



# VOLUME 2: PLACE

Technical Analysis Memo | Wabash County Comprehensive Plan

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Volume 2:  
**PLACE**

Technical Analysis Memo | Wabash County Comprehensive Plan

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*The following report provides an analysis across four topics: land use, agriculture, natural resources and parks and recreation and historic and archeological resources. This report and its accompanying summary presentations are a summary of the baseline conditions and trends in support of the Wabash County Comprehensive Plan. For questions on this report please contact the project manager for Imagine One 85, Kyle May, senior planner with planning NEXT, at [kyle@planning-next.com](mailto:kyle@planning-next.com).*

**CONTENTS**

- 1. Land Use**
    - 1.1. Planning Area
    - 1.2. Community Character
    - 1.3. Land Management & Regulation
    - 1.4. Land Use & Growth Capacity
    - 1.5. Land Cover
  
  - 2. Agriculture**
    - 2.1. Agricultural Land Use and Production
    - 2.2. Farmland Preservation
    - 2.3. Infrastructure
    - 2.4. Agricultural Innovation
  
  - 3. Natural Resources / Parks and Recreation**
    - 3.1. Environmental Resources
    - 3.2. Recreational Amenities
    - 3.3. Environmental Quality
  
  - 4. Historic and Archeological Resources**
    - 4.1. Historic Sites
    - 4.2. Programming
    - 4.3. Future Considerations
-

# 1. LAND USE

*Land use reviews the existing conditions of the built and natural places across the communities of Wabash County. Through this analysis, a comprehensive inventory was established of the various types of land uses and how much is present today to establish a baseline for future development growth. This section details the existing community character – another method for assessing the county’s land use profile – found throughout the county, evaluates the zoning framework that regulates land development, assesses current growth potential for specific land uses, and identifies assets to incentivize and leverage community investment. The final section of the topic provides an analysis of the county’s land cover patterns and changes over time.*

## KEY FINDINGS

- **A diverse collection of places from urban to rural to natural.** There are ten unique place types in Wabash County ranging from natural parkland to historic/urban downtowns.
- **Very little land consumption from 2000.** Just over 600 acres of agricultural land was lost to development from 2000. During this same period, the county lost 3,000 residents.
- **Agricultural land dominates in terms of overall land use.** More than 82% of the county is used for farming operations. These uses include cultivation, livestock, along with other processes.
- **The current zoning maps identify significant growth areas.** Almost every land use (commercial, residential, industrial, etc.) has at least 40% undeveloped land capacity available for future growth based on the current zoning.
- **Industrial development capacity is substantial.** An estimated 71% or just over 4,080 acres of industrial zoned land is available for future development.

## 1.1 Planning Area

*The planning area is the geographical boundary establishing the focus of the comprehensive plan. Indiana State Law outlines the ability for local government entities or jurisdictions to develop comprehensive plan or master plan boundaries based on participation of those entities involved.*

Imagine One 85’s boundary is defined by the Wabash County line and is inclusive of the Cities of Wabash and North Manchester and the Towns of Roann, Lagro, and La Fontaine along with all unincorporated land. The county is approximately 412 square miles in size making it the 32nd largest county in Indiana out of all 92 counties. Wabash County is part of the Northeast Indiana Region, an 11-county area expanding from the Fort Wayne Metropolitan Area, with the third largest land size in the region, behind Allen and Kosciusko Counties. A countywide context map is provided in the map gallery, [see Map 1.0 Planning Context](#).

## 1.2 Community Character

*Character is a description of the diverse environments - both natural and manmade places - that make-up the communities of Wabash County. These character types are defined by their shared features such as building density, street patterns or block size, connectivity, and the mix or non-mix of land uses. Understanding the existing development characteristics of the county and its communities will help to identify qualities that the community supports while also revealing potentially productive or appealing types that may not exist today but could be developed in the future.*

## CHARACTER TYPES IN WABASH COUNTY

There are 10 unique character types across the communities of Wabash County. These are organized into three categories covering the diversity of places: Natural / Rural, Residential, and Commercial / Industrial. Each character type was developed by analyzing the existing land use, mix of uses on a block, building form, street pattern and connectivity, relationship between the building and street, and integration of open space or natural areas. The combination of these variables defines unique places that exist at a variety of scales in all the communities of Wabash County. These character types are not meant to be reviewed at the parcel level but focus on the neighborhood-scale qualities experienced when travelling through a community. Provided below are brief descriptions of the 10-character types along with supporting images. A countywide character map is provided in the map gallery. see [Map 1.1 & 1.2 Existing Character](#).

### NATURAL / RURAL

**Open Space / Conservation:** These areas include parks, open spaces, or undeveloped natural areas that may serve recreational or conservation purposes and are protected from future development. These are represented at a variety of scales from neighborhood parks of less than an acre to large, regional conservation sites composed of hundreds of acres. In some instances, additional amenities are provided to enhance the area based on the community or region's desires.

**Rural Service:** Areas characterized by larger scale uses that are a critical part of the active agricultural industry. These areas are predominantly used for farming operations consisting of several large crop tracts with integrated supporting uses for agricultural production such as processing and warehousing. Homes or other buildings are typically set far back from the roadway and may not be served by municipal water and sewer utilities. This may include light industrial plants, pole barns, utility buildings, or other similar farming facilities that are essential to production.



**Rural Living:** These consist of primarily agricultural areas which include single-family residential, agricultural support buildings, small-scale commercial, and institutional uses in a mixed rural setting. Homes and other buildings are generally set back from the roadway but may be developed close enough to share common driveways. Properties are typically over an acre in size and may range up to several acres when adjacent to farm tracts. These areas may have municipal water and sewer service if located near a more developed portion of the city but are typically served by private water wells and septic systems.



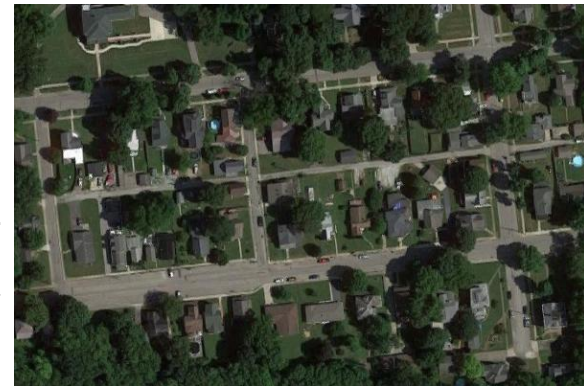


## RESIDENTIAL

**Mixed Rural Residential:** Areas characterized by larger lot residential or standalone subdivisions near the outskirts of a community or adjacent to a rural setting. These areas represent the transition from rural to urban areas providing a mix of small businesses and institutional uses near subdivisions. Homes range in age from older, mid-century stock to modern housing options constructed in new subdivisions. Lots are generally an acre in size near agricultural areas or smaller near activity centers and Traditional Neighborhoods.



**Traditional Neighborhood:** These consist of primarily residential areas featuring a mix of housing types such as detached single-family, duplex, manufactured home parks, and townhomes. These areas are typically near activity centers and developed in a traditional, grid-like street pattern. Housing is generally older and can include historic neighborhoods or properties near the center of the community. New infill residential can occur throughout the neighborhood taking a variety of forms from detached single-family to townhomes. These neighborhoods can include appropriately scaled retail or office uses and complementary uses like parks or community facilities.



## COMMERCIAL / INDUSTRIAL

**Town Center:** Traditional activity centers with a mix of small-scale commercial, office, and residential uses. They may be in either incorporated communities or unincorporated areas but typically serve as the activity center for the community. These areas are generally walkable, being developed on small, grid-like blocks but may not have complete sidewalk connections. Buildings are constructed close to the roadway with small parking areas or some on-street parking adjacent to the main entrance.



**Commercial Center:** These are predominantly commercial and retail areas characterized by large footprint buildings or shopping centers along major corridors. Buildings are set far back from the roadway with surface parking lots between the building and roadway. Sites have minimal landscaping integrated along the edge of parking areas with hardscaping elements such as patios, pavilions, etc. Areas may have some pedestrian / sidewalk connections but are typically accessible by vehicle only due to site layout and corridor use.



**Downtown Core:** The historic, civic, and cultural centers of urbanized areas. These areas provide a variety of uses in a compact, walkable center such as commercial, office, and residential. Buildings are located very close to one another or are directly attached and are constructed close to the roadway. Streets are connected in a grid pattern with sidewalk and pedestrian connections throughout, encouraging walkability. Complementary uses such as park space or community facilities are closely integrated with other major destinations.



**Industrial Center:** These areas are characterized by large footprint manufacturing, assembly, warehousing, and other similar employment-oriented uses. Street connections are typically limited to provide direct site service to major corridors and highways. In some instances, businesses have outdoor operations that require additional screening or buffering from adjacent development. Most sites have multiple access drives to separate general employee and customer traffic from heavy truck or machine movement.



**Institutional Campus:** These areas include academic, government, hospital, religious centers, and church centers providing a range of building types to support their functional use. Some sites contain one primary structure while others require several buildings arranged in a campus to provide necessary operations. These areas are typically integrated into neighborhoods or Commercial Centers and are walkable to many community amenities. Private open space and sidewalk connections are common features that further integrate the site into the surrounding area.



## 1.3 Land Management & Regulation

*Wabash County and its communities are governed through a combination of legal regulations and elected or nominated entities. The county and incorporated communities each contain unique ordinances that establish the tools for managing the development of land. This section includes a detailed description of the legal framework and governing bodies that are responsible for regulating development across the county. Wabash County and its communities are directly influenced by the established land controls outlined below.*

### ZONING REGULATIONS

Land use and development in Wabash County is regulated through three zoning ordinances; City of North Manchester, City of Wabash, and Wabash County (includes the Towns of Roann, Lagro, and La Fontaine). Both cities are responsible for governing additional property outside of their corporate limits, within defined areas established by the County. The remaining portion of land outside these boundaries is regulated by the County which includes the three towns and several rural communities. These planning area boundaries are defined in the map gallery, see [Map 1.3 Consolidated Zoning](#).

There are many similarities between the three ordinances pertaining to zoning classifications and district intent with a few key differences. North Manchester is the only ordinance with an *Institutional/Professional District*, primarily due to the presence of Manchester University. Similarly, the City of Wabash has a *Historic District* classification focused on downtown to preserve and protect the unique character with complementary development or redevelopment. One common classification relates to Wabash County's natural features, a *Flood Plain District* is represented in each ordinance to regulate property within FEMA floodplain zones. All three ordinances have conducted periodic and recent updates to ensure regulations remain current and include appropriate standards.

### WABASH COUNTY CODE

The Wabash County Code is responsible for governing the development of land in the Towns of Roann, Lagro, La Fontaine, and smaller unincorporated communities throughout the county. The code was originally adopted in 1965 to establish regulations for the use and development of land including the creation of an Advisory Plan Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals to manage the review process for development. A total of 13 unique zoning districts were established which provided regulations for agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial land. The original code has been amended numerous times since its adoption with the most recent amendment occurring in early 2020. This amendment consisted of the comprehensive review and update to the regulations including the removal of several zoning districts, establishing several new



zoning districts such as residential with public utility access or private septic / well, and the removal of “advisory” from the Plan Commission. The Wabash County Code serves as the legislative companion to the Comprehensive Plan, allowing for the implementation of land use and preservation recommendations.

**CITY OF WABASH CODE**

The City of Wabash Code is responsible for governing the development of land for the City of Wabash and a specific portion of the county defined as the planning area. This area is generally defined by the following limits; W 50 N to the north, N/S 100 E to the east, W 500 S to the south, and S.R. 115 to the west. The planning area boundary is defined in the map gallery, see **Map 1.3 Consolidated Zoning**. The code was originally adopted in 1995 per Indiana State Law as part of a reconfirmation and reenactment of the 1975 Wabash City Code. This code established a total of 11 unique zoning districts with general and specific development regulations, a Board of Zoning Appeals to address zoning discrepancies, and a Plan Commission responsible for managing and reviewing the development process. The City of Wabash Code outlines special provisions for downtown through the Historic District which seeks to protect the historic community character. This is used to regulate the careful development or redevelopment of property in downtown and is used in conjunction with state and federal designations of historic districts/places. The code has undergone major and minor amendments over the past 25 years with the most recent amendment occurring in 2019.

**CITY OF NORTH MANCHESTER CODE**

The City of North Manchester is responsible for governing a specific area of the county similar to the City of Wabash which includes the incorporated area and a specific boundary known as the planning area. This area is generally defined by the following limits; E 1400 N to the north, N 300 E/Rittenhouse Road to the east, E 1100 N to the south, and N 100 W to the west. The planning area boundary is defined in the map gallery, see **Map 1.3 Consolidated Zoning**. The code was originally adopted in 1995 per Indiana State Law and included 14 unique zoning districts, establishment of a Plan Commission, and establishment of a Board of Zoning Appeals. The City of North Manchester is the only zoning ordinance in Wabash County with an institutional/professional zoning district which is primarily for Manchester University. This outlines unique regulations for the growth and development of collegiate campuses including the diversity of land uses from education to office to residential for student housing. The code was most recently amended in 2006.

**CONSOLIDATED ZONING MAP**

For the zoning analysis conducted in this volume, a consolidated zoning map was prepared using the district regulations for each of the three ordinances. Countywide zoning classifications were identified that incorporated and related each unique zoning district to one another to assist in guiding analysis and future recommendations. This was established by reviewing the zoning regulations and intent for each of the unique zoning districts across the three ordinances including permitted & conditional uses, lot size requirements, building location requirements, building height limitations, and others. Once a baseline was established, each zoning district was compared to the other ordinances to identify similar zoning districts which were then given a unique consolidated zoning classification. The matrix below provides an overview of how each unique zoning district relates to the consolidated zoning map and among the three zoning ordinances. A consolidated zoning map for the entire county is provided in the map gallery, see **Map 1.3 Consolidated Zoning**.

*Table 1: Consolidated Zoning Matrix.*

| Consolidated Zoning | Wabash County            | Wabash City                | North Manchester City     |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Agriculture         | Agriculture District (A) | Agricultural District (AG) | Agricultural District (A) |



| Consolidated Zoning       | Wabash County                        | Wabash City                    | North Manchester City                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Conservation              | Flood Plain District (FP)            | Flood Plan Area (FP)           | Flood Plain Area (FP)                                |
|                           | Forest Recreation District (FR)      |                                |  |
| Estate Residential        | Residence 1 District (R1)            | Residence 1 District (R1)      | Residence Estate District (RE)                       |
|                           | Lake Residence District (LR)         | Suburban District (S1)         | Residence Single Family District (RSF)               |
| Traditional Residential   | Residence 2 District (R2)            | Residence 2 District (R2)      | Residence Two Family District (RTF)                  |
| Neighborhood Multi-Family | Residence 3 District (R3)            | Residence 3 District (R3)      | Residence Multi Family Low Density District (RMF-L)  |
| Community Multi-Family    | -                                    | Residence 4 District (R4)      | Residence Multi Family High Density District (RMF-H) |
| General Commercial        | General Business District (GB)       | General Business District (GB) | Business General District (BG)                       |
|                           | Shopping Center District (SC)        |                                |  |
|                           | Accommodation Business District (AB) |                                |  |
| Community Commercial      | Local Business District (LB)         | -                              | Business Local District (BL)                         |
| Mixed-Use                 | -                                    | Historic District (HD)         | Central Business District (CBD)                      |
|                           |                                      |                                | Residence Urban District (RU)                        |
| Office / Institutional    | -                                    | -                              | Professional Office District (P)                     |
| Limited Industrial        | -                                    | Light Industry District (LI)   | Limited Industrial District (LI)                     |
| Industrial                | Industrial District (I)              | Heavy Industry District (HI)   | Industrial District (I)                              |
|                           | Industrial Reserve District (IR)     |                                |  |

**ELECTED & NOMINATED ENTITIES**

Application and review of zoning regulations is managed through public elected and nominated governing bodies. Each entity has specific powers and duties through the community’s zoning code to review and apply the regulations for land management and development. These are supported by city or county staff who manage the day-to-day application, processing, and enforcement of the zoning code. Provided in this section is an overview of the types of reviewing bodies for the three zoning ordinances which have an identical zoning management structure. This structure is composed of two primary reviewing bodies that manage zoning related matters for the community.

