

# JAY COUNTY

Strategic Investment Plan





JAY COUNTY

## LETTER FROM KEY OFFICIALS

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As President of the Jay County Commissioners, it is my pleasure to welcome you to our community. We have a history of coming together and accomplishing big things here. From the second oldest community foundation in Indiana to one of the top counties for manufacturing employment to an arts center that rivals that of large urban areas; we know how to work together to make things happen.

We knew we had to apply when the state introduced the Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program in 2021. Having wrapped up implementation of our last 10-year planning effort, 20/20 Vision, it was time for us to focus on where we were headed next. With assistance from the state partners and input from over 250 of our citizens we think we have developed a strategic investment plan that will propel us into the next decade.

As you read through the following pages, you'll learn more about some of our past triumphs and see our plans for a successful future. It is my sincere hope that you will see something that resonates with you. If so, reach out to our team to learn more.

In closing, Jay County is a welcoming place to raise a family, start a business, or retire comfortably. I encourage you to read through to see some of our next big projects.

Sincerely,

**Chad Aker**

*President, Jay County Commissioners*





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## INTRODUCTION

# Jay County, Indiana

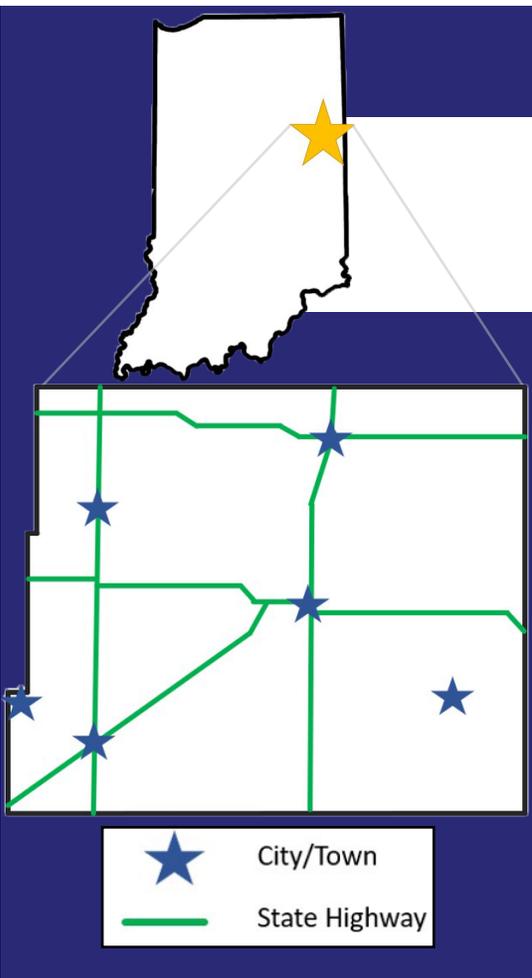
Situated along the Indiana-Ohio border in central Indiana, Jay County is a small rural community with a big personality and plenty of rich history. First inhabited by the Miami Tribe of Native Americans, Jay County's first settler arrived in 1821 with many more following in search of good farmland. Some of them, like the John and Nancy Hawkins family housed fugitive slaves and served as a station on the Underground Railroad. Jay County was named by the Indiana Legislature in 1835 to honor the first chief of justice of the United States Supreme Court - John Jay. Much to our delight, we are the only Jay County in the United States!

The early economy of the county was based on agriculture, however, the discovery of oil and natural gas in the early 1880's broadened the economic focus. During this time known as the "gas boom" many glass factories were established. Having

been home to as many as 23 of these factories, Dunkirk is still known as the "Glass Capital of Indiana". Other factories followed suit during this time and resulted in a broad base of manufacturing

covering a variety of sectors. This agricultural and manufacturing heritage continues. Today our industries range from high-end kitchen cabinets to ethanol production to automotive to grain processing to machining to furniture to packaging to food processing to mining.

Jay County is a great place to grow up, raise a family, make a career, or retire. From the first few residents and right up through today, we remain one of those communities where people still know each other. We are a good mix of small town and rural personality with bigger community amenities. We are a place to get rooted, grow, and thrive.



## MISSION & VISION

*Jay County will honor and continually cultivate the richness of our history, traditions, and strengths by:*

- Thinking strategically through the lens of our collective experience.*
- Planning our forward progress to ensure effective results.*
- Thoughtfully managing our resources for continued growth and investment in ourselves.*
- Diligently working to build increasingly positive momentum.*

*Through these actions, Jay County will remain a welcoming place to live, grow, work, and invest.*

Dig a little deeper and you will see that Jay County is so much more than farms and factories. We are a tight knit community that works together to make opportunities for ourselves. This attitude has been instrumental in our success. Given our geographic situation, we don't feel closely tied to any particular metro area. We know that if anything is going to happen in Jay County it is going to be because of our time, our efforts, our contributions - not a larger metro helping a satellite community.

Jay County has a history of creating plans and then following through on them. For instance, the 20/20 Vision plan that was created in 2010 and slated for completion in 2020 accomplished every goal except for boosting childcare capacity in the county. Unfortunately, the pilot program designed for implementation stalled with the introduction of COVID in early 2020.

We have even been working through our 2019 Indiana Stellar Regional Development Plan without receiving the Stellar designation and associated funding awards. Granted, the progress has been slower than if we had been designated, but that hasn't deterred us from moving forward. This plan contained projects addressing housing, connectivity, downtown revitalization, quality of life & tourism, and community & economic well-being. To date, we have completed:

## Housing

The downtown Dunkirk site has been secured and the blighted building removed to make room for development.

## Connectivity

- Free wireless hotspots are active at Jay County School facilities.
- A trail and park project in Bryant is currently underway.
- Dunkirk park trails have been installed.

## Downtown Revitalization

- Portland's façade improvement program has three projects in process today.
- New benches, planters, trash receptacles, and banners have been added in Portland's downtown.



## Quality of Life and Tourism

- Pennville's library expansion was completed this year.
- A new mural celebrating Dunkirk's glass heritage has been put up.
- The Jay County Campus of Arts Place recently underwent significant renovation and expansion.

## Community and Economic Well-Being

- A building has been secured and fundraising started for the early education center.

We have been assiduous in our efforts to accomplish our vision. This snapshot of over \$223 Million dollars in recent project investments demonstrates the advancements achieved. As you can see, there is significant overlap between many of the projects and initiatives in our past plans and the Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program-Strategic Investment Plan. Some projects that simply could not have happened, will now have new life breathed into them with the federal American Rescue Plan Act Funds and the matching Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) funds.



Jay County is a hotspot for manufacturing and industrial investment with over \$205 million invested in the last five years including manufacturing facilities, equipment, automation, and renewable energy installations.



