

The Original Indiana: A Marketing Plan for Washington County, Indiana

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract

There are over 3,000 counties in the United States. This abundance makes the task of developing a marketing strategy that sufficiently differentiates any one county from the rest particularly difficult. Existing research on place marketing has demonstrated that building unique selling points and strong branding is crucial, and many urban areas have followed these strategies with success. However, there is lack of practical application of these principles in rural areas. This paper developed a marketing plan for Washington County, Indiana, a sparsely populated, rural county in southern Indiana. To accomplish this, data from federal, state, and local sources was collected and analyzed using a Four P's marketing strategy and SWOT analysis. After careful analysis, it was concluded that the best marketing strategy for Washington County is for it to nationally differentiate itself based on its proximity to Louisville, KY and regionally differentiate itself based on it being the community-focused, historic capital of southern Indiana. This paper also contains policy recommendations that will help in the implementation and effectiveness of this strategy. Implementing the plan presented in this paper may help Washington County reverse negative trends like aging population and dependency on a few economic sectors, while also enabling it to take advantage of emerging opportunities like the virtual economy and growing regional population.

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Process Analysis Statement

There were several stages in the development of this Honors thesis. Since beginning work in economic development, I have known that my thesis would build a marketing plan for my home county, Washington County, but I did not know where to start with that process when the time came. My thesis advisor, Dr. Syed, recommended that I start with a literature review to orient myself to what had already been done in county marketing. Initially, I was frustrated to learn that there was little existing research on county marketing. Most of the literature focused on sub-county entities like municipalities or super-county entities like regions. However, after accepting that such literature was the best I was going to find, I realized that many of the principles in marketing these entities also apply to marketing counties. Moreover, applying these principles to a county setting is a unique and valuable addition to the literature. Ideas from my literature review, like the need to identify clear unique selling points and present a brand story that is genuine and compatible with people's preexisting conceptions of the county, greatly assisted the direction of my subsequent work.

The next step was orienting myself to the current state of Washington County. I accomplished this primarily through my research for the Product and Price sections of the plan. Though I am a native of the county, I could not overestimate my preexisting knowledge. In fact, there were several times I discovered things in the county that I had never even heard of. In addition to providing me with relevant information, this orientation allowed me to soberly assess the existing situation and build a realistic marketing plan.

The orientation process began with data collection. I started with gathering some basic demographic statistics, using the most up-to-date tools from the Economic Development Administration, whose data I use frequently in my job. For more detailed data, I turned to state

and institutional sources. Information from Ball State University's Center for Business and Economic Research is worthy of note here. Not only did their policy memos on quality of life and economic development best practices guide the theoretical framework of this plan, but their data sources allowed me to easily compare Washington County with other Indiana counties and benchmark on key statistics. I also looked at many non-statistical sources like government websites, history books, regional development plans, and other resources produced by relevant parties in the region.

Early in this data collection stage, I realized that I simply had too many numbers in my notes and that I had lost track of what they all meant. I needed to organize them. Microsoft Excel, a program I have ample experience with, was a critical help towards that end. However, data entry is a time-consuming process, so I initially questioned the value of this note organization. I doubted that any of the information I was creating was going to be useful. However, aggregating these data in Excel from a variety of sources allowed me to see new relationships I would not have noticed without engaging in this extra step. For example, without this data aggregation I would never have realized that Washington County has the unique feature of over 56 miles of hiking trails and that over eighty percent of them are rugged. My paper is stronger because of this organizational effort.

After completing the literature review and Product and Price sections, I felt that I had sufficient background information and expert guidance to begin work on the heart of the plan: the Promotion section. This was the section I was most passionate about, so I jumped into work on this section with pleasure. My pleasure, though, soon turned into panic. I worked for almost two days on the Promotion section and could not find anything physical in Washington County that I believed made the county unique enough to compete against the three thousand other

counties in the country. The best strategy I could come up with was building a strategy that sold the emotional benefit of Washington County's great sense of community.

This is where Dr. Syed's guidance was critical. He gently pointed out that the promotional strategy I had presented to him was weak. Emotional appeals must be backed by something real to be credible. For my plan to work, there had to be something that set Washington County apart from all the other counties. I told him that I had tried to find something unique for almost two days and had come up empty. Instead of just taking my word for it, he had me describe the county to him. I listed off a few things, and he encouraged me to keep going. He would know when to stop me. Eventually, I said that Washington County was located close to Louisville, Kentucky, so close that people consider it to be a part of Kentuckiana. He stopped me and said that only a few counties in the world can credibly claim to be close to a large city like Louisville, a city with its own unique, well-known culture. I had not even considered this a unique selling point. The long hours of looking at masses of information about the county had desensitized me to some important points of data. Being relatively distant from the project, Dr. Syed was able to immediately recognize these points. This was a great lesson in the value of collaborating with others. Diverse perspectives and levels of experience add value to a project.

I left Dr. Syed's office that day encouraged and determined to build off the revelation from our meeting. Using proximity to Louisville as a unique selling point narrowed the field of competition from 3,142 counties to just 4, which was a much easier number to work with. I analyzed these four counties to understand how they were promoting themselves. After doing so, I realized that my initial strategy of emotional benefit promotion may work at the local level, where neighboring counties primarily sell functional benefits like suburban access and natural

scenery. However, I still wanted to tie the emotional benefit I was selling to something real, otherwise my promotional plan would just be clever wordsmithing with no relationship to the real Washington County. Thus, I analyzed all the things that I believe give Washington County a great sense of community, and I realized that the main reason for this is that the county has many long-standing cultural traditions, annual festivals, and beloved historical landmarks.

Wanting to develop the historical angle even further, I dug deeper into some of the historical research I had done for the Product section. I discovered that Indiana was settled from the south to the north and that Washington County was one of the original 13 Indiana counties invited to the state's constitutional convention. An emerging trend solidified the direction I took for the promotional strategy. I learned that Washington County is one of only 29 counties projected to grow in Indiana. Moreover, it is one of the only rural counties among these 29. Somewhat sadly, I realized that Washington County may soon be the only place left in Indiana where the oldest history and traditions of the state are still preserved. Though I tested other brand slogans, I quickly settled on "The Original Indiana," which I felt perfectly captured that sad yet proud sense of disappearing history I was feeling.

After writing a short Place section, the next phase of the process was the SWOT Analysis, which I consider to be a contextualization phase. I was very excited by the ideas I had developed in the Promotion section, and the SWOT Analysis served as a much-needed grounder. Sure, I was excited about my ideas for promoting Washington County, but why would anyone else care? The SWOT helped me answer that. Upon realizing that I was repeating a lot of content in the Strengths and Weaknesses sections, I began to wonder what the purpose of this section was. However, I realized that though I understood the relationships between the points in my Four P's section, my reader would need a distillation and categorization of the most critical

points. SWOT Analysis is a useful tool for accomplishing that end. When framed in the context of temporary Opportunities and genuine Threats, the reader can more easily see the value of building a marketing plan around the county's Strengths and Weaknesses. Doubting the value of SWOT Analysis and then seeing the positive outcomes of completing it gave me greater confidence in trusting the proven processes of analysis presented in common marketing tools.

A rather intense revision was required after I had completed writing all the narrative components. I realized that some of the positions I had theorized in my introduction had either been proven incorrect by the research or were else not relevant to what I now knew my piece contained. If I were going to write this over again, I would write the introduction last, not first. However, this was a great lesson in the value of iteration. What I write first is seldom my best work. Revisiting my previous work several times and rewriting it in the context of accrued knowledge allowed me to present the strongest final product possible.

Regarding beginnings, at the start of this project, I did not know what my final product was going to look like. I doubted whether I would be able to find a compelling brand and story in Washington County. After going through the research process, revision, and numerous iterations, I can confidently say, that I think my ideas are strong and that the county will be better off if it adopts the plan and its recommendations. Along the way, I learned several important lessons that will benefit me in other projects and my career in economic development. If I trust proven processes, seek second opinions, and work to fine tune my product, the result will be worthy of bringing to market.

Introduction

By 2050, 49 of Indiana's 92 counties will experience a decrease in population (Kinghorn, 2012). Washington County, nestled in the hilly, southern part of the state, is not one of those counties. Due to its proximity to the Louisville metropolitan area, the county seems likely to benefit from a trend that will see populations grow around major cities and decline in the more isolated, rural parts of the state (Kinghorn, 2012). Indeed, Washington County could glean even more from Louisville in the post-COVID world, as more people choose to work remotely and live in areas within commuting distance of their less frequently visited offices.

However, even amidst these positive trends, there are still very real threats for the long-term prosperity of the county. While the county is not decreasing in population, its growth is negligible. It is more accurate to say that the county's population is stable than to say it is growing (Stats Indiana, 2021). Moreover, in a world where post-secondary education is highly correlated with income and success, Washington County ranked 76th out of 92 counties in number of residents with a bachelor's degree; accordingly, Washington County has one of the ten lowest per capita income levels in the state (Law, 2017, p. 11). Additionally, the county's economy is highly concentrated in manufacturing, retail, and food service, three industries at severe threats of automation (Economic Development Administration, 2021).

If current trends continue, these problems could create a debilitating competitive disadvantage for the county. After all, there are 3,142 other counties or county equivalents in the United States, and most people can only live in one of them. As important as intergovernmental cooperation is, the simple fact is that counties compete for both human and capital investment. In a country where birth rates are below replacement levels, attracting new residents is the only way to ensure communities' long-term survival.

Beyond survival, though, bringing in new residents is critical for prosperity. A long-standing question in economic development has been whether jobs move to people or people move to jobs. Believing the latter leads economic developers to focus on attracting businesses, whereas believing the former leads economic developers to focus on attracting people. Recent research has conclusively demonstrated that businesses move to areas where they will be able to source skilled laborers. Indeed, according to Ball State University's Center for Business and Economic Research, "over the past decade and a half, the most successful places in Indiana have done the least business attraction, focusing instead on improvements to quality of place and education" (Hicks & Faulk, 2016, p. 6). In other words, under normal conditions, because they will attract more of the workers that companies rely on, communities that invest more in building up their citizenry's human capital and improving the quality of public amenities will attract more industry than communities that rely solely on fiscal means of attraction.

However, the world since the COVID-19 pandemic has hardly been normal. At present, it is still unclear what the long-lasting effects of the pandemic will be for most communities and businesses. Academic institutions and government agencies have not had sufficient time to answer some of the more pressing questions about how the post-pandemic world will look. Even so, analyzing current trends to estimate future realities can still be instructive. Stiles and Smart (2021) note that the pandemic "forced adoption of telework by many knowledge workers" (p.2477). Experts at the World Economic Forum maintain that even pre-pandemic surveys demonstrated that an "overwhelming majority of knowledge workers would like to work from home" (Chugh, 2021). Assuming that great changes in public sentiment have not taken place, it is likely that virtual work will only grow in popularity going forward.

