

It's the Simple Things.

PULASKI CO. CELEBRATES INDIANA BICENTENNIAL, LOOKS TO FUTURE

On 11 December 1816, President James Madison signed the act admitting Indiana to the Union, a date we now celebrate as Statehood Day. In 2011, then-Governor Mitch Daniels appointed a fifteen member commission, chaired by then-Lt. Governor Becky Skillman and former Congressman Lee Hamilton, to collaborate with 92 county coordinators to oversee the planning and execution of a statewide celebration of Indiana's two-hundredth birthday. Myriad initiatives were undertaken, including a new Indiana State Archives building, Statehouse Education Center, statewide Bicentennial Torch Relay, and the Children of Indiana Nature Park.

Pulaski County celebrated the Bicentennial in numerous ways, beginning with the Winamac Fish and Wildlife Area's purchase of a 30-acre parcel of land, partially paid for by the Bicentennial Nature Trust. The land contained a house and barn, which were removed to provide for additional outdoor-recreation activities and wildlife conservation.

In addition to the Nature Trust purchase, Pulaski County benefitted from several Bicentennial Legacy Projects, sponsored and implemented by local non-profit groups. Included in these projects were "Celebrating 200 Years of Agriculture" (Northern Indiana Power from the Past); "Francesville: How

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DID YOU KNOW ...

that the Valparaiso-based Regional Development Company can help you to get up to 90-percent financing at a lower interest rate for business growth and expansion?

Contact us to learn more!

It Takes a Village to Light a Torch

Belatedly, and on behalf of the Pulaski County Bicentennial Committee and Chamber of Commerce, we offer our heartfelt thanks to all of the sponsors who made the Pulaski County TorchFest possible:

Inferno - The Community Foundation of Pulaski County, the Croell Family, the Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce, the Pulaski County CDC, Pulaski County Public Library;

Blaze - BraunAbility, Four County Counseling Center, PWRTC (Lightstream);

Flame - Fratco, Good Oil, Pulaski County Press, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1728;

Spark - American Legion Post 71, First Source Bank, Frain Mortuary, Fritz Fire Equipment, Howard's Marathon, Murray Leasing, Professional Interiors, Pulaski Memorial Hospital, Standard Properties/Standard Industrial; and

Other supporters/participants - Galbreath, Gutwein Popcorn, FTC Enterprises, the Isis, the Miss Pulaski County program, Monterey Days Festival, One-Eyed Jack's, Overdue band, the Pulaski County Historical Society, the Pulaski County Sheriff's Office, Riverside Rentals, the Town of Winamac, Winamac Coil Spring, Winamac Kiwanis.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ...

Shane Pilarski on recently named President & CEO of Alliance Bank!

First Federal Savings Bank on celebrating its fiftieth anniversary in 2016!

CDC Project Coordinator Krysten Hinkle and the Pulaski County Bicentennial Committee on TorchFest and a series of great commemorations of Indiana's two-hundredth birthday in 2016!

The State of the County Economy, 2017

WHY PULASKI COUNTY?

THE WINAMAC INDUSTRIAL PARK, WINAMAC, AND PARTS OF OTHER TOWNS ALL HAVE THE FIBER-OPTIC CONNECTIVITY THAT YOU NEED.



This address is going to diverge from the traditional script just a bit. Every year, I mix the good with the bad, and I'll do the same again here, but the tone will be a little darker, and I hope that tonight's message will open eyes and serve as a call to action. To put it in the informal parlance of the day, I'm going to drop some truth bombs.

The Pulaski County economy is under duress.

I don't mean to minimize very real positives: BraunAbility's continued investment; that Galbreath is hiring enough to justify putting up a banner; that Winamac Coil Spring is significantly outpacing the employment requirements for its forgivable loan; that Metal Fab Engineering has nearly doubled its workforce and has increased annual revenues exponentially. I could go on for days just championing the growth displayed by our existing companies.

It's not my intention to diminish the efforts of my office, West Central, Ivy Tech, the Center of Workforce Innovations, and our Pulaski County Industrial Forum to expand vocational and incumbent-employee workforce training opportunities as we have through our RAM-Tech program and Ivy Tech soft-skills classes, and as we'll be doing through local participation in the Northwest Indiana Skill Up project.

I'm not looking to write off the great energy and momentum that we're seeing from Wander Our Winamac and Francesville's UpTown Project, the Indiana Main Street organizations working to bring new life to our beleaguered downtowns featuring more and more empty storefronts.

