

# DOWNTOWN FORT WAYNE REAUTHORIZATION PETITION

## Dear Downtown Fort Wayne (DTFW) Stakeholder:

Our organization celebrates 30 years of serving the Downtown this year, and it has been an extraordinary journey serving an ever-evolving city center. The last ten years have brought some of the most significant growth that we have seen in recent history, with the collective value of Downtown property nearly doubling and new developments – residences, hotels, entertainment venues – changing the landscape of Downtown.

2025 also marks the end of our Economic Improvement District (EID) – the funding mechanism that fuels the services we provide to you and allows us to leverage other contributions from local government and grants to invest in impactful services and programs that go well beyond what the City or any one of us as stakeholders can do alone. Since 1995, every ten years, you have voted to support the EID to be the financial backbone of our services. And today, we are asking you to support us again.

The Downtown Fort Wayne Board of Directors and Staff have used the reauthorization process as an opportunity to take a fresh look at Downtown's needs today while forecasting the change that will continue to reshape and refine the heart of the city. In addition to ensuring comprehensive services to the existing district area, neighborhoods on our borders are opting in, too. We have also engaged the support of the City of Fort Wayne, Allen County, and many other community partners to ensure your EID resources are leveraged and invested most effectively.

We hope you'll consider supporting a renewed 10-year term for Downtown Fort Wayne's EID and that you'll sign the petition to support another 10 years of our services Downtown.

### 2025 Board of Directors

**Greg Allen**, Premier Bank

**Lorie Ailor**, Lutheran Health Network

**Amanda Muldoon**, Hanning & Bean Enterprises

**Tom Ludwiski**, Barrett McNagny

**Zach Barrett**, Barrett & Stokely

**Rich Beck**, Allen County Commissioners

**Michelle Chambers**, City Council of Fort Wayne

**Tiffany Fries**, Surack Enterprises

**Pete Henry**, Midwest Pipe & Steel

**Brittany Kruse-Andrews**, Ash Crest Corp.

**Harley Parsons**, Catalyst Marketing Design

**Matt Reckman**, Model Group

**Andrea Robinson**, City of Fort Wayne

**Theoplis Smith III**, Phresh Laundry

**Bob Walters**, Downtown Property Owner



# SERVICES TO BE FUNDED BY DOWNTOWN FORT WAYNE'S EID:

## A DISTINCTIVE IDENTITY

- Champion a Downtown master plan that considers growth, connectivity, and how to grow activity centers.
- Establish distinctive nodes of Downtown that are aligned with identity, offer, and experience.
- Comprehensive wayfinding signage and placemaking plans that align with node identity.
- Continue to build the Downtown brand through physical expansion and differentiation.
- Embrace neighborhood corridors by including their offer and opportunity in planning.

## CLEAN(ER) AND GREEN(ER)!

- Continue to build on the success of the Clean & Green program, adding resources to address challenging areas.
- Ensure the entire district receives a consistently high level of service.
- Expand snow removal at key intersections and critical access areas.
- Invest in public realm enhancements that reinforce a sense of place.

## A SAFE, WELCOMING, AND ACCESSIBLE ENVIRONMENT

- Invest in a team for the Ambassador program, providing proactive safety patrols and services, engagement with the unhoused population, coordination with police and service providers and hospitality functions as well (Note: DTFW plans to launch a safety Ambassador pilot program in 2025 utilizing a \$50K grant – funding to sustain the program will be needed).
- Invest in lighting needs throughout the district to address safety and areas of concern.
- Establish a strategy to address transportation, parking, and access throughout the district, particularly considering how to easily move people around the enlarged district footprint and increase their time and money spent Downtown.
- Ensure connection points between different areas of town – including underpasses – are targeted with placemaking and safety strategies.

