



STARKE COUNTY

Opportunity Zone Investment Prospectus

Imagine the Possibilities



January 2022



STARKE COUNTY

LETTER FROM THE COMMISSIONER



Mark Gourley
Starke County Commissioner

There are abundant opportunities for those bold enough to harness our resources. Within our Opportunity Zone lies one of Starke County's three incorporated municipalities, which also happens to be my hometown. The Town of Hamlet is currently seeing what it looks like to those of us who have known the town all of our lives, something of a housing boom. Demand for new construction homes is at a level I have never seen in my lifetime, and the stage is set for many more successful housing developments.

Significant effort is being made to expand our recreational areas. The Hamlet Town Park will be the site of many of these efforts. Already, plans are in place to create a new walking trail around the park. Also within the bounds of the Opportunity Zone, the Starke County Fairgrounds attracts visitors not only from the entire county, but from many of the surrounding areas as well. These visitors come for the annual county fair and several other popular community events. One such event is the nationally recognized Yellowstone Trail Festival, commemorating the installation of a country-spanning road established in 1912 that passes through the entirety of our Opportunity Zone.

Several other resources are available for investments outside the Town of Hamlet. Major arterial roads traverse the zone. Running along the northern border is US 30, while US 35, State Roads 39, 8, and 23 provide access to the heart of the ROZI designated space. Much of this area is wide-open agricultural ground. Already, plans are being formulated for a major solar electric generating project between US 35 and State Road 23.

As you read through this prospectus, know that Starke County's local government is open to a variety of innovative incentive packages to make building, working and living in Starke County – financially and aesthetically – beneficial for all.





STARKE COUNTY
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INTRODUCTION

Starke County,
Indiana's
crossroad to
the East and
West, and bridge
to economic
opportunity.

Starke County is centrally located between Chicago, South Bend and Indianapolis. Our Opportunity Zone offers easy access via roadway and rail – and is also home to the Starke County Airport.



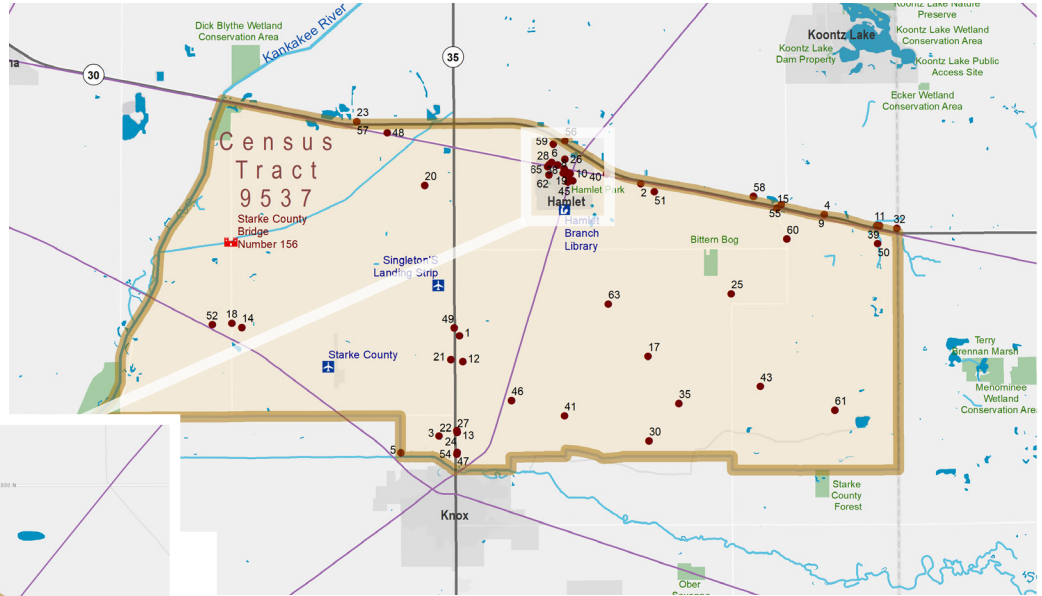
Starke County

One census tract located within Starke County is designated as an Opportunity Zone (OZ). The natural beauty of the terrain within the OZ speckled with lakes, rivers, trails and spacious parks is one of the county's greatest attractions. The municipalities are led by local leaders who know how to leverage limited resources to provide exciting opportunities for residents and visitors who are eager to embrace progress while celebrating past successes. Our investment prospectus highlights key developments and local assets that are the foundation upon which the county will continue to build a prosperous future in partnership with local organizations and community residents.



