



Nov 10, 2025

Wabash County Courthouse  
1 W. Hill St.  
Wabash, IN 46992

Dear Wabash County Commissioners,

Grow Wabash County deeply values our partnership and our shared mission to foster economic growth, attract investment, and support the businesses and residents of Wabash County.

Over the years, our role has expanded significantly, and we now serve as staff support for several county authorities, coordinate with state and regional partners, manage site readiness and databases, and provide regular reporting, outreach, and convening. These efforts have generated measurable returns for Wabash County. In 2024 alone, we:

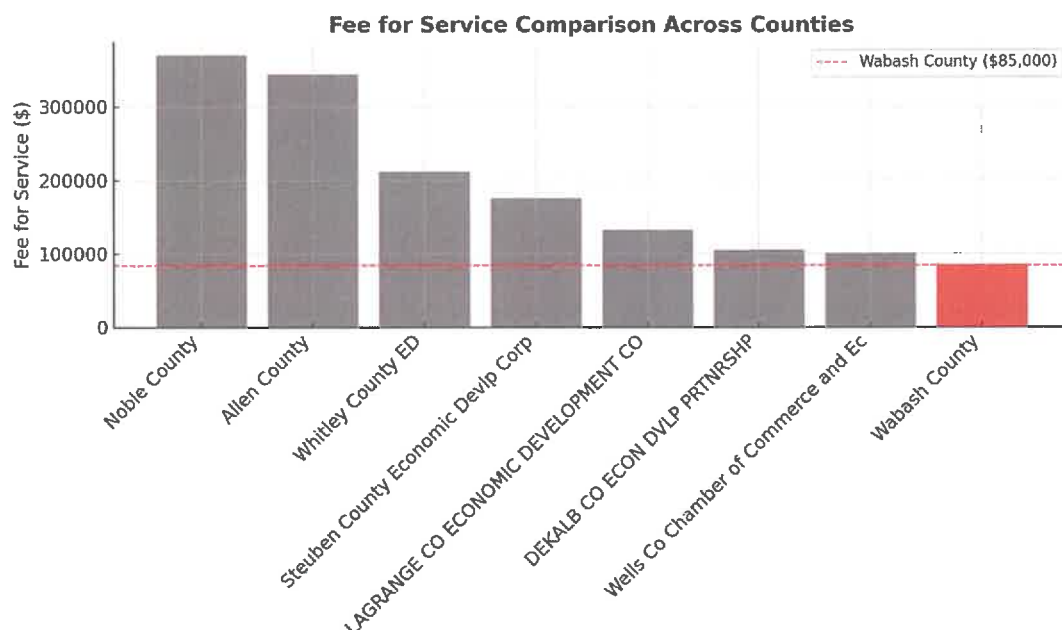
- Facilitated \$173.5 million in private investment and supported 348 jobs (60 new / 288 retained).
- Secured 232 industrial acres with Shovel Ready Gold certification and secured an option on 155 acres that will bring the largest investment in our county's history which is coming soon
- Leveraged \$7,170,668 in grant funding from nine partners and helped achieve Wabash County's Stellar Pathways designation, unlocking quality-of-life projects all over the county.
- Provided \$224,508 in scholarships for workforce training and graduated 24 emerging leaders with IU micro-credentials.

These results reflect a clear return on investment: **every dollar committed to Grow Wabash County helps generate new jobs, retain existing employers, grow property and income tax revenue, and bring in outside dollars** from programs like Lilly Blight, READI, and Stellar. In short, this investment reduces the burden on local government while expanding the county's revenue base.

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When compared to neighboring counties, Wabash County invests significantly less in its economic development services:



At \$85,000 annually, Wabash County is well below NE regional peers, despite GWC carrying a full countywide portfolio of responsibilities and punching way above our weight class. While we remain committed to serving Wabash County, it is important that the fee-for-service contract align realistically with the scope of work and the value being generated.

For future years, we respectfully request that the Commissioners consider an adjustment to the county's annual investment in Grow Wabash County. Doing so will ensure we can sustain and expand services that directly create revenue for the county through tax growth, retained jobs and leveraged outside funding.

We look forward to continuing this partnership and working with you to secure a strong, prosperous future for Wabash County.

Sincerely,

*Tenille Zartman*

Tenille Zartman, President & CEO  
Grow Wabash County

Enclosed: Wabash County Commissioners Fee for Service 2026 Contract with Grow Wabash County.

