



ECONOMY

SUPPORTING OUR ECONOMY

“Together we will support local and small business development by providing services that advance business attraction, mentorship, and retention.”

Supporting the existing businesses within the community and creating a culture of entrepreneurship is vital to growing Scott County’s economy and attracting new residents. Business support can encompass initiatives such as tax abatement for companies to promotional material highlighting destinations within the community to expanding broadband infrastructure to increase digital connectivity.

Supporting businesses within Scott County is just one piece of economic resiliency within the community. Directing redevelopment to areas of the county which have experienced disinvestment, developing new wayfinding for visitors, and supporting those interested in pursuing alternative education are all elements Scott County organizations are currently working towards. Collaboration between public, private, and non-profit entities is vital for the success of these current initiatives as a healthy economy encompasses everyone within the county.

WHY IS THIS GOAL IMPORTANT TO SCOTT COUNTY?

- Small businesses accounted for 99.4% of businesses within Indiana in 2019 and employed 44.9% of Indiana’s employees.
- More than a quarter of Scott County’s employment is tied to manufacturing (25.8%), a decrease from 1970 (35%).
- Support for small businesses and new industries within Scott County can help offset the decline of manufacturing jobs seen within rural Indiana over the last decade.
- Business development can help Scott County become more competitive with its urban neighbors.

HOW CAN WE MOVE THIS GOAL FORWARD?

The following action items work towards the goal of supporting a strong economy through creating businesses which serve as anchor destinations, expanding broadband infrastructure, and providing training for students and adults entering the workforce. Some of these items are currently being addressed by one or more organizations while other action items were identified as gaps that need to be solved. Two catalyst projects were identified for Supporting Our Economy that will build momentum, address critical and immediate needs, and create a sound base for future action steps.

Action Items

1. Increase support and encouragement for pursuing trade certificates through partnerships with high schools and Mid-America Science Park.

2. **Work with providers to expand broadband infrastructure to areas prime for development.**

*Catalyst
Project*

3. Incentivize anchor businesses to reinforce and support the county as a destination.

4. Provide ongoing training that aligns with the needs of the area's employers and industries.

5. **Explore the feasibility and development of a regional youth sports complex.**

*Catalyst
Project*

6. Incentivize development of targeted businesses and industries which can fill gaps in services demanded by residents.

7. Develop online and print promotional materials that highlight tourist attractions within the region.

8. Identify funding opportunities and incentives to spur redevelopment of blighted properties.

9. Enforce existing ordinances that impact how the community looks, such as the existing trash ordinance or building/property maintenance.

10. Develop a Facade Improvement Program that could be used for improvements to commercial or highly visible properties.

11. Develop a wayfinding sign system specific to the county and each community that highlights local history and culture.

12. Direct redevelopment to areas within the county which have experienced disinvestment or have shown signs of blight.

13. Create a business mentorship program within the county to promote entrepreneurial growth.

CATALYST PROJECT - ACTION ITEM 2: Work with providers to expand broadband infrastructure to areas prime for development.

A barrier impacting many rural communities in their efforts to attract new businesses, industries, and residents is lack of broadband infrastructure. Online connectivity is a crucial aspect for successful businesses in today's economic environment, allowing them to reach supply chains, vendors, and consumers locally and across the nation. Fast and reliable internet is also a key factor many residents consider when determining where to live. With the significant increase in remote working and online education, broadband is needed to allow work to occur and also provide competitive education to youth and adults. Due to its necessity, broadband has become a public utility in many places across the country and is a key incentive for communities attempting to attract new residents and employers.

WHY IS THIS PROJECT IMPORTANT TO SCOTT COUNTY?

According to Rural Stats Indiana, Scott County's current broadband speeds show a 25 Mbps download / 5 Mbps upload rate across the county, but 28.9% of Scott County residents do not subscribe to internet within their homes and 19.4% of residents do not have a computing device within their homes. These numbers indicate Scott County has a vulnerable population who may not be able to access the same online resources as their more urban neighbors, negatively impacting their quality of life.

While broadband infrastructure is typically extended by the provider and not an individual town or city, Scott County is unique because the City of Scottsburg provides internet services through the town utility department. This provides an opportunity to work with the city to expand their current service area while also partnering with other providers in the more rural areas. For example, within the rural areas Scott County can identify incentives and policies which directly impact the private sector's ability to expand their infrastructure network. These incentives can include utilizing county facilities and staff when placing broadband infrastructure, streamlining approvals and fees, or implementing a 'dig-once' policy which allows cables to be laid during routine public infrastructure projects.

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

- Create a "road map" that prioritizes areas for broadband expansion to reduce the county's "digital divide."
- Coordinate improvements with various service providers and identify needed financial support that is needed.
- Expand broadband access throughout the county for residents and businesses.
- Attract new businesses, industries, and residents based upon high-speed broadband connections.

WHAT ARE OUR NEXT STEPS?

1. **Immediate:** A five-county Broadband Readiness Plan was included in the Our Southern Indiana's READI Work Plan. Scott County should play an active role in this plan to ensure its needs are met.
2. **Short:** Work with the city utility and private providers to apply for Next Level Connections to expand infrastructure within the county and/or region based upon the findings and outcome of the Regional Broadband Readiness Plan.
3. **Short:** Adopt local policies, such as a dig-once or climb-once policy, that streamline infrastructure installation throughout all communities and the greater county.

WHO ARE THE POTENTIAL PARTNERS?