### **PLAN COMMISSION**

The first reviewing body is the Plan Commission which is responsible for the review of land use changes and zoning applications for property development. The commission ensures that proposals align with the requirements of the zoning code and other adopted regulations of the city or county. Members are nominated from the public to serve on the commission and guide land management practices. Amendments and updates to zoning regulations require review by the Plan Commission before going for final approval and adoption by the community council. The commission also promotes the implementation of the county or city's comprehensive plan recommendations, specifically those pertaining to land use and community character. Their review and application of the zoning code seeks to position new development with the future vision of the county and its communities.

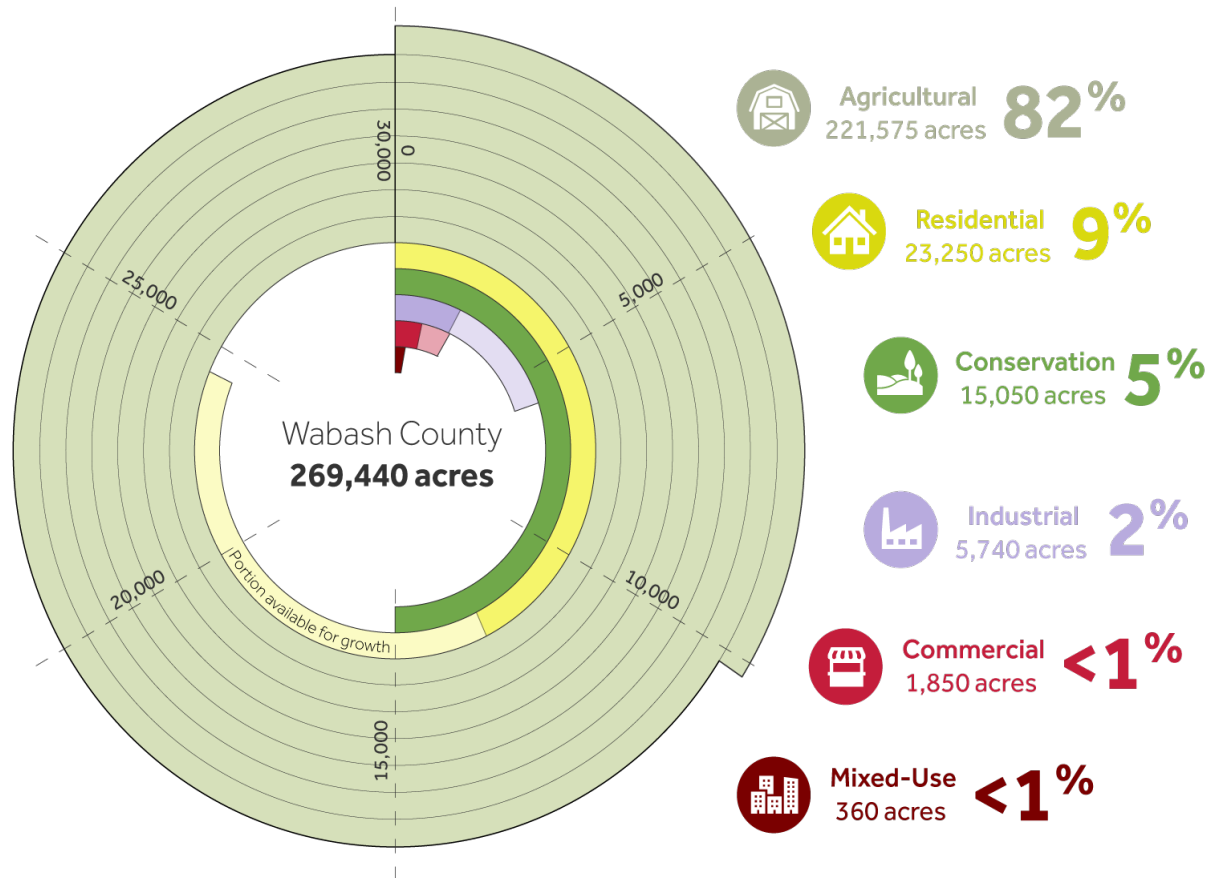
### **BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS**

The second is a specialized review board for unique zoning applications known as the Board of Zoning Appeals. The board is responsible for reviewing applications that pertain to appeals of previous development reviews or variations from the zoning code due to unique circumstances. Administrative appeals from staff decisions, determination of special exemptions, and variances to the zoning code regulations are a few of the development applications that go before the board. The members are nominated by the city or county council to serve. The Board of Zoning Appeals complements the Plan Commission in the enforcement of zoning regulations, ensuring that regulations are applied appropriately to new development.

## 1.4 Land Use & Growth Capacity

Land use and growth capacity analyzes the specific land uses found across the communities of Wabash County including industrial, residential, agricultural, and commercial among others. An inventory of existing land zoned, undeveloped land or growth potential, and other factors were collected to understand land planning. These will serve as the foundation for developing principles that future development should follow. Unique assets were identified that position Wabash County and its communities to align with future investment opportunities.

Graphic 1: Countywide Zoning Distribution.



NOTE: REMAINING ACREAGE INCLUDES AREAS WITH SPECIALIZED ZONING SUCH AS INSTITUTIONAL OR HAS NO APPLICABLE ZONING SUCH AS RIGHT-OF-WAY.

### AGRICULTURAL LAND

The largest zoning classification and most prominent to the county is Agriculture. Over 82% of Wabash County or 221,575 acres is zoned for agricultural use. This includes farm tracts of various sizes, rural residential homes, and agricultural support in the forms of warehousing, agribusiness, and light industrial. Agricultural zoning is distributed throughout the county with every community, regardless of size, having direct access and influence on the spectrum of uses. This calculation is based on only the portions of the county specifically zoned for agricultural use. Several reserved development areas for commercial, residential and industrial are currently operating as agricultural use but would transition over time as the communities grow.

More information on land usage, economic influence, historical presence, and existing conditions is provided in the *Agriculture* section.

## RESIDENTIAL LAND

Composing 23,250 acres, residential land is the second largest zoning district for Wabash County. The majority, 21,200 acres, is considered Estate Residential which is low-density residential integrated into a rural or agricultural context. The remaining 2,050 acres is Traditional Neighborhoods which are more compact developments near the center of communities. These might have a wider variety of housing types such as duplexes or townhomes while Estate Residential is predominantly detached single-family homes.

The existing housing stock in Wabash County is fairly limited leaving potential gaps in alternative options. The most prominent housing type in Wabash County today is detached single-family homes which accounts for over 11,000 units or 79% of all housing stock. Other housing options like duplexes and manufactured homes account for an additional 600 units or 5% each. This distribution of housing stock relates to the historical growth of residential neighborhoods in the communities of Wabash County. During the early to mid-1900's, housing was constructed adjacent to downtown in walkable neighborhoods, typically more dense to provide accessibility to retail, commercial, and employment-related uses. As the car became more accessible to communities, residential development shifted to expanding outward from a community in auto-oriented subdivisions. These new neighborhoods had limited street connectivity between adjacent areas and were no longer walkable to essential areas for shopping or employment. The available residential capacity offers the opportunity to establish neighborhood transitions that address the saturation of a singular housing type and the connectivity to community activity centers for work, commerce, and recreation.

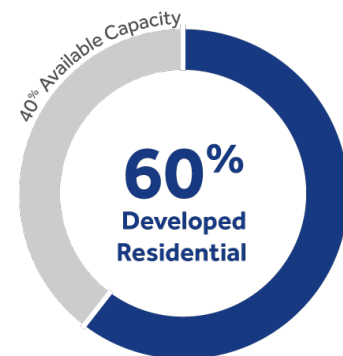
Approximately 40% or 9,500 acres of this zoning is planned for future residential and is currently agricultural or undeveloped. This acreage allows for significant growth throughout the county without impacting or reducing more vulnerable land such as farmland. For instance, using a density of one new unit per acre and assuming a conservative estimate that 30% of land would go towards infrastructure, over 6,650 new residential units could be constructed in existing residential zoning. Using the median household size of 2.3 people per household, this amount of residential growth would bring +/- 15,000 new residents or 50% of the existing population of Wabash County.

However, this type of residential growth does not account for the variety of missing housing types and would limit growth to a specific, more impactful development pattern. Many of the central neighborhoods in the Cities of Wabash and North Manchester are designed with smaller residential lots of one unit per quarter acre. Additionally, these areas are constructed in grid-like patterns which increase connectivity between blocks and reduce infrastructure needs for development. Assuming only 20% of available land going towards infrastructure and a lot size of a quarter of an acre, approximately 30,400 new residential units could be constructed in existing residential zoning. This would lead to an increase in population of nearly 70,000 residents or more than double the existing population of Wabash County.

**9,500 acres**

### Planned Residential Growth

*Nearly 40% of residential land is available for future development.*

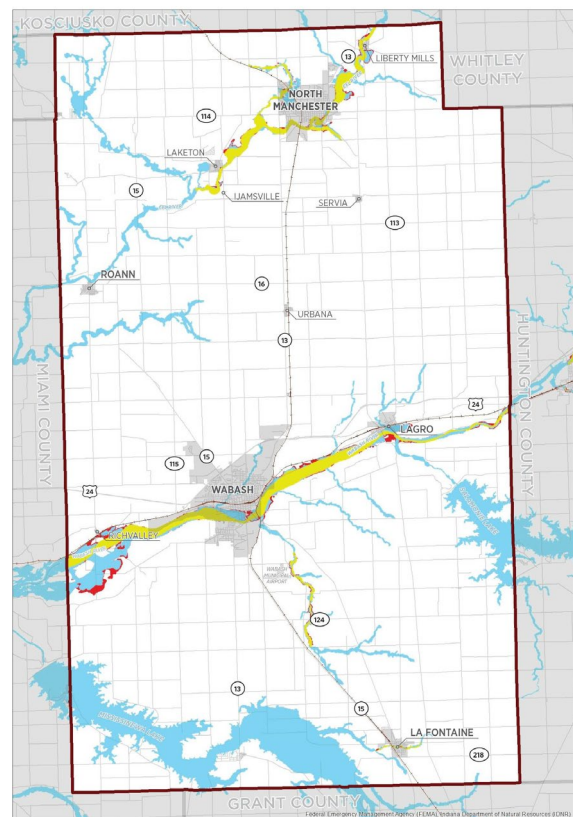




## CONSERVED OR PROTECTED

Conservation areas are unique places that are protected from development to preserve natural features. In Wabash County these places are typically owned by the State or Federal government focused around Lake Mississinewa and Lake Salamonie. Land around the reservoirs are designated as state forests ensuring the protection of wildlife and the operation of the lakes for stormwater management and flood prevention. While under the management of the state, the forest designation does permit harvesting which has the potential to disrupt the natural tree canopy. Local efforts have sought to reclassify the area for conservation to protect the historic tree canopy indefinitely and prevent additional growth of invasive species. Aside from recreational amenities, these areas are not available for development from private organizations due to their importance to flood control and benefit as a regional amenity. This classification includes approximately 15,050 acres of land, composing 5% of the county.

Additional land is protected along river, stream, and creek corridors through federal regulations. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) outlines regulations for the management of water corridors across the country. FEMA analyzes and designates floodways and floodplains for water corridors which serve as the primary flood controls for natural site drainage. Floodways are water channels and surrounding land reserved for the base flood control. Floodplain is low-lying land surrounding the floodway that is prone to flooding during heavy rain events. The designation of these areas further limits the development of surrounding property as it can impact the corridors natural flood management causing adverse property damage. FEMA regulations are federal regulations requiring specific procedures for development in designated areas to ensure these corridors remain functioning for flood mitigation. Wabash County has major river corridors with the Eel and Wabash Rivers which have varying floodplain areas protecting additional land. Several creeks and streams feed into the river network creating a vast network of protected corridors. Exact acreage is not available but includes a substantial portion of the county given the reservoirs, rivers, and creeks found across the communities of Wabash County. A floodplain map for the entire county is provided in the map gallery, see [Map 1.4 Floodplain Areas](#).

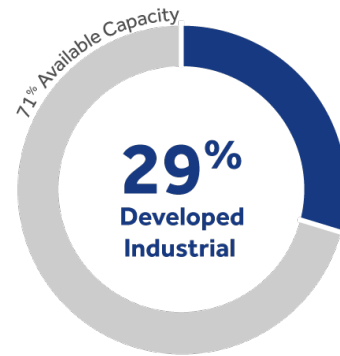


**Map 1.4 Floodplain Areas**

## INDUSTRIAL

Wabash County has approximately 5,740 acres of industrial zoned land which includes both Limited Industrial and Industrial districts. These zoning districts permit a wide variety of industries from internal manufacturing or assembly operations to heavy, external operations such as mining or refineries. The “industrial use” classification is broad and includes a wide range of uses but can typically be categorized as either Light or Heavy Industrial. Light Industrial refers to uses that have primarily interior operations, minimal site obstructions, modern building design, and are able to integrate into commercial or in some instance’s residential areas. These operations typically focus on warehousing, manufacture wholesaling, or

similar operations that are contained within an enclosed environment. Heavy Industrial refers to uses that have a mix of interior and exterior operations, require substantial land for storage or development, and have production performance requiring buffering or separation from surrounding land uses. These operations include more visible operations such as refining, mining, or manufacturing with large outdoor storage areas. Accessibility to major highways, interstates, and rail is essential to allow for transportation and distribution of materials used or produced by the business operations.



Industrial zoning represents only 2% of the county for both existing industries and planned growth across the communities. An estimated 4,080 acres or 71% of this land is not currently developed for industrial use, being available for future growth. This includes land contained in one of the industrial parks and industrially zoned land throughout the communities of Wabash County.

Wabash County is uniquely positioned to expand its industrial portfolio through three industrial parks. One located on the southern edge of the City of North Manchester and two located on the north east and west boundaries of the City of Wabash. These three parks account for approximately 575 acres for modern industrial uses having access to full utilities and high-speed fiber connectivity. The North Manchester park also offers the ability for Norfolk Southern rail service providing further opportunities for rail-oriented industry. All three parks are Indiana State Site Certified as “shovel-ready” sites meeting their unique standards for economic development including proximity to interstate and/or rail, utility accessibility, applicable zoning, and other similar factors.