There are two key implications of this reality. First, companies will be increasingly able to locate anywhere, irrespective of physical workforce availability. Secondly, workers will be able to live anywhere, irrespective of where their job is located. The freedom of companies will likely provoke price competition between communities, evocative of older models of economic development. It is unlikely that Washington County will be able to compete with many other cheaper and more exotic locales on this front. However, it has much to offer the location-independent teleworker. Scenery and low cost of living are just two factors that could be promoted to these workers. It would be wise to develop methods for attracting such individuals in all future county strategies.

Another more outrightly negative impact of the pandemic on the county will be the emerging Great Resignation, the global mass exodus from low-wage jobs. Though academic literature has hardly had time to thoroughly analyze the topic, cultural commentators are already predicting that the Great Resignation will promote a wave of automation in the food service, manufacturing, and agricultural industries (Andriole, 2021). Since workers are refusing to work at the wages previously offered by many firms in these industries, businesses have been forced to raise wages. However, they will only continue to raise wages so long as paying the increased wages is less expensive than automation. When the mathematics change to favor automation, we will likely see a massive, permanent loss of jobs in these sectors. Such a loss in jobs could be devastating for Washington County, where a combined 43% of the workforce works in manufacturing, agriculture, retail, or food service (Stats Indiana, 2021). If such a job loss is coming, it is incumbent on county leaders to work to make the blow delivered by automation as light as possible.

To that end, and simply as a matter of best practice, strides must be made to improve quality of life and human capital in Washington County for the community to prosper in the long-term. It is also important, however, not to neglect advancing as much as possible in the near-term. Too often, policymakers focus on fixing what is broken and forget to utilize what is not. The county has some worrying trends, but it also has existing assets that work in its favor. The county's proximity to Louisville, rich history, ample outdoor recreational space, healthy business environment, strong location for remote work, low housing costs, and other factors are all very sellable, yet undersold, aspects of the county. External interactions and advertising cannot be ignored while county leaders work to make internal improvements.

Informed by that necessity, this paper seeks to create a marketing strategy for Washington County that frames the realities of the community in a positive and compelling brand narrative that is adaptable to the future actions of county leaders. In this way, county leaders are not made subservient to the marketing plan. Instead, the marketing plan can serve as a base that county leaders can build upon as they continue to improve the community. For example, if they create a new public park, that feature can easily be added to the Parks section of the strategy.

Regarding sections, this paper consists of four main parts. Part I is the Literature Review. It will overview the current scholarly consensus on county marketing and the best practices of economic development, empirically and intellectually justifying the elements of the plan for the reader. Part II is a Four P's strategy. The Four P's is a widely accepted model of marketing that builds strategy by analyzing product, price, place, and promotion. Part II will be divided into four subsections, each corresponding to a P. In the context of this paper, product refers to the physical and cultural assets of the county. Price refers to the costs associated with living and

doing business in the county. Place refers to where marketing materials and information will be distributed, and promotion refers to how those marketing materials and information will be constructed and the strategies behind their construction. Part III will be a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. Informed by the data in Part II, Part III will begin to frame the implications of the internal realities of Washington County in the context of emerging trends and the larger external environment. Finally, Part IV will discuss the implications of the preceding sections and offer possible policy actions or avenues for further research.

Literature Review

Place is a concept that has featured very prominently in academic marketing literature. It is, after all, one of the four foundational marketing concepts. However, the subdiscipline of place marketing does not deal with place in a Four P's sense as the methods of distribution of products, services, and information. Rather, place marketing treats locations, or places, as products themselves and develops marketing strategies for them.

Key to any definition of place marketing is the recognition of a competitive market of places. Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2008) argue that such a market exists because “there are always alternative places that could be selected for any particular use” (p. 154). As with companies, if a place is to win investment, it must provide a greater value proposition to potential investors than other places. Place marketers accomplish that by “creating uniqueness” that “improves the competitive position of the place marketed” (Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2008, p. 154).

In other words, they pursue a differentiation strategy, the first of the three basic business strategies. Cost leadership, the second strategy, is focused on operating at the lowest possible cost within an industry. While efficiency is admirable at all levels, it seems that focusing solely on cost reductions and efficiency gains is a poor strategy for attracting residents and investment. After all, people visit unique places, not necessarily cheap places. Blue ocean strategy, the third strategy is more of an ideal than a common outcome. It provides unique products to the market at low operating costs. This should be contradictory because product innovation typically requires high costs. However, the contradiction can be overcome by radical technological and process improvements that significantly drive down costs. The existence, applicability, and possibility of

any such improvements are beyond the scope of this plan, which will agree with prevailing scholarship that effective strategic place marketing is an exercise in differentiation.

However, place marketing almost always occurs in a public sector context, and the differences associated with strategy in the public sector versus the private sector are important to note if the plan is to be effective. The differences are best understood by grouping them into two types: administrative differences and functional differences. Administrative differences are based on who has control over and influence on marketing efforts. Unlike a private sector marketer, a public sector place marketer has little control over the marketing project and must defer to political and bureaucratic leaders (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009). For example, in business, the decision to pursue a particular marketing message need only be made by top executives. Any criticism of the decision is largely irrelevant because the decision is closed and autocratic. However, in government, the same decision may involve executives, legislators, concerned citizens, members of the media, and many other stakeholders. The number of relevant voices in public sector decision making complicates and slows most processes.

Functional differences derive from the goals and processes of the marketing efforts themselves. Tielau et al (2010) summarized these differences by noting that in the private sector, the primary focus of activities is to provide satisfaction and value to the company's patrons, whereas in the public sector, the focus is on providing satisfaction and value to all the location's stakeholders. The difference in focus has many practical manifestations, perhaps the greatest of which is that promotional messages must be simultaneously simplistic and consumable for a mass audience and yet held to a high standard of factual accuracy that protects the public good (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009). For example, the primary metric that a site like Disneyland will use to measure success is increased shareholder value, as they only have to report to their

corporate shareholders. Moreover, the most likely marketing method they would use to achieve a profit is targeting limited segments of the market. Due to their mandate to provide services to all stakeholders, and the greater number and diversity of those stakeholders, government cannot measure success as easily or target markets as narrowly. Increased shareholder value is a nebulous concept when there are many diverse shareholders, and targeting loses much of its relevance when large swaths of the market must be included.

Working within these limitations can be challenging, but scholars have proposed many solutions to the problems faced by public sector place marketers. Realizing a need to simplify targeting in a public sector context, Parr (2007) provided a very influential conceptual model that divided cities into four main areas that corresponded to the target markets of city residents, consumers, industrialists, and individuals that work in the city, but do not live there. Using these broad, catch-all categories allows marketers to stay within their mandate of serving all stakeholders, while still allowing them to target a manageable number of reasonably homogenous groups. While the identification of these target markets was an important first step, the descriptions of the different target markets were difficult to operationalize. Zenker and Braun (2010) noted the lack of a “theoretical model” to capture the “complexities” of place marketing and searched for a marketing approach that could appropriately manage many different target markets (p. 1). They argued that the brand house model used by many corporate entities can serve as a solution. The brand house model builds “a single master brand to span a set of offerings that operate with only descriptive sub-brands” (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000, p. 10). The sub-brands can cater to the various target markets identified by Parr while simultaneously building the collective strength of the overall place brand (Zenker and Braun, 2010).

Many other scholars have since examined methods for making place brands stronger. The work of Styven et al (2020) puts the work of psychologists that have tried to understand the emotional and cognitive factors that affect place attachment into a brand marketing perspective. A key finding from their work is that “place-ad congruity,” defined as the degree to which the brand’s message about a place aligns with the subjective feelings the viewer already holds about a place, positively affects the intention to share a place brand message (p. 543). Such baseline positive feelings about a brand are dependent on familiarity, perceived quality, reputation, and overall trust in the brand, all of which can be built across multiple positive encounters between brands and customers (Japutra et al, 2014). A key implication of this reality is that marketers must be highly conscious of touchpoints between the customer and the brand and work to make experiences at those touch points as positive as possible.

Thus, developing touchpoints that will bring in market traffic is critical for building up strong brand. However, Rauhut and Rauhut (2016) have noted the difficulties that rural communities like Washington County face in attracting visitors. Rural areas struggle to develop unique selling points (USPs), clear messages about what makes them stand out from all the other places customers might visit instead. Moreover, the audience for any USP message is much more geographically dispersed for a rural area. This makes convincing enough individuals to come to their community, experience the unique selling point, and carry positive experiences of those unique selling points back to the broader market much more difficult. One possible solution to this problem is increasing the geographic density of USPs (Rauhut and Rauhut, 2016). Why do urban areas tend to attract more visitors than rural areas? There are simply more things to do in an urban area than in a rural area. The concentration of multiple, unique venues in a limited geographical area allows urban areas to function much like shopping malls. Instead of driving to

geographically dispersed stores (e.g. rural attractions), customers can drive to one mall that includes many highly diversified stores (e.g. city attractions). Though cities will always have the advantage in USP density, any way rural areas can bundle multiple USPs together will likely drive traffic to the rural area. This could be accomplished via regionalism and cooperation between local communities, or simply through partnerships between rural businesses and attractions.

Undoubtedly, the literature is somewhat fragmented regarding place marketing. However, place marketing is but a subdiscipline of economic development, and the literature has reached broad consensus on many factors related to economic development. Examining those points of agreement can frame the place marketing literature in a more solid and actionable context. Most scholars agree that using business incentives, such as tax breaks, as a primary means of business attraction is a poor economic development strategy. In their summary of economic development best practices, Olfert and Partridge (2010) simply noted that such incentives “often come with high opportunity costs” (p. 152). Peters and Fisher (2004) went much further and argued that locally targeted tax incentives within a state simply encouraged the migration of resources from one location to another. They suggested that attraction of companies within one’s own state or country is unlikely to result in many new jobs for locals, as people from the firm’s old location relocate to the new location. Hicks (2016), while acknowledging the reality of that paradigm, argues that it is out-of-date. Relocation of companies will occur less and less because today’s dominantly service-based companies are far more responsive “to local demand, which is a function of population and income” (Hicks, 2016, p. 5). Today, firms will only relocate if they believe that they will have access to better labor and commercial markets at the new location.

