



SOUTHEAST STRATEGY UPDATE



Community Development
Planning & Policy
February 2021

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REVITALIZATION

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Top-of-market employment opportunities should be encouraged
- Inclusive and equitable entrepreneurial development should be promoted
- Commercial corridors and districts should attract a regional market



Themes and Findings

Embrace Your Inner Entrepreneur

Southeast Fort Wayne's retail market has shifted considerably since the demise and subsequent removal of Southtown Mall. During its peak in the 1980's, Southtown Mall was a significant regional attraction with four anchor stores and approximately 950,000 square feet of retail space. After struggling through the 1990's, the mall was demolished and in the early 2000's redeveloped as Southtown Centre, with new Menard's and Wal-Mart stores. Though the two anchor stores have been successful and have provided necessary goods and services to residents, the site has never reached the level of retail prominence that was recognized when it was Southtown Mall.

In addition to the impact of losing a regional retail center, neighborhood commercial corridors such as Pontiac and Oxford also experienced a decrease in retail services. With less retail options (especially sit-down restaurants, cafés, health related services, and other basic retail needs) a gap has been created which limits consumer options and requires residents to travel distances to obtain goods and services.

Attracting national chains to this submarket has proven to be a challenge since national retailers adhere to a formulaic site selection process that tends to reward established or more certain markets. Cultivating local entrepreneurs is one way to address the need for retail services and grow the economy. Bobby Boone with &Access provided a gap analysis and strategy for enhancing southeast's entrepreneurial ecosystem.





Themes and Findings

About the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Recognizing and supporting a small business ecosystem is an emerging approach in economic development, primarily spurred by high-growth, technology firms. Dell Gines, Economic Development Advisor for the Federal Reserve, who wrote: *The Importance of Inclusive Entrepreneurship Ecosystems*, presents the following five C's of an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem:

- Capital: Financial Resources
- Culture: The local communities' perception and support of entrepreneurship
- Connection: Resource and relationship network
- Capability: Entrepreneur and owner skillset
- Climate: Regulatory, Economic Development, & Policy Environment

The ecosystem tailored for neighborhood retail comprises all of the same elements but includes the following:

- Organizational Capacity
- Stage of Entrepreneur Supported (Business Planning, Startup, Growth, Decline/Pivot)
- Programmatic Offerings
- Community Building (Networking, Mentorship)
- Design Services (Architecture, Graphic Design, Branding)
- Education (Financial Literacy, Sales and Marketing, Workforce Development, Management, and Operations)
- Financial Support (Grants, Loans, Lines of Credit, Venture Capital)
- Real Estate (Pop Up, Traditional Leases, Other)
- Technical Assistance (Accounting and Tax, Business Planning, Legal, Feasibility Studies, Licensing Support, Business & Nonprofit Consulting, etc.)

Enhancing Southeast's Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Of the elements needed for a successful entrepreneurial ecosystem, an analysis provided by &Access found that the following services are lacking southeast and are needed to help business entrepreneurs thrive:

- Financial Support - low interest loans and grants
- Sales and marketing education
- Design services
- Education for business owners and employees
- Real estate options for start-ups

Retail Strategies and Tools

The following are suggestions to grow retail.

- Explore the opportunity to offer grants to subsidize the following:
 - Pre-development costs
 - Branding and graphic design
- Hire a Southeast Small Business Liaison to connect existing and potential businesses to resources
- Diversity financing products for small businesses and real estate with CDFI and community banks
- Organize community organizations to pool resources to activate a vacant storefront in their community
- Celebrate big and small wins with PR support for small business openings



Themes and Findings

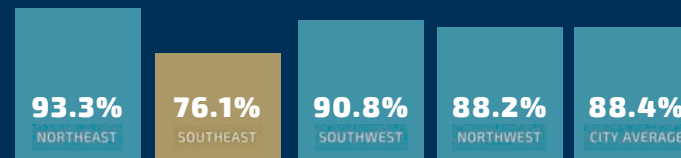
Education and Training

Access to education for business owners and for their employees and potential employees is greatly needed southeast. For business owners, financial literacy was noted as the most prevalent need, followed by sales and marketing.