Legend

- Businesses
- Airports
- Libraries
- Historic Bridges
- Recreational Areas
- Rails
- Rivers
- Opportunity Zone boundary



COMMUNITY EVENTS

An impressive array of annual festivals and local celebrations held throughout the year, including the Yellowstone Trail Festival and the annual 4-H Fair.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Exceptional vocational education programs with a focus on automotive, welding and robotics offered through the Starke County Initiative for Lifelong Learning (SCILL) Center, which provides quality training to youth and adults.

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

120 nonprofit organizations that support the activities/needs of communities & people in the county.

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Over \$135,500 awarded for student scholarships & 266 grants invested in local community-minded groups in 2020.

BUSINESS CLIMATE

Proactive assistance and incentives available to attract & support new companies, as well as local/regional organizations seeding entrepreneurial activities.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Close to 3,500 students enrolled in the county's three public school corporations (pre-K through high school).

INDUSTRY MIX

Multiple sectors contribute to the economy, including manufacturing, retail trade, construction, and agriculture.

PARKS/RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

Multiple outdoor venues for residents and visitors to enjoy, including the 150-acre Starke County Forest – an ideal setting for bird-watching, hiking, cross-country skiing and more.


POPULATION



County Population (2020)
Number of county residents

 23,049

Age Structure (2019)
Diversity of residents by age

	Under 25	31.1%
	25-44	23.1%
	45-64	27.9%
	65+	17.8%


Median Age (2019)
Median age of Starke County population

 41.5

Households (2019)
Total number of households

 8,549

Education (2019)
Adults (25+) with:

	Some college education or more	42.8%
	H.S. education/ equivalent only	42.1%

ECONOMICS



Real Median Household Income (2019)
Adjusted for the effects of inflation

 \$54,001

Labor Force Participation (2019)
Working age population in the labor force

 78.4%

Manufacturing (2019)
Average annual earnings for employees

 \$49,849

Cost of Living Index (2019)
Cost of living relative to the national average of 100

 91.9

Home Ownership (2019)
Percent of homes owner-occupied

 80.1%

Heavy Industrial Planned Unit Development (PUD) Site



ADDRESS

500 N. Hamlet, IN 46532

LOT SIZE

75-02-23-500-009.201-015 (88.814 acres)
 75-02-23-100-011.100-015 (0.9480 acres)
 75-02-23-500-09.000-015 (153.8350 acres)
 75-02-23-500-010.100-015 (75.600 acres)

Local Incentives

that may be specifically applicable for deal-stacking

- Tax Phase-In
- Potential for TIF District
- CEDIT Allocation

Details

The current concept plan for the 320-acre Planned Unit Development site is to have a mix of large, heavy industrial, rail-served sites with smaller industrial manufacturing type sites interspersed with other commercial and retail site opportunities. The Planned Unit Development (PUD) concept would allow the greatest amount of flexibility in size and types of industrial and commercial development and investment opportunities.

In 2006, a large corporation had selected the entire 320-acre site for a Midwest distribution center. As part of a local incentive, the Starke County Economic Development Foundation applied for and obtained several grants to extend water and sewer service to the proposed site, build a 200,000-gallon water tower, and make additional upgrades to the Town of Hamlet's water system and sewage treatment plant.

