

# ANNUAL REPORT 2018



**GROW**  
**WABASH**  
*County*

# MISSION

Together, Growing a Prosperous Wabash County

# VISION

Wabash County will be the model for small town America, making a relevant impact on the global community, by offering vibrant cultural experiences, enriching lifestyles and growing economic opportunities while building on our heritage.

# WHO WE ARE

Grow Wabash County is an organization that strategically combines the county-wide economic development organization and Chamber of Commerce. Grow Wabash County is a one-stop-shop for economic and community development efforts. The team focuses on five main areas: Entrepreneurship, Business Development, Workforce Development, Livability, and Investor Services. Grow Wabash County also provides local incentives and other benefits to businesses looking to locate or grow here. Leveraging our community assets with regional partners and local municipalities, Grow Wabash County strives to fulfill our mission of *Together, Growing a Prosperous Wabash County*. The kind of collaboration needed to achieve our mission is possible because when it comes to economic development, Wabash County cities and towns are all in.



# A Letter from the President/CEO

## Keith Gillenwater



I am honored to be writing my second annual report for Grow Wabash County! We have been diligently working towards fulfilling our mission – Together, Growing a Prosperous Wabash County – it seems impossible that the merger of the former Economic Development Group of Wabash County and the Wabash County Chamber of Commerce, into the new Grow Wabash County, happened almost two years ago.

Grow Wabash County is organized around five pillars of service: Entrepreneurship, Business Development, Workforce Development, Livability, and Investor Services. It is through these five pillars that we work to serve Wabash County. This report to the community will detail some of the exciting things we worked on under each of those pillars in 2018.

Several years ago, I read a quote from Steve Jobs, the former CEO and co-founder of Apple Inc., from a commencement speech that he delivered in 2005 at Stanford University. It read: “Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work... and the only way to do great work is to love what you do.” From the moment I first read the quote and every time since, it has continued to motivate me as we focus the new Grow Wabash County on building our community's capacity through our economic and community development work while also confronting the challenges that we face head on. Again, I'm excited for the future of our community, and I am humbled to be a part of it.

*Keith A. Gillenwater*

# Message from the Chairman of the Board

## Emily Boardman



Sometimes “opportunity” becomes synonymous with “voluntold.” You know, those obligations that masquerade as volunteer opportunities, but in reality, you’ve been told to accept. I admit, I’ve had a few voluntold opportunities and, if I’m being honest, my introduction to economic development in 2014 may have started out as an obligation masquerading as an opportunity to volunteer. Here we are, though, five years (and technically two organizations later) and I’m holding onto my board seat with both hands!

The excitement of this organization has everything to do with you, our network of accomplished and devoted investors. You have built a network that extends outside the County, the Region and the Country. It’s this network that makes bold initiatives come to life. Our organization’s greatest strength is our spirit of collaboration. You will see project highlights outlined in this annual report that showcase the tremendous efforts of this group. Each project points back to our mission of "Together, Growing a Prosperous Wabash County."

Having an inside look at what it takes to accomplish these projects makes me appreciate what so many have done to position our community for success. Community leaders past and present have been devoted to expanding the scope and redefining what community development means. With Keith’s direction, a strong team has been built – and our successes show it. It’s been my pleasure to have played a small part in helping to grow our community and I am proud to have served as the first Chair of the new Grow Wabash County.

*Emily S. Boardman*



## Entrepreneurship

Support includes small business services, supporting and maintaining our partnerships, building upon our educational offerings, and others as community needs arise.

## Innovate @ INGUARD

Innovate @ INGUARD (I@I), the umbrella program for our entrepreneurship support program in Wabash County, had a wonderful year in 2018. Our I@I co-working space hosted a number of events throughout 2018, from business and non-profit groups who utilized our unique space for strategic planning to co-workers who met to foster creative collisions with other entrepreneurs. We were proud to host the first Fort Founders Collaborative (part of START Fort Wayne) meeting held outside of Allen County this past summer, where we hosted entrepreneurs, economic development professionals, venture capital firms, and university partners to discuss creative ways we can collectively support an entrepreneurial ecosystem in Northeast Indiana. We also worked to secure our first Innovation grant from the Indiana Economic Development Corporation.



