

BUILD NOBLE

*Economic Development Work Plan
2023-2024*

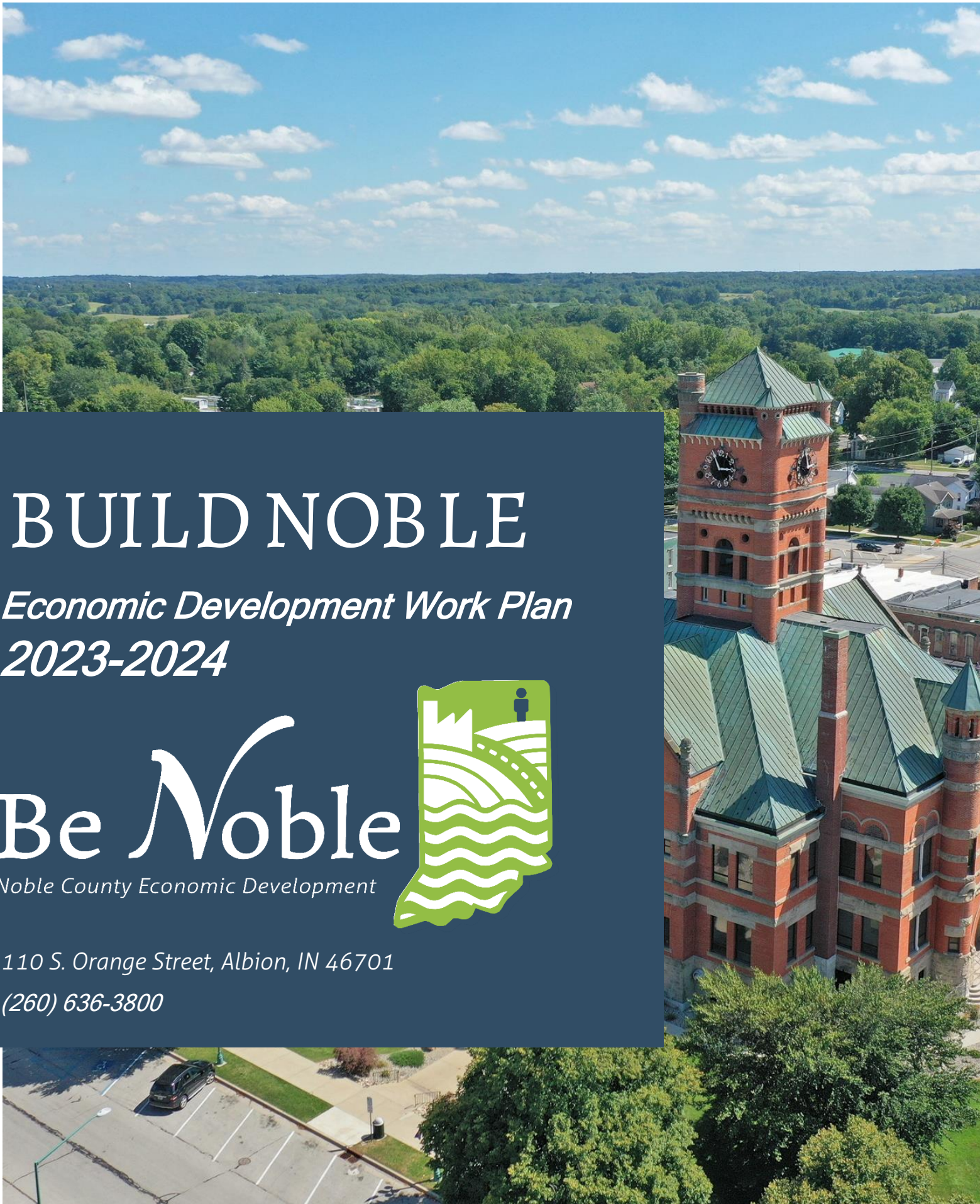
Be Noble

Noble County Economic Development



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Be Noble Inc. Mission

Ensure a thriving Noble County Economy

Be Noble Inc. Vision

Noble County is growing and full-of-life, a place in which businesses choose to operate and grow. The region is known as a hub of innovation and home to a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem. Residents enjoy a high quality of life made possible by engaged leaders, a diversity of culture and amenities, and ample opportunities to enhance personal wealth.

