

# TOWNSHIP MERGERS

**LESSONS FROM THE 2022  
MERGER  
of FRANKLIN, UNION, NEEDHAM  
TOWNSHIP (FUN)  
In JOHNSON COUNTY**

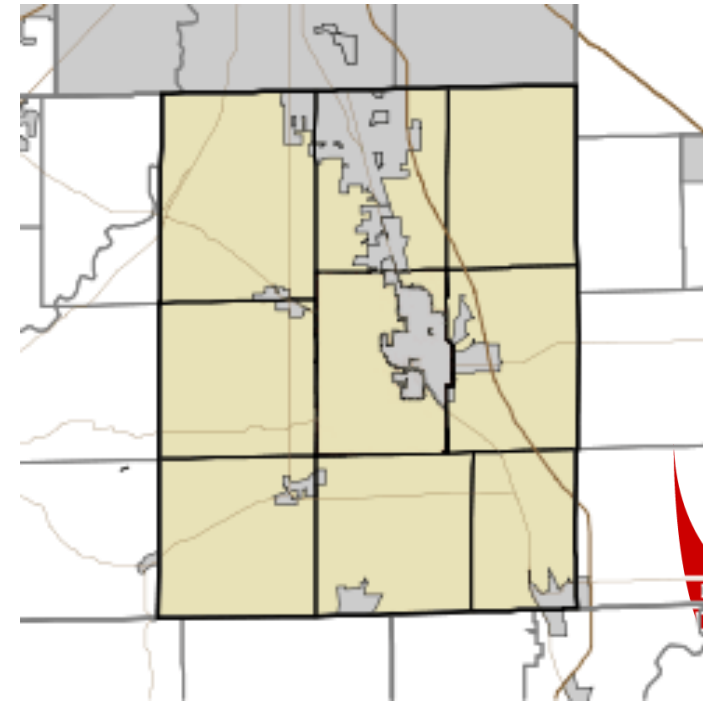
**Presented by**

**Lydia Wales  
FUN Township Trustee**



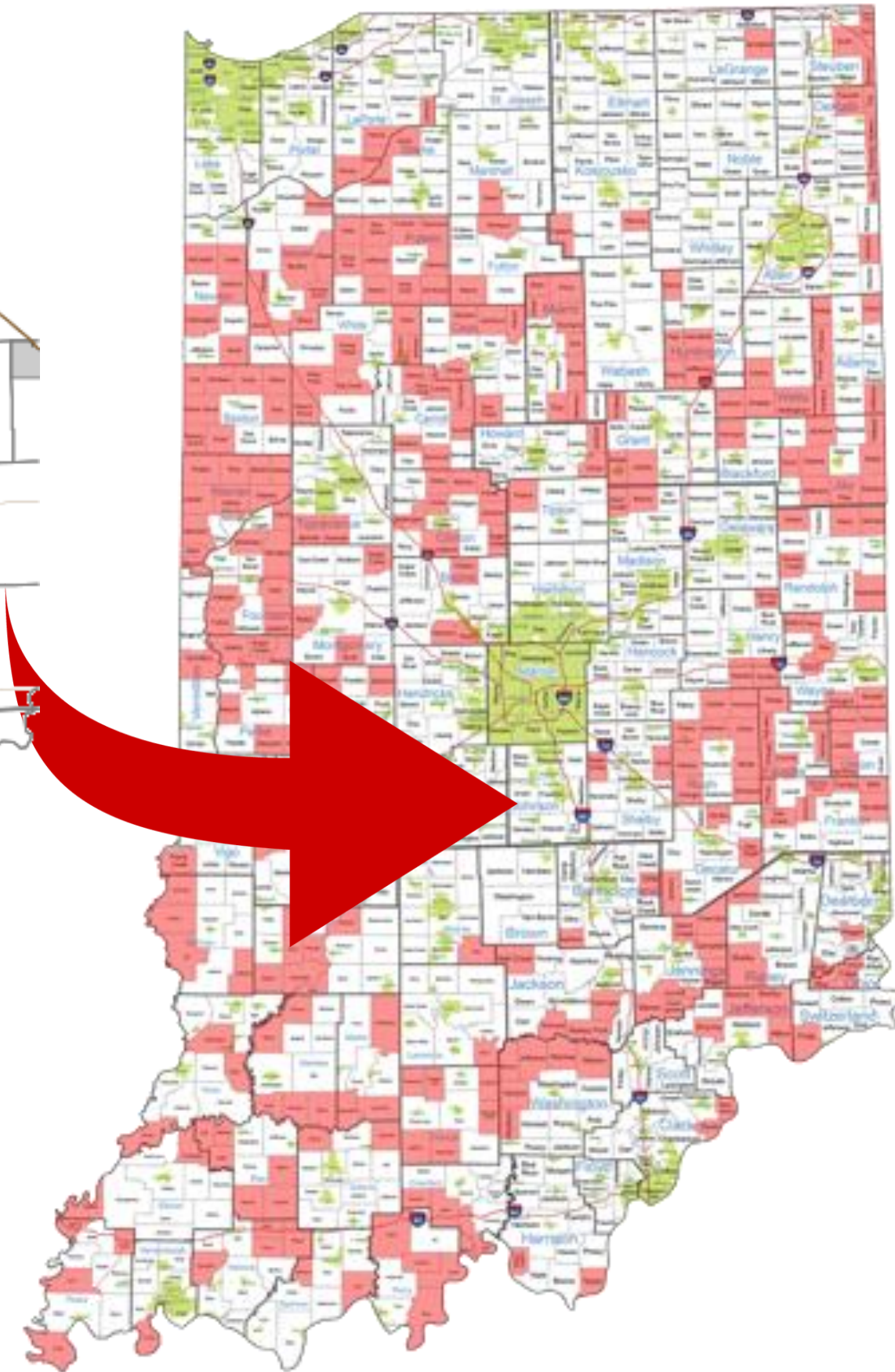
# Introduction

- Why the merger was pursued
- How it gained approval
- Lower costs & enhanced services
