

# INDIANA'S GREAT SOUTHWEST

*the new frontier for talent & business*

## Economic Development Coalition of Southwest Indiana

318 Main Street, Ste. 400  
Evansville, IN 47708  
812.423.2020  
[southwestindiana.org](http://southwestindiana.org)

## Regional Cities Update for 2018



As a possible solution to flat population growth, the State of Indiana crafted the Regional Cities Initiative that would unite counties in collaborative regions, build talent-attracting projects and create a national brand. Through a competitive process of submitting regional plans and presenting to the Indiana Economic Development Corporation Regional Cities Task Force, *Indiana's Great Southwest* along with North Central Indiana (South Bend/Elkhart) and Northeast Indiana (Ft. Wayne) became Regional Cities' designees in December 2015, receiving the promise of \$42 million in matching funding to accomplish each region's respective plan.

Fast forward to today, 11 Southwest Indiana projects have been submitted and approved representing over \$90 million in public funding; \$29.9 million in Regional Cities funding; \$26.6 other public funding; and, \$403.9 private investment for a **grand total of \$550,947,873 investment** spread throughout the four-county region.

The most recently approved project is the Walnut Street Connector Trail project in Vanderburgh County connecting downtown Evansville to Vann Ave. The first project receiving funding that has been completed and closed-out is the Regional Medical Center in Poseyville, making medical services available for rural parts of Posey, Vanderburgh and Gibson Counties. Additional projects in various stages are the YMCA project, Evansville Regional Airport Terminal Renovation and the Warrick Wellness Trail.

The Regional Cities projects have been a catalyst for additional community plans and strategies, all helping capitalize on this synergistic approach making Indiana's Great Southwest a magnet for talent.

[Video: Recap of Regional Cities Projects](#)

## Resolving the Grants Gap-Financing Challenge

Oftentimes communities have identified "critical issue" projects and know that grants are available, but the total anticipated project costs exceed potential grant amounts. The resulting "gap" can prove to be an ominous task for moving a project from concept to reality.

Should your community have projects that have a funding hurdle, contact the Coalition's Community Development Team at 812-423-2020. Ask for [Karen](#), [Wylie](#), [Debbie](#) or [Carol](#) to learn about other potential funding sources that might help your community move that project forward.



## Southwest Indiana Blight Elimination Program Exceeds Milestones and Expectations

In February 2014, the U.S. Department of the Treasury approved the use of \$75 million of Indiana's Hardest Hit Funds to create the Indiana Blight Elimination Program. The Program provided local units of government throughout Indiana an opportunity to compete for funding to eliminate blighted and abandoned homes caused by the massive foreclosure rate across the nation. The Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority (IHCDA) was the agency responsible for the creation and over-site of the new program.



When the State of Indiana announced the Blight Elimination Program by Lt. Gov. Sue Ellspermann, the Coalition's Community Development team began preparing for a major allocation of time and other resources that would be necessary to carry out the initiative successfully throughout Southwest Indiana.

With a regional vision in place, the Coalition assisted Gibson, Posey and Warrick Counties, with the development and submission of an original application list of 163 homes slated for demolition. Each property required tremendous coordination, lots of paperwork and numerous meetings with property owners, local elected officials and construction crews. Debbie Bennett-Stearnsman, Vice President, Training & Development headed up the initiative with assistance from Wylie Zeigler, Project Specialist. "The Coalition knew Southwest Indiana communities would benefit greatly from this program," said Bennett-Stearnsman. "Effective community development initiatives pave the way for future economic development and talent attraction."

"The Economic Development Coalition of Southwest Indiana and its communities are examples of how a precise and well-organized Blight Elimination Program can lead to a successful and transformative community impact," stated Rayanna A. Binder, Blight Elimination Program Director, IHCDA. "Through the Coalition's efficient and cost-effective Program oversight, its BEP communities realized cost savings allowing the communities to add additional approved properties to their Blight Elimination Program Projects using funds from their original BEP awards."

To date over 169 homes have been demolished with the projected total of 210 by the program's end in 2018.

[More about the Blight Elimination Program](#)

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