



## ANNUAL REPORT 2021

**LaPorte County Office of Community & Economic Development**

Email: [trodriguez@laporteco.in.gov](mailto:trodriguez@laporteco.in.gov)

Website: [www.laportecountyoeed.org](http://www.laportecountyoeed.org)

Telephone: (219) 877-8830

Address: 555 Michigan Ave. Suite. 203

LaPorte, IN 46350

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**To:** *Elected Officials, LaPorte County, IN.*

**From:** *Tony Rodriguez, EDFP., Dir.*  
*LPC Community & Economic Development*

**Date:** *January 2022*

**Re:** *Annual Report of Activity*

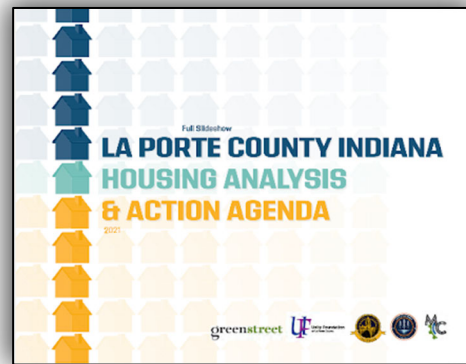


*It is my genuine honor to present to you this summary of the OCED Office's 2021 activities, which will give you as the elected official a look into the high payoff activities that we are focused on within the office.*

*What makes this job so very special for me is that our activities and our successes change La Porte Countian's lives. Focusing on business retention and expansion first and foremost, increasing the base wages, diversifying our tax base, spurring increased supplier activities are all core tenants to successful economic development.*

*As we continue to successfully land deals that will generate housing development, create advanced manufacturing and technology based, high wage jobs and redevelop areas that have been designated Tax Increment Financing Districts we seek your support and partnership for these projects that we intend to bring in front of you for your consideration. Not only will your support be necessary, it will serve as the lynch pin that sends the final message to our investors in LaPorte County that they are placing their trust in your leadership and support and it is for this very reason that we will continue to become simply the most attractive place in the entire world to live and raise a family as well as to make the products that sustain our economies for the generations to come.*

# HOUSING DEVELOPMENT



The housing and market analysis process started in December of 2020 when Greenstreet, an Indiana based, housing analysis firm was contracted to help La Porte County unearth the reasons for housing development stagnation.

10

Manager Meetings

20

Round Table  
Discussions Held

5

Steering Committee  
Meetings

4

Presentations to  
Stakeholders

5,000

Projected New  
Home Builds  
Needed

129

Number of Permits for  
New Builds Pulled in  
2021\*

5

Housing Projects in  
the County  
Pipeline\*\*

3

Reports of Initial  
Findings

\*Additional projects within cities being built

\*\*Permit process tracking is being updated and will reflect additional builds moving forward in 2022

## Key Findings:

**There is a need for a  
spectrum of housing**

**Commercial centers  
with dense housing  
should be supported**

**Continuing the  
conversation around  
housing will be key to  
long term success**

# HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

## Action Agenda

1. Establish and Communicate a Clear Vision for Housing Growth in La Porte County
2. Build a Spectrum of Housing to Unlock Growth
3. Continue the Conversation
4. Support Commercial Centers with Dense, Walkable Housing
5. Manage Growth at the Edge
6. Establish a Housing Trust Fund

Completing work in July 2021, the process has worked with over 40 organizations from chambers, businesses, developers, municipalities, and many more to look at housing and opportunities from all sides. The assessment can be found [here](#).

## Management Group:



Clarence Hulse,  
MS&D, FM, MEDP



Nick Minich



Skyler York



Iris Muccigorosso



Tony Rodriguez, EDFP



Maggi Spartz



Mike Ordziejewski



Maria Fruth



County Council &  
Commissioners



David Heinold, AICP



Bert Cook



Mike Polan

"The top goal of the Vibrant Communities initiative was to complete a housing study and action agenda. Unity partnered with the OCED to get that critical task done. The end result is that we have a current baseline of our housing inventory, we know what the needs are, and we have a plan of action. It will take a team effort to make La Porte County more attractive to housing developers, and to give more and better housing choices to current and future residents. The OCED is a lead player in implementation."

