



Arts & Culture Plan

2025 – 2035

We Grow from Deep Roots | The Counties

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

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
WELCOME	11
The Project	12
The Plan	13
THE REGION	17
Southeast, IN	18
State of the Arts	23
Defining Success	31
Goals & Strategies	33
The BIG Ideas	52
Call to Action	61
THE COUNTIES	65
Introduction	66
Dearborn County	67
Franklin County	73
Ohio County	79
Ripley County	85
Switzerland County	91
Union County	97
THE TOOLKIT	103
Introduction	104
A. Ideas & Inspiration	105
B. Project Funding	112
C. Data & Advocacy	113
D. Glossary	116
APPENDIX	117
A. Data Tables	118
B. Methodology	128
Acknowledgements	136



Still Pointe Art Studio & Gallery, Rising Sun

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 six 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 its 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 gradually be available directly from [SEI READI](#), 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 118-127) break out counties from the region for key indicators.



Ripley Plein Air Paint Out, Versailles State Park

Dearborn County

Arts & Culture Profile

Cultivating big opportunities with small town charm

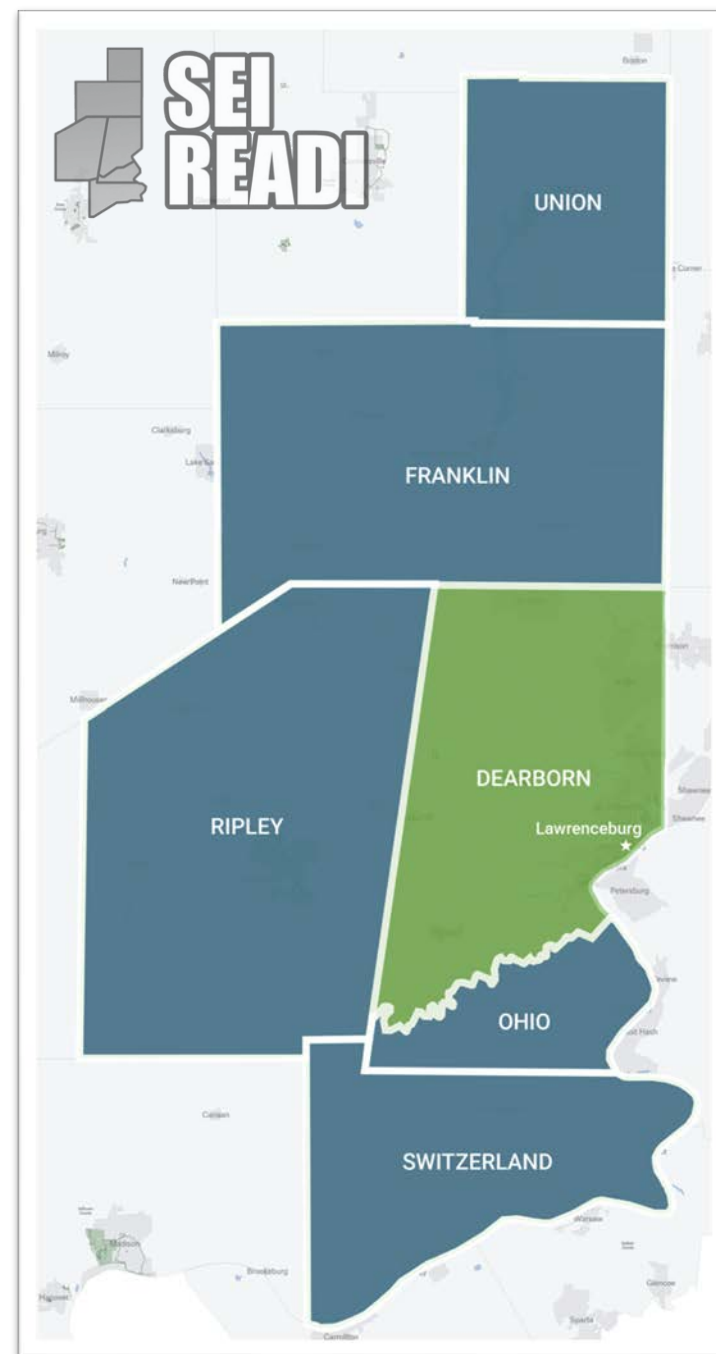
Vision, asset, and opportunity highlights to guide county efforts – shaped by local voices and research.
2025 – 2035

Arts & Culture Identity

Dearborn County, with a population just over 51,000, sits along the Ohio River as part of the Cincinnati metropolitan area. Its history is shaped by river and rail commerce, industries powered by German and Irish immigrant labor, and the enduring influence of Lawrenceburg – home to Ross & Squibb Distillery since 1847 and proudly known as **“Whiskey City USA.”** Music has been a long-standing tradition that continues to draw people to the area, while the Aurora Casket Company, founded in 1890 and now the largest privately owned casket manufacturer in the U.S., reflects the county’s industrial strength and endurance.

Today, Dearborn County combines its historic character with modern amenities and attractions. The Hollywood Casino & Hotel draws visitors to Lawrenceburg, while outdoor assets such as Perfect North Slopes, trails, and riverfront parks connect residents and visitors to recreation and nature. This foundation is matched by a vibrant cultural life, with active arts organizations, festivals, historic sites, and creative industry that together shape the county’s dynamic arts and culture profile.

Dearborn County’s vibrant arts and culture scene grows directly from its history and long-standing traditions, which continue to shape today’s creative life. **Music and fiber arts stand out as enduring traditions, supported by local businesses, organizations, and events.** The Southeastern Indiana Musicians Association, Southeast Indiana Youth Orchestra, drum corps, Liberty Theatre, Lawrenceburg Event Center, Dillsboro Jazz Festival, recording studios, and performances on stages across the county all contribute to a thriving music scene. Alongside



music, the county hosts a remarkable community of literary and visual artists – from authors and photographers to quilters and designers – creating a diverse and connected creative ecosystem that both honors tradition and embraces new expression.

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 Dearborn’s needs.

1. **River and Region: A Gateway to Nature and Cincinnati**

The Ohio River Way, Perfect North Slopes, and the river valley offer endless recreation, eco-tourism, and scenic gathering potential. Positioned within the Cincinnati OH-KY-IN CSA major media market, the county can use its regional connections to amplify its voice, draw visitors, and balance rural charm with city convenience.

2. **Arts-Driven Countywide Transformation using Culture as Catalyst**

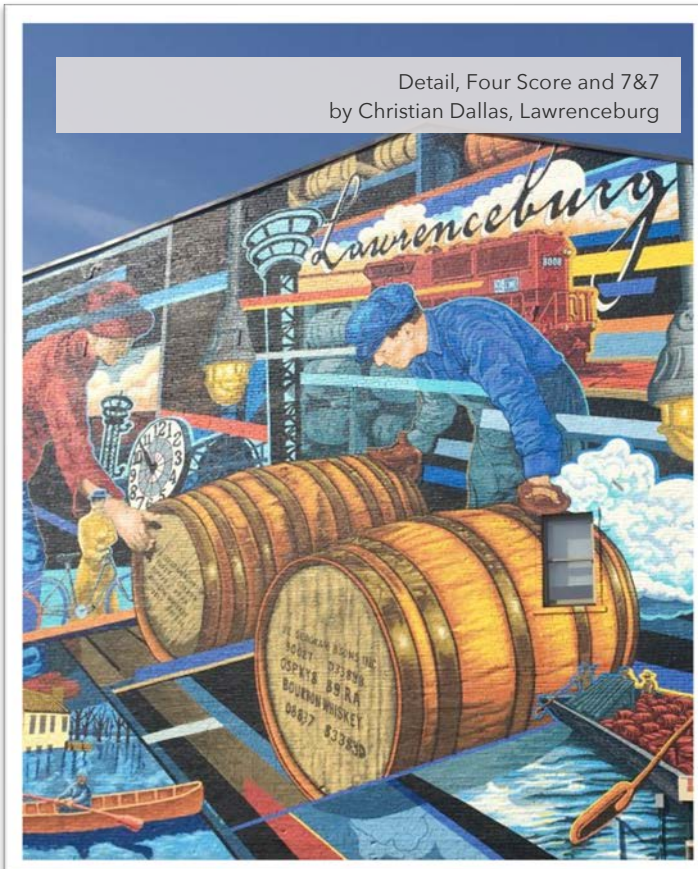
Arts and culture rise as a unifying force for economic development, youth engagement, and healing. Dearborn sees the creation of Cultural Arts Centers, and street fairs and festivals that span the region. The arts are no longer niche but mainstream, and a dedicated umbrella organization connects creatives, nonprofits, and civic leaders, ensuring coordination, shared space, and celebration of local identity.

3. **Reuse, Revive, Reconnect: Historic and Built Assets as Community Engines**

Older buildings, from downtown storefronts to legacy institutions, are restored and repurposed to serve new needs – artist studios, community theaters, and maker hubs. Architecture becomes a storybook and an incubator. Reinvestment supports walkability, intergenerational gathering, and place-based pride.

4. **Youth, Wellness, and Belonging**

A bold focus on young people and well-being shapes the county’s future. New creative programming invites ages 20-30 to stay, grow, and give back. The healing nature of the arts supports one of the state’s strongest recovery networks. Schools and American Legions connect with arts professionals, and small-town parks become hubs of intergenerational activity.



Rivertown Players, Lawrenceburg

5. Vibrant Downtown and Coordinated Leadership

Downtown is transformed with storefront activation, alley enhancements, heritage-inspired design, and consistent activity. Micro-events, DORA (designated outdoor refreshment areas), and effective communication tools drive engagement, while professional leadership and Main Street accreditation provide a foundation for sustained growth.

