

From the Mayor...

May 6, 2016

Sometimes an opportunity presents itself that makes sense for our community.

The State of Indiana will designate its 2016 Stellar Community on August 18 at the Indiana State Fair. The City of Warsaw is one of three finalists vying for the honor.

What is the Indiana Stellar Community program? How did Warsaw become a finalist? How will being designated as a 2016 Stellar Community impact Warsaw?

Let's look at this state sponsored program and how it works.

In 2010, the State of Indiana created a partnership of three state agencies that fund local road improvements (INDOT), housing improvements (IHCDA) and infrastructure improvements (OCRA). These three agencies regularly administer project funding to communities in Indiana on a competitive basis. If designated a Stellar Community, these funds would be accessible and not have to be competed for. The Stellar Community Program is designed to "reward" communities for utilizing comprehensive citizen-engaged planning to create a livable vision for their future. The first Stellar Communities were named in 2011.

An initial application to the Stellar State Committee is submitted that details community vision, a specific local target project area, and how the projects in that target area will impact the future livability of the community.

The East Market Street neighborhood from downtown Warsaw into the Town of Winona Lake is our target area. Eight projects have been identified that are designed to improve the neighborhood quality of life and connectivity between communities.

All projects have been in the planning stage for at least five years, some even longer. The Warsaw Comprehensive Plan (2014), the five year Warsaw Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update (current), the Market Street Neighborhood Plan (2015), the Warsaw Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2013), and the Town of Winona Lake Council and Redevelopment Commission planning were all contributory to the projects.

The specific projects listed in the application will be presented in a detailed document to the committee that is due July 1. The committee will evaluate each of the finalists' proposals and come to Warsaw/Winona Lake for a site visit on July 21. As mentioned previously, the Stellar Community will be designated on August 18 at the State Fair.

The City of Warsaw has included the Town of Winona Lake as a project partner in our application. The town has, in the past, sought competitive INDOT funding for a roundabout project at Winona Avenue and Argonne Road. This project is being

included in our Stellar application. City park improvements are also planned for Krebs Trailhead Park, Ker Neighborhood Park, and Richardson-Dubois Park, all on East Market Street. Other neighborhood projects include a senior housing project, streetscape beautification projects and owner occupied home improvements, Gatke Maker-Space renovations, and Argonne Road street improvements and building façade renovations. The city will publicize these projects in more detail and has established a Facebook page for that purpose. Look for a new project each week.

Warsaw has already benefited immeasurably from the Stellar Community process. Our East Market Street neighborhood revitalization has begun with the recently completed road reconstruction project, the state funded phase road reconstruction that is currently being engineered, and the recently announced Little Crow Lofts redevelopment project.

The city will work hard to prepare an application that will exceed the expectations of the state committee.

The city will continue to work even harder to engage every interested citizen in the Stellar vision of our community! ...Stay tuned.