-Maggi Spartz, Unity Foundation President





# INFILL HOUSING MARKETING

## Meadowbrook

Middle Income Single Family Homes on 1/2 to 1/3 acre lots.  
Streamlined building permit procedure in place for development.



Zoning	Target Home Value	Number of Lots Approved	Number of Lots Built
AG Agriculture	\$350,000	101	32






### Location Advantage

Meadowbrook offers several advantages in terms of location to La Porte City.

- 5.2 miles from Groceries
- 7.8 miles from Downtown Chesterton
- 5.1 miles from schools

### LPC Economy

Jobs over the \$35,000 income level and Expanding

- Lippert Components
- E-Pak Machinery
- Northwest Health
- Howmet Industries
- American Permitt

\*Site is Well and Septic Served

219-942-4442

Grag Balaban





## Park Place

Middle Income Single Family Homes on 1/2 acre to 1 acre size lots.  
Streamlined building permit procedure in place for development.



Zoning	Target Home Value	Number of Lots Approved	Number of Lots Built
RIA Single Family	\$250,000	234	44






### Location Advantage

Sand Ridge offers several advantages in terms of location to La Porte City.

- 4.1 miles from Groceries
- 27 miles from Downtown La Porte and 15 miles from Downtown Valparaiso
- 4.1 miles from schools

### LPC Economy

Jobs over the \$40,000 income level and Expanding

- Lippert Components
- E-Pak Machinery
- Northwest Health
- Coriscana Mattress

\*Site is Well and Septic Served

219-785-2266


Mark Parkman









## Stonehedge Estates

Middle Income Single Family Homes on 1-acre parcels.  
Streamlined building permit procedure in place for development.



Zoning	Current Area Home Value	Number of Lots Approved	Number of Lots Built
Residential Single Family and Agriculture	Approx. \$350,000	94	2

### Location Advantage

Stonehedge Estates offers several advantages related to the location of the subdivision.

- Approx. 2 miles from elementary school
- Within 4 miles of Grocery Shopping and other amenities
- Within 5 miles of downtown La Porte City

### LPC Economy




Jobs over the \$60,000 income level and Expanding

- Lippert Components
- E-Pak Machinery
- Alexander Chemical
- Northwest Health
- Howmet

\*Site is Well and Septic Served

219-324-3504

Daniel McDue 219-878-0888

## Sand Ridge

Middle Income Single Family Homes on 1/2 to 1/3 acre lots.  
Streamlined building permit procedure in place for development.



Zoning	Target Home Value	Number of Lots Approved	Number of Lots Built
B1 Neighborhood commercial	\$250,000	95	66






### Location Advantage

Sand Ridge offers several advantages in terms of location to La Porte City.

- 4.4 miles from Groceries
- 5.7 miles from Downtown La Porte
- 5.2 miles from schools

### LPC Economy

Jobs over the \$50,000 income level and Expanding

- Lippert Components
- E-Pak Machinery
- Northwest Health
- Coriscana Mattress

\*Site is Well and Septic Served

219-324-3504

Loucks Development Company Inc





These samples show how Infill housing will be promoted on LaPorte County's Website in order to make information available on "Shovel Ready" build sites.

