



# My Community, My Vision Final Plan

North Putnam High School

Community Service Group

4/8/19

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Heidi Menzel, Community Giving Garden Leader at First Baptist Church  
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## Executive Summary

My Community, My Vision is an initiative of the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority and the IUPUI O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. The program aims to link specific areas of Indiana with the tools and resources needed to inspire placemaking and positive community development.

The North Putnam High School Community Service class was selected to be a part of the 2018-2019 My Community, My Vision program. This group of students, along with their teacher and IUPUI graduate student mentor, present this community development plan which summarizes their experience throughout the year as well as the intended project for the MCMV funding.

Putnam County, Indiana has a population of about 37,000 people, with North Putnam making up the north half of the county. North Putnam is a rural area, with similar characteristics to other rural communities in the state. Although North Putnam is lacking some community resources, this tight-knit community serves as a great place to implement a community development project. Unfortunately, this lack of resources has contributed to a decline in the local population, and it has become more difficult to attract young people back to their hometown. Our community development plan aims to address this problem.

Throughout the MCMV program, our group has taken multiple steps in the planning process to ensure that the Putnam County community has a voice in our project. First, we developed a SWOT analysis and needs assessment to hone in our focus on potential projects. This led to the development of a community survey, along with multiple meetings with local organizations and community leaders.

Based on the feedback from the community, along with our student group's interest as North Putnam County youth, we developed a group of projects designed to meet our intended goals and needs. The first being an Accessible Community Giving Garden. This will serve as a source of fresh food, as well as a localized space for meeting and volunteering as a community.

## **Introduction**

**Our Mission** is to create a sense of Home and Community in North Putnam so that young people want to stay or

return here to live, work, and raise their families. We want North Putnam to mean Home, and to create a sense of Place and Connection for everyone. To do that we will work to draw people together by developing communication pathways and shared events reflecting what we value: Family, Friends, and Community.

#### **Creating a Sense of Place and Belonging: HOME**

Indiana communities, especially rural, have recorded population loss in recent years, with a majority being younger age groups. As young people graduate high school and college, their tendency is to leave rural areas for urban ones or to leave Indiana all together. This “brain drain” has a ripple effect economically on home construction, retail sales, public schools, local philanthropy, and virtually all aspects of our communities. Rural communities in Indiana have many desirable attributes: low crime, affordable housing, reduced traffic, and friendly residents; but often lack the amenities and opportunities attractive to younger residents: social and entertainment options, high-speed internet, reliable cell phone coverage, newer housing, and well-paying job opportunities.

What we have learned- through working with a variety of guest speakers, advisors, students, and older residents who have stayed in northern Putnam County, is that the largest attractions

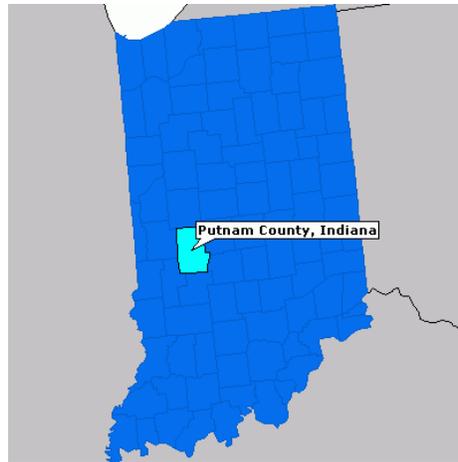
to our area are: family and friends, familiarity with the area and culture, affordable housing and related costs, and safety. In short, North Putnam feels like Home.

Through a community tour, local needs assessment, and a survey we learned that our community needs and wants venues that provide activities for young people and families, more attractive communities, and better communication about events in our area. The survey also showed us that the sources of information people use are varied, making it challenging to get information to everyone in the community. Most importantly, we have learned the value of residents having a sense of Place and belonging to that place in a way that establishes North Putnam as HOME.

Initially we were looking at ways to create a new entertainment option. A mini-golf course or an outdoor movie venue were top contenders. But as we toured our community and talked with long-time local residents, one theme started to emerge: in an area known for Agriculture, there was substantial food insecurity. There are no grocery stores in the North Putnam area, and the current food sources--convenience stores and discount stores--do not offer healthy food options. The nearest groceries are 20 to 30 minutes away for most residents, and a monthly charitable food delivery (Gleaners) serves more than 100 families. We recognized a need for a healthy food source and decided an Accessible Community Giving Garden with supporting social areas would serve many purposes. It would be a healthy food source, provide volunteer opportunities, beautify and revitalize underutilized areas, create social activities for all age groups, and reflect our local culture.

One clear message has emerged not only through the information our survey produced, but also demonstrated by the willingness of our community members to take the survey and the support we have received during the research and planning stages of our project: our community cares a great deal for one another, sees the value in the projects we envision, supports its youth, and is willing to work together to make North Putnam a desirable place to live. With limited economic resources, this is a challenge; but with the collaboration of civic leaders, willing advisors, community volunteers, and local youth, it is more than possible.

