from the survey specifically mentioned a walking or biking trail from the I-65 intersection to downtown on SR 114.



Increasing alternative transportation was listed as the third most important item for Rensselaer’s future on the survey.



From the survey, parks and recreation facilities were listed as Rensselaer’s second most significant asset, with quality of life being its greatest.



52% of responses to the survey listed youth programming as the most important amenity to them. *Stakeholders also expressed the need for more activities and events, specifically for the youth.*



Update and improve the pool was a reoccurring comment on the survey.

RELEVANT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

- ✓ Encourage innovative and diverse economic growth by supporting efforts to grow local businesses, retain youth, ensure necessary social and community services, and promote life-long learning initiatives.
- ✓ Support the natural environment and its vital role in human and economic health by promoting natural landscaping throughout the community, beautification and landscaping, preserving natural corridors for wildlife and recreational use, and conserving prime agricultural land.

CHAPTER 9: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

One of the most significant drivers of population growth is the availability of high-quality jobs. While jobs can bring people to an area, providing for the safety and comfort of residents and populations keeps people interested in a community. Growing Rensselaer's commercial and industrial diversity will go hand-in-hand with developing the city's workforce and population. Industries are attracted to places with a high quality of life, diverse economic activity, adequate infrastructure, and shovel-ready sites. Public infrastructure keeps the city moving and functioning smoothly. High-quality, efficient, and proper infrastructure is needed to address the needs of both existing and future residents and businesses.

OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS

- ! Support and provide efforts that encourage a strong, diverse, and healthy economy while catering to local businesses and diversifying the tax base.
- ! Explore incentives to attract new businesses while also encouraging established businesses to grow.
- ! Create a local economy that encourages new entrepreneurial growth.
- ! Promote potential areas of tourism as an economic driver.
- ! Continue to promote and develop existing industries already present in Rensselaer.
- ! Attract, develop, and maintain a talented workforce through workforce development programs, lifelong learning opportunities, and retention of youth.

STRATEGIES

- Support Jasper County Economic Development Organization (JCEDO) in its economic development efforts.
- Build off the existing employment clusters while encouraging new industrial development near I-65 to attract additional suppliers and manufacturers.
- Better utilize Tax Increment Financing to facilitate new business development.
- Identify and develop entrepreneurial and small business talent through community coaching by exploring potential partnerships with programs such as Indiana Small Business Development Center.
- Support the development of entrepreneurial space in the downtown business district.
- Collaborate with the Jasper County Tourism Commission.
- Expand on the agritourism opportunities that Fair Oaks Farms brings to the region.
- Continue and increase advertising of events such as the Rensselaer Art in the Alley Walk.
- Explore more opportunities to expand the community's artistic identity.
- Promote increased regional tourism through youth sports facilities and other recreational amenities.
- Promote the development of the I-65 interchange as a tourism support base for other destinations in the area.
- Establish a workplace visitation program so city officials regularly contact employers to discover their needs.
- Identify opportunities for partnership with Ivy Tech, Rensselaer Central School Corporation, JCEDO, and St. Joseph's College.
- Explore potential areas for trade skill development by partnering with St. Joseph's College, Rensselaer Schools, WorkOne, and local employers.
- Partner with local agencies and not-for-profits to provide additional skills training and explore grants to assist.

WHAT WE HEARD



Key themes from stakeholder conversations included focusing more development efforts near I-65 and providing more workforce skills and programs.



Support for local businesses was ranked as one of Rensselaer's most significant assets and one of its top challenges in the survey.



Expanding the local economy was ranked the essential item for Rensselaer's future in the survey.



When asked what Rensselaer's future starts with, 69% of respondents said maintaining existing businesses, and 67% of respondents selected job creation.



When asked if they could change one thing about Rensselaer, common answers from respondents included the need for more workers, higher education opportunities, and jobs.



Many survey respondents and stakeholders said more should be done to solidify the city's identity and brand as an artistic destination.



Survey respondents would like to see more small or locally owned businesses, restaurants, retail, beautification, and landscaping downtown.

BEST PRACTICE: ENTREPRENEURIAL ECONOMY

Entrepreneurs are often the heart of a community's downtown. Local businesses give consumers diverse shopping options and the feeling of supporting a local business owner directly but are also excellent sources of community development. A healthy local business often has a ripple effect on other businesses. Consumers visiting one shop or eating out at one local restaurant will likely take time to see another business downtown while they are there, and local businesses tend to source their materials from nearby. The e-commerce effect discussed in the retail gap section has changed how consumers shop for goods. A local good or service can provide consumers with a unique experience of finding a product that would not be offered online and supporting a business owner within the community.

Local businesses and entrepreneurs also provide a unique opportunity to fill underserved retail NAICS market areas. Local businesses often serve a niche for the community or the retail environment that big box stores cannot. Based on stakeholder discussions and the retail gap analysis, consumers want more local restaurants and boutiques—both optimal opportunities for entrepreneurs to take on.

Being an entrepreneur is difficult—having an established local business often takes time, money, and hard work. The city should establish incentives to encourage business development downtown to mitigate the entrepreneur's risks. Incentives could include sponsoring an infrastructure improvement plan to update and make downtown buildings more attractive to building owners. The city should continue utilizing and providing more opportunities such as workshops, networking events, and entrepreneurship classes in this space.

One of the easiest ways to diversify businesses is by promoting business types such as food trucks, test kitchens, maker's spaces, co-working spaces, and pop-up shops. Sponsoring a "food-truck Friday" or weekend pop-up show is a relatively low-cost, low-effort effective way to promote diverse businesses throughout the community and give residents a chance to experience new retail opportunities.





RELEVANT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

- ✔ Support the natural environment and its vital role in human and economic health by promoting natural landscaping throughout the community, beautification and landscaping, preserving natural corridors for wildlife and recreational use, and conserving prime agricultural land.

CHAPTER 10: AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is a crucial component of the land use pattern in Rensselaer and its extraterritorial jurisdiction, but it also plays a significant role in community history and identity. As Rensselaer plans for growth and development, it will be critical to consider the future impacts, opportunities, and challenges the agricultural industry may face.

OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS

- ! Support the natural environment and agriculture's vital role in human and economic health by preserving natural corridors and undeveloped areas of prime farmland.

STRATEGIES

- Incentivize and promote development within existing neighborhoods or infill areas within city limits.
- Establish an agricultural advisory committee to ensure that farmers in the extraterritorial jurisdiction have their needs accommodated as the City develops.
- Coordinate with Jasper County Tourism to explore agritourism opportunities.

WHAT WE HEARD



The city's small-town feel was many respondents' favorite thing about Rensselaer.



Several stakeholders and comments from the survey mentioned the idea of creating permanent public space downtown for the farmer's market.



Stakeholders and review team members suggested building off the area's existing agritourism.

RELEVANT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

- ✓ Develop diverse, quality, attainable, and desirable housing types for residents of all income levels and ages that are properly maintained over time.
- ✓ Promote Rensselaer's identity by encouraging neighborhood pride, creating vibrant and livable spaces, embracing the city's artistic culture, and preserving traditional neighborhoods, key features, and unique assets such as downtown Rensselaer.
- ✓ Ensure organized and effective governance and ordinance enforcement that increases resident satisfaction, promotes population growth, utilizes limited resources efficiently, promotes sound development throughout the community, and diversifies the tax base with a mix of land uses with smart growth practices.
- ✓ Promote safe and efficient modes of transportation that support an active and healthy citizenry by developing multi-modal transportation systems, maintaining and expanding infrastructure, and encouraging connectivity and walkability in all systems.

CHAPTER 11: HOUSING

Because of Rensselaer's rural nature and small-town characteristics, existing and future housing stock is crucial to understanding and planning for future growth. The survey confirmed that many residents choose to live in Rensselaer because of its small-town feel and quality people. Providing quality, affordable, and diverse housing options is one approach to attracting and retaining new residents.

OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS

- ! Ensure consistency between development ordinances and the land use element of the comprehensive plan.
- ! Secure the status of existing neighborhoods in need of revitalization.
- ! Diversify the types of housing available to new community residents.

STRATEGIES

- Explore modifications to the zoning ordinance that allow for flexibility in accommodating the caregiving of family members in accessory dwelling units or other temporary structures.
- Maintain a database of vacant properties for potential infill development that interested buyers and homebuilders can easily access.
- Promote the expansion of middle-income housing stock.
- Support mixed-use development and second-story dwelling spaces when applicable and appropriate in areas such as downtown.
- Explore Owner Occupied Rehabilitation programs through Federal and State grant program that would allow eligible homeowners to be able to address repair issues on existing housing stock.

WHAT WE HEARD



Supply and affordability of housing were ranked as Rensselaer's top challenges on the survey.



Expanding the number and affordability of housing choices was ranked as the second most crucial item for Rensselaer's future on the survey.



The small-town feel was a typical response to the survey question asking, "what is your favorite thing about living in Rensselaer?"



Many comments from the survey indicated they would like to see homes better maintained.



Stakeholders mentioned the need for opportunities to age in place and the high demand for housing but low availability.



78% of survey respondents lived in Rensselaer.



When asked what respondents would change about Rensselaer, many listed affordable housing.

BEST PRACTICE: AGING IN PLACE^{5,6}

Aging in place is when residents can live and age in the community of choice for as long as possible, ideally staying active for as long as possible. According to a national survey on housing and home modifications issues, 82 percent of respondents would prefer to stay at their residence as long as possible.⁷ However, many communities have had difficulty creating livable communities for all ages. Physical and non-physical barriers may make staying at home a poor option or even impossible. Municipalities need to minimize or eliminate these barriers and create housing options that enable citizens to be independent and thrive at all ages. If residents can age in place, it benefits not only them, but it benefits the social and economic fabric of the community.

Housing issues are interdependent with neighborhood and community design, access to food and transportation, affordability, and safety. Housing is a variable in social interaction. It is a multifaceted issue that requires interdisciplinary approaches to create successful solutions. Solutions to consider are “universal design,” the design of neighborhoods, social support, affordability, and safety.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

The design of products and environments is to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without needing adaptation or specialized design.

- RON MACE, ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Homes designed according to the principles of Universal Design (also known as barrier-free design) would meet the behavioral needs of the majority of the population in our society across a range of ages and abilities. Current standards generally do not include a broad range of ages, abilities, heights, and people’s senses, resulting in spaces that unnecessarily disable residents.

⁵ [*American Planning Association: Aging in Place: Housing, Supports, Safety.*](#)

⁶ [*American Planning Association: Aging in Place: Tools to Advance Resilience.*](#)

⁷ [*AARP: Fixing to Stay: A National Survey on Housing and Home Modification Issues.*](#)

Homes designed according to the principles of Universal Design (also known as barrier-free design) would meet the behavioral needs of the majority of the population in our society across a range of ages and abilities. Current standards generally do not include a broad range of ages, abilities, heights, and people's senses, resulting in spaces that unnecessarily disable residents.

Housing not designed to meet people of any age and ability increases the risk of accidents because of the gap between the built environment's demands and a resident's abilities. For example, falls are the leading cause of injury and death for older adults and have a direct cost to society of over \$30 billion annually. Falls and other safety concerns can be addressed by available design features such as a zero-step entry into the home, a zero-step shower, non-skid flooring, high lighting with low glare, grab bars, and a clear and accessible path. Other human-made barriers are narrower doorways for wheelchairs, walkers, and bathrooms accessed only by stairs.

Universal Design features have been formalized in ordinances and policies that promote housing features such as zero-step entries, no-threshold showers, a bathroom on the first floor, and 36-inch wide doorways. These solutions have been successfully built in all housing types in every climate in the US and, therefore, could be implemented in New Haven's housing stock.

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES FOR HOME IMPROVEMENTS ARE:⁸

US Department of Agriculture's Rural Development

The US Department of Agriculture's Rural Development program offers loans of up to \$20,000 and grants of up to \$7,500 to low-income homeowners in rural areas who need to renovate. To qualify, you must have a family income below 50 percent of your area's median income. The interest rate is capped at 1.0 percent. Grants are available only to homeowners who are 62 or older. Younger borrowers are eligible only for loans.

To apply, contact your state office of the US Department of Agriculture. A state-by-state list is available on the USDA's website. You can also find lenders in your area who specialize in USDA loans.

Fannie Mae and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA)

FHA renovation loans for homeowners and buyers are not explicitly designed for borrowers with disabilities but can be used for necessary adaptations. Fannie Mae's HomeStyle program is available for buyers who want money to buy and renovate a home in one loan or those who wish to refinance their home loans and get cash for renovations. The FHA's 203(k) renovation loan is similar to Fannie's but has more flexible qualification requirements.

To qualify, you'll need to gather the necessary documents and information on your assets, credit, and debt to apply for an FHA loan.

⁸ [MoneyGeek](#).



Refinancing

Refinancing when interest rates are low is an excellent way to use a home's equity to pay for projects like a home renovation. First, contact several different lenders to see who offers the best rate, then secure a preliminary mortgage approval, and finally, choose your lender.

Getting Help From Non-profit Organizations

Non-profits can be a source to choose which home repairs are needed and how to pay for them, and some include:

Rebuilding Together works with dozens of affiliated organizations nationwide to complete some 10,000 projects a year. They help low-income homeowners, requiring applicants to fall under income guidelines, which vary depending on location.

The National Resource Center on Supportive Housing and Home Modification: Headquartered at the University of Southern California, the center aims to encourage aging in place and promote home modifications. The National Resource Center provides training, education, technical help, and an information clearinghouse.

Local Independent Living Center affiliates: This is a directory of independent living centers compiled by the Independent Living Research Utilization Program, a non-profit organization. The guide lists centers that train people with disabilities to live independently, where 51% of the staff and the board of directors have disabilities.

Local Easter Seals chapters: Easter Seals and real estate brokerage Century 21 launched the Easy Access for Easier Living Program, which includes educational brochures, resources, and tips for making a home accessible.

NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN⁹⁻¹³

Universal design also applies to neighborhoods. Universal Design is designing an environment to be used and understood “to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of age, size, ability or disability.” Suppose every environment is designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it. In that case, everyone can benefit from that design and not just a minority of the population because “if an environment is accessible, usable, convenient and a pleasure to use, everyone benefits.”

Considering a large diversity of needs and abilities throughout the design process leads to the most significant number of users possible. Universal design is good design.

When Rensselaer adds new or renovates public infrastructure, building universal design considerations into every process step is a great way to maximize the number of future users. Universal Design works best when applied at the beginning of the design process and not seen as an “add-on” to the process. Reaching out to the disabled community in the area and involving them in planning decisions from the beginning is also vital for designing genuinely inclusive spaces.

The National Disability Authority notes that “Universal Design is not only applicable to the needs of people with disabilities but to everyone, regardless of age, size, ability or disability. Secondly, Universal Design is not a list of specifications; it is an approach to design that considers the varied abilities of users.” The term “Universal Design” is different from compliance with the ADA standards. ADA prohibits discrimination based on disability, while Universal Design standards include the ADA’s requirements but go beyond them to make the built environment accessible to even more users.

One example of a universal design improvement is building or repairing the ends of driveways to meet the street with as little slope as possible. Many drivers have experienced “bottoming out” their car at the end of a driveway. Those situations can be precarious for people with limited mobility and wheelchair users. By addressing where the driveways meet the street in a more universally designed way, residents who use wheelchairs can more safely roll onto the road. It also makes things easier for other pedestrians and drivers.

⁹ [What is Universal Design](#). Copyright© 1997 NC State University.

¹⁰ [USDOT: Literature Review on Vehicle Travel Speeds and Pedestrian Injuries](#).

¹¹ [What is Universal Design](#). Copyright© 1997 NC State University.

¹² [The principles of universal design: Version 2.0](#).

¹³ [10 Things to Know about UD](#).



Poorly designed sidewalk and crosswalk infrastructure make it more difficult for people with limited mobility. For example, a utility pole blocking the middle of a narrow sidewalk might not pose an issue for a non-disabled person. Still, a wheelchair user, a person with a walker, or someone pushing a stroller would have to find another route or walk in the street to get around the pole.

Source: [APA: Inclusive Mobility](#).



Likewise, a pedestrian activation button on a raised sidewalk out of the ADA-accessible part of a curb ramp makes it nearly impossible for a wheelchair user to cross under the safety of the “walk” light.

Source: [APA: Inclusive Mobility](#).

SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS

While aging in place and community may have the advantages of familiarity and maintaining one's connections, it may also set older adults and disabled persons up for social isolation, particularly if they have limited mobility or access to other people. Social isolation and loneliness have been shown to affect health and well-being negatively. Density does not automatically ensure social interaction. Can residents get to a senior center or other places for interaction? Get to medical services? Can an aide take a bus to serve a senior at home? Understanding transportation issues from varied perspectives will assist Rensselaer with addressing these and creating housing options that work for residents' needs. Barriers to accessing support services are created when one can no longer drive to a location or afford to own a vehicle. This barrier may also be an obstacle to receiving services at home, regardless of whether one rent or owns.¹⁴

SAFETY

At the scale of a neighborhood, safety includes benches to enable walking, shade and shelter for refuge from the weather, smooth and well-maintained sidewalks year-round, good lighting, orientations that encourage informal surveillance and social interactions, human-scale design, layers of public versus private space that support territoriality, and a lack of dark nooks to give shelter from possible predators.

¹⁴ Ball, M.S. (2014.) "Aging in Place: A Toolkit for Local Governments."





RELEVANT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

- ✓ Ensure organized and effective governance and ordinance enforcement that increases resident satisfaction, promotes population growth, utilizes limited resources efficiently, promotes sound development throughout the community, and diversifies the tax base with a mix of land uses with smart growth practices.
- ✓ Promote safe and efficient modes of transportation that support an active and healthy citizenry by developing multi-modal transportation systems, maintaining and expanding infrastructure, and encouraging connectivity and walkability in all systems.
- ✓ Encourage innovative and diverse economic growth by supporting efforts to grow local businesses, retain youth, ensure necessary social and community services, and promote life-long learning initiatives.
- ✓ Support the natural environment and its vital role in human and economic health by promoting natural landscaping throughout the community, beautification and landscaping, preserving natural corridors for wildlife and recreational use, and conserving prime agricultural land.

CHAPTER 12: HAZARD MITIGATION

With increased natural disasters and global pandemics, hazard mitigation and emergency planning are more important than ever. While the level of risk involved in each scenario differs by the community, being prepared and proactive is always better than being reactive. The hazard mitigation section strives to lessen the adverse effects of a disaster through mitigation, preparedness, and recovery planning.

OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS

- ! Maintain and expand infrastructure to serve the needs of all current and future residents while also ensuring systems resistance to external shocks.
- ! Keep new development out of 100-year floodplain zones.

STRATEGIES

- Work with INDOT and other municipal partners to create a Capital Improvements Plan and Program to address areas of priority for improvement over the next five to 20 years.
- Ensure the zoning ordinance has an effective flood zone overlay.

WHAT WE HEARD



42% of responses from the survey indicated Rensselaer's future starts with expanding opportunities for public services (public transportation) and providing/maintaining infrastructure.



68% of responses from the survey stated Rensselaer's future starts with maintaining existing businesses.



Figure 1. Green infrastructure captures stormwater runoff in Seattle, WA.
Source: [Wikipedia](#).

BEST PRACTICE: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

“Green infrastructure” is stormwater management systems that preserve, emulate, or restore a site's natural hydrology. It is sometimes called “urban stormwater control” or “low-impact development.” It has become a popular way to manage stormwater runoff as it is less expensive than traditional “grey” infrastructure (e.g., vast systems of pipes and sewer lines).

By using green infrastructure, regulators can encourage more stormwater to infiltrate into soils, to help refill aquifers, or be taken up by plants and filtered for pollutants. Additionally, it is more beautiful because it uses plants instead of pipes (see Figure 1). Using those same plants can benefit the local ecosystem by providing food and habitat for wildlife and pollinators. Green infrastructure reduces the flow and pollution in a water body during rainstorms or snowmelt. Snowmelt runoff has the potential for higher pollutant loadings to waterways because of the sudden release of pollutants trapped in the snow. It may also become a more significant water-quality threat as climate change increases the number of freeze-thaw cycles during increasingly warmer winters.

Stormwater runoff contributions to urban streams increase with the amount of impervious surface in a watershed (see Figure 2). For example, the Center for Watershed Protection found that stream quality is affected when only 10 percent of an urbanized watershed consists of impervious surfaces, such as roofs and paving. Also, streams become severely polluted when impervious surfaces in a watershed exceed 25 percent.

The US Environmental Protection Agency has been championing green infrastructure as part of its Municipal Separate Stormwater Sewer System permit program. Smart Growth advocates have also promoted these practices as their low-impact development initiatives. Local regulators need to know how to evaluate green infrastructure when it is proposed to replace conventional infrastructure in a new development or when it is intended to retrofit existing stormwater management systems to address existing water pollution and flood-hazard risks.

Castle Rock, Colorado, is one of the fastest-growing communities in the United States. In 2006, the City planning department and the local water utility partnered to address how to conserve water best while still accommodating growth. As part of their plan, the City set up financial incentives, regulatory changes, and behavioral service strategies to utilize water more efficiently. For example, the City gave financial incentives to developers in exchange for the developers being required to meet professional certification requirements for water efficiency. Although Midwestern cities like Rensselaer sometimes have too much water instead of too little, managing water during floods and droughts is essential.

There are many methods for tackling water conservation on the American Planning Association's website, planning.org. Some ideas include requiring only plants native to Indiana to be planted in new developments and upgrading aging stormwater management infrastructure with green infrastructure. Although the law does not mandate all water-related planning, residents and utilities can still find ways to collaborate. More specific local plans can include water supply and wastewater infrastructure plans; hazard mitigation and resilience plans, like floodplain and stormwater management; demand management; watershed processes and health; and interagency coordination and collaboration plans. If those variables feel overwhelming, Rensselaer can look to peer communities for best practices. Although every city is different, no one needs to reinvent the wheel.

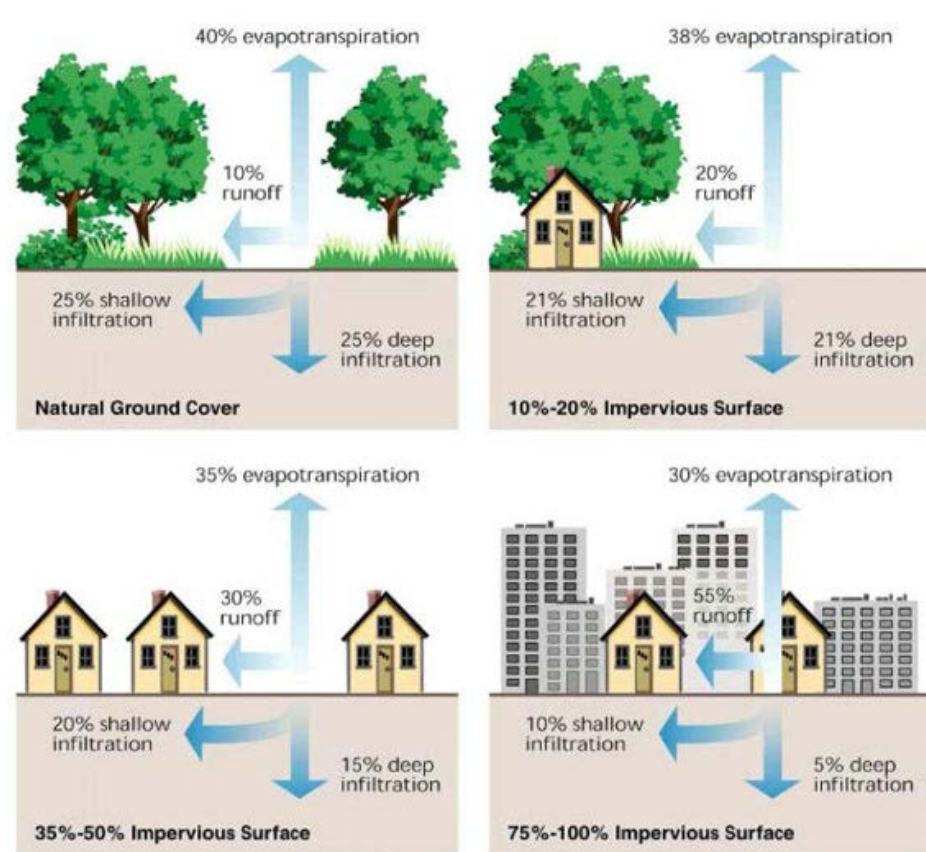


Figure 2. Changes in hydrology from the increased impervious surface.
Source: [American Planning Association](http://AmericanPlanningAssociation.org).

RELEVANT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

-  Ensure organized and effective governance and ordinance enforcement that increases resident satisfaction, promotes population growth, utilizes limited reSources efficiently, promotes sound development throughout the community, and diversifies the tax base with a mix of land uses with smart growth practices.
-  Promote safe and efficient modes of transportation that support an active and healthy citizenry by developing multi-modal transportation systems, maintaining and expanding infrastructure, and encouraging connectivity and walkability in all systems.
-  Encourage innovative and diverse economic growth by supporting efforts to grow local businesses, retain youth, ensure necessary social and community services, and promote life-long learning initiatives.

CHAPTER 13: BROADBAND

With the increased reliability on broadband services, broadband communications planning is rapidly becoming a need for a variety of services. The recent Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated this need. While the level of necessity varies by location, each business and household must have reliable broadband access to connect to the greater community.

An important distinction here is internet vs. broadband. The internet is a network of data, colloquially known as the “World Wide Web,” accessible through capable devices (e.g., computers, laptops, smartphones, etc.). Broadband is the technology used to connect those devices to the internet. While in the past, a cable or WiFi router had to be used, broadband requires only an access point to provide high-speed WiFi to the nearby area.

[The Federal Communications Commission National Broadband Map](#) showed that most of Rensselaer’s city limits were between 80 to 100 percent covered by internet speeds of 25/3 Mbps or greater. However, many gaps existed within the broadband network in the planning area and along the SR 114 corridor toward I-65.

OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS



Maintain and expand infrastructure to serve the needs of all current and future residents while also ensuring systems resistance to external shocks.

STRATEGIES

- Coordinate utility, sewer, stormwater, transportation, and other infrastructure projects to combine construction projects, reduce costs, and expand broadband infrastructure where possible.
- Explore options to offer free public wifi or hotspots in the community.
- Work with regional broadband providers and Jasper County REMC to increase broadband services.
- Identify existing gaps in broadband infrastructure and prioritize areas for broadband expansion.
- Coordinate with Jasper County to explore local, state, and federal funding opportunities for broadband improvement projects.

WHAT WE HEARD



42% of responses from the survey indicated Rensselaer's future starts with expanding opportunities for public services (public transportation) and providing/maintaining infrastructure.



68% of responses from the survey stated Rensselaer's future starts with maintaining existing businesses.



Several comments from the survey expressed the need for increased internet services.

IMPLEMENTATION

The goals and objective statements are created to guide the community's vision through recommendations; the strategies are straightforward guidelines to implement those recommendations.

Strategies that are considered high-priority were developed into critical path strategies. Critical path strategies are the key to the implementation of this plan. Each critical path strategy has a complete page outlying the work plan. This portion of the plan is intended to assist in implementation, provide related goals, outline action items, list people or organizations who should be involved, and suggest an estimated timeline and cost for each project.

Each strategy identified as a critical path strategy should be considered a top priority. Strategies are typically short-term initiatives that are affordable projects that can create momentum and showcase immediate progress for the community. Some projects will be long-term and require extended timelines, additional budgeting, or increased staff resources. Strategies might apply to multiple goals or objective statements. Strategies that directly address multiple goals will be identified. Strategies might address the first step to completing a long-term goal as well.

CRITICAL PATH STRATEGIES

The following pages guide Rensselaer and community partners in implementing the identified critical path strategies. Each program's dedicated work plan will have an included timeframe that will be no longer than five years and an estimated cost.

Some proposed projects and programs will incorporate public outreach and engagement activities in their planning process. To provide transparency to the decision-making and implementation process, responsible parties must keep the public informed of the changes and progress occurring because of the implementation of this plan. All identified critical path strategies will benefit from informing the public of potential changes, anticipated impacts and benefits, and when the community can expect to see those changes implemented. Public outreach will give businesses and residents time to prepare for the changes, become educated about and aware, and potentially reduce adverse public reactions.

STRATEGY 1

Develop institutional capacity to advance key projects in the downtown and at other critical points.

ACTION STEPS

- Prepare a short document outlining several key projects the City wants to implement. Several projects and their actions steps may include:
 - Downtown & commercial building renovation program.
 - Work with the Chamber of Commerce to explore the possibility of forming a downtown merchant's association.
 - Offer grants to downtown businesses in need of exterior renovations.
 - Building inspection program.
 - Create a database of vacant properties that developers can easily access.
 - Coordinate between building, fire, and zoning officials to identify potential code issues or modifications required to occupy the building.
 - Downtown park/gathering space.
 - Coordinate with the farmer's market, parks department, and downtown merchants.
 - Determine the feasibility, design, and implementation of the project.
 - Secure funding to complete the gathering space.
 - Identify multi-modal connections between downtown and community corrections center.
 - Coordinate with INDOT LaPorte District to obtain historic traffic counts and accident locations along SR 114.
 - Identify potential comparable projects in other communities to ascertain costs and benefits.
 - Convene a committee consisting of INDOT and Jasper County to discuss the corrections center and issues of transportation.
 - Work with INDOT LaPorte District to identify potential funding sources for trails implementation.
- Identify pertinent representatives from each organization.
- Invite representatives to a charrette to discuss these projects.
- Develop an action plan for assigning projects to agencies, as well as identifying outside resources.

PARTIES INVOLVED

- City of Rensselaer.
- Jasper County Planning.
- Jasper County Economic Development.
- INDOT
- City of Rensselaer schools.
- Chamber of Commerce.
- Jasper County Tourism.
- Downtown business owners.

RELATED GOAL CATEGORIES

- Economic Development.
- Public Facilities and Services.
- Transportation.
- Parks and Recreation.
- Historic and Archeologic Resources.
- Government and Fiscal Capacity.
- Placemaking.

TIME FRAME

1 year for initial items; ongoing for project implementation.

ESTIMATED COST

Administrative costs only for initial items.

STRATEGY 2

Explore alternative strategies to address housing needs in the city.

ACTION STEPS

- Utilize a housing needs assessment to determine potential solutions to increase housing in the community, some of which may include:
 - Community Land Trust (CLT), a non-profit run by community members that buys vacant or underutilized land in the city to build affordable housing units.
 - Keeps affordable homes affordable after passing through owners.
 - Involves collaboration, partnership, and investment from the city and other community organizations in order to buy land and manage funds.
 - Middle housing options, encourage the development of middle housing options such as townhomes, courtyard buildings, tiny homes, and cottage courts.
 - Ensure the zoning ordinance allows middle housing options in certain districts throughout the city. These changes could possibly include reducing minimum lot sizes, allowing for more housing types, revisiting minimum structure sizes, and reducing or eliminating parking minimums.
 - Inclusionary housing, utilizes mandatory requirements or voluntary programs with development incentives in the zoning ordinance to create a certain new number of affordable housing units in new housing developments.
 - These programs would offer density bonuses or other regulatory or financial incentives such as waiving or reducing fees if affordable units are included.

PARTIES INVOLVED

- Jasper County.
- City of Rensselaer.
- Local realtors and developers.

RELATED GOAL CATEGORIES

- Housing.
- Economic Development.
- Government and Fiscal Capacity.

TIME FRAME

1 to 2 years.

ESTIMATED COST

Administrative fees for initial tasks and changes to zoning code.

STRATEGY 3

Partner with Appleseed Childhood Education, CASA, and other potential community partners to explore the possibility of a childcare center to serve community residents.

ACTION STEPS

- Convene a meeting of the affected organizations to identify the affected populations.
- Develop and send out a survey to determine the willingness of targeted populations to utilize daycare services if they were available.

PARTIES INVOLVED

- Appleseed Childhood Education.
- CASA.
- Local employers.
- City of Rensselaer.
- Jasper County Economic Development.

