

Recommendations on Vote Centers for Monroe County

Report of the Vote Center Study Committee

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Approved 7-0 (Conyer, Ellis) and submitted to the Monroe County Board of Elections on February 19, 2025

Executive Summary

The Vote Center Study Committee (“the Committee”) was created by the Monroe County Board of Elections (“the Election Board”) and tasked with studying and producing a vote center draft plan, how many to have and the cost and logistics of such a change. The Committee spent the year 2024 researching the question.

This report reviews the county’s current conduct of elections, feedback that the Committee received from other counties and from local voters, and other concerns. The Committee explored four options: converting all 29 super-precincts to vote centers (with some location modifications to increase voter access), converting only 22 of them, converting only 11 (one per township), or not converting to vote centers at all.

The Committee recommends: that Monroe County convert the existing 29 polling places to vote centers (with some location modifications to increase voter access). This would reduce concerns about confusing and potentially disenfranchising voters, and would also would provide the most even comparison of voters’ vote center location preferences.

The Committee also recommends: that Monroe County open three additional early vote centers at least ten days before the election; that Monroe County conduct a marketing effort regarding the changes throughout 2025 and beyond; and that Monroe County appropriate sufficient monies to purchase the additional equipment and advertising necessary to achieve the above by the time of the 2026 primary election period, with the understanding that there will also be a need to continue communicating the vote center model to voters throughout 2026, 2027, and 2028 elections.

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PREFACE: Vote Center Compliance Checklist

The statutes reproduced below, from Indiana Code Chapter 3-11-18.1, govern the adoption of vote centers.

The Monroe County Board of Elections formed the Vote Center Study Committee to develop a draft plan for administration of vote centers called for in 3-11-18.1-3(c). This report contains that plan and, if approved, would represent the county's vote center plan.

IC 3-11-18.1-4, enumerating the requirements of such a draft plan, is reproduced below with comments specifying how the plan complies.

IC § 3-11-18.1-3. Designation of County as Vote Center County; Adoption of Vote Center Order and Plan

(a) A county must comply with this section to become a vote center county.

(b) As used in this section, "board" refers to any of the following:

(1) The county election board.

(2) The board of elections and registration.

(c) The board shall hold a public hearing to present a draft plan for administration of vote centers in the county.

(d) After presentation of the draft plan under subsection (c), the board shall accept written public comments on the draft plan.

(e) At least thirty (30) days after the hearing held under subsection (c), the board shall hold a public hearing to consider the following:

(1) The draft plan.

(2) The written public comments.

(3) Any other public comment that the board may permit on the draft plan.

(f) After consideration of the draft plan and the public comments, the board may do the following:

(1) Adopt an order approving the draft plan.

(2) Amend the draft plan and adopt an order approving the amended draft plan. The board may adopt the order to approve a plan only by unanimous vote of the entire membership of the board.

(g) All members of the board must sign the order adopting the plan.

(h) The order and the adopted plan must be filed with the election division and must include a copy of:

(1) a resolution adopted by the county executive; and

(2) a resolution adopted by the county fiscal body;

approving the designation of the county as a vote center county.

IC § 3-11-18.1-4. Vote Center Plan; Requirements

Sec. 4. The plan required by section 3 of this chapter must include at least the following:

- (1) *The total number of vote centers to be established*

Resolution [INSERT] calls on the Election Board to establish 29 vote centers to be operational for the 2026 Primary Election. It is the intention of the Monroe County Board of Elections to use the majority of the polling place locations from the November 2024 General Election as vote centers going forward, with alterations to some locations to improve voter access.

- (2) *The location of each vote center*

For a list of the buildings and their physical addresses, see Figure 10 of this report. Figure 2 is a map representing the general distribution of current polling sites in Monroe County. Monroe County's vote center plan requires at least one vote center to be located on or immediately adjacent to the campus of Indiana University. Following each election, the County must publish data regarding vote center usage. If changes in vote center locations are recommended, the County must provide opportunities for public input regarding location and accessibility, before finalizing selection of locations.

- (3) *The effective date of the vote center order*

At its public meeting on [INSERT] , 2025, the Monroe County Board of

Elections adopted an order to approve the vote center plan.

- (4) *The following information according to the computerized list (as defined in IC 3-7-26.3-2) as of December 12, 2024*

*The total number of voters within the county: **93,934.***

*The number of active voters within the county: **80,748.***

*The number of inactive voters within the county: **13,186.***

- (5) *For each vote center designated under subdivision (2), the number of precinct election boards that will be appointed to administer an election at the vote center*

Any registered voter in Monroe County will be able to cast their ballot at any of the vote centers in Monroe County. Each vote center will have one appointed precinct election board. (See Section C and Figure 5 of this report).

- (6) *For each precinct election board designated under subdivision (5), the number and name of each precinct the precinct election board will administer consistent with section 13 of this chapter for an election that is not being held in each precinct of the county:*

Any registered voter in Monroe County will be able to cast their ballot at any of the vote centers in Monroe County. Each precinct board will be able to administer the election for any precinct, allowing any registered voter to cast their ballot at any vote center within Monroe County.

(7) For each vote center designated under subdivision (2), the number and title of the precinct election officers who will be appointed to serve at the vote center:

Each vote center will have at least 5 poll workers: 1 inspectors, 2 judges, and 2 clerks. The precinct election workers will be recommended by each major political party and appointed by the Election Board in accordance with Indiana statutes. If a political party fails to appoint precinct election officers, the Election Board will do so in accordance with applicable law.

(8) For each vote center designated under subdivision (2),

a) the number and type of ballot variations that will be provided at the vote center; and b) whether these ballots will be: i) delivered to the vote center before the opening of the polls; or ii) printed on demand for a voter's use.

Each ballot style created for a particular election will be available in every vote center location. A ballot will be printed on demand for a voter's use.

(9) A detailed description of any hardware, firmware, or software used:

Monroe County uses a turnkey solution that includes hardware, software and firmware for poll books, printers, scanners and assistive technologies. The vendors, Hart InterCivic and NoInk, manage the operating system and application software updates as well as the hardware upgrades. Figure 5 has the full list of the equipment used in 2024; and Figure 8 has the additional software

and hardware requirements for Vote Center implementation.

a) to create an electronic poll list for each precinct whose polls are to be located at a vote center; or

The poll book software has a direct connection to the State Voter Registration (SRV) system and automatically updates the poll books.

b) to manage data in an electronic poll book through a secure electronic connection between the county election board and the precinct election officials administering a vote center.

Not applicable.

(10) A description of the equipment and procedures to be used to ensure that information concerning a voter entered into any electronic poll book used by precinct election officers at a vote center is immediately accessible to:

a) the county election board; and

Poll book data will be updated as individuals vote. The data is automatically synced every 5 seconds and can be manually synced by poll workers in each polling place as needed. The Election Board and Election Office staff will have access to this data as well.

b) the electronic poll books used by precinct election officers at all other vote centers in the county.

