VISION 2021
FIVE-YEAR ECONOMIC PLAN
Jeff and Melissa Daniels and children Taylor and William are frequent visitors to Muncie’s cultural attractions such as, shown here, the David Owsley Museum of Art at Ball State University.

Carey and Jud Fisher’s farm on the outskirts of Muncie enables sons Colton and Carter to sample rural life and still be within 15 minutes of their friends, major sporting events, and school activities.

“Our decision to relocate to Muncie-Delaware County almost 10 years ago was made mostly for business reasons, but our decision to stay was based on the people we’ve met here and the experiences we’ve enjoyed since day one.” – Jeff Daniels

“You can’t beat Muncie-Delaware County as a career destination—excellent schools, world-class healthcare facilities, and diverse entertainment. Only a few miles separate fishing on the reservoir with great restaurants and concert venues.” – Jud Fisher
COLLEAGUES,

When we signed on as co-chairs of the Vision 2021 campaign, our motivation was simple: We believe in its mission. Six previous economic development plans have powered the community forward to where it is today. Now the challenge is to build on the progress and continue the momentum. To ensure that the next five-year plan clearly reflects Delaware County’s priorities, we hosted a series of brainstorming sessions and issued a blanket invitation to attend. The participation was amazing, the discussions were lively, and the result—as detailed in this book—is the community’s most transformative strategic plan to date. The six goals that emerged are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. In short, they’re SMART.

Now the hard work begins. The Muncie-Delaware County Economic Development Alliance (EDA) is charged with implementing the plan and achieving its objectives. Depending on the goal, the EDA either will serve as the driving organization or will collaborate with key partners to accomplish the task. Some of the goals are carryovers—important components of every aggressive economic development plan. These include expanding and retaining existing businesses, encouraging job growth, and promoting a culture of education. But Vision 2021 goes beyond tradition and focuses on two priorities that surfaced during the brainstorming sessions. Residents expressed enthusiasm for efforts to enhance the quality of place and enrich the quality of life in Muncie-Delaware County. The message that reverberated was, “Yes, this is a great place to work, but it’s also a great place to live. Let’s expand efforts on both fronts.”

Taken as a whole, the goals and objectives, as outlined on these pages, comprise an integrated plan to position the community for the future. The plan is designed to strengthen what we do as well as where we do it.

On a personal note, neither of us is originally from Delaware County, but we’ve chosen to make it our home. Our children attend its schools, we serve on its nonprofit boards and committees, and when we’re not at our desks we’re with our families at the Reservoir, along the Cardinal Greenway, on the grounds of Minnetrista, and on the banks of the White River. We enthusiastically endorse Vision 2021 and will be actively engaged in its implementation. Please join us in this adventure!

Sincerely,

Jeff Daniels, Vision 2021 Co-Chairman
Jud Fisher, Vision 2021 Co-Chairman
WHO WE ARE:
The Muncie-Delaware County Economic Development Alliance (EDA) represents the consortium of entities involved in providing economic development services in our community. The EDA is composed of the Muncie-Delaware County Chamber of Commerce, Delaware Advancement Corporation, Muncie Redevelopment Commission, Delaware County Redevelopment Commission, Delaware County Advisory Council on Industrial Development, Muncie Economic Development Commission, and Delaware County Economic Development Commission. The EDA works closely with the City of Muncie and Delaware County government. Delaware Advancement Corporation and the Muncie-Delaware County Chamber of Commerce are the administrative entities for the EDA.

WHAT WE DO:
• Expansion of existing businesses
• Retention of existing businesses
• Marketing and recruitment of new businesses
• Site selection and company location assistance
• Research and marketing
• Administration of financial assistance programs
• Business advocacy
• Financial incentives
• Infrastructure improvements
• Workforce training assistance
• Business start-up assistance
• Land and buildings clearing-house
• Administration/development of tax increment financing districts and CReED Districts
• Community engagement promotion
• Community marketing and outreach
• Bonding
• Wellness promotion within the community
• International business assistance