City of Scottsburg Government: This group will evaluate, prioritize, and expand broadband services to geographic areas that are feasible.

Broadband Providers: These group will evaluate, prioritize, and expand broadband services to geographic areas that are feasible.

Local Governments of Austin, Lexington, and Scott County: These organization will identify and prioritize areas for broadband expansion and work with private providers to secure grant funding as well as local financial incentives.

Scott County Community Foundation: Provide coordination between the multiple organizations and entities within the county to ensure everyone is working together to expand broadband.

Scott County Schools / Businesses and Industries / Anchor Institutions : These groups will work with the local governments and other organizations in developing the Regional Broadband Readiness Plan.

HOW HAS THIS BEEN DONE SUCCESSFULLY?



Source: Andrew Moore-Crispin

Indiana is investing \$270 million toward improving broadband access and adoption in Indiana. The Indiana Next Level Connections Broadband Program offers grants for broadband infrastructure to provide service to underserved end users, which include households, businesses, and community anchor institutions such as schools and health clinics. Areas with poor broadband coverage (less than actual speeds of 25 Mbps downstream), poor quality broadband, and a compelling need may qualify

for this funding. A minimum match of 35% is required and up to \$5 million can be awarded per project. Project costs covered through the grant program include design, engineering, permitting, construction of “last mile” infrastructure expenses, and service-related validation costs. Additionally, recent American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds that were allocated from Congress as a response to COVID-19 may be used for broadband infrastructure as well.

CATALYST PROJECT - ACTION ITEM 5: Explore the feasibility and development of a regional youth sports complex.

Communities across the state who are investing in quality-of-life initiatives often focus on facilities and programming for their youth. Youth sports plays an important role in being more active and working as a team as well as offering safe and structured activities for youth and their families. Sport activities often play an integral part in local economic development by attracting families from not only nearby communities but also a multi-state region, and also positively impact a community's quality of life. While the complex may be most active during traditional sporting seasons, there are forms of programming which could be implemented within a publicly-owned park to keep the space activated throughout the year. Developing a sports complex within Scott County could capitalize on existing youth sports programming while also creating a regional attraction within Southern Indiana and beyond.

WHY IS THIS PROJECT IMPORTANT TO SCOTT COUNTY?

A regional sports complex does not currently exist within Southern Indiana. Regional sports complexes can be major economic and tourism drivers for a local economy that produce direct tax revenues but also support the hospitality industry. Restaurants, hotels, and other local businesses can benefit from the increase in traffic produced by a sports complex and the tourists it brings to a community. It can also provide the needed customer base for new dining and entertainment businesses that are desired within Scott County but are not always financially feasible due to the number of residents.

Nearly 180 million people traveled to a sports event within the US in 2019, generating 69 million room stays, over \$45 billion in travel and event-related expenses, and more than \$103 billion in business sales (Sports Events & Tourism Association, 2019 Industry Report). The Southern Indiana Youth Sports Complex at Scott County is anticipated to generate over \$3.4 million in new tax revenues and an additional \$16.8 million in economic output over the first ten years as well as over 260 new direct and indirect jobs with about \$5.6 million in new wages.

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

- Develop a complex which can support a variety of sports programming and become a unique tourism draw from Southern Indiana and the larger Midwest region.
- Increase housing and property values and school enrollment through new residents.
- Improve community health (decrease rates of obesity, increase physical activity, etc.).
- Leverage the park to influence new dining, entertainment, and commercial development within Scott County that many residents desire and can improve quality of life/place.

WHAT ARE OUR NEXT STEPS?

1. **Immediate: Conduct a needs and feasibility analysis to:**
 - Determine the ability to successfully draw regional tournaments including an inventory of sports complexes within the Midwest;
 - Identify the types of facilities, sports, and programming needed; and
 - Fulfill needs of the schools and local sports leagues.
2. **Short: Secure required local funding as a match for the Our Southern Indiana RDA's READI grant.**
3. **Short: Evaluate existing conceptual plans and costs estimates against the needs and feasibility analysis and begin schematic design of funded phases of the sports park.**

WHO ARE THE POTENTIAL PARTNERS?

Local Governments of Austin, Lexington, Scottsburg and Scott County / Scott County Schools: These organizations will provide direction on the project development, funding, and maintenance of the project once complete.

Scott County Community Foundation: This organization will serve as the coordination point for the multiple communities and organizations as well as provide funding for the local public match for READI.

Scott County Family YMCA / Township Trustees / Scott County Visitors Commission: These groups will provide support and funding for the project as well as aid in marketing the new complex for tourism.

Local Businesses and Industries / Sports Leagues: These organization will provide support through new development as well as donations for project funding.

WHERE HAS THIS BEEN DONE SUCCESSFULLY?



The Elizabethtown Sports Park in Elizabethtown, Kentucky is a 150-acre development which includes baseball/softball, soccer, lacrosse, and football fields as well as event space, walking trails, playgrounds, and Wi-Fi. The park hosts about 50 tournaments each year which attract tens of thousands of players, families, and casual viewers to the city from across the country. This has not only brought new visitors and tourists to Elizabethtown but has led to the development of new hotels and restaurants. According to a study performed

on the park's impact in 2019, the sports park has contributed nearly \$20 million per year to the local economy, with approximately 60,000 families visiting the park annually.

A regional complex could provide space for local sports leagues and also give the county an economic advantage within the region by attracting tourism-related businesses, hotels, restaurants, and shopping that would serve visitors and residents.