# LaPorte County Rural Broadband Task Force



## LaPorte County Rural Broadband Task Force

LaPorte County, Indiana

### Fiber-to-the-Home Engineering and Budget Report

July 19, 2021

PREPARED BY:



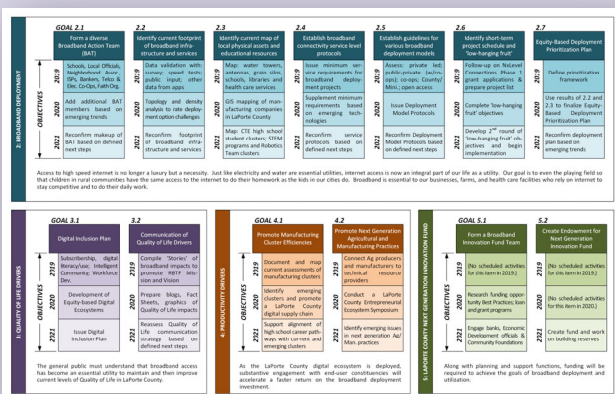
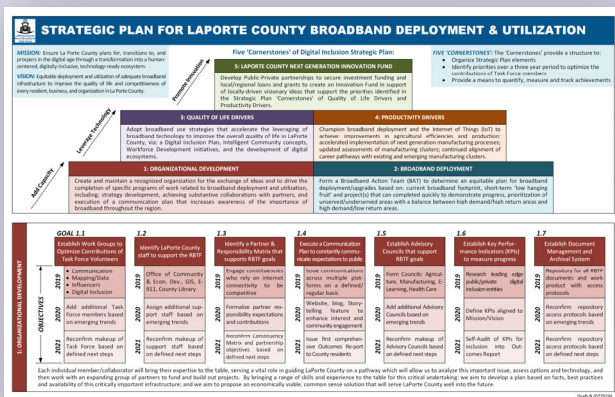
YATES ENGINEERING SERVICES, LLC  
2536 W. INDUSTRIAL PARK DR.  
SUITE 1  
BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA 47404  
P: (812) 333-7335  
F: (812) 333-7336  
www.yatesus.com

It was proved very fortuitous that LaPorte County Commissioner Sheila Matias and Office of Community and Economic Development Director Tony Rodriguez, form a task force in March 2019, that would soon be come known as the LPCRBTF. It wasn't long after that the entire world would then turn on a dime with the pandemic, truly excentuating how broadband connectivity was as important as water and electric to all of us. It was the diversity of hand picked members and the commitment to the task at hand sherpherding several grant applications and laying the "GEO SPACIAL" mapping foundation that continues to build out our database of LaPorte County's digital

divide. The Healthcare Foundation of LaPorte awarded \$17,000 to create a fiber to the premise analysis. Yates Engineering, a fiber engineering company was contracted and completed work July 2021. With the now complete study, the broadband task force is able to compete for additional funding, both through the state and federal grant opportunities.

## Surveying:

The Task Force created a subcommittee to survey more of LaPorte County for speeds on upload and download. These surveys serve as a foundation in demonstrating the disparity in internet accessibility. Initial surveying began in April of 2021 and had over 800 responses for community members with unreliable service. In December of 2021, the task force moved forward with direct mailings to residents in various parts of LaPorte County, aiming to reach those with the



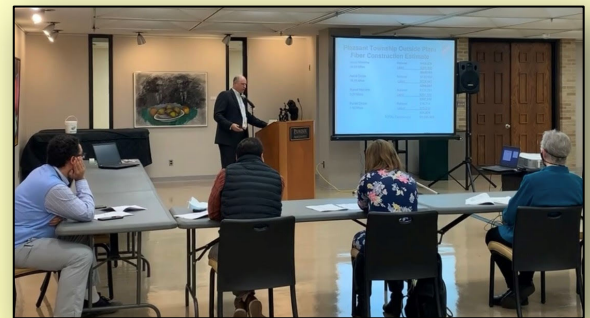
hardest to reach internet struggles. Both surveying strategies have been conducted in partnership with Purdue University West Lafayette, aiming to obtain usable data to push forward the need for reliable internet access in Rural America.

### **Funding:**

Because of COVID, the standards for download and upload speeds increased, opening opportunity for La Porte County residents to qualify for state funding to connect them with fiber. This opened 270 Million in funding for new broadband projects across the state, opening this summer. ACME and Surf Broadband, in partnership with La Porte County Broadband Task Force, both submitted application for the 3rd round of Next Level Connection Funding, hoping to serve nearly 4,000 households.

