



Tipton

MAYOR KEGAN SCHMICKER TIPTON THRIVES STRATEGIC PLAN

JANUARY 2025



DRIVING
CHANGE

PROVEN RESULTS



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Letter from the Mayor

Dear Tipton Residents,

I am excited to share with you a new chapter for our beloved city—a vision that will not only guide us forward but also inspire meaningful change, **Tipton Thrives**. After thoughtful discussions, feedback from many of you, and a strategic planning process that focused on action, we are proud to introduce our new Tipton Thrives Strategic Plan for Tipton's future.

This plan is not just a set of ideas or lofty goals—it is a dynamic, action-oriented roadmap that will be implemented step-by-step, with measurable results. It's designed to ensure that every resident, every business, and every organization has a role in Tipton's growth. We are embarking on an exciting journey together, one that brings us all closer and makes Tipton an even better place to live, work, and thrive.

At the core of this plan are several priorities that will shape our community for years to come: **Building a Leadership Team, Investing in a Vibrant Arts Ecosystem, Re-invigorating a Sense of Community Pride, Pursuing Creative Economic Development Strategies, Providing High-Quality Infrastructure, and Supporting a Sustainable Public Safety Strategy.**

This is your invitation to get involved. Whether you're a lifelong resident or new to Tipton, there is a place for you in this journey. We need your ideas, your energy, and your commitment to make these plans a reality. I encourage you to participate in community meetings, share your feedback, and consider how you can contribute to the vision we're building.

Together, we will make Tipton a place we can all be proud of—a community that inspires, engages, and empowers everyone who calls it home.

Thank you for your continued dedication to Tipton's bright future. Let's work together to make it happen.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kegan Schmicker".

Kegan Schmicker
Mayor of Tipton



Leadership in Tipton

Kegan Schmicker, Mayor

Prior to his current role, Schmicker served as the CEO of the Tipton County Chamber of Commerce, helping to improve the local business climate, investing in leadership development, and pursuing community development projects. Prior to his time at the Chamber, Schmicker worked with the City of Tipton performing economic and community development projects to position Tipton for growth. Since 2017, Schmicker has helped the Tipton and Tipton County community secure nearly \$500,000 in grants to launch a small business revolving loan fund, address local childcare challenges, install a mural, create the Downtown Revitalization Plan, and more.

In the community, Schmicker is a member of the Tipton Lions Club and member of the Board of Directors for Shafer Leadership Academy. Previously, Schmicker has served on the boards of the Tipton Main Street Association, Tipton County Chamber of Commerce, Encore Lifestyle and Enrichment Center, and a School Board Trustee for Tipton Community School Corporation.

The Mayor's Office oversees all city departments and employees. The Mayor also works alongside the City Council as the fiscal body, consisting of four district council seats and one at-large, to ensure a sustainable budget and alignment with City priorities.

City Council

Rich Vautaw, District 1

Ken Ehman, District 2

Tim Richards, District 3

Nathan Kring, District 4

Rick Rippy, At-Large

Strategic Planning Consultant

Keeley Stingel, Driving Change



About Tipton

Nestled in the heart of Indiana, Tipton is a small yet vibrant city with rural charm and rooted in opportunity. Founded in 1844 and named after the Tipton family, this picturesque community has evolved over the years while preserving the welcoming spirit and small-town values that make it so special.

Tipton is located in central Indiana, approximately 40 miles north of Indianapolis, making it an ideal spot for those seeking a peaceful, country lifestyle with easy access to urban amenities. With a population just over 5,200, Tipton offers a tight-knit community where neighbors know one another, and local businesses are the backbone of the economy.

Rich in history, Tipton boasts a variety of historic landmarks, including its stately courthouse and charming downtown district, which features a mix of classic architecture, specialty shops, and local eateries. The city's commitment to preserving its heritage is balanced with a forward-thinking approach to growth, evident in its thriving parks, schools, and community programs.

Outdoor enthusiasts will appreciate Tipton's abundance of green spaces, including the popular Tipton City Park, which provides recreational opportunities for families and visitors of all ages. Whether it's enjoying a leisurely walk along the trails, playing a round of golf, or attending one of the community's seasonal events—such as the First Fridays Downtown—there's always something to look forward to in this welcoming community.

With a deep respect for tradition and a clear vision for the future, Tipton is a place where history, hospitality, and progress come together to create a quality of life that's hard to beat. Whether you're visiting or planning to make Tipton your home, you'll find a warm, friendly atmosphere that invites you to stay a while and make lasting memories.