RELATED GOAL CATEGORIES

- Economic Development.
- Public Facilities and Services.

TIME FRAME

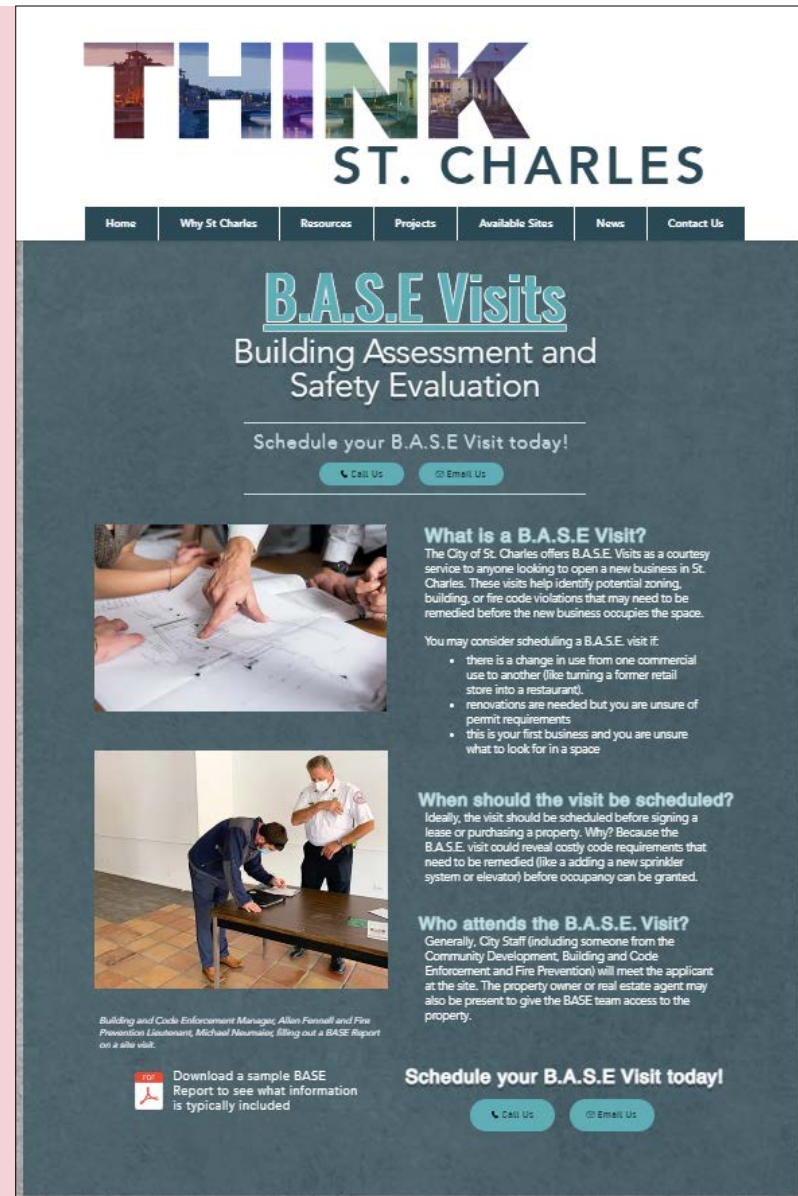
6 months to 1 year.

ESTIMATED COST

Administrative costs only.

CASE STUDY: ST. CHARLES, IL PRE-INSPECTION PROGRAM

St. Charles, IL, has created a program to assist new tenants about to sign a lease or anyone going to purchase a commercial/industrial space within their city limits. These visits help potential tenants/owners better understand the space they are considering and its potential costs. These complementary meetings are called Building Assessment, and Safety Evaluation (BASE) visits. Meetings occur at the commercial space and host building, and fire and zoning officials to identify any potential code issues or expensive modifications required to occupy that building. BASE visits are an invaluable tool to help retail recruitment efforts. Not only do they identify potential code or structural issues to tenants, but they also establish a relationship with prospective business owners and their commercial brokers. This program provides “goodwill” to the retailer and insights into their business and why they are considering Rensselaer for their location.



THINK
ST. CHARLES


Home Why St Charles Resources Projects Available Sites News Contact Us

B.A.S.E. Visits

Building Assessment and Safety Evaluation

Schedule your B.A.S.E. Visit today!


[Call Us](#) [Email Us](#)



What is a B.A.S.E. Visit?
The City of St. Charles offers B.A.S.E. Visits as a courtesy service to anyone looking to open a new business in St. Charles. These visits help identify potential zoning, building, or fire code violations that may need to be remedied before the new business occupies the space.

You may consider scheduling a B.A.S.E. visit if:

- there is a change in use from one commercial use to another (like turning a former retail store into a restaurant),
- renovations are needed but you are unsure of permit requirements
- this is your first business and you are unsure what to look for in a space



When should the visit be scheduled?
Ideally, the visit should be scheduled before signing a lease or purchasing a property. Why? Because the B.A.S.E. visit could reveal costly code requirements that need to be remedied (like adding a new sprinkler system or elevator) before occupancy can be granted.

Who attends the B.A.S.E. Visit?
Generally, City Staff (including someone from the Community Development, Building and Code Enforcement and Fire Prevention) will meet the applicant at the site. The property owner or real estate agent may also be present to give the BASE team access to the property.

[Download a sample BASE Report to see what information is typically included](#)

Schedule your B.A.S.E. Visit today!

[Call Us](#) [Email Us](#)

Building and Code Enforcement Manager, Allan Fennell and Fire Prevention Lieutenant, Michael Neumaier, filling out a BASE Report on a site visit.

Source: [THINK St. Charles: BASE Visits](#).

STRATEGY 4

Utilize beautification and streetscape improvements to connect downtown with the western, southern, and northern approaches to the city.

ACTION STEPS

- Identify specific locations for gateway treatments at the city's west, south, and north entryways.
- Provide a separate gateway downtown to attract attention to the city's core.
- Implement additional signage and wayfinding throughout the city to identify neighborhoods and streets.
- Secure funding for gateway, beautification, and placemaking improvements.

PARTIES INVOLVED

- Business owners.
- Chamber of Commerce.
- Jasper County Economic Development.
- Jasper County Tourism.
- City of Rensselaer.

RELATED GOAL CATEGORIES

- Placemaking.
- Economic Development.

TIME FRAME

1 to 2 years.

ESTIMATED COST

Variable, depending upon design, location, and availability of external funding.

STRATEGY 5

Implement a marketing and branding campaign to increase city recognition, attract talent, and instill community pride in residents.

ACTION STEPS

- Assemble a group of city leaders as a Branding Task Force to head up the development and implementation of this process.
- Inventory all existing branding efforts to help determine Rensselaer's identity.
- Create a logo, narrative, and tag lines that promote Rensselaer as an artistic destination for new residents, potential business owners, and existing residents.
- Develop strategies for the city, partner agencies, businesses, and property owners to share the new brand.
- Identify existing or new events and potential organizers to create and coordinate new frequent micro-events such as local live music, street food celebrations, food truck Fridays, and art in the alley walks.
- Implement wayfinding signs that mark the location of city-owned off-street parking lots and local attractions.

PARTIES INVOLVED

- City of Rensselaer.
- Jasper County Economic Development.
- Jasper County Tourism.
- Chamber of Commerce.

RELATED GOAL CATEGORIES

- Placemaking.
- Economic Development.
- Housing.

TIME FRAME

6 months to 1 year.

ESTIMATED COST

Variable, depending on outside consultation.

BRANDING

Branding can contribute to placemaking while also providing information for residents and visitors. Rensselaer's identity can grow a sense of place and encourage its identity. A brand can give a picture of that identity to help separate Rensselaer from other cities.

"Branding involves creating a desired image for a product or place. For a place, a brand is a set of emotional connections and positive expectations in the minds of residents and visitors. Successful brand identities establish a preconceived expectation that is either met or exceeded by reality. Logos and taglines are evocative of the overall image that is a brand. Through advertising, events, and grassroots word of mouth, places can be defined by coordinated branding efforts, allowing businesses and activities to stand out from the continuous onslaught of media appeals to consumers. Branding is more than the words and images used along with a place name; those things can change over time. A brand is a long-term, permanent concept of what a place should be and mean. It, therefore, demands a great deal of forethought to be successfully conceived, implemented, and sustained."¹⁵

¹⁵ University of Wisconsin Extensions, *Downtown Economics*. Issue 154.



Example of branding from Carmel Arts District, Carmel, Indiana.
Source: American Structurepoint.

STRATEGY 6

Partner with the Prairie Arts Council, Rensselaer Schools, local businesses, and other community partners to create an arts program for youth and community residents.

ACTION STEPS

- Work with the Prairie Arts Council to expand the existing summer art camp program into a permanent space and program to provide year-round arts education for children and community residents.
- Coordinate with local artists to teach classes or workshops to children and community members.
- Promote available programs through Rensselaer schools and local businesses.

PARTIES INVOLVED

- Prairie Arts Council.
- Rensselaer Schools.
- Chamber of Commerce.
- Local businesses.
- City of Rensselaer.

RELATED GOAL CATEGORIES

- Placemaking.
- Economic Development.
- Public facilities and services.

TIME FRAME

1 to 2 years.

ESTIMATED COST

Administrative costs only.

STRATEGY 7

Partner with local agencies, schools, and not-for-profits to provide additional skills training and explore grants to assist.

ACTION STEPS

- Meet with local employers to determine skillset needs.
- Work with Jasper County Schools, Rensselaer Schools, and Jasper County Economic Development to explore the opportunity of a county-wide career center for students to jump-start their career program.
- Form a partnership between Rensselaer Schools and St. Joseph's College to allow students to enroll in certificate or associate degree programs.
- Explore options for funding through state programs.

PARTIES INVOLVED

- Local employers.
- Rensselaer Schools.
- Jasper County Schools.
- St. Joseph's College.
- Jasper County Economic Development.

RELATED GOAL CATEGORIES

- Economic Development.

TIME FRAME

2 to 3 years.

ESTIMATED COST

Administrative costs only.

STRATEGY 8

Implement a Capital Improvement Plan and Program (CIPP).

ACTION STEPS

- Work with INDOT and other regional or local partners to identify and prioritize areas for maintenance and improvement through a CIPP.
- Prioritize improvements, expansions, and new roadways in areas of growth shown on the Future Land Use Map.
- Identify gaps in existing sidewalk infrastructure to improve connectivity.
- Coordinate with the Park Department to include and prioritize trail expansion or improvement projects.
- Coordinate street, utility, stormwater, broadband, and other projects to limit construction, reduce costs, and expand broadband infrastructure where possible.
- Identify potential funding sources to complete a CIPP.

PARTIES INVOLVED

- Jasper County.
- City of Rensselaer.
- INDOT.
- Rensselaer Parks Department.

RELATED GOAL CATEGORIES

- Transportation.
- Land Use.
- Hazard Mitigation.
- Government and Fiscal Capacity.
- Parks and Recreation.
- Broadband.

TIME FRAME

3 to 5 years.

ESTIMATED COST

Consultant costs; estimated at \$50,000.

What is a Capital Improvement Plan and Program?

A CIPP ensures that public funds are strategically invested in infrastructure to provide the most significant benefit to the public. The CIPP prioritizes transportation projects for local funds and helps ensure eligibility for state and federal grant programs. Projects can include intersection improvements, road widening, beautification, and new construction or reconstruction of roads and trails.



STRATEGY 9

Coordinate with Jasper County REMC, local broadband providers, and other local partners to pursue Broadband Ready Community Certification, procure funding, and offer residents and businesses with fast, reliable internet options.

ACTION STEPS

- Gauge the extent of download and upload speeds in different areas of the City.
- Identify areas with the most need for broadband expansion.
- Work with FBN Indiana to increase coverage to priority areas.
- Become an IEDC Broadband Ready Community.
- Coordinate with utility, transportation, stormwater, and other infrastructure improvements to combine construction projects, reduce costs, and expand broadband infrastructure where possible.
- Incorporate potential broadband improvement projects in the CIPP.
- Work with Jasper County REMC to explore the possibility of offering broadband or fiber internet services to customers.
- Coordinate with the public library and local schools to explore the possibility of implementing a mobile hotspot check out program for home use.

PARTIES INVOLVED

- Jasper County.
- Jasper County REMC.
- Local broadband providers.
- Local businesses.
- City of Rensselaer.

RELATED GOAL CATEGORIES

- Economic Development
- Hazard Mitigation.
- Government and Fiscal Capacity.
- Broadband.

TIME FRAME

3 to 5 years.

ESTIMATED COST

High. Procure outside funding.

Broadband

Broadband provides access to high-speed internet. The COVID-19 pandemic proved the need for broadband in rural communities. As a result, many positions are now available for remote work, which allows workers to choose where they want to live instead of living where they work. Broadband capabilities need to be expanded to make Rensselaer an attractive community to other employment bases and remote workers. As broadband expansion has become a hot-button issue, many grants are available to create broadband access in rural communities. Several grants are available through the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA).^{15,16} Federal funding is also available for projects that support broadband planning, digital inclusion, and deployment projects. More information on specific grants and other funding opportunities can be found at internetforall.gov and broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov.




¹⁶ OCRA: Grant Overview.

¹⁷ OCRA: Rural Broadband.



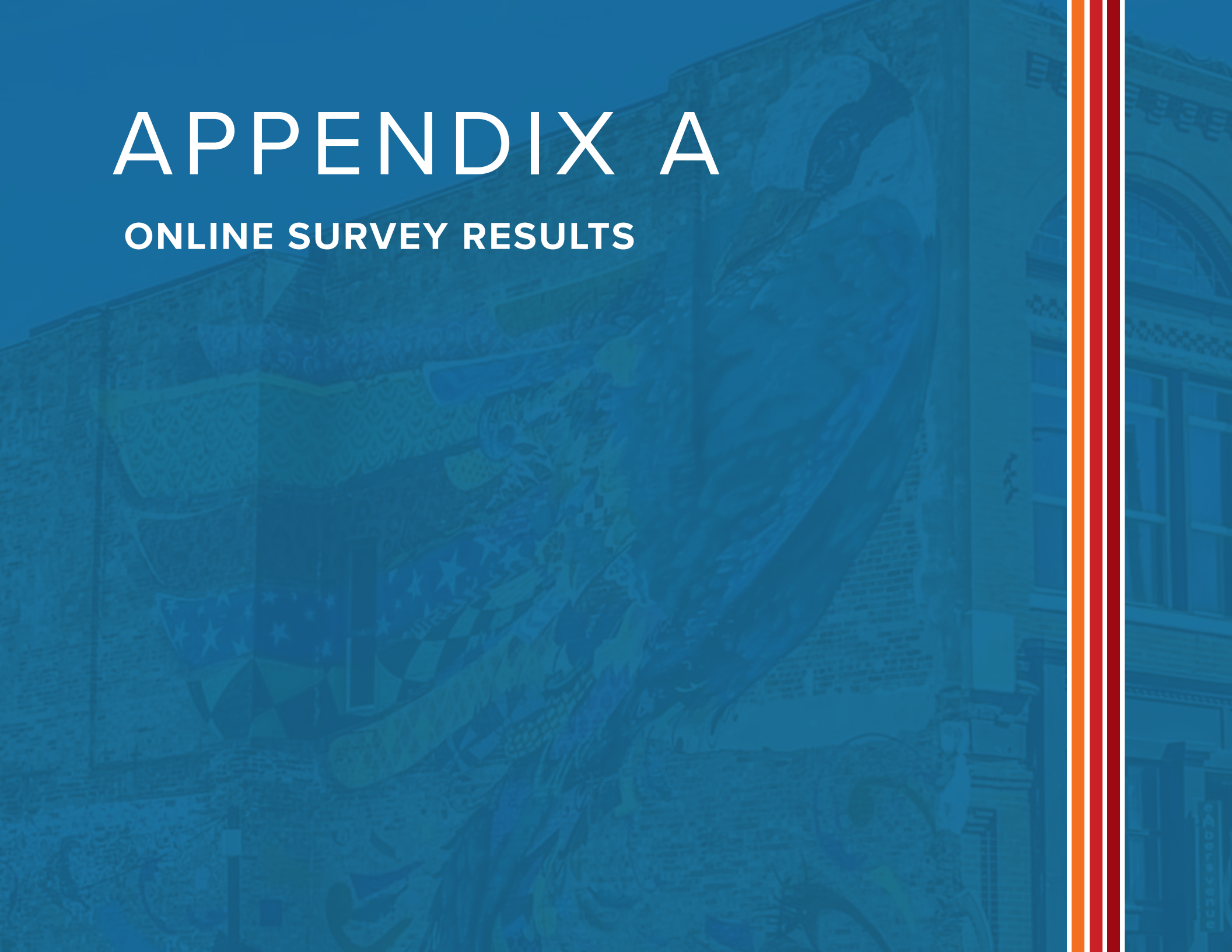
UPDATING THE PLAN

The following measures should be taken to ensure that the recommended strategies and action steps continue to move the community toward its vision and that the plan accurately reflects its collective vision and values over time.

-  Prepare an annual report highlighting how the plan was used and the effectiveness of the contents. Pay particular attention to the implications of how one part of the plan affects or otherwise relates to another.
-  Establish a five-year review and update process to examine and revise the plan's contents regularly. Items of particular importance to examine are:
 - Updates to sociodemographic information.
 - Relevancy of identified policy objectives.
 - Advancement in best practice in land use, transportation, or zoning.
 - Changes to the local regulatory environment.
-  Convene a community engagement process with inter-local cooperation to complete the first two measures.

APPENDIX A

ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS



ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

Stakeholder Viewpoints



St. Joseph's College



Workforce skills and programs needed



City should communicate/share
available resources



Focus more development
efforts near I-65



High demand for housing but
low availability



More activities and things to do
(especially for youth)



Need opportunities to age in place
like granny flats



Need for more alternative
transportation

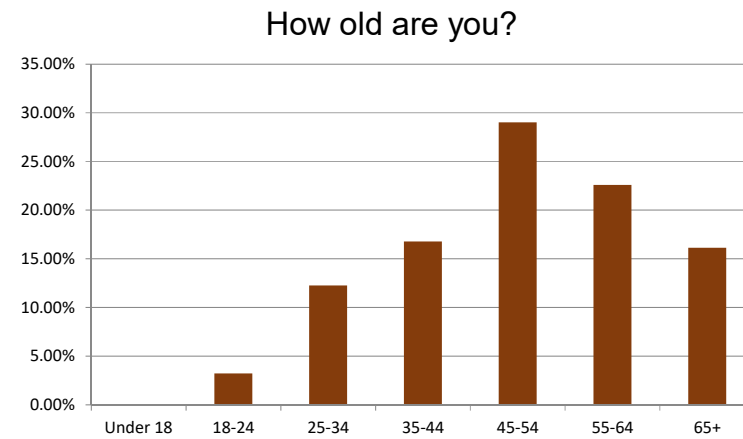
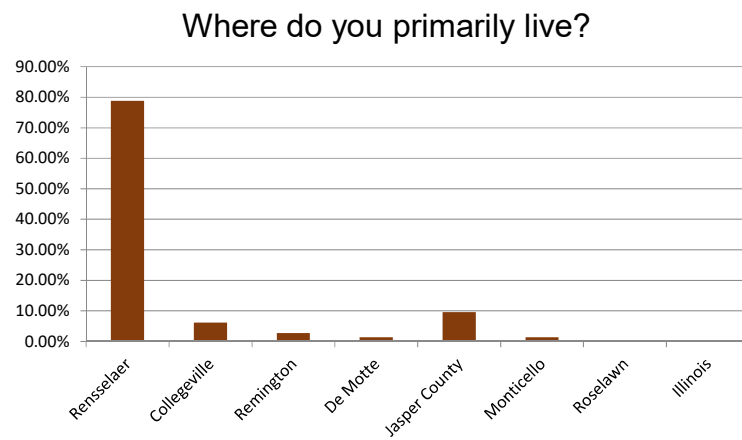


Continue revitalizing the downtown



More support for social services and community resources
like mental health, affordable housing, and daycare

Public Survey – Who responded



Rensselaer's Top 5 Assets



1. Quality of life



2. Park facilities and programming



3. Downtown environment

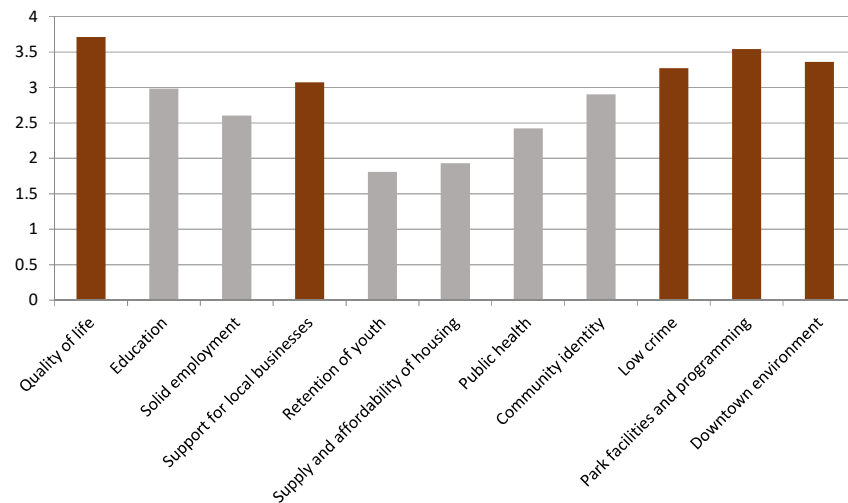


4. Low crime



5. Support for local businesses

From the following list, pick Rensselaer's top five assets.



Rensselaer's Top 5 Challenges



1. Supply and affordability of housing



2. Education



3. Solid employment

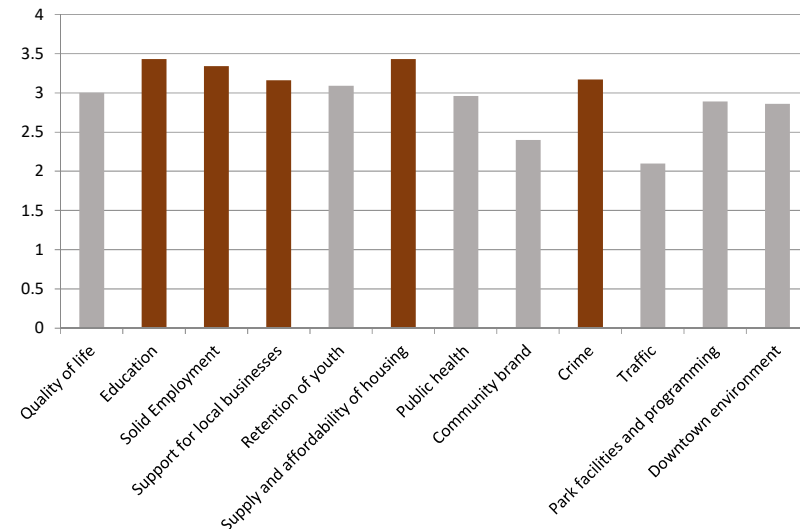


4. Crime



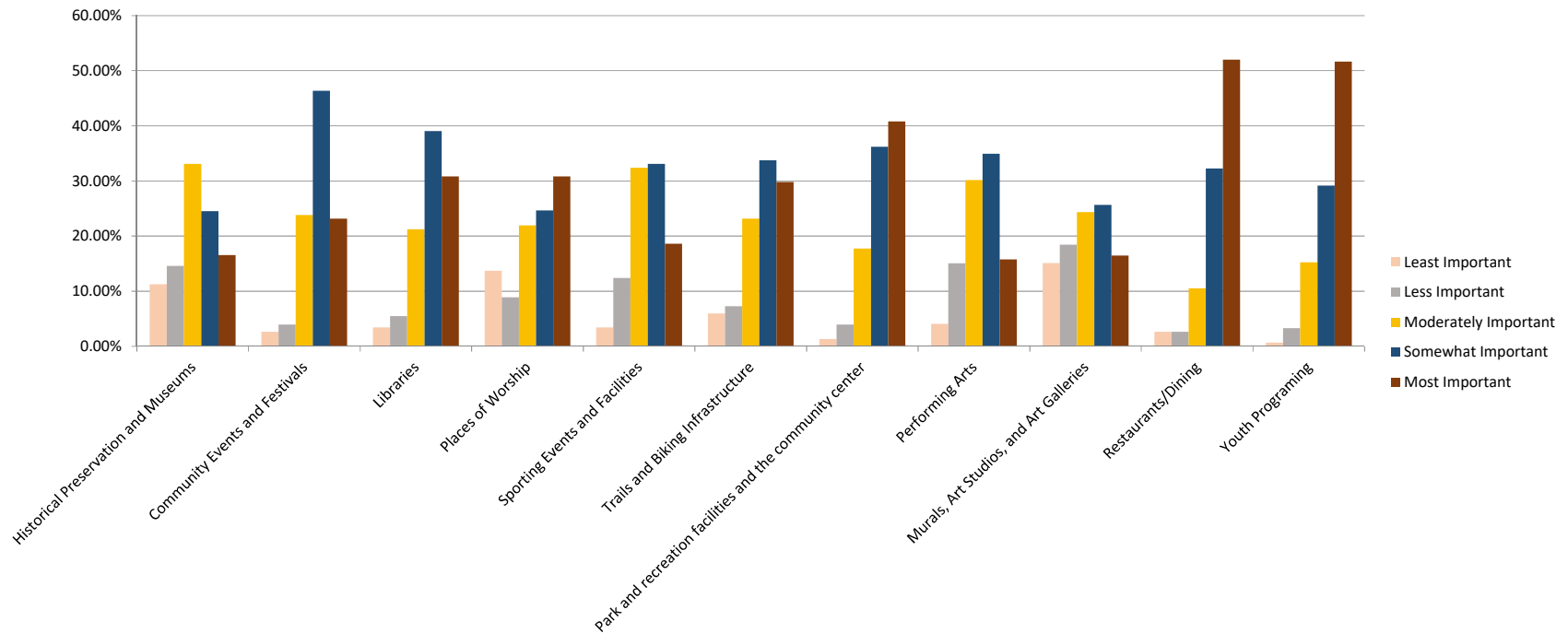
5. Support for local businesses

From the following list, pick Rensselaer's top five areas needing improvement.



Most Important Amenities

How Important are the following amenities to you?



City of Rensselaer Comprehensive Plan

Most important items for Rensselaer's future



1. Expanding the local economy.



2. Expanding the number and affordability of housing choices.



3. Increasing alternative transportation.



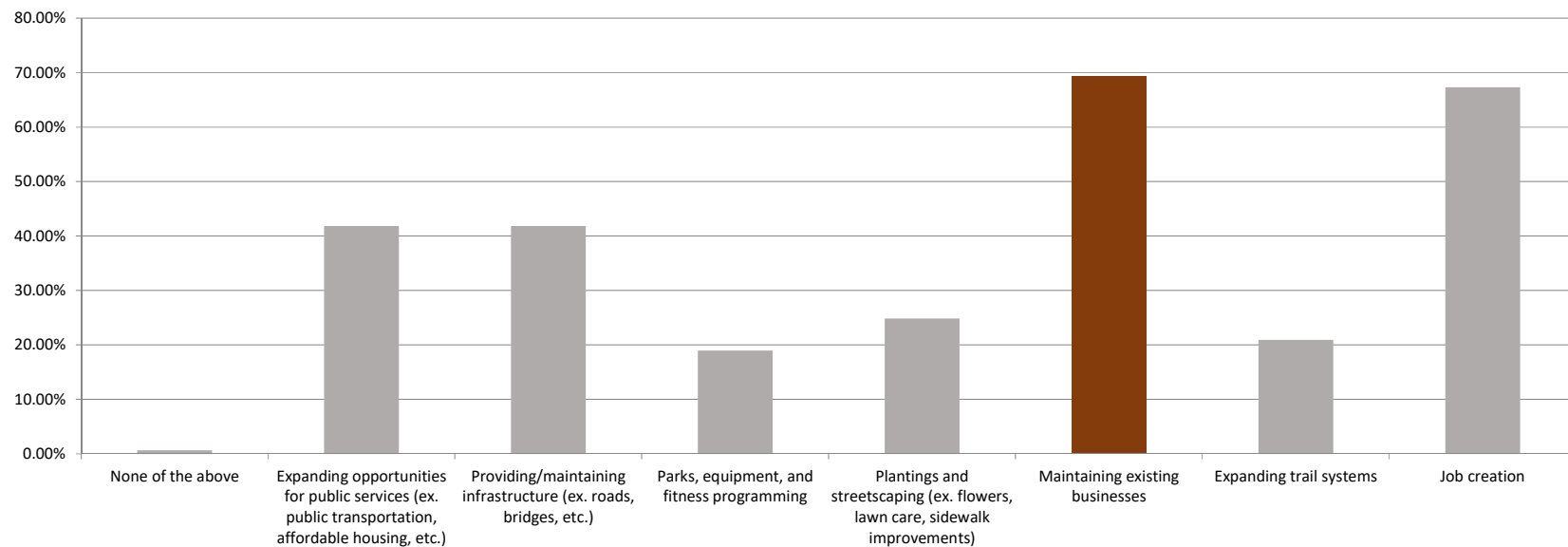
4. Creating access to parks, recreation, and green spaces.



5. Developing a unique and distinguishing look and feel for the community.

Rensselaer's future starts with...

Rensselaer's future starts with which of the following categories?



City of Rensselaer Comprehensive Plan

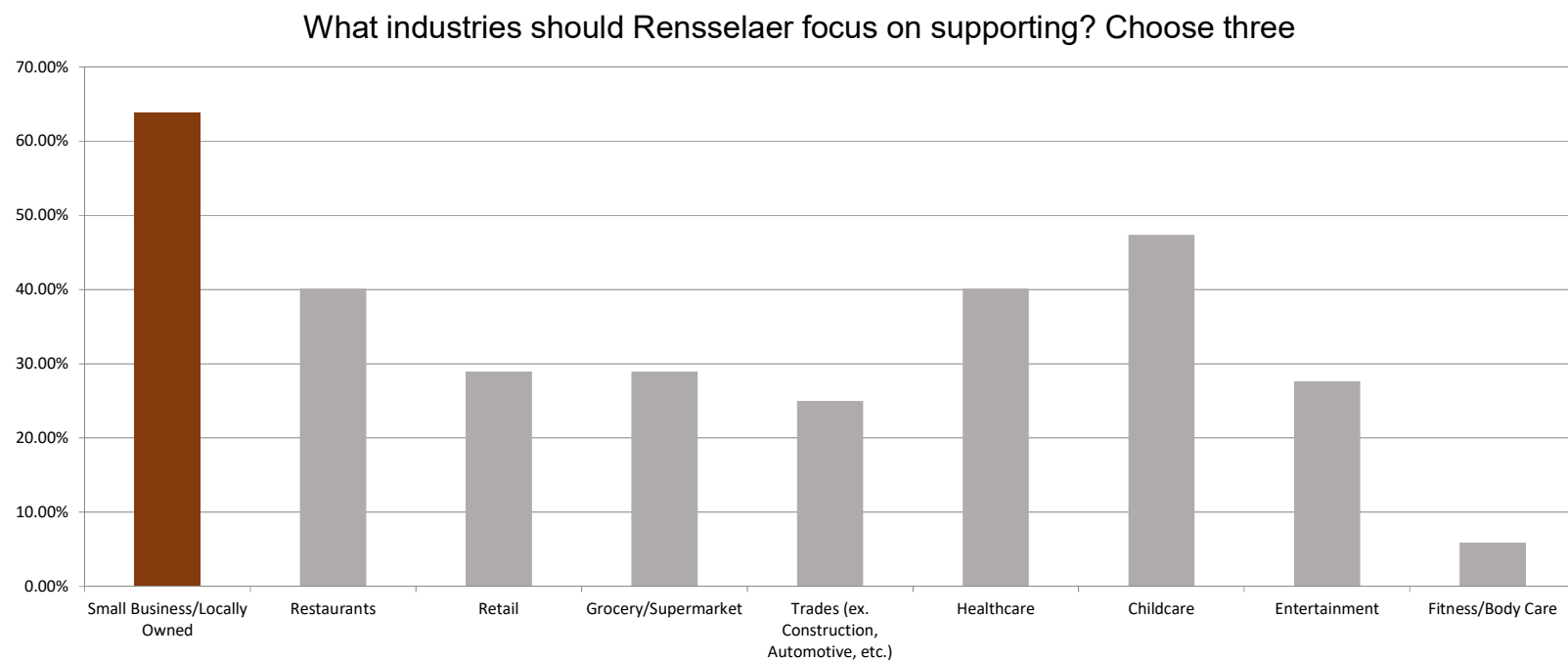
What is your favorite thing about living in Rensselaer?

businesses place live sense community welcoming quiet good downtown
knowing living Safety love friendly Family feel people
downtown area community still Small town close
Small town feel Rensselaer safe environment small job great
Family friends need Cost living small town atmosphere kind

If you could change one thing about Rensselaer what would it be?

