

# The Distribution of Mobile Home Park Development in Vigo County, Indiana

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## *Abstract*

There is a need for proper low cost housing in Vigo County, Indiana. The number of mobile home parks and mobile homes are increasing rapidly, and they may help to meet this need locally. This paper locates mobile home parks and suggests observed trends in the Terre Haute area.

## **Introduction**

The need for improved housing for a large number of Americans has been recognized both nationally (4) and locally (1). The desire for improved housing at a lower cost has been emphasized by the agencies which construct low-income housing and noted by the findings published by the Bureau of Census and other publications. Mobile home parks (MHP) may be able to satisfy an increasing percentage of lower cost housing. Different aspects of mobile home housing have been considered, and each author has implied that there is a lack of information available in the field (2, 3). This paper examines the location of mobile home parks in Vigo County as they have developed over a 30-year period and suggests MHP locational trends.

## **Growth of Mobile Home Parks in Vigo County**

The number of mobile homes in Vigo County is rapidly increasing. In 1940 there were 135 trailers; in 1950 there were 155 mobile homes; in 1960 there were 448; in 1970 the expected number is 1,110 and for 1975 it is expected to be 2,135. Mobile homes in the county increased 716% from 1950 to 1970, which was relatively greater than the increase in all housing units in the same period (1, 5). Mobile homes as a percentage of total housing units increased from about 0.5% in 1950 to 2.8% in 1970. Mobile homes are expected to provide housing for 1 family in 20 by 1975.

## **Factors in MHP Location and Distribution in Vigo County**

The location of mobile home parks is dynamic. Mobile home parks have expanded from the center of Terre Haute (the county courthouse) in each census since 1950 (Fig. 1). In 1950 there were 5 parks within the city limits and 1 about 4 miles east of Terre Haute. The average distance between MHPs and the city center was 2.5 miles. The State Legislature in 1955 authorized the State Board of Health of Indiana to enforce Health Sanitary Engineering Code 21, concerning mobile homes. This regulation required no dead end streets, an automobile parking space for each mobile home; and minimum

distances between sewers, water supply, and property lines. Spacious areas were available for mobile home parks beyond the congested area, and the new parks were developed at the outskirts of the city.

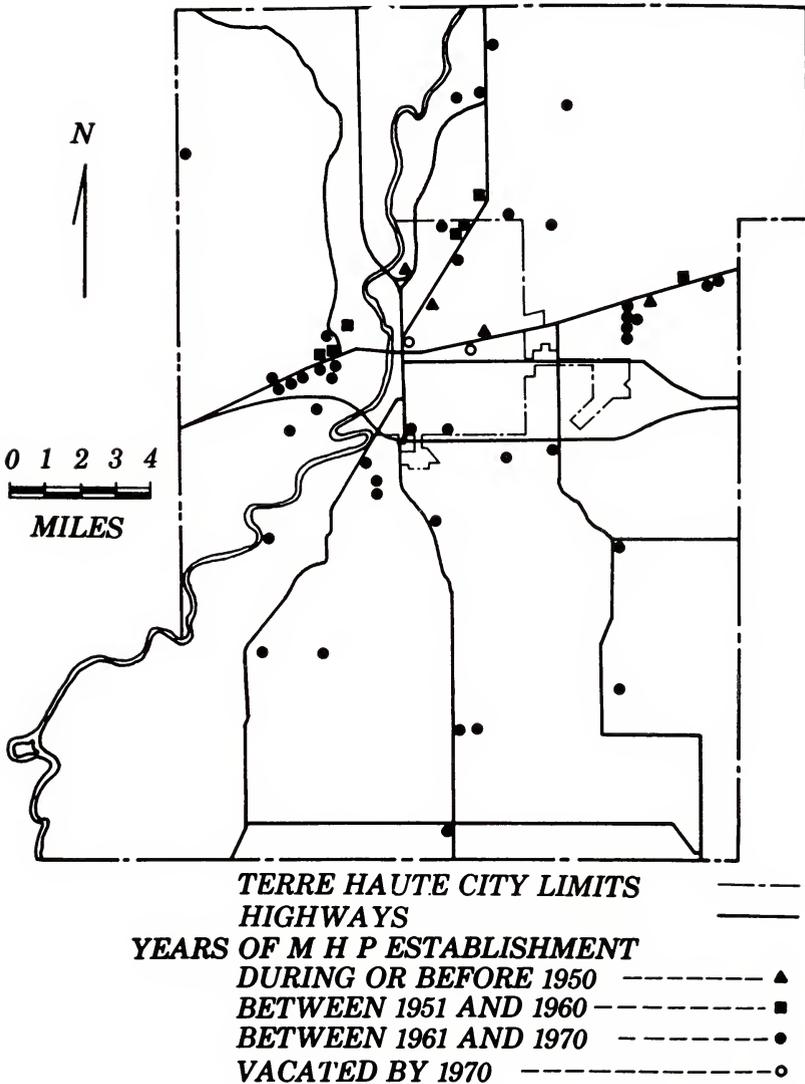


FIGURE 1. Mobile home park locations in Vigo County.

By 1960, in response to the above restrictions, the average distance between the MHPs and the city center had increased to 2.8 miles. At that date 11 of the 12 parks were located within  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of a highway, and 6 were outside the city limits. In 1967 the Terre

Haute City Council approved the zoning ordinance which prohibited additional mobile homes or parks within the city. Also, MHP developers were influenced to establish parks outside the city limits because of reduced development costs.

In 1970 the 52 MPHs had an average distance from the city center of 5 miles. Forty-five of the parks were located outside the city. Thirty-nine of the parks were located within  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of a highway, but only 6 of them were located directly on a highway. Locations farther away from the city also reflect improved transportation, zoning laws, crowding, high cost of land, lack of proper space in the built-up area, and desirability of suburban living.

These trends have been observed in Vigo County: 1) an increase in the size and number of mobile home parks; 2) an increase in the distance between the city center and the MHPs; 3) an increase in the percentage of MHPs not located on a highway. These trends have developed over the past 30 years and are expected to continue.

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