History of Tipton

The history of Tipton, Indiana, is a story of growth, perseverance, and community spirit, set against the backdrop of central Indiana's agricultural landscape. The city, established in 1844, has grown from a small rural settlement into a thriving community, while maintaining the values and character of its early days.

The Early Years

Tipton's origins can be traced back to the 1830s when the area was first settled by pioneers drawn to Indiana's fertile soil. Early settlers found the land ideal for farming, and the small community that began to take shape quickly attracted the attention of entrepreneurs and landowners. In 1837, a post office was established, and the area was officially named Tipton in honor of General John Tipton, a prominent military leader and U.S. senator who played a key role in the state's development.

The land that would become Tipton was part of the broader settlement of Central Indiana, an area rich in resources like timber and fertile farmland, which would later fuel the region's growth. In 1844, Tipton was officially platted and soon became the county seat of Tipton County, further establishing its role as a center for trade and government in the area.

Growth and Development

As the railroad arrived in Tipton in the 1850s, the town began to grow more rapidly, with new businesses and industries emerging to support the needs of a more connected community. The railroad not only brought essential goods to the area but also allowed local farmers to ship their crops to wider markets, leading to an economic boom that would continue throughout the 19th century.

By the late 1800s, Tipton had developed a thriving downtown area. The city's architecture from this time still reflects the Victorian and early 20th-century styles, with several buildings that have stood the test of time, including the Tipton County Courthouse, which was completed in 1884. The town also saw the establishment of schools, churches, and civic organizations that played an important role in community life.





History (cont.)

The 20th Century: Industrialization and Innovation

The early 20th century saw continued growth, spurred by the advent of new technologies, including the automobile, which helped to bring in tourists and made the area more accessible. Tipton, like many small towns across the U.S., experienced the boom-and-bust cycles of industrialization, but its focus remained on agriculture, which continued to be the backbone of the local economy.

The Great Depression of the 1930s hit Tipton hard, but the community remained resilient. Local businesses adapted to the times, and citizens worked together to weather the economic downturn. The establishment of new agricultural technologies in the mid-20th century helped to rejuvenate the economy, and Tipton continued to maintain its small-town charm while adjusting to the changing needs of the modern world.

During the post-World War II era, Tipton, like much of the Midwest, began to experience suburbanization. More people settled in the area due to its proximity to Indianapolis and relatively low cost of living. This era also saw the development of new infrastructure, including schools, roads, and recreational spaces, that helped to support the growing population.

Modern Day Tipton

Today, Tipton is a city that reflects the values of its past while looking toward the future. Its deep historical roots are celebrated through local events, the preservation of its historic architecture, and the spirit of community that still defines the town. The county fair, local parades, and other events offer a glimpse into Tipton's rich cultural heritage, while modern schools, parks, and businesses continue to thrive.

Though small in size, Tipton's heart remains large, and the community continues to attract people who appreciate the balance between rural life and modern convenience. The history of Tipton is one of resilience, growth, and a steadfast commitment to preserving the essence of what makes the town special.

From its early days as a rural settlement to its present-day status as a growing small city, Tipton has remained a place where history is honored, and new generations work together to build a bright future, rooted in opportunity.



Mission & Vision

Vision Statement

Tipton is a thriving, dynamic place to live, *rooted in opportunities*, a place that is abound with vibrant neighborhoods, expanding recreational opportunities, and enhanced walkability where families feel safe, children walk to the park, and neighbors support one another. With a restored historic downtown, active parks, and thriving schools, Tipton is a city that blends its rich past with a bright, exciting future.

Mission Statement

Tipton is a purposefully designed city that embraces its historic downtown, public spaces, and growing arts ecosystem. It encourages the creation of shared experiences across generations that reinvigorate the spirit of Tipton.

“Go fast, go alone. Go far, go together.”

-Mayor Kegan Schmicker



Strategic Planning Process

Overview



The City began the four week strategic planning process with setting forth a mission and vision, completing the STING problem solving facilitation method, and identifying key strategic priorities with an identified action plan. The process including the following:

Week 1: Vision/Mission of the City

- Vision: In an ideal world, what would the City look like?
- Mission: How do we get there?

Week 1 & 2: Problem Solving with the STING Problem Solving Method

- S: Assess the Situation. What do we know to be true?
- T: Approach it with Tenacity. If you were a superhero, how would you solve this?
- I: What does your Intuition tell you? What solutions will work or not work in the City?
- N: What are your Negotiables? To solve this, what are you willing to concede on?
- G: Go - Next steps for action. Who? When?

