

# Fort Wayne Indiana

A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report

April 30–May 5, 2023



**COVER:** (ULI)

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# Fort Wayne Indiana Electric Works

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Urban Land Institute  
2001 L Street, NW  
Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036-4948  
[uli.org](http://uli.org)

# About the Urban Land Institute

**THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE** is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 48,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 84 countries.

The extraordinary impact that ULI makes on land use decision-making is based on its members sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns.

Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. Each year, thousands of events, both virtual and in person, are held in cities around the world.

Drawing on the work of its members, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

More information is available at [uli.org](https://uli.org). Follow ULI on [X \(formerly known as Twitter\)](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).

# About ULI Advisory Services

**THE GOAL OF THE ULI ADVISORY SERVICES PROGRAM** is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and are screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda of an Advisory Services panel is tailored to meet a sponsor's needs. ULI members are briefed by the sponsor, engage with stakeholders through in-depth interviews, deliberate on their recommendations, and make a final presentation of those recommendations. A report is prepared as a final deliverable.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, participants in ULI's Advisory Services panel assignments are able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

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# About ULI's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy

In the immediate aftermath of the murder of George Floyd in the spring of 2020, the nation rose up—rightfully so—outraged by the injustice, the casual privilege, the police brutality. George Floyd's cruel, purposeful, callous public murder was a catalyst that exposed generations of structural and systemic racism in the United States, revealing clearly the blatant, oppressive inequity forever operating just beneath the surface.

Here at ULI, individual voices came together in a groundswell of anger and frustration. Land use policy and practice play an outsized role in segregation, marginalization, and unequal access and opportunity in education, career and personal development, health and wellness, goods and services, recreation, and wealth creation. And even though these monumental overlapping issues are centuries old and deeply embedded, this inequality had to stop.

With its mission to shape the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide, and as an essential voice of the real estate industry, ULI took the lead and took a stand. First by naming and taking responsibility for the role the real estate industry plays in creating and perpetuating these inequalities. Then, addressing the past, present, and future by detailing a high-level, long-term strategic view of diversity, equity, and inclusion at ULI, in the real estate industry, and throughout the built environment. The strategy included a topline commitment and a tactical blueprint to focus resources and actions, to set the course forward and to move the needle, and to make a measurable difference in communities across the nation.

ULI's topline commitment is to pursue unrelenting efforts to shape the built environment toward diverse, equitable, and inclusive communities.

How ULI focuses programs and priorities to bring diversity, equity, and inclusion into every aspect of the work it does is laid out in its high-level blueprint. Employing the same three key drivers as the mission commitments—which outline the highest-level road map to achieve mission success at ULI—the blueprint architecture is anchored by the words *connect*, *inspire*, and *lead*.

- **Connect** talent and opportunity for staff, membership, and leadership at ULI to better represent the communities ULI serves through targeted, measurable, organization-wide actions.
- **Inspire** a welcoming and inclusive culture in the real estate industry, underscoring business benefit for members and their organizations through outreach, education, and programs of work.
- **Lead** in tackling structural and systemic barriers across real estate through committed engagement, actionable insights, and best practices.



## Acknowledgments

This panel is a result of multiple sponsors participating collectively toward achieving transformational change for Electric Works in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The Advisory Services program acknowledges, with gratitude, the following panel sponsors: Ancora, Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne, Barnes & Thornburg LLP, AWS Foundation, Greater Fort Wayne Inc., and the ULI Foundation. ULI's Advisory Services program is grateful to many individuals, local businesses, and the more than 60 stakeholders who shared their experiences, perspectives, and insights with the panel.

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# Executive Summary

**INCREASINGLY, INTEGRATING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION** in the development life cycle is becoming a high priority in the real estate industry, and the industry is recognizing that an elevated focus on equity can have benefits for financial and social returns. However, reversing the divisions and structures that yield systemic societal inequities, particularly on race in the United States, is not a small task, and no one individual, community, or entity, can do it on its own.

Like most American cities, Fort Wayne, Indiana, was built upon the societal structures that have led to long-term disinvestment in minority communities. However, there is momentum within the community to create a more equitable and inclusive community for the city's diverse residents and visitors. Much of this momentum has been fueled by the recent redevelopment of the Electric Works campus by Ancora. Ancora has set out to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in its multiphase redevelopment project, one of the largest projects in the city of Fort Wayne. During phase one of the project, it became clear that there are many hurdles to inclusivity that are embedded in the business culture of the community, region, state, and country. As Ancora moves forward with its project, it has

engaged local community leaders, organizations, and businesses to better understand how to fully embrace a more equitable approach to doing business in Fort Wayne and make meaningful progress toward a more inclusive business community.

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*XBE* is an umbrella term for a business enterprise owned by either recognized minorities (MBE), women (WBE), veterans (VBE), or socially or economically disadvantaged persons (DBE).

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Ancora, in partnership with multiple Fort Wayne community groups and businesses, reached out to ULI Advisory Services to bring a group of national ULI members to make recommendations on integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion into the Electric Works redevelopment project, given the hurdles it has experienced in phase one of the project. Ancora hoped that the experience of hosting a national panel would illuminate these challenges among the rest of the community and that any solutions could be a road map for other projects in communities across the country.

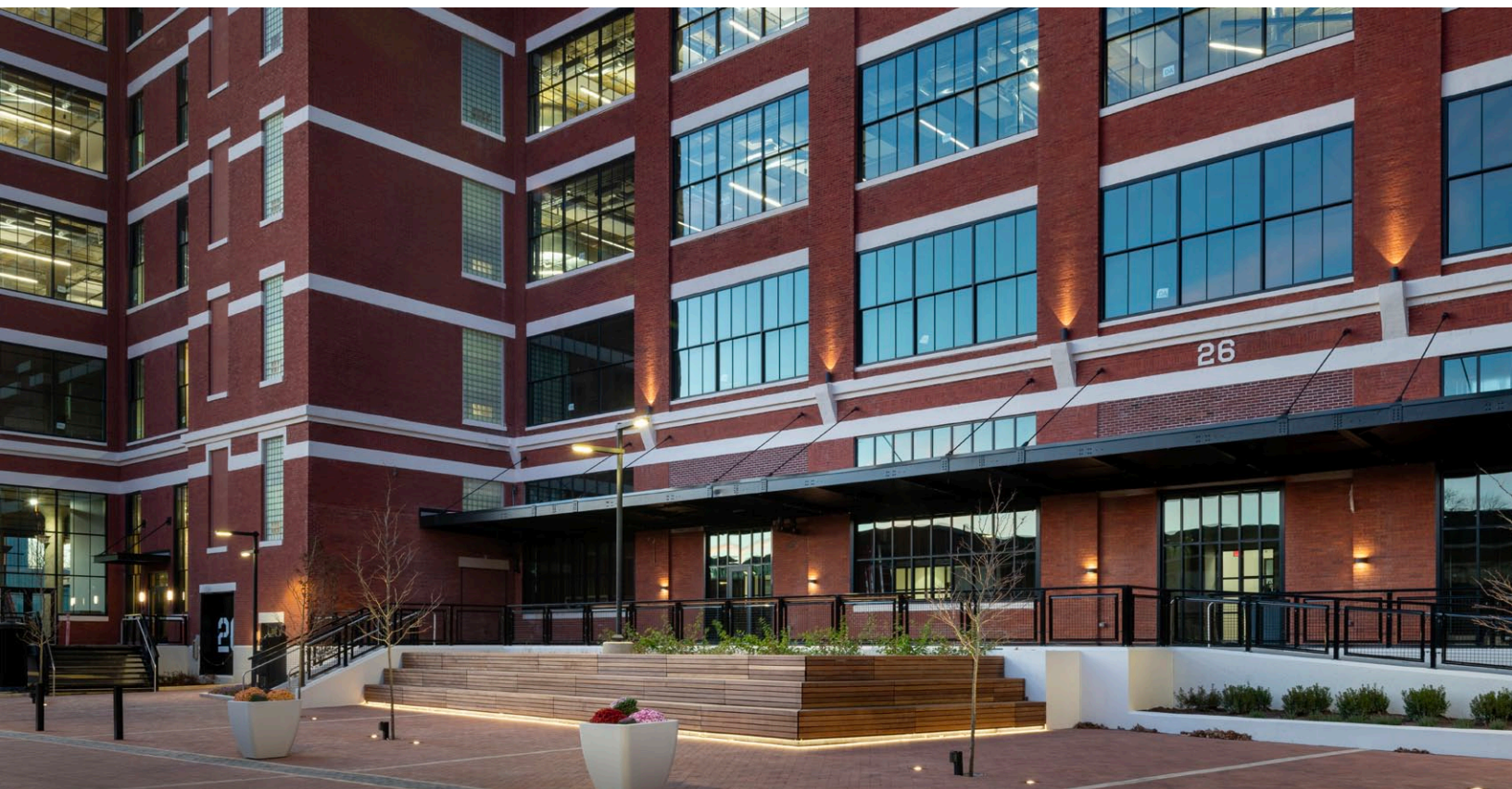
As a result of the research and interviews during this Advisory Services panel engagement, the panel outlined the following top-line strategies for achieving greater XBE participation in Fort Wayne's business community, specifically in the Electric Works redevelopment project.

- **Pursue inclusive planning.** Foundational to this effort is the rebuilding and establishment of trust with the community and with potential XBE owners. Government and developers must recognize and acknowledge the extractive nature of past real estate practices and work today to design *with* and not *for* the community. Inclusive planning celebrates the multicultural assets found throughout the community and fosters the entrepreneurial spirit of its residents.
- **Embrace business equity.** Business equity leverages inclusive economic, social, and cultural assets and practices to catalyze and maximize the potential benefits for businesses that have been historically left behind. From

hiring and contracting to attracting talent and tenants, to placemaking, collaborating, and learning, a host of inroads exist where businesses can begin to make progress toward a more equitable environment.

- **Create paths for equitable development.** The tools that drive and support equitable and inclusive development and growth include strengthened neighborhood partnerships, inclusive infrastructure, more accessible communications, capacity-building initiatives, displacement mitigation, inclusive enhancement funds, and metrics to measure progress and hold partners accountable.

If these strategies are done well, the Electric Works campus can become a local and even national model, pointing the way to more diverse business participation in local economies. Ancora and the development team for the Electric Works project must work closely with local and state governments, private enterprises, global organizations such as ULI, and educational institutions at all levels that are focused on increasing the participation of those who have been historically underrepresented in local economies. In Fort Wayne, these organizations, trade organizations, and the city's business community can work together to influence local and state policies and barriers to entry and shift old business models to a new approach—one in which all business owners, employees, and future business operators believe they have an important role to play and are needed and welcome at the business table. They are vital to the success and resilience of the economy going forward.



ANCORA

## Introduction and Panel Scope

**FORT WAYNE STANDS ON THE VERGE OF AN ECONOMIC RENAISSANCE.** The city is taking measured risks and bold actions to revitalize its urban core by delivering transformative projects that include a more active riverfront, a new minor league ballpark, and new downtown housing. These coordinated efforts have enabled the city in recent years to grow in population and employment while other Midwestern industrial cities battle economic stagnation or even decline. The city is well positioned to continue this progress with strategic guidance from the [Allen County Together](#) economic development plan and other local planning documents.

The restoration and adaptive use of the historic Electric Works campus presents Fort Wayne with a unique opportunity not only to create jobs, attract investment, and expand the city's tax base but also to use this redevelopment as a catalyst for involving underrepresented businesses and communities in the city's growing economy. Electric Works, the redevelopment of a former 39-acre General Electric (GE) campus, contains 18 historic buildings with more than 1.2 million square feet of space and was recently listed as a landmark district on the National Register of Historic Places. Today, the campus is home to this ambitious mixed-use project that seeks to foster innovation, energy, and culture.

The Electric Works project is a public/private partnership between Ancora (the developer) and the city of Fort Wayne, Allen County, and the state. The project's \$286 million first phase opened in November 2022 and includes 740,000 square feet of space, about 70 percent of which is already leased to a variety of tenants. The capital stack for this phase includes funding from 21 different sources and is composed of about 40 percent private equity, 20 percent federal tax credits, 20 percent state tax credits, and 20 percent funding from various city and county sources. Future phases will include a \$129 million second phase featuring about 300 residential units, for which the developer anticipates a financial closing in 2023. Planning for the third phase should begin in 2024.

Ancora and the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne have demonstrated a strong desire to involve underrepresented businesses and communities in all aspects of the Electric Works project. Their collective goals align with ULI's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategy and its commitment to pursuing unrelenting efforts to shape the built environment toward diverse, equitable, inclusive communities. ULI is eager to support Fort Wayne and other communities through this very important work.

## Questions Posed to the ULI Advisory Services Panel

1. What does the community (local government, philanthropy, business advocacy organizations, economic developers, and developers) need to do if it wants the private sector to expand opportunities for minority hiring and XBE businesses in the design, development, and construction phases?
  2. What can Electric Works do to make the district a model of inclusiveness in ongoing operations, activation, and programming?
  3. How do tasks 1 and 2 become a template for Fort Wayne to implement in other public/private partnerships going forward, while also being a model for other communities nationally?
1. What does the community (local government, philanthropy, business advocacy organizations, economic developers, and developers) need to do if it wants the



*Electric Works site.*



## Background and Market Analysis

**FORT WAYNE IS THE SECOND-LARGEST CITY IN INDIANA** and the hub of the northeastern section of the state. The city has received a host of recent accolades with respect to its housing environment and business climate. The *Wall Street Journal* recently noted Fort Wayne as having one of the hottest job markets in the country, and *Business Insider* pointed to the city as the most affordable place to live in the United States.

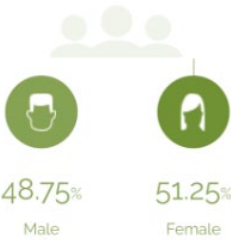
### Population and Demographics

The city's population growth over the previous decade has kept pace with the rest of the United States, representing an economic rebound over the postindustrial shocks of the 1980s and 1990s. The increase in population has been matched by job growth as the region diversifies beyond manufacturing, which remains an important base industry.