Unsurprisingly, localities still want to attract new companies, so new methods that focus on increasing an area's population and income have been proposed to do so. Olfert and Partridge (2010) maintain that "education and human capital" are a "key" to local growth because they increase productivity, diversify the labor market, and spur innovation (p. 152). Supporting this, Garmis (2009) noted that even given equal access to knowledge and opportunity, areas with more educated populations continuously outperformed areas with less educated populations. Obviously, education is worth very little without opportunity, so areas with small economies should simultaneously focus on improving the education of their citizens and establishing cooperative and regional relationships with larger nearby industrial centers (Olfert and Partridge, 2010). Ramsey and Schaumleffel (2006) propose that building such regional economic cooperation can lead to social cooperation that creates "power clusters of interesting sites, activities, and events" (p. 7).

Another well-supported, yet emerging trend in economic development is the role that diversity plays in sustained area prosperity. Rodríguez-Pose and von Berlepsch (2019) examined American counties to determine how heterogeneous they became after the major American immigration booms of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and discovered that the most heterogeneous counties remain the most economically prosperous to this day. Even when controlling for base wealth of the counties, the most diverse counties were the most prosperous. This suggests that aiming to build a diverse population that can collaboratively innovate is a goal that will have prolonged economic returns for localities. It has also been demonstrated that the positive economic effects of increased diversity are greater for poorer areas than richer areas (Bove & Leandro, 2017). Thus, a more economically challenged location like Washington County may greatly benefit from an increase in diversity.

The literature on place marketing and economic development presented here reveals three necessities for plan success. First, a brand that clearly communicates unique selling points must be built for Washington County if its marketing efforts are going to succeed in a competitive place market. Second, the plan must acknowledge the new economic development landscape that places value on creating quality of place and increasing human capital. Finally, the plan must be accessible to a diverse audience that can serve as agents for the marketing messages crafted in the plan.

Four P's

Product

Even though “Hoosier,” is the official name of Indiana residents, no one is sure where the term originated. One of the more plausible stories says that a Polish Count and veteran of the Napoleonic Wars moved to Southern Indiana and lectured extensively about his experiences with the “hussar” cavalry units. One of the Indiana men that attended the lectures was a construction worker with a reputation for street brawling. After beating three Kentucky men in a fight while working on the Louisville canal construction project, he declared himself to be a “hoosier,” mistaking the heavily accented word of the Count to mean a hero. Knowing that the man was from Indiana, the Kentuckian workers started jokingly calling all people from Indiana Hoosiers. As Indiana boatmen passed through Louisville on their Ohio River trade routes, they also picked up the name and carried it back to their homes further north (Stevens, 1916, p. 654).

The brawler who started it all was a man by the name of Short, and he was from Washington County, Indiana. Today, Washington County is a large, rural, sparsely populated place with little development outside of the county seat of Salem and school towns of New Pekin and Campbellsburg. However, its historical significance, natural amenities, popular regional festivals, sound government, and business-friendly environment make it deserving of much more attention than it currently enjoys. This portion will overview the basic features of Washington County that will be important to the promotional strategy in this marketing plan.

A. History

Washington County, named after first U.S. president George Washington, was officially incorporated as the tenth Indiana county in 1813, three years before Indiana achieved statehood.

Due to this early prominence, Washington County was one of only thirteen counties allowed to send delegates to the convention that wrote the state constitution and set Indiana on the road to statehood (Souder, 2004). Almost half a century later, Washington County would play a leading role in the drama of Morgan's Raid, which, aside from the Gettysburg campaign, was the furthest north Confederate forces ever reached during the Civil War (Bishop, 2021). The Civil War period also saw the rise to prominence of the county's favorite son, John Hay, who served as Abraham Lincoln's personal secretary and would later go on to become Secretary of State under Presidents McKinley and Roosevelt (Souder, 2004). The history of the county is largely unremarkable after the Civil War period as it lost much of its political clout as Indiana became a more urbanized state with power firmly concentrated in Indianapolis.

B. Geography

Washington County is in hilly south-central Indiana, and as the seventh-largest county in Indiana, it is adjacent to eight other counties: Scott, Clark, Floyd, Harrison, Lawrence, Crawford, Orange, and Jackson. It is included in the Census Bureau's Louisville Kentucky metropolitan statistical area, and for this and historical reasons, is considered part of "Kentuckiana" (Our Southern Indiana, 2021, p. 31). The close association with Kentucky lends it a unique cultural heritage that makes the people more apt to think of the Kentucky Derby than the Indianapolis 500 when hearing the term "race day."

Internally, the county has few population centers. Salem, the county seat, is located roughly in the center of the county at the intersection of Indiana State Roads 56, 60, and 135. Four of the five other towns in the county are located along these major routes as well, including New Pekin on SR 135, Campbellsburg and Saltillo on SR 60, and Little York on SR 56. The

remaining town of Hardinsburg is located along U.S. 150 in the southwestern corner of the county.

There are few defining natural features. Most of the county is hilly, sparsely forested farmland (Our Southern Indiana, 2021, pp. 116-118). The Muscatatuck River, a non-navigable tributary of the White River, forms the county's northern boundary with Jackson County, while the Blue River flows southwest through much of the county. Though the Blue River is popular with canoers and kayakers, the first launch point where the water is deep enough is at Fredericksburg, a small, unincorporated town in the far southern portion of the county.

Demographics

A. Population

According to the 2020 census, Washington County has 28,213 residents (Economic Development Administration, 2021). The biggest city is the City of Salem, the seat of county government. Other population centers include the towns of New Pekin and Campbellsburg, which are home to East Washington School Corporation and West Washington School Corporation, respectively. Average age in the county rose between 2010 and 2021 from 39.1 to 41.7, suggesting an aging population (Our Southern Indiana, 2021, p. 118).

B. Ethnicity

The majority of Washington County's population (97.9%) is white/Caucasian. Hispanics and Latinos comprise the largest minority group at 1.3% of the population. Other minorities include American Indian or Alaskan Natives (0.4%), Asians (0.3%), and African Americans (0.1%) (Economic Development Administration, 2021).

C. Income and Labor Force

The median household income in Washington County is \$51,948, which is just over 79% of the U.S. average (Economic Development Administration, 2021). However, Campbellsburg, Little York, and Saltillo are the only towns for which the median income approaches the county median income. Other population centers fall far below it (Economic Development Administration, 2022).

This trend is also seen with the poverty rate, which is 12.1% for the county, but as high as 27.7% (Salem) in the cities and towns. Conversely, the county unemployment rate of 6.9% is lower in most of the cities and towns (Economic Development Administration, 2022).

D. Educational Attainment

Washington County falls far behind the State of Indiana in educational attainment. The number of residents without a high school diploma is 3% higher than the state average. Moreover, there are almost 20% fewer residents with a bachelor's degree than the state average (Our Southern Indiana, 2021, p. 123).

Public Institutions

A. Government

Washington County has the standard governmental structure of all Indiana counties. The executive branch is comprised of three commissioners who each represent a district in the county. The County Council is the legislative and fiscal body of the county. It has seven members, four of whom serve a district and three of whom serve the county at-large. In addition,

the various executive offices like Auditor, Assessor, Recorder, Clerk, Coroner, and Sheriff are directly elected by the county's citizens.

The City of Salem elects a mayor, a clerk-treasurer, and a five-person City Council, four of whom serve districts and one of whom serves the city at-large. The various towns of the county, including New Pekin, Campbellsburg, Hardinsburg, Livonia, and Saltillo operate off a standard town governmental structure. They elect a clerk-treasurer as an executive and a town board as the legislature ("Washington County Leadership," 2018).

Washington County is considered a safe Republican county, and all county-wide positions except Sheriff are currently held by Republicans ("Pivot Counties in Indiana," 2021). The City of Salem and county towns are also dominated by Republicans, though some elections in the smaller towns are not competitive.

B. Schools

Washington County contains three separate school districts. Salem Community Schools serves Salem and the surrounding areas and had a 2021 enrollment of 1,792 students. While Salem High School is an A-rated school with the state, a grade based on student proficiency, student growth, and graduation and college and career readiness, the district's elementary and middle school pull the aggregate grade for the district down to a C (Indiana Department of Education, 2022).

The East Washington School Corporation serves New Pekin and the surrounding areas and had a 2021 enrollment of 1,478 students. This is notable because the entire population of New Pekin is 1,149 people. Even accounting for students from the larger district outside of New Pekin, this figure suggests that the school is attracting students from surrounding areas, possible

because of Indiana's school choice policies. This is curious because the corporation has a C grade with state, and no individual school has a grade higher than a B (Indiana Department of Education, 2022).

Undoubtedly, the most successful school from an academic perspective is West Washington School Corporation in Campbellsburg. The school enrolls a total of 911 students. The corporation has received a B grade from the state, and its elementary school has an A grade. Moreover, West Washington exceeds the state average across reading, English and language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science proficiency for all grade levels, except grade 10 biology (Indiana Department of Education, 2022).

The three schools also have healthy athletic programs that compete ferociously among each other. The Salem Lions are a 3A team and have the only soccer and swimming programs in the county. The Eastern Musketeers are a 2A team and are well-known for their basketball program, especially girls' basketball, which won the 2A Girls Basketball State Championship in 2017, the only county sports team to ever win a state championship. Finally, the West Washington Senators are a 1A team and have highly-respected football and wrestling programs (Indiana High School Athletic Association, 2022).

While having three separate school districts is sometimes regarded as inefficient, these schools comprise a large part of the county's culture. School pride is very real in Washington County, where many students attend the same school that their parents did and complete all thirteen years of their non-college education there. As such, school rivalry can be intense and games between county rivals tend to draw very large crowds, especially in basketball. The annual Washington County Christmas Tournament, which pits the three county basketball teams against each other, is a beloved county tradition.

Public Amenities

Ball State University's Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) defines static public amenities as those that are "not easily changed," like forests, wildlife preserves, nature areas, bodies of water, and shorelines (CBER, 2019). Static amenities in Indiana tend to be concentrated in the far northern and southwestern counties, thus Washington County at a score of 102 is above the CBER index's state average of 100. However, Washington County only has static public amenities score higher than one of its eight neighboring counties, Scott County.

This is unfortunate, of course, but out of policy makers' control. What is in policy-makers control is the quality and quantity of changeable public amenities, defined by CBER as those that can be "changed by a community" and "created, expanded, or downsized, as the needs of the community change" (CBER, 2019). These include parks, historic sites, hiking and fishing areas, etc. Given that Washington County ranks second to last compared to its neighbors in static public amenities, it would be expected that it would rank no lower than that in changeable public amenities. However, the data demonstrates that Washington County is last compared to its neighbors. This shows that the County is not adequately leveraging its natural amenities. Worse still, Washington County is the only county among its neighbors whose changeable public amenities fall below the state average of 100.

