

Technical Assistance Panel Report | DECEMBER 3-4, 2019

# DECATUR TOWNSHIP

## INDIANAPOLIS

## ABOUT

### About the Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute is a global membership organization comprising more than 40,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe and Asia Pacific Region, and members in 81 countries.

ULI's impact on land use decision making is based on its members sharing expertise on the variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns. Peer-to-peer learning is shared through thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as an authority on land use and real estate.

ULI's Advisory Services program, which began in 1947, assembles member-lead teams to help find creative practical solutions to complex land use planning and development projects, programs and policies. National panels are available for 3-day or 5-day assignments.

More information is available at [uli.org](https://uli.org). Follow ULI on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.

### About ULI Indiana

ULI Indiana was founded in 2007 and has over 350 members across the state, with the majority in Central Indiana.

The Indiana district council is supported by over 45 corporate and philanthropic sponsors and by contract assignments like Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs).

Local TAPs are available for assignments ranging from 1/2 day to 2 days.

ULI Indiana also offers over 15 general audience events per year, as well as affinity groups such as the Women's Leadership Initiative (WLI) and Young Leaders Group (YLG).

In 2020 ULI Indiana launched a Diversity Initiative to expand the number of minorities and women working in real estate development.

Learn more at [Indiana.uli.org](https://Indiana.uli.org), and follow us on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.

© 2020 URBAN LAND INSTITUTE

THIS REPORT IS SPONSORED BY:

City of Indianapolis, Department of Metropolitan Development



ON THE COVER: Aerial view of the study area in context. (Image credit ULI Indiana.)

Contents

About	2
Background	4
Assignment	6
Process	7
Findings	10
Land Use	17
Community	24

Acknowledgments

On behalf of ULI Indiana, the panel would like to thank the City of Indianapolis, Department of Metropolitan Development, for their sponsorship of this effort. Special appreciation goes to the host organizations, the Decatur Township Civic Council and Partners for Prosperity, for their work in preparation, support, and coordination leading up to and during the panel. The panel would also like to thank the community stakeholders from across Decatur Township and Indianapolis who shared their perspectives, experiences, and insights with the panel.

PANELISTS

- Jacque Haynes (Chair)
- Eva Gribler
- Daniel Liggett

TAP COMMITTEE VOLUNTEERS

- Debra Kunce
- Andrea Wesson

ULI INDIANA STAFF

- Jennifer Milliken
- Megan Adams





---

## BACKGROUND

---

The Urban Land Institute is an independent, unbiased (non-lobbying and nonpartisan) professional association, founded in 1936 and with over 40,000 members worldwide. Among other activities, ULI brings its members together in small groups to combine and leverage their expertise to help solve challenging community land use issues. These small groups, called panels, have been used on several occasions by the City of Indianapolis to generate ideas and test theories for different parts of the City. TAP results are non-binding—i.e. they aren't adopted into the City long-range plan—however, they can be a useful guide to the decision-making that takes place during the City's official planning processes.

ULI Indiana was asked to provide a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) for the southwest portion of the City of Indianapolis also known as Decatur Township. In this area the question of appropriate land use has been a topic of discussion for years, with little consensus. Located within the City limits, close by the Indianapolis International Airport and I-465, the area has experienced pressure for industrial /office flex space, and some of this has taken place, notably at Ameriplex. At the same time, many parts of the Township retain a rural character, with agriculture land and some areas of wooded, rolling hills.

Residents and property owners are similarly divided. One coalition of residents has banded together in two separate organizations, as the Decatur Township Civic Council (DTCC) and Partners for Prosperity (PfP). These groups of engaged citizens were asked by the City to serve as hosts for the ULI TAP. The DTCC/PfP are against further industrial development in the area, especially if it would creep southeast of Kentucky Ave./SR-67, a major highway and boundary bisecting the Township. They are in favor of more residential opportunities—especially “move-up” and senior “move-down” housing—and more retail opportunities, including big box/national and boutique/local retail and restaurants. In their words, they want a *complete community*.

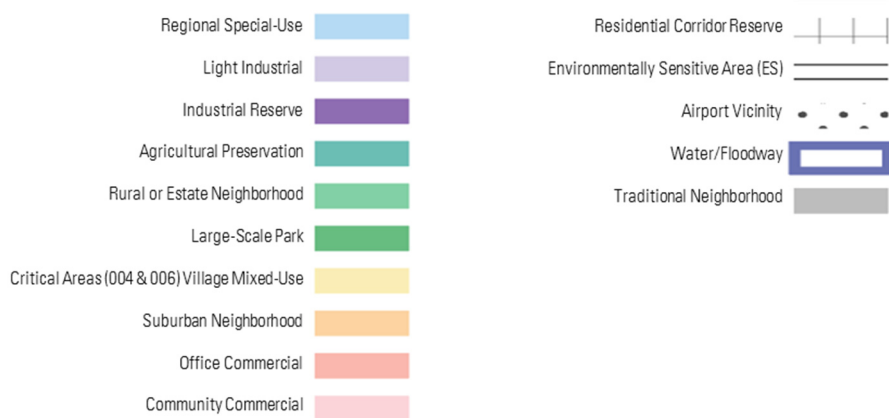
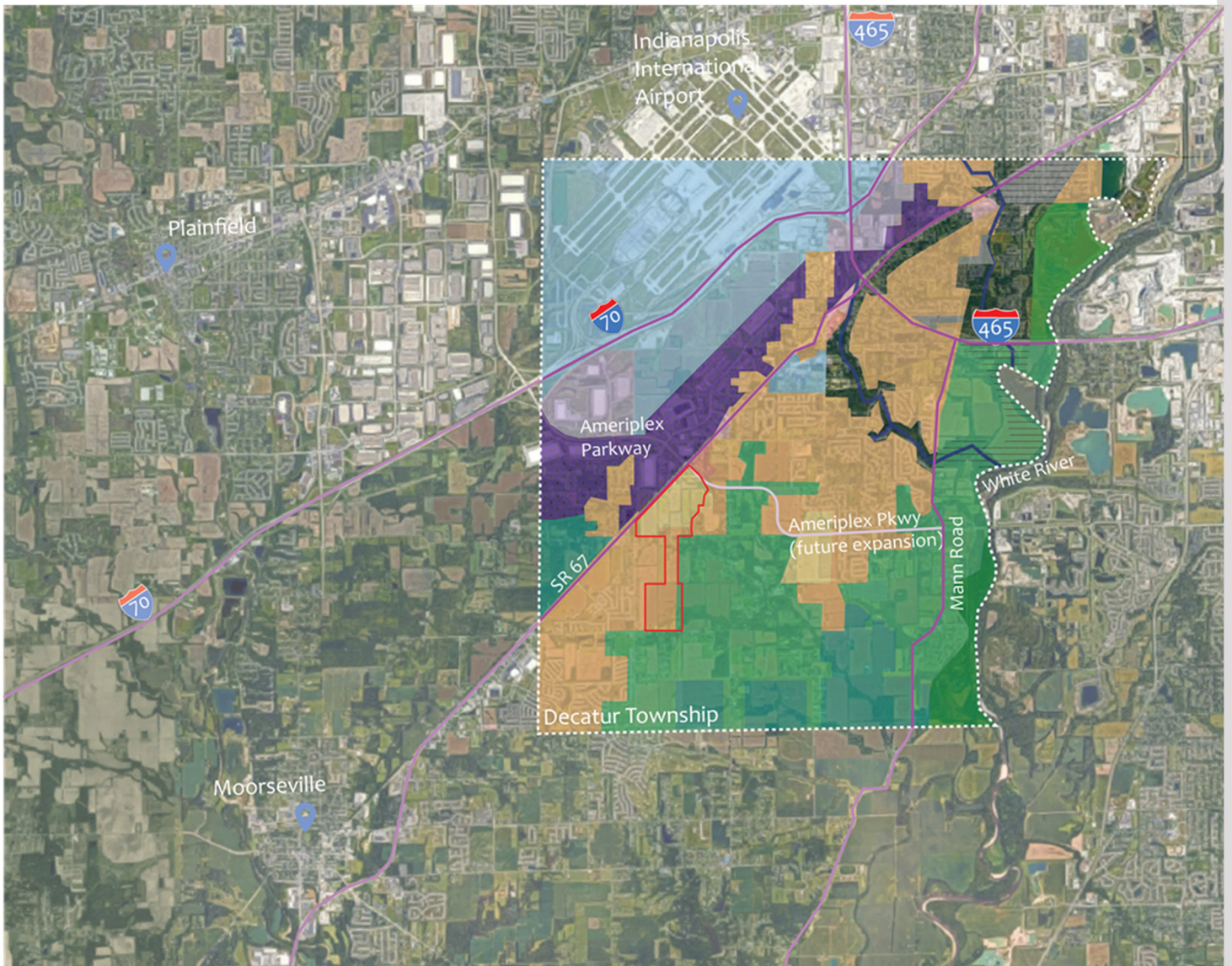
At the same time, other residents and property owners would welcome more industrial / office flex space. When meeting with this faction, the ULI Indiana panel learned that much of the vacant land in the area has been marketed for retail use for over a decade, without attracting any buyers.