- Lessons for other counties



Johnson County

Franklin  
Township  
Union Township  
Needham  
Township





# Background: Three Townships, One Community

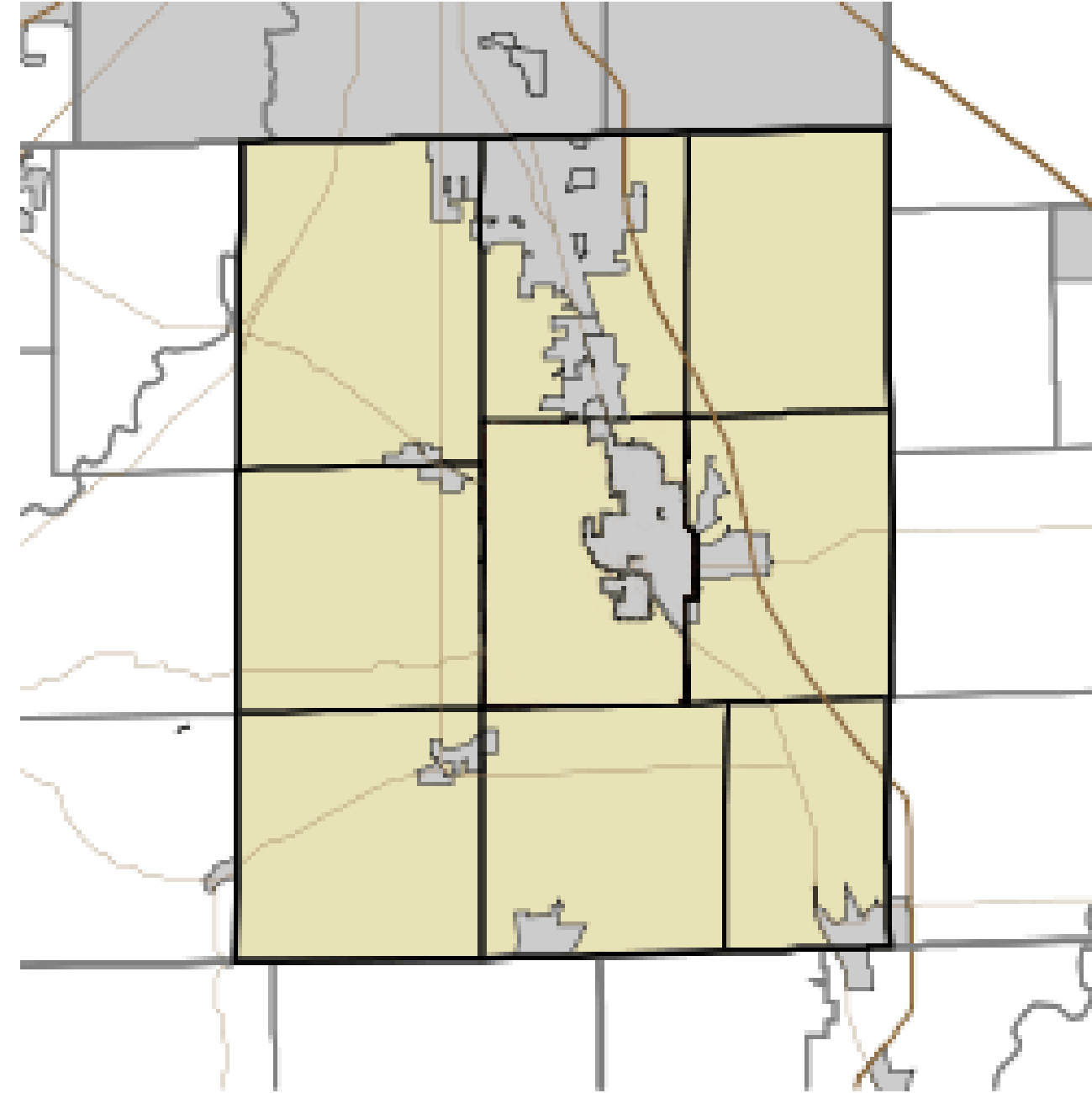
- Contiguous, interconnected communities
- Overlapping services within the same school district creating confusion
- Administrative duplication