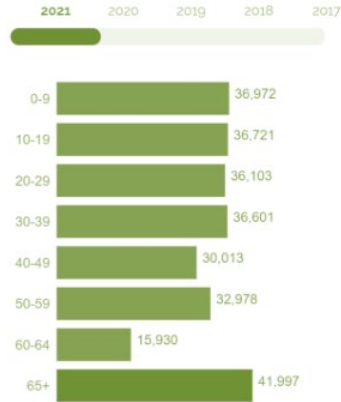
According to data from the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership, the demographics of Fort Wayne, population 267,317, differ from those of surrounding Allen County and broader northeastern Indiana. With a median age of 35, Fort Wayne residents are slightly younger than those in Allen County and northeastern Indiana, both averaging just over 36 years old. In 2021, SmartAsset.com listed Fort Wayne among the top cities for homes purchased by young residents.

267,317

Total Population



Age Distribution



Median Age

35

Population Growth (in thousands)



NORTHEAST INDIANA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP REGIONAL PROFILE AND DATA

Fort Wayne's population growth and age distribution.

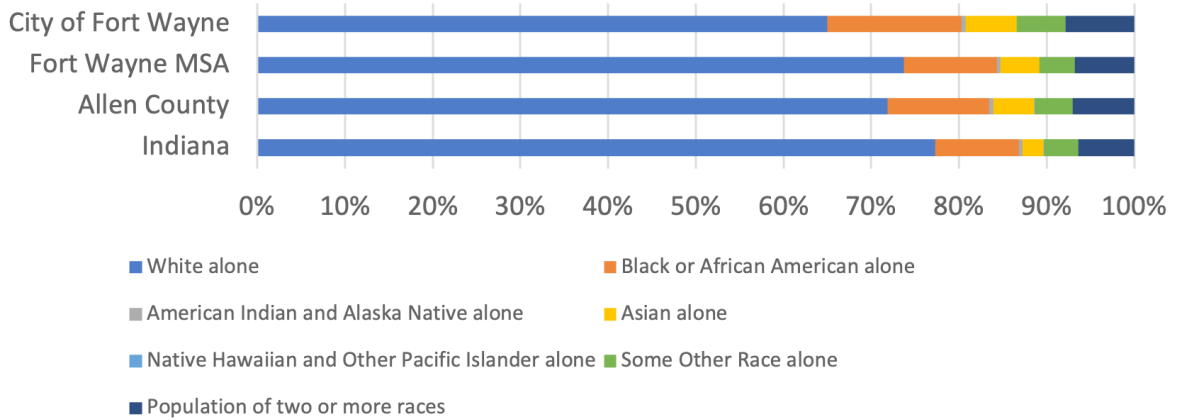
## Diversity

Fort Wayne is more racially diverse than the county, region, and state (see Figure 1). The city's population of residents identifying as Black or African American is 15.2 percent, and Asian residents make up 5.8 percent of the population. The number of residents identifying as belonging to more than one race is over 7.8 percent. Fort Wayne is also home to the

largest population of Burmese-born individuals outside of the country of Burma (Myanmar). With well over 30 percent of the population identifying as racially diverse, the city's stated 10 percent XBE goals, as noted in the Fort Wayne Emerging Business Enterprise Program, should be achievable.

Figure 1

## Measuring Racial Diversity



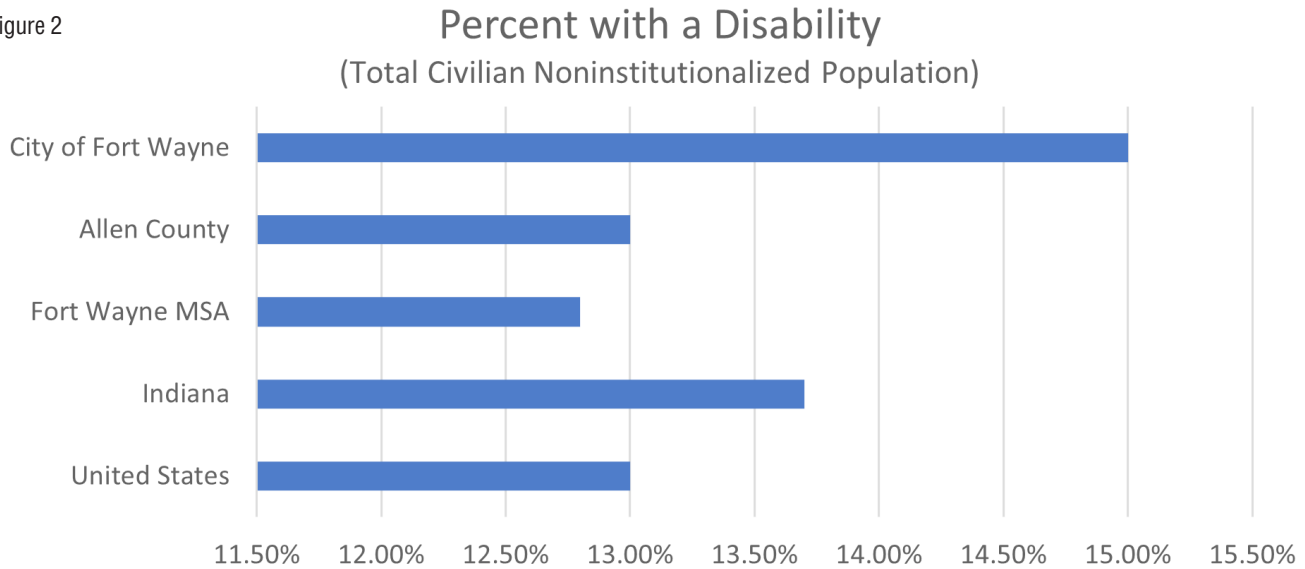
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, 2020 CENSUS REDISTRICTING DATA (PUBLIC LAW 94-171)

Racial diversity measured in Indiana and its city, county, and metropolitan statistical area by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2020.

In addition to its racial diversity, Fort Wayne has a greater percentage of persons with disabilities than Allen County, the Fort Wayne metropolitan statistical area (MSA), Indiana, and the nation (see Figure 2). To meet the needs of this large population of differently abled residents, the [AWS Foundation](#), [The League](#),

and [Turnstone](#) are working to ensure that people of all abilities can be active participants in every aspect of community life. These organizations will be valuable resources to Ancora’s Electric Works project as it continues to expand inclusivity across the development.

Figure 2



U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, 2021 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 1-YEAR ESTIMATES

## Talent

Fort Wayne has a strong educational sector that is delivering new talent to area businesses. The MSA is home to the Fort Wayne Community School system, five community colleges (seven within 50 miles), and nine universities (24 within 50 miles). With a 3.2 percent unemployment rate (according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 2023), expanding the workforce is necessary, and tapping into the city’s diverse population will truly benefit the area economy.

A review of Fort Wayne’s XBE-certified businesses provides insights into how poorly the city’s diverse population is represented in its business ecosystem. Although there may be numerous XBEs operating in Fort Wayne, only businesses

that obtain certification are listed in the state’s directory. Of the 1,611 companies listed in Indiana’s directory, only 35 note Fort Wayne in their business address. City and state certification takes time and requires extensive documentation, both of which often become barriers to business owners who are also trying to run their operations.

The U.S. Census Bureau’s Annual Business Survey provides a much different outlook, as shown in Figure 3, which shows 1,525 XBE firms listed in Fort Wayne. This disparity suggests that many firms that identify or even qualify as an XBE do not pursue certification, even though this lack of certification may lead to barriers in future bidding opportunities.

Figure 3

## Number of Firms That Identify or Qualify as an XBE

Employer Firms	Fort Wayne	Indiana
All employer firms, Reference year 2017	5,435	102,435
Women-owned employer firms, Reference year 2017	795	17,721
Minority-owned employer firms, Reference year 2017	403	7,979
Veteran-owned employer firms, Reference year 2017	327	6,326
<b>Total XBE</b>	<b>1,525</b>	<b>32,026</b>
<b>Percentage XBE of all employer firms</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>31%</b>

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, 2018 ANNUAL BUSINESS SURVEY (ABS) PROGRAM



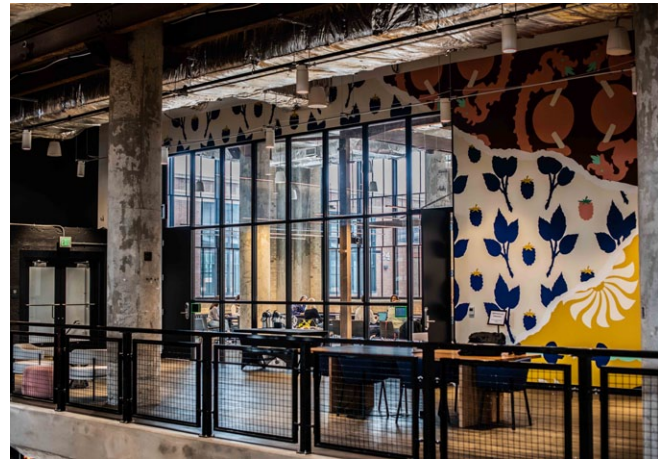
## Emerging Business Enterprise Program

Fort Wayne maintains a database of businesses that have qualified for its [Emerging Business Enterprise Program](#) and are thus certified with the city. This program is intended for small businesses owned, operated, and controlled by one or more economically disadvantaged individuals and that meet the city's specific criteria. The program "encourages the participation of minority, women-owned, and emerging business enterprises in city construction contracts to create jobs and opportunities for citizens of this community."

The city set a goal for the Emerging Business Enterprise Program to encourage each contractor awarded a construction contract to subcontract at least 10 percent of the contract amount to a certified emerging business enterprise. As of April 2023, only 58 XBEs were registered with the city. Given that the U.S. Census Bureau's Annual Business Survey suggests that more than 1,500 such businesses exist in Fort Wayne, the city needs to do a comprehensive review and outreach to find these unregistered businesses; confirm they are in fact minority owned, as done by other emerging business programs; and support those who qualify through the registration process to ensure the city is truly reaching and supporting XBE enterprises.

## Business (Re)Development Opportunities

Several historically underserved neighborhoods across the city are finally receiving the attention they deserve. Through the use of development tools like the Opportunity Zone classification, HUBZones, and New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC), redevelopment and investment in these areas can begin to make financial sense in addition to being the morally right thing to do.



A view of the panel and sponsors convening in one of several meeting rooms at the Electric Works site.

## SELECTED ACCOLADES

### 2023

- In its 2023–2024 rankings, *U.S. News & World Report* ranked Fort Wayne as #33 in the Best Places to Live, #15 in Best Places to Retire, and #5 in Cheapest Places to Live.

### 2022

- Fort Wayne was named a top emerging real estate market by the *Wall Street Journal* and *Realtor.com*.
- Fort Wayne was named a top city to visit in 2022 by *Better.net*.

### 2021

- Fort Wayne came in at #1 in a recent study conducted on the [best cities to buy a second home](#).
- Fort Wayne was ranked #8 on a list of [Top Cities for Remote Work](#).
- *Business Insider* ranked Fort Wayne as the most affordable place to live in the United States.

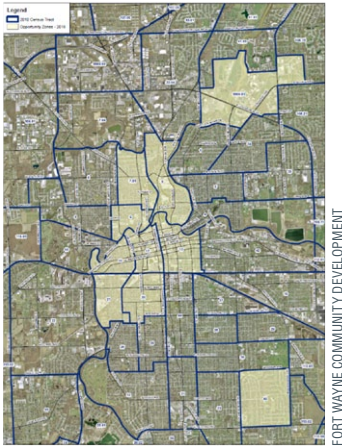
### 2020

- SmartAsset recognized Fort Wayne as one of the top 25 most livable cities nationwide and in the top 10 for most affordable cities for early retirement.
- Fort Wayne is among the Best of the Midwest cities for startups according to [Midwest Startups](#).
- Fort Wayne was named in the *Wall Street Journal's* list of the top hottest job markets.

## Opportunity Zones

Fort Wayne has several Opportunity Zones, which are federally designated low-income or distressed communities that would benefit from economic development and job creation activities generated from real estate or new business development. Those investing in the Opportunity Zone developments receive incremental tax benefits to offset capital gains. See Figure 4. For more detail, go to the [Opportunity Zones map](#).

Figure 4

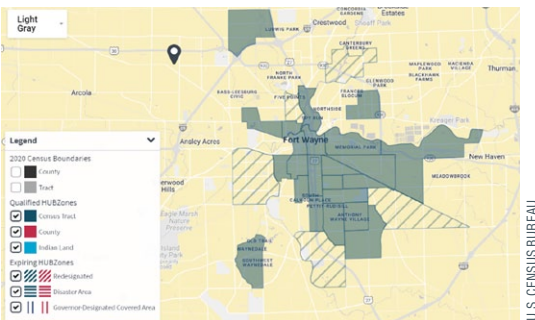


Opportunity Zones.

## HUBZones

The HUBZone program fuels small-business growth in historically underused business zones by awarding at least 3 percent of federal contract dollars to HUBZone-certified companies each year. See Figure 5. For more detail, go to the [Preview HUBZone Map](#).

Figure 5  
SBA Preview HUBZone Map (Effective July 1, 2023)



HUBZones.

## New Markets Tax Credit

The NMTC program incentivizes community development and economic growth using tax credits to attract private investment to distressed communities. Figure 6 shows in blue the areas

that are eligible for NMTC investments in relation to the Electric Works development. For more detail, go to the [New Markets Tax Credit Census Tract map](#).

Figure 6

## New Markets Tax Credit Census Tract Eligible/Severely Distressed



New Markets Tax Credit.

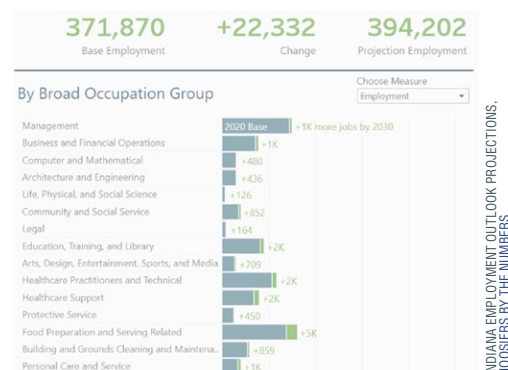
## Job Growth

The Indiana Department of Workforce Development provides employment projections through 2030 (via [Hoosiers by the Numbers](#)) for the state as well as the 12 Economic Growth Regions. Economic Growth Region 3, which includes Fort Wayne, is projected to increase by more than 22,000 jobs across nearly all broad occupation groups. See Figure 7.

Fort Wayne's low unemployment, in-migration, greater diversity, and expected job growth should mean more opportunities for the city's diverse talent pool within a more diverse business ecosystem. Achieving this expansion will require technical support and capacity building for many XBE firms.