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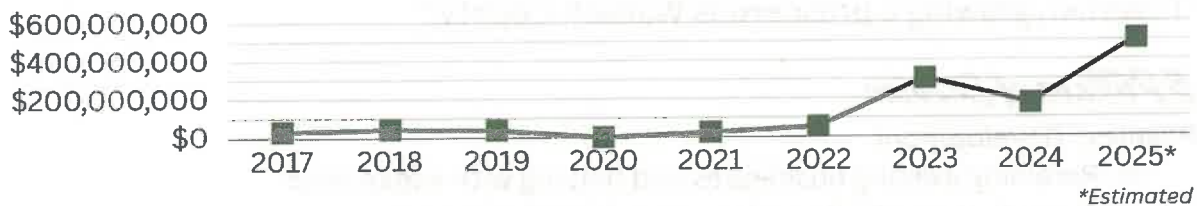
## Winning for Wabash County



Thanks to the ongoing work of **Grow Wabash County** and its partners, **Wabash County** enjoys continued, **unprecedented growth and progress** as we move the needle toward and even brighter future!

### *What we've been up to since GWC was established (2017)*

**Record-breaking business growth:** 2023 & 2024 set records for new **investment** in business and on track to continue this trend in 2025-2026



**Rising wages:** Local average hourly wage saw a **46% increase** (2017-2025) from **\$16.06 to \$23.44**

**Job Creation:** **807** new jobs created

**Jobs Retained:** **16,429** jobs retained (2023)

**Business Leads:** **61** active business leads

**Project Wins:** **26 confirmed wins**, several others in progress (**43% win rate**)

**Per Capita Personal Income:** **43% increase** (\$39,571 → \$56,584 2017-23)

**Gross domestic product (GDP): 46.2% increase**  
(2017 → 2023 \$1684.6M → \$1152.6M)

**Workforce Development:** **232** scholarships awarded, totaling **\$616,649** directly invested in residents; leveraged over **\$1M** in additional outside funds for high-demand certifications

**State Recognition:** Duke Energy **Site Readiness Property** (2024); **Stellar Pathways Community**, OCRA (2024-2025)

**Nationwide recognition:** Earned **Top 100 Micropolitan** ranking in both 2024 & 2025 by **Site Selection Magazine** for business investment.

**Global recognition:** **FDI Certified Community Award**, Speculative Building Developments



# About Grow Wabash County



**Grow Wabash County** is the joint economic development and chamber of commerce nonprofit organization for Wabash County.

## ***Mission Statement***

“Together, growing a prosperous Wabash County.”

## ***5 Pillars of Service***

### ***Business Development***

- Retaining existing businesses and helping with expansions
- Attracting new business investment & job creation
- Facilitating processes between business and government
- One stop for business from site selection to talent development to growth assistance

### ***Entrepreneurship***

- Direct support and connections to entrepreneurship coaches and mentors
- Financials Support and resource navigation
- Education support and resources

### ***Workforce Development & Attraction***

- Coordinate trainings according to local employer needs
- Spearheaded Adult Education Center construction plans
- Provide scholarship funding to Wabash County residents to pursue training
- Involvement in the schools to support next generation of the workforce
- Attract new talent to live and work in Wabash County