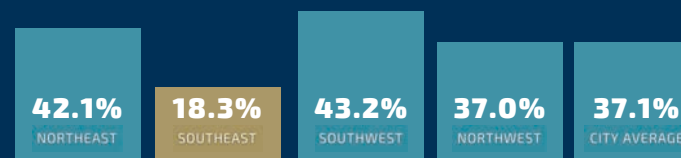
For employees, many of the secondary and post-secondary educational training programs remain aligned with manufacturing. However, stakeholders mentioned an essential need for training in emerging technologies/IT and hospitality.



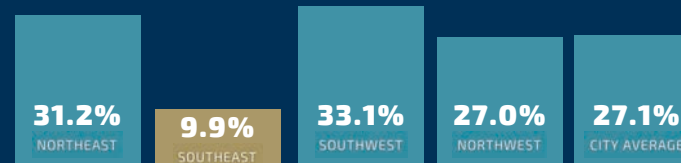
ADULTS WITH HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR HIGHER



ADULTS WITH ASSOCIATE DEGREE OR HIGHER



ADULTS WITH BACHELOR DEGREE OR HIGHER



Source: US Census Bureau & CDC

Providing Third Places

A reoccurring theme voiced by residents was southeast's shortage of restaurants, coffee shops, café's, and other similar gathering locations. These retail establishments provide more than food and drink, they also serve as third places for the community. Third places are the places where people congregate when they are not at work or at home. A term popularized by sociologist Ray Oldenburg, it is the place where people can meet to socialize, interact and share ideas.

Southeast is not entirely without third places; libraries, community centers, churches, barber shops and salons continue to provide this opportunity for southeast residents. However, many (though not all) of these listed spaces are places devoid of the communal atmosphere one experiences when socializing around food.





Themes and Findings

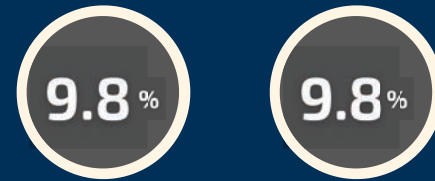
The Economics of Health

Life expectancy in Southeast is significantly lower than other areas of the city, up to 10 years shorter. Diabetes and obesity are both about 50% more common in Southeast adults (age 18+) compared to adults elsewhere in the City. A major factor in the higher rate of diabetes and obesity is that most of Southeast Fort Wayne is a food desert, meaning a lack of access to affordable and good-quality foods. Adults in Southeast are also 50% more likely to smoke, commonly associated with racially targeted advertising.

Lack of access to healthy foods and to healthcare is a significant reason for these staggering health statistics. Inability to access quality healthcare and food can be attributed to the physical distance residents must travel to reach full service grocers. The gulf between these distances are referred to as food deserts. For the fourteen percent of southeast households who do not own a personal vehicle (compared to 7% of households citywide), alternatives such as public transit, relying on others for transportation, or walking, are not acceptable solutions.

Since late 2020, several health care providers have opened or announced the opening of health clinics in southeast . Alliance Health Centers has opened in the former Lafayette Medical Center, IU Health has announced a new clinic at South Gate Plaza, and Neighborhood Health will expand and operate healthcare and educational facilities and programs in the former Ward School on Warsaw Street.

