

1. With the trend in development of “upscale” student accommodations in high-rise buildings, are you satisfied that enough is being done to provide affordable housing for students from lower income families.

No.

Having a diverse portfolio of leasable properties is key to the vitality of our West Lafayette community. For student renters, especially those from lower income families, it can be difficult to find housing that fits into their budget.

I am also concerned about the affordability of commercial properties. The creation and expansion of local businesses with local dollars is necessary to a vibrant and resilient community, as well.

During a student’s time here, they are evaluating Greater Lafayette on the economic opportunities, environmental offerings, senses of place, affordability, and other key metrics. If we wish to retain individuals once they complete their years at Purdue, we must engage the student population and develop systems that succeed in making our community affordable, approachable, and desirable for a variety of income levels.

My Administration would proactively publish such information to ensure that the community has the data it needs to be informed and organize around this issue.

2. A goal of the “West Lafayette Downtown Plan” is “To expand housing opportunities and affordable housing options in the downtown. What is the definition of “affordable”? How is this going to be implemented? Where is land available for this? How many units of “affordable” housing are going to be added? How much section 8 housing will be included?

The Public was not involved in the initial generation of the West Lafayette Downtown Plan proposal. At the August 29th meeting, the Public learned that the plan did not start from a blank slate, but instead incorporated ideas the APC had developed in prior years.

The City Council and APC also chose to utilize an exclusive Steering Committee model to form an in-depth and detailed proposal. After 100+ pages were created, the Public was then asked for input.

The proposal includes two high level strategies for housing:

Goal 2, Objective C: Expand housing opportunities and affordable housing options in the downtown.

Strategy 1: Change zoning tools to support the development of a variety of housing types in the downtown that will appeal to non-student groups. [Mid-range, High priority, City and APC responsibility]

Strategy 2: Periodically review ordinances to determine if a variety of affordable housing types are supported in the downtown. [Long-range, Medium priority, City and APC responsibility]

The proposal also includes two strategies for commercial spaces. Affordable business properties are vital if we are to grow our local economy with local dollars instead of requiring outside investment as we have seen along State Street:

Goal 3, Objective C: Create an environment favorable for affordable commercial spaces.

Strategy 1: Study the commercial real estate market to ensure right-sized and affordable commercial spaces are available for large and small business in the downtown. [Mid-range, Medium priority, City responsibility]

Strategy 2: Ensure zoning and city ordinances serve the needs of small and large businesses and make changes to those ordinances as the market demands change. [Long-range, Medium priority, City and APC responsibility]

The proposal is silent on details, including definitions and metrics for the strategy components, not just the affordable housing ones. The lack of specificity provides a tremendous amount of flexibility to the City and County Officials and very little in terms of accountability tools for the Public. A similarly bare [plan was also created for the New Chauncey Neighborhood](#).

From [HUD's web site](#): *Who Needs Affordable Housing?* Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care.

How much do people make in West Lafayette? From the [Census.gov web site](#):

Median income:	\$31,230
Median gross rent:	\$860

If we estimate that someone making \$31,230 takes home roughly \$25,600 (82% of their total wages), this places the housing budget at ~\$640. The median gross rent is \$240 above the affordable housing threshold.

The proposal does not include implementation strategies to create affordable housing.

Using [The Hub as a reference](#) of new development, one can only meet the budgetary goal while sharing a three or four bedroom apartment.

A single bed in a studio apartment is \$1100+
Having a single bedroom in a two bedroom apartment is ~\$810
Having a single bedroom in a three bedroom apartment is ~\$615
Having a single bedroom in a four bedroom apartment is ~\$599

The proposal is also silent on Section 8 housing.

My Administration would proactively publish such information to ensure that the community has the data it needs to be informed and organize around this issue.

3. Does the current and planned development specify LEED certified buildings? Is it a requirement? If not, why not? What other plans are there to ensure that new buildings are environmentally sustainable?

Yes.

