



# Arts & Culture Plan

2025 – 2035

We Make things Here | The Counties

**TRANSFORMING  
COMMUNITIES • ART**  
through the power of arts and culture



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Images from Winterfest, Downtown Connersville

# INTRODUCTION

The regional plan is intended to be implemented on the county and regional levels elevating both while maintaining community voices and local authenticity. It assumes that each community, and the region overall, will periodically prioritize the most important of goals, strategies, and tactics for vision success – setting developmental benchmarks along the way.

This section “The Counties” includes eight profiles – *one per county* – aren’t intended to be county-level plans. Instead, they **provide a starting point of information for each county to use in adapting this plan to their specific needs**. They include:

- **Arts & Culture Identity**, an overview of the county’s distinctive character and assets.
- **From Community Visioning**, an excerpt from that county’s community vision session recap as a start in adapting the plan to local needs.
- **Asset Highlights**, a summary view of inventoried cultural assets.
- **County Composition** includes key population and economic numbers.
- **Key Influences**, a brief presentation of catalytic funding, and momentum and challenges influencing efforts.

There are too many stories to tell, works to highlight in each county to cover them all in such a small space. We encourage each to take this starting point and make it their own – telling the whole story in all is splendor.

Every community across the region comes to this plan from a different place – with different assets, resource levels, capacity, expertise, and authentic identity. To support that variety, this plan includes a toolkit of ideas and inspiration. Not every idea will fit every community, but all can inform new approaches.



And there is more on the [Project Website](#) that will become available directly from [Forge ECI](#), including:

- Community Visioning Presentation & Recap
- Interactive Asset Maps along with Asset Inventory and Project Participation Spreadsheets
- The Toolkit and More

**Data Tables in the Appendix** (pages 130-138) break out counties from the region for key indicators.

## More in Appendix

- A. Data Tables  
*Livability Index • Technology & Broadband • Arts Vibrancy • The Asset Inventory • Recent Arts & Culture Funding • Forge ECI READI Projects*
- B. Methodology – including engagement details

## Never Doubt... Committed Volunteers

“Just wanted to share a little win with you. Yesterday we opened the People’s Marketplace, a holiday market for local artisans.

*We took the empty side of the building beside Obi’s and in a little under 3 weeks transformed it into an upscale/rustic shop.*

This was a true community project, built by volunteers. The story is pretty interesting, and it speaks to what we can do with a little support and a lot of volunteer enthusiasm.

We have a section dedicated Young Entrepreneurs and are looking forward to creating new opportunities for them, as well as all of our artists.

Cheri Brown  
Community Development Director  
Hartford City, Indiana

<https://www.facebook.com/ThePeoplesMarketplace/>  
<https://the-peoples-marketplace.com>

# BLACKFORD COUNTY

## Arts & Culture Profile

### Forging a Creative Path for East Central Indiana

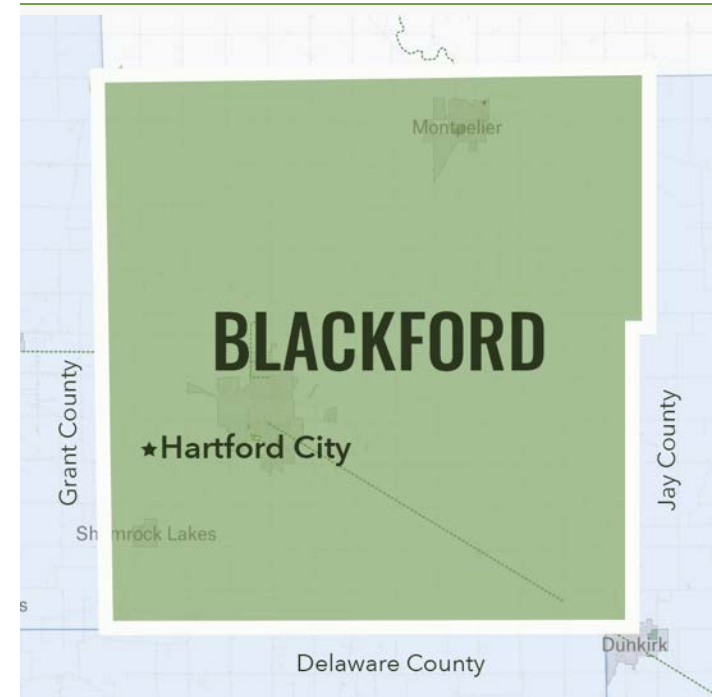
Vision, asset, and opportunity highlights to guide county efforts – shaped by local voices and research.  
2025 – 2035

### Arts & Culture Identity

Blackford, a small rural county of just over 12,000, is defined by the strength of its people. **“United community, we do things together”** emerged as a guidepost throughout the engagement process, reflecting residents’ pride and willingness to work collectively to shape their future.

The county’s cultural identity is rooted in its **Miami Indian heritage, agricultural beginnings, and industrial boom**. Chief Larry P. Godfroy, a descendant of Miami leader Chief Francois Godfroy, donated the 25-foot-tall Miami Indian sculpture in Montpelier in 1984 to honor the tribe’s ancestral ties to the area. Along with the Godfroy Reserve, Civil War Days festival, and historic structures, the sculpture serves as a lasting reminder of the county’s layered history, while today Hartford City and Montpelier anchor a community known for its hospitality and small-town character.

Blackford County has strong foundational assets including a stable, well-established arts organization (Arts Place), signature festivals, county history center, unique historic assets, and active public **spaces like the Weiler Plaza which bring communities and all ages together**. Each community is poised for growth and already making great progress in strengthening quality of place through arts and culture through public art, activating outdoor spaces, beautification projects, façade improvement, and a city arts council.



Praying Mantis, unknown artist, Hartford City



By the numbers, Blackford County has a solid foundation of arts and cultural assets for its population size including an impressive collection of public art, events and traditions, and creative practitioners many of which are connected to neighboring Taylor University.

## Goals & Strategies from Blackford County's Plan

### GOAL 1 CREATIVE PLACEMAKING DOWNTOWN.

Blackford County's downtowns are thriving – revitalized through arts initiatives, beautification, and programming.

- Beautify all the "small" stuff for civic pride and engagement.
- Activate with public art, partnerships, events, and opportunities to create.
- Connect activities, places, and people.

### GOAL 2 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN & THROUGH THE ARTS

Blackford County's youth are thriving through the arts and civic participation.

- Increase opportunities for youth arts engagement.
- Increase youth access to arts.
- Increase youth stake in the arts.

### GOAL 3 CREATIVE ECONOMY & ENTREPRENEURS

All benefit from a thriving creative economy with increasing numbers of successful creative entrepreneurs and groups.

- Build support systems and training opportunities.
- Create spaces for creatives.

### GOAL 4 CULTURAL IDENTITY & HERITAGE

Blackford County's identity has been strengthened through the arts, history, and community engagement.

- Reimagine and strengthen signature festival traditions.
- Lean into Blackford County's history and heritage.

### GOAL 5 SUSTAINED COMMITMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

Arts initiatives and programming are sustained through collaboration, leadership, and long-term funding.

- Increase support for arts and culture
- Solidify long-term investment pathways for arts and culture.
- Include arts elements and arts stakeholders when implementing related existing plan strategies.

## Blackford County Arts & Culture Master Plan

Blackford County was part of another regional arts and cultural planning project in 2024-2025. Funded by the National Endowment for the Arts through their [Our Town](#) grant and fiscally managed by [Arts Place, Inc.](#), that work included Blackford and Jay Counties in Indiana and Auglaize County in Ohio and sought to:

***"Provide opportunities for the arts to be integrated into the fabric of community life – Strengthening Communities."***

The resulting plan has been endorsed by the county and is being implemented under the collaborative leadership of Arts Place and Purdue Extension.

Facilitated by the same consultant team, using a similar planning process the work fed seamlessly into the larger, East Central Indiana regional Arts & Cultural Strategy.



Top: Airplane, Baldwin Park, Montpelier  
Bottom left: Fallen Soldier, Veterans Garden, Hartford City  
Bottom right: Guitar, Weiler Plaza, Hartford City

## What You Have

### Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

Blackford County has strong arts and culture assets from which to draw upon.

#	Overview by Category	Select Arts & Culture Assets
<b>35 Arts</b>		
13	Artists & Creative Business	
--	Informal Group	
6	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
11	Public Art	
5	Organizations	
<b>51 Culture</b>		
9	History & Heritage	
15	Events & Traditions	
12	Parks & Trails	
15	Funders & Friends	
<b>12 Misc.</b>		
4	Civic Assets	
8	Other Opportunities	
	In addition to the highlights presented here. The <b>Full Inventory</b> with individual asset details is available as well	
	<a href="#">Inventory sheets for each county</a>	
	<a href="#">Interactive regional map</a>	
		<b>Artists &amp; Creative Businesses</b>
		Don Rogers Photography, ADM Custom Creations, Hunt Guitars, Blue Felt Jazz Band, Blackford County Radio Club, painters, musicians, teachers, fiber artists, designers
		<b>Arts Organizations &amp; Groups</b>
		Arts Place, Hartford City Arts Council
		<b>Public Libraries</b> in Montpelier Harrison Township and Hartford City
		<b>Historical Groups</b> dedicated to Blackford County and Montpelier
		<b>Places</b>
		Dunkirk Oddfellows Cemetery, Old Blackford County Jail, Hartford City Courthouse, Square, and Historic District
		<b>Festivals</b>
		Civil War Days, Rendezvous on the Reserve, Heritage Days
		<b>Nature &amp; Trails</b>
		Blackford Greenway, Godfroy Reserve, Wilderness Park
		<b>Other Places &amp; Spaces</b>
		Baldwin Park (Airplane Park) Weiler Plaza, Montpelier Motor Speedway



## County Composition

Overview	2020 #	Co. Rank
Population	12,112	#85
Square Miles	165	
<b>Population / Sq Mi</b>	<b>72</b>	
% of Co.		
City <b>Hartford City</b> (seat)	<b>6,086</b>	50%
<b>Cities &amp; Towns &lt; 3,500</b> (line for SEA1 purposes)		
City Montpelier	1,540	13%
Town Shamrock Lakes	222	2%
City Dunkirk (partial, Jay Co.)	130	1%
<b>Everywhere Else</b>	<b>4,134</b>	34%

Source: Stats Indiana (2020 = U.S. Census)  
(fractions rounded to full digit)

Composition	2024 %	Co. Rank
Preschool 0-4	5%	#84
School Age 5-17	17%	#84
College Age 18-24	7%	#85
Young Adult 24-44	23%	#85
Older Adult 45-64	25%	#86
Seniors 65+	23%	#84
<b>Median Age</b>	<b>43</b>	

Dynamics	2023	Co. Rank
Population Growth (2020-2024)	<b>- 2 %</b>	<b>#91</b>
Median <i>Household</i> Income	\$51,799	<b>#91</b>
Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income	\$46,989	<b>#85</b>
Poverty Rate	16%	<b>#9</b>

### Notable

- Population decline, but predicted to stabilize
- Aging population with nearly half age 45+
- One of the lowest median incomes in the state
- 9<sup>th</sup> highest poverty rate in the state



People's Marketplace, Hartford City

## Key Influences

Resources to leverage, dynamics poised the county for growth, and areas to address include:

Catalytic Investments	
<b>\$35,000,000</b>	READI 2.0 Regional Award to Forge ECI <i>Blackford, Delaware, Fayette, Grant, Henry, Jay, Randolph, &amp; Wayne</i>
<b>\$30,000,000</b>	Lilly Endowment Inc. College & Community Collaboration <i>Grant to Taylor University for its Main Street Mile initiative (Grant but recognize carry over effect)</i>
<b>\$10,000,000</b>	Projected annual Wind and Solar project revenue
<b>\$ 3,100,000</b>	Lilly Endowment Inc. GIFT VIII <i>Grant to expand the Blackford Greenway</i>
<b>\$ 20,000</b>	Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs <i>Planning grant for improved walkability in Montpelier</i>

READI Projects with Connection to Arts & Culture Plan Goals			
	1.0		2.0
<b>\$ 700,000</b>	Broadband Improvements	--	None

See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 137-138.