### Industrial Use Spectrum

The graphic below displays the variety of industrial uses represented in Wabash County.

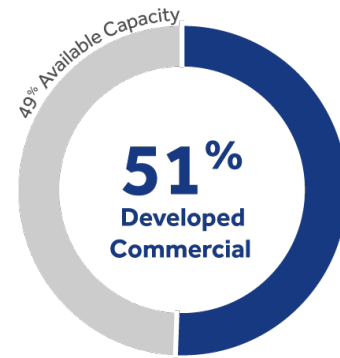


### COMMERCIAL

Commercial areas include nodes of retail or restaurant uses that provide a diversity of goods and services for the community and region. The communities of Wabash County have several types of commercial properties ranging from small, neighborhood scale businesses to large, regional shopping centers anchored by “big box” stores. The majority of the neighborhood commercial is found along major roads near the center of the community. These blend into the surrounding residential with smaller building footprints, building height of two stories or less, and site buffering or landscaping along the edge of the property. This type of commercial is common in cities such as Wabash and North Manchester and smaller communities like Roann and Lagro. Regional commercial areas consist of large footprint buildings or attached centers surrounded by shared parking with smaller commercial sites integrated into the surrounding area. These are typically located at the

intersection of two major thoroughfares and have a regional market draw in addition to the local community. This type is typically found along the edge of the community, specifically urban areas such as Wabash and North Manchester.

Approximately 1,850 acres of the county is zoned for commercial use including both Community Commercial and General Commercial zoning districts. These districts account for approximately 1% of the county including both existing properties and planned potential growth. Of the total acreage, an estimated 900 acres or 49% is reserved for commercial growth across the county. This is inclusive of those properties which are currently zoned for commercial and does not include any outlying commercial properties that may exist in other zoning districts.



### MIXED-USE

Mixed-Use zoning refers to unique zoning districts that permit multiple types of uses from residential to commercial to office. For Wabash County, these areas are most prominent in downtowns, specifically the Cities of North Manchester and Wabash. This zoning district is the smallest portion of the county, representing 360 acres or less than 1%. However, these downtowns have concentrated recent capital investments from both public, private and philanthropic sectors, and they serve as the core of their larger communities.

Investments from the Stellar Communities Grant supported several projects and programs in downtown Wabash. The Eagles Theatre Community Center, Friendship Hill Inclusive Playground, Wabash Riverwalk Trail, downtown facade improvements, downtown dog park, and streetscape beautification and connectivity improvements are a few of the major projects funded by the grant. These have had a significant impact on downtown by enhancing the amenities available within the district while also further connecting these amenities to the surrounding community. Similarly, the City of North Manchester in the recent comprehensive planning process identified specific development opportunities that enhanced the core of the community. Two major development focuses were on a potential riverside park just south of downtown connecting to the bicycle trail network. Another promotes redevelopment on Market Street to encourage the extension of the downtown character and provide a wider array of housing, employment, and activity centers. Additional information regarding these investments will be covered in a future volume under *Placemaking*.



## 1.5 Land Cover

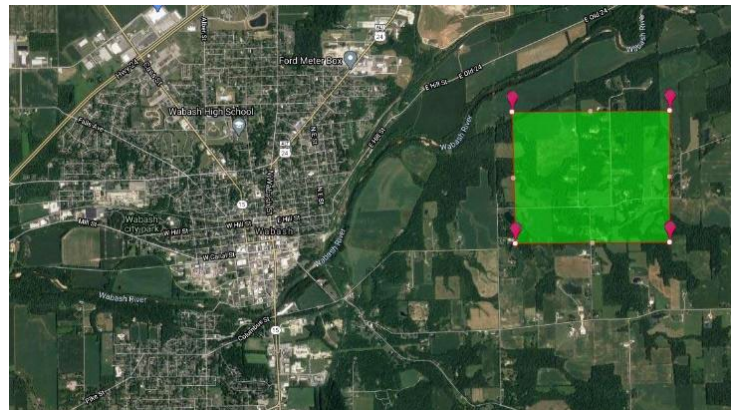
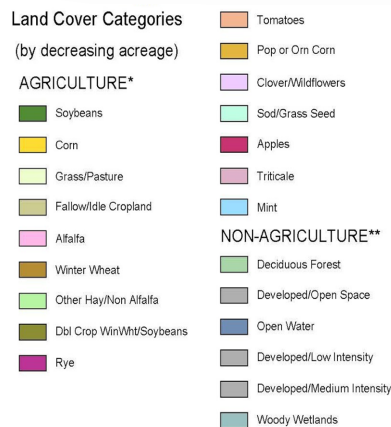
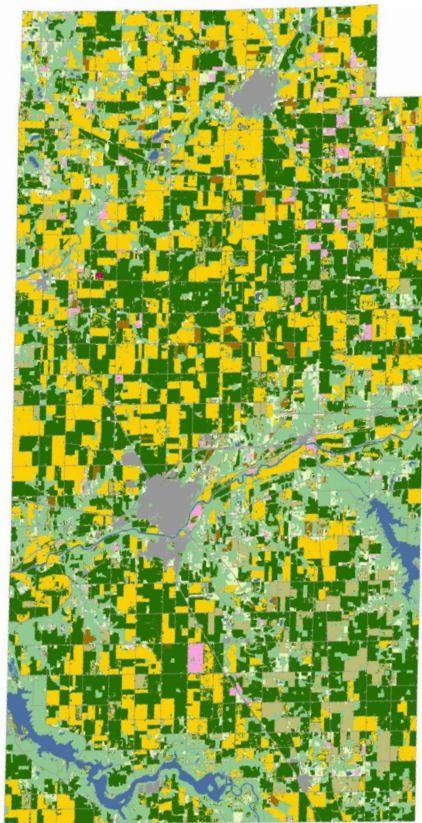
Land cover analysis uses satellite imagery to construct summary pixels of land cover at a defined scale and interval. These are then used to summarize the dominant land cover over a defined area. Unlike land use analysis, land cover does not create a summary at a parcel level, but rather at this pixel scale. Because of this, there will always be a discrepancy between totals from a land cover and land use summary. As an example, a 200-acre parcel may be classified as an agricultural use, even if more than half of that land is out of production or open space. Land cover analysis will break the parcel into its parts and create a more accurate total.

The land cover map left converts satellite photography into detailed land cover information through color and reflectivity. The green hues on the map indicate areas without impervious surfaces or built elements / development. Greys on the map indicate these built areas. As the map indicates, most of the land in the county is covered with rotating crops, primarily corn and soybeans. Other major categories include deciduous forests and developed areas.

### CHANGES FROM 2000

One of the most valuable uses of land cover imagery is the ability track changes in land use over a period. The map on the left shows a static image from 2019, but the data supporting the tool is gathered annually back to 2000. A comparison of these two images reveals changes in key trends like urban growth and development.

**Just over 600 acres of farmland was developed (converted to low to high intensity urban use) between 2000 and 2019.** Comparatively speaking, very little agricultural land was developed over the 20-year time horizon indicated in the land cover data. The image below shows the extent of this growth as compared to central Wabash. Allen County, as a comparison, lost 2,400 acres over this same period but also grew by 48,000 people. Wabash County lost 3,000 people of the same period.





## 2. AGRICULTURE

*Agriculture takes a closer look into the primary type of crops and livestock that are produced throughout Wabash County. This is achieved through evaluating the current enabling infrastructure and identifying some of the emerging trends in farming that can be leveraged.*

### KEY FINDINGS

- **Farms in the County continue to decrease in number but increase in average size.** An average farm today is nearly 154% larger than the average Wabash farm in the 1940s.
- **The market value of agricultural products sold has experienced a drop off in recent years.** The County's average market value of products sold per farm fell 27% between 2012 to 2017.
- **Local farmers are on the forefront of the Farm-to-Fork movement.** While distributing products directly to restaurants is viewed as an emerging trend, a number of Wabash farms have already been doing this for decades.
- **Relatively little farmland was lost to development over the past 20 years.** Based on a land cover analysis, just over 600 acres moved from an agricultural use to developed from 2000, roughly equivalent to the size of downtown Wabash.

## 2.1 Agricultural Land Use and Production

*Agricultural land use and production focuses on how the land is utilized and the specific farm products that are grown in Wabash County. Wabash's information was then compared to adjacent counties in the region. This analysis helped to determine the types of crop and livestock products Wabash farmers specialize in.*

### AGRICULTURAL LAND USE

It is important to understand how the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Census of Agriculture calculates the land in farm acreage totals. Land in farms consists of agricultural land used for crops, pasture or grazing. It also includes woodland and wasteland that is not currently being utilized for farm operations. Land in farms is an operating unit concept and includes land owned and operated as well as land that is rented from others.

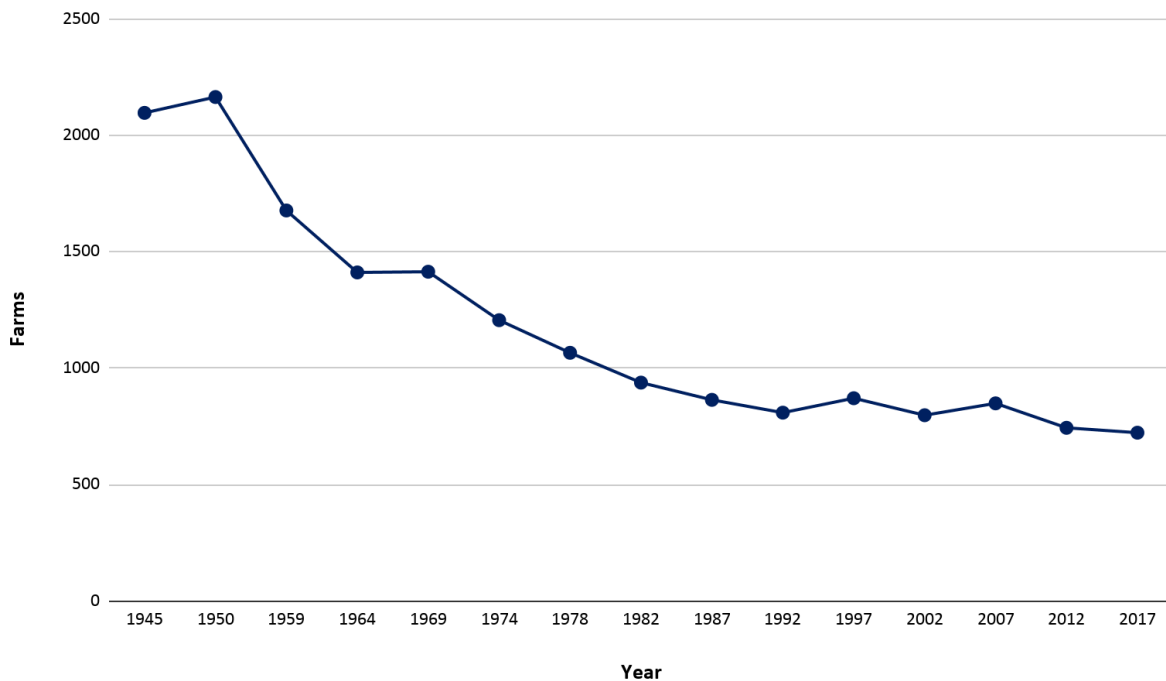
A decrease in overall land in farm acreage does not necessarily imply that land is lost to development. Instead, it may mean that land is dormant and not currently being used for agricultural production. Likewise, an increase in land in farms could be attributed to existing farmland being put back into operation, rather than the introduction of brand new cropland or pastures.

According to the most recent USDA Census from 2017, Wabash County has 211,239 acres of land in farms. About 90% of this is categorized as cropland. This is 38,495 less acres from its peak in 1950. More recently, the County saw a 7% increase in land in farms from 2012 to 2017, reversing a 10-year trend of acreage loss that began in 2002.

Table 1: Land in Farms Wabash County Comparison

| Year | Wabash County | Fulton County | Grant County | Huntington County | Kosciusko County | Miami County | Whitley County | Indiana    |
|------|---------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------|----------------|------------|
| 1945 | 240,542       | 214,396       | 242,457      | 229,707           | 326,680          | 212,003      | 207,500        | 20,027,015 |
| 1950 | 249,734       | 221,556       | 240,487      | 231,978           | 316,344          | 224,340      | 206,361        | 19,658,677 |
| 1959 | 246,582       | 223,161       | 223,487      | 220,036           | 302,391          | 213,876      | 195,272        | 18,613,046 |
| 1964 | 237,513       | 214,396       | 217,360      | 220,912           | 297,793          | 208,256      | 196,441        | 17,933,226 |
| 1969 | 240,955       | 210,618       | 210,522      | 206,411           | 294,654          | 213,022      | 194,114        | 17,572,865 |
| 1974 | 234,090       | 203,704       | 207,214      | 193,344           | 291,383          | 202,189      | 192,691        | 16,785,208 |
| 1978 | 221,504       | 194,212       | 210,517      | 198,173           | 288,279          | 204,194      | 186,395        | 17,037,075 |
| 1982 | 207,924       | 185,495       | 208,967      | 195,604           | 274,364          | 198,468      | 178,239        | 16,294,268 |
| 1987 | 202,566       | 201,724       | 196,132      | 194,605           | 268,334          | 196,019      | 165,339        | 16,170,895 |
| 1992 | 197,947       | 194,312       | 196,537      | 187,955           | 251,603          | 188,843      | 162,244        | 15,618,831 |
| 1997 | 194,640       | 175,783       | 236,232      | 186,367           | 256,706          | 201,428      | 170,386        | 15,525,154 |
| 2002 | 214,703       | 192,861       | 210,989      | 199,773           | 262,001          | 191,369      | 172,094        | 15,058,670 |
| 2007 | 200,689       | 184,847       | 202,138      | 199,070           | 251,340          | 178,030      | 137,082        | 14,773,184 |
| 2012 | 197,588       | 188,411       | 183,380      | 188,848           | 154,847          | 175,276      | 140,099        | 14,720,396 |
| 2017 | 211,239       | 214,452       | 190,076      | 197,236           | 261,674          | 193,548      | 176,255        | 14,969,996 |

Number of Farms - Wabash County (1945 - 2017)



The number of farms in Wabash County in 2017 was 724, a 3% decrease since 2012. This continues a decades long trend of steady decline from when the County was home to 2,165 farms in 1950. As the number of farms shrink further, the average size of farms continue to increase. The average size of a farm in Wabash for 2017 was 292 acres, an increase of 10% from 2012. An average farm today is nearly 154% larger than the

average Wabash farm in the 1940s. These trends suggest that land that once belonged to smaller, family-owned farms is being consolidated by larger farms. However, over 50% of farms are between 10 and 179 acres. Large, more-industrial farms that are over 1,000 acres only make up 8% of total farms in the County.