Week 2 & 3: Problem Solving Summary of Findings; Confirm 3-6 Objectives

Week 3: Activities; Timeline; Roles & Responsibilities; Funding Strategies

Week 4: Draft for Review/Final





Problem Solving Facilitation Outcomes

Key Findings

During the STING problem solving facilitation method, the City *assessed the Situation* through data gathering and fact finding.

During the strategic planning session, city leadership assessed Tipton's current conditions, highlighting both challenges and opportunities. Tipton, the third oldest county in Indiana, is undergoing a significant historic preservation project, with a focus on revitalizing its historic downtown. The city is home to a proud farming community, with a strong sense of pride in its schools, leadership, and local businesses—especially the high number of women-owned businesses.

Despite challenges like having the lowest birth rate in Indiana and the need for some residents to travel for specialized medical care, including prenatal care and deliveries, Tipton's median income is steadily growing, and property values are increasing. This economic progress positions Tipton as a good place to raise a family, with potential to attract young adults back to the area.

There is a robust support system in place, including an incoming grant writer who will focus on securing funding. Continued investment in local infrastructure, such as the city park, is also planned. Tipton has a noteworthy appreciation for art, with community programs that create a supportive environment for students to thrive artistically. The leadership in both the city council and schools is acknowledged for its proactive efforts in promoting community development and growth.

Overall, Tipton is strategically poised for continued growth, with a focus on historic preservation, investment in community spaces, and leveraging its unique assets to attract new residents, businesses, and investment.



Problem Solving Facilitation Outcomes

Potential Solutions

During the STING problem solving facilitation method, the City developed **solutions** to the needs of the City with *Tenacity* through bold ideas.

City leadership in Tipton approaches problem-solving by embodying strength, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to the community's success. With a strong sense of duty and partnership with local industry and an active role in downtown revitalization, leadership envisions re-established community pride and strong trust in local government, which sparks a renewed sense of unity and collective purpose.

Their approach aspires to be sophisticated, strategic, and calculated—always taking thoughtful, intentional actions with long-term goals in mind. Leadership nurtures partnerships and seeks to assemble an "A-Team" of capable, driven individuals to help move the city forward. They are deeply committed to preserving Tipton's unique identity and cultural assets, ensuring that growth happens without sacrificing the values that make the community special.

With a strong moral compass and unwavering conviction, Tipton's leadership embraces an elevated vision for the future—one that prioritizes reinvestment, community growth, and careful stewardship. Their focus on thoughtful, purposeful development is propelling Tipton toward a thriving, prosperous future, all while keeping the community's well-being at the center of their mission.



Problem Solving Facilitation Outcomes

Local Insight

During the STING problem solving facilitation method, the City tapped into their *Intuition* to identify potential opportunities, obstacles, and actions to consider.

Tipton's city leadership relied on intuition to understand what data alone cannot reveal about the community's needs and opportunities. They recognize that relying on outside developers to "save" the city isn't the answer—Tipton must take a proactive approach, with local leadership driving change. There's a strong, deeply rooted hunger within the community to improve the city, a passion that is "in their blood." People are eager to be part of the solution, and leadership has a keen sense that what works in larger metro areas won't necessarily work in Tipton. The community is not a "warehouse" for housing but a place with a unique identity and potential.

Practical decision-making also drives city leadership's focus on what truly matters—creating a walkable, bikeable environment that aligns with the community's values. This includes careful planning around safety, infrastructure, and public access, with an understanding that features like sidewalks, lighting, and security are essential to ensuring the city's growth is both sustainable and safe. With funding available for walkable infrastructure and a commitment to annual sidewalk investments, the city is building toward a more connected and navigable space. Leadership envisions innovative solutions like wayfinding systems—simple tools such as painted lines and maps—that enhance mobility and guide residents and visitors alike.

There is also a strong belief that investing in the arts and fostering creative partnerships will pay long-term dividends for Tipton. Leadership recognizes that collaboration—both within the community and with outside partners—is crucial for the city's growth. They also see creative financing tools, such as the RDC (Redevelopment Commission), as a powerful vehicle for achieving economic development goals. By trusting their intuition and aligning with the community's energy and aspirations, Tipton's leadership is positioning the city to thrive in ways that data alone could not predict.



Problem Solving Facilitation Outcomes

Concessions

During the STING problem solving facilitation method, the City Council identified *Negotiables*, knowing that there will be tradeoffs to effectively create change.

One critical trade-off centered on the need for education and capacity building in creative financing and project delivery methods. While the city recognizes the importance of exploring innovative funding options for priority projects, there is a balance to strike between introducing these new concepts and ensuring local leadership is adequately trained and informed. This approach requires investing time in educating stakeholders upfront to ensure they are prepared for creative solutions.