Target Industries

Advanced Manufacturing

Advanced manufacturing is the use of innovative technology to improve products or processes, with the relevant technology being described as "advanced," "innovative," or "cutting edge." Advanced manufacturing industries increasingly integrate new innovative technologies into both products and processes.

Agribusiness

Agribusiness is the business sector encompassing farming and farming-related commercial activities. The business involves all steps required to send an agricultural good to market, including production, processing, and distribution.

Vehicle Components

The vehicle component sector is a broad range of companies involved in the design, development, and manufacturing of motor vehicle components. This includes components used in the final manufacture of automobiles, trucks, construction equipment and RVs.

Medical Devices and Technologies



Medical device manufacturing includes all aspects of the fabrication of a medical device. This includes the design and manufacturing of implants and instruments used in the medical field.

Small Businesses/ Entrepreneurs

Cutting across every sector of our economy, 8 out of every 10 businesses in Noble County employ 10 or fewer workers. This entrepreneurial community is the backbone of the Noble County economy.

Be Noble Inc. 2023/2024 Strategic Priorities

To fulfill its mission, Be Noble Inc. must engage with existing businesses and industry partners to support their retention, expansion, and growth. This is core to the mission of the EDC and the EDC will prioritize this in all of its efforts.

Overall, this will happen through a combination of activities including:

- The EDC will meet directly with at least 30 industry partners to identify issues/concerns that the EDC can help address including 12 employers that have not been met with in the last 4 years. Examples include assistance with accessing tax abatements and other forms of local/regional support, assistance with the development and coordination of workforce training activities, provision of information on wages/benefits that help employers assess budgets, and assistance in accessing grants and other forms of state support.
- The EDC will aggressively share information with HR contacts and others as appropriate. Such sharing will feature information/updates on workplace issues such as legal issues, local/regional initiatives, new programming and other similar kinds of information. This will also include information about new grants/opportunities for employers, new data that is relevant to industry and anything else that the EDC can pass along that will be helpful to industry partners.
- The EDC will also re-establish an HR Roundtable with key HR talent from across the county. This roundtable will work on issues that are of collective importance to the industry such as childcare, leadership training, and others. This roundtable will be a quarterly opportunity for small



groups of HR leaders to offer input, thought and perspective on these larger issues that challenge virtually every employer in the county.

In addition to serving its core purpose of supporting existing employers, however, the EDC must work to help the Noble County economy grow. To fulfill this portion of its mission, the EDC must engage in a series of efforts to expand and build the infrastructure required to support this growth. For 2023/2024, the EDC will focus these efforts on the following strategies for building Noble County to ensure economic growth.

Build Development Sites

Expand industrial development sites in Noble County to support business retention, expansion, and attraction efforts.

Currently, Noble County has a limited capacity to compete effectively for economic development projects due to the limited number of site and building options that are available. Three key observations about this include the following:

Sites: There is one 36-acre site that is shovel-ready available in the Kendallville East industrial park, annexed 100 acre site in Ligonier, and properties in Rome City. All sites are updated on a regular basis on Zoom Prospector.

Buildings: The current building inventory includes structures with significant age, low ceilings, and smaller square footage than what is often requested. Currently, there is one existing building that meets many of today's economic development requirements.

Missed Opportunities: An analysis of economic development projects issued in 2020 reveals that many prospects want 50+ acres or buildings that run 75,000 to 100,000+ square feet. Right now, Noble County has 1 site option and 1 building that would meet these requirements (however, the building has 16' ceilings in much of the building).



In 2023/2024, in partnership with communities, the EDC will focus efforts on working with local governments and development partners to identify new potential sites, as well as bring existing sites to “shovel-ready” status and otherwise enhance features to ensure that Noble County can compete effectively for industry expansion and attraction projects and ensure business retention.

In 2023/2024, Investment Trust Fund (ITF) commitments will be in support of efforts to acquire, develop or ensure these sites are shovel-ready and ready for development, and other projects as defined in [Attachment A](#). This could include Phase 1 environmental assessments, soil borings, surveys (with wetland delineations if appropriate) and other items required to get these sites certified as shovel ready. We will also work with current manufacturers to ensure that they are prepared for additional infrastructure.