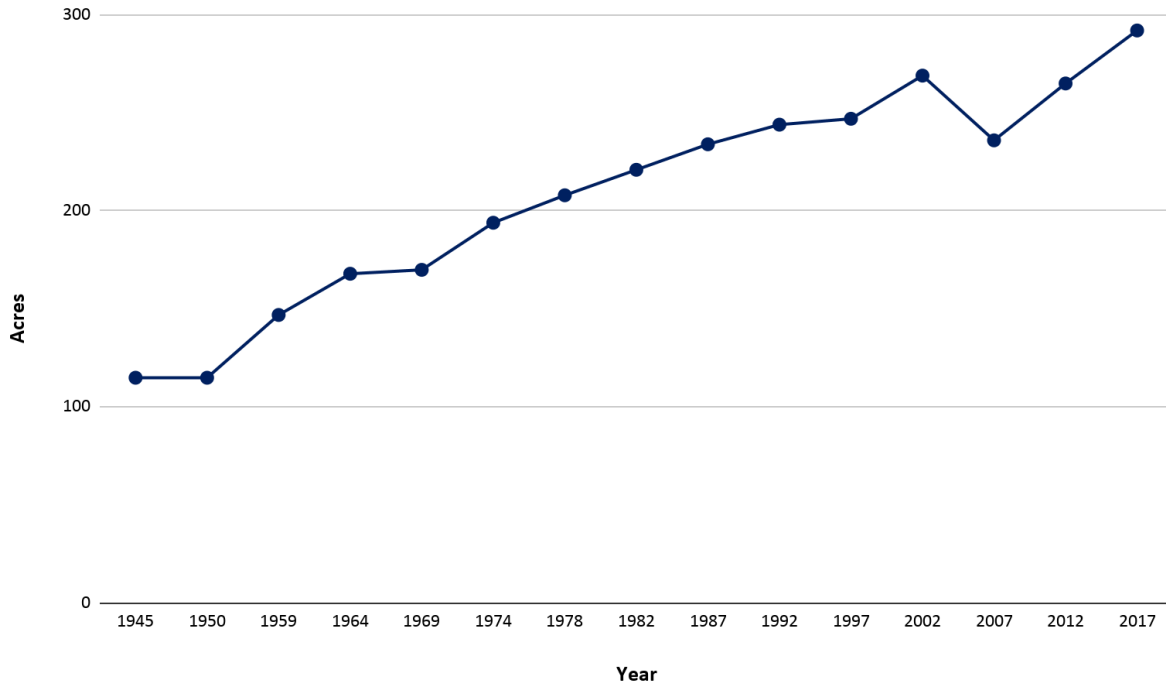
Table 2: Number of Farms County Comparison

| Year | Wabash County | Fulton County | Grant County | Huntington County | Kosciusko County | Miami County | Whitley County | Indiana |
|------|---------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------|----------------|---------|
| 1945 | 2,097         | 1,680         | 2,396        | 2,158             | 3,034            | 1,851        | 2,088          | 175,970 |
| 1950 | 2,165         | 1,838         | 2,291        | 2,171             | 2,783            | 1,879        | 1,927          | 166,627 |
| 1959 | 1,678         | 1,567         | 1,568        | 1,591             | 2,272            | 1,447        | 1,530          | 128,160 |
| 1964 | 1,412         | 1,283         | 1,290        | 1,459             | 2,052            | 1,193        | 1,385          | 108,082 |
| 1969 | 1,415         | 1,235         | 1,262        | 1,301             | 2,038            | 1,260        | 1,351          | 101,479 |
| 1974 | 1,207         | 1,048         | 1,102        | 1,115             | 1,686            | 1,065        | 1,219          | 87,915  |
| 1978 | 1,067         | 937           | 966          | 991               | 1,527            | 988          | 1,110          | 88,427  |
| 1982 | 939           | 817           | 876          | 927               | 1,442            | 924          | 1,014          | 77,180  |
| 1987 | 865           | 773           | 744          | 818               | 1,327            | 818          | 880            | 70,506  |
| 1992 | 810           | 690           | 630          | 704               | 1,123            | 771          | 759            | 62,778  |
| 1997 | 872           | 705           | 646          | 730               | 1,330            | 760          | 919            | 66,707  |
| 2002 | 799           | 616           | 557          | 675               | 1,203            | 685          | 840            | 60,296  |
| 2007 | 850           | 639           | 524          | 766               | 1,235            | 682          | 809            | 60,938  |
| 2012 | 745           | 653           | 500          | 695               | 1,247            | 666          | 710            | 58,695  |
| 2017 | 724           | 635           | 494          | 611               | 1,042            | 629          | 696            | 56,649  |

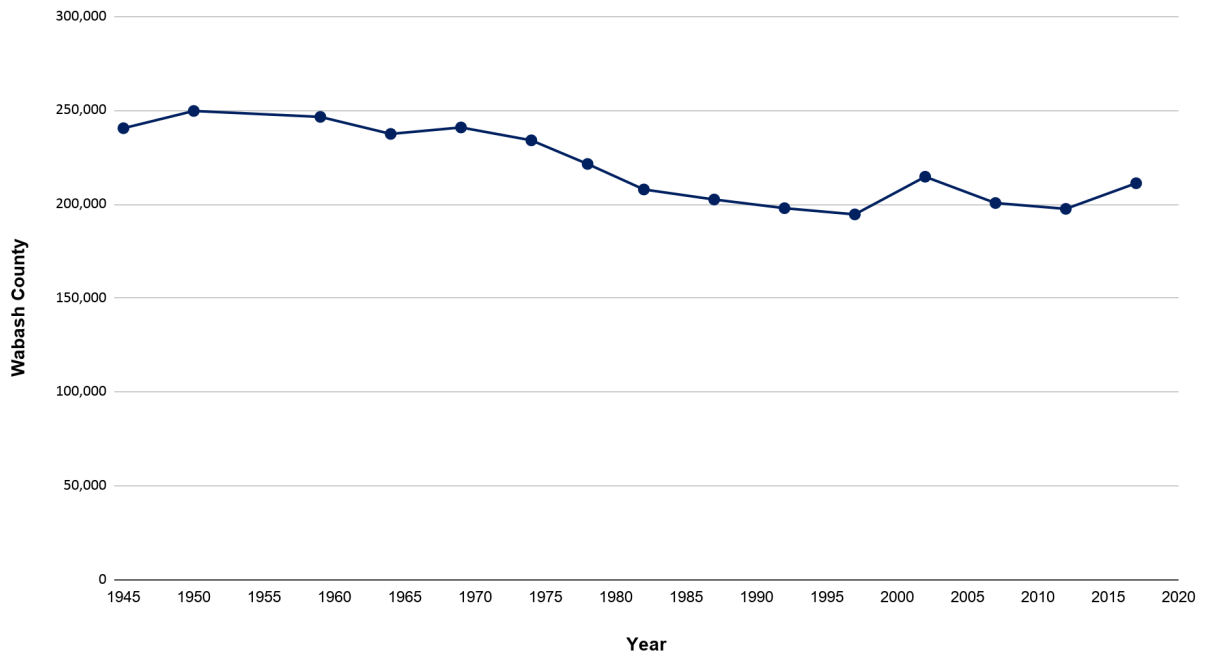
Table 3: Average Size of Farms Comparison

| Year | Wabash County | Indiana |
|------|---------------|---------|
| 1945 | 115           | 114     |
| 1950 | 115           | 118     |
| 1959 | 147           | 145     |
| 1964 | 168           | 166     |
| 1969 | 170           | 173     |
| 1974 | 194           | 191     |
| 1978 | 208           | 204     |
| 1982 | 221           | 211     |
| 1987 | 234           | 229     |
| 1992 | 244           | 249     |
| 1997 | 247           | 261     |
| 2002 | 269           | 250     |
| 2007 | 236           | 242     |
| 2012 | 265           | 251     |
| 2017 | 292           | 264     |

**Average Size of Farms - Wabash County (1945 - 2017)**



**Land in Farms - Wabash County (1945 - 2017)**





## PRODUCTION

Wabash County's Share of Sales can be broken down into 59% crops (ranking 31st out of 92 counties) and 41% livestock poultry, and other products (ranking 21st). Nearly 80% of Wabash's farmland acreage is dedicated to the production of soybeans and corn. The County ranks 11th in the state for the sale of hogs and pigs and 6th for sheep and goats.

Market values of agricultural products from Wabash County have fallen 29% since 2012. The average market value of products sold per farm has dropped from \$305,033 in 2012 to \$222,664 in 2017, a 27% decrease. Farm-related income per farm has fallen 38% during this same time period. There is a broad spectrum of outcomes, as 32% of farms in Wabash earn less than \$2,500 in sales and 28% of farms earn \$100,000 or more. Overall, Wabash County farms contribute 1% of agriculture sales in Indiana.

## 2.2 Farmland Preservation

*One of the primary concerns for rural communities is the ability to facilitate growth and development without sacrificing their key natural assets. Because of this, farmland preservation is a growing focus at both the state and local levels.*

### EXISTING POLICIES & REGULATIONS

State of Indiana provides tax advantages for agricultural land. Indiana assesses farmland at its agricultural value instead of the market value of the land. This is meant to conserve agricultural land from being developed for other uses.

Zoning regulations and land use planning is another tool to preserve farmland. Communities such as Wabash and North Manchester have specific Agricultural Districts that prioritize land uses related to farming. The Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) provides a model agricultural zoning document for county governments that are interested in maintaining their agricultural lands while balancing other uses and growth demands. The guide presents three main models that other county officials can look to when revising their own zoning code.

Right to Farm legislation is designed to protect farmers from nuisance suits that result from urban encroachment. Passed in 1981, Indiana's Right to Farm Act states that if a farm is not deemed a nuisance when it begins its operations, it cannot be deemed a nuisance later. An amendment in 2005, maintained those protections if a farm underwent significant changes to its size, technology, or hours of operation. In 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear a case that challenged the constitutionality of Indiana's Right to Farm Act.

### AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) is a program operated by the USDA's National Resources Conservation Service to conserve agricultural lands. ACEP provides financial and technical assistance to eligible partners for purchasing Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) that protect existing farmland. These ALEs are an important tool for ensuring that productive working lands are not developed for non-agricultural uses. Under the Agricultural Land component, NRCS may contribute up to 50% of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement.

At the state level, the Indiana House of Representatives Interim Study Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources have been directing their attention to Agricultural Easements. Legislation proposed in HB 1165,

would direct ISDA to create an Agricultural Conservation Easement Fund that would let farmers preserve their agricultural land and keep it from being developed into a subdivision or for industrial use. Once established, these easements would remain for perpetuity and survive even if the property is sold or transferred. This would also result in a property tax reduction for the landowner since the tax assessment would reflect the easement rather than the market rate. While the Committee unanimously passed the legislation, the financial incentive language was ultimately stripped from the bill as it advanced further in the legislative process.

## 2.3 Infrastructure

*Similar to other major businesses and industries, agriculture requires sufficient access to infrastructure and utilities in order to be successful. Water management is a primary consideration for local farmers, especially those who produce crops like soybeans and corn.*

### TILING

Tiling is a water management practice that involves a system of subsurface drains and pipes to help improve drainage performance for farmland. It is an especially common strategy for land devoted to corn and soybean production. Tiling has been known to help improve crop production and reduce soil erosion for prime farmland. According to Purdue University, at least 50% of Indiana's cropland has drainage improvements, enhancing crop production on more than 8 million acres.

While the presence of water bodies such as the Wabash and Eel Rivers help contribute to the county's rich, fertile soils, it can also be detrimental to crop yield during high flood events. Tiling systems are ineffective tools against flooding once rainfall exceeds the infiltration rate of the soil. New tiling practices recently introduced near La Fontaine have revealed potential concerns with increased flooding downstream due to the increased water volume. Tiled farmland may help expedite the removal of excess water after the storm event has ended compared to land that has not been tiled.

Tiled farmland is an effective strategy to prevent significant damage to crops, but it also carries a number of tradeoffs from an environmental perspective. Systems may carry nutrients such as nitrate to adjacent streams and rivers. Decisions related to tile spacing and the utilization of cover crops can help mitigate high concentrations of nitrate and leaks in the system.

### CONSERVATION EFFORTS

Water management across the county relies on comprehensive drainage system. This system leverages the natural rivers and streams to distribute water runoff from surrounding land to help mitigate flooding. Local efforts have recently pursued efforts to encourage conservation practices as part of the county drainage system. All low head dams on the Eel River have been removed and the Middle Eel River Watershed Alliance has encouraged the use of swails, cover cropping, and no-till farming to further prevent flooding. These practices have shown improved drainage as water is capable of moving through the stream channels faster during rain events, mitigating the possibility of flooding.

## 2.4 Agricultural Innovation

*The agricultural industry is constantly adapting to new trends and technological advancements. It is vitally important for farmers to stay current on best practices and monitor any potential disruptions so they can continue to meet consumer demand, increase crop yields, and reduce costs.*

## CURRENT INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

### FARM-TO-FORK

Farm-to-Fork is one of the most prevalent shifts in farming trends. This change is being spurred by consumers motivated by health benefits or environmental sustainability, who are trying to be more cognizant of where their meal originates from. Fortunately, some Wabash farmers are well-accustomed to selling their products directly to local restaurants and other institutional buyers. According to the 2017 USDA Census, 6% of Wabash farms sell directly to the consumer. This matches with Indiana's overall trend. Four farms in Wabash County are listed in the Indiana Grown for Schools Directory. The County should find ways to encourage these types of transactions since they help support the local economy, while also helping to foster a greater sense of community.

### FACILITY UPGRADES

Farms will need to update their facilities to ensure that they can deliver high quality products. A farm in North Manchester recently constructed a state of the art hog building that features an enhanced ventilation system. The energy efficient system provides a healthier environment for the pigs which results in a better return on investment for the farmers raising the pigs. Elsewhere, the Wabash Heartland Innovation Network, composed of other central Indiana counties, is exploring the application of Internet of Things (IoT) technology to make agriculture practices more efficient. Wabash County should continue to support local farmers who are interested in upgrading their facilities and equipment.

### LIVING LABORATORY

The Wabash County Soil and Water Conservation District has utilized the Wabash County Farm as a living laboratory to test out the latest agricultural trends. The farm features a drainage water management system that was donated by Agri Drain Corporation. These types of tiling systems have several benefits for agricultural producers including improved crop yield and reduced soil erosion. The farm has also installed Water and Sediment Control Basins (WASCOB) that directs the flow of water runoff away from farmland and water bodies. WASCOBs are able to improve water quality by settling out harmful sediment before it reaches nearby rivers or streams. While each improvement benefits the performance of the farm, it is also useful for demonstrations for others interested in adopting new technology.

## COMING DISRUPTIONS

### TRADE POLICY SHIFTS

Global trade policy has a profound impact on Indiana farmers and their ability to be profitable. The recent trade war between the United States and China has resulted in retaliatory tariffs being placed on key domestic products such as corn and soybeans. Soybeans acts as Indiana's number one agricultural export and China has been the largest consumer of U.S. soybeans. This has resulted in the U.S. government having to prop up the agriculture industry through subsidies. The use of subsidies with no clear end in sight creates uncertainty for local farmers as they make important decisions regarding their crop production.