What You Have

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



Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

#	Overview	Select Assets
125	Arts	
61	Artists & Creative Business	Artists & Creative Businesses – Liberty Theatre, The Crafter's Cove, Maple Hill Pottery, Busy Needle Quilting, Three Ridges Design Co, Distinctive Knits, 17 literary artists, 11 photography studios, 6 music focused businesses, designers, traditional artists, musicians, and visual artists Arts Organizations & Groups – Southeastern Indiana Musicians Association, Youth Orchestra, and Art Guild; Dearborn Highlands Arts Council, Dillsboro Arts Friendship Gallery, Rivertown Players, Voices of Indiana, Rivertown and Lawrenceburg Modern Quilters Guilds Public Libraries in Aurora, Dillsboro, Lawrenceburg, and West Harrison Historical Groups dedicated to Dearborn, Dillsboro, River City Classic Cars; Hillforest Victorian House Museum, Weber Sports Bicycle Shop and Museum, and Aurora High School Museums Places – Guilford Covered Bridge, historic districts (Aurora, Lawrenceburg, Greendale), and 21 National Register Historic sites Festivals – Dillsboro Jazz Festival, Aurora Farmer's Fair, Lawrenceburg Fall Museum Fest, St Leon Historic Pole Raising, Whiskey City Summer Fest Nature & Trails – Oxbow Nature Conservancy, Perfect North Slopes, Rullman and Gladys Russell Wildlife Refuges, Dearborn Trail, Ohio River Way National Water Trail Other Places & Spaces – Hollywood Casino & Hotel, Lawrenceburg Speedway, Archaeological Research Institute
7	Informal Group	
15	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
31	Public Art	
11	Organizations	
70	Culture	
32	History & Heritage	
21	Events & Traditions	
13	Parks & Trails	
4	Funders & Friends	
44	Misc.	
32	Civic Assets	
12	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	50,679	#28
Square Miles	305	
Population / Sq Mi	168	
% of Co.		
City Lawrenceburg (seat)	5,129	10%
CDP Bright	5,814	11%
CDP Hidden Valley	5,529	11%
City Greendale	4,602	9%
Cities & Towns < 3,500 (line for SEA1 purposes)		
City Aurora	3,479	7%
Town Dillsboro	1,360	3%
Town Moores Hill	675	1%
Town St Leon	660	1%
Town West Harrison	325	1%
Everywhere Else	23,106	46%

Composition	2024 %	Co. Rank
Preschool 0-4	5	#35
School Age 5-17	16	#31
College Age 18-24	8	#31
Young Adult 24-44	23	#29
Older Adult 45-64	28	#28
Seniors 65+	20	#28
Median Age	43	

Dynamics	2023	Co. Rank
Population Growth (2020-2024)	+1.5 %	
Median <i>Household</i> Income	\$82,578	#7
Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income	\$60,731	#14
Poverty Rate	8 %	#86

Notable

- Population growth (+1.5%) below state average (+2%)
- Median Household Income ranks higher than the state average (69,458)
- 8% poverty rate ranks 86/92 – one of the lowest poverty rates in the state

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



Lawrenceburg's [Award-Winning](#) Civic Park in action

Key Influences

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

Catalytic Investments	
\$10,000,000	READI 2.0 Regional Award to SEI READI <i>Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, & Union</i>
\$6-8,000,000	OCRA Stellar Pathway Designee <i>a multi-year, multi-million-dollar quality of place initiative</i>

READI Projects to Date with Connection to Arts & Culture Plan Goals			
1.0		2.0	
\$ 600,000	Liberty Theater	---	none
<i>See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 126-127.</i>			

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

Momentum Pushes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural assets (Perfect Slopes, Ohio River) Ohio River Way National Water Trail 2025 designation by the U.S. Department of Interior Strong music sector (venues, businesses, performers) Makers are connected across the county by art form (e.g., SEIMA) Most active recovery service community in the state (CARE, JCAP) with opportunity to deepen connection between artists and recovery community Dillsboro Arts Creator Space implementation skills through Creative Convergence grant Ability to leverage abandoned buildings Willingness to keep the conversation going

Challenging Pulls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No concerted push for arts and culture (yet) Perceived imbalance within county (Lawrenceburg gets the most attention) Communication Challenges (West Dearborn disconnected from east, getting info to North Dearborn/getting word out) "Greater Cincinnati" (entire county in MSA) – all news comes out of Cincinnati Lawrenceburg a commuter area offers benefits but outside Indiana systems



The Porch, scene of periodic free public music events

Tuesdays at Arts

Dillsboro Arts in the Creator Space
Every Month - Community Sharing - Open to everyone!

1st Tuesdays: Music Circle

Bring a song. Bring an instrument. Share the music.

2nd Tuesdays: Writer's Group

Share your writing and ideas with other writers.

3rd Tuesdays: Life Drawing

Bring your favorite drawing materials, \$5 to donate towards the model fee and see what emerges!

4th Tuesdays: Artists Lounge

Join in with artists, musicians and writers to talk about your work, ask for advice, share your inspirations, . . . find a creative friend.



. . . and in those months with a **5th Tuesday**, come for a surprise happening!
All activities 6:00-8:00 pm

Friendship Gallery is always open during the Tuesday activities.

info@dillsboroarts.org
12926 Bank Street, Dillsboro, IN





Southeast Indiana Youth Orchestra, Aurora

Franklin County

Arts & Culture Profile

Cultivating big opportunities with small town charm

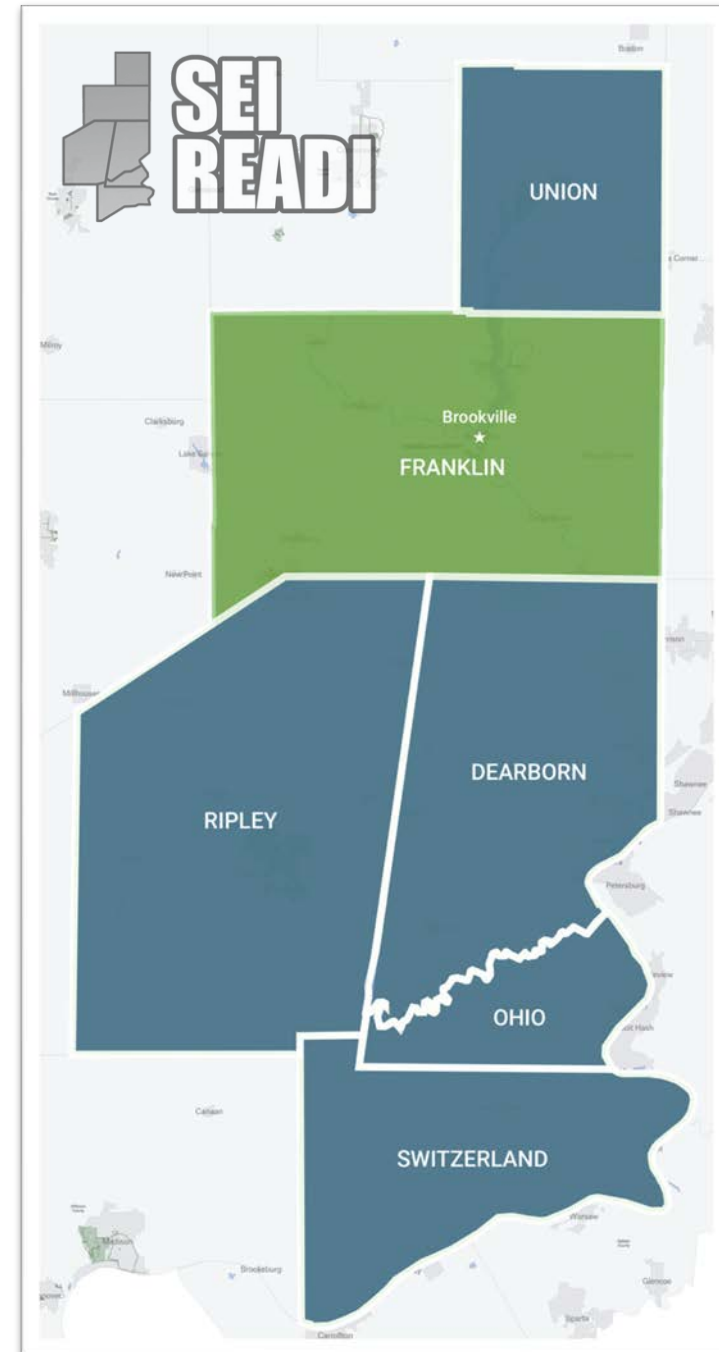
Vision, asset, and opportunity highlights to guide county efforts – shaped by local voices and research.
2025 – 2035

Arts & Culture Identity

Located **just 40 minutes from Cincinnati**, Franklin County is a rural and bucolic destination steeped in arts and culture heritage and traditions. With a population of just over 23,000, the county's history is visible in its Primitive Baptist and German settler roots, canal trade-era structures, and railroad driven industry that still define its character. **Communities like Metamora and Oldenburg serve as living time capsules:** Oldenburg's churches, historic architecture, and the Sisters of St. Francis convent reflect its German heritage, while Metamora brings the Whitewater Canal trade boom to life through the Whitewater Valley Railroad, the Whitewater Canal State Historic Site, and tradition-driven businesses, artisans, music, and historic structures. Brookville, the county seat, adds further distinction as the home of some of Indiana's most important artists – T.C. Steele and J. Ottis Adams – and Indiana's 4th-6th Governors.

Complementing its heritage, the county's natural assets – Brookville Lake and the Whitewater River – draw over a million weekend and seasonal visitors each year. The county also takes pride in the quality of its schools and community-based programs, its strong 4-H tradition, and the enduring sense of community that connects its residents across generations.