OUR MISSION:
To aggressively promote investment in Muncie-Delaware County which will result in the creation and retention of quality job opportunities and enhance the quality of life in our communities.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT: www.muncie.com
In back-to-back sessions—one in the evening, another the following morning—facilitator and Ball State University management professor emeritus Ray Montagno wasted no time in giving more than 100 Delaware County residents their assignment. “For the next two hours you’re working for the Economic Development Alliance,” he said. To assist them in their task, all tables in the Prairie Creek Room of the Horizon Convention Center were equipped with paper, pens, and copies of the Vision 2016 book, the five-year strategic plan recently concluded. “Those books give a picture of where this organization has been,” explained Montagno. Then, pointing to the thick pad mounted on an easel at the front of the room, he added, “And those sheets of paper will show where we’re going.”

Staff of the Economic Development Alliance (EDA) had met previously and created a list of five “starter objectives.” Now it was up to the gathering to refine, expand, or rework the list. Because each table would explore a different objective, participants were encouraged to move to the table that was tackling the topic that interested them the most. The stampede was on, and before any discussion began, a priority emerged. The “quality of place” topic generated so much enthusiasm among millennials that it spilled over to occupy two tables.

Montagno and EDA staffers roamed the room, clarifying the task and offering tips on how to proceed. The noise level escalated as participants distilled their ideas to phrases, which Montagno then captured on sheets of easel paper that soon covered the walls. Clearly, no one suffered from what Montagno called “planning paralysis.”

Twelve days later the group reassembled to view the list that the EDA staff had winnowed to a manageable number of goals and objectives. Participants were invited to express their priorities by affixing red and green dots to the various line items. Two hours later, the exercise ended and the framework for Vision 2021 emerged.
GOAL 1 Enrich quality of life

OBJECTIVES:
- Population Growth and Diversity
- Community Well-Being
- Transit Options
TACTICS FOR MEETING OBJECTIVES

Population Growth and Diversity
• Create an online portal to highlight community diversity
• Work with employers to recruit workers to the area
• Convince commuters to relocate to Delaware County

Community Well-Being
• Support wellness activities for healthy living
• Identify and support public safety programs

Transit Options
• Stay current on transit trends
• Collaborate to plan and implement new options
• Make the community more bicycle and pedestrian friendly

MEASUREMENTS
• Become the first county well-certified in the state
• Increase positive news, events, and people on social media
• Assist with community database on transit developments
• Increase the number of people living and working in Delaware County

Muncie Area Facts:

Minnetrista center for cultural exploration hosts ongoing exhibits and invites visitors to wander its 40 acres of beautifully landscaped grounds.

Delaware County is consistently ranked in the top five counties in the state for nonprofits.

The Charles W. Brown Planetarium at Ball State University is the largest planetarium in Indiana and offers free weekly showings throughout the year.

The Muncie Children’s Museum offers 18 interactive, hands-on exhibits for children to explore, create, and discover.

The Muncie Public Library has four locations throughout the city including the history and genealogy center and Connection Corner, founded as a paperless library branch that promotes 21st century skills and resources to focus on the community’s creative projects.

Ball State athletics are part of the NCAA Division I and Mid-American Conference and include seven men’s sports and 12 women’s sports.

Realtor.com ranks Muncie—with a median home price of $77,900—as the least expensive college town in America.

The Marilyn K. Glick Center for Glass at Ball State University was built to support the contemporary glass arts and allows the public to watch artists as they work in the hot shop.

The David Owsley Museum of Art has a notable, well-rounded collection that spans more than 5,000 years.

Canoe Country in Daleville allows individuals to rent a kayak or tube to enjoy the scenic White River that flows through Delaware County.
VISION 2021

GOAL 2 Enhance quality of place

OBJECTIVES:
• Community Revitalization
• Recreational and Cultural Trail Systems
• Public Art Programs
• Housing Options
• Downtown Development
TACTICS FOR MEETING OBJECTIVES

Community Revitalization
- Create an incentive program for revitalization efforts
- Work with partners to identify revitalization needs
- Expand standards for commercial corridors
- Identify vacant/blighted lots for adaptive reuse

Recreational and Cultural Trail Systems
- Support trail-system expansion and cultural trail completion
- Assist in finding funding