## CURATION OF THE RETAIL AND BUSINESS OFFER

- Lead on a small business investment and activation strategy, exploring how to leverage the district approach to curate distinctive retail, restaurant, and experiential offers throughout the Downtown.
- Work with City and partners to align funding and incentives to realize strategy recommendations.
- Consider targeted retail recruitment and small business startup support.
- Identify how to address the existing needs/issues with small businesses, particularly in looking at how the newer expansion corridors and existing district offers work together.

## STORYTELLING AND ACTIVATION

- Launch a nuanced communications strategy that leverages digital media and storytelling that targets different audiences – both local and visitors.
- Implement digital tools and applications that allow visitors to find parking and amenities easily.
- Work with Visit Fort Wayne to curate a compelling tourism/destination marketing strategy.
- Reimagine events, programming, and activation in ways that spread activity around and ensure that stakeholders receive benefits from the investment.

*The Downtown Fort Wayne Board of Directors will develop yearly service plans, identifying specific projects to be carried out.*



# WHAT ARE EIDs

Economic Improvement Districts are enabled by Indiana Code 36-7-22 and are designated zones in which services can be provided above and beyond the level the local government offers. Through the mechanism of an independent assessment district, property owners can decide what kind and what level of Downtown management services they need and exert direct control over the delivery of those services. EIDs:

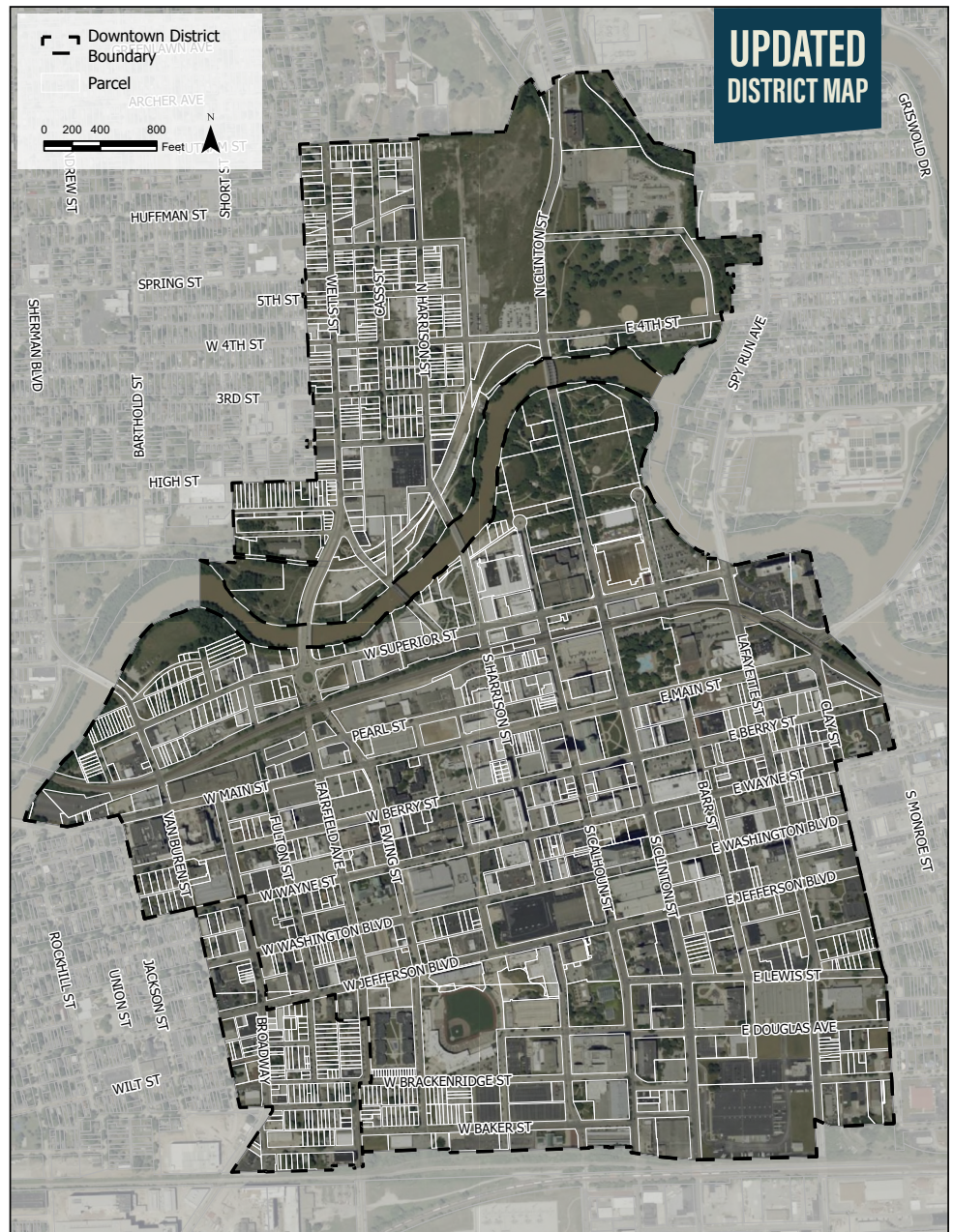
- Are established by commercial property owners through a petition process.
- Raise money through an assessment of commercial property.
- Reinvest money back into the area to fund collectively agreed-upon services.