### COVID-19

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has created significant disruptions to Indiana in the form of restrictions, closings, and other policy changes. Prices for various products have fallen as restaurants and other major purchasers buy less. All of these factors have an impact on how local farmers produce, sell, and distribute their crops. Some farmers must change their crop schedules, while

others who focus on livestock are unable to delay. Equally important is the impact on farmers and workers' health. A sick workforce risks decreases in production and other significant logistic delays.

### 3. NATURAL RESOURCES / PARKS AND RECREATION

This section reviews the natural resources and other unique places that have naturally defined the character of Wabash County and its communities. Along with this are the parks and recreation assets the county has developed to connect and expand the greenway and blueway network. Through this analysis, a baseline of the existing conditions is established to understand how the communities leverage these assets. This section details the natural resources available, examines existing programming, reviews the relationship between the natural and manmade, and identifies efforts to enhance natural assets.

#### KEY FINDINGS

- **Community parks are provided at all levels.** From the local to the regional, parks and open spaces are provided throughout the communities of Wabash County.
- **Rivers are a major community asset.** Several communities from Wabash to Roann have direct riverfront access to one or more of the county's river corridors.
- **Substantial parkland is protected from development.** Approximately six percent of the County's land is protected by local, state, and federal parks.
- **Agricultural production has a strong relationship with the environment.** Farming practices directly impact the health and quality of environmental resources like soil and water.

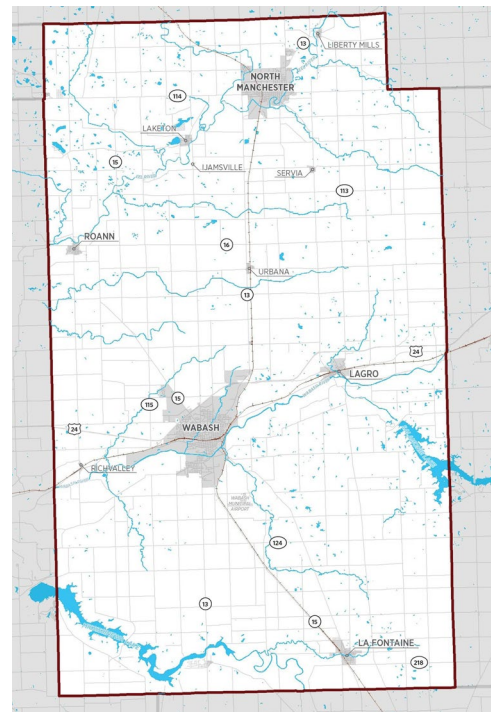
### 3.1 Environmental Resources

Environmental resources focuses on the specific, natural features that are found in Wabash County and its communities. These resources were identified throughout the county as unique destinations or assets that set the county apart from others in the region. Ensuring these resources are protected, preserved, and enhanced is important to Wabash County's community character.

#### RIVER CORRIDORS AND BLUEWAY NETWORK

Wabash County has a diverse network of river and waterway networks, also known as blueway corridors, waterways connecting throughout the region. These resources led early settlers to establish communities along the blueways with the majority of communities still retaining direct water access today. The Eel and Wabash Rivers represent the two most prominent features hosting the largest communities of North Manchester and the City of Wabash respectively. A waterway network map for the entire county is provided in the map gallery, see [Map 1.5 Waterway Network](#).

The Eel River flows 110 miles from north of Fort Wayne to the southwest connecting numerous communities until feeding into the Wabash River at Logansport. Several smaller communities including Laketon, Roann, and Liberty Mills reside on the bank of the river providing opportunities for water access. The river varies in width from a 20 foot stream along certain portions to 100 feet near its merge with the Wabash River. Most of its bank is lined with trees and vegetation providing a scenic route for



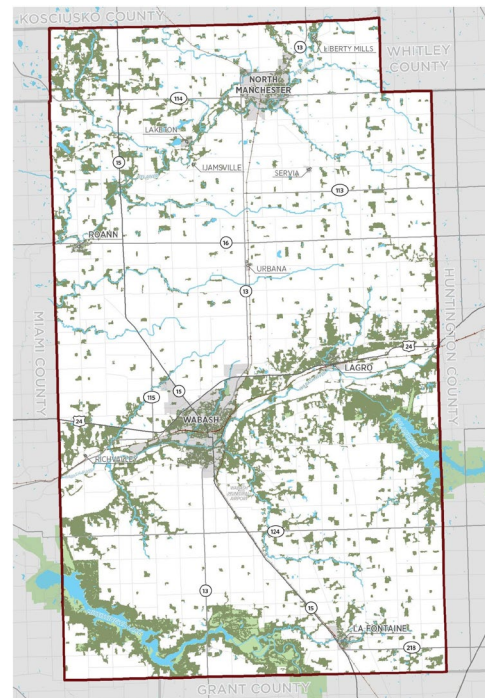
Map 1.5 Blueway Network



water activities which can be accessed by any number of community banks. Wabash County further supplies the river with over half a dozen creeks crossing the northern portion of the county. These creeks include:

- Silver Creek
- Squirrel Creek
- Clear Creek
- Pony Creek
- Treaty Creek
- Swank Creek
- Charley Creek
- Bear Grass Creek
- Otter Creek
- Wheeler Creek

The Wabash River is Indiana’s most significant river corridor extending from Huntington in the northeast down to the Ohio River in southwest Indiana. Covering over 475 miles, the river drains over 33,000 square miles of the state and is the primary drainage route for Indiana’s farmland. Almost all river corridors feed into the Wabash River along its route which remains free flowing for nearly 400 miles. In Wabash County, several communities reside directly on the river corridor including the City of Wabash, Lagro, and Richvalley. The Salamonie River joins the Wabash near Lagro while the Mississinewa and Eel Rivers connect to the west, outside of the county. The Lagro Creek, Mill Creek, Kentner Creek, Charley Creek, and Treaty Creek also serve the river with most connections occurring near the City of Wabash. The river corridor is primarily natural vegetation in rural parts of the state supplemented with parks and open space in developed areas such as downtowns or town centers. The extent of this corridor makes it a unique amenity to the region providing a service for agricultural drainage and water connectivity to communities across the state. A natural resources map for the entire county is provided in the map gallery, see [Map 1.6 Natural Resources](#).



**Map 1.6 Natural Resources**

## COUNTY RESERVOIRS

While rivers serve as unique natural assets, their proximity to each community and erosion over time has revealed concerns with potential flooding. To assist with flood management, a set of reservoirs was constructed under the Flood Control Act of 1958 in the northeast region of Indiana. The Salamonie, Mississinewa, and Huntington lakes were constructed to reduce potential flooding during rainfall events for the Wabash River Basin. This river serves as the primary drainage corridor for the majority of Indiana, connecting the northeast near Fort Wayne down to the southwestern border of the state. Built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, these lakes adjust water levels and reduce flow rates for the rivers to prevent flooding events.

The Salamonie Lake protects an estimated 31,500 acres of agricultural land in addition to the 13,000 acres of preservation surrounding the reservoir. The lake and its rockfill dam were constructed in 1966 with the dam having a height of 133 feet and length of 6,100 feet along its crest. Fed by the Salamonie River from Jay County, the reservoir connects directly to the Wabash River northwest of the dam near the Town of Lagro. Monument City, originally platted in 1876, and two small towns were removed to open land for the construction of the reservoir. The town’s namesake was a Civil War monument engraved with the names of men from Polk Township who served in the war. This monument and the town’s cemetery were relocated as part of this project now residing a mile north of the lake. Over 40 ponds, marshes, and wetlands contribute to

the unique natural area surrounding the lake which offers a variety of recreational opportunities and wildlife preservations. Trails, campgrounds, mountain biking, sports courts, and a variety of water sports are all available during the summer months. During winter, snowmobile trails are designated to offer additional, year-round recreational activities.

The Mississinewa Lake preserves over 14,000 acres of land with a 3,200 acre lake at its center. Construction began in 1962 with the lake becoming operational in 1967 to assist with flood management for the region. The construction of the dam, finalized in 1967, resulted in the relocation of the unincorporated community of Somerset, now located on State Route 13. The reservoir is fed by the Mississinewa River from the southeast and connects to the Wabash River northwest of the lake near the City of Peru. The conservation area surrounding the lake offers a diverse landscape of forests, prairies, and farmland. Water sports, trails, campgrounds, cabins, and bicycle paths are just a few of the amenities offered by the state park. Ice fishing and snowmobiling provide winter activities that attract additional visitors to the region. Since its construction, the reservoir is estimated to have prevented hundreds of millions in flood damage for Wabash County and the surrounding region.

### 3.2 Recreational Amenities

*This section analyzes the parks and recreation amenities that the communities of Wabash County have developed. Existing parks were analyzed to understand acreage preserved or protected, the types of parkland available, locations and service reach of parks, and other recreational amenities in the county. These serve an important community benefit that enhances the quality of place alongside the natural features unique to Wabash County.*

#### PARKS SYSTEM

Park spaces serve a variety of purposes for the communities of Wabash County from recreation to preservation. Conservation efforts in the county are focused around natural places, primarily the Salamonie and Mississinewa Lakes. The Federal and State government own land to ensure the continuous preservation of natural assets in the region. Additional preserves such as the Kokiwanee Nature Preserve, privately managed by the Acres Land Trust, further expand protected environments in Wabash County for recreational, educational, and environmental use.

At the local level, parks systems have steadily been integrated into neighborhoods for use by the community. North Manchester maintains six parks totaling approximately 20 acres for use by its residents ranging from 1/10 of an acre to several acres in size. The City of Wabash maintains nine parks totaling roughly 70 acres with the largest park being 35 acres near the center of the City. Smaller communities have sought to connect with regional, county parks while also leveraging the natural areas present in almost every community. A comprehensive table of parks in the county is provided below.

*Table 2: Wabash County Parks.*

| Name                             | Community Location | Acreage |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Wabash City Park                 | Wabash             | 35      |
| Honeywell Park                   | Wabash             | 8       |
| Paradise Springs Historical Park | Wabash             | 15      |

| Name                                    | Community Location | Acreage |
|---|--------------------|---------|
| South Side park                         | Wabash             | 1       |
| Hanna Park                              | Wabash             | 3       |
| Broadmoor Park                          | Wabash             | 2       |
| Charley Creek Park                      | Wabash             | 2       |
| John Drock Memorial Bike and Skate Park | Wabash             | 3       |
| Friendship Hill Inclusive Playground    | Wabash             | 0.84    |
| Master Trooper David Rich Memorial Park | Wabash             | 0.25    |
| Warvel Park                             | North Manchester   | 12.3    |
| Thomas Marshall Town Life Center        | North Manchester   | 4.5     |
| Frantz Park                             | North Manchester   | 1.8     |
| Halderman Park                          | North Manchester   | 1.2     |
| Ogan's Landing                          | North Manchester   | 2       |
| Cook-Crumley Park                       | La Fontaine        | 2.5     |
| Servia Park                             | Servia             | 0.4     |
| Salamonie Lake Reservoir                | Wabash County      | 12,554  |
| Salamonie River State Forest            | Wabash County      | 950     |
| Kokiwanee Nature Preserve (private)     | Wabash County      | 140     |
| Mississinewa Lake Reservoir             | Wabash County      | 15,072  |
| Frances Slocum State Forest             | Wabash County      | 550     |

There is also capacity to further expand the parks system as identified in previous planning efforts. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan for the City of Wabash identified that compared to benchmark communities in the region, Wabash had a below average parks system. It was determined at the time, 2014, that an additional 9 acres of parkland should be acquired to expand accessibility. One common enhancement area identified by the communities is along the waterfront with access to the Eel and Wabash Rivers. Both North Manchester and the City of Wabash have defined strategies to develop trail networks and amenities along the rivers, especially in flood prone areas. These trails provide direct connections to the county network with opportunities to further enhance pedestrian and bicycle connectivity throughout the region.

## BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN TRAILS

Trail development is a recreational focus in Wabash County providing a comprehensive connection to major destinations. For over a decade, the county has hosted the Dam to Dam Annual Bike Ride which includes several routes visiting all the communities of Wabash County. This event has identified key corridors that connect the communities and amenities throughout the county together with the longest route being 150 miles in length. At the local level, the City of Wabash has the Paradise Springs Trail, the Charley Creek Gardens trail, and the Wabash Riverwalk Trail which extends along the Wabash River and connects to the historic downtown. This trail was identified in the Stellar Communities Grant in 2014 and represents an important economic investment in the community.

The Wabash River Trails, inclusive of all trail networks, received \$1 million in funding from the Northeast Indiana Regional Development Authority in 2017. An additional \$2 million from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to develop a trail and blueway that will connect Paradise Springs and the Town of Lagro, six miles to the east. The City has pursued additional opportunities to extend and enhance trail features, with 2.5 miles of trail in use today. Many redevelopment projects have been identified along the trail, promoting economic investment in the county.

North Manchester has also identified the importance of trail development outlining this in their recent 2015 Comprehensive Plan. Like the City of Wabash, North Manchester has defined several local trail connections that connect downtown to adjacent neighborhoods and expand off the Wabash County regional bike trail. The City also seeks to develop an enhanced riverfront park as one of three community development opportunities. Additional trail features are included in the State and Federal parks system located around the Salamonie and Mississinewa Lakes.

## 3.3 Environmental Quality

*This section focuses on the existing conditions of the county's natural resources and their relationship with the built environment. Environmental resources including air, soil, and water quality are reviewed to understand the potential risks or threats to the long-term quality and overall health. Human and development influence on the environment establishes an understanding of how all land use sectors interact with the natural features and the challenges impacting this relationship.*

### AIR

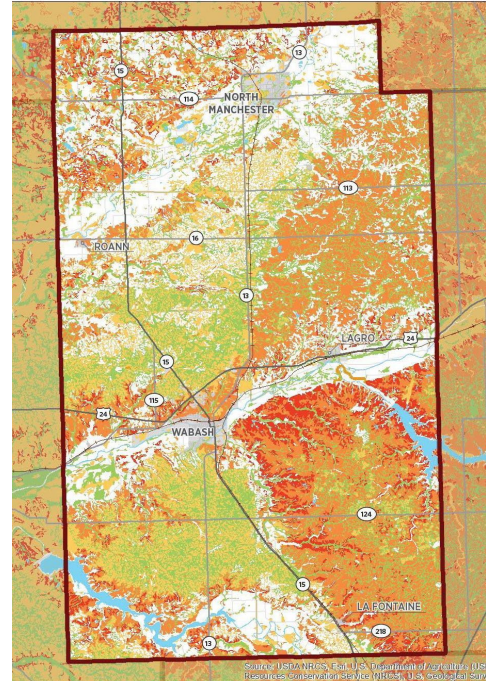
The quality of air, water, and soil (reviewed in the *Agricultural* section) is especially important to public health and agricultural production. Overall, Wabash County has maintained compliance with air quality standards set by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM). The highest risk to the communities relates to Ground Level Ozone or Smog which is the result of industrial facilities, fossil fuel combustion, motor vehicle exhaust, and vapors from gasoline or chemical solvents. High levels of ground-level ozone can result in health effects for sensitive groups like young children and the elderly. Long-term exposure such as congestion, chest pain, decreased lung function can become more common, providing a public health concern for the county.

