



MAJOR INVESTMENT BY WALMART AT SEYMOUR DISTRIBUTION CENTER

Walmart has announced significant investment at its regional distribution center in Seymour.

On July 10th, company officials appeared before the Seymour City Council to request abatement on phase one of a multi-year, multi-million-dollar project for high-tech automation at its distribution center in Seymour.

The first phase of the investment includes \$103 million in personal property and \$5 million in real property that will help enable the company to retain its workforce of 1,240 associates (including Walmart transportation's 238 associates). The majority of the investment will be made in 2024, although some work might begin in the 2nd half of 2023. Subsequent investments are expected after 2024.

The expansion is part of Walmart's broader initiative to renovate all 42 regional distribution centers as the retailer continues to modernize its vast supply chain network to provide customers with better reliability, service and speed. Once complete, the distribution center will be able to ship nearly double the number of cases compared to a traditional RDC while evolving strenuous, manual jobs into those that offer new skills in robotics and technology.

Walmart's Seymour distribution center has been a pillar in our community for over 30 years. Adding robotics, automation and AI-powered software systems to this facility will revolutionize an already impressive operation, fundamentally changing the way we distribute products to stores," said Mike Baecke, General Manager, Regional Distribution Center #6017, Walmart U.S. "This isn't just an investment in our facility, but also in our associates, our community and our future." **Story continued Page -3-**

BROOKINGS STUDY COMPLETE; IMPLEMENTATION UNDERWAY

Developing new neighborhoods. Preparing workers for new and better jobs. Creating an immigrant welcome and resource center. Building an indoor recreation center.

Those and other projects large and small make up the Burkart Opportunity Zone agenda, unveiled this month as the Seymour Brookings Institution-LISC Study team wrapped up more than 10 months of convening, planning and mapping out community needs.

The Inclusive Economic Development Agenda for Seymour offers a road map aimed at turning many of those plans into a reality over the next three years.

Seymour joined Warsaw and Michigan City at the invitation of the Indiana Economic Development Corp. in working with Brookings and the Local Initiatives Support Corp. (LISC) to develop place-based strategies to span gaps in health, wealth and opportunity.

The Seymour team, comprised of a broad range of people across the community, developed a game plan for improvements in what is called the Burkart Opportunity Zone, an area running along Burkart Boulevard and encompassing the East Side Industrial Park on the northeast side to Freeman Municipal Airport to the southwest and spaces in between.

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Theresa Kulczak, long-time director of the Japan America Society of Indiana (JASI), was honored during the group's annual Gala at the Indiana Roof Ballroom in Indianapolis in August. Jim Plump, executive director of JCIDC and member of the JASI Board of Directors, took part in the ceremony as did former Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels, who also was the featured speaker for the event.

Brookings (continued from Page -1-)

Proposals include training the local workforce and adding workforce housing; connecting people to work and play; improving affordable housing options and expanding housing options for a growing population; and creating new places and spaces for recreation and socializing. Among those projects is a proposed welcome and resource center for new arrivals to the community and a proposal to improve multi-lingual communications. They help tackle a primary aim of the study to better connect Seymour's growing immigrant population – from Mexico, Central America and elsewhere – to the overall community, thereby moving the entire community forward economically. The city's population grew from 17,503 in the 2010 census to 21,569 in the 2020 census, due largely to an increase in the Latino/Hispanic population.

"We think these community-based efforts offer wonderful opportunities to bring our growing immigrant community closer to our community overall," said Ashley Caceres, executive director of Su Casa. Caceres is teaming with Jackson County United Way Executive Maci Baurle to lead efforts on developing a resource center, reducing language barriers and creating a new community space in the Opportunity Zone.

Representatives of the City of Seymour, Jackson County Industrial Development Corp. and the Community Foundation of Jackson County served as the core team working with Brookings, LISC and its consultants, Anderson+Bohlander LLC, bringing more than 20 other community members together over five months of meeting, talking and planning. The work also included gathering several focus groups.

"Bringing in those community members, especially through those focus groups, was important to ensuring that we heard from a broad range of people," said Jackie Hill, director of the Jackson County Industrial Development Corp. Workforce Partnership program. "We wanted to make sure that their voices were heard and reflected."

Mayor Matt Nicholson is excited for the city to have been included in the process and looks forward to the work that lies ahead. "Being selected by the State of Indiana for this project has presented us a tremendous opportunity to not only bring many residents to the table to discuss the future of Seymour but also to put plans together to work toward making these changes a reality," he said.

FROM THE IEDC With the Brookings plans in place, the three cities can now compete for funding from the Indiana Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI), which seeds community development projects and programs across the state in order to catalyze economic and population growth.

Seymour-Jackson County is part of the South Central Indiana Talent Region, which includes Bartholomew and Jennings counties. Work is underway on READI 2.0, which was announced earlier this year and follows the initial READI program, which the South Central Indiana region received a \$30 million grant.

"Oftentimes, small cities don't have access to the kind of community development infrastructure that large municipalities do when working to build economic opportunity and align with regional economies," said Vincent Ash Jr., Vice President of Development with the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC), which is supporting the three-city effort. "It makes it more difficult to attract the capital and expertise needed to fuel revitalization and growth, and it impacts the well-being of tens of thousands of Indiana families. These three plans directly address those challenges in ways that will have a lasting impact."

