



CITY OF CRAWFORDSVILLE

CRAWFORDSVILLE, IN 47933



Stellar Partners-

The City of Crawfordsville is honored to submit this Letter of Interest for the 2015 Stellar Communities Program. We have found this to be a very beneficial process each and every time we have participated in the past. It has forced us to sharpen our vision and create a solid plan for moving our community forward. In fact, we have already accomplished many of the goals that were identified in our 2012 Stellar Strategic Investment Plan and we have resolved to continue our efforts. Crawfordsville is being transformed, thanks in part to the vision we created during the Stellar process. We are confident that we have created a unique plan to complete that transformation.

Sincerely,

Todd D. Barton, Mayor

PRIMED FOR STELLAR TRANSFORMATON

The City of Crawfordsville has made giant strides in recent years. Although it has a long, proud history, it had fallen into the lull of complacency. Renewed efforts have injected a new sense of energy and excitement that have resulted in a noticeable turn of the tide. Recent successes have been built on the foundation of the following principles:

- Strong mayoral leadership focused on consensus building, teamwork & collaboration
- A clear vision for our future centered on quality of life
- A can do attitude that utilizes our strengths to offset challenges
- Utilization of human capital and a spirit of volunteerism to affect transformation

Our efforts to transform Crawfordsville are focused squarely on one overarching belief. *We must create a community in which people want to live and work.* While the term quality of life is thrown around a lot today it isn't merely a catch phrase for us. We operate with an unwavering passion to steadily improve our quality of life because we know our very survival is dependent upon it. This realization is based on two very noticeable trends. First, we have experienced a noticeable decline in the number

of professionals choosing to live in our community. This has a very negative impact not only because of the loss of spending power but the loss of human capital and the leadership potential it brings. Secondly, there is one age group that is becoming increasingly sparse in our community. Young people ages 22-35 are not choosing to call our community home. It is a trend that is very disturbing and represents a credible threat to our future. Most notably, local young people chose not to return to Crawfordsville after completing their college education. People in this age group are typically beginning careers, buying cars, purchasing homes and starting families. Their lack of presence in a community has a significant economic and social impact.

While the lack of suitable employment opportunities can be a factor in the decision to locate elsewhere for each of these groups, we believe quality of life is a far more significant factor. Our realization is tempered by the fact that quality of life has a dynamic definition. Its mere definition varies greatly from one generation to the next and we must find a way to appeal to not only our target populations, but to everyone. Our efforts have focused on:

- Improving sense of place through community gathering points
- Promoting wellbeing through trails, parks and bike/pedestrian friendly streets
- Promoting economic growth to spur investment in improved retail, dining & entertainment offerings
- Engaging residents to improve their sense of worth by utilizing their human capital
- Harnessing the tremendous power of our high sense of volunteerism
- Increasing community pride through aggressive blight elimination
- Capitalizing on a strongly emerging tourism industry

THE STELLAR IMPACT ZONE

Much like most communities we have recognized that our downtown area is the very heart of our city and we have dedicated much effort to reenergizing it. It must lie at the heart of our efforts to create a unique and attractive quality of life. Fortunately, we have some significant advantages in our quest. We already possess a vibrant downtown that is full of potential for additional growth and development. It is home to many eateries, shops, museums and has a solid foundation on which to build. In our case we consider the downtown to be a slightly larger geographical area than what might be obvious. We believe our downtown extends beyond the multi-story commercial buildings that line the core and well into the historical neighborhoods that are nestled alongside. As a result, our plan is to focus in a broader sense on the immediate downtown and those residential areas within which it is intertwined.



Ben Hur Hotel, Condos, Restaurant & Bar

Developments within our downtown area have a profound effect on a much larger area. It serves as the focal point for not only our community, but many others. While Crawfordsville is the county seat for Montgomery County it also serves as the economic and social hub for other more rural counties to our south and west. The recent addition of several large-scale sporting events has focused national and international attention on the community as well.



