

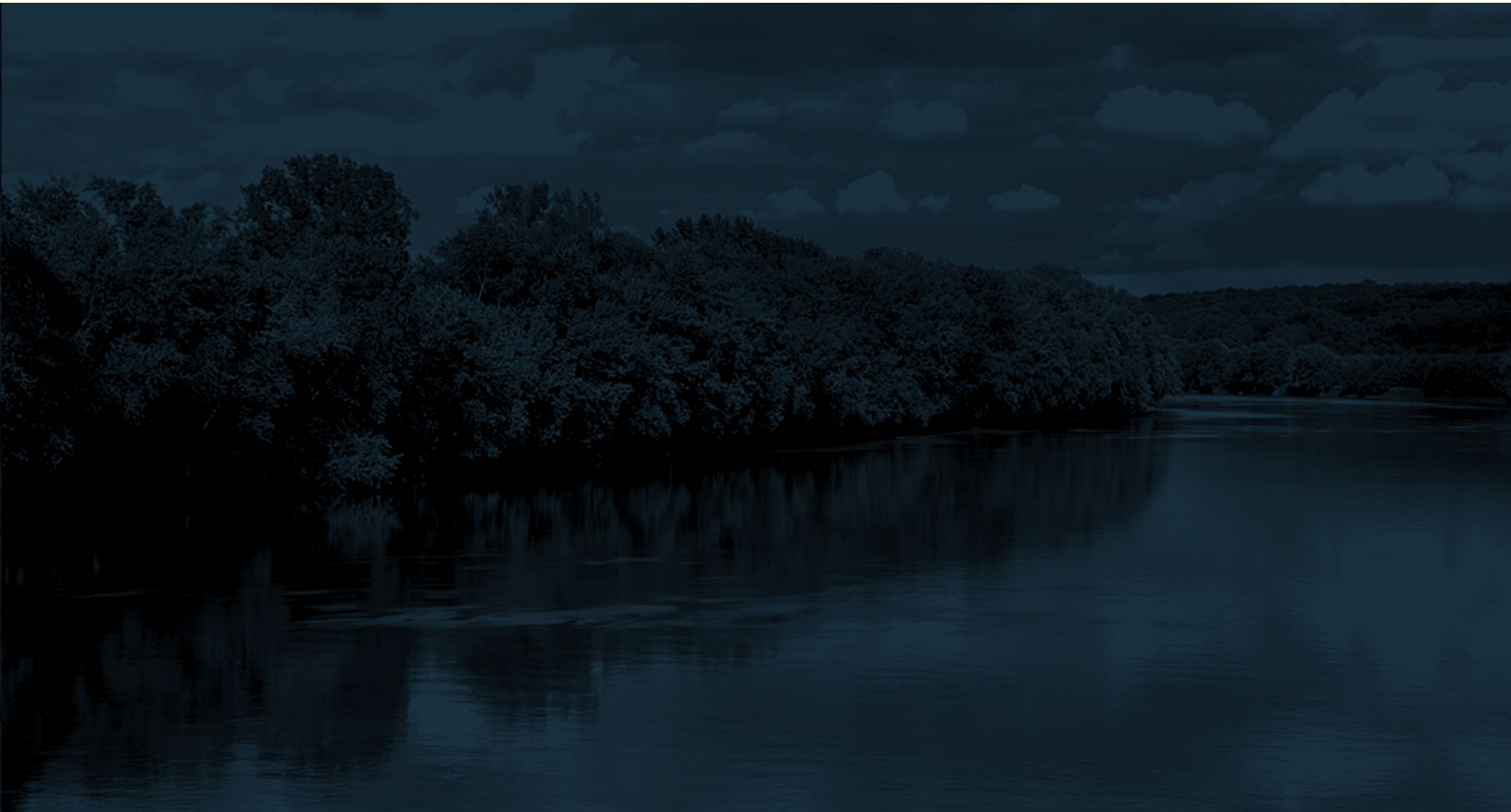
# NEWSLETTER

Fall 2024

Wabash Economic Growth Alliance, Inc. serves our community by providing a local economic development office, representative and strategy organization. We also work to increase business and housing starts, improve childcare services and revitalize downtowns.

For more detailed information please see our website:

[www.wegaworks.com](http://www.wegaworks.com)



# GROWING BUSINESS

This fall we will start construction on a regional business incubator designed to serve our existing businesses and inspire new business development. This product is the result of many years of planning and grant pursuits.

