

PARTNERSHIP POTENTIAL

Regions Seek Continued Progress

By Symone C. Skrzycki

Henry Ford was onto something big when he postulated that “Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.”

Today, the Indiana Regional Cities Initiative is driving collaboration and growth as applicants try to transform their communities into extraordinary places to work, live and play.

Last fall, seven regions competed for \$84 million in state-matching funds. The intent was to recognize two, but after the Indiana

Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) deemed that three were worthy of funding, the Indiana General Assembly allocated an additional \$42 million (totaling \$126 million).

The winning regions (North Central, Northeast and Southwest Indiana) are moving forward with their plans. *BizVoice*[®] spotlights input from members of the selection review committee in the sidebar on page 64.

Hopes are high for the remaining regions (Northwest, East Central, Central and West Central) as the IEDC continues to offer guidance and each seeks alternative funding sources. Their stories – ripe with potential – continue to unfold.

“While there were three out of seven

regions actually selected, I really don’t believe that there were any losers in this process,” asserts Greg Goode, director of governmental relations at Indiana State University.

“Every one of us – every region – has moved forward in a very dramatic way in expanding the horizons of opportunity around economic development by collaboration, and that was one of the primary goals of this thing: ‘How do we increase the populations of our regions through construction-types of projects that will enhance quality of place?’”

Take a closer look at how the Regional Cities Initiative is opening new doors of opportunity.

West Central: Wabash River Region

Proposal: Included projects such as redevelopment of physical assets

Counties: Knox, Sullivan and Vigo

Location, location, location. The three counties that comprise the Wabash River Region formed for two primary reasons: shared proximity to Illinois as well as the Wabash River. They have a combined population of nearly 170,000.

“It was a recommendation that the regions hit a certain threshold (200,000),” Goode recalls. “We knew we weren’t going to be able to turn that around in the given time, but it was very much a victory for us to pull together the way we did – and even more importantly to establish and get a regional development authority moving.”

Projects in the plan focused on (among others) two dominant themes: leveraging the Wabash River as a natural resource and the region’s robust higher education institutions.

Located along the northern banks of the



The ICON project will transform a former industrial facility along the Wabash River into residential space. Greg Goode, director of governmental relations at Indiana State University, praises the Regional Cities process for boosting the initiative’s profile.

Wabash River in Terre Haute, the three-story former ICON building sits on the site of a former industrial facility. Stretching approximately 180,000 square feet, it would accommodate emerging entrepreneurs. The first floor would feature collaborative working space, while the top two floors would offer 125 market-rate rental apartments.

“People are actually going to be able to live right along the Wabash River, which we think is going to be appealing not only to residents in Indiana, but our hope (overall with the Regional Cities proposal) is to attract people from the state just west of us,” Goode emphasizes.

Another riverfront project involves the revitalization of Kimmell Park, an 18-acre camping and park area. Highlights of the plan include establishing a new walking path along the river to connect Kimmell Park to the Vincennes University campus and downtown Vincennes. Additional amenities range from new playground equipment and a state-of-the-art amphitheater to utility upgrades and landscaping.

“The Vincennes University campus has continued to evolve in such a magnificent way – much like so many of our university campuses,” Goode declares. “Being able to grow closer to the river just helps connect the dots of opportunity in that part of our region.”



Approximately 60,000 residents live along the Red Line route. Nearly one-fourth of all Marion County jobs are located there. If all goes as planned, service will open to the public in late 2018. A view of the proposed path along College Avenue in Broad Ripple.



Central Indiana: Indy’s Metro Momentum Agenda

Proposal: Red Line Bus Corridor; 16 Tech; and regional trails and bikeway development

Counties: Marion, Boone, Hamilton, Hancock, Hendricks, Johnson, Madison, Morgan and Shelby

Efforts will continue on the Red Line Bus Corridor, which would be Indiana’s first rapid transit project and the country’s first 100% battery-powered electric rapid line.