Goal 4, Objective A: Protect and Expand the Natural Urban Environment

Strategy 3: Develop design standards for buildings and spaces that promote high-quality and sustainably built environments in the downtown. These standards should address issues such as: re-use of existing structures, LEED certification (including water and energy efficiency), low impact development, resource recovery (such as recycling, composting, and reuse), and green spaces (including tree planting, preservation, and protection). *[Mid-range, Medium priority, City and APC responsibility]*

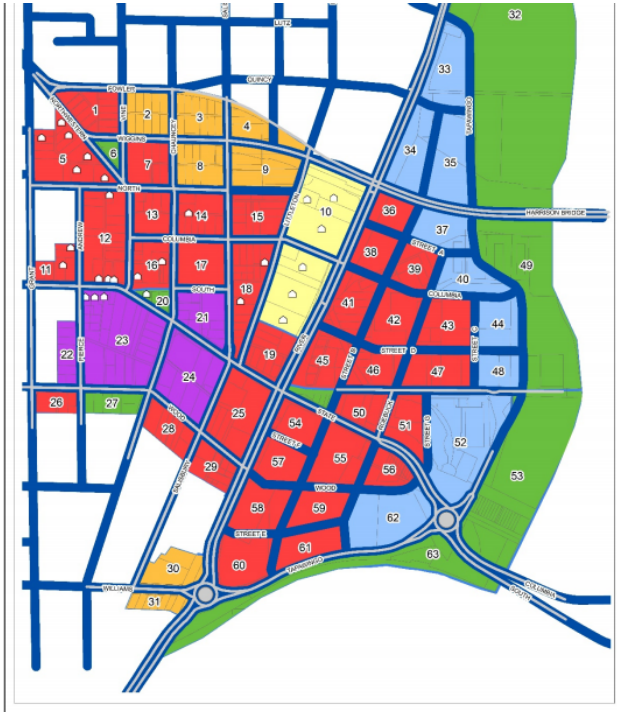
We need to understand where we were, where we are, and where we want to be. LEED, for instance, has recognition levels ([Certified, Silver, Gold, and Platinum](#)) and the West Lafayette Downtown Plan proposal does not state which level the Downtown developments will be required to achieve.

What is our current standing with LEED? What is our baseline for current impact on the environment? What metrics are we using to evaluate our status on a regular basis? Etc.

My Administration would proactively publish such information to ensure that the community has the data it needs to be informed and organize around this issue.

4. A goal of the West Lafayette Downtown Plan is to protect and expand the Natural Urban Environment". What specific greenspace, if any, will be added. How is the Wabash riverfront going to be enhanced and protected?

A large percentage of the green space is relegated to the Wabash Riverfront area (Blocks 63, 53, 49, 32)



This Riverfront expansion is celebrated by many in the community. The implementation is long-term and therefore unknown if and when it will be completed. Because of this volatility, smaller, more compact, greenspace options are critical.

The proposal includes additional greenspace areas (Blocks 6, 20, 27, and south of 45), however the layout is sparse, making it inadequate to provide a stimulating and vibrant Downtown.

A 2018 article from the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health titled, [Modern Compact Cities: How Much Greenery Do We Need?](#), makes the case for the health and societal benefits for greenspace.

The World Health Organization [36] recommended the availability of a minimum of 9 m² of green space per individual with an ideal UGS (Urban Green Spaces) value of 50 m² per capita.

[...]

In retrospect to the amount of greenery and relating UGS availability in cities and urban areas we delineate a linkage between the World Health Organization's UGS values with a reduced amount of social and environmental discontent [37,38,39,40].

Another section mentions specific ideas for contemporary city planning:

Example concepts for contemporary city planning include: UGI (Urban Green Infrastructure), nature-based solutions, biophilic urbanism, sponge cities (e.g., Shanghai and Wuhan in China) [45], forest cities, edible green infrastructure, eco-urbanism and landscape urbanism.

The West Lafayette Downtown proposal does not include any details about the financial support for the new Riverfront Conservation area. The proposal does, however, include options for financing the public art components. It is unclear why the funding component was left out of the strategies for conservation and greenspace creation.

At the August 29th meeting, the Public asked about the financial support for the proposed Downtown and no definitive funding option or plan was communicated.

5. What plans are there to enhance pedestrian and bicycle access for the downtown area?

The current West Lafayette Downtown Plan proposal is designed from an automobile perspective and includes a grid roadway system for most of the Downtown. Instead of creating large intentional non-automobile traffic areas (e.g. plazas, city/market squares, etc.), all other modes of transportation must fit into this roadway system.