The following came from community input at the in-person visioning session.

Momentum Pushes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated to downtown revitalization</li> <li>• Has a groundswell of successful efforts to build upon (public art, placemaking, beautification projects, façade improvement, city arts council), and several in the works that align well with goals and strategies within this plan</li> </ul>
Challenging Pulls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inter-community competition</li> <li>• Lack of leadership – there aren't enough to address community needs</li> <li>• Loss of identity (of Montpelier school, of hospital, of golf course)</li> <li>• Burn out (lack of volunteers)</li> <li>• Needs new volunteers and leaders</li> </ul>



Arts Place Arts in the Parks Program, Montpelier



Weiler Plaza, Hartford City





Civil War Days Reenactment, Hartford City



# DELAWARE COUNTY

## Arts & Culture Profile

### Forging a Creative Path for East Central Indiana

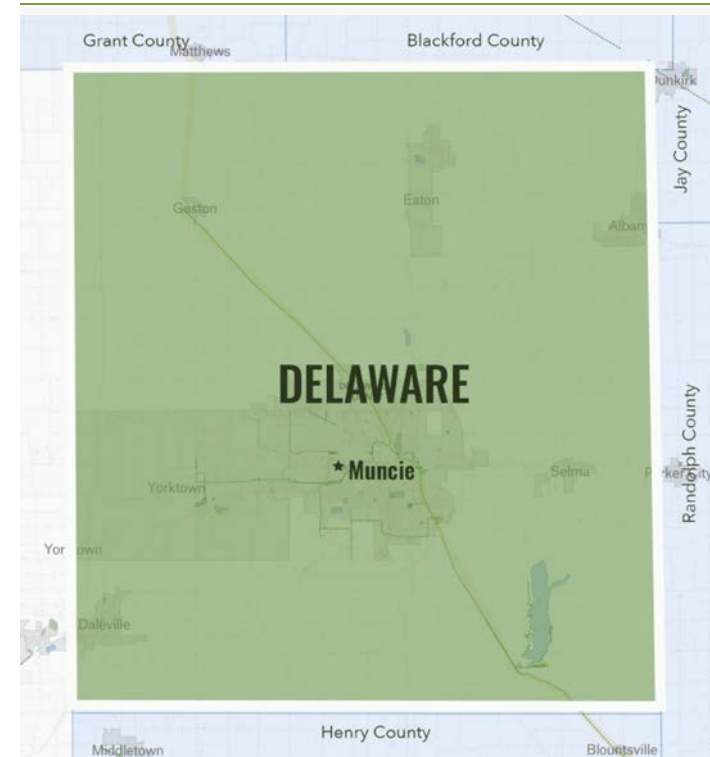
Vision, asset, and opportunity highlights to guide county efforts – shaped by local voices and research.  
2025 – 2035

### Arts & Culture Identity

There is perhaps no greater legacy impact from Indiana's late 19<sup>th</sup> century Gas Boom than in Delaware County. The natural **gas discovery in Eaton sparked a flurry of businesses** to form and the relocation of Ball Brother's Ball Corporation glass manufacturing company to Muncie to take advantage of the abundant, inexpensive fuel. The Ball prosperity and philanthropy is ever-present today through both its continued financial support and its visible legacy marked by beneficiary institutions hallmark to county identity and culture, most notably, Ball State University. BSU serves as a driver of economy, population, education, and arts and culture through its schools (fine arts, architecture, etc.), museum, planetarium, glass center, performance venues, programming, and more.

Yet, BSU and the multiple Ball family foundations are just a part of the greater Delaware County story which has been **home to nationally and internationally significant artists** including Jim Davis (Garfield), J. Ottis Adams (Hoosier Group), Angel Chang (fashion designer), and David Letterman. Railroads sparked community growth county-wide, and each brings its own, yet connected identity. Visitors and residents alike can explore the county's natural beauty via the Cardinal Greenway which spans diagonally through the county and connects four other counties in the region. Other natural features include the White River, Prairie Creek Reservoir, and more.

Delaware County can **boast a healthy arts and culture presence strongly reflecting its population and university presence**. While largely centralized in the Muncie area, assets span the county offering unique opportunities to engage in county history and cultural life from the Albany Glass Museum to the National Model Aviation Museum. Residents can engage in all artforms across all



Mad Jax Maker Force, Muncie



levels fueled by a treasure trove of arts organizations (18 in total) and arts providing organizations (most notably, Ball State University) of varying levels from emerging-to-professional. Muncie was even the fictional setting for “*Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.”

Growth and investment continue to centralize the role of arts and culture as both a key attractor and emerging identity for Muncie and potentially the county. By the numbers, Delaware County is replete with arts and cultural assets the vast majority of which occupy the Muncie area. Within History and Heritage, there are 43 sites on the National Register of Historic Places including 11 historic districts (all of which are in Muncie), 34 buildings, and one cemetery. A staggering 171 public art pieces reflects a commitment to celebrating place and identity.

## What You Want for the Future c. 2035

### Content from Community Visioning Recap

The regional plan is intended to be implemented on the county and regional levels elevating both while maintaining community voices and local authenticity. What follows emerged from the local vision session. It is here as a start in adapting the plan to Delaware County’s needs.

#### 1. Connected & Vibrant Communities

The region features improved transportation infrastructure like rail and trail systems, thriving downtowns, arts and culture opportunities, and seamless cultural corridors that physically and socially connect people, cities, towns, and the region overall.

#### 2. A Thriving Creative Sector

Film studios, audio/visual production, makers, local fabrication, and food innovation have become exports, supported by private and government investment, expanded markets, and strong local prioritization.

#### 3. Arts & Culture as a Tool for Healing and Identity

The community has surpassed the trauma of manufacturing decline using arts, culture, and placemaking, to build a keen sense of place, pride, and resilience.

#### 4. Shared Leadership, Inclusive of All Voices

Decision-making includes voices previously left out, embracing the county’s identity as “big city” and “small town,” and recognizing diversity as its strength.

#### 5. Empowered Youth & Lifelong Arts Education

Arts education is widely available for young people, with creative opportunities that embed youth in the cultural and economic fabric of the region.



East Central Indiana Chamber Orchestra, Muncie



National Model Aviation Museum, Muncie



Muncie Civic Theatre

## What You Have

### Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

Delaware County has strong arts and culture assets from which to draw upon.

#	Overview by Category	Select Arts & Culture Assets
<b>312</b>	<b>Arts</b>	
78	Artists & Creative Business	<b>Artists &amp; Creative Businesses</b>
13	Informal Group	MadJax Maker Force, Hoosier Made, Harmony Movement Studio, Happy Accidents Art Studio, John Peterson Pottery, Carrie Wright Silks, Gordy's Fine Art & framing, painters, musicians, teachers, fiber artists, designers
32	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
171	Public Art	<b>Arts Councils</b>
18	Organizations	Muncie Arts & Culture Council (MuncieArts) and Yorktown Council for the Arts
<b>123</b>	<b>Culture</b>	
51	History & Heritage	<b>Organizations &amp; Groups</b>
31	Events & Traditions	Minnetrista Museum & Gardens, Orchestra Indiana, Cornerstone Center for the Arts, Youth Symphony Orchestra, Muncie Civic Theatre, Muncie Children's Museum, Masterworks Chorale, Shamaniacs Drum Troupe
18	Parks & Trails	
23	Funders, Friends & Support Organizations	<b>University Assets</b> such as the David Owsley Museum, Marilyn Glick Center for Glass, Brown Family Amphitheater, etc.
<b>42</b>	<b>Misc.</b>	
37	Civic Assets	<b>Public Libraries</b> in Muncie, Yorktown, Eaton, and an all-volunteer community library in Daleville
5	Other Opportunities	<b>Historical Groups</b> dedicated to Delaware County, Yorktown Mt. Pleasant Township as well as Muncie Railroad Preservation
		<b>Places</b>
		Albany Glass Museum, Midwest Computer Museum, National Model Aviation Museum, Shaffer Chapel AME Church, and 34 assets on the National Register of Historic Places
		<b>Festivals</b>
		Fire Up DWNTWN, Art in Bloom, Muncie Three Trails Music Series, Black Music Month, Daleville Fall Frenzy, Bluebird Days
		<b>Nature &amp; Trails</b>
		Cardinal Greenway, White River Greenway, Garfield Trail, Prairie Creek Reservoir, Mountain Bike Trails
		<b>Other Places &amp; Spaces</b>
		White River, Charles W. Brown Planetarium, Red-Tail Land Conservancy Nature Preserve

In addition to the highlights presented here. The **Full Inventory** with individual asset details is available as well

[Inventory sheets for each county](#)

[Interactive regional map](#)



County Composition

Overview	2020 #	Co. Rank
Population	111,903	#16
Square Miles	392	
Population / Sq Mi	288	
% of Co.		
City <b>Muncie</b> (seat)	<b>65,194</b>	58%
Town Yorktown	11,548	11%
Cities & Towns < 3,500 (line for SEA1 purposes)		
Town Albany	2,099	2%
Town Daleville	1,651	2%
Town Eaton	1,595	1%
Town Gaston	796	1%
Town Selma	747	1%
Everywhere Else	28,267	43%

Composition		2024 %	Co. Rank
Preschool	0-4	5%	#16
School Age	5-17	13%	#18
College Age	18-24	19%	#8
Young Adult	24-44	23%	#17
Older Adult	45-64	23%	#16
Seniors	65+	18%	#16
Median Age		36	

Dynamics	2023	Co. Rank
Population Growth (2020–2024)	< 1 %	
Median <i>Household</i> Income	\$ 55,704	#86
Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income	\$47,629	#82
Poverty Rate	19	#3

Notable

- While the population is aging, the median is lower than the state likely reflecting Ball State University student population
- 3<sup>rd</sup> highest poverty rate in the state
- 75% of county population lives outside incorporated cities/towns

Source: Stats Indiana (2020 = U.S. Census)  
(fractions rounded to full digit)



Masterworks Chorale, Muncie

## Key Influences

Resources to leverage, dynamics poised the county for growth, and areas to address include:

Catalytic Investments	
\$35,000,000	READI 2.0 Regional Award to Forge ECI <i>Blackford, Delaware, Fayette, Grant, Henry, Jay, Randolph, and Wayne</i>
\$35,000,000	Lilly Endowment Inc. College & Community Collaboration <i>Grant to Ball State University</i>
\$ 2,250,000	Lilly Endowment Inc. GIFT VIII grant to expand the Blackford Greenway
\$ 75,000	Ball Brothers Foundation Award to support the Muncie Creative Space Action Plan

READI Projects with Connection to Arts & Culture Plan Goals			
1.0		2.0	
\$ 250,000	Yorktown Downtown Revitalization	\$ 2,000,000	Revitalizing the Village
\$ 250,000	Salem Township Initiative		

See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 137-138.

The following came from community input at the in-person visioning session.