### **Broadband Ready Community:**

With La Porte County focused on improving broadband, the task force led the county through the certification process programed by the state of Indiana. This program opens the opportunity for La Porte County for more easily apply for broadband funding.



### **Indiana Connect Program:**

Through the Broadband Task Force, residents having difficulty connecting and being served reliable internet have applied to the Indiana Connect Program. This program puts their addresses out to bid, pushing internet providers to serve more residents.

### **Communities connected with:**

In 2021 alone, the Broadband Task Force has connected to dozens of communities across the country, discussing how each community is solving the last mile connection issue. These conversations have taken the Task Force to talk with people from Georgia to Texas to even across the border in Illinois. Each have started with the simple fact that a fiber to the premise study is how they got their broadband programs moving faster. La Porte County Broadband Task Force has set the foundation and has learned best practices to improve connectivity in La Porte County.



# THANK YOU TO OUR TASKFORCE MEMBERS



**Sheila Matias - Co-Founder & Chairwoman**  
*President*  
LaPorte County Commission



**Tony Rodriguez, EDFP - Co-Founder**  
*Director*  
LaPorte County Office of Community & Economic Development



**David Heinold**  
*Interim Director of Planning*  
City of La Porte



**Joe Haney**  
*Member*  
LaPorte County Commission



**Jim Pressel**  
*Indiana State Rep.*  
District 20, State Of Indiana



**Randy Novak**  
*President*  
LaPorte County Council



**Pat Boy**  
*Indiana State Rep.*  
District 9, State Of Indiana



**Kevin McGuire**  
*Director of Information Technology*  
Michigan City Area Schools



**Michael Bohacek**  
*State Senator*  
District 8, State Of Indiana



**Andy Matanic**  
*Director of Information Technology*  
City of Michigan City



**Darlene Hale**  
*Director of Information Technology*  
LaPorte County



**Mark Scarborough**  
*Member*  
LaPorte County Farm Bureau



**Roscoe Hoffman**  
*Network Administrator*  
LaPorte County



**Mary Jane Thomas**  
*Founder*  
Thomas & Associates



**Mike Schultz**  
*County Assessor*  
LaPorte County



**Richard Pate**  
*Principal*  
Pate & Associates



**Mitch Bishop**  
*County Planner*  
LaPorte County



**Al Walus**  
*Senior Project Manager*  