Each locale tailored its strategy to its local assets, needs, and opportunities. Together their plans shared many common goals—like expanding career pathways to high-quality jobs, building and preserving affordable housing, and transforming distressed or underutilized land into vibrant commercial facilities and public space for arts and recreation. The plans are based on the principles of community-centered economic inclusion (CCEI), which builds community wealth within underinvested places by directly engaging with residents; breaking down barriers related to race, income and geography; and connecting to broader economic growth in the region.

MAVERICK CHALLENGE JACKSON COUNTY CONTINUES UNDER NEW FORMAT



Maverick Challenge is returning to the Jackson County schools for the 2023-24 school year but will look a little different going forward. Since 2011, schools in Jackson County have participated in the Maverick Challenge under the Bartholomew County umbrella with students competing at the county level and the winner going on to compete at the regional competition with surrounding counties. After last year's regional competition, Bartholomew County stated they were no longer going to continue coordinating the regional program.

"Our county team met and immediately the consensus was the importance of continuing the local program," said Jackie Hill, JCIDC Workforce Partnership Director. "We have a great group of community leaders that have been involved in some capacity in the program since the beginning and didn't want this opportunity to end for our young people."

Under the new name, Maverick Challenge Jackson County, the team developed a new mission statement, designed a new logo, and put together a game plan for the county program that will align with the State Innovate WithIN program.

This year, there are 50 teams comprised of 85 students from Brownstown Central, Seymour, Trinity, and Medora high schools. "This will be the first year for students from Medora to participate and we are excited to bring them on board," said Arann Banks. Banks serves on the JCIDC Executive Committee. JCIDC Workforce Partnership is pleased to welcome Seymour Main Street as a sponsoring partner this year. "Seymour Main Street is proud to be a sponsor for Maverick Challenge Jackson County," said Bri Roll, Seymour Main Street Executive Director. "We see the value in investing in our future leaders and business owners and welcome the opportunity to encourage and incentivize innovation and creativity." In addition to the program sponsors, JCBank will be the lead financial supporter contributing to the prize package awarded to the winner and finalists.

The initial step for students is presenting their "Business Elevator Pitches" to a team of business volunteers in September. Given the thumbs up, the students will then work to prepare videos and business presentations to be reviewed by judges in January 2024 with ten finalists selected to return for oral presentations the end of February.

With the changes to the program and schedule adjustments, dates will coincide with the state deadlines encouraging more students to enter the state competition. Hill added, "Our team is positioned to assist our students through the challenge with a goal to see more students excel at the state level."

Upcoming Events

October 13 – Reality Fair at SMS
October 25 – MFG Day
October 31-Nov 2 - SHS Mock Interviews

Employee Highlight

To showcase the amazing individuals that make our local companies great, we've started an Employee Highlight Series on social media. We hope to recognize and appreciate hardworking employees while also providing an inside look into our partners' company culture and values. To date, we have featured Rhonda Sexton (Pet Supplies Plus), Aspen Cooper (The Royal Group), Teresa Garrison (Aisin Drivetrain, Inc) and Craig Pollert (Brownstown Quality Tool & Automation).

Walmart (continued from Page -1-)

Responding to Walmart's announcement, Seymour Mayor Matt Nicholson stated: "We are thrilled that Walmart is making this investment in Seymour. This is a significant investment and shows the company's long-term commitment to our region."

"The improvements we're making in our Seymour, Indiana distribution center will be felt by store associates and customers in the surrounding region," said James Valenti, Regional General Manager, North Operations, Walmart U.S. "For our store associates, these investments will make it significantly easier and faster to stock shelves, which results in our customers having the items they want, when they want them."

The retailer employs over 43,000 associates in Indiana, and supports local businesses across the state, spending \$1.1 billion with Hoosier suppliers in fiscal year 2023 and supporting 33,300 Hoosier supplier jobs.

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Biehle Electric
CenterPoint Energy
DEEM LLC
FPBH, Inc
German American Bank
Jackson Township Trustee
Lorenzo Bevers Braman &
Connell
Nippon Steel Pipe America
SpaceGuard
The Peoples Bank
Vernon Township Trustee

Silver Level

Agresta, Storms & O'Leary
Aisin Chemical Indiana
Andersons
Cerrowire
Cornerstone Environmental
Dunlap Construction
Force Construction
GAI Consultants
Gaylor Electric
Harmon Construction
Jackson County REMC

Silver continued...

King's Trucking
Lannett Company Inc.
Lawyer Excavation
Metronet
Milestone
Millman Realty Partners
O&k American
Rose Acre Farms
Rumpke of Indiana
State Bank of Medora
The Tribune

Bronze Level

B&H Electric
Blue & Company
CC ILL Holdings
Independent Land Survey
Shelby Materials

Contributor Level

92.7 WXXU/99.3 WZZB
Aisin Drivetrain, Inc.
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Workforce Partnership

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Brownstown Schools
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