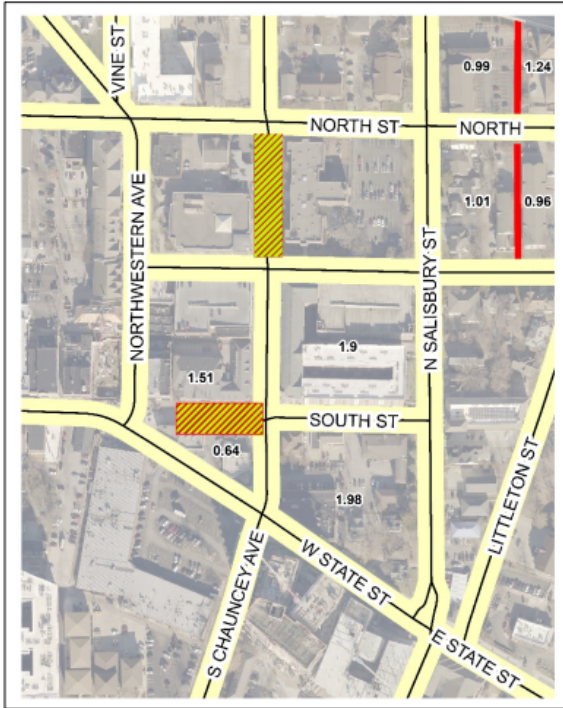
The difficulties of crossing River Road, even after the State Street redesign, were also brought up multiple times at the August 29th meeting as a current and future transportation concern.

6. Is a public area for presentation of artistic, musical and cultural events part of the plans for the West Lafayette downtown area? If so how will these be paid for?

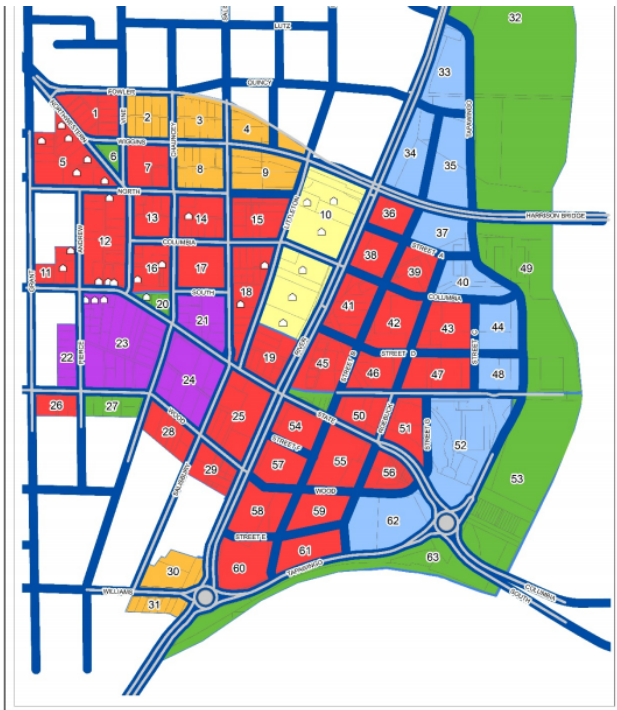
The arts play an integral role in developing every community. With the current [City Hall proposal](#), the former Morton Community center will have less public space (the 2nd floor is currently designated City use only) for the crucial arts offerings that have been celebrated in our community for decades.

The current West Lafayette Downtown Plan proposal does not mention music, cultural, performance, and other words related to the arts. Instead, the proposal uses the term *public events* to describe more abstract uses. If artists and performers were included in the Steering Committee, I am confident that these types of uses would have been more explicitly incorporated into the strategies, design, and overall proposal.

There are two plazas mentioned, Chauncey Avenue Plaza and South Street Plaza:



The proposal also includes some park areas (Blocks 6, 20, 27, and south of 45), however, their placement is confined to the West, one in the middle, and then along the riverfront. The addition of other public plazas, parks, squares, and open space is critical to creating places for the Public to engage, celebrate, perform, and build community in the Commons.



The one area of the arts that is mentioned in any detail is the concept of Public Art:

Goal 4, Objective C: Add public art in the downtown.

Strategy 1: All planned development negotiations in downtown projects will include opportunities to expand public art where appropriate, either by developers providing easements, placing money in escrow or adding art as a part of the project.

Strategy 2: All conventional rezone and special exception applicants shall be encouraged by staff to provide, where appropriate, opportunities for expanding public art in the neighborhood through developers providing easements, placing money in escrow or adding art as a part of the project.

These two strategies are especially of note since they specifically discuss placing money in escrow or adding it as an item in the project in order to complete a component of the Downtown proposal. These are also the only two strategies that talk about using escrow or inclusion in projects to ensure that money is available to execute.

7. Would stronger or different building codes have prevented the spread of the fire that recently destroyed Homes in Lindberg Village? Is the city looking into this?

With the cause of the fire that destroyed five homes (and scarred others) in Lindberg Village being unknown, we cannot say with certainty what role building codes played. The full report was not proactively released to the Public and I am not sure of what other findings were made during the investigation or if any further inquiry is being performed. There is no mention of the tragedy or investigation on the City's web site.