No, I don't want anyone to forget about all of these amazing things. Let us not merely be grateful, but absolutely excited, that our community enjoys such blessings.

But we also have to be brutally honest with ourselves: when we look in the mirror, we should be troubled by what we see. The Pulaski County economy is increasingly vulnerable.

It is menaced by a sharply decreasing population and a directly linked diminishing labor pool. Following the 2010 Census, per which there were 13,402 Pulaski Countians, our population was projected to drop below 13,000 by 2025. We only needed until 2014 to decline that much.

Since 2010, we've lost almost four percent of our populace. On the plus side, the 45-64 and 65+ age cohorts are projected to increase in size, so we'll be in the running for the new location of the Midwest Shuffleboard Championship.

Only 43 percent of BraunAbility employees live in Pulaski County today. Forty-three percent. This isn't just c-suite executives choosing the Carmels and Lafayettes of Indiana. This is their workforce at all levels. Fewer than half of Plymouth Tube's employees live here. The most salient basis for criticism of our proposed industrial park near Medaryville is that we may not have the labor force to sustain growth. Without a change in population trends, our downtowns are going to decay even more.

Our local economy is further endangered by opioid abuse and other drug use. Please do not mistake my words as suggesting that drug addiction is primarily an economic threat; it's so much worse. But it is doubtless perilous to our economy.

Whatever your personal opinions about recreational marijuana use, how reliable can a new hire possibly be when he can't stay clean even for long enough to pass a first-day drug screen? How can we expect anyone to hire persons whose struggles with substance abuse make them a liability to profits, to equipment, and, most of all, to the safety of themselves and their coworkers?

When we're at the point at which there are only a few hundred residents who are, officially or unofficially, unemployed, and too many of them are struggling too much with inner demons to hold down a job — especially one that comes with all of the demands of factory work —, things get harder for growing companies.

The State of the County Economy, 2017

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Of course, the current state of our local politics and governance creates hazardous conditions for the Pulaski County economy, too.

Problematically, for all intents and purposes, we are a one-party county. In 2016, two Democrats ran for county-level office. Two. Not a single Democrat vied for one of the three open at-large Council seats. This has to change.

I don't say this because of any particular affinity for the Democratic Party, but because we've seen what happens when one party barely shows up on the ballot. The other becomes complacent to the point of sclerosis and has little incentive to react to criticism or to re-evaluate old ideas. I'm hopeful that the new GOP chair will spark some changes, and that Democratic leadership will find the right strategy to revive the party.

As I noted above, we are at the point at which our dwindling population is an acceptable reason to second-guess plans for new industrial development, but all too many of our decision-makers have seemed to be unable to follow this concern to its logical end: population decline is a problem in and of itself. Full stop.

I don't know if it's a head-in-the-sand unwillingness to accept this sad truth, a failure to listen to my frequent warnings, a lack of information on the part of newly elected leaders, or a perverse and morally untenable belief that this population loss is immaterial, or even a good thing, but few seem to have much interest in combatting our demographic doom.

As many of you are aware, I found myself locked in an ugly battle with our county commissioners over tourism marketing. I'll be the first to admit that I handled the public conflicts poorly and regret how I expressed my frustration. How I behaved, though, does not change the fact that we have a problem on our hands. I can't guarantee that the proposals that I presented are perfect, or that there are no flaws with our vision, but I can guarantee that we have to do something — and the CDC is trying.

Tourism promotion is a first step in the effort to rebuild our population to a sustainable level. People can't relocate to Pulaski County if they don't realize how great this place is. They can't be exposed to all that our community has to offer if they don't visit. And they can't visit if they don't know that we exist. Increasing tourism isn't some kind of elixir

that will magically save us, and I'm not going to tell you that every transient visitor — or even every one out of ten guests — is going to relocate, but we'll never know if we don't try, and tourism does have a significant financial impact on our community. It's one piece of the puzzle.

And yet, when I asked for permission to spend money already in a budget approved by the CDC and the County Council, I struggled to overcome skepticism and disinterest. I returned with data, market research, and testimonials. I presented slimmed-down proposals, including a super-cheap online-only campaign. Yet progress was slow and unsubstantial.

Perhaps more troubling than the reluctance to acknowledge our population problem is the apparent disinterest in addressing the fact that, simply by living in Starke County, I pay roughly half as much in local income taxes as I would if I lived here. There's no one reason why people choose to leave here, why people choose not to relocate to here, but this pummeling of the pocketbook doesn't work in our favor — and it hurts the people who do choose to remain a part of this wonderful community.