Two facts are influencing the City and the DTCC/PfP to finally decide on the best future for Decatur Township:

- 1) While the Metropolitan Development Commission (MDC) adopted a citywide comprehensive land use plan at the end of 2018, it also provided a five-year window for further discussion. Therefore there is some sense of urgency for a resolution.
- 2) The Department of Public Works (DPW) is currently in the planning stages of an Ameriplex Parkway extension, which would begin at the current intersection of Ameriplex Parkway with Kentucky Avenue/SR-67 and extended eastward, providing improved east-west access through the area. As major roadway projects like this always exert a strong influence on area land use patterns, it is important to get ahead of this project and direct its influence appropriately.



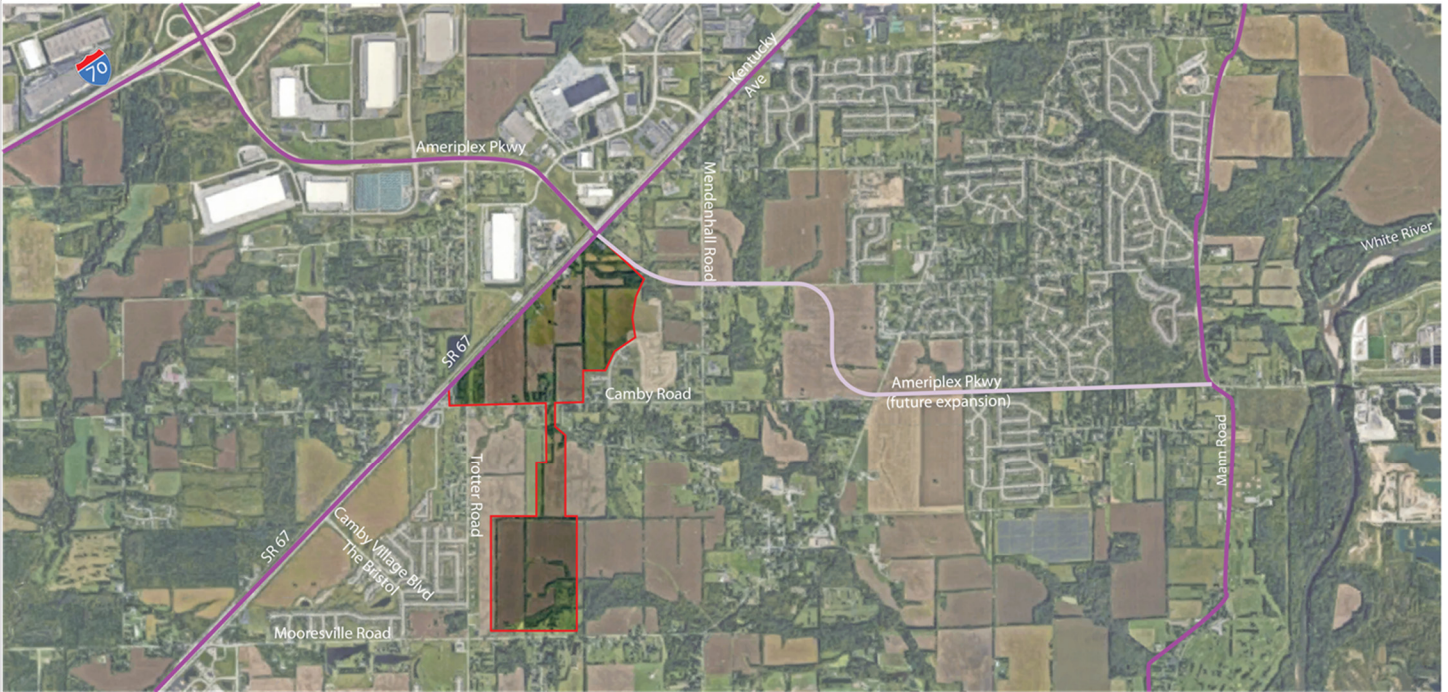
## BACKGROUND



Land Use Plan: A component of the Comprehensive Plan for Indianapolis and Marion County.



## ASSIGNMENT



The targeted area is defined as the area bounded by the future Ameriplex Parkway extension to the North and Camby Road to the South, including a small portion that extends South to Mooresville Road, and SR 67 to the West and Mendenhall Road to the East.

In context of the background described, the host committee asked ULI Indiana to answer the following questions:

- What would it take to create, and which areas would be best suited for, a neighborhood/village mixed-use solution with retail within the targeted area?
- What housing types should be considered viable in the targeted area? What product types lacking in the community could be accommodated in the targeted area?
- What are the key catalysts to spur other development?
- What might our land-use map look like in 5 years?

## PROCESS

Beginning with the establishment of the assignment, ULI Indiana identified a panel of its members with expertise related to the questions, and with no conflicts of interest with regard to the targeted area. The panelists donated their time for the duration of the TAP assignment.

ULI volunteers, with the assistance of the host committee, developed a briefing book comprising essential data and information about the area for the panelists to review.

In the meantime, the host committee identified area stakeholders who should be interviewed by the panelists during the TAP.

Following is the TAP agenda.

### DAY 1 – December 3, 2019

10am	Arrival—Community Room, Decatur Township School of Excellence
10:30 am – 11:00 am	Panelist & Host Group Orientation
11 am – noon	Site Tour (conducted by the host committee)
12:00 pm – 12:45 pm	Host Group & Panelist Lunch
12:45 am – 1:00 pm	Host Group Kick-off Introduction with Interviewees
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	Stakeholder Interviews
2:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Stakeholder Interviews
3:00 pm – 4:00 pm	Stakeholder Interviews
4:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Stakeholder Interviews

### DAY 2 – December 4, 2019

9:00 am – 4 pm	Panel deliberations; panel develops presentation
4:30 pm – 5:30 pm	Presentation—Community Room, Decatur Township School of Excellence





## PROCESS

**Sponsor** | City of Indianapolis, Department of Metropolitan Development

**Hosts** | Decatur Township Partners for Prosperity/Decatur Township Civic Council, as led by committee members:

- Pat Andrews
- Kirk Farmer
- Jason Holliday
- Gregg West

### Panelists

**JACQUE HAYNES, CCIM | Senior Associate, Midland Atlantic Properties**



With 30 years in commercial real estate, Jacquie has extensive experience in development, acquisition/dispositions, leasing and asset management providing clients with strategic and collaborative means to improve their real estate holdings. Since the late '90s she has focused on retail assets including neighborhood and community shopping centers and retail development. She represented Duke Realty in the disposition of 40+ acres, with multiple buyers and transactions, that led to the development of over one million square feet of retail, hospitality and restaurants at Anson in Whitestown, IN. She currently represents Valvoline and MyEyeDr in site acquisitions throughout Indiana along with retail leasing and out lot sales, and continues to market and sell retail investments.