The 320-acre Planned Unit Development site, zoned heavy industrial, is strategically located near the US 35/US 30 Highway Interchange along US 35. The site is permit-ready for a direct highway entrance onto US 35. The Norfolk Southern Railroad East/West mainline track is adjacent to the northern boundary of the site and is permit-ready for construction of a railroad spur. The site is infrastructure ready for industrial development and investment.

Hamlet Residential Development Site



LOCATION

Indiana Avenue, southern edge of Hamlet town limits

PARCEL ID

75-03-30-101-007.000-017
(31.7700 acres)

ACREAGE/LOT SIZE

18 acres

OWNERSHIP/PROPERTY STATUS

Privately owned and willing seller

ZONED

Agricultural

TERRAIN

Level, well-drained site with sandy soil and wooded acreage

Details

The 18-acre residential development site is vacant land located within the community of Hamlet, Indiana. The proposed development plan is to first provide 10 single-family units and add another 20 units consisting of single- and multi-family homes.

The proposed development is located near the Town of Hamlet’s existing water and sewer infrastructure, an asset which is offered as an incentive to concentrate housing development within the existing town, reducing the need to develop costly infrastructure and subdividing other, more rural, landscapes.

Local Incentives

that may be specifically applicable for deal-stacking

- ✓ Three months of free water, sewer, trash and recycling pickup*
- ✓ At-cost water and sewer connections*
- ✓ Possibility of reduced or suspended permit fees*
- ✓ Subject to IHCD 9% low income housing tax credit

*Town of Hamlet Incentives

Site Amenities

- ✓ Land area for proper infrastructure, utilities, and road access
- ✓ Proximity to town parks, fairground, and other amenities
- ✓ Proximity to US 30/US 35 corridors
- ✓ Rural, hometown charm
- ✓ Good local school corporation with small classes
- ✓ Close proximity to Ancilla College of Marian University



Veterans Memorial Plaza

Starke County has a proud and abundant history of service men and women who have paid the ultimate price for our country. The Veterans War Memorial includes the names of those lost in action in wars and conflicts dating back to the Civil War – etched in beautiful, black granite stone. Benches and ADA accessibility allow for a space of relaxation and meditation as individuals reflect on the sacrifices service men and women have made to secure our freedom.

Norwayne Field Stage

The Norwayne Field stage provides a calm and beautiful setting for people to relax, watch movies in the amphitheater and enjoy a community gathering with food and refreshments during events.



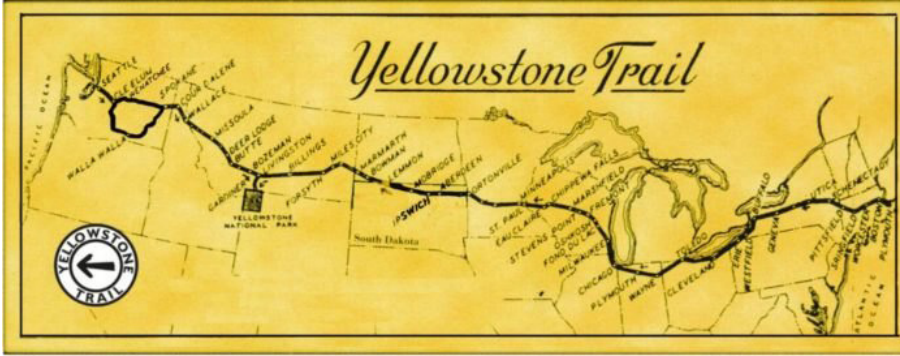
Our Solar System in Scale on the Erie Trail

Space is closer than one might think, thanks to the installation of the Our Solar System in Scale project along the Erie Trail in North Judson. Patrons of the rail-trail can learn about the planets, thanks to proportionally-spaced signs along the route. The project emphasizes education, art, culture, and physical fitness. Each sign features a unique design, and the name of each planet is listed in multiple languages. The rail-trail is popular with locals as well as visitors from all over the world and can be accessed on foot, via bicycle or on horseback. Users can “travel” to each planet as they enjoy rural Starke County’s tranquil flora and fauna. The Starke County Community Foundation spearheaded this grant-funded solar system project.