Another trade-off identified was the need for intentional content creation to support the strategic plan's objectives. While the city could focus on various communication channels, leadership agreed that aligning content with the plan's goals is paramount. A well-defined communication strategy should be prioritized to effectively engage the community and stakeholders.

Engaging Tipton's youth was also discussed, with a recognition that this demographic offers untapped potential for community growth. However, leadership acknowledged that activating the youth requires patience and a strategic approach.

Finally, there was a recognition that while large-scale projects are appealing, the city must value-engineer solutions that are both creative and attainable. While completing ambitious projects could significantly impact Tipton's development, leadership identified that smaller, more feasible projects—done well—are more realistic in the short term.

In summary, Tipton's leadership faces the challenge of balancing ambitious goals with the practical considerations of capacity, communication, and resource allocation—ensuring that each decision aligns with the city's long-term vision while remaining grounded in achievable, community-driven solutions.



Problem Solving Facilitation Outcomes

Go Take Action

During the STING problem solving facilitation method, the City Council decided it was ready to Go Take Action. A summary of actions is listed below.

Identify the A-Team

Form a dedicated team of leaders and stakeholders to drive key initiatives forward.

Secure Funding for Downtown Redevelopment

Begin securing the estimated \$2 million needed to kickstart the downtown revitalization effort.

Develop a Community Arts Strategy

Create a strategy for arts programming with an achievable action plan, emphasizing local engagement and creative economic development.

Enhance Recreational Opportunities

Improve existing park amenities, such as the pool and golf course, to enhance the experiences to residents and visitors.

Engage Local Businesses in Branding Effort

Actively involve local businesses in the city's branding efforts to foster a cohesive, unified identity.

Activate Community Pride

Launch a marketing campaign to promote Tipton's unique identity and build a stronger sense of community pride.

Create Investment Opportunity List

Develop a high-priority list of investment opportunities to focus on, aligning with Tipton's strategic goals.

Secure Funding for Urban Trail/Wayfinding System

Move forward with securing funding for a new urban trail and wayfinding system, including creating a detailed map and materials list.

Build Leadership Team

Strengthen the leadership structure to ensure successful execution of all initiatives.

Focus on Sustainable Public Safety

Develop a strategy for sustainable public safety that ensures long-term security for residents.

*By prioritizing these actions, Tipton is positioning itself for **strategic growth, increased community engagement, and sustainable development with a focus on arts, recreation, infrastructure, and public safety.***



Strategic Plan

GOALS

01

Build a leadership team

02

Invest in a vibrant arts ecosystem

03

Re-invigorate sense of community pride

04

Pursue creative economic development strategies

05

Provide high quality infrastructure

06

Support a sustainable public safety strategy



Strategic Plan

01

Build a leadership team

A) Take inventory of the City's existing human capital

WHO	Mayor + Local Leaders
WHEN	12 months
FUNDING	In-house

B) Create a Mayor's Cabinet

WHO	Mayor
WHEN	18 months
FUNDING	In-house

C) Identify and delegate City priorities

WHO	Mayor + Mayor's Cabinet
WHEN	18-24 months
FUNDING	In-house



Strategic Plan

01

Build a leadership team

D) Identify administrative gaps in operations

WHO	Mayor
WHEN	6 months
FUNDING	In-house



Strategic Plan

02

Invest in a vibrant arts ecosystem

A) Establish Tipton Arts Commission

WHO	Mayor + City Council
WHEN	6 months
FUNDING	In-house

B) Create a community arts strategy with achievable action plan

WHO	Mayor + Arts Commission
WHEN	6-12 months
FUNDING	In-house

C) Create Youth Arts Commission

WHO	Mayor + Art Teachers + School Administration
WHEN	12 months
FUNDING	In-house



Strategic Plan

02

Invest in a vibrant arts ecosystem

D) Engage youth in City art strategy

WHO	Mayor + School Leadership + Youth Arts Commission
WHEN	12-18 months
FUNDING	In-house

E) Create and launch a pop-up art showcase

WHO	Mayor + Arts Commission + Youth Arts Commission + Local Artists/Artisans + Local Business Community
WHEN	12-18 months
FUNDING	In-house



Strategic Plan

03

Re-invigorate sense of community pride

A) Capture and share positive testimonials from new and existing residents

WHO	Mayor + Communications Consultant + Downtown Businesses
WHEN	6-12 months
FUNDING	In-house, General Fund, EDIT