**Eva Gribler | Director of Research, Onyx + East**



Eva is a strategic marketing professional with extensive experience in consumer insights, strategy development, data analytics and product/brand management in the real estate industry. Her strong suit is in anticipating trends and results within the residential new construction market. Eva is responsible for developing a deep understanding of local real estate market conditions to guide decision-making for senior operating teams. She also supervises and mentors the marketing team to ensure execution of marketing plans and the development and implementation of comprehensive marketing programs to drive business and deliver results.

**Daniel Liggett, PLA, LEED AP, ASLA | Associate, Rundell Ernstberger Associates**



Daniel is an urban designer and landscape architect graduate at Rundell Ernstberger Associates (REA), a land planning, urban design, and landscape architecture firm working throughout the Midwest. His experience includes all phases of design, including master planning, site design, construction documentation and graphic design. He has contributed toward major site design projects such as the Indianapolis Cultural

Trail. Liggett's academic research focused on framework master planning, increasing livability in cities, and housing development typologies. He is a guest reviewer at Ball State University in both the urban design and landscape architecture programs. Daniel has served on two national ULI Advisory Service Panels.

## Stakeholders (as Interviewed on December 4, 2019)

1:00 PM

- Matt Dunn (Westport Homes)
- Chase Lyday (Metropolitan School District of Decatur Township)
- Ty Rinehart (Lennar Homes)
- Mike Stoia (Decatur Township Resident)
- Jo Vickers (Decatur Township Partners for Prosperity)

2:00 PM

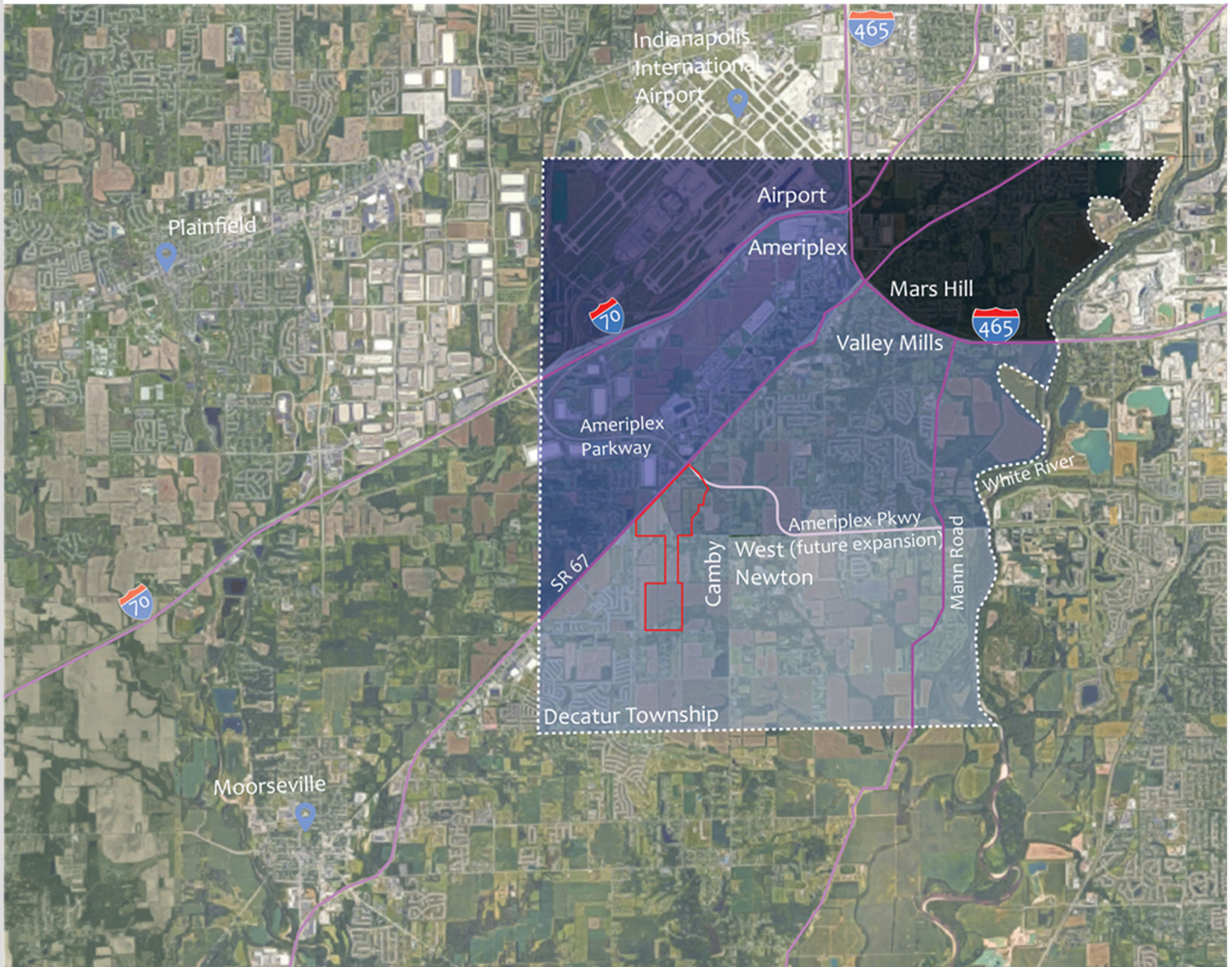
- Pascal Arnes (Decatur Township Fire Department)
- Judy Collins (Metropolitan School District of Decatur Township School Board)
- Emily Mack (Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development)
- Joe McNeil (Valley Mills CC)
- Jan McWhirter (Near Neighbor)
- Tim McWhirter (Near Neighbor)
- Matt Prusiecki (Metropolitan School District of Decatur Township)
- Chris Wilkes (Holladay Properties)

3:00 PM

- Robert Behning (Indiana House of Representatives)
- Kathleen Blackham (Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development, Current Planning)
- Dale Henson (Metropolitan School District of Decatur Township School Board)
- Ian Nicolini (Develop Indy)
- Robin Robinson (Camby Village HOA)
- Jeneene West (Realtor)

4:00 PM

- Sheldon Phelps (Chrysalis Consulting)
- Dale Yaeger (Yaeger Family landowners)
- Jay Yaeger (Yaeger Family landowners)
- Joe Yaeger (Yaeger Family landowners)