## WHO OVERSEES THE EXPENDITURE OF EID FUNDS?

The Downtown Fort Wayne Board of Directors has fiscal responsibility for the EID. It is a 15-member board comprised of property and business owners who geographically represent the entire district, and one appointee each from the Mayor, City Council, and County Commissioners.

## WHAT WILL MY ASSESSMENT BE, AND WHAT IS THE TOTAL BUDGET?

The same assessment rate that has been in place for the last ten years of the EID will continue – that rate is 1.5 mills on Gross Assessed Value (GAV) or \$1.50 per \$1,000 of GAV. The assessment will increase 2% annually. However, the Downtown Fort Wayne organization leverages this funding, obtaining financial support from the City of Fort Wayne, Allen County, grants, and event revenue to nearly double its budget annually.



The district is growing during this reauthorization period, just as it has done every 10 years since its original formation.

## WHY IS THE EID SO IMPORTANT FOR DOWNTOWN FORT WAYNE?

Downtown has grown substantially under the leadership of Downtown Fort Wayne over the last 30 years, and it could not have happened without the financial support the EID provides. In that time, Downtown Fort Wayne has:

- Established the Clean & Green program, which has excelled as a critical maintenance provider, collecting over 50,000 pounds of debris and litter yearly while enhancing Downtown's appeal through beautification efforts and community partnerships.
- Fostered an ecosystem for growth and development through strategic program investments, creating vibrant, community-driven experiences that celebrate local culture, support businesses, and bring people together in the heart of the city.
- Served as the chief storyteller and marketer for Downtown, maximizing digital media impact, with over 2.5 million individuals reached via website, email, and social media every year, attracting new audiences Downtown.
- Leveraged EID assessments for increased impact by bringing in revenue from the City and County, as well as through sponsorships, grants, and in-kind contributions.
- Provided advocacy, services, and support to over 275 businesses.
- Ensured that 11.9 million employees, residents, and visitors experience a more vibrant, urban experience through Downtown Fort Wayne's programming.



## WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR REAUTHORIZATION?



**SPRING 2025**

### **Petition drive begins.**

Signatures are obtained from commercial property owners and residential property owners and submitted to the City of Fort Wayne.



**SUMMER 2025**

### **Petitions are verified, City Council holds a public hearing and passes ordinance.**

This process allows stakeholders to voice their opinions on the district.



**FALL 2025**

### **Preparation begins for expanded service delivery.**

Staff prepares to deliver new services.



**EARLY 2026**

### **New services begin.**

The Reauthorization plan becomes effective for another 10 years, through 2035.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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