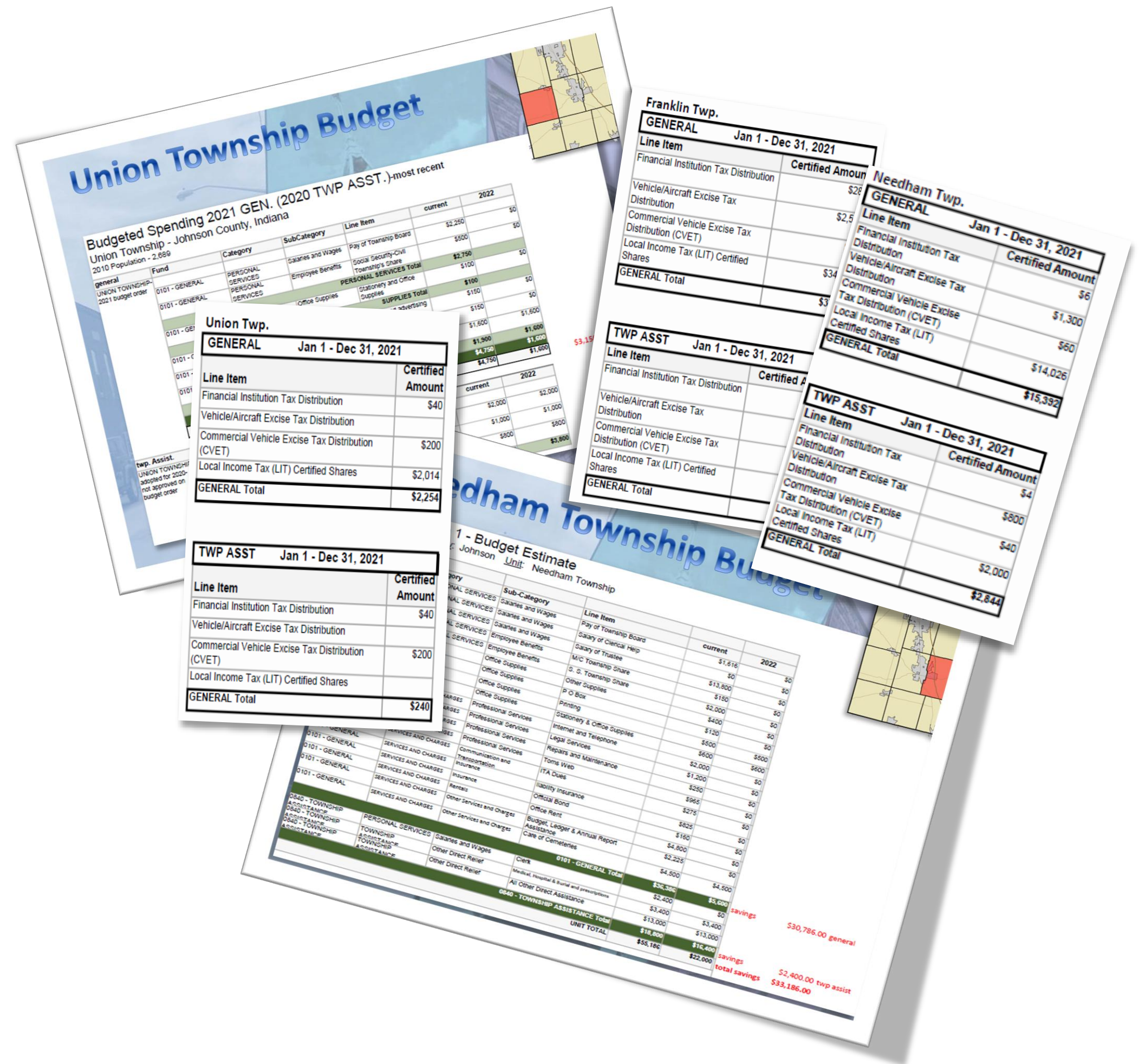
# The Idea: A Single, Unified Township

- Streamlined governance
- Unified Township Trustee Office
- More efficient tax use
- Combined assets & personnel



# Building the Case for Merger

- Financial analysis
- Public sessions & workshops
- Collaboration with boards & county
- Transparency with taxpayers



