



Wabash River Corridor Enhancement Corporation Formational History

In 1999-2001 the cities of Lafayette and West Lafayette, and Tippecanoe County undertook a regional visioning process - Vision 2020 to develop a comprehensive regional vision for Tippecanoe County. It identified enhancement of the Wabash River Corridor as the top multi-jurisdictional community development issue facing the region.

Coming out of this visioning process, a community coordinating committee was formed to develop a community strategy to address corridor enhancement. The Committee was led by North Central Health Services, a regional provider of community health services with a significant grant program targeting community health and community development issues. The committee looked at local options and resources, along with river projects nationwide to identify a successful strategy to accomplish river corridor enhancement. A strategy utilizing a nonprofit corporation to lead the corridor enhancement effort was identified by the committee as a best practice utilized throughout the nation to lead river corridor projects. Project leadership provided through a nonprofit strategy would address criteria identified by the committee for achieving successful river corridor enhancement and put in place project leadership characteristics found in successful riverfront projects nationwide.

Key project leadership qualities identified from successful riverfront projects and specifically, nonprofit led riverfront projects, included **long, term continuity** in relation to *project planning, leadership, and fund raising*; the **ability to function regionally** through multiple jurisdictions; being **community driven**; and **partnering closely with local governments**.

These criteria were identified as key for the Wabash River Corridor Enhancement Project due to the scope of the proposed project in its geographical size, complexity in range of development, projected overall cost, required private/public sector partnership, and the corridor's position geo-politically through four political jurisdictions and Purdue University. Corridor enhancement was also planned to eventually expand into a **four county region** consisting of Tippecanoe County and three adjacent counties of Warren, Fountain, and Carroll counties, which would further increase the multi-faceted complexity of the project. It was understood that prior to regional project expansion, the leadership and organizational structure of the agency would evolve to include appropriate county/regional leadership from these counties. This later phase would also develop more readily through leadership provided through a nonpolitical, regional – public sector structure rather than via a governmental entity.

The Wabash River Enhancement Corporation was formed in August, 2004. The agency's **bylaws** mandated a nine member board be formed to oversee the agency, with an executive committee made up of five of its members providing operational oversight. It received its 501c3 designation from the federal government in January, 2005, and it became operational in July, 2005 when its first Executive Director was hired.

One of the first steps the Board took upon becoming operational was to develop a mission statement to guide its efforts to enhance the Wabash River Corridor:

*The mission of the Wabash River Enhancement Corporation is to enhance the quality of life in the Wabash River Corridor by providing **sustainable** opportunities to improve health, recreation, education, economic development, and environmental management.*

WREC then developed an agency strategic plan to guide its efforts to accomplish its mission to enhance the Wabash River Corridor and began working to accomplish its mission. The Corporation is now governed by a ten member Board of Directors (A Board restructuring in 2013 added a position), and it now consists of:

Mayor, City of Lafayette
Mayor, City of West Lafayette
Tippecanoe County Commissioner Representative
Community At Large Representative
Tippecanoe County Council Representative
City of Lafayette Parks and Recreation Board Representative
City of West Lafayette Parks and Recreation Board Representative
Tippecanoe County Parks and Recreation Board Representative
Community At Large Representative
Designated Representative Purdue University President

2022 Board Membership:

Tony Roswarski	Board President. Mayor, City of Lafayette
John Dennis	Board Treasurer. Mayor, City of West Lafayette
Tom Murtaugh	Board Vice President. Tippecanoe County Commissioner Representative
John Collier	Board Secretary. Community at Large Representative
Jody Hamilton	Board Member. Tippecanoe County Council Representative
Claudine Laufman	Board Member. City of Lafayette Park and Recreation Board Representative: (Designated Representative: Superintendent of Parks & Recreation)
Kathryn Lozano	Board Member. City of West Lafayette Park and Recreation Board Representative
John Gambs	Board Member. Tippecanoe County Park and Recreation Board Representative
Jim Andrew	Board Member. Community At Large Representative
Ken Sandel	Board Member. Purdue University President - Designated Representative: (Director of Sponsored Program Services, Purdue Research Foundation)

* Names in bold are on the WREC Executive Committee