Momentum Pushes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Muncie Creative Corridor project</li> <li>Great philanthropic leadership through local foundations and a generous community</li> <li>Forward thinking support from the Indiana Arts Commission</li> <li>Unique prosperity legacy</li> <li>Opportunity to value and increase opportunities for K-12 arts education</li> <li>Deeply felt sense of place and pride</li> </ul>
Challenging Pulls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perception: Muncie doesn't believe it's as good as it is.</li> <li>Challenge centralizing the role of arts and culture to the city identity</li> <li>Public transportation</li> </ul>



Excess by Project One Studio, Muncie



Civic Green Amphitheatre, Yorktown



Under the Same Sun by Carolyn Frost, Muncie





Muncie Three Trails Music Series, Canan Commons

# FAYETTE COUNTY

## Arts & Culture Profile

### Forging a Creative Path for East Central Indiana

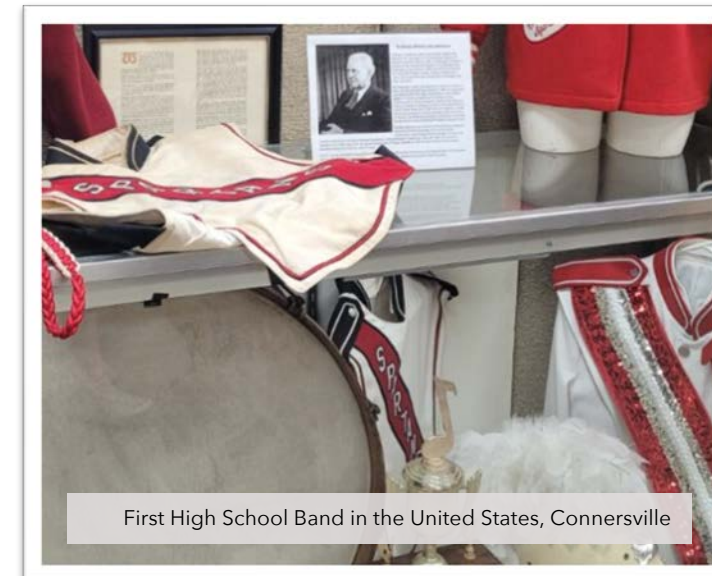
Vision, asset, and opportunity highlights to guide county efforts – shaped by local voices and research.  
2025 – 2035

### Arts & Culture Identity

Fayette County is a predominantly rural county located in the Whitewater Valley, with its county seat of Connersville home to nearly 60% of the county's population of just over 13,000. In the early 1800s, Fayette served as a critical gateway for settlers moving into the Northwest Territory. The construction of the Whitewater Canal, followed by the arrival of the railroad only a few decades later, positioned the county as a hub of transportation and growth. By 1909, **automotive manufacturing further transformed Connersville into a bustling center of industry and opportunity.**

Though the Whitewater Canal exists now only through historical markers, the railroad remains a visible and active feature in Connersville, including a working Amtrak station and restored historic cars that recall the city's industrial past. **County history is ever visibly present through sites, structures, and Connersville's downtown historic district.** The county is proud of its history and traditions, and while the population declined after its boom periods, it's dedicated to strengthening its quality of place, quality of life emphasizing health and wellness investing in parks, trails, and downtown.

**Despite Fayette County's size and geographic location, it has an impressive foundation of assets.** Anchor arts organizations – Imagine Performing Arts and the Whitewater Valley Arts Association provide opportunities for both visual and performing arts, while festivals like the Fayette County Free Fair and 4th Street Art Fair celebrate identity community and attract visitors. History is activated through Historic Connersville and the Whitewater Valley Railroad



First High School Band in the United States, Connersville



Association, while signature sites such as the Fayette County Historical Museum, Historic Elmherst Landmark & Place, and the Canal House highlight the area's unique cultural heritage. Complementing a growing arts and culture scene are over 20 civic assets and opportunities including Roberts Park, trails, Mary Gray bird sanctuary, preserve, amphitheaters, newly installed inclusive playground, and more making for rich opportunities to connect and engage. Alongside, a robust creative industry features artists from traditional to contemporary, and from locally to nationally known. All this and more make for an impressive, growing cultural county.

## What You Want for the Future c. 2035

### Content from Community Visioning Recap

The regional plan is intended to be implemented on the county and regional levels elevating both while maintaining community voices and local authenticity. What follows emerged from the local vision session. It is here as a start in adapting the plan to Fayette County's needs.

#### 1. Downtown Revitalization through Arts & Culture

Downtown becomes a cultural destination with streets transformed into public gathering spaces, revitalized districts, and activity after 5 p.m., making it a place where people want to stop, stay, and engage.

#### 2. Connectivity through Corridors & Trails

Cultural corridors, health and wellness trails, and creative multi-county trail concepts like QR-code history walks and themed trail experiences link communities physically and culturally.

#### 3. Creative Sector & Regional Identity

Inspired by models like Paducah and Strasburg, the county evolves into a hub for visual and performing arts, film, and local fabrication, with expanded markets and incentives supporting creators and small businesses.

#### 4. Tourism, Promotion, & Storytelling

Strategic marketing, compelling storytelling, and curated tourism packages (e.g., Blue Ridge-style rail tourism) highlight local assets, build regional pride, and attract visitors from beyond the county.

#### 5. Inclusive Engagement & Cross-Sector Collaboration

A culture of collaboration drives progress, with youth, residents, organizations, and sectors working together through structured partnerships and shared leadership to advance arts, culture, and community development efforts.



Mystery Mural by Whiteriver Valley Arts Association Artists



Boy Scout Camp Out at Historic Elmherst



Welcome to Glenwood by Lexi Keen

## What You Have

### Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

Fayette County has strong arts and culture assets from which to draw upon.

#	Overview by Category	Select Arts & Culture Assets
<b>42 Arts</b>		
20	Artists & Creative Business	
5	Informal Group	
4	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
11	Public Art + 64 in Quilt Trail	
2	Organizations	
<b>45 Culture</b>		
12	History & Heritage	
12	Events & Traditions	
12	Parks & Trails	
9	Funders, Friends & Support Organizations	
<b>12 Misc.</b>		
8	Civic Assets	
4	Other Opportunities	
<p>In addition to the highlights presented here. The <b>Full Inventory</b> with individual asset details is available as well</p> <p><a href="#">Inventory sheets for each county</a></p> <p><a href="#">Interactive regional map</a></p>		<p><b>Artists &amp; Creative Businesses</b> Act 3 Pottery and Lynette Eklund along with wood carvers, painters, musicians, actors, teachers, fiber artists, designers</p> <p><b>Organizations &amp; Groups</b> Imagine Performing Arts, Whitewater Valley Arts Association, Conner Quilters Guild</p> <p><b>Public Library</b> in Fayette County</p> <p><b>Historical Groups</b> dedicated to Historic Connersville, Whitewater Valley Railroad Association</p> <p><b>Places</b> Fayette County Historical Museum, Canal House, Historic Elmhurst Landmark &amp; Place, First Ward Hose House</p> <p><b>Festivals</b> Fayette County Free Fair, Renaissance Fair, Celebration in the Ville, 4th Street Art Fair</p> <p><b>Nature &amp; Trails</b> Roberts Park, Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary, Shrader-Weaver Nature Preserve, Heritage Barn Quilt Trail</p> <p><b>Other Places &amp; Spaces</b> Market Street Plaza, Mettel Field Airport, Kunkel's Drive-in, Connersville Station</p>

“

Miah Michaelson, executive director of the Indiana Arts Commission, told an assemblage of local arts organizations that the city is **“hitting above your weight,”** using an expression from the sport of boxing to tell us that Connersville is doing more than many places of the same size.

Blue Zones is about building on the good,  
Connersville audience learns,  
Connersville News-Examiner, October 15, 2025



## County Composition

Overview	2020 #	Co. Rank
Population	23,398	#65
Square Miles	215	
<b>Population / Sq Mi</b>	<b>109</b>	
<b>% of Co.</b>		
City <b>Connersville (seat)</b>	<b>13,324</b>	57%
<b>Cities &amp; Towns &lt; 3,500 (line for SEA1 purposes)</b>		
Town <b>Glenwood (partial, Rush Co.)</b>	<b>72</b>	<1%
<b>Everywhere Else</b>	<b>10,146</b>	43%

Source: Stats Indiana (2020 = U.S. Census)  
(fractions rounded to full digit)

Composition	2024 %	Co. Rank
Preschool 0-4	6	#66
School Age 5-17	16	#67
College Age 18-24	8	#63
Young Adult 24-44	23	#67
Older Adult 45-64	26	#66
Seniors 65+	21	#66
<b>Median Age</b>	<b>43</b>	

Dynamics	2023	Co. Rank
Population Growth (2020-2024)	<b>-0.3 %</b>	
Median <i>Household</i> Income	\$60,483	#75
Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income	\$50,175	#73
Poverty Rate	20%	<b>#10</b>

### Notable

- Slightly declining population
- Aging population with nearly half (47%) age 45+
- 10<sup>th</sup> highest poverty rate in the state
- 57% of the population lives outside Connersville and Glenwood



October Art Stroll, Downtown Connersville

# Key Influences

Resources to leverage, dynamics poised the county for growth, and areas to address include:

Catalytic Investments	
\$35,000,000	READI 2.0 Regional Award to Forge ECI <i>Blackford, Delaware, Fayette, Grant, Henry, Jay, Randolph, &amp; Wayne</i>
\$ 5,000,000	Lilly Endowment Inc. GIFT VIII <i>Grant to enhance Roberts Park and create accessible trail loop</i>
\$ 500,000	OCRA Community Development Block Grant <i>Fayette County: Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Grant</i>

READI Projects with Connection to Arts & Culture Plan Goals			
1.0		2.0	
\$ 200,000	Market Street Plaza	\$ 500,000	Imagine Performing Arts Center

See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 137-138.

The following came from community input at the in-person visioning session.

## Momentum Pushes

- Connersville part of OCRA HELP Cohort 3
- Improved broadband
- Low cost of living
- Key anchors are active and have bones of an arts district
- Placemaking partnership with the Center for Rural Engagement at Alpine Park
- Civil War Reenactment reinstatement would benefit Elmhurst, youth, and tourism

## Challenging Pulls

- Communication, collaboration (“weak”), inclusion, and structure to move efforts forward
- Accessible parking downtown
- Job loss – however this provides opportunity for tourism around arts and culture
- Getting into schools



Whiteriver Valley Arts Association



Imagine Performing Arts



Lynette Ecklund, Creature Effects & Fabricator Artist, Author





Whitewater Valley Railroad

# GRANT COUNTY

## Arts & Culture Profile

### Forging a Creative Path for East Central Indiana

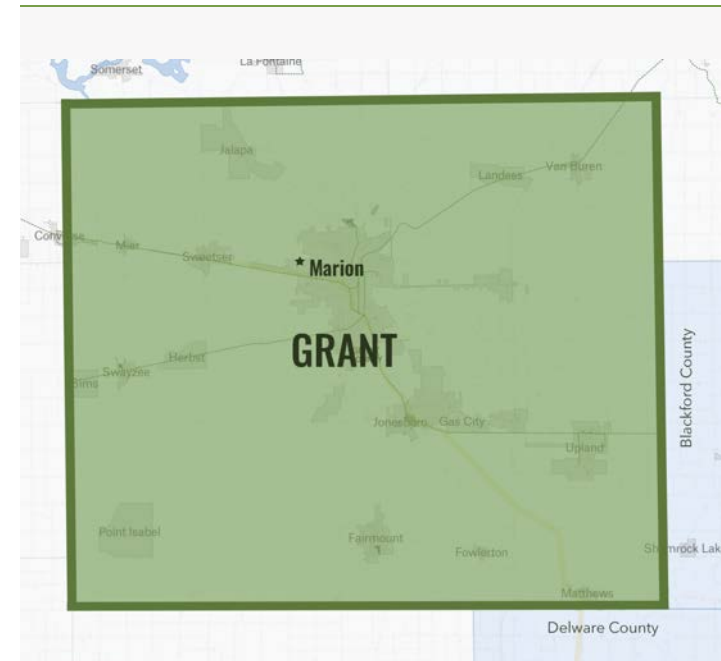
Vision, asset, and opportunity highlights to guide county efforts – shaped by local voices and research.  
2025 – 2035

### Arts & Culture Identity

With over 66,000 residents, slightly eclipsing Wayne, Grant County is the second most populated county in east central Indiana. Its cultural identity is ***rooted in Native American heritage, industrial innovation, pivotal historic events, and nationally recognized icons***. The Mississinewa River, which winds through many of the county's communities, was the site of the 1812 Battle of the Mississinewa—an event still remembered today through one of the nation's largest War of 1812 reenactments. Later, the Indiana Gas Boom transformed the landscape, fueling Marion's rapid growth and giving rise to towns like Gas City and Matthews, a legacy still visible in the county's architecture, historic districts, and public art.