The Red Line could ultimately traverse 35 miles from Westfield and Carmel through Indianapolis to Greenwood. It’s described in the Regional Cities proposal as “the cornerstone of a regional transit system (Indy Connect) that is projected to generate nearly \$4 billion in economic impact over the next 20 years.”

Information from IndyGo notes that, “The Red Line is part of a larger planned system, which would be funded by a 0.25% income tax, authorized by a referendum in November 2016 (only in Marion County this year). The first phase of the BRT project – which would run from Broad Ripple south to the University of Indianapolis – is not dependent on the referendum.”

The project has received federal funding, including \$75 million from the Federal Transit Administration.

Also gaining momentum is the 16 Tech innovation district, a 60-acre community near the northwest area of downtown that will contain research, businesses, retail space and housing opportunities. It will be anchored by the Indiana Biosciences Research Institute, which will open there as early as 2018.

State and local government funding for 16 Tech has been complemented by awards from Lilly Endowment, Inc. and the Eli Lilly and Co. Foundation (announced in February) among other sources.

In addition, the Regional Trails Plan would “accelerate progress on roughly 85 miles in additional trails, pathways and bike lanes prioritized by 2025.”

East Central: ADVANCE ECI

Proposal: 14 projects revolving around three themes: Build a new economy in the region, create destination communities and unleash the potential of real estate to support growth and redevelopment

Counties: Blackford, Delaware, Henry, Jay, Madison and Randolph

They say home is where the heart is. It’s certainly at the heart of East Central Indiana’s vision for attracting residents and talented workers to its communities.

“Addressing the real estate market is a big component of what we want to do here,” explains Terry Murphy. Affable and a bit nostalgic, he was preparing to retire as vice president of economic development at the Muncie-Delaware County Economic Development Alliance just

a few days after we spoke in July.

Observing that many individuals working in the region live elsewhere and commute, he reveals, “In Delaware County’s case, we have 10,000 people that live outside the county and come to work here, so we need to provide more housing for professionals and millennials, health care professionals and the university people because

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Falling Into 'Place'

Review Committee Members Offer Insights

By **Symone C. Skrzycki**

"Economic development is a team sport."

It's not only a sentiment expressed by Indiana Humanities president and CEO Keira Amstutz, but the powerful philosophy behind the Regional Cities Initiative.

Amstutz characterizes herself and others who served on the Strategic Review Committee, formed by the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC), as "listeners" and "connectors."

They reviewed proposals, listened to presentations and shared input during question and answer sessions.

"What the projects and proposals

centered on was how to improve quality of place to create talent magnets and improve the economy," Amstutz remarks. "Part of what I found exciting about the process is that it not only included traditional economic development voices, but also folks like me who represent the cultural sector."

Mark Maassel, president of the Indiana Energy Association and another member of the committee, seconds that.

"For any single city – or frankly in many cases, even single counties – (economic development) is not going to be as effective as it could be if you worked on a broader basis. That's absolutely one of the keys to this."

The other, he emphasizes, revolves around quality of place.

"To me, it's as simple as connecting things and people."

In reviewing the proposals, he and others

considered whether "those things were present – not just in the planning, but in a sustainable fashion. Had organizational structures been built that would allow for the conversations to continue, for combined decision-making?"

Equally important to Kathy Davis – systems advisor to Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett and Indiana's first female lieutenant governor (appointed in 2003) – was "readiness."

"I'm a former budget director," she relates, "so I want to invest in efforts that are ready to go and not only are going to provide a strong return, but provide it as soon as possible because the ability to start an improvement now changes the slope of the trendline and gets us a better result."

"And then – these are all interconnected – (we sought) a demonstration that there were the private and local resources that were going to come along besides the state's investment to



The East Bank Village, located in downtown South Bend east of the St. Joseph River, encompasses two historic housing districts. It's within biking distance of South Bend's Innovation District and the University of Notre Dame.



The Decatur Downtown Facade Improvement Program was designed to complement other enhancements, such as streetscaping, parking and a sculpture tour.