Using the poll book software, the poll workers in each vote center will have access to the same, updated list.

(11) This subdivision applies to a county in which ballot cards are used at a vote center. For each vote center designated under subdivision (2), whether each ballot card printed will have the printed initials of the poll clerks captured through the electronic signature pad or tablet at the time the poll clerks log into the electronic poll book system printed on the back of the ballot card immediately before the ballot card is delivered to a voter.

Not applicable.

(12) The security and contingency plans to be implemented by the county to do all of the following:

a) Prevent a disruption of the vote center process.

The Monroe County Election Board adopted the security requirements as outlined in IC 3-11-15-46 at a meeting on October 15, 2024 meeting.

b) Ensure that the election is properly conducted if a disruption occurs.

Monroe County Election Central has a direct phone number poll workers can call on Election Day to reach voter registration employees, election board staff, equipment vendors, and attorneys on hand to answer questions and respond to disruptions.

Loss of Internet Connections: The poll book tablets are designed to operate without an internet connection. The pollbook data is stored on each poll book individually. In the event the Poll Pad loses its internet connection, it can still operate with its internally stored

data. When the connection is restored, the affected poll books will sync with the main system.

Loss of Power: Each location is accompanied by an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) unit to ensure that equipment is available and the election continues.

c) Prevent access to an electronic poll book without the coordinated action of two (2) precinct election officers who are not members of the same political party.

The poll book requires both logins and passwords from the two precinct election officers for access to the data.

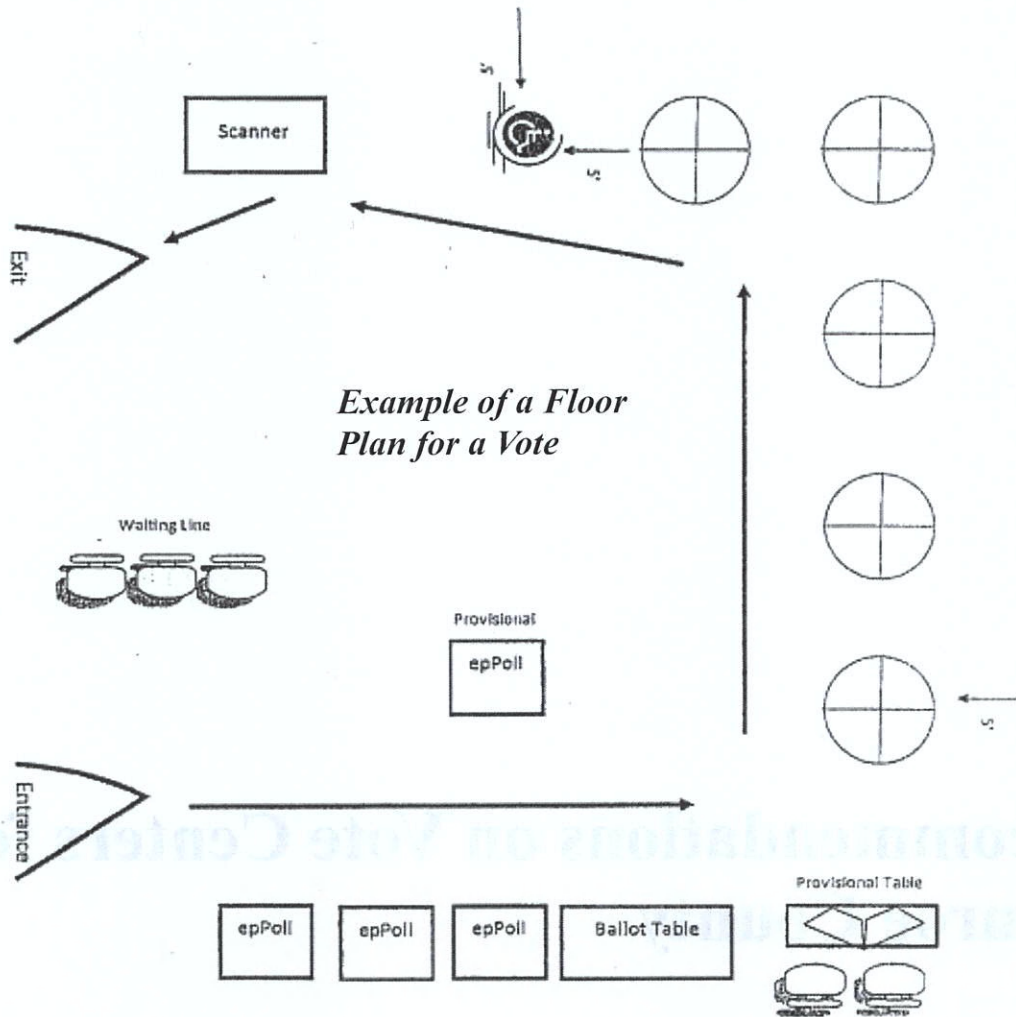
(13) A certification that the vote center complies with the accessibility requirements applicable to polling places under IC 3-11-8.

All current polling sites have been audited and comply with the accessibility requirements applicable to polling places under IC 3-11-8. Documentation is held at Election Central.

(14) A sketch depicting the planned layout of the vote center, indicating the location of: a) equipment; and b) precinct election officers; within the vote center.

An example of the planned layout of the vote center is presented in the diagram below. It includes the locations of equipment and precinct election officers.

(15) The total number and locations of satellite offices to be established under IC 3-11-10-26.3 at vote center locations designated under subdivision (2) to allow voters to cast absentee ballots in accordance



with IC 3-11. However, a plan must provide for at least one (1) vote center to be established as a satellite office under IC 3-11-10-26.3 on the two (2) Saturdays immediately preceding an election day.

Pursuant to IC 3-11-10-26.3, three satellite offices will be established as vote center locations, to allow voters to cast absentee ballots in advance of Election Day. Please see Section G, paragraph 4 of this report.

(16) The method and timing of providing voter data to persons who are entitled to receive the data under this title. Data shall be provided to all persons entitled to the data without unreasonable delay.

Election Central will continue to provide voter data to persons who are entitled to receive the data under this title. Data shall be provided to all persons entitled to the data without unreasonable delay. Data are currently provided through the Election Central webpage at <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/departments/division.php?structureid=89>

(17) In a county in which a majority of votes are cast on optical scan ballot cards, any additional procedures to provide for efficient and secure voting at each vote center, including ballot on demand printing.

Not applicable.

Recommendations on Vote Centers for Monroe County

Report of the Vote Center Study Committee

The study committee was formed to evaluate the current voting process in Monroe County and to recommend ways to improve it. The committee held several public hearings and received many suggestions from voters. After careful consideration, the committee has developed the following recommendations:

1. Establish a central vote center in each precinct where voters can go to vote during extended hours. This will allow voters to vote at a convenient time and place, and will reduce the need for multiple polling locations.

2. Provide secure and accessible voting equipment at the vote centers. This will ensure that voters can vote privately and securely, and that the process is accessible to all voters, including those with disabilities.

