



WELLS COUNTY INDIANA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

"Where Ideas and Success Converge"



PRO-BUSINESS & LOW TAXES



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Wells County has a reputation as not only a great place to do business but also a marvelous county in the State of Indiana to visit, settle down or raise a family. The county is emerging as a desirable place for companies to locate or expand for reasons from low taxes to outstanding, pro-business, local and state incentives.

Written by Robert Hoshowsky

Wells includes the city of Bluffton—its county seat—and six towns with a total current population of 27,636 residents. In 2015, Bluffton earned the distinction of being named the Best Place to Start a Business in Indiana by the experts at Nerdwallet. The personal finance website provides objective advice to help others make the best possible financial decisions – examined factors from housing to business.

Site developers and business owners alike have been paying close attention to the state's rapid growth in entrepreneurship. Buoyed by sectors such as agriculture, automotive and manufacturing, Indiana's economy has grown twice

as fast as the rest of the United States, with Bluffton at the top, scoring above second- and third-place cities Monticello and Batesville.

Nerdwallet's report stated Bluffton residents benefitted from affordable housing, making it the second most affordable area for housing, with a median monthly housing cost of \$571 and a very high percentage of businesses with paid employees, at 36.39 percent. Bluffton's 1,003 businesses made an average revenue of \$5.06 million.

Underscoring the area's success is the Wells County Chamber and Economic Development, guided by Executive ►►





- Director Chad Kline. The four person strong organization has two people dedicated to chamber activities and two who focus on economic development. It promotes and markets businesses, supports workforce development and seeks out and organizes marketing and networking opportunities and events.

“We are one organization that just has a little bit of split duties, but we work very closely together for the same common goal: to grow and promote Wells County,” says Kline, who has led the organization for over a year. His background includes working in journalism, law enforcement and as an elected county commissioner.

With very reasonable tax rates, low labor costs, access to highways and railways and plenty of room for expansion, Wells County has a pro-business environment for companies of all sizes. The county is continually working on programs to bolster workforce availability and expertise, collecting and providing valuable data for employers, and working with businesses to ensure success.

Historically, the area has been home to many varied industries and was known at one time as ‘The Piano Capital of Indiana.’ Wells County also had electric motor and submersible pump manufacturers in the years following World War II. Later on, it was a major center for the glass used to make color television sets.

“At one point, if you had a color TV in your house, the odds were 50/50 that the tube came from Bluffton,” says Ted Ellis, mayor of Bluffton for the past twenty-one years.

Today, the county hosts businesses from logistics to salty snack food companies, and the variety helped the area remain sound



“Wells County has a pro-business environment for companies of all sizes.”

during the economic global downturn almost a decade ago. “One of the things we pride ourselves on is we have a very diverse range of industry here in Wells County, and our plan is to keep it that way,” comments Ellis. “No decrease or effect on one industry is going to affect Wells County in a negative way.”

In 2002, the chamber had 216 members and currently has 332 members comprised of businesses both large and small. Some are even from outside of Wells County. “I think they see the value that our organization can provide, it has grown substantially,” says Kline. The active and growing chamber has several committees and holds planning events for the benefit of its members.

This is a conservative community with a low tax structure, including income tax and property taxes; in fact, some townships within the county have taxes for under a dollar.

Wells County has much to offer: incentives for businesses, a great location close to I-69 and three school districts that work very well together, making the area rank high in education in the State of Indiana.

Community and business leaders come together to meet with department heads, utilities, chamber executives and other key parties at the same time. This speeds approval processes and permits and manages to get things accomplished quickly. “Apparently it’s not that usual, and people express astonishment that our building and plan departments actually talk to one another,” says Mayor Ellis.

Among the many incentive packages being offered to both new and expanding companies are tax credits, financial assistance, training grants and more.

The county has an established tax increment financing (TIF) district, which supports community redevelopment and infrastructure improvement, along with property tax abatements and County Economic Development Income Tax (CEDIT) funds, to be used for economic development projects. Numerous Indiana State incentives that are aimed at capital investment and job creation initiatives are directed through the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC).

In late 2015, Bluffton was recognized as the first ‘Gigabit City’ in the State of Indiana. What this means is that the city can



provide Internet speeds up to one hundred times faster than regular residential broadband throughout Bluffton. Many businesses are dependent on fast and reliable internet speeds and connections so that it will provide a remarkable advantage.

“What this means is that anywhere in Bluffton has access to gigabit upload and download speeds to the internet,” says Ellis. The project is the result of a public-private partnership with Adams-Wells Internet Telecom TV, a local company and has resulted in plenty of fiber-optic cables around Bluffton.

The new technology is stimulating conversations with a number of high-technology industries. “It has been great for the school system and existing businesses needing high upload and download speeds, and it was well worth the effort.”

As well as being able to meet the technological needs of residents and businesses, Wells County has ample space for physical expansion, including about 525 acres of land available for development and five buildings and space available for industrial use. These range from 50,000 square feet to 200,000 square feet.

Wells County has many advantages for home buyers and has been named by smartasset.com as one of the top places to get a mortgage. Add to this a scenic backdrop of parks and rivers, trails, great entertainment, quality schools, affordable housing, festivals and more, and it all adds up to an unbeatable combination.

And for visitors, there is plenty to see and do including visiting museums and historic sites, camping, exploring extensive interconnected trail systems and visiting the internationally-recognized Ouabache State Park.

“It’s hard to pinpoint the one great thing to describe Wells County,” says Mayor Ellis. “We are a pro-business community, a conservative community. When you come here, you feel like you’re part of the family in Wells County, and there are many great things to do and see. It’s a great place to start your business and to start and grow your family.” ■



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