# Community Engagement Strategy

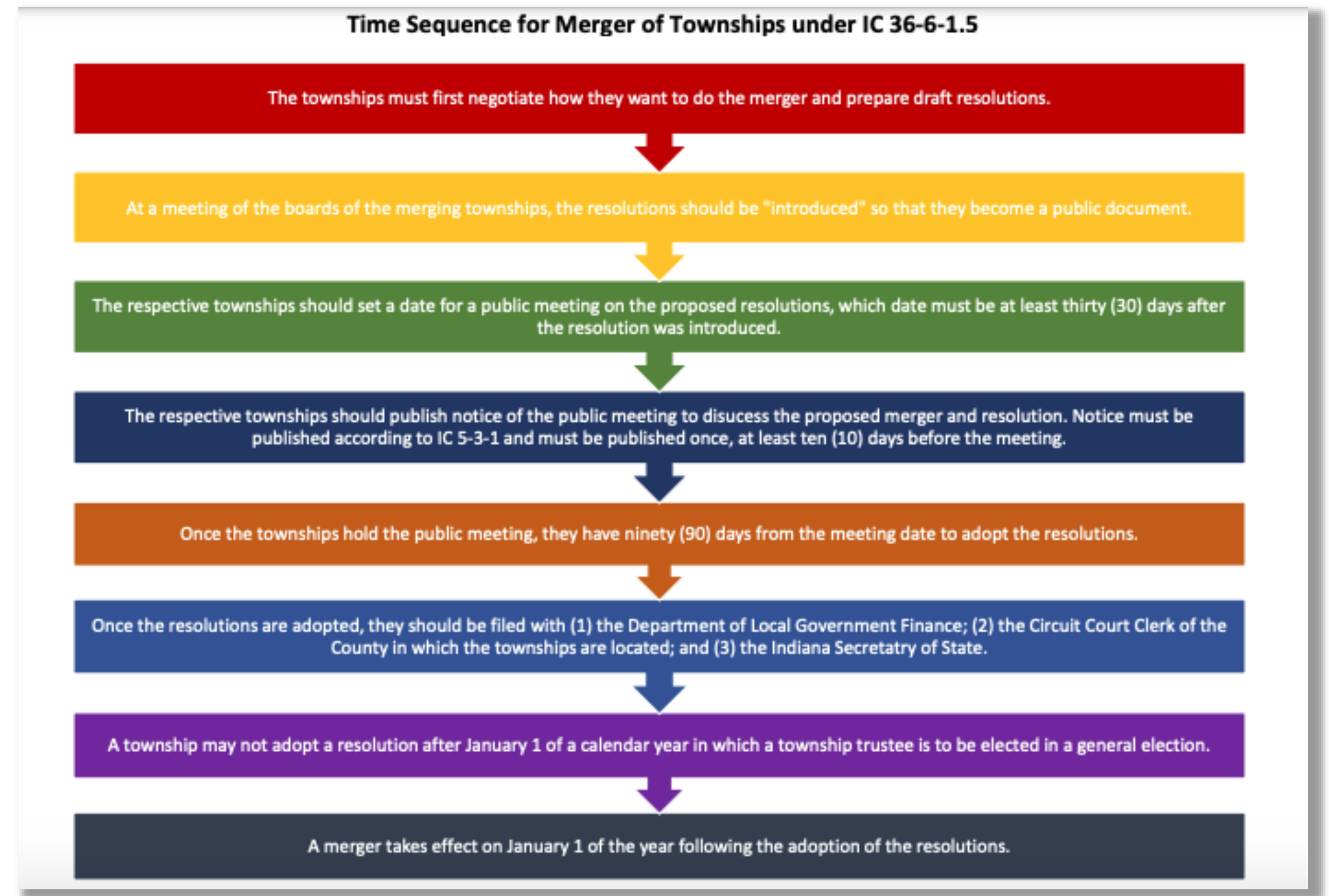
- Education on merger mechanics
- Tax Levy explanations
- Coverage maps & service examples
- Outreach across community groups





# Legal & Procedural Steps

- Joint township resolutions
- Consolidation plan submission
- Public hearings
- County approval & state verification



# Launch of FUN Township

- Unified administration
- Fire/EMS coverage remained the same
- Single assistance program
- Strategic combined budget

The functions of the abolished township are assigned to the new Township as well as all property, records, personnel, rights and liabilities of the old units.

Any bonds or debt is assumed by the new township. As with a corporate merger, the merging township must share their financials, balance sheets, debts, liabilities and any pending litigation prior to merger.

The new township will assume all of these obligations.

It is important that any leases, phone contracts and any other continuing agreements or contracts are designed to twilight by the merger effective date.


No new debt or long-term hires should be taken on by the townships prior to the merger effective date without the input of the merger partners. Additionally, the new township will need the capitol asset status of the old units.