3. Implement a voter check-in system to streamline the voting process. This will allow voters to check in at the vote center and receive a ballot, reducing the time spent at the center.

4. Provide voter education and assistance at the vote centers. This will help voters understand the voting process and ensure that they are able to cast their ballot correctly.

5. Implement a system for securely transporting ballots to the central counting location. This will ensure the integrity of the election process and prevent any tampering with the ballots.

These recommendations are based on the committee's findings and the input of voters. We believe that implementing these changes will improve the voting process in Monroe County and increase voter participation. We encourage the Board of Supervisors to take prompt action on these recommendations.

The committee members are:

- Chair: [Name]
- Members: [Name], [Name], [Name], [Name], [Name]

Report prepared by the Vote Center Study Committee, [Date]

A. Formation and Scope of the Study Committee

Monroe County currently has precinct-based voting, in which each voter is assigned to vote in a specific location on Election Day based on where the voter lives. In comparison, vote centers allow voters to vote at any voting location across the county.

In 2011, the State of Indiana offered all counties the option to use a vote center model. As of 2024, 65 Indiana counties have adopted vote centers. Monroe County first considered moving to vote centers in 2011, but the proposal was not approved by the Election Board.

On August 3, 2023, the Election Board created a new Vote Center Study Committee for the purpose of creating a draft vote center plan for Monroe County. The Committee's membership includes representatives from both major political parties as well as independents, university students, and representatives of non-partisan community organizations working to improve voter access. The Committee first met on December 7, 2023 and met on a roughly semi-monthly schedule until the date of this report.

The Election Board also asked the Committee to make ancillary recommendations on:

- the infrastructure and technology required to enable vote centers;
- electronic poll books;
- training and procedures for poll workers;
- early voting;
- preparing voters for the change; and
- cost.

Thus charged, the Committee conducted its research, which included, but was not limited to, the following activities:

- holding open meetings for public comment in Bloomington, Ellettsville, and Unionville;
- reviewing past vote center work in Monroe County;
- reviewing reports and guidance from the Indiana Election Division;
- reviewing information on polling sites, voter turnout, and staffing in Monroe County, in consultation with the county GIS staff;
- reviewing technology needs and costs to implement vote centers, in consultation with Voter Registration Office staff, the Election Supervisor, IT service providers, and equipment manufacturers;

- collecting and analyzing information from other Indiana counties (Carroll, Dearborn, DuBois, Floyd, Greene, Hancock, Hendricks, Henry, Howard, Johnson, Knox, Madison, Marion, Montgomery, Porter, St. Joseph, Steuben, Tippecanoe, Vigo, Wayne);
- meeting with representatives of Indiana University students, voters with disabilities, communities of color, and marginalized communities; and
- receiving a presentation by Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, a non-partisan organization, regarding voter access implications of vote center models and polling place consolidation.

Former members of the Committee who participated in meetings include Emily Alford, Taylor Bryant, Evan Anish Nayee, Danny Shields, Hal Turner, and Alexandria Workman.

B. The County and Its Experience in Recent Elections

Monroe County has one city, Bloomington; two towns, Ellettsville and Stinesville; two census-designated places, Harrodsburg and Smithville-Sanders; and 39 unincorporated communities. The county is divided into 11 townships. (See Figure 1.)

Monroe County is divided into 82 voting precincts. In Indiana, precincts must have between 2,000 and 2,300 voters. Precincts can be combined into super-precincts that share a polling place. The county had 29 polling places for 82 precincts in 2024. (See Figure 2.)

The county also has conducted early voting, which has been very popular, at a single early-voting center located at 302 S. Walnut St. in downtown Bloomington. In Monroe County and beyond, early voting has increased in popularity because it allows greater flexibility for when a person can cast their ballot. Figure 3 illustrates early voter turnout in the 2024 general election. Nearly one third (32%) of registered voters and 51% of actual voters voted early in October and November 2024. Over the 22 days of early voting, an average of 1,392 people voted per day.

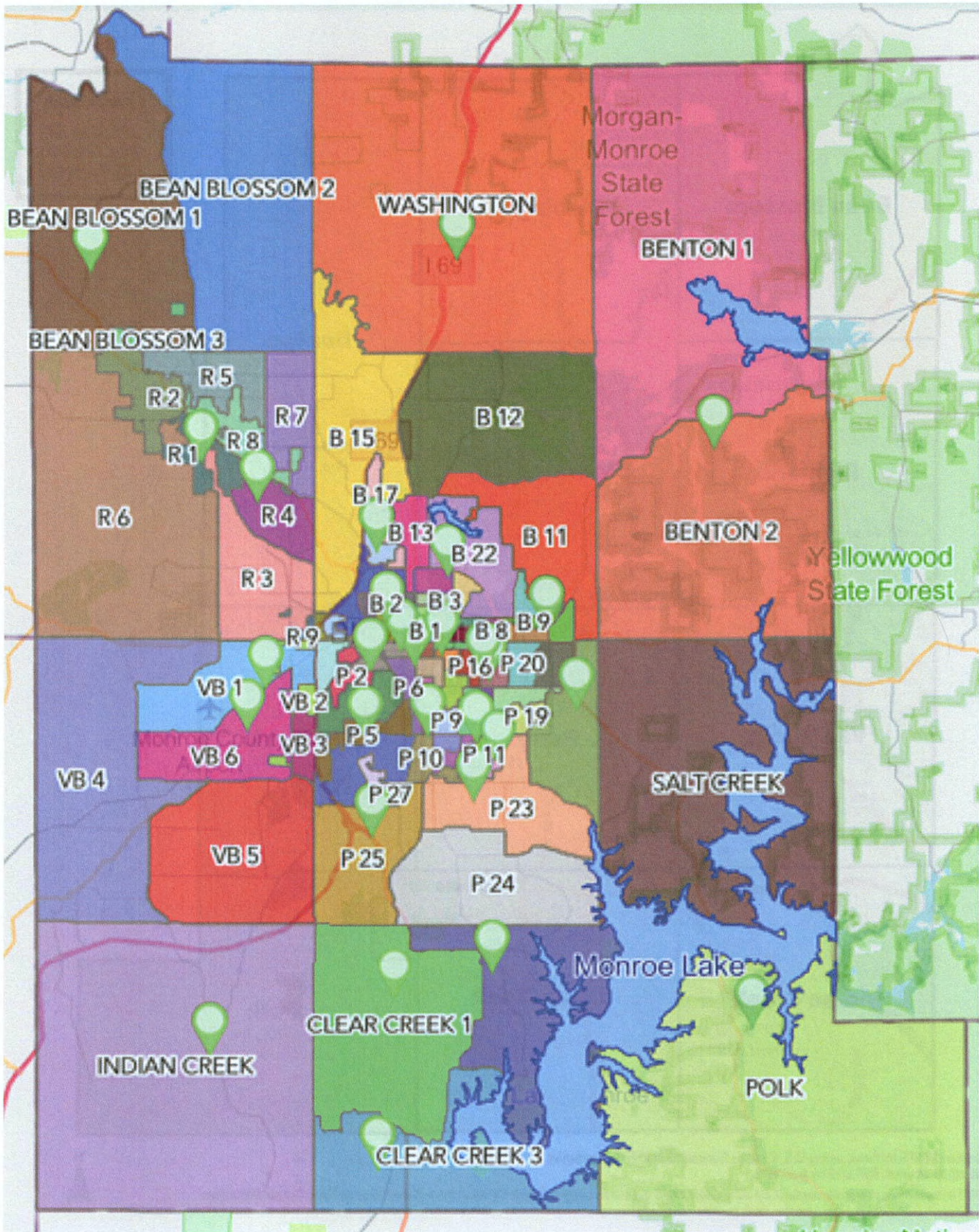
Figure 1. Monroe County township sizes and populations.