Figure 7

## Employment Projections 2020–2030

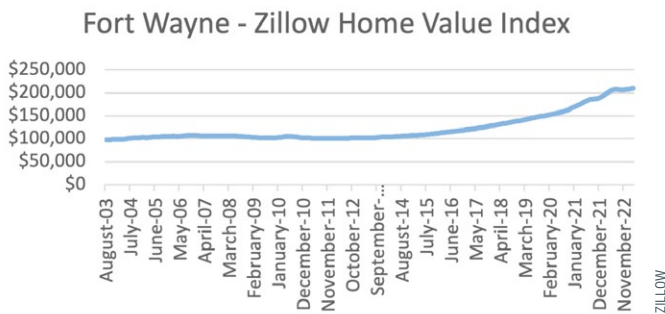


Projected growth by more than 22,000 jobs in Indiana will lead to opportunities, but technical support and capacity building will be required.

## Home Values

Fort Wayne has been proclaimed as one of the most affordable places to live in the United States, and young people are buying homes at an impressive clip. The city has seen a steady inventory of residential properties for sale at relatively low prices, yet the value of the average home is increasing. ([The Zillow Home Value Index](#) provides a measure of the typical home value and market changes across a given region and housing type. It reflects the typical value for homes in the 35th to 65th percentile range [smoothed, seasonally adjusted measure]). The increasing sales prices are generating equity for sellers, but the trend is pushing the housing affordability index in the wrong direction. See Figure 8.

Figure 8



## Household Income

Household incomes across the Fort Wayne MSA are generally higher than within the city proper. As one moves closer to the Electric Works campus, household incomes decline further, pointing to the potential employment and income benefits nearby residents may be able to tap into as business growth continues across the campus. See Figure 9.

Figure 9

### Esri Market Profile (May 2023), Esri Forecasts for 2022

2022 Median Household Incomes	
Fort Wayne MSA	\$61,110
City of Fort Wayne	\$53,962
5-mile radius of Electric Works	\$44,761
1-mile radius of Electric Works	\$38,271



Homes in the West Central neighborhood, 0.5 miles from Electric Works.

## Key Findings

- Fort Wayne's population is racially diverse enough to meet the XBE goals in the city's Emerging Business Enterprise Program. However, there is a disparity between the number of XBEs certified and registered in Fort Wayne, and the actual number of XBE firms listed in Fort Wayne through the Census Bureau's Annual Business Survey, suggesting that many firms that identify or even qualify as an XBE do not pursue certification.
- The shortage of XBE firms that have been able to achieve certification is a critical roadblock for the public agencies overseeing these programs to address.
- Furthermore, the city set a goal for the Emerging Business Enterprise Program to encourage each contractor awarded a construction contract to subcontract at least 10 percent of the contract amount to a certified emerging business enterprise. Given the disparity described above, minority ownership could be in name only and a more comprehensive review, like the state's process, may be needed to ensure the city is truly reaching and supporting XBE enterprises.
- Many of the neighboring communities of the Electric Works project site fall within areas or eligibility requirements of Opportunity Zones, HUBZones, and NMTC. Redevelopment and investment in these areas can begin to make financial sense in addition to being the morally right thing to do.
- Fort Wayne has been proclaimed as one of the most affordable places to live in the United States, and young people are buying homes at an impressive clip; however, without intervention the affordability could curve in the wrong direction toward displacement.
- Household incomes across the Fort Wayne MSA are generally higher than within the city proper. As one moves closer to the Electric Works campus, household incomes decline further, pointing to the potential employment and income benefits nearby residents may be able to tap into as business growth continues across the campus.

In summary, although Fort Wayne's population is racially diverse, aligning with the city's Emerging Business Enterprise Program's XBE goals, a notable disparity exists between the actual number of XBE firms in Fort Wayne, as indicated by the Census Bureau's Annual Business Survey, and the number of XBEs that are certified and registered. This discrepancy

points to a deeper issue beyond certification processes, as experienced in the Electric Works project. Despite sufficient capacity among XBEs, their engagement in significant projects like Electric Works remains limited. Key factors contributing to this limited involvement include trust issues; unfamiliarity with nongovernment bidding processes; and challenges in financial capacity, vendor pricing, and labor access. These hurdles often lead to XBEs quoting higher prices than their non-XBE counterparts.

## Recommendations

To bridge this gap, it is imperative to establish a resource pool dedicated to training XBEs in financial management for favorable financing terms, competitive bid preparation, and effective relationship-building with larger commercial firms. Such initiatives will not only enable XBEs to participate more actively in major projects but also contribute to closing the wealth gap by fostering more equitable business opportunities.

By integrating the following actions with the specific roles of the entities in the following list, those involved can help create a comprehensive ecosystem that not only simplifies the certification process but also actively supports the growth and development of XBEs in Fort Wayne.

1. **City of Fort Wayne and community advocates.** The city of Fort Wayne, its Summit City Entrepreneur and Enterprise District (SEED), Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne, Black Chamber, Hispanic Chamber, Greater Fort Wayne Inc., Start Fort Wayne, Small Business Development Center, Northeast Indiana Innovation Center, Indiana Community Reinvestment Bankers Association, and other local business associations should not only vet the XBE certification process but also actively participate in capacity-building initiatives. These activities could include hosting workshops on financial management and competitive bidding, facilitating mentorship programs by pairing XBEs with established firms, and developing a digital marketplace to connect XBEs with potential clients and resources. In addition, financial institutions should be more broadly engaged to create specialized funding options for XBEs.
2. **Advocacy and connections through ULI Indiana and state government.** While leveraging connections with ULI Indiana and Indiana's state government, the city of Fort Wayne should advocate not only for a more accessible certification process but also for policy changes that

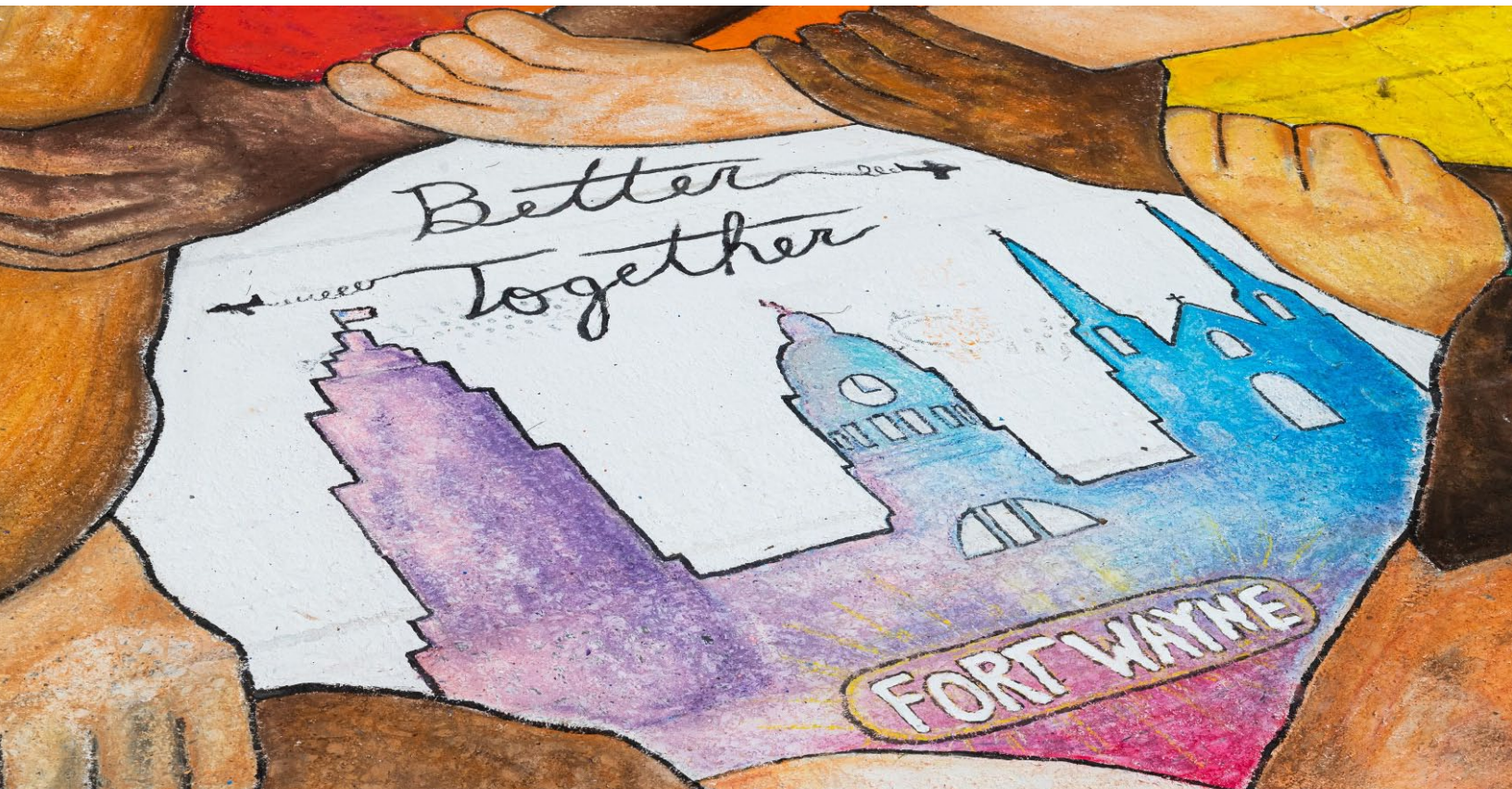
support XBE growth. These incentives could include tax incentives for companies working with XBEs and looking to cities, like Indianapolis, for policies that can enhance XBE participation in government contracts. The city and community partners should also use these connections to increase program awareness among the Fort Wayne business community and facilitate regular industry feedback mechanisms for continuous adaptation of strategies.

3. **Funding opportunities.** In exploring funding opportunities like Opportunity Zones, NMTCs, and HUBZone programs for Electric Works and other XBEs, the city of Fort Wayne should collaborate with local economic development organizations, such as the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership and financial experts specializing in these funding mechanisms. These collaborations can assist XBEs in navigating and accessing these complex funding opportunities. Additional entities to engage include the following:

- **Local educational institutions.** Universities and technical schools, such as Ivy Tech and Manchester University, can be valuable partners in providing educational resources and training programs for XBEs.
- **Professional associations.** Professional associations in construction, finance, and business could provide networking opportunities and industry-specific training for XBEs. These groups would include the Home Builders Association, Building Contractors Association, Northeast Indiana Innovation Center, Small Business Development Center, and so on.
- **Tech and innovation hubs.** Local tech and innovation centers could provide XBEs with access to the latest tools and technologies, which they can then use to enhance their competitiveness.



*A welcome sign in the residential West Central neighborhood.*



RACHEL VON ART

## Inclusive Planning

**THE CONTINUING PROGRESS ACROSS THE ELECTRIC WORKS CAMPUS** will benefit from a development approach that leads with inclusive planning. From the American Planning Association, “inclusive planning processes ensure all community members feel welcome to participate and are confident that their participation can positively affect outcomes.” For Electric Works, an inclusive planning approach starts with listening; reaches deep into the community of residents, business operators, and XBE firms; and strives to continually engage with those stakeholders throughout the process. However, the Electric Works development team, Ancora, will be successful only if it is willing to work with those stakeholders and other community partners to start removing barriers and systems that prevent inclusive planning and development. It will take a lot of coordination and collaboration to move the needle on DEI in the redevelopment process and long-term operations of the Electric Works campus.

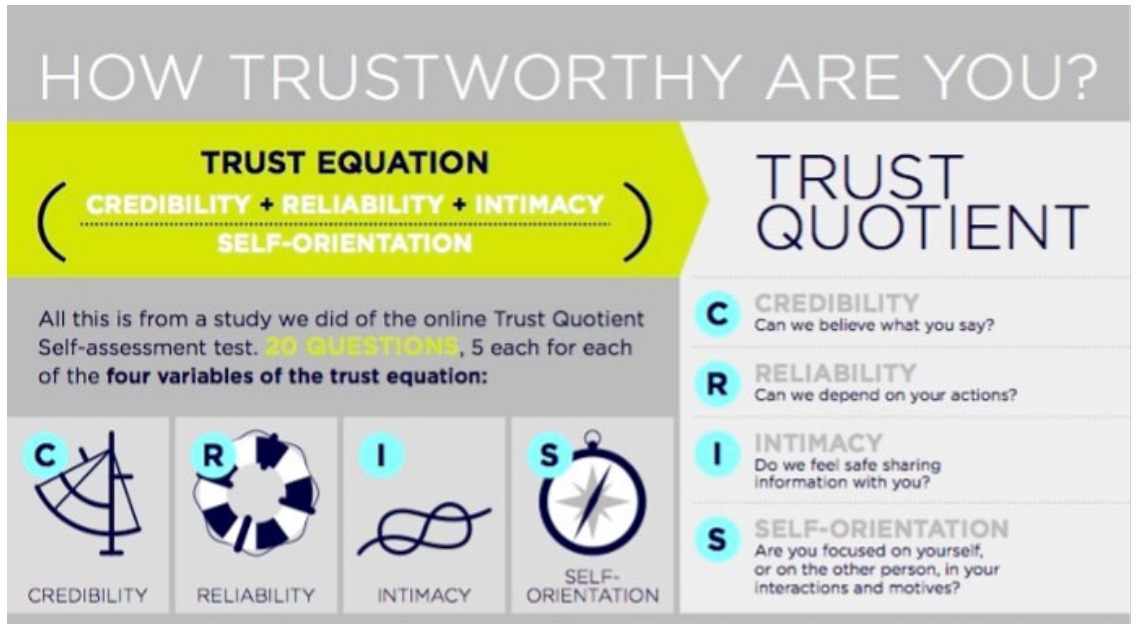
### Rebuilding the Foundation with Trust

The foundation of inclusive planning is trust, which takes time to build. A historical lack of accountability, transparency, and consistency has created barriers to trust, as seen in Fort Wayne and across the country. Research from the University of North Carolina recently discovered that for every heart-wrenching experience endured, a person needs at least three heartfelt emotional experiences to offset that one negative experience. Centuries of injustices across the United States, regularly

experienced by Black and brown individuals and communities, necessitate deep and long-lasting restoration work to rebuild those broken bonds of trust.