## IEDC Innovation Grant

Grow Wabash County, in conjunction with INGUARD and Wabash City Schools, applied for and received an innovation grant from the Indiana Economic Development Corporation for just over \$195,000 to support our Innovate @ INGUARD program. The grant is designed to support many facets of entrepreneurship in Wabash County. Grant funds were used to implement primary and secondary entrepreneurship education at Wabash City Schools through the INCubatoredu by Uncharted Learning program. Funds were also used to purchase a new prototyping 3-D printer located in the Innovate @ INGUARD co-working space, to fund 12 Business-in-a-Box starter kits, and to seed our new Innovate Wabash County high school pitch competition, with our first competition held on April 16, 2019.

## Revolving Loan Fund Program

Grow Wabash County's Revolving Loan Fund Program is aimed at current business owners or prospective business owners located in Wabash County to provide gap funding to help small businesses succeed. Grow Wabash County's goal with this program is to be a financing partner, together with the small businesses' equity and a conventional (primary) lending institution. At the close of 2018, GWC had two active revolving loans outstanding. The two outstanding loans included KenapocoMocha Coffee & Pastry Shop located in North Manchester and the Wabash County Historical Museum located in Wabash. Both of these loans are strong, current, and performing according to established guidelines. The loans totaled \$244,487.54 in outstanding direct loans with \$67,211.95 available for lending on new loans as part of the revolving loan fund program.

## Small Business Development Center

Scot Goskowicz, our local Business Advisor from Northeast Small Business Development Center housed at Purdue University Fort Wayne, provided 19 entrepreneurs from Wabash County with expert guidance and a comprehensive network of resources in 2018. Free business consulting will continue to be available every third Thursday at Grow Wabash County by appointment throughout the 2019 year.





## Business Development

Includes traditional economic development services such as business attraction and retention, developing sites and building infrastructures, and incentive negotiation.



In 2018, we welcomed a company new to Wabash County, 10X Engineered Materials, LLC, which purchased the former Spiece warehouse at 1162 Manchester Ave in Wabash. Grow Wabash County worked with the partners of 10X Engineered Materials, LLC for a year to help them locate a suitable location in Wabash County; work through various project development challenges such as permitting, contracting, and financing; and ultimately to make the decision to locate their flagship facility in our community.

10X Engineered Materials, LLC is a green-tech company that works with partner companies to help them divert waste-streams from going into the landfill and reprocess them to create new, usable products. The company committed to investing over \$4,000,000 in capital improvements to the building as well as construction of a new building on the site. The company also committed to creating 26 new jobs at an average wage of \$32.00/hour by 2021. Since our project announcement in early 2018, the company has already exceeded many of their investment goals and are working to start production in mid 2019.

## Asia Trade Mission 2018

Grow Wabash County was proud to organize our first ever Sister-City and international business development trip on behalf of the City of Wabash and Wabash County in November 2018. In early 2016, Mayor Scott Long and our CEO, Keith Gillenwater, started early discussions on exploring the possibility of developing an international Sister-City relationship, which ultimately culminated in our trip with a delegation to visit Linhai City, which is a county-level city located in Taizhou, Zhejiang Province, China. While there, we visited numerous historic and cultural sites, presented at an Economic Forum to over 30 Chinese companies who are interested in creating economic relationships in our community, cemented an educational exchange program with Binhe Middle School in Hangzhou, and signed an MOU (memorandum of understanding) to formalize our intentions to create a Sister-City relationship. We expect to host a formal visit from Linhai City officials in late 2019. While planning the trip, we also took the opportunity to explore additional opportunities for economic and educational relationships in Japan. Indiana is home to almost 300 Japanese companies, and is the highest per capita state in the US for Japanese investment. Wabash County is home to one of these companies, Oji Intertech in North Manchester, so we visited with Oji Intertech's parent company Oji Interpack Co. Ltd to express our gratitude for their continued investment into our community and hosted their leadership at a dinner later that evening. We also visited with dozens of companies, such as Toyota, Fuji Films, and Mitsubishi, as well as educational institutions and governmental leaders while in Japan.