Source: STATS Indiana, using U.S. Census Bureau township boundaries, May 2021
 Basemap source: Esri and its partners
 STATS Indiana (www.stats.indiana.edu) is a public service of the Indiana Business Research Center at the Indiana University Kelley School of Business.



Figure 2. Polling places in Monroe County in 2024.



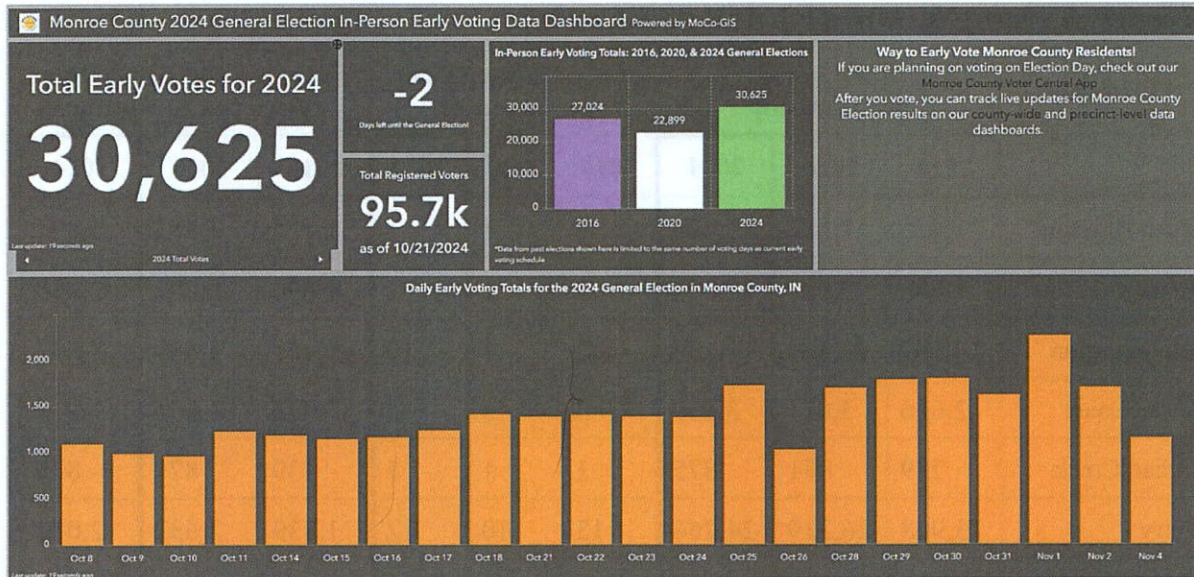


Figure 3. The County's electronic dashboard. The electronic dashboard promoting early voting data, available at <https://gis.co.monroe.in.us/portal/apps/dashboards/9becc8ed739e463684cd1b7a9a4a922>.

The Committee reviewed voting data by township and polling place in 2016, 2020, and 2024, which were Presidential election years when voter turnout is highest. (See Figure 4. Note that 2020 was a possible aberration, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and increased voting by mail.) Over each election year, there are clear disparities in the average number of voters per polling place. Specifically, Benton, Perry, Richland, and Van Buren townships have significantly more voters per polling place than the others.

C. Current Staffing and Technology in County Polling Places

Each polling place must be staffed with trained officers and personnel, who may serve in a variety of roles.

- An **election clerk** greets voters, checks each voter's ID, verifies eligibility in the electronic poll book, provides ballots to voters, and participates in counting ballots.
- An **election judge** handles problems with voter IDs, guides voters through the voting process, assists voters with disabilities, assists with provisional ballots, and aids with the counting of ballots.

Figure 4. Voting by township and polling place

Township	Total Votes per Township			Total Polling Places per Township			Average Votes per Polling Place per Township		
	2016	2020	2024	2016	2020	2024	2016	2020	2024
Bean Blossom	1,425	1,583	1,604	1	1	1	1,425	1,583	1,604
Benton	1,896	2,087	2,050	1	1	1	1,896	2,087	2,050
Bloomington	14,169	12,869	11,105	12	8	10	1,181	1,609	1,111
Clear Creek	2,626	3,011	3,039	3	3	3	875	1,004	1,013
Indian Creek	739	871	875	1	1	1	739	871	875
Perry	23,908	26,319	24,264	13	10	12	1,839	2,632	2,022
Polk	141	159	160	1	1	1	141	159	160
Richland	6,791	7,870	8,275	2	2	2	3,396	3,935	4,138
Salt Creek	953	1,037	987	1	1	1	953	1,037	987
Van Buren	5,567	6,181	5,885	2	2	2	2,784	3,091	2,943
Washington	1,125	1,241	1,240	1	1	1	1,125	1,241	1,240
Totals/Averages	59,340	63,228	59,855	38*	31*	35*	1,487	1,750	1,649

**Some polling places supported two townships. In those cases, the polling place was counted in each township's total. In both 2016 and 2020, Perry and Bloomington townships shared a polling place, as did Perry and Salt Creek, and Bloomington and Washington. In 2024, in addition to the above pairings, Bloomington and Perry shared a second polling place, and Perry shared one with Clear Creek as well.*

- An **election sheriff** requests assistance if necessary from law enforcement officers at the direction of an election officer at the polling place.
- An **election inspector** ensures that the polling place location opens and closes on time, checks and verifies all vote regulations are followed, and oversees the counting of ballots.

Each polling place requires technology, including tablets to function as electronic poll books for voter verification, printers for ballots created by voters with disabilities, and scanners to tally the votes. (See Figure 5.) All polling places used in the 2024 elections had adequate accessibility and parking from the perspective of the Clerk's office. In addition, county staff and the technology provider had experience working with the organizations that provided these polling locations.