Music and visual arts take root in Franklin County, mingling seamlessly with a rich and ever-visible history. **Signature festivals like Freudenfest and the Franklin County Quilt Show amplify community identity** and celebrate cultural heritage, drawing thousands each year. Performance venues, the Franklin County Arts Council, along with annual events like the Plein Air Paint Out



(echoing Hoosier Group traditions) and the Chainsaw Invitational, showcase today's talents while inspiring the next generation. While most public art was created in the last century, newer works like the **"Great Chicken Fry" rooster sculptures** in Brookville and the playful fire hydrant characters in Oldenburg reflect a commitment to vibrancy and place-making.

The county's inventory of 22 "Creative Industry / Artists" skews heavily toward the visual arts – especially photography – yet music is equally powerful here. Metamora alone, anchored by Metamora Performing Arts, is home to the Songfarmers of Metamora, Tuesday Night Jam, Metamora Mandolin Gathering, Metamora Music Festival, and more. Countywide, the Happy Valley Bluegrass Festival in Batesville, Music on Main in Brookville, and live performances in taverns and festivals across communities keep Franklin's musical traditions thriving.

Interwoven throughout is the county's deepest informant: history. Heritage is in Franklin's DNA and, in Metamora's case, remains a cornerstone of the economy. It fuels tourism, culture, and aesthetic character. Documented "History & Heritage" assets include three active organizations and 14 significant sites – 1 state historic site and 7 National Register of Historic Places listings.

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 Franklin's needs.

1. **Connected by Place, Arts & Heritage**

Franklin County's rich heritage, natural beauty, and creative assets come together through events, public art, and trails. Church tours, mural projects – from small-scale to visionary – and festivals like Freudenfest celebrate local character, connect communities, and strengthen a shared sense of place.

2. **Public Art & Beautification for Community Pride**

Murals, sculptures, and gardens transform public spaces into vibrant, welcoming places. These enhancements invite visitors and residents alike to explore and celebrate the county's unique identity.

3. **Summer Influx, but Year-Round Activation**

Solstice gatherings, county-wide plein air paint-outs, live theatre, and arts learning institutes create a lively calendar of events that engage locals and attract artists and visitors all year.



"Great Chicken Fry" rooster sculpture, Brookville



Freudenfest, Oldenburg

4. Communication & Collective County-wide Action

Franklin County moves forward together through shared calendars, strong local leadership, and cross-county collaboration. Digital tools, creative platforms, and community councils keep efforts aligned – building a unified identity that reflects every corner of the county.

5. Brookville Lake as Cultural Anchor & Connector to Community

With intentional planning – trails, public art, wayfinding, events, and marketing – Brookville Lake becomes a cultural gateway that connects people to towns, businesses, and local stories, turning recreation into lasting community engagement while deepening economic and cultural connections.

What You Have

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

Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

#	Overview	Select Assets
75	Arts	
22	Artists & Creative Business	Artists & Creative Businesses – Schwestern Gallery of Arts, She Shed Glass Studio, Columbia Street Music District, 8 photographers, painters, musicians, potters, traditional artists Arts Organizations & Groups – Franklin County Arts Council, Metamora Performing Arts – Opry Barn, Quilt Batts of Franklin County, Songfarmers of Metamora, Tuesday Night Jam, Whitewater Valley Blacksmiths Public Libraries in Brookville and Laurel Historical Groups dedicated to Franklin County Historic Society, Historic Metamora Places – Whitewater Canal State Historic Site, Historic Laurel Jail, and 11 National Register historic sites including Stockheugter Covered Bridge, Little Cedar Grove Baptist Church, and 4 historic districts Festivals – Freudenfest, Happy Valley Bluegrass Festival in Batesville, Cedar Grove Fireman's Festival, Franklin County Quilt Show, Metamora's Chainsaw Carving Invitational, Metamora Music Festival, and Laurel's Trikefest Nature & Trails – Mounds State Recreation Area, Whitewater River, Brookville Lake, Whitewater Canal Trail, Whitewater Canal Scenic Byway Other Places & Spaces – Haspin Acres, Sal Creek Horse Ranch, Wolf Creek Habitat and Rescue
4	Informal Group	
13	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
34	Public Art + Roosters	
2	Organizations	
50	Culture	
17	History & Heritage	
20	Events & Traditions	
12	Parks & Trails	
3	Funders & Friends	
29	Misc.	
14	Civic Assets	
15	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	22,785	#67
Square Miles	384	
Population / Sq Mi	60	
% of Co.		
No cities or towns larger		
Cities & Towns < 3,500 (line for SEA1 purposes)		
Town Brookville (seat)	2,622	12%
City Batesville (partial, Ripley)	1,937	9%
CDP Lake Santee	889	4%
Town Oldenburg	647	3%
CDP New Trenton	595	3%
Town Laurel	406	2%
CDP Metamora	207	1%
Town Cedar Grove	150	1%
Everywhere Else	15,332	67%

Composition	2024 %	Co. Rank
Preschool 0-4	5	#68
School Age 5-17	17	#66
College Age 18-24	7	#67
Young Adult 24-44	23	#68
Older Adult 45-64	27	#64
Seniors 65+	21	#65
Median Age	43	

Dynamics	2023	Co. Rank
Population Growth (2020-2024)	+1.5 %	
Median <i>Household</i> Income	\$77,456	#13
Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income	\$57,550	#25
Poverty Rate	9 %	#78

Notable

- Aging population with nearly 50% age 45+
- Median Age (43) higher than the state average (38)
- 9% live in poverty
- Median Household Income ranks above state average (\$69,458)

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



Franklin County School art student artwork, Brookville

Key Influences

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

Catalytic Investments	
\$10,000,000	READI 2.0 Regional Award to SEI READI <i>Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, & Union</i>
\$ 350,000	OCRA Community Development Block Grant <i>Town of Brookville: Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Grant</i>

READI Projects to Date with Connection to Arts & Culture Plan Goals			
1.0		2.0	
---	none	\$2,000,000	Brookville Renovate to Eliminate (Blight)
<i>See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 126-127.</i>			

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

Momentum Pushes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already has a functioning county-wide Community Council (e.g., Coffee & Calendars) • Improvements made to the Metamora Opry Barn • Millions of tourists coming into the county every summer • Community-based action planning experience with the ICI team from Ball State • Brookville's public art project implementation skills developed through Creative Convergence grant 	
Challenging Pulls	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed-upon need to strengthen communication, collaboration, and marketing – and leveraging technology to do so • Challenges identifying strategies for waterfront development and drawing lake visitors into town • Capacity building needed, particularly around where to start and accessing resources • Metamora's need for significant investment 	



Chicken Festival & Fry Off, Brookville

Accelerate Rural Indiana READI Projects

Arts and culture related projects that Batesville's regional development organization supports also exert positive momentum for Franklin and Ripley Counties.

	READI Investment
Kids Discovery Factory	1,000,000
Skate Park	50,000
Ivy Tech Welding Program	400,000
Arts & Innovation Hub	2,000,000
Trails & Gathering Space @ Margaret Mary Health	2,000,000
Rural Schools Reimagined	3,200,000



Metamora Opry Barn & Performing Art

Ohio County

Arts & Culture Profile

Cultivating big opportunities with small town charm

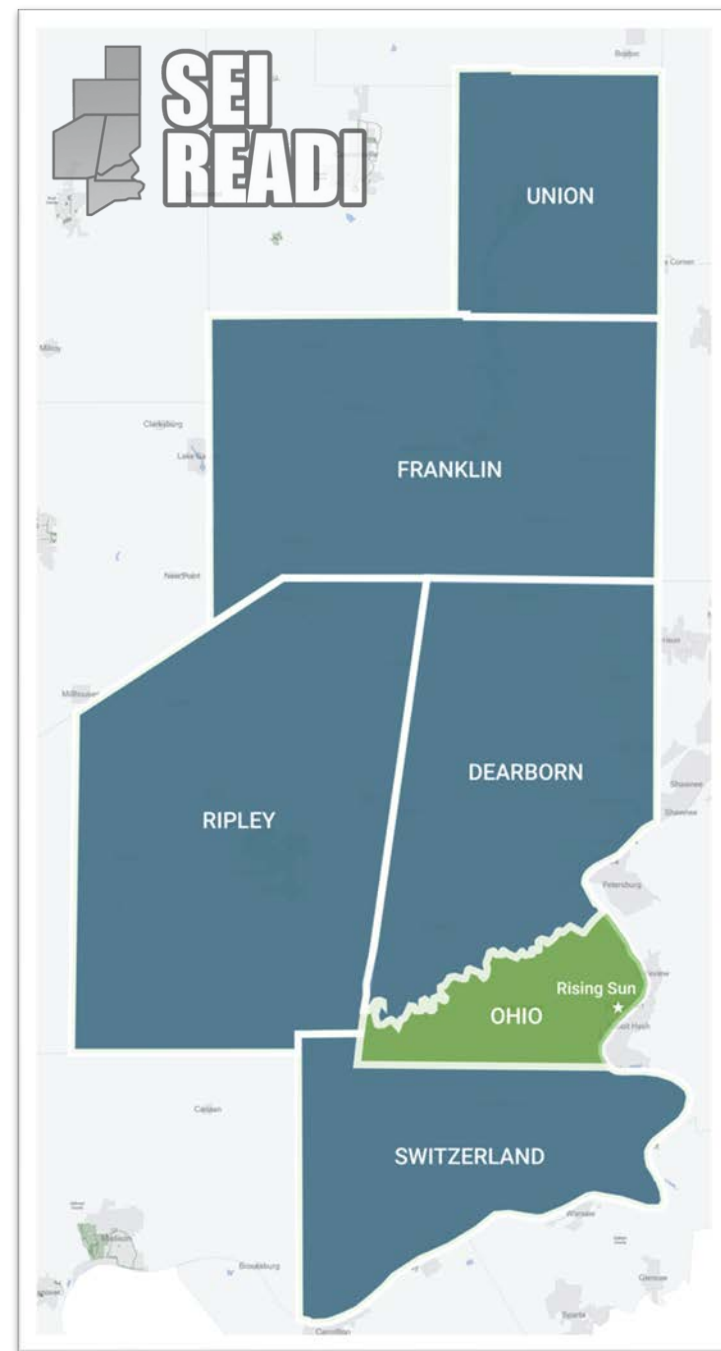
Vision, asset, and opportunity highlights to guide county efforts – shaped by local voices and research.
2025 – 2035

Arts & Culture Identity

Situated along the Ohio River shared by neighboring Kentucky, Ohio County owns the unique title as Indiana's smallest county by both population and land area, with just over 6,000 residents and 86 square miles. Its county seat, Rising Sun, once hailed in the early 1900s as one of the state's most prominent young cities, has since settled into its role as a bedroom community.

