

This week we are looking at the East Central Indiana Regional Development Authority and their plan “ADVANCE” which covers the counties of Blackford, Delaware, Henry, Jay, Madison and Randolph counties. The ADVANCE east central Indiana Plan puts forth a series of initiatives and projects that address the five core challenges facing the region:

- Demographics
- Real Estate Value
- Talent Attraction
- Industry Value Capture
- New Business Starts

In order to address these issues, ADVANCE is asking for funding to support many projects; some of the largest being:

The Innovation Center - Once completed, the region will have created an Innovation Center, which will be a collaborative partnership between Purdue Polytechnic and the Flagship Enterprise Center for sparking ideas, developing new products, building businesses, and growing jobs. It will provide space, software, and equipment to students, entrepreneurs, and existing businesses for hands-on learning, idea-testing, tinkering, and prototyping. The building will be roughly 90,000 sq. ft. and will include a Creator Space and an Advanced Manufacturing Space.

The Cintas Maker’s Hub - Also, the proposal calls for support of the conversion a vacant 85,000 square foot former industrial facility in downtown Muncie into a maker’s hub. The mission of this initiative is to simultaneously restore a conspicuous prominent structure in the downtown district to an attractive, useful facility and reintroduce the maker’s culture to the community.

The White River Canal District - The focus of this redevelopment plan is on providing quality, urban-style housing options that do not exist in the Central City by building off of existing river and greenway, and adding a walkable mix of lifestyle service businesses that is attractive to young professionals and baby boomers. Investing in “quality of place” in the central city is a critical strategy for employee retention and growth.

1400 Plaza - Multi-purpose public space (special events, parking, walkway) to connect the Historic Jennings Project (\$6 million historic adaptive re-use) to the Henry County Arts Park. Redevelopment of the historic LA Jennings Building into 20 apartments and four new restaurants will substantially increase downtown activity. In between this project and another key activity area—the Arts Park and library—is the 1400 block bound by Broad, Race Streets, 14th and 15th Streets in New Castle, Indiana.

The Wigwam Project - The Wigwam is the former Anderson High School and Gymnasium that closed to students in 2005 and closed its iconic gym in 2012. The gymnasium is widely known throughout the State of Indiana as it the SECOND largest high school gym in the USA. The revitalization of the Wigwam will provide jobs, training, education, health resources and housing to the immediately adjacent low-income community and the residents of Madison County. The plan calls for a partnership with the State of Indiana’s Job Source Inc., Anderson Township Trustees, a local private school, a local community hospital, local food purveyors and a youth organization that will program and manage the building’s gymnasium and athletic spaces. The building has approximately 135,000 square feet of usable space, including:

- Over 18,000 square feet of vocational/industrial classroom space
- An “at capacity” 9,500 seat arena
- An 840 seat auditorium that can be divided into 4 classroom/ practicum spaces
- 6,400 square foot health clinic space
- 8,200 square feet commercial kitchen
- 36,000 square feet of education and training classrooms

A planned second phase will provide housing and retail opportunities.

The Muncie Arts & Culture Trail - The Muncie Redevelopment Commission, working in conjunction with the City of Muncie, the Muncie Arts and Culture Council, and Ball State University, are seeking to develop an innovative multi-modal urban trail that will:

- Link the City of Muncie’s four cultural districts (Ball State, Downtown, Minnetrista Cultural Center and Heekin Park/South Muncie).
- Improve quality of life
- Enhance recreation and alternative transportation throughout Muncie
- Encourage economic (re)development

Known as the Muncie Arts & Culture Trail, this facility is intended to be more than a greenway or bicycle lane. The Muncie Arts & Culture Trail is a multi-use path and urban amenity that will become a branding tool and destination facility for the City of Muncie. Designed for use by individuals, children and families alike, this facility will be separated from the vehicular roadway and will provide opportunities for walkers, joggers, runners, bicyclists, roller bladers, and others to safely access the City’s existing bicycle facilities, parks, public art, schools, historic neighborhoods and business districts.

For more information on the East Central Indiana Regional Development Authority proposal, please visit http://indianaregionalcities.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/ADV_RegionalDevelopmentPlan_submission-134-pgs.pdf