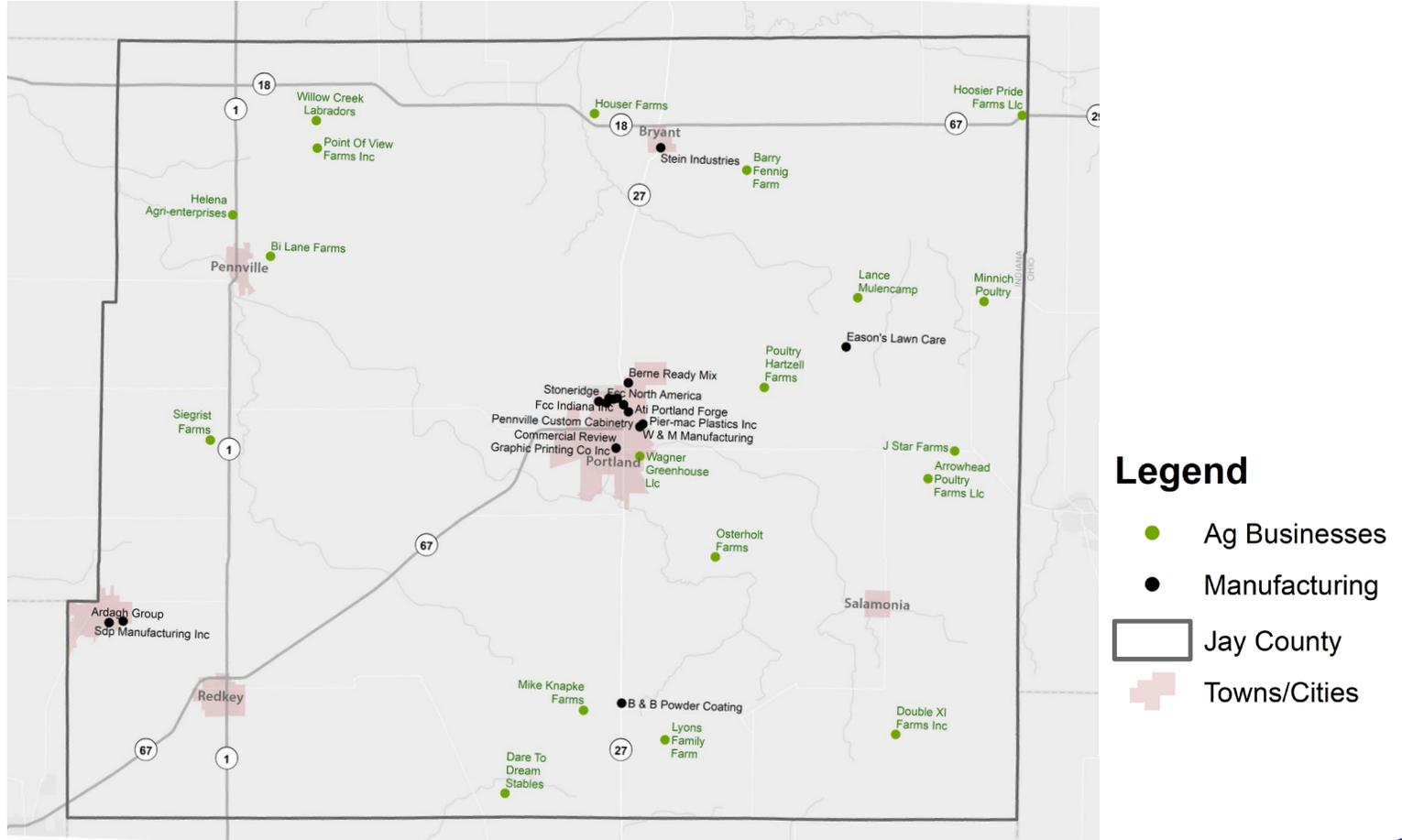
We have continued to look to the future with investments in infrastructure to allow continued growth. This is evidenced by nearly \$12 million invested in projects like paving, storm water, and sidewalk projects.

The airport recently underwent a runway extension to 5,500 feet with planned building additions bringing the investment to almost \$7 million.

Of course, we haven't forgotten our downtowns. Coming in at over \$300,000, the beautification projects in downtowns across the county are helping to breathe new life into central business districts.

Project	Local Municipal Investments	Grant Investments	Private Investments	Total Investments
JJCL - SkillsTrac Industrial Maintenance Training Equipment	\$45,276	\$1,782,000	\$145,000	\$1,972,276
Penn Township Library Expansion	\$119,216	\$333,333		\$452,549
Dunkirk Depot Renovation	\$12,100	\$41,357	\$46,900	\$100,357
Portland Municipal Airport Runway Expansion		\$1,409,115		\$1,409,115
Dunkirk Stormwater Project (announced but not started)	\$400,000	\$600,000		\$1,000,000
Dunkirk Glass Capital Mural	\$11,250	\$21,200	\$7,550	\$40,000
Portland Meridian Street Drainage (announced but not started)	\$1,290,510	\$780,450	\$350,000	\$2,420,960
Redkey Sidewalk (in process)	\$46,831	\$164,560		\$211,391
Launch Jay Small Business Pitch Competition	\$31,000			\$31,000
Arts Place Expansion and Renovation			\$2,401,889	\$2,401,889
Paving through Community Crossings Match Program (2020-2022)	\$1,811,676	\$2,816,869		\$4,628,545
Industrial and renewable energy investment (2018-2022)	\$3,197,502		\$205,728,794	\$208,926,296
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,965,361</b>	<b>\$7,948,884</b>	<b>\$208,680,133</b>	<b>\$223,594,378</b>





## Legend

- Ag Businesses
- Manufacturing
- Jay County
- + Towns/Cities

## Diverse Manufacturing

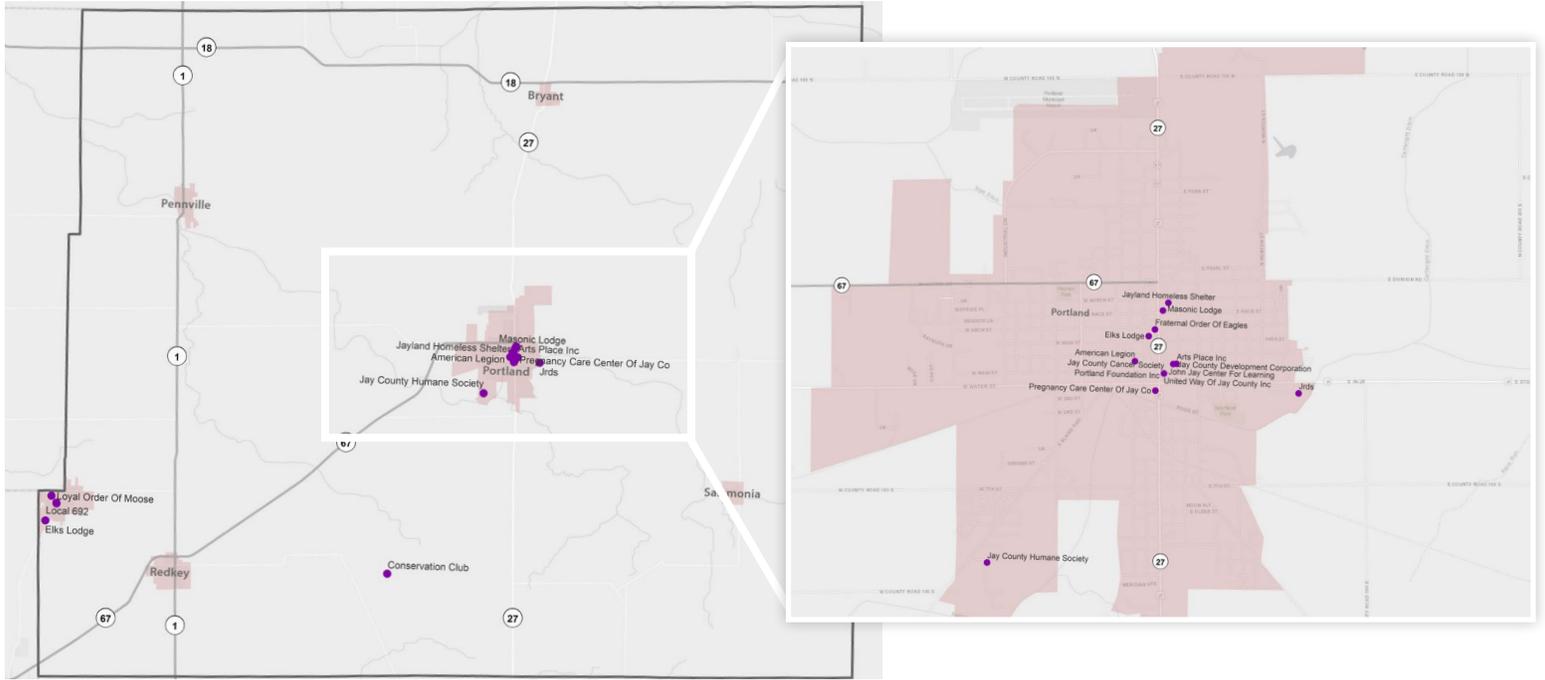
Do you own a KitchenAid mixer? Have you ever driven a Honda, Ford, Toyota, or GM product? Do you drink beer from a bottle? Do you like 11PM Taco Bell visits? If so, there's a good chance you've interacted with a product manufactured in Jay County! We are home to a wide variety of manufacturers with ownership ranging from local to international. The prominence of our manufacturing sector is reflected in our rank of 44th highest percentage of county workforce employment in manufacturing by county nationally according to data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## Unparalleled Ag Production

With historical ag roots and generations of hard work and ingenuity, Jay County leads the state in ag production, rated the #1 county in Indiana for total market value of agricultural production with over \$372 million produced in one year according to the latest US Agricultural Census. This puts us near the top 5% of all US counties!

