

THE COLLEGE'S HOMETOWN was on the verge of scoring one of the biggest economic victories in Crawfordsville's history, and Mayor Todd Barton '00 didn't have a speech.

He wasn't going to jinx it.

"I'm superstitious," he admits. And the city had applied for the Indiana Stellar Community Designation—an award that could bring the city \$17 million in grants and access to state funds—five times. Been a finalist once before. He'd had a speech ready then.

Not this time.

That decision was even more ironic because the city's previous apps had been penned by consultants, but this one was all Barton and City Planning Director Brandy Allen.

"Consultants do great work, but each year we didn't win I'd look back and think, Those weren't our words. They didn't have the passion and the feel that came from the heart, from Crawfordsville," Barton says. "So this year we decided to write it ourselves, and we went below the surface. Most communities talk about the nice things they're going to do, the pretty things, but we said, 'Those things are great, but we're also going to change the way we do business.'"

It was a risky decision that could put the city either over the top or out of the league.

The former fire chief thought it was time to go for it.

"When I chose to run for mayor I was so upset with the mentality that had crept into our local leadership, that we should just roll over and die, that we don't deserve to be better," Barton says. "I don't believe that. I don't roll that way. That fire comes from within."

Not winning the Stellar in previous years only made Barton more determined. So he and Allen put hundreds of hours into the writing and presentation.

The writing was personal, but the process was more collaborative than ever. In multiple sessions—including some led by the College's Democracy and Public Discourse Initiative students—Barton had listened to what citizens wanted and needed.

"The College was really engaged and a full partner in this process,

and President Hess and I meet on a regular basis to talk about our projects, our vision, and how we can work together," Barton recalls.

"Crawfordsville had not had a huge win for a long time, and we needed one."

And a five-minute speech just in case we did win?

No way.

So when Lieutenant Governor Sue Ellspermann stepped to the mic during the Indiana State Fair, Barton was "on pins and needles, hanging from every syllable."

When she hung a banner with the word "designee" on the city's placard to symbolize Crawfordsville's victory, the mayor was literally speechless.

But the Crawfordsville contingent's cheering and nearly leaping into the air was voice enough.

When the applause stopped Barton stepped up to the mic and talked about how the funds would be used, in part, to retain young professionals by improving the city's downtown.

"This is not about one individual, but it's about Crawfordsville and Montgomery County," he said. "This is about all of us."

Of course, this is when the real work begins, as they say. But here's a glimpse at some of what that work is going to create:

"The College was really engaged and a full partner in this process."

Mayor Barton (below) updates alumni on Stellar plans at Big Bash; stairway, office door, and (top left) engraved doorknob show attention to detail in the soon-to-be renovated Ben Hur Building.



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The Gamechanger: US O 54*

A 20,000-sq.-ft. building at 231 and Franklin St. will house:

- Visitors Center
- Chamber of Commerce
- Indiana West Advantage
- Wabash College Center for Innovation, Business, and Entrepreneurship (CIBE)
- Small-business incubator
- Senior Center
- Volunteer Center
- Light retail, coffee shop

* 54 is the state's designation for Montgomery County

graphics © HWC Engineering

The Centerpiece: Condos, Hotel, and Restaurant

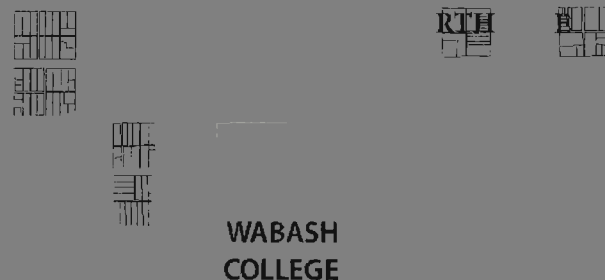
Renovation of the Ben Hur Building, constructed in 1912-13, is a \$9.1 million project that includes a restaurant/bar on the first floor with a lobby and conference space, and a combination of condominiums and hotel space on the second to fifth floors (*right*).

