

Comprehensive Gap Analysis

Protecting Rural Lifestyle and Small-Town Character

Village of Indiantown 2050 Comprehensive Plan Update

May 2026

Purpose of This Analysis

This document provides a comprehensive gap analysis of the draft 2050 Comprehensive Plan from the perspective of protecting and maintaining Indiantown’s rural lifestyle and small-town character. It evaluates every major element of the plan against the goal of preserving the qualities that define rural Indiantown: low-density living, open landscapes, quiet roads, dark skies, agricultural/rural edges, and a strong sense of community.

The analysis compares the 2019 Comprehensive Plan with the draft 2050 plan, identifies where protections have been strengthened or weakened, and highlights remaining gaps that should be addressed before adoption.

Key Components of Rural Lifestyle in Indiantown

For the purposes of this analysis, “rural lifestyle and character” includes the following core attributes:

- **Low-density residential living** with space between homes and a sense of privacy
- **Open landscapes, viewsheds, and natural/rural edges** that define the visual character
- **Quiet roads** with rural design (narrower widths, minimal lighting, limited curbs/sidewalks in rural zones)
- **Dark night skies** with minimal light pollution
- **Protection from incompatible development** at the rural edges
- **Support for limited agricultural/hobby farm uses** and rural lifestyle activities
- **Strong sense of community and small-town feel** balanced with privacy and space

Full Gap Analysis by Comprehensive Plan Element

Color Key: Red = Significant Gap | Orange = Moderate Gap | Green = Minor/No Gap

Element	Key Rural Lifestyle Aspects	2019 Plan	Draft 2050	Gap Analysis & Recommendations
Future Land Use	Density limits, rural categories, anti-sprawl, viewsheds, buffering	Moderate	Moderate	Gap: Weak design standards, limited viewshed protection, no rural buffering policy. New annexation language increases risk. <i>Rec: Add rural design standards policy + annexation criteria for rural/ag land (see separate papers).</i>
Housing	Housing diversity, affordability, protection of existing rural neighborhoods	Moderate	Moderate+	Gap: Improved data but limited policy on protecting existing rural housing patterns from incompatible infill. <i>Rec: Add policy requiring compatibility review for new housing near rural areas.</i>
Infrastructure & Water Resources	Water/sewer extension, septic, drainage, utility impacts on rural areas	Weak	Moderate	Gap: Better capacity data, but no explicit policy linking utility extension to rural character protection. <i>Rec: Add policy requiring rural/ag impact assessment for utility extensions (see Ag paper).</i>
Conservation	Wetlands, habitat, natural areas, environmental buffers at rural edges	Moderate	Strong	Gap: Stronger data and species protection, but limited explicit connection to rural character/viewsheds. <i>Rec: Add policy tying conservation to preservation of rural landscape character.</i>
Recreation & Open Space	Parks, trails, open space preservation, access to nature	Moderate	Moderate	Gap: Focus on facilities, but weak policy on preserving large blocks of open/rural land as part of character. <i>Rec: Add policy prioritizing conservation of rural open space and viewsheds over active recreation in rural zones.</i>
Transportation & Mobility	Road design, traffic, rural road character, multimodal in rural context	Weak	Weak-Moderate	Gap: Strong multimodal push, but no distinction between urban and rural road design standards. Risks urbanizing rural roads. <i>Rec: Add policy requiring rural-</i>

				<i>appropriate road design (narrower widths, minimal lighting, rural cross-sections) in Rural Community and Small Farm Residential areas.</i>
Intergovernmental Coordination	Coordination with Martin County on rural/ag land, annexation, services	Weak	Moderate	Gap: Improved coordination language, but no specific focus on protecting surrounding agricultural/rural land. <i>Rec: Add dedicated policy on farmland preservation coordination with Martin County (see Ag paper).</i>
Capital Improvements	CIP priorities, rural infrastructure investment, impact on character	Weak	Moderate	Gap: Improved organization, but no explicit policy guiding capital investments to protect rural character. <i>Rec: Add criterion that CIP projects in rural areas must demonstrate compatibility with rural lifestyle.</i>
Economic Development (NEW)	Job growth, commercial development, impact on rural edges and lifestyle	N/A	Weak	Gap: New element actively promotes growth without balancing language for rural character or surrounding ag land. <i>Rec: Add strong policy requiring economic development to respect rural character and avoid impacts on adjacent farmland (see Ag paper).</i>
Property Rights (NEW)	Protection of private property rights in decision-making	N/A	Strong	Gap: None. This element actually supports rural lifestyle by requiring consideration of property rights. <i>Rec: None needed. Retain as written.</i>
Introduction / Vision	Overall mission, small-town feel, rural heritage language	Moderate	Moderate	Gap: “Small-town feel” language exists but is not strongly tied to rural lifestyle or protected as a core value. <i>Rec: Strengthen mission statement with explicit commitment to protecting rural heritage and lifestyle (see Rural Character paper).</i>