Christopher B. Burke Eng., LLC



**Mary Foell**  
*Community Development Educator*  
Purdue Extension



**Nelson Pichardo**  
*Attorney*  
Friedman & Associates



**Tom Fath**  
*Vice President*  
Westville Town Council



**Scott Sears**  
*President, Chief Executive Officer*  
Kankakee Valley REMC



**Justin Kiel**  
*Publisher*  
Westville Indicator



**Mike Ordziejewski**  
*Geographic Information Systems Director*  
LaPorte County



**Don Parker**  
*Director*  
Wanatah Public Library



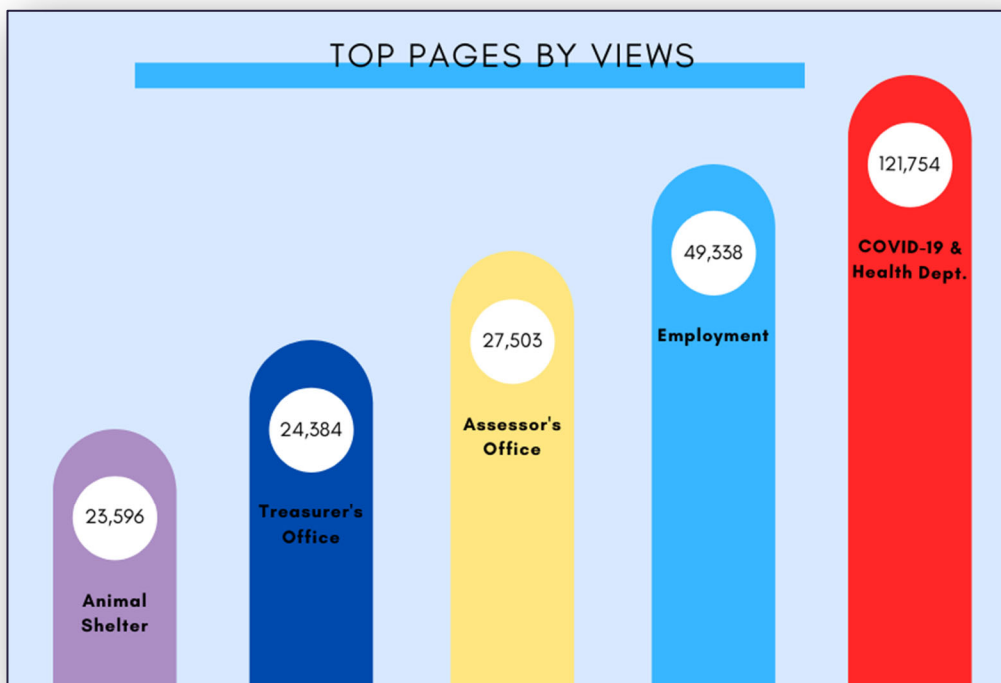
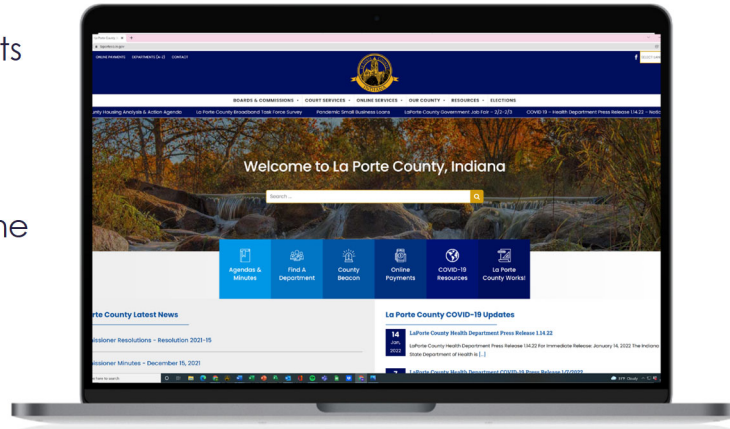
**Fonda Owens**  
*Director*  
LaPorte County Library



**Viviana Plaza**  
*Community Development Specialist*  
LaPorte County Office of Community & Economic Development

# LAPORTE COUNTY WEBSITE

The La Porte County Website will celebrate its second birthday on March 4th, 2022. The website has become the most consistent way to communicate with community stakeholders in La Porte County to inform them on tax information, building closures, vaccine info, and so much more. The website has seen over 1 million views with top pages being:



Thank you to  
the website  
super users!

**Mike Ordziejewski** (GIS)  
**Roscoe Hoffman**  
(Sheriff's Office)  
**Christine Keil** (Drainage  
Board)  
**Amanda Lahners** (Health  
Department)  
**Nida Harvey** (Courts)  
**Maggie Jakelski** (Courts)  
**Kae Stewart** (Courts)  
**Sharon Krachinski**  
(Courts)  
**Steve Eyrick** (Probation  
and Courts)  
**Mary Lake** (Courts)  
**Ryan Crosslin** (Sheriff's  
Office)  
**Eric Fenstermaker** (EMS),  
**Ashley Kazmucha**  
(Building Department)  
**Diane Gonzales** (Board of  
Commissioners)  
**Monique Thomas** (Human  
Resources)  
**Mitch Bishop** (County  
Planner)  
**Kaitlyn Simms** (Facilities)

*"I'm really grateful for the opportunity to work with such a creative group of individuals like our super users, and I look forward to a productive 2022!"*

*- Viviana Plaza, Community Development Specialist and Website Administrator*

# BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANISON PROGRAM

The purpose of La Porte County's Office of Community and Economic Development Retention and Business Retention program is to provide business assistance to the businesses located in the unincorporated areas of LaPorte County. The goal is to help our existing businesses stay in business, to provide the needed information to expand their business, or to assist with their day to day operations.