The county also carries ***stories of national significance*** from the African American Weaver settlement to the tragic 1930 lynching in Marion, and later the global fame of James Dean and Jim Davis's Garfield. Today, traditions like the Popcorn Festival honoring Van Buren as the "popcorn capital of the world" and James Dean Festival celebrate community pride, while preservation efforts ensure Grant County's layered history continues to shape its distinct cultural identity and future.

Grant County offers an ***impressive and rich tapestry of arts and culture assets county-wide*** collectively reflecting and celebrating its unique heritage and traditions while embracing and blending the present. Alongside 7 arts organizations, two universities – Taylor (Upland) and Indiana Wesleyan (Marion) – and their professional creative sector faculty bring a collective force of visual and performing arts offerings for students and residents alike. Organizations, events, historic structures, and trails reflect and celebrate local heritage, histories, and cultural icons.



Garfield Trail Stop (creator, Jim Davis)



There are 5 historic districts, 12 structures on the National Register of Historic Places, and 10 history organizations and museums providing opportunity to engage, research, and connect. Alongside, there's a barn quilt trail and 20 documented pieces of public art mostly in Marion revealing an opportunity for growth across the county. Taken as a whole, Grant County has a robust inventory of arts and culture assets from which to draw upon.

## What You Want for the Future c. 2035

### *Content from Community Visioning Recap*

The regional plan is intended to be implemented on the county and regional levels elevating both while maintaining community voices and local authenticity. What follows emerged from the local vision session. It is here as a start in adapting the plan to Grant County's needs.

#### 1. **Pride, Identity, & Community Narrative**

A renewed sense of pride is evident as residents feel proud to call the area home, external perceptions improve, and a unified narrative rooted in value, history, and creativity begins to take hold.

#### 2. **Connected Arts, Culture, & Education Ecosystem**

A cultural district, collaborative arts infrastructure, strong arts education, and career pathways create a vibrant ecosystem that connects artists, schools, history organizations, and regional partners.

#### 3. **Quality of Life & Livability**

Walkable, safe, and accessible communities, abundant green space, public art, and family-friendly activities contribute to a high "joy index" and make the area attractive for both residents and remote workers.

#### 4. **Innovation & Economic Development through Creativity**

The region is known as a hub for tech innovation and creative enterprise, blending historic preservation with modern arts, fostering entrepreneurship, and offering vocational training tied to local opportunity.

#### 5. **Regional Collaboration & Coordinated Communication**

A strong regional framework supports planning, resource-sharing, and artist connection through structures like regional arts councils, cooperatives, and community councils, while centralized communication tools keep residents informed and aligned across county lines.



Boy & Bird by Andrew Luttrull, Marion



Marion Community School of the Arts



Marion Design Co. Fashion Show at the Kennedy Art Center

## What You Have

### Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

Grant County has strong arts and culture assets from which to draw upon.

#	Overview by Category	Select Arts & Culture Assets
<b>129 Arts</b>		
47	Artists & Creative Business	<b>Leaders &amp; Anchors</b> Marion Arts Commission, Community School of the Arts, The Quilters Hall of Fame, Hoosier Shakes, Grant County Art Association, along with Indiana Wesleyan and Taylor University performing groups  <b>Centers &amp; Spaces</b> Gas City, Phillippe and Walton Performing Arts Centers; James Dean Memorial Stage, Taylor University Theatre, Kennedy Arts Center
29	Informal Group	
27	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
19	Public Art + 2 Art Trails	
7	Organizations	
<b>97 Culture</b>		
31	History & Heritage	<b>Artists &amp; Creative Businesses</b> Halstead Architects, Player's Gear Guitar Shop  <b>Groups</b> Dance studios, singers, jazz groups, visual artists, designers, writers, actors, media, university performing groups  <b>Public Libraries</b> in Marion, Gas City-Mill Township, Upland, and Jonesboro  <b>Historical Societies</b> dedicated to Grant County, Gas City, and Jonesboro, as well as to Indiana Motorcycle Preservation  <b>Places</b> James Dean Museum, History Center at the Marion Public Library, Woodside Frank Loyd Wright House, Hostess House, Obadiah Jones Cabin, Samuel Plato buildings, Lustron Homes, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers  <b>Festivals</b> dedicated to James Dean, Old Settlers Days, Popcorn, Cumberland Covered Bridge, Congruence Art & Music  <b>Events</b> Fly/In Cruise/In, Jonesboro River Rally, Mississinewa 1812 Reenactment, Ducktail Run  <b>Trails</b> for Quilts, Garfield statues, and James Dean.  <b>Other Places &amp; Spaces</b> Cardinal Greenway, Sweetser Switch Trail, parks, and historic districts
23	Events & Traditions	
29	Parks & Trails	
14	Funders, Friends & Support Organizations	
<b>31 Misc.</b>		
29	Civic Assets	
2	Other Opportunities	

In addition to the highlights presented here. The **Full Inventory** with individual asset details is available as well

[Inventory sheets for each county](#)

[Interactive regional map](#)



## County Composition

Overview	2020 #	Co. Rank
Population	66,674	#25
Square Miles	414	
<b>Population / Sq Mi</b>	<b>160</b>	
<b>% of Co.</b>		
City <b>Marion</b> (seat)	<b>28,310</b>	43%
City Gas City	6,157	9%
City Upland	3,821	6%
<b>Cities &amp; Towns &lt; 3,500 (line for SEA1 purposes)</b>		
Town Fairmount	2,682	4%
Town Jonesboro	1,516	2%
Town Swayzee	918	1%
Town Van Buren	790	1%
Town Total for 3 Towns <500 *	1,007	2%
<b>Everywhere Else</b>	<b>21,510</b>	32%

Source: Stats Indiana (2020 = U.S. Census) (fractions rounded to full digit)

\* Fowlerton, Matthews, and Converse (partial, Miami Co.)

Composition	2024 %	Co. Rank
Preschool 0-4	5	#26
School Age 5-17	16	#27
College Age 18-24	13	#18
Young Adult 24-44	22	#27
Older Adult 45-64	24	#27
Seniors 65+	20	#25
<b>Median Age</b>	<b>39</b>	

Dynamics	2023	Co. Rank
Population Growth (2020-2024)	<b>- 0.3 %</b>	
Median <i>Household</i> Income	\$53,872	#89
Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income	\$49,748	#74
Poverty Rate	20%	#2

### Notable

- Population slightly declining and with nearly half (44%) age 45+ despite university
- One the lowest median incomes in the state ranking at 89<sup>th</sup>
- Indiana's 2<sup>nd</sup> highest childhood poverty rate
- 68% of the population lives outside incorporated cities/towns



Gas City in Boom Days by William Adelbert Dolwick, Gas City Post Office

## Key Influences

Resources to leverage, dynamics poised the county for growth, and areas to address include:

### Catalytic Investments

<b>\$35,000,000</b>	READI 2.0 Regional Award to Forge ECI <i>Blackford, Delaware, Fayette, Grant, Henry, Jay, Randolph, &amp; Wayne</i>
<b>\$30,000,000</b>	Lilly Endowment Inc. College & Community Collaboration <i>Grant to Taylor University for its Main Street Mile initiative</i>
<b>\$24,300,000</b>	Lilly Endowment Inc. College & Community Collaboration <i>Grant to Indiana Wesleyan University for the 29 Project</i>
<b>\$ 1,500,000</b>	Lilly Endowment Inc. GIFT VIII <i>Matching grant to build assets and support charitable activities</i>

### READI Projects with Connection to Arts & Culture Plan Goals

1.0	2.0
<b>\$ 2,750,000</b> Gas City Performing Arts Center	<b>\$ 1,263,000</b> Gas City YMCA
<b>\$ 100,000</b> Kennedy Art Center	

See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 137-138.

The following came from community input at the in-person visioning session.

### Momentum Pushes

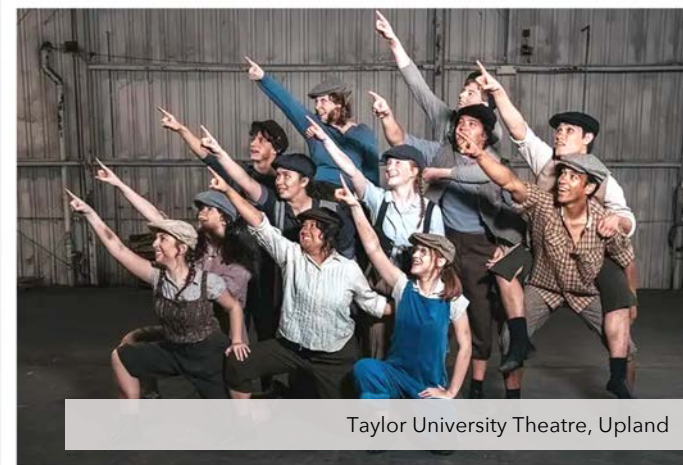
- [Marion Arts Commission](#) leadership and [plans](#)
- 2018 Grant County by Choice plan implementation
- Riverfront District and DORA approvals
- Downtown revitalization efforts + Opportunity for downtown residency
- Opportunity to create clear growth measures for the arts plan
- Lilly Endowment Inc. funding has deepened efforts

### Challenging Pulls

- Current narrative (not pride and value) + Perception downtown Marion unsafe
- Strengthen branding, marketing, and promotion
- History and buildings preservation (inc. public policy, incentives, and training)
- Communication across sectors and the county



Cumberland Covered Bridge



Taylor University Theatre, Upland



Ole Miss Singers at Obadiah Jones Cabin, Jonesboro





The Davis House / Woodside, Frank Lloyd Wright, Marion (Photo by davelandweb.com)