## Redevelopment Efforts

Our organization is proud to be continued partners with our local governments and state partners to help facilitate redevelopment efforts on challenging sites in our communities. We staff the redevelopment commissions for the City of Wabash and Wabash County, and serve in an advisory role to the North Manchester Redevelopment Commission. In 2018, in conjunction with Mayor Scott Long, we spearheaded the efforts to identify a suitable partner to help us start the redevelopment of the 29-acre former GDx site now known as One General Street, LLC. We know that this is a long-term development project, but we are committed to seeing the site remediated back into a developable site that can add value to our community. We also helped to facilitate the rehabilitation of several empty buildings in 2018, including the former Brown Trucking building that is now home to Wabash Woollen Works & Fiber Art Center, the former Spiece Building now home to 10X Engineered Materials, and the former Eagles Lodge building in North Manchester that is now home to Precision Medical Technologies, amongst others.



Former Brown Trucking Building



Wabash Woollen Works & Fiber Art Center  
Photo courtesy of Visit Wabash County

## Lead Development

Throughout the course of the year, Grow Wabash County tracks the sources and number of leads that we receive. We received 45 new leads last year from our state and regional partners that we tracked, and of those 45 leads we were able to submit sites or buildings for a total of 13 of those projects. We continue to be hampered by a lack of high quality, modern buildings available in our community, but as buildings become available, we have been effective in filling them. Locally, we tracked 25 derived project leads last year, several of which ultimately converted into project wins, while others were eliminated for assorted reasons or are still currently being tracked. One important note is that many projects we work take well over a year to develop, so we track them until we have a conclusion, or the project goes dormant for several months. We expect over the next year for some of our contacts we developed on our Asia trip in late 2018 to develop into true project leads and we will provide updates next year on our progress.

## Marketing Efforts

2018 was a year of rebranding and getting the Grow Wabash County name out in the public. We spent the bulk of the year updating marketing materials and rebranding items that would be sent on the Asian Trade Mission in November as well as to our investors and members of the community. We were very fortunate in that we received several grants to help us with this enormous task. Thank you to Duke Energy for the Marketing Partnership Grant, Wabash Valley Power Association, and NIPSCO. It's because of these partnerships that we were able to complete almost all the rebranding for our organization.



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## Workforce Development

Ensure the availability of a high quality, trained workforce for Wabash County employers by coordinating training opportunities, talent attraction, retention, and development.

## Office of Community and Rural Affairs Community Development Block Grant

Grow Wabash County led the charge to address local manufacturers needs for more skilled workers by applying for and receiving a workforce development grant through the Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) as part of their Community Development Block Grant program. This grant was awarded to Wabash County, in partnership with Huntington and Kosciusko counties, to serve residents whom are under-employed, unemployed, or whom lack a certification to get a higher wage job.

Wabash, Huntington, and Kosciusko county residents that wanted to enhance their career by earning certifications in Computer Numeric Controlled (CNC) Machinist, Welding, or Industrial Maintenance had the opportunity to attend free training courses through Ivy Tech Community College Northeast (made possible by this grant and local match funders). Local sponsors from partners that included: Northeast Indiana Works, Huntington County Economic Development, Kosciusko Economic Development Corporation, WorkOne of Northern Indiana, Wabash County Commissioners, and Wabash County Community Foundation. Across the three counties in 2017 and 2018, nearly \$406,000 was invested in workforce training where \$250,000 came from the OCRA grant and the remaining \$156,000 was funded from the partner organizations. There were a total of 120 participants in the three counties overall where 51% of the participants were considered low to moderate income (LMI) by federal standards. Classes were held at Ivy Tech Wabash Campus, Huntington Learning Center, Heartland Career Center, and the Orthopedic Advanced Manufacturing Training Center in Warsaw. From Wabash County, there were 59 participants that took the classes expending \$206,382 of the total funds available. Within Wabash County, two classes of each CNC Machinist, Welding, and Industrial Maintenance programs ran through Ivy Tech.



Graduates of the 2018 Industrial Maintenance Certification course offered as part of the Community Development Block Grant.