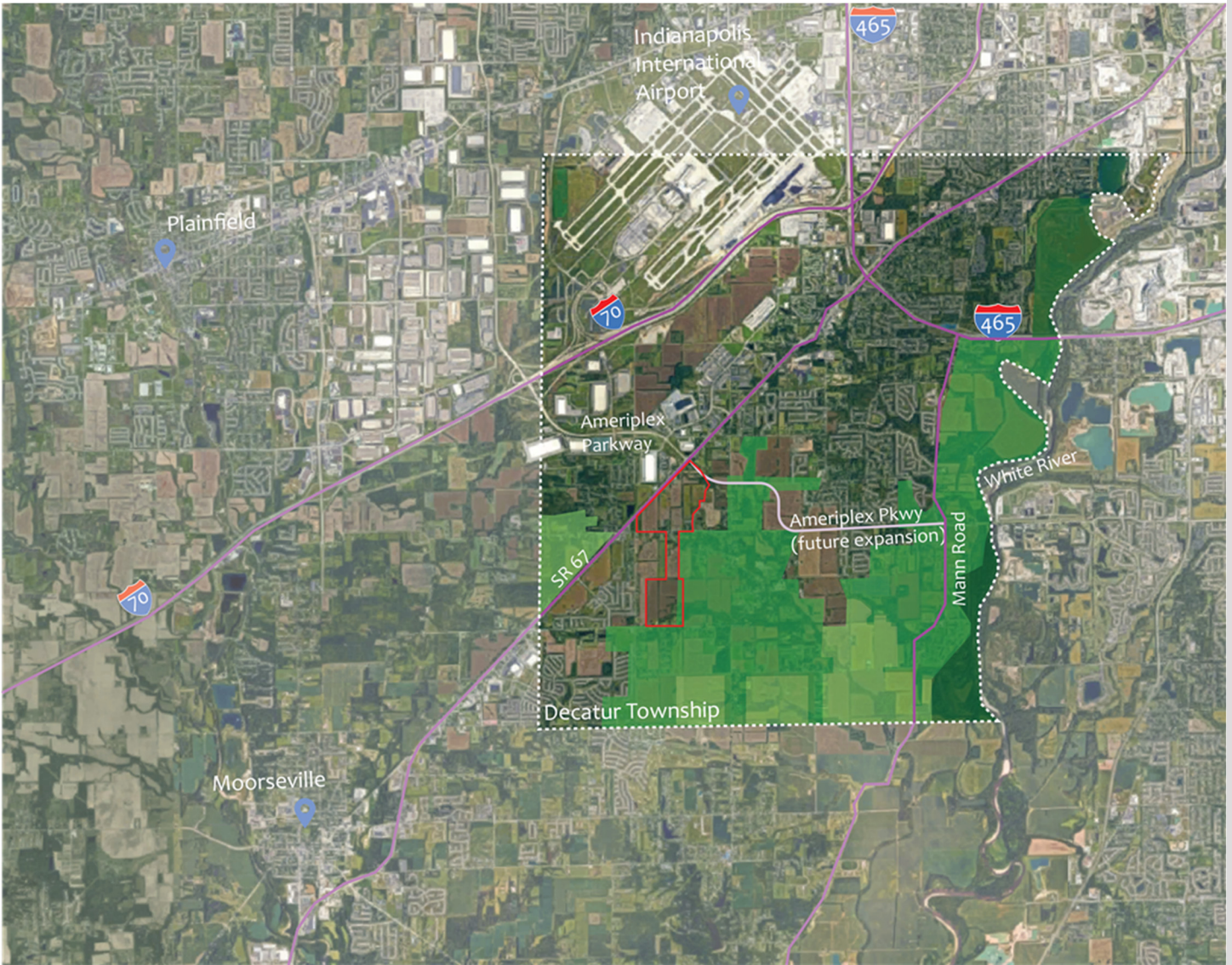
ABOVE: Decatur Township is made up of multiple neighborhoods with strong physical and perceptual barriers. BELOW: Most people arrive in Decatur Township via SR67/Kentucky Avenue, which lacks visual appeal.

### Challenges



- Lack of community gathering space such as community center, YMCA
- Gateway to community lacks curb appeal
- Not a destination
- Lack of medical facilities, especially important for older residents
- Lack of public transit
- Negative perception of school system
- Poverty in neighborhoods north of I-465
- Lack of housing variety: move-up, empty nester, retirement, assisted
- Limited retail, dining and entertainment
- Physical challenges/barriers of railroad, Highway 67, airport-owned property





ABOVE: The eastern and southern portions of Decatur Township have ample greenspace, including Southwestway Park (587 acres), which will become more accessible following the extension of Ameriplex Parkway. BELOW: The Quaker village of West Newton has rolling hills with rural charm.

## Assets & Opportunities

- Strong sense of community pride and involvement
- Convenient—20 minutes from downtown Indianapolis, Greenwood, & northwest Indianapolis
- Readily accessible workforce nearby: Fed Ex, Airport, Infosys, Nice Pak, etc.
- Affordable and attainable workforce housing in area
- Large tracts of land viable for development
- Market demand for industrial/office-flex development
- Highway 67 corridor connects southwest Indianapolis to southern Indiana
- Greenspace and rural character



## Five Primary Findings

The vision of a *complete community* is compelling. Most urban planners would probably say that every community should, ideally, be a complete community—with a wide array of land uses and opportunities for working, shopping and living.

It is somewhat ironic that for many communities, the missing piece is jobs. Economic developers, including those in Indianapolis, exert massive effort and financial incentives to attracting jobs. In Decatur Township, the land use pressure is reversed. The demand is for employment-generating uses, while the demand for residential and retail uses has lagged somewhat behind.

The ULI panel's primary findings are summarized in five points. Additional findings are presented in the following sections.

### 1. The key to achieving the DTCC/PfP vision of a more complete community, with more retail and residential opportunities, is to continue to allow some additional industrial development, in a highly controlled way.

Because of the demand for Industrial development, Decatur Township has a unique advantage of being able to hold developers to a higher standard of development requirements incorporating green space, pocket parks, and walkable amenities into the development, or make contributions towards off site community amenities.

To reframe one of the four questions we were asked, the catalyst that would need to happen for change is already happening, in two parts:

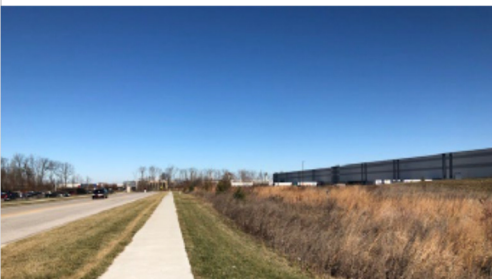
- A. The demand for industrial/office flex space is an asset to the community, even when it may not seem like it, because it:
  - Adds jobs, increasing daytime population to support restaurants and businesses,
  - Brings utilities and infrastructure to support future residential development, and
  - Increases assessed value, and potentially generates TIF revenue, to flow back into the City for community improvements. [Currently, Decatur Township citizens are not seeing the direct benefits of increased tax revenue within their community, but we believe they could and should.]
- B. The construction of the Ameriplex Parkway extension will further accelerate this process of converting industrial demand to retail and residential demand.

*What do we mean by highly controlled?* We don't believe that having industrial development southeast of Kentucky Ave./SR-67 — by itself — will negatively impact the future of Decatur Township.

However, we do believe that such development should be appropriately buffered by transitional land uses, slower capacity streets, green space and water features. In addition the building development standards, such as exterior design, should be at least equivalent to the existing Ameriplex development.

### 2. The Ameriplex Parkway extension will create a crucial east-west connection that funnels traffic between area residential and industrial uses; this added traffic will provide additional impetus for the desired retail development.