## **Where is North Putnam County?**

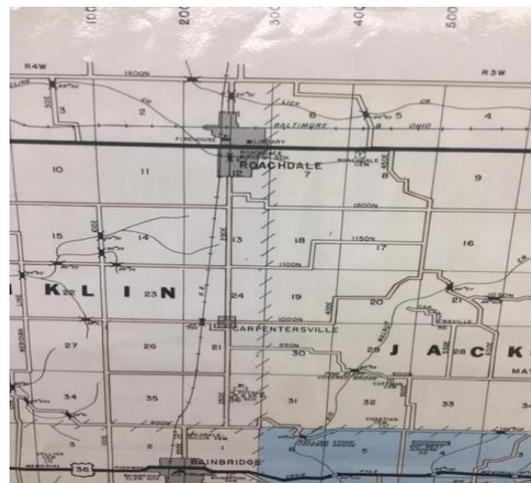


**North Putnam School District**

There are 13 townships in Putnam County; the North Putnam district covers the northern 6 -- nearly the top half of the county. It is the largest district by area in the county.

**Roachdale**

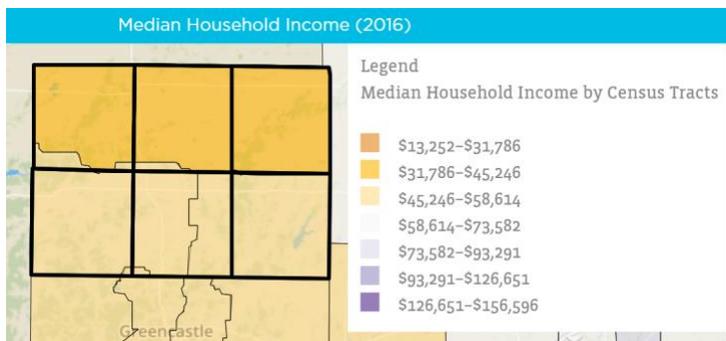
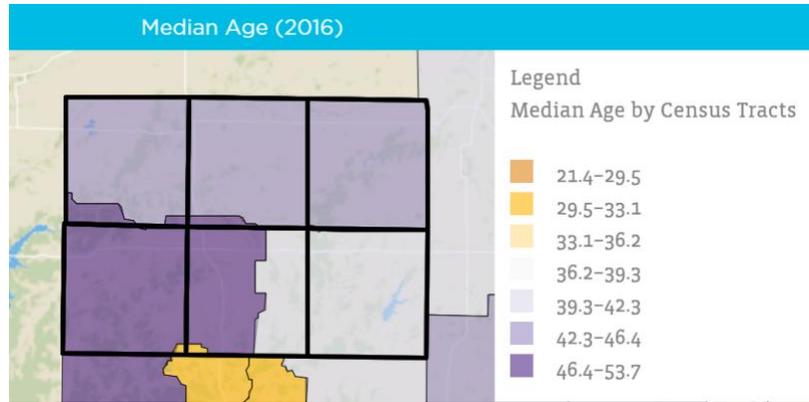
The town is within half a mile of the northern county line. The township line between Franklin and Jackson townships runs through the center of town. North Putnam High School is four miles south of Roachdale.



**Snapshot of Demographics**

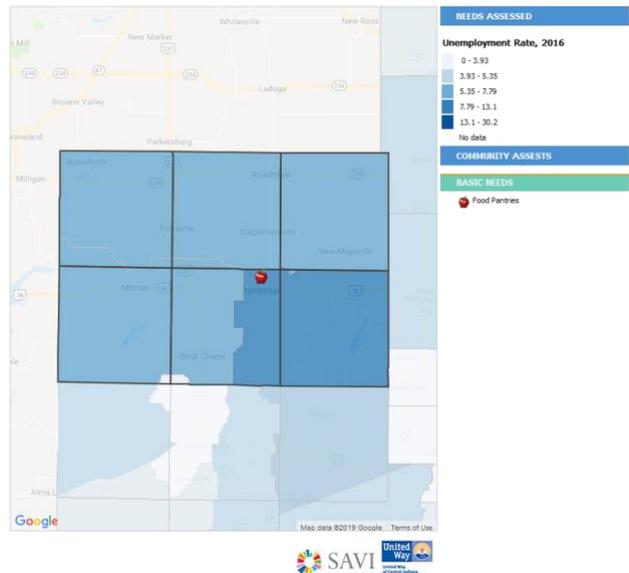
Data & Maps gathered from Savi.org

Median Age  
**42.7** Years



Median Household Income  
**\$54,066**

Here we can see the lack of food pantries available in North Putnam, with the shading representing the 2016 unemployment rate.