B) Invest in a comprehensive brand & identify strategy

WHO	Mayor + Communications Consultant
WHEN	12 months
FUNDING	General Fund, EDIT

C) Invest in strategic communications plan

WHO	Mayor + Communications Consultant
WHEN	12 months, ongoing
FUNDING	EDIT



Strategic Plan

03

Re-invigorate sense of community pride

D) Launch new logo & website

WHO	Mayor + Communications Consultant
WHEN	6 months
FUNDING	General Fund, EDIT

E) Create and launch an “In the Park” signature event series

WHO	Mayor+ Parks Superintendent
WHEN	6 months
FUNDING	In-house, General Fund, EDIT, Sponsorships

F) Activate youth engagement in the City

WHO	Mayor + Parks Superintendent
WHEN	6-12 months
FUNDING	In-house



Strategic Plan

04

Pursue creative economic development strategies

A) Develop a creative financing toolkit (TIF, BOT, Tax Abatement, Residential TIF, etc.)

WHO	Mayor + Redevelopment Commission + Legal + Municipal Advisors
WHEN	6-9 months
FUNDING	In-house, Legal Counsel

B) Market sites for sale by leveraging commercial brokers

WHO	Mayor + Economic Development Consultant + Commercial Brokers
WHEN	36 months, ongoing
FUNDING	In-house

C) Align landuse planning with City priorities

WHO	Mayor + Planning Director + Plan Commission
WHEN	36 months
FUNDING	In-house, General Fund



Strategic Plan

04

Pursue creative economic development strategies

D) Proactively communicate with area housing developers	
WHO	Mayor + Redevelopment Commission
WHEN	Ongoing
FUNDING	In-house, IHCD

E) Support downtown redevelopment through adaptive reuse and historic preservation	
WHO	Mayor
WHEN	Ongoing
FUNDING	In-house, Creative Financing, READI, IHCD, OCRA, DNR, etc.



Strategic Plan

05

Provide high quality infrastructure

A) Improve and maintain City-owned public utility infrastructure

WHO	Mayor + Municipal Services Superintendent
WHEN	36 months, ongoing
FUNDING	In-house, USDA, SRF, DNR, and OCRA

B) Improve and maintain road infrastructure, including sidewalks, bike lanes, and pedestrian safety

WHO	Mayor + Municipal Services Superintendent + City Engineer
WHEN	Ongoing
FUNDING	In-house, General Fund, INDOT CCMG

C) Secure outside funding for roadway improvements

WHO	Mayor + Municipal Services Superintendent + City Engineer
WHEN	Ongoing, Annually
FUNDING	In-house, General Fund, INDOT CCMG



Strategic Plan

05

Provide high quality infrastructure

D) Develop and secure funding for a City-wide walking trail/street grid utilizing existing sidewalks	
WHO	Mayor + Municipal Services Superintendent
WHEN	36 months, ongoing
FUNDING	In-house, INDOT, USDOT



Strategic Plan

06

Pursue a sustainable public safety strategy

A) Continue to provide high quality public safety

WHO	Mayor + City Council + Police Chief + Fire Chief
WHEN	Ongoing
FUNDING	In-house, General Fund, Public Safety

B) Identify outside funding opportunities to invest in equipment and other needs identified

WHO	Mayor + Police Chief + Fire Chief
WHEN	18 months, Ongoing
FUNDING	In-house, COPS Grant, Others

C) Provide critical building improvements to the public safety building

WHO	Mayor + City Council + Police Chief + Fire Chief
WHEN	12 months
FUNDING	General Obligation Bond



Parting Words from the Consultant

To Mayor Schmicker,

It has been an honor to walk alongside you as you plan the improvements around the City of Tipton. The concepts and ideas facilitated throughout the process were revealed through tapping into a source of inspiration, the one that lights you up and gets you excited to lead a community you so deeply love.

During the strategic planning process, your vision for the City came into focus, and it is an exciting one. One that will reverberate across generations and activate the great community you are privileged to lead. My hope for you is that this plan becomes a living, breathing, purposeful tool in your toolkit to taking Tipton to new heights. The difference between a plan that sits on the shelf and transformational projects is YOU. May you remember to tap into the very reason you acted on the call to serve your community.

Through building a leadership team and pursuing achievable, actionable strategies, Tipton is going to be served in the highest way by people who love it as much as you do. And, even on days where it is hard to see the forest through the trees, you are and will continue to be surrounded by people who are excited to pour into Tipton because it is an inherent desire of the people of Tipton that you eloquently identified during the process.

I am excited to watch the flame being ignited across all corners of Tipton and for you to fan that flame. Hold yourself accountable and others, and there is no limit to what you can accomplish.

To the future of Tipton, *Rooted in Opportunities.*

Keeley Stingel, MPA
Driving Change





Tipton



DRIVING
CHANGE

PROVEN RESULTS