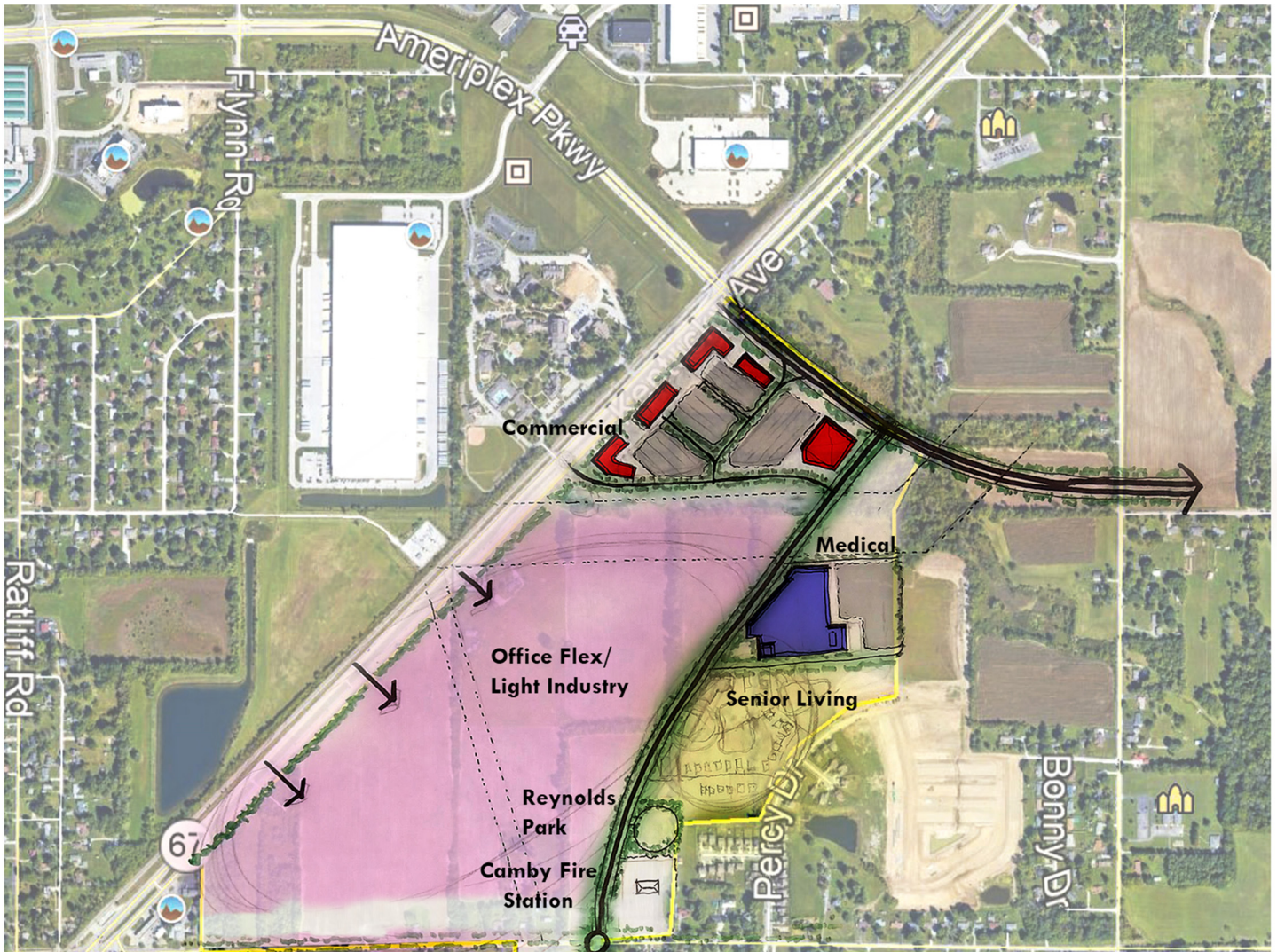
The area southeast of Kentucky Ave./SR-67 and the Ameriplex Parkway Extension thus becomes that “*best suited for a neighborhood/village mixed-use solution with retail within the targeted area.*”



Quality buffering and development standards as seen at Ameiplex.



## FINDINGS



Development in this area can be accelerated by allocating some space to community service uses, for example:

- A planned future fire station, situated here, could provide a community landmark and set a high quality design precedent for the area.
- Medical office space, much needed in the area, could be located here and help drive demand to complementary uses.
- Public offices could be moved here—for example the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles and the Department of Revenue offices, currently located west of Kentucky Ave./SR-67 at Ameriplex—which would contribute to the “community” center.

Community and office uses would increase foot traffic in the center and help incentivize the desired retail uses such as local restaurants and shops. The panel advises that just 20 acres would accommodate over 75,000 square feet of retail and service businesses.

Potential arrangement for 20-30 acres of retail, office and community service uses (in red and blue); potential senior housing in yellow.



## FINDINGS

Examples of housing types with potential market demand in Decatur Township.



**3. There is an opportunity for more diverse housing types in Decatur Township.**

The panel agrees that there is the opportunity in Decatur Township for move-up single family, empty nester and senior housing. This is based on expected population growth from 2019-2024 in the 65-74 and 75-84 age groups, as well as the observed lack of existing housing in these types.

**4. The potential land use map in five years could look like the illustration shown at right.**

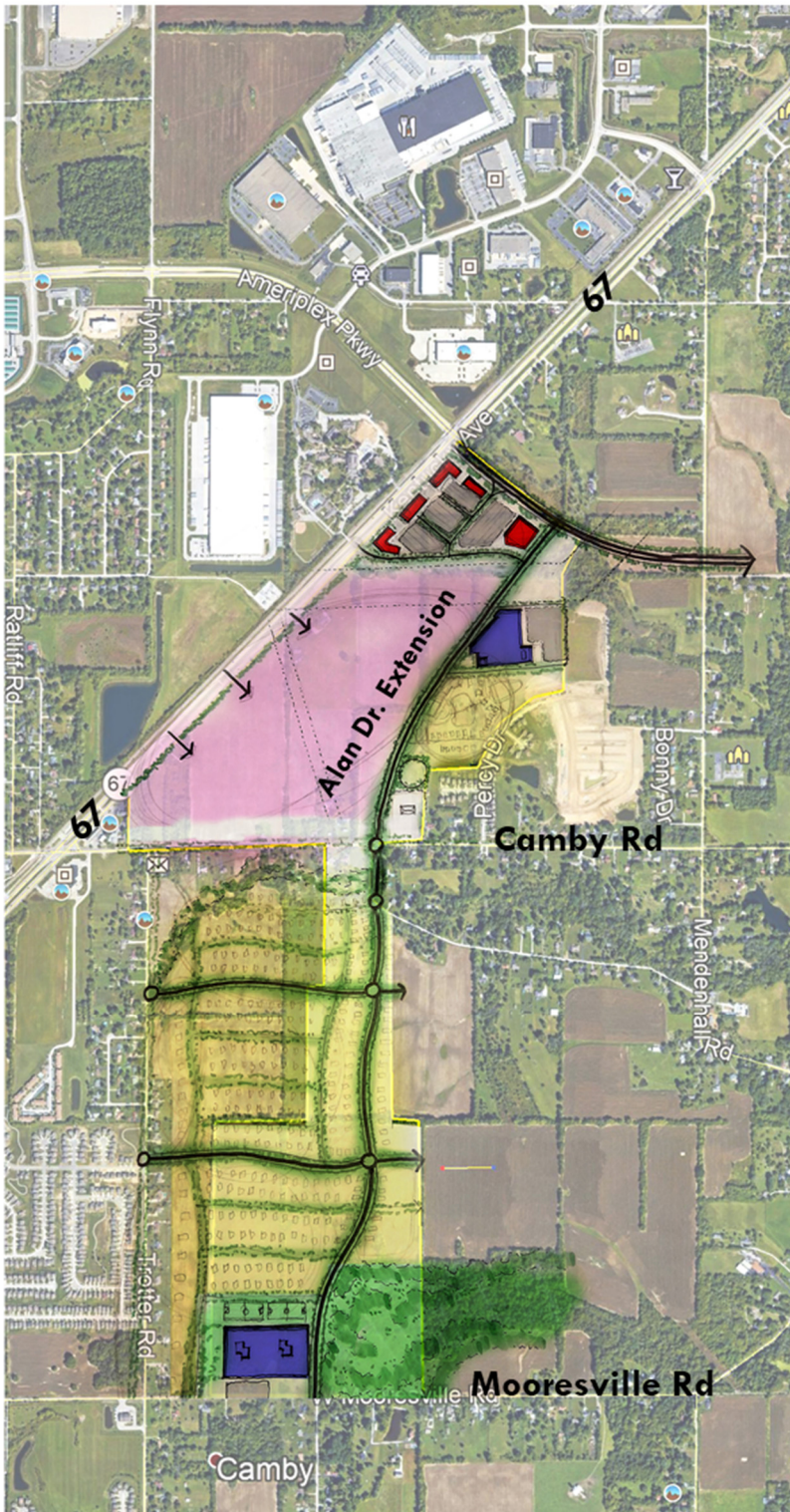
This is a conceptual plan and could vary in some respects, however other aspects are important to maintain.