ADULTS WITH DIABETES

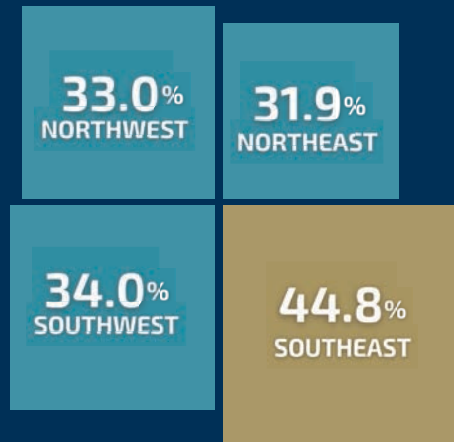


NORTHWEST NORTHEAST



SOUTHWEST **SOUTHEAST**

ADULTS WHO ARE OBESE





Themes and Findings

Food Deserts Allen County, IN Vulnerable Populations Study

St. Joseph Community Health Foundation

Some people and places, especially those with low income, may face greater barriers in accessing healthy and affordable food retailers, which may negatively affect diet and food security. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service, Food Access Research Atlas, identifies census tracts that are both low income and low access, as measured by different distances to a grocery store. There are several classifications within "food desert", but a food desert is in a census tract where:

- The tract's poverty rate is 20.0% or greater; or
- The tract's median family income is less than or equal to 80.0% of the statewide median family income; or
- The tract is in a metropolitan area and has a median family income less than or equal to 80.0% of the metropolitan area's median family income.

In most of the food desert neighborhoods, the issue of food insecurity is both caused and compounded by other poverty-related issues. For example, in the **46806** community, which has a particularly high concentration of designated food deserts, some additional issues they face include:

- About 32.0% of adults (ages 18 to 64) live below the Federal Poverty Line.
- Over 50.0% of children under the age of 18 live below the Federal Poverty Line.
- Over 50.0% of residents who rent spend over 35.0% of total household income on rent.
- The unemployment rate is 12.0%.
- Over 25% of households speak a language other than English at home.
- Roughly one-quarter of households are single-parent households.
- Over one-quarter of adults did not complete high school or equivalent.
- Less than 10.0% of adults have a bachelor's degree or higher.
- Nearly 40.0% of adults (ages 18 to 64) are uninsured.

Income, geographic location, and level of education are all strongly correlated with food security. Therefore, solutions must be multifaceted, addressing both accessibility and affordability of nutritious food.

– Source: St. Joseph Community Health Foundation. Allen County, IN Vulnerable Populations Study: A Review of Demographic, Socioeconomic and Poverty Indicators



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REVITALIZATION Recommendations

PROVIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND JOB TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOUTHEAST RESIDENTS

PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO SOUTHEAST BUSINESSES

Partner with Burmese business leaders to assist the Burmese business community in developing a chamber of commerce organization

Continue to collaborate with the Black and Hispanic chambers, Greater Fort Wayne Inc., and the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership to assist southeast businesses

Continue to promote SEED and other economic development tools for businesses and investors in EDTA areas

LEVERAGE EXISTING RESOURCES AND CREATE NEW MECHANISMS TO SUPPORT SMALL RETAIL BUSINESSES IN SOUTHEAST FORT WAYNE

Establish a CDFI (Community Development Financial Institution) that will focus its services in the southeast quadrant

IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERVICES AND FRESH FOOD OPTIONS WITHIN SOUTHEAST FORT WAYNE

Work with area health systems and nonprofit organizations to establish more full-serve medical clinics and wellness centers

Provide economic incentives to attract a full-service grocery store in areas currently underserved or classified as food deserts



Recommendations

Reinvestment Focus Areas

Four initial focus areas were selected through input from the advisory committee and the public during the Southeast Charrette. The four commercial corridors and nodes: Calhoun Street, Pontiac Street, McKinnie and S. Anthony intersection, and the Southtown Area, provide a connection between downtown and the furthestmost retail area of southeast. Each of these areas already have existing assets and community energy. The goal is to build on this emerging momentum by concentrating programming and capital resources to these areas. Ultimately reinvestment in these connecting focus areas will benefit surrounding neighborhoods and adjacent commercial areas.

Each of these areas are at different starting points when it comes to level of need for private market investment so approach will be different for these areas.