# HENRY COUNTY

## Arts & Culture Profile

### Forging a Creative Path for East Central Indiana

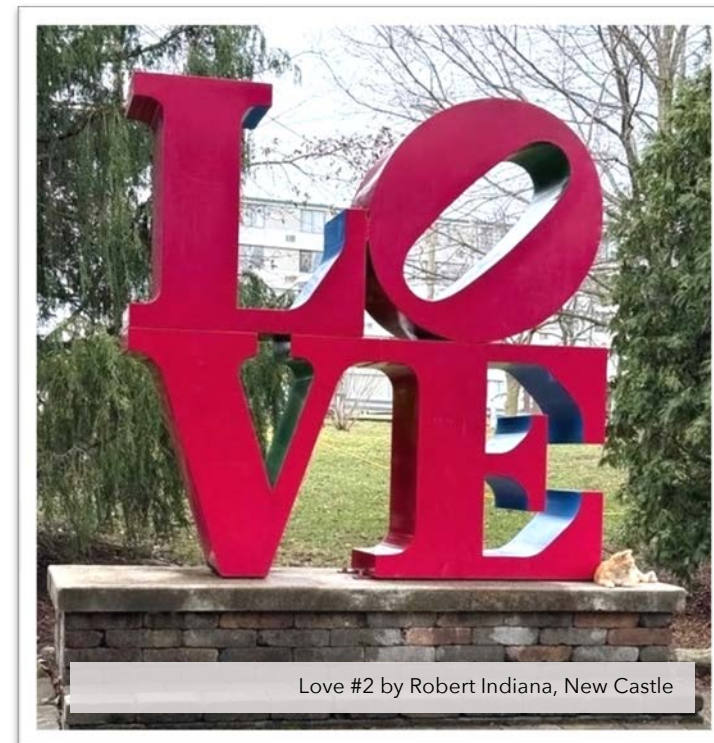
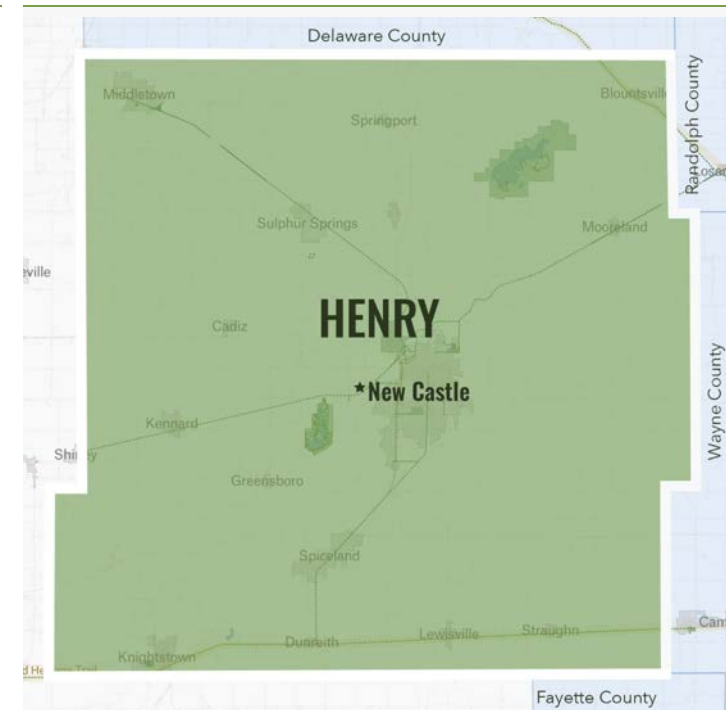
Vision, asset, and opportunity highlights to guide county efforts – shaped by local voices and research.  
2025 – 2035

### Arts & Culture Identity

Henry County, with a population of about 50,000, is shaped by innovation, the arts, and basketball. It is the birthplace of aviation pioneer Wilbur Wright, whose farmhouse and museum near Millville preserve his early life and legacy. The county also claims **Robert Indiana, the internationally known artist behind the iconic LOVE sculpture**, with one of two replicas installed at New Castle's Arts Park. Basketball is central to Henry County's identity. New Castle is home to the world's largest high school fieldhouse and the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame, while **Knightstown's Hoosier Gym, made famous in the film Hoosiers**, attracts visitors nationwide. Other notable aspects of its identity and history include being the birthplace of the American Beauty rose, significant contributions to early piano manufacturing, and being the site of the Maxwell automobile factory, once the largest of its kind in the nation.

County residents and visitors can enjoy a **range of quality-of-life opportunities**. Summit Lake State Park, multiple trails, and other green spaces provide recreation and connection to nature, while historic sites like the County Courthouse, the Knightstown Historic District, and the Guyer Opera House highlight the county's cultural heritage.

Henry County's arts scene is anchored by the Arts Association of Henry County in New Castle and the historic Guyer Opera House in Lewisville, both offering programs and opportunities for artists and performers. Schools, libraries, and community groups strengthen this ecosystem through award winning choral and theater programs, while more than 25 annual festivals—including Artoberfest, the Knightstown Fall Festival, and the Moorland Free Fair—celebrate local culture and traditions. Cultural assets span from the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame, Hoosier



Love #2 by Robert Indiana, New Castle



Gym, and local museums to 3 historic districts and 11 sites on the National Register of Historic Places, libraries, and community spaces like the Arts Park & Pavilion.

A **growing creative industry** includes studios, artisans, musicians, and designers, while outdoor destinations such as the Wilbur Wright Trail, Honey Creek Trail, and Summit Lake State Park connect arts, heritage, and recreation – making Henry County’s cultural profile both broad and dynamic. Together, these assets reflect a county that values both its history and its future livability.

## What You Want for the Future c. 2035

### Content from Community Visioning Recap

The regional plan is intended to be implemented on the county and regional levels elevating both while maintaining community voices and local authenticity. What follows emerged from the local vision session. It is here as a start in adapting the plan to Henry County’s needs.

#### 1. Arts & Culture as Quality of Place Driver

The transformation of Henry County includes improved venues, public art, expanded arts festivals, and a greater emphasis on integrating arts into everyday spaces (e.g., trails, gateways, and tourism).

#### 2. Youth Engagement & Retention

Investing in keeping and retaining young talent by providing arts-related opportunities for youth and young adults, embedding them in planning and leadership roles, and offering spaces and events that reflect their interests.

#### 3. Marketing, Promotion & Destination Development

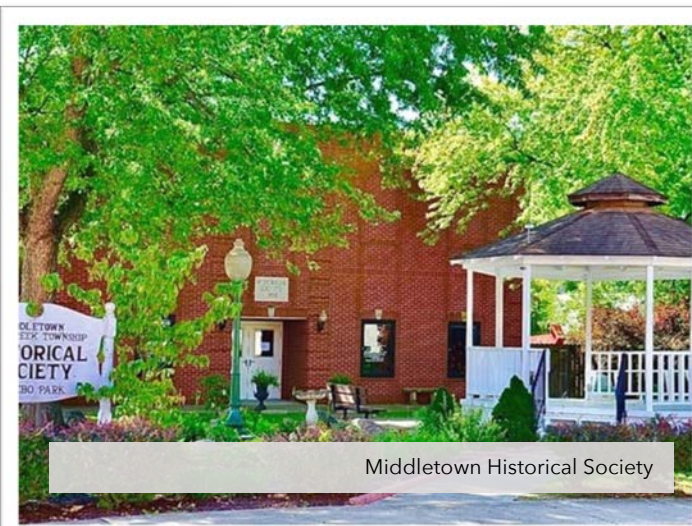
A centralized and strategic approach to market the County as an arts and culture destination, with strong branding, global outreach, and well-promoted activities.

#### 4. Diversity in Arts, Culture & Business

Supporting minority-owned businesses, culinary and cultural festivals, and diverse music and performance opportunities that reflect the interests of different generational and cultural communities.

#### 5. Collaboration & Infrastructure for Growth

Strengthening community, philanthropic, and cross-sector partnerships, creating a nonprofit network, offering technical training for creative businesses, and ensuring physical and financial accessibility to the arts.



Middletown Historical Society



Bluegrass at Baker Park, New Castle



Robin McBride Scott, Weaving Demonstration

## What You Have

### Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

Henry County has strong arts and culture assets from which to draw upon.

#	Overview by Category	Select Arts & Culture Assets
<b>66</b>	<b>Arts</b>	
30	Artists & Creative Business	
3	Informal Group	
11	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
19	Public Art	
3	Organizations	
<b>84</b>	<b>Culture</b>	
23	History & Heritage	
28	Events & Traditions	
22	Parks & Trails	
11	Funders, Friends & Support Organizations	
<b>26</b>	<b>Misc.</b>	
18	Civic Assets	
8	Other Opportunities	
<p>In addition to the highlights presented here. The <b>Full Inventory</b> with individual asset details is available as well</p> <p><a href="#">Inventory sheets for each county</a></p> <p><a href="#">Interactive regional map</a></p>		<p><b>Organizations</b></p> <p>Arts Association of Henry County, Guyer Opera House, Monarch Filmcraft, Lightkeepers of Henry County</p> <p><b>Artists &amp; Creative Businesses</b></p> <p>The Castle Theater, Let's Fuse that Glass, 5 After 5, Monkey Jacks Emporium, Raintree Studio, Moncrieff Leathers, musicians, literary artists, designers, photographers, frame shops, dance studio, jewelers, etc.</p> <p><b>Public Libraries</b></p> <p>New Castle-Henry County Public Library, Spiceland Public Library, Middletown Fall Creek Township Public Library, and Knightstown Public Library</p> <p><b>Historical Societies</b> dedicated to Henry County, Mooreland, Middletown Fall Creek</p> <p><b>Places</b></p> <p>Historic Knightstown Museum, Henry County Veterans Museum, Wilbur Wright Museum, The Hoosier Gym, Hickory Bus, and 3 historic districts</p> <p><b>Festivals</b> dedicated to New Castle-Henry County Renaissance Festival, Knightstown Fall Festival, Moorland Free Fair, Artoberfest, Sulphur Springs Community Days &amp; Mud Bog</p> <p><b>Trails</b></p> <p>Wilbur Wright Trail, Honey Creek Trail, Wooly Bear Parkway Trail</p> <p><b>Other Places &amp; Spaces</b></p> <p>Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame, Arts Park &amp; Pavillion, Garden of Memories, Summit Lake State Park, Saddle Club, Speedway, Redtail Conservancy's public woods, and Farmer's Markets</p>



## County Composition

Overview	2020 #	Co. Rank
Population	48,914	#29
Square Miles	392	
<b>Population / Sq Mi</b>	<b>125</b>	
<b>% of Co.</b>		
City <b>New Castle (seat)</b>	<b>17,382</b>	35%
<b>Cities &amp; Towns &lt; 3,500 (line for SEA1 purposes)</b>		
Middletown	2,270	5%
Town Knightstown	2,158	4%
Town Spiceland	963	2%
Town Total for 12 Towns <500 *	2,951	6%
<b>Everywhere Else</b>	<b>23,190</b>	47%

Composition	2024 %	Co. Rank
Preschool 0-4	5	#39
School Age 5-17	15	#37
College Age 18-24	8	#33
Young Adult 24-44	25	#28
Older Adult 45-64	27	#29
Seniors 65+	20	#29
<b>Median Age</b>	<b>42</b>	

Dynamics	2023	Co. Rank
Population Growth (2020-2024)	0.3 %	
Median <i>Household</i> Income	\$62,048	#64
Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income	\$48,320	#81
Poverty Rate	13%	#32

### Notable

- Aging but steady population
- Better than average household income and poverty rates for the state
- Population split between incorporated and non-incorporated places

Source: Stats Indiana (2020 = U.S. Census) (fractions rounded to full digit)

\* Blountsville, Cadiz, Dunreith, Greensboro, Kennard, Lewisville, Mooreland, Mount Summit, Shirley (partial, Hancock Co.), Springport, Straughn, and Sulphur Springs



Knightstown Makers Market

## Key Influences

Resources to leverage and areas to address include:

Catalytic Investments			
\$35,000,000	READI 2.0 Regional Award to Forge ECI		
	Blackford, Delaware, Fayette, Grant, Henry, Jay, Randolph, & Wayne		
\$ 2,000,000	Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs		
	PreservINg Main Street Grant to New Castle		
\$ 40,000	Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs		
	Downtown revitalization planning grant awarded to Middletown		
READI Projects with Connection to Arts & Culture Plan Goals			
1.0		2.0	
\$ 245,000	Wilbur Wright Trail Phase 3	\$ 500,000	Henry County 4-H Center
\$ 190,000	Knightstown Library Expansion		
\$ 3,625	Henry County YMCA		

See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 137-138.

The following came from community input at the in-person visioning session.