## These business services include the following:

- ✓ Availability of raw materials, suppliers, & subcontractors
- ✓ Building & site locations
- ✓ Education & employee skill training
- ✓ Exporting / International trade
- ✓ Financing
- ✓ Tax Abatement
- ✓ Tax Increment Financing & State Incentives
- ✓ Government contracting assistance
- ✓ Labor supply
- ✓ Wage & hour information
- ✓ Local, state and federal regulations
- ✓ Technology & transfer needs
- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ Utility costs and availability

During program year 2021, the LaPorte County's Office of Community and Economic Development Business and Retention Expansion team conducted:

6

LAPORTE COUNTY  
WORKS!  
HIGHLIGHTS

35

BUSINESS  
VISITS

210

CONTACTS &  
FOLLOW-UPS

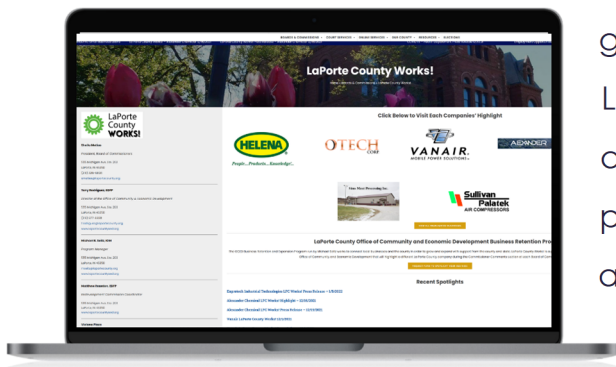
# LAPORTE COUNTY WORKS!

The LaPorte County Office of Community and Economic Development's LaPorte County WORKS! program is another exceptional business retention tool designed to assist our local LaPorte County employers. This program showcases our existing local employers and their job openings in a public setting for all to hear. We are the ombudsman for local business, and we look forward to hearing from interested companies who may benefit from our services. Local businesses are invited to fill out the form on the county



LaPorte County WORKS! page for the chance to get their company highlighted!

Looking to 2022, La Porte County Works serves as a tool for business attraction and expansion, promoting jobs to La Porte County Residents. The ability to minimize closures and layoffs further promotes the stability of the LaPorte County Economy.



**Thank you to the companies who have worked with us to get their highlight completed:**



"The foundation of our overall economic development strategy starts with business retention and expansion. This innovative branding concept known as LaPorte County WORKS! has elevated both residents' awareness of our niche manufacturers as well as directly helping our companies find new employees in this linkage."



# CELEBRATING A FULLY REDEVELOPED MIDWEST TRADE CENTER

Celebrating the many tense negotiations and countless hours of promotional prospect visits, the OCED and Northpoint celebrated one of Northwest Indiana's Largest Multi-Tenant Industrial Facility Success Stories. The Midwest Trade Center located in Westville is now fully leased. With Employment projected to reach nearly 597 people, the Midwest Trade Center has 5 companies. NorthPoint and LaPorte County Office of Community and Economic Development hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony on June 30, 2021 to celebrate the completion and abundant job opportunities.