Public Art Programs
- Research successful efforts of other communities
- Incorporate art into existing programs

Housing Options
- Ensure a range of options at multiple price points
- Consult with builders and financiers on new construction
- Encourage improvements to existing homes
- Partner to develop standards for residential developments

Downtown Development
- Collaborate to encourage retail growth
- Partner to promote downtown activities

MEASUREMENTS
- Document programs to increase revitalization
- Connect current trail and add miles to the system
- Create database and grow art and recreation programs by 10%
- Facilitate the maintenance of a database showing a wide array of housing options
- Boost downtown occupancy rate

Muncie Area Facts:

The Muncie Civic Theatre, founded in 1931, is one of the oldest civic theatres in the state and is located in one of the oldest theatres in the country, built in 1880.

Muncie is home to more than 25 parks, including community and pocket parks.

The Farmer’s Market offers fresh and locally-grown produce each week at Minnetrista from more than 40 vendors. During the summer, free cooking demonstrations are available.

The Wheeler-Thanhauser Orchid Collection and Species Bank, situated within the 17-acre Christy Woods on Ball State University’s campus, is the largest college-maintained collection in the U.S. and it is open to the public.

The Cardinal Greenway is the longest rail-trail in Indiana and spans 62 miles from Marion through Muncie to Richmond in East Central Indiana.

Located just five miles southeast of Muncie, the Prairie Creek Reservoir and its park area are made up of approximately 1,275 acres of water and 750 acres of land.

Emens Auditorium annually welcomes world-renowned artists, speakers, Broadway Shows, and musicians to its stage. Past guests have included Oprah Winfrey, Stevie Wonder, David Letterman, David Copperfield, Adam Sandler, B.B. King, and The Blue Man Group.

Muncie has many art galleries in its downtown area; the first Thursday of each month is an Arts Walk.

Sursa Hall seats 600 and features a world-class pipe organ built by the Goulding & Wood Company.
GOAL 3
Expand and retain existing business

OBJECTIVES:
- Economic Growth and Retention
- Alternative Energy
- Pro-Business Environment
TACTICS FOR MEETING OBJECTIVES

Economic Growth and Retention
• Support efforts to increase business investment and job growth
• Build awareness of expansion efforts via awards, honors, and tours

Alternative Energy
• Create a consortium to develop alternative energy strategies
• Identify partners to benefit from alternative energies

Pro-Business Environment
• Market Muncie-Delaware County as a regional economic center
• Promote visits by state and national leaders
• Position EDA as the one-stop economic resource in Delaware County

MEASUREMENTS
• Increase regional/county GDP by 10%
• Build database of financial resources for businesses
• Assess multiple businesses per year for energy savings
• Maintain statistics on job creation and retention
• Track social media postings about business honors
• Host “Business Appreciation Day” annually
• Visit 80-100 businesses per year to determine needs

Muncie Area Facts:
Tribune Showprint located in Muncie, is the oldest continuously-operating print shop in the country.
The average commute time to work in Muncie is 17 minutes, which is 34 percent below the nation’s average.
Delaware County is home to Tonne Winery, Indiana’s 2014 Winery of the Year.
Delaware County does not allow smoking in workplaces, restaurants, or bars.
Muncie-Delaware County is home to the award-winning PhyXTGears, the county’s first robotics team.
The Island Muncie is a tropical paradise located along the Cardinal Greenway and offers visitors a reprieve to enjoy a cool drink or snack.
Mid-West Homes for Pets, a division of Mid-West Metal Products, is America’s largest home builder for pets.
The famous Ball jars were once produced here, and Jarden Home Brands still produces the enclosures locally.
Ontario Systems builds software to recover consumer and business payments in highly regulated industries, including three of the five largest health systems in the U.S.
Murray’s Jewelers, located in downtown Muncie, has been designing jewelry for customers around the world for five generations.
Delaware County’s Accutech creates industry-leading trust and investment management software.
GOAL 4: Create a culture of education

OBJECTIVES:

- Kindergarten Readiness
- Education and Community Growth
- Community Health and Wellness Education
- High School and Post-Secondary Attainment
- Shared Apprenticeship Training
TACTICS FOR MEETING OBJECTIVES