## Immense Entrepreneurial Spirit

Jay County has a very entrepreneurial spirit with a very high ranking among counties in the nation in the change in establishment births to all establishment ratio.



### Deep-Rooted Nonprofit Support

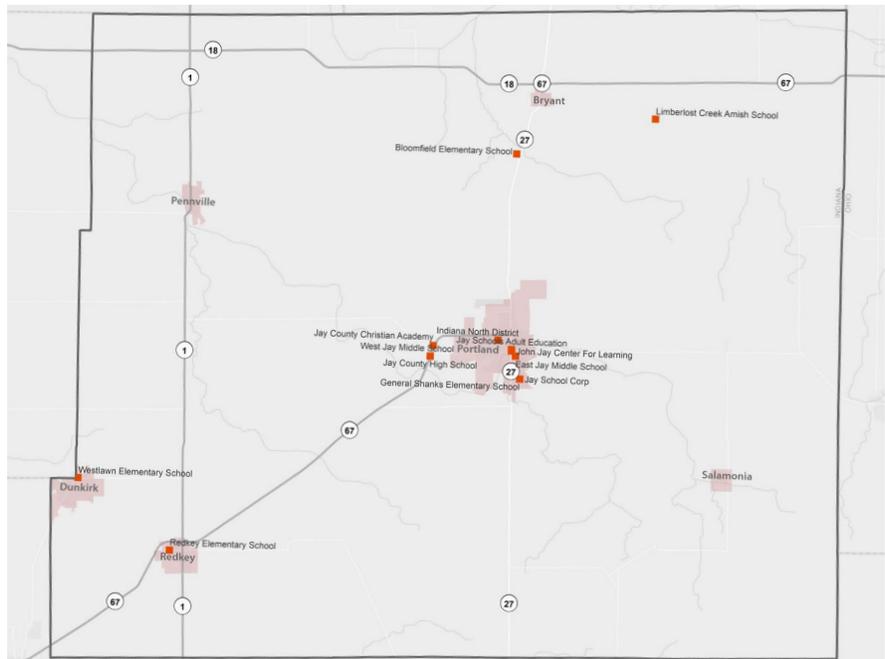
The real driver behind our success is the strength and depth of our not-for-profit groups. These groups have stood the test of time with some going back over 70 years. Each caters to a specific area of need for the county and works on behalf of the entire population.

### Quality Education

Over 83% of our high school graduates earn a college or career credential. This speaks volumes compared to the state average of 68%. This is coupled with a higher-than-average attainment of honors diplomas. In addition, Jay County boasts the John Jay Center for Learning where students and adults can further their education through partnerships with other colleges or industry specific programs for our area.

### Legend

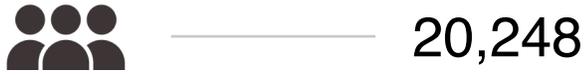
- Non-profits
- Schools
- Jay County
- Towns/Cities





# Population

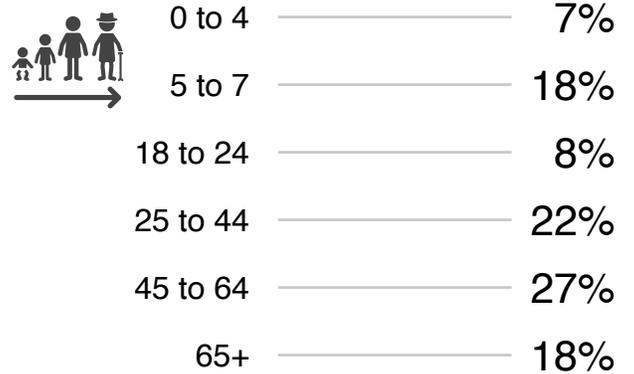
## Population (2021)



## Median Age



## Age Demographic Estimates (2020)



# Economics



## Labor Force



## Total Households



## Unemployment Rate (Annual Avg. 2021)



## Median Household Income (2020)



## Manufacturing (% All Jobs in County)



# Advancing E-Connectivity

## Broadband Expansion Phases A - D

Broadband internet access has never been more important. With the rise of e-learning, digital entertainment, virtual healthcare, and remote work, communities that lack access will be left behind. Much like other rural areas, Jay County has limited access to 100/20 speeds. Through the community engagement process our residents were encouraged to run speed tests from Purdue Center for Regional Development’s site to get a map of speeds across the county. Using this data and the number of children per census block, the e-connectivity team has chosen several projects to expand fiber optic service to areas of greatest need.

Phase A \$600,000	Phase B \$368,000	Phase C \$1,192,500	Phase D \$697,500
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### Project Scope

This project responds to COVID through connectivity for remote work, e-learning, and virtual healthcare.

# Enhancing Quality of Place

## Project 1: Childcare Facility

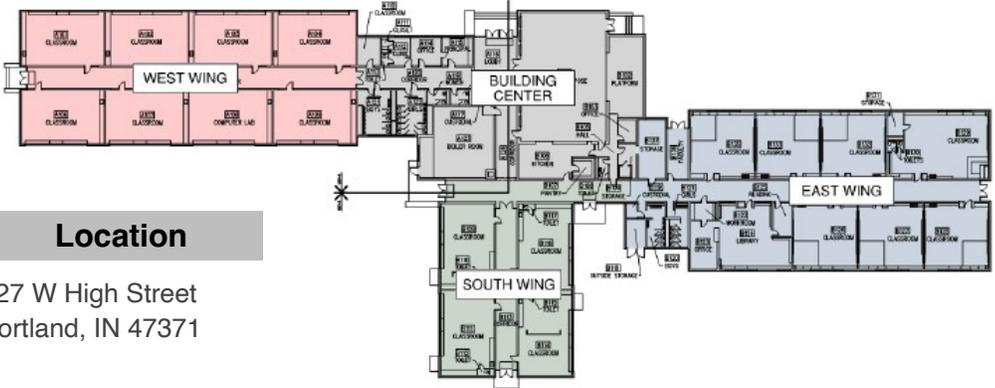
According to a 2018 report by Transform Consulting, there are nearly 1,900 children ages 0-5 in Jay County. Of these, 59% live in a household where all parents work and need care.

But the economics of child care present a challenge. It costs an average of nearly \$6,000 per year for high-quality early education for one child with infant and toddler care being even more expensive. This presents a budgeting challenge for most families – but the problem is particularly acute for a family in poverty and for what United Way calls ALICE families—Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. Even if they could afford care, families have a hard time finding openings in the limited number of child care facilities.

Earlier studies have found child care to be a critically important issue. An August 2021 report for the State of Indiana from Early Learning Indiana reiterated the importance of early childhood education.