In general, the roadway labeled “Alan Drive Extension” is the organizing spine to which much of the development throughout the study area would respond.

- It would provide internal site connections for residents, instead of requiring them to use Kentucky Ave./SR67 for circulation. This in itself would reduce the feeling of traveling through an industrial area.
- It would create an intersection at the future location of the Ameriplex Parkway extension, making that area more easily developed and accessible (i.e. more marketable).
- It would help to provide a more adequate buffer between proposed flex space (in pink) and the existing residential to the east.

## FINDINGS

Potential Land Use Plan



In its final design, however, the roadway could curve in different ways, following natural site features to make the drive more interesting and/or allow for more efficient organization of land to the west.

## FINDINGS

### **5. Decatur Township can help to ensure these outcomes by following standard public processes, both formal and informal.**

When these findings were presented at the conclusion of the TAP, members of the DTCC/PfP expressed skepticism that future development would be held to the standards recommended by this TAP.

Formally, processes exist for community members to come forward and make comments on development proposals before the City.

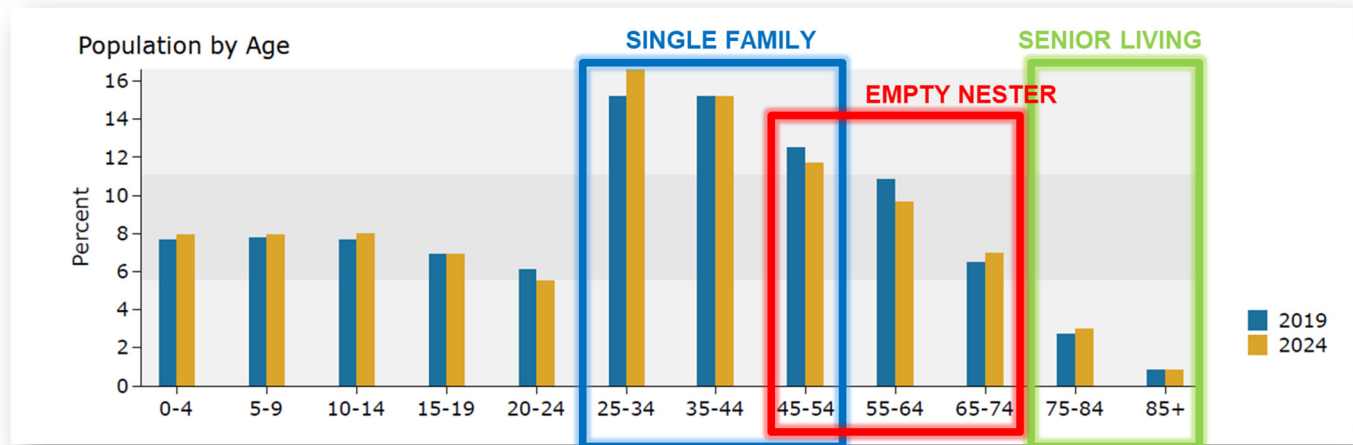
Informally, what happens in many neighborhoods is that developers approach community groups first to show them their plans and attempt to reach some consensus, before submitting plans to the City.

Unfortunately, past actions of the DTCC/PfP have created barriers to these processes working effectively. They have soundly rejected so many proposals that they are no longer asked what they think.

In order to exert appropriate influence moving forward, community members should be respectful and also open to some flexibility in their community vision.



## LAND USE



### Housing Opportunities

Based on a review of area demographics versus available housing supply, the panel believes there is demand for:

- Senior Living Facility
- Empty Nester Housing—Affordable
- Single Family — \$200-300K

### SENIOR LIVING FACILITY

Demand for a senior living facility is demonstrated by expected population growth from 2019 to 2024 in the age groups of 65-74 and 75-84. In addition, stakeholders interviewed expressed the lack of such facilities currently available. A senior living facility could be appropriately located adjacent to retail, industrial, or other residential.



## LAND USE

### EMPTY NESTER HOUSING—AFFORDABLE

The panel's research also showed that by 2024, 33.7% of the households in Decatur Township will be aged 55+, while there is a shortage of housing specifically designed to cater to the empty nester buyer. Such housing should help provide a transition from family to post-family/low-maintenance living, and located independently from family housing. It could include detached, paired patio homes, or four-plex housing styles, which would help to achieve the targeted averaged sales price of just \$195,842.

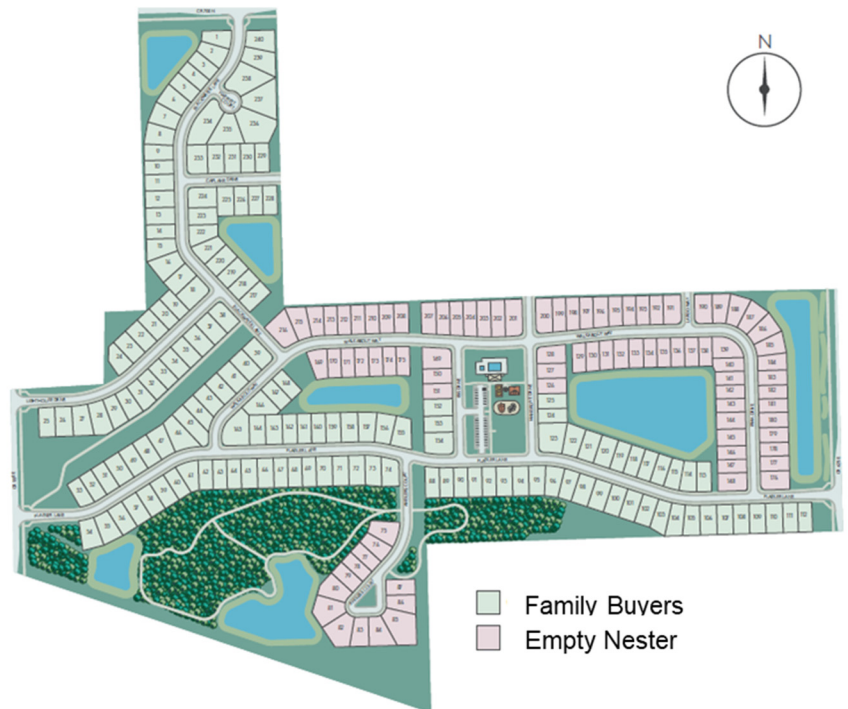
Empty nester housing could include detached, paired patio homes, or four-plex housing styles, which would help to achieve the targeted averaged sales price of just \$195,842.



SOURCE: [www.delwebb.com](http://www.delwebb.com)



SOURCE: [www.epcon.com](http://www.epcon.com)



Right: Example of a section of empty nester housing as separated from family buyers.



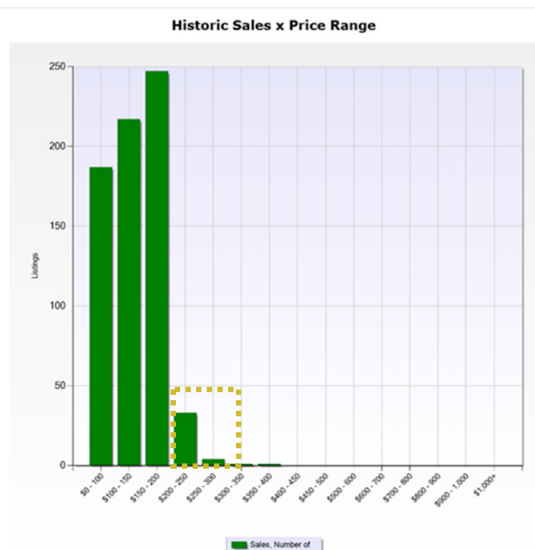
## SINGLE FAMILY—\$200-300K

The panel is also cautiously optimistic that the market can support some additional new construction housing at prices from \$200-300K.