Kindergarten Readiness
- Partner and promote BY5 activities
- Increase the number of certified childcare facilities

Education and Community Growth
- Publicize the link between education and community growth
- Create partnerships between businesses and schools

Community Health and Wellness Education
- Promote wellness activities
- Build awareness of wellness program providers

High School and Post-Secondary Attainment
- Emphasize vocations requiring a high school diploma
- Highlight careers that require post-secondary training
- Create a mentoring program

Shared Apprenticeship Training
- Identify and promote apprenticeship programs
- Make connections between existing industries to create apprenticeship programs

MEASUREMENTS
- Serve on BY5 board
- Communicate lifelong learning opportunities
- Increase high school and post-secondary attainment by 10%
- Develop additional apprenticeship programs

Muncie Area Facts:

The Muncie Symphony Orchestra has been in the community since 1949 and offers an Instrument Petting Zoo for children and adults to look at and play instruments under the watchful eyes of veteran musicians.

Muncie was the focus of Robert S. and Helen Merrell Lynd’s Middletown sociological studies that established the community as a barometer of social trends in the U.S.

The City of Muncie is now recognized as a Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC), according to the League of American Bicyclists.

Yorktown and community partners have constructed a 60-acre multi-sport complex featuring 20 soccer fields, baseball and softball fields, and an indoor volleyball facility.

Cornerstone Center for the Arts holds special events as well as offers art and educational opportunities throughout the year in its six-story building that was formerly a Masonic Temple.

Two area schools are consistently ranked in the top 15 Best High Schools in Indiana by U.S. News and World Report.

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading has named Muncie-Delaware County a “pacesetter.”

Ivy Tech Community College and Muncie Community Schools offer an early college curriculum to allow students to complete a one- or two-year college degree while fulfilling high school graduation requirements.

Camp Adventure offers corporate and nonprofit organizations a variety of programs including natural sciences, ropes courses, and team-building activities.
Prepare the community for the future

GOAL 5

OBJECTIVES:

- Expansion of High-Quality Internet Access
- Alignment of Vision 2021 with Other Plans
- Economic Development and Environments
- Attractions and Assets in East Central Indiana
- Infrastructure-Ready Sites
TACTICS FOR MEETING OBJECTIVES

Expansion of High-Quality Internet Access
• Expand broadband access to the county
• Work to implement citywide wi-fi in Muncie

Alignment of Vision 2021 with Other Plans
• Assist Muncie Action Plan in achieving goals
• Support completion of ADVANCE-ECI Regional Cities Plan
• Incorporate other community plans (Ball State University, Ivy Tech Community College, Muncie Community Schools, etc.)

Economic Development and Environment
• Stay current with regulations affecting businesses
• Provide leadership on economic and policy issues

Attractions and Assets in East Central Indiana
• Invite stakeholders to pool efforts
• Promote destinations on social media
• Create one-day trips to highlight assets

Infrastructure-Ready Sites
• Help government and utility companies identify needs
• Establish and promote shovel-ready sites

MEASUREMENTS
• Increase internet access to at least 50% for Muncie-Delaware County
• Achieve citywide wi-fi connectivity for Muncie
• Experience a surge in regional tourism
• Earn and maintain certifications for infrastructure-ready sites

Muncie Area Facts:

Ball State University has implemented the nation’s largest ground-source, closed-loop district geothermal energy system.
The Academy of Model Aeronautics is headquartered in Muncie and features the National Model Aviation Museum, which contains the largest collection of model aircraft in the nation.
Muncie has more museums than McDonald’s restaurants!
The DC Wellness Professionals are working to make Delaware County the first county in the state to be Well-Certified by the Wellness Council of Indiana.
The Arbor Day Foundation has designated Muncie a “Tree City USA” community since 1998.
Muncie-Delaware County is home to eight golf courses.
The three major foundations of Muncie-Delaware County—Ball Brothers Foundation, George and Frances Ball Foundation, and The Community Foundation of Muncie & Delaware County—awarded almost $13 million in 2015.
The community has embraced the BY5 initiative that works to improve early childhood experiences for children ages 0-5.
Recently, some 300 acres of land in East Central Indiana, with more than half of that in Muncie-Delaware County, have been secured to promote land conservation in the area.
Encourage job growth in targeted sectors

