



WABASH RIVER ENHANCEMENT CORPORATION

200 North 2nd Street Lafayette, IN 47901

Wabash River Enhancement Corporation (WREC) Formational History Abstract.

Enhancement of the Wabash River Corridor was identified in the 1999-2001 Lafayette-west Lafayette/Tippecanoe County Vision 2020 visioning process as the top multi-jurisdictional community development project in the county. Community leadership developed a strategy to utilize a nonprofit agency as the point agency for planning and implementing enhancement of the Wabash River Corridor. The cities of Lafayette and West Lafayette, Tippecanoe County, and Purdue University, with formational leadership provided by North Central Health Services, agreed to form the Wabash River Enhancement Corporation (WREC) in early 2004.

WREC was formally created in August, 2004 and it became operational in 2005 when it received its 501c3 nonprofit designation from the IRS and hired its first Executive Director. WREC is governed by a nine member board of directors, and its first five years of operation were funded through a \$500,000 North Central Health Services grant. Since July, 2011, WREC operations have been funded through a dedicated allocation from the Tippecanoe County Innkeepers Tax revenue. WREC seeks funding for planning, land acquisition, environmental work, and development projects through public and private sector funding sources. To learn more about WREC's formational history click [here](#).

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 priority, 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. Committee leadership was provided by North Central Health Services, a regional provider of community health services, it also oversees 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 physical size, complexity in range of development, project 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 at this time that prior to project expansion, or initiating planning for it actively began, 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 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. To learn more about its project history click **here**. The Corporation is governed by a nine member Board of Directors consisting of:

Mayor, City of Lafayette
Mayor, City of West Lafayette
Tippecanoe County Commissioner Representative
Tippecanoe County Council Representative
Purdue University President, or Designated Representative
City of Lafayette Park and Recreation Board Representative
City of West Lafayette Park and Recreation Board Representative
Tippecanoe County Park and Recreation Board Representative
Wabash River Parkway Commission Representative

2011 -12 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. Purdue University President designated Representative: (Designated Representative: Director of Campus Master Planning)
Andy Gutwein	Board Member. Tippecanoe County Council Representative
Ted Bumbleburg,	Board Member. City of Lafayette Park and Recreation Board Representative: (Designated Representative: Superintendent of Parks & Recreation)
Richard Shockley Representative	Board Member. City of West Lafayette Park and Recreation Board
John Gambs	Board Member. Tippecanoe County Park and Recreation Board Representative
Norman Neiburger	Board Member. Wabash River Parkway Commission Representative (This agency has merged with WREC, the position will serve until the bylaws are revised)