Currently, 94% of the resale homes sold in the area are below \$200K. However, 42% of households make greater than \$75K in income, suggesting they could afford higher priced homes if available.

Also, the average age of resale homes is 30 years old, so there is definite need for newer housing.

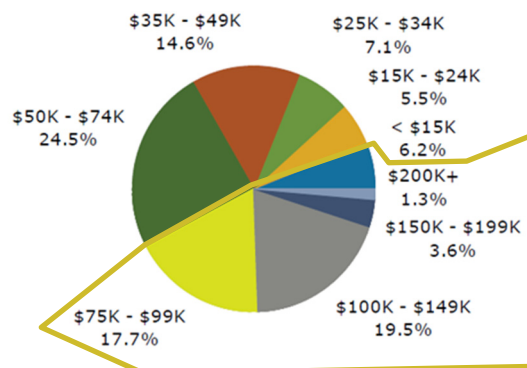
Finally, the area enjoys a healthy sales rate, with an average of 28 days on the market (median of 8 days on the market.)



SOURCE: [www.matrix.miborblc.com](http://www.matrix.miborblc.com)

Currently, 94% of the resale homes sold in the area are below \$200K. However, 42% of households make greater than \$75K in income, suggesting they could afford higher priced homes if available, up to \$200-300K.

## 2019 Household Income



SOURCE: [www.esri.com](http://www.esri.com)

## LAND USE

### Retail & Restaurant Opportunities

Demand for retail and restaurants will increase with population growth and creation of a signalized corner at a main intersection with both north/south and east/west traffic.

Retail shops, restaurants and personal care services are best suited at the intersection of Highway 67 and Ameriplex Parkway Extension. Approximately 20 acres designated for these land uses can accommodate +/- 75,000 square feet including a variety of business types. Examples of a shopping center of this size and scale are shown below.

The panel cautions that retail demand is impacted by the amount of existing retail in the trade area, as shown at right.

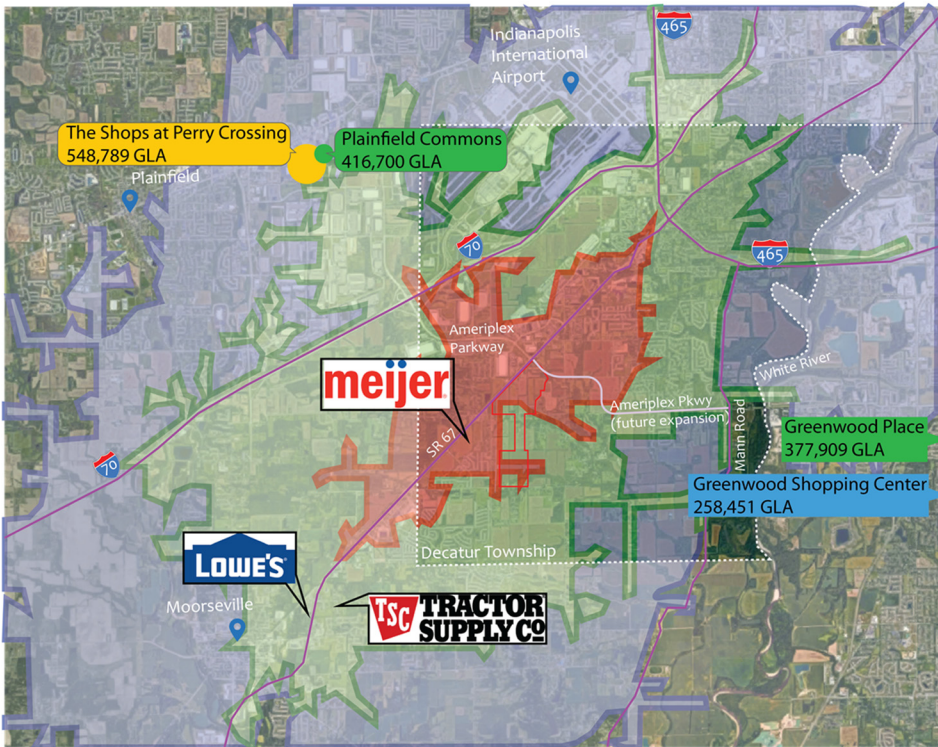
#### POTENTIAL BUSINESS TYPES

- Coffee Shops
- Fast Casual Restaurants
- Specialty Grocer
- Local Hardware
- Locally Owned Restaurants
- Hair Salons
- Day Spas
- Financial Institutions
- Fitness
- Boutiques
- Medical / Dental