Access to high-quality early learning opportunities is foundational to a child’s success in kindergarten and beyond, a family’s ability to achieve self-sufficiency and a community’s economic resiliency.

While there are several ways to work towards addressing this county-wide issue, detailed here is an illustrative project that is currently being reviewed. This project is illustrative of a potential piece of the puzzle to solving this problem. The project takes a former elementary school building and renovates it to become an early learning and childcare center. The building is owned by the Portland Foundation for the purpose of investigating a childcare/early learning center. Parallel to construction, an RFP would be released to determine the operator of the facility.



### Location

827 W High Street  
Portland, IN 47371

### Lot Size

~ 4 acres

### Site Description

Building is approximately 38,000 sq ft with parking lots and playground intact

### Ownership

Owned by The Portland Foundation, purchased for the purpose of creating a childcare center.

### Project Timeline

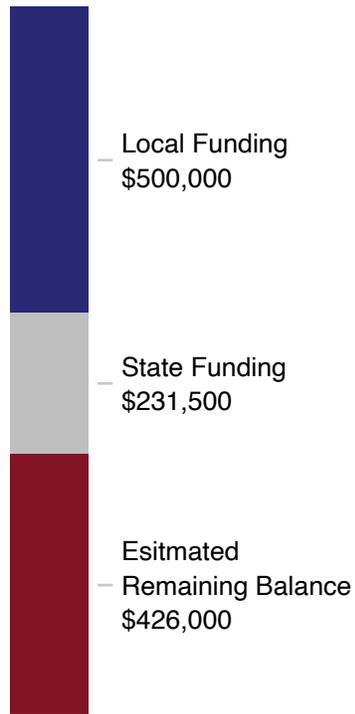
With the building already secure, construction and renovation can begin immediately upon securing the required funding. The estimated construction timeline is 8-12 months.

Two local entities have expressed interest in running the facility. Selecting one and implementing is expected to take less than 6 months and occur within the construction schedule.

### Project Scope

This project helps families that have been economically impacted by COVID by offering a childcare facility, allowing parents to work. Additionally, the facility will likely have a “sick” room where children may go after an illness to allow parents to return to work during the 24 hour “fever-free” quarantine period after illness.

### Budget



# Enhancing Quality of Place

## Program 1: Walkability Program

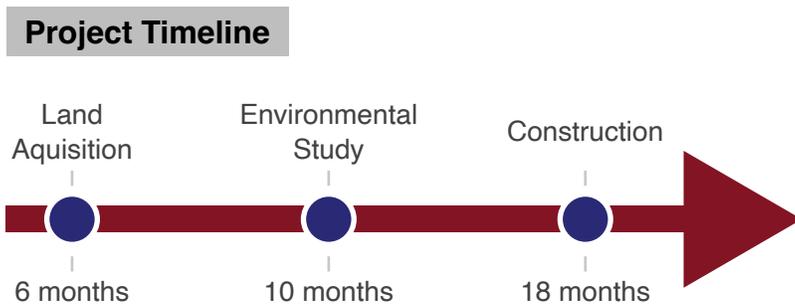
Walkability is a key need for thriving communities, especially post-COVID when the need for outdoor amenities has risen dramatically. Jay County recognizes this need and has done a significant amount of groundwork towards this aim.



- The Jay County Trails Club was formed and actively advocates for trail development and maintenance.
- In 2018, the Jay County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan was created to lay out long-term trail efforts.
- In 2021, funding was awarded for a new trail and park project in the Town of Bryant.
- Many of the municipalities in the county have and are constructing sidewalk projects through various programs such as INDOT and local fundraising.

In order to maintain the momentum, this project proposes to create a walkability fund to be used across the county to continue to improve and add sidewalks and trails across the county. Funding for projects would be recommended by a task force that would review individual projects and set priorities.

Detailed is a trail project featured in both the 2018 Jay County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan and the 2019 JayRegion Stellar Regional Development Plan. This 2.5 mile trail would connect the City of Dunkirk and the Town of Redkey, mirroring the path of the current railroad. This walking and biking path would link the two communities, providing a safe route for alternative modes of transportation.



**Location**

2.5 mile linear trail mirroring the path of the railroad between Redkey and Dunkirk.

**Ownership**

Local

**Project Scope**

- Improves connectivity within the region, connecting two prominent communities in Jay County.
- Promotes healthy lifestyles.
- Promotes tourism in the region.
- Provides quality of life amenities that attract people, businesses and investment to the region.

# Enhancing Quality of Place

## Program 2: Youth Engagement Program

Social engagement across all levels has been decreasing across the US for many years. Jay County is not immune to these trends. One area of particular focus is on increasing youth engagement. It is our team’s belief that forming social connections at an early age is crucial. This project seeks to help connect families and children with the organizations, groups, services, and activities that are intended for them through targeted outreach and marketing.



How many of us have said or heard, “There is nothing going on in Jay County”. This is unfortunate, especially given the magnitude of offerings we boast for a rural community with a population of 20,000. One recent review indicated 17 different programs offered within the Portland Park system alone - engaging approximately 2,000 participants. This did not include other programs like soccer, scouts, 4H, FFA, archery, and many other programs that are not specifically held in Portland’s parks.

This outreach may be best accomplished by coordinating with the marketing effort that is already underway. The marketing effort has also been targeted for growth and is featured as a project in this plan as well. This would be one additional extension. The project cost accounts for initial setup and three years of maintenance/upkeep.

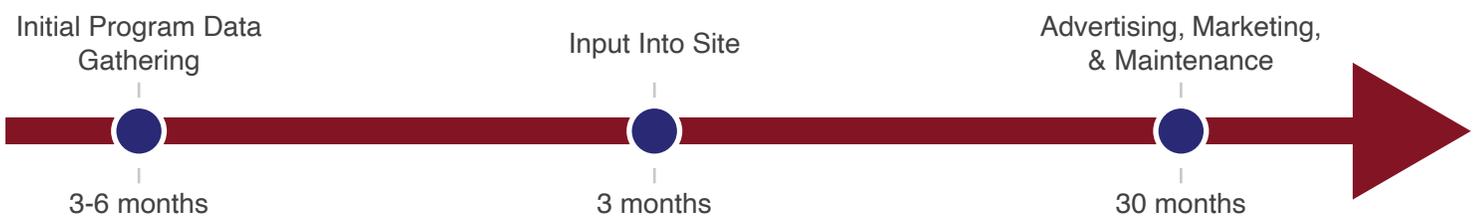
### Project Scope

- Increase social engagement and outdoor activities post COVID.
- Positive public health improvements with additional activity and social growth.
- Aid to local tourism.

### Budget

The estimated project cost is \$35,000. To date, no funding has been secured.

### Project Timeline



# Promoting Community Wellness

## Project 1: Public Safety Building

The current Jay County EMS building, located on the IU Health Jay campus has served the community for several years. Continued growth of our emergency services has led to cramped conditions for storage, sleeping quarters, and truck bays.

Concurrently, the county Health Department is housed in a former doctor’s office that was built in the 1960’s. While this has worked for many years, the building is showing its age. Additionally, the space is not well configured for social distancing during vaccination clinics and other events.



This project would combine these two functions along with an office for the coroner in a new public safety building. The building would be approximately 12,000 square feet and contain:

- 4 truck bays – the extra bay allows an ambulance located in Dunkirk to be more centrally located
- A large meeting room that can be used for training and vaccination clinics
- Additional sleeping quarters to allow more than one crew to be on duty

The site for the building location is being pursued for purchase by the county and is located on the west edge of Portland.

Consolidating three separate service locations into one facility will allow easier access for the public.