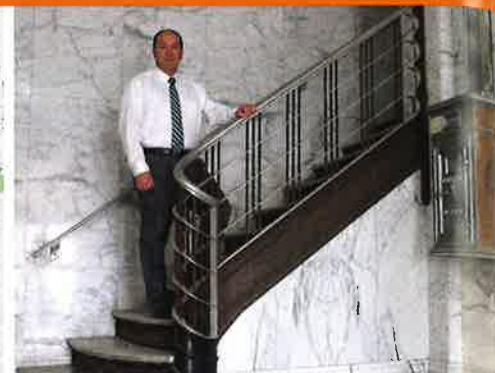
The Big Four and Downtown LOOP TRAILS

The project will extend the five-mile Sugar Creek Trail through the Wabash campus to downtown and the Amtrak station and will create bike/pedestrian-friendly streets (*map and bottom of page*).

The POCKET PARK

Adjacent to the already-successful location for the Farmer's Market, the Pike Street Pocket Park will be used for everything from performances to lunch in the park (*lower left, middle right*).





"I need Wabash alumni to come back and live here. And I need alumni who are retiring to consider what being part of this community of Wabash and Crawfordsville has to offer them."

—Mayor Barton talks Crawfordsville and the College in a Wabash on My Mind podcast at WM Online.

historic Whitlock

Barton stops in the lobby of the Ben Hur Building (above): "It's a fixer-upper, but it's sturdy and there's so much craftsmanship and detail. It's going to be beautiful again."

The Miracle: WHITLOCK NEIGHBORHOOD

The long-awaited renovation of the former Culver Hospital for housing is already well under way, and the rehabilitation of homes in the same neighborhood is a companion project that will dramatically boost the appearance of the area adjacent to downtown.

The TRANS

Several Wabash students worked with Mayor Barton on past Stellar Designation efforts, and Niki Kazahaya '18 (left) worked on this year's application.

"Niki follows a line of very good interns and student workers from Wabash I've been fortunate to have in my office, and he was in the right place at the right time. We even had him give part of our presentation to the state team," Mayor Barton says. "He's the prime example of the people we want to keep in our community, and he could speak to that. He did a fantastic job."

MENTION "THE BELL" AT WABASH and we know what you mean: The Monon Bell (now resident in the Allen Athletics Center seven years straight, thanks to this year's 45-17 Little Giant victory over DePauw.)

But another bell once heard at Wabash went silent not long after the Monon Bell became the trophy for the Wabash-DePauw rivalry in 1932.

That silence was heartbreaking for Dr. James Kirtley '29.

Filling it again with a joyful noise may yet be his legacy.

KIRTLEY'S MOTHER WORKED in the Montgomery County Courthouse when she was raising him and his siblings as a single mom after his father died. Kirtley could hear the courthouse clock tower's resident bell chiming off the hours from his house.

He could hear the reassuring bell at Wabash when he was a student.

He carried it in his mind to Normandy Beach, where he served in the Army 4th Infantry during World War II.

When he came home to Crawfordsville a medical doctor and a decorated veteran, the 25-foot tall Victorian clock tower had been torn down. The 1,200-pound bell of his youth had been melted for the war effort.

"He was absolutely sick," says S Kirtley founded in 1996 to rebuild president of the group ck Tower Restora t. "He told people, 'I'm going to restore that tower someday.'"

When he retired after 50 years of service as a beloved physician (he delivered more than 5,000 babies!), city council member, county commissioner, and state senator, he decided it was time to make good on that promise.

"He remembered exactly what that bell sounded like," Lofland-Brown says. "When he'd come by our house he'd play the note—F sharp—on the piano and say, 'That's it!'"

Lofund-Brown helped take care of Kirtley the day before he died of leukemia in 2000.

"That's when he made me promise I would see that the tower project was finished," she says. "I made that promise and I intend to keep it."

Today after nearly 20 years and more than \$250,000 raised, the restored tower, clock, and bell are within \$150,000 of becoming reality. The Indiana Bicentennial Commission has endorsed it as a Legacy Project for that celebration in 2016.

"We just hope we can get it ready for the Bicentennial," says Lofland-Brown. For her the project is both a promise fulfilled and a bellwether of a brighter future for her hometown.

"Doc used to say, 'If we can get the bell ringing again, all will be right in Crawfordsville.'"

CITIZEN SMITH

Dave Gerard

Read more about the Clock Tower project at WM Online.

100th Anniversary

4-12-
Dave Gerard

"I had a nightmare last night. I dreamt I was the mayor!"