The county's roots run deep. German immigrants brought farming traditions, flatboat commerce spurred early prosperity, and the locally made Clore plows gained regional recognition. The Berkshire family played a role in abolitionist efforts, while Rising Sun's courthouse remains the oldest continuously operating in Indiana. By the late 19th century, as river traffic waned and rail connections never materialized, Rising Sun transitioned from a bustling commercial hub to a quieter river town. Its heritage remains visible in the architecture and landmarks that define its charming downtown. Complemented by natural assets – from rolling countryside to the sweeping Ohio River – Ohio County's historic and creative sectors provide a solid foundation for cultural and economic vitality.

For Indiana's smallest county, Ohio boasts an impressive array of arts and culture assets that reflect and celebrate both its past and present. Rees Harps, inventor of the popular *Harpicle Harps* and winner of the *Indiana Small Business Development Center's 2024 "Coolest Thing Made in Indiana"* award, continues the county's remarkable legacy of innovation. Rees follows in the footsteps of J.W. Whitlock, Rising Sun's first renowned harp inventor, whose automatic harp is preserved at the Ohio County Historical Museum.



The museum, along with the Southeast Indiana Veterans Museum, historic sites, and distinctive architecture showcased in downtown Rising Sun and across the county, underscores a deep commitment to heritage. Festivals such as the Navy Bean Festival, the Rising Sun Christmas Model Train Show, and the river-based Catfish Tournament foster community pride while drawing visitors to the region.

Although Ohio County does not currently have a formal arts organization, it **supports a strong and active creative industry, particularly in the visual arts**, with artists and businesses contributing to its cultural vitality. A growing collection of public art – indoors and out – along with civic leadership committed to quality of place ensures that the county's natural assets remain interwoven with its arts and culture initiatives.

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 Ohio's needs.

1. Riverfront as a Cultural and Recreational Anchor

The river is a defining focal point for storytelling, tourism, and activity. As a designated "National Water Trail" the Ohio River Way and riverfront support events, recreation, and heritage-based experiences that connect residents and visitors to place.

2. Heritage Preservation and Storytelling

Historic assets like the Underground Railroad sites, Carnegie Library, Rees Harps, and the courthouse are celebrated and activated. A renewed focus on walking tours, architecture, and ghost stories positions Ohio County as a place where the past informs the present and inspires pride.

3. Nature-Based Living and Community Wellness

Inspired by models like Paducah, KY and Strasburg, PA, 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. Creative Placemaking and Public Art

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.



Navy Bean Festival, Rising Sun

Your Input View from the Survey

“ Small town, Big Catch!
Thank you for including Indiana's smallest county, Ohio County!

I would love to see us better connected to Aurora and Lawrenceburg through the bike trail that stops at Lesko Park... [It] would be amazing if we could get that to happen.

I want all the art everywhere and all the outdoor activities. With our gorgeous riverfront, it makes total sense.

Individual response from the regional survey used to provide feedback on the plan's vision, goals, and strategies.

5. Vibrant Downtown and Coordinated Leadership

Downtown is transformed with storefront activation, alley enhancements, heritage-inspired design, and consistent activity. Micro-events, DORA (designated outdoor refreshment areas), and effective communication tools drive engagement, while professional leadership and Main Street accreditation provide a foundation for sustained growth.

What You Have

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

Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

#	Overview	Select Assets
50	Arts	
19	Artists & Creative Business	
–	Informal Group	
6	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
25	Public Art	
–	Organizations	
24	Culture	
6	History & Heritage	
11	Events & Traditions	
5	Parks & Trails	
2	Funders & Friends	
13	Misc.	
9	Civic Assets	
4	Other Opportunities	
<p>In addition to the highlights presented here. The Full Inventory with individual asset details is available as well</p> <p>Inventory sheets for each county</p> <p>Interactive regional map</p>		<p>Artists & Creative Businesses – Still Pointe Art Studio and Gallery, Rees Harps, Rising Sun Metal Works, Geneva’s Homemade Quilts, Heather’s Art, 4 photographers, 3 traditional artists</p> <p>Arts Organizations & Groups – Ohio County Public Library, Heritage Farms at Willow Creek, Grand Theater at the Casino, King’s Landing</p> <p>Public Library in Rising Sun</p> <p>Historical Groups – Ohio County Historical Museum, Southeast Indiana Veterans Museum, Ohio County Courthouse, Heritage Hall – former 1832 First Presbyterian Church, Triple Whipple Bridge</p> <p>Places – Rising Sun Historic District, City Pavilion, Heritage Hall</p> <p>Festivals – Navy Bean Festival, Ohio Valley River Cats Catfish Tournament, Rising Sun Christmas Model Train Show, Ohio County State Fair</p> <p>Nature & Trails – Ohio River, Monarch Meadows Nature Preserve, Denver-Siekman Environmental Park</p> <p>Other Places & Spaces – Red Wolf Sanctuary, Rising Star Casino, City Pavillion</p>



County Composition

Overview	2020 #	Co. Rank
Population	5,940	#92
Square Miles	70	
Population / Sq Mi	86	
% of Co.		
No cities or towns larger		
Cities & Towns < 3,500 (line for SEA1 purposes)		
City Rising Sun (seat)	2,248	38%
Everywhere Else	3,692	62%

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

Composition	2024 %	Co. Rank
Preschool 0-4	4	#92
School Age 5-17	16	#92
College Age 18-24	6	#92
Young Adult 24-44	21	#92
Older Adult 45-64	28	#92
Seniors 65+	25	#92
Median Age	48	

Dynamics	2023	Co. Rank
Population Growth (2020-2024)	+0.9 %	
Median <i>Household</i> Income	\$70,757	#33
Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income	\$55,398	#41
Poverty Rate	9 %	#74

Notable.

- Aging population with over 50% ages 45+
- Median age (48) is higher than the state average (38)
- 9% live in poverty
- 62% of Ohio County's population lives outside of Rising Sun



Rising Sun Main Street and National Historic District

Key Influences

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

Catalytic Investments				
\$10,000,000	READI 2.0 Regional Award to SEI READI <i>Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, & Union</i>			
READI Projects to Date with Connection to Arts & Culture Plan Goals				
	1.0			2.0
\$ 50,000	Ohio County Pop-Up Pavillion		—	none
See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 126-127.				

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

Momentum Pushes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Golf cart ordinance in place and DORA policy initiative in process 2025 Strategic Investment Plan adopted (wayfinding implementation in process) Ohio River Way National Water Trail 2025 designation by the U.S. Department of Interior Accredited Main Street (though needs stabilization) New signage coming to town 	
Challenging Pulls	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of capacity to meet demand (e.g., what people want Main Street to do vs. its capacity to do it) – need more leadership/volunteers in general Difficulties activating people to attend events and to volunteer Economic development embedded in city planning rather than dedicated professional Lack of trees/shade downtown hinders welcome and walkability Communication silos make government / community collaboration difficult Aging/Retirement population is a focus to lean in on but makes growth difficult 	