Countywide Murals

The countywide mural project is an ongoing effort that’s breathing new life into our communities by strategically placing murals in various locations. In 2019, Starke County native Anthony Brooks painted a large mural that highlights a Native American legend of cranes and otters in downtown North Judson. Brooks has done multiple paintings in Europe, but the one in North Judson was his first in the United States. The countywide mural projects are funded by the Starke County Community Foundation and Lilly Endowment Gift VII. They will be part of an eventual mural trail to encourage visitors to explore Starke County.





The Yellowstone Trail and Lincoln Highways

Starke County's rich transportation history is a cornerstone of its Rural Opportunity Zone. The nation's first transcontinental automobile highway – the Yellowstone Trail – passed through Hamlet and is celebrated

every August with a festival at the Starke County Fairgrounds. The road connected northern states from Massachusetts to Washington and was established in 1913.

The route was born of a grassroots effort to raise money for roads through a system of “assessments.” The Yellowstone Trail Association lobbied for good roads and provided local construction and maintenance instructions. Members also worked with people in little towns who wished to boost their community's economies by being on a well-used road. Routes were often marked with either yellow stones or the official circle and arrow of the Yellowstone Trail Association.

The Lincoln Highway, which is another early transcontinental route, also passed through Starke County. It was at the time the shortest, best, and most direct route between New York City and San Francisco and was established during the dawning of the automotive era. In 1928, the Boy Scouts placed concrete Lincoln Highway markers at five different locations throughout Starke County. Parts of the former Lincoln Highway are now U.S. 30, which is the northern border of the Rural Opportunity Zone in Starke County.



Cultivation

The IHC Titan 10-20 tractors (left) were very popular with local Starke County farmers. This photo shows Dwight Burch cultivating soybeans around 1940 on the Gindleberger Farm northeast of Hamlet. The four-cylinder gasoline engine was rated at 14-drawbar horsepower. It was unusual to see tractors with four-row cultivators back then. Most were two-row cultivators.

<i>Project</i>	<i>Total Investments</i>
Solar Project at Bass Lake	\$485,000,000
Solar System in Scale on Erie Trail	\$25,000
Veteran Memorial Plaza	\$275,000 + Donation of Labor
Norwayne Field Stage	\$30,000
Countywide Murals	\$9,000
Economic Development Administration (EDA) Grant	\$1,900,000
Industrial Site Development	\$500,000
Community Crossings Road & Bridge Projects	\$4,300,000

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING



I started my business in Western & Northern Illinois and realized it would be more beneficial to relocate to Northwest Indiana. Indiana & Starke County have more opportunities for small business. I quickly found rural communities welcomed a woman-owned business more readily than Illinois. In my search across NW Indiana, many of the Starke County businesses & surrounding communities have afforded my company the opportunity to succeed.”

Nan Wellman

President

Outstanding Tradeshow Exhibit Services, Inc.



Lisa Dan

Executive Director,
Starke County Economic
Development Foundation, Inc.



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OUR PARTNERS



Center for Regional Development

The Purdue Center for Regional Development (PCRD) seeks to pioneer new ideas and strategies that contribute to local and regional collaboration, innovation and prosperity. The Center partners with public, private, nonprofit and philanthropic organizations to identify and enhance the key drivers of innovation in communities and regions across Indiana, the U.S. and beyond.



The Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs is a valuable state agency that works with local, state and national partners to provide resources and technical assistance to aid Indiana communities in shaping and achieving their community and economic development vision and goals.



Committed to the future of rural communities.

USDA Rural Development focuses on improving the economy and quality of life in rural America. It does so through a variety of programs, including grants, loans, and loan guarantees designed to help create jobs, strengthen economic development, and support the availability of such key services as housing, health care, water, electric and communications/broadband infrastructure.



The Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority partners with developers, lenders, investors, and nonprofit organizations to provide housing opportunities and stability for Indiana families, which prospers and strengthens communities across the state.