The goal will be to have at least 1 additional shell building project in the works for 2023/2024.

Build A World Class Talent Development System

Enhance the existing talent development system in Noble County with a focus on advanced manufacturing skills.

For 2023/2024, the EDC will continue to support K-12 partners, the Impact Institute, Freedom Academy, the Community Learning Center, Ivy Tech and others to implement robust Industry 4.0 skill programs for high school students, adult learners, and employers. When the Industry 4.0 program is fully implemented, Noble County will be home to a world class manufacturing skills development program with a focus on robotics, industrial automation, control systems, and applied digital technology.

To move this forward, the EDC will lead efforts to bring this kind of talent development capacity to Noble County. This will include the following specific efforts:

- The EDC will continue to engage industry partners to secure significant employer input into needed program content/curriculum.



- The EDC will continue to develop meaningful work-based learning opportunities for students through its relationships with industry partners.
- The EDC will continue to work with education/industry partners to secure the significant funding required to capitalize this effort and ensure a successful implementation.
- The EDC will support the completion of Phase II for the Smart Factory installation at the iSMART Lab.

The EDC, under the Thrive Noble County brand, will partner with other community leaders to develop and launch a new leadership program called Engage Noble. The objective of the program, which will take place over a series of sessions held over several months, is to develop more quality civic leaders across Noble County. The EDC plans to begin marketing and recruiting in March of 2023 with the first program delivered by early fall of 2023. All training and experiences delivered will focus on the 5 Pillars of Thrive and the 20 Clues to Rural Community Survival with a uniquely Noble County twist.

Build an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Identify and execute on a series of strategies designed to create and ecosystem of support that will foster and develop entrepreneurs in Noble County

Entrepreneurship is a cornerstone of community and economic development. Entrepreneurs start businesses, create jobs, and launch products and services that serve and generate wealth in a community. While Noble County has a rich history of entrepreneurship, to ensure a thriving economy we must become a community that supports and provides the environment required for the next generation of entrepreneurs to succeed.

To help facilitate this, the EDC will work with partners across the community to develop and execute on a strategy for creating and growing an entrepreneurial ecosystem. The system must include space for collaboration and open communication between networks of entrepreneurs, business support organizations, business incubators, training institutions, libraries, and foundations. This kind of community infrastructure supports growth in a way



that differs from traditional, formal infrastructure because an entrepreneurial ecosystem creates connectivity between individuals, services, and opportunities. The EDC will lead efforts in Noble County to create this kind of ecosystem - one that will include the following five critical elements:

- **Wrap Around Services:** A thriving ecosystem requires an environment that encourages entrepreneurs to ask questions and offers an abundance of easy ways for them to get answers. Such questions can focus on everything from helping with a business plan to help growing a business by building solid marketing, e-commerce, accounting or HR systems that support growth. The EDC will work with business support organizations such as SCORE, the SBDC, local chambers, the Northeast Indiana Innovation Center, lending institutions, insurance agents and others to develop a network of knowledge-based resources that can support entrepreneurs. This would also include formal personal and business development training opportunities that entrepreneurs can access at little/no cost to them.
- **Coworking Spaces:** Early-stage entrepreneurs often need access to physical assets that will support the planning and early activities of their new business. Examples of such physical assets include co-working spaces, business incubators, business accelerators, and entrepreneurial support centers. Such physical spaces offer entrepreneurs access to office space, high-speed internet and technology that they might otherwise not be able to access. Working with community partners, the EDC will explore options and develop a strategy for creating such a space in Noble County to support early-stage entrepreneurs.

The goals of this effort will be as follows: within the next two years, have an Entrepreneurial Center that supports entrepreneurs and business start-ups, within the next 12 months have key elements of an entrepreneurial pipeline in place with K-12 partners and others, and over the next 2 years, engage with at least 25 Noble County entrepreneurs and provide support that enables their growth (striving for at least 1 break out entrepreneur per year).



Build Housing Stock

Work to increase housing starts through a strategy that includes developing relationships with home builders across the region, collaborating with communities to identify target locations for future developments, and marketing these locations to developers/home builders.