Ozone monitoring occurs in select places across the state with Wabash County's being located near the Salamonie Reservoir. Annual measurements are taken by monitoring air quality during 8-hour windows between the months of March and October. The highest maximum concentration during the time slot is averaged over the three previous years to ensure the total value does not exceed U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and IDEM requirements. The concentration limit is set at 0.070 parts per million (ppm)

and is used to determine if an area is in exceedance, a high level of ozone resulting in potential health impacts. Wabash County has historically remained under the concentration level with the 2020 value being 0.068 ppm. Two recent years resulted in a higher level which were in 2016 & 2018, however the following year showed a decrease in the parts per million. As IDEM standards are updated, Wabash County has maintained lower levels of smog preventing public health risks for people living in the county.

## WATER

Water quality has been a primary focus for environmental protection given the natural waterways in Wabash County. The county is part of four distinct watersheds that expand the region; Upper Wabash River Watershed, Middle Eel River Watershed, Mississinewa Watershed, and the Lower Salamonie Watershed. Within these watersheds, erosion is a uniform concern as historically the county has lost a significant portion of its waterways. A historical erosion map for the entire county is provided in the map gallery, see [Map 1.7 Historical Erosion](#). This is attributed to some of the adjacent land use practices, specifically farming, and water management infrastructure along banks. Water quality stressors are another primary concern with the Middle Eel River Watershed having higher Total Suspended Solids (TSS) in the water. This is attributed to several factors including cropland erosion, fertilizer runoff, and septic system deterioration. The county is at the forefront of managing water quality in the region with several surrounding counties having more risk for contaminants and stressors.



**Map 1.7 Historical Erosion**

As part of the Lower Salamonie Watershed Management Plan, priority stream areas were identified based on a critical evaluation of the region. Streams in Wabash County ranked in the lower tiers being determined as areas of least concerns for addressing water quality. The Middle Eel River Watershed was identified as a priority area for improvement after reviewing several parameters like TSS, phosphorus, and ammonia levels. A major contributor to these high parameters is the use of conventional tillage practices for cropland as opposed to alternative methods.

Many local organizations and programs have been established to assist in water quality management. The Wabash River Defenders are a non-profit organization who host various events directed towards cleaning and improving the Wabash River. They participate in the annual river clean-up and have developed a strategic plan for enhancing the river network throughout the county. Other local efforts encourage implementing conservation practices to reduce runoff and additional riverbank cleaning events to remove debris and other contaminants.

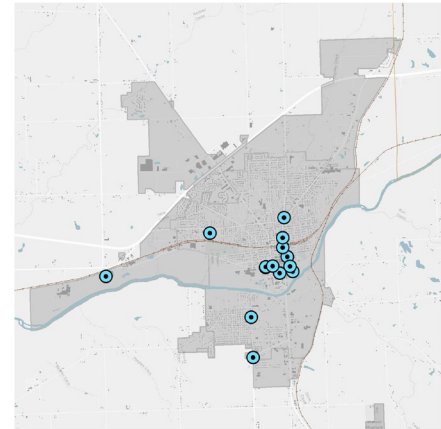


## INDUSTRIAL BROWNFIELD SITES

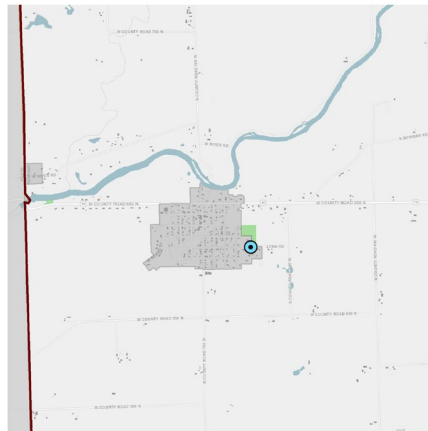
Brownfields are properties that are either contaminated by hazardous substances or thought to be contaminated. Over the years, industrial sites have ceased operations leaving behind their vacant facilities and potential environmental impacts. Several have been identified as having environmental contaminants on site that impact potential redevelopment of the property. The Indiana Brownfield Program has identified 18 sites in Wabash County that have applied through their grant program for remediation funding. This list includes property in the Town of Roann, City of North Manchester, and City of Wabash. In some instances, these properties are integrated in the community, near downtown or destinations making them important to the general health and safety of the public. Many local governments have been working diligently to remediate sites as funding becomes available such as the City of Wabash redeveloping a brownfield site for the Friendship Hill Inclusive Playground.

The following list and maps, right, identify the 18 properties who have sought remediation funding from the state. The table includes details pertaining to the individual properties including the property address and land restrictions due to prior contaminants.

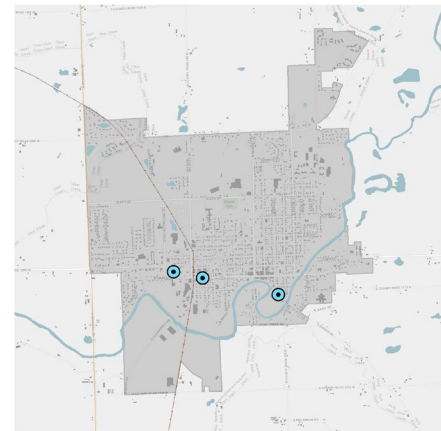
This is not a comprehensive list of all the potential brownfield sites but only those where property owners or private corporations have sought to address environmental concerns.



Wabash Brownfield Sites



Roann Brownfield Sites



North Manchester Brownfield Sites

Table 2: Brownfield Sites & Restrictions.

| ID | Site Name                | Address          | City   | Acreage | Land Restrictions   | Remediation Efforts |
|----|--------------------------|------------------|--------|---------|---|---------------------|
| 1  | Mafcote Property         | 410 S Carroll St | Wabash | 1.5     | No residential, agricultural, water wells, soil cap restriction, excavation below 12 inches (metals, SVOCs in soil and groundwater) |                     |
| 2  | Denton (former junkyard) | 129 E Fulton St  | Wabash | 0.8     | No residential, agricultural, water wells (metals in soil)  |                     |

| ID | Site Name                            | Address                | City             | Acreage | Land Restrictions   | Remediation Efforts  |
|----|--------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|---------|---|--|
| 3  | Swinger Shell                        | 211 N Wabash`          | Wabash           | 0.28    | No residential, agricultural or wells. Prohibit activity that may interfere with response activities, long-term monitoring. |  |
| 4  | Kozy Korner                          | 1408 Vernon St         | Wabash           | 0.2     |   |  |
| 5  | GDX Automotive SEP                   | 1 General St           | Wabash           | 31      |   | Under contract to negotiate clean-up and redevelopment by the City of Wabash.                              |
| 6  | Quality Quick Lube & Specialties LLC | 701 W Main St          | North Manchester | 1       |   |  |
| 7  | United Service Station 6069          | 904 W SR 114           | North Manchester | 0.25    |   |  |
| 8  | Hoefer Fred Amoco                    | 6 W Hill St            | Wabash           | 0.23    |   |  |
| 9  | J&M Enterprise                       | 403 S Cass St          | Wabash           | 0.5     |   |  |
| 10 | Vernon Manor Children's Home         | 1955 S Vernon St       | Wabash           | 3.5     |   |  |
| 11 | Fairplay Family Fun Center           | 92 E Market St         | Wabash           | 0.36    |   | Demolished and redeveloped as shared parking lot for Rock City Lofts and the Wabash County History Museum. |
| 12 | Rivers Edge MHC                      | 303 S Mill St          | North Manchester | 2.25    |   |  |
| 13 | Harvey Industries LLC                | 3837 W Mill St         | Wabash           | 20      |   |  |
| 14 | Abe Sposeep & Sons Inc               | 55 Water St            | Wabash           | 3.5     |   | Remediation completed and now being monitored.   |
| 15 | Sposeep II                           | 472 Miami St           | Wabash           | 0.6     |   | Under negotiation for remediation.   |
| 16 | Old Roann School                     | E Pike St & S Grant St | Roann            | 2       |   | Building has been demolished.  |
| 17 | Bront Company Warehouse Bldg         | 401 S Carroll St       | Wabash           | 0.5     | No residential, agriculture, water wells (VOCs, PAHs and metals in soil)  |  |
| 18 | Pizza Station                        | 503 Wabash St          | Wabash           | 0.13    | No groundwater use (TPH in groundwater)   |  |

## **4. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

*Historical and Archaeological Resources examines the County's many cultural assets that contribute to the overall sense of place. This section assesses preservation efforts that have taken place within the county and highlights some of the organizations that are spearheading this important work.*

### **KEY FINDINGS**

- **Wabash communities are active advocates for their history and their landmarks of historical significance.** The first landmark in the County to make it on the National Register was listed in 1979.
- **The County has a unique network of active preservation partners.** Not all counties of similar size and composition have multiple historical societies and an institution like the Honeywell Foundation.
- **Historic assets play an important role in reinforcing community identity.** Unique events such as the four-day Roann Covered Bridge Festival demonstrate how landmarks add vibrancy to the communities of Wabash.

### **4.1 Historic Sites**

*The communities of Wabash County have a rich history that is worth sharing. These important assets cannot be replaced and need to be protected for future generations.*

#### **NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

Wabash County is a place that has a unique and storied past. This is evident in the amount of state historical markers and properties and districts that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Wabash has 21 properties and 8 historic districts listed on the National Register. Four of these districts are located within Downtown Wabash. North Manchester features two districts, one in the downtown and another by Manchester University. Historic Districts can also be found in the towns of La Fontaine and Roann. The earliest property on the Register was listed in 1979. This demonstrates that the communities of Wabash County have prioritized the preservation of their historical landmarks and assets for decades.

#### **STATE HISTORICAL MARKERS**

The County also has 8 state historical markers that designate important landmarks associated with key events or historical figures from Indiana's storied past. The state historical marker program is operated by the Indiana Historical Bureau.

#### **WABASH**

The City of Wabash has four separate historic districts located within the downtown area: the Downtown Wabash Historic District, the North Wabash Historic District, the East Wabash Historic District, and the West Wabash Historic District. The Downtown Wabash Historic District was the first one to be designated in 1986, with the latest one being the East Wabash Historic District in 2011. Other primary historic places from the Register include several assets connected to the Honeywell Foundation including the Honeywell Memorial Community Center and Honeywell Studio (originally the Wabash Country Club) for their architectural significance and connection to founder and prominent industrialist Mark C. Honeywell and the Lincoln Statue at the Courthouse.

Wabash also features three state historical markers from the Indiana Historical Bureau. The Paradise Spring Treaty Ground marker is located within the Paradise Spring Historical Park. It marks the site where the Potawatomi and Miami Tribes signed treaties that ceded the lands north of the Wabash River to the United States government in 1826. Located on the grounds of the Wabash County Courthouse, a marker celebrates Wabash as the “First Electrically Lighted City”. In 1880, Wabash city officials utilized Charles F. Brush’s carbon-arc lights for the courthouse, which illuminated the building until 1888. On the southern bank of the river, a marker denotes the site of Camp Wabash, the 11th Congressional military camp that was active during the Civil War.

#### **NORTH MANCHESTER**

North Manchester features a historic district for its downtown and another for Manchester College. The North Manchester Historic District has three buildings that individually were placed on the National Register including the Lantz House, Noftzger-Adams House, and the original North Manchester Public Library. The other district notes the architectural significance of the campus and educational impact Manchester College (now University) had on Wabash County and the City of North Manchester. The North Manchester Covered Bridge is one of the two remaining covered bridges in the County.

North Manchester’s state historical markers include the location where the Church of the Brethren held their annual meetings in 1878, 1888, and 1900 and the birthplace of Thomas Riley Marshall, the former Governor of Indiana (1909-1913) and two-term Vice President to Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921). Other primary historic features include the grave of Andrew Cordier, a Manchester College professor and former undersecretary to the General Secretary of the United Nations, and former resident Lloyd Douglas, author of the religious novel *The Robe* (1942).

#### **ROANN**

Roann’s Historic District covers most of the downtown area and includes other historical assets listed on the National Register including the Thomas J. Lewis House and the Roann-Paw Paw Township Public Library, a Carnegie Library. The town is also home to the second covered bridge in Wabash County, as well as the Halderman-Van Buskirk Farmstead, noted for its Gothic Revival Architecture. The annual Roann Covered Bridge Festival celebrates an important symbol of community pride in the town. Located just one mile west of Roann is the Stockdale Mill. The old water powered flour mill and dam was placed on the National Register in 2004.

#### **OTHER HIGHLIGHTS**

Other key assets of note include churches such as the St. Patrick’s Roman Catholic Church in Lagro and the Hopewell Methodist Episcopal Church and Cemetery in Urbana. St. Patrick’s is listed on both the National Register and has its own state historical marker for its impressive architecture and stained glass. Lagro was also the birthplace of Mrs. Gene Stratton-Porter, early 20<sup>th</sup> century author known for her novel *A Girl of the Limberlost* (1909).

Another significant cemetery in the County is the Slocum Cemetery, the resting place of Frances Slocum, who assimilated into the Miami Tribe after she was captured as a child by members of the Delaware. The state historical marker is located just outside the Frances Slocum State Recreational Area. Located in close proximity to Richvalley, the Miami Indian Mills is a state marker that denotes the remnants of an old grist and sawmill that was built for the Miami Tribe as a part of the 1818 Treaty of St. Mary’s. It is possible that it was the first industrial site in Wabash County.

## 4.2 Programming

*Wabash has several entities that are leading the preservation efforts in the County. It is important to have a sense of what institutions are doing so that efforts are not being duplicated, but to also identify any limitations that might exist.*

### ORGANIZATIONS

#### WABASH COUNTY MUSEUM

The Wabash County Museum is a not for profit institution that welcomes 20,000 visitors annually. In addition to its exhibits, the museum houses the Richard E. Ford Archives and Research Center. It also offers a walking tour through a mobile app that guides people to various points of interest in Downtown Wabash.

#### NORTH MANCHESTER CENTER FOR HISTORY

The North Manchester Center for History is a museum that partners with the North Manchester Historical Society. The museum's goal is to collect, preserve, and interpret the history of North Manchester and the Northern Indiana Eel River Basin. The society maintains an expansive online article and research studies archive. More recently, the Center was one of six Indiana locations selected to host Crossroads - Change in Rural America, a traveling Smithsonian exhibit.

#### HONEYWELL FOUNDATION

In addition to its numerous programs related to the advancement of arts and education, the Honeywell Foundation is also an active player in community historical preservation. The Foundation maintains a number of historical venues including the Dr. James Ford Historic Home and the Eagles Theatre. The Eagles Theatre has been a fixture in Downtown Wabash since its construction in 1906. The Honeywell Foundation acquired the landmark venue in 2010 and launched an ambitious, two-year restoration in 2017. The rehabilitation efforts of the historic architectural features and addition of modern amenities totaled \$10 million for the 30,000 square foot structure.