During the panel’s interviews with community stakeholders, it became evident that the current climate and systemic structures in Fort Wayne have led to community distrust, particularly for communities of color. Community members want to be involved before decisions are made. Not including the community in design decisions and broken promises of the past have led

Figure 10



Trust Quotient based on the trust equation of credibility, reliability, intimacy, and self-orientation.

to a scarcity mind-set today. This scarcity perspective, when combined with the city’s plans for additional inbound migration seemingly without regard for unintended consequences, only furthers the concerns and distrust found in the community.

As a counterapproach to previous check-the-box prescriptive planning mechanisms, an inclusive planning approach would recognize the checkered and often harmful historic planning processes and would embrace new initiatives that center community from the start, providing transparent accountability and metrics against which all can measure any initiative’s impact.

### Design with the Community

Design strategies are needed that shift community power. As stakeholders advised, “design with us, not at us.” Programs like the My Neighborhood Planner program are already helping move Fort Wayne in this direction. Advisory committees are now forming with business owners, church leaders, community leaders, and elected officials and now include members of nonprofit volunteer-led organizations dedicated to serving and representing neighborhoods. But more work remains. Ancora has a unique opportunity to be the leader and demonstrator for the rest of Fort Wayne, through the multiphase development process of the Electric Works campus. To embrace the DEI goals Ancora has set and achieve them in future development phases, it must take steps to demonstrate a deep interest in the community and provide an authentic system for building trust and gathering input.

### Recommendations

Ancora must take the opportunity and responsibility as the developer of a large, catalytic redevelopment project in the city to build trust within the community and to set a good example of best practices for DEI in the redevelopment process for the city and, hopefully, for other communities around the country.

#### **Ancora should immediately embrace and foster the following community trust-building strategies, leaning on the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne for support.**

- Provide a system for consistent community check-ins and employ feedback loops, which are listening sessions and a review of what was heard and any needed confirmation or correction. Feedback loops also outline proposed plans, information on how to stay involved, and mechanisms for checking in to see if promises were kept.
- Form a more formal community engagement department, with the existing community-based staff, to begin to engage deeply in community conversations and trust building. This action should dovetail into the work being done by the city in this area and will demonstrate commitment from the private-sector side.
- Hire community ambassadors and residents from the community near Electric Works, and pay the community members stipends for their work. This step could also include Amp Lab students and GE retirees.

- Consider hiring a local community adviser to assist the organization’s strategies for building trust within the community and becoming a trust-based operation.
- Define accountability measures and create processes by which progress is measured against accountability goals.
- Strive for consistent engagement. [The Southeast Strategy Update](#) is a good model.

**Ancora should plan and prepare for longer-term community trust building and involvement.** Trust takes time. Patience and persistence will be required. Ancora should lean on the Community Foundation and other community partners for support (for example, SEED, Greater Fort Wayne Inc., Hispanic Chamber, Black Chamber, and ULI Indiana).

- Set up systems for transparency, disclosing metrics such as percentage of community involvement, and create strategies for communicating community engagement process outcomes.
- Continue to follow the systems of accountability and check to see if what was planned aligned with what was communicated and what was eventually delivered. Again, the Southeast Strategy Update has some good examples that could serve as models.

## End the Extractive Nature of Real Estate Development

Government and development entities must recognize and address the historically extractive nature of the real estate development industry. The industry’s current structure recognizes the value of the culture it often extracts from communities—because there is money to be made there—but it does not begin to pay communities in a manner that is equal to the long-term value leveraged by the development. Figure 11 provides a framework that cities can use to draw from the seven classes of trust instruments.

As Fort Wayne continues to grow, those in power must end the extractive nature of development, particularly in communities of color. In cities across the United States, displacement has already gone too far and civic leaders are scrambling, using reactive measures to counteract further displacement. Given the untapped assets in Fort Wayne that have large capacity for future economic generation, the city has a unique opportunity at this time to be proactive with antidisplacement measures that will protect its communities of color today and into the future.

In addition to supporting residents’ ability to remain in place, the public and private sectors can pursue near-term strategies to support community members’ ability to remain in place and actually benefit from the development around them.

Figure 11  
Trust Instruments



Cities can draw from seven classes of trust instruments.



## Recommendations

Removing the extractive nature of development requires both the public and private sectors to work together.

- Local and state government need to play a key role by supporting programs that allow community members to age in place and establishing tracking systems to measure—in order to prevent—cultural and socioeconomic displacement. The current real estate market would allow the city of Fort Wayne to proactively prevent displacement in the communities adjacent to the Electric Works project site.
- On the private-sector side, more robust wealth-building programs should be explored to pay participating community members stipends at the beginning of projects and provide financial participation for communities in projects that link to the long-term appreciation of the development.

## Cultural Preservation and Antidisplacement

The rich, multicultural assets of Fort Wayne should be uplifted, celebrated, and protected. These are the very characteristics that make the city unique and that tie community members to the place and to one another. These assets can and should be celebrated, yet they must also be protected so that they do not become yet another extracted cultural asset. The panel also observed that some rental units—duplexes or fourplexes—in adjacent neighborhoods have been converted to single-family

homes, displacing renters and drastically decreasing the ability of others to afford the increased ownership costs in the area. Maintaining the culture and citizenry of surrounding and adjacent neighborhoods should be addressed proactively and as soon as possible in areas where displacement has already begun. These efforts will help mitigate displacement effects as the success and impact of Electric Works ripples across the city and help protect those residents, organizations, and businesses that wish to remain in place.

To support the goal of residents to remain in place, the city should explore municipal policies such as Right to Return and Right to Stay, stabilization overlays, and property tax exemptions to protect the character of the neighborhood and help existing residents. Emergency assistance funds could also be created at the municipal level and by nonprofits to assist residents as they navigate sharp increases in rent and mortgage payments. Additional social supports could include the formation of a community land trust to maintain affordability.

Existing homeowners may also need home repair assistance to remain safely in their home. Municipal enhancement grants and home and building repair programs can help. Enhancement grants provide funds to support the overall improvement of neighborhoods. Home and building repair programs provide grants to local residents, organizations, and businesses to update their structures for safety, accessibility, and aesthetic purposes. Fort Wayne has recently launched the Curb Appeal Pilot Program (March/April 2023), which should also help in these efforts. See Figure 12. Evaluating the success of this initiative could help inform future iterations and expansions.



THE JOURNAL GAZETTE

*Entertainers with the Academy of Mexican Dance and Music perform a traditional Costa Chica of Guerrero during Fiesta Fort Wayne, a celebration of Latino heritage, at Headwaters Park.*

## Recommendations

Without the following recommendations, Ancora or any other future investor/developer in the city will struggle to achieve diverse, inclusive, and equitable planning and redevelopment.

The city of Fort Wayne should pursue the following proactive antidisplacement strategies in the near term. Ancora must be an influencer, advocate, and partner to the city.

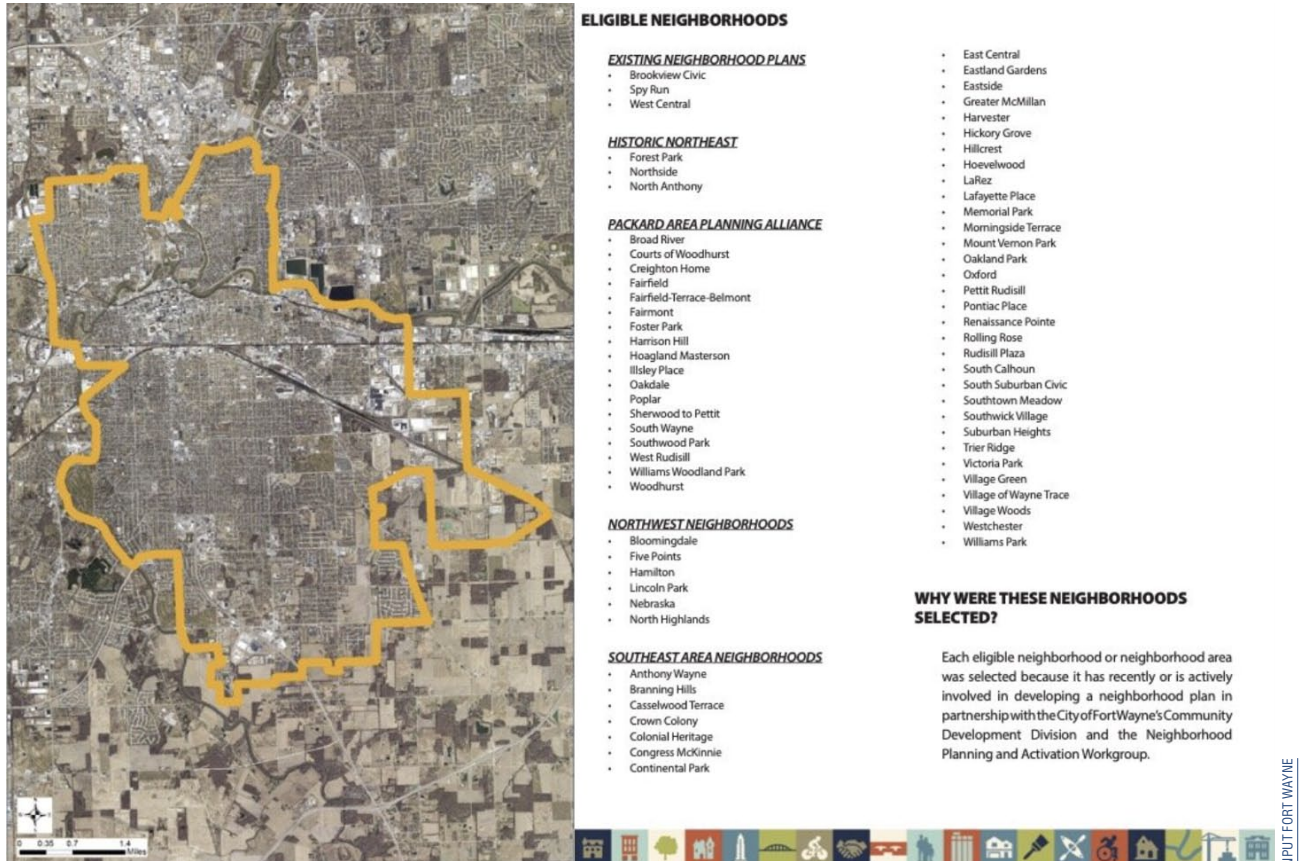
- Encourage further community participation in antidisplacement strategies.
- Create community task forces to help monitor the levels of direct and indirect physical displacement as well as any potential cultural displacement.
- Design strategies and programs that allow renters and homeowners to age in place.
- Create home repair programs for at-risk community members, particularly those in areas at high risk of displacement.

- Provide emergency legal assistance, particularly relating to renters' rights.
- Connect community members to the Curb Appeal Pilot Program and help increase access and knowledge about the program throughout the surrounding neighborhoods.

Longer-term proactive antidisplacement strategies hinge on the provision of more diverse affordable housing within the region.

- The city of Fort Wayne should begin to mandate affordable housing percentages as a function of new development and then begin to measure against an agreed-upon baseline.
- The city will need to mandate a more equal distribution of affordable housing across the city to avoid concentrations of affordable units in any one area.
- The city needs to streamline the application process for affordable housing to remove barriers to entry for individuals and families in need.

Figure 12  
Curb Appeal Pilot Program



Curb Appeal provides matching funds to residents in select Fort Wayne neighborhoods to support neighborhood revitalization and incentivize property owners to repair or enhance their property's exterior appearance.

## Align Leadership to Foster Entrepreneurialism

Fort Wayne's longstanding entrepreneurial spirit continues strong today and helps differentiate Fort Wayne from its peer cities. However, a knowledge gap exists in Fort Wayne that creates barriers to entry for diverse entrepreneurs and future civic leaders, as mentioned earlier. Often, individuals, coming to the table with rich expertise to add to civic leadership, do not have the insider information or systems knowledge to access those roles. To better support the city's entrepreneurs, civic leaders should adjust planning efforts, procedures, and structure to foster more entrepreneurial access and success.

Going forward, the public sector and development entities should operate in a manner that fosters additional entrepreneurial success across the region. By aligning the city's processes, structures, and decision-making, new and diverse entrepreneurs will have an easier time launching new business ventures, finding paths to success, and participating in the civic leadership structures that will determine the future success of Fort Wayne.

It is also important that Fort Wayne looks to the next generation of civic leaders for early insights and involvement. An opportunity exists to bring input to civic discussions that greater reflects the future generation's needs. This input will require a reframing of historic structured decision-making processes and a revised leadership pipeline that includes the city's youth.

### Leverage, Support, and Build on Current Leadership Programs

Civic leaders can build on and further support leadership development and educational efforts already underway.

- Fort Wayne Community Schools' [Amp Lab](#) program brings high school students from diverse backgrounds to Electric Works for half-day sessions full of real-world experience in an innovative environment.
- Fort Wayne has established the [Mayor's Youth Engagement Council](#) to help inform city plans.

At the same time, additional education and training are needed for business owners, their employees, and potential employees, particularly individuals from the city's southeastern neighborhoods. When asked, business owners said more information and training relating to financial literacy, sales, and marketing are needed.

## Recommendations

- Ancora and the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne and other community partners (Greater Fort Wayne Inc., SEED, Black Chamber, and Hispanic Chamber) should advocate for the public sector to align its processes to better support the success of diverse entrepreneurs. Ancora and the Community Foundation can be an example for other private entities and, through their experiences with phase one of development and community outreach, they can communicate to the city about where alignment is most needed.
- Ancora should continue to connect small-business owners in operation at Electric Works, or who are considering Electric Works for their businesses, with current training programs and support the development of additional educational and training resources as a co-investor with the city and its partners. The city can learn from Ancora's experience and hands-on interface with small-business owners.

## Strategies for Successful Leadership

Aligning city structures and processes to foster Fort Wayne's entrepreneurial spirit and nurture the next generation of civic leaders will take both time and attention. The following strategies, implemented now and into the future by the city and Ancora, can help build a solid foundation for greater, more inclusive civic leadership.

## Recommendations

Without the following recommendations, Ancora or any other future investor/developer in the city will struggle to achieve diverse, inclusive, and equitable planning and redevelopment. Changes at the local level that support goals of DEI are required for implementation success by the private sector.

The city should engage with process restructuring including the following actions, with influence and advocacy from Ancora, the Community Foundation, and other community partners in the near term.

- Spur innovation by including diversity of thought at all decision-making levels. This change can be accomplished by including diverse thinkers (diverse in terms of age, race, experience, background) on key boards, commissions, and task forces.