OBJECTIVES:
• Workforce Development
• Entrepreneurial Ecosystem
• Business Information Clearinghouse
TACTICS FOR MEETING OBJECTIVES

Workforce Development
- Collaborate to meet training demands of the marketplace
- Build awareness of high-paying jobs at all education levels
- Increase the average wage for Muncie-Delaware County

Entrepreneurial Ecosystem
- Help entrepreneurs recognize “next step” opportunities
- Promote Innovation Connector, Co:Lab, and MadJax
- Work to improve capital investment opportunities
- Support companies transitioning beyond incubation

Business Information Clearinghouse
- Maintain database of industries targeted for marketing efforts
- Create business profiles with statistics on products and services
- Oversee database of available office space and industrial sites

MEASUREMENTS
- Improve the number of labor-force training grants
- Catalogue new and transitioning businesses
- Increase the county’s average income ranking within the state
Muncie-Delaware County has embraced the fact that 90% of brain development happens by age 5 by supporting the birth to age 5 initiative, BY5, to provide high-quality and accessible early childhood development programs.

IU HEALTH BALL MEMORIAL HOSPITAL serves as a tertiary referral center and teaching hospital for East Central Indiana and part of Indiana University Health.

The public high schools in Muncie-Delaware County offer a combined 17 different sports for students to participate in and five foreign languages.

Why Muncie and Delaware County?

Adam Unger
President, Accutech Systems

I tell people that we aren’t a software company; in truth, we’re a service company that happens to make software. Our industry is very competitive, so we have to recruit really bright and talented team members who are driven by a desire to serve our clients. The mission at Accutech is to “make great things happen for other people,” and we’ve had a lot of success finding outstanding talent in and around the Muncie area that are really passionate about that calling. I call it “the Midwest disposition.” When we bring in prospective clients and employees, we introduce them to as many people on our team as possible. That’s the big draw—for them to see the exceptional folks they’ll be working with.

Braydee Euliss
Member, Muncie Arts & Culture Council Board of Directors

For a Midwestern town its size, Muncie has an impressive history of cultivating an appreciation for the visual arts that dates back to the late 1800s and the early influence of the Ball family. Fortunately, I was given the chance to be professionally involved with the arts at an early age when I began working for Brian and Genny Gordy. As a Muncie native, that experience opened my eyes to how robust our arts scene really is. It’s also uniquely accessible and malleable, ripe for the next wave of influential young people to dig in and make a difference.

Kelsey Timmerman
New York Times bestselling author of Where Am I Wearing?

I start the day carpooling my son to Ball State’s Child Study Center preschool. Next, it’s CrossFit with my wife at The Arsenal where Coach Adam and a barbell humble me. I grab a panini at The Downtown Farm Stand and settle in at my office in the Co:Lab where I work on the nonprofit I cofounded and Muncie supports—The Facing Project. In my books I’ve written about faraway places I’ve visited, places with mountains and oceans and other features that lure folks to live there. But not me. I choose here. I choose Muncie—a city big enough to make a life, yet small enough to make a difference.
Frank Scott, Sr.
President, board of directors, Whitely Community Council

Our neighborhood association has adopted the "One Muncie" theme that has us sharing ideas and programs with other associations in the community. It’s not unusual for our monthly meetings to attract dozens of people who aren’t residents of Whitely but who want to partner with us. Ball State helped us develop a strategic plan, and one of the initiatives that came out of the plan is going to be a real game changer. We call it Time Banking, and it’s a way for people to volunteer their services, “bank” their volunteer hours, and then exchange them for services that they might need. We already have 30 people signed up to participate, and we’re hoping other neighborhood associations will hear about the idea and replicate it.

Roni Johnson
President emeritus, The Community Foundation of Muncie & Delaware County

My 27 years at the Foundation gave me the chance to interact daily with people from every corner of Delaware County—Muncie, Gaston, Eaton, Albany, Selma, Daleville, and Yorktown. Not only were they the kindest and most generous folks around, they also were the most creative. Their ideas for community-based programs and projects were visionary, and the Foundation had the honor of helping bring them to reality. Now retired, I choose to stay here because I want to be part of a community that is composed of compassionate and innovative people who care deeply about the place they call home.

Matt Brandon
Locomotive engineer, CSX Transportation

I work for the railroad and pass through Muncie at least four times a week on the train. I had never been off the tracks here—April and I live in Franklin—but I’ve watched the roads being resurfaced, the circle put in, and the new hotel going up. We were looking for a short getaway close to home, someplace we had never been, and we decided on Muncie. We had no clue what was here. We stayed at the Marriott, which is awesome. We used the bike lanes to get in and out of town. The first day we rode from Muncie to Gaston and back. We’ll come back for sure, but next time we want to bring the kids.

Ball State University is home to approximately 21,000 students on and off campus. BSU offers seven associate, 178 bachelor’s, 99 master’s, two specialist, and 16 doctoral degrees in seven academic colleges.

There are 10 public school systems in Muncie-Delaware County and four private schools.

7,400+ This is the number of credentials that Ball State University and Ivy Tech — East Central grant each year.

The entrepreneurship program at Ball State University is ranked continuously among the nation’s top 10 undergraduate programs by U.S. News & World Report and described as the “ultimate entrepreneurial experience.”

Ivy Tech Community College, which has three Muncie locations, ranks 1st in the nation for the most associate degrees awarded from a two-year institution, according to Community College Week Magazine.

94% The graduation rate for schools in Muncie-Delaware County.

ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN:
Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boys and Girls Club, Buley Center, Motivate Our Minds, Ross Center, Muncie Children’s Museum, 4-H, Tuhey Pool, facilities for baseball, tennis, volleyball, soccer, Cornerstone Center for the Arts, Muncie Ballet Studio and more.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES:
Concerts and events at Ball State University, Academy for Model Aeronautics, Minnetrista and Oakhurst Gardens, Muncie Parks, Muncie Public Library, YMCA, Charles Brown Planetarium, David Owsley Museum of Art, The White River and Cardinal Greenways, Downtown art galleries, Ball State Athletics, Muncie Civic Theatre, Muncie Symphony Orchestra and more.
THANK YOU
To the many individuals who took time to participate in the development of the goals for Vision 2021.

Vision 2021
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Jeff Daniels, Co-Chair
Jud Fisher, Co-Chair
John Littler
Tom Miller
Steve Moore
Magi Sikora

Vision 2021
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Casey Stanley
Gary Thomas

GOAL PARTNERS:
To achieve these goals, leadership will come from the following partners:

ADVANCE-ECI
Building Better Neighborhoods
Business Education Partnership
BY5
Cardinal Greenway
Child Protective Services
Childcare Operators
Church Leaders
Co: Lab
Community Attractions
Community and Business Leaders
Community Enhancement Projects
Community Leadership
Community Schools K-12
Court System
Delaware County Wellness Professionals
Department of Family Resources
East Central Indiana Regional Partnership
ecoREHAB of Muncie, Inc.
Elected Officials
Existing Businesses
Financial Institutions
Foundations
Habitat for Humanity
Higher Education/Vocational Training Facilities
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
Innovation Connector
Land and Building Developers
Law Enforcement
Libraries
Local Government
Local Media Outlets
Local Utility Companies
MADJAX
Medical Providers
Muncie Action Plan
Muncie-Delaware Clean & Beautiful
Muncie Delaware Metropolitan Plan Commission
Muncie Downtown Development Partnership
Muncie Manufacturers Alliance
Muncie Young Professionals
Muncie-Delaware County Chamber of Commerce
Muncie Visitors Bureau
Museums
Neighborhood Associations
Neighborhood Leaders
Neighborhood Investment Committee
Organized Labor
Professional Associations
Project Leadership
Real Estate Professionals
SCORE
Service Clubs
Small Business Development Center
Social Service Agency Leaders
United Way and its Partners
WorkOne
YMCA
Focus Group Participants
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