To facilitate this effort, the EDC will coordinate efforts with community partners and develop a county-wide strategy (with associated materials) that targets home builders in the region/state. This effort will begin with community conversations about the best locations for future residential development in the county. Once these sites have been fully identified and vetted, an outreach campaign will be developed that targets home builders in the region. This campaign will feature specific sites that would be appropriate for residential development, any incentives that may be available to assist in site development, and a Google Earth map that allows developers to explore these sites in an interactive manner. In short, this effort will resemble the EDC's approach to industrial site development - identify good sites, know these sites inside and out, and aggressively market them to residential developers and home builders.

The goals of this effort are to develop relationships with home builders across the region, to secure at least one additional commitment for a housing development in the next two years, and to support the housing collation efforts along with Housing Resource Hub (the HUB), as defined in [Attachment B](#).

Build and Effective Child Care Infrastructure

Along with the Community Foundation and the United Way, serve as one of the lead organizations in the development on the Noble County Early Child Education (ECE) Coalition and a build a comprehensive plan for improving access to affordable and quality childcare.



It is common sense that parents with young children need access to childcare to obtain and retain employment, which makes a strong childcare system a vital component of the Noble County economy. However, there is also a two-generational role that childcare plays with regard to families and young children. Childcare is certainly a work support for parents, but it also enables children to be in a setting that promotes their healthy development and school readiness (while their parents are at work). In this way, childcare not only has a direct impact on today's workforce, but it also impacts the workforce of tomorrow. As a result, the development of a childcare system that offers quality and affordable care to families has become an economic development issue. And with employers struggling to find the talent they need to sustain and grow operations; this issue has quickly become front and center for the EDC.

Given all this, with its partners at the Community Foundation and the United Way, the EDC worked collaboratively with others in the county to launch the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Coalition. This coalition includes individuals and organizations from a variety of disciplines that work together to develop strategies to develop a system of affordable and quality childcare for Noble County families. For example, the EDC will work with local employers in industrial parks and create private/public partnerships that keep quality childcare close to these concentrations of jobs.

Goals for this coalition effort include: (1) through the work of the coalition, have a plan and set of childcare implementation strategies identified and ready to go in the next 12 months, (2) engage industry partners in this effort and get commitments from 5-10 employers to participate in the implementation of strategies, and directly support the Albion Child Care project.



Attachment A

Investment Trust Fund Guidelines

The Investment Trust Fund (ITF) of the Noble County Economic Development Corporation (NCEDC) was established in 2006. The purpose of the ITF is to manage funds contributed to the NCEDC by the Noble County Commissioners and Council for use in attracting and retaining companies and other efforts that will better position Noble County for growth. These funds can only be used upon approval of the ITF Board and the NCEDC.

This memorandum provides guidance to the ITF Board, Noble County EDC and other agencies on how these funds may be used. The guidelines and limits expressed herein are subject to availability of funds in the ITF.

There are two general ways that ITF monies may be used:

1. for construction and/or improvements of public infrastructure such as roads, sewers or water lines
2. for other efforts that will better position Noble County for growth

The following general parameters must be considered:

- average wage per job
- number of jobs retained and/or attracted.
- the availability of other incentive sources
- the significance of the project
- the location of the project
- will the investment better position Noble County for growth

While ITF funds may be used anywhere in Noble County, the involvement of other units of government is encouraged and must be considered in determining the appropriate level of ITF support.

It is recognized that each project is somewhat unique, and, on occasion, some projects may warrant special consideration and action; however, it is the ITF's policy that ITF funds must be utilized fairly and proportionately to the benefit derived.

Companies/projects that do not qualify for ITF assistance may still qualify for tax abatements, loans from the Community Development Corporation and other programs that may be offered.

Upon the approval of incentives by the Noble County Investment Trust Fund Board, recommendations for approval will then be forwarded to the Noble County Economic Development Corp. Board of Directors for final approval.

The Noble County Investment Trust Fund Board and the Noble County Economic Development Corporation Board believe as a matter of public policy that it should not provide public incentives for jobs, which do not pay enough to minimally support a typical household without additional public assistance such as food stamps.



Attachment B



Agreement Between Housing Resource Hub & Be Noble, Inc.

This agreement between the High Performance Government Network Corp. d/b/a The Housing Resource Hub ("the Hub") and Be Noble, Inc. ("the EDC"), is pursuant to the terms set forth within.