- Eliminate the pay-to-play models that shape those boards, commissions, and task forces, and set term limits for individual participation.
- Create Young Leader seats on committees and boards and create liaison positions with youth commissions to eliminate siloed thinking.
- The Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne, Allen County, and the city of Fort Wayne each has a strategic plan guiding its operations. These plans should be assessed to identify, and modify as needed, the plan review and updating processes to ensure greater inclusivity.

The city must expand access to roles for boards, commissions, and task forces and reduce the barriers to entry for these roles. This action is a long-term one, and Ancora, the Community Foundation, and others should advocate and influence the need for this change as much as possible with local government.

In the longer term, today's civic leaders need to reduce the barriers to entry in new civic leadership. One key barrier is a lack of knowledge. By creating programs that help build community members' knowledge of civic processes and planning principles, the city will have a much more informed populace and a deeper pool from which to draw knowledgeable community members to serve on and lead key civic initiatives.



## Business Equity

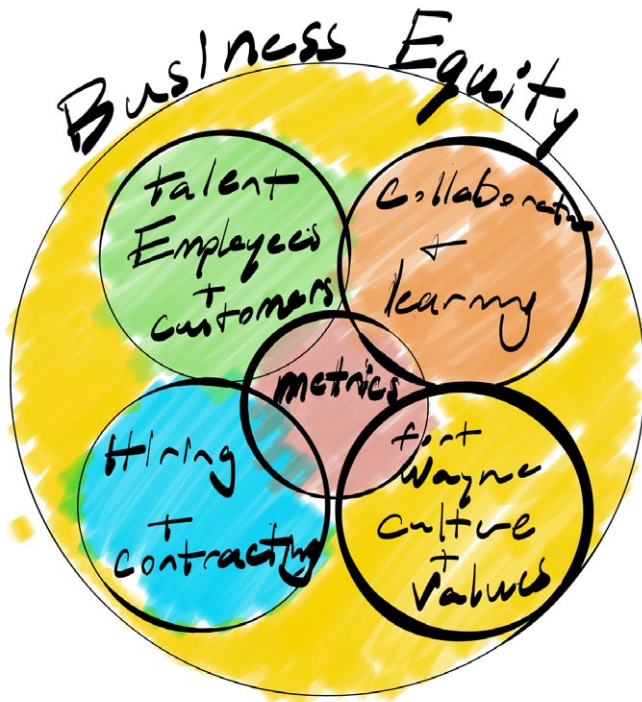
**BUSINESS EQUITY LEVERAGES INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL ASSETS** to maximize the catalytic ripple of a business's operations. For Fort Wayne, the opportunities presented at Electric Works provide business and civic leaders with a real-time example and innovation lab for more equitable business and real estate development practices. Building on the legacy of GE at the site, Electric Works can be an engine for the city's future economy.

Building an equitable place begins with weaving DEI throughout the construction, hiring, workforce, management, and programming of the space. Electric Works' phase one development represents a \$286 million total public and private investment spread over 10 buildings housing 740,000 square feet of office and retail space. Furthermore, the public dollars used for the development of this project should be beneficial to the whole Fort Wayne community.

Ancora set DEI goals for the construction of phase one. However, even with expert advice and guidance from consultants, hurdles to including XBEs in every step of the development process were prevalent. As described throughout this report, the existing business environment and systems in

place, particularly in the real estate development sector, are not set up to support XBE firms or unintentionally weed those firms out of the process. Support systems must be established to aid and ensure their success.

It is the responsibility of both the public sector and the developer to push past some of these barriers—through problem solving, being creative, and going an extra step—to move the needle on an inclusive development process. Thoughtful and intentional engagement must happen throughout—as well as support systems and accessibility for XBEs—to ensure that these hurdles are overcome and the systems that prescribe winners before the process has even begun are disrupted.



DANVEED SCULLY

An infographic illustrating the components of business equity.

## Hiring and Contracting

Hiring and contracting can have immediate, direct, and measurable impacts on local businesses. The management strategy at Electric Works strives to ensure that locally owned businesses are involved in the project and are benefiting from the development. Achieving an 8 to 9 percent XBE participation in the first phase’s contracting work is a great first step. Building on this initial progress, Ancora and community partners can further enhance processes to engage the XBE community more deeply and develop the ecosystem.

A healthy and robust XBE ecosystem is needed for businesses to prepare for, respond to, and succeed in upcoming engagements. This need includes early support for businesses as they prepare for the opportunity, helping them find development partners, design resources, construction firms, and additional business support services to help ensure that they are ready to meet the opportunity fully. The ecosystem also must create transparent and accessible processes for XBE firms to follow with clear scoring criteria outlined and aligned with the stated project goals. The preparation work and support may also include exploring joint venture partnerships for smaller businesses, allowing them to partner with other firms to pursue the larger opportunities. Mentors can also be critical at this

stage, helping guide XBE leaders through the early stage of business pursuit and expansion. Finally, technical support can prove game changing in these early stages, helping XBE firms build capacity from within.

Projects of the scale of Electric Works need to manage direct and indirect impacts on the community and be very intentional about project partnerships so support is widespread and uplifts local businesses and residents who have historically been shut out of opportunities of this kind.

Other partners in this space, including local and state government, philanthropic, nonprofit, and community organizations, can help provide additional support to assist businesses in scaling up to meet the opportunities presented by a project like Electric Works. [Start Fort Wayne](#) and its [Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Strategy](#) are also poised to help entrepreneurs in the region with strategies of support for core business functions.

## Recommendations

Ancora, in partnership and with the expertise of other entrepreneurial community partners whose mission is to support small businesses, and specifically XBEs, must be intentional with contracting with all aspects of the development process, including its lead contractor and subcontractors. Although challenging and beyond the typical scope of these roles, someone must take the lead on creatively opening the door to more XBE contractors and businesses to be a part of the future development phases and move beyond the status quo.

Ancora should work with its community partners as appropriate to do the following:

- Advocate for the city to facilitate support for XBEs’ certification pursuits with a clear process and funding assistance to reduce the burdens associated with obtaining local and state certifications and insurance.
- Identify a local organization that can facilitate technical support for responding to bid packages and requests for proposals (RFPs) and provide a direct pipeline to Ancora.
- Create a clear and equitable RFP scoring criteria for selection and a feedback loop to support small-business competitiveness.



*This section outside the Electric Works food hall houses murals by local artists.*

## Tenants, Talent, and Customers

Inclusive spaces, by definition, are welcoming and feel that way to all. To create an inclusive environment, planners should ensure that the opportunities within a space are available to everyone and invite people from all backgrounds to take advantage of the dynamic mix of uses at hand.

For a space like Electric Works, curating the tenant mix is important to maximize economic and community vitality and diversity. Carefully curating the tenant mix will also help ensure that business operations can coexist seamlessly and that buildings and campus activities are accessible for all community residents.

Although management at Electric Works will not be able to directly affect the hiring of tenant employees or engagement with potential tenants' customers, there are actions Electric Works management can take to support the inclusivity and equity of both groups. Universal design and accessibility of the physical spaces will have a positive impact, helping support a more inclusive environment for tenants and customers. Similarly, environmental elements such as inclusionary programming and activity pricing can also be positive influences.

For additional inspiration, civic and real estate leaders can turn to other regionally significant adaptive use projects from across the United States that have delivered an inviting mix of uses for a diverse population. In Memphis, Tennessee, Crosstown Concourse has grown into an inclusive development of regional significance, as has Ponce City Market in Atlanta, Georgia.

Electric Works can become a “must-do” experience for visitors and community members that showcases the vibrant spirit and culture of Fort Wayne. This success will require that a range of experiences and price points are available for a myriad of users, including employees coming for lunch, tourists stopping for a peek, Amp Lab students working in the space, nearby residents, and curious visitors, from all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

## Recommendations

- Ancora must curate the Electric Works environment to be inclusive of all the people who call Fort Wayne home to maximize economic and community vitality and diversity and create spaces that are inviting, welcoming, accessible (in physical form and price points) and enjoyable to people from all walks of life.



ANCORA

*Dynamo Alley at Electric Works can house various inclusive activities.*

- To the extent possible, Ancora should lean on local community partners to identify opportunities to connect diverse businesses with tenant space at Electric Works and provide resources and programs to help businesses. Electric Works, in turn, should ensure that leasing and tenant agreements are accessible and flexible to small businesses.

## Enhance Inclusive Placemaking

Building on the potential to create a regional draw and a “must-do” experience, implementing additional placemaking at Electric Works can enhance the user’s experience of the space, encourage return visits, and welcome a wide range of people to enter, experience, relax, work, and enjoy the campus. Electric Works was funded by significant public dollars and, therefore, needs to be a space that truly is public and accessible to anyone.

Communication and storytelling can be effective placemaking strategies. Throughout the stakeholder interviews, community members shared story after story about the buildings, the neighborhood, and the experiences they shared growing up around the campus. Capturing those stories and sharing them

can further build community and invite people into the shared memories to create new experiences. Ensuring that these and other communications, such as branding, maps, and other wayfinding, are accessible to people in multiple languages will add to the inclusive nature of Electric Works’ communications.

The physical design of the spaces is critical to fostering inclusivity and welcoming all ages and mobilities to the campus. Universal design principles, the findings from the developer’s recent accessibility audit, and an accessible Electric Works focus group can inform improvements to the current buildings and assist in the planning for future phases.

Placemaking can also take the form of programming, activities, and events that infuse a space with vibrancy and provide great reasons for new people to visit Electric Works. Ensuring that these events are welcoming and priced, if ticketing is needed, in a manner that is not exclusionary will also support everyone’s enjoyment of the experience. Free events for the community, hosted in collaboration with parks and recreation departments, nonprofits, and philanthropic partners, can help expose more people to Electric Works. The free and low-cost events can be balanced with festivals and other events that generate revenue as needed.



Finally, placemaking often evolves into creative placemaking, which often involves visually or sense-engaging works that enliven spaces. Electric Works management is encouraged to work with local artists and landscape architects on further placemaking interventions in the campus's public realm.

## Recommendations

- Electric Works should launch placemaking and programming in Dynamo Alley, highlighting local artists and perhaps offering it as a venue for other events and area festivals.
- Electric Works should partner with public and community groups to determine what programs would be representative and attractive to community members to attend.

## Collaboration and Peer Learning

The recommendations and work outlined here for the Electric Works project and greater Fort Wayne can be daunting, yet it is important to remember that this is not a solo venture. Projects across the country have begun to successfully implement inclusive planning and equitable development practices. There are cities, too, that have recognized the value DEI brings to business and residential communities. Neither Electric Works nor Fort Wayne is alone; collaborations and peer learning can be found just a phone call away.

- **Projects.** As mentioned earlier, Crosstown Concourse in Memphis and Ponce City Market in Atlanta are excellent examples of large-scale, mixed-use adaptive use projects that are delivering an engaging and inclusive experience for nearby residents, employees, and visitors alike. Both projects deliver programming and use inclusive connectivity and wayfinding well and have struck an effective balance between the various uses taking place on site at any point in time.
- **Peer cities.** The following peer cities are embracing DEI and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles to better serve their communities and also provide a competitive advantage for their hometown businesses: South Bend, Indiana; Indianapolis, Indiana; Durham, North Carolina; and Wichita, Kansas. These cities that are embracing DEI principles are also seeing gains in businesses' ability to attract and retain employees and cities' ability to attract and retain new residents.

## Move Forward with Metrics

Data will be helpful going forward, informing process improvement to better support equity and inclusivity at Electric Works and as a template for broader adoption across Fort Wayne businesses. Metrics can also provide further insights for stakeholders—the community, businesses, civic leaders, and real estate industry—into how the project is performing and



*Panelists and community members engaging at the ULI reception at Electric Works.*

how processes and programs need adjusting to better meet the needs of the community, businesses, and city overall.

Throughout the life of the project, Electric Works leadership should use communications and storytelling to capture the spirit—and progress—of the project so far. Taking the time to capture the experiences of people on site and sharing their stories can add additional life to the project and provide inspiration for additional art, including participatory art installations and placemaking installations.

## Recommendations

Electric Works management and Ancora, working as a team, should take the following steps in the near term to begin to track progress and better understand the current and potential future impact of the Electric Works project.

- Track hiring and include data on XBE hires that have occurred in phase one to help inform hiring for phase two. To further support more XBE involvement, consider the following steps: use smaller bid packages to allow smaller firms to participate, match XBEs with mentors at established businesses, and establish supportive roles for partners (nonprofits, educational institutions, and foundations) to help shore up gaps in XBE capacity.
  - Address the issues raised through the accessibility audit and engage a diverse advisory committee to help guide solutions.
  - Continue working with local organizations, nonprofits, and philanthropy to connect Electric Works with the cultural fabric of Fort Wayne. Through these partnerships, offer to host on campus three or four events for the community.
- Identify what will be needed to achieve the goal of 7.5 percent XBE participation in phase two.
  - Create a feedback loop to continually and effectively address issues and explore new opportunities.

Electric Works management and Ancora should begin to track the direct and indirect investments on an annual basis to better understand, and quantify where possible, the full economic impact of the project. This long-term tracking should include the following:

- Visitors to the campus
- Dollars spent with XBE contractors and consultants (phase one was 5.66 percent)\*
- The total percentage of the project built by XBE contractors
- Number of community events held on site
- Funding to support local artists
- Metrics to quantify the project's ongoing performance and to inform necessary adjustments to meet the project's goals and deliver on promises to stakeholders

\*In phase one contracts, \$10,597,017.94 was spent on XBEs out of a total of \$187,297,789.



ANCORA

## Equitable Development

**FORT WAYNE IS AT AN INTERESTING CROSSROADS.** Several of the city's neighborhoods, many heavily affected by the previous economic downturn and loss of key regional employers, are not faring well. Public disinvestment and concentrations of people along racial and socioeconomic lines have created enclaves of racial groups and poverty. Recent, more encouraging city developments, including a growing population base, downtown redevelopment, park network expansion, and the addition of Electric Works, point to a renewed energy, momentum, and opportunities for civic growth. The way Fort Wayne chooses to manage and leverage these opportunities and historic investments, for the community or with the community, uplifting all but focusing additionally and intentionally on these affected neighborhoods, can serve as an example of inclusive growth and equitable development to other cities across the country.

As defined by [PolicyLink](#) and in the ULI publication [10 Principles for Embedding Racial Equity in Development](#), equitable development is “an approach to creating healthy, vibrant communities of opportunity. Equitable outcomes come about when smart, intentional strategies are put in place to ensure that everyone can participate in and benefit from decisions that shape their neighborhoods and regions.”