## 4.3 Future Considerations

*While the communities of Wabash have a proven track record of preservation and appreciation for their historical assets, the work is never truly completed. Organizations must continue to monitor aging buildings and look for other opportunities to fund preservation efforts.*

### ONGOING PRESERVATION EFFORTS

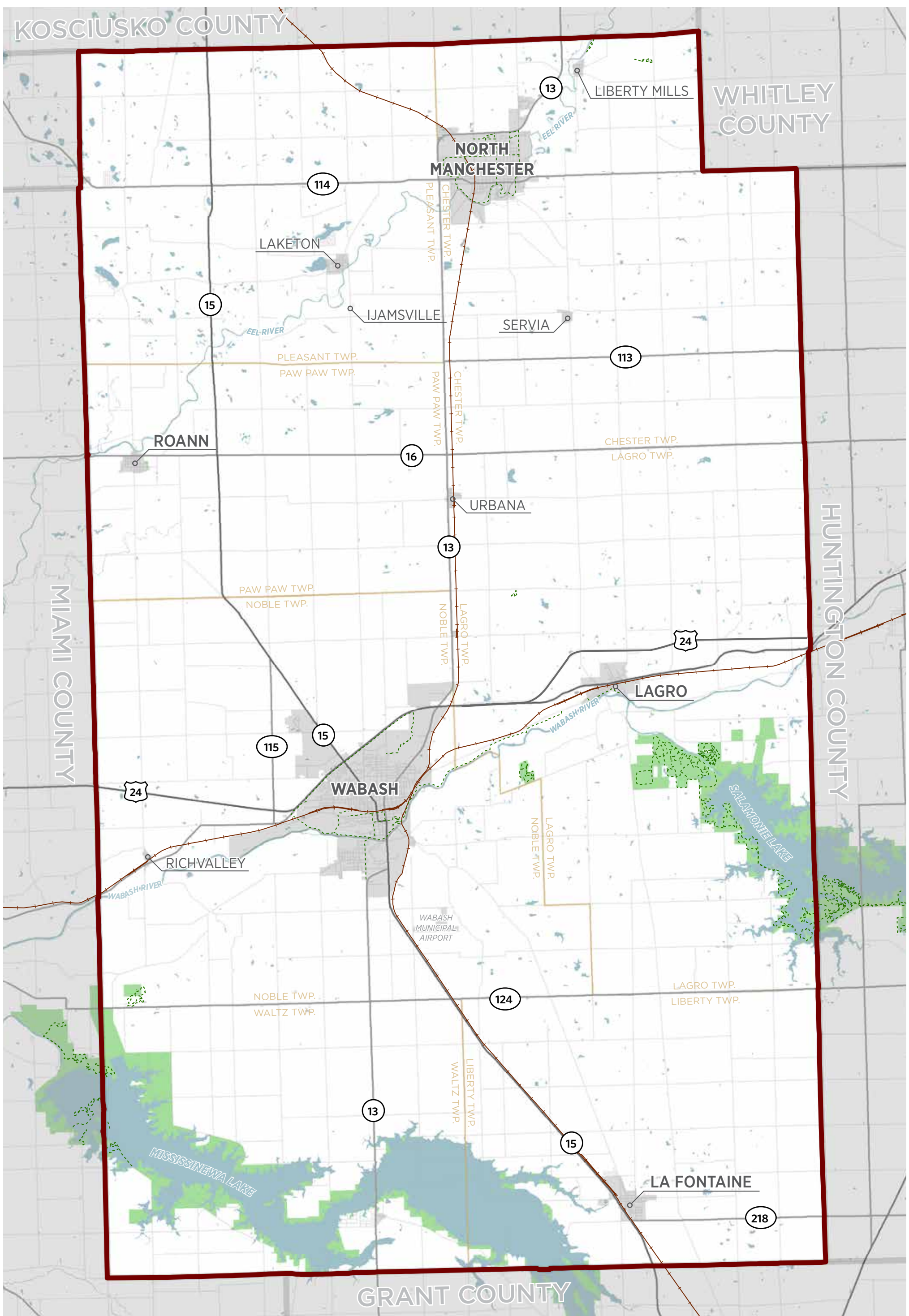
Indiana Landmarks has recently purchased six historic homes within the East Wabash Historic District with the goal of rehabbing the properties and placing them back on the market. Wabash County should continue to support these preservation efforts as they have significant economic and cultural benefits for the communities. Smaller towns such as Roann have also been making strides by earning a Main Street designation through Main Street Indiana. This allows Roann to qualify for grants and other benefits that will help supplement their preservation strategy for the historic downtown.

### FINANCIAL SUPPORT

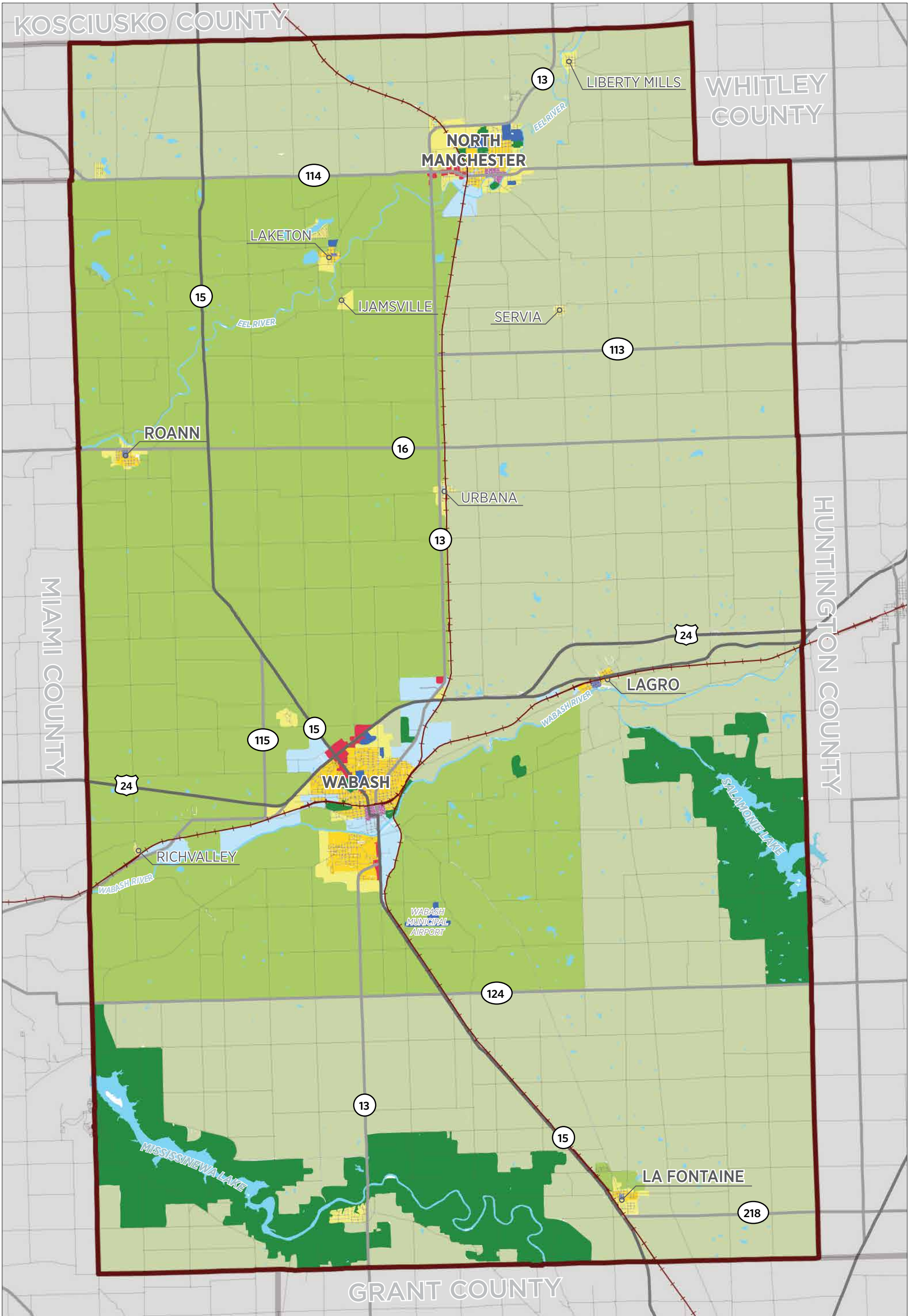
The County should also identify programming that aids the local museums that have played such a crucial role in cataloging history. This is especially needed since many of these institutions rely on a combination of



admissions fees and donations to stay in operation. A drop in visitor attendance related to the ongoing pandemic is expected to have an impact on museum finances.





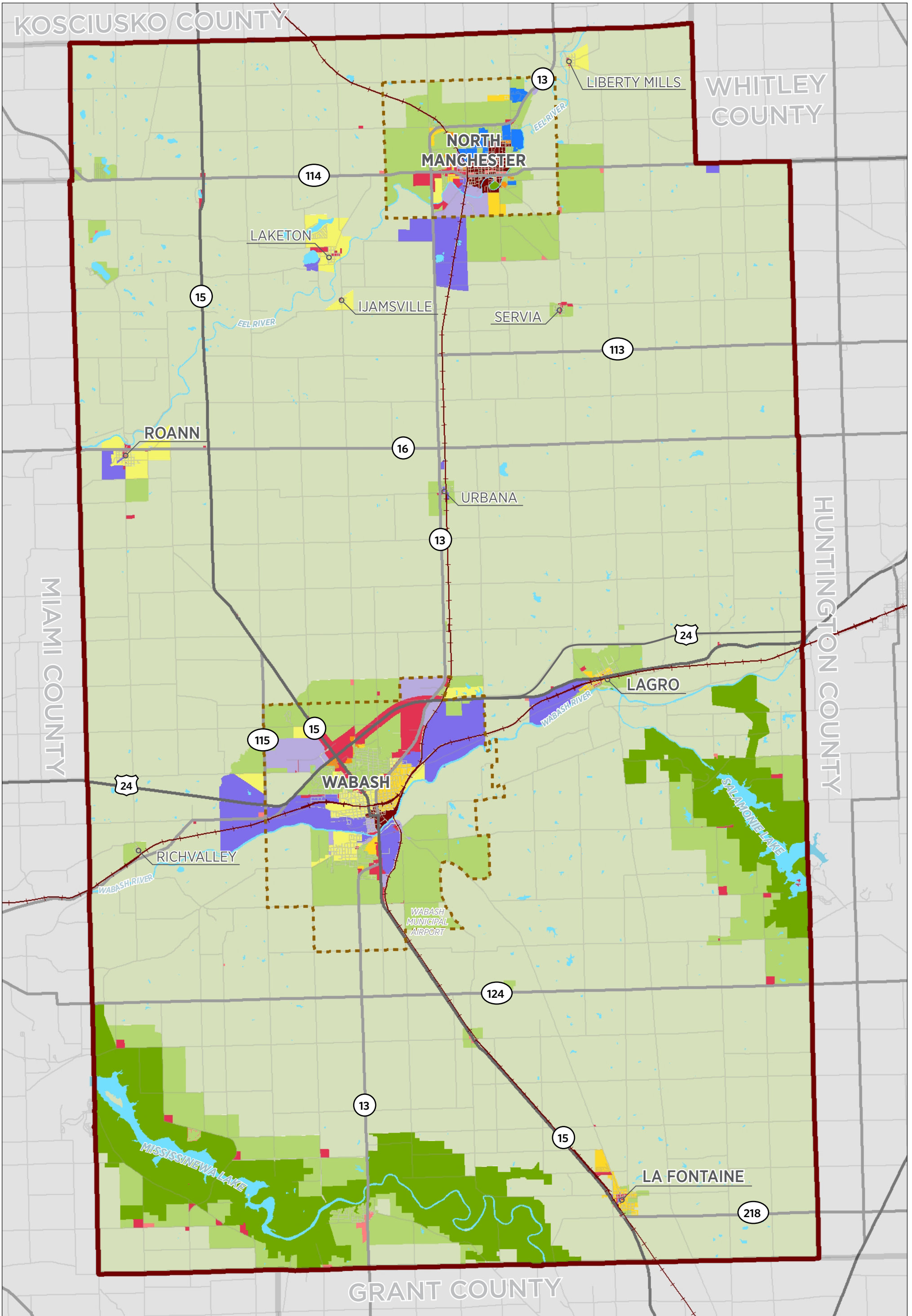


**IMAGINE ONE 85**  
**MAP 1.1 EXISTING CHARACTER**  
 COUNTYWIDE VIEW

- |   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #006400; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Open Space              | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FFD700; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Traditional Neighborhood | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ADD8E6; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Industrial Center                               | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 2px solid #8B0000;"></span> Wabash County                  |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #90EE90; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Rural Service           | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #4169E1; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Town Center              | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #00008B; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Institutional Campus                            | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px solid gray;"></span> Counties                          |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #3CB371; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Rural Living            | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #DC143C; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Commercial Center        | <span style="display: inline-block; border-bottom: 2px solid gray; width: 15px;"></span> US Highway   | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 1px; background-color: #8B0000; border: none;"></span> Railroad          |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FFD700; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Mixed Rural Residential | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #800080; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Downtown Core            | <span style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; width: 15px; height: 15px; text-align: center; line-height: 15px;">13</span> State Highway | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ADD8E6; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Water |



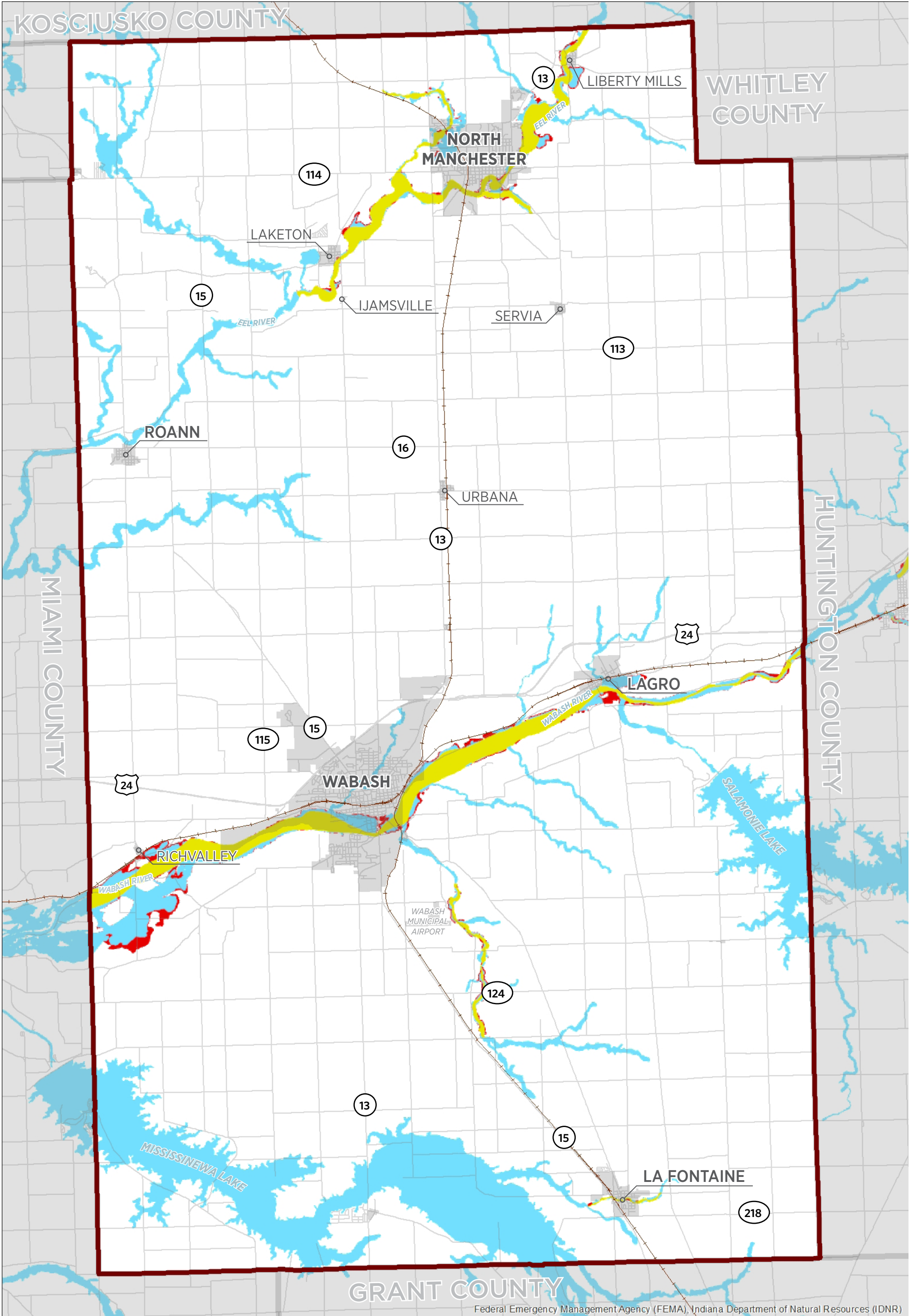




**IMAGINE ONE 85**  
**MAP 1.3 CONSOLIDATED ZONING**  
 COUNTYWIDE VIEW

- |                           |                        |                    |               |
|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Agricultural              | Community Multi-family | Limited Industrial | Wabash County |
| Conservation              | General Commercial     | Industrial         | Counties      |
| Estate Residential        | Community Commercial   | Zoning Boundary    | Railroad      |
| Traditional Residential   | Mixed-Use              | US Highway         | Water         |
| Neighborhood Multi-family | Office / Institutional | State Highway      |               |





Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)



**MAP 1.4 FLOODPLAIN AREAS**  
COUNTYWIDE VIEW

- Floodway
- 1% Annual Flood Chance
- 0.2% Annual Flood Chance
- US Highway
- State Highway
- Wabash County
- Counties
- Railroad

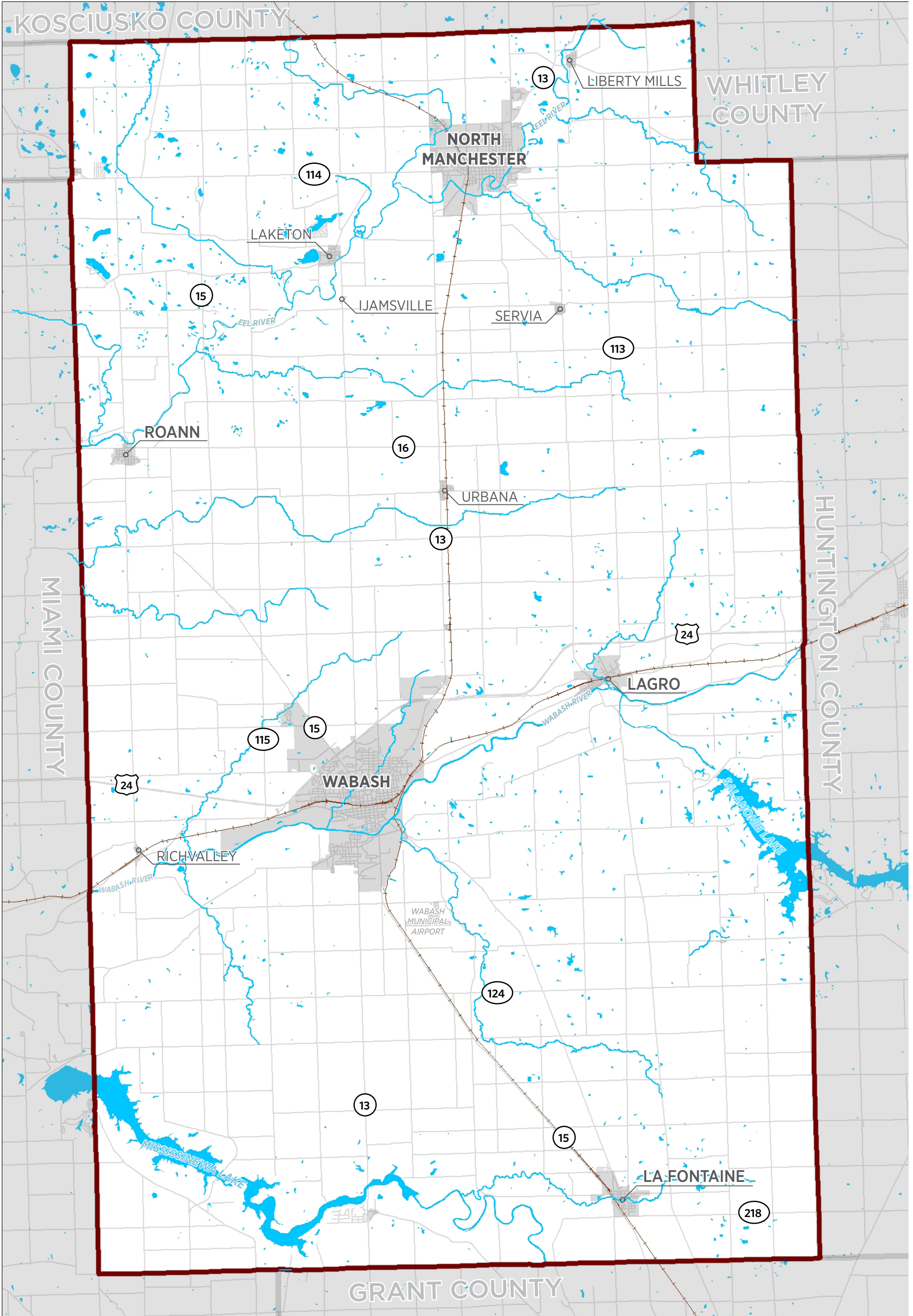
KOSCIUSKO COUNTY

WHITLEY COUNTY

HUNTINGTON COUNTY

MIAMI COUNTY

GRANT COUNTY



**IMAGINE ONE 85**

**MAP 1.5 BLUEWAY NETWORK**  
COUNTYWIDE VIEW

- US Highway
- State Highway
- Wabash County
- Counties

- Railroad
- Water



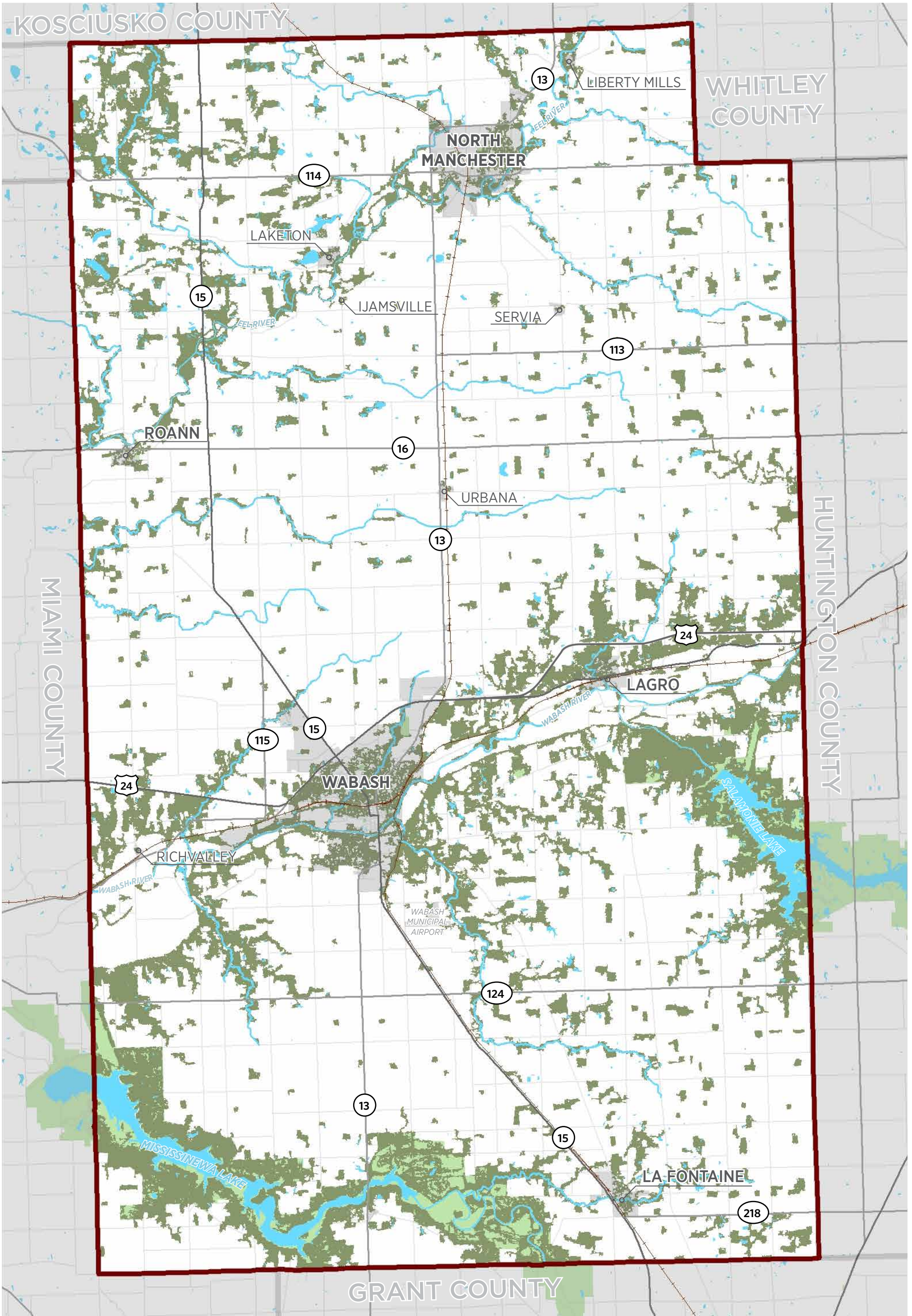
KOSCIUSKO COUNTY

WHITLEY COUNTY

HUNTINGTON COUNTY

MIAMI COUNTY

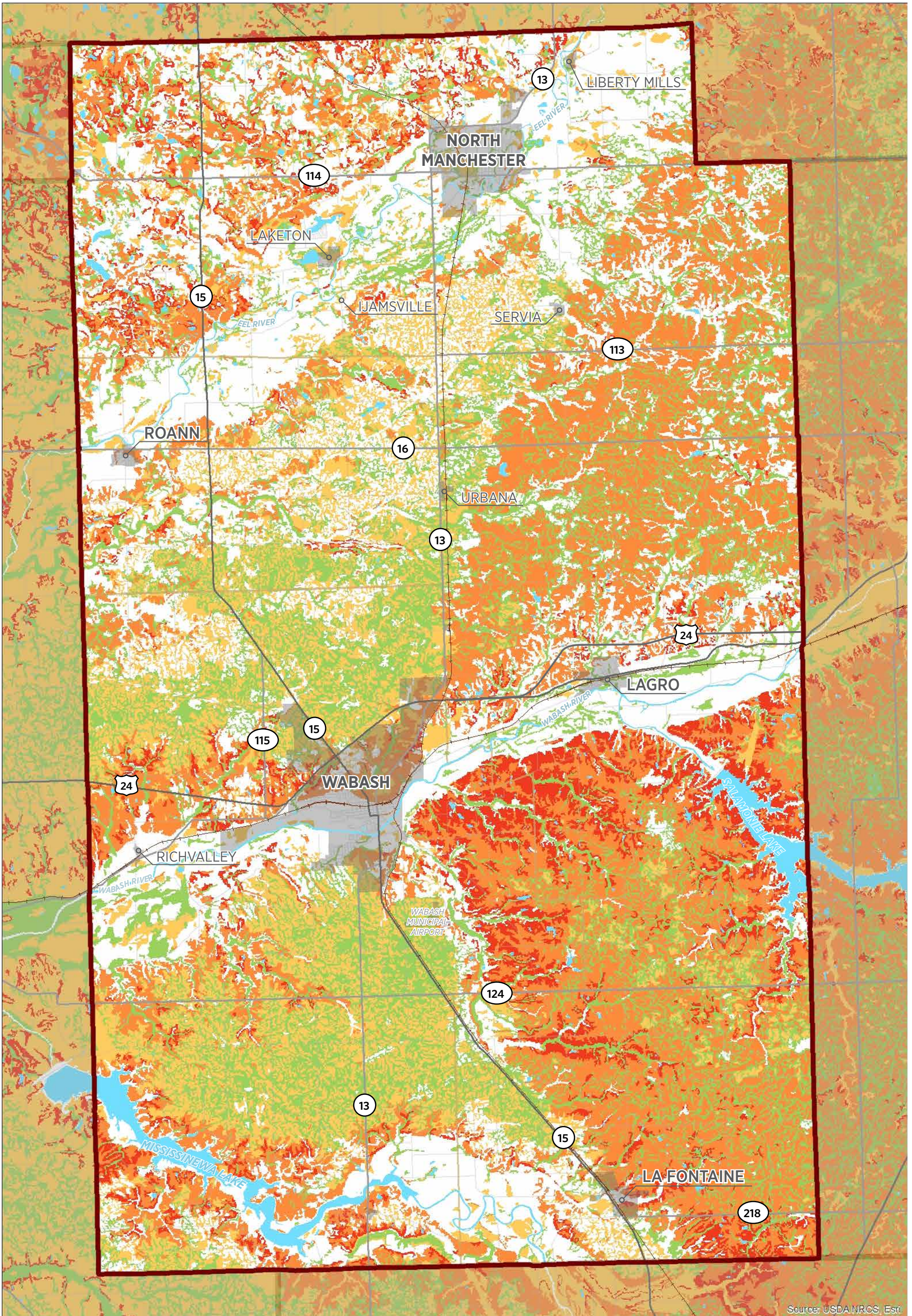
GRANT COUNTY



**IMAGINE ONE 85**  
**MAP 1.6 NATURAL RESOURCES**  
 COUNTYWIDE VIEW

- Tree Canopy Cover
- Community Parks
- Water
- US Highway
- State Highway
- Wabash County
- Counties
- Railroad





Source: USDA NRCS, Esri

**IMAGINE ONE 85**

**MAP 1.7 HISTORICAL EROSION  
COUNTYWIDE VIEW**

Note: Historical loss measured since 1982.

- |   |  |          |
|---|--|----------|
| None  | Class 4 (all historical topsoil lost to erosion) | Counties |
| Class 1 (up to 25% historical topsoil loss) | US Highway                                       | Railroad |
| Class 2 (between 25% and 75% topsoil loss)  | State Highway                                    | Water    |
| Class 3 (between 75% and 99% topsoil loss)  | Wabash County                                    |          |