Future Historic Whitlock Place Apartments



FUSING THE STELLAR IMPACT

Our plan is to capitalize on our strengths by fusing them together at an unprecedented level to generate a substantive transformation that takes our community to the next level. By harnessing the high level of collaboration and volunteerism that abounds in our community and fusing it together with the efforts of our growth entities our community becomes unstoppable in its efforts to advance.

Our efforts are already underway and we have been steadfast in our work to build the foundation on which our plan will be carried out. Over the course of the last three years we have accomplished the following:

- More than a dozen derelict homes have been razed by the city which has led to another dozen being taken down by property owners to eliminate blight.
- An abandoned complex of industrial buildings known as the “match factory” were razed and the area prepared for redevelopment.
- Funding was obtained for expansion of the Sugar Creek Trail, a splash park was constructed and a new park was added for the first time in decades.
- A comprehensive Bike/Pedestrian Plan was completed.
- Achieved “Gigabit City” status with a fiber optic system throughout the city.
- Funding awarded through Indiana Housing & Community Development to reconstruct the former Culver Union Hospital, which has stood vacant for 30 years, into much needed housing known as Historic Whitlock Place. Construction is imminent.
- The Ben-Hur Building, vacant for 20 years, was recently transferred to a new developer with plans to reuse the historic structure as a boutique hotel and condos along with a restaurant and bar. This will serve as a catalyst for change in our downtown area.
- Montgomery County has plans to reconstruct the area around the courthouse along with replacing a clock tower upon the structure that had been removed in the 1940’s.
- We have fused together the operations of Montgomery County Economic Development, Crawfordsville/Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, Crawfordsville Main Street, Montgomery County Leadership Academy and the Wabash College Center for Innovation, Business & Entrepreneurship (CIBE) which is operated with funding from the Lilly Endowment. All of these growth entities are now collocated in the newly created Crawfordsville Commerce Center which is funded by the City of Crawfordsville.
- We have been awarded a planning grant from Office of Community and Rural Affairs for the creation of a plan that will pull all of our downtown projects together in a cohesive fashion.
- We have become a Cities of Service Coalition Member.

These are recent successes that relate specifically to our plan but many others such as development of a solar park, privatization of our electric power plant, upgrades to our municipal golf course and construction of a new Ivy Tech Campus support our efforts as well.

The stage is set and you often hear people in our community saying “the stars are aligned.” This is the overwhelming sentiment because levels of collaboration, communication and cooperation have never been higher. The City of Crawfordsville, Montgomery County, Union Township and numerous non-profit groups are working together in a unified effort to take our community to the next level.

STELLAR IMPACT PROJECTS

Our vision and resolve are clear. We plan to implement the following to create the necessary synergy that will fuel our efforts to take quality of life to the next level for all citizens:



FUSION 54

We plan to take our current Crawfordsville Commerce Center concept to the next level by constructing a center to fuse our many efforts together in an out-of-the box format. This 20,000 sq. foot, two story facility will be located on vacant property along US 231/SR 47/SR 32 just south of downtown. It will bring together the following components in a highly charged and stimulating environment:

- Montgomery County Visitors' & Tourism Bureau prominently located in the front. This elevates our presence as we are now home to major events such as the Lucas Oil Motorsports Motocross Championship Series season finale.
- Indiana West Advantage: The lead economic development organization for our community (formerly Montgomery County Economic Development) Fusion 54 co-working space for entrepreneur
- Crawfordsville/Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce
- Crawfordsville Main Street
- Montgomery County Leadership Academy
- Wabash College Center for Innovation, Business & Entrepreneurship
- Fusion 54 Senior Center
- Fusion 54 Center for Volunteerism to Implement our Cities of Service initiatives
- Greenspace & direct access to the Big Four Trail

PIKE STREET POCKET PARK

The City, Wabash College and the Montgomery County Community Foundation will join together to create a pocket park on .3 acres of land located in the heart of the downtown that has stood vacant since a devastating fire in 2008. The high profile site sits alongside the 100 block of West Pike Street that is now home to our highly successful farmers' market every Saturday. The area will be well designed to host events, serving as a gathering location and focal point for the community.