Among those neighbors, the top-ranking neighbors for changeable public amenities are Clark and Floyd Counties, which are 11.4 and 8.2 points above the state average, respectively. All four of Clark County's largest cities and towns have a parks department, while Floyd County has a county-wide parks department. Such a strong planning and administrative arm would likely be beneficial for Washington County as well, which only has the Salem Parks Department.

A. Natural Features

Though the public amenities data would suggest that Washington County is not as endowed with natural features as some of its neighboring counties, the numbers may be skewed to favor state and nationally operated sites and areas with shorelines. All of Washington County's neighbors save Floyd and Jackson Counties are home to a National Forest or State Park or Reservoir. Meanwhile, Floyd County enjoys an extensive Ohio River shoreline. Even, Jackson County, perhaps the most directly comparable to Washington County, has many more state-managed nature and forest areas than Washington County. Despite the shortage of state and nationally operated features however, Washington County has many beautiful county and city-managed natural features that should feature more prominently in marketing materials.

The abundance of lake recreation sites are of note. Washington County boasts almost 700 acres in public lakes (see Appendix A). The most notable of these is county-run Delaney Lake, which, in addition to fishing, boating, and swimming, has facilities for tent, cabin, and RV camping ("About," n.d.). The county also has over 56 miles of hiking trails, over 80% of which are rugged (see Appendix B). Chief among these trails is the northern half of the Knobstone Trail, the longest hiking trail in Indiana and a popular destination of hikers training for the Appalachian Trail (Washington County Indiana Tourism, 2018a). Washington County also shares the Jackson-Washington State Forest with Jackson County. Though the Washington County portion is smaller, it includes the popular Starve Hollow Lake and camping area (Washington County Indiana Tourism, 2018b). The County also boasts three nature preserves, Twin Creek Nature Preserve, Big Spring Natural Preserve, and Cave River Valley Natural Area, all of which offer a variety of beautiful scenery.

B. Parks

Unfortunately, very few parks have been created in the county to complement these natural features. The City of Salem operates DePauw Park, which includes the much-acclaimed Riley's Place Playground, as well as two smaller city parks, and New Pekin has a small community park where it hosts its Fourth of July festivities. Aside from these, Myers Swimming Pool in Salem, and the community baseball parks in New Pekin and Campbellsburg, there are no parks within the County (City of Salem, 2017).

C. Historic Sites and Museums

The oldest historic site in the county is Beck's Mill, an old grist mill that has stood in the same location since 1864. After its restoration in the early 2000s, the Mill opened for tours and often hosts history-focused events on weekends. The Mill is a county treasure and well-supported by the non-profit Friends of Beck's Mill ("Beck's Mill," 2018).

The most extensive historic site is the John Hay Center. In addition to being the birthplace of Salem's favorite son John Hay, personal secretary of President Lincoln and Secretary of State under Presidents McKinley and Roosevelt, the center hosts the Stevens Museum of Washington County History, the Depot Railroad Museum, and the Pioneer Village, a kid-oriented replica of what a settlers' village may have looked like. All these attractions can be enjoyed for a single low price or for free at the annual Old Settler's Day and Friday Night on the Square ("About the John Hay Center," 2018).

That County Square, located in Salem, contains the County Courthouse, a war memorial, and a host of shops and restaurants. The Courthouse is perhaps the most beloved landmark in the entire county and serves as its unofficial symbol. The war memorial on the courthouse grounds

pays tribute to the veterans and fallen soldiers of America's wars. A few restaurants around the square are of note, including the Salem Apothecary, which has stood since 1875 and is well-regarded for its vintage soda fountain, and H&R Bakery, a popular and acclaimed bakery that has been in Salem since 1964 (City of Salem, 2017b). Finally, the Salem Municipal Airport has the Piper Flight Museum, which features three vintage Piper aircraft and various educational materials (Piper Flight Museum, 2014).

D. Festivals

The county has several annual festivals that draw thousands of people to the county each year. The largest of these festivals are the L.M. Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival and the New Pekin 4th of July Celebration. The former has occurred every last weekend in February and first weekend in March for 31 years. Located far out in the country, just off State Road 160, it provides an opportunity for visitors to buy syrup and maple-themed food, learn about the process for making genuine maple-syrup, and enjoy rustic, fun activities. The New Pekin 4th of July Celebration, on the other hand, is touted as the longest-consecutive Fourth of July celebration in the nation. It began in 1830 when residents gathered to read the Declaration of Independence. Today, it has grown to include a parade, queen contest, 3-on-3 basketball competition, and carnival. Both events consistently attract thousands of visitors each year.

Salem has its own special events as well. The combination Old Settler's Day and Friday Night on the Square occurs every 3rd weekend of September. This event features a plethora of reenactors that educate visitors about the pioneer days, as well as vendors and special rates at locations around the county square. Additionally, the Salem Speedway, in operation for over sixty-five years, hosts racing events nearly every weekend from late spring to late fall.

Even small towns like Campbellsburg have their own festivals. The Campbellsburg All-American Country Hoedown Festival is held every first weekend in June and is true to its name. In addition to a parade and queen contest, the festival also features an antique tractor show, horseshoe tournament, tractor pull, and 5K race (“Annual Events,” 2022).

Economic Amenities

A. Location Quotient and Key Industries

Location quotient is a statistical figure that measures a region’s specialization in an industry relative to a baseline region, typically the United States. A location quotient of 1.0 means that the region in question is equally specialized with the United States in that industry, whereas a location quotient greater than 1.0 means the region is more specialized than the United States in that industry. Washington County has above baseline location quotients in Manufacturing (2.96), Trade, Transport, and Utilities (1.09), and Mining (1.07), which includes lumber harvesting (Our Southern Indiana, 2021, p. 123). It should thus be no surprise that Washington County has industry clusters in powdered metal parts manufacturing and lumber processing (Washington County Economic Growth Partnership, 2014b).

B. Airport

The Salem Municipal Airport accommodates private flights and currently has a runway of 2,700 feet by 50 feet runway. However, there are plans to expand the runway to 5,000 feet to accommodate corporate planes (Our Southern Indiana, 2021, p. 266).

Price

There are many costs associated with any location, and only some will be relevant to any given party. This section will focus on the costs that would be most relevant to a resident, business developer, and visitor to the area.

Housing Costs

Of primary importance to any resident or prospective resident of Washington County is the cost of housing. Fortunately, Washington County is a very affordable place to live. The county's median contract rent in was only \$453, less than 50% of the U.S. average of \$941 (Indiana Uplands, 2019, p. 34). Moreover, only 41% of households in the county are burdened by housing costs, defined as paying more than 30% of household income on housing (Indiana Uplands, 2019, p. 54). While this may seem like a high figure, the state average is 47% (Indiana Housing and Urban Development Authority, 2022, p. 26).

While beneficial to those living in or purchasing existing housing stock, these low housing costs can hinder development. About 270 new rental units and 200 new owner-occupied units are needed to satisfy housing demand, but the low average rent of \$453 and a slightly undervalued housing market means that developers cannot justify the cost of building new houses or apartments (Indiana Uplands, 2019, p. 55). There are both short-term and long-term solutions to this problem. In the short-term, local government can subsidize the construction of new housing by closing the financing gap. While this shows local government confidence in its own housing market, it risks the money of taxpayers and could be a very unpopular policy. The long-term solution is to increase demand for housing in the county to such a degree that rents and

housing prices rise. For this reason, any promotional strategy should work to encourage people to move to the county.

Taxes

A. State Taxes

The Tax Foundation ranks Indiana as the ninth best U.S. state for taxes, and the second-best state in the Midwest for taxes, behind only South Dakota (Walczac and Cammenga, 2021). Moreover, the Tax Foundation rates Indiana as having the lowest overall property taxes in the nation. The state sales tax in Indiana is 7%, while the corporate income tax is 4.9% (Walczac and Cammenga, 2021).

B. Local Taxes

The tax structure of Washington County is very similar to those of its neighboring counties. It has a Local Income Tax (LIT) of 2%, 0.5% of which is an Economic Development Income Tax (EDIT) that goes into a county fund to support economic development and 1.0% of which is a County Adjusted Gross Income Tax (CAGIT) that supports the functions of county government (Indiana Department of Revenue, 2022a, p. 4) (Indiana Department of Revenue, 2022b). The county has no Food and Beverage Tax (FAB), and a County Innkeeper's Tax of 4% (Indiana Department of Revenue, 2022b). Washington County has the third-lowest county taxes compared to its neighbors (see Appendix C).

Informed by the literature review, it is not advisable for Washington County to make any large changes to its tax structure. There is little evidence that such moves support further

development. Rather, it would be advisable for county representatives to have this information readily available for potential investors.

Incentives and Business Development

A. State Incentives and Business Development

In addition to a tax rate that is on par with surrounding counties, Washington County and the State of Indiana provide several programs to alleviate the tax and financial burden of local businesses. The State of Indiana provides certain tax incentives, especially to larger firms that are relocating. For example, the state offers a tax credit for businesses that move their headquarters to Indiana. Perhaps the most notable tax incentive, however, is the Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE) tax credit (Indiana Economic Development Corporation, 2022). This calculates a state tax credit based on the forecasted increase in tax withholdings caused by the enterprise. In essence, the more employees a new enterprise is projected to hire, the larger the tax credit offered.

B. Local Incentives and Business Development

Washington County offers tax abatements on qualifying capital investments. Using an abatement, a firm can phase in taxes on property and equipment. Additionally, Washington County has a small business development loan program which offers loans of \$2,000 to \$50,000 to small businesses (Washington County Economic Growth Partnership, 2014a). These loans are intended to encourage further investment in the community, and thus terms for these loans are typically skewed in favor of the borrower. Finally, the county has a very active Chamber of

Commerce that is committed to the success of its members and can assist with helping small businesses get off the ground.

Utility Costs

Utility costs are highly dependent on the quantity of usage. In municipal areas, the electric service provider is Duke Energy, whereas in the rural regions, it is provided by Jackson County REMC. Similarly, water service is provided either by the municipality or by the Washington County Rural Water Corporation. Natural gas comes from Midwest Natural Gas Company (Washington County Economic Growth Partnership, 2014a).

Fortunately, there are many options for telecommunications services. Jackson County REMC, Tele-Media Solutions, Frontier, Spectrum Cable, and Blue River Networking are available throughout the county and provide both fiber and wireless options for high-speed internet service. Moreover, major phone carriers like Verizon and AT&T will work almost anywhere in the county, though Verizon is typically considered the more reliable option (Washington County Economic Growth Partnership, 2014a).