## Strengths

- Close-knit community that is friendly and welcoming. Family and friend relationships are valued.
- Affordable housing, affordable utilities, and low cost of living.
- Strong public school system- adult education available.
- Low crime rate.
- Beautiful, natural settings throughout the area. Lakes, creeks, wooded areas, and conservancies; both public and private.
- Housing and population growth occurring in Bainbridge and Heritage Lake area.
- Close proximity to several universities and post-high school training options.

## Opportunities

- The project offers situations where generations can interact in pursuit of common goals that improve the NP community. The opportunity to create unity is a key component in developing a sense of place, connections, and belonging.
- The Roachdale Revitalization Cooperative Alliance opened up many options for the CS/MCMV group for our first project and more to come by offering their lot and building as project sites.
- The North Putnam community is supportive of student-led projects, and local residents and businesses are willing to aid students in their efforts financially, and with labor and advice.
- Parents of the students in the group have relevant skill sets (construction, agriculture/ gardening, electrical and plumbing, and entrepreneurship) and are willing to assist with the project.

## Weaknesses

- Limited job and career opportunities in the district for adults and teens.
- More housing is needed; especially apartments, condominiums, or income-based housing.
- Internet/WiFi and cellphone access is not available in some areas or reliable in others. Service is expensive.
- Childcare is expensive and limited, which presents a challenge for working parents.
- Reliable transportation is a challenge for some residents.
- Limited racial, ethnic, political, and religious diversity.
- No grocery stores and nearest grocery stores are 30 minutes or more away. (Two gas station/convenience stores and one discount store are the only consistent grocery sources; they do not offer nutritious options. Gleaners Food Pantry visits one Saturday a month.)

## Threats

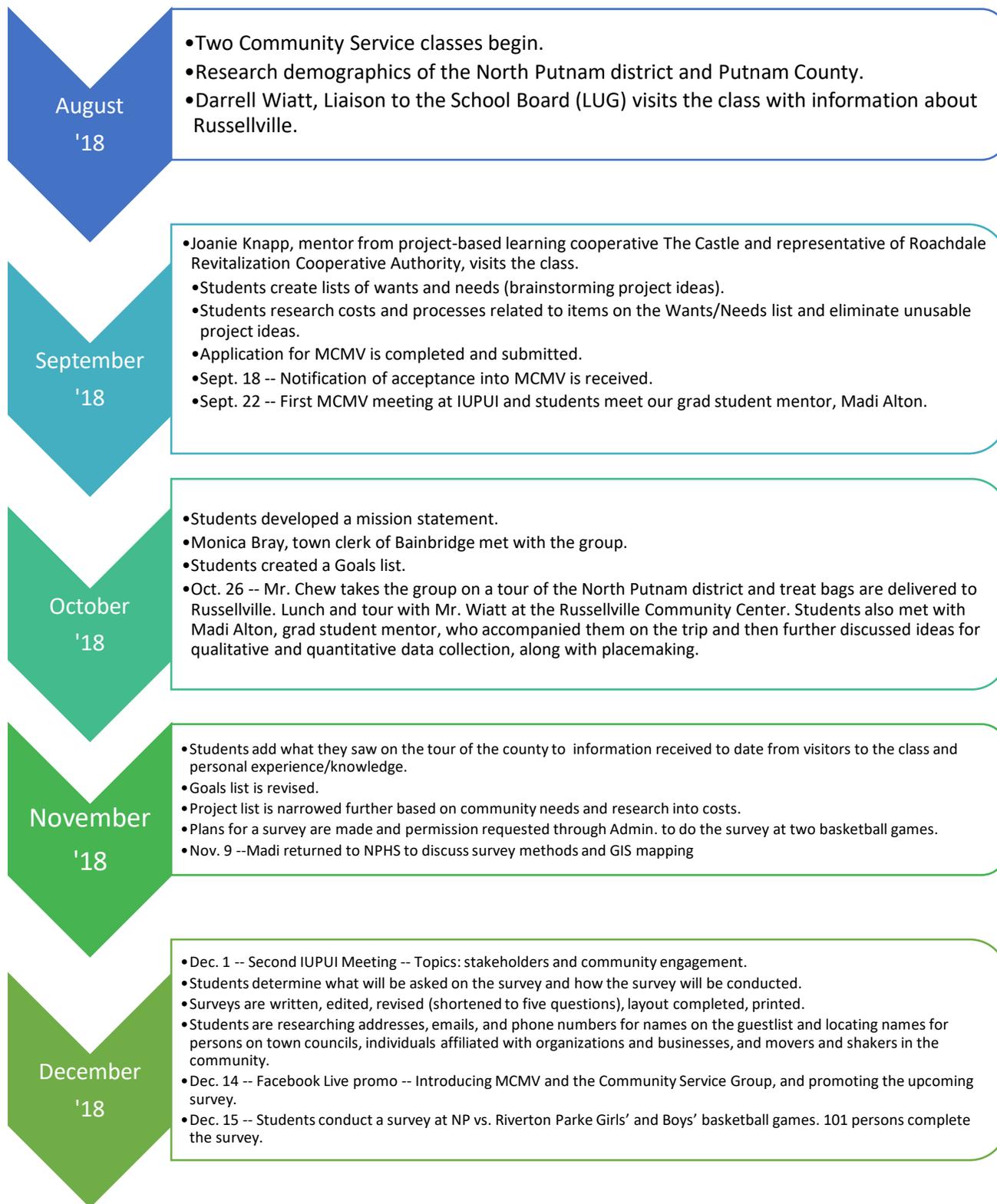
- Crumbling buildings in Russellville and some parts of Roachdale and Bainbridge
- Reduction in local manufacturing jobs
- Stagnant wage growth
- Due to the limited number of businesses in our area and the economic constraints of individuals and families, the pool of resources for monetary or materials donations is small.
- The potential for vandalism or theft is a concern. Although most residents in the area are respectful of others' property, unsupervised individuals with few entertainment options sometimes damage community and private property.