Renovating the Evansville Regional Airport terminal could significantly enhance passenger service.

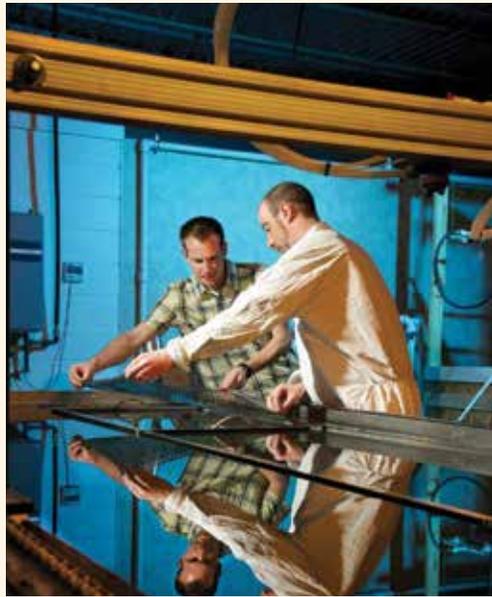
really optimize the return for what was being allocated.”

Transformative proposals – both culturally and economically – took center stage.

The IEDC selected North Central (Innovate Indiana Plan), Northeast (Road to One Million Plan) and Southwest Indiana (Indiana’s Great Southwest Plan) to receive \$42 million each in matching funds to support their regional development plans.

Amstutz, Maassel and Davis commend those regions and the remaining four (Central, East Central, Northwest and West Central) on the quality of their proposals.

“High and wide, they were all terrific,” Maassel reflects. “In some cases, the regions were newly formed. They hadn’t spent a great deal of time working with each other, yet they were able to put together an exciting proposal. We tried in all cases to encourage them, to give them some thoughts on, ‘Perhaps you can look at this, that or the next,’ and sent that through the IEDC, which has been out talking with folks in each of the regions (about how to carry



A training center, housed in Lincoln Junior High School, would connect adults – and high school students from all Marshall County Schools – with workforce and job training assistance.

their initiatives forward).”

“It wasn’t top down like, ‘Region X, you should do this and not that,’ ” Amstutz chimes in. “It was more, ‘Oh my gosh, that’s a really interesting idea! Have you intersected with the Department of Tourism?’ Trying to make those links to (provide) every opportunity to take advantage of what’s there so these projects and programs can be realized.”

Davis offers her take: “There were elements of the proposals (submitted by regions that weren’t selected to receive funding) that some of us felt were very, very valuable. We certainly expressed that to those communities and are interested in figuring out how to get some of those things done.”

Amstutz reveals her hopes for the future.

“I encourage the IEDC to continue to think along these lines of quality of place, and how to combine community and traditional community development methods,” she declares. “It’s a very effective recipe for success.”

RESOURCES: Indiana Regional Cities Initiative at www.IndianaRegionalCities.com | Keira Amstutz, Indiana Humanities, at indianahumanities.org | Mark Maassel, Indiana Energy Association, at www.indianaenergy.org | Kathy Davis, office of Mayor Joe Hogsett, at www.indy.gov/eGov/Mayor/



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Muncie’s Kitzelman Pure Energy Park (spanning 18 acres on an old brownfield site) and Kitzelman Trailhead will embody a “live, work and play” concept. The project includes a new Cardinal Greenway along the White River as well as the construction of one bridge and relocation of another.



Downtown revitalization in Muncie and other cities emphasizes the region’s focus on housing and commercial development.

Partnership Potential

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we’re losing them now.”

Enter the White River Canal District.

Urban-living apartments, a boardwalk, public plazas, a restaurant, café, commercial space and more will dot the 10-acre development in downtown Muncie.

“It’s a multi-year project, but the steps are being taken that are necessary to keep the project moving forward,” Murphy outlines.

Innovation will take shape at an old building with an enticing new name: Madjax, the Muncie Maker Force.