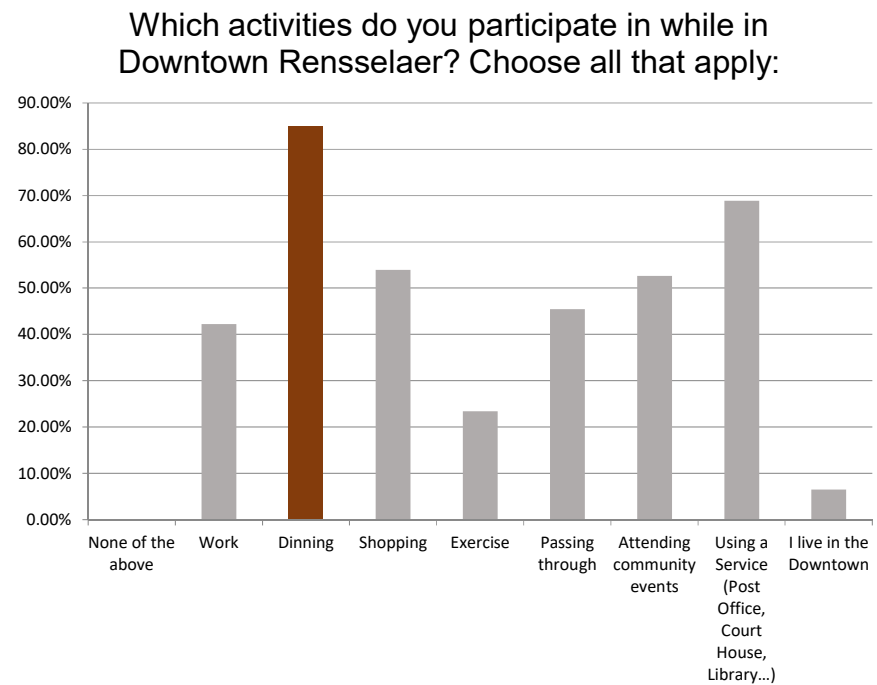
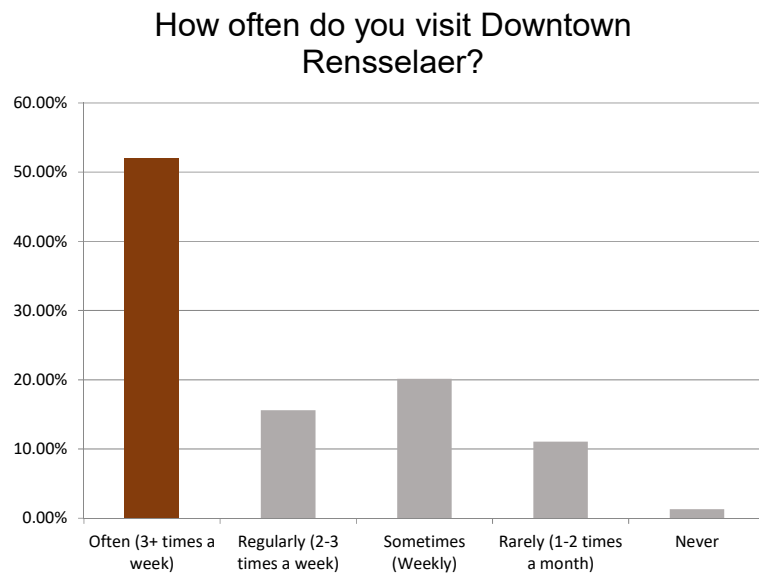
youth small businesses options think town government education attract school local
Rensselaer Increased opportunities Higher jobs splash pad
businesses young community Even Better Add
need work people affordable homes things housing activities
downtown Bringing go drug look put affordable housing drug use kids

What industries should Rensselaer focus on supporting?

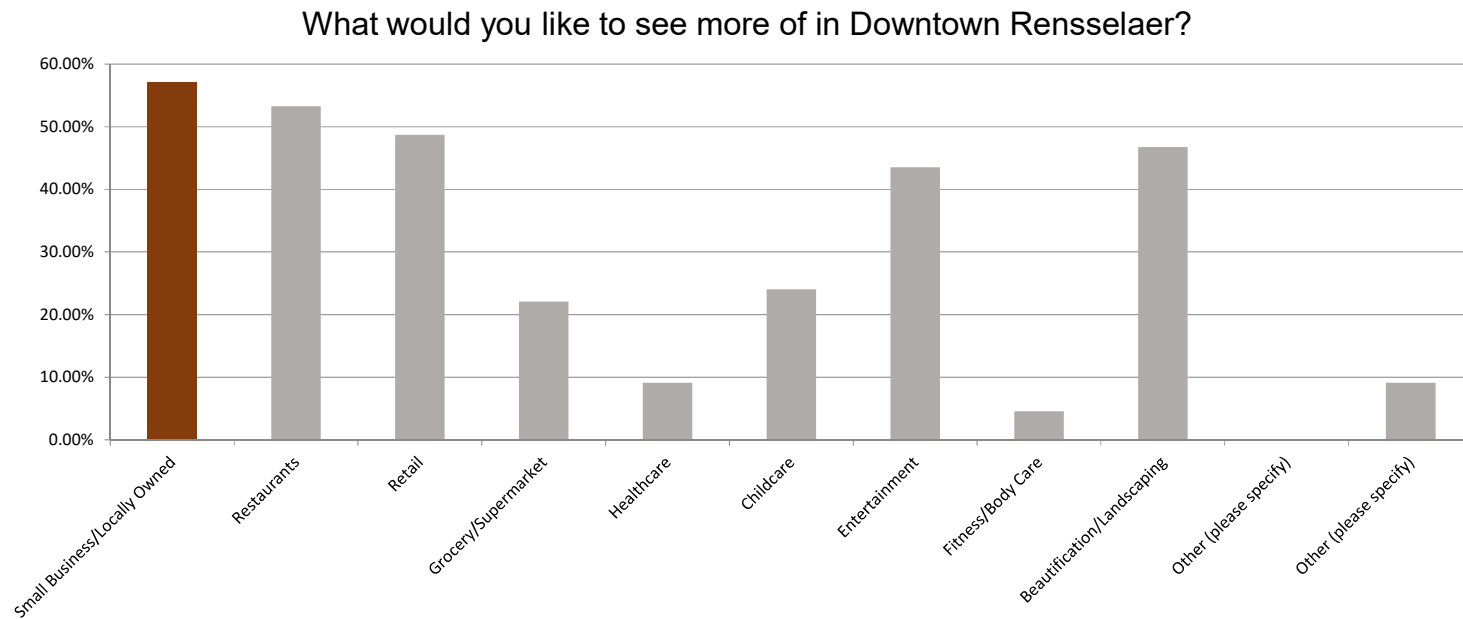


City of Rensselaer Comprehensive Plan

How often do you visit downtown Rensselaer and what do you do?

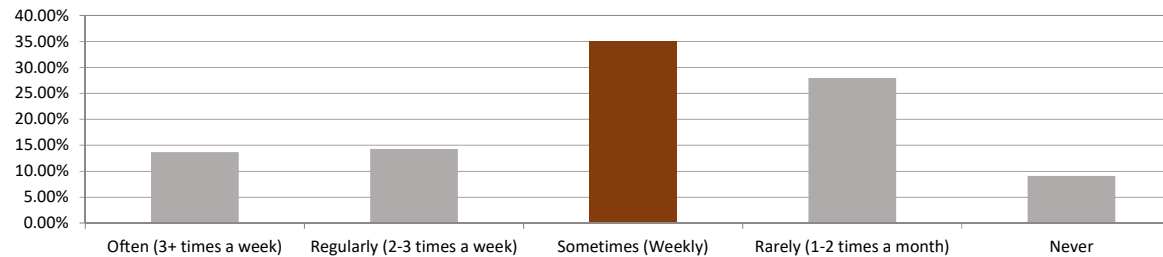


What would you like to see more of in downtown Rensselaer?



City of Rensselaer Comprehensive Plan

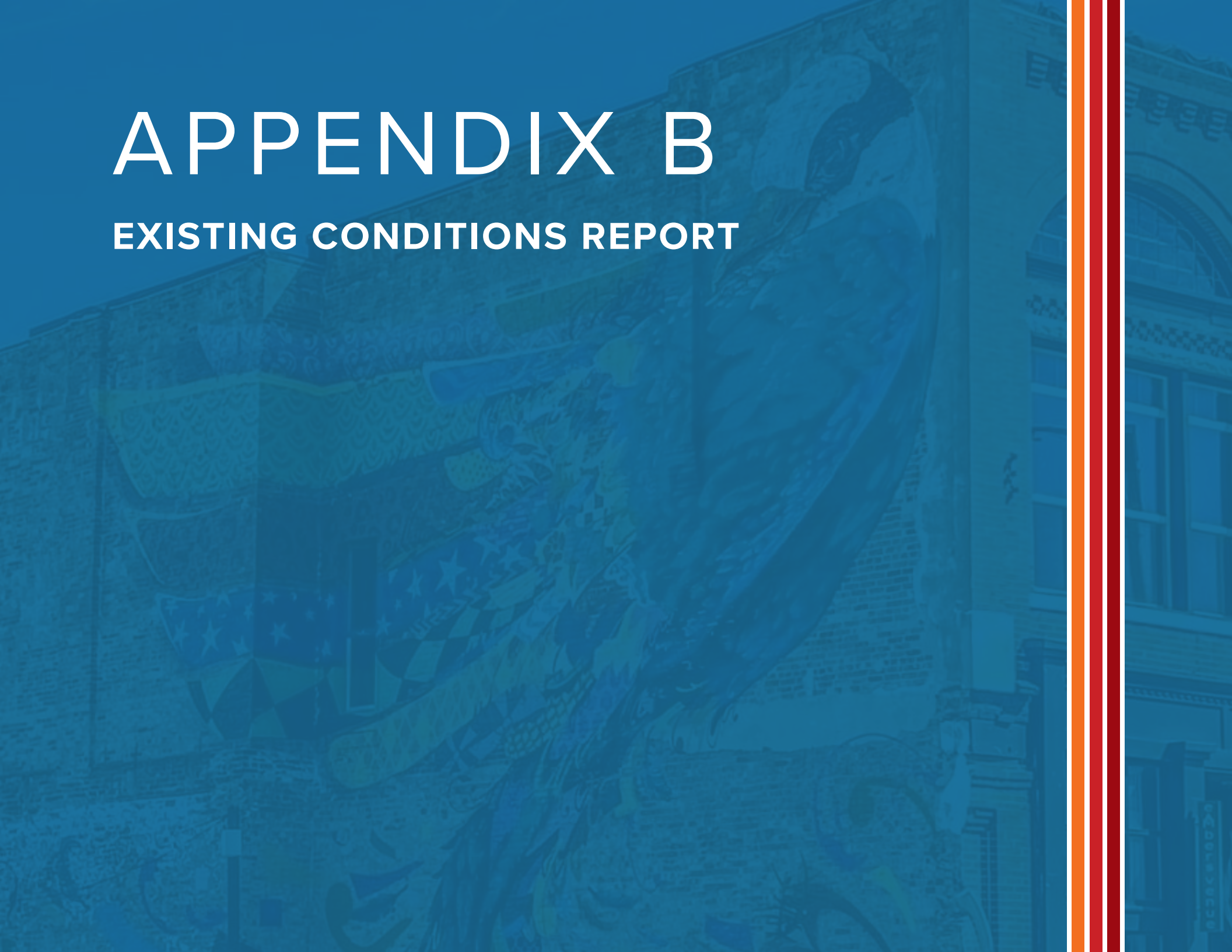
How often do you visit parks in Rensselaer and what would make you visit more?

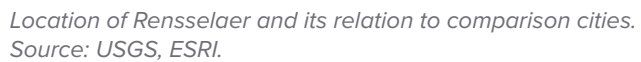


Updated keep children Water things Nothing walking trails
 walking biking trails Community upgraded Better needing
 splash pad playgrounds parks New activities
 walking paths events pool splash pad pool organized walk facilities Trails
 Walking biking paths equipment

APPENDIX B

EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT





Rensselaer is a community in Marion Township, Jasper County, Indiana, along the Iroquois River.

I-65 runs directly west of Rensselaer, with the main access points off of SR 114 West and US 231 South. SR 114 and US 231 are also main thoroughfares. Saint Joseph's College is located south of the city limits, offering a rich history to the community from its beginnings as a Catholic seminary, once summer training camp of the Chicago Bears, on through its 4-year liberal arts college curriculum until 2017. Recently, in 2021, its state-of-the-art facilities reopened to offer online and in-person programs to meet the community's needs. The College delivers traditional degree programs and programs for non-degree-seeking students through partner universities.

COMPARISON CONTEXT

This report also reviewed demographic data for "comparison communities." Comparison communities are those similar in population size to Rensselaer and have similar characteristics, such as proximity to major arterials, adjacent to farmland, etc. The communities reviewed were Monticello, Knox, Remington, and Winamac. Data from the county and state was also examined, which revealed similarities and differences between cities and towns of similar size.

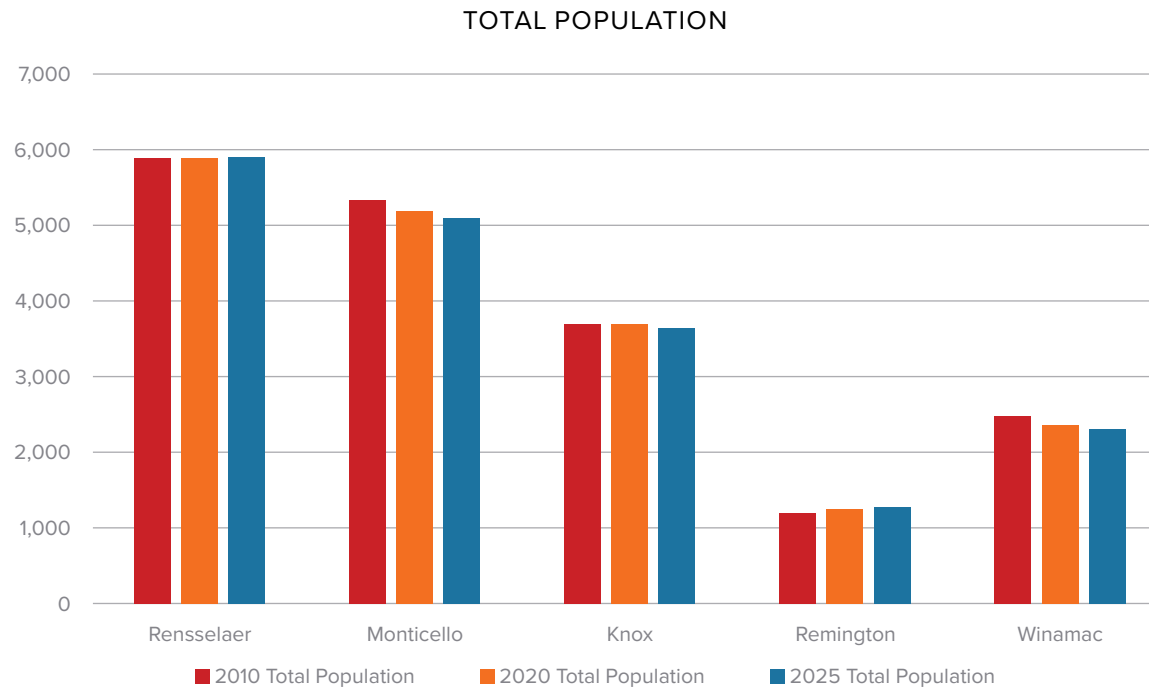
DEMOGRAPHICS

OVERVIEW

An analysis of the City of Rensselaer's current conditions was carried out to help guide the planning process and provide the necessary background information to develop project and policy recommendations. Topics considered in the analysis included: community demographics, current market conditions, resident amenities, transportation elements, community infrastructure, and the natural environment.

Data used in this analysis was pulled primarily from the US Census Bureau via the following sources:

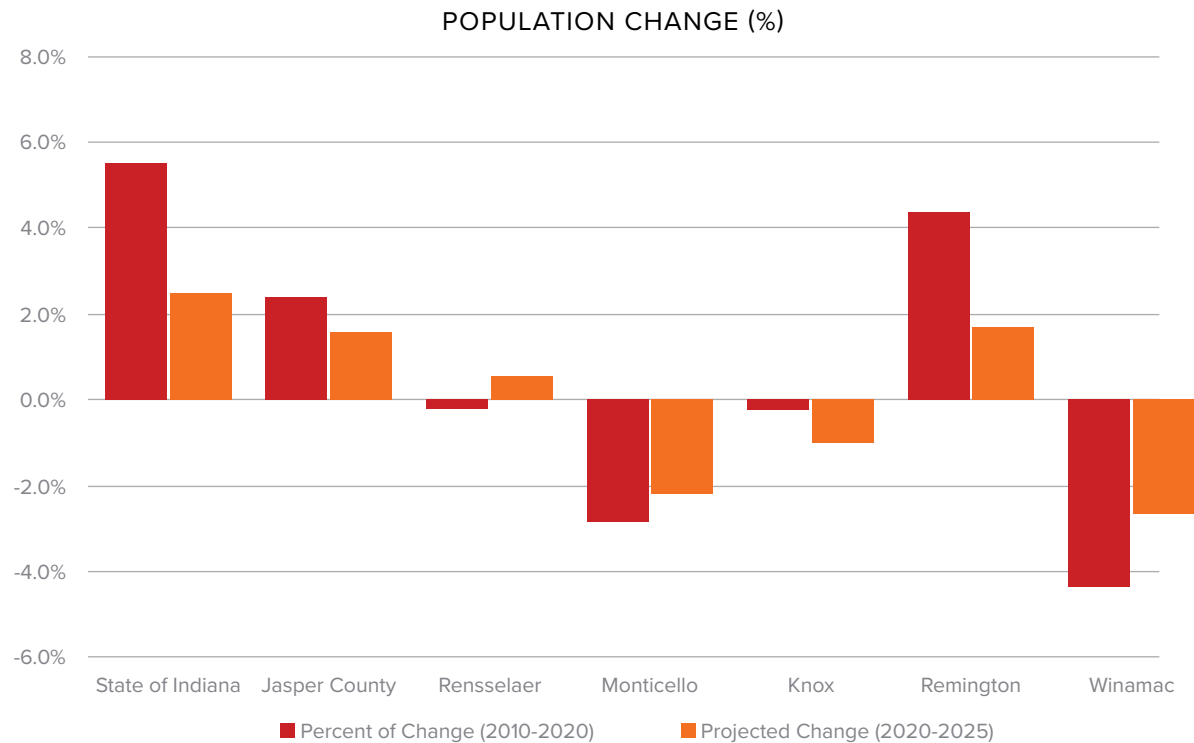
- **2019 American Community Survey, 2010 and 2020 US Census**
In addition to the decennial census (2010), the US Census Bureau conducts dozens of other censuses and surveys, including the American Community Survey. The American Community Survey is an ongoing effort that gathers information from a community through a small sample rather than the extensive 10-year survey with which most people are familiar.
- **ESRI Business Analyst**
ESRI Business Analyst is a powerful tool for analyzing data within a specific geographic location. ESRI allows data to be observed at a very local level and compared with surrounding groups.



*Total Population from 2010 to 2025.
Source: ESRI Business Analyst.*

POPULATION

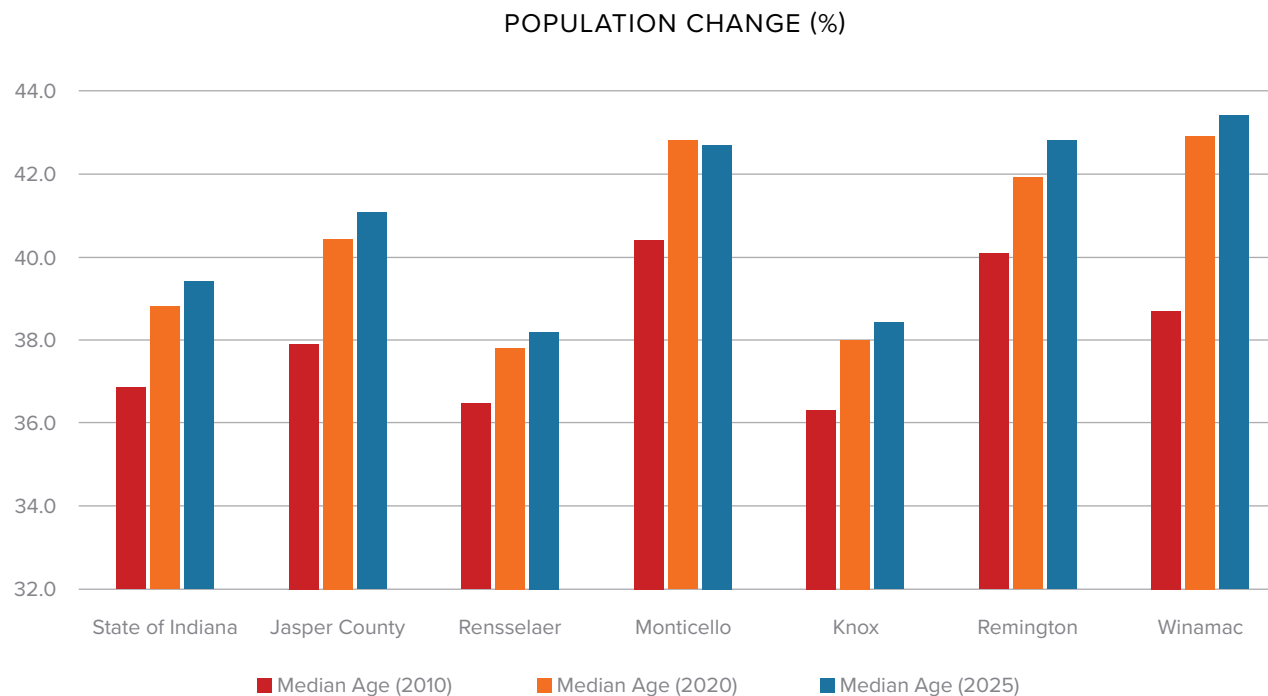
As of 2020, Rensselaer had an estimated population of 5,889 residents within the city limits, with a 0.2 percent decrease since 2010 from 5,903 residents. Projections show that this trend will reverse, with the local population increasing to 5,921 by 2025. Rensselaer had the highest population in 2010, 2020, and projected population in 2025 compared to the comparison communities. Jasper County has consistently increased in residents, aligning with Rensselaer's population trend.



*Total Population Change Percentages from 2010-2020 and Projected Population Change from 2020-2025.
Source: ESRI Business Analyst.*

HISTORICAL CHANGE AND PROJECTED GROWTH

The population growth of Jasper County (2.4 percent) was positive, but projections show growth rates slowing to (1.6 percent) through 2025. Much of the decrease in growth could be attributed to the overall decline in Indiana's population. As shown on the total population chart above, the population of Rensselaer was projected to increase by less than one percent by 2025. A less than one percent change in population was observed from 5,903 residents in 2010 to 5,889 in 2020.

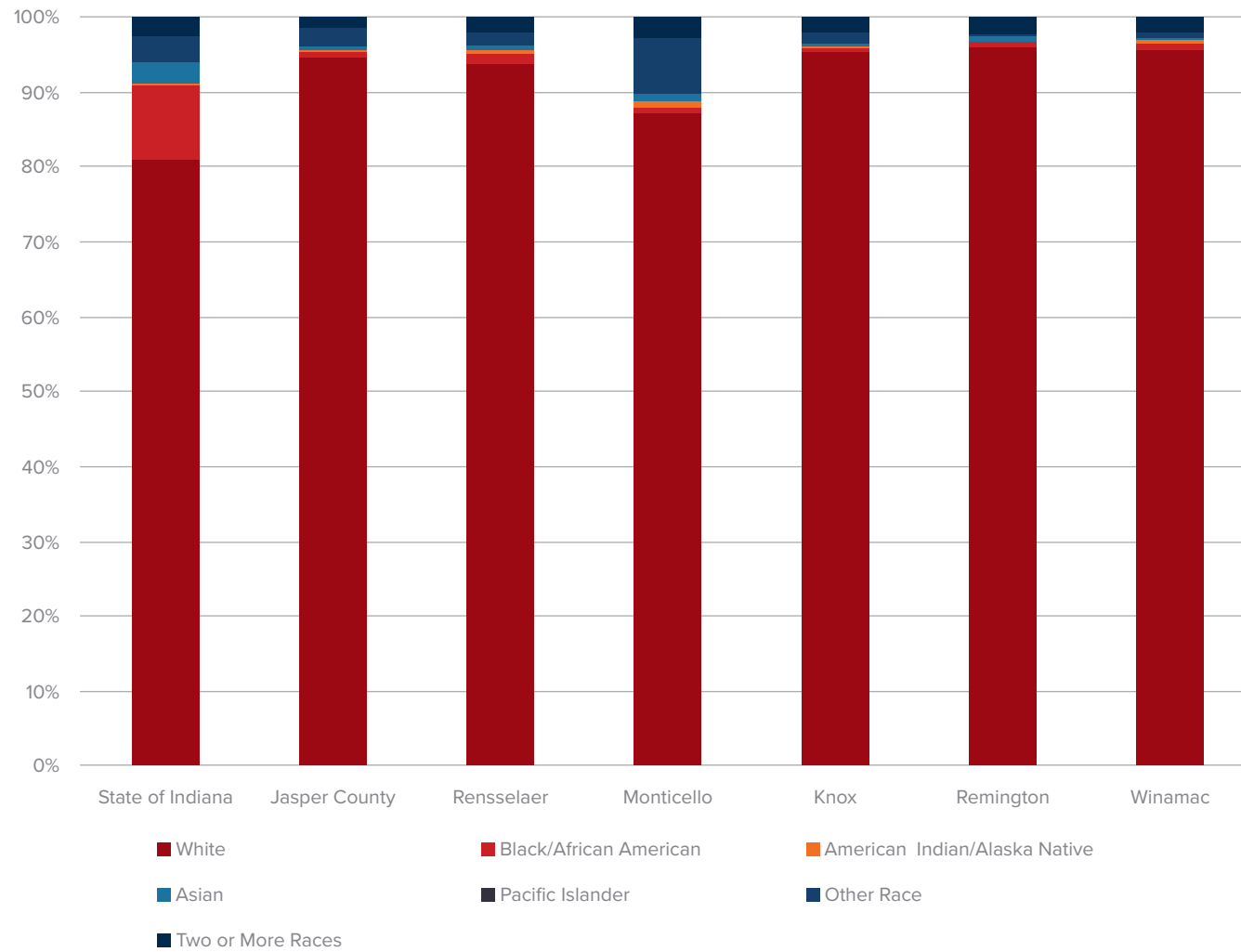


Median Age from 2010-2025.
Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).

MEDIAN AGE

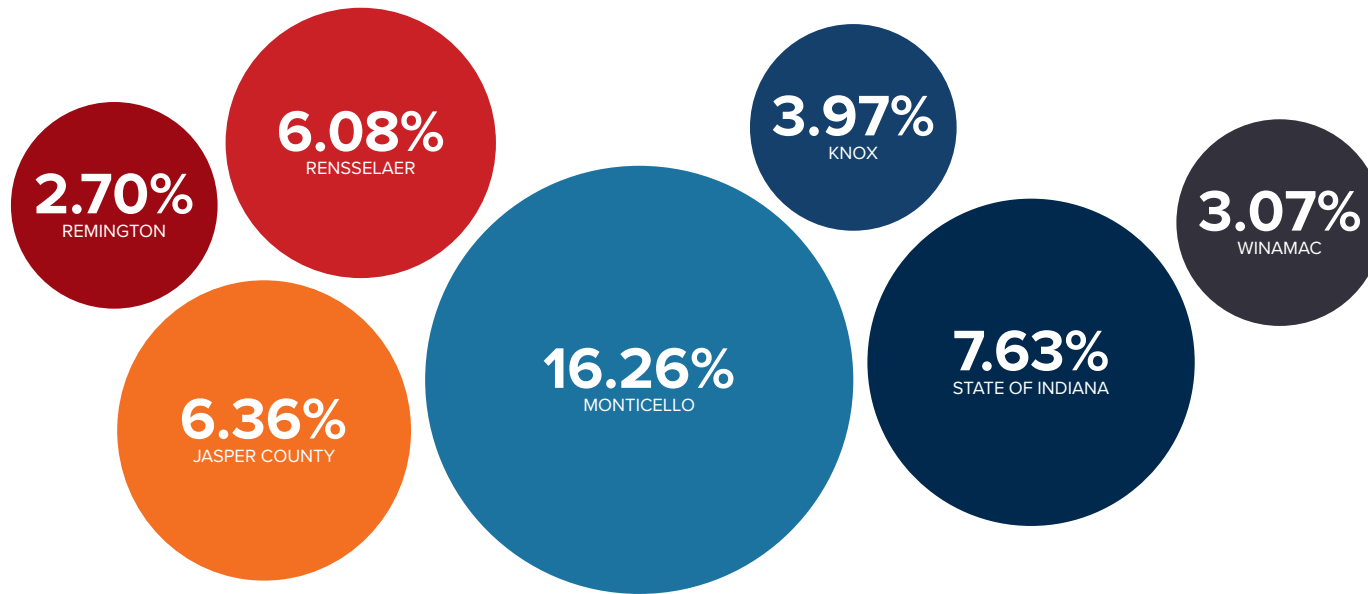
The median age of Rensselaer residents in 2020 was 37.8 years old, younger than any of the surrounding cities, including the state (38.8). Rensselaer's median age was projected to increase to 38.2 years in 2025. Rensselaer has maintained a median age lower than Jasper County in 2010, 2020, and 2025.

2020 RACE AND ETHNICITY COMPARISONS



Rensselaer's 2020 Race and Ethnicity.
 Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).

POPULATION WITH HISPANIC ETHNICITY

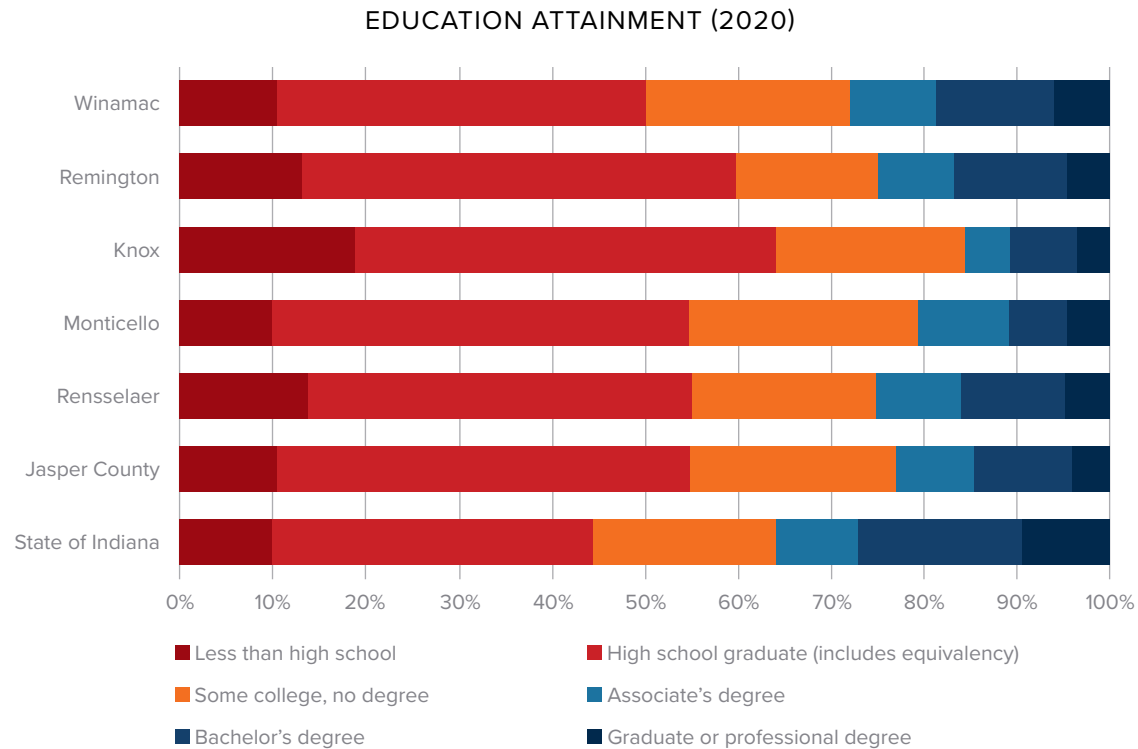


Population with Hispanic ethnicity in Rensselaer and comparison communities.

Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).

RACE AND ETHNICITY COMPARISONS

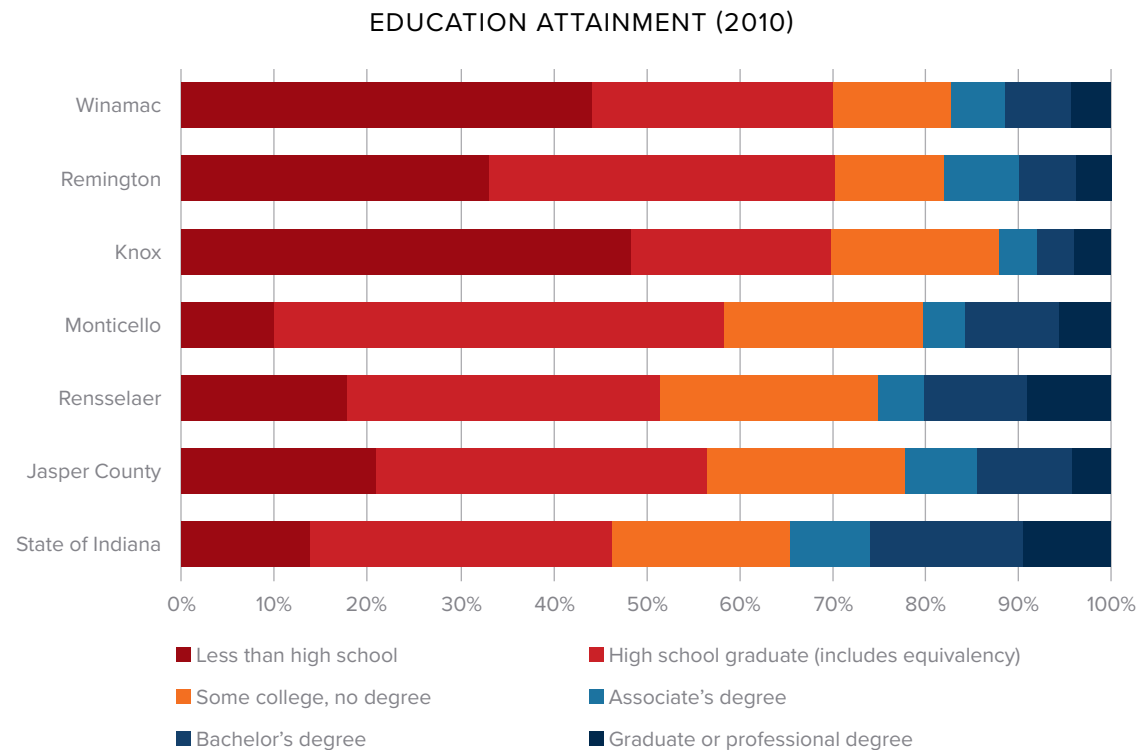
The Census Bureau only reports Hispanic ethnicity. All other categories, such as White, Black, Asian, etc., are considered racial categories. Rensselaer's race and ethnicity demographics remained relatively the same between 2010 and 2020. A slight decrease in white residents occurred within Rensselaer from 95.3 percent to 93.9 percent. Caucasian Jasper County residents were lower by the same ratio in 2020. Given the decline in the White population, there was a slight increase of Black/African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Other Race, and two or more races, with the majority being Black/African American. Pacific Islanders remained at 0.1 percent with no change. The percentage of those with Hispanic ethnicity (6.0 percent) was similar to Jasper County (6.4 percent).



2020 Percentages of Rensselaer's residents' educational attainment by degree category.
 Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).

EDUCATION

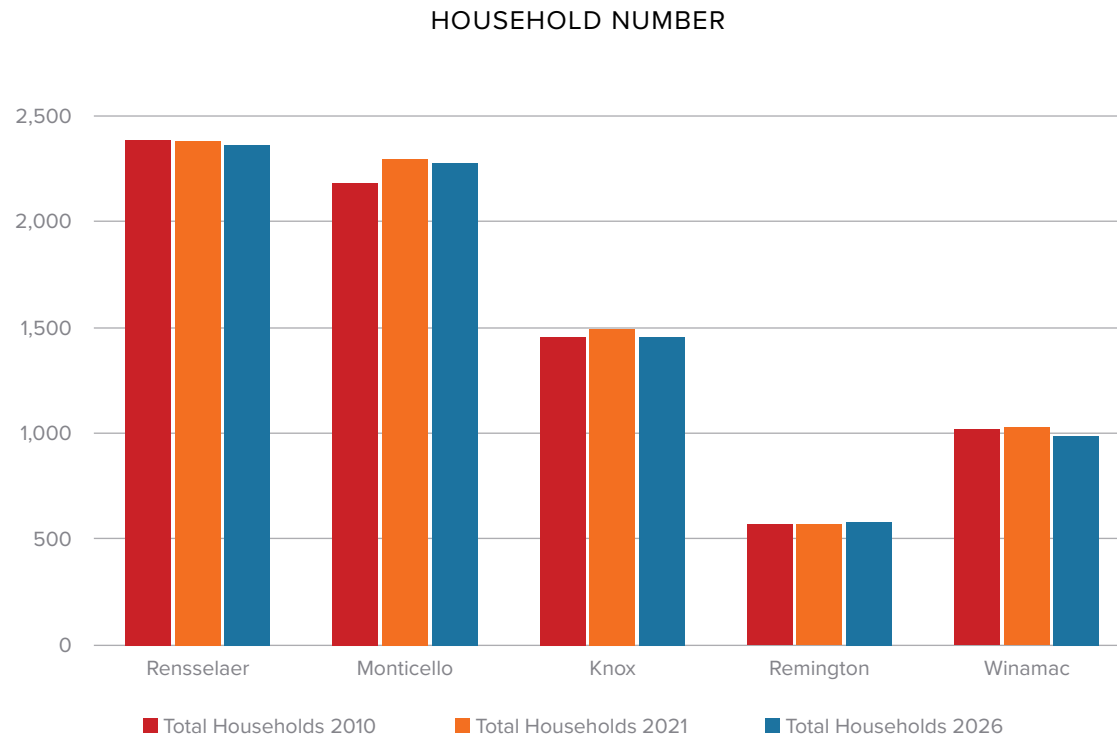
The majority (41.2 percent) of Rensselaer's population achieved a high school diploma as their highest level of education. Another 19.8 percent attended some college but did not obtain a degree, while 11.0 percent received a bachelor's degree, and 4.9 percent earned a graduate or professional degree. In comparison, the City of Monticello had more persons whose highest level of education was high school graduate (44.7 percent), some college with no degree (24.7 percent), and those with an associate degree (9.8 percent). Monticello had a lower percentage of those whose highest level of education was a bachelor's degree (6.2 percent) and a slightly lower graduate or professional degree (4.7 percent).



2010 Percentages of Rensselaer's residents' educational attainment by degree category.
Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).

Until 2017, Saint Joseph's College had grown into an accredited 4-year liberal arts Catholic college with an enrollment of approximately 1,100 students. The college temporarily closed and re-opened in 2021, offering traditional degree programs through partner universities and various certificate programs.¹ Compared to Rensselaer's educational attainment in 2020, 2010 had a higher percentage of residents whose highest level of education was less than high school graduation (27.40 percent). However, residents with some college (no degrees) as their highest level of education stayed relatively the same with less than a one percent difference. Interestingly, even though St. Joseph's College was open in 2010 and closed before 2020, associate and bachelor's degree attainment percentages were higher in 2020 than in 2010.

¹ [St. Joseph's College in Indiana Latest Small College to Close Its Doors - WSJ](#).

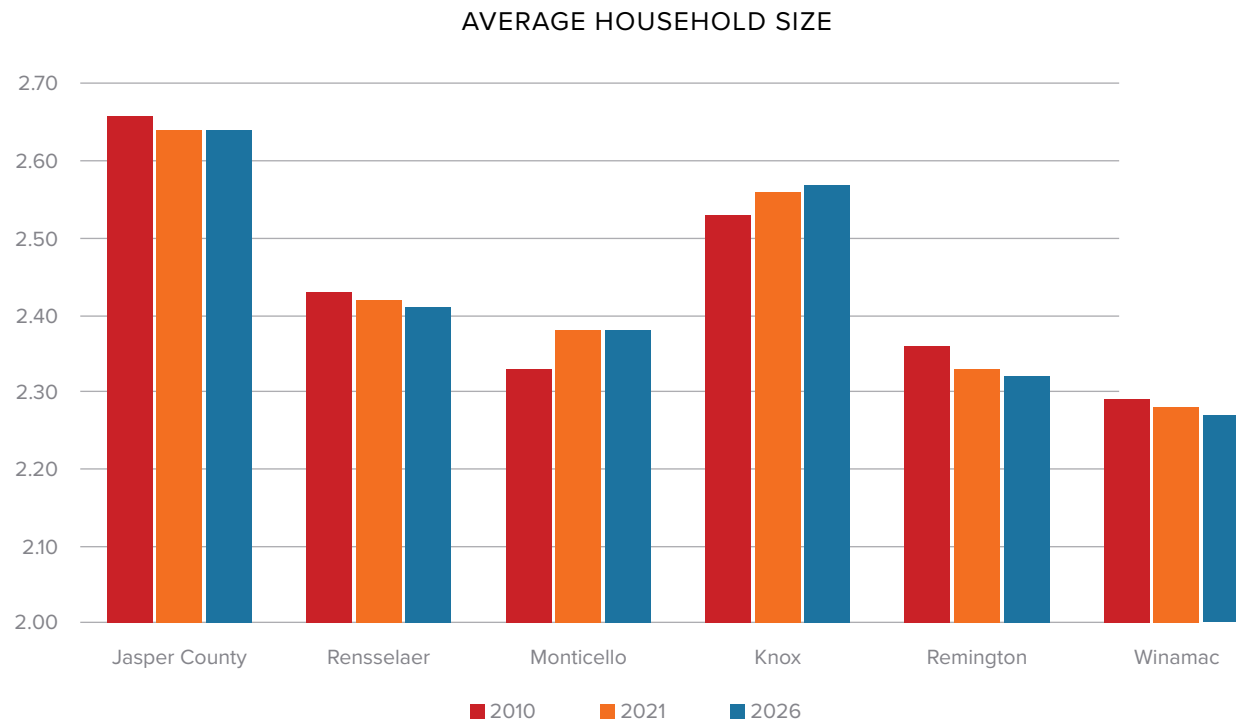


Total Households from 2010 to 2026.

Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).

HOUSEHOLDS

The City of Rensselaer reached 2,384 households in 2020, a less than one percent decrease from the number of households in 2010 (2,389). Households were expected to continue to decrease, with the community shrinking to 2,363 households in 2027. As the total population of Rensselaer decreased, so did the number of households.

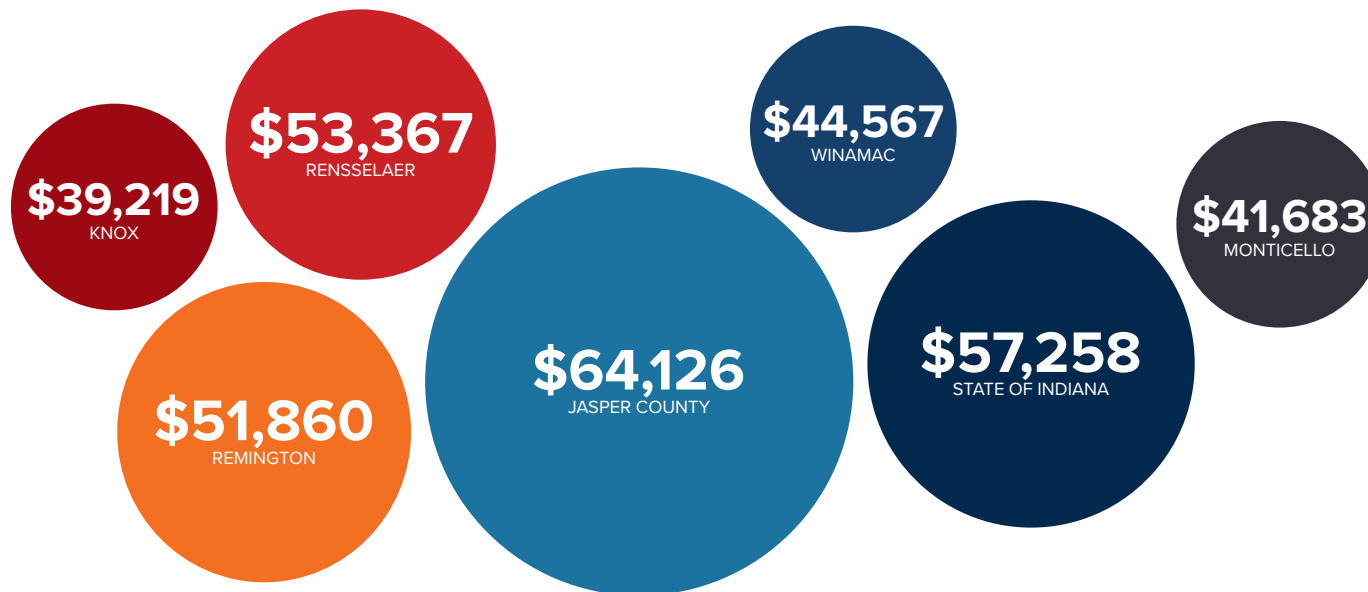


2010, 2021, and 2026 Average Household Size.
Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).

AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Rensselaer's household size slightly decreased in 2021 and 2026 compared to 2010. However, the observed decrease was slight, going from 2.43 to 2.41.

2021 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME



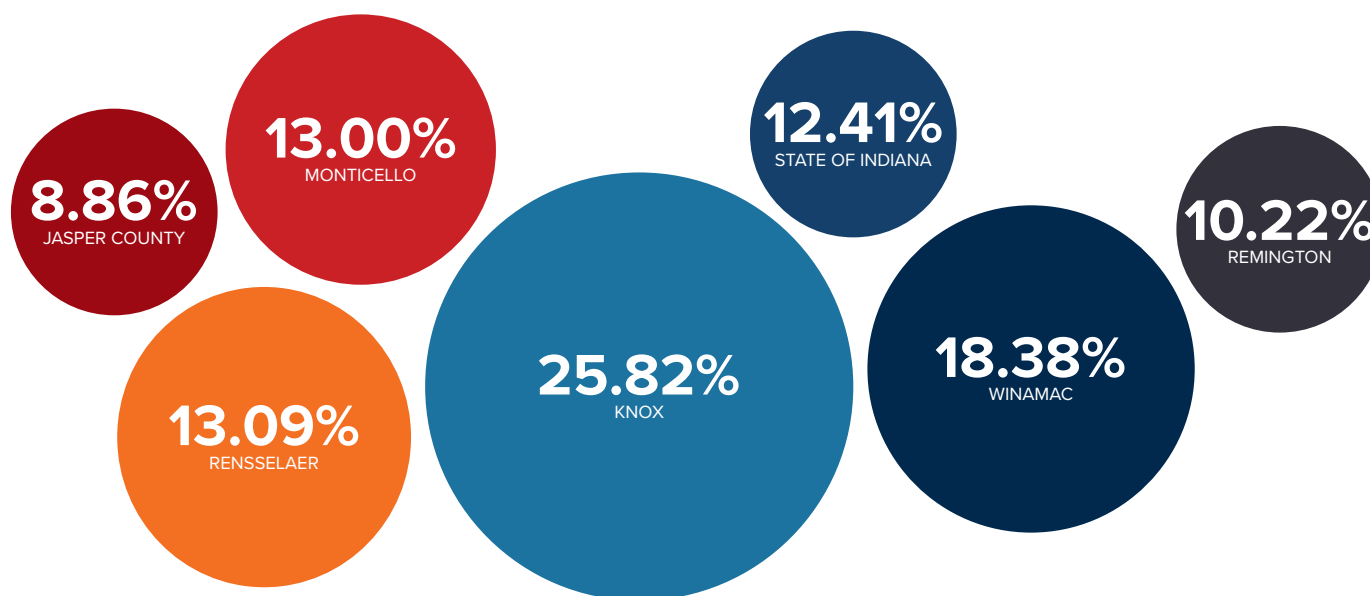
2021 Median Household Income.

Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

In 2021, Rensselaer had the highest median household income in the region (\$53,367) compared to the comparison communities. Jasper County's median household income was higher than the State of Indiana's, with a \$6,858 difference. Jasper County had the highest median household income (\$64,126), while Knox had the lowest (\$39,219).

POVERTY RATE 2021



*The poverty rates for Rensselaer.
Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).*

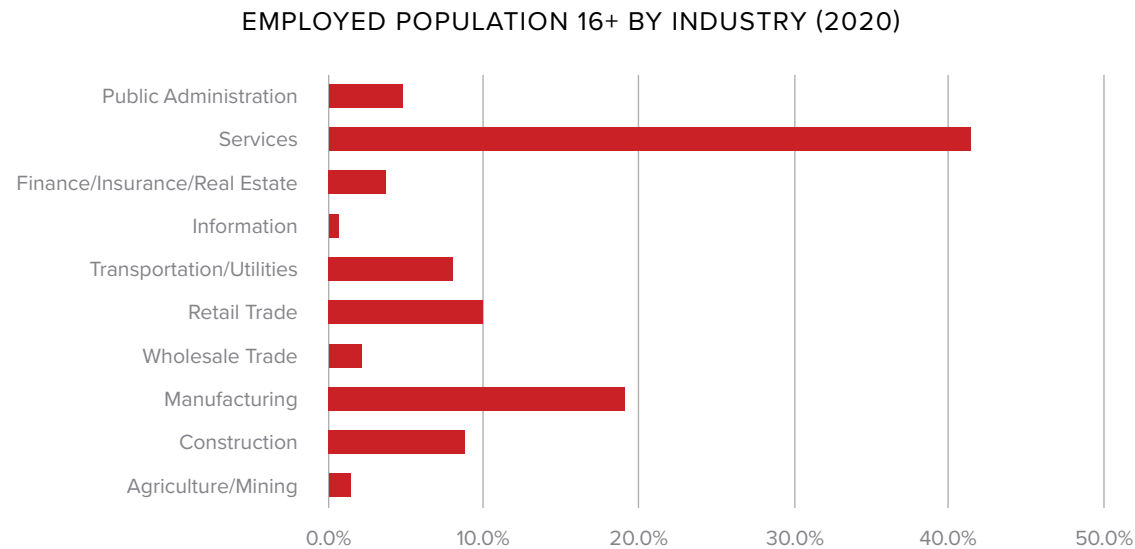
POVERTY

In 2021, the poverty rate in Rensselaer was 13.09 percent, similar to Monticello (13.0 percent) and the State of Indiana (12.41 percent). Jasper County and Remington had a lower poverty rate than Rensselaer. Knox and Winamac had the highest poverty rates at more than 15.0 percent.

EMPLOYMENT

INDUSTRY

Services, manufacturing, and retail trade were the three leading industries in 2020. Services made up almost half of all industries at 41.4 percent. Following behind services was manufacturing at 19.2 percent, and retail trade was third at 10.10 percent.

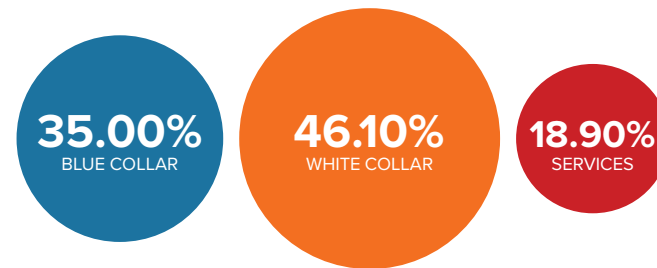


Where Rensselaer residents work by industry.
Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).

WORKFORCE

Residents of Rensselaer primarily worked in white-collar occupations (46.1 percent), including management, business, and sales. In 2020, 35.0 percent were employed in blue-collar occupations such as construction, production, and transportation.

EMPLOYED POPULATION 16+ BY OCCUPATION (2020)

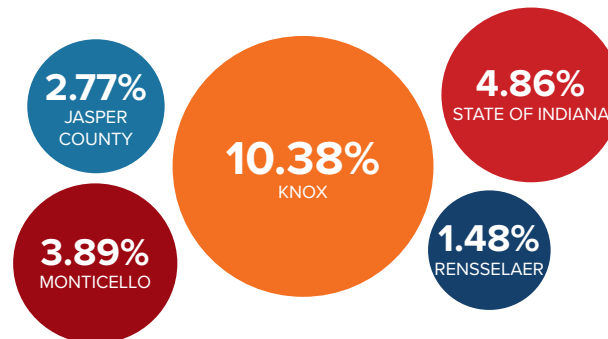


*Percentage of Rensselaer residents working in blue-collar, service, and white-collar jobs.
Source: ESRI Business Analyst.*

UNEMPLOYMENT

In 2020, 1.5 percent of Rensselaer's labor force was unemployed. The City of Rensselaer had the lowest unemployment rate compared to the State of Indiana, Jasper County, and the comparison communities. The highest unemployment was in the City of Knox (10.4 percent). Following the City of Knox was the State of Indiana (4.9 percent).

UNEMPLOYMENT (2020)



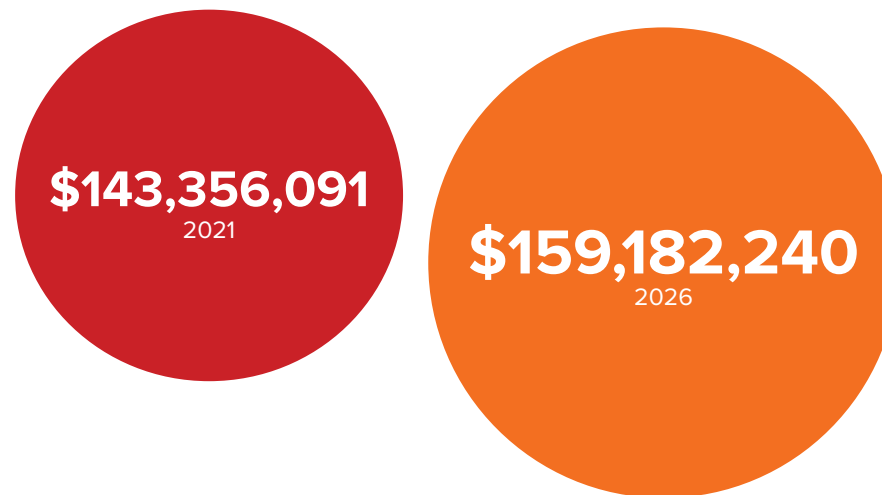
*Unemployment in Rensselaer and comparison communities.
Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).*

PROJECTED GROWTH

AGGREGATE EARNINGS

Aggregate earnings reflect the total income earned by all people, businesses, and governments in a geographical region.² Between 2021 and 2026, Rensselaer is expected to increase from \$143,456,091 to \$159,182,240. That is an 11.0 percent increase.

AGGREGATE EARNINGS OVER TIME

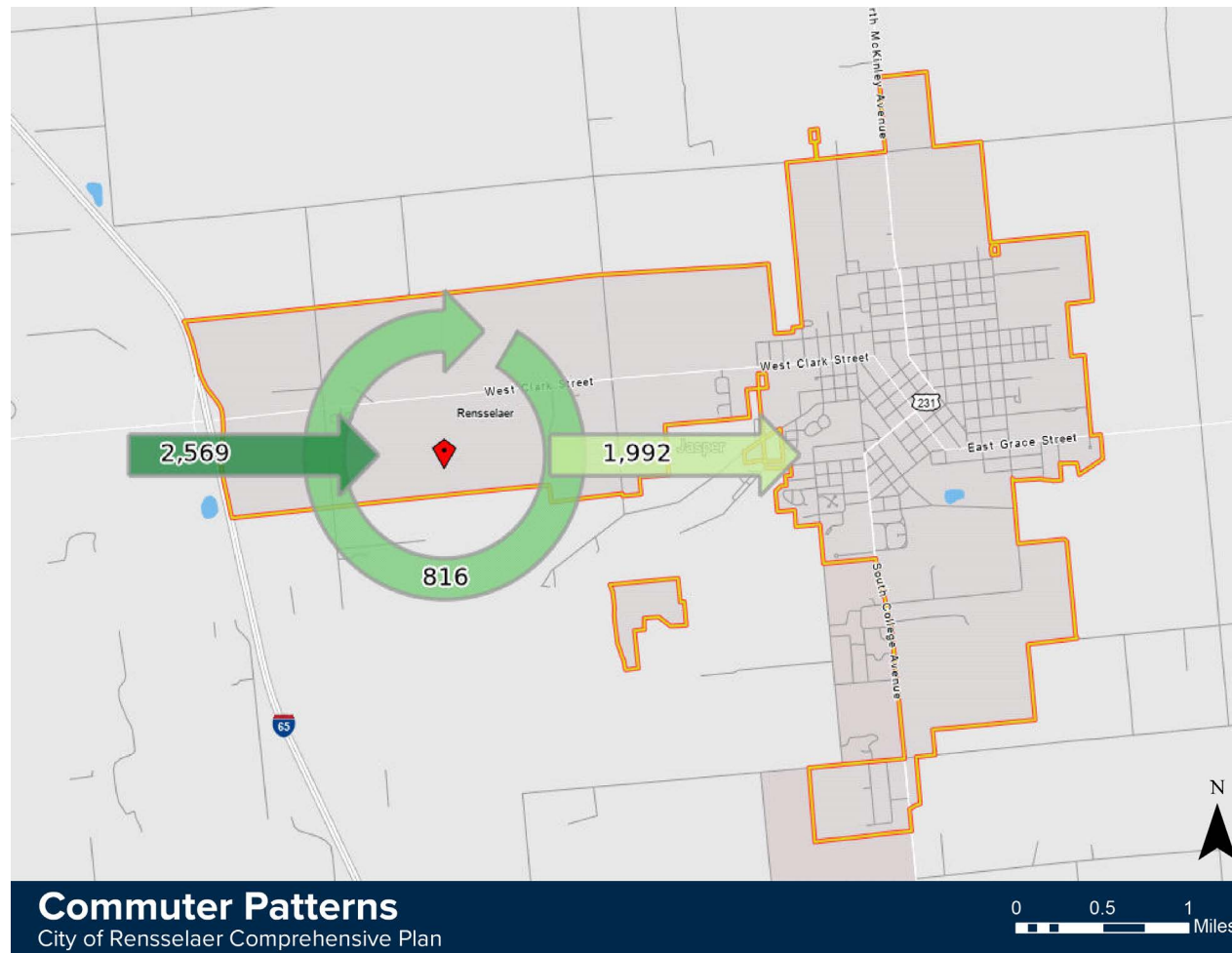


Aggregate earnings of Rensselaer residents over time adjusted for inflation.
Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).

² [Study.com: Aggregate Income: Definition and Formula](#).

COMMUTER BEHAVIOR

In 2019, 3,385 people were employed within the city. Only 816 residents were working and living within the city. 2,569 people employed in the selection area commuted into the city for work. Often, residents of the city worked outside of the city's limits. In this case, 1,992 people lived in Rensselaer but worked outside the city.



Rensselaer's Commuter Patterns.
Source: [Census on The Map](#).

HOUSING

Rensselaer's total housing units have slightly increased, with 19 units added from 2010 to 2021. During this same timeframe, owner-occupied housing units slightly decreased, and the rental units increased. Vacant units increased from 8.42 percent to 11.1 percent.

HOUSING TYPE SINGLE-FAMILY

Rensselaer's most significant housing type in 2010 was single-family detached (74.2 percent). In 2020, that total percentage decreased to 68.9 percent.

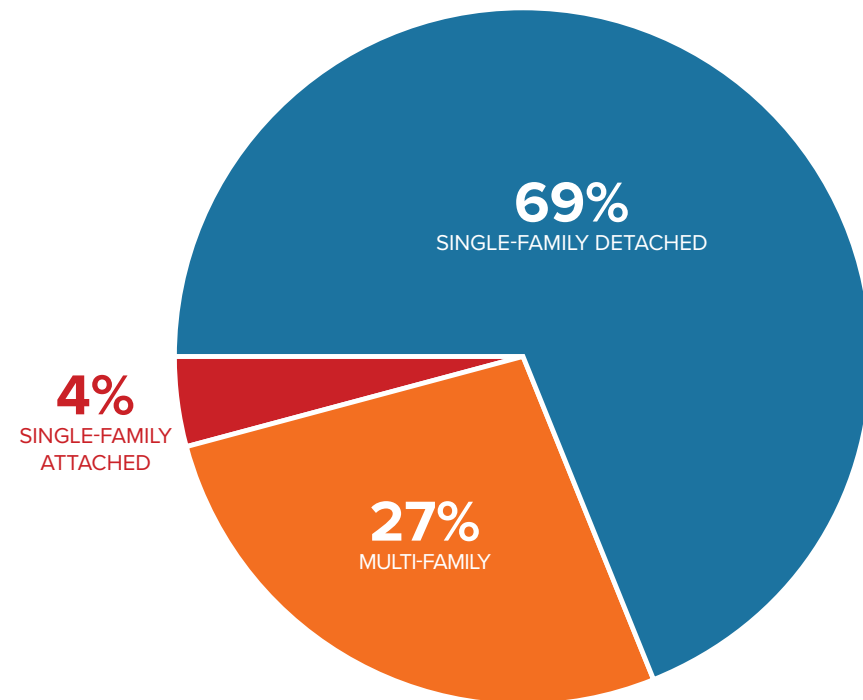
2-3 FAMILY

There was an increase in single-family attached housing in 2020 from 2.6 percent in 2010 to 3.6 percent. No mobile homes were reported in Rensselaer in 2020. In 2010, less than one percent of homes were mobile homes, and in 2020 it was zero percent. The City is aware of mobile home developments within the planning area. The Census Bureau may have misclassified these developments.