Harpicle Harps, Rising Sun
Voted 2024 Coolest thing Made in Indiana



Hibiscus Mural by JJ Wolfe, Rising Sun Waterfront



Ohio County Courthouse, oldest in continuous use in state



Ripley County

Arts & Culture Profile

Cultivating big opportunities with small town charm

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

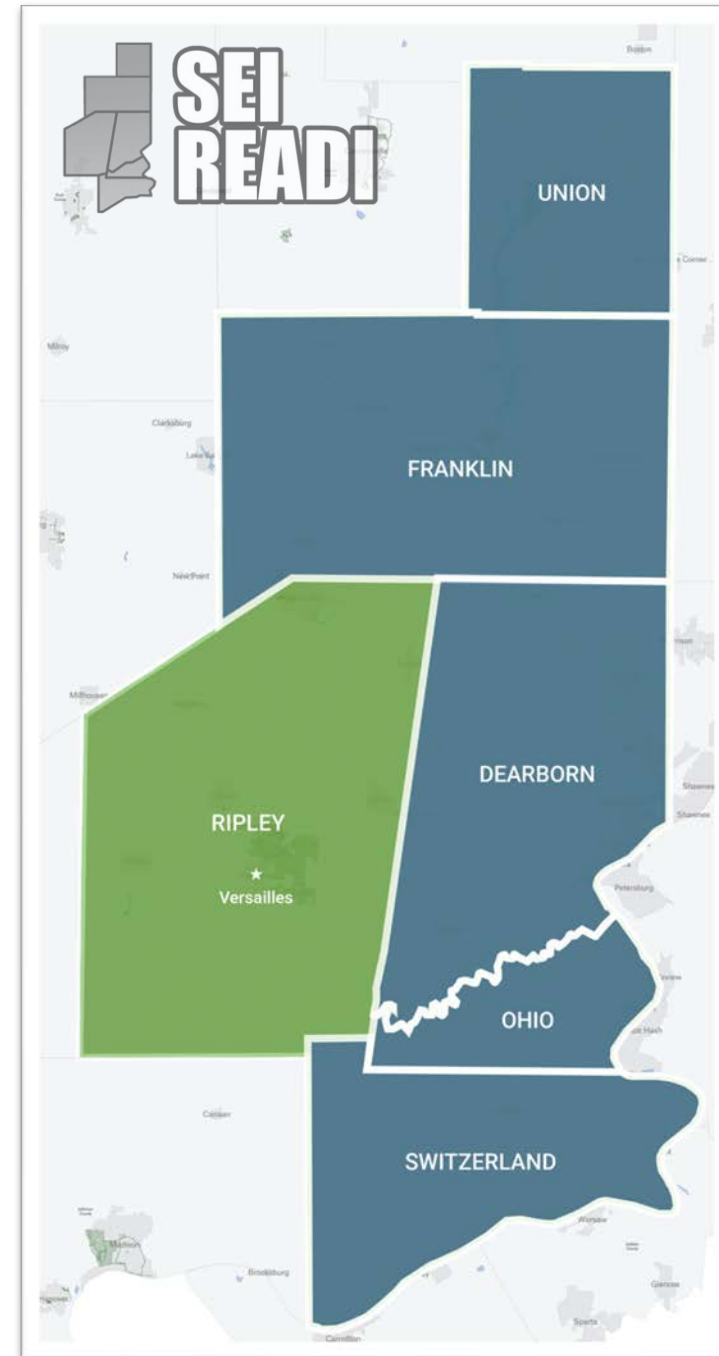
Arts & Culture Identity

Ripley County, home to nearly 29,000, is defined by community spirit, pride in heritage, and a neighborly culture rooted in families that have lived here for generations. People are known for their **“can-do” attitude, generosity, and willingness to support one another** – qualities that carry into the county’s vibrant arts and cultural life. Traditions of craftsmanship, passionate arts educators, rich music history, and distinctive festivals all highlight the creative energy of its residents. The landscape shapes daily life, with Versailles State Park, winding creeks, and natural beauty offering recreation, gathering spaces, and a connection to place.

The county is perhaps best known for **the “Milan Miracle” of 1954**, when Milan High School captured the state basketball championship and inspired the film *Hoosiers*. Ripley County also played a significant role in the Underground Railroad, reflecting its long tradition of generosity and courage. Batesville anchors the economy with major employers like Batesville Casket Company and Hillenbrand, whose manufacturing strength supports jobs and philanthropy. Today, museums, festivals, and community events preserve these legacies while sustaining a cultural identity defined by resilience, creativity, and connectedness.

Ripley County is home to a remarkable collection of arts and culture assets, anchored by a vibrant creative industry and enriched by strong traditions in music, literary, and visual arts.

Artisan excellence is reflected in nationally recognized makers such as Iron Timbers, featured on HGTV’s *Good Bones*, alongside Red Forge, Thornfire Forge, and Indiana Artisans Robin Dyer (Original Moccasins) and Roland Rein (the Basket Man). A thriving literary scene is evident in the work of 8 published writers, a local bookstore, and a publication company, while 5 arts



organizations – including the Batesville Area Arts Council, Southeast Indiana Woodturners, SEI MakerPlus, and two active theatres – further traditions, champion contemporary creativity, and provide valuable community programming. Music, deeply rooted in traditions and community legacies, remains a defining cultural thread evident through signature events like the Batesville Art & Music Festival, performers, and myriad hosting venues across the county including taverns, wineries, theatres, the Holdsworth Pavilion, and Speakeasy Listening Room.

Ripley County also honors and shares its history with pride. Fourteen sites on the National Historic Register, 6 museums, 9 historic bridges, active preservation groups, and 5 Underground Railroad driving trails all highlight heritage. Signature events such as the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association’s annual Championship bring history to life. Looking ahead, the new arts and innovation hub at Batesville Memorial Library promises to nurture emerging talent and inspire the next generation of makers, artists, and storytellers.

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 Ripley’s needs.

1. An Arts-Rich Countywide Identity

Ripley County becomes a regional arts destination anchored by dedicated arts spaces, a countywide arts council, and events that feature local talent. From woodworking and live music to mural festivals, creativity is visible, celebrated, and woven into every community.

2. Trail-Connected Communities and a Reinvented Versailles State Park

A network of bike and walking trails links towns, Versailles State Park, and community hubs. The park itself is reimagined with lodging, event space, and trail access, making it a year-round draw for all.

3. A County of Story, Sound, and Celebration

Home to a growing Music Hall of Fame and unique festivals, Ripley County honors its musical legacy and community spirit. Events, public art, and storytelling lift up shared heritage and small-town charm while inviting new voices.



Weberding's Carving Shop, Batesville



Glockenspiel Clock by Chaz Kaiser, Aesthetic Metal Studio



The Osgood Sculpture by Iron Timbers

4. Youth-Led, Future-Focused

Youth engagement is prioritized through school-based art recognition, expanded STEAM programming, and intergenerational creative initiatives. Young people shape Ripley County's future and are seen, heard, and celebrated.

5. Aesthetic and Cultural Integration in Community Development

Public art, wayfinding, and design are central to how Ripley County grows. From gateway signage and murals to cohesive branding and beautification, the look and feel reflect pride, purpose, and place.

What You Have

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

Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

#	Overview	Select Assets
108	Arts	
47	Artists & Creative Business	
1	Informal Group	
13	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
42	Public Art	
5	Organizations	
56	Culture	
22	History & Heritage	
17	Events & Traditions	
15	Parks & Trails	
2	Funders & Friends	
41	Misc.	
31	Civic Assets	
10	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	
		Artists & Creative Businesses – Iron Timbers, Red Forge, Batesville Music Co, Weberding's Carving Shop, Sandy Pickett, 8 authors, music groups and musicians, Indiana Artisans: Robin Dyer's Moccasins, The Basket Man
		Arts Organizations & Groups – Southeast Indiana Woodturners, Batesville Area Arts Council, SEI MakerPlus, The Damm Theatre, Gibson Theatre, Southeast Indiana Creative Collective, Kids Discovery Factory
		Public Libraries in Versailles, Batesville, Osgood, and Milan
		Historical Groups – Ripley County Historical Society & Museum, Batesville Area Historic Center, Ripley County Basketball Hall of Fame, Milan '54 Museum, Osgood Historical Museum, Sunman Historical Museum
		Places – 14 sites on the National Register of Historic Places, 9 bridges
		Festivals – Plein Air Paint Out, Ripley County Film Fest and Park Hop, National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association National Championships and Spring Shoots, Bricktoberfest, Batesville Museum & Arts Festival, Milan's Christmas Walk
		Nature & Trails – Versailles State Park, Underground Railroad Driving Trails
		Other Places & Spaces – Holdsworth Entertainment Pavillion, Capability Farm, Bel-Air Drive-in Theatre



County Composition

Overview		2020 #	Co. Rank
Population		28,995	#55
Square Miles		447	
Population / Sq Mi		65	
		% of Co.	
City	Batesville (<i>partial, Franklin</i>)	5,265	18%
Cities & Towns < 3,500 (line for SEA1 purposes)			
Town	Versailles (seat)	2,184	8%
Town	Milan	1,823	6%
Town	Osgood	1,587	5%
Town	Sunman	914	3%
Town	Holton	417	1%
Town	Napoleon	236	1%
Everywhere Else		16,569	57%

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

Composition		2024 %	Co. Rank
Preschool	0-4	6	#52
School Age	5-17	17	#52
College Age	18-24	8	#54
Young Adult	24-44	24	#56
Older Adult	45-64	26	#55
Seniors	65+	20	#53
Median Age		41	

Notable

- Median age (41) is higher than the state average (38)
- 10% live in poverty
- 57% of Ripley County's population lives outside incorporated cities/towns

Dynamics		2023	Co. Rank
Population Growth (2020-2024)		+0.8 %	
Median <i>Household</i> Income		\$66,942	#45
Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income		\$52,541	#58
Poverty Rate		10 %	#60



Busching Covered Bridge

Key Influences

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

Catalytic Investments	
\$10,000,000	READI 2.0 Regional Award to SEI READI <i>Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, & Union</i>
\$ 700,000	OCRA – State Revolving Loan Fund Grant <i>Town of Milan – “Basketball Town USA” Water Tower</i>

READI Projects to Date with Connection to Arts & Culture Plan Goals			
1.0		2.0	
\$ 86,000	Versailles Pocket Park	\$3,000,000	SEI Career Center
\$ 100,000	Milan Street Lights & Banners	\$ 500,000	The Tanglewood (Phase 2)

See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 126-127.