## Our MCMV Project Goals

- Create a sense of **PLACE**. Our project has to convey the feeling of the North Putnam Community. The family-oriented, friendly, comfortable, straight-forward, and unpretentious aspects of our community should be evident.
- Create a **WELCOMING** and **ACCESSIBLE** space available to ALL; where young people feel wanted and connected to the community, families feel supported, older residents feel needed and valued, and guests feel accepted and appreciated. This will require making the space accessible.
- Create a **FOOD SOURCE** to address the issues within our community: no grocery stores, few sources for healthy food, and limited opportunities for those who raise and grow food to market their products.
- Make an undeveloped and underutilized lot and building useful and attractive in a way that improves and **BEAUTIFIES** the area.
- Create an environment supportive of **EDUCATION** and **GROWTH**. Learning and growing is supported, talents and skills are displayed and recognized, community members exchange ideas and help one another, and connections are encouraged.
- Create a Multi-purpose place that has the potential to meet many needs of our community.
- Create opportunities for **VOLUNTEERING** and **EMPLOYMENT**.
- Create an environment that reflects the North Putnam Community's **HISTORY** and **FUTURE**. Appreciation of our community's heritage and the contributions of older generations will coexist with new development, technology, and changes that attract younger generations.
- Increase traffic through Roachdale and the North Putnam area, including growth of tourism by working with and supporting the efforts of the Roachdale Revitalization Cooperative Alliance.
- Serve as a model of Youth Activism and Community Service to Inspire contribution by young volunteers.

## **Planning & Data Collection**

## Planning & Timeline



January  
'19

- Introduce new students to the course and MCMV.
- Jan 18 -- Madi made a visit to NPHS to discuss survey outcomes and to solidify project ideas for the MCMV grant, as well as other grant opportunities.
- Jan. 23 -- Field trip during Per. 7 to Roachdale to see the building and lot.
- *Weather influenced some of our intended plans, but we learned from this.*

February  
'19

- Feb. 8 -- Field trip to Greencastle to: Conspire to meet with Community Garden leaders J.D. Grove and Heidi Menzel; peek into Grounded; tour of Starbucks led by manager Ashley Whitesell; tour of Bon Appetit, the C-Store, and Cafe Roy at DePauw University led by General Manager John Hecko; and visit to Putnam County Museum hosted by Director Lisa Mock. Purpose: to gain information to help guide us in decision-making and planning of our projects. Maureen Hayden Director of Intergovernmental Relations at the Office of Indiana Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch accompanied the group for lunch as well.
- Complete thank you notes to field trip hosts.
- Complete poster content for AIM Conference (on Feb. 16).
- Application made to the Mary Allison Children's Trust Grant for funds (up to \$250).
- Creation of content for Putnam County Foundation Youth Grant Application (up to \$500) and Putnam County Foundation Grant (request \$6000).
- Feb. 16 (Sat.) -- AIM Leadership Conference. Bloomington, IN. SPEA graduate student mentor Madi Alton presented the poster during the MCMV session and Oliva Haste, Shay Campbell, and McKenna Speier answered questions at the end of the MCMV session.

March  
'19

- Development of content for the draft of the My Community, My Vision project plan.
- Students review application for PCF Youth Grant and plan presentation.
- Mar. 6 -- Presentation to the Putnam County Foundation Youth Philanthropy group to support application for grant. Grace Fry and Josie Lyons conduct presentation.
- Mar. 8 -- MCMV project plan draft.
- Mar. 11 -- Putnam County Foundation Grant presentation (Mrs. Roach).

April  
'19

- Apr. 1 - 5 -- Finalize plan details and practice presentation for AIM Legislative Meeting
- Apr. 8 -- AIM Legislative Meeting and Presentation of MCMV Projects, Indianapolis.
- Final version of project plan is presented.
- Apr. 9 - 11 Send invitations for Community Receptions during first week of May.
- Coordinate plans for building garden beds and begin construction.
- School Board Meeting for presentation of project plans to the Board.