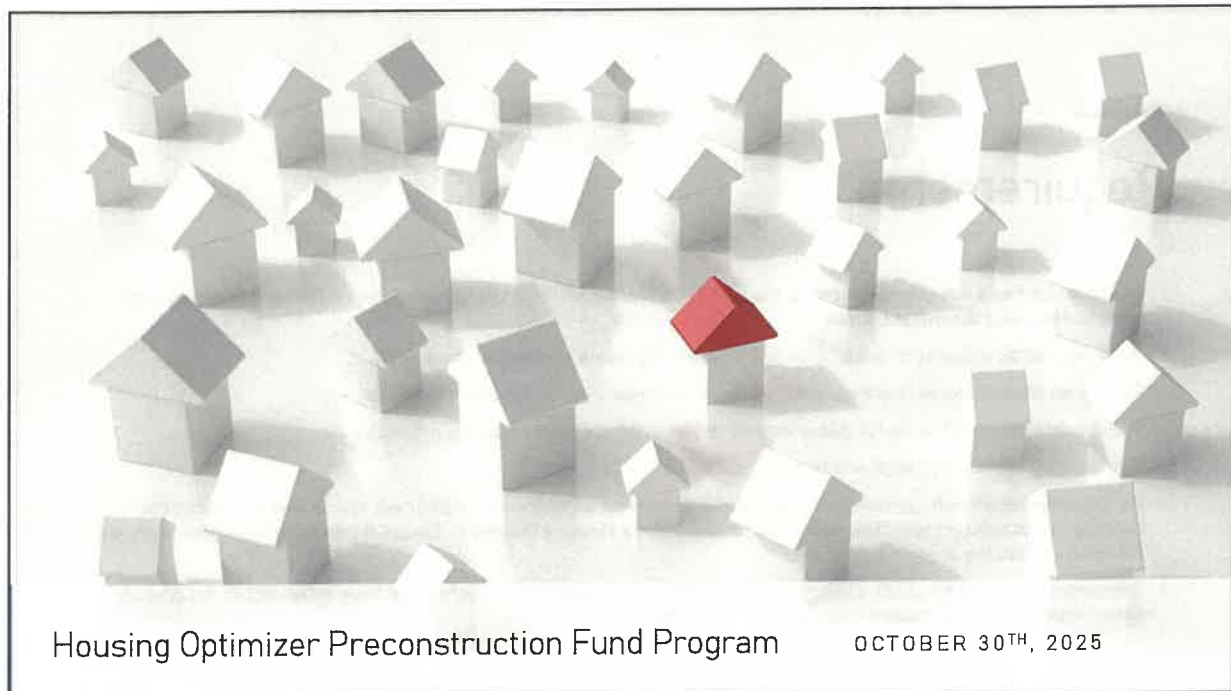
### ***Investor Services***

- Marketing opportunities at events and GWC social channels
- Business referrals
- FREE education and networking events

### ***Livability***

- Support QOL projects to make Wabash County a great place to live
- Support housing projects across Wabash County






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## Purpose

- The Housing Optimizers Preconstruction Grant Program is designed to provide grant funds for sustainable financial support for preconstruction activities, including architectural planning, permitting, land acquisition deposits, and related expenses. This program offers seed funding to facilitate early-stage project development and/or organizational formation, or bolster the efforts of existing organizations. These funds would be made available to organizations that are engaged in the capacity building activities supported by the NEISDC to encourage sustainable, community-led housing development beyond the initial funding available to the region.



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## Requirements

- Be recognized as a housing optimizer by the NEISDC. ENGAGE WITH CLUB720's Planner on Demand Program and complete Housing Optimizer Course
- Be sponsored by a County or Second- or Third-Class City with a population above 5000.
- Provide an organizational financial stability plan. – Five-year plan for Financial Sustainability
- Provide detailed use of funds for disbursement requests for applicable housing projects.
- Maintain compliance with local and federal regulations.
- Be a countywide or multi-jurisdiction or jurisdiction organization endorsed by all cities, towns, and the county that oversee the jurisdiction operating within the territory of the Housing Optimizer. Except for municipalities that preclude themselves from the organization.
- Sponsored agent can be LEDO, CDC, Housing Authority, and eligible fiscal agent must have active 501-c designation; Other organization may make a case for their eligibility.

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### Approved Uses of Funds:

Funds must be used exclusively for preconstruction-related expenses towards new housing activation or delivery, including:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Prior to establishment or prior to SDC recognition, Housing Optimizer Funds may be used to reimburse cost of course. | 6. Land acquisition deposits/purchases (all land purchased must have active work towards development within one calendar year of closing) |
| 2. Design service costs & fees – must provide use case for services rendered  | 7. Environmental assessments, and/or environmental remediation  |
| 3. Master Planning/Urban Design – provide use case for services rendered  | 8. Legal  |
| 4. Zoning/Permitting costs  | 9. Project Management   |
| 5. Surveying  | 10. Other approved predevelopment activities, as determined by SDC  |

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## Application Process

- 1. Delivered opt-in resolution to SDC by no later than December 31, 2025.
- 2. Pre-Application Screening: Submit initial business and financial information for review via online portal. For initial submissions for new housing optimizer, this step shall include organizational presentation to the NEISDC.
- 3. Full Application Submission: Provide a complete proposal, including a project plan, financial statements, and required documentation. By March 31, 2026.
- 4. Approval and Agreement Signing: Receive approval and execute the Grant Agreement. Dependent on Approval by SDC.
- 5. Fund Disbursement: Request and receive Advances as needed within the Draw Period. Dependent on accepted and approved plan by the SDC.

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Questions?

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## Next Step

### PLANNER ON DEMAND

Ryan Chasey

[ryan@yourhousingresource.org](mailto:ryan@yourhousingresource.org)

Madison Morrison

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### HOUSING OPTIMIZER FUND PROGRAM

Jacob Ihrie

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