Project Scope. The Hub agrees to support a countywide housing initiative by facilitating the development and implementation of a Housing Strategy, as outlined in Attachment A.

Compensation. The Hub will work on a retainer basis, payable \$10,000 upon contract execution and \$5,000 monthly for a two year period. Total compensation during this period shall not exceed \$70,000 in year 1 and \$60,000 in year 2. The EDC will pay invoices within 30 days of submittal.

Term. This agreement will commence upon execution and remain in effect for 2 years.

Subcontractors. The Hub will engage Zimmerman/Volk Associates to complete the Housing Market Potential Analysis. All subcontractor costs are included in the fee outlined above.

Termination. Either party may terminate this amendment with 30 days written notice. Compensation will be paid for services rendered prior to the effective date of termination.

Notice to Parties. Notice to the Hub should be sent to: Ryan Chasey at ryan@yourhousingresource.org.
Notice to the EDC should be sent to: Gary Gatman at gary@noblecountyedc.com.

Amendments. Any amendments must be agreed to in writing by both parties.

Ryan Chasey
Housing Resource Hub

May 31, 2022

Date

Gary Gatman, Executive Director
Be Noble, Inc.

5/31/2022

Date





Noble County Strategic Housing Development Plan Proposal

Housing is economic development. Economic growth is optimized when we build enough of the housing that the talent we want to attract and retain can afford in places that make them happy to be there. Therefore, communities must be proactive in not only quantifying the potential for housing growth in their market, but also in taking bold and decisive action to accomplish their dreams. The Housing Resource Hub (“THE HUB”) uses a proprietary method for supporting communities that want to take action but lack sufficient capacity to do so. Outcomes of this approach include measured results, including:

Bold leadership that knows what’s possible, refuses to settle for less, who knows the plan is just the beginning and is prepared to see it through to completion

Reliable housing market performance metrics, including specific numbers of new units that can be constructed and absorbed

Community-by-community approach to development on identified and prioritized catalyst sites

Community-led, community-driven strategies to catalyst site design and development barriers removal

County-wide system of leadership support for excellent housing policies, programs and product

Employer engagement strategy that reduces commute time for employees and builds an empowered workforce

Overview

A housing strategy provides a roadmap for leaders to launch a housing initiative that meets the needs of the community. THE HUB uses the Housing Optimization Market Empowerment (H.O.M.E.) Method, a proprietary approach that mobilizes a vision into action and produces a five-year strategic plan, at least one catalyst housing development project and an employer driven homebuyer pipeline building tool. Beginning with the end in mind, we cultivate and engage local leadership in an important dialogue to create a shared vision that protects and enhances what the community loves most through our virtual “Six Steps to Success” Mastermind.

With a vision for the future, our team goes to work to translate the demand community leaders are sensing into a picture of who is looking to live in the community, what type of home they are seeking to buy or rent, and how much they can afford. A housing production plan then becomes the foundation for designing a customized housing program for the community, that is complete with recommendations for planning, design, private-public investment tools, and housing-related talent attraction and retention programs.

The final step is to launch a catalyst development project that jumpstarts housing production and demonstrates the high-quality vision that was developed by the leadership. As the nonprofit housing market potential optimizer, THE HUB becomes a mobile community development unit, assisting and supporting communities that choose to undertake catalyst projects as an instrument of the local leadership’s vision that can attract viable development partners. More importantly, it becomes a vehicle for bridging the distance between the grand vision the community wants to bring to life and the high-quality private developers who can make it happen. In this role, THE HUB aggregates available local, state, and federal resources and brings together a cross-disciplinary team of experienced professionals in site planning and design, construction, and public and private finance to determine what is possible. We have found that this approach not only ensures implementation of the Housing Strategy, but it also reduces risk for all parties and right-sizes any local investments in time, talent and resources in implementation of a housing strategy.



Benefits of This Approach

Jump start and/or enhance efforts to set the table for future development

An economic development tool with lenders, employers and others in the business community to demonstrate your commitment to all drivers of quality of life

Entice developers to consider investing in your community.

Prioritize the investment of scarce public resources.