	Franklin	Needham	Union	Total new Franklin Township Civil Levy 2022
2021 civil levy	193,347	27,664	5,409	
Assessed Value Growth Quotient	1.042	1.042	1.042	
2022 civil levy	201,468	28,826	5,636	235,930



# Financial Benefits

- Reduced overhead
- Purchasing efficiencies
- One central office
- Stable long-term tax base


**SAVINGS** 

Currently 1 Trustee per Township.  
Two Trustee positions will be dissolved.

Currently 3 Advisory Board Members per Township.  
Six board member positions will be dissolved.

Elimination of duplicate expenses.  
Rent, utilities, insurance, dues, etc.

Current Franklin Township office is owned.  
No mortgage or rent payments.



# Enhanced Services

- Faster response times & 24/7 availability
- Expanded coverage
- Consistent assistance policies
- Modernized equipment & training

## INCREASED SERVICES



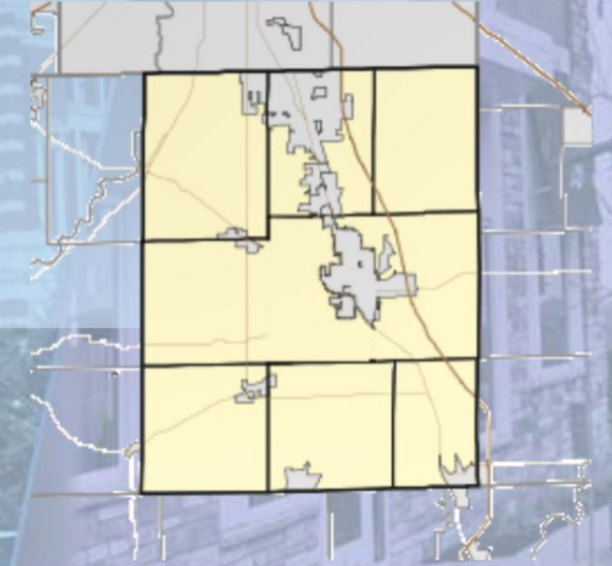
One central location office with regular hours.

A physical office address for clients to visit for assistance.

Extended office hours after merger.

24 hour Emergency number for Police to contact Trustee for assistance.

Transitional Housing area can be expanded.





# Community Impact

- Stronger emergency services
- Clear governance
- Single accountability point
- Unified reporting & transparency

## ELIMINATES CONFUSION



Currently students in the Franklin Community School district can live in three different townships.

This creates confusion for families in need, who may contact the Franklin Township Trustee, only to be referred to the Needham or Union Trustee as they may live in one of those townships instead.

Due to different budgets, assistance often differs for students and their families.

**FRANKLIN**  
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS  
*Student-Centered • Innovative*



# Lessons for Other Townships

- Clear communication
- Data-driven planning
- Unified leadership
- Local identity preserved
- Service-focused messaging

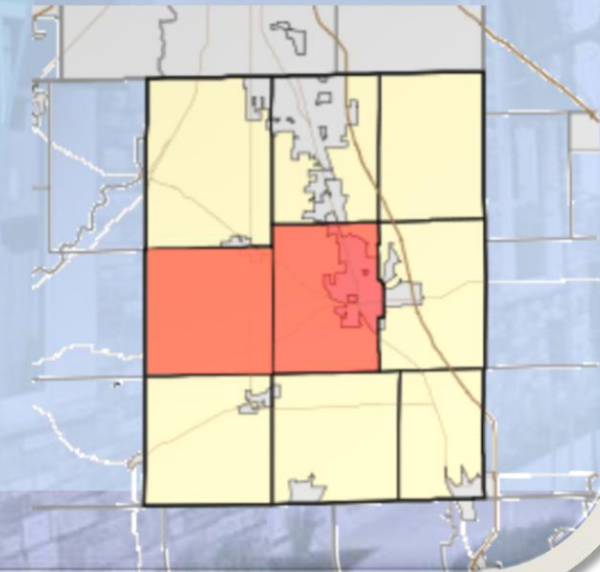
## Conclusion

We believe a merger of the three townships will provide a great benefit to the residents of all three townships. The cost savings due to the elimination of duplicate expenses, the increased services to all three townships and the streamlining of services to students of Franklin Community Schools make this merger a necessity.

The plan has been presented to the Johnson County Commissioners, Johnson County Council, Franklin City Council, Bangersville Town Council, Franklin School Board, State Representatives and local media (Daily Journal).