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

Momentum Pushes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong ‘can do’, supportive, generous, and friendly people Significant projects in Batesville (Children’s museum opening, Arts & Innovation Hub) Bike & Pedestrian Masterplan implementation, including trails connecting communities, wayfinding, etc. 2025 Strategic Investment Plan adopted Opportunity to learn from work in other counties (e.g., Dillsboro Arts) Community-based action planning experience with the ICI team from Ball State 	

Challenging Pulls	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed-upon need to strengthen communication and public awareness re activities and opportunities as well as need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase youth, young adult connectedness Increase collaboration Connecting communities (across county) Solidify a community identity Challenges attracting pass through traffic to stop, explore, and stay 	

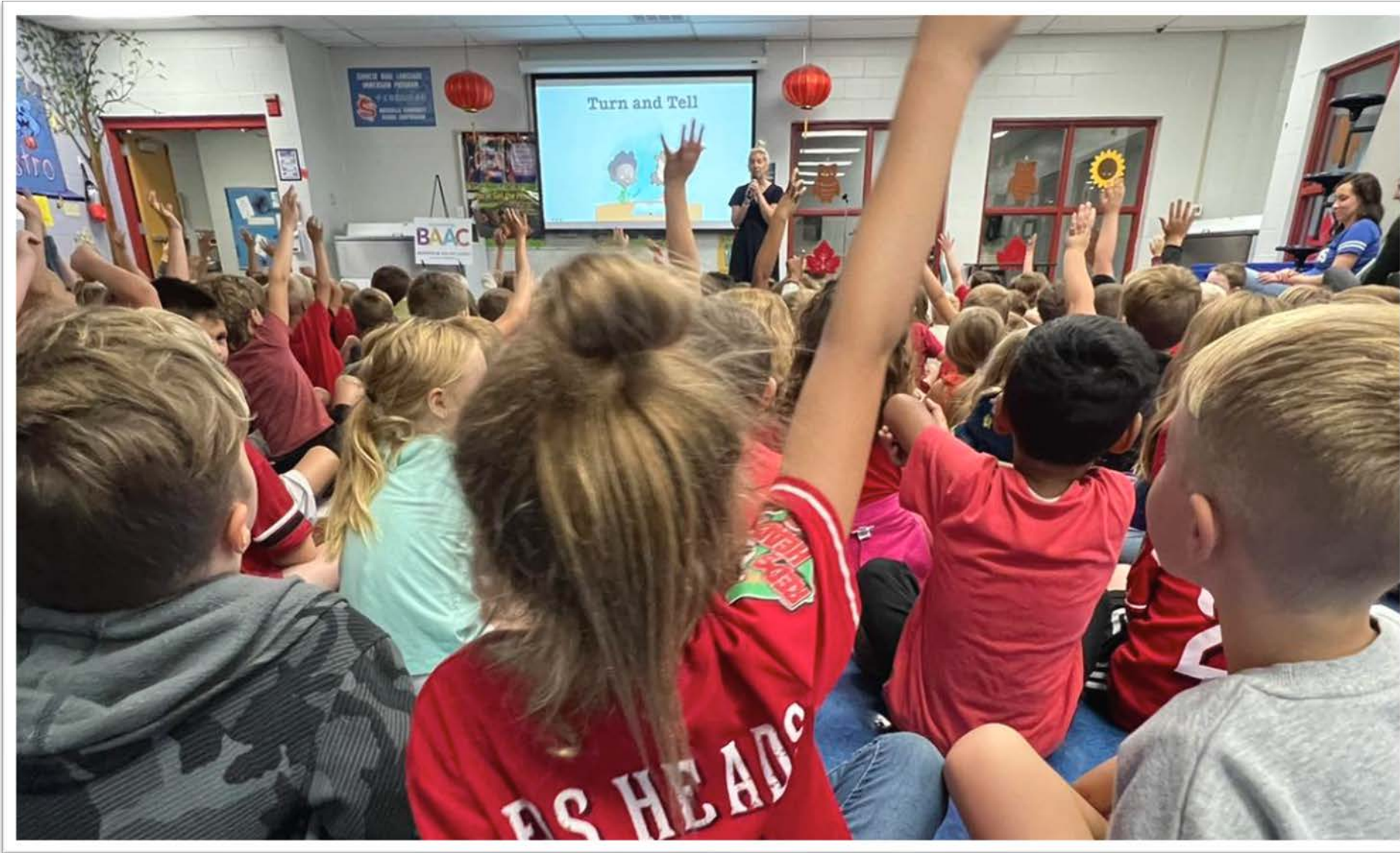


Ripley County Film Fest at the Damm Theatre, Osgood

Accelerate Rural Indiana READI Projects

Arts and culture related projects that Batesville’s regional development organization supports also exert positive momentum for Franklin and Ripley Counties.

	READI Investment
Kids Discovery Factory	1,000,000
Skate Park	50,000
Ivy Tech Welding Program	400,000
Arts & Innovation Hub	2,000,000
Trails & Gathering Space @ Margaret Mary Health	2,000,000
Rural Schools Reimagined	3,200,000



Batesville Area Arts Council Arts in Education

Switzerland County

Arts & Culture Profile

Cultivating big opportunities with small town charm

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

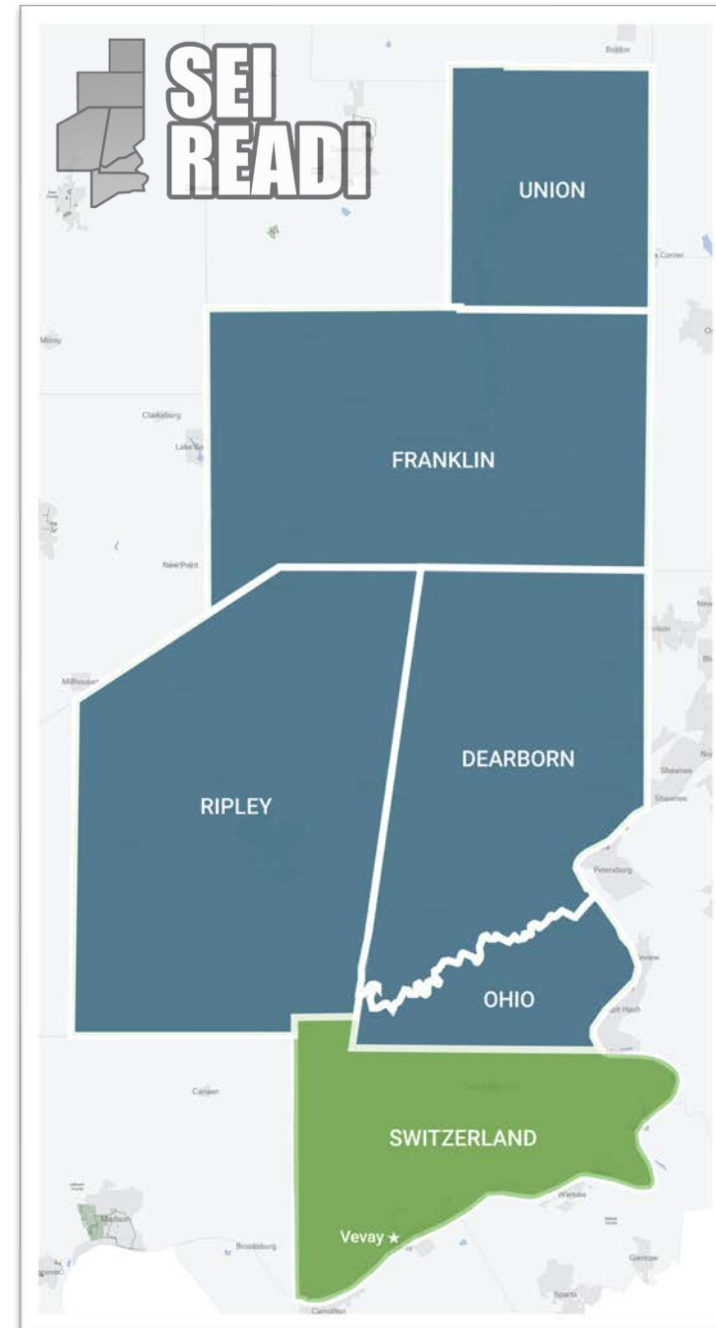
Arts & Culture Identity

Switzerland County, with a population of just over 10,000, sits along the Ohio River and is steeped in heritage shaped by its Swiss founders. Known as the *“Rhineland of America,”* the county became a national leader in early American wine grape production. Today, that legacy is celebrated annually through the Swiss Wine Festival in Vevay, recognized by USA Today readers as the Best Small Town in the Midwest in both 2023 and 2024.

History is omnipresent, most prominently in Vevay’s 275 historic buildings and landmarks that reflect the county’s prosperity during its wine and river trade years. Despite lacking railroads, Switzerland County thrived as a river community, with commerce flowing along the Ohio. Key figures include like Benjamin Schenck, a steamboat magnate whose 19th-century mansion remains a symbol of the county’s golden era. Today, the mansion is home to modern tattoo artist and entrepreneur Kat Von D, linking past grandeur with contemporary cultural flair.

With its combination of rich history, preserved architecture, scenic river setting, and modern recognition, Switzerland County continues to embody both tradition and vitality. Its cultural identity is rooted in immigrant ingenuity blending heritage with small-town charm and a dash of quirk making it a distinct destination.

Switzerland County’s arts and culture scene blends rich history with a flair for fun. Anchored by the Community Art Center of Switzerland County and the Historic Hoosier Theatre, the county showcases creativity through festivals like the ***Goatauqua Art Fair – inspired by the beloved***



Fred the Goat – along with the Sleepy Hollow Arts & Craft Show, Swiss Wine Festival, Vevay Volkfest, and Wheels on Fire Vevay. Heritage is central to this identity.

A **thriving creative industry adds vibrancy**, from The fAxtory Music Co. and Lizzy Green Mosaics to local potters, quilters, woodworkers, musicians, and designers. Unique touches, like Kat Von D's garden of 30,000 Black Tulips, reinforce the county's spirit of quirkiness and fun. The high school provides a strong arts education including art and drama clubs, ensuring new generations of talent. Together, these assets make Switzerland County's cultural identity both rooted and refreshing, historic yet contemporary, and always marked by creativity, community pride, and a touch of playful charm.