## Welcome to LaPorte County!

**DOLLAR GENERAL®**

**LIPPERT**

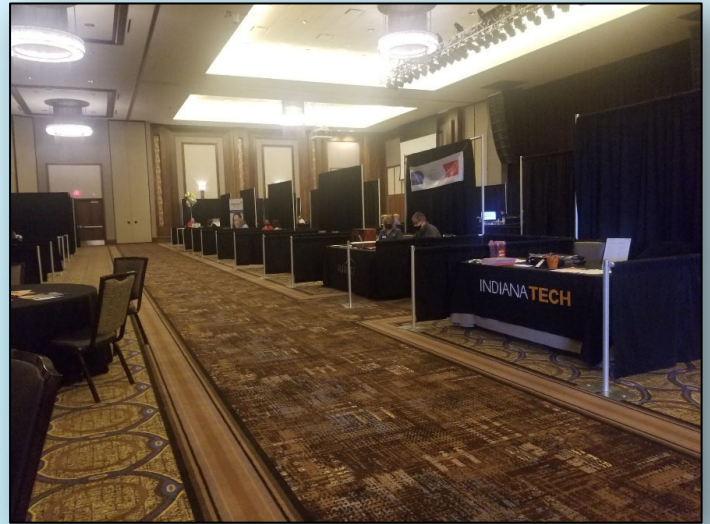


*Companies currently residing in the Midwest Trade Center are Dollar General's Midwest Regional Distribution Logistics operation, Lippert Component Parts Inc., Pratt Industries, Tonn and Blank Construction, and Cash's Cleaning Services.*

# OUR MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE - OUR HUMAN RESOURCES

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Because of the continued job growth and opportunity in La Porte County, Michigan City and La Porte have both created workforce groups to organized efforts to increase job placements and upskill our workforce.



## La Porte High School Fair:

- 20 businesses and long-term career opportunities present
- All 300 senior students attended

## Michigan City Hospitality Fair:

- 28 businesses related to healthcare and hospitality attended
- 29 job seekers in attendance

## LEAP Hiring Event:

- 28 businesses attended
- 75 job seekers in attendance

Future hiring events are being planned for 2022, promoting jobs from local employers to continue to employ LaPorte County Residents. As collaboration continues between both cities and the county, the Office of Economic Development continues to serve as a partner for events and marketing.



# NEW BUSINESS



Following a rigorous multi-state site selection competition, Corsicana chose LaPorte County, Indiana as its home for their Midwest mega factory. This operation will create 350 permanent full-time positions. La Porte County's ability to get deals done has drawn national and international attention with many RFI's looking directly at our industrial parks.



Many are focused on the accessibility of rail, proximity to population, and municipal engagement in business growth and expansion. As the office has grown, so has marketability of LaPorte County. In 2021, the development of the Kingsbury Industrial Complex packet was created to provide an overview of all economic advantages. This prepared material serves as a talking point



with potential investors to showcase LaPorte County as the place to do business.



## Organic growth:

- 8 expansions in pipeline
- Estimated 240 new jobs created from expansions of E-PAK Machinery, Dwyer Instruments, OTECH, A&A Sheet Metal, Sims Meats, Alexander Chemical, & Vanair

**"We have had significant growth in our boxed bed business and require a facility that is appropriately equipped with well-trained employees to provide the manufacturing efficiency to support that growth. Indiana was a great location for us and the local, regional and state agencies we worked with have been very helpful and welcoming throughout this process."**

*- Michael Thompson, Chief Executive Officer of Corsicana Mattress.*

## MEET OUR TEAM

# Anthony Rodriguez, EDFP. Director



Following graduation with a BA degree in Marketing, minor in Finance and three years in Student Government Tony started his professional career at the Mayor's Office of Economic Development in Hammond, Indiana. Tony was quickly promoted while working in the City of Hammond becoming the youngest Department Head in the City of Hammond at the age of 27. While Serving the City of Hammond, Tony pursued and graduated from the National Development Council's renowned Economic Development Finance Certification Program becoming an EDFP.