First Year Milestones

By undertaking this work, the community will work to achieve the following first year milestones, which include the development of the Housing Strategy and a public roll-out designed to launch local housing initiatives in communities that are interested in implementing their own catalyst projects. The individual steps of the engagement and an approximate timeline are outlined below. *Local decision making could alter this timeline.*

Set the Table for Table Setting - Months 1-3

Develop Housing Leadership Coalition. THE HUB will collaborate with local leaders to establish a Steering Committee comprised of local leaders and key housing stakeholder. THE HUB will lead the Steering Committee's meetings in order for the group to make process related decisions. Steering Committees are typically comprised of leaders from local government, local economic development organizations, school board representatives, community foundations, major employers (especially those that are expanding), banks and lenders, realtors, and local housing non-profits.

o **Note:** A leadership inventory will be used to define specific areas for technical assistance and capacity building. A customized set of online courses will be developed to support leadership development during the course of the project.

Map Current Housing Delivery System & Tools. THE HUB will collaborate with local leaders to create a Community Asset Inventory - policy makers, program providers, producers, and consumers (employers & employees). A local housing system capacity assessment will be completed, as well as an employee housing needs assessment during this step.

Define Project Goals & Prioritize List of Potential Catalyst Projects. THE HUB will work with the Steering Committee to define development priorities, implementation options, and local funds that can be deployed for pre-development, development gap financing and homebuyer pipeline building. Following this meeting the THEHUB will work with identified communities to gain site control for prioritized properties prior to their being included in the market potential analysis.

Communities that choose to undertake a catalyst project will execute a memorandum of understanding ("MOU") with THE HUB that selects THE HUB to work alongside of them as their local Housing Department. A Local Housing Leadership Coalition will be formed to oversee the catalyst project and to advise THE HUB in its role as implementer.

Design the Housing Program - Months 3-6

Create Site Plan for Catalyst Site(s). After the catalyst site(s) is confirmed, THE HUB will assemble and oversee the development team and a facilitated site planning session will be held with the Local Housing Leadership Coalition that will inform the site design for each catalyst project.

Create Workforce Housing Development Project Financing Toolkit. A workforce housing development project financing toolkit will be created to help the Housing Leadership Coalition to select and complete the first catalyst project. This work will include a review of local financing tools available, best practices used in other Indiana communities and a return-on-investment analysis for each of the identified catalyst sites.

Create Workforce Housing Program Toolkit for Talent Attraction and Retention. A workforce housing programs toolkit will be created to help the Housing Leadership Coalition to engage private-public partnerships that seek to treat existing residents with as much care and concern as they seek to attract new residents. This program will be designed to support employers with plans to expand, encourage buyers and renters to choose to live nearer where they work.



Prepare for Implementation - Months 5-12

Finalize Housing Strategy & Plan for Public Launch. THE HUB will present the results of the market potential analysis, along with preliminary results of the catalyst site review and the recommendations to be included in the Housing Strategy document. Any changes that need to be made as a result of this meeting will be made in preparation for the formal launch of the Housing Strategy.

Launch Housing Strategy. A public launch of the Housing Strategy will include a presentation of the results of the market potential analysis, a presentation on the catalyst project(s) to be undertaken immediately and a plan and timeline for other projects and programs to be released. A survey will be completed to determine additional leadership tools that are needed for implementation of local housing programs and projects. This information will be used to deliver a virtual mastermind, called the “Six Steps to Success”.

Cost

THE HUB will be responsible for planning, coordination, and on-site and virtual facilitation of all elements described above. THE HUB works alongside the lead community organization on a retainer basis, payable \$10,000 upon contract execution and \$5,000 per month for a recommended period of 24 months.

About

The Housing Resource Hub is a partnership between High Performance Government (HPG) Network and Capacity Enhancement & Development (CED) Services, LLC. The organizations have partnered on projects like this since 2011. HPG Network is an Indiana-based, not for profit organization dedicated to cultivating thriving communities.

The Housing Optimization Market Empowerment (H.O.M.E.) Method is a proprietary product created by Heather Presley-Cowen of CED Services, LLC. Presley-Cowen has more than 25 years' experience in designing and implementing dynamic and exciting housing strategies, most notably during her tenure as the City of Fort Wayne's deputy director for Housing and Neighborhood Services. CED Services, LLC is an Indiana-certified, minority owned women's business enterprise that specializes in working with government, community & business leaders to design “homegrown strategies with tasteful results.”