### Local Neighborhood Partnerships

When redevelopment, adaptive use, and other methods of preserving and revitalizing historical assets happen, the culture and history of local neighborhoods are often co-opted by development and often without proper credit, input, or inclusion of related residents and organizations.



ULLI panelist Dr. Carter presents on local partnerships.



A home adjacent to construction in the Southeast neighborhood of Fort Wayne.

## Adjacent Communities

Neighbors in areas directly adjacent to new developments are often faced with multiple burdens, including increased traffic and noise, increased rents or taxes associated with increased property values, and, depending on the type of development, limited ability to enjoy the new project’s amenities. Having lived in the neighborhood for decades or generations, many residents find they are unable to access the new resource, whether due to physical design or pricing structures. Establishing active and engaging local partnerships with adjacent communities at the outset, and remaining in constructive dialogue through and beyond the project’s completion, can help in several ways. These benefits include minimizing cultural disruption, celebrating the neighborhood’s history, increasing resident access, and building a shared narrative that benefits everyone.

Residents are not always aware of nor well acquainted with planning, permitting, or development processes. Creating educational opportunities and programs for local stakeholders to better understand these processes can help to answer existing questions, mitigate conflict, and support rapport building. These efforts also support residents’ and stakeholders’ inclusion as partners in the development effort.

Storytelling is a critical component of neighborhood preservation, revitalization, and placemaking. Oral histories, written summaries, physical markers, virtual tours, and other cultural resources help ground current residents and newcomers in the rich history of the place. Storytelling can also inform the design and construction of new resources

in a way that complements the adjacent architecture. In addition, storytelling creates an avenue for area stakeholders to take ownership of the changes as a continuation of the neighborhood’s history and not a removal or replacement of that cherished history.

Developers and planners should invite residents, businesses, and other organizations into the development process. By proactively outlining a plan for inclusive growth, one that considers these existing entities in anticipated changes, developers can make meaningful progress in allaying residents’ fears and concerns.

For Electric Works, the enhancement grant provides a unique opportunity to include design elements that welcome the existing community onto the campus, set price points that are accessible to current residents, and create free third spaces and public places for everyone’s use and enjoyment.

## Recommendations

- The city of Fort Wayne should embrace the opportunity that the Electric Works project brings and leverage this chance to host educational events around the planning and development process, in coordination with Ancora’s development team.
- Ancora should continue to build out a placemaking and community outreach strategy that is built on celebrating the neighborhood and former GE site’s history through storytelling, tours, and design features.



*George's International Market is an example of a business connecting the main streets of Taylor and Broadway.*

## Surrounding Neighborhoods

The southeast quadrant of Fort Wayne, although not directly adjacent to Electric Works, has been identified as an additional area of need by the city. As the most diverse area of the city, it is home to multiple ethnic and racial groups, multiple faith communities, and a population spanning a wide range of ages.

In 2019, the [Southeast Strategy](#) was created to “develop a targeted reinvestment strategy for Southeast Fort Wayne to holistically improve the area by prioritizing investment in five key areas: economic development and revitalization; neighborhoods and housing; transportation and infrastructure; community and pride; and public spaces and interconnectivity.”

Expanding the efforts of the Electric Works project to other areas in the city can help maximize overall impact. It also underscores the development team’s commitment to the city beyond the project footprint, builds community rapport, and adds to the momentum of existing efforts. Emphasizing collective Fort Wayne growth will benefit Electric Works and the broader community.

The Electric Works project also has a network of commercial and residential real estate development professionals that could be tapped to help support initiatives in the Southeast Strategy economic development and revitalization pillar

through mentoring, partnering, and working with contractors, developers, and real estate professionals of color.

Fort Wayne has several city and area plans that have articulated economic and quality-of-life goals. The metrics, progress, successes, lessons learned, and impact measures of the Electric Works project can be used to positively inform the city’s plans, highlight areas where efforts should be increased, and identify best practices that can be used in other areas.

### Recommendation

Ancora should be a leader and emphasize collective Fort Wayne growth. Through partnership with the city, it should help inform strategies outlined in municipal plans and leverage its network to share best practices and metrics.

## Community Connection

Electric Works’ substantial footprint can serve as a point of connection and exemplar for inclusivity in Fort Wayne’s other gathering places. With 60 percent of the funding for Electric Works coming through public sources, the public should consider the space their own. If communities of color do not yet feel welcome, fostering stronger community connections through programming, events, and inclusive infrastructure can help.



Fairfield Avenue

## Connectivity for Persons with Disabilities

Working proactively, Ancora has taken initial steps to improve the accessibility of the facility for persons with disabilities. This work included a tour of phase one with local advocate organizations to identify areas in need of additional accessibility improvements. The lessons learned through the process will help rectify deficiencies in phase one and inform the design of subsequent phases.

### Recommendation

In future phases, Ancora must be intentional about processes, program types, physical design, building layout, and accessibility. Developers can create an inclusive environment and a community culture that will encourage the use of the space by persons with disabilities and their families.

### Inclusive Infrastructure

Electric Works is on the edge of the Downtown Development District, but connectivity between the two is insufficient, in disrepair, and, in places, nonexistent. Creating a reliable, safe, and well-lit alternative transportation route for community members and guests would increase traffic and use of both spaces and increase the likelihood of residents enjoying both spaces, expanding the district's overall reach southward.



Streetlights run down the sidewalks in downtown Fort Wayne.

Creating a citywide walking trail or loop with activity nodes would encourage gathering, commerce, and connection among residents and visitors. The initiative by Visit Fort Wayne to construct a pathway to connect the Convention Center to Electric Works is an example of infrastructure improvements necessary for residents to traverse the city easily, without geographic location as a barrier. Financially supporting this initiative and ensuring that the design includes wide sidewalks for larger groups and those with disabilities will be critical to broader community engagement and use of the space.



Engagement between ULI panelist, local ULI members, and community members at Electric Works.

### Recommendations

- Ancora should increase walkability and connectivity throughout the Electric Works campus to ensure the community can pass into the site from the surrounding neighborhood and eventually use the site as a direct connection to the rest of downtown Fort Wayne.
- The city of Fort Wayne must leverage the opportunity of the Electric Works campus redevelopment to implement the initiative by Visit Fort Wayne to build out a network connecting Electric Works to the Convention Center. Ancora can act as an advocate and partner for this network by investing in and strengthening its own connections to the surrounding community. Such actions by Ancora would also demonstrate the future benefits of the network.

### Clear Communication

Perception affects how stakeholders use and engage with a space. Incorporating welcoming design and wayfinding measures will help those new to Electric Works navigate the space and enjoy everything the space has to offer. Increasing access through signage in multiple languages can create a welcoming environment that supports inclusivity.

### Recommendations

Fostering community-centric programming will send a clear invitation for neighboring residents to use the space. Sample considerations include the following:

- **Programming development:** Create programming that is responsive to community interests and the range of economic capacities.
- **Storytelling.** Tell the story of Electric Works, the community's part in that story, and how this new chapter can be written together.
- **Signage and language accessibility.** Ensure that all visitors feel welcome and can easily find the resources they need. Create signage in multiple languages or use QR codes to provide access to the signs' messaging in various languages.

## Business and Education Initiatives

Fort Wayne is in a period of growth and needs to build its municipal capacity to attract new businesses and real estate investment. Multiple efforts are needed across the city to ensure a diversification of skilled trades and professional services to support this growth.

The existing procurement process for real estate development and construction is not designed to allow for opportunities for diverse businesses. The city and the community need to develop a system to build capacity and encourage joint ventures that can connect XBE and smaller, lesser-known businesses to opportunities, while the large development and construction industry business owners need to create a process that allows opportunities for those businesses to plug into larger-scale development projects.



Union Street Market, a food hall housing locally owned businesses inside Electric Works.

## Build Capacity through Collectives

To support long-term capacity building across the city's industries, companies should establish and maintain joint ventures between established firms, new companies, and businesses owned by people of color. Industries noted by stakeholders as ripe for experimentation include construction, real estate, and interior design, where firms working to build their own organizational capacity can partner with more experienced firms for either a set number of projects, a set time frame, or until a certain level of agreed-upon competency has been achieved.

Other partnerships, known as collectives, can be organized to share talents and resources to support firms owned by people of color. Through these partnership collectives, smaller firms can be positioned to bid on larger projects, knowing they can lean on the resources of the collective. Collectives of this type would increase network capacity and help smaller firms meet the capacity requirements of larger bids, increasing their ability to participate in the economic growth happening in the city.

### Recommendations

- Ancora should set an example of fostering the establishment of joint ventures and create talent and resource collectives to expand the capacity of smaller XBE firms where it can. It should also work with the Community Foundation and other community partners to encourage the city to support these efforts to expand XBE firm capacity. (See the [appendix](#).)
- The city and the community need to build a support network to establish these joint venture opportunities and build up the capacity of smaller XBE businesses. There must be a system in place to connect these businesses to the opportunities. Ancora, in turn, can stretch itself to create the opportunities for these businesses to participate and advocate for a more inclusive system in the city and the industry.

## Expand Opportunity through Partnerships

Partnerships can expand opportunities for newer or smaller companies, and construction firms in particular, through collaborations in programming and facilitated connections that encourage advanced industry professionals to provide guidance and share wisdom with newer firms.

Restaurant partnerships are also ripe for exploration and expansion. Several local families and residents are interested in opening a restaurant in the area. The Union Street



*Community members meet at Electric Works.*

Market on the Electric Works campus is full of first-time restaurateurs. The Market's program could be expanded to include an incubator environment where interested home chefs are educated on what it takes to successfully run a restaurant and given the opportunity to take turns running a stand in the Market for a few weeks.

### Recommendation

Ancora should work to cultivate mentorship in the construction industry and consider launching a shared kitchen incubator through an expansion of the Union Street Market, leveraging the relationships with other community organizations mentioned earlier in the report, to expand XBE business opportunities.

## An Inclusive Enhancement Fund

Community enhancement initiatives are intentional investments in neighborhoods and city districts that work to improve the overall quality of life, access to resources, and ability of community members to thrive. These investments require long-term commitments to reach maximum impact and develop momentum substantial enough to create and facilitate long-term change. Community enhancements have often been used through city programming grants and corporate responsibility projects to improve the areas directly affected by new development to ensure that developers invest not only in the success of their business but also in the overall growth and health of the directly affected community. This section outlines in detail the components of the proposed community enhancement fund for Electric Works.

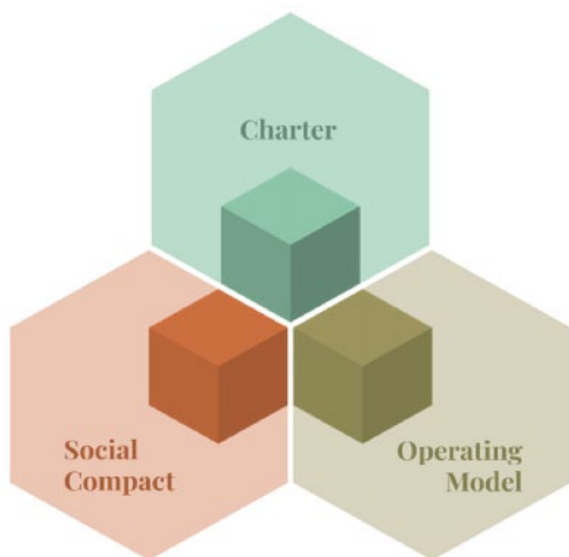


Ancora can continue and deepen its relationship with the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne by forming an inclusive enhancement fund. A fund of this nature is founded on a charter, social compact, and operating model. See Figure 13.

- **Charter:** The organization’s scope, form of governance, and decision-making protocol
- **Social compact:** Implicit or explicit agreement with society about the value the organization will create, including questions of accountability and legitimacy
- **Operating model:** The approach to the resources, structures, and systems needed to implement strategy

Figure 13

### The Philanthropy Framework



THE ROCKEFELLER PHILANTHROPY ADVISORS

The priorities of an inclusive enhancement fund are important to establish at the start and should include community feedback and input in decision-making. Providing forums for community members to share ideas for fund priorities and board composition could provide a powerful way to build consensus and ensure the fund is responsive to the needs it was created to address. Answers to the following three questions will help determine the fund’s priorities:

- Where can we strategically use funds to be most significant?
- What criteria do we need to use when determining beneficial uses?
- How can we ensure an equitable and inclusive distribution of funds—geographically, racially, among age groups, and so on?

From the [Harvard Business Review](#), funds should consider “*where they are* (current state), *where they want to go* (aspirational state), *how they compare* to other players and their *unique position* in the ecosystem. They can help funders map potential gaps. And they can create a shared language for evaluating an organization’s expertise, talents, and capabilities.”

### How to Create an Inclusive Enhancement Fund

Inclusivity is an integral component to creating an environment that is welcoming for all and is especially important when inequitable power dynamics have been the norm. One way to begin addressing this issue is to ensure that diverse voices are included at all levels, from entry level to middle management to decision-makers. For the fund to succeed and not only appear to be equitable in intent but also to do so in fact, it must include local and diverse voices in the group who will decide how appointments to its board of directors are made and how fund dollars are allocated.



Taylor Ralph, ULI panelist, presents ULI’s 10 Principles for Embedding Racial Equity in Real Estate Development.

### Fund Leadership

The leadership guiding the fund’s activities and investments should represent the communities it is serving. An important first step is establishing a clear board recruiting and appointment process.

Ancora should convene a temporary task force that is representative of the city at large and each of the service areas. This task force should create an equitable application for board membership (i.e., the application is available in all spoken languages, not onerous in length, has requirements for serving that encourage and do not discourage participation, etc.). Once the initial board is established, it should adopt an appointment

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## FUND EXAMPLES

The [Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors](#) describe the following types of funds with examples.