Promotion

The promotion aspect of this plan will synthesize the product and price information into an actionable promotional strategy. Before this can be carried out, however, it is critically important to understand what aspects of the county are and are not marketable. Unfortunately, the public schools of the county are not marketable. While the performance of the three county schools is not horrible, it is not at a high enough level to justify highlighting them in the promotional materials. County leaders should work toward improving the quality of education in

the county so that it can be added to the promotional materials. Second, there can be no promotion about diversity. While the literature review advises that diversity should be a desired state for any county, Washington County is so ethnically and politically homogenous that appeals to diversity would be perceived as disingenuous. It is important that an honest brand story be told.

On a positive note, there are four aspects of the community that are very marketable. The first is the great volume of natural amenities. 56 miles of trails and 681 acres of lakes are aspects of the county that could easily be sold to adventurous types. The constant draw of hikers that the Knobstone Trail alone brings to Washington County is hugely beneficial. Another marketable feature is the business-friendly environment. The County has a conservative government, active chamber, and a tax and financial structure that is conducive to development. Third, the County has a very strong civic culture. The combination of festivals, rich history, and intense school rivalry has made the citizens of Washington County very community minded. Finally, the county is near and shares a cultural heritage with Louisville, Kentucky. This means that Washington County is well-positioned to attract residents that work in Louisville.

The promotional plan to follow will be guided by these marketable and unmarketable aspects. Informed by the literature on place marketing, this promotional plan will develop a brand house with three sub-brands, one for industrial investors, one for residents, and one for visitors. Buyer personas, or fictional biographies of ideal customers intended to guide marketing efforts, will be developed for two of these target markets. A master brand concept, master brand story, and promotional strategies for two of the target markets will also be included.

Brand Concept

The brand concept for Washington County will be built using the brand house model discussed in the literature review. The master brand for this campaign will be the Washington County brand, and there will be sub-brands for each of the target markets, industrial investors, residents, and visitors.

Master Brand Rationale

Only 29 of Indiana's 92 counties are projected to grow between 2015 and 2025 (Indiana Business Research Center, 2018). Washington County is one of these counties, and though it is growing modestly, the fact that it is growing at all puts it in the top third of all Indiana counties. To market the county properly, it is important to understand why Washington County is growing while so many other counties are not. All 29 growing counties are near either Indianapolis, Chicago, Cincinnati, Louisville, Evansville, or Indiana or Purdue University. This demonstrates that population growth is only occurring in areas fortunate enough to be near a major city or institution. The logical conclusion is that people want to live near major cities and institutions. Thus, Washington County's main functional benefit is its proximity to Louisville. Seeing that its location is probably what is driving most if not all its current growth, this is clearly the most valuable resource that Washington County possesses. Moreover, because there is only one Louisville, proximity to the city is a rare, inimitable resource on which the county can build competitive advantage.

Though Louisville is an inimitable resource, Washington County does not have a monopoly on Louisville. Indeed, there are 12 counties within the Metropolitan Statistical Area colloquially known as Kentuckiana. However, 8 of these 12 counties are in Kentucky. Since

choosing to live or locate in Kentucky or Indiana probably has more to do with state factors than local factors, the 8 Kentucky counties will be ignored in this analysis. That leaves only the 4 Indiana counties: Clark, Floyd, Harrison, and Washington counties. Though not part of the Metropolitan Statistical Area, it is also important to include Scott County, which is roughly equidistant from Louisville as Washington County. How can Washington County differentiate itself from these four counties?

As can be seen in the Product section, Washington County's most notable functional benefit is the large amount of outdoor recreational opportunities. As the data from CBER demonstrated, however, Washington County can only outcompete Scott County in terms of static natural amenities. Even more unfortunately, some of the nominally unique features of the county, like the Salem airport, are eclipsed by similar features in neighboring counties. Quite simply, there are few functional, tactile offerings of the county that can be considered unique. As such, differentiation between Washington County and the other four will have to be built on emotional benefits instead of functional benefits.

Among the less tangible aspects of Washington County, the most unique qualities are the large number of popular festivals, abundance of historic features, and commitment to the three county schools. When analyzing these three factors, an easily identifiable trend emerged. The county was named after President George Washington, long after he had died. It is possibly the birthplace of the word "Hoosier," the name of the state's people. The most popular festival in the county is a 4th of July festival. The favorite son of the county is a former U.S. Secretary of State. One of the schools' mascots is the Senators, represented by a man dressed like Uncle Sam. The well-known pastimes include going to the racetrack, walking around the county square, watching the local high school basketball game, and making maple syrup the old-fashioned way. In short,

the county is incredibly patriotic for both the nation and state and well-represents many of the most nostalgic images of both.

These deep historical and cultural roots greatly differentiate it from Clark and Floyd Counties. Though these counties mostly share a history with Washington County, they have not maintained it near as well. Their joint tourism bureau, SoIN, seems focused on emphasizing the suburban nature of these two counties. The SoIN website boasts that the area is just “1 mile north of Louisville, Kentucky, just across the Ohio River” and that Floyd County’s biggest city, New Albany, is “Louisville’s Brooklyn” (Clark-Floyd Counties Convention Tourism Bureau, 2022). The region is clearly positioning itself as a suburban alternative that is roughly homogenous with Louisville.

Harrison County, on the other hand, clearly leans into its natural features, which is a good choice considering it has the greatest concentration of natural amenities of these five counties. Their website proudly declares that it is “Southern Indiana’s home for natural excursions” (Corydon Indiana, 2022). Scott County, meanwhile, is poorly differentiated, weakly asserting that Scott County is a “great place” with “great people” (Scott County Government, 2022). This is fortunate for Washington County, as Scott County’s roughly equal distance from Louisville and similar rural character make it like Washington County in many ways. Crucially different, however, is that Scott County has easy access to Louisville via Interstate 65.

This competitive analysis reveals that Washington County’s neighbors are differentiating themselves based on functional benefits. Clark and Floyd are positioned as suburban, and Harrison is differentiated as naturally beautiful. It is safe to predict that if Scott County ever developed a differentiation strategy, it would probably position itself as rural, but accessible. Since none of these counties are differentiating themselves on emotional benefits and because

Washington County cannot viably compete on suburban character, natural beauty, or accessibility, cultivating and selling an emotional benefit is the best path forward.

Thus, the overall brand differentiation strategy is as follows. On the national level, Washington County will be differentiated by its proximity to Louisville. On the local level, Washington County will differentiate itself from its neighbors by cultivating the emotional benefit of being part of a close-knit, patriotic, and established community.

Brand Slogan

A. Slogan

The Original Indiana

B. Justification for the Slogan

A little-known fact about Indiana is that it was settled South to North, filled “up like a glass of water” as Hoosier historian James Madison (2014) put it (p. 60). Most of these settlers came up through Kentucky and crossed the Ohio River near Louisville. Thus, Kentuckiana is the birthplace of the entire state of Indiana, and any county in the region could justly claim to be part of the “Original Indiana.” However, as discussed above, other historic Kentuckiana counties, like Clark and Harrison counties, are not leaning into this historical significance with their promotion, creating an opportunity for Washington County to do so.

Moreover, Washington County’s culture still embodies some of the most nostalgic images of Indiana and the United States. People out in the country still make maple syrup from scratch. High school basketball follows closely behind Christianity as the county’s most popular religion. The area still draws thousands of people to a variety of festivals, and summers in Salem

are complimented by the sounds of racecars on a dirt track. Though there are other Indiana counties that have these things, remember that Washington County is one of only 29 Hoosier counties that are growing. What will happen to these traditions and institutions in the other counties when those counties face demographic collapse? It seems likely that Washington County is positioned to become the place where Indiana's history and traditions are most preserved.

As such, this plan proposes that Washington County begin positioning itself as that place now, hence the slogan Washington County: The Original Indiana. The slogan is short, easy to say, and easily understandable. Moreover, multiple definitions of the word "original" (including first, a quirky individual, and creative) provide a wealth of opportunities to use the slogan in a variety of sub-brand contexts.

C. Sub-Brand Slogans

Be an Original – For Residents

Behold the Original – For Visitors

Build an Original – For Investors

Brand Story

A. Explanation of Brand Stories

A brand story is an aspirational message that includes information about where the brand comes from and the problem the brand is trying to solve, as well as a call to action for the reader. Typically, these narratives are written in the first person and are addressed directly to the reader.

Presented below is a brand story that could be used by Washington County on their website or in their promotional materials.

B. Brand Story Narrative

The places we live are built on contradictions. Everyone enjoys the opportunities and options that cities provide, but most people don't want to live in them. Instead, they live in the suburbs, which have turned into places we talk of "escaping" on the weekends. You don't have to escape home. Drive-through cities and built-from-scratch suburbs lack the sense of community and shared experience that we all look for in the places we live.

There is no connection in these places because they killed their history, but Washington County never lost its ties to what came before. The towns that were built here in the 1800s were not bulldozed and paved over to make way for the malls that now lie dead in every suburban town. We stayed small. We focused on community. We built traditions that are still going strong. We did what we had always done, and we thought nothing of it, because this used to be normal. But it isn't normal anymore.

Washington County is the last of the Original Indiana, the Indiana that crossed over from Kentucky and made a state out of nothing, the Indiana where the county fair was still a big event, and the Indiana where basketball, country cooking, and watching the sun set over the hills were all the comforts a person needed. All those things are still here, and we think that people still want them. If you want cookie-cutter commodities, there are places for you just down the highway. But if you want to be someone original and be part of building something original, come behold the Original Indiana. Come to Washington County.

Brand Visual Elements

As part of this campaign, a symbol must be created that captures the key beliefs of the brand. While a logo might work, it is important to remember that this plan is for a county. Washington County is a unit of government that already has its own logo. It would be foolish and expensive to replace an already well-known and aesthetically pleasing logo in the interest of a single marketing campaign. As such, it is necessary to find an alternative symbol that can unite this brand.

It may be that Washington County's status as a unit of government provides a perfect opportunity for a viable symbolic alternative. A key symbol of any governmental body is its flag. Indeed, these flags can become incredibly iconic representations of the places and beliefs they represent. For example, the U.S. flag is known around the world as a symbol of freedom and opportunity. The patriotic brand elements seem to make a flag the perfect choice for a symbol for the Washington County brand.

Moreover, the facts that only nine of Indiana's ninety-two counties currently have a flag and that none of those flags feature very prominently in the counties' marketing mean that Washington County has an opportunity to build a strong but unique symbol for the county (Padgett, 2021). Though adoption of the flag would require the approval of the County Council and County Commissioners, a well-designed flag backed by a well-planned marketing strategy should have no problem getting approved.