BIG FOUR TRAIL

Plans are currently in the works to close down an industrial rail line that will become obsolete following the construction of a new rail facility along the main rail line. Our plan is to construct the Big Four Trail on a mile of this former rail line under an agreement with CSX Transportation. The trail will begin at Fusion 54 and pass through the campus of Wabash College before joining our already existing Sugar Creek Trail. It will bring trail access to the heart of our city and to thousands of residents.

HISTORIC WHITLOCK NEIGHBORHOOD OWNER-OCCUPIED REHABILITATION

With construction on the Historic Whitlock Place Apartments imminent it is imperative that we address the long-term neglect present in the neighborhood that surrounds it. The former hospital has stood vacant for 30 years and the neighborhood has suffered greatly in its shadows. This will serve as a companion project to the adaptive reuse creating a dramatic boost to the area located on the northwest side of downtown.

BIKE & PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY COMPLETE STREETS

In 2014 we received funding and technical assistance from the Indiana State Department of Health to complete a Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan. This process received a great deal of public input and we are planning to complete



many of the recommendations pertaining to the downtown area. This will greatly accelerate implementation of our plan and result in a “complete streets” concept promoting use of our downtown.

STELLAR IMPACT EXECUTION

During the last few years we have proven our ability to perform at a high level. We have assembled a talented team of professionals who have tackled longstanding challenges that had faced our community for decades. This team has been fueled by cooperation and consensus building among community partners. It is led by mayoral leadership which is based on the principles of hard work, communication and an outright refusal to make excuses.

Routine meetings are held in which the many different organizations working to affect change come together to share their progress and explore cooperation. This has significantly improved overall efficiency and eliminated many of the duplications of effort and misunderstandings that previously occurred due to the silo effect.

This leadership formula will continue to be utilized to implement our plan because it has already proven very successful. Simply put, it works! In addition, our team will be further enhanced with the addition of project managers from the private sector. Beyond our commitment to utilize technical professionals to guide the technical aspects of our various projects, we will solidify the leadership structure by adding the position of Director of Operations to our staff. This person will oversee all aspects of plan implementation and report directly to the mayor.

We have diligently created a solid financial plan for creating our vision by engaging the services of Umbaugh & Associates along with the law firm of Ice Miller. An investment by partner state agencies will be leveraged by the following local funding sources:

- Crawfordsville Square TIF District Funds
- City of Crawfordsville General Fund
- Crawfordsville Local Road & Street Fund
- Crawfordsville Power Plant TIF Fund
- Montgomery County Community Foundation
- Wabash College
- Montgomery County
- Montgomery County Historical Society
- Indiana West Advantage



We are confident that our plan will truly be a game changer in our efforts to create *a community in which people want to live and work*. We will create a greater sense of place through projects such as the Big Four Trail, Pike Street Pocket Park and bicycle & pedestrian friendly complete streets. At the same time we will harness the collective power of our many growth entities through Fusion 54 and create an environment of entrepreneurship. Our growing tourism industry will receive a major boost and downtown neighborhoods will get the restoration they need to overcome decades of neglect. A strong sense of leadership and collaboration will fuse these efforts with the many other good things that are already under way to make Crawfordsville a truly unique and inviting community in which to live, work and recreate.





- A** OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING
 - B** HISTORIC WHITLOCK PLACE APARTMENTS / CULVER HOSPITAL REDEVELOPMENT
 - C** MONTGOMERY COUNTY COURTHOUSE
 - D** SITE RENOVATION
 - E** PIKE STREET POCKET PARK
 - F** BEN HUR LIFE BUILDING
 - F** FUSION 54
- 510 S. WASHINGTON STREET

MAP KEY

- ON STREET SHARROW
- ON STREET BIKE LANES
- CYCLE TRACK
- MULTI-USE PATH
- BIG FOUR TRAIL