May  
'19

- Plan work days for the summer.
- Coordinate project development with RRCA and Town of Roachdale personnel

## Community Surveys

### Administration

Students conducted 101 in-person paper surveys with North Putnam residents ranging in age from 15-60+ years old at two basketball games in December (2018), just before the Winter Break.

The information gathered from the survey and what people said to us during the time they were filling out the forms backed up the concerns we'd already heard about food sources, the need for positive activities for people to do, and a place for kids to spend their time. We ended up in the second-favored location-- Roachdale--and selecting a food-related project, which was the subject of the second-favored project survey takers picked. While not a food truck or a farmers' market exactly, our project is still food supply connected.

The five survey questions asked were\*:

1. Which town or area in the school district is closest to the respondent's residence;
2. What age range accurately describes the respondent;
3. What location would the respondent favor for the MCMV project (we asked for their top two);
4. Which project of those under consideration at the time did the respondent favor most; and
5. When attempting to find out information about local events and activities, what resources does the respondent use?

(\* A copy of the survey is included in the Appendix of the report- Appendix A)

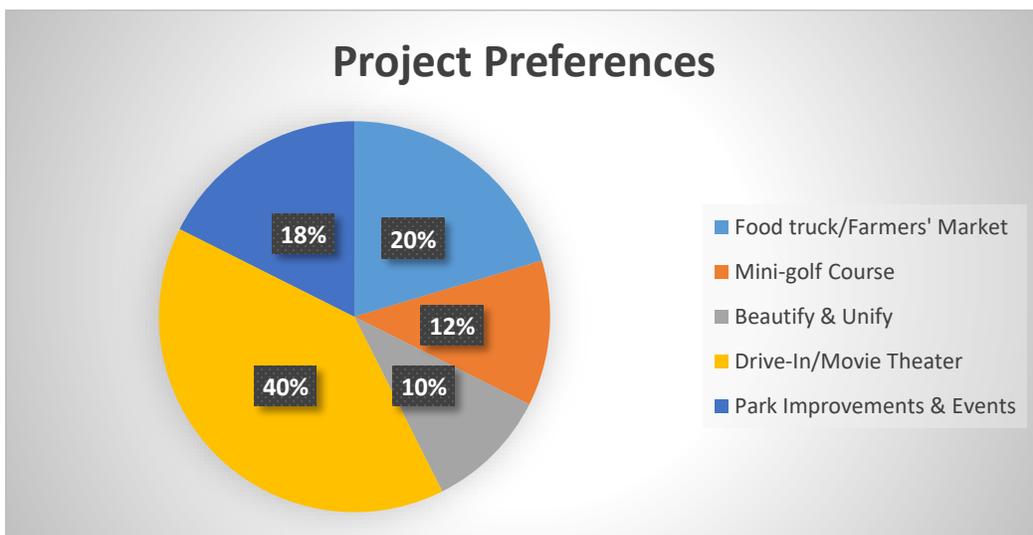
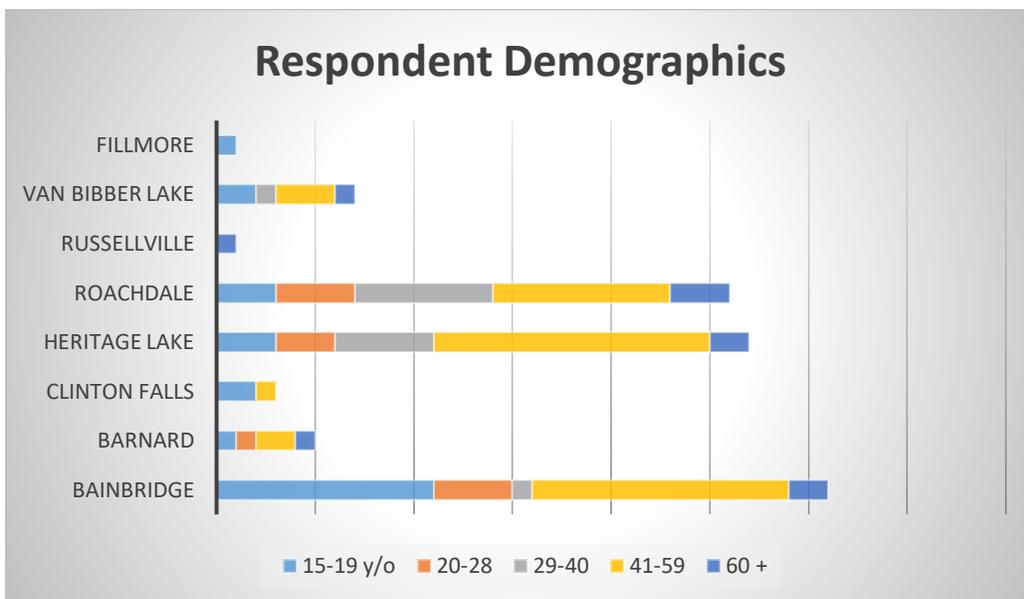
At the time of the survey, the group was considering a list of 10-12 projects. For the purpose of the survey that list was honed down to six. Those six projects were:

1. a food truck or Farmers' Market;
2. a mini-golf course;
3. a project to beautify and unify the main thoroughfares in the district;
4. a movie venue (either a drive-in, lawn-chair, or indoor movie spot); and
5. park improvements and events.