Figure 5. Staff and equipment by polling place on Election Day 2024

LEGEND: J = JUDGES C = CLERKS SH = SHERIFFS I = INSPECTORS PB = POLL BOOKS
 PR = PRINTERS SC = SCANNERS TW = TOUCHWRITERS HP = HANDICAP PADS

	<i>Polling Place</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>J</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>SH</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>PB</i>	<i>PR</i>	<i>SC</i>	<i>TW</i>	<i>HP</i>
1	The Academy	school	568	4	6	2	1	4	1	1	1	2
2	Binford Elementary	school	594	4	8	1	1	4	1	1	1	2
3	BHS North	school	494	2	8	1	1	6	1	2	1	2
4	BHS South	school	1,100	4	12	2	1	4	1	2	1	2
5	Burgoon	church	110	2	4	1	1	2	1	1	1	2
6	Christ Community	church	541	4	8	1	1	4	1	2	1	2
7	Eastview	church	1,290	4	10	2	1	5	1	2	1	2
8	Election Operations Center	other	758	4	12	2	1	6	2	2	2	0
9	Ellettsville Christian	church	1,868	4	12	2	1	6	1	2	1	2
10	Emmanuel	church	1,088	4	12	2	1	6	1	2	1	2
11	Fairview Elementary	school	397	4	8	1	1	4	1	2	1	2
12	Faith Lutheran	church	313	2	6	1	1	3	1	1	1	2
13	Family Life	church	925	2	8	1	1	4	1	2	1	2
14	Grandview Elementary	school	1,319	4	12	2	1	6	1	2	1	2
15	Harrodsburg Community Center	other	547	2	6	1	1	3	1	1	1	2
16	Highland Park Elementary	school	1,192	4	12	2	1	6	1	2	1	2
17	Indian Creek Lions Club	other	532	2	6	1	1	4	1	1	1	2
18	Indiana Memorial Union (IMU)	other	614	2	6	2	1	3	1	1	1	2
19	Jackson Creek Middle	school	980	4	8	1	1	5	1	2	1	2
20	Meadowood	other	160	2	4	2	1	2	1	1	1	2
21	Sherwood Oaks Christian	church	525	2	8	1	1	4	1	1	1	3
22	Smithville Christian	church	416	2	6	1	1	3	1	1	1	2
23	Souls Harbor	church	930	2	8	1	1	5	1	2	1	2
24	St. Johns	church	1,899	4	14	2	1	7	1	2	1	2
25	Stinesville Lions Club	other	1,001	2	8	1	1	4	1	1	1	2
26	Summit Elementary	school	1,088	2	10	2	1	5	4	2	1	3
27	Tri-North Middle	school	858	2	8	1	1	5	1	2	1	2
28	Unionville Elementary	school	917	2	8	2	1	4	1	2	1	2
29	University Elementary	school	1,004	2	8	1	1	5	1	2	1	2
	TOTALS		24,028	84	246	42	29	129	33	47	30	58

D. Feedback on Vote Centers

1. From Indiana counties using them

Interviews, email, and websites from eight other Indiana counties suggest that there was not a great impact in either voter participation or in the costs of running elections when adopting a vote center model. Most of the counties located their vote centers in the highest population areas. Some, but not all, initially had more vote centers but reduced to a smaller number. The average number of registered voters per vote center in these counties was 3,545 (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Vote Centers in other Indiana counties

COUNTY	Largest City (County Seat if not the largest)	Vote Centers	Registered Voters	Average Registered Voters per Vote Center
Cass	Logansport	6	8,764	1,461
Hancock	Greenfield	5	28,255	5,651
Jackson	Seymour (Brownstown)	6	12,887	2,148
Porter	Portage (Valparaiso)	12	73,048	6,087
St. Joseph	South Bend	42	118,242	2,815
Tippecanoe	Lafayette	15	65,252	4,350
Wayne	Richmond	8	26,760	3,345
Totals		94	333,208	3,545

2. From Monroe voters on the prospect of using them

The Committee organized listening sessions for the community, holding in-person meetings in Ellettsville and Unionville, on the IU campus, and with the Monroe County NAACP. Students from Indiana University's Political and Civic Engagement (PACE) program spoke at one of the regular meetings. Comments from the Stone Belt Board of Directors were submitted through then-member of the Committee Hal Turner.

Monroe County voters provided consistent and useful comments on the prospect of moving to a vote center model. Generally, most voters thought that cost should not drive the decision for or against vote centers, but that convenience and accessibility should be priorities. In line with these priorities:

- Some voters were concerned about distance to polling places; others thought that driving a bit farther was not really an issue.
- There was some nostalgia for being able to see neighbors at polling locations, but also an acknowledgment that it was unrealistic in the current age.
- Students who had come to Monroe County from vote center counties said they had been confused by precinct voting and some were challenged by living on campus and being assigned to vote as far away as Bloomington North High School and having to take unfamiliar non-campus buses to get there.
- Advocates for voters with disabilities appreciated the prospect of community members traveling together, for example via pre-arranged transportation, to a single voting location on Election Day.
- Students, faculty, and staff expressed they would welcome additional locations on or close to the Indiana University campus.
- There was consensus that early voting is very positive and that additional voting locations (particularly on campus) during the week before Election Day would be very useful to the community at large.

Ultimately, people thought that vote centers would be easier, less confusing, and more convenient than the current precinct voting model.

E. Other Issues Considered by the Committee

The Committee considered other issues, such as the proximity of vote centers to key population centers, key community centers, and public gathering places.

The Committee discussed such population centers with regard to students, university faculty and staff, people with disabilities, communities of color, concentrations of historically marginalized groups, proximity to public transit, access to free parking, proximity to communities with low rates of vehicle ownership, location of low-income communities, and proximity to communities who are eligible voters but not registered.

The Committee also viewed a presentation by Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, a non-partisan organization, regarding voter access and racial equity implications of vote center models and polling place consolidation.

F. Options Considered by the Committee

The committee seriously considered four options:

Option 1: Convert all 29 current polling locations into vote centers, making modifications only if necessary to improve voter access.

This has specific benefits. For one, no current polling place would be closed, thus reducing concerns about confusing and potentially disenfranchising voters. Also, voters may use vote centers differently from precinct-based polling places; this option would provide the most reliable information on voters' vote center location preferences.

Option 2: Select 22 locations to become vote centers.

22 locations was based on the average number of voters per vote center in the eight counties surveyed, dividing Monroe County's 77,673 registered voters by 3,545. This scenario would close seven of the existing polling locations; the committee would recommend retaining a minimum of one vote center per township.

Option 3: Select 11 locations to become vote centers.

Although the legal minimum would be eight (Indiana law requires one vote center per 10,000 voters), the Committee would recommend a minimum of 11 — one in each township — to provide an equitable geographic distribution.

Option 4: Do not adopt vote centers.

Several reasons were cited by Committee members for not adopting vote centers. For one, vote centers increase the cost to candidates for town or township office: rather than just needing a few signs for each polling place for that specific town or township, candidates would need to have signs at all vote centers. Another reason cited was that minority parties appear to have been significantly disadvantaged in vote center counties. Finally, there were concerns about the long-term equity of distribution of sites, as state law lacks detail on the fair distribution of vote centers.