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 Switzerland's needs.

1. A Vibrant, Walkable Downtown Core

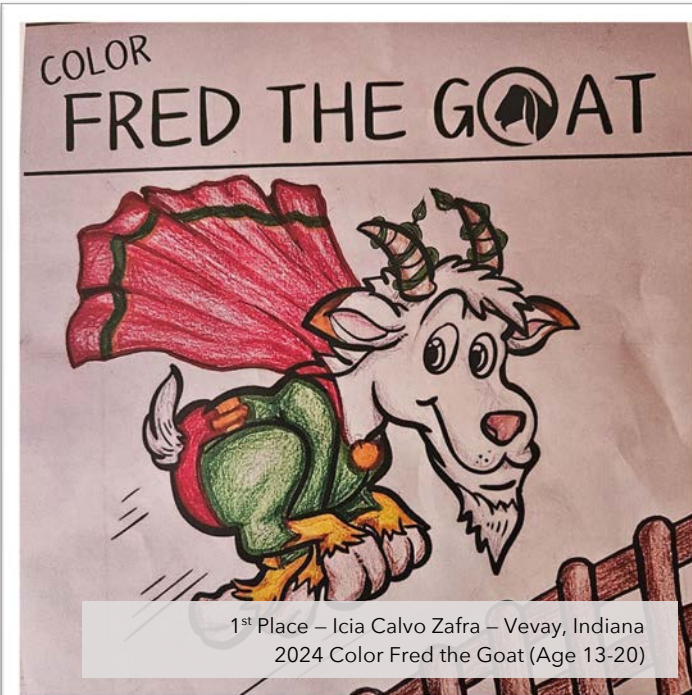
By 2035, downtown Vevay is a lively hub where every storefront is filled, restaurants thrive, and walking trails connect residents and visitors to local shops, stories, and scenic assets. Beautification efforts and adaptive reuse of historic buildings create a cohesive and attractive small-town experience.

2. Heritage Identity-Driven Growth that Embraces the Quirky and Unique

Switzerland County confidently preserves and promotes what makes it different. Quirks become cornerstones of local pride, storytelling, and tourism. As part of the Cincinnati metro, the county maintains its distinct character while inviting creative entrepreneurs and remote workers to call it home.

3. Nature as a Lifestyle and Economic Driver

Waterways, trails, and wildlife define daily life. Birding, boating, hunting, camping, and natural beauty are preserved and elevated. As a destination for outdoor recreation, the county attracts both visitors and residents seeking wellness, adventure, and a deep connection to the land.



4. Celebrated History, Arts, and Architecture

From the Underground Railroad to winemaking, history is reinterpreted for today. The local theatre and community art center thrive with diverse talent and professional management. Revitalized historic assets are homes for arts, culture, and community gathering – supporting economic vitality and heritage pride.

5. Connected Communities and Future-Ready Infrastructure

High-speed internet countywide, active civic engagement, and clear wayfinding and communication, better connects Switzerland County – physically and socially. Collaboration across communities grows, drawing in new residents and energizing long-time locals to shape the future together.

What You Have

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

Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

#	Overview	Select Assets
50	Arts	
30	Artists & Creative Business	Artists & Creative Businesses – The fAxetory Music Co, Lizzy Green Mosaics, Cardinal Quilts, Stoned Gnomes, Bev’s Pottery, Riveraire Fibreworks, Kat Von D & Von D Land, woodworkers, authors, visual artists, makers, musicians, and designers Arts Organizations & Groups – Community Art Center of Switzerland County, Historic Hoosier Theatre, Switzerland County High School Art and Drama Clubs Public Library in Vevay Historical Groups – Musee de Vonage, Switzerland County Historical Society, Racing Performance Museum Places – Benjamin Schenck Mansion, Patriot Old Jail and General Store, Thiebaud Farmstead, and 5 sites on the National Register of Historic Places, Vevay Historic District and walking tour Festivals – Goatauqua Art Fair, Sleepy Hollow Arts & Craft Show, Swiss Wine Festival, Vevay Volkfest, Wheels on Fire Vevay Nature & Trails – Ohio River and Ohio River Scenic Byway Other Places & Spaces – Belterra Casino Resort and Event Center, Paul Ogle Riverfront, Larry Tolbert Fitness Trail, Patriot Memorial Park
2	Informal Group	
4	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
12	Public Art + Fred the Goats	
2	Organizations	
28	Culture	
11	History & Heritage	
7	Events & Traditions	
7	Parks & Trails	
3	Funders & Friends	
16	Misc.	
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	9,737	#88
Square Miles	221	
Population / Sq Mi	45	
% of Co.		
No cities or towns larger		
Cities & Towns < 3,500 (line for SEA1 purposes)		
Town Vevay (seat)	1,741	18%
Town Patriot	201	2%
Everywhere Else	7,795	80%

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

Composition	2024 %	Co. Rank
Preschool 0-4	6	#85
School Age 5-17	18	#86
College Age 18-24	7	#89
Young Adult 24-44	23	#87
Older Adult 45-64	27	#87
Seniors 65+	20	#88
Median Age	43	

Dynamics	2023	Co. Rank
Population Growth (2020-2024)	+3 %	
Median <i>Household</i> Income	\$60,219	#77
Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income	\$43,212	#91
Poverty Rate	13 %	#31

Notable.

- 5 years older than the state at the median
- 2nd lowest per capita income at the median with 13% living in poverty
- 80% of county population lives outside incorporated cities/towns
- +3% population growth outpaced the state (2%)



Historic Hoosier Theater, Vevay

Key Influences

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

Catalytic Investments

\$10,000,000	READI 2.0 Regional Award to SEI READI <i>Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, & Union</i>
\$ 467,327	Lilly Endowment Inc. GIFT VIII <i>Matching grant to build assets and support charitable activities</i>

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

1.0	2.0
-- none	-- none

See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 126-127.

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

Momentum Pushes

- Upcoming installation of outdoor stage
- Activity and attention related to Kat Von D relocation (e.g., 30,000 Black Tulips, Hello Vevay, Wheels on Fire Cruise-In, Von D Land store opening)
- Community commitment to Hoosier Theatre and planned improvements
- Opportunity to capitalize on Creation Museum (Petersburg, KY) for art tourism

Challenging Pulls

- Agreed-upon need for greater communication across sectors and communities, more diverse group of doers and volunteers
- Need for additional attraction and retention strategies (e.g., adding bike lanes, install EV access stations)
- Challenges advocating for appropriate policies and addressing unfavorable ones
- Challenges solidifying / uniting around a community identity



Goatauqua Community Art Fair, Vevay



Bev's Pottery and Kip Meyerhoff, Author



Community Art Center of Switzerland County, Vevay



Swiss Wine Festival, Vevay

Union County

Arts & Culture Profile

Cultivating big opportunities with small town charm

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

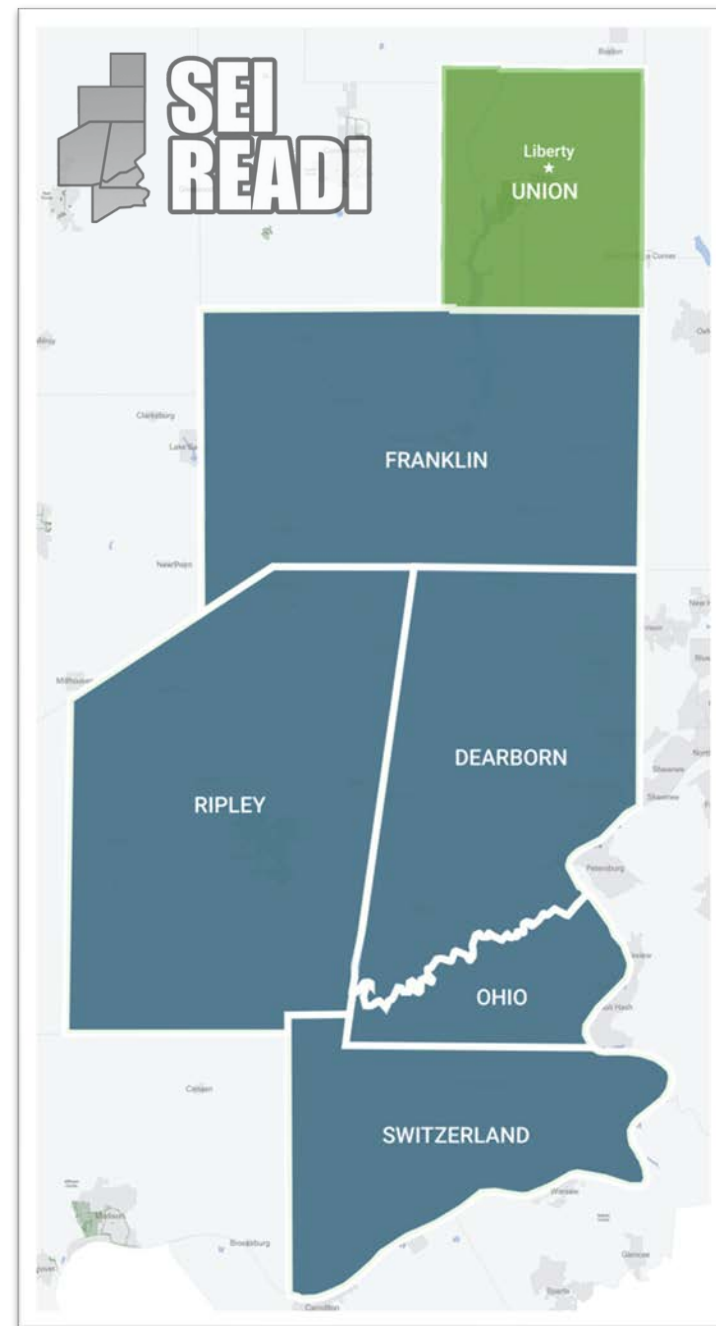
Arts & Culture Identity

Bordering Ohio with just over 7,000 residents, Union County is among Indiana's smallest counties by population and size. Its seat, Liberty, and the surrounding towns reflect a rural character shaped by deep agricultural roots that continue to define the economy and community life today.