The BRE Statistics of the Mayor's Office of Economic Development were beginning to demonstrate that Economic Development Industry was changing to a fully automated highly responsive Industry and the Communities that invested into the technology were going to become winners. Serving under two Mayors before coming to Michigan City, Indiana to Head the Newly formed Michigan City Economic Development Corporation during the Sheila Brillson Administration in which Tony served 9 years. During that time Tony attended Notre Dame University and completed the Executive Masters Certificate Program. While heading up this Newly formed Michigan City Economic Development Corporation Tony would work closely with his Public/Private Board of Directors to Fill all of the Vacant Industrial Space and help to create two thousand new full time permanent jobs many coming from newly located, International Companies that selected Michigan City and LaPorte County as their new permanent home.

Many if not all of these companies continue to thrive today GAF Materials, Frech USA, Michigan City Baking, one of Nabisco's Largest contract manufacturers just to name a few. As private investor Tony has developed commercial real estate managing construction and structured small holdings. Tony and his wife Corey have four wonderful children.



## MEET OUR TEAM

# **Matthew Reardon, EDFP.**

## **Redevelopment Commission Coordinator**



Matthew Reardon has 25 years of experience in private and non-profit business interests, government and project management. Matt has facilitated, acquired financing for and completed projects ranging from a few thousand dollars in community improvements with federal, state or local grant funds to multi-million-dollar new construction and redevelopment projects.

Matt currently operates MCR Partners, a professional service firm engaged in economic development, real estate, engineering and municipal finance for both public and private sector clients. MCR specializes in professional service management for municipalities, investors and owners.

## MEET OUR TEAM

### Michael Seitz, IOM. Program Manager



Mike Seitz is a 1976 Graduate of Indiana University South Bend with a B.S. degree from the School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA), Public Policy and Administration. He has also received an IMO certificate and designation from the US Chamber of Commerce 'Institute of Organization Management University of Notre Dame. In addition, Mike completed 1st year of Institute for Economic Development, University of Kentucky.

He spent twenty-two years with the South Bend Chamber of Commerce, Logansport Chamber Commerce and La Porte Chamber of Commerce conducting business retention and expansion services to chamber members. The purpose of this service was to offer any assistance to chamber business services ranging from the availability of raw materials, suppliers and subcontractors, building and or site expansion or relocation, education or training of the workforce, exporting /international trade, financing government contract assistance labor supply, local state and federal regulations: relationships with governmental offices, marketing assistance, business taxes, technology transfer needs, transportation, utility costs and service, or any other issues the business may have.

## MEET OUR TEAM

# Viviana Plaza

### Community Development Specialist



Viviana Plaza is the Community Development Specialist for the LaPorte County Office of Community and Economic Development. A graduate of Andean High School ('17) and Purdue University Northwest ('21), Viviana has a BA in Political Science and minors in Spanish and public policy and administration. She has also successfully graduated from PNW's Honors College and was the president of the political science honors society, Pi Sigma Alpha.

As the Community Development Specialist, Viviana is responsible for daily COVID, Facebook, and County website updates, as well as researching and preparing marketing materials, generating press releases, preparing materials for the LaPorte County WORKS! segment, and researching and recommending changes that would encourage or facilitate economic development in the areas of housing, fiber/internet, COVID, business creation, retention and expansion, and community outreach in order to help create a better La Porte County for its citizens and businesses.

# OUR PARTNERS

La Porte County Board of Commissioners

La Porte County Council

La Porte County Redevelopment Commission

La Porte County Auditor

La Porte County Assessor

La Porte County Building Department

La Porte County Plan Commission

Unity Foundation of La Porte

The Healthcare Foundation of La Porte

Michigan City Chamber of Commerce

Michigan City Economic Dev. Corp.

La Porte Economic Advancement Partnership

WorkOne

Center for Workforce Innovations

South County Coalition

Farm Bureau of LaPorte County

Purdue University Northwest

Ivy Tech Community College

La Porte County Schools

Michigan City

LaPorte City

NIPSCO

American Electric Power

Indiana Economic Development Association

Indiana Economic Development Corporation

39 NORTH CONSERVANCY DISTRICT  
LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