What's worse is that it's often hard to see what return residents get on this “investment”. I've struggled to use just a tiny portion of these funds to try to market Pulaski County — because, hey, if we could boost our population, then we could collect the same revenues with a lower tax rate —, to say nothing of other attempts to invest in our future. Hundreds of thousands of dollars just in economic-development income-tax funds sit in the bank, accumulating almost no interest and doing nothing to improve our community. I guess the Justice Center has proven to be a good use of these funds — only a few million dollars left on that bill.

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DID YOU KNOW ...

that the Revolving Loan Fund has more than \$90,000 available to help to finance start-ups, expansions, and relocation projects?

Contact us to learn more!

The State of the County Economy, 2017

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Okay, our income taxes are high, but we have some of the lowest property-tax rates! Sure, 15 of our 19 taxing districts have rates in the bottom 25 percent of all of Indiana, but given the structure of our tax caps, especially regarding owner-occupied homes, this statistic is pretty meaningless for the average wage-earner. The primary beneficiaries are industry and large landowners.

Once you consider that manufacturing requires a much larger workforce, which is harder to attract with our stratospheric income taxes, some of that benefit disappears. Modern farming admittedly requires a lot more land held by a lot fewer individuals, so that the total tax bill is still a burden, but on top of the workforce issue, most industrial land is within municipalities, where tax rates are higher, and industrial land is assessed much higher than farmland is valued. It becomes clear who benefit the most from this, and it's not our manufacturers.

I'm not arguing this to earn the ire of farmers. I mean, heck, our guest speaker at our Economic Development Summit joined us from the State Department of Agriculture, and I made a point of extending a personal invitation to the Summit to our local Farm Bureau. Agriculture is a significant part of our economy, and an even more important part of our

heritage. We're never going to write it off — and, honestly, we need to do a better job of supporting it at the CDC.

But we have to be realistic about a couple of things. First, manufacturing is much more land-efficient when it comes to employment, and depending on the taxing district, it generates anywhere from seven to 12 times as much tax revenue per acre as agriculture does. Bear with me and hold on to this information for just a moment.

The other issue that we need to recognize is that people, and thus incomes, and thus income taxes, are mobile. Land is not. If we continue to rely so heavily on income taxes to fund the operations of government, we're going to become increasingly less attractive; the fewer wage-earners we have, the more we'll have to increase our tax rates. It's a vicious cycle.

Last I checked, no one has figured out how to move an acre of ground to a different taxing district. No matter where the owner lives, that land is ours to tax.

And let's not forget who the biggest winners are here: not the large local farmers and landowners who still get to pay

our high income taxes, but the out-of-county land-investment corporations who buy up thousands upon thousands of acres, pay our low property taxes,

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Pictured: Attendees dine and socialize at the 2017 Pulaski County Economic Development Summit.

[A slightly different version of this report was originally delivered by CDC Executive Director Nathan P. Origer at the Summit on Tuesday, 14 March, at the Medaryville Christian Church annex.]

PULASKI COUNTY, HOME TO ...

- the 22-mile-long Panhandle Pathway and Winamac Parkway multi-modal trail.
- Tippecanoe River State Park (and the lovely Tippecanoe River).
- Jasper-Pulaski and Winamac Fish and Wildlife Areas.

IT'S THE SIMPLE THINGS:

WE LIVE IT. YOU'LL LOVE IT.

(Bonus!) CONGRATULATIONS TO ...

the new local elected officials who took office on 1 January 2017! Good luck to you all!

the Pulaski County Farmers' Market on a successful first year and expansion into Francesville this year!

County Prosecutor Daniel P. Murphy, the 2017 H.J. Halleck Community Service Award recipient!

Clear Decision Filtration on their 2016 plant expansion and continued growth!

The State of the County Economy, 2017

Continued from page 4.

and bring in out-of-town tenants to lease the land, all while their corporate principals pay taxes on their handsome salaries at other counties' lower rates. We're losing out here.

I'm not suggesting that we upend our entire tax matrix and start trying to squeeze every possible penny out of the ground, but it is indisputable that we have to make some changes to how we fund our county government if we care about the future of Pulaski County. And it's not just about cutting spending, which anyone who's been involved in government budgeting can tell you is much easier to campaign for than to do. It's about becoming more responsible with how we generate the revenues that we need. It's about using those revenues to invest in our future.