A. Flag Elements

What this flag will look like is up to county decision makers. However, the North American Vexillological Association (vexillology is the study of flags) has created five “rules” for effective flag design. They are as follows:

1. **Keep It Simple.** The flag should be so simple that a child can draw it from memory.
2. **Use Meaningful Symbolism.** The flag's images, colors, or patterns should relate to what it symbolizes.
3. **Use 2 or 3 Basic Colors.** Limit the number of colors on the flag to three which contrast well and come from the standard color set.
4. **No Lettering or Seals.** Never use writing of any kind or an organization's seal.
5. **Be Distinctive or Be Related.** Avoid duplicating other flags but use similarities to show connections. (Kaye, 2006, p. 3)

As stated above, the ultimate decision of what the flag would look like and the processes to choose the design would be up to the County’s decision makers. However, a potential flag will be presented here. This flag is inspired by the Ball State University Honors Thesis of Gregory Padgett, and the inspiration was taken with his permission (Padgett, 2021). The design elements are similar but arranged differently.

B. Flag Description

Two white crossed Civil War-era calvary swords are centered on a blue field. Also on the blue field are the sparks of red fireworks. The colors of the flag will mimic the colors of the United States flag, with the same shades of white, blue, and red (following Rules #2 and #5). This design is incredibly simple, but also highly symbolic. The blue field and fireworks represent

the sky and fireworks on the 4th of July in the county, while the crossed swords represent Morgan's Raid, the most significant event in the county's history that swept through Washington County in just two days. As the United States flag is colloquially known as the stars and stripes, this flag will be known as the bursts and blades.

Buyer Personas

Meet Jeff (Resident Buyer Persona)

A. Background

- Washington County resident and graduate of one of the local high schools
- Never went to college. Instead, began working at GKN out of high school
- Has worked his way up and gotten trainings such that he now works as a skilled laborer on a precision machining lathe

B. Demographics

- Skews male
- 45-55 years old
- Lives in a home that he still has a mortgage on

C. Identifiers

- Enjoys outdoor activities and sporting events on the weekend
- Knows most of the people in the community
- Much of his time used to consist of taking kids to sports games, now that that is over, he is looking for more hobbies and friends

D. Goals

- Pay off his mortgage

- Get his kids through school

E. Challenges

- Has one child that decided not to move back home after graduation. He is pained that he does not see her or her children much
- Has two other children, one in college and one about to enter college. He wants them to live in the area after they graduate

Meet Cathy (Visitor Buyer Persona)

A. Background

- Mom that lives in the southern Indiana region
- College educated, middle-class, and works in the service industry

B. Demographics

- Skews female
- Early to mid-30s, has several young children (<8 years old)
- Lives in a recently built suburban home and is paying off a large mortgage
- Household income of \$80,000 to \$110,000 a year

C. Identifiers

- Very social media savvy
- Enjoys taking walks, but has not found as much joy in it since moving to their crowded suburb
- Drives a minivan
- Enjoys spending times with friends and family

D. Goals

- Get her kids through school
- Spend more time with her family

E. Challenges

- Doesn't get a lot of quality time with her kids and husband
- Misses living in a quieter part of town

Promotional Strategies

A. Resident Campaign – Be an Original

Two of the most worrying trends in Washington County are the aging population and low number of individuals with a post-secondary education. Unfortunately, sending young people away to college to receive a post-secondary education is often the very thing that ensures they will not return to Washington County. After experiencing the greater opportunities available in their college towns and large cities, many decide to start a life and career in those areas.

Two things are needed to combat this brain drain. First, career opportunities must be increased in Washington County. Second, negative perceptions of Washington County among the county's residents need to be addressed and actively fought by county leadership. Furthermore, the best carriers of the county's promotional message and brand will be the county's residents. Given that the youth of the county go all over the state and country to college, it would be beneficial for the county to equip these youths with a positive message about their home that they can share with the world. This is the point behind the Be an Original campaign. It equips the residents with a positive message that says that the county values creativity and being unique.

Promotional Strategy #1: Saturate the Community with the Flag

Students grow up seeing the American and Indiana flag waving high on flagpoles around the county. As a result, they subliminally understand that the country and state are things to respect. It would be beneficial if the county could capture an equal level of admiration. To this end, all efforts should be made to convince key stakeholders, like seats of government, well-established businesses, schools, and respected community organizations to fly the flag of the county on their flagpoles or otherwise display it in their places of operation.

Ideally, the flag will become a recognizable, iconic symbol of the county with not only the residents of the county, but outsiders as well. To this end, county officials should work to ensure that the flag saturates the county. Some methods for doing this could be the handing out of free county flag bumper stickers to vehicles, sale of merchandise with the flag's design on it, and display of the flag at prominent, crowd-drawing festivals, like the New Pekin 4th of July Festival or the LM Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival. Additionally, all graduating seniors in the county, typically less than 500 students, could be given a congratulatory letter and county flag sticker for their laptops, which they will hopefully take with them to college.

Promotional Strategy #2: Walkabout Washington County Hiking Challenge

The county boasts over 56 miles of hiking trails. The challenge of the Knobstone Trail (KT) draws hikers from around the country to Washington County every year. However, there are almost 20 miles of rugged trails in the county besides the KT that KT hikers might find enjoyable on a later visit to the county. Since hikers often tackle the KT purely for the challenge or for training reasons, there is currently little incentive for them to return to Washington County

once they have completed the trail. In addition to these visitors, residents of the county are often not aware of hiking opportunities within the county outside of the KT.

To rectify this situation, the county could create a hiking challenge that incentivizes hikers to complete as many miles of hiking trails in the county as possible. This Walkabout Washington County initiative would be built around markers placed at the halfway point on the county's trails. Hikers would be instructed to take a picture with these markers to prove that they had hiked the trail, and then post the picture to social media with the hashtag #WalkaboutWashingtonCounty. Hikers could tag the county office responsible for managing this program (hopefully, a newly created Parks Department), and work their way towards hiking every trail in the county. The program would have tiers like 15-mile, 30-mile, KT, and Full 56 tiers. Rewards for this program could vary. Perhaps recognition on the social media page of the Parks Department could be the reward for the 15-mile tier, an embroidered patch branded with the Walkabout Washington County logo could be the reward for the 30-mile tier, a different embroidered patch with the Knobstone Trail's logo could be the reward for completing it and getting one's name engraved on a plaque in the county parks office could be the reward for the Full 56 tier.

B. Visitor Campaign – Behold the Original

Promotional Strategy #3: Touchpoint Marketing

There are two attractions that bring thousands of people to the county every year. The first is the LM Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival and the second is the New Pekin 4th of July Festival. Given the volume of visitors these events attract, leaving visitors with a good impression of the county at these events is critical.

The LM Sugarbush Maple Syrup festival occurs every year during the last week of February and the first weekend in March. The site of the festival is located off State Road 160, far away from any town or city. Though the festival can be reached via backroads, most visitors to the festival will take this route. To generate awareness of the brand, the Washington County flag should be very visible along this route. Preemptive negotiations can be conducted with the relatively few homeowners along this highway to convince them to fly the county flag. Moreover, the flag should be flown and sold at the actual event.

However, beyond the flag, efforts to interact with people should take place at the event. The festival always has ample room for vendors, so the county should rent a booth. Due to the usual cold or rainy weather at that time of year, the county's representatives should be prepared to hand out material that would be helpful to people in such conditions (i.e. hot drinks or raingear). In addition, representatives at the booth should hand out promotional brochures to the people coming. Ideally, these brochures would include a calendar of other county festivals, information on water recreation and cabin rental sites like Delaney Lake and Starve Hollow, and an advertisement for the Walkabout Washington County Challenge. To ensure that people keep the brochure instead of throwing it away, helpful and relevant information for the Maple Syrup Festival should also be included, perhaps a basic overview of the syrup-making process or the ways to distinguish between the types of maple trees.

The New Pekin 4th of July Parade is a very different event. There are far more traditions and scheduled events associated with this festival. However, there are some mainstays that will allow the county to shine at this event as well. The parade is an area where the county could easily make an impression on thousands of spectators. The county could design a float that focused on the county's accomplishments and history. Perhaps, they could build a scale model of

the Salem Courthouse on the float. The more creative, the better, as winning the float contest would provide added, free publicity.

In addition to a parade, there are various events that the county could sponsor, like the queen contest or 3-on-3 contest, but it would probably be best for the county to stay away from such activities for fear of seeming to favor any contestant over another. The second-best venue for the county at this event is the vendors' booths. These will be at the event all weekend and provide an opportunity for the county to sell flag merchandise and give out brochures, as at the Sugarbush festival. The free item to give out at this event should be chilled bottled water, as the July heat can often be scorching.

Promotional Strategy #4: Bundled Washington County Experiences

The more visitors have positive experiences in the county, the more their opinions on the county improve. As such, the county should incentivize repeat visits to the area. One possible way of accomplishing this is to bundle various Washington County experiences together in one price. This strategy will likely require collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, and success of the program is highly dependent on which businesses participate. However, the County can initiate some bundles. For example, the county owns Delaney Lake Park. They can bundle a weekend there with something else of equal experiential value quite easily. Ideally, these bundles will be themed to certain types of customers. Retirees and families, for example, could both have their separate bundles.

Promotional Strategy #5: Regional Collaboration

As stated above, Washington County simply cannot compete with most of its neighbors in terms of natural amenities. However, what if it did not have to compete? What if neighboring counties could share successful strategies among themselves and become stronger together as a collective? If successful, the Walkabout Washington County initiative should be shared with neighboring counties. How much more incentivized would a person be to investigate the program if they knew that there were many counties involved and more options to choose from? Some tentative names for neighboring counties' programs are as follows:

1. Scout Out Scott County
2. Caravan Clark County
3. Journey Jackson County
4. Hike Harrison County

Place

Place answers the questions of where and when marketing messages are delivered. This should not be limited to mere geographical locations. It can also include objects within locations and constructed spaces. For example, choosing to put a brand message on a shelf in the supermarket instead of at the checkout would fall under place, as would deciding to put an advertisement on page 2 of the newspaper instead of page 8.

A. County Touchpoints

As extensively discussed in the Promotion section, the county's annual festivals provide a consistent draw of visitors that the county can market to using a variety of creative methods.

Moreover, visitor locations like the county's hotels and bed and breakfasts are additional venues where county promotional material is welcomed and expected. Practically, the Washington County Tourism Bureau could make brochures and manage the county's promotional efforts at these events and places.