Retail Strategies and Tools

The following are strategies for growing retail's presence in the focus areas:

- Implement temporary activations at existing and potential places of community intersection
- Activate facades and key intersection with public art, leveraging creative ecosystem
- Diversity financing products for small businesses and real estate with CDFI and community banks
- Organize community organizations to pool resources to activate a vacant storefront in their community

Downtown's renaissance is good for Southeast

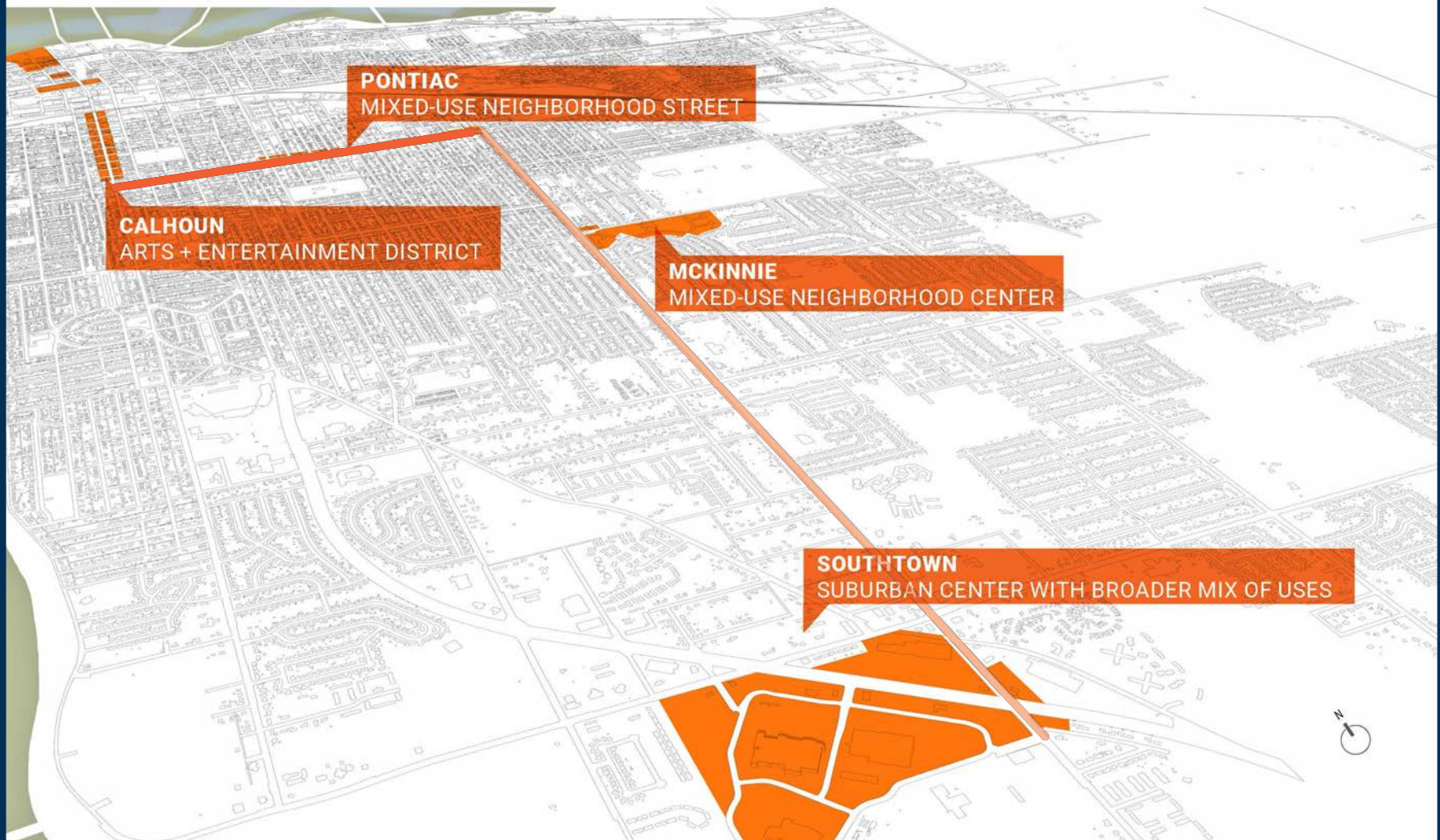
Downtown Fort Wayne is experiencing unprecedented growth and investment. This is good for the region as it helps attract employers to Northeast Indiana. It is also good for the surrounding neighborhoods as downtown's resurgence brings new residents and reinvestment in the commercial corridors connected to downtown. Ultimately, these commercial corridors can serve as the conduit that draws downtown's newfound energy into the outlying areas. Calhoun Street is the corridor that provides Southeast a connection to downtown. The key is developing and implementing an approach that extends this momentum into the heart of southeast. This can be achieved through incrementally connecting successful areas of investment, establishing demand, and activating areas that are underperforming. All of which is predicated on community support and initiative.