- Field Builder:
  - Description: “Launches or significantly strengthens institutions to fill a gap and create a robust, vibrant ecosystem needed to address a large challenge or to advance an issue area. Grows organizations and movements through steady, largely hands-off, support.”
  - Example: “Wellcome Trust [United Kingdom] strengthens institutions responsible for generating, disseminating, and applying scientific insights, in order to catalyze breakthrough ideas and establish the evidence base for effective health interventions to solve the urgent health challenges facing everyone with a focus on mental health, infectious disease, and the intersection of climate change and health.”
- Sower:
  - Description: “Provides a large number of grants across a diverse range of individual actors and institutions, often exercising responsive, flexible, and participatory grantmaking. Sowers bet on the cumulative effect of this approach to seed wide-ranging change.”
  - Example: “Building Institutions and Networks (BUILD) Initiative, Ford Foundation [United States] supports a diverse set of social justice organizations worldwide via multi-year general operating funding and targeted technical assistance, as they clarify their strategy, optimize their operations, and maximize their impact in tackling inequality.”
- Talent Agency:
  - Description: “Seeks out, strengthens, and promotes leading individual or organizational change agents who are closest to the issue, focusing more on their potential than on their programmatic goals or strategies.”
  - Example: “The Skoll Award for Social Innovation [United States] identifies, funds, champions, and amplifies the voices of changemakers closest to issues and/or communities who are advocating for reforms or creating innovative solutions to pressing, often systems-level problems.”
- Designer:
  - Description: “Leverages mainly internal expertise to design programs and approaches. Starting with an understanding of the context based on research and interaction, and with end users in mind, it prototypes, iterates, and communicates to engage and influence end-users.”
  - Example: “The William G. McGowan Charitable Fund’s NEPA Readiness In Skilled Employment (RISE) Program [United States] supports a comprehensive services program it developed by leveraging internal expertise and with input from local partners to facilitate workforce development and job placement in Northeastern Pennsylvania.”

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process whereby members are replaced in the future at staggered intervals.

Fort Wayne is a community of cultural, language, and socioeconomic diversity. The board membership should celebrate and be reflective of the areas it is being created to serve. Further, requiring representative percentages by race, age, ethnicity, preferred language, tenure (ownership and rental), and educational background is key to establishing an equitable and inclusive board. This effort will ensure that various voices, backgrounds, and perspectives will inform and influence the board’s operations and awards, as well as maintain an innovative approach to grant making. A question to be decided is, *What composition of the board would be most beneficial?*

Board membership should be time limited (e.g., a limit to the number of consecutive and total terms one member can serve)



*A local leader and sponsor engage in conversation at Electric Works on interview day.*

to ensure that no one person or group creates a monopoly in the system. This restriction will also support a fresh approach to board operations, grant opportunities, and community interfacing, ensuring that an entrepreneurial spirit remains a cornerstone of board membership. In addition, adopting staggered terms for board members will institute a membership structure that always has access to both fresh ideas and the experience of more senior members. Staggered terms will help facilitate continuity of board operations and ensure the presence of experienced members to facilitate the flow of business.

### Recommendation

The Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne, in partnership with Ancora, must create an inclusive process, provide representative board composition, and set board term limits to ensure the fund is inclusive and used to directly support the surrounding community and other communities affected by the redevelopment of this site.

### Fund Development

Once the fund's leadership team is in place, the next steps are to develop a contribution schedule, pursue matching funds, and outline inclusive award criteria.

The proposed funding mechanism for the fund at Electric Works is a \$0.25-per-square-foot contribution for each vendor. This contribution could be increased to a sliding scale percentage of the leasehold over the next decade. To prevent this fee from becoming burdensome to tenants, the fund could evolve into a matching fund in partnership with philanthropic, state, regional, or federal dollars.



Fort Wayne community members meeting after their interview with the ULI panel at Electric Works.

Fund award criteria should have clear guidelines that are reflective of fund priorities, but not overly prescriptive, to cultivate responsiveness to community needs. Criteria should consider how the fund will work with individuals, organizations, and businesses, as well as award cycles, key demographics, and ranking criteria.

### Recommendations

The fund's work cannot, nor should it, take place in a vacuum.

- The fund's board of directors should develop a graduated contribution schedule, pursue matching fund commitments, and institute inclusive award criteria.
- The board should work with the community to identify and prioritize areas of need and areas ripe for investment. It should give special attention to existing efforts that could benefit from supplemental funding.
- The board must do research to find local and regional partners whose goals are aligned with the fund. Partnerships of this nature will maximize the impact of allocated fund dollars within the community.
- The board, with input from Ancora, must create intentional metrics to measure success in a meaningful and quantifiable way. Using a system of metrics will allow Electric Works and the community to measure the overall impact of the fund and to see where improvements, interactions, or increases in investment should be made.

### Performance Metrics

Measuring impact is a critical component of gauging success. Metrics help identify key areas for review to ensure that the intended outcomes are being reached. The sample metrics outlined as follows can help Electric Works leadership gauge project impact and success.

- Number of people engaged from all city quadrants, including all forms of engagement and other on-campus activities
- Number of joint ventures created with XBE firms, including a time-bound measure for length of venture
- Number of historical residents able to remain in place in neighborhoods within a two-mile radius of Electric Works. Measurements should include number of renters, owners, and other sociodemographic markers.



ANCORA

*Local vendors serve community members at the food hall inside Electric Works.*

- Number of participants in mentorship and culinary programs, including information on home geography. These metrics should capture and record the representation of residents from each city quadrant to gauge how well efforts to encourage citywide access to the new opportunities are working.

Although they are not metrics, these two milestones can be equally important and add to the success of Electric Works:

- Completion of a neighborhood history project for adjacent neighbors with multimedia tools used to create it
- Establishment of a representative and equity-focused fund that follows best practices



## Local and National Model

**WHEN CONSIDERING HOW THE WORK IN FORT WAYNE AND AT ELECTRIC WORKS** can begin to inform similar efforts in other cities and at other projects around the country, the panel identified six primary recommendations that should be a part of and serve as a framework for nearly any inclusive and equitable development:

- Government, specifically state and local (both city and county)
- Educational institutions, from kindergarten through 12th grade to secondary and postsecondary institutions
- Civic engagement, including local and regional organizations
- Community, connectivity, and placemaking for both physical and emotional connections
- Inclusive communications that address both messaging and marketing
- Ongoing data collection to establish metrics, measure progress, and report findings to stakeholders

### Get Government Support

For Electric Works, local and state resources can play pivotal roles and support the inclusivity goals of the project. The Indiana state government has already signaled its early support of the Electric Works project through its significant investments in the project to date. In addition, the vision of the Indiana Office of DEI and Opportunity aligns very well with the DEI goals of the Electric Works project and, as such, could be more involved in the project and provide additional support by helping Ancora refine its procurement processes for the project and work with other state offices in contracting, incentives, and other vendor programs. The state's DEI office can also help companies identify best practices and create a mentor, mentee, or other similar protégé programs to align majority/minority vending relationships and support budding entrepreneurs.

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## OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EQUITY INCLUSION AND OPPORTUNITY OFFICER

Vision: To make Indiana a lasting leader in equity, inclusion, and opportunity through targeted strategic initiatives and partnerships, policy development, good stewardship, innovation, and next-level service so all Hoosiers have access to the tools necessary to experience their best life.

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### Connect the Dots on Education

Education is the cornerstone of a long-term, sustainable reliable pool of talent for the Fort Wayne community. By connecting the dots across educational resources to the work already underway in several organizations across the community, the city can amplify its people resources, fill the jobs available in the current business ecosystem, and begin to attract new employers to the region with the promise of an educated and work-ready population.

#### K–12 Education

With 52 schools and more than 30,000 students, the Fort Wayne Community School system is the largest school district in the state. The K–12 school system has a 90 percent graduation rate and is led by an astute superintendent who understands how public schools, charter schools, colleges, and universities can and should be preparing the next generation of business leaders and how his team of educators can work with the business community to create more meaningful and impactful connections for students. Electric Works' Amp Lab is an excellent example of how businesses can connect directly



*AMP Lab is a program that brings high school students from diverse backgrounds to Electric Works for half-day sessions full of real-world experience in an innovative environment.*

with educational institutions and students to create inroads for students into the business world.

#### Postsecondary Education

A host of postsecondary educational resources are available in the community to both graduating high school students and adults seeking additional educational resources. From community colleges and trade schools to four-year colleges and universities, these institutions are focused on preparing their students for the work world. There is opportunity in connecting directly with these institutions and finding paths to align their curriculum with the needs of the business community.

In addition to connections to the business world, schools and real estate developers can be working in partnership. Development projects large and small can provide interesting opportunities for students at every level (elementary through postsecondary) to engage with various aspects of a project. Students at trade schools and members of trade organizations and other nonprofits can also find value in engaging directly with development projects in their communities. Providing real-world development experiences for learners of all ages and abilities can support their future career paths and build general community knowledge of the development process, which supports more effective and productive community engagement on future projects.

#### Leverage Existing Civic Engagement

Fort Wayne is a city with an impressive and deep history of civic engagement. People are committed to the community—many have been in the city for generations and have no plans to leave. That said, there is also an undercurrent of distrust in many of Fort Wayne's civic organizations as well as a lack of accountability on the part of those organizations. Local



*Local businesses along Broadway, with a view of Electric Works at the end of the road.*

government (city and county), the business community, the nonprofits and philanthropic organizations, and even recreation and entertainment opportunities all provide important connection points to and with community members. It is through these connection points that trust can be supported or eroded. The scale and scope of the Electric Works project holds promise for turning the page on civic distrust, but it cannot just happen by chance. Civic engagement and trust building will take time and intention.

## Connect with the Community: A Renewed Partnership

Inclusive planning and project execution require an all-hands-on-deck approach, and Electric Works is off to a good start. Intentionally expanding on these efforts by developing a more diverse and aligned group of stakeholders sharing the message to all of Fort Wayne is a critical step toward rebuilding the trust of historically underserved or marginalized communities. The complex nature of a massive, layered project like Electric Works will require the city and development team to forge a renewed partnership with the community stakeholders and diverse populations who can help make this project the turning point toward sustained economic growth for Fort Wayne. The growth and success of recent investments in improving the city's infrastructure are paying dividends, and the city should recognize Electric Works' potential to turn what once was an economic engine—the GE plant—into a new economic engine for Fort Wayne.

## Think Long Term

Building diverse relationships takes time. Years of distrust, disinvestment, and exclusion have yielded tumultuous relationships among cities, developers, and marginalized communities. Understanding that the decades of structural racism and neglect of marginalized communities will not be overcome with any one project or economic development effort, efforts moving forward must be authentic and intentional, seeking incremental improvements along the way.

Building diverse relationships across all professional disciplines, trades, and services requires sustained effort. This work cannot be the job of one team member, nor does it easily permeate into established organizations. The effort must include an inward commitment for the outward effort to be successful.

Fort Wayne has a robust stakeholder ecosystem of nonprofit, economic development, and community groups that are dedicated to improving the city and region. The stakeholders must find ways to multiply the power of this ecosystem through coordinated strategic initiatives, collaboration, and trust building to build sustainable, long-term results for the community and by the community. Expanding the ecosystem is a long-term strategy and will also require support and cooperation of the city and its elected officials.

## Respect the Unique History and Leverage Existing Resources

Every region, city, and neighborhood has a unique history of successes and failures. Leveraging the community's strengths while acknowledging and addressing its weaknesses in a transparent and holistic manner can help diverse stakeholders and project leaders find common ground.



Members of the Fort Wayne community meeting before the panel's presentation.



A mural of the history of Electric Works as a former home of General Electric.



The General Electric logo is still posted on the new Electric Works building, showing the appreciation for the history of GE and its impact on the city's workforce.



An audience member at the final presentation asks a question of the ULI panel.

GE and other manufacturers have a legacy in Fort Wayne, attracting various skilled and unskilled diverse talent pools who relocated to and built families in Fort Wayne. This is the story of the local economy and the important heritage of Fort Wayne.

It is this reality that can provide a guidepost for how the economy could modernize its structure while holding onto its underlying foundation and values, using the Electric Works site as an example of future community investment.

Further, as Fort Wayne evolves, acknowledgment of the role that the business community has in the development of an equitable and inclusive economy is critical. Capitalizing on businesses' needs for committed and cost-effective human capital as well as a commitment by the business community to employ a diverse workforce, Fort Wayne can answer the call.

Leveraging the real estate availability and energy at Electric Works provides another touchpoint of the continuing legacy of GE on Fort Wayne's economic development.

Developments in Fort Wayne's urban core are pointing to a new, modern Fort Wayne, and Electric Works is adding energy to that movement. Taken together and with other neighborhood-based initiatives, this collective progress can attract similarly committed employers, help retain talent and diverse community members, and continue to further the success and growth of Fort Wayne. The Landing is a great example of honoring Fort Wayne's history while embracing the future.

## Communicate: One Message Respecting Many Voices

Civic leaders, business owners, and real estate professionals across the country are recognizing the value of robust community engagement in inclusive planning and equitable development efforts. Effective communication tools are clear and consistent and help ensure that opportunities exist for all members of the community to engage how, when, where, and at what level they choose. These communications must recognize the diverse backgrounds, physical abilities, and languages found within the community and adjust messaging accordingly, so it is easily accessible and readily understood. Speak with one voice, using the many languages of Fort Wayne.

It is not clear that the community understands what Electric Works can offer them. Many community members, especially those of different native languages and ethnicities, stated that they don't feel that Electric Works is a place for their people or that, thus far, it has been a place that was invite-only to those "in the know."

The panel urges Electric Works to change that perception as quickly as possible—to develop an inclusive marketing program to bring the community together, coupled with events small and large that celebrate the various neighborhoods, cultures, age groups, and abilities of Fort Wayne.

The city and county should commit to coordinating strong support of this vital adaptive use project that can help deliver on many of the community's goals. To date, this area is lacking.

The story of Electric Works is still being written. It is a story of innovation and renewal, and it is a story that should be written in concert with the community, incorporating community



members' histories and holding honestly to their truths, needs, concerns, goals, and visions.

## Practice Inclusive Development and Placemaking

Inclusive and equitable development practices often start with the expansion of opportunities for XBEs in the design, development, and construction phases. It is a great way to start and one that Electric Works has already undertaken. The next step is truly integrating the values and demographics of the community into the project's design, reflecting the diversity of the community in the building's programming and ensuring community inclusion across the campus amenities.

Early engagement with neighborhood groups, ethnic populations, and XBE owners is critical to incorporating features that will address the diverse needs of the community and expand the population of potential users. Integrating these diverse populations into the early design processes helps create an environment that is easily accessible by different modes of transportation and by those of different mobilities. Wayfinding and other development signage should be accessible across the community's various languages. Diverse programming, amenities, and offerings should welcome all members of the community.



*An accessible pathway into Electric Works.*

In addition to the project's core building design, placemaking interventions can support the project's inclusivity goals by welcoming in, celebrating, and amplifying the stories, talents, and people in the community.