Cross-Cutting Areas Not Well Addressed in Any Element

These important aspects of rural lifestyle are not adequately addressed in any single element and require dedicated policy attention:

Cross-Cutting Area	Why It Matters for Rural Lifestyle	Recommended Policy Addition
Design Standards & Rural Aesthetics	Building scale, materials, colors, rooflines, and overall visual character define rural feel more than density alone.	Add policy in Future Land Use requiring rural-compatible design standards (scale, materials, colors, massing) for development in Rural Community and Small Farm Residential areas. Direct LDR update.
Dark Skies / Outdoor Lighting	Dark night skies are a defining feature of rural areas. Light pollution from development destroys rural ambiance.	Add dedicated policy requiring dark skies compliant lighting (full cutoff fixtures, color temperature limits, curfews) in rural-designated areas. Reference International Dark-Sky Association standards.
Rural Road Design Standards	Wide roads, curbs, sidewalks, and streetlights urbanize rural areas and change their fundamental character.	Add policy in Transportation Element requiring rural road cross-sections (narrower lanes, open ditches, minimal lighting, no curbs/sidewalks unless safety-critical) in Rural Community and Small Farm Residential areas.
Viewshed & Scenic Resource Protection	Open views of fields, trees, and rural landscapes are central to the rural experience.	Add policy requiring viewshed analysis for development on ridgelines or open rural land and allowing the Village to require building placement, height limits, or landscaping to protect scenic views.
Buffering & Transitions at Rural Edges	Without strong buffers, commercial, industrial, or higher-density development visually and functionally intrudes on rural areas.	Add policy requiring enhanced buffering (width, opacity, native vegetation) when non-rural uses are proposed adjacent to Rural Community or Small Farm Residential areas.
Clustering / Conservation Subdivision Design	Clustering allows development while preserving large blocks of open/rural land — a key tool for maintaining rural character.	Add policy in Future Land Use encouraging or requiring conservation subdivision design (clustering) in Rural Community and Small Farm Residential areas, with density bonuses for preserving 50%+ open space.
Historic & Cultural Rural Resources	Old farmsteads, barns, rural structures, and cultural	Add policy requiring identification and consideration of historic rural resources in development review and allowing incentives for

landscapes contribute to rural identity.	preservation/adaptive reuse.
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Overall Assessment

Strengths of the Draft 2050 Plan for Rural Lifestyle: The draft plan carries forward most of the protective low-density categories from 2019, adds useful data, includes a new Property Rights Element, and has stronger environmental analysis. Infrastructure capacity limits may indirectly slow growth that could threaten rural character.

Weaknesses: The draft plan introduces new growth-oriented elements (Economic Development, proactive annexation language) without adequate balancing protections for rural lifestyle. It lacks policies on design aesthetics, dark skies, rural road standards, viewsheds, and buffering — all of which are critical to how rural character is actually experienced day-to-day. The plan is stronger on data and analysis than on qualitative character protection.

Net Effect: Without additional policy additions, the draft 2050 plan is likely to result in gradual erosion of rural lifestyle and character over the next 10–20 years, even if core density categories remain in place. The biggest risks come from design/appearance changes, lighting, road design, and pressure on the rural edges from economic development and annexation.

Priority Recommendations for Adoption

Based on this gap analysis, the following actions are recommended in priority order:

- **High Priority:** Adopt the five policy recommendations from the Agricultural Land Preservation / Anti-Annexation paper (especially annexation criteria and Economic Development balancing language).
- **High Priority:** Add dedicated policies for Design Standards & Rural Aesthetics and Dark Skies / Outdoor Lighting (these have the most immediate visual and experiential impact).
- **High Priority:** Add policy requiring rural-appropriate road design standards in Rural Community and Small Farm Residential areas.
- **Medium Priority:** Add policies for Viewshed Protection, Enhanced Buffering at Rural Edges, and Clustering / Conservation Subdivision Design.
- **Medium Priority:** Strengthen the Introduction/Vision statement with explicit commitment to protecting rural heritage and lifestyle.

Conclusion

The draft 2050 Comprehensive Plan represents an evolution from the 2019 plan, with improved data and some new tools. However, it does not yet contain a comprehensive or robust framework for protecting Indiantown's rural lifestyle and small-town character. The new growth-oriented elements create real risks that are not adequately balanced by character protection policies.

The good news is that most of the gaps identified in this analysis can be addressed through targeted policy additions that do not require overhauling the plan's structure. The policies recommended in the companion Rural Character and Agricultural Land Preservation papers, combined with the cross-cutting recommendations in this analysis, would provide a strong, balanced framework that allows the Village to grow while protecting the rural lifestyle that defines Indiantown.

These documents are intended to support informed public comment during the May 16, 2026 Joint Workshop and the subsequent review and adoption process for the Village of Indiantown 2050 Comprehensive Plan.