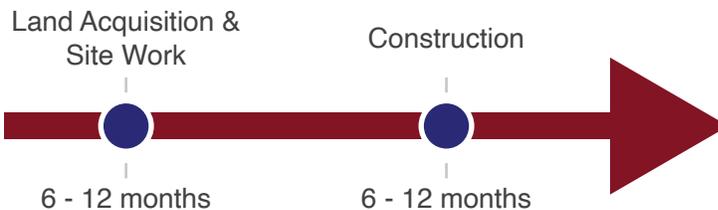
### Location

Hwy 67 on the west edge of Portland

### Lot Size

Approximately 3 acres

### Project Timeline



### Zoning

Ag/Residential, but adjacent to property zoned Highway Service

### Ownership

County is currently pursuing a purchase of the property

### Budget

Approximately \$3 million

# Promoting Community Wellness

## Program 1: Crisis Intervention Program

This project is intended to help with crises that occur within our population routinely from mental health issues. The project includes educational outreach through a created task force about: existing services, such as the 2-1-1 hotline, integration within local schools to educate volunteers and students on how to help other at-risk students, and public awareness on outreach volunteer efforts to make support and care accessible in the moment until professional help is sourced, in lieu of community shortage of mental health providers.

Additionally, the project seeks to develop community support through this education in targeted areas that are centered on social determinants of health including support related to economic stability, education access, basic housing needs, healthcare access, and community experiences.



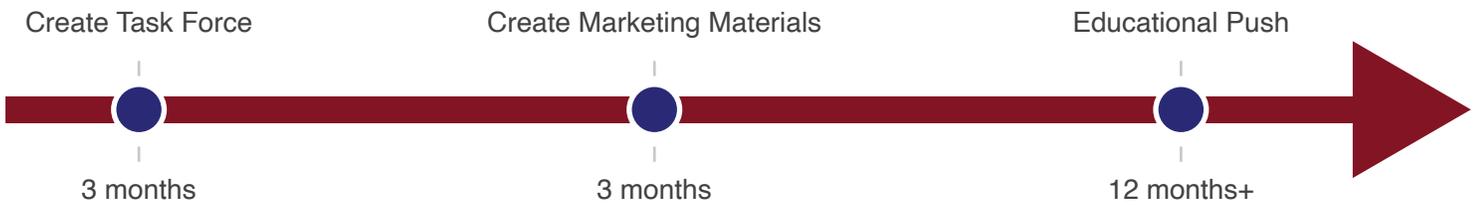
### Project Scope

Mental health issues have escalated during and since COVID. This project seeks to help reverse those trends and help with overall public health.

### Budget

The estimated project cost is \$50,000. To date, no funding has been secured.

### Project Timeline



# Promoting Community Wellness

## Program 2: In-Patient Mental Health Plan

Jay County, Indiana community members addressed “In-Patient Mental Health” as an area of concern to local community members. The concept for focused improvement is to:

- 1) Address lack of access to in-patient mental health facilities within the county. Currently community members have to be referred to out of town facilities that can exceed 50-mile radius from home. This increases risk of suicide, violence towards others and puts additional burden on existing healthcare system due to lack of resources.
- 2) Allow other healthcare providers a resource for referring patients who are a threat to themselves or who threaten others with violence due to illness related to mental health.
- 3) Prevent additional deaths / violence due to lack of available local entry points to access care.
- 4) Relieve police officers, social workers, family members, and other medical personnel who lack qualified training from the arduous responsibility of managing patients who are in desperate need of specialized medical care.
- 5) A currently unused building could be adapted to provide mental health services due to lack of local infrastructure in the traditional medical care model.



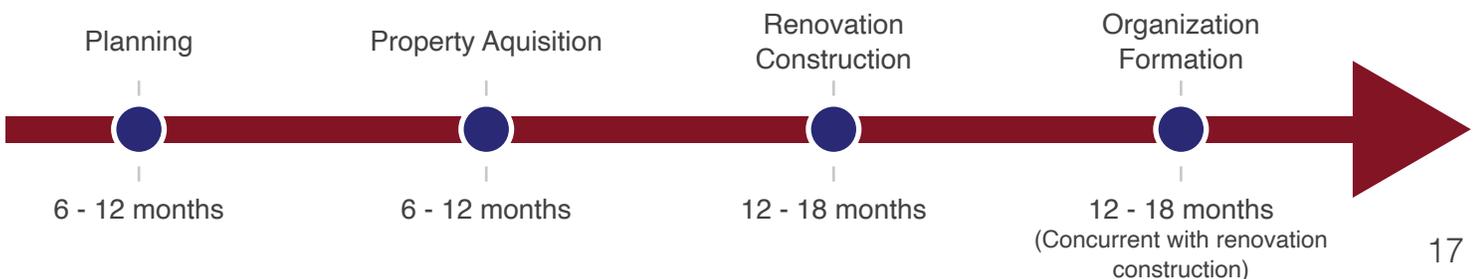
### Project Scope

Mental health issues have escalated during and since COVID. This project seeks to help reverse those trends and help with overall public health.

### Budget

The estimated project cost is \$4,500,000. To date, no funding has been secured.

### Project Timeline



# Promoting Community Wellness

## Program 2: Recovery and Reintegration Program

This project seeks to assist those with substance use disorders and mental health issues through recovery and reintegration into society. The major components of this project include: Programming to assist people nearing release or recently released from incarceration with securing a job, life skills training, behavioral coaching, social/emotional support and referral to other resources, and temporary housing during the transition period that would cost a portion of the residents' wages and require them to agree to certain rules in order to stay on the premises.

Some groups have been identified as being good resources for the programming including Jay County Drug Prevention Coalition, A Better Life Breanna's Hope, and 2nd Chance at Life Ministries. Additionally, a building formerly occupied by Community Family Services has been identified as a potential site for housing.

### Location

521 S Wayne Street, Portland, IN  
10,700 sq ft, two story, brick structure.

### Property Status

Locally owned, listed for sale,  
neighborhood business zoning.

### Lot Size

103' x 221'

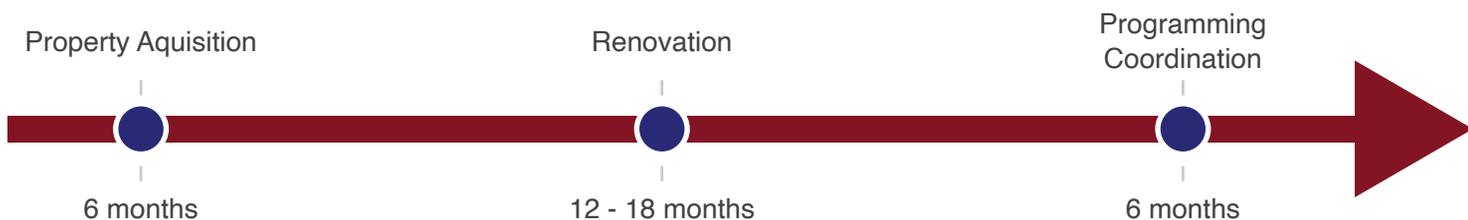
### Project Scope

- Mental health issues have escalated during and since COVID. This project seeks to help reverse those trends and help with overall public health.
- The participants in the program would largely be in economic distress.

### Budget

The estimated project cost is \$575,000.  
To date, no funding has been secured.

### Project Timeline



# Strengthening Local Economies

## Project 1: Manufacturing Incubator

Jay County is home to a diverse manufacturing base that employs a high percentage of its population. The community struggles to attract further large industry due to the size of our workforce and logistics challenges among others. The county has had a number of small manufacturers and startups looking for 5-10,000 square feet of space. This type of space is not prevalent in the county, meaning this need goes unmet.

This project will help us start and sustain local micro manufacturers - some of which will grow to tomorrow's major industries for our community - through work space, but also through a created menu of assistance to startups and small businesses. This project falls in line with the latest strategic plan from the Jay County Development Corporation.