Remember what I said about the employment efficiency and revenue-generation power of industrial land? Our 2010 economic-development strategic plan proposed a rail-served industrial park with an intended focus on adding value to our strong agricultural economy. This could be a tremendous investment in our future.

From day one, I've been working on this: contacting landowners, commissioning feasibility studies and appraisals, negotiating with landowners, and meeting with potential tenants. It's been a long time coming, and we're almost there. Alas, we're at a standstill.

I have proposed a creative funding alternative that would leave tax-based funds minimally impacted after carefully considering every possible way of paying for the land. I've addressed every request for more information. Things have idled.

When County Councilman Ken Boswell asked about workforce availability, he raised a reasonable point. I returned with data showing that even if our local labor force is a little thin, the population base within thirty to forty-five minutes of Medaryville is more than sufficient to support this project, especially when you consider how many residents leave the county for work. Still nothing.

And if we don't develop this property soon, we're almost guaranteed to lose out on at least one of our potential tenants.

In the worst-case scenario, we see no interest in this site for a while and we generate cash rent, ultimately putting the land back on the market if the

PULASKI COUNTY, HOME TO ...

- the Northern Indiana Power from the Past antique-engine-and-tractor show.

- Winter Wonderland

- the Francesville Fall Festival, Monterey Days, the Medaryville Crane Cruise, trick-or-treating at the State Park, and so much more!

IT'S THE SIMPLE THINGS:

WELCOME BACK HOME.

project fails. No harm done. In the best case scenario, we replace agricultural ground with industrial development that generates more property-tax income for the County, creates new jobs, and maybe spurs some new commercial growth and an increase in population. We can't see into the future, so we'll never know if we don't try.

So, there you have it, the State of the Pulaski County economy. We have some great things going on, including a lot of projects that I didn't get to mention, and about which you can read in our 2016-2017 achievements report, but there are a lot of causes for concern.

I sincerely hope that what I have said here will inspire you to take action, to speak up, to get involved. Community development is a team sport, and the bigger the team we have, the more we can do to affect change and to make Pulaski County the best Pulaski County it can be.

Show up at meetings. Call your elected officials. Run for elected office. Sign petitions. Start petitions. Write letters. Help with community projects. Join a Main Street organization. Volunteer with Junior Achievement or a youth organization. Keep yourselves informed. Do something — for yourselves, for your children, for your children's children, and for the sandhill cranes.

Let's make sure that Pulaski County is a place that people visit for outdoor recreation, not for the Midwest Shuffleboard Championship — although I suppose that that could generate some income, too!

Pulaski County lights up Bicentennial

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Water Management Transformed a Region” (Francesville Fall Festival Committee); “Quiltessential Pulaski County”, a quilt showcasing the history of Pulaski County’s townships (local artists); two group bike rides, “Moonlight Over the Tippy” and “Tippecanoe and Bicycles, Too!” (Friends of the Panhandle Pathway); “Art in the Park” at Tippecanoe River State Park (Prairie Arts Council); and, culminating the festivities, the Pulaski County TorchFest (Pulaski County Bicentennial Committee, the CDC, and the Chamber of Commerce).

While the Nature Trust and Legacy Projects were carried out over the course of 18 months, one day stands out as the pinnacle of Pulaski County’s Bicentennial celebrations. On 7 October, the Torch Relay made its way through Pulaski County, honoring not just the birthday of Indiana, but 16 of our community’s finest, who were selected for exceptional public service, excellence in their professions, acts of heroism, or volunteer service. A crowd gathered at the courthouse lawn for a ceremony featuring a stunning rendition of “On the Banks of the Wabash, Far Away” and Circuit Judge Michael A Shurn’s proclamation forever cementing 7 October 2016 as Torch Relay Day in Pulaski County.

The festivities didn’t stop there, though. TorchFest kicked off when the torch left, and with it came three days of fun, food, spirits, live music, laughter, and a National Manufacturing Day exhibit in the ultimate celebration of our state, and more importantly, Pulaski County — yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

— Krysten Hinkle, Project Coordinator

WHY PULASKI COUNTY?

IT’S THE SIMPLE THINGS:

DIVERSIFIED, ENTREPRENEURIAL, AND
HERE TO GROW WITH YOU.