## Outcomes

### Key findings:

- Majority of individuals were interested in projects in either Bainbridge (44%) or Roachdale (27%), with Roachdale being the choice of project location
- Community members said social media and the Banner Graphic newspaper were the most common sources of information
- Most respondents were 41-59 years old (42%) and most respondents lived in Bainbridge (31%).



## **Our Proposed Project Plan**

In collaboration with the Roachdale Revitalization Committee, our community service group proposes a collection of projects to benefit our community. Although we are excited to embark on this endeavor with the RRC, our group is focused on the Accessible Community Giving Garden for the MCMV funds.

Since the development of these projects will exceed the MCMV funds, our group has pursued additional grant opportunities from organizations within the community.

### Project A -- Accessible Community Giving Garden

The Accessible Community Giving Garden emerged as the My Community, My Vision Project in part because it is a project the group can build within the timeframe and within the \$5000 budget, but the primary reason it was selected is that our community really needs it.

Students in the Community Service Group explain:

*“After surveying the northern part of Putnam County through tours, meetings with local residents, and via 101 paper surveys, it became apparent that the North Putnam has a lack of food sources. We have a limited amount of unhealthy food sources, but zero healthy food sources. By creating the garden, we will provide the community with a variety of healthy food options and offer physical outdoor activity, improving everyone’s wellness altogether. The garden also will provide the community with a space to gather and volunteer. The younger population in this area can use the garden for community service opportunities and as a way to connect with others in the community. As for the elders: they can use it for enjoyment, physical activity, and as a teaching and learning space. In addition, the garden makes an unused space productive, creates curb appeal, and beautifies a space in our community.”*



To understand the complexities of an Accessible Community Giving Garden, our group met with organizations and individuals at DePauw University, including J.D. Grove at Conspire & Heidi Menzel of First Baptist Church (pictured below). We learned an extensive amount about the difference between a *Giving Garden* and a *Community Garden*. In this case, a community garden would require maintenance & management by the MCMV group rather than the collaborative effort of a giving garden. We also learned:

- What fresh produce is best to plant based on the success of previous giving gardens
- Volunteer recruitment and retention strategies
- Pest control and other animal concerns
- Money saving ideas and practices
- Potential community partners and opportunities for support



The Accessible Community Giving Garden be part of the first phase of the revitalization plan in Roachdale, IN. Some additional components of the garden include:

- Raised garden beds
- Accessibility accommodations for the space to be enjoyed by all
- Use of plants from the NPHS FFA and seeds from local Master Gardeners
- Use of familiar and easily prepared vegetables and fruits and beneficial flowers in the garden
- Developing collaborative opportunities between various groups
- Donated labor and materials from community members
- A space which allows for volunteering and educational experiences
- Inclusion in a county-wide Giving Garden effort to address food insufficiency
- An area for gatherings and a central location for individuals to hang out
- An attraction for individuals of all ages who visit Roachdale



Example of the raised garden beds.



Providing a community space for learning and relaxing.

**Project B -- Social Gathering Place Adjacent to the Garden** (funded by Putnam County Foundation Youth Grant) and **Project C -- a Shelterhouse.**

Initially the CSG's second goal was to have a sheltered (covered) gathering space next to the garden so that volunteers had a space to gather, clean vegetables, and rest. The shelterhouse began to look like a project that would extend beyond the timeline and be more costly--and that the new location on Community Center property might not have space for it. While the group has applied for a large grant through another source to construct a shelterhouse, what began to seem more important was a group of tables that would be placed next to the garden; that became the Social Gathering Place. Community Service Group members say:

*Having the extra space around the community garden will allow for a place to set the fruits/vegetables and wash them. People can also sit at them to take a break and get out of the sun. One of the things we learned when we met with people who run community gardens in a neighboring town is that it is important to make the garden a welcoming, fun, and social place.*

*Along with supporting the garden, having the tables will offer a great place for families to hold outdoor parties and get together. We are planning to have cornhole boards and a regulation cornhole field next to the table area. We envision this will also be a place where people using the community center can spend time outdoors and get to know each other.*

*We have not given up on the Shelterhouse, but that may become next year's project for CSG and could be constructed in the park instead of by the garden. There are still details to resolve, and that is why it is now Project C.*



**Project D -- A Place (A Youth Hang-Out in the Community Center)** (funded by the Putnam County Foundation Grant)

In late January we learned we could have access to a building in Roachdale that was under the control of the RRCA, the North Meetinghouse. We began to have a vision, along with Joe Buser, of what the building could become. On our field trip to Greencastle we met with individuals to explore the issues faced in running a food establishment and a gathering place, and even investigated having museum displays in the space.