The project consists of construction of a 30,000 square foot industrial facility in one of our industrial parks with flexibility to be reconfigured to meet different space requirements of tenants. The space would be owned by the economic development corporation with lease payments supporting the cost of construction and ongoing maintenance. The building would feature shipping dock(s), an overhead access door, office space, and open industrial space for lease. Shared space would include a conference room, restrooms, breakroom, and product display area.

Aside from the manufacturing space, the building would be open to visitors and consumers at specified times to highlight the businesses inside and give them an opportunity to market to the public. This concept has been put into practice in other locations around the country, showing that success is possible.

The project can be completed at any of Jay County's industrial parks. A complete listing and details can be found at [www.jaycountydevelopment.org](http://www.jaycountydevelopment.org). For illustrative purposes, Portland's north industrial park is featured here.



### Location

Portland Industrial Park  
East 100N, Portland, IN

### Property Status

Available, owned by Portland Economic Development Corporation, industrial zoning.

### Lot Size

Up to 50 acres.

### Project Timeline

With the property already under local control, the first step is building design. The design/build phase is expected to take approximately 18-24 months. Utilities would be extended from current to the actual building site during that window.

### Site Description

All utilities available at site.  
Access to US 27 with a mile.

### Project Scope

This project will help ease economic distress by providing resources for small businesses, some of which have been affected by COVID and the subsequent economic issues. In addition, this would be an aid to tourism.

### Budget

The estimated project cost is \$4,000,000.  
To date, no funding has been secured.

# Strengthening Local Economies

## Project 2: Mixed-Use Space

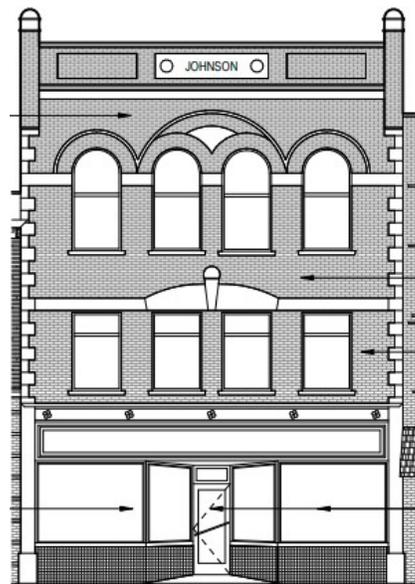
Jay County ranks very high on the Business Dynamics Index of StatsAmerica.com - 78th out of US counties. The key takeaways from this dataset are:

- Patterns of establishment formation and composition indicate a high level of business competitiveness.
- The top measures for this index are: 1) change in establishment births to all establishment ratio (rank 9th) and 2) establishment births to deaths ratio (rank 36th).

This indicates that our community is very good at creating businesses. However, this poses a challenge in the form of providing space for these startups. The mixed use space project will ease that burden by providing flexible space for small retailers, eateries, and service businesses. The ideal location would be a fairly large space, centrally located within one of our cities or towns, and have easy access. The building would be configured to allow flexibility so that as a business grows it can use more space or move on to another location, freeing up space for another small business.

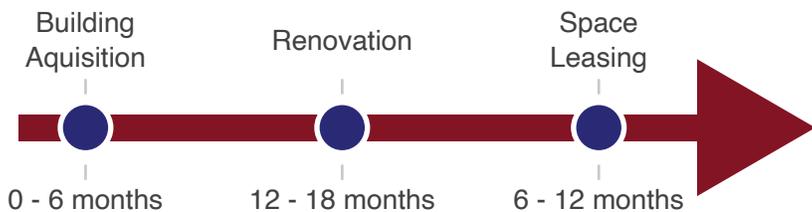
In addition, the site can feature co-working space for remote workers and even boutique lodging such as an AirBNB to further entice visitors and increase tourism in the area.

While there are sites available in multiple municipalities across the county, this project listing will focus on one location in Portland that has been identified as a potential site. The former McClurg building is a vacant downtown building encompassing approximately 4,000 sq ft of space on the first floor. A raised concrete patio at the rear of the building backs onto Brick Alley, a brick lined area recently created as a placemaking project for community gathering. These two adjoining spaces elevate each other in terms of use and attraction. The space is in the heart of downtown Portland with well over a hundred employed within a single block radius.



\*sample image, unintended for use

### Project Timeline



### Location

105 W Main Street  
Portland, IN 47371

### Property Status

Privately held, commercial  
business zoning.

### Lot Size

52' X 132'

### Project Scope

This project responds to COVID through assisting small business growth in the post COVID economy. Additionally, it will aid tourism in the immediate area.

### Budget

The estimated project cost is \$450,000. To date, no funding has been secured.

# Strengthening Local Economies

## Project 3: Pop-Up Restaurant

Time and again, residents express a desire for more dining choices. The pressures COVID exerted on the dining sector since early 2020 have been enormous. With little expansion during this time, the “Pop Up” Restaurant project seeks to spur eatery development.

The project consists of renovating an existing property and installing a certified kitchen and seating area that is versatile enough to be used for different types of food. The space will then be rented to an entrepreneur for a limited time to open a restaurant to advertise their food idea to the community. This relieves some of the burden of startup costs to help vet a restaurant. Upon successful launch and growth, the entrepreneur would find another space to

expand allowing the building to be leased to the next in line.

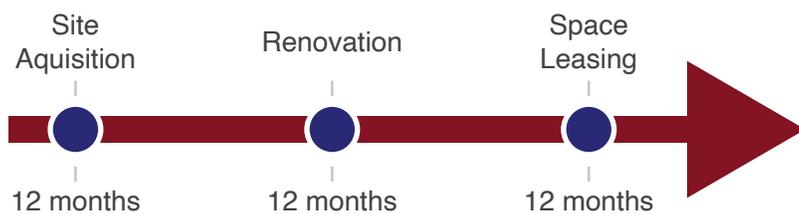
Between startups, the kitchen can also be used to bring chefs into the community for special events. This allows more diversity and community building among residents.

It makes the most sense for the property to be located inside the Riverfront District of Portland. This allows the restaurants an opportunity to get a lower cost liquor license, further incentivizing successful startup and growth.

For illustrative purposes, a building in Portland will be detailed.



### Project Timeline



### Site Description

The building is a former law office in the central business district of Portland. Situated along US 27, the site has a high level of foot and motor vehicle traffic.

### Location

123 N Meridian Street  
Portland, IN 47371

### Property Status

Not listed, privately held,  
commercial business zoning.

### Lot Size

22' X 132'

### Project Scope

This project responds to COVID through assisting small business growth in the post COVID economy. Additionally, it will aid tourism in the immediate area.

### Budget

The estimated project cost is \$650,000. To date, no funding has been secured.

# Strengthening Local Economies

## Program 1: Promoting Housing Development

Jay County has identified housing as a priority in previous planning efforts including the most recent strategic plan for Jay County Development. In pursuit of this need, the following actions have already been taken:

- A housing task force was created with representation from a variety of sectors including county and city officials, real estate, law practice, small business, economic development, industry, financial/lender, nonprofit, and others.
- A housing study was completed in 2020 to identify types and quantities of needed housing.
- Potential properties have been identified for development.
- Discussions have been started with multiple developers.

In order to fulfill the long term needs of the community related to housing, the major components of this project are: Designate funding to be used towards spurring housing development. Specifically, the funding could be used towards the purchase of property, installing or upgrading infrastructure, site work, completing engineering studies, design work, or owner-occupied rehab. Utilize the existing housing task force to review and recommend disbursements to the county. This group would review requests, prioritize, and make recommendations to the county for fund distribution.

Detailed is one development from our 2019 Stellar Regional Development Plan that includes the construction of 16 market rate townhouses in downtown Portland. Each is 1,100 - 1,300 sq ft containing 2-3 bedrooms and an attached two-car garage.