Settlement began in the early 1800s, when pioneers moved into the fertile Whitewater Valley. Among them was William Beard, a Quaker and noted conductor on the Underground Railroad. Agriculture has remained central from those early days to the present, with family farms and agribusiness still anchoring local identity. Notable natives include Bob Jenkins, a nationally recognized motorsports broadcaster, whose career reflected the region's keen sense of storytelling and connection.

Union County also holds a unique distinction as home to Union County – College Corner Joint School District, the last operating joint state district in both Indiana and Ohio. Natural and recreational assets play a vital role: Whitewater Memorial State Park and Brookville Lake attract over a million annual visitors and sparked the county's motto, ***"Stopped for the lake, stayed for the life."*** With its historic legacy, cross-border ties, and enduring agricultural foundation, Union County offers a cultural identity that blends heritage, community pride, and natural beauty.

Union County offers ***a small but mighty foundation of arts and culture from which to grow, connect, and expand*** – including a growing inventory of public art that reflects and celebrates county identity. A strong community of creative entrepreneurs-designers, photographers,



traditional artists, makers, performers, and even a sound studio – anchor the creative business economy while adding vibrancy. The county’s active public library, informal groups like the Union County Knitting Club and Plein Air Union County Artists, and community events such as Live at Liberty and Harvest Fest provide residents and visitors with meaningful opportunities for arts engagement and connection.

Heritage is equally important to Union County’s cultural identity. The Union County Historical Society and Depot Museum, the historic Union County Courthouse, Templeton Cabin, and First Missionary Baptist Church preserve and interpret stories of early settlement, civic life, and faith traditions. Festivals such as Christmas in Our Hometown, the Liberty 4th of July Festival, and the Union County Fireman’s Festival Truck Show carry these traditions forward while strengthening community pride. Together with the county’s thriving recreation assets – Brookville Lake, Whitewater Memorial State Park, and Quakertown State Recreation Area – Union County presents a charming, peaceful “cool little county” to visit, stay, and grow.

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 Union’s needs.

1. **Connected and Vibrant Communities**

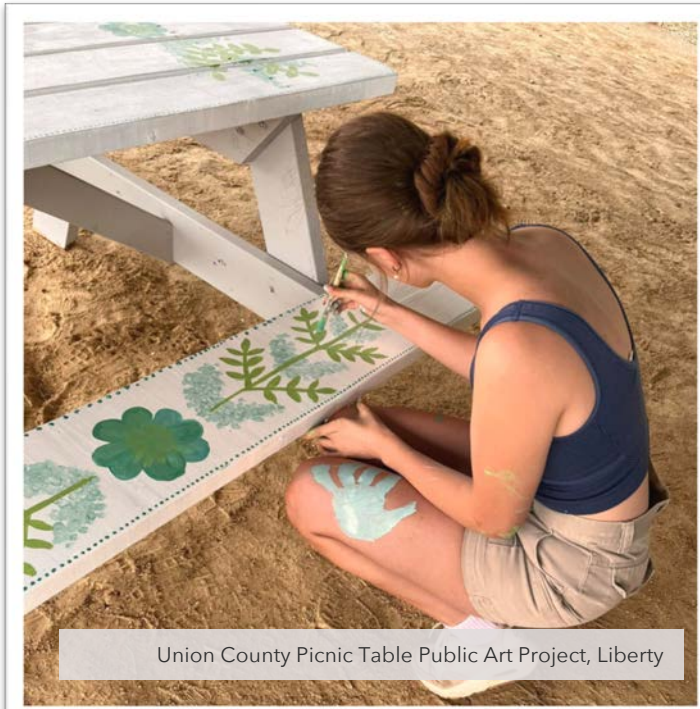
Downtown Liberty thrives as a lively hub, beautification efforts span public and private spaces, cohesive signage unifies across towns, and active Main Street programs reflect strong local investment and pride.

2. **Flourishing Arts, Culture, and Local Economy**

Public art, community theatre, creative entrepreneurs, and small businesses energize the county. Farmers markets, pop-ups, and independent shops thrive alongside arts-integrated childcare and shared creative spaces. Together, they reflect an economy fueled by local identity, culture, and entrepreneurship-and a strong preference for independent businesses over national chains.

3. **Engaged Citizens and Collaborative Leadership**

Volunteerism is thriving, residents in all corners of the county feel connected, and a “we can” spirit drives grassroots action. Local government, Main Street, UCDC (development), and



Union County Picnic Table Public Art Project, Liberty



Live in Liberty

civic leaders work in sync, while collaboration with Franklin County realize lake-centered economic and tourism opportunities

4. Parks, Recreation, and Natural Assets

Expanded trails, upgraded parks, and revived destinations support year-round recreation. Revitalized natural spaces and active ballfields provide safe, family-friendly places to gather, play, and enjoy Union County's outdoors.

5. Emerging Momentum and Shared Energy

New community gardens, an expanded library, and community events like Food Truck Fridays spark engagement. These early efforts reflect a shared commitment to growth, creativity, and collective action.

What You Have

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

Highlights from the County Cultural Asset Inventory

#	Overview	Select Assets
41	Arts	
24	Artists & Creative Business	
4	Informal Group	
4	Art in Non-Art Spaces	
9	Public Art + Quilt Trail	
–	Organizations	
15	Culture	
4	History & Heritage	
7	Events & Traditions	
3	Parks & Trails	
1	Funders & Friends	
15	Misc.	
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		
		Artists & Creative Businesses – Pohler Fabrics, Artistry Farm, Copper Dream Art Studio, Provincial Papercrafter, fiber artists, photographers, dance studio, designers, visual artists, writers, makers
		Arts Organizations & Groups – Union County Knitting Club, Plein Air Union County Artists, Live at Liberty, Creative Writing Club
		Public Library in Liberty
		Historical Groups – Union County Historical Society and Depot Museum, First Missionary Baptist Church 1805 Templeton Cabin, Union County Courthouse
		Festivals – Harvest Fest, Christmas in our Hometown, Liberty 4 th of July Festival, Union County's Fireman's Festival Truck Show, Union County Extension Homemaker Bazaar
		Nature & Trails – Brookville Lake, Whitewater Memorial State Park, Quakertown State Recreation Area, Union County Nature Park
		Other Places & Spaces – Liberty 44 Speedway, Whitewater Ranch

County Composition

Overview	2020 #	Co. Rank
Population	7,087	#91
Square Miles	161	
Population / Sq Mi	43	
% of Co.		
No cities or towns larger		
Cities & Towns < 3,500 (line for SEA1 purposes)		
Town Liberty (seat)	2,000	28%
Town West College Corner	545	8%
Everywhere Else	4,542	64%

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

Composition	2024 %	Co. Rank
Preschool 0-4	5	#91
School Age 5-17	16	#91
College Age 18-24	7	#91
Young Adult 24-44	23	#91
Older Adult 45-64	27	#91
Seniors 65+	23	#91
Median Age	45	

Dynamics	2023	Co. Rank
Population Growth (2020-2024)	-3 %	#92
Median <i>Household</i> Income	\$64,648	#56
Median <i>Per Capita</i> Income	\$51,547	#66
Poverty Rate	11 %	#46

Notable

- Fastest SHRINKING county in the state
- 7 years older than the state at the median
- 11% live in poverty
- 64% of county population lives outside incorporated cities/towns



Plant Your Roots Here by Leah Pinney, Liberty

Key Influences

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

Catalytic Investments

\$10,000,000	READI 2.0 Regional Award to SEI READI <i>Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, & Union</i>
\$ 736,083	Lilly Endowment Inc. GIFT VIII <i>Matching grant to build assets and support charitable activities</i>

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

1.0		2.0
\$ 38,000	Union County Historic Water Works <i>See full list of READI projects in Appendix, pages 126-127.</i>	— none

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

Momentum Pushes

- A charming downtown
- The leadership of a strong community foundation
- A strong public library with community services and arts programs completing expansion
- New engagement through two community gardens, Food Truck Friday, and more
- Focused local identity in action (e.g., avoid national businesses like Dollar Store)
- Recently developed county vision documents

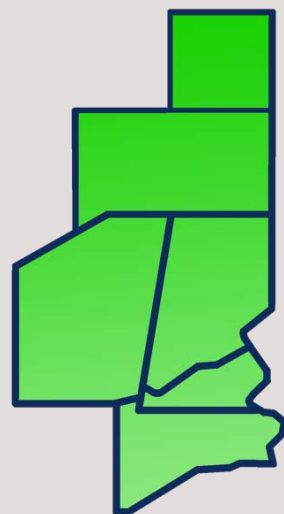
Challenging Pulls

- Need to develop “we can” attitude, connect with residents outside largest communities, and bridge mindsets
- Commuter class has time challenges engaging/participating within the community
- Challenges cooperating for mutual benefit (e.g., need for Franklin and Union Counties to work together – maximize benefit of the lake)
- Capacity challenges at county, towns, Main Street, and UCDC levels
- Concerning health statistics (high rates of opioid overdoses, smoking, and suicide)





Clockwise: UC Hype Youth Program, Union Square Project Design, Young Author inspired by local coffee shop, Union County Parks & Recreation



**SEI
READI**