The types of materials, setbacks, and other development factors play a role in the safety of our homes and communities. We must be diligent to ensure that we are creating safe places for people to live, work, and play in West Lafayette.

8. According to the Journal and Courier, 1 in 6 residents of Tippecanoe County are food insecure. Do you think enough is being done to address the needs of West Lafayette residents living below the poverty line? How can the city of West Lafayette help?

We need to understand where we have been, where we are, and where we want to be in regards to food insecurity.

According to [Census.gov](https://www.census.gov), 41.1% of our residents live at or below the poverty line. With food prices increasing and the current community resources being heavily utilized, we can infer that food insecurity is increasing.

My Administration would help by actively engaging the community, asking questions, listening, and making sure that those who need assistance have the tools to discover, navigate, obtain, and utilize it. We would also be proactive in working with our community resources (ACE, Food Finders, West Lafayette Farmers Market, etc.) to ensure they are supported to fulfill food needs of our community.

9. What do you see as the role of the West Lafayette City Council and the West Lafayette City Government in addressing the questions above? If elected how will you act to ensure that the downtown development in West Lafayette serves the needs of our community and our diverse population?

The City Council and City Government must have an active role in engaging and facilitating dialogue within the community on the questions asked.

In regards to the West Lafayette Downtown Plan process:

My Administration would have actively engaged and disseminated information throughout the entire process, making all work sessions open and available to the public (including minutes and recordings), and providing several opportunities for feedback as ideas were being generated and constructed. We would have also given the public a way to monitor the iterations of the plan in a clean and easy to understand format.

Currently, the West Lafayette Downtown Plan proposal is left to the West Lafayette City Council, the City Officials, and the Steering Committee. The Public has very few direct accountability tools to ensure that their feedback is included and informs future iterations of the plan.

A common thread in my conversations with the Public has been around the lack of engagement, communication, and cooperation with Public regarding the Downtown proposal and other areas in the City.

[Ordinance 07-18](#), adopted in May of 2018, stated:

“a zoning map amendment, consistent with the principals of the Unified Zoning Ordinance, as a means of implementing that Plan, and that the Area Plan Commission, **throughout these processes, hold appropriate public hearings to evaluate these proposed work products.**”

Holding the first public meeting 15 months after the ordinance was adopted is viewed as appropriate by the West Lafayette City Council, City Administrators, and Steering Committee members.

Given the impact the proposal will have on the future of West Lafayette, this type of engagement is poor democratic governance and not acceptable. At the August 29th meeting, similar sentiments about the lack of public input at the outset of this process were also expressed.

10. What is the process for getting continued community input and endorsement as concrete steps are proposed and taken to implement the West Lafayette Downtown Development Plan? Do you think this process is adequate? If not, what changes would you propose?

The process utilized for the West Lafayette Downtown Plan proposal was grossly inadequate from a community engagement and celebration perspective.

Several areas require improvement:

First, we need to make sure everyone has mutual knowledge of the Downtown Plan proposal and the information that has informed the goals, objectives, and strategies.

Next, we need to understand the data: how did we get to this point, what is happening now, and where do we want to go?

Once we have mutual knowledge and the data, we can publicly develop, as a community, specific options we can take to achieve our goals, while also providing the necessary transparency and accountability along the way.

At a minimum, we need to ensure all information is available on the Internet. As of September 15th, the West Lafayette Downtown Plan is still not included on the City's web site.

My Administration would publish the dates and times for all meetings (the initial August 29th meeting was not posted on the City's or County's web site). At each meeting, we would stream and record all presentations, speakers, members of the public, etc. We would also include digital interaction components for in-person and remote participants, creating more feedback loops. After the event, the recordings would be posted on the City's web site, making the meetings available to everyone for their reference, review, and engagement.

Thankfully, the Public changed the tone of the August 29th meeting, and interjected questions throughout Ryan O'Gara's presentation. A failure in the meeting's structure was that a summary was not being made in real time, nor was anything shared after the meeting, making it difficult for community members to organize around ideas, strategies, etc. These deficiencies are remedied with operational changes to the public engagement processes.

The Public was told that their ideas would be included in the feedback portion of the process; however, the Steering Committee will meet again, in private, to discuss and, at their pleasure, possibly incorporate the Public's ideas into the larger proposal.

Without transparency and accountability being integral parts at the outset of the West Lafayette Downtown Plan process, it is nearly impossible to ensure that the Public's feedback is included. And also of value is the reasoning behind its exclusion. The Public will endorse a plan that maintains the spirit of its will.