## Partnering with Heartland Career Center

Throughout 2018, Grow Wabash County has focused on workforce development of all ages. By partnering with Heartland Career Center (HCC), a cooperative technical school that serves nine surrounding high schools, we are able to help connect employers' current and future needs to the next generation of workers. The mission of Heartland Career Center is to provide a stimulating environment and opportunities for students to learn technical skills, attitudes, knowledge, and to understand design in order to promote occupational preparation that will be effective in today's and tomorrow's technical society. The programs offered at HCC include: Automotive Collision Repair, Automotive Service Repair, Construction Technology, Cosmetology, Criminal Justice, Culinary Arts, Diesel Services, Early Childhood Education, Industrial Electronics, Entrepreneurship, Graphic Design, Multimedia Arts, Health Sciences, Information Technology Precision Machining, Welding, and Precision Machining. Our team at Grow Wabash County partnered with HCC in several areas in 2018 including: helping to establish a Heavy Duty Equipment Operator CDL program, creating support letters, connecting employers to internship and talent opportunities, as well as helping with grant initiatives.



## Young Professionals of Wabash County

Young Professionals of Wabash County (YPWC) was formed in the fall of 2018 to help young professionals excel in their careers by establishing a thriving network of peers and community-driven individuals within Wabash County. The group has a dedicated set of volunteers that make up the steering committee which includes: Jana Thibos, Social Event Director; Kimberly Lundmark, Philanthropic Director; Mark Frantz, Legal Director; Peter Shepherd, Educational Liaison; Susan Ross, Communications Director; Tenille Zartman, Chair; and Tyler Karst, Membership Recruiter. This member-driven group's mission is to create a supportive professional network of dynamic relationships that thrive together in Wabash County through networking, philanthropic, educational, and community events. While most members of YPWC are under 40, there is no age restriction. The group hosts monthly events with varying times in the morning, lunchtime, and after-hours at various locations within Wabash County. This group is free to join and young professionals interested in getting connected can simply come to an upcoming event listed on Facebook or sign-up on the website at [growwabashcounty.com/yp](http://growwabashcounty.com/yp). Currently 156 people are updated via monthly emails. Benefits for individuals being involved in this dynamic group include: the ability to grow social capital, develop leadership skills, learn from peers, build a better resume, discover new job opportunities, find a side gig, give back to the community by volunteering, stay inspired, and network to make new connections. This group is important to the overall vitality of Wabash County as well. As a community, we need to attract and retain young educated minds to help combat brain drain and increase population growth to help our community thrive. The decreasing population in Wabash County and rural America is a serious threat to quality of life for everyone. The goal with this group is to get this generation more connected and involved within the communities throughout the county. This deeper connection can help employers with recruiting and ultimately help retain their talent. Young professionals are the future of Wabash County and by young adults being a part of this group they can ensure they have a seat at the table to voice opinions for future initiatives and growth.





Focus to grow the population of Wabash County which includes initiatives for housing development, quality of place projects, and community engagement.

## Active Living Workshop

The Wabash Active Living Workshop was a community, grant-funded workshop offered in May of 2017 with the goal of bringing neighbors, city staff and community leaders together to learn how to build an active living community for all ages and abilities. Topics covered at the workshop included benefits of active living, best practices, walking audit of nearby infrastructure, and identification of active living goals for the community. There were 31 attendees at this all-day strategic workshop, and from that group launched a steering committee headed by the Purdue Extension office that included: Grow Wabash County; Wabash County YMCA; City of Wabash; and an active community volunteer, Pat Lynn. This steering committee was tasked with prioritizing the goals defined at the workshop and creating an action plan to turn these prioritized goals into a more active community. This grant was funded through 2018 and goals that were addressed by the steering committee included: promote walkability by painting crosswalks; research, create and adopt a pedestrian safety plan; encourage more activities and programming in public spaces such as parks; install some safety measure (i.e. crosswalk or flashing light) for pedestrians trying to cross from Meadowbrook to Kroger on Cass Street; connect existing resources such as the trails and parks together; and identify bike routes and wayfinding signage opportunities.



