

The following character type definitions describe the planned character for Whitley County. More information on the character types is available at www.FormWhitleyCounty.com.

Town Center Core

Typically, the historic, civic, and cultural center of an urbanized area. Buildings of a variety of sizes and forms are located close to one another and to the street; buildings are often adjoined. There is a tight mixture of residential, commercial, and institutional uses, while compatible industrial uses may also be integrated. Street pattern is grid-like with short blocks, frequent intersections, and usually alleys. Streets accommodate moderate traffic at slow speeds and should include on-street parking and feature amenities for pedestrians such as wide sidewalks, street trees and benches. Redevelopment of underutilized buildings is often necessary, and infill development on vacant sites is encouraged.

Commercial Center

Commercial and retail development on or along major roadway corridors serving a regional market. Main buildings are usually a "big-box" architecture, and development may be anchored by a large commercial use or employer. Surface parking lots are predominant, often with existing buildings located behind the parking. There should be provision for landscape features and amenities that improve the aesthetics of the development. Existing development patterns should evolve to raise design quality, improve connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods, and become more walkable with sidewalks, shorter blocks, buildings near streets and shared parking.

Community Enhancement

Traditional activity centers with a mix of smaller-scale commercial, residential, and institutional or public uses that form a cohesive area. These are usually the core of unincorporated towns, and in some cases may be the entire town. Commercial development should serve residents in surrounding neighborhoods and supply day-to-day goods and services, although specialty businesses and low-intensity manufacturing may also be compatible. Over time, areas can benefit from intensification more similar to the Town Center Core, provided that the overall scale and character of the area is respected.

Employment Center

Employment-oriented areas that are characterized by light-industrial and office uses typically located in a conventional "business park" setting. Commercial uses, both service and retail, and more intense industrial, including heavy industrial, can be appropriate in certain circumstances on a case-by-case basis. Large footprint structures should offer flexible space to accommodate market demand for various users over time. Buildings should be oriented to the street and be adapted to support different uses such as light manufacturing, high-tech industries, and research and development. New multi-family and other housing types can be appropriate as supporting uses when properly located. Plazas and pocket parks should serve as amenities for employees. When possible, restaurants and services should be integrated to create a multifunctional campus-like environment.

Institutional Campus

Academic, governmental, and medical (hospital) campuses, religious centers and retreats, including a range of building types and accessory uses that reflect their unique functions. The core of the campus area may cluster buildings in a walkable pattern with some limitations to vehicular access. Related facilities and parking areas are located at the edges. Many of these uses can be appropriate within other character types, so this character should apply when there is significant differentiation between these uses and the surrounding area.

Suburban Living

Comprised of residential uses, the majority of which are single-family homes, arranged along wide, curvilinear streets with minimal intersections based on hierarchical road classification to ease vehicular movement. Developments typically contain some shared open spaces and common amenities for use by property owners. Lots may range in size and residences may vary in scale and value, but they tend to be relatively homogenous within any particular development. Supporting non-residential uses, such as small retail and service commercial, may be appropriate at certain locations, but direct connectivity between residential areas and non-residential uses is not tightly integrated. New development should be served by public utilities, but some larger-lot neighborhoods may utilize on-site water and septic systems.

Traditional Neighborhood

Primarily residential areas that feature a mix of residence types on smaller lots, generally with a consistent appearance that is largely single-family. These may be historic residential areas of towns or new neo-traditional developments. Traditional neighborhoods should have a street network of small blocks with alleys, a defined center and edges, and integration with surrounding development, even those of differing land uses. These neighborhoods can include integrated nodes of small-scale retail, service, and office uses, or mixed commercial-residential uses. Complementary uses like parks, schools, and community facilities should be within walking distance. New development should be served by public utilities, and historic traditional neighborhoods not currently served with sanitary sewers should be priorities for service extensions.

Lake Village

Primarily residential areas consisting of small lots adjacent to and near the County's lakes. Many neighborhoods were historically developed as fishing or summer resorts with closely-spaced small cottages on narrow, often winding, access roads. Conversion of historic cottages to large floor area houses is occurring, resulting in large homes with small setbacks and high lot coverages. This type has similarities with both the Suburban Living and Traditional Neighborhood types but is distinct due to the unique conditions around the lakes. Environmentally sensitive land dictates the scale and pattern of development. Homes are focused on lakes and similar natural features. These areas should include appropriately located nodes of small-scale retail, office and/or institutional uses, feature a mix of housing types, and include complementary uses such as parks and amenities within walking distance.

Mixed Rural

Areas that are primarily agricultural at present but already include single-family residential and will face residential growth pressure from nearby urban areas. The character in this area is expected to continue to be recognizably rural throughout the timeframe of the Plan, but over time, farms may be further blended with non-farm residential development. This type can also include appropriately-located small-scale commercial that meets the immediate local needs. Public sewer and water are not necessary, but where they are available, development should be anticipated. New buildings are closer to the roadway, eventually resulting in a more intense development pattern than the Rural characters below but still less intense overall than the Suburban Living character.

Rural-Conventional

Areas that are primarily agricultural but also include non-farm single-family residential. The historic rural agricultural aesthetic is maintained over the planning timeframe, but this area can include larger scale farming or smaller scale supporting commercial operations, as well as scattered non-farm residences. Buildings are generally set far back from the roadway on large lots (over two acres). These areas are not typically served by municipal water and sewer utilities, and even where those may be available, new development should occur only where adjacent to existing development. New non-farm residences are generally discouraged.

Rural-Traditional

Areas that contain agricultural land, varying sizes of farms, with limited non-farm residences. Traditional agricultural aesthetic is required, and farming is the primary activity. Appropriately located larger-scale intense farming operations may be expected, and agricultural uses are to be continued well beyond the timeframe of this Plan. These areas are rarely served by municipal water and sewer utilities, and even where those may be available, new development should not occur. New residential development of any size is staunchly discouraged.

Open Space and Conservation

These areas include large tracts of parks, open spaces, and undeveloped natural areas of enough significance that they are set apart from the other character types. They may serve recreational or conservation purposes and are unlikely to be subjected to extensive development. These areas may be improved with amenities and other enhancements based on community desire.