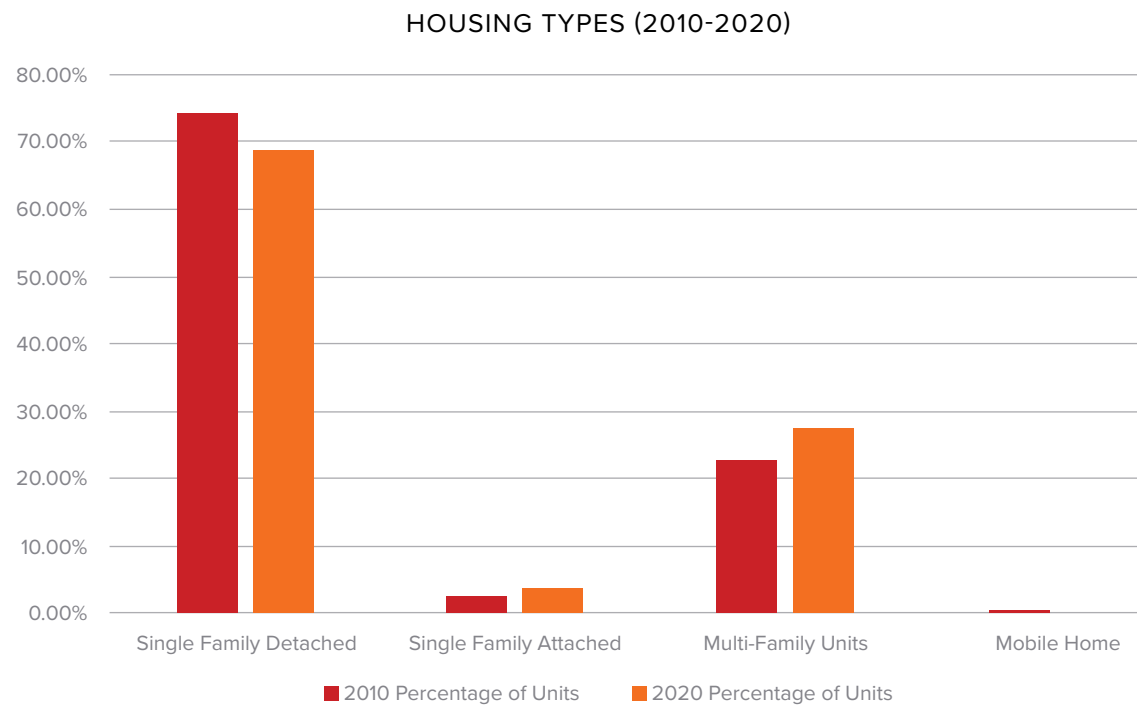
MULTI-FAMILY

There was an increase in multi-family housing units from 2010 to 2020. In 2010 there were 591 multi-family housing units. This number had increased to 715 units by 2020. During this same timeframe, multi-family housing units increased by 4.6 percent.

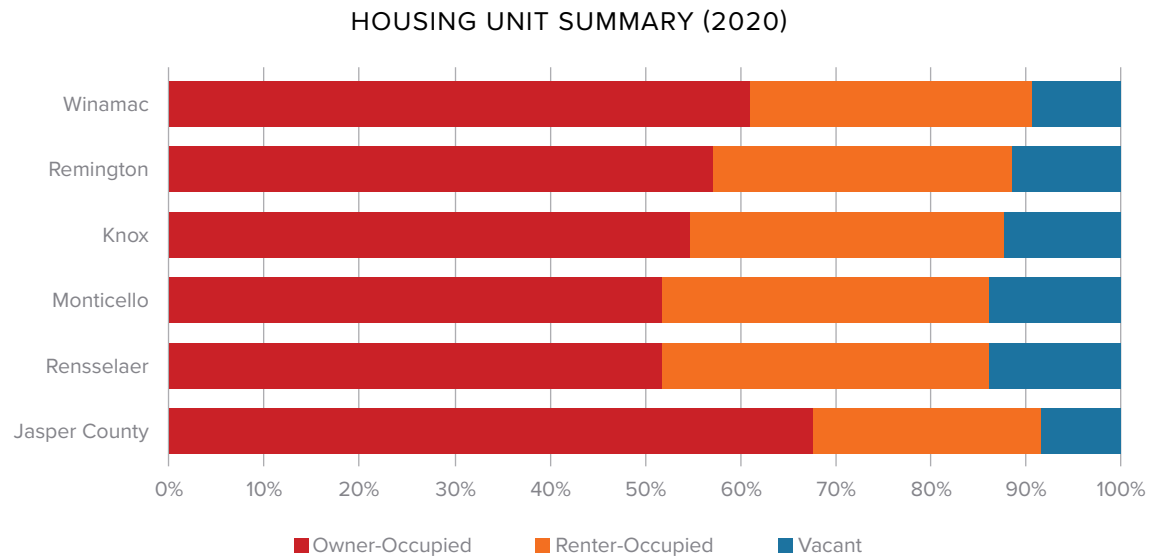
2020



*Housing types available in Rensselaer (2020).
Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).*



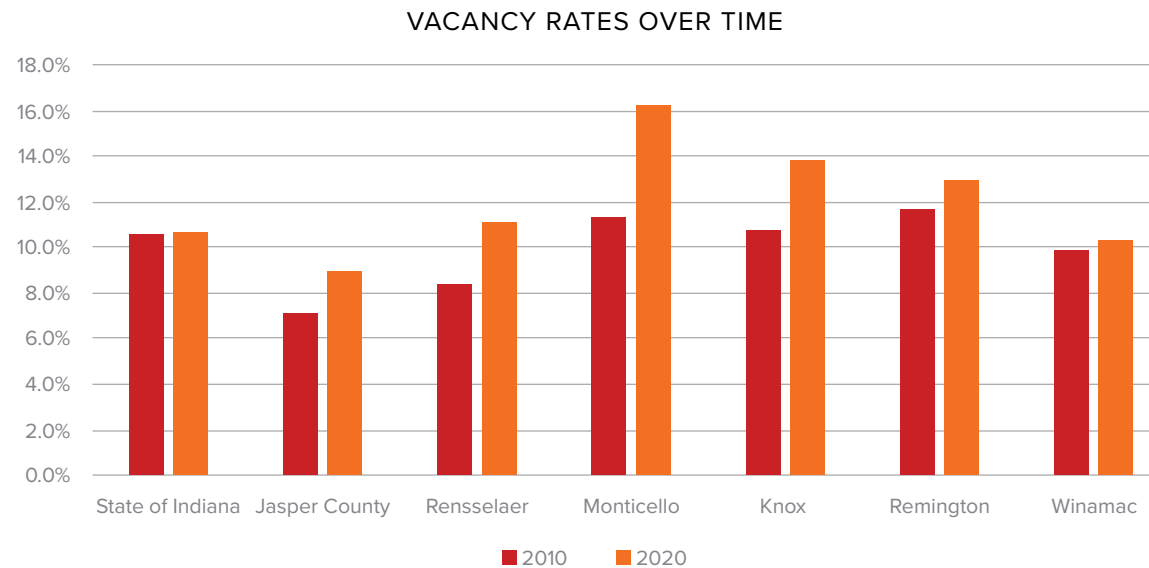
Percentages of changes in housing types from 2010 to 2020.
Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).



2020 Percentage of owner-occupied, renter-occupied, and vacant housing units in Rensselaer and surrounding communities. [ESRI Business Analyst](#).

OCCUPANCY

Rensselaer had a similar ratio of owner-occupied to renter-occupied units compared to nearby communities. In 2020, Rensselaer had the lowest amount of owner-occupied housing units (57.0 percent) but the highest number of renter-occupied housing units (43.1 percent) of all the communities. Jasper County was the opposite of Rensselaer. Jasper County had the highest owner-occupied units (73.7 percent) and the lowest renter-occupied units (26.3 percent). Most of the county's renter-occupied housing stock is typically within incorporated areas. Therefore, the percentage of renter-occupied housing is usually higher for cities and towns than for the county.



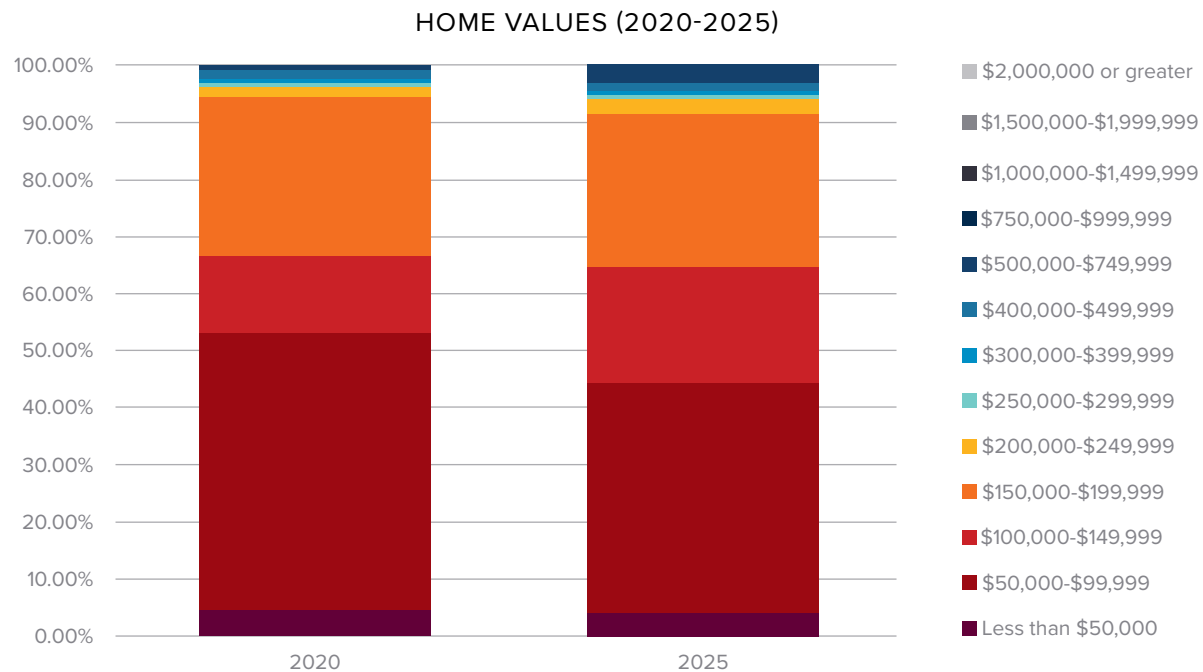
*Housing Units. CAPTION: Vacancy Rates Over Time (2020).
Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).*

VACANCY

Between 2010 and 2020, vacancy rates increased in Rensselaer by 2.7 percent. Rensselaer's vacancy rate in 2020 was higher than Jasper County's (nine percent) but lower than Monticello's (16.2 percent), Knox's (13.8 percent), and Remington's (12.9 percent). Vacancy rates are a normal component of the housing market as units transition to new owners. Higher vacancy rates can perhaps indicate economic difficulties, a less-than-desirable stock of housing supply, or an oversupply of housing. None of these conclusions would seem to apply to the City of Rensselaer.

TRENDS

The most significant percentage (48.5 percent) of homes in Rensselaer was valued between \$50,000 and \$99,999 in 2020. Projections for 2025 show housing values will increase, with most home values from \$100,000 to \$149,999. There were no homes in 2020 or projected to be in 2025 that were \$750,000 or greater. It is important to note that assessed value does not necessarily correlate to market value.

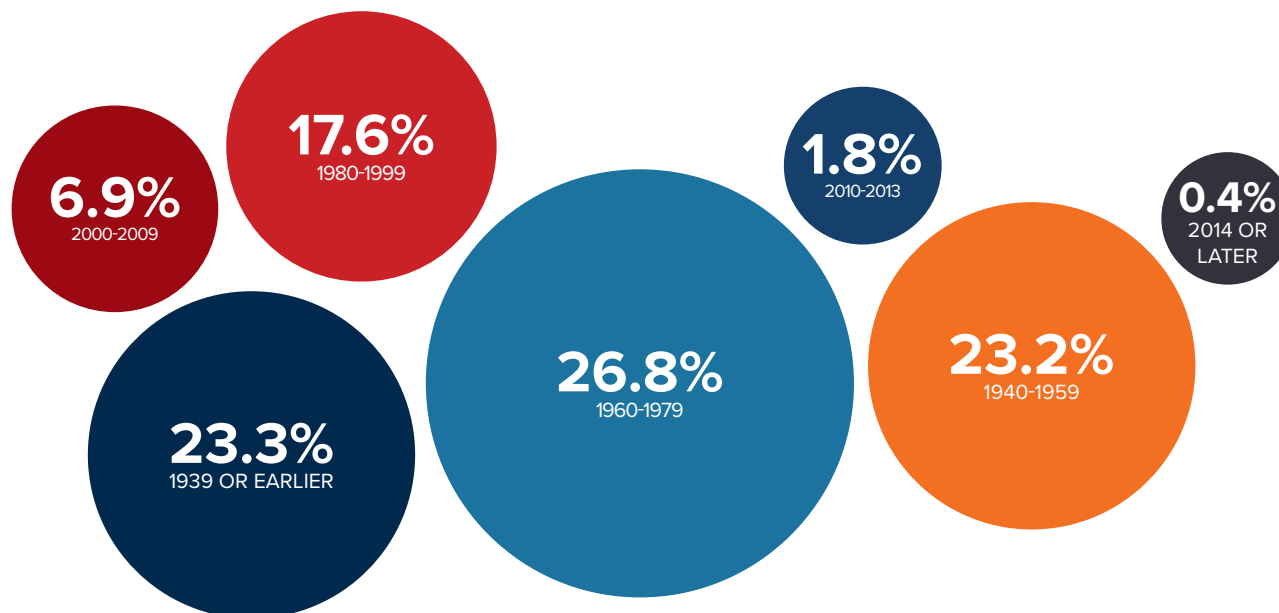


Homes values in Rensselaer in 2020 and 2025 projections.
Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).

AGE OF HOUSING UNITS

Rensselaer has a historic and aging housing stock. The majority of the housing was built before 1999. The largest houses were built in 1960 and 1979 (26.8 percent), and the second highest (23.3 percent) was in 1939 or earlier. The number of new incoming homes declined between 1980 and 1999 and decreased significantly. Since 2014, the construction of new homes has represented less than 1.0 percent of the city's total housing stock.

HOUSING AGE IN RENSSELAER

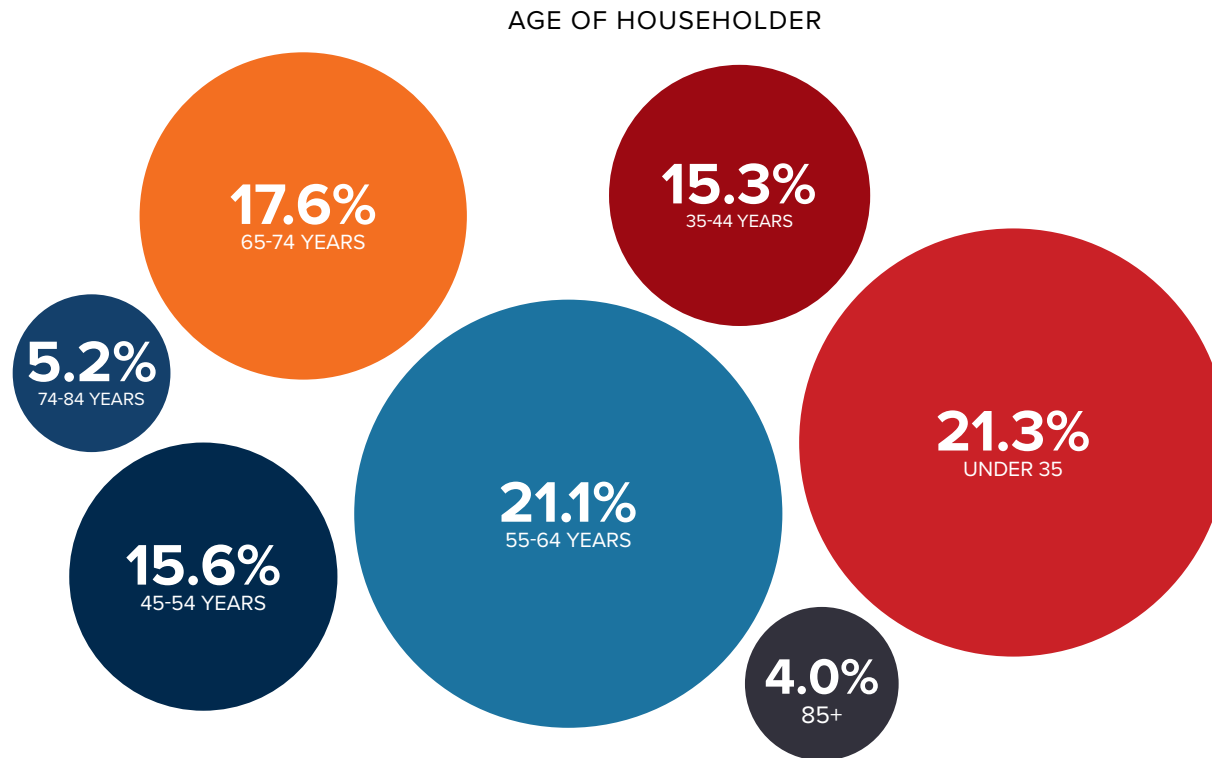


Age of housing units in Rensselaer.

Source: [2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates Comparison Profiles](#).

HOUSEHOLDER

“Householder” is a Census term that refers to the individual listed as that housing unit’s primary mortgage or leaseholder.³ Most householders (21.3 percent) in Rensselaer are 35 years old or younger.



Age of householders in Rensselaer.

Source: [2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates Comparison Profiles](#).

³ [US Census Bureau: Subject Definitions](#).

MARKET CONDITIONS

RETAIL GAP ANALYSIS

A retail gap analysis shows how much money is spent locally compared to how much money “should” be spent based on the local population’s disposable income. A retail gap analysis helps to:

- Uncover unmet demand and possible opportunities;
- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of the local market area; and
- Measure the difference between actual and potential retail sales.

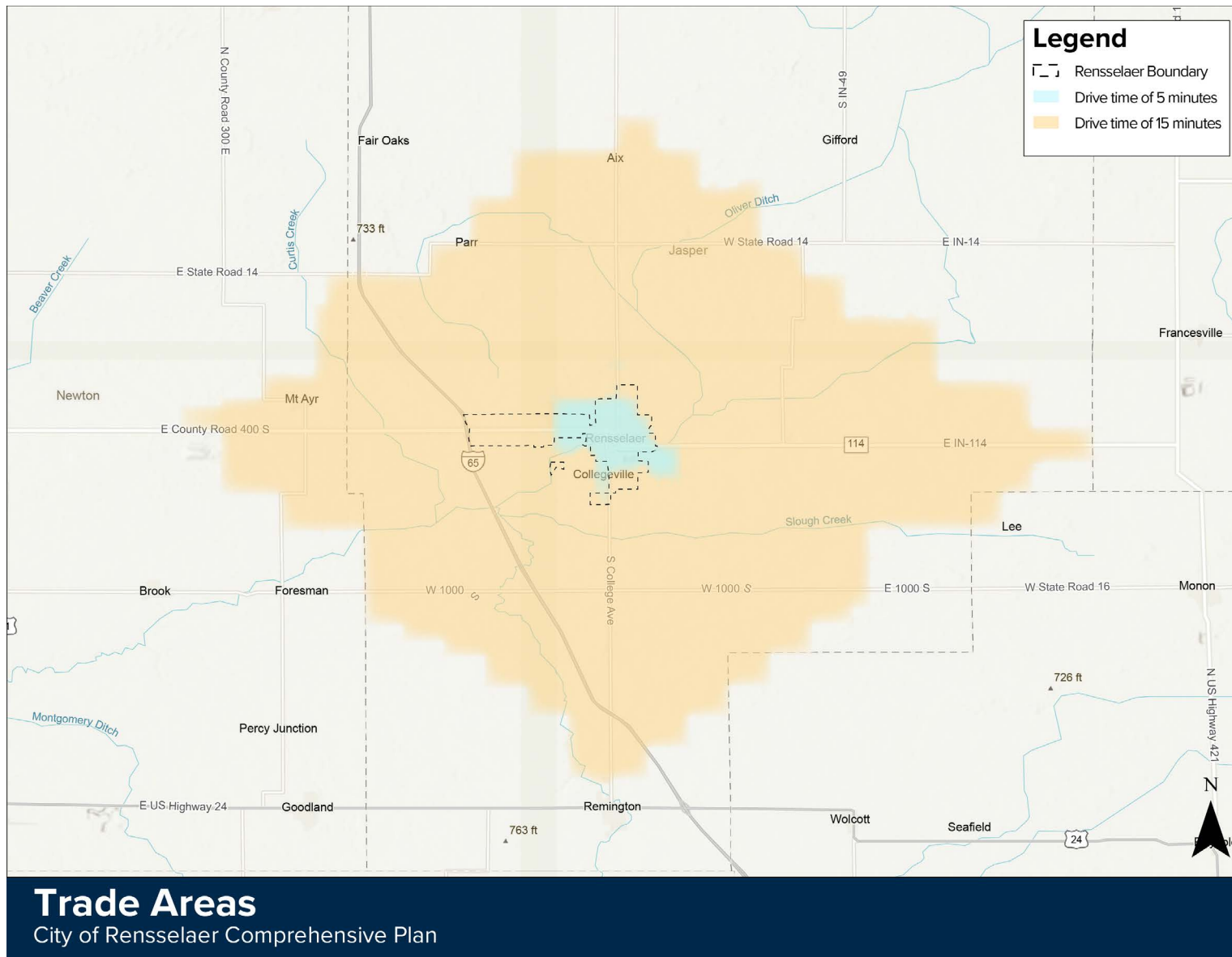
“Leakage” and “surplus” are the two categories used in a retail gap analysis.

- Leakage in a local market means that people living in a trade area are spending money outside of that trade area. That indicates that additional disposable income could be captured in the trade area but is being lost or “leaking” to competing shopping districts.
- A surplus in a local market means more money is being spent at local businesses than the trade area’s population “should be” spending. A surplus can have multiple meanings:
 - Too many businesses exist in the trade area without enough disposable income to support them all; or
 - The trade area attracts spending from additional shoppers beyond the residents’ spending power.

RENSSELAER’S TRADE AREAS

An analysis of Rensselaer’s population trends, commuter patterns, daytime population, and public input revealed two distinct trade areas. The two trade areas identified were:

- **Primary Trade Area (5-minute drive)** – The primary trade area was defined as a five-minute drive from downtown Rensselaer and captured residents and employees that work and likely shop at local businesses multiple times per week.
- **Extended Trade Area (15-minute drive)** – The extended trade area was defined as a 15-minute drive from downtown and captured potential shoppers that may frequent Rensselaer businesses once or twice a month.



Rensselaer Retail Analysis for Primary and Extended Area.
Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).

CATEGORY	PRIMARY TRADE AREA (\$)	EXTENDED TRADE AREA (\$)
Total	34,033,955.00	54,870,566.00
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	9,432,596.00	14,719,120.00
Furniture and Home Furnishing Stores	1,756,553.00	2,823,525.00
Electronic and Appliance Stores	609,466.00	2,696.00
Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers	4,731,254.00	7,701,845.00
Food and Beverage Stores	4,830,589.00	4,062,590.00
Health and Personal Care Stores	6,424,595.00	5,138,164.00
Gasoline Stations	22,394,477.00	42,979,255.00
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	2,703,956.00	4,333,649.00
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, and Book Stores	1,031,381.00	1,641,383.00
General Merchandise Stores	702,355.00	299,836.00
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	8,219,386.00	9,876,478.00
Food Services and Drinking Places	2,343,446.00	2,528,380.00

Comparative Retail Gap Analysis of Rensselaer and Extended Trade Areas.
Source: [Claritas: Retail Market Power®](#) | [Opportunity Gap by Retail Store Types](#).

PRIMARY TRADE AREA

The Table of Comparative Retail Gap Analysis on the previous page of Rensselaer and Extended Trade Areas shows the reported gap analysis for each significant retail category in the primary and extended trade areas. Surpluses are shown in red, and leakages in green. Rensselaer's primary trade area had a total surplus of **\$34,033,955** for all retail trade categories, including food and drink. The largest reported surplus within the primary trade area was in Gasoline Stations at **\$22,394,477**. The large surplus in motor vehicles and parts dealers indicates that many people come to Rensselaer to purchase a car or other auto parts or services. The primary trade area also had surpluses in the following categories:

- Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers (**\$9,432,596**)
- Electronic and Appliance Stores (**\$609,466**)
- Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers (**\$4,731,254**)
- Health and Personal Care Stores (**\$6,424,595**)
- Miscellaneous Store Retailers (**\$8,219,386**)

Rensselaer's primary trade area also showed leakages in the following categories:

- Furniture and Home Furnishing Stores (**\$1,756,553**)
- Food and Beverage Stores (**\$4,830,589**)
- Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores (**\$2,703,956**)
- Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, and Book Stores (**\$1,031,381**)

In the primary trade area, there was a leakage in General Merchandise Stores of **\$702,355**. General merchandise and department stores, such as Walmart, fall under this General Merchandise category. In this case, the sub-category Department Stores had a surplus of **\$2,566,858**, which means that people from Rensselaer are shopping at local department stores.

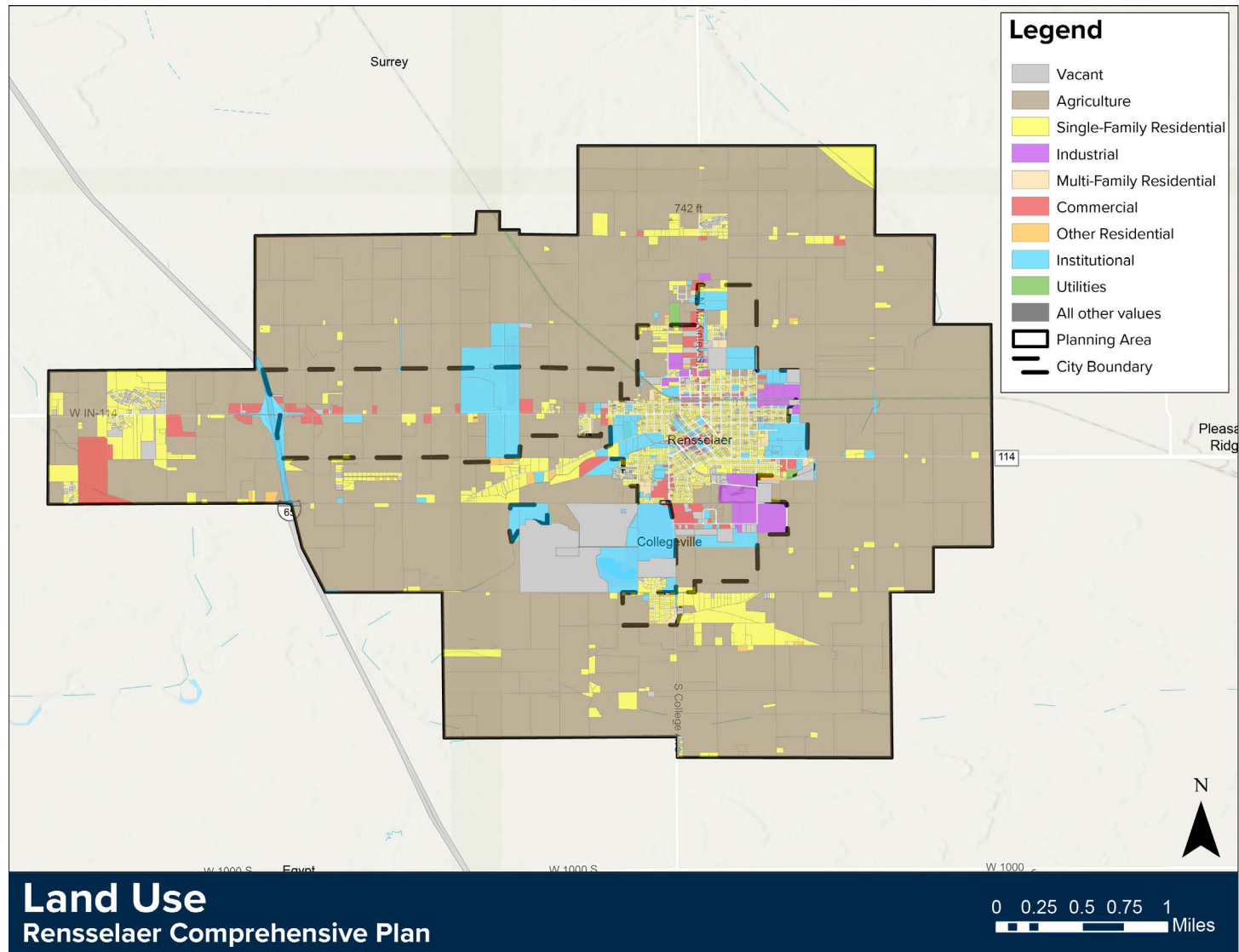
The Food and Beverage Stores category reported a leakage of **\$4,830,589**. Further examination of this leakage revealed a **\$2,343,446** potential demand for more Food Services and Drinking Places and implies that opportunities existed for more sit-down restaurants and bars.

EXTENDED TRADE AREAS

The extended trade area captured spending within a 15-minute drive from downtown. The extended trade area had a total surplus of **\$54,870,566**. In this case, the highest surplus was reported in Gasoline Stations, with a surplus of **\$42,979,255**. Rensselaer is located between two major roads, I-65 and SR-231. These major transit corridors are the likely cause of this category's surplus. Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealership reported a surplus of **\$14,719,120**, which was slightly higher than the primary trade area's surplus. The extended trade area also had surpluses in the following categories:

- Miscellaneous Store Retailers (**\$9,876,478**).
- Electronic and Appliances (**\$2,696**)
- Building Materials and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers (**\$7,701,845**)
- Health and Personal Care Stores (**\$5,138,164**)

EXISTING LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT



Land uses in Rensselaer and Planning Area
Source: [ESRI](#), [IndianaMAP](#).

LAND USE

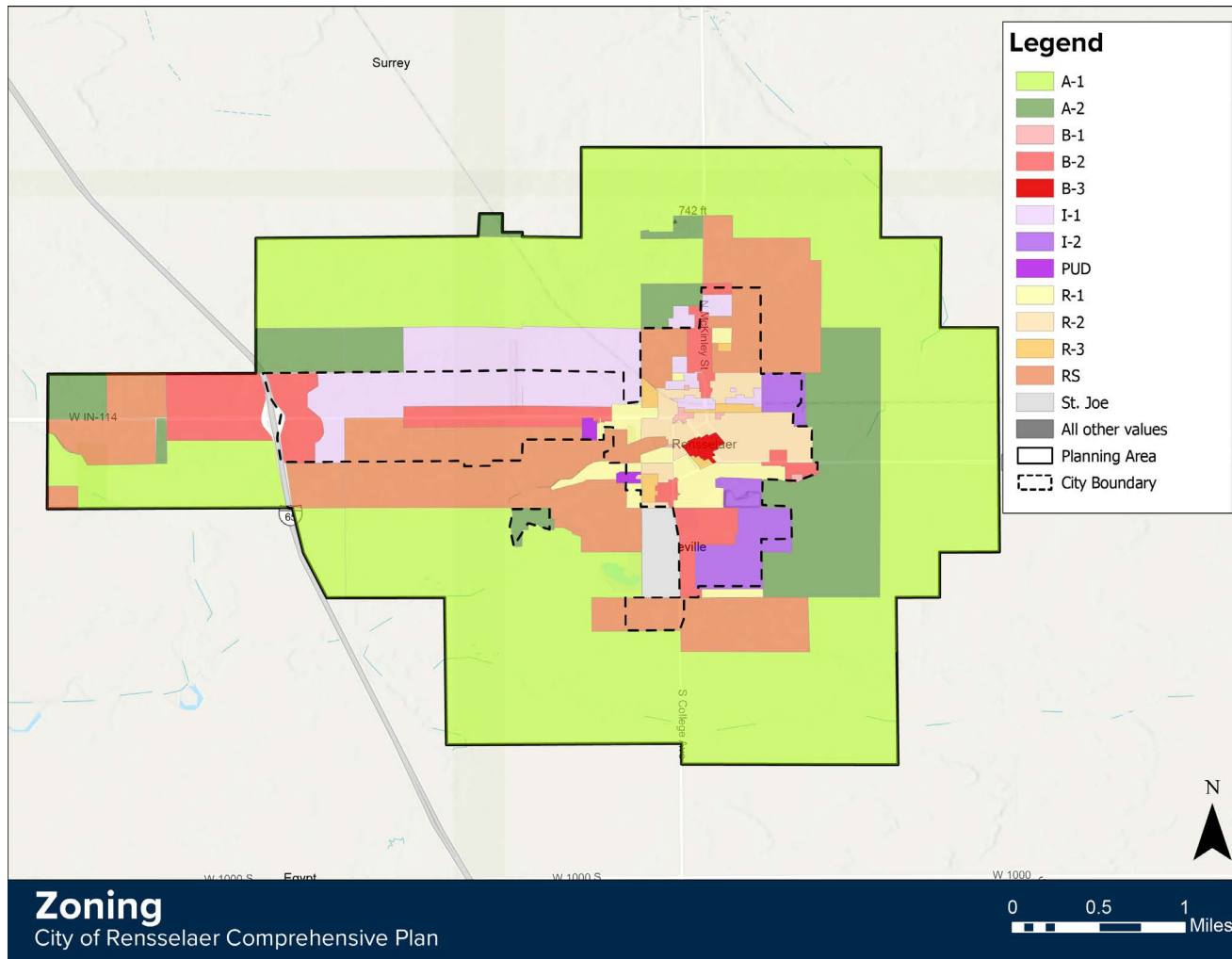
The most prominent land use within the city's limits was agricultural land at 47.1 percent. Institutional uses were the second most common land use at 19.5 percent. Single-family was the third most common land use at 15.7 percent and was mainly located adjacent to the downtown area. However, multi-family residential land was 0.9 percent throughout the city. Industrial areas (5.8 percent) were located southeast and northwest of downtown. Commercial concentrations (5.3 percent) and industrial land uses were spread out throughout the city, with some commercial uses downtown. The planning area consisted of Rensselaer's extra-jurisdictional zoning territory and was 80.7 percent agriculture.