Grow Wabash County's team members had the privilege of serving on the steering committee for an incredible project that really encapsulated the quality of life initiatives our county has prioritized. 2018 was an exciting year for Friendship Hill Inclusive Playground (formerly called the Wabash Inclusive Playground project). The project's goal was to change the face of play in Wabash County, Indiana and beyond. The dream was inspired by two families whose children have physical disabilities. That dream quickly grew to a custom-designed concept, set to be located on a two-acre remediated former factory site located at 499 S Carroll St in downtown Wabash. This design came with an estimated \$1.8M price tag that intended to allow all ages and all abilities a space to play together. The dream started in 2013 but became a reality in 2018 when the funds were raised to complete this project. Funding for this project included \$200,000 from the City of Wabash, \$200,000 from Tax Incremental Funds, \$50,000 from Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority's CreatING Places program, with the remaining funds being raised through private fundraising including: corporate sponsorships, grants, in-kind donations, and individual contributions. This project was led by a committed group of volunteers that made up the steering committee which included both a design committee and a fundraising committee.



## Early Childhood Education

Grow Wabash County has served on the Early Education committee convened by the Community Foundation of Wabash County since its inception. Over the course of 2018, Grow Wabash County served on the steering committee which developed a new strategic plan to help us create more high quality, early education opportunities for our infant-to-five year-old population and those teachers and caregivers that provide this service across Wabash County. Following the development of our strategic plan, Grow Wabash County was asked to remain on the steering committee to lead its Accessibility Task Force for the committee. We are charged with helping to create partnerships with our local employers and are also working to create a sick-child care opportunity for working adults who have a child who is ill and cannot attend their regular provider due to the illness. We are proud to partner with all the providers, non-profits, and businesses who are dedicated to helping our next generation every day!

## Housing

Grow Wabash County has identified housing as a key component of livability in Wabash County. We have heard from both our local companies who are recruiting and bringing in talent to our area, as well as our real estate professionals, about the lack of quality available housing at all levels across our community. To that end, Grow Wabash County has been actively engaged in the procurement of new housing opportunities in Wabash County. In 2018, Grow Wabash County served as a convening host of the City of Wabash Housing committee. We assisted with bringing a consultant, HPG Network, to help us develop a strategic plan and market study of the housing situation in the City of Wabash. Armed with that data, our committee has worked to identify key areas for redevelopment, including the site of the former Parkview Wabash Hospital and the former GDX site. We also facilitated a study with a Manchester University class to examine the housing potential of the East Market Street corridor between Allen and Huntington Streets. Grow Wabash County has also worked with the Town of North Manchester over the last several years on developing the 92-acre site the town acquired for housing at the corner of 9th Street & IN-13 which will get underway in 2019!

## Population Loss

The concept of population loss remains the biggest challenge facing the long term growth and success of our Wabash County community, and it will remain a topic which we continue to rally around. In 2018, we made several presentations wherein we addressed the idea of population loss and its effect on our business community, local governments, school systems, philanthropic base, and others in various community groups across Wabash County. In 2019, we will make this an even bigger focus when we undertake a study with our partners that will examine this subject further in depth and present strategies with which our community can arrest and reverse the largest threat to our long term community vitality.



## Wabash County Drug Steering Committee

Grow Wabash County has served on the Wabash County Drug Steering Committee since its inception in 2017. Throughout the course of the last two years, we've worked through this committee with a variety of community partners across Wabash County, including faith leaders, non-profits, law enforcement, treatment providers, and educators, all spearheaded by Parkview Wabash Hospital. We developed a strategic plan which divided our work into three sub-committees: Prevention, Treatment, and Transition. Grow Wabash County serves on the Transition sub-committee, which is tasked with creating opportunities for individuals who have received treatment or have been adjudicated to receive ongoing support services to include second-chance employment opportunities. In 2018, our committee hosted a second-chance employment summit, wherein we not only had a current employer speak about his experiences with hiring workers that bring these challenges with them to the workplace, but also regarding support services that provide incentives and assistance to employers who choose to work with this affected population.





## Investor Services

Traditional business retention services, legislative advocacy, investor events, municipality support, and others as community needs arise.