Originally touted as Gearbox: Muncie A Maker Hub, it will foster creativity and innovation on the site of an 85,000 square foot former laundry business. In January, the city approved a \$1 million loan related to the endeavor.

Opening this fall, Madjax recently announced its first tenants: Tribune Showprint Posters and The Guardian Brewing Co.

Reflecting on the variety of collaborations that have grown out of Regional Cities, Murphy shares, “In East Central Indiana, we haven’t had an effort like this before. (For the most part), the areas that have been funded (through the Regional Cities Initiative) have been doing this for 10 or 15 years or longer. We started with the Regional Cities program, so we’re lagging behind a little bit. But it was good to see people’s enthusiasm. We had regional meetings where we had as many as 250 people showing up. There was a genuine enthusiasm for the concept, and we got a lot of good thoughts that went into the process.”

Northwest: Indiana’s Third Coast Gateway Initiative

Proposal: Fully double tracking the South Shore line from Gary to Michigan City (and related transit-oriented development)

Counties: Lake, LaPorte, Porter and St. Joseph

The South Shore line, which runs from South Bend to Chicago, links Northwest Indiana to the nation’s third-largest metro economy.

“It gives us an opportunity to really touch that Chicago workplace,” remarks Heather Ennis, president and CEO of the Northwest Indiana Forum. “Having that opportunity for our residents to get to high-paying jobs in the metropolitan area, and then coming back to Northwest Indiana to live and spend their money offers great opportunity to us.”

Fully double tracking the line would cut commuting times between Chicago and South Bend to one hour. In addition, a trip from Gary to South Bend would drop to 30 minutes.

Enhanced mobility adds to the rail’s appeal. It’s an enticing proposition to all age groups, but especially millennials.

“Many millennials want to be free of – we’ll call it traditional transportation,” Ennis asserts. “They don’t necessarily want to be tied down to a car; they want a more transit-oriented lifestyle where they can get on a train or get on public transportation and get to the things they really want to see.

“If you look at the infrastructure around the city of Chicago and the suburbs of Chicago, from a rail perspective, we just aren’t competing with that. We don’t have the infrastructure that they have.”

Building a proposal around one project – as opposed to other regions that embarked upon several – simply made sense in Northwest Indiana.

“(We asked ourselves), ‘What are our strengths and how do we capitalize on them most quickly? And how do we attract talent to the marketplace most quickly?’ We’ve got these great amenities in Lake Michigan, lakefront and trail

development, and great things that are going on here, but how do we plug people into that? We have so many components that are already working, but we saw this rail line as the glue that holds all of those things together and makes them cohesive.”

Ennis eagerly articulates next steps.

“We’re continuing to try and find funding mechanisms,” she relates. “We’re carrying on those conversations and trying to best figure out how to meld all of our plans so they work well together and we’re even more prepared the next time these opportunities come up. But we’re not going to wait for the next opportunities. We’re going to continue to try to figure out how to get this done because we all feel it’s extremely critical.”

Breaking down boundaries

Ennis acknowledges that a lack of cooperation among various entities in Northwest Indiana has hindered regionalism in the past. But she emphasizes that’s changing.

“Whereas the Northeast (region) has Fort Wayne as their major city and their major hub, we’ve got quite a few different



Fully double tracking the South Shore line is a \$270 million, eight-year project aimed to maximize the region’s proximity to Chicago.

cities, but no one large city. The diversity of our area is such is that it can get siloed very quickly ... but this process has really allowed us to get regional in our approach, to look at the broader brushstroke of the region and what things we can come together on that could be game changers.

“It’s been a fun process. We’re thrilled

about the opportunities going forward for us.”

Murphy couldn’t agree more.

“There’s a realization that what’s good for one of us is good for all of us,” he stresses, “that we’re not so much in it independently, but for the good of the entire region because we know we all benefit from that.”

RESOURCE: Indiana Regional Cities Initiative at www.iedc.in.gov/programs/regional-cities-initiative

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