Momentum Pushes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Activity – events, festivals, Main Street, Arts Park, etc.</li><li>• Food &amp; Beverage Tax as well as Downtown revitalization planning efforts</li><li>• Multiple trail expansions planned</li></ul>	
Challenging Pulls	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hospital funding for the arts</li><li>• Safe, welcoming youth/young adult activities reflect interests, leadership opportunities</li><li>• Centralized way to market and promote myriad activities</li></ul>	



Evening Mail Mural by Raymond L Morris



Hoosier Gym Mural, Knightstown



Henry County Art Center





Youth Program at Guyer Opera House, Lewisville

# JAY COUNTY

## Arts & Culture Profile

### Forging a Creative Path for East Central Indiana

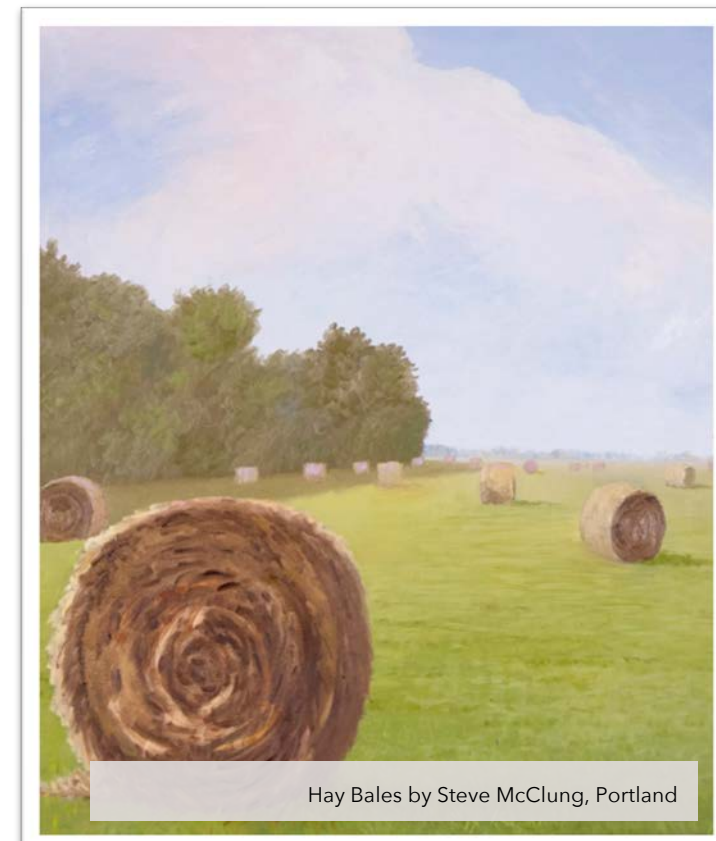
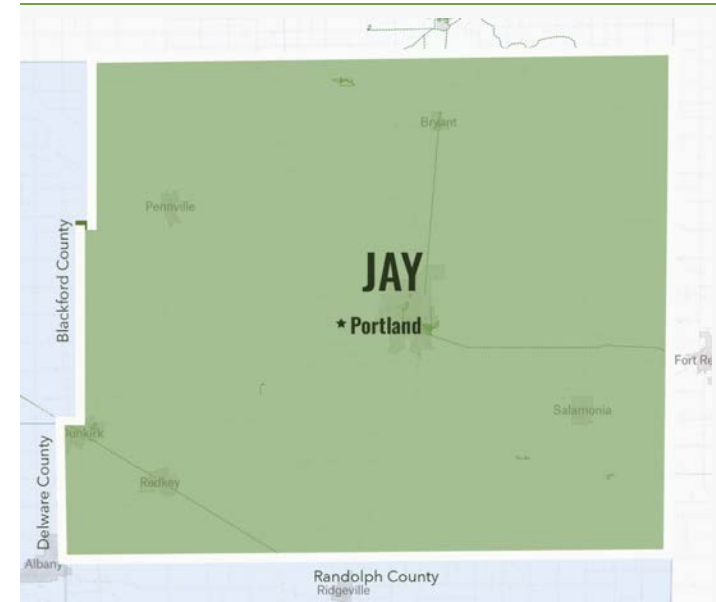
Vision, asset, and opportunity highlights to guide county efforts – shaped by local voices and research. 2025 – 2035

### Arts & Culture Identity

Jay County, home to just over 20,000 residents and spanning approximately 52 people per square mile, reflects its rural heritage and industrious spirit. The county's identity emerged early through a natural gas boom in the late 1800s – a discovery that spurred rapid growth, fueled glass factories in places like Dunkirk (known as the **"Glass Capital of Indiana"**), and helped shift the local economy from purely agricultural to increasingly industrial.

**"Advancing creative economy embedded in local history, heritage, and people"** emerged as a guidepost early in the engagement process revealing a core strength of drive and ambition continuously reemphasized through ongoing input. Anchored in committed leaders of all levels, from all communities, each have the drive to create lasting cultural, community, and economic impact for their communities and county. This vision is reflected in creative entrepreneurs, downtown revitalization efforts, and signature festivals including the Tri-State Antique Gas Engine & Tractor Show (one of the nation's largest) and the annual Jay County Heritage Festival.

Jay County's arts scene is anchored by Arts Place, the county's regional arts council, alongside the Jay County Civic Theatre and Harmony Players. Informal arts groups and arts in non-traditional spaces broaden opportunities for residents to engage in creative activities across the county. **Festivals remain a central feature**, with more than two dozen annual events – three-quarters of which are festivals – highlighting traditions such as the Fiber Arts Festival, Dunkirk Glass Days, and the Great Lakes Nation Powwow.



Hay Bales by Steve McClung, Portland



The creative sector is growing, with at least 17 local artists and businesses spanning quilt-making, jewelry, design, fiber arts, and blacksmithing.

Community life is supported by civic assets, parks, and trails such as the Gas Boom Trail, as well as arts venues and gathering spaces like the Hall-Moser Theatre, Webster Depot Park, and the Jay County Fairgrounds. Together, **assets showcase a county where history, tradition, and creativity are closely connected**, and a prime opportunity to catalyze that connection into its next phase of growth and development.

## Goals & Strategies from Jay County's Plan

### GOAL 1 CREATIVE PLACEMAKING DOWNTOWN.

Jay County's downtowns are thriving – revitalized through arts initiatives, beautification, and programming.

- Beautify all the “small” stuff for civic pride and engagement.
- Activate with public art, partnerships, events, and opportunities to create.
- Connect activities, places, and people.

### GOAL 2 CREATIVE ECONOMY & ENTREPRENEURS

All benefit from a thriving creative economy with increasing numbers of successful creative entrepreneurs and groups.

- Build support systems and training opportunities.
- Create spaces for creatives.

### GOAL 3 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN & THROUGH THE ARTS

Jay County's youth are thriving through the arts and civic participation.

- Increase opportunities for youth arts engagement.
- Increase youth access to arts.
- Increase youth stake in the arts.

### GOAL 4 CULTURAL IDENTITY & HERITAGE

Jay County's identity has been strengthened through the arts, history, and community e

- Reimagine and strengthen signature festival traditions.
- Lean into Jay County's history and heritage.

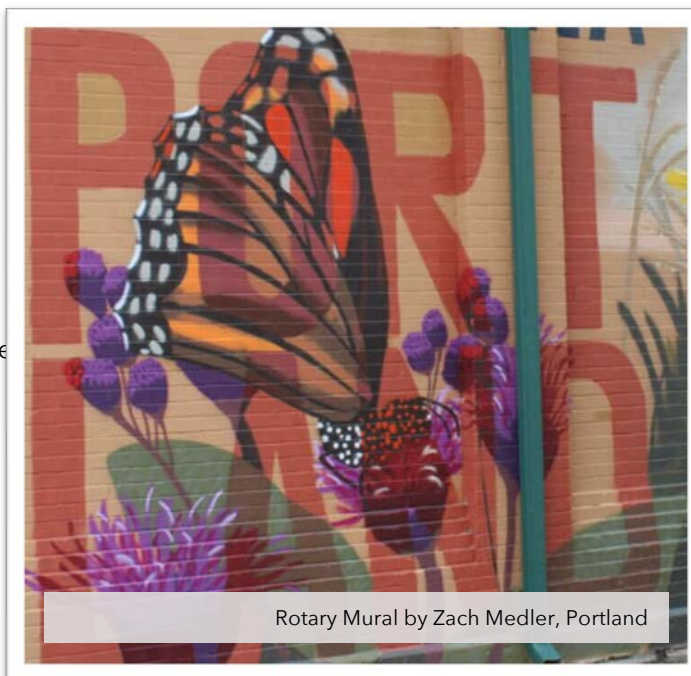
## Jay County Arts & Culture Master Plan

Jay County was part of another regional arts and cultural planning project in 2024-2025. Funded by the National Endowment for the Arts through their [Our Town](#) grant and fiscally managed by [Arts Place, Inc.](#), that work included Blackford and Jay Counties in Indiana and Auglaize County in Ohio and sought to:

***“Provide opportunities for the arts to be integrated into the fabric of community life – Strengthening Communities.”***

The resulting plan has been endorsed by the county and is being implemented under the collaborative leadership of Arts Place and Purdue Extension.

Facilitated by the same consultant team, using a similar planning process the work fed seamlessly into the larger, East Central Indiana regional Arts & Cultural Strategy.



Rotary Mural by Zach Medler, Portland

**GOAL 5 SUSTAINED COMMITMENT & IMPLEMENTATION**

Arts initiatives and programming are sustained through collaboration, leadership, and long-term funding.

- Increase support for arts and culture
- Solidify long-term investment pathways for arts and culture.
- Include arts elements and arts stakeholders when implementing related existing plan strategies.

**What You Have***Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory*

Jay County has strong arts and culture assets from which to draw upon.

#	Overview by Category	Select Arts & Culture Assets
<b>53 Arts</b>		
17	Artists & Creative Business	
3	Informal Group	
15	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
14	Public Art	
4	Organizations	
<b>72 Culture</b>		
19	History & Heritage	
27	Events & Traditions	
10	Parks & Trails	
16	Funders, Friends & Support Organizations	
<b>25 Misc.</b>		
9	Civic Assets	
16	Other Opportunities	
	In addition to the highlights presented here. The <b>Full Inventory</b> with individual asset details is available as well <a href="#">Inventory sheets for each county</a> <a href="#">Interactive regional map</a>	<p><b>Organizations</b> Arts Place, Harmony Players, The Glass Museum, Jay County Civic Theatre, Harmony Players</p> <p><b>Artists &amp; Creative Businesses</b> Reclaiming Design, Grandma-N-Me Quiltin, Jay County Woodcarvers, Redkey Blacksmiths, The Alcove Artists, Pennville Custom Cabinetry, 5 photographers, painters, musicians, jewelers, traditional artists</p> <p><b>Public Libraries</b> in Pennville, Dunkirk, and Jay</p> <p><b>Historical Societies</b> dedicated Jay County, Dunkirk, and Redkey</p> <p><b>Places</b> Museum of the Soldier, Underground Railroad/Pioneer Home, Jay County Historical Museum, 6 sites on the National Register, and 2 historic districts</p> <p><b>Festivals</b> dedicated to Fiber Arts. Great Lakes Nation Powwow, Dunkirk Glass Days</p> <p><b>Other Places &amp; Spaces</b> Hall-Moser Theatre, Gas Boom Trail, Bowstring Truss Bridge, formal and informal galleries, Jay County Fairgrounds, Loblolly Marsh Wetland Preserve</p>



## County Composition

Overview	2020 #	Co. Rank
Population	20,478	#71
Square Miles	384	
<b>Population / Sq Mi</b>	<b>53</b>	
% of Co.		
City <b>Portland (seat)</b>	<b>6,320</b>	31%
<b>Cities &amp; Towns &lt; 3,500 (line for SEA1 purposes)</b>		
City Dunkirk (partial, Blackford)	1,968	10%
Town Redkey	1,100	5%
Town Pennville	621	3%
Town Bryant	239	1%
Town Salamonina	151	1%
<b>Everywhere Else</b>	<b>10,079</b>	49%

Source: Stats Indiana (2020 = U.S. Census)  
(fractions rounded to full digit)

Composition	2024 %	Co. Rank
Preschool 0-4	7	#62
School Age 5-17	19	#68
College Age 18-24	8	#69
Young Adult 24-44	23	#73
Older Adult 45-64	25	#74
Seniors 65+	19	#76
<b>Median Age</b>	<b>39</b>	

Dynamics	2023	Co. Rank
Population Growth (2020-2024)	<b>- 1.5 %</b>	
Median <i>Household</i> Income	\$61,030	#70
Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income	\$53,566	#48
Poverty Rate	13%	#23

### Notable

- Declining population
- Median household income lower than the state average ranking at 70<sup>th</sup>
- 51% of the population lives outside incorporated cities/towns



Arts Place Jay Campus, Portland

## Key Influences

Resources to leverage, dynamics poised the county for growth, and areas to address include:

Catalytic Investments	
<b>\$35,000,000</b>	READI 2.0 Regional Award to Forge ECI <i>Blackford, Delaware, Fayette, Grant, Henry, Jay, Randolph, &amp; Wayne</i>
<b>\$ 3,900,000</b>	Jay County Council and Board of Commissioners <i>Approved investment to expand broadband access (various sources)</i>
<b>\$ 1,250,000</b>	Indiana Department of Transportation <i>Community Crossings grants</i>

READI Projects with Connection to Arts & Culture Plan Goals			
	1.0		2.0
<b>\$ 2,750,000</b>	Gas City Performing Arts	<b>\$ 240,000</b>	Pennville Community Park Revitalization
<b>\$ 9,000</b>	Salamonia Schoolhouse & Park Project		

See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 137-138.