G. Recommendations of the Committee

On the primary charge entrusted to it by the Board of Elections, the Committee finds that *vote centers have potential benefits for Monroe County voters and should be adopted*. The Committee voted in December 2024 to convert all 29 super-precincts to vote centers (more on why in Section H). With respect to the ancillary concerns of the Board of Elections, the Committee found the following:

1. Infrastructure and technology: Adequately prepared

Monroe County has had good experience with Hart InterCivic equipment, serviced by B&L Information Services. Representatives of these organizations instructed the Committee on how the county's current equipment would need to be supplemented to support ballot-on-demand printing at each vote center (as noted below in section G6). Although some current polling sites have poor Wi-Fi, B&L has been able to overcome the problem by installing temporary antennas.

2. Electronic poll books: Adequately prepared

Monroe County owns 130 electronic poll books (also known as “poll pads” or “e-poll books”) and would not need more. The technology has been used through several elections and is considered secure and reliable.

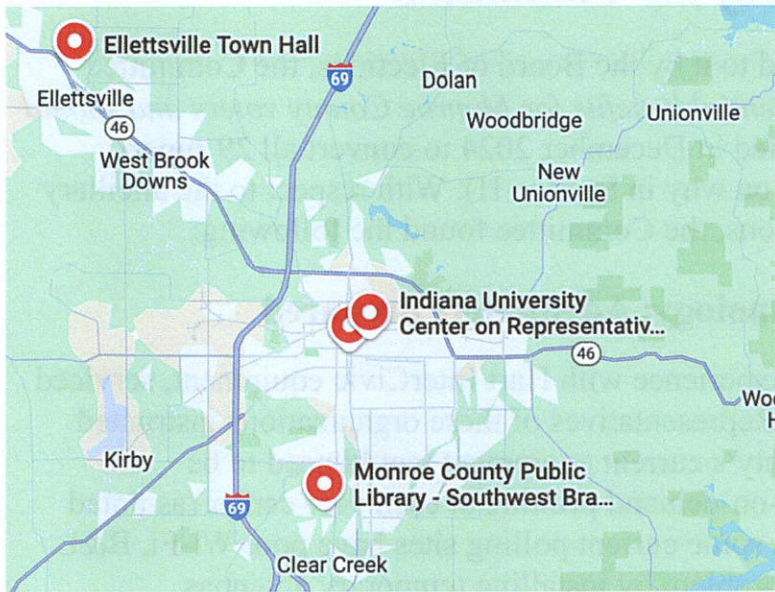
3. Training/procedures of poll workers: Adequately prepared

Monroe County's current poll-worker training and procedures for early voting would form the basis for preparing poll workers for vote centers. One key difference in process between a precinct polling place and early voting is that in a vote center, the voter would scan the ballot, rather than sealing it in an envelope. This difference can easily be accommodated by current training.

4. Early voting: Changes recommended

Other states that moved to vote centers have looked for ways to reduce the level of Election Day traffic by increasing vote-by-mail and early voting. State law determines eligibility to vote by mail. The Committee strongly advises the Election Board to increase the number of locations for early voting. Most other Indiana counties have a central location for the current state-required 28 days of early voting, supplemented by other locations for the two Saturdays and intervening week before an election. The Committee recommends three vote centers be opened at least ten days prior to an election. Possible locations include the Ellettsville Town Hall, the IU Center on Representative Government, and the Monroe County Public Library Southwest Branch. (See Figure 7.)

Figure 7. Locations of Proposed Early Vote Centers



5. Preparing voters: Changes recommended

Informing voters of the change to vote centers (and possibly early voting) is critical to its success. Traditional methods such as news releases, postcards to all residents, social media dissemination, information on the Election Central website, and collaboration with community partner organizations should all be used. With no election to be held until 2026, the county has the opportunity to plan a communication and engagement campaign that will reduce confusion, anticipating that voters will continue to need guidance on this change in 2026, 2027, and 2028 elections. Converting current polling sites into vote centers would also help voters adapt to the change.

6. Estimated fiscal impact: a 5 percent increase

Monroe County would need to acquire enough equipment to outfit 28 more polling places to function the way that Election Operations currently operates for early voting. Specifically, this would require additional label printers (for output from e-poll books) and ballot printers. Each vote center would require a label printer for each e-poll book, and at least one additional ballot printer and label print device (more for the busier vote centers).

Bob White of B&L noted that the county currently owns 29 Verity Print on-demand ballot printers, which are devoted to the TouchWriter ballot-marking

devices for voters with disabilities. In addition, White recommends additional scanners for the busiest vote centers. The estimated cost for converting all polling sites to vote centers is \$601,763. (See Figure 8.) Of that amount, \$35,873 for 5 print devices has been appropriated thanks to a HAVA grant from the Indiana Secretary of State's office.

Figure 8. Costs for additional capital equipment

Equipment	Vendor	Additional Required	Price per item	Cost
Ballot Printers/Print Devices	Hart	75	\$5,875	\$440,625
Auto-Ballot Kit	Hart	87	\$499	\$43,413
Label Printers	NoInk	125	\$525	\$65,625
Scanners	Hart	10	\$5,210	\$52,100
Total Cost				\$601,763

Although the initial outlay for capital equipment seems daunting, it should be seen in the context of the overall Elections Division budget. Election Supervisor Kylie Farris reported that the operating cost for running the 2024 primary and general elections was about \$1.27 million, compared to half that for municipal-year elections. (See Figure 9.) She estimated that a midterm federal election is roughly three-quarters of the cost of a presidential year. For the quadrennium just ended, conducting elections cost Monroe County about \$2.8 million.

Farris estimated that new equipment should serve for six to eight years before needing updating or replacement. For the equipment needed to run elections through vote centers, the annualized capital up-front cost would be \$75,000 to \$100,000 a year, which is no more than the county spent on capital equipment for voting in 2024.

The equipment needed to convert to vote centers, assuming it lasts eight years, represents about 11 percent of the current cost of Monroe County elections.

Vote centers would also eliminate the cost of pre-printing ballots, which would have saved approximately \$80,000 in 2024, and could save as much as \$370,000 over eight years. Assuming these figures stay consistent, vote centers may represent as little as a 5 percent increase in overall costs.