The business facility will provide space for our management offices, business training classrooms, business start-up offices, co-working facilities, and a social/networking hub. Programming will include a variety of practical business courses, individualized advisory services and a business mentorship program.

The market facility adjacent will provide space for new product and food retailers. It will also provide a farm store consignment facility to promote our specialty farming industry. Though the incubator is in downtown Attica it will serve all of Fountain County and beyond. The desired result is to help increase business knowledge, amplify creative excellence, improve market access, strengthen overall competitiveness, and support new emerging talent. We are also very hopeful this will help revitalize our downtowns throughout the county.

Many of the programs and facilities will be free to use. Although we may collect a small fee for some functions and charge a percentage of sales in the market to keep the program operational.



## **GROWING HOUSING**

In coordination with the County Commissioners we are pursuing housing targets identified in the READI 1.0 funded Greater Lafayette Regional Housing Study. Our targets include the number of replacement houses required and predictable growth patterns over the next 10 years. The targeted increases are: 8% for Attica & Covington; 5% for Veedersburg, Kingman & Hillsboro; 2% for Newtown, Mellott & Wallace. We are not pursuing housing starts in the unincorporated areas. These targets may sound high but they only serve to stabilize the market. To make up for the population loss over the last 30 years these numbers would be higher.

Though we did not initiate all of these developments we are working with the following projects in various capacities: Shiloh (Covington) - 42 single-family houses and 5 duplexes; Shepherd's Landing (Attica) - 87 single-family homes; The Reserve (Covington) - 71 single-family houses; Old Elementary School Reuse (Attica) - 68 market-rate apartments; Chamberlain Place (Attica) - 44 fixed-rate apartments.

As we continue our ongoing efforts to encourage new housing starts and housing variety please reach out with any potential sites, builders or investors. Building quality solutions in rural areas can be challenging. We are always looking for new opportunities.

## **GROWING CHILDCARE SERVICES**

We are working with the Fountain/Warren Childcare Coalition, Purdue Center for Rural Development and many others to find sustainable solutions for childcare within the county.

To date we have helped the Attica Learning Center achieve a United Way grant to assist with their relocation and expansion serving 107 kids. And we are helping River City Church to achieve grants for a new facility in Attica facilitating 120-148 seats. All told we have helped two organizations add approximately 200 seats within the county.

We are also currently working with the Purdue Center for Rural Development to hire a Childcare Educator within the Purdue Extension office to serve Fountain County. This will help provide a resource for future childcare development within our county.

# REVITALIZING DOWNTOWNS

Since downtowns are key to small town identity and small businesses serve the core of our rural economy we believe they are worth revitalizing.

We started buying up downtown blighted buildings on the behalf of the City of Attica several years ago. We then hired a consultant and held community meetings to establish a downtown revitalization plan. It took some time and creativity but the blighted buildings are now down and the city is working to rebuild the streets, sidewalks and amenities for future development. Our forthcoming business incubator, farm store and market are the next installation for this effort. All together the process took five years and included endless hurdles. The change it brings however will turn around 50+ years of decay.

We are also currently working with Hillsboro to coordinate a solution with INDOT on state-owned property to remake their downtown sidewalks and building canopies. They also are working through a blighted building issue downtown.

## OTHER NEWS

**Grant Awards** - Previous to our county-wide efforts WEGA helped achieve roughly \$1.5M in READI 1.0 grants for the county. Following our county-wide contract we have achieved an additional \$9.02M from AARPA, DNR, Indiana Landmarks, OCRA, READI 2.0, Lilly Endowment Inc. for the county.

**Regional Growth Planning** - This fall WEGA will host meetings in Kingman, Hillsboro, Newtown/Mellott, Covington and Attica to discuss growth planning for your communities. We are working with the Purdue Research Foundation and 7 other counties to run a growth planning exercise for the region. The goal of this planning effort is to participate in growth coming from the forthcoming chip manufacturing investment in West Lafayette. The effort will help us identify the status of our roads, utilities, schools, housing, commercial districts, zoning, ordinances etc. It will also help us participate in future investment opportunities.

## THANK YOU!

WEGA is working hard to help Fountain County grow its economy. Thank you for your interest and patience. Sometimes it just takes time to get things moving. We look forward to the opportunities ahead. Please reach out with any constructive input. This is a daunting task that will take many points of input to succeed. Please also participate in community discussions and make investments wherever you can. Together the future is bright!



Rod Bannon, Executive Director