### Location

W Main Street  
Portland, IN 47371

### Property Status

Not listed, locally held,  
commercial business zoning.

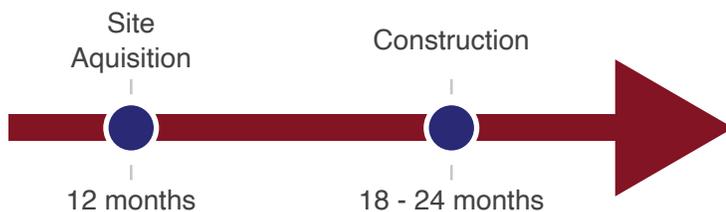
### Lot Size

132' X 132'

### Budget

The estimated project cost is \$852,600. To date, no funding has been secured.

### Project Timeline



### Project Scope

- Increases the availability of housing in Downtown Portland, increasing foot traffic downtown and the demand for commercial and retail.
- This project promotes walkability.
- The increase in housing units facilitates the attraction of new residents to the region. This project increases the attractiveness of downtown and the attractiveness for potential investors or developers.

# Strengthening Local Economies

## Program 2: Jay County Marketing Program

Jay County can be an enigma to the outside world, even sometimes to ourselves. For a community our size, positioned between two metro areas, it seems there is more activity than one would expect. There is literally a public activity occurring somewhere in the county on practically every day of the year. However, many residents and tourists are unaware of the depth and breadth of involvement possibilities.

The County Marketing project seeks to create and administer a targeted marketing effort for all of Jay County. This effort would be spearheaded by a new staff person at one of our not-for-profit institutions and would target four audiences:

1. Current residents
2. Returning visitors
3. Potential new residents
4. Potential new visitors

The successful campaign would build from the assets already in existence:

- The JayRegion website and social media
  - Offers information on living, working, playing, starting a business, and getting connected in Jay County
- Jay County Visitor and Tourism Bureau website and social media
- Local media
  - WPGW
  - The Commercial Review
  - The News and Sun
- Yodel - the recently announced community calendar software expected to launch in January 2023



In addition, the campaign would align with the new INIndiana marketing efforts to create synergy with the state and cast a wider net.

The project consists of hiring a staffer to gather the information, create content, and manage the forward looking sites. Other parts of the project include sourcing AV equipment and advertising outside the county.

### Budget

Local Funding  
\$30,000

Estimated Remaining Balance  
\$120,000

### Project Timeline

The timeline for implementation of the initial project is within a 12 month period. However, the project accounts for three years of operational expenses.

### Project Scope

This project specifically aids tourism in Jay County's post COVID economy. It additionally seeks to help reverse long-term population trends.

# Strengthening Local Economies

## Program 3: Downtown Revitalization Program

Downtown building utilization and upkeep have been identified as key issues for many rural communities. Jay County is no exception. This project seeks to enhance the built environment in Jay County’s downtowns as a major step towards revitalization. This project is the culmination of four separate facade improvement programs that were featured in the 2019 JayRegion Stellar Regional Development Plan. The project would expand existing programs already in place in both Portland and Dunkirk. It would replicate those programs for Redkey and Pennville.

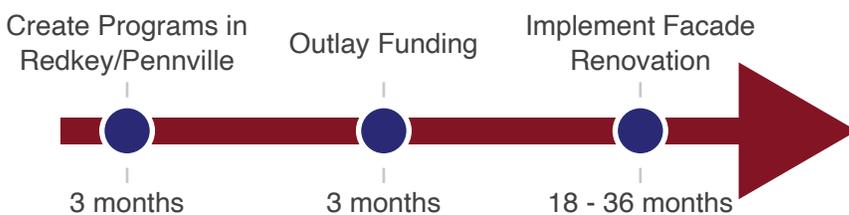


The goals for this project include:

- Increases the attractiveness of downtowns across the county.
- Increases foot traffic downtown.
- Increases business sales and business establishment downtown.
- Increases living units downtown.
- Promotes an overall economic well-being for the downtowns.
- Facilitates tourism in the region.

Having successful models already in place in two communities will help for quicker program creation in the other two communities. All the structures that will participate are already privately held. The facade committees in each community will help the cities and towns prioritize and administer the funds.

### Project Timeline



### Budget

The estimated project cost is \$2,288,847. To date, no funding has been secured.

### Project Scope

- Increases foot traffic downtown.
- Increases business sales and business establishment downtown.
- Increases living units downtown.
- Promotes an overall economic well-being for the downtowns.
- Facilitates tourism in the region.

### Location

Downtown areas of Portland, Dunkirk, Redkey, and Pennville

# Strengthening Local Economies

## Program 4: Blight Elimination

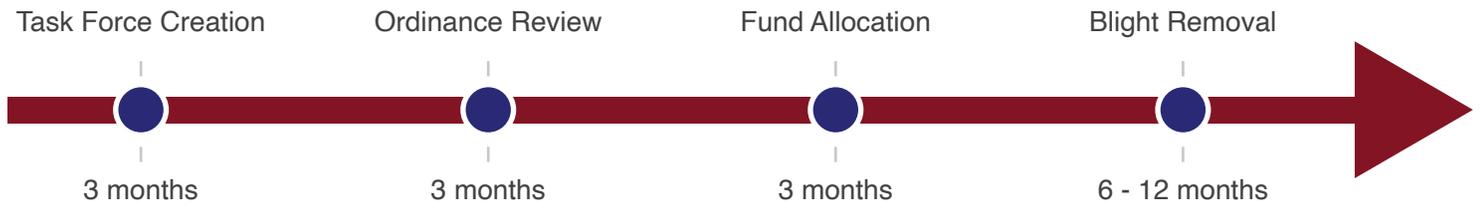
The blight elimination program for Jay County municipalities and outlying county areas will facilitate the removal or rehabilitation of abandoned residences, structures, and commercial buildings. The program will include funds for a task force to:

- Help create and ensure compliance to ordinances.
- Identify, secure, and eliminate blighted structures.
- Facilitate repurposing of formerly blighted properties.

The task force will take previous local efforts like Dunkirk’s effective residential blight elimination program into account, as well as the efforts in other communities. Efforts are already underway to review other communities’ ordinances related to blight.

A successful effort will recover some funds through the sale and repurposing of formerly blighted properties, allowing the effort to continue into the future.