The four focus areas may be better connected through a variety of means along primary corridors. On these corridors it will be critical to coordinate intersection improvements, traffic studies, road diets and lighting and streetscape improvements with the greatest emphasis placed on those portions of the corridors that are located within the above focus areas.



Recommendations

THROUGH A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT, ENSURE FOCUSED REINVESTMENT IN THE SOUTHTOWN AREA, MCKINNIE AND SOUTH ANTHONY AREA PONTIAC STREET, AND CALHOUN STREET



The image shows the facade of the Rialto Theatre in Calhoun, Georgia. The building is a multi-story structure with a prominent Art Deco-style marquee. The marquee features the word "Rialto" in large, stylized, illuminated letters. The letters are white with red outlines and are set against a background of blue and white panels. The building's facade is made of light-colored stone or concrete. At the top of the building, there is a decorative relief sculpture of a smiling face. The sky is overcast.

Continue to build on development activity to foster an Arts and Entertainment Gateway to the South and Southeast

CALHOUN

Calhoun Key Projects

- Focus a small business grant program to encourage businesses to locate along Calhoun
- Activate the railroad underpass using art and creative lighting
- Create more pedestrian-friendly intersections across Clinton St. connecting to Lebamoff Park

Create a walkable, mixed-use street with a focus on market activation to drive incremental growth of Renaissance Pointe

PONTIAC



Pontiac Key Projects

- Expand and improve pop-up park on NW corner of Pontiac St. and Weisser Park Ave.
- Work with building owners on public art murals
- Focus facade grant and Summit City Match Programs along Pontiac St.
- Create a more pedestrian-friendly street between Hanna St. and Smith St

PHASE I

Create a walkable, mixed-use street with a focus on market activation to drive incremental growth of Renaissance Pointe

PONTIAC



PHASE II

Focus demand creation and programming with food and art to create an active neighborhood center that drives increased investment

MCKINNIE & ANTHONY



McKinnie & Anthony Key Projects

- Repurpose lane on McKinnie at S. Anthony and activate with neighborhood programming
- Provide façade grant to strip center and paint a mural on the northern wall of the building
- Work with church in reusing former bank building on north side of McKinnie

PHASE I

Focus demand creation and programming with food and art to create an active neighborhood center that drives increased investment

MCKINNIE & ANTHONY



PHASE II

Create a suburban, mixed-use town center that serves existing neighborhoods and the rural populations to the south

SOUTHTOWN



Southtown Key Projects

- Market and promote city controlled out lots at Southtown Centre
- Expansion of Decatur Rd. to Southtown Blvd., creating a new intersection on US 27
- Further improve bike and pedestrian access and circulation between Anthony and Southtown Centre.

PHASE I

Create a suburban, mixed-use town center that serves existing neighborhoods and the rural populations to the south

SOUTHTOWN



PHASE II



Secondary Focus Areas

The four focus areas were not the only areas identified and considered by the advisory committee. Other commercial corridors such as Lafayette, Hessen Cassel, Oxford, Creighton, Decatur Road, and Paulding Avenue were all viewed as significant corridors that also should be part of future study and corridor improvement planning.