Figure 9. Cost of presidential (2024) and municipal (2023) elections in Monroe County

		2024 Primary + General	COB 2023 General	MCCSC '23 General	COB 2023 Primary
Precinct Board: Per Diem Inspectors		\$13,250.00	\$5,000.00	\$1,850.00	\$3,494.00
	Per Diem Judges	\$28,500.00	\$7,468.00	\$2,763.16	\$6,372.00
	Per Diem Poll Clerk/Asst. Clerks	\$68,771.23	\$8,332.00	\$3,082.84	\$8,940.00
	Per Diem Sheriffs	\$6,492.50	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
	Meals	\$18,962.50	\$3,675.00	\$1,359.75	\$2,850.00
	Rental of Polling Places	\$6,574.00	\$37,961.93	\$14,045.91	\$17,250.51
	Other Precinct Board Expenses	\$55,442.15	\$14,856.62	\$5,496.94	\$14,856.62
Ballots (Sample, Official, and Absentee)		\$83,605.90	\$28,616.72	\$10,588.18	\$2,123.32
Precinct Box Supplies		\$0.00	\$5,334.85	\$1,973.89	\$3,741.53
Advertising		\$13,269.48	\$2,978.28	\$1,101.96	\$0.00
Breakage and Loss of Equipment (Not Reimbursed)		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Postage—Absentee Ballots		\$48,050.17	\$1,350.61	\$499.72	\$893.80
Other: Training ('24), IT Support & Setup ('23)		\$21,575.36	\$117,724.00	\$43,557.88	\$106,822.39
Compensation					
	Absentee Voter Boards	\$213,403.60	\$73,748.12	\$27,286.06	\$0.00
	County Election Board	\$4,247.50	\$3,184.62	\$1,178.31	\$0.00
	County Election Board Assistants	\$113,628.44	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Hauling and Handling Equipment		\$2,456.72	\$962.10	\$355.98	\$402.40
Mechanics for Voting Systems		\$298,360.53	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$30,019.78
Voter Reg'n Office — Preparing Voter Lists		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$200.00
Supplies, Voter Lists (paper, photocopies, etc.)		\$35,657.13	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$5,786.59
Rental of Extra Office Equipment		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$235.00
Voting Equipment (e.g., privacy booths)		\$123,780.64	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Clerical Personnel		\$106,435.30	\$4,753.51	\$1,758.80	\$3,392.43
Supplies (e.g., Voter reg'n applications and transfers)		\$0.00	\$1,246.57	\$461.23	\$0.00
Equipment Repair		\$1,466.95	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,128.50
Other: Storage and Shredding		\$3,800.24	\$1,050.00	\$388.50	\$0.00
Total Cost of Elections		\$1,267,730.34		\$645,500.91	

Sources: Kylie Farris, MC Voter Registration Office (2024); CEB-35 form for Monroe County (2023)

7. Recommended Location and Community Engagement Safeguards

- a. At least one vote center must be located on or immediately adjacent to the campus of Indiana University.
- b. Vote center location criteria should always consider geographic distribution and access for people with particular needs, as outlined in Section E above.
- c. The County must publish data regarding vote center usage and provide opportunities for public input regarding vote center location and accessibility, before finalizing locations in the vote center plan and for subsequent elections.

Figure 10. Recommended vote center locations

	<i>Polling Place</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Address (Bloomington except where noted)</i>	<i>ZIP</i>
1	The Academy of Science and Entrepreneurship	school	444 S Patterson Dr	47403
2	Binford Elementary School	school	2300 E 2nd St	47401
3	Bloomington High School North	school	3901 N Kinser Pk	47404
4	Bloomington High School South	school	1965 S Walnut St	47401
5	Burgoon Baptist Church	church	8598 E Burgoon Church Rd	47401
6	Christ Community Church	church	503 S High St	47401
7	Eastview Church of the Nazarene	church	4545 E Lampkins Ridge Rd	47401
8	*Election Operations Center	other	302 S. Walnut Street	47401
9	**Ellettsville Town Hall	church	1150 W. Guy McCown Drive, Ellettsville	47429
10	Emmanuel Church	church	1503 W That Rd	47403
11	Fairview Elementary School	school	500 W 7th St	47404
12	Faith Lutheran Church	church	2200 S High St	47401
13	Family Life Church (Family Worship Center)	church	8449 N Fox Hollow Rd,	47408
14	Grandview Elementary School	school	2300 S Endwright Rd	47403
15	Harrodsburg Community Center	other	1002 W Popcorn Rd	47403
16	Highland Park Elementary School	school	900 S Park Square Dr	47403
17	Indian Creek Lions Club	other	8120 S Rockport Rd	47403
18	§Indiana Memorial Union (IMU)	other	900 E 7th St	47405
19	Jackson Creek Middle School	school	3980 S Sare Rd	47401
20	Meadowood	other	2455 N. Tamarack Trail	47408
21	Sherwood Oaks Christian Church	church	2700 E Rogers Rd	47401
22	Smithville Christian Church	church	7280 S Fairfax Rd	47401
23	†Southside Christian Church	church	500 E Empire Mill Rd	47401
24	St. John the Apostle Catholic Church	church	4607 West State Road 46	47404
25	Stinesville Lions Club	other	8060 N Stinesville Rd, Stinesville	47464
26	Summit Elementary School	school	1450 W Countryside Ln	47403
27	Tri-North Middle School	school	1000 W 15th St	47404
28	Unionville Elementary School	school	8144 E St Rd 45, Unionville	47468
29	University Elementary School	school	1111 N Russell Rd	47408

**Will be demolished for expansion of the Convention Center before the 2026 election. No substitute has been identified.*

***Replaces Ellettsville Christian Church. §Voters have complained about limited accessibility at the IMU. The Center on Representative Government at 201 N. Indiana Ave. is a location with potential that the Clerk's office is considering.*

†Replaces Souls Harbor Church.

H. Recommended Vote Center Locations

1. On Primary and General Election Days

The Committee recommends the current 29 polling locations be converted to vote centers. Some centers could be removed to get to 22 to save money, but doing so would prevent observing whether voters would prefer those locations as vote centers. (See Figure 10. All locations are in the state of Indiana, and unless otherwise specified have a Bloomington address.)

If it became evident to the Election Board that vote centers were successful, but not all 29 were needed, locations to consider for closure include:

- #3, Bloomington North could be merged with #27, Tri-North Middle School.
- #10, Emmanuel Church could be merged with #23, Southside Christian Church.
- #20, Meadowood. Its virtue as a standalone vote center was a question, but the Committee does not recommend replacing or removing it.

2. During Early Voting

The Committee recommends at least one vote center be open the state-mandated 28-day early voting period before Election Day. The Clerk's office should identify a replacement for the current early voting site at 302 S. Walnut St. (referred to as "Election Operations"). The Committee recommends additional vote centers be open Monday through Saturday for at least one week before the election. The Committee suggests the following additional locations:

1. Ellettsville Town Hall, 1150 W. Guy McCown Drive, Ellettsville, 47429
2. Monroe County Public Library—Southwest Branch, 890 W Gordon Pk, 47403
3. The Center on Representative Government, 201 N. Indiana Ave., 47408 (or some other location on or close to the Indiana University campus).

E N D R E P O R T

APPENDIX I: Enforceability of Vote Center Plans

MEMORANDUM

To: **Monroe County Vote Center Study Committee**

From: **Ami Gandhi, Conner Kozisek, Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights**

Date: Last updated December 12, 2024

Re: **Enforceability of Indiana Vote Center Plans**

QUESTIONS

(1) Can an Indiana county add additional considerations, safeguards, and requirements beyond existing state requirements when enacting a vote center plan?

(2) Is the county Election Board required to follow the vote center plan after the Election Board goes through the state's required process?

ANSWERS

(1) Yes, vote center plans can include additional considerations, safeguards, or requirements that exceed existing state law requirements. Indiana law requires that vote center plans include "at least" certain information, but a county can exceed that minimum so long as it does not conflict with federal or state law. Many counties already go beyond the minimum requirements by adding additional vote center locations than are required by law.

(2) Yes, the county election board must follow the vote center plan after completing the statutorily-required process to become a vote center county. Indiana law requires that a vote center county administer an election at a vote center in accordance with federal law, state law, and the vote center plan adopted by the county election board.

DISCUSSION OF ENFORCEABILITY OF INDIANA VOTE CENTER PLANS

To become a vote center county, an Indiana county must comply with Indiana Code § 3-11-18.1-3 ("Section 3"). Among other requirements, Section 3 mandates a county election board or board of elections and registration ("Election Board") to adopt a vote center plan to become a vote center county.

Can a vote center plan include considerations, safeguards, or requirements beyond what is required under Indiana law?

Yes, vote center plans can include considerations, safeguards, or requirements in addition to Indiana state law requirements. Section 3’s required vote center plan must include “at least” 17 specific items, such as the total number of vote centers to be established, the location of each vote center, the effective date of the order, and other information. I.C. § 3-11-18.1-4.

The statutory language of “at least” suggests that these are the minimum requirements for a vote center plan, and, as such, a plan can include additional requirements. In other words, Section 3 establishes a floor for requirements in a vote center plan, but a county can exceed those requirements.

This is supported by how other counties have implemented vote centers through a vote center plan. For example, Indiana law requires vote center counties have at least one vote center. 2024 Indiana Election Administrators Manual, citing I.C. § 3-11-18.1-6. In counties with at least 25,000 active voters, the vote center plan must provide “at least” one vote center for each 10,000 active voters and for any additional fraction of 10,000 active voters. I.C. § 3-11-18.1-6(a). Indiana vote center counties routinely include more than the minimum required number of vote centers in their vote center plans. Table 1, below, summarizes several Indiana vote center plans’ required number of vote centers based on the number of active voters in the county and the county’s proposed number of vote centers.

Table 1. Vote Center Plans and Vote Center Location Numbers for Some Counties

	Number of active voters	Minimum required number of vote centers	Plan's number of vote centers	Number added beyond minimum
2024 Marion County Vote Center Plan	544,367	55	186	131
2023 La Porte County Vote Center Plan	72,673	8	38	30
2022 Knox County Vote Center Plan	21,853	1	13	12
2020 Starke County Vote Center Plan	12,150	1	7	6
*2024 Brown County Vote Center Plan	11,695	1	5	4
2021 Tipton County Vote Center Plan	10,686	1	6	5

*draft

The 2024 Marion County Vote Center Plan is available online at <https://vote.indy.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2024G-Vote-Center-Plan.pdf>

The 2023 La Porte County Vote Center Plan is available online at <https://laporteco.in.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Vote-Center-Plan.pdf>.

The 2022 Knox County Vote Center Plan is available online at <https://knoxcounty.in.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/knox-county-vote-center.pdf>.

The 2020 Starke County Vote Center Plan is available online at <https://starke.in.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2020-018-Approval-of-Vote-Center-Plan.pdf>.

The 2024 Brown County Vote Center Plan is available online at <https://independentvotersofbrowncountyin.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/brown-county-vote-center-plan-revised-1.pdf>.

The 2021 Tipton County Vote Center Plan is available online at https://www.tiptongov.com/egov/documents/1631030938_86762.pdf.

Multiple counties exceed the minimum number of vote centers required by Indiana law. In Knox County, the vote plan exceeded the minimum requirement by 1200 percent; in Starke County by 600 percent; in Tipton County by 500 percent; in Brown County by 400 percent; in La Porte County by 375 percent; and in Marion County by over 235 percent.

Some vote center plans even explicitly state that they exceed Indiana law requirements. For example, the 2021 Tipton County vote center plan has six vote center locations for Election Day, noting that “Indiana Code 3-11-18.1-6 only requires one vote center per 10,000 active voters, but the Tipton County Election Board plans to provide more for efficiency and convenience.” See 2021 Tipton County Vote Center Plan, p.14. To address Tipton County’s interest in more “efficiency and convenience,” the County included more than the statutorily required number of vote center locations. Similarly, the 2020 Starke County vote center plan has seven vote centers open on Election Day, noting that “Indiana statute requires one Vote Center for every 10,000 active voters, but the Starke County Election Board will provide one Vote Center for roughly every 1700 voters.” See 2020 Starke County Vote Center Plan, p.7.

A county can introduce other additional considerations, safeguards, and requirements into a vote center plan, so long as they do not conflict with Section 3’s minimum requirements or other provisions of federal or state law. The state law gives county Election Boards this discretion. Additional considerations could include, for example, a county’s interest in long-term equity in the distribution of vote centers; impact of vote centers on student voters, voters with disabilities, voters of color, or other voters with barriers to access; proximity to public transit; access to free parking; proximity to communities with low

rates of vehicle ownership; location of low-income communities; proximity to communities of eligible voters who are not registered; and more.

Vote Center Plan Process

Section 3 requires the Election Board to hold a public hearing to present a draft vote center plan, to accept written public comments on the draft plan, and to hold a public hearing to consider the draft plan, written public comments, and any other public comment the board permits. I.C. § 3-11-18.1-3(c)–(e). After considering the draft plan and public comments, the Election Board may adopt an order approving the draft plan. I.C. § 3-11-18.1-3(f)–(g). The Election Board must unanimously vote to approve an order, in order to adopt a vote center plan, and all members of the Election Board must sign the order adopting the plan. I.C. § 3-11-18.1-3(f)–(g). The order and the adopted plan must be filed with the Indiana Election Division and must include a copy of (1) a resolution adopted by the county executive approving the designation of the county as a vote center county and (2) a resolution adopted by the county fiscal body approving the designation of the county as a vote center county. I.C. § 3-11-18.1-3(h).

Once a plan is adopted, it can be changed only if the Board amends it. A county may amend an adopted plan if (1) the Board unanimously votes to approve the amendment; (2) all members of the Board sign the amendment; and (3) the amendment is filed with the Election Division. I.C. § 3-11-18.1-15(b).

Is the Election Board required to follow the vote center plan after going through the required process?

Yes, the county Election Board must follow the vote center plan after going through the required process. Except as otherwise provided in Chapter 18.1 (i.e., the chapter governing Indiana vote centers), the county shall administer an election conducted at a vote center in accordance with federal law, Indiana Code Title 3 (Elections), and the vote center plan adopted with the county Election Board's order in compliance with Section 3 requirements. I.C. § 3-11-18.1-10.

As previously noted, vote center plans must be adopted and amended by unanimous vote of the entire Election Board. I.C. §§ 3-11-18.1-3(f); 3-11-18.1-15(b). An Election Board therefore must follow a vote center plan, including any additional considerations, safeguards, or requirements in the vote center plan, as long as they do not conflict with federal or state law.