# LAND USE



Examples of existing retail within the trade area



Marwood Plaza

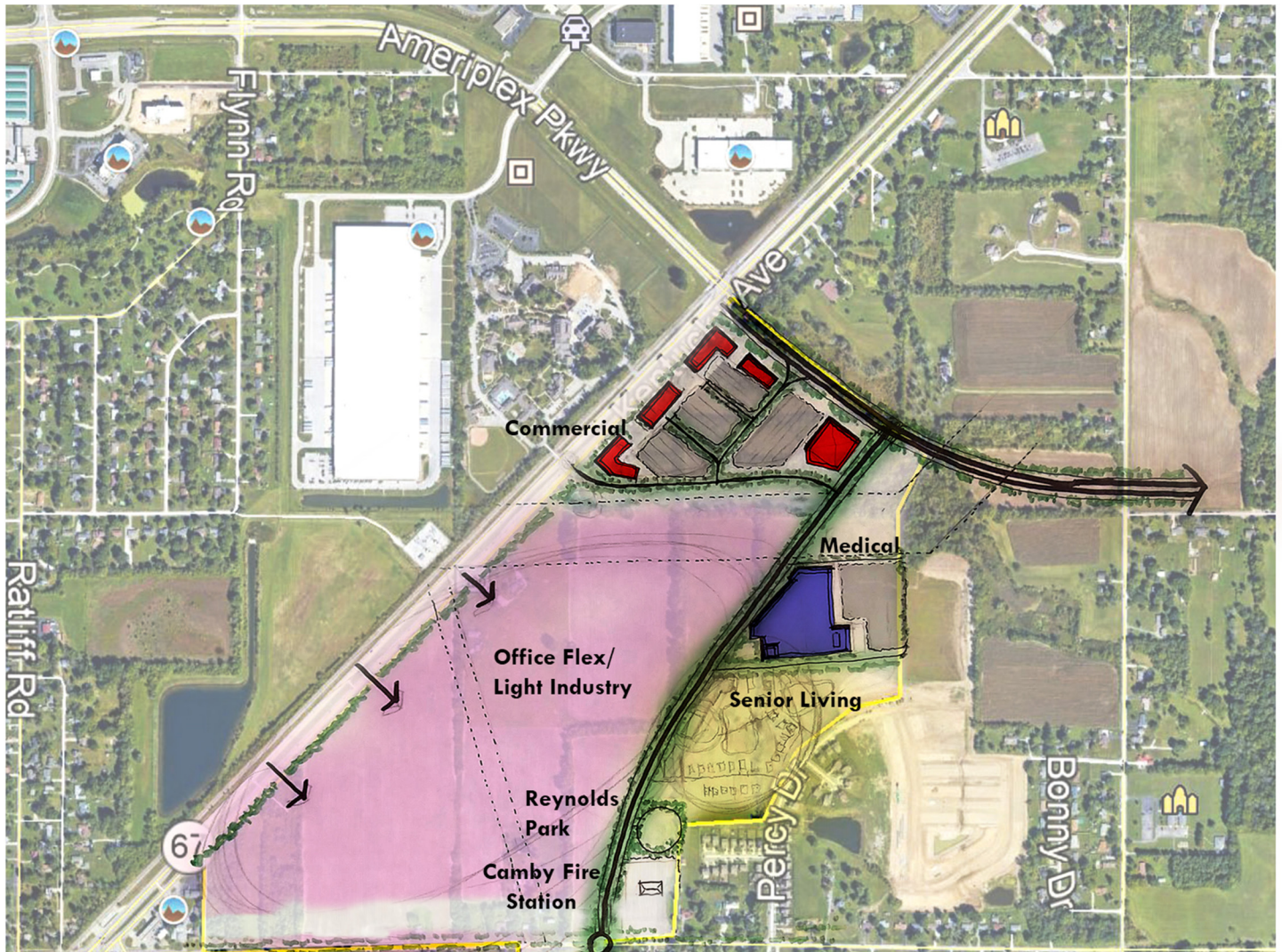
Heartland Crossing



## LAND USE

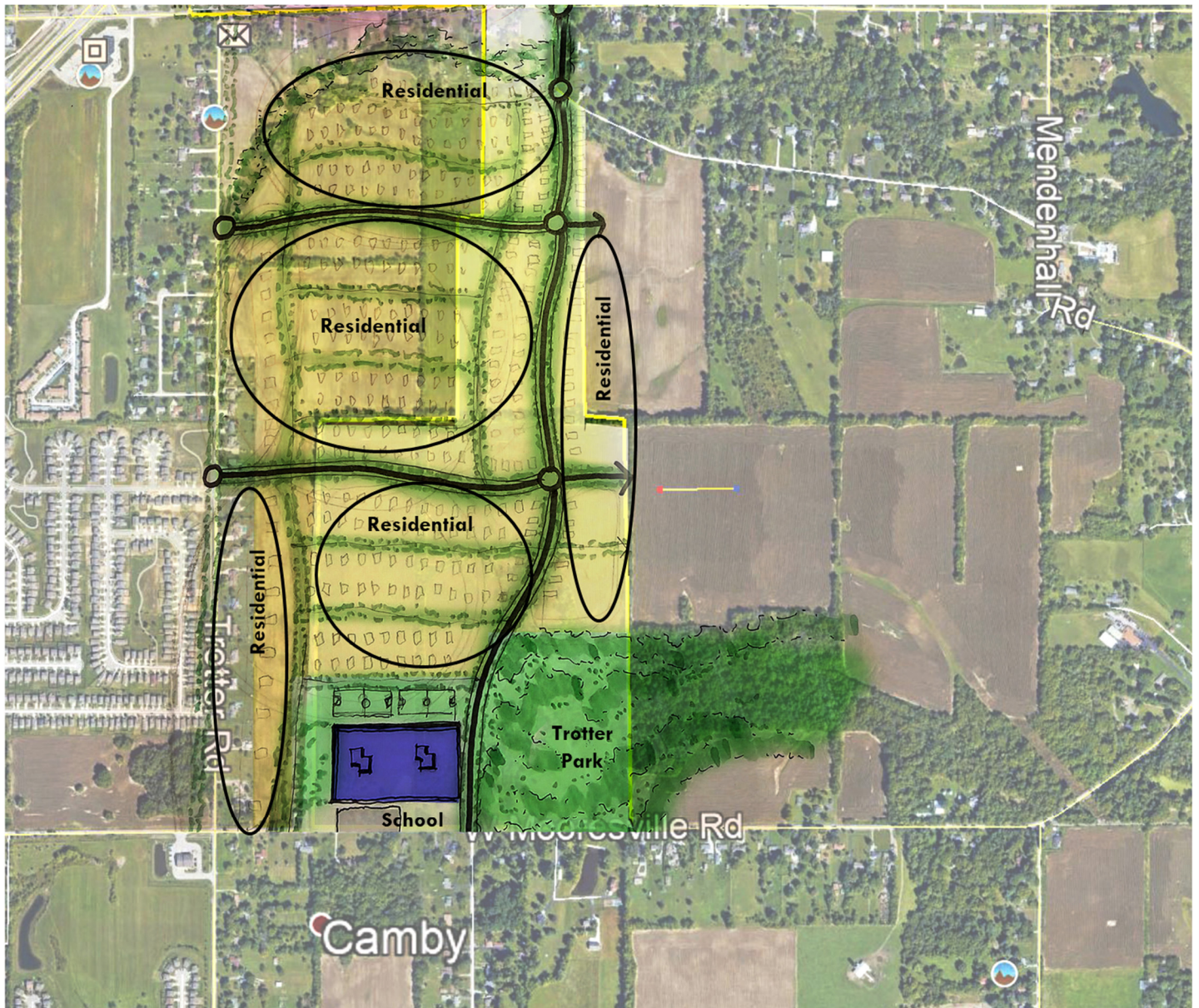
### Potential Land Use

Potential Land Use—North (Commercial/Mixed Use)





Potential Land Use—South (Residential/Mixed Use)



## COMMUNITY

### SOME COMMUNITY ASSETS & OPPORTUNITIES

- Strong sense of community pride and involvement
- Greenspace and rural character

### SOME COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

- Lack of community gathering space such as community center, YMCA
- Gateway to community lacks curb appeal
- Not a destination

### A POTENTIAL RESOURCE

Patronicity.com combines community fundraising with traditional community grants. They work with the Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority through its CreatINg Places program. Patronicity works with the community to vet all projects, coach their fundraising campaign, and disburse funds. Successful projects then receive a matching grant from IHDA.



Beyond their basic findings and land use recommendations, the panel wished to provide guidance on certain community initiatives that they believe can help Decatur Township to better leverage some of its assets and opportunities, as described at right. There is obviously a strong sense of community pride and involvement in Decatur Township, and the panel was told that Partnership for Prosperity was founded in order to be proactive about their community. Thus PforP is an excellent platform to organize these initiatives.

The panel was impressed with the ample greenspace in the southern and eastern parts of the township (shown on page 11), notably its connection to Southwestway Park and closer grounds like the school-owned cross-country trails off Mooresville Road. This is complemented by rolling hills with rural character, particularly around West Newton. These are community assets to be promoted. But currently, the community lacks gathering spaces, destinations, or strong gateways. The following community initiatives would help to improve on this dynamic, and are presented in a range from programmatic initiatives (like community events) to physical improvements requiring capital investments.

### Community Events

Community is built in part through shared events, and the following types of events have been successful in other communities and are recommended here:

- Ice cream social—possibly named after Antrim
- Quaker heritage event—possibly in West Newton
- Farmers Market
- Movie Nights in the splash pad park or cross-country park

### Other Programmatic Initiatives

- Gateway beautification
  - Business groups adopting areas
  - Façade grants for building improvements
  - Landscaping
  - More prominent entry/sense of arrival
- Pop-up retail/incubator space
- Food trucks
- Community Center (usable barn/vacant Marsh)
- Activate existing parks
- Community marketing



## Physical Improvements



### GATEWAY SIGNS

- Creates identity/sense of place
- Celebrates the unique identity of a place
- Community landmark/wayfinding
- Informative





---

## POCKET PARKS

- Provides local access to green-space
- Community gathering locations
- Health/social/economic benefits







## TRAILS AND STREETSCAPE

- Provides connectivity to local destinations/amenities
- Landscape enhancements





# Indiana

---

ULI Indiana

P.O. Box 501621

Indianapolis, IN 46250

317 441 9561

[indiana@uli.org](mailto:indiana@uli.org)

[indiana.uli.org](http://indiana.uli.org)