CONTACT PCED @ 574-946-3869, OR VISIT

[HTTP://WWW.ADVANCEPULASKI.ORG/](http://www.advancepulaski.org/)

CDC reorganizes; Summit has record attendance

After elections held during the short business meeting on Tuesday, 14 March, Gregg Malott is now serving a second term as CDC president; also re-elected were Vice-President Annie Scholz and Executive Secretary John Plowman. Rounding out the 2017-2018 Executive Board are Membership Officer Doug Roth and board member Lawrence Loehmer. At the meeting, the CDC welcomed new members Auditor Laura Wheeler (County Commissioners), Doug Hoffman, and Samantha Williams; Ross Davis, an at-large member representing the nonexempt manufacturing sector, joined earlier this year.

Following the meeting, a substantial crowd of elected officials, regional partners, and the general public enjoyed a dinner catered by Pulaski County Revolving Loan Fund borrower Meadow Springs - a Place for Celebrations and listened to the CDC’s executive director’s State of the County Economy address before hearing a keynote talk from guest speaker Jeff Cummins, the Indiana State Department of Agriculture’s Director for Policy and Regulatory Affairs.

Mr. Cummins presented on agriculture’s increasing importance in the Hoosier economy, highlighting Indiana’s high rank in the production of a number of crops — including popcorn, something in which Pulaski County leads nationally — and touting recent agri-businesses successes, including expansions as the Prairie Farms and Dairy Farmers of America plants in Fort Wayne and Goshen, respectively. He emphasized the copious opportunities for value-added production given the significant quantities of milk currently shipped out of Indiana for processing.

Focusing on the Kankakee-Iroquois Regional Planning Commission service area, which encompasses Pulaski County and seven other counties, Mr. Cummins emphasized rural northwestern Indiana’s strength in agri-business and food processing and possibilities for growth in these sectors locally — an idea that ties in neatly with the vision of the proposed west-side, rail-served PC-CARE industrial park.

He also provided a pretty sweet scoop: Indiana is the number-two ice cream-producing state in the union!

PULASKI COUNTY, PARADISE ON THE TIPPECANOE



(Image credit: Scott Roudebush)

New tourism group convenes

Along with the ongoing implementation of the Pulaski County Bike Route Network, an outcome of Pulaski County's participation in the State's Hometown Collaboration Initiative was the establishment of a Tourism Advisory Council (TAC), a group of local business owners and residents engaged directly or indirectly in tourism-related businesses or otherwise having a vested interest in the promotion of our community as a destination. The intended role of the TAC is to provide guidance to CDC staff in carrying out the most effective and cost-efficient programs and projects to market Pulaski County's offerings, to build stronger relationships among tourism businesses, and to help to create new tourism opportunities locally.

In late March, roughly 10 such individuals met with CDC staff to discuss the roles and responsibilities of the TAC, as well as to engage in open dialogue about the various concerns facing them and opportunities for growth. The fruitful discussion provided staff with a new understanding of the impacts, both positive and negative, that bringing visitors into the community has.

The Pulaski County TAC will likely continue to meet on a quarterly basis to support CDC staff.

THE PULASKI ONLINE JOB BANK

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LOOKING FOR QUALIFIED LOCAL WORKERS,
THEN CONTACT PCED TO ADD A JOB LISTING,
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([HTTP://DEVELOPMENT.PULASKIONLINE.ORG/
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JOB IN PULASKI COUNTY, TOO!*

WHY PULASKI COUNTY?

WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF EVERYWHERE;
YOU CAN BE, TOO.



CONTACT PCED @ 574-946-3869, OR VISIT
[HTTP://WWW.ADVANCEPULASKI.ORG/](http://www.advancepulaski.org/)

Our Mission

Pulaski County Economic Development holds to a mission to promote and improve the quality of economic development throughout Pulaski County in pursuit of excellence through the following endeavors:

- *Supporting the expansion and continued investment of Pulaski County businesses.
- *Recruiting new business and industry into Pulaski County.
- *Promoting tourism and the increase of transient spending in Pulaski County.
- *Developing and supporting business services such as workforce development, infrastructure, planning, financial programs, technology initiatives and entrepreneurial programs.
- *Conducting charitable and educational activities.

Pulaski County Community Development Commission 2016-2017 Leadership

President: Gregg Malott, Pulaski Memorial Hospital

Vice-President: Annie Scholz, Alliance Bank

Secretary: John Plowman, Town of Winamac/
Link Environmental Equipment

Membership Officer: Doug Roth, County Council/
Winamac Coil Spring

Board Member: Lawrence Loehmer, Town of
Monterey/Loehmer's Hardware

Executive Director: Nathan P. Origer

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Project Coordinator: Krysten L. Hinkle

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