B. State Rest Areas

Rest areas along major Interstate highways are a great place for the county to distribute its promotional message. Most visitors to these locations are travelers looking for fun and enjoyable things to do. The county tourism bureau should develop a brochure for the county and advertise at these locations through the Indiana Tourism Commission, the entity that manages the information kiosks at these locations.

C. Intergovernmental Conferences

Accelerate Indiana Municipalities and the Association of Indiana Counties are two organizations that host annual conferences for local governments to meet, collaborate, and peruse a variety of vendors. These conferences and similar conferences in the Louisville area could be a venue for Washington County to make a statement with a strong promotional message that local government leaders from across the state take back to their constituencies.

D. Economic Development Conferences

Similar to the intergovernmental conferences above, events like the International Economic Development Council annual conference and SelectUSA are places where

Washington County can directly interact with domestic and foreign investors and present opportunities within the county to them.

E. Digital Spaces

A County YouTube channel or Facebook page could be a place for the County to make outsiders aware of the various opportunities within the county. YouTube, as a visual and auditory medium is a particularly promising platform for showing off Washington County's scenic beauty and educating on the county's historical features.

SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is a standard strategic business tool that analyzes an entity's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to ascertain its current strategic position and help decision makers plan for future positioning (Teoli et al, 2021). Understanding strengths helps the entity determine what it should continue investing in for future strategies. Weaknesses demonstrate existing problems that, if fixable, should be fixed and if unfixable, should be minimized through strategy. Strengths and weaknesses constitute factors within the entity, while opportunities and threats tend to be focused on factors external to the entity and have longer time horizons. Opportunities analyze developing trends and emerging realities that it may be helpful for the entity to exploit. Finally, the threats section attempts to predict future developments that could harm the entity and preempt those developments through careful monitoring and planning. This SWOT analysis will consider five key elements from each SWOT category that will be important to Washington County's future planning.

A. Strengths

As stated in previous sections, the greatest asset Washington County has is its proximity to Louisville. However, though close enough to provide some jobs and a cultural anchor to the people of the county, this proximity should not be overestimated. Non-rush-hour drive times between the county's population centers are still quite long. The closest town, New Pekin, is still a 35-minute drive from Louisville. Salem is 47 minutes away, and Campbellsburg is an even hour away (Google, n.d.). Obviously, the benefits of proximity to Louisville will be greatest for New Pekin, but Salem and Campbellsburg can still benefit significantly from their proximity to the Louisville suburbs in Clark and Floyd counties.

Another strength of Washington County that has been discussed in other sections is the abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities. While it may not have a commensurate level of outdoor activities as a place like Harrison County, 56 miles of trails and 681 acres of lakes constitute valuable, marketable, rural, family locations that can be marketed to the large suburban and urban populations around Louisville. Moreover, Washington County is one of only two counties with the Knobstone Trail, renowned state-wide as the longest hiking trail in Indiana.

A third strength is that Washington County has a business-friendly climate. Not only are the tax rates reasonable, but the local economic development corporation provides various business development incentives. Moreover, the county has a consistently conservative government, stable political space, and an active chamber of commerce with members from a wide variety of industries.

A rich history and strong cultural traditions constitute the fourth and fifth strengths of the county. Though Harrison and Clark Counties were also part of the thirteen original Indiana counties, they have not preserved or leaned into their historical significance to the same level that Washington has. Moreover, the county actively reconnects with the past every year with festivals like the LM Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival, Old Settlers Day, and the Pekin 4th of July Festival. Many of the county's festivals are very popular and allow the county to draw far more people every year than such a sparsely populated county should probably be able to.

B. Weaknesses

As the literature review demonstrated, jobs go to where the people are. People do not go to where the jobs are. Therefore, it is critical that the county's people be as highly skilled as

possible and that county institutions remain strong. Thus, a critical weakness of the county is its mediocre schools and relatively poorly educated workforce. While none of the schools are irredeemable, they will have to do better if they can be featured as a selling point of the county. Additionally, more of the county's population must graduate high school, and all graduates should be encouraged to pursue some sort of post-secondary education. Finally, the county must do more to prevent the brain drain of the youth it sends away to college.

Two other quality-of-life weaknesses are equally threatening. As the Price section demonstrated, there is a lack of housing for low- and moderate-income families. Low home values in the county do not incentivize development, meaning that solving this problem will require the county to either close the financing gap or find a way to boost home values. Secondly, there is a lack of public parks in the county. Though the county ranks high in natural features, relative to much of the state, it ranks far too low in terms of built features like parks and other attractions. The county should create more built spaces for outdoor recreation.

The fourth weakness will probably take much longer to rectify than some of the above quality-of-life weaknesses. In short, the county's industries are not diversified. Retail, food service, and manufacturing account for almost 50% of the county's jobs, and a further 23% is consumed by education and healthcare (Economic Development Administration, 2021). The first group is severely threatened by automation, while education and healthcare are directly linked to county population. If the county wishes to survive in the future, it will have to diversify its economy and cultivate more business incubation and entrepreneurship.

The fifth weakness is almost entirely out of the county's control. Though it is crisscrossed by several state highways, Washington County is probably the most inaccessible county in the Kentuckiana region. Residents must travel to other counties to reach an Interstate

highway, and the federal highway that runs through the county, U.S. 150, is distant from the major population centers of Salem, New Pekin, and Campbellsburg. This lack of access makes it cumbersome for visitors to reach the county and for the county's residents to reach other places.

C. Opportunities

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the world's transition to hybrid and fully digital work environments. Increasingly, people do not have to live near the places that they work. This provides a great opportunity for Washington County, which is close to Louisville, but distant at the same time. It could feasibly position itself as a living area for Louisville remote workers and hybrid workers. Washington County currently enjoys broadband-minimum download speeds of 25 mbps and upload speeds of 5 mbps, which is 2 mbps over the broadband minimum (Our Southern Indiana, 2021, p. 130, 146). However, these speeds are low compared to neighbor Floyd County which has median download and upload speeds of 100 mbps and 20 mbps, respectively (Our Southern Indiana, 2021, p. 146). Washington County can, and should position itself as a location for teleworkers, but it should also work to improve its broadband infrastructure and median speeds.

Three regional trends also provide future growth opportunities for the county. As the literature review showed, cooperative regionalism can significantly bolster an area's economic development. Fortunately, regional ties are growing stronger by the year. The most significant regional effort in recent years has been its participation in the Our Southern Indiana Regional Planning Authority, which wrote one of the top five regional development plans in the state and captured \$50 million for the region to enact the plan (Brown, 2021). A second opportunity is the growing wage differential between Louisville and southern Indiana. Wages are, on average,

about 35% higher in Louisville, probably to accommodate for greater cost of living in the city (Our Southern Indiana, 2021, p. 146). By providing workers to Louisville, Washington County can capture much of that differential and bring it back to be spent and invested within the county. Next, the overall regional population is expected to grow by 2.7% by 2026, meaning that there will be a consistent increase in new residents for the county to capture going forward (Our Southern Indiana, 2021, p. 157).

Finally, though low home prices can also be seen as a weakness, the more affordable nature of housing in Washington County makes it well-positioned to exploit the growing virtual economy as virtual workers seek places to live.

D. Threats

Probably the greatest existential threat to the county is the threat of automation. As the Weaknesses section described, Washington County's job market is heavily dependent on manufacturing, food services, and retail, three industries that are at severe threat of automation. If these jobs are automated away, the county could experience a severe drop in population, which would only exacerbate the jobs crisis as the large education and healthcare sectors would collapse for lack of customers to serve. If automation comes to the county before the economy can diversify, Washington County could easily become the 64th Indiana county with a decreasing population.

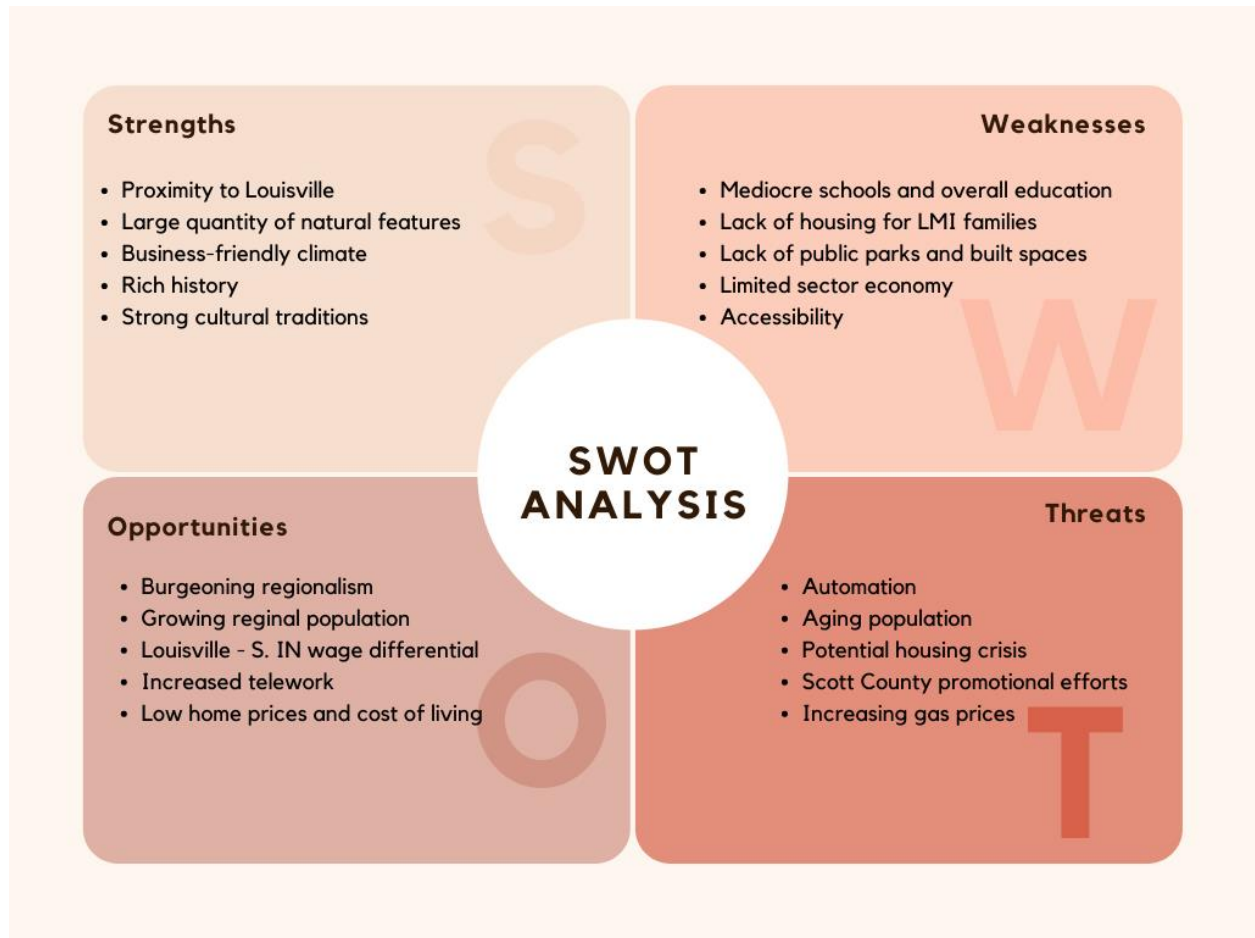
A different population crisis may also be developing, albeit at a slower rate. As the Product section showed, Washington County has a growing, but aging population. The county must do a better job of attracting and retaining young people if it is going to survive in the long-term. Complicating the county's ability to do that, however, are low home values and an inability

to incentivize development. Indeed, the housing trends have the potential to develop into a full-blown housing crisis, should a large portion of existing housing stock degrade.