The following came from community input at the in-person visioning session.

Momentum Pushes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County part of OCRA HELP Cohort 1</li> <li>Dedicated to downtown revitalization</li> <li>Recently adopted County Arts &amp; Culture plan</li> <li>Committed leaderships</li> <li>Groundswell of successful efforts (placemaking, façade improvement, beautification projects)</li> </ul>	
Challenging Pulls	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need people to belief in arts/its importance</li> <li>Strengthen communication and marketing</li> <li>Affordable space for artists to make and sell their work</li> </ul>	



Education program at Redkey Blacksmiths



Jay County Civic Theatre, Portland





Demonstration at Dunkirk Glass Days

# RANDOLPH COUNTY

## Arts & Culture Profile

### Forging a Creative Path for East Central Indiana

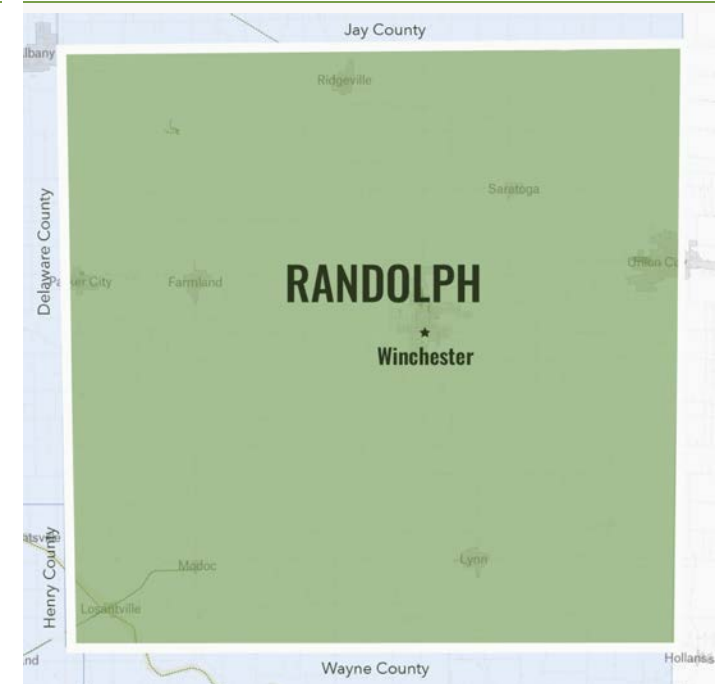
Vision, asset, and opportunity highlights to guide county efforts – shaped by local voices and research.  
2025 – 2035

### Arts & Culture Identity

Bordering the state of Ohio, Randolph County is home to just under 25,000 residents. Established in 1818, the county is rooted in Quaker settlement and abolitionist activism and played a significant role in the Underground Railroad, with sites such as the **Union Literary Institute—founded in 1846 as one of Indiana's first integrated schools**—symbolizing its values of education and equality. Amish communities also contribute to the county's cultural fabric, preserving traditions of craftsmanship, agriculture, and faith. The discovery of oil and natural gas in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century fueled industrial growth, with **Winchester emerging as a glass-manufacturing center and Union City as a hub for auto parts production**. Today, Randolph County continues to balance heritage and innovation, with its small towns revitalizing through historic preservation, community festivals, and a growing network of arts and cultural initiatives that build upon its long legacy of creativity and craftsmanship.

Randolph County's **arts and cultural landscape is defined by its deep historic roots and creative energy**. The county is home to 4 historic districts and 9 sites on the National Register of Historic Places, alongside preservation efforts that honor its architectural and community heritage. A thriving public art presence includes 67 documented works and the impressive Quilt Barn Trail, where 44 murals showcase local identity across the rural landscape.

Cultural vitality is growing through anchor organizations and grass roots arts alliances including the Randolph County Art Association, Randy Players Little Theater, and Start with Art, while festivals like the Union City Arts Festival and Aloha International Steel Guitar Festival bring together music, performance, and community





pride. Arts and historic assets combined with local enthusiasm and a growing creative industry - from artisan glass and pottery to chocolatiers, designers, and musicians – reveal **a county poised for growth.**

## What You Want for the Future c. 2035

### Content from Community Visioning Recap

The regional plan is intended to be implemented on the county and regional levels elevating both while maintaining community voices and local authenticity. What follows emerged from the local vision session. It is here as a start in adapting the plan to Randolph County's needs.

#### 1. Arts, Heritage, & Technology Activate Place

Arts and culture animate historic sites and public spaces through storytelling, theatrical performances, murals, and digital enhancements like augmented reality and projections—blending tradition with innovation to make history engaging and relevant.

#### 2. Countywide Access to Arts Infrastructure

New and expanded arts facilities—such as galleries, studios, mobile units, and multi-use venues—ensure every community in Randolph County can access, create, and experience the arts close to home.

#### 3. Youth Engagement & Creative Attraction

Youth are actively engaged through music, theatre, and arts programs that build confidence and skills, while a vibrant, supportive arts environment helps attract and retain youth, artists, and creative entrepreneurs.

#### 4. Signature Attractions & Regional Connectivity

Each community features a fun, distinctive arts or culture draw—supported by improved transportation, trails, and collaborative programming—that strengthens regional identity and encourages exploration across the county.

#### 5. Arts as a Driver of Wellbeing & Belonging

The arts foster inclusion, civic pride, and mental wellness by supporting public engagement, intergenerational connection, and creative expression—making Randolph County a more vibrant and welcoming place to live.



The Randy Players at the Little Theatre, Union City



To Be Honest, Inc, Mongo



Boettger Pottery, Union City

## What You Have

### Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

Randolph County has strong arts and culture assets from which to draw upon.

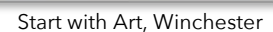
#	Overview by Category	Select Arts & Culture Assets
<b>107 Arts</b>		
23	Artists & Creative Business	
1	Informal Group	
9	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
67	Public Art including Quilt Trail	
7	Organizations	
<b>65 Culture</b>		
16	History & Heritage	
12	Events & Traditions	
24	Parks & Trails	
13	Funders, Friends & Support Organizations	
<b>27 Misc.</b>		
23	Civic Assets	
4	Other Opportunities	
	In addition to the highlights presented here. The <b>Full Inventory</b> with individual asset details is available as well <a href="#">Inventory sheets for each county</a> <a href="#">Interactive regional map</a>	<p><b>Organizations</b>            Randolph County Art Association, Start with Art, Randy Players – Little Theater, Randolph County Area Community Theater, To Be Honest, Arts in Union City Alliance, Union City Arts, Music &amp; Entertainment, Blue Steel Blues Society</p> <p><b>Artists &amp; Creative Businesses</b>            Timber Creations, Bee Wings &amp; Fuzzy Things, Gallery 112, Cat Tails Art Glass Studio, Singing Bridge Pottery, <a href="#">The Goodrich Mill</a>, photography studios, dance, pottery, designers, painters, jewelers</p> <p><b>Public Libraries</b> in Farmland, Ridgeville, Union City, Washington Township, and Winchester</p> <p><b>Historical Societies</b> dedicated to Randolph County, Union City, Farmland, and Saving the Old Properties</p> <p><b>Places</b>            Randolph Co Historical Museum, Union City Depot, Stone Mansion, Randolph County Infirmary, Windsor Mound, Carnegie Library, 4 historic districts, 9 sites on the National Register</p> <p><b>Festivals</b>            Union City Arts Festival, Aloha International Steel Guitar Festival, Stateline Heritage Days, Winchester Main Street Festival</p> <p><b>Other Places &amp; Spaces</b>            Cardinal Greenway, Randolph County Quilt Trail, Goodrich Park, Modoc Gardens, Goodrich Park Amphitheatre, Winchester Speedway</p>



Overview		2020 #	Co. Rank
	Population	24,502	#63
	Square Miles	452	
	<b>Population / Sq Mi</b>	<b>54</b>	
			% of Co.
City	<b>Winchester (seat)</b>	<b>4,843</b>	20%
<b>Cities &amp; Towns &lt; 3,500 (line for SEA1 purposes)</b>			
City	Union City	3,454	14%
Town	Parker City	1,278	5%
Town	Farmland	1,270	5%
Town	Lynn	954	4%
Town	Ridgeville	688	3%
Town	Total for 4 Towns <500 *	792	5%
<b>Everywhere Else</b>		<b>11,223</b>	<b>46%</b>

- Notable
  - Declining population
  - Nearly half (47%) of the population is age 45+
  - Median household income ranks 83<sup>rd</sup> in state
  - 54% of the population lives outside incorporated cities/towns

\* Albany, Losantville, Modoc, and Saratoga



## Key Influences

Resources to leverage, dynamics poised the county for growth, and areas to address include:

### Catalytic Investments

<b>\$35,000,000</b>	READI 2.0 Regional Award to Forge ECI <i>Blackford, Delaware, Fayette, Grant, Henry, Jay, Randolph, &amp; Wayne</i>
<b>\$ 50,000</b>	Lilly Endowment Inc. GIFT VIII <i>Community Planning Grant</i>

### READI Projects with Connection to Arts & Culture Plan Goals

1.0		2.0	
\$ 1,375,000	Vision Corner Learning Center	\$ 232,000	Second Welding Lab at
\$ 250,000	Randolph County 4-H		Winchester Community High
	Improvements		School

See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 137-138.

The following came from community input at the in-person visioning session.