RENSSELAER LAND USE CATEGORY	CITY		PLANNING AREA	
	Acres	% of total	Acres	% of total
Agriculture	1826.8	47.1%	17878.3	80.7%
Commercial	204.8	5.3%	427.5	1.9%
Industrial	223.8	5.8%	237.6	1.1%
Institutional	757.5	19.5%	1280.9	5.8%
Multi-family Residential	36.9	0.9%	38.8	0.2%
Other Residential	40.1	1.0%	96.7	0.4%
Single Family Residential	608.6	15.7%	1840.2	8.3%
Utilities	19.8	0.5%	60.4	0.3%
Vacant	160.6	4.1%	301	1.4%
Total	3878.9	100.0%	22161.4	100.0%

*Land Uses in Rensselaer and Planning Area.
Source: [ESRI](#), [IndianaMAP](#).*

ZONING AND POLICY⁴

ZONING DISTRICT BY ACREAGE



Zoning Districts in Rensselaer and Planning Area.
Source: [ESRI](#), [IndianaMAP](#).

⁴ [City of Rensselaer: Zoning Ordinance](#).

RESIDENTIAL

Residential zones in Rensselaer were classified into four residential districts: Single-Family (R-1), Two-Family (R-2), Multi-Family (R-3), and Suburban Residential (RS). The Single-Family Residential District is established to provide for low-density single-family residents. The Two-Family Residential District provides a transition between single-family residential areas and higher-density areas. The Multi-Family Residential District accommodates high-density residential development. Suburban Residential Districts are a transition between rural and farm areas. The combined zoning coverage of these districts is more than a quarter of the town's zoning coverage area.

COMMERCIAL

Other zones in Rensselaer included commercial and conservation zones. Commercial zones included Neighborhood Business, Regional Business, and Central Business. The Neighborhood Business District (B-1) meets the day-to-day convenience shopping and service needs of the community living in nearby residential areas. Regional Business Districts (B-2) encourage well-planned uses along major city streets. These should meet design standards such as safe ingress/egress and adequately located parking and service facilities. Central Business Districts (B-3) accommodate the city's center for government, finance, professional offices, services, and retail uses. The central business district was limited to downtown. The combined zoning coverage of these districts is about a quarter of the town's zoning coverage area.

INDUSTRIAL

Industrial districts were divided between Light Industrial (I-1) and Heavy Industrial (I-2). The Light-Industrial District is intended to provide manufacturing, wholesaling, warehousing, and other uses conducted entirely within an enclosed building. Light industrial was in the center of the city. Heavy industrial comprised a small area (2.2 percent) directly north of SR 114. The Heavy Industrial District is for manufacturing, construction, wholesaling, warehousing, and other services that need outdoor storage, procession, or operations. There was more than triple the amount of light industrial (7.0 percent) zoning than heavy industrial (2.2 percent).

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT

Permitted uses in Planned Unit Development (PUD) include "dwelling units in detached, semi-detached, attached or multi-storied structures or any combination thereof, non-residential uses of a religious, cultural, recreational, and business or enclosed industrial character, or non-residential uses of a religious, cultural, recreational and business or enclosed industrial character, which uses are an integral part of a residential development logically oriented to and coordinated with the total Planned Unit Development. Such uses shall be planned and gauged primarily for the service and convenience of the anticipated population of the planned unit development."⁵

⁵ [*City of Rensselaer: Zoning Ordinance.*](#)

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture districts were divided between Prime Agricultural Districts (A-1) and Agricultural Transition (A-2). Rensselaer zoning showed a 0.03 percent of Prime Agricultural; these districts are usually located where the soil types are most conducive to agricultural operations. Agricultural Transition occupied 1.4 percent of the land in the city.

RENSSELAER ZONING LAND USE CATEGORY	CITY		PLANNING AREA	
	Acres	% of total	Acres	% of total
A-1	1.2	0.0%	12241.6	53.3%
A-2	57.5	1.4%	2247.7	9.8%
B-1	20.7	0.5%	21.5	0.1%
B-2	819.9	19.4%	1242.6	5.4%
B-3	42.0	1.0%	42.0	0.2%
I-1	904.7	21.4%	1603.9	7.0%
I-2	446.7	10.5%	504.1	2.2%
PUD	27.5	0.7%	34.6	0.2%
R-1	328.2	7.8%	431.6	1.9%
R-2	522.6	12.3%	524.6	2.3%
R-3	92.6	2.2%	92.6	0.4%
RS	970.1	22.9%	3789.5	16.5%
St. Joe	0.1	0.0%	202.0	0.9%
TOTAL	4233.9	100.0%	22978.4	100.0%

Zoning Codes in Rensselaer and Planning Area.
Source: [ESRI](#), [IndianaMAP](#).

OVERLAY ZONING DISTRICTS⁶

AIRPORT OVERLAY

The Airport Overlay (AO) District overlays and highlights regulations, standards, and requirements to land uses in and around the Jasper County Airport. Permitted uses in the Airport Overlay District include airports, heliports, and other aviation use that shall be approved by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Indiana Department of Transportation, and the local Airport Authority. Also, notice and approval from the FAA shall be required to construct or alter any structure within the designated air space. "Within the Airport Overlay District, land uses will be encouraged to separate uncontrolled noise sources from residential and other noise-sensitive areas and avoid danger to public health and safety or property due to aircraft operations." Schools, churches, hospitals, and libraries are prohibited in existing or proposed runway protection zones. Agricultural and open recreational spaces shall be encouraged.

CORRIDOR OVERLAY

The Corridor Overlay (CO) District is intended to designate landscape, architectural, and access management standards for the SR 114 and US-231 roadway corridors, requirements that consist of the quality of life and community identity objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. Developments within this district shall be designed to provide traffic circulation, pedestrian safety, and the area's visual image. Any design criteria shall promote safety and efficiency in highway access, avoid congestion, and promote attractive and harmonious land use within SR 114 and US-231 roadway corridors. A few of these design criteria include: driveway design and placement shall be in harmony with internal circulation and parking design, driveway entrances shall be able to accommodate all vehicle types having occasion to enter the site, including delivery vehicles, and driveway placement shall be such that loading and unloading activities will in no way hinder vehicle ingress or egress. The landscape, buffering, and architectural standards shall apply to all development within the Corridor Overlay District.

⁶ [*City of Rensselaer: Zoning Ordinance.*](#)

⁷ [*City of Rensselaer: Zoning Ordinance.*](#)

FLOODPLAIN OVERLAY

The Floodplain Overlay (FO) District overlays and highlights standards for developments in flood hazard areas to reduce the potential for loss of life and property, health and safety hazards, and extraordinary public expenditures for flood protection and relief. The requirements of the Flood Overlay District shall be applied to lands within Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA). "No person, firm, corporation, or government body not exempted by state law shall commence any development in an SFHA without first obtaining an Improvement Location Permit from the Building Commissioner. The Building Commissioner shall not issue an Improvement Location Permit if the proposed development does not meet the requirements of this Ordinance".⁷

HISTORIC OVERLAY

The Historic Overlay (HO) District highlights and includes specific requirements for historic preservation. The district has special design requirements and land use restrictions to preserve the historic character and culture of buildings, structures, lots, blocks, and neighborhoods. A few of these standards include: minimum lot area and minimum lot width shall be as initially platted, or for replats and new subdivisions, an average of adjacent lot area and lot width, minimum street frontage shall be twenty-five (25) feet, and minimum rear setbacks shall be ten (10) feet. Also, landscaping is not required in the Historic Overlay District.

RENSSELAER OVERLAY ZONING DISTRICTS	TYPE OF DISTRICT
AO	Airport Overlay
CO	Corridor Overlay
FO	Floodplain Overlay
HO	Historic Overlay
IO	Interchange Overlay

Overlay Zoning Districts in Rensselaer.
Source: [City of Rensselaer: Zoning Ordinance.](#)

TRANSECTS

A transect is a horizontal "cut" through the environment that shows a range of land uses. Transects are used to observe how land uses and character change along a specific corridor. Transects can also draw attention to areas where land use does not match zoning.⁸

US-231 TRANSECT SOUTH TO NORTH



US-231 Transect South to North of Rensselaer.

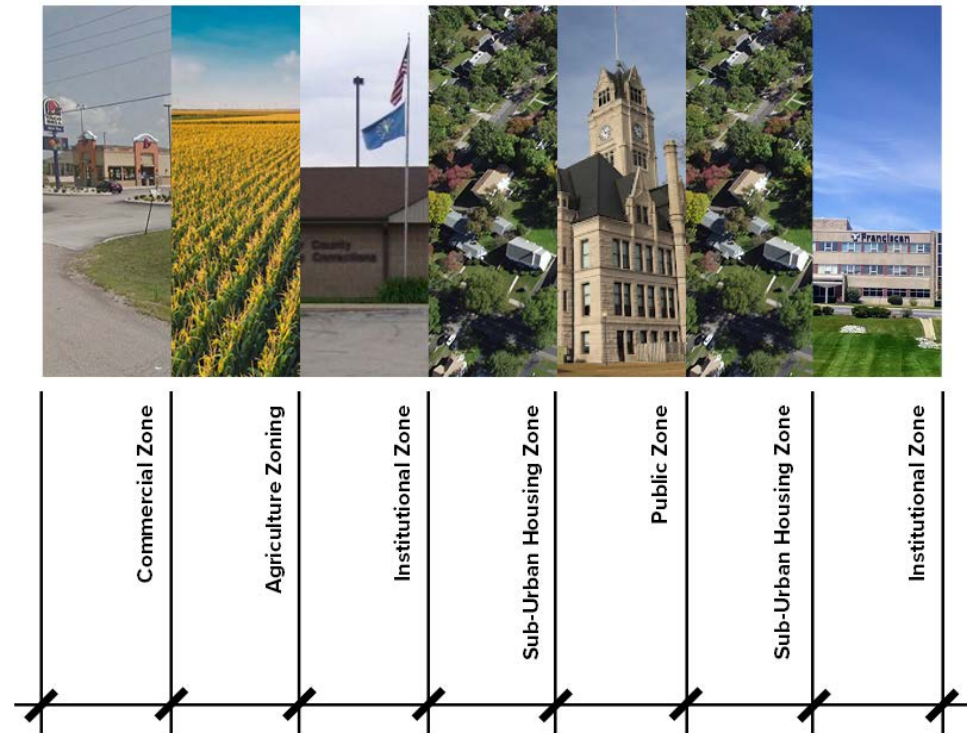
Source: [GoogleEarth](#), [City-Data](#), American Structurepoint.

⁸ [Center for Applied Transect Studies: The Transect.](#)

US-231 is the primary north-to-south corridor, and the transect graphic outlines the flow of land uses along US-231. There are various land uses, such as light and heavy commercial, residential, and light industrial, and the road runs next to St. Joseph's College. The route travels from the city's north boundary to the south, passing through downtown. Starting with the light commercial zone, the road continues to industrial, sub-urban housing zones to transfer to a downtown zone where land is classified as retail shopping. Continuing south, another commercial zone is located before entering the institutional zone where St. Joseph's College is. Exiting the city on the south side was classified as an agricultural zone.

IN-114 is classified as a minor arterial in Rensselaer. This route has various land uses such as light commercial, industrial, residential, and institutional. Coming from the west, the area was classified as a commercial zone. The zone is adjacent to I-65, and some of the businesses in this zone include fast-food restaurants and gas stations. Along this route, the Jasper County Airport, Jasper County Fairgrounds, and Jasper County Community Corrections are located, and this zone was classified as an institutional zone. Sub-urban housing zones were also classified along this route, including single-family and two-family residential, and the Jasper County Courthouse was classified as a public zone. Franciscan Health Rensselaer and Rensselaer Central High School are located on the east side of this road, and this area was classified as an institutional zone.

IN-114 TRANSECT WEST TO EAST

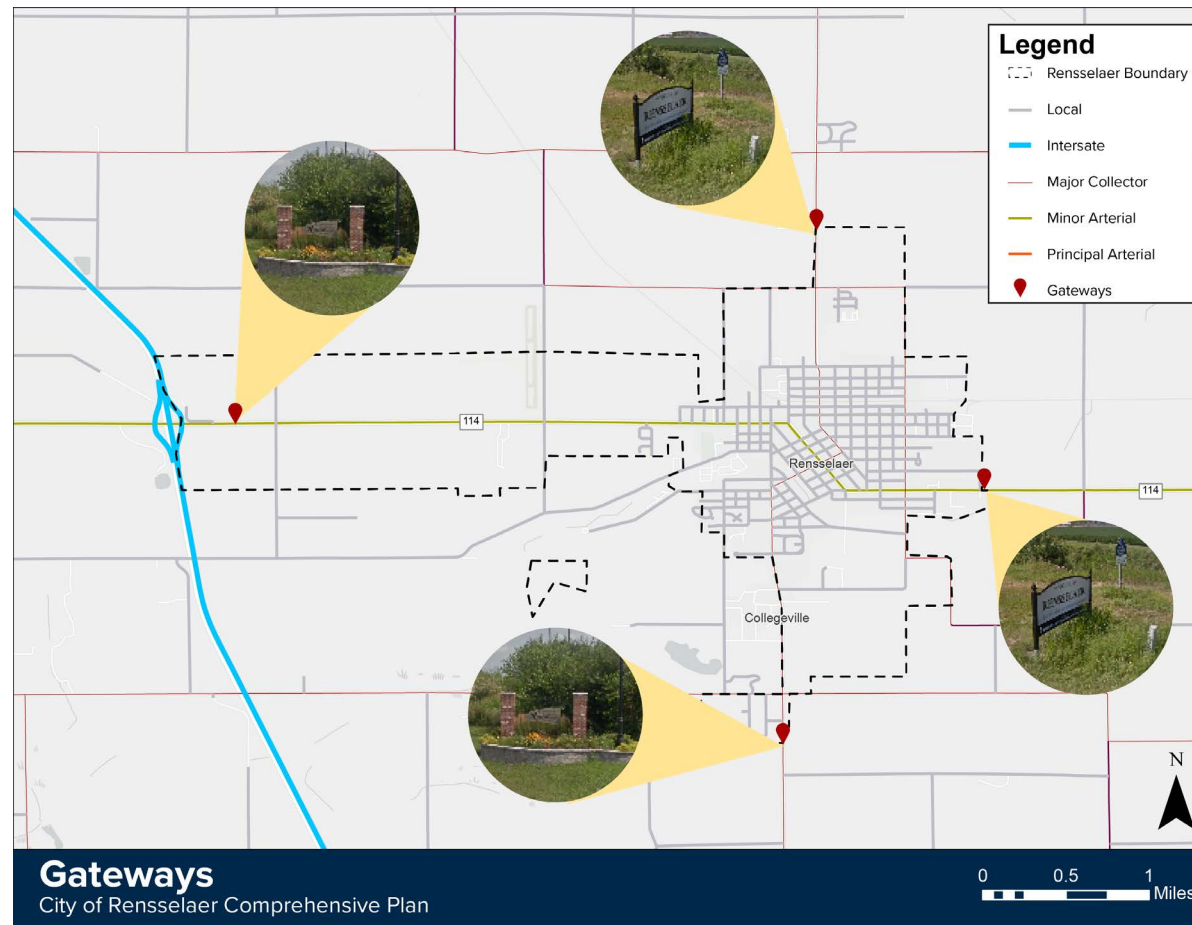


IN-114 Transect West to East of Rensselaer.
Source: [GoogleEarth](#), [City-Data](#), American Structurepoint.

DESIGN FEATURES

GATEWAYS

Gateways in Rensselaer are located on the city's main entrances/exits. The map below illustrates the two different gateways currently situated in the city. IN-114 is a busy transited route, and gateways are located west and east of this route. US-231 travels north-south of Rensselaer and goes through downtown, with gateways both north and south of this route.



Rensselaer gateways.

Source: [GoogleEarth](#).

IDENTIFIABLE NEIGHBORHOODS

Rensselaer has several suburbs and neighborhoods throughout the city. The map shows neighborhoods as identified by *Nextdoor* in Rensselaer. *NextDoor* identified at least 13 neighborhoods, among several others: Maddison Cottages, Webster, Brookside, Countryside, North Cullen, Angelica/Cherry, Friendlyville Rensselaer, South Sparling Ave, Downtown Rensselaer, and Collegeville.



Rensselaer neighborhoods.
Source: [NextDoor](#).



OTHER PUBLIC SPACES

Other public spaces in Rensselaer include Jasper County Community Corrections; this facility offers Community Service Work, Work Release, Community Transition Programs, Electronic Monitoring, and Forensic Diversion programs. These programs help reduce a person's propensity to commit a crime.⁹

Department of Child Services is another public facility offering young kids services. The primary mission of this facility is to allege child abuse and neglect and facilitate child support payments. Indiana Department of Child Services offers many different services to communities. Some include the Children's Mental Health Initiative, Family Preservation, Home Based Family Centered Casework, Counseling, etc. CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children) is a division of the Jasper County Circuit Court.¹⁰

The Courthouse is the heart of downtown, housing most county government offices, Circuit Court, and Superior Court. Additional offices (Prosecutor offices) are located along the Courthouse Square and other departments within the city limits.

⁹ [*Jasper County: Work Release.*](#)

¹⁰ [*IDCS: Service Standard Summaries and Comparisons.*](#)

TRANSPORTATION AND MOVEMENT

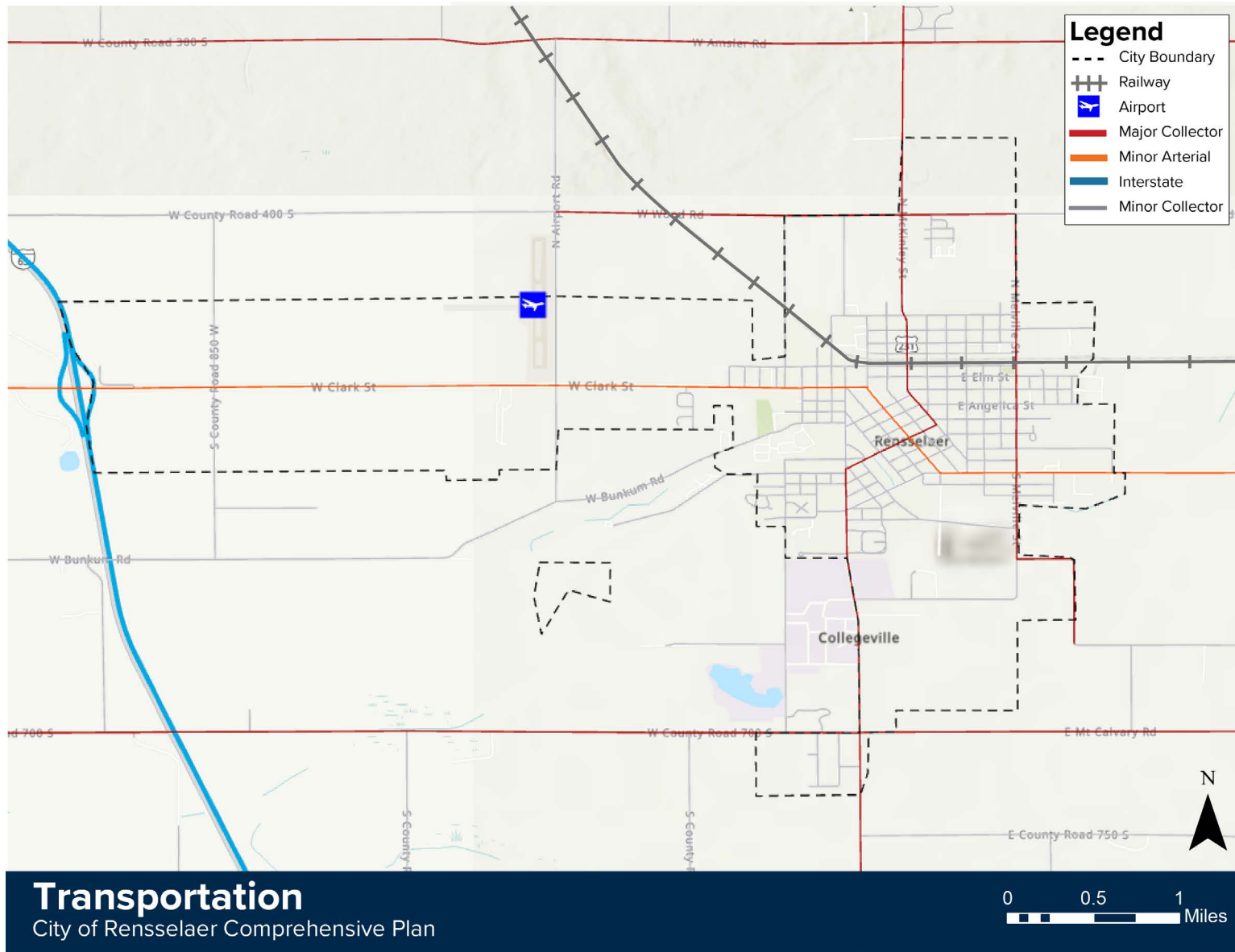
All types of vehicles available in the city are considered means of transportation and movement. Rensselaer is primarily a roadway city, like other communities of its size. The most prominent form of transportation is vehicular travel. Walking is always a viable option if the infrastructure is there. Most of the time, people walk even without infrastructure. Walking distance is a personal preference.

ROADWAY CLASSIFICATION

Roadway classifications define roads into interstates, principal arterials, minor arterials, major collectors, minor collectors, and local roadways. Arterial roadways cater to a large traffic volume and serve cross-community travel. Collectors distribute high traffic volume from arterial roads to local streets. Local streets are intended for property access.

CONDITIONS

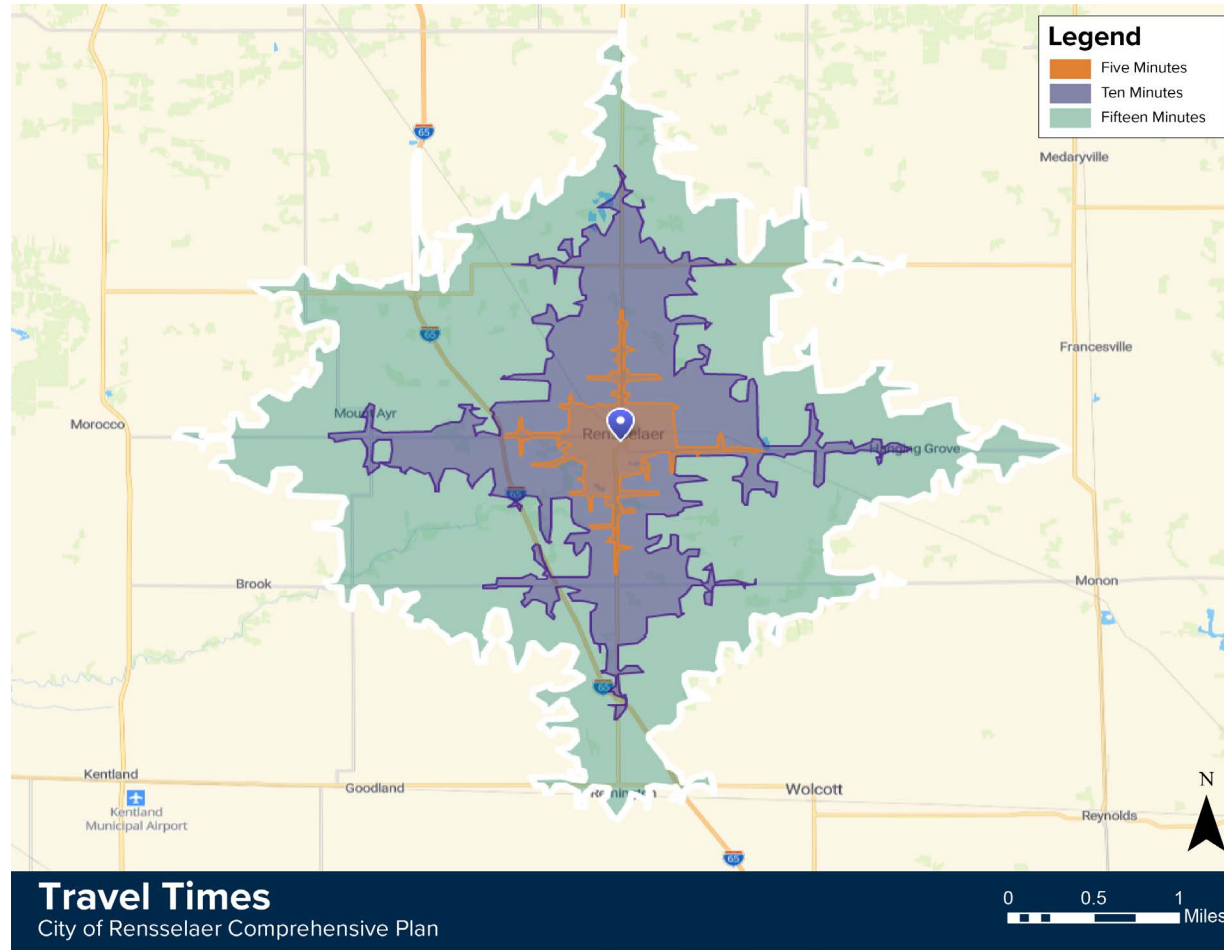
From the area south of the city limits, US-231 allows a connection to I-65, which links Rensselaer to areas like Lafayette and downtown Indianapolis. SR 114 runs west to east and intersects with I-65 at Rensselaer's westernmost city limits. US 231 and SR 114 intersect in the city's heart, providing arterial roadways running east and west or north and south. I-65 allows travel to other destinations such as Chicago, directly into downtown Indianapolis, and as far south as Louisville. US-231 and SR 114 are the two primary arterial roadways within the city. Major collectors include N McKinley Avenue, W Washington Street, W Clark Street, S College Avenue, and E Grace Street. W Clark Street and E Grace Street also serve as minor arterials to the west and east. W Clark Street runs west from I-65 and beyond the city limits and turns into W SR 114. E Grace Street, beyond the city limits, turns into E SR 114.



Road Way Classifications in Rensselaer.
Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).

TRAVEL TIMES

ESRI created travel times in increments of five, ten, and fifteen minutes to determine the distance that could be traveled while driving. Within five minutes, a driver could travel from the center of Rensselaer and reach nearly all of the city and I-65. A driver could reach Mount Ayr, SR 55, parts of Newton County, Parr, Hanging Grove Township within 10 minutes. Within 15 minutes, a driver could reach the north edge of Remington, US-421, Fair Oaks, and almost reach Morocco, Brook, and surrounding townships such as Salem and Walker.

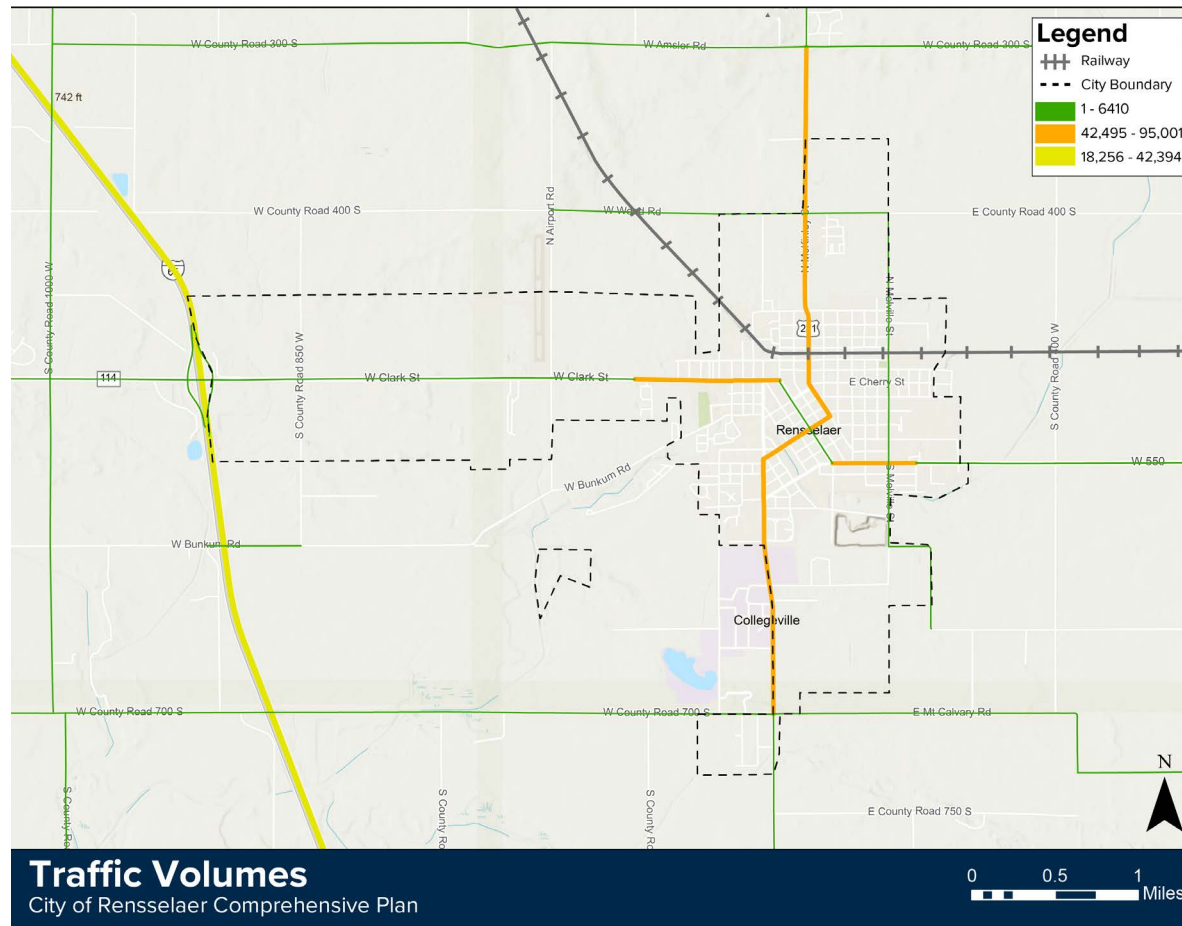


Travel times from Rensselaer in increments of 5, 10, and 15 minutes of drive time.

Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).