### Project Timeline

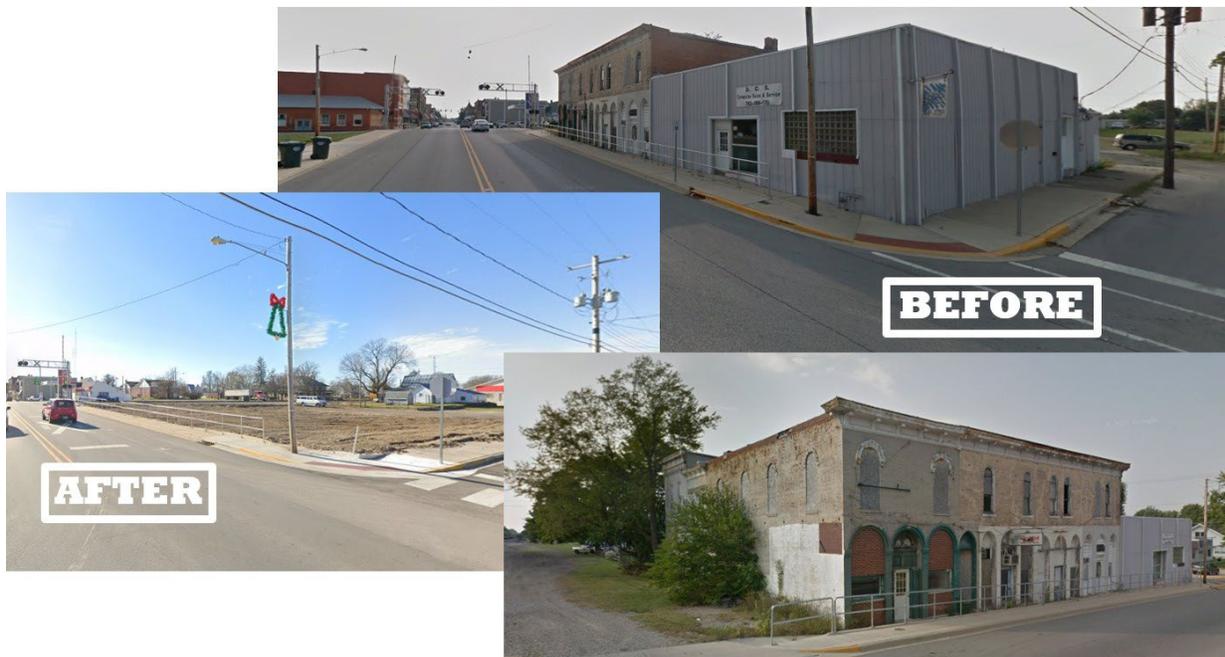


### Project Scope

- Removes unsafe properties.
- Allows property to be repurposed for greater community well-being.

### Budget

The estimated project cost is \$750,000. To date, no funding has been secured.



## What were the COVID-19 community impacts and responses?

While the effects of COVID struck the nation in ways no one expected, Jay County did what we do best – we entered the situation together knowing that we needed to look out for our fellow residents, business owners, and families.

The community supported our small businesses, our industries continued to employ our residents, the Portland Foundation provided grants for food banks, and mobile hotspots were made available for students to allow participation in e-learning. Perhaps the most far-reaching program was a food pickup and delivery service through the Jay School Corporation. Through this program the school provided 450,000 meals using buses and pick-up sites across the county.

The long-term effects of COVID are still being sorted out but through the HELP initiative and the funding that is available, we can complete projects that will help. Whether it is recovery from illicit drug use or a quality of place project designed to help reverse population trends, these projects will help us plan for and build a better future.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Jay County HELP Core Team engaged with the community in a variety of ways to maximize input:

- Created a website that contained information related to HELP, surveys, and contact forms.
- Mailed postcards with a brief explanation of HELP, QR code for the website, and a phone number to call and ask questions or make project suggestions.
- The school corporation sent an email to all parents with the same information as the postcards.
- Placed ads in our local media – radio and newspaper.
- Conducted radio interviews.
- Walked through the Fourth of July parade and handed out treats with QR codes for the online survey.
- Set up a booth at the Jay County Fair and conducted in person surveys with prizes given daily to a randomly selected survey taker.
- Personally solicited volunteers to sit on pathway committees.
- Spoke about the process and how to get involved in several public meetings – county commissioners, council, redevelopment commission, Jay County Development Corporation board meetings, and others.
- Hosted a community forum.
- Posted updates and other information on social media accounts.

Through this process we were able to engage with nearly 300 people by counting surveys and pathway committee members. In addition, the Enhancing E-Connectivity committee advertised the Purdue Center for Regional Development speed test to help build a map of current internet speeds and coverage. We were able to get over 800 speed tests completed in a month!



Also of particular note, the Promoting Community Wellness pathway committee is continuing to meet to create a “Community Wellness Navigator”. This navigator will be a tool to show all the health and wellness resources that are available for Jay County residents. Many in this committee felt that this project fell outside the scope of HELP – both in timing and with negligible costs – but felt it was critical.



**Travis Richards**

*Executive Director*  
Jay County Development Corporation



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🌐 jaycountydevelopment.org

SPECIAL THANKS



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Jay County Council

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**Doug Inman**  
*Executive Director*  
The Portland Foundation

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**Trent Paxson**  
*Assistant Superintendent*  
Jay School Corporation

✉ tpaxson@jayschools.k12.in.us



## Pathway Teams

### Advancing E-Connectivity

Trent Paxson	Core Team Member/Education/Jay School Corporation/ Assistant Superintendent
Sarah Paxson	Community Resident
Rusty Inman	Executive Director at the John Jay Center for Learning/ Continuing Education
Leland LeMaster	Retired/Optimist Club-Non-profit Organization
Matt Glentzer	Owner of Napa and REMAX Realty
Neil Draper	President/CEO of REMC/Utility Company
John Boggs	Local Government/Mayor
John Moore	Retired Navy Officer, Project Manager, and International Consultant-Volunteers on many local organizations

### Enhancing Quality of Life

Doug Inman	Core Team Member/Executive Director of Portland Foundation-Non-profit
Eric Rogers	Cultural Non-profit/Arts Place
Tabby Sprunger	Chamber of Commerce Executive Director
LeRoy Brown	Local Entrepreneur/Blacksmith Shop & Valhalla Axe Hall
Mark Leavell	Local Businessman & Non-profit/Redkey Junktion & Redkey Fun for Kids/Industrial Manufacturing
Mike Medler	Local Businessman/Medler's Furniture
John Bell	Retired Disability/Horticulture/Truck Driver
Allison Keen	Extension Educator/4-H Youth Development/Purdue Extension
Amy Smith	Community Resident
Erin Ransom	Special Education Teacher/Jay School Corporation/Religious Sector/Wife of Local Pastor
Tonja McClain	Community Resident
Barbara Street	JCDC Executive Board/Retired CEO of Eastern Indiana Workforce Development
Brian McGalliard	Jay County Commissioner
Carolyn Carducci	Community Resident

Pathway Teams

Promoting  
Community  
Well-Being

Chad Aker	Core Team Member/Jay County Commissioner-LUG
Tracy Carpenter	First Bank of Berne
Christina Schemenaur	Vice President/COO/CNO for IU Jay Health Hospital
Jennifer Blackford	Education/Jay School Corporation
Shaylee Myron	Community Volunteer/Pennville Community Center/Speech Language Therapist at Blackford County Schools
Reda Theurer	Mainstreet and Former Youth Service Director
Lisa Peterson	Community Resident
Joe Acker	Group Manufacturing Director of Tyson/Industry
Jenny Bricker	Co-Owner of Portland True Value
Shawnda Roussey	Business Management & Scheduling Director for Adams Physical Therapy
Kyle Roussey	Mental Health Therapist/Psychotherapist at Community Health Network in Kokomo
Aaron Huey	Preacher at Local Church/Religious Sector
Angela Twigg	Health Field/Community Resident
Andrew Wood	Community Resident
Aaron Loy	
Josh Gibson	Physical Education Teacher-Jay School Corporation/Education
Kyle Love	Robotics Teacher/Jay School Corporation/Education
Ashley Keen	
Brenda Eads	
Drew Wood	
Gary Schmiesing	
Joe Johnston	Retired Hospital CEO
PJ Corwin	Executive Director of Youth Service Bureau/Nonprofit

Strengthening  
Local Economies

Travis Richards	Core Team Member Executive Director of Economic Development
Jeanne Houchins	Core Team Member Small Business & LUG/Progressive Office Supply & County Council
Rob Weaver	Local Radio Station/WPGW
Adolfo Solis	Local Entrepreneur/Cleaning, Fabrication, and Handyman Businesses
Emily Goodrich	Owner of Goodrich Brewery/Local Business
Hannah Long	Owner of Bizy-Dips/Local Business
Chip Teegarden	Retired from Law Enforcement
Cesar Antiona Gonzalez	Community Resident
Brayden Lilly	Community Resident
Rex Journey	County Commissioner
Kenci Grayson	Owner of Live in Joy/Local Business
Angela Paxson	First Bank of Berne/AgriBusiness Loan Officer/Bank/Lending Institution
LeAnn Miller	Small Business Owner/Interior Design