### Momentum Pushes

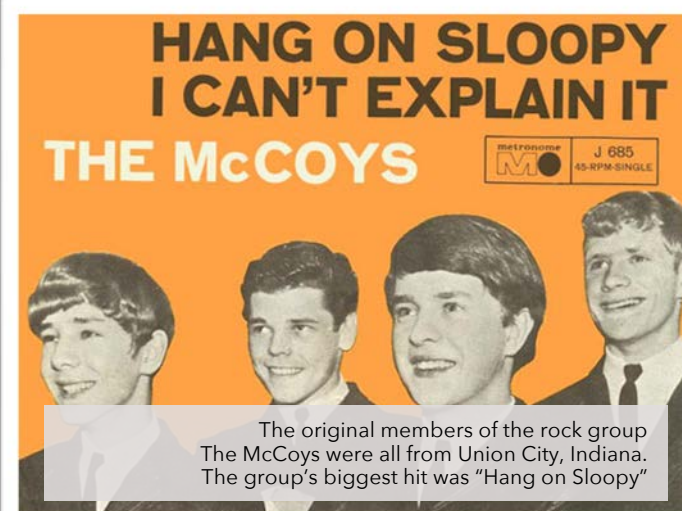
- Forum of Funders focused on public art.
- Ohio/Indiana Stateline opportunity to amplify/highlight
- Randolph County Cultivating Community Initiative actively in progress

### Challenging Pulls

- Many small groups with the same type of goals makes resources spread thin and loss of momentum
- Many people do not venture out
- County mental health and opioid use crisis (87/92 highest overdose rate in state)



Mural by Jaylei Osting



The original members of the rock group The McCoys were all from Union City, Indiana. The group's biggest hit was "Hang on Sloopy"



New Deal Mural, Union City Post Office





Blue Steel Blues Society, Union Mills

# WAYNE COUNTY

## Arts & Culture Profile

### Forging a Creative Path for East Central Indiana

Vision, asset, and opportunity highlights to guide county efforts – shaped by local voices and research.  
2025 – 2035

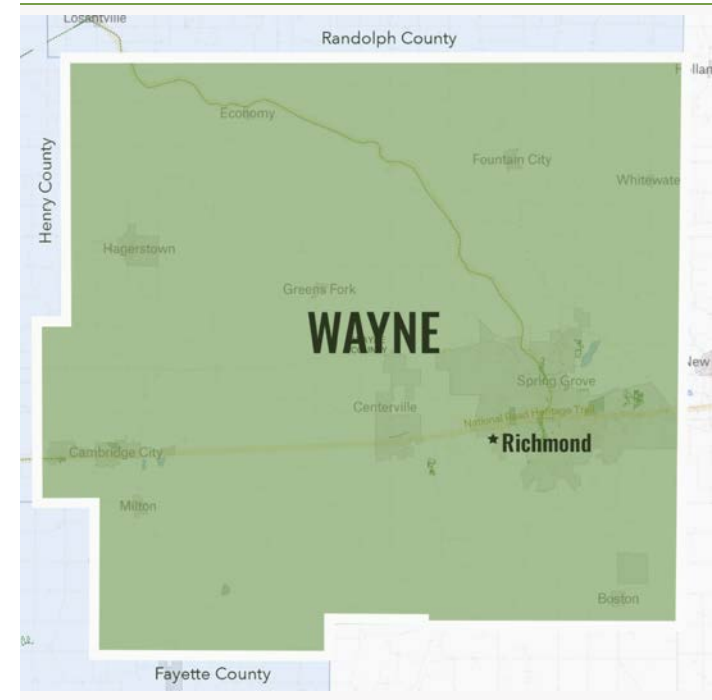
### Arts & Culture Identity

With a population of just over 66,000, Wayne County has **long been a place where industry, education (the county has five higher education institutions),** and social progress intersect. Richmond, a 19<sup>th</sup> century hub for manufacturing, is recognized as the **'birthplace of recorded jazz'** and earned renown for its rich musical heritage – most notably through Starr Piano Company and Gennett Records, which recorded early jazz and blues legends including Louis Armstrong, Hoagy Carmichael, and Jelly Roll Morton.

The county's Quaker roots established a legacy of abolitionist activity, including significant roles in the Underground Railroad, shaping a cultural identity rooted in freedom, education, and civic responsibility. It was home to Levi and Catharine Coffin whose work fighting against slavery earned national recognition. Earlham College, a Quaker-founded liberal arts institution, still influences the intellectual and cultural life of the region.

Wayne County hosts **a vibrant arts and cultural scene, anchored by an impressive public art collection** of over 141 assets. Central are dedicated; long-standing arts organizations driven to serve and build new audiences across the county and region. The Richmond Art Museum, the nation's only independent art museum housed in a public high school, joins the Symphony and Jazz Orchestras, Civic Theater, Shakespeare Festival, a growing community of artists and creative businesses, and Earlham College which serves as both arts provider and educator.

**Cultural attractions abound:** The Reid Center doubles as both music venue and Tiffany Glass Studio showcase; the Levi and Catharine Coffin State Historic Site highlight the county's historic significance; and 38 sites on the National Register sites, Model T Museum, and Overbeck Museum add further depth. Signature festivals like Canal Days and creativity while outdoor



The Jazz Man by Ivan Roque, Richmond



assets like the National Road Heritage Trail, Cardinal Greenway, Hayes Arboretum, and Cope Environmental Center offer rich recreational experiences. With revitalization efforts underway, Wayne is poised for economic development and population growth. **Centering arts, culture, and legacy would further drive these efforts alongside tourism from local to national.**

## What You Want for the Future c. 2035

### Content from Community Visioning Recap

The regional plan is intended to be implemented on the county and regional levels elevating both while maintaining community voices and local authenticity. What follows emerged from the local vision session. It is here as a start in adapting the plan to Wayne County's needs.

#### 1. Vibrant, Walkable Downtowns

Downtowns are revitalized, clean, and walkable with preserved historic architecture, thriving businesses, public art, and eliminated blight to create attractive and active community hubs.

#### 2. Increased Public Engagement Across All Ages

A strong culture of public participation emerges through a centralized event platform, youth involvement in planning, better feedback loops, and inclusive opportunities for residents of all ages.

#### 3. Strong Arts Infrastructure & Artist Support

An arts council is established to align and strengthen the arts ecosystem, supported by vibrant studio centers, collaborative spaces, affordable studios, artist support networks, and grants for emerging creators.

#### 4. Cross-Sector Collaboration & Capacity Building

Arts, culture, education, and community organizations work together to pool resources, eliminate duplication, support leadership, and ensure sustainable growth through coordinated, bottom-up development.

#### 5. Regional Destination for Arts, Culture, & Heritage

Wayne County becomes a regional arts and tourism hub with restored historic districts like the Starr District, expanded trails and wayfinding, dynamic museum experiences, a thriving creative sector, and strong arts education that ties past, present, and future together.



Historic District and Antique Trail, Centerville



Overbeck Pottery Mural by Pamela Bliss, Cambridge City



Levi Coffin House, Fountain City

## What You Have

### Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

Wayne County has strong arts and culture assets from which to draw upon.

#	Overview by Category	Select Arts & Culture Assets
<b>192 Arts</b>		
44	Artists & Creative Business	
3	Informal Groups	
17	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
119	Public Art + Quilt Trail	
9	Organizations	
<b>117 Culture</b>		
54	History & Heritage	
20	Events & Traditions	
24	Parks & Trails	
19	Funders, Friends & Support Organizations	
<b>31 Misc.</b>		
29	Civic Assets	
2	Other Opportunities	
<p>In addition to the highlights presented here, The <b>Full Inventory</b> with individual asset details is available as well <a href="#">Inventory sheets for each county</a> <a href="#">Interactive regional map</a></p>		<p><b>Organizations</b> Richmond Art Museum, Richmond Symphony Orchestra, Richmond Jazz Orchestra, Richmond Civic Theater, and Richmond Shakespeare Festival, Overbeck Pottery Museum</p> <p><b>Artists &amp; Creative Businesses</b> Whitewater Valley Fiber Arts Guild, Ply Creative, Art Restoration Technique, Sky &amp; Earth Studio, Oblivion Cinema &amp; Arts, India Kruse Griffin, arts faculty at Earlham College &amp; IU East, dance studios, photography studios, visual artists, designers, writers, performers</p> <p><b>Public Libraries</b> in Cambridge City, Centerville, Dublin, Hagerstown, Richmond</p> <p><b>Historical Societies</b> dedicated to Wayne County, Black Legacy, Clay Township, and Women's History, Overbeck House, Historic Hagerstown Museum &amp; Arts Place, Mansion House Museum, Clay Township Historical Society, Women's History Club, Starr-Gennett Building, 29 sites on the National Register of Historic Places</p> <p><b>Places</b> The Reid Center, Model T Museum, Wilbur Wright Birthplace, Levi &amp; Catharine Coffin State Historic Site, Hagerstown Museum &amp; Arts Place, Starr-Gennett Building, and 29 sites on the National Register</p> <p><b>Festivals</b> dedicated to heritage - Canal, Archway, and Levi Coffin, and Jubilee Days, and arts - Meltdown Winter Ice Festival, Potterypalooza, Wayne County Mural Festival, Gennett Records Walk of Fame Festival</p> <p><b>Trails</b> 6 tourism trails and 8 recreational trails including the Whitewater Valley Gorge Park &amp; Trail and the Cardinal Greenway</p> <p><b>Other Places &amp; Spaces</b> Civic Hall Performing Arts Center, Cope Environmental Center, Hayes Arboretum, Red Tail Conservancy, Swoveland Preserve</p>





## County Composition

Overview			Composition			Dynamics		
	2020 #	Co. Rank		2024 %	Co. Rank		2023	Co. Rank
Population	66,553	#26	Preschool	0-4	6 #25	Population Growth (2020-2024)	- 0.2 %	#74
Square Miles	402		School Age	5-17	17 #26			
Population / Sq Mi	165		College Age	18-24	9 #25	Median <i>Household</i> Income	\$52,956	#90
			Young Adult	24-44	24 #26	Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income	\$52,493	#59
			Older Adult	45-64	25 #26			
			Seniors	65+	20 #24	Poverty Rate	17%	#6
			Median Age	41				
Notable								
— Declining population with median age slightly above the state								
— Median household income ranks 90 <sup>th</sup> in state								
— 17% poverty rate ranks 6 <sup>th</sup> in the state								
— 68% of the population lives outside incorporated cities/towns								

Source: Stats Indiana (2020 = U.S. Census) (fractions rounded to full digit)

\* Boston, East Germantown, Economy, Greens Fork, Milton, Mount Auburn, Spring Grove, and Whitewater



Richmond Symphony Orchestra

## Key Influences

Resources to leverage, dynamics poised the county for growth, and areas to address include:

Catalytic Investments	
<b>\$35,000,000</b>	READI 2.0 Regional Award to Forge ECI <i>Blackford, Delaware, Fayette, Grant, Henry, Jay, Randolph, &amp; Wayne</i>
<b>\$25,000,000</b>	Lilly Endowment Inc. College & Community Collaboration <i>Grant to Earlham College to fund the "Revitalize Richmond" initiative</i>
<b>\$ 5,000,000</b>	Lilly Endowment Inc. GIFT VIII <i>Award to advance quality of life projects</i>

READI Projects with Connection to Arts & Culture Plan Goals			
1.0		2.0	
--	None	<b>\$ 5,100,000</b>	Wayne Co. Revitalization (LEI Blight)

See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 137-138.

The following came from community input at the in-person visioning session.

Momentum Pushes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County part of OCRA HELP Cohort 3</li> <li>Gift VIII funding performances spaces and countywide opportunities from arts organizations</li> <li>Opportunity to develop and implement strategies to drive greater participation from tourists</li> </ul>	
Challenging Pulls	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better feedback loops/communication between sectors</li> <li>Blight and a scarcity mindset</li> </ul>	

“The studio was primitive, the room wasn’t soundproof, and just outside was a railroad spur with switch engines puffing away noisily. Yet this obscure recording studio in a small Indiana city saw a history-making parade of musicians. They made the name of the Hoosier Gennetts one of the greatest names in recorded music, and the gold-lettered Gennett label is one to collect.

Hoagy Carmichael



Richmond Art Museum



Cambridge City Summer Concerts



Birthplace of Recorded Jazz, Richmond





Heron Mural by Holly Sims, Mount Auburn