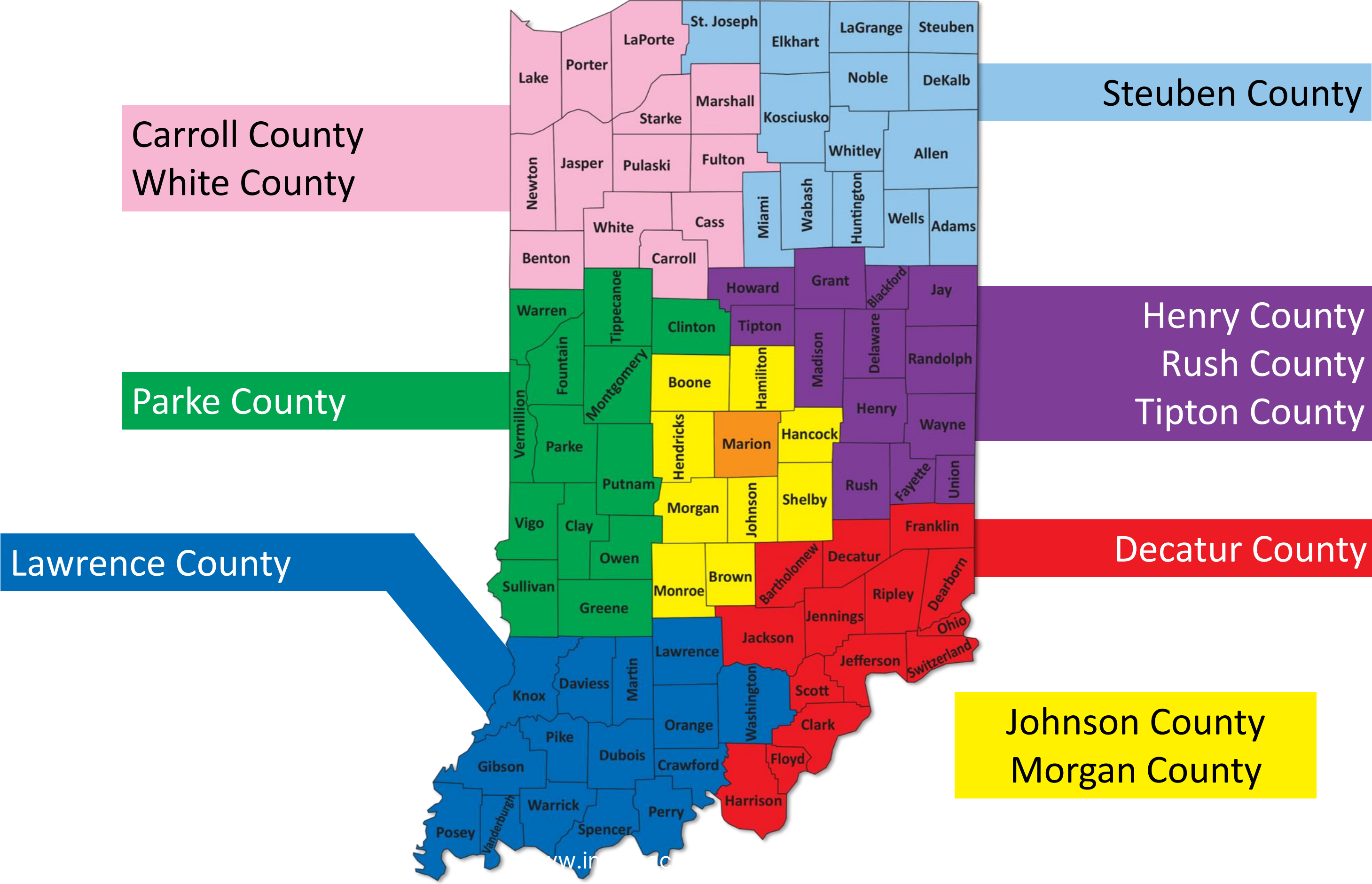
We encourage any questions from the community before the three advisory boards vote on the merger.

Union Township Trustee Annette Barr  
Franklin Township Trustee Lydia Wales  
Needham Township Trustee Rita LaGrange





# Counties Who Have Had a Merger Meeting



# Conclusion

- FUN Township is a statewide model
- Lower costs + higher service
- Government designed for today
- Thank you

THANK  
YOU!





# Monroe Fire Protection District



How  
Monroe County  
IS Consolidating  
it's Fire Services



# Dustin Dillard, Fire Chief

Entered the fire service in 2006 with the Perry - Clear Creek Fire Protection District

Graduated from Indiana University with a Bachelor of Science, major Safety Science, minor Public Management.

- Firefighter 2006-2011
- Training Officer 2011-2017
- Assistant Chief 2013 - 2014
- Fire Chief 2014 – Present

Has overseen the merger of seven townships, with additional on the brink





# History

- Late 1960's
- Series of studies over time
  - 1970 (Preliminary Analysis of Fire Fighting Services for Monroe County
    - Shaped the layout of emergency services
  - 2007 (Kernan – Shepard Report, Streamlining Local Government)
    - Consolidate emergency public safety dispatch
    - Transfer responsibility of township government for assessment, poor relief, fire protection, emergency medical services (EMS)
  - 2014 (Analysis of Cooperative Solutions to Improve Rural Fire Protection in Monroe County, Indiana.
  - 2017 (A Comprehensive Plan for Providing Community Fire Dept Services)