# State of Our Communities

March 14, 2018

The inaugural State of Our Communities event brought together the five incorporated communities within Wabash County: LaFontaine, Lagro, North Manchester, Roann, and Wabash, as well as the Wabash County Commissioners. Dedicated community leaders and elected officials spoke, spelling out their community's successes, challenges, and a call to action to help further promote borderless communities within Wabash County. Thank you to the committee members, speakers, and sponsors who made this event possible.

**Speakers:** Brian Hauptert, Wabash County Commissioner  
Richard Monce, Town of Lagro  
Bob Ferguson, Town of Roann  
Janet Pattee, Town of LaFontaine  
Toby Tobias, Town of North Manchester  
Mayor Scott Long, City of Wabash  
Keith Gillenwater, Grow Wabash County, Emcee

# Salute to Agriculture

March 20, 2018

In 2018, we were honored to present Liberty Acres Dairy Farm with the 2017 Family Farm of the Year award. Thank you to the committee members, sponsors, and speakers who made this event a success.

**Speakers:** Dr. Sherilyn Emberton, and Howard Halderman, Emcee

**Committee Members:** Toni Benysh, Curt Campbell, Kristen Lovell, Bill Needler, Mike Rees, David Smith, Jay Vanderburg, Mark York, and Grow Wabash County staff.



## Honor Student Luncheon April 19, 2018

The 18th Annual Honor Student Luncheon brought together over 100 graduating seniors and educators from all five Wabash County high schools in order to honor their efforts and remind them that there are jobs for them in Wabash County when they are ready to return home after college. Thank you to the committee members, speakers, and local business sponsors who made this event possible.

**Speakers:** Parker Beauchamp and Tyler Karst, Emcee

**Committee Members:** Chelsie Matchette, Kerri Mattern, Susan Mattern, and Grow Wabash County staff.



## WACC-Y Golf Outing June 6, 2018

On the first Wednesday in June, over 90 golfers gathered for the 23rd Annual WACC-Y Golf Outing at the Honeywell Golf Course. Thank you to the committee members and sponsors who made this event a success.

**Committee Members:** Jami Bartel, Wayne Denger, Kay Krom, Gary Larson, Paul McCann, Rachel Olsen, Margaret Warren, and Grow Wabash County staff.



# Annual Celebration Dinner

## October 11, 2018

On Thursday, October 11th, we welcomed over 280 attendees to our Second Annual Celebration Dinner as Grow Wabash County. We were able to take the time to reflect on the previous years' achievements and look forward to the prosperous future that lies ahead. In true Annual Celebration Dinner fashion, we had the following honorees:

Business of the Year: J.M. Reynolds Oil Company  
Distinguished Citizen: Larry Curless  
Volunteer of the Year: Kaye Krom

A special thank you to the sponsors and committee members who made this event a success.

**Committee Members:** Chris Benson, Kaye Krom, Kristi Lundquist, Ruth Ann Masiongale, Paul McCann, Jim Reynolds, Jennifer Toombs, and Grow Wabash County staff.



## Ribbon Cuttings and Groundbreakings

This year we welcomed and hosted several Ribbon Cuttings for new businesses within Wabash County: Ninja Express, Lutheran Medical Facility, Rock City Lofts, Art's Que, Nicole A. Howard Photography, Wings Etc., and Wabash Wicks. We were also honored to have hosted a groundbreaking for 10X Engineered Materials as mentioned in the Business Development section.



## Leadership Development

In May, we graduated 27 students (pictured below) from the 2017-2018 Leadership Development Program. During this program, each student was to attend all classes, have active participation, and complete 25 service project hours in order to receive their certificate. The new cohort began in October of 2018 with 29 students and will run until May 2019.



## Business Retention and Expansion

From January to December, almost 90 local businesses were visited by members of the Grow Wabash County Staff. These visits were to check-in to see how they are doing and if there is anything Grow Wabash County can help them with. The goal of these visits is to make a meaningful connection with the local business people and to remind them that Grow Wabash County is in their corner.

Thank you to all our investors, public partners, and to all the residents of Wabash County who work Together, Growing a Prosperous Wabash County!