At its core, real estate development is about creating spaces and places for people, and the goal at Electric Works is for those spaces to be as welcoming as possible to as many people as possible. Developers and designers must be sure the places they create are easily accessed by diverse populations of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds, whether they are biking, walking, driving, or taking transit. Done well, Electric Works could become an embraced place that is known to provide equitable benefits to all of Fort Wayne's diverse communities.

The mixed-use nature of Electric Works, along with its position near the Southeast neighborhood, makes it critical to address not only the connections required for the community to access the Electric Works site but also, once people are there, making it feel like a place that offers something for the diverse community members.

## Leverage the Business Case for Inclusive Development

During the COVID-19 pandemic, construction supply chains and labor forces were heavily disrupted, creating daunting challenges that the market is struggling to overcome even today. Project construction costs remain significantly elevated, creating ongoing financial challenges for developers as they try to make projects pencil out. These ongoing development pressures also harm efforts to provide additional affordable housing and other critical infrastructure needed in many communities.

Diverse economies are more resilient economies. Hiring XBEs across the full spectrum of the design, development, and construction phases of a project provides the developer with a broader labor pool and deeper access to talent that may have firsthand experience with the diverse needs and goals of a community. Further, supporting diverse workforces through additional education and job training opportunities will enhance the city's marketability and begin to address the labor shortages that continue to affect the costs of construction.

Ivy Tech, Amp Lab, and the school district are eager to find ways to give their students hands-on experience and explore job opportunities. The Electric Works project should more holistically embrace being the place to build long-term pathways

from real-world, hands-on learning to job training and full-time employment. The local government and state should embrace this opportunity with the Electric Works redevelopment project and leverage existing tools, amend policies, and support Ancora to make this pathway possible.

## Drive with Data, and Share Results

A data-informed approach can provide meaningful benchmarks and support a community's fuller understanding of the environment when the development began, how the work is progressing, and the impacts that are being created. This deeper information and supporting data can also help inform the discussions required to build consensus and trust.

Incorporating data points from diverse sources, including governmental entities, industry organizations, and cultural and nonprofit sources, can provide a more robust picture of the subject matter and help ensure that information gathered is as reflective of the diverse community stakeholders as possible.

There were no clear goals tied to the historic state and local funding of this project, but there was consensus that this investment was critical to the economic development of Fort Wayne. It is time to take the important steps to ensure that the work to expand phase one and design, planning, and execution



*The Ancora team giving a tour of the Electric Works campus.*

of phase two and future phases show improvement in XBE participation, diverse programming, and inclusive design. These efforts will help the project live up to its potential.

By using benchmarked data, insights from community engagement, and current market realities, a development team can design a robust set of project-specific metrics and goals. These metrics can then be tracked and referenced along the life span of a project and at critical milestones.



## Conclusion and Summary of Recommendations

**THE CITY OF FORT WAYNE IS ON AN EXCITING PATH** toward additional economic and population growth. City leadership is working hard to meet the needs of its diverse population and it recognizes how a project like Electric Works can create significant ripples throughout the community. The team leading Electric Works likewise understands its role in the community and its potential for positive impact going forward.

The project's inclusivity and equitable development goals are helping shape an environment that is attractive, compelling, and engaging to a wide range of business owners, employees, and visitors. By setting solid XBE goals for each of its development phases, the leadership team is also working to broaden the economic effects of the Electric Works project by ensuring that more XBE firms have greater access to the opportunities associated with the design and construction of the project.

Going forward, the private sector must be more intentional and more explicit about assisting underrepresented businesses

in competing for jobs and contracts. Fort Wayne has a large and diverse workforce and an untapped supply of certified and uncertified XBEs, but their historic underrepresentation in the city's economy will require more affirmative efforts to level the playing field and overcome the effects of past discrimination. This challenge is not unique to Fort Wayne, as similar issues affect virtually all large and medium-sized cities across the country. City and county governments, foundations, chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, and real estate developers all have roles to play in addressing the challenge.

Electric Works can become a model of inclusive planning and equitable development by improving its communications

and outreach to the city's diverse residents, many of whom do not feel welcome at Electric Works today. With about 60 percent of the project's first-phase capital funding coming from various public sources, all residents have a right to view Electric Works as a gathering place where they can interact with others and enjoy the city's cultural diversity. The Electric Works team has already taken the first step toward becoming such an example by commissioning this ULI study and by providing ULI with a basis on which to extend the lessons learned here to other communities. ULI intends to employ all its resources, including its DEI program, district councils, product councils, learning program, and multidisciplinary membership, to advance this initiative.

The keys to Fort Wayne's future success lie in three key areas. First, civic leaders should pursue inclusive planning and prioritize restoring trust in the city's leadership by ensuring

that public participation is extensive, meaningful, effective, and representative of the city's diverse communities. Second, developers should become more proficient in articulating the business case for diversity, equity, and inclusion, helping others to understand how such policies and practices can reduce risks and increase returns on investment. Finally, business leaders should measure the results of their DEI efforts and hold each other accountable for the city's progress toward these goals.

Electric Works can be a model for inclusive and equitable development for Fort Wayne. The same principles can be implemented in cities and at other projects nationwide. Equitable development is an ongoing, iterative process that begins before the first design is sketched and does not end when the punch list is complete. Developers and civic leaders must continue the learning and continue the work.

# Appendix: XBE Cultivation and Support Recommendations

The panel acknowledges Heather Presley-Cowen of Capital Stacker and an Indiana Member Adviser for providing the appendix.

## XBE Cultivation and Support Recommendations

### 1. Capacity Building Workshops

Implement regular workshops and training programs for XBEs, focusing on key business skills like financial management, bidding process navigation, and project management. These workshops should be tailored to address the specific challenges XBEs face in nongovernmental projects.

### 2. Mentorship and Partnership Programs

Establish mentorship programs that pair XBEs with established firms. The goal is to support XBEs in building relationships, gaining insights into successful business practices, and fostering an environment of mutual growth and opportunity.

### 3. Access to Financing

Collaborate with financial institutions to create specialized funding options for XBEs. This could include lower interest loans, grant programs, or funds specifically earmarked for supporting XBE participation in large-scale projects.

### 4. Streamlined Project Entry Points

Develop simplified pathways for XBEs to engage in large projects. This could involve creating a pre-qualification pool where XBEs can be vetted in advance for multiple projects, reducing the need for repeated and cumbersome certification processes.

### 5. Incentives for Non-XBE Firms

Encourage larger firms to subcontract or partner with XBEs through incentives like tax benefits, recognition programs, or priority consideration in future project bids.

### 6. Marketplace Development

Similar to our Club 720 model, develop a digital marketplace that connects XBEs with potential clients, including larger firms and government agencies. This platform could also serve as a resource hub for training materials, financial advice, and networking opportunities.

### 7. Regular Industry Feedback and Adaptation

Establish a feedback mechanism where XBEs can voice their challenges and experiences. Use this feedback to continuously adapt strategies and programs to better serve their needs.

## A Comprehensive Ecosystem for Delivery

- **Create a University-led Construction Business Program:** Blending education on running a business with technical training is needed to help those who have a great product to know how to grow and expand their business.
- **Professional Associations:** Engage the Home Builders Association to provide networking opportunities and industry-specific training for XBEs.
- **Business Planning, Coaching, and Support:** Collaborate with the Northeast Indiana Innovation Center (NIIC) to provide XBEs with access to business coaching and the latest tools and technologies, which can enhance their competitiveness.

## Key Performance Indicators

1. Review/define specific, measurable outcomes for XBE engagement, such as revenue targets, foot traffic goals, and customer satisfaction benchmarks. These metrics should be regularly monitored and reported, with strategies adjusted as needed to ensure continued growth and success for XBE vendors.
2. Beyond just providing tenant space, actively foster a business environment that supports XBE growth. This could include offering business development workshops, marketing support, and financial guidance tailored to the unique challenges faced by XBEs.
3. Addressing the wayfinding issues and enhancing the overall accessibility of the market can significantly improve footfall. This includes clear signage, digital directories, and marketing initiatives to guide visitors through the space, highlighting XBE vendors.
4. Consider offering flexible lease terms and affordable rent options to accommodate the financial realities of small XBE businesses. This can include graduated rent scales, short-term leases, or shared-space arrangements.
5. Engage in active marketing and promotional efforts to attract diverse customers to Electric Works. This can involve community events, partnerships with local organizations, and targeted advertising campaigns.
6. Empower the established tenant board with a budget to implement their ideas for improving the market experience for both vendors and customers. This board could also play a crucial role in ensuring that the market stays aligned with the community's needs and expectations.
7. Utilize technology to gather data on customer patterns, preferences, and feedback. This data can inform decisions on market layout, vendor placement, and targeted marketing strategies to increase foot traffic and sales for XBE vendors.
8. Deepen collaboration with local community partners, not just for identifying potential XBE tenants but also for supporting them through mentorship programs, networking events, and access to local resources.

# About the Panel

## Fernando Costa

Panel Chair  
Fort Worth, Texas

Fernando Costa serves as an assistant city manager for the city of Fort Worth, currently overseeing a group of three departments: Police, Neighborhood Services, and Diversity and Inclusion. He also serves as a part-time faculty member at the University of Oklahoma. Before accepting both jobs in 2008, Costa worked for 10 years as Fort Worth's planning director, 11 years as planning director for Atlanta, and 11 years as a planner for the Middle Georgia Area Planning and Development Commission. He studied civil engineering and city planning at Georgia Tech and served as an officer in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Costa enjoys serving on the boards of many professional and community organizations. With ULI, he serves as a Global Governing Trustee and as a member of the Americas Executive Committee. He lives in Fort Worth with his wife, Ann.

## Dr. Lorin R. Carter

Dallas, Texas

Dr. Carter is passionate about facilitating healthy, vibrant communities and equipping people with tools needed to be independent determiners of their destiny. With almost two decades of education and experience spanning civil engineering, law, higher education, public policy, and urban planning, Carter is the founder and CEO of C-Suite Equity Consulting, an award-winning equity, justice, and social impact firm, where she works to foster equity through strategy development, capacity building, community planning, and speaking about making urban spaces equitable places.

Her work has led to record-breaking multimillion-dollar urban investments; community-driven programming and initiatives in communities of color overcoming years of intentional disinvestment; increased investment for local benefit and access to opportunity; informed institutional approaches to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging; and informed regional decisions on programmatic investments. Carter is

also a sought-after speaker and trainer, a 2020 Dallas Public Voices Fellow through the OpEd Project with published articles in multiple national news outlets, and vice chair of the Farmers Market Reinvestment Zone of Dallas. Outside of work, Carter enjoys spending time with her husband, family, and friends, visiting local farmers markets and restaurants, listening to live music, supporting other small businesses, and exploring local cities, parks, and trails.

## Faron A. Hill

Peachtree Corners, Georgia

Faron Hill has more than 20 years of experience originating, structuring, and closing complex transactions. In his current role at Peregrine Oak, Hill is responsible for developing and implementing the firm's strategy in addition to directing daily operations. Peregrine Oak is an Atlanta-based advisory services and capital markets firm. Hill was appointed ULI Foundation chair on July 1, 2021. Since joining ULI in 2004, Hill has volunteered his time and talent, serving in leadership roles that include chair of the ULI Atlanta Young Leaders Group and cofounder and co-chair of the ULI Atlanta Capital Markets Council. He also serves on the Global Board of Directors, as a Governing Trustee, as chair of the ULI Foundation Board, and in the Technology and Real Estate Council leadership.

## Jill Hunger

Arlington, Virginia

Jill Hunger has been a planner for regional and local governments for over 25 years; she understands bureaucracy and strives to span the connection between visionary statements and pragmatic approaches. She is the assistant director of Arlington's Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development. Collaboration is a strong theme running through her career and she brings a perspective that blends strategic thinking and complex analysis with sound planning principles and economic development goals, with

an understanding of land economics and a community's core values. Because of her experience and ability to work cross-departmentally, she has been asked to assist in numerous Arlington County initiatives ranging from work due to rising commercial office vacancy rates to the COVID-19 pandemic to assistance with Arlington's community art organizations to Amazon's HQ2. Hunger holds a BA in environmental sciences and a master's in urban and regional planning from the University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

## Joanna Mack

West Sacramento, California

Joanna Mack's dedication to improving social conditions through architecture and her passion for collaborating with historically excluded communities feed her work at Salazar, and beyond. For 10 years, she has focused on innovative and equitable neighborhood transformations through urban planning, infill development, affordable housing design, and other project types that bring community benefits. Mack is a leader in Salazar's Sacramento office and is deeply engaged in the local community. As part of ULI's National Building Healthy Places Initiative, she was a major contributor to the National ULI Health and Equity Report and Community Toolkit, which focused on Sacramento's Meadowview neighborhood. Mack was recently named a Top 25 Black Changemaker by the *Sacramento Bee*.

## Taylor Ralph

Tampa, Florida

Taylor Ralph, LEED AP BD+C, is the president and founder of REAL Building Consultants LLC, a firm specializing in providing comprehensive sustainability consulting services to large building owners, developers, and design teams. His more than eight years of project experience—both in the design/build/development role and as a consultant to project teams—allows him to provide a thoughtful approach to creating high-performance, innovative, and award-winning projects. He has significant experience in the LEED for New Construction, LEED for Homes, LEED for Homes Multi-Family, and LEED for Commercial Interiors, as well as corporate sustainability consulting and real estate development.

Ralph currently serves on the Governance Board of Tampa Metropolitan YMCA, University of Tampa's Board of Fellows, Advisory Board of Gasparilla Music Foundation, and USGBC Florida's Market Leadership Advisory Board. He is a frequent speaker and guest writer on issues of environmental and energy performance, urban development issues, and building healthy places.

## Dawveed Scully

Chicago, Illinois

Dawveed Scully is commissioner at the city of Chicago Department of Planning and Development and an adjunct professor at IIT College of Architecture. Trained as an architect and urbanist, Scully has a strong passion to make design a strong tool to enhance the lives of everyday people. He has experience working on a variety of projects from vision strategies that create a framework to move forward to developing implementation strategies that allow those visions to be realized. He does this by facilitating robust collaboration between stakeholders and local government while also empowering citizens into the design process. Scully is a graduate of IIT College of Architecture and was awarded the Crain's Chicago Business 40 under 40 in 2020, was in the Leadership Greater Chicago Class of 2021, and received the ULI Chicago Young Visionary Award in 2018.





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