

BEDFORD COMPLETE STREETS



SUSTAINING HOOSIER COMMUNITIES

2017-2018

A partnership between SPEA-S515:
Sustainable Communities &
Bedford Complete Streets





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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
About Sustaining Hoosier Communities	4
About the Course	5
About the City of Bedford & Complete Streets	6
Connecting Course & Community	7
Student & Community Outcomes	8



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Acknowledgements

This project was completed as a collaboration between the students in SPEA-S515: Sustainable Communities and the City of Bedford's Complete Streets policy as part of the 2017-2018 Indiana University Sustaining Hoosier Communities (IUSHC) initiative. IUSHC is a program within the IU Center for Rural Engagement (CRE).

This report represents original student work and recommendations proposed by the students in SPEA-S515: Sustainable Communities for the City of Bedford. The contents of this report represent the views of the students in SPEA-S515: Sustainable Communities and do not reflect those of IUSHC, CRE, Indiana University, or the City of Bedford.

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About Sustaining Hoosier Communities

Indiana University Sustaining Hoosier Communities is an initiative that partners with a local community within south central Indiana to explore, understand, and resolve challenges and projects identified by the community. Based on a tested model for university/community engagement that has been successfully implemented by over 25 universities and their community partners, Sustaining Hoosier Communities is a yearlong collaboration between Indiana University and a single community partner.

Indiana University's faculty who opt in to Sustaining Hoosier Communities match their courses to the projects based on their areas of research, expertise, and teaching. Each course uses a cross-disciplinary approach to explore and solve sustainability issues identified by the community partner through project-based research. Faculty and community stakeholders agree before classes begin on a scope of work and deliverables for each class, and project liaisons are identified by the community and the university to coordinate this unified effort.

Sustaining Hoosier Communities is just one example of many types of community engagement Indiana University plans to pursue as part of the Center for Rural Engagement. By harnessing the research, expertise, energy, and service of Indiana University's faculty, staff, and students, Indiana University and our local partners work collaboratively to improve the health, prosperity, and vitality of southcentral Indiana.

To learn more about IU Sustaining Hoosier Communities, visit www.shc.indiana.edu.

To learn more about the IU Center for Rural Engagement, visit www.rural.indiana.edu.

Sustaining Hoosier Communities Project Process





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About the Course

SPEA-S515: Sustainable Communities explored proactive strategies for moving communities toward economic, social and environmental sustainability. The course began with an overview of the imperatives for change, as most of the world's people become urban dwellers for the first time in the history of civilization. The city of Bedford, located 25 miles south of Bloomington, was used as a learning lab for students in SPEA-S515: Sustainable Communities to explore the complex, interrelated challenges communities of all sizes face as they strive to thrive in a world of finite resources, growing populations, and a changing climate. Students explored new thinking in sustainable community design, from the scale of individual green buildings and complete streets to sustainable regional systems of transportation, land use, commerce, natural systems restoration, waste, food, water and energy. The goal of SPEA-S515: Sustainable Communities was to allow students to integrate their knowledge of sustainable communities with their own life experiences and career goals to design and lead change towards thriving, resilient communities. Student teams worked with Bedford community leaders to research best practices for a Complete Streets policy and implementation and make specific recommendations for moving forward with aspects of Bedford's 2016 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan in order to increase rural multimodal transportation networks.



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About the City of Bedford & Complete Streets

The Bedford Comprehensive Plan, adopted by the City Council in 2010, identified some future areas for continued improvement to city infrastructure. Within the plan, the lack of separate bikeways and predominant absence of sidewalks outside of the downtown and older residential neighborhoods were noted as concerns. Certain areas in Bedford make biking and walking difficult due to the poor condition or absence of sidewalks. This discourages activities such as walking and biking due to pedestrian and cyclist safety risk. A Complete Streets policy has been drafted to address these challenges, opportunities, and priorities for active living in Bedford. Students in SPEA-S515: Sustainable Communities were tasked with researching past planning documents and offering suggestions regarding how to implement a Complete Streets policy for Bedford. Furthermore, the class prepared case study materials, conducted site visits, and led a town hall meeting in order to explore potential policy and develop implementation strategies for three streets identified as the community's priorities: Washington Avenue, I and J Streets, and Mitchell Road.



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The Project: Connecting Course & Community

The City of Bedford identified its interest in implementing a Complete Streets policy that includes safer access to multimodal transportation infrastructure, increased ability to engage in an active lifestyle, greater community equity, and increased economic development and social capital. Students in SPEA-S515: Sustainable Communities prepared case study materials, conducted site visits, and led a town hall meeting in Bedford to explore potential policy and implementation strategies for Washington Avenue, I and J Streets, and Mitchell Road. Based on feedback from the community, students determined the importance of Bedford officially enacting a Complete Streets plan and proposed solutions to the perceived barriers to passing this ordinance.

Students suggested forming a Complete Streets Task Force, provided prioritization criteria to determine which segments would be the best investment of taxpayer funding, suggested a monitoring plan that include metrics for safety, usage, and installation, and developed community outreach strategies to engage the local community around its Complete Streets policy to ultimately mitigate any potential pushback.

By working directly with community members to understand their needs, students had the opportunity to learn more about the cultural identity of Bedford, to collaborate and communicate as working professionals in their fields of study, and to understand how coursework theory can be applied to real-life problem solving. Likewise, by providing students with valuable support and insight into Bedford's existing challenges and goals, the community could then benefit from student-generated ideas and energy that could drive the Complete Streets initiative forward.



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Student Outcomes

- Identified areas for renovation and improvement for Washington Avenue, I and J Streets, and Mitchell Road in Bedford, IN
- Utilized peer community policies and research on national standards and Complete Streets best practices to guide recommendations for Bedford's Complete Streets policy
- Provided comprehensive "next steps" that integrated Bedford's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, Complete Streets policy draft, and the Active Living Workshop Notes
- Led a town hall meeting to speak directly to community members about their concerns on the Complete Streets policy adoption
- Gained applicable skills in project management, communication, research and planning to integrate sustainability within a rural community

Community Partner Outcomes

- Student-generated solutions to perceived barriers to Complete Streets policy as voiced by the community
- Prioritization criteria to move Complete Streets policy forward
- Recommendations on implementing community-level education and public awareness strategies in transportation improvements
- Resources for developing workshops and trainings for citizens and law enforcement
- Community outreach strategies to increase transparency and raise awareness of benefits associated with proposed changes



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