

From the Mayor...

July 1, 2016

Today, the City of Warsaw submitted the final application for the Indiana State Stellar Communities initiative. Our core team consisting of Jeremy Skinner and Tim Dombrosky (Building and Planning Department), Pam Kennedy (Housing Opportunities of Warsaw), Larry Plummer (Parks and Recreation), Craig Allebach (Town of Winona Lake), Suzy Light (Kosciusko County Community Foundation), and Staci Young (Mayors Office) have put in hundreds of hours towards the finished product. I couldn't be more appreciative of their time and effort.

Community support has been stellar! We have engaged hundreds of citizens, community organizations, local businesses, and industry. While space limits the individual acknowledgment of so many partners, suffice it to say the committee has been overwhelmed by the enthusiastic volunteer and in-kind support towards our application and its projects!

Our partnership with the Town of Winona Lake typifies the common vision both communities have shared as neighbors for many years. Diligent planning and stewardship of both financial and natural resources has yielded a vibrant quality of life. Partnership and synergy accelerates success and growth.

The focus of our projects is to connect both communities by revitalizing the East Market Street Neighborhood. The Warsaw Comprehensive Plan described the neighborhood as a "critical sub-area" of our city with the need to address aging infrastructure and housing as well as improve multi-modal connectivity of Market Street as a gateway to Winona Lake.

Community focused planning is a fundamental tenant of the Stellar Communities initiative. Our projects are the result of many years of good planning. The Warsaw Comprehensive Plan, the Hyett-Palma Downtown Action Plan, Warsaw/Winona Lake Ride Walk Master Plan, the East Market Street Neighborhood Plan, and the Ball State Planning Charette are all the origins of our Stellar Projects.

Several projects have already been completed (East Market Street reconstruction Phase 1) or are in progress (East Market Street Phase 2 and the Little Crow Lofts). The impact of the Market Street reconstruction can already be seen in the home improvements along the street.

The specific Stellar projects will include basic housing improvements for eligible owner-occupied and rental housing. Storm-water improvements are also being proposed in our application. Park improvements at all three Market Street parks are also being proposed along with a Senior Housing project, Gatke rehabilitation, a downtown cycle track, and Argonne Road and Winona Avenue improvements. We know that investment of local and state agency partner funds in the Stellar Communities projects will have a transformative impact on the East Market Street Neighborhood. Project descriptions and drawings have all been published and are available at warsaw.in.gov or on the Warsaw/Winona Lake Stellar Facebook page.

The committee focus is now on the State Stellar Committee site visit that will occur later this month. We will present the projects to the committee, take a tour of the project sites, and answer any final questions.

We will then plan for the final announcement of our Stellar Community Designation on August 18th at the Indiana State Fair.

Our past planning and vision have elevated us as a Stellar Community Finalist.

Our current Stellar Community project planning and vision will move Warsaw and Winona Lake to the next level. I couldn't be prouder of the work of everyone involved to envision the future of Warsaw and Winona Lake!