TRAFFIC VOLUMES

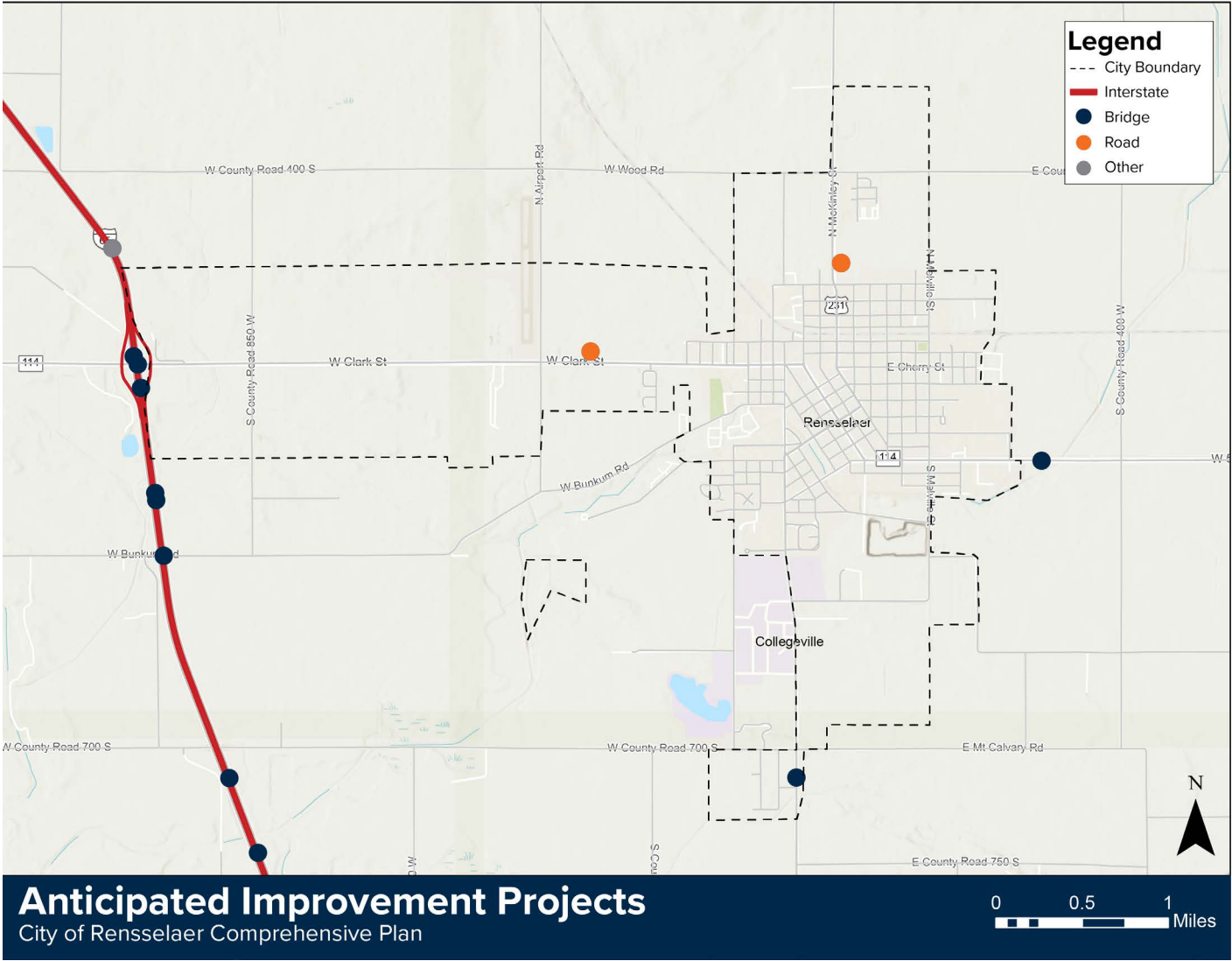
Traffic volumes, provided by INDOT, are measured by annual average daily traffic counts (AADT). Traditionally, this calculates the annual volume of vehicle traffic on a highway or road by 365 days. The AADT is a straightforward yet helpful indicator of how busy the route is. AADT counts are now provided by the side of the road, by day of the week, and the hour of the day, thanks to more recent developments from GPS traffic data suppliers. I-65 had the highest AADT, ranging from 20,000 to 40,000. US-231 and SR 114 had the second-highest ranging from 1 to 20,000 AADT. The minor roads had too low of an AADT to appear on the map.



Travel times from Rensselaer in increments of 5, 10, and 15 minutes of drive time.

Source: [ESRI Business Analyst](#).

ANTICIPATED IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS



Anticipated INDOT projects 2020 to 2026 in Marion.
Source: [INDOT Next Level Roads](#).

ANTICIPATED IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

Multiple bridge projects are happening in 2022 through 2026 along I-65. The “Anticipated Improvement Projects” map shows locations where improvement projects occur in Rensselaer. The interstate project consists of the installation of ITS traffic Management Systems. All bridge projects along I-65 happening in 2022 include a bridge deck overlay, substructure repair, rehabilitation, and replacement superstructure. The bridge has a scour protection (erosion) project in 2023 and five other projects in 2025. Regarding road improvements, there will be two commencing in 2022. Marked on the map above in orange closets to the interstate is a road project that includes HMA Overlay and Preventive Maintenance. Other road project includes HMA overlay minor structural work.¹¹

Within the city, especially around the Courthouse Square, the Brick Streets Project is scheduled to begin in July 2023 and is slated to be completed by year-end. This long-awaited streetscape project was made possible through a US Department of Commerce EDA (Economic Development Administration) grant and matching City funds. It will include many amenities and all new below-ground infrastructure (electric, gas, water main, sewage, and electronic – telephone and internet). Working with affected businesses, residents, and Jasper County officials, the project will include all new sidewalks, parking spots, trash receptacles, and lighting along both Van Rensselaer and Harrison Streets, plus the County’s two sidewalks along Washington and Cullen Streets. Rensselaer continually reviews and improves its city streets with the help of funding sources such as an Indiana Community Crossing Matching Grant (CCMG); several city streets receive HMA, mill patch, and overlay.

AIRPORT

Jasper County has one airport within Rensselaer’s western city limits, directly off W Clark Street, one of Rensselaer’s minor arterials. A public airport that does not cater to commercial airlines but does serve as a gateway to Jasper County at the doorstep of Northwest

Indiana. It offers local and transiting pilots welcoming hospitality, competitively-priced fuel available 24/7, and nationally-renowned maintenance specialists. The Airport is intended for general aviation uses and has a 4,000-foot runway-oriented north-south axis. From Rensselaer’s downtown, residents can reach the airport within a three-minute drive or a 30-minute walk. The Airport is owned and operated by the Jasper County Airport Authority (JCAA), which comprises a five-member board appointed by the Jasper County Commissioners.

The Airport offers Aircraft Rentals to renters/pilots with valid and current pilot certificates and Pilot Experience Records. The Airport’s location caters to Rensselaer’s downtown area, neighboring attractions, and other Jasper County communities. It also offers an Airport Management & Operations Internship Program, giving students knowledge with real-world aviation experiences. A great community partner, the Airport has offered biplane rides, youth aviation summer camps, and aviation education courses with Rensselaer Central Schools Corporation.

Improvements to the Airport include the 2020 purchase of 47 acres of land adjoining the airport’s west side. The parcel will be used for airspace protection for the current grass runway and future development of the east/west paved runway. The Runway Project will not only reap benefits for Jasper County’s Airport. Still, it will also have an economic ripple effect benefiting local shops, restaurants, and hotels, potentially attracting new business to a community. Along with the Airport’s Master Plan Project, reviewing many resources may quantify and substantiate that the airport can meet the needs of the communities that depend on its daily operation.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Jasper County has one form of public transportation. Jasper County Community Services (JCCS) is a public transportation source for all of Jasper County. JCCS has a stock of seven vehicles, four lift-equipped and ADA-accessible. Greyhound has a daily stop for travel outside the city, just one block from the downtown area.

¹¹ [*INDOT Next Level Roads.*](#)

¹² [*Jasper County Community Services, Inc: Public Transportation.*](#)

RAILROAD

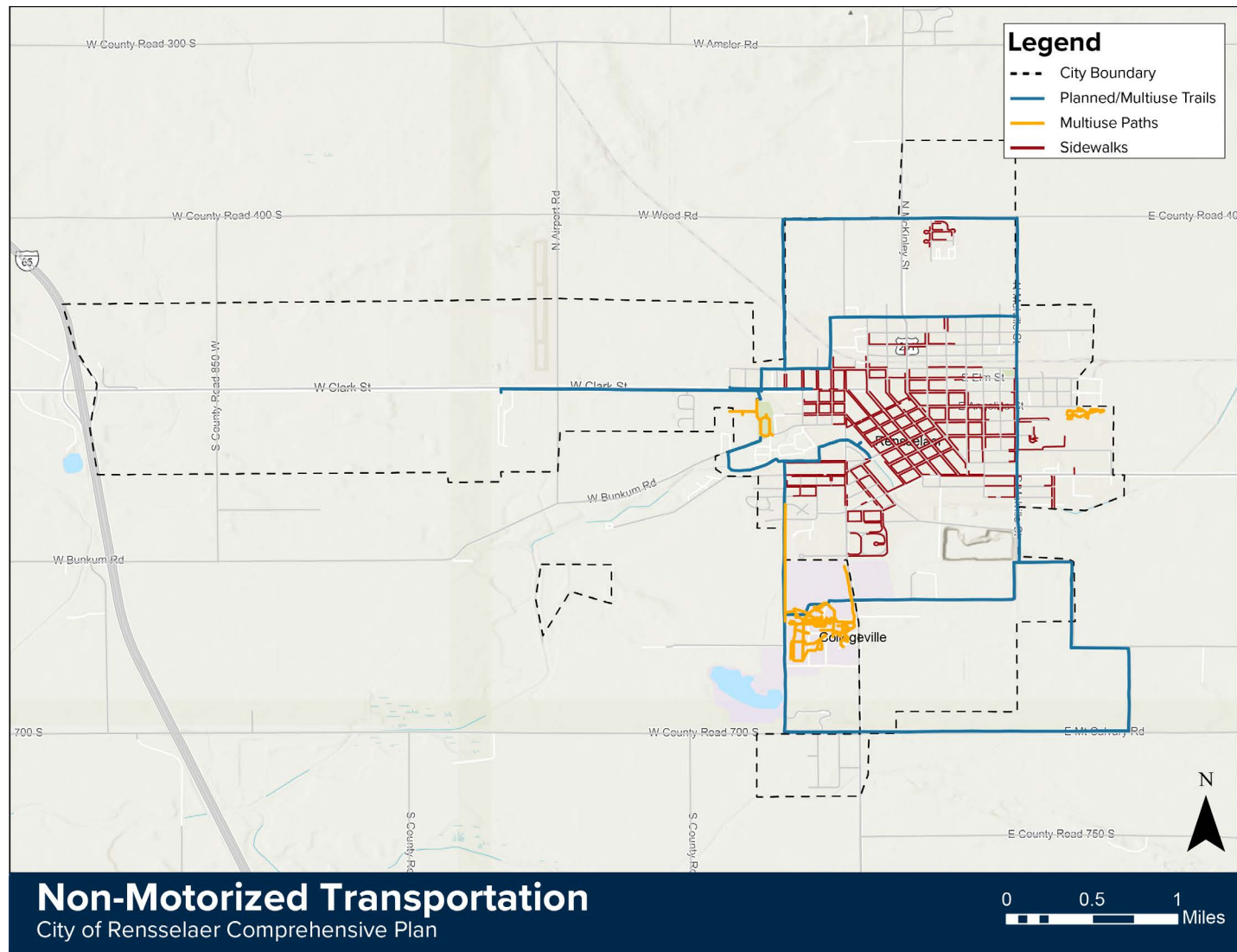
The Amtrak-Cardinal line is the closest rail line to the City of Rensselaer. The National Railroad Passenger Corporation operates Amtrak, a federal passenger railroad service in the United States. Residents can access the station located one minute from downtown. The Amtrak route runs from Chicago to New York and goes through Indiana, stopping in Indianapolis, on the border of Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, and New Jersey.



Amtrak Route.

Source: [IndianaMAP](#), [IDNR](#).

NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION



Multi-Use Trails in Rensselaer.
Source: [IndianaMAP](#), [IDNR](#).

TRAILS AND WALKWAYS INFRASTRUCTURE

Sidewalks are mainly located in the center of Rensselaer and some neighborhoods. Most downtown streets have sidewalks on both sides of the road. Most of these sidewalks are in good condition. Sidewalks on E Washington Street are 10-12 feet wide paved sidewalks. Other neighborhoods near downtown have access to both sides of paved sidewalks, and other streets only have sidewalks on one side of the road. The current multi-use paths shown on the map are paved. Still, these are primarily located at St Joseph's College, the Iroquois River, and Laird's Landing, a small park that serves as a launching site for canoes into the Iroquois River.

WALK SCORE

Rensselaer's walk score decreases the further from downtown, especially north and northeast. The walk score can be as high as 70 downtown and as low as 20 outside of it.¹³ In addition, the bike score operates the same as the walk score; the further from downtown, the lower the score. Rensselaer's bike score ranges from 30 to 60.¹⁴ Rensselaer has a few multi-use paths located in the south. Rensselaer has planned to construct a multi-use trail around the city, as seen on the map above.

UTILITIES

Incorporated as a city in 1896, the City of Rensselaer is one of the few municipalities in the state that owns and operates five different services (gas, electric, water, sewage, streets, and sanitation), serving 2,897 residential, commercial, and industrial customers. The Mayor's Office, Clerk-Treasurer's Office, and Utility Office are housed within City Hall. The Utility Office is responsible for, among other things, all of the billing, bookkeeping, and collection of each billable service. The Utility Office is operated by a Utility Office Manager, Billing Clerk, and two Utility Clerks.

WATER AND SEWER

The City of Rensselaer has a groundwater system composed of three wells. A water treatment plant with a design capacity of 2.3 MGD and a daily average of 600,000 gallons. The distribution system comprises 39.5 miles of water main, two elevated storage tanks, a third already in the construction phase, and 409 fire hydrants. That allows the City to offer water services to some areas outside the city limits.

Created in 1898, the Rensselaer Sewage Department and the Water Department currently serve 2,897 clients. The wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) oversees the city's daily wastewater, which is built to hold 1.2 million gallons of sewage daily. The WWTP filters remove all suspended particles and ammonia from the raw sewage. Equipment includes a vactor truck for cleaning sewer lines, a camera that can go through sewer pipes to look for obstructions in the central city lines, a sludge truck, and two maintenance trucks. There are also 33.89 miles of sewage lines in Rensselaer.¹⁵

¹³ [*Walk Score: 1221 North Rensselaer Court, Griffith, IN.*](#)

¹⁴ [*Walk Score: 138 Rensselaer, Griffith, IN.*](#)

¹⁵ [*City of Rensselaer: Water & Sewage.*](#)



ELECTRIC

The Electric Utility is comprised of a Line Department and a Meter Department and partners with the Indiana Municipal Power Agency (IMPA), out of Indianapolis, to provide low-cost electric service to all residential, commercial, and industrial customers, along with residential and commercial customers located outside the city limits. IMPA is the sole power provider for Rensselaer. The utility has three substations and nine feeder circuits, which allow for multiple ways to feed different parts of the service areas, plus provides a security light program and priority service program for residents in need.

The Line Department consists of groundmen, apprentice linemen, journeyman linemen, and a line foremen. They are responsible for daily operating and maintaining Rensselaer's distribution system. The Department partners with the Indiana Municipal Electric Association (IMEA) for all of its monthly and necessary training needs. As a member of IMEA and IMPA, the Line Department offers disaster relief/storm restoration services to any community in need.

The Meter Department reads 3370 meters for all three metered services (electric, gas, and water utilities), including service areas outside the city limits. They are also responsible for work orders for all turn on/off services, including immediate shutoffs in emergencies to help emergency response personnel, plus communicating and working in unison with the Utility Office. The City is upgrading to AMI (Advanced Metering Infrastructure) to improve efficiency and the entire meter system. The upgrade will offer real-time information and work jointly with the City's GIS mapping system. Some benefits include obtaining meter reads during outages, pinpointing which transformer the outage is on, doing disconnects remotely, improving efficiency and minimizing the need for after-hour turn-ons, and saving residents added expense for the extra call-out. Another benefit is that real-time monitoring of voltage will help customers concerned with the quality of their service.

GAS

Our Gas Utility is equally progressing and provides services to a large customer base within and outside the city limits. To ensure our thriving city is ready to service any economic growth, the utility has helped construct a high-pressure six-inch gas line into the city. This new take point puts Rensselaer at a greater advantage with a second feed and supply for a growing customer base. Plus, the City can use the older feed as a backup and a second lower-pressure feed.

Electric, gas, water, sewage, and trash services are billed and collected monthly through the Utility Office. Each account is billed its respective service(s). All new infrastructure is usually necessary when undertaking utility and/or other improvement projects. All utilities have a rotation of employees to handle after-hour call-out services, which includes weekend and City-observed holidays, giving all customers 24/7 coverage.

OTHER SERVICES

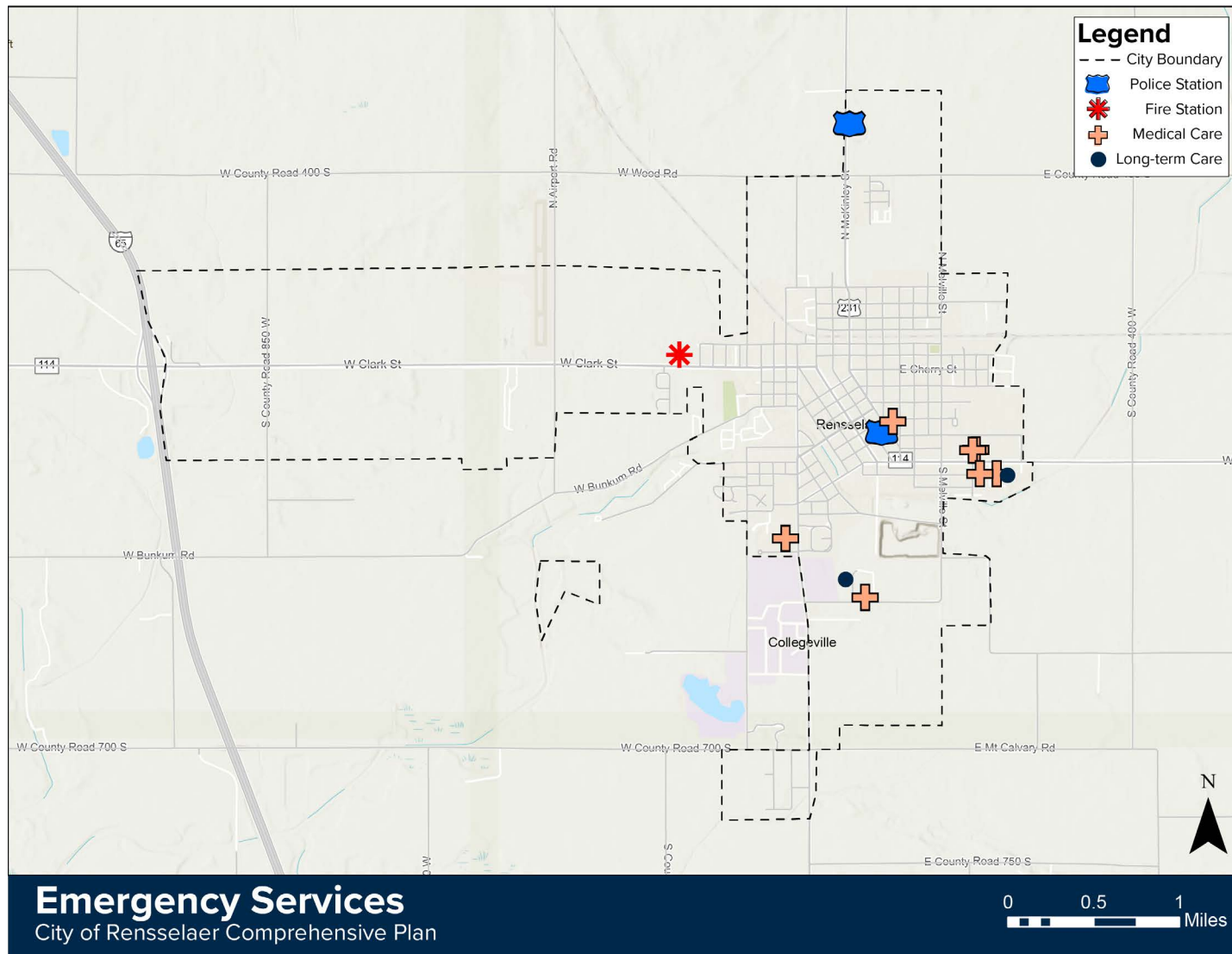
Rensselaer also owns and operates its own Street, Sanitation/Recycling Departments, Parks Department, Weston Cemetery Department, plus a Police Department and Volunteer Fire Department.

The City's Streets/Sanitation/Water and Sewage Departments/Utilities are operated by one office, which includes the City's Project Manager, Assistant Superintendent, and Administrative Assistant. The Street and Sanitation Departments often work together to provide a clean and picturesque hometown feeling. They provide such services as street sweeping; snow, leaf, and brush pick up; mulching; plus trash and recycling routes for all residents. Trash and recycling receptacles are provided at no cost to customers. Trash services are provided for all residential, commercial, and industrial customers, and new schedules allow for uninterrupted service even during City-observed holidays.

Weston Cemetery is a picturesque property for a final resting place and is maintained by respectful and caring individuals. Events such as Memorial Day, Veterans' Day, Memories Alive, and Wreaths Across America showcase the city's history in a caring and beautiful way. Remembering loved ones who have passed keeps our history alive.

The Parks Department is responsible for 25+ parks, big and small – including a dog park, a canoe launching park, and parcels of land, totalling approximately 75 acres. The biggest park is Brookside Park, a 25-30 acres park home to the municipal swimming pool, Blacker Fields, and other amenities. Many improvements have become a reality thanks to the tireless efforts of Department personnel, Corporation members, and the Parks for People campaign. Staddon Field, Foundation Park, and Blacker Fields are but a few improvements that draw more people to our parks and city. The department works tirelessly all year, not just during the summer. Much behind-the-scenes work goes into offering the many programs and maintenance, not just within the parks.

EMERGENCY SERVICES



A map showing police stations, fire stations, and medical care facilities.
Source: [IndianaMAP](#).

POLICE DEPARTMENT¹⁶

The Rensselaer Police Department has a location at 201 South Cullen Street, in what is considered the downtown or Courthouse Square area. The Rensselaer Police Department is responsible for its own 9-1-1 dispatchers, who handle all emergency calls within the city for Rensselaer's Police, Fire, and EMS. Dispatch services include, but are not limited to, responding to the Emergency Weather Service alerts and dispatching and recording on-call utility and department personnel. Police officers patrol the city to ensure all residents' safety and respond to service requests from emergencies to criminal activity reports. They also offer agency assistance to area agencies, schools, and others. The department also offers disaster support/recovery assistance to any community in need. Police personnel actively participate in training exercises and programs, keeping up to date at all times to provide better services to their community, even serving as instructors at the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy or joint training sessions with other police agencies.

FIRE DEPARTMENT¹⁷

The Rensselaer Volunteer Fire Department and the Marion Township Fire Department are separate entities but have partnered to provide fire services to both the city and township, adding 6,000-7,000 residents for a total of approximately 12,000 residents. Rensselaer encompasses around a six-square-mile area, and the department services an additional 232-square-mile area within the township. Founded in 1896 and once housed in what is now City Hall's Clerk-Treasurer's Office, the Department is one of Indiana's oldest continuously running volunteer fire departments. The department is located at 1060 W Clark Street, conveniently in the city and the I-65 corridor. The department's location is key to its response time since it is responsible for 30 miles of I-65 and 15 miles of CSX Transportation's railway.

In conjunction with the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, the department's new training facility is a critical resource for its training needs and other departments. Constant and up-to-date training (e.g., electric vehicles, water rescue, railroad investigation, safety) is critical to maintaining firefighters who can handle any situation that may arise.

Fire Department presence is visible at and during local events and in performing emergency assistance and support, and even setting up medical helicopter landing areas. An elite force within the department includes its Drone Team, who likewise are trained to offer immediate mutual aid to other departments and agencies, whether for fire investigations, assisting with missing person reports, or other police matters.

Joint associations give the department added responsibility but testify to its readiness and willingness to serve more than Rensselaer and Marion Township. As part of the District 1 Training Council and District 1 Task Force Team, firefighters gain and offer added elite skills and values (e.g., rope rescue ops/tech, educator, NFPA 1700 instructor, advanced search skills) by delivering traditional and aggressive skills and ideas while following local, state and federal codes, standards and regulations with other professionals.

¹⁶ [*City of Rensselaer: Police Department.*](#)

¹⁷ [*City of Rensselaer: Fire Department.*](#)

The District 1 Mass Casualty/Medical Response Strike Team provides essential emergency medical care and patient evacuation during natural, human-made, or national security emergencies, especially when local and national agencies are overwhelmed in managing patient care. The volunteer team's focus is to prevent and minimize the loss of life, mitigate the consequences of disasters, provide emergency and non-emergency support services, and safeguard the environment and economic base for the community. That focus further enhances the department's cooperation with the Jasper County Emergency Management Team.

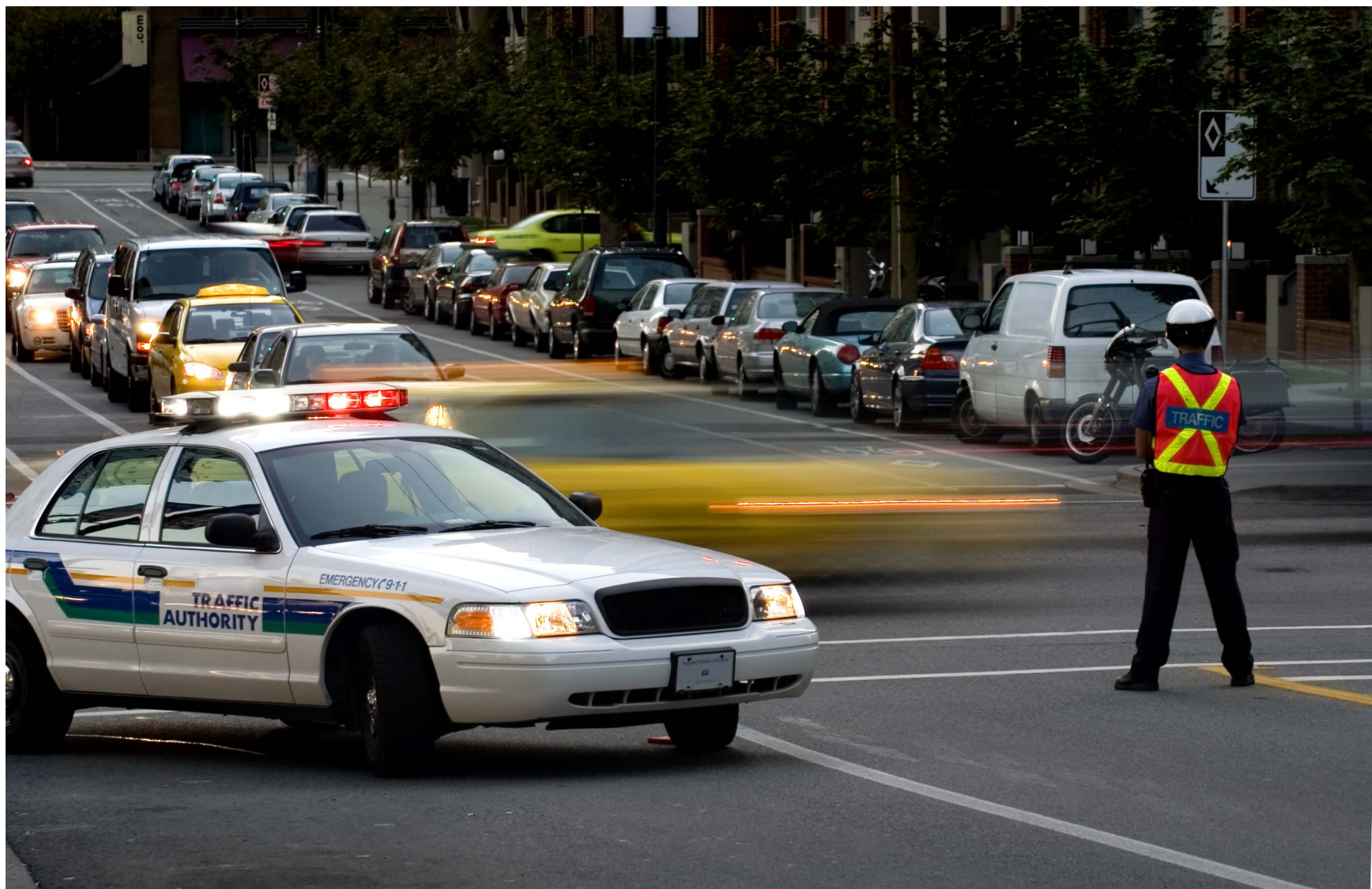
Mutual aid is not a rare occurrence. Despite its volunteer status, any fire department in need can contact Rensselaer's department due to its workforce size, training skills, equipment inventory, and fleet. As a member of the District 1 Asset Team, an agreement with the State of Indiana, the department can provide mutual aid to any department in need.

The department has also joined forces with area departments to form the Jasper County Firefighters Association, providing better coverage to all of Jasper County. Firefighters use information from the dispatcher, decide rescue tools are needed, coordinate water supply and tactics, and know the location of other trucks, in order to assist the community.

Teaming with the Rensselaer-Marion Township Fire Advocates allows the Department to go above and beyond by assisting individuals in need within 24 to 48 hours after a fire occurs.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SERVICE RESPONDERS

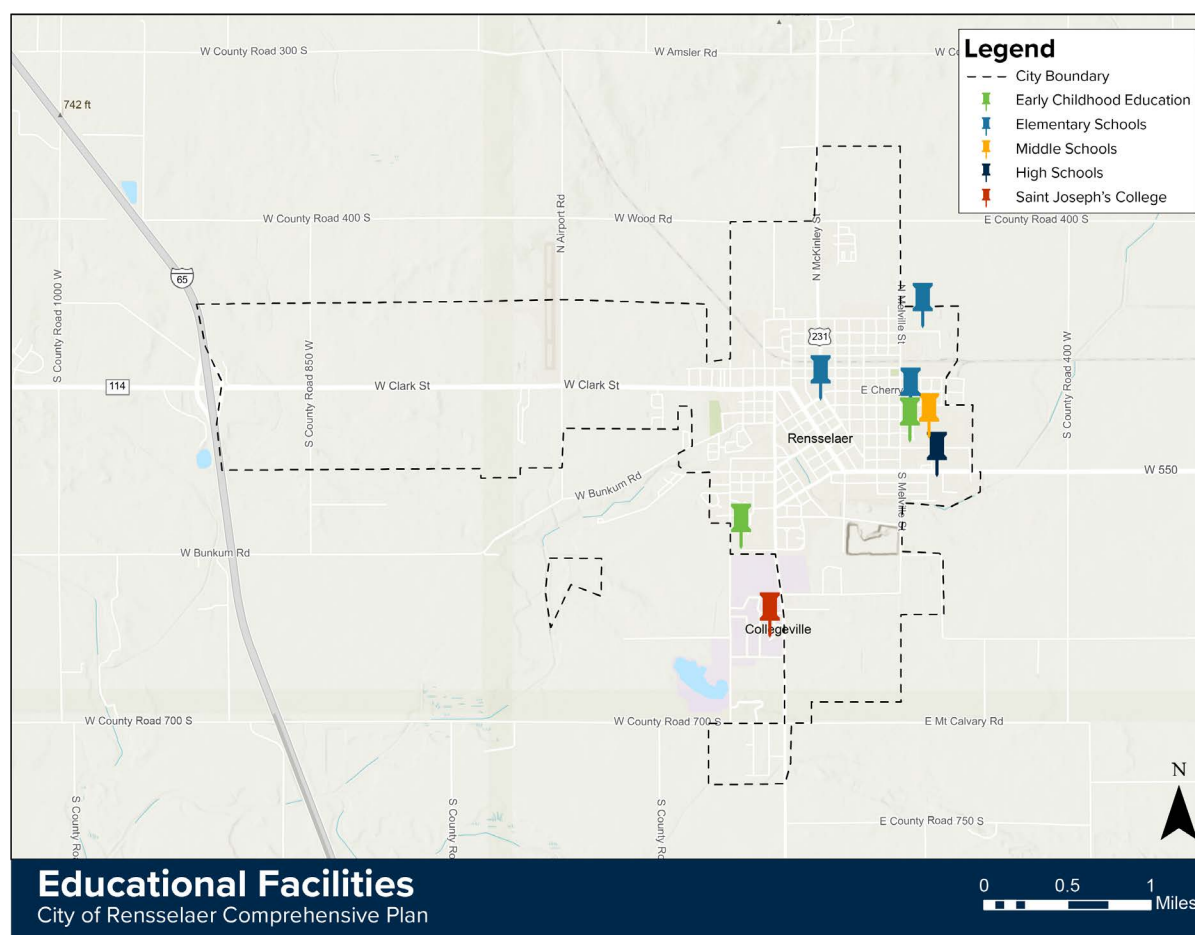
Jasper County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) is responsible for Rensselaer and other cities within the county for maintaining emergency response procedures for any natural and human-made disaster. The Jasper County EMA coordinates with county and local shareholders and provides leadership and support to reduce significant disaster losses. A new emergency services location was recently added on East Walnut Street near the Street Department.



COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Rensselaer has a primary school, two elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, and one college. The Rensselaer Central School Corporation includes Rensselaer Primary School, Van Rensselaer Elementary School, Rensselaer Central Middle School, and Rensselaer Central High School. Other schools include St. Augustine's Catholic School and St. Joseph's College.

Other educational facilities include K-IRPC Head Start, an early-childhood education program for children ages 3-5 years; Appletree Childhood Education - for children six weeks to five years, an accredited early childhood education facility. Head Start and Appletree are adjacent to Rensselaer's hospital, just west of the high school. Alphabet Soup is also a pre-kindergarten school off College Avenue and Charles Street.



Educational Facilities.
Source: Indiana Map, IDNR.

ELEMENTARY

Van Rensselaer Elementary School and St. Augustine's Catholic School are the two elementary schools in Rensselaer. In 2021, Van Rensselaer had a student body of 330.¹⁸ In 2022, St. Augustine's had 111 students enrolled.¹⁹ Van Rensselaer Elementary School is between E Angelica Street and E Washington Street, on the city's east side, and centrally located between the primary and middle schools. St. Augustine's has been serving the Rensselaer community since 1903. It is a Lafayette Diocese parochial school open to children of all faiths from preschool through fifth grade. It is located one block off of North McKinley Avenue, a main downtown artery.

MIDDLE

Rensselaer Central Middle School is the only middle school with a student body of 367 in 2021.²⁰ Rensselaer Middle School is located off Bomber Boulevard and serves grades six through eight.

HIGH

Rensselaer had one high school with 445 students in 2021. Rensselaer Central High School is located off East Grace Street.²¹ Programs like Career and Technical Education, under the guidance of the Perkins V State Plan and Next Level Programs of Study, which offers students authentic meaningful experiences that improve the quality of their education to increase their engagement and achievement.²² Scholarships include local and Jasper County Scholarships through agencies like the Jasper-Newton Foundation and State of Indiana (e.g., National Merit Scholarship Program, Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship, 21st Century Scholarships, Rising Stars of Indiana, Rural and Small-Town Scholars, National Hispanic Scholars). Athletes may also apply for NCAA Scholarships. The School Corporation partners with alums and community members through support programs like Bombers for Academic Excellence.²³

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY

Rensselaer is bordered to the south by the unincorporated community of Collegeville, home of Saint Joseph's College. Founded in 1889, Saint Joseph's College is a private Catholic institution located on a tranquil campus within walking distance of downtown. State-of-the-art facilities allow the college to offer programs to meet the community's needs. The college delivers traditional degree programs through partner universities. For the non-degree-seeking student, the college offers a variety of certificate programs in healthcare and executive education. The St Joseph's Meeting and Conferencing Center hosts corporate events, training sessions, workshops, seminars, after-hours business meetups, networking events, and more. Apartments are also available. Through its Core Coworking Center, the college provides individuals and organizations with state-of-the-art facilities to complete a project or engender a new business. Lake Banet also makes Saint Joseph's College a special place in Rensselaer, Indiana.²⁴⁻²⁷

Saint Joseph's College offers Rensselaer a rich history, from the filming of the 1971 movie *Brian's Song*, NFL Football's Chicago Bears, Congressman Charles Halleck, the Saint Joseph's Indian Normal School, and so much more. The Indian Normal School was established in 1888 by Saint Katherine Drexel, an heiress from Philadelphia, who donated \$50,000 to educate Catholic American Indian boys. The school trained 60 boys annually until 1896. The Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions operated the school. Saint Joseph's College has petitioned the City of Rensselaer for annexation into the city limits. The potential for economic development and growth are a few reasons this venture may benefit Saint Joseph's College and Rensselaer.^{28,29}

¹⁸ [*Van Rensselaer Elementary School 2021 Rankings.*](#)

¹⁹ [*St. Augustine Catholic School.*](#)

²⁰ [*Rensselaer Middle School.*](#)

²¹ [*Rensselaer Middle School.*](#)

²² [*Rensselaer High School: Apprenticeship Programs.*](#)

²³ [*Rensselaer High School: Apprenticeship Programs.*](#)

²⁴ [*ThoughtCo.com: Admissions Statistics for Saint Joseph's College in Indiana.*](#)

²⁵ [*InsideHigherEd.com: Marian, Saint Joseph's to Open 2-Year College.*](#)

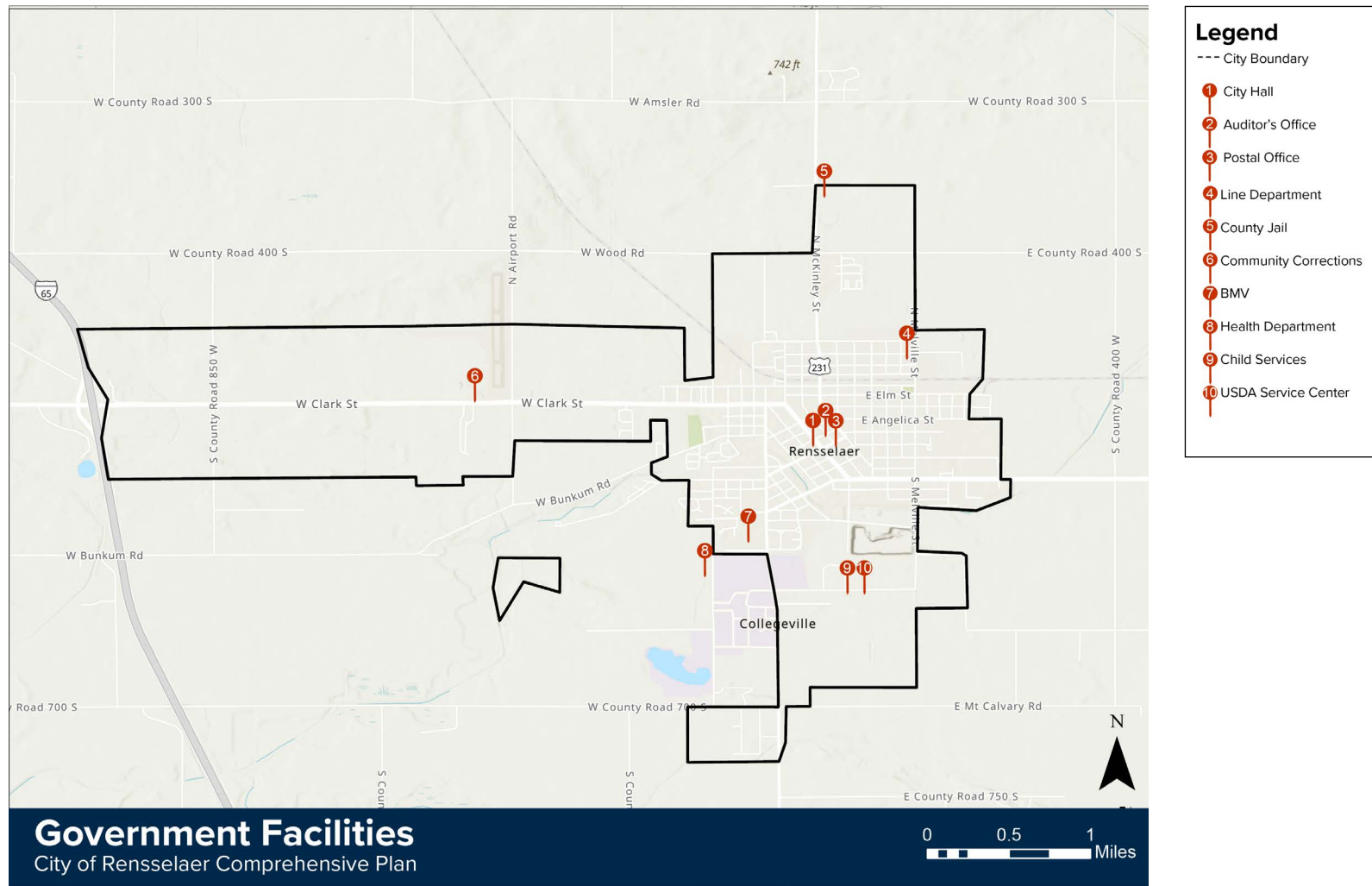
²⁶ [*CollegeSimply.com: Saint Josephs \[sic\] College.*](#)

²⁷ [*Saint Joseph's College.*](#)

²⁸ [*Marian University: Saint Joseph's College.*](#)

²⁹ [*CollegeSimply.com: Saint Josephs \[sic\] College.*](#)

CIVIC FACILITIES



Governmental Services in Rensselaer.
Source: [Google Maps](#).

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

The City of Rensselaer is the county seat of Jasper County, the primary destination for residents in the county.³⁰ Rensselaer has 11 government services located within the city limits, including Jasper County's main library branch located on the corner of N Van Rensselaer and Susan Streets; State offices such as a Bureau of Motor Vehicles located off of S College Avenue; and Federal services such as the U.S. Post Office located on the corner of W Rutsen and S Van Rensselaer Streets, 1½ blocks from the courthouse square, and the USDA office located off Drexel Parkway. In addition, the Saint Joseph's Indian Normal School, the Jasper County Courthouse, Oren F. and Adelia Parker House, Rensselaer Carnegie Library, and Rensselaer Courthouse Square Historic District are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Bridging Rensselaer's past and present is the Jasper County Historical Society and Museum at N Van Rensselaer and W Clark Streets.

City Hall, located along Van Rensselaer Street and directly west of the Jasper County Courthouse, houses the Mayor's Office, Building Commissioner's Office, Utility Office, Clerk-Treasurer's Office, and City Council Chambers.

All city utilities, departments, and facilities are located within the city limits, from the construction of the third Elevated Water Tower, Rensselaer Volunteer Fire Department, Brookside Park, Weston Cemetery, Parks Department, Wastewater Treatment Plant, Water Plant, and New Lift Station, located on the west side, to the former-Light Plant and Metering Department located north of the downtown area, and heading east are the Rensselaer Police Department, Gas Utility, Water/Sewage/Streets/Sanitation/Recycling Departments, Line Department, along with water wells, electric substations and parks and land parcels intermixed from the west to east and north to south city limits.

HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

Franciscan Health Rensselaer, once the Jasper County Hospital, is located directly off E Grace Street/US Hwy 114, within Rensselaer's eastern corridor. Franciscan Health offers specialty services through hospital-based outpatient clinics.

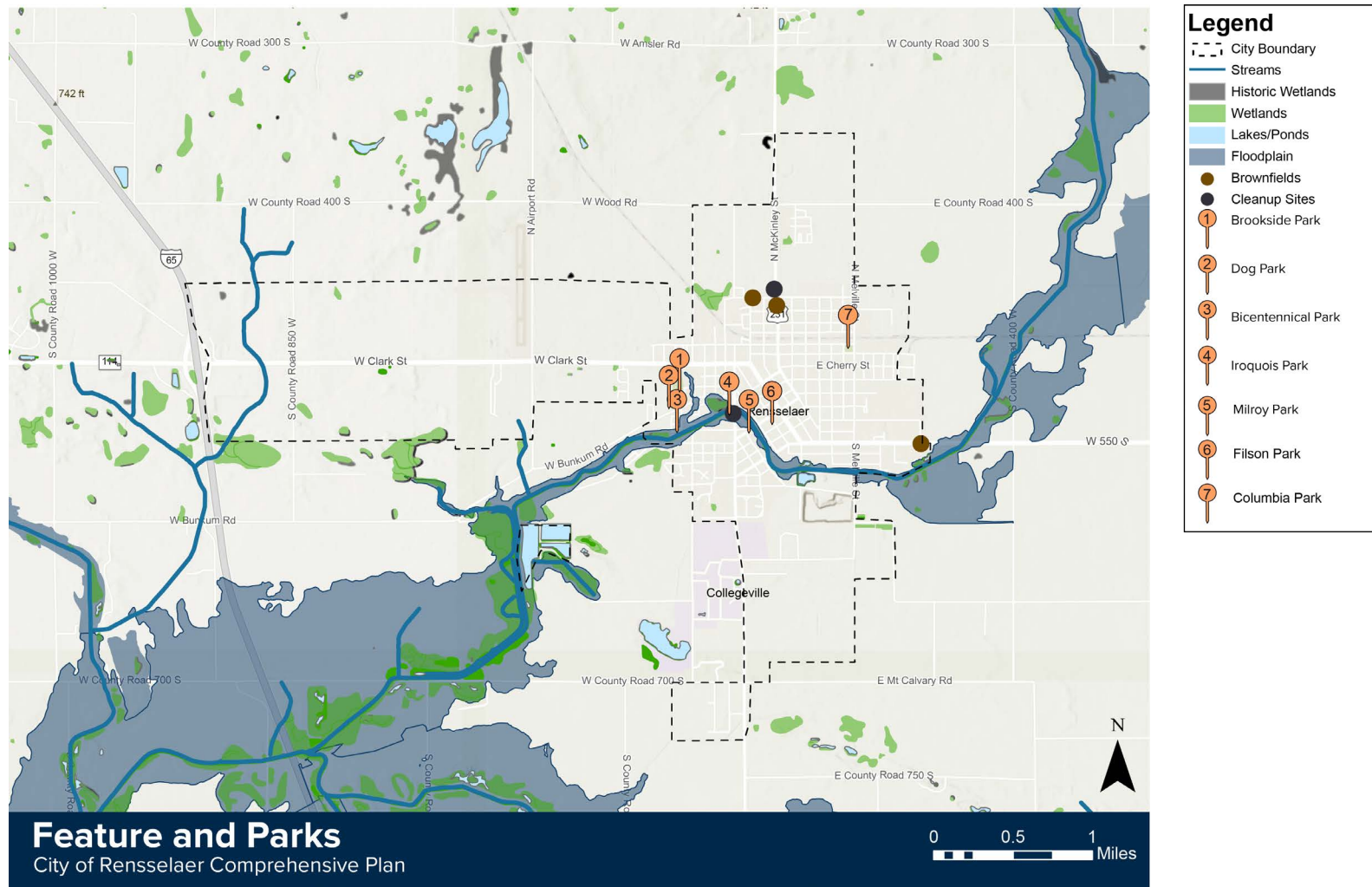
Rensselaer is also home to five medical clinics. Franciscan Express Care and Liberty Clinic are direct across from Franciscan Health Hospital. Another clinic is located at the eastern edge of the downtown area, one off of S College Avenue and another along Saint Gaspar Drive and Drexel Parkway.

Senior care is also helpful with the Jasper County Community Services located off Bomber Boulevard and adjacent to the north side of Franciscan Health Hospital. This facility offers meals, transportation, social events, and other programs for seniors and residents.

The Rensselaer Care Center is a nursing home facility that offers personalized guidance to its residents and caregiver support. Located directly southeast of the Franciscan Health Hospital, the Care Center has many benefits for the Rensselaer community. Autumn Trace Senior Communities is an independent assisted living facility at 1384 Saint Gaspar Drive.

³⁰ [*Jasper County, Indiana: Homepage.*](#)

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES AND PARKS



A map showing features of the natural environment such as waterways, streams, wetlands, floodplains, brownfields, cleanup sites, and parks.

Source: [IndianaMAP](#).

NATURAL FEATURES

LAKES

There are no lakes within Rensselaer's borders. However, Riverside Lake is southwest of Rensselaer, about 12.5 miles away. There are several swamp marshes to the northwest, reservoirs to the southwest, and the college's Lake Banet, a private lake.

WETLANDS

Wetlands surround the City of Rensselaer. Many of the wetlands border the southwest along the Iroquois River. The wetlands begin to thin out near city limits leaving around six wetlands spread through Rensselaer. A small historic wetland is located in the middle of Rensselaer, and to the northwest are two significant historic wetlands.

CORRIDORS

Natural corridors are areas of the undeveloped natural environment where animals travel. Rensselaer's corridor is along the Iroquois River.

FLOODPLAIN

The entirety of Rensselaer is in Flood Zone C. Flood Zone C has minimal flood hazards as this area is above the 500-year flood level. In addition, there is less than a 0.02 percent risk of an annual flood. Flood insurance is not required in this area for most properties; however, climate change tends to intensify storms.



AMENITIES

Rensselaer has many parks offered to the public. Brookside Park, Jasper Newton Foundation Park, Potawatomi Park, Columbia Park, Hal Gray Park, Milroy Park, Iroquois Park, Bicentennial Park, and Laird's Landing includes activities such as kayaking, and fishing, are all parks in Rensselaer. Rensselaer Art Walk is also another great amenity. Rensselaer Art Walk is an opportunity to look at public art and murals cast on the sides of buildings and structures while strolling through the city. The RenArtWik has also attracted the attention of many visitors within and outside Indiana. It has been featured on several websites, including the Chicago Sun Times and YouTube. The Carnegie Center, the Prairie Arts Council, and Lilly Fendig Theater have all attributed to the many public art opportunities throughout the year, from art camps, art gallery exhibits, and plays.³¹ In 1935, the City of Rensselaer established the Rensselaer Park Board. The City of Rensselaer ran the park system before this time. With the City Council's permission, a six-member board that the mayor selected oversaw the Parks system. To maintain a better community, these appointees work unpaid. Since 1948, the park system has run a swimming pool, keeping all of the fees and donations received.³²

CONTAMINATION CONCERNS

BROWNFIELDS

The EPA defined a brownfield as a property that may have the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.³³ Two brownfields are present in Rensselaer, about 800 feet from each other. A former brownfield site is now a cleanup site just north of there.

SUPERFUND SITES

Rensselaer has two superfund sites not shown on the map above. A site is designated as a superfund when contamination becomes more severe or could endanger human life. To ensure that Superfunds are cleaned up and remedied effectively, private owners and the federal government frequently tackle them. A poorly maintained site with hazardous waste dumped or left in the open is considered a superfund.³⁴ Superfund sites in Rensselaer include one Archived Active NPL and one Active Non-NPL. They are at N Wellfield 210, College Avenue and 47978 Continental Sand, and North Gravel 300, just outside of the city limits. Archived Active NPL means that the EPA has concluded the assessment, and no further work is needed. Wellfield superfund site is active, and its remedial continues.

PHYSIOGRAPHY

Physiography describes natural features such as topography or slope, soil type, and land cover.

³¹ [*Rensselaer Art Walk.*](#)

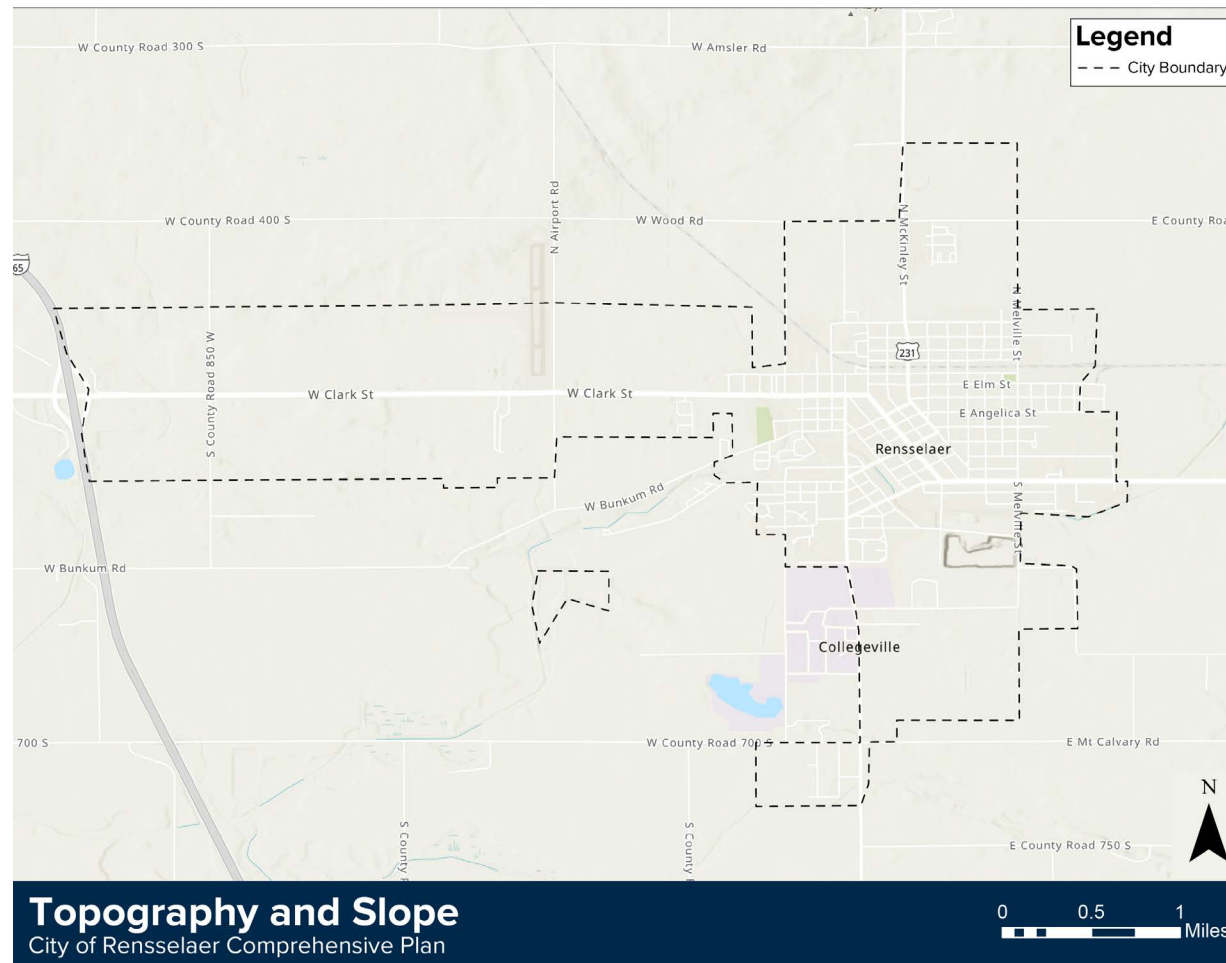
³² [*City of Rensselaer: Park Board & Parks Department History.*](#)

³³ [*USEPA: Overview of EPA's Brownfields Program.*](#)

³⁴ [*Broadview Waste Solutions: Brownfields Vs. Superfunds.*](#)

TOPOGRAPHY/SLOPE

Rensselaer's slope remains at a relative height of 668 feet, with few slopes in the city. The size of the land north of Rensselaer elevates and forms several slopes. There is no consistency to the north, but the land within the town stays relatively flat.³⁵

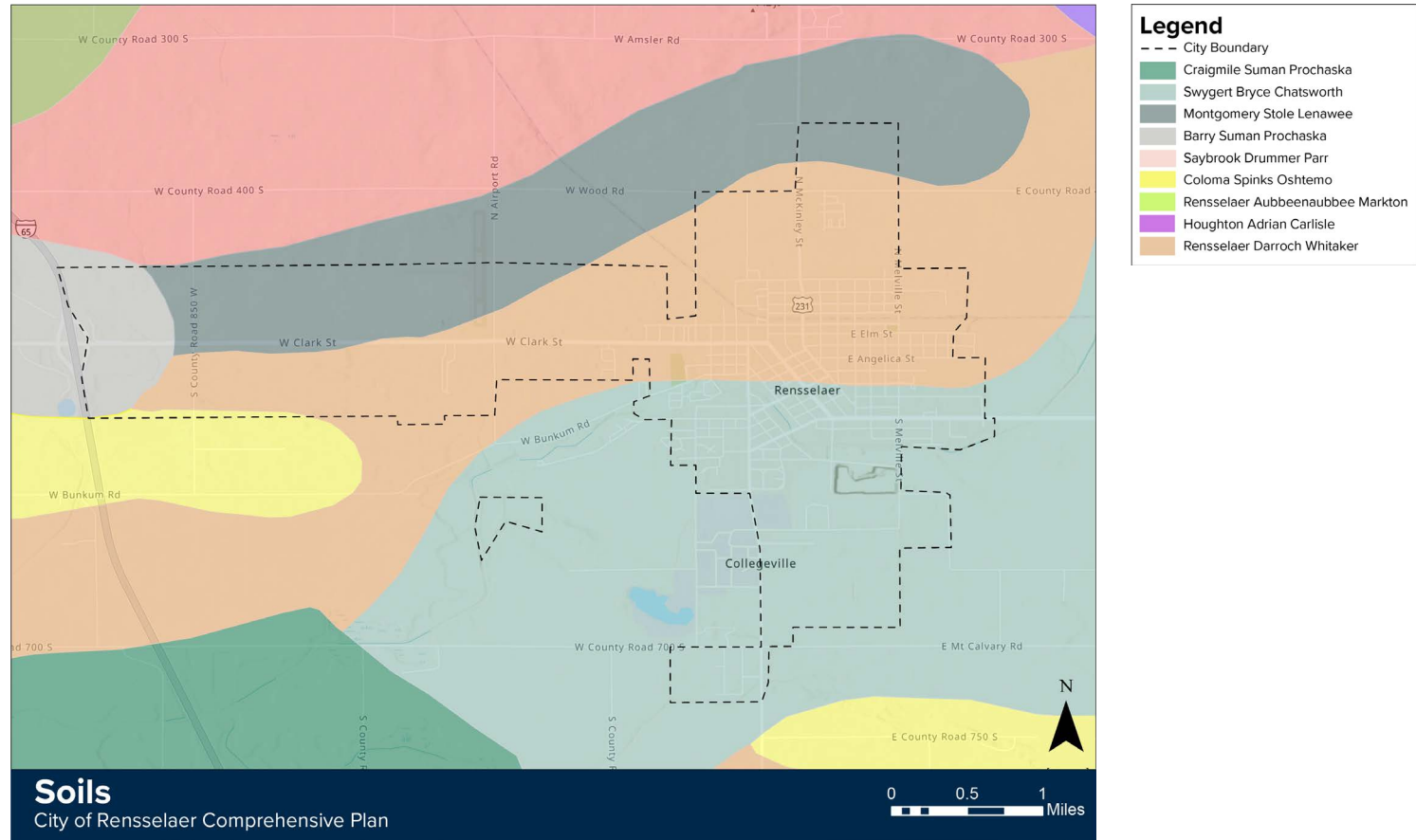


Topography and slope of the land in and around Rensselaer.
Source: [IndianaMAP](#).

³⁵ [IndianaMAP](#).

SOILS

Darroch Loam, Faxon Loam, and Rensselaer Loam are the three main soil types within Rensselaer. Darroch Loam is silty and loamy sediment that produces exceptionally deep, poorly drained soils. Lake plains, outwash plains, and till tables all have Darroch soils.³⁶ The Faxon series consists of moderately deep, weakly, and poorly drained soils formed under a mantle of glacial drift over bedrock on rock-cored terraces and structural benches. The permeability of these soils is moderate.



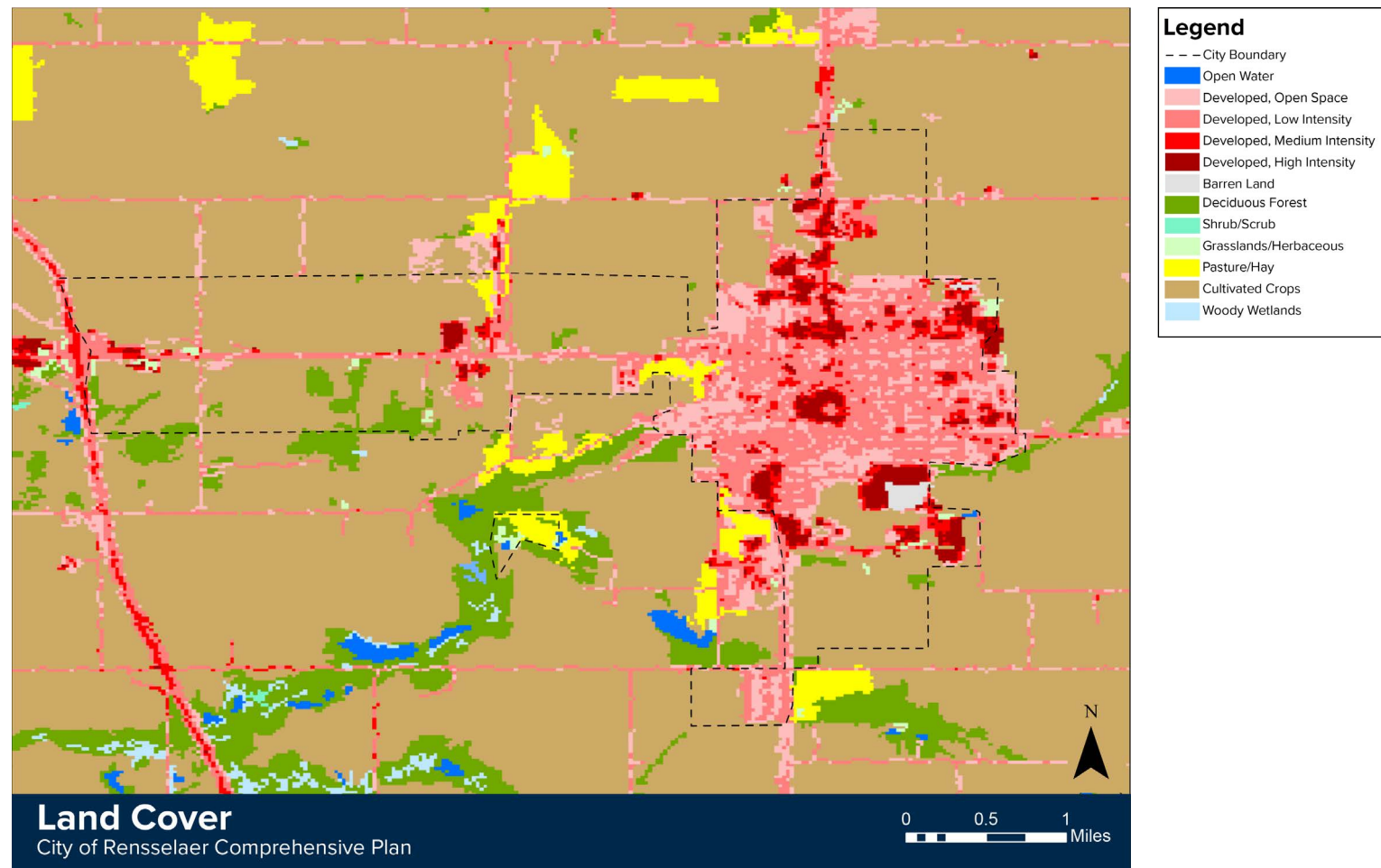
Types of soils in and around Rensselaer.

Source: [IndianaMAP](#).

³⁶ [USDA: Darroch Series](#).

LAND COVER

Land cover is the type of features on the surface, such as development, open water, forest, wetlands, and crops. Most prominently represented in Rensselaer is low-intensity development followed by medium-intensity development.



Types of land cover in and around Rensselaer.

Source: [IndianaMAP](#).



AMERICAN
STRUCTUREPOINT
INC.