The first week of March we learned the building might be sold and it would not be wise for us to pursue grant funding for projects in the building. This was a big disappointment but quickly another opportunity presented itself: the possibility of space in the new Roachdale Community Building.

In the long run, the new facility probably is a better option for many reasons, but we had already begun to envision what the North Meetinghouse could become. We have not yet seen the interior of the new community building as construction is currently underway there, but it is a newer structure and a great deal of funding and work is being poured into it.



*Student response: Having a community building will bring unity to our community. It will become a safe place for people of all ages to not only hang out but even have birthday parties.*

## Final Thoughts

In Spring 2018 as the creation of a new course--Community Service--was added to the course options for North Putnam High School as part of Indiana's Graduation Pathways, I met with our principal Jason Chew and he told me about My Community, My Vision (MCMV).

We viewed the MCMV process as a support system aiding us through the development of the course and the execution of it during this first year. Over the summer I studied the project plans submitted by previous MCMV groups and also created a back-up plan for the class--in case we were not selected.

Having the resources of the instructors at IUPUI's School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA) to introduce the junior and senior high school students in the class to public policy has enhanced the students' experience. None of them knew anything about public policy or the impact it could have on a community, and certainly had not considered it as a career field. In addition, having a graduate student assigned to our group has not only helped with the students' process of determining a project and writing the report, it has provided a valuable personal resource for students who have questions about college and life beyond high school.

The plans the North Putnam Community Service/MCMV Group have created are based on research about the community and discussions with residents from all parts of the district. The resulting Action Plan and Projects were developed by students, and then organized and edited by advisor Sheri Roach and grad student mentor Madi Alton. The 11 students who contributed to the research and development of this plan know that implementation of it will have a direct impact on their community, create a foundation for further collaboration with several contributing groups and individuals, and serve as evidence for what a group of teenagers can do. Through this process the NP Community Service Group has learned how to get the attention of decision-makers, find the information they need, go after funding through a variety of sources, sell their ideas, and show that their opinions and concerns about their community matter.

## Appendix A – Community Survey

Conducted in December 2018.

### My Community, My Vision Project -- Interest and Information Survey

By The North Putnam High School Community Service Class

Determining community interest and gathering information to help us create a project to benefit the North Putnam community is our goal. We hope this MCMV project is the first of many that NPHS students will complete through working with community partners and stakeholders -- and one of those stakeholders is you!

**1. From the list, please select the town or area closest to where you reside. (Mark only one, please.)**

- Bainbridge
- Barnard
- Clinton Falls
- Heritage Lake
- Roachdale
- Russellville
- Van Bibber Lake

**2. Which age range listed below best describes you? (Mark only one, please.)**

- 15 - 19 years of age
- 20 - 28 years of age
- 29 - 40 years of age
- 41 - 59 years of age
- 60 years of age and older
- 10 - 14 years of age

**3. Our group is considering potential areas for placement if our project requires a fixed location. If a new activity became available in the North Putnam area, what locations would you be most likely to visit? Please mark the top two, writing a 1 for your first choice and a 2 for your second.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Bainbridge

- \_\_\_\_\_ Barnard
- \_\_\_\_\_ Clinton Falls
- \_\_\_\_\_ Heritage Lake
- \_\_\_\_\_ Roachdale
- \_\_\_\_\_ Russellville
- \_\_\_\_\_ Van Bibber Lake