Scott County poses a fourth, but minor threat. Since Scott County is roughly equidistant from Louisville as Washington County and has better interstate access, an aggressive promotional campaign in that county could greatly reduce Washington County's efforts to attract visitors and residents. However, this depends on how Scott County chooses to promote itself, and as the Promotion section asserted, they would probably be best served by positioning themselves as rural but accessible.

The fifth threat is far more significant. The strategy presented in the Promotion section rests on the ability of Washington County to position itself as a commuter home and rural travel destination for the Kentuckiana region. However, that position could be severely weakened if gasoline prices continue to go up, increasing the costs of living in and travelling to Washington County. That said, the steady progress of innovation in the electric car market likely means gas prices will not be a threat for much more than a decade.

Figure 1



Discussion

Washington County, Indiana has many unique features that have, historically, been undermarketed. This marketing plan has sought to build a strategy that promotes those features, prepares for upcoming opportunities, and addresses current weaknesses. To accomplish this, data was analyzed from a variety of national, state, and local sources to develop an understanding of the county's current position in the competitive environment. Conclusions drawn from those analyses were then synthesized into an actionable marketing plan built on four key findings.

The most first and most important finding from this plan is that Washington County's growth and success are inextricably linked to the growth and success of Louisville. Only 29 of Indiana's 92 counties are projected to grow between 2015 and 2025, and all the growing counties are near major cities or universities (Indiana Business Research Center, 2018). Instead of fighting this reality, the plan presented in this paper embraces it. This plan advocates differentiating Washington County from other counties in the United States by leaning into its relative proximity with Louisville.

There are, however, four other Indiana counties that are close to Louisville. Washington County will differentiate itself from these communities by leaning into its historic, nostalgic nature. As the Promotion section of this plan discusses, southern Indiana is where the history of the state began. Washington County has maintained that history well through its historic county square district, strong museum scene, and plethora of folksy festivals. A key finding, however, is that surrounding counties have either made themselves incapable of credibly positioning themselves as historic or else chosen not to pursue such a promotional strategy. Therefore, building a local promotional strategy built on historical significance and sense of community is a viable strategy for Washington County.

Regardless of the angle pursued, county leaders should feel urgency to enact a strong marketing plan. A critical finding for the future of county is that the county's economy is highly concentrated in manufacturing, retail, and food service sectors. All these industries are at severe risk of being automated away within the next decade. If its population is to remain stable or grow, Washington County will have to work to reposition itself and diversify its economy. This plan proposes positioning the county as a destination for commuters and virtual workers. Doing so may also work to attract and retain more young people in the local economy, which will be critical to combating the steadily rising age of the county.

The above findings guided the development of the marketing plan for Washington County, which utilizes the brand-house model that Zenker and Braun (2010) proposed for place marketing. It is hoped that further development of this plan and its implementation will provide other counties' leaders a framework to work with and a case to learn from in their own county marketing efforts. As such, future users of this plan should be aware of its limitations. First, for the sake of time and space, this plan did not consider all the aspects that could have been included in the Product section. Importantly, the plan did not touch on healthcare, citizen wellness, social institutions, or crime. Any implementation of this marketing plan would be wise to interface with the county's existing comprehensive plan, which touches on some of these areas. A second limitation is that the industrialist market segment was not developed very far. This is primarily because industrial customers all have their own unique and complicated needs and because there was not enough data on Washington County's economic development available to the public to craft a useful industrialist strategy. Finally, this plan ignores the local competition that Washington County may have with the 8 Kentuckiana counties in Kentucky. The paper argued that location decisions between Indiana and Kentucky had more to do with

state differences than local differences, but one could credibly argue that local factors play a large role as well.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the above marketing plan and its constituent analysis of the situation in Washington County, there are six important policies that would greatly bolster the county's marketing and development efforts. First, all county leaders should actively look for areas where small changes to existing conditions would create large social benefit. There were a few such areas identified in the planning process. For example, Washington County lags behind its neighbors in terms of built amenities and public parks. A relatively simple way of solving this problem is to create a County Parks Board and a 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. This will give the county access to state funding for the creation and improvement of parks in the county. Another small change would be to aggressively improve the usability, quality, and promotion of the county's trails. Such a high concentration of rugged trails in a county is unique, yet this resource is highly underutilized and underdeveloped. Finally, the county has many popular cultural festivals that draw in thousands of people every year. Taking a more aggressive stance towards county promotion at these events would allow the county to quickly disseminate its promotional message to relevant regional populations.

A second policy recommendation is that the county must work tirelessly to improve the quality of its three public schools. As stated in the Promotion section, the performance of the schools is not horrible, but it is not at a high enough level to promote. The same small change, high improvement approach taken at the county-level should be taken at the school level as well.

The schools should analyze what they can do to increase the value of a diploma from their institutions and the value of students that leave their institutions. For example, schools could explore opportunities to build stronger alumni networks, such that high schoolers going to college can connect with alumni from their high school that went to universities they are interested in. Additionally, the schools could explore cooperative arrangements whereby students could study in AP class programs at each other's schools. Lastly, the county schools could build relationships with local employers and create a pipeline that equips students that will not be attending university with the skills they will need to fill jobs at these businesses upon graduation.

Thirdly, towns and municipalities within the county should independently examine how they would be best and most realistically positioned in the context of the county's broader marketing plan. Likely, New Pekin, positioned most closely to Louisville of any of the population centers in the county, will position itself as the commuting hub of the county, while Salem will position itself as the county's cultural and industrial heart. Campbellsburg will likely lean into its position as the home of West Washington School Corporation. Little York and Saltillo will have to conduct more independent analysis to find unique selling points for their communities.

Fourth, travel bottlenecks to Louisville should be identified and, if possible, eliminated. As discussed above, proximity to Louisville is the county's most significant asset. If there is any way to make commutes to Louisville from the county's population centers shorter, every effort should be made to accomplish this. Of course, this may require cooperation with other local and county governments. That leads into a fifth policy recommendation: work cooperatively with other areas whenever possible. As the literature review demonstrated, regionalism is a viable strategy for growth. Moreover, other Kentuckiana counties are not positioning themselves as

competitors to Washington County, and Washington County should not betray that outstretched hand. Instead, all counties in Kentuckiana should endeavor to increase the overall value of region, and that means cooperatively assisting neighboring counties and localities.

Finally, business incubation within the county should be greatly expanded. The current makeup of Washington County's economy is not conducive to future growth or success. As such, entrepreneurial programs in the schools should be created and strengthened. Moreover, the county might benefit from the creation of a dedicated business incubator that focuses on helping local entrepreneurs get their businesses off the ground. If that proves cost prohibitive, county-funded entrepreneurial education programs can be launched as an alternative.

Conclusion

The marketing plan presented here was designed to be data-driven, realistic, and actionable. The data revealed that proximity to Louisville is the key to Washington County's current and future growth. Moreover, a competitive analysis demonstrated that there is a viable opportunity for Washington County to differentiate itself as the community-focused historic capital of Kentuckiana. As such, the marketing plan presented here proposes that the county differentiates itself along these factors with the slogan "The Original Indiana." The threat of increasing automation and an aging population gives the county a particular urgency to quickly develop a strong promotional strategy. Finally, the plan has been intentionally designed with strategies that could be easily implemented by county officials and built upon with several clear policy recommendations. It is hoped that the plan will be implemented and that such implementation can serve as a model for other counties seeking to find what makes them unique.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Washington County Lakes	
Body	Acreage
Delaney Lake	88
Lake John Hay	300
Elk Creek Lake	48
Lake Salinda	90
Spurgeon Hollow	10
Starve Hollow	145
Total	681

Appendix B

Washington County Hiking Trails			
Site	Trail	Length (miles)	Rating
Starve Hollow	Lowland Trail	0.65	Easy
Starve Hollow	Lakeshore Loop	0.66	Rugged
Starve Hollow	Vista Trail	1.55	Very Rugged
Starve Hollow	Cabin Site Trail	1.02	Moderate
Starve Hollow	Spillway Trail	1.22	Moderate
Starve Hollow	JWSF Turkey Roost Trail	5.6	Rugged
Spurgeon Hollow	Backcountry Trail	8	Rugged
Lake Salinda	Veterans Trail	1.5	Easy
Big Springs Nature Preserve	Big Springs Trail	0.8	Easy
Cave River Valley Natural Area	Cave River Valley Trail	3.3	Moderate
Beck's Mill	Mill Trail	0.15	Rugged
Beck's Mill	Cemetery Trail	0.3	Rugged
Beck's Mill	Mill Creek Overlook Loop Trail	1.1	Rugged
Beck's Mill	Sulphur Springs Trail	1.8	Rugged
Beck's Mill	Spring View Trail	0.5	Rugged
Salem YMCA	Fitness Trail	2	Easy
Indiana DNR	Knobstone Trail	26	Rugged
Totals	Total	56.15	Percent
	Total Rugged	45.66	81.3%
	Total Moderate	5.54	9.9%
	Total Easy	4.95	8.8%

Appendix C

Taxes of Washington County and Its Neighbors					
County	LIT	FAB	CIT	Total	Rank
Clark	2.00%		6.00%	8.00%	1
Crawford	1.00%		5.00%	6.00%	8
Floyd	1.35%		6.00%	7.35%	3
Harrison	1.00%		4.00%	5.00%	9
Jackson	2.10%		5.00%	7.10%	5
Lawrence	1.75%		5.00%	6.75%	7
Orange	1.75%	2.00%	4.00%	7.75%	2
Scott	2.16%		5.00%	7.16%	4
Washington	2.00%		5.00%	7.00%	6