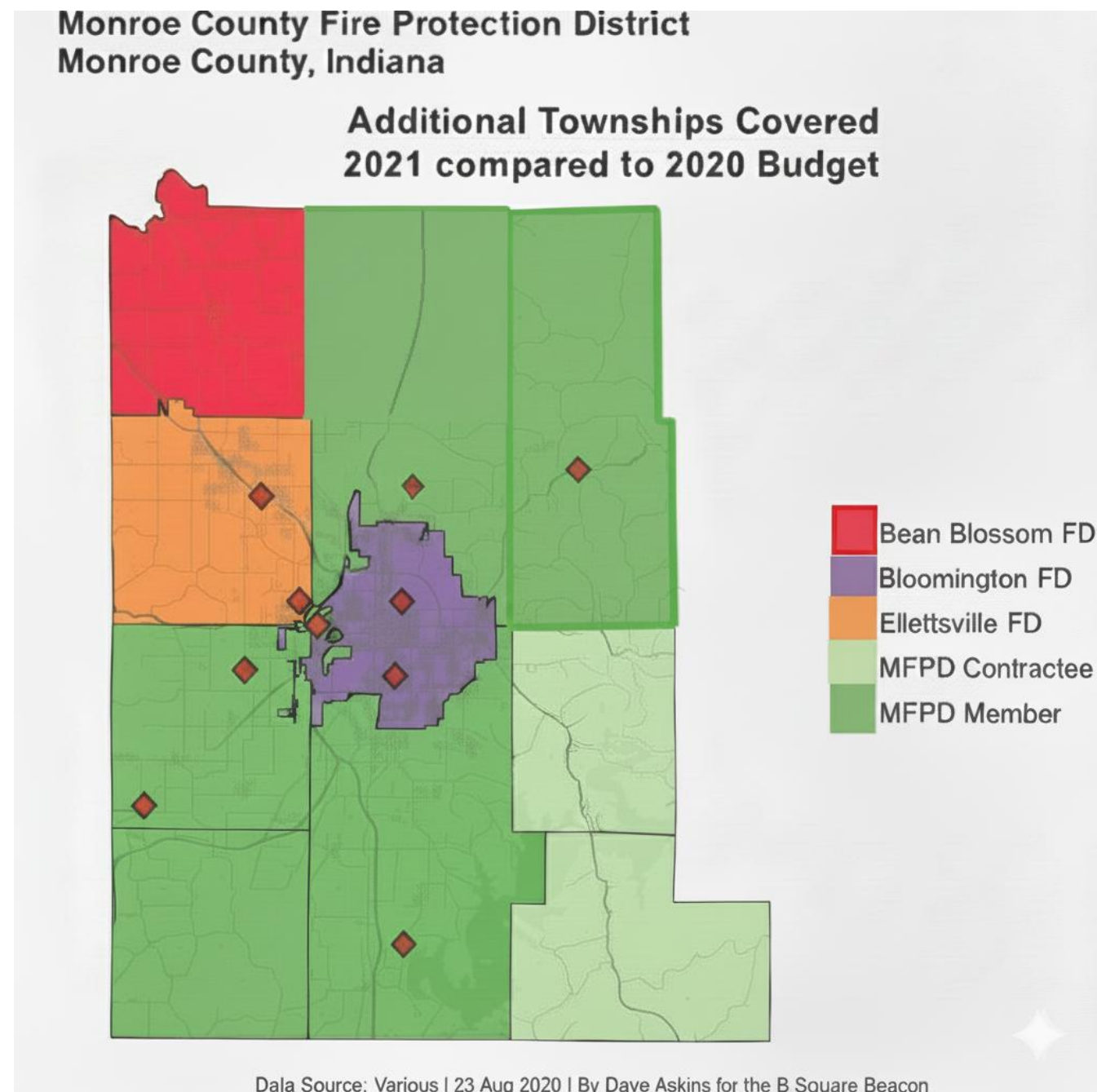
# What Has Taken Place

- 1888 – Ellettsville forms first fire department
- 1900 – Bloomington forms the first paid fire department
- Early 1970's
  - Six townships in Monroe County create volunteer or combination fire departments
- 1987 – Perry and Clear Creek townships form Perry-Clear Creek FPD
- 2016 – Northern Monroe Fire Territory Becomes operational
- 2019 – Indian Creek township joins PCCFPD, renamed MFPD
- 2019 – Salt Creek and Polk townships contract with MFPD
- 2021 – Bloomington and Van Buren townships join MFPD
- 2023 – Benton and Washington townships join MFPD





# Current Situation



In 2018, there were only (2) townships serviced by the Fire District.

There are now (9) townships, with the 10<sup>th</sup> in the process.

(8) Fire Stations vs. (7) then

(30) Firefighter/EMTs on-duty vs. (12) then

(4) Townships saw an increase in property taxes, (3) saw a reduction

# What's Next?

- Bean Blossom Township
  - Very similar to Indian Creek and Benton township services prior to merging
  - Discussions have taken place for over three years
    - Including meetings with fire and government officials
    - Development of draft budgets that have evolved into the one presented on 5/11/2024
    - Three public meetings detailing the proposed staffing and increases in fire protection (8/26-27, 2024)
      - Countered by impromptu Ellettsville Fire Department contract offer to provide the same service for free for up to three years (now two) admittedly while annexation is considered into the township
    - Remonstrance meeting held 11/7/2024
  - Trustee and township board members have been very active in fact finding and researching fire protection options and the Monroe County Commissioners have become actively involved in the topic of Fire Protection, seeking to include all citizens not covered by a municipality in the fire protection district.





# What's Next?

- Polk and Salt Creek Townships
  - Both currently contract with the Monroe Fire Protection District for fire and emergency services
  - No formal process has been initiated by landowners, however the trustee and board have been proactive in communicating with and contracting with MFPD since 2019 in an effort to improve fire protection
  - Monroe County's Commissioners are considering adding these townships when they add Bean Blossom
- Richland Township
  - Currently contracts with the Town of Ellettsville
  - No formal process has been initiated by landowners, though it has been discussed informally
  - Richland Township Trustee has previously expressed interest on three occasions, but the most recent conversations ceased after political pressure from the Town of Ellettsville
  - Ellettsville Fire Department has brought their own financial and staffing issues to light during Bean Blossom meetings.



# The Don'ts

- Don't Ignore
- Don't Wait...
- Don't "Recreate the Wheel"
- Don't fear the unknown
- Don't stop thinking about tomorrow...





# The Benefits

- **Increased PUBLIC SAFETY**

- Staffed Fire Stations
- Increased Staffing
- Reduced Response Times
- New Services

- **Increased Financial Efficiency**

- Cost Savings
  - I have heard it said; “*no consolidation has saved money*”. **FALSE**. I have seen insurance premiums reduces, bulk purchasing opportunities, vendor accounts, staff maintenance, etc.
  - Hiring personnel costs, but having a more efficient service **SAVES LIVES** and waste.

- **GRANTS and Opportunities**



# Why District are Important

- **Providing Essential Services**

- The primary purposes of an FPD, as outlined in Indiana Code, are:

- **Fire Protection:** The capability to extinguish all fires that could reasonably be expected within the district's boundaries.
    - **Fire Prevention:** Identifying and eliminating potential and actual sources of fire hazards.
    - **Emergency Medical Services (EMS):** Many modern FPDs are combination organizations that also provide emergency medical response (often as non-transport or transporting paramedic units) and technical rescue services.

- **Stable and Equitable Funding**

- FPDs form a **taxing district** and are municipal corporations with their own dedicated funding mechanism. This is a major advantage because:
  - **Shared Costs:** They allow communities, townships, and sometimes cities to consolidate their fire services into one district, ensuring that the **cost of fire protection is shared evenly** among all taxpayers within the territory.
  - **Enhanced Resources:** By pooling property taxes over a larger area, FPDs can often afford better-trained **full-time staff**, modern apparatus, better training, and more robust emergency services than smaller, individual township or volunteer departments could manage alone.





# Why District are Important

- **Consolidation and Efficiency**

- FPDs and Fire Protection **Territories** (which serve a similar purpose) are a common way to overcome the challenges faced by smaller, often volunteer-run, township fire departments, such as:
- **Addressing Declining Volunteerism:** Providing a stable structure to hire full-time or part-time career firefighters, reducing reliance solely on volunteers.
- **Eliminating Redundancy:** By combining multiple small departments, they can reduce overlapping coverage and consolidate administrative and equipment costs, which leads to better overall service and efficiency.
- **Improved Insurance Ratings (ISO):** Improved resources and staffing often lead to better Insurance Services Office (ISO) ratings, which can result in **lower property insurance premiums** for residents and businesses within the district.

- **Legal and Administrative Authority**

- As a separate unit of government, an FPD has the legal authority to:
  - **Govern its own board of trustees** who are directly responsible for the district's operations.
  - **Issue bonds** for large capital expenditures like building new stations or purchasing expensive apparatus.
  - **Provide a career pathway** for firefighters, including the ability to establish a merit system, which helps retain skilled personnel.



# Who We've Worked With

- **Good Legal Counsel...**
  - **Ferguson Law - Bloomington, Indiana**
    - David Ferguson
    - Christine Bartlett
- **Township Trustees and Boards**
- **County Commissioners**
- **County Councils**
- **Indiana Public Retirement System**
- **Department of Local Government Finance**
- **State Board of Accounts**
- **State Legislators**



**INFORMATION HERE**

**Good Legal Counsel**





# Our Contacts

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