**4. Looking at the project descriptions, which one is of greatest interest to you?**  
(Mark one, please.)

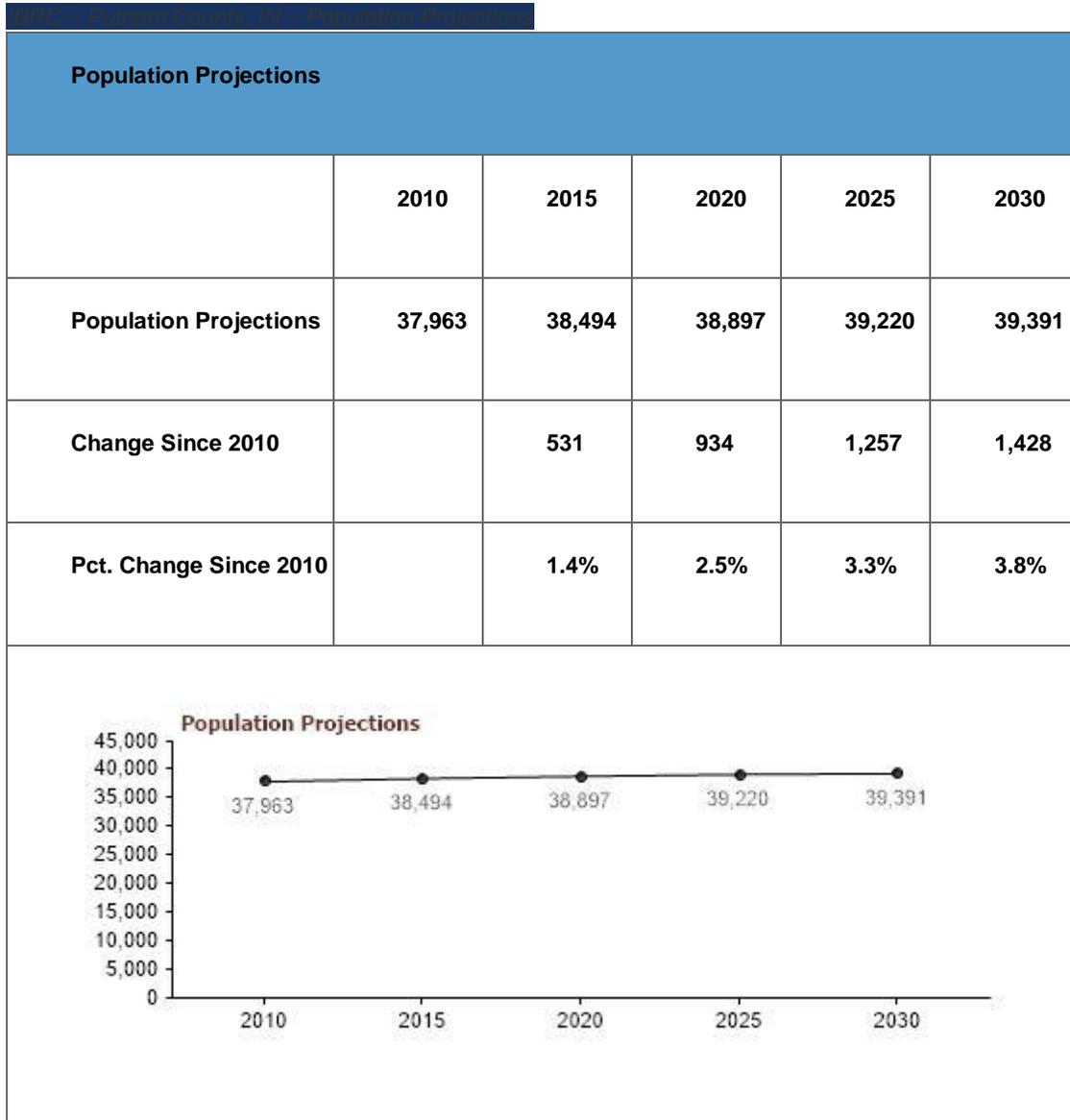
- Food Truck and Farmers' Market Hangout
- Mini-Golf Course
- Beautify and Unify
- Drive-In or Lawn-Chair Movie Theater
- Park Improvements and Events

**5. When attempting to find out information about events and activities in the North Putnam area, what sources do you tend to use? (Check all that apply.)**

- Banner Graphic newspaper
- Print/paper calendars or schedules (church, school, club, etc.)
- Online schedules or calendars posted by various groups
- Social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
- Posters or flyers placed throughout the community
- Radio or TV
- Community or Neighborhood Newsletter (print or online)
- I have trouble finding information about local events and activities.
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B – Additional Demographic Info

### Putnam County



Source: Indiana Business Research Center.

<b>Households in 2012</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Pct. Dist</b>
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>12,493</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Family Households</b>	<b>8,955</b>	<b>71.7%</b>
<b>Married with Children</b>	<b>2,708</b>	<b>21.7%</b>
<b>Married without Children</b>	<b>4,614</b>	<b>36.9%</b>
<b>Single Parents</b>	<b>903</b>	<b>7.2%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>730</b>	<b>5.8%</b>
<b>Non-family Households</b>	<b>3,538</b>	<b>28.3%</b>
<b>Living Alone</b>	<b>2,819</b>	<b>22.6%</b>
<b>Average Household Size</b>	<b>3.01</b>	
<b>Average Family Household Size</b>	<b>4.20</b>	

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates

<b>Housing Units in 2012</b>	
	<b>Number</b>
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>14,697</b>
<b>Occupied</b>	<b>12,493</b>
<b>Owner Occupied</b>	<b>9,876</b>
<b>Renter Occupied</b>	<b>2,617</b>
<b>Vacant</b>	<b>2,204</b>
<b>Average Household Size</b>	<b>3.01</b>
<b>Average Family Household Size</b>	<b